

PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER OUR TWENTY-
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Next Meeting

January 20th , Sunday, 2:30 P.M.

You will want to bring your friends to this meeting. An executive producer of the award winning film, "For the Bible Tells Me So", Bob Greenbaum, will be our speaker. I'm sure you will want to hear about how the film came to be and the reception around the country.

Cathedral City Library Community Room. Everyone is welcome.

PFLAG INFORMATION LINE Telephone: 760-202-4430

MAILING ADDRESS PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities Chapter Post Office Box 402
Cathedral City, CA 92235

info@pspflag.org

A Message From The Editor

-Mike Balasa

The study of human nature is absolutely fascinating. Jane Goodall found that monkeys were interesting enough to make a successful career of recording their daily habits, but her findings are rather tame compared to the way our fellow humans cavort. For example consider the Evangelical preacher who built one of the major mega-churches in the US and regularly ranted about the evils of the "gay lifestyle". He was very influential and became head of the largest Evangelical association and had a direct line to the White House. What do you think you would observe him doing when he wasn't busy being such an important influence on people's lives. If you guessed visiting a male prostitute and snorting illegal drugs you would be right.

If you were a US senator who campaigned on "family values" and introduced into the senate a constitutional amendment against gay marriage, what would you do when not busy making certain that gays and lesbians remained second class citizens? Of course, the answer is solicit sex from men in public restrooms. That poor guy was asked to resign from the senate by his party cohorts, but what do you think those fellow senators thought about another "family values" defender who was caught visiting female prostitutes where he was said to enjoy frolicking around in a diaper. Would you guess they would ask him to resign, also. No. no, no. They came to his defense.

If you were a respected church leader who built a university and had incredible influence on the political scene, and often preached against gays and lesbians because of their unhealthy lifestyle,

what would you do to celebrate the healthy life. If you guessed that eating your usual enormous breakfasts with lots of fried eggs and bacon to add on to your reputation as a gourmand and then going back to your office to have a massive coronary and drop stone cold dead, you would be right. Have an interesting new year.

PFLAG Members Urged to Get Involved In PoliticsPFLAG as a non-profit organization cannot take sides in partisan races, but it is permissible to lobby for issues that relate to our mission statement. One of the best uses for our time and efforts is to discuss with candidates of all political parties the civil rights issues of same-sex marriage, hate crime legislation and allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military. Letting candidates know how the issues they will be facing affect you personally might make a difference. Even if they vote against us, they might be a moderating voice behind the scenes and block hateful legislation from their more rabid co-legislators. Writing letters helps but speaking to candidates now when they are willing to listen is an opportunity that might not be available when they are in office.

Desmond Tutu Apologizes to Gay PeopleOn a BBC broadcast in December, Archbishop Desmond Tutu apologized to gays and lesbians for the way the Anglican Church has treated them. Said the Archbishop appearing on “Made in Manchester”, an openly gay program, “I want to apologize to you and to all those who we in the church have persecuted. I’m sorry that we have been part of the persecution of a particular group. For me that is quite un-Christ like and, for that reason, it is unacceptable. Maybe even as a retired Archbishop I probably have, to some extent, a kind of authority, but apart from anything let me say for myself and anyone who might want to align themselves with me, I’m sorry. I’m sorry for the hurt, for the rejection, for the anguish that we have caused to such as yourselves”.

Huckabee Stands By Anti-gay StatementsPresidential candidate and winner of the Republican Iowa caucus said that he would not back down from a 1998 statement declaring that he, “would take the nation back for Christ.” In that statement he declared that, “homosexuality is an aberrant, unnatural and sinful lifestyle. I don’t know whether people are born that way. . . . but the behavior one practices is a choice”.

Evidence is Found that Colorado Killer was A Persecuted Gay

The young man who shot and killed two people at a youth ministry training center and later shot and killed two others and himself at a church left e-mail messages that would explain his actions. Mathew Murray, age 24, wrote letters to his mother complaining that the church, Colorado’s New Life Church (Ted Haggard’s former church), had forgiven Haggard but not him. Murray wrote in his blog, “People like us are going to hell, according to Christians. I’m bisexual. I can never get a female date. I am at least able to get some male action. I want to know where was all the love, mercy and compassion for my supposed imperfections . . . [that

was given to Haggard]”.

Murray was dismissed from the Youth With A Mission group for what they described as “health reasons”. Youth With A Mission has been described as associated with the ex-gay organization Exodus International, and has been criticized by some as a ‘cult’ and attacked for ‘brainwashing’ members and promoting anti-gay messages.

Iraqi Gays In Danger Since InvasionA report appearing in a December 18th, New York Times article makes the claim that gays in Iraq are now more in danger than when ruled by Saddam Hussein. A United Nations report issued in January of 2007, described the increased persecution, torture and extrajudicial killing of Iraq gays and lesbians. In 2005 an influential Shiite cleric, Grand Ayatollah Ali al-Sistani, issued a fatwa, or religious decree, calling for gay men and lesbians to be killed in the “worst, most severe way”.

The report quotes Iraqis who maintain that in the 1980’s and early 1990’s, there was a thriving gay community in Iraq. After the first gulf war, Hussein decided to crack down on gay night life and many gays and lesbians had to go underground but still felt safe as laws against gays were seldom enforced. Since the invasion the anti-gay influence of Iran, where gays are routinely executed, has resulted in a dangerous situation for anyone suspected of being gay.

Gay Men Navigate Like WomenResearchers at Queen Mary University of London found that gay men had similar spatial learning and memory to women. Placing subjects in a maze, the researchers found that gay men and straight and lesbian women took longer to find the hidden platform that offered a way out of the maze than straight men. Straight men and gay men; however spent more time in the correct area of the maze than either straight women or lesbians. Women; however, had better memories for spatial indicators. The conclusion: straight men have better skills in acquiring spatial information and finding their way out; however, women and gay men are better at remembering landmarks and where they had been. The practical application: for finding a new address, use a straight man; but, for finding an address you previously visited, depend on a woman or gay man.

Editor’s note: I doubt this information will result in less arguing in the car when driving aimlessly around in circles trying to find the address of the party when you are already late.

Sun City Officially Recognizes Social Club for Gays, Lesbians, Families and FriendsPFLAG members and residents of Sun City, Chuck and Ginni Rassieur proudly announced that the social group they informally formed a few years ago is now officially recognized by Sun City as a chartered club. The club now has official status, and the group’s meetings and activities are on the cable TV channel available to Sun City residents. Chuck wrote to The Banner, “Ginni and I never intended to start a club when all this got going. But there has been so much interest, it has become a chartered club with some status and respectability. And, the gays and lesbians who participate in the group are especially excited

about the “club” status. Ginni is the official president of this new group. As a club, we are required to charge annual dues of \$5.00 per year. We had about 60 signatures on the petition to become a recognized club.”Editor’s note: Our thanks and congratulations to Chuck and Ginni for their efforts.

Pat Robertson Gives His Yearly PredictionsRoberson, the anti-gay TV preacher, claims he talks to God who supplies him with a vision of the future. What is Pat predicting? China is becoming a Christian nation in 2008. Last year Robertson said that Iraq would turn out to be a big success and the economy would boom. With a success rate like Robertson’s, most people would shut up.

New Hampshire Has A Civil Unions LawAt midnight on December 31st, the New Hampshire Civil Unions Law became effective. Hundreds of same-sex couples around the state gathered to celebrate in homes and churches. New Hampshire joins the ranks of Vermont, Connecticut and New Jersey in allowing same-sex couples to have legal civil unions with all the state rights as other couples. Massachusetts is the only state to allow same-sex couples the right to marry. Maryland legislators will consider a marriage rights bill, tax relief proposals to benefit same-sex couples and other similar measures when they reconvene in January. New Hampshire was the first state to pass a civil unions law without a legal challenge.

Oregon’s Domestic Partner Bill Stalled By CourtA federal judge’s decision to put Oregon’s new domestic partner law on hold stunned gay civil rights supporters. An anti-gay group, Concerned Oregonians, submitted a referendum petition to Oregon’s Secretary of State who found that their signature drive was 116 valid signatures short. The anti-gay group protested the denial, and the judge ruled that further hearings were necessary and put off the implementation of the law. The new hearing will be held in February. Currently eight states have some form of spousal rights for same-sex couples: Connecticut, Vermont, New Hampshire, New Jersey, Maine, California, Washington, Hawaii and Massachusetts. **University of California, Riverside Looking for Coming Out Stories**If you would like to share your coming out story for an audience, UofC, Riverside wants to hear from you by January 15th. Last year UofC, Riverside students and staff, compiled coming out stories and created a performance piece for the breaking of silence on The Day of Silence. The piece was well received and last year’s script is being used by other schools. A new script is being prepared. If you are interested in sharing your story go to <http://out.ucr.edu/events/tcom.htm>This years’ performance will be on April 25th.

Gay-Straight Alliances Improve School Climate The Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network (GLSEN) released a report based on their own research and other studies that indicate the positive results of gay-straight alliances (GSA) in high schools. Dr. Eliza Byard, GLSEN Interim Executive Director, said, “This research brief provides proof of the enormous positive impact gay-straight alliances have on school climate. First and foremost, all

students are bullied and harassed less often based on actual or perceived sexual orientation when a school has a GSA. LGBT students also demonstrate a greater sense of safety and belonging in school and skip school less often.”The study had four major findings: 1. The presence of GSA’s may help to make schools safer for LGBT students by sending a message that biased language and harassment will not be tolerated. 2. Having GSA’s may also make schools more accessible to LGBT students by contributing to a more positive school environment.3. GSA’s may help LGBT students to identify supportive school staff, which has been shown to have a positive impact on their academic achievements and experiences in school.4. Most students lack access to GSA’s or other student clubs that provide support and address issues specific to LGBT students and their allies. Evidence cited by the report is that in schools with GSA’s, students are less likely to hear homophobic remarks, students are less likely to miss or skip school, and students report that staff members are more supportive. GLSEN expects to register up to 4,000 GSA’s this year.

New Palm Springs Police Chief NamedDavid Dominguez was named the new Palm Springs chief of police. Dominguez was deputy chief of police for four years with the Riverside Police Department. He will assume his duties in early February.