



THE BANNER OF THE DESERT
THE NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG
PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER
OUR THIRTY-FIRST YEAR FEBRUARY, 2012 Volume 32, No. 2

Next meeting: February 19th, 2011
2:30 p.m., Cathedral City Library
33520 Date Palm Drive, Cathedral City, CA

Our speaker will be Keith Froehlich. Keith and his late wife, Bonnie started the local PFLAG in 1991. They led the chapter for 10 years. Keith will talk about those early years. Many of us “new comers” will enjoy learning of our heritage and thanking Keith for his contribution. Light refreshments served.

Save the date: March 18th PFLAG Meeting

A Message From The Editor - *Mike Balasa*

If one were really concerned about “family values”, what would be the most pressing issues? How about adequate income, housing and medical care? These are the problems that create havoc on the stability of marriages. Of course you can’t forget about the problems of alcohol and drug abuse. Also, the problem of teen-age pregnancy. Teenagers who marry have the highest divorce rate - that needs to be addressed in churches and schools. If we really care about marriage - there are lots of areas to focus attention. So the question arises: why is the only topic, that “family values” politicians talk about, same-sex marriage? The answer is that “family values” is a code

word for the right wing fundamentalist base. It really means “anti-gay” aggression.

There are lots of code words and references in the current primary season. When the politicians talk about “food stamps” they are really talking about unemployed racial minorities. “Illegal immigrants” is more about blaming people of Mexican heritage for the unemployment rate rather than protecting the borders.

I haven’t witnessed the openly racist and homophobic rhetoric coming from the current crop of presidential contenders since the 60’s when George Wallace was running for office. The tried and true method, that is now common practice, is to play to people’s prejudices and fears rather than any attempt to propose policies that have a basis in rational thinking.

Shouldn’t our political leaders take some responsibility for eliminating prejudices and irrational fears that can only divide us as a nation? Osama Bin Laden might have been killed in Pakistan, but it seems his attempts to weaken our nation are still successful.

All of us, straight, gay, religious, non-religious of many ethnic origins, are in this together. Whatever happened to “love thy neighbor”?

Washington State Senate Passes Bill Authorizing “Same-Sex” Marriage

On Feb 1st, the Washington State Senate, after several hours of debate that lasted into the evening, passed a bill authorizing same-sex marriage. The bipartisan vote was 28 for and 21 against. Twenty-four Democrats and 4 Republicans voted for it. It next goes to the House where it is expected to pass without serious opposition. Governor Christine Gregoire has promised to sign the bill. The governor released the following statement shortly after the bill passed:

“Tonight the Washington State Senate stood up for what is right and told all families in our state that they are equal and that the state cannot be in the business of discrimination. I believe that this decision should be made by our state Legislature, and I’m proud our elected leaders recognized that responsibility.

Tonight we saw the best of Washington and our leaders. They were

respectful and they were kind. I thank Sen. Ed Murray for his leadership.

This vote was courageous and was only possible with bipartisan support. That support shows Washington's commitment to equality. Fair-minded and responsible leaders crafted a bill that protects religious freedoms while ensuring equal rights. I commend our state Senators who acknowledged tonight that separate but equal is not equal.

Tonight our families are better for this vote. Our kids have a brighter future for this bill. And our state is better for this bill. I encourage the House to approve this bill and get it to my desk for my signature. I look forward to the day when all Washington citizens have equal opportunity to marry the person they love.”

Anti-gay groups have already begun the process of collecting signatures to force the issue on the ballot. A poll taken by King 5 news found the state equally divided on the issue”: 47% in support of the bill, 46% against with 7% uncertain. Most opposition came from elderly rural voters.

Is The Ex-Gay Movement In Decline?

Alan Chambers, president of the “ex-gay” group, Exodus, told an audience of Christian supporters that the “...overwhelming majority of those who had undergone “ex-gay” therapy had not changed their sexual orientation. The majority of people that I have met, and I would say the majority being 99.9 percent of them, have not experienced a change in their orientation or have gotten to a place where they could say that they could never be tempted or are not tempted in some way or experience some level of same-sex attraction.”

Venn-Brown, the founder of Ambassadors and Bridge Builders International and a survivor of “ex-gay” treatment said he hoped that the admission would lead to the demise of the “ex-gay” movement, “We want groups like Exodus to either completely redefine themselves or cease to exist. But no one jumps overnight from anti-gay to gay affirming. It can take years. We have seen many ex-gay leaders both overseas and in Australia come out and some have apologized for their past involvement. As any person involved in working for gay rights knows, some things are

inevitable. The decline and eventual non-existence of these groups is one of those. The question is, what can we do to hasten the day.”

San Diego Might Soon Have A Gay Mayor

The leading candidates for Mayor of San Diego are both openly gay: City Councilman Carol DeMaio and District Attorney Bonnie Dumanis. Both are Republicans.

Chief Executive of the San Diego LGBT Community Center said, “It’s a great story to talk about the ways that the politics of the past are no longer acceptable. It doesn’t mean they don’t occasionally happen in different corners with using sexual orientation in one way or another subtly, but it’s not the body politic’s fight. The fight is over other values and other issues for the city.”

There will be primary election in June and the winner will appear on the November ballot. If either of the two gay candidates are successful, San Diego would rank second to Houston, Texas as the largest US city with an openly gay mayor. (Thanks to alert reader, Dan Paicopolis, for the news tip.)

What’s Happening With Same-Sex Marriage Around The Country?

In addition to the Washington State Senate passing a bill legalizing same-sex marriage, several other states are confronting the issue. Despite the many setbacks suffered by advocates of marriage equality, efforts to allow gays and lesbians to marry seem to increase every election cycle. In New Jersey, despite a promise from Governor Chris Christie to veto it, a measure is likely to pass the New Jersey Legislature legalizing same-sex marriage. Governor Christie told reporters that if the issue went to the voters, they would likely approve it but he is still determined to stop marriage equality.

At the Federal level, efforts are still underway to override the “Defense of Marriage Act” and enact a bill to allow same-sex couples equality in tax and social security benefits. In November, the bill, the Respect For

Marriage Act, passed out of committee and is awaiting action in the Senate. Presently there are 32 Senate and 136 House of Representatives sponsors.

Proposition 8 is back in the hands of the 9th District Court in California. The panel of Federal judges will now decide if backers of Proposition 8 have standing to appeal Judge Walkers' decision that the Proposition 8 initiative was unconstitutional. Earlier this year, the California State Supreme Court ruled that Prop. 8 backers did have standing to appeal the verdict in state courts.

In Maine, where same-sex marriage was voted out by an initiative in 2009, GLBT advocates gathered enough signatures in January to place an initiative on the November ballot to return the right to marry to same-sex partners. Supporters say that unlike 2009, polls indicate that a majority of Maine residents are willing to vote yes on the equality measure.

In Minnesota, a ballot measure to change that state's constitution to ban same-sex marriage will appear on the November ballot. Polls indicate that the issue will be close.

In Maryland, Governor Martin O'Malley put forth a marriage equality bill, and the Senate is expected to pass it. Political leaders expect difficulties for the bill in the House of Delegates.

Attempts to overturn New Hampshire's marriage equality law is stalled in the legislature.

Racism And Prejudice Linked To Low IQ

A study from Brock University in Toronto found that children with low IQ's are more likely than others to hold prejudices and gravitate to socially conservative ideologies when adults. They also show resistance to change and new ideas.

So when discussing issues with a bigot be sure to use small words and talk very slowly. It might not hurt to use diagrams, too.

TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY FOCUS OF PFLAG MEETING

By Bob Warburton

“PFLAG can help get the word out (about the Transgender Community). There is a lot more information out there now, but with more youth coming out earlier and earlier, we need more support,” said speaker Mattie Leyden, leader of the Transgender Support Group at The Center in Palm Springs at a very well attended PFLAG meeting in January. Leyden is also a member of the GLBT Outreach Committee of the Palm Springs Police Department, and will be providing Transgender training for the police.

Mattie started by telling her personal story as do many PFLAG speakers. Mattie went to school in the conservative community of Redlands, liked playing with dolls and jumping rope. Somehow she knew this was not going to be accepted by many people. As a man, Mattie got married, joined the Marine Corps, served proudly in Desert Storm, and restricted her “female” activities to private cross dressing.

After years of this, Mattie decided this life was not for her. She really needed to live life as a woman. Even though the dissolution of her marriage was traumatic, she knew “I had a wonderful wife and now my ex and I are really good friends.” Her two children, even though young when told, have become very supportive of their father. As well as things have gone for Mattie with her wife and children, relations with her parental family are strained.

Always being a people person, Ms. Leyden got involved with the Salt Lake City LGTB Community and was instrumental in establishing a TG support group there. Upon moving to Palm Springs, she helped rejuvenate a local group and move it to The Center. Now the group meets every month with 10 to 12 participants.

Even though she is gainfully employed as an auto mechanic, Mattie strongly believes “getting jobs (for Transgender individuals) is a big problem.” Discrimination against the Community is legion, and Leyden reports unemployment among people she knows runs as high as 70%. She

also points out that Transgender persons are not allowed in the military, have special health needs which are often not met, and have a high homeless rate.

The meeting ended with discussion involving transgender persons, PFLAG regulars, and a family who has discovered recently that one of their children is Transgender. Everyone emphasized the necessity of personally supporting friends, young people, and family members. Regarding possible surgery, Ms. Leyden stressed one should be, “happy with who you are as a person before considering any surgery.” The Transgender Support Group meets at The Center, 611 S. Palm Canyon, suite 201, Palm Springs, or call the PFLAG Information Line at 760-202-4430.

Appeals Court Refuses To Release Videotapes Of Proposition 8 Trial

Citing Judge Walker’s promise to Prop. 8 supporters that he wouldn’t broadcast tapes of the trial, the three judges of the US 9th District Court of Appeals ruled that the videotapes will remain unavailable to the public.

Attorney for Prop. 8 opponents, Theodore J Bourous, Jr., said, “It speaks volumes that the proponents of Prop. 8 are so insistent about concealing the videotaped record of this historic trial. They know the videotape would expose their baseless campaign of fear and let the public see the powerful evidence we have submitted showing that Prop. 8 flatly violates the United States Constitution. That’s why they fought so hard to keep the tapes secret.”

The American Foundation for Equal Rights, AFER, brought the suit to free the tapes. AFER along with Academy Award winning screenwriter, Lance Black, produced a play titled “8” about the trial that had its world premier on Broadway in September of 2011. The production raised over one-million dollars in support of marriage equality. The play is set to have its West Coast premier at the Wilshire Ebell Theater in Los Angeles on March 3rd, 2012. The production will include George Clooney and will be directed by Rob Reiner.

More Gay Penguin News

Zoo keepers in Northern China gave a chick to a gay penguin pair. The chick was part of a set of twins. The zoo officials were worried that only one of the chicks would survive so they gave one to the male couple who have successfully raised other chicks at the zoo.

Please Consider Joining our PFLAG Chapter:

Will you join and help us continue our work? Your membership supports our local Palm Springs/Desert Communities PFLAG chapter and includes membership in National PFLAG. Help us continue our website, information line, monthly newsletter, speaker's bureau and outreach to youth and families. Your support makes it possible for us to purchase information booklets for teachers and counselors in local schools.

If you join National PFLAG, they do not send us any of your dues. If you join the Palm Springs/Desert Communities PFLAG, part of your dues will be sent to National and you will be sent their periodicals and other publications.
Support your local PFLAG.

You may pay on line using PayPal at www.PSPFLAG.ORG or use the form below:

PFLAG MEMBERSHIP AND RENEWAL APPLICATION FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ **ZIP** _____

Phone No. _____

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Check One: Yearly Dues

Family Membership \$50 _____ **Individual \$40** _____

Make check payable to PFLAG and mail to :

PFLAG

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