



**THE BANNER OF THE DESERT  
THE NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG  
PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER  
OUR THIRTIETH YEAR    DECEMBER, 2010    Volume 30, No. 12**

**PFLAG Annual Holiday Potluck Party**

**December 19<sup>th</sup>**

**2:30 P.M.**

**At the home of  
Sly Zelnys and Christine Hammond**

Everyone is invited to the annual Holiday Party. PFLAG will provide beverages, plates and cutlery. Don Koch and Ed Masucci have volunteered to bring turkey and dressing. Please bring a share dish. Recommendations: appetizers, casseroles, salads, side dishes and desserts.

For driving instructions--please call the PFLAG information line (760) 202-4430

**A Message From The Editor -**

*Mike Balasa*

I believe that both the anti-gay religious right and pro gay groups have failed to appreciate the impact of passing anti-bullying laws. The work of both the ACLU and Lambda Legal in suing school districts that failed to protect their GLBT students from bullying has created much safer school environments in every state. The first cases were

won in the mid 1990's. In 2000, the California Assembly passed AB537 which added sexual orientation to the category of "protected status" and that bill was signed into law by then Governor Davis. Earlier this year the Federal Department of Education issued a statement that funds would be withheld from any school district that failed to protect GLBT students. The result is that many more students are coming out in both middle school and high school. Gay straight alliances are forming even in traditionally conservative communities. In many areas, GLBT teachers and administrators feel safe in being out.

Much of this progress was forgotten when several gay students committed suicide after experiencing relentless harassment from classmates, and a GLSEN research paper reported that many GLBT students don't feel protected in their schools. Obviously much work still needs to be done. Our chapter is reaching out to students, teachers and staff to lend assistance and resources.

However, my point is, that progress has been made. I remember in the early 1990's when I had a conversation with an official from a suicide prevention organization. The official had never heard of research about increased risk of suicide by GLBT children, nor was he interested in hearing about it. Today all creditable social service agencies are working on the problem.

The important impact: as more students come out and the straight students come to know GLBT peers, the more tolerant the straight students become. That is why young people are far ahead of their elders on GLBT civil rights.

### **A Few More Gains For GLBT Civil Rights**

After a divisive campaign, the city of Bowling Green, Ohio passed a referendum extending anti-discrimination protection to lesbians and gays. Bowling Green is a university town and supporters of the referendum were surprised at the vehemence of the opposition. The measure passed by only 24 votes out of the 8,100 votes cast. Opponents claimed that the bill would have failed except for efforts to register students from Bowling Green State University to vote on this issue. (Further evidence of the generation difference in GLBT civil rights support).

The Illinois State Senate passed a civil unions bill that is now sitting on Governor Pat Quinn's desk. He has promised to sign the bill sometime in January of the new year and the law will take effect on June 1st.

The Gay and Lesbian Victory Fund, a political action committee, announced that 106 of the 164 candidates they endorsed and supported won their elections. A notable win was that of Jim Gray, an openly gay business man who beat an incumbent for the office of mayor in Lexington, Kentucky. The above victories are all worthy of notice because they all occurred in states where anti-gay groups have strong support.

### **Openly Gay Police Chief In Coachella Valley**

Captain Raymond Gregory oversees the sheriff's department that protects eastern Riverside County including the cities of La Quinta, Coachella and Indio. He was appointed to the Chief's position by the Riverside County Sheriff, Stan Sniff, in July of this year.

Captain Gregory is an out gay man and is married to a disc jockey in Palm Springs, The two men have adopted two sons. Gregory hopes that his appointment will

help change the “overly masculine” culture of law enforcement that has discriminated against women and gays in the past. He also hopes that more gay and lesbian officers will be comfortable in coming out, “I think that people work best when they can be who they are.”

The Riverside Sheriff’s Department had a large contingent in this year’s Palm Springs Pride Parade.

### **Palm Springs Pride Parade**

The Pride Parade held on November 7th was well attended. Both sides of Palm Canyon Drive from Ramon to Alejo were filled with spectators to enjoy the over 120 entries. The PFLAG contingent had over 30 marchers and two cars. Gay, Straight Alliance teenagers from La Quinta joined us on the march, adding youthful energy and glee to the event. The weather was perfect. Everyone agrees that marching in the parade is a fun experience. PFLAG is always appreciated and loved by the crowd.

### **What’s Going On With The Proposition 8 Appeal?**

Monday, December 6th, a three judge panel heard the appeal of Judge Walker’s verdict nullifying Proposition 8. While the judges specified that only two hours of their time would be allowed to hear the appeals, the hearing went on for 2 hours and 45 minutes with one 10 minute break. The first hour and almost 30 minutes more covered the question of standing. Since both Governor Schwarzenegger and Attorney General Brown refused to defend Proposition 8, the question arose about who has the legal standing to represent the side defending a state law when the state chooses not to participate. The Pro Prop. 8 side tried to argue that officials from Imperial County could have standing - the argument seemed unconvincing and later blog comments seemed to indicate that the standing issue might be the deciding factor. In that case, Judge Walker’s decision would stand

The second hour covered the issue of the substance of Judge Walker’s ruling. There was much discussion about prior ruling by federal courts including the Supreme Court overturning of an initiative in Colorado that removed all rights to GLBT people including partner benefits and anti-discrimination laws. Questions from the judges seemed to focus on the supposed benefit to the state for taking away a right that had been previously given. Evidently, the fact that a right was taken away has more implications for the 14th amendment than otherwise. To watch the entire hearing go to the C-Span web site: <http://www.c-span.org/Watch/Media/2010/12/06/HP/A/41535/9th+Circuit+Court+Oral+Argument+on+Same+Sex+Marriage.aspx>

For a Prop 8 Trail Tracker blog discussing the testimony: <http://prop8trialtracker.com/>

### **Confronting Religious Arguments About GLBT Civil Rights**

Those of us who have fought for GLBT civil rights for many years know that the most reactionary anti-gay religious persons are not going to be persuaded by any arguments. For example, one could not talk to the protestors at the Pride Parade and change their minds (congratulations to the PFLAG contingent for following the rules and ignoring them - the protestors only reason for being there is to get attention) . However,

most people who have religious beliefs are open to discussion and would consider a different point of view. The Faith in America organization considered the question of how to talk to religious persons, tried several ideas on focus groups and came up with practical advice. Their advice:

1. Use your own experience or story. Your truth is hard to refute and comes with personal emotional impact.
2. Challenge the harm done to GLBT persons, not the person's faith. Ask them to understand the pain and abuse that GLBT persons feel from religious rhetoric.
3. Insist that ending religious based bigotry has a positive impact on all of us. Holding hate or fear of GLBT persons is not wholesome and is contrary to a positive religious life.
4. Engage boldly but with patience. Use the first person whenever possible. For example: I want to marry the person I love and be there for him/her the rest of my life.

The Faith in America organization says that in their research they found that most people are not offended when you challenge a specific aspect of their church teachings. Don't however, get into theological debates, stick to the harm the particular belief does to others. Discuss historical instances of how religion has been used to justify discrimination and persecution. Faith in America web site:

<http://www.faithinamerica.org/>

### **Speakers Bureau Activities**

Speakers Bureau head, John Dierken, reports that the bureau had a speaking engagement, Nov. 10th, at the College of the Desert. Speakers were John, Rosemary Hendler, David Irwin and John and David's son, Brian. John reports that 35 persons, faculty and students, attended the forum.

### **Religious Anti-Gay Group Living In Fear Of Gay TSA Workers**

The anti-gay group, "Americans For Truth About Homosexuality" is living in fear now that the possibility exists that an undercover homosexual might pat them down during a security check at the airport. Their fear arises from the belief that getting groped by a homosexual will make them gay. They have filed a complaint with the TSA.

### **The SPLC Nominates 18 Organizations To Their list Of Hate Groups**

The Southern Poverty Law Center, SPLC, a leading voice against groups that practice hate and discrimination, has listed a number of anti-gay groups that consistently propagate known falsehoods and engage in repeated, groundless name calling. One of the groups listed is The Family Research Council, headed by Tony Perkins. Perkins responded to the SPLC by calling it a smear by the left against conservatives. Perkins is a frequent commentator on the MSNBC program, "Hard Ball" hosted by Chris Matthews. Recently Matthews was criticized by Seattle author and newspaper editor, Dan Savage, for giving Perkins a voice on the program.

SPLC listed the Family Research Council as a hate group for its long time efforts at fronting anti-gay propaganda. They have published specious articles linking gay men to pedophilia, and encouraging the criminalization of homosexuality. They also argue that allowing gays and lesbians to serve openly in the military would result in gay and straight sexual assaults. Tony Perkins has a history of aligning with racist organizations such as the Louisiana chapter of the Council of Conservative Citizens. For a full list of

groups and explanations why they were identified as hate groups go to the SPLC web site: <http://www.splcenter.org>

## **Is Marriage Going To Be Obsolete?**

During the window in California when same-sex couples could get married, a number of couples chose not to do so. Some had financial or special situations, but many believed that they were happy the way they were. This is not just a gay phenomena, Pew researchers reported in mid November that their findings indicate 4 in 10 Americans believe that marriage is becoming obsolete.

Nearly one in three American children are living with a parent who is divorced, separated or never married. Americans are willing to redefine what makes up a family: unmarried couples with children including same-sex couples with children are considered families by a majority of respondents.

## **GLAD Files Second Suit Against Federal DOMA**

GLAD, Gay and Lesbian Advocates and Defenders, filed its second suit challenging the constitutionality of the Federal Defense of Marriage Act. DOMA cuts across many areas of federal law: tax benefits, Social Security survivor benefits, family leave benefits, inheritance rights, protection to military families and the right to sponsor a foreign spouse to reside in this country. The first suit which was filed in Massachusetts was successful: the judge ruled that DOMA violates the equal protection clause of the Constitution. That decision is being appealed. The second suit was brought forward for same-sex married couples residing in Connecticut, Vermont, and New Hampshire.

GLAD's Civil Rights Project Director said, "DOMA must fall. In 1996, when Congress passed DOMA, the stated goal was to harm gay people and same-sex families with this law, and sadly, it has succeeded. Married gay and lesbian couples fall through the federal safety nets that exist for other married people. We have to keep the pressure on and get DOMA off the books before it does even more harm."

In the same month as GLAD filed their law suit, the ACLU, the law firm Paul, Weiss, Wharton and Garrison, and the New York Civil Liberties Union also filed a lawsuit challenging DOMA. This lawsuit was brought on behalf of a New York couple who were married in Canada in 2007. One of the pair died two years later and the surviving spouse was faced with a huge tax burden on the families assets including their home. Heterosexual couples would not have the tax burden as their property would transfer to the survivor without any estate tax. New York State recognizes same-sex marriage in state tax laws.

## **The Prop. 8 Ad Claiming Children Would Learn About Same-Sex Marriage In School Was Effective**

The ad featured a little girl coming home from school announcing that she learned that a prince can marry a prince, and that she could marry a princess. At the LA Gay Center, a team is investigating why the ad was successful and what can be done to counter a similar ad in the future. Sample ads are being prepared and tested in case a repeal of Prop. 8 is undertaken in 2012.

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**PFLAG MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION**

Your membership supports our local Palm Springs/Desert Communities PFLAG chapter and includes membership in National PFLAG.

**PFLAG 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**

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**PFLAG INFORMATION LINE: (760) 202-4430**

**EMAIL: [INFO@PSPFLAG.ORG](mailto:INFO@PSPFLAG.ORG)**

**WEBSITE: [WWW.PSPFLAG.ORG](http://WWW.PSPFLAG.ORG)**

**Chapter Officers**

Co-presidents: Mike and Carol Balasa

Vice-president: (currently unfilled)

Secretary: Sly Zelnys

Treasurer: Stuart Lynn

Directors:

Christine Hammond

Rosemary Hendler

Don Koch  
Barbara Lynn  
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George and Jacquie Spencer