



THE BANNER OF THE DESERT
THE NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES CHAPTER

Our Twenty-Third Year, April 2019, Volume 24, No. 4

PFLAG MEETING -- NOTICE DATE CHANGE!

SUNDAY, APRIL 14th 2:30 P.M.

CATHEDRAL CITY LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM

Meeting facilitator: Dan Smith

Discussion topic:

The meeting facilitator is Dan Smith and the topic is: What brought you to PFLAGPS in the first place? What brought you back again? What has the PFLAGPS experience offered you over time? Share your story if you will.

Light refreshments provided by Mike and Carol Balasa

Please volunteer to bring light refreshments to a future meeting. Email: info@Pspflag.org

PFLAG and TCC Support Group For Transgender and Gender Expansive Families

Facilitator: Susan Thronson

Thursday, April 4th, 7:00-8:30 P.M.

Thursday, May 2nd, 7:00-8:30 P.M.

Transgender Health and Wellness Center
35-325 Date Palm, Suite 107, Cathedral City

A Message From The Editor

-Mike Balasa

The recent decision by the United Methodist Church, to continue their policy of not allowing gay, lesbian and bisexual ordination and to not perform same-sex marriages, was not expected. There is a decided majority within the U.S. that wanted the policy changed. One report indicated the Bishops wanted a policy that would allow individual churches and conferences to decide their own policies. Other mainline Protestant congregations such as the Episcopal Church, the United Church of Christ and the Presbyterian Church have long included the LGBTQI community into full membership with all rights and responsibilities.

One explanation for the anti-LGBTQI vote is that a substantial membership in the United Methodist Church is from African nations where LGBTQI discrimination and hatred is widespread. However, there was still a strong minority in this country that wanted the ban on LGBTQI participation to continue. Now the United Methodists are in disarray. Many congregations across the country denounced the decision and publicly expressed support for the LGBTQI community. I read one statement from a church leader who apologized to the LGBTQI community for once again having to endure an assault on their worth and dignity.

I find it difficult to understand why some religious congregations choose to ignore the findings of medical and psychological professional organizations that sexual minorities are not exercising a choice to be sinful; but, are merely expressing their true natures. They choose to ignore the personal testimonies of persons who identify as members of the LGBTQI community.

I also find it difficult to understand why they choose to interpret the Bible to condemn, encourage discriminatory behavior and, sometimes, persecution against sexual minorities. Many Biblical scholars have cast doubt on the passages often quoted to defend the animosity. Why doesn't that make a difference?

Speaker Pelosi said during her acceptance speech as Speaker of the House, "We will make America fairer by passing the Equality Act to end discrimination against the LGBTQ community." The Equality Act would amend the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Fair Housing Act to ban discrimination against LGBTQI people in employment, housing, public accommodations, jury duty, education, federal programs and credit. The Act is necessary now that there is a push by anti-LGBTQI religious fundamentalists to allow them to discriminate on the basis of their beliefs: they are advocating for the so called, "religious liberty" bill.

Across the U.S., there are a patchwork of laws that leave many LGBTQI persons without basic legal protections. It is estimated that 50% of LGBTQI persons lack basic legal protection. In a recent poll nearly two-thirds of LGBTQI persons report experiencing some form of discrimination in their lives. Presently 20 states and more than 100 cities, counties and towns have enacted equality laws that include the LGBTQI community.

According to polls, The Equality Act has the support of over 70 percent from individuals and corporations. Many members of Congress from both sides of the aisle have voiced support for the Equality Act over the past several months. Unfortunately, the U.S. government is divided by animosity that hasn't existed at this level since the Civil War.

Major criticism of the Act is coming from the religious right who claim their religious liberty is at risk. Supporters of the Act respond to this by saying religious freedom is not a license to discriminate against any group of persons and deprive them of their basic rights. Protecting any minority from discrimination will, in the future, improve protection for all minorities, including religious minorities. Furthermore, current exemptions given to religious organizations to discriminate will not change.

It is unlikely that the Equality Act will pass out of the House and go to the Senate anytime soon. Speaker Pelosi will probably put the Act into motion in the next few months. Even if the Senate were to pass the Act, the current President would likely veto it. LGBTQI activists want the Equality Act to be an important issue in the upcoming Presidential race. They want the Act to be part of platforms of all Democratic Presidential Candidates, without exception.

PFLAG National has declared the Equality Act as a top priority and has asked chapters to become active in advocated for advancement of the Act.

Here are the ways that PFLAG members can support this legislation:

1. Sign on to endorse the Equality Act. Go to www.pflag.org/equalitystartswithme to personally endorse the Act. It would also be helpful to share your story of why the Equality Act is important for you and your family.
2. Advocate for the Act at every opportunity. Talk to legislators or discuss the issue with friends and family.
3. Keep abreast of the news and follow the Act's progress to better advocate and educate.

Another Story Of Non-Traditional Birds

Editor's note: Please excuse this long-time bird watcher's preoccupation with bird stories, but I find it fascinating that birds and other animals could very well form their own PFLAG chapters.

This bird story comes to us from the Upper Mississippi River Refuge in Illinois. Two male bald eagles have had a relationship since 2013. At first they were rivals for the attention a female but even though one eagle (named Valor 1) was dominant the other eagle (named Valor 2) decided to stay and help with nesting duties. The female eagle mated with both males the next year and together the three some raised several eaglets. In 2017, the nest was raided by other eagles and the female left, never to return. The two fathers continued to raise the two hatchling to maturity. Later that year a new female showed up and the three raised one eaglet.

This year the trio continued with their family building and are incubating three eggs. Valor 1 and Valor 2 have demonstrated loyalty and resilience. The staff of the refuge are uncertain what exactly keeps the two males together, but it seems obvious that three adults make a nest more secure and baby bird tending much easier.

Congratulations To Diane Ross

PFLAG member Diane Ross was honored with the Senior Inspiration Award in a ceremony at the Palm Springs Convention Center, March 22nd. This is the 27th year the Senior Inspiration awards were given by Riverside County and cities of Coachella Valley to senior citizens over 65 who inspire others through their volunteerism and ongoing contribution and dedication to their communities.

“Queer Eye” - A Delightful Netflix Series

Netflix’s series, “Queer Eye”, now in its third season is well worth watching. It is based on the original series, “Queer Eye For The Straight Guy”, which debuted on the Bravo Cable channel in 2003 and ran for five seasons. The original 5 gay men who starred in the show all went on to have their own shows. Ted Allen, the cooking expert, is still seen regularly on the Food Network. The original series strived to show that gay men’s culture had value for straight persons. The new series has a different approach; it shows the five gay men, called the Fab Five, going to conservative areas and teaching straight people that gays and straights can be friends and care about each other. The formula is working.

In my opinion, the third season is the best. The writers and producers are successful in finding interesting people both straight and gay who need the help of the experts to improve their self-image and appearance. The 5th episode is special - the subject for the guys is a young women in her early 20’s, Jess Guilbeaux, who is scraping by as a waitress in a Greek restaurant in Lawrence, Kansas. Her sad story is that her adoptive parents kicked her out of the house when she told them that she was lesbian. She said that she has attempted a few times to talk to them, but nothing had changed. A further sad detail was that she was unable to continue her college education as a computer scientist because of the expense. The young woman had a wonderful personality, was obviously very bright and loving. By the end of the episode the young woman was transformed by a physical makeover but she also experienced a personal transformation. She told the men, “You all just showed me that it is beautiful and sexy to care for yourself. It’s cute and confident to just be black and be gay and be a woman and what that is, is me, and I am always that. I feel radiant, beautiful, sexy and confident. I had it in me, but you all brought it out, and I really appreciate that.” The Fab Five also taught her that she could make her own family of close friends.

One viewer, Vanessa Gamet, was moved to create a Go Fund Me campaign to raise money so Guilbeaux could go back to school. On the Go Fund Me page, Gamet wrote, “Let’s send this smart and strong woman back to college to complete what she began and give her the future she deserves.” The page has a goal of \$100,000 and in eight days the fund has raised over \$80,000. There is no indication that her parents regret or feel and guilt or shame in rejecting her. Hard to believe that parents could be that cruel.

Evangelical Churches Losing Members Over Politics

Fundamentalist Christian churches often labeled, Evangelicals, describe themselves as highly moral and defenders of “family values”. That self-image makes it even more difficult to understand why they would so enthusiastically support a man who married three times, cheated on his wives, cavorted with prostitutes, owned casinos and has a long string of law suits and ethical business complaints against him, many still active. None of that jives with a group who claimed to be the moral majority or defender of traditional values. In addition, several scandals have erupted over the past several years of ministers sexually molesting church members and children,

The sellout of the Evangelical to a politician is often ascribed to Trump’s willingness to cater to the Evangelicals hate of the LGBTQI community, and their desire to reverse equality laws; and, especially, marriage equality. Trump has catered to them by appointing judges who have history of siding with or sympathizing with Evangelical concerns, the abortion issue is also important to the Evangelicals, and Trump has catered to that concern as well.

While the rewards to the Evangelical community seem worth the compromise in the short run, there is evidence that long term consequences might exact a steep price. Already there are a growing number of ex-Evangelicals who are frustrated and disgusted with the politicization of their religion. One of these ex-Evangelicals who labels himself as an Exvie, runs a twitter account to express his frustrations is Chris Stoop, a PhD in history from Stanford, who is now a journalist. Stoop started his campaign in response to the white supremacist demonstration in Charlottesville, Virginia in 2017 to organize other Exvies who need a voice to express their concerns. He was shocked when he heard Trump on TV call the white supremacist “fine people” and the Evangelicals not responding to the outrage. Stoop wrote in an article, “Noting that almost nothing will get most Evangelicals’ attention apart from declining church attendance, last night I took to Twitter to exhort any wavering members of conservative evangelical churches, or indeed any churches complicit in Trumpism and white supremacy, to take now as a moment to leave those churches in protest, as publicly and vocally as possible. If you have doubts about your church’s overt or subtle white supremacy, sexism, homophobia, transphobia, and general toxicity, now is the time to leave and do so publicly, in protest.”

Stoop’s message and other protests have resulted in a marked decline in Evangelical membership. An NPR/PBS Poll found a drop in Evangelical support of Trump: from a 73% approval rating to 66%. That trend was mirrored in a poll of white, suburban men who dropped their approval rating from 51% to 42% approval. A Pew survey found that half of all Evangelicals are over the age of 65. Only 17% of persons between the ages of 18 and 29 label themselves as belonging to an Evangelical church. Those numbers do not bode well for the future of conservative churches. It will be difficult in the future to convince people that they have any moral authority.

Testosterone Exposure In The Womb Is A factor In Sex Role Behavior Of Women

An extensive study in Norway involving all children born from 1967 to 1978 including 13,800 twins found that testosterone had an unexpected effect when one of the twins was female. The study suggests that there are measurable differences in women who were exposed before birth to higher than usual levels of testosterone. When females are exposed to male sex hormones in utero studies have found that the girls behaved more like typical boys. While there could be many other factors that contribute to girls acting more like males, the same phenomena has been observed in animals that are in litters that are predominantly male.

Females with the high testosterone exposure were found to behave in school similar to males: they had lower grades, tended to mature slower and were involved in more disruptive behavior. The women tended to have lower graduation rates from high school and college. The women studied also tended to

have lower marriage rates and their fertility rate was lower than other women. The lower fertility rate was also found in sheep and other animals when exposed in utero to excess testosterone.

Happy Countries Love Their LGBTQI Citizens

The World Happiness Report was released and one finding was that of the 156 countries covered in the report, nine out of the top 10 have laws that protect their LGBTQI citizens. The happiest countries are: Finland, Denmark, Norway, Iceland, The Netherlands, Sweden, New Zealand, Canada and Austria.

(more on next page)

DEAR FRIENDS — IT IS TIME TO JOIN OR RENEW PFLAG MEMBERSHIP

If you would like to join PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities, print and mail the form below or join online at www.pspflag.org/joindonate.html

All our expenses go to furthering our mission. Our expenses are for materials that we supply to individuals, schools and supporting organizations; the information phone line, newsletter production, support to local schools' Gay Straight Alliances; and, many other occasional expenses such as the Pride Parade.

When you join and support the local PFLAG chapter with a membership of \$30 or more, we send your name and a portion of the fees (\$15) to PFLAG National, making you a member of both the National and our local chapter of PFLAG. You will receive all publications and notices.

Members sometimes don't realize that if you join National PFLAG directly you are not on the membership rolls of the PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities. PFLAG National does not notify us that you joined, and they do not share any of the membership fee.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ ZIP _____

Phone No. _____ E-Mail _____

Suggested Donation: Family Membership \$50 _____ Individual \$30 _____

Make check payable to PFLAG and mail to:
PFLAG 611 S. Palm Canyon Drive 7-262, Palm Springs, CA 92264

PFLAG INFORMATION LINE: (760) 202-4430

EMAIL: INFO@PSPFLAG.ORG

Chapter Officers

President: Mike Balasa, Vice-president: Carol Balasa, Secretary: Christine Hammond,
Treasurer: Peter East, Directors: Dan Smith, Sly Zelnys

ANOTHER WAY TO SUPPORT PFLAG

Every time you shop online using AmazonSmile, PFLAG Palm Springs-Desert Communities will receive a donation from the AmazonSmile Foundation.

at smile.amazon.com