

THE BANNER OF THE DESERT
THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG
PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER
OUR TWENTY-EIGHTH YEAR December, 2008 Volume 28, No.12

MEETING REMINDER:

Sunday, December 21st--2:30 p.m.

Everyone is invited to the annual PFLAG holiday party at the home of Stuart and Barbara Lynn. PFLAG will provide turkey, ham, home made bread and beverages. Please bring a dish to share: appetizers, salads, side dishes and desserts. Please call our information line for driving instructions (760) 202 -4430.

A Message From The Editor

-Mike Balasa

Time to make my annual wish for the future. "The Banner" editorial staff, over the past several weeks, received many requests to comment on the coming verdict of the California Supreme Court on the validity of Proposition 8. I am prepared to now tell you what I would like to occur, I want the court to uphold their original finding and find that the state must recognize same-sex unions as equal to heterosexual unions, but they must also instruct the legislature to rewrite the marriage laws, to give religious institutions the right to declare couples married. Let the state issue the legal contract (how about calling it the "Family Formation Compact") and leave the religious institutions to perform the rituals. Of course, open and affirming churches could marry same-sex couples and a couple could call their union anything they wanted even if a court official administered the oath. The important point is that all couples regardless of sexual orientation would be treated equally by the state and religious connotations would be left to the clerics.

Last year I predicted that gays and lesbians would be allowed to serve openly in the armed forces within five years. The newly elected president has promised to lift the unsuccessful "Don't ask don't tell" regulations, but it now appears that he will put off making the change until he has gotten past the pressing legislation to ease the financial mess. Evidently, they don't want to create a controversy and distraction while facing more dire problems. My wish is that this issue be resolved by the end of 2009.

The massive financial support of Proposition 8 has not been the good public relations effort the Mormon Church wished for. Focus on the Family gave a half million dollars and is now laying off more of their staff. Playing politics is not good for the churches. Why can't they give us good examples of positive, loving deeds instead of being negatively judgmental and vindictive? I only wish!

Robert And Sonja Marchand And Henrietta Mitchell To Be Honored

In honor of their long service to PFLAG, retiring board members, Robert and Sonja

Marchand and Henrietta Mitchell will be recognized at the holiday party. The progress that we have made to GLBT civil rights in this country is due to the loving, caring persons like our retiring board members.

The Marchands Will Be Missed

Robert and Sonja Marchand resigned from the board, but we know that we can always depend on them for support when needed. They both are experiencing health problems that make it impossible to continue their normal pace of activism. They both became active in PFLAG and joined the board from the first days of their arrival in the area in 1994. Robert took over as treasurer in 1995 and served in that capacity until just a few years ago. When the Spencers were no longer able to serve as co-presidents, the Marchand's son, Paul, took over as interim president to keep the Palm Springs/Desert Communities PFLAG alive. Robert and Sonja assisted Paul in his generous efforts, and today the PS PFLAG is a healthy and effective voice of GLBT civil rights in the Coachella Valley. Sonja and Robert are active in local Democratic politics. They have served as officers in local political clubs and Sonja has run for non-partisan offices. They both have served on city commissions in Cathedral City. Their son Paul has continued the family tradition of activism and is currently a second term councilperson in Cathedral City. They are representative of the best in the PFLAG tradition: a commitment to family and justice for all. All of us are enriched for having them as friends.

Henrietta Mitchell Retires From Board

Henrietta has a long history with PFLAG. She and her late husband, Roy, assisted in founding a PFLAG chapter in Sonora, California in the mid 1990's. Henrietta was the chapter librarian and managed the purchase of literature, buttons and other PFLAG paraphernalia. She arrived here in 1999 and again became active in PFLAG, joining the board when we needed person to continue the chapter. She and her sister Marie Fox were dependable members, always showing up at meetings to lend their support and loving presence. For several years Henrietta and Marie generously provided the famous "light refreshments" that made the monthly meetings so enticing. Henrietta and Marie are currently focusing their efforts on supporting the Father Heart's Ranch for abused children in Desert Hot Springs. Each year they raise money and buy Christmas presents for the children.

Holocaust Survivor Asks What Is The Reward For Intolerance?

In the December 3rd, Letters to the Editor, section of the local newspaper, Goldie Jacoby who describes herself as a Holocaust survivor wrote a thoughtful and poignant letter. As a person who has experienced the worst kind of persecution for having a minority status, she has authority and a heartfelt view. She wrote, "I can't understand for the life of me why humanity has not learned tolerance by now. How much more must human beings suffer because of such ignorance? It brought up for me gay marriage, and what makes it so intolerable? What affect does it have on your life? All you people against it, tell me: is God speaking to you? Did God speak to Hitler too? I don't think so. I thought that God loved all people, so why are the so-called religious people so hateful toward other human beings, like us Jews? Gays have done nothing to deserve such prejudice. So in conclusion I ask you, what do you get out of it? What does it do for your life, for your well-being, to

spew such intolerance for gay marriage?”

The No On Proposition 8 Campaign Stays Alive In Coachella Valley

Community leaders met a few days after the election to decide on a next move after Proposition 8 passed. There was consensus in the group that the campaign infrastructure needs to stay alive and in place for the next struggle. Terry Applegate who coordinated the local action committee, volunteered to stay on as head of the local group. A steering committee was formed with Terry at the head. The committee will be meeting sometime in December to decide what direction to take while waiting for the court decision on the validity of Proposition 8. Rev. David Pelletier of the Metropolitan Community Church has volunteered office space.

At the initial meeting several suggestions were discussed. Outreach to the people who live in the eastern valley area needs to continue. Efforts must be made to form coalitions with other minority groups to insure success in repealing Proposition 8, when the next opportunity to vote on it occurs.

PFLAG Participated In The College Of The Desert Diversity Council

The College of the Desert Diversity Council is part of a nationwide program: Seeking Educational Equity and Diversity (S.E.E.D.). Staff and faculty meet regularly to study and recommend ways for the College to encourage and support diversity. They invited PFLAG to attend their October 28th sessions to discuss Proposition 8 issues. PFLAG was represented by PFLAG members, Ted Barnes and Jim Reynolds, a married couple. Ted and Jim reported that the meeting went over three hours with lots of questions and discussion. Ted and Jim were very gracious to accept this assignment from PFLAG and we thank them.

And Now a Word About The Speaker's Bureau

PFLAG occasionally gets requests for speakers. We need persons who we know are knowledgeable on GLBT issues, capable of organizing their thoughts under pressure and can hold the interest of their audience. Often the requests are for a combination of straight and gay persons. The PFLAG board has decided to organize a Speakers Bureau of persons willing to fill speaking engagements. While we get few requests at this time, we think that having a group together we can advertise our availability. Schools, religious, civic and governmental agencies have requested speakers from PFLAG in other areas of the country, and we think we can generate interest here. At this time Stuart and Barbara Lynn, Rosemary Hendler, John Dierken and David Irwin, Ray Cunningham and Richard Prescott and Mike and Carol Balasa have volunteered. Some time early next year there will be a speakers training workshop. If you are interested in participating call the Information Line- (760) 202-4430.

Florida Judge Rules That Gays Have The Right To Adopt Children

A Miami judge ruled that there is no rational or moral reason to deny gays and lesbians the right to adopt children. The judge said there is a consensus among researchers that gay people make excellent parents. The ruling was based on the equal protection clause

of the Florida State's constitution.

Danger Signs

At the entrance to Kim Light's art Gallery in Culver City is a pink sign that alerts visitors to the dangers inside.

Warning: This area may contain homosexuals, which are known by the State of California to be harmful to the sanctity of heterosexual marriage.

Author Richard Rodriguez Offers An Explanation Why Churches Supported Proposition 8

Richard Rodriguez, award winning author and Peabody Award winning commentator for the PBS News Hour and an openly gay man, has an explanation why fighting same-sex marriage was so important to religious leaders. In an interview for Slate magazine this is what Rodriguez, a practicing Catholic, said, "American families are under a great deal of stress. The divorce rate isn't declining, it's increasing. And the majority of American women are now living alone. We are raising children in America without fathers. I think of Michael Phelps at the Olympics with his mother in the stands. His father was completely absent. He was negligible: no one refers to him, no one noticed his absence. The possibility that a whole new generation of American males is being raised by women without men is very challenging for the churches. I think they want to reassert some sort of male authority over the order of things. I think the pro-Proposition 8 movement was really galvanized by an insecurity that churches are feeling now with the rise of women. Monotheistic religions feel threatened by the rise of feminism . . .

In such a world, we need to identify the relationship between feminism and homosexuality. These movements began in some sense, to achieve visibility alongside one another. . . And while there is some relationship between the persecution of gays and the anti-miscegenation laws (affecting Blacks) in the United States, I think the true analogy is to the women's movement. What we represent as gays in America is an alternative to the traditional male structured society".

Ruth Debra and Sherry Fulton Are Married

On National Coming Out Day on October 11th, Ruth Debra and Sherry Fulton legalized their 17 year partnership by marrying. Ruth and Debra were featured speakers this year at a monthly PFLAG meeting. All of us extend our warmest and loving congratulations to the couple.

Desert Women For Equality Continue Offering Free Mammograms

Barbara Barrett, president of Desert Women for Equality (DWE), announced that they provided free mammograms to 111 women in the final two clinics of 2008. Since the inception of the program 921 women were examined and approximately 14 percent of the women needed medical follow-up. All the services are provided free with no means tests given.

To make an appointment for a mammogram call the DWE office at 760-325-4701.

Donations can be made to DWE by sending a check to 555 S. Sunrise Way, Suite 212 E., Palm Springs, 92262.

Every \$90 that is donated provides one woman with a free mammogram.

