

**THE BANNER OF THE DESERT**  
**THE OFFICIAL NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG**  
**PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER**  
**OUR TWENTY-NINTH YEAR    June, 2009    Volume 29, No. 6**

**Something New For June Only**

Sunday, June 21st at 2:30 P.M.

Our regular meeting will be a Father's Day potluck, pool party at the home of Don Koch. See driving instructions below. Bring a share dish—we provide plates, cups, plastic utensils and soft drinks. If you'd like to take a swim, please bring your own towel.

Direction to the June Meeting at Don Koch's Home:

From Hwy 111 in Rancho Mirage, turn southwest onto Indian Trail Road. The Elephant Car Wash with the outrageous pink elephant washing its back is on the corner.

At the third street off Indian Trail Road turn left onto Mirage Road. The house will be on your right about half way down the block.

Don's address is 71467 Mirage Road., Rancho Mirage.

**A Message From The Editor**

*-Mike Balasa*

The religious anti-gay groups (hereby called RAG) did not get what they expected from the California Supreme Court. The court said that only the terminology would change: same-sex couples must continue to have all the same rights, privileges and responsibilities of opposite sex couples. Underneath it all the RAG's want gay and lesbian citizens to be demeaned to the status of criminals—marriage in their eyes gives the GLBT community status and dignity. The RAG's may not yet have figured out that the California Supreme Court ruling included this dictum: "These core substantive rights include. . .an officially recognized and protected family possessing mutual rights and responsibilities and entitled to the same **respect and dignity** (my emphasis) accorded a union traditionally designated as marriage."

What this means to me is that the ceremony afforded same-sex couples should have the same dignity and affect as the traditional marriage ceremony. There should still be a city or authorized official taking vows of union and concluding the ceremony with the words, "By the power and authority granted me by the State of California, I hereby pronounce you husband and husband (or wife and wife)".

Same sex couples should still be issued the standard marriage license, but to adhere to the law there could be an asterisk after the word marriage; and, at the bottom of the certificate the words, "for same-sex couples the word marriage does not apply." One could then call all same-sex unions as marriages with asterisk or any other terminology

one's comfortable with.

I'm serious about this. There should be some means, in keeping with the court ruling, that same-sex unions are given a similar imprimatur by representatives of the state. Friends and relatives should be at the ceremony and cry, cheer and laugh just as one should at any marriage\*.

## **Marriage Rally**

The rally on Tuesday, May 26th was an enthusiastic and dignified event that proudly affirmed the right of every person to marry the one they love. PFLAG was given a chance to speak and many of our PFLAG family were there. I would like to name the many PFLAG people who were there but for fear of missing someone, I won't. My guess is that up to 20 members were there. I'm proud of being part of a caring, determined group.

Over 400 people showed up for the rally held at the Riverside Courthouse across the street from the Palm Springs City Hall. Speakers encouraged the attendees to prepare for further efforts to overturn the California Court decision to validate Proposition 8. Speakers were Jorge Guzman; Rev. David Pelletier of the MCC; Councilperson Ginny Foat; councilperson and former PFLAG president, Paul Marchand; current PFLAG co-presidents, Carol and Mike Balasa; Melinda Tremaglio, president of NOW, Carlos Gozalez, representing Assemblymember, Manuel Perez; Rick Saputo, board member of EQCA and publisher of the Bottom Line; Jess Stoddart, representing ACLU; Jack Newby, executive director of the Pride Center; and, Vanessa Wilcox, head the Palm Springs High School Gay Straight Alliance and a sophomore. Vanessa was the last speaker and amazed the gathering with the power and conviction of her presentation.

## **Coachella Valley Gay Straight Alliance Advisors Spring Meeting**

PFLAG board member and retired educator, Don Koch, organized a dinner meeting to bring together the Gay Straight Alliance advisors from all the high schools in the area. Don holds these dinner meetings twice a year, once in the Spring and another as the school-year starts in the Fall. At these meetings advisors can air concerns, discuss strategies and programs and establish a support group. PFLAG gives each advisor a packet of literature to support their GLBT students and parents.

Most high schools in the area have Gay Straight Alliances. The GSA's are student formed and led. The GSA's have lunch time meetings, after school events and provide support for GLBT and questioning students. At times no student leader comes forward to form or lead a GSA, and the group becomes dormant. The advisors and school counselors play an important role in giving advice and support to young persons who feel alienated or uncertain of their parent's support. With the demise of Gay Associated Youth the GSA's are the main point of support for our youth.

## **More About The California Court Ruling On Proposition 8**

The more one thinks about the issue of Proposition 8 and the ensuing Supreme Court ruling, the more absurd the final result. The court wrote in their finding that the only change that Prop. 8 entailed is the term, "Marriage". There is no change in state rights, responsibilities, benefits or respect and dignity of the union. What's in a word? The most dramatic change was the return to the previous procedure of establishing "Registered Partnerships". Now couples merely fill out a form, have it notarized and that is the end. This, I believe, is contrary to the Supreme Court ruling that each union must have the same "respect and dignity". Please write or e-mail Equality California, your legislator or anyone else who might listen to reinstate the same type of serious, solemn ceremony for same-sex couples. My idea of a Marriage license with \* (see editorial), is just one idea but the important detail is having an authorized person say the serious and meaningful words, "By the legal authority given to me by the State of California I hereby pronounce you husband and husband (or wife and wife)".

This change in the procedure would reinstate the ceremony, and, hopefully, give couples a chance to bring their families and friends together to honor their commitment. Eventually, we will get the word "marriage" back, but a solemn ceremony would be a step closer to equality.

### **And What About the 18,000 Same Sex Couples Legally Married?**

If allowing gays and lesbians the right to use the term, "Marriage" is going to be a disaster for our society as the RAG's, (religious anti-gay groups) insisted in their TV ads, what will be the consequence of having 18,000 legally married gays and lesbians? For many years to come, if Prop. 8 stands, there will be legally married same-sex couples in every community. They will stand as living examples of the unfairness and cruelty of the ban against same-sex marriage. Every same-sex married couple will continue to be part of their communities, identifying themselves as legally married to everyone they meet and living normal lives.

### **The Forward March In Equal Marriage Across the USA**

The momentum is continuing across the country to grant same-sex partners full equality. Nevada overrode a governor's veto to establish a limited domestic partnership registry. Michael Ginsburg of the Progressive Leadership Alliance of Nevada said, "The significance here is it literally equates domestic partner with spouse under Nevada state law."

In New Hampshire, House and Senate negotiators agreed to add one sentence and change one word in a bill that will determine whether the state allows same-sex marriage. The compromise adds a sentence that all religious organizations, associations and societies may continue to discriminate against same-sex couples. The discrimination allowance originally stated the exclusion included 'charitable and educational' institutions. The new word is 'or'; exclusions include 'charitable or educational' institutions. The stronger language assures the RAG's (religious anti-gay groups) that they can continue to keep out

same-sex couples. As this was being written word has just arrived that the Governor has signed the bill, making New Hampshire the sixth state to legalize same-sex marriage. In Illinois the state legislature is working on a bill to provide same-sex couples civil unions. The RAG's are out in full force to write in assurances that religious institutions may continue to discriminate. At this time the bill is stalled in committee. In New York a bill to grant marriage rights to same-sex couples passed the house but faces stiff opposition in the Senate. The Senate will vote on the issue later this month. The Governor supports same-sex marriages, and said he would sign an equal marriage bill.

### **Kevin Jennings Appointed to Education Post in the Department of Education**

Kevin Jennings the founder of the Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network was appointed as Assistant Deputy Secretary in the Office of Safe and Drug Free Schools. Jennings is an outspoken foe of religious bigotry, and his appointment has outraged the RAG's (religious anti-gay groups).

### **PFLAG Members Doug Hairgrove and Woody Wood Testify For Same-Sex Marriage in Redlands**

Doug and Woody returned to their alma-mater, the University of Redlands, to attend a "Faith, Race and Human Rights" forum. Doug and Woody were married this summer after 48 years of shared living. Woody told the standing room only audience that, "Marriage evened the playing field for us. Maybe it's our perception, but we're sure people see us differently because we are a married couple." Doug explained that they felt more solidified in their own relationship and in their relationship with others. Simple affections came to mean more and after a year of being pleasantly surprised by the difference a piece of paper made in their lives, "these touchy, feely benefits are too precious to give up," Doug said. "The rights of us all are abbreviated if any of us don't have full rights". The forum was sponsored by Equality California and the University of Redlands' Pride Alliance.

### **Marie Osmond Supports Gay Daughter**

Marie Osmond, a member of the Mormon Church, publicly declared that she supports full civil rights including marriage for her lesbian daughter. Marie joins another well known Mormon, the NFL Hall-of-Fame quarterback, Steve Young, whose wife publicly condemned Prop. 8. Steve Young is a descendant of Brigham Young.

### **PFLAG Members Andy Cardenas and Tim Welch Participate in the AIDS/LifeCycle**

Andy and Tim have participated in the AIDS/LifeCycle for several years to raise money for AIDS/HIV treatment, support and education. Last year they raised \$6,640. The event involves a bike marathon from San Francisco to Los Angeles and lasts 6 days. This year Andy and Tim are serving as “Roadies”. They will follow the bicyclists in a sweep vehicle providing support and care for participants. The event began May 31st and will end in Los Angeles on June 6. Last year AIDS/LifeCycle raised \$12,000,000.

## **President Obama Declares June as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgendered Pride Month**

The President’s proclamation begins: “The LGBT rights movement has achieved great progress, but there is more work to be done. During LGBT Pride Month, I call upon the LGBT community, the Congress, and the American People to work together to promote equal rights for all, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity.”

President Clinton issued a GLBT Pride Month proclamation during his tenure but excluded the terms, “bisexual” and “transgendered”. George Bush never issued a proclamation honoring the GLBT community.

The RAG’s (religious anti-gay groups) as expected are outraged. A spokesperson for the Southern Baptist Convention said, “For a president who pledged to bring us together, Mr. Obama persists in doing the opposite on all things homosexual. This issue for most Evangelical Christians (RAG’s) is not bias or prejudice. It is simply maintaining the freedom to speak the truth about scripture. It is one thing to be loving and tolerant. It is something else altogether to encourage pride in what God clearly says is sin.”

The President’s proclamation goes on to state, “My administration has partnered with the GLBT community to advance a wide range of initiatives. .... I continue to support measures to bring the full spectrum of equal rights to GLBT Americans. These measures include enhancing hate laws, supporting civil unions and Federal rights for GLBT couples, outlawing discrimination in the workplace, ensuring adoption rights, and ending the existing ‘Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell’ policy in a way that strengthens our Armed Forces and our National security. We must also commit ourselves to fighting the HIV/AIDS epidemic by both reducing the number of HIV infections and providing care and support services to people living with HIV/AIDS across the United States.

These issues affect not only the GLBT community, but also our entire Nation. As long as the promise of equality for all remains unfilled, all Americans are affected.”

In the final paragraph, President Obama stated, “I call upon the people of the United States to turn back discrimination and prejudice everywhere it exists”.

### **MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

**Name** \_\_\_\_\_

**Address** \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_

E-Mail \_\_\_\_\_

**Check One: Yearly Dues**

**Family Membership \$50** \_\_\_\_\_

**Individual \$40** \_\_\_\_\_

**Make check payable to PFLAG and mail to :**

**PFLAG**

**611 S. Palm Canyon Drive 7-262**

**Palm Springs, CA 92264**