



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

Our Chapter's 26th Year, April 2021, Volume 26, No. 4

VIRTUAL PFLAG MEETING
SUNDAY, APRIL 18ST 2:30 P.M.

In lieu of our regular monthly meeting at the Cathedral City Library, will be a virtual meeting, via Zoom. This will be a place to discuss your thoughts and concerns and an opportunity to connect with other PFLAGers.

Just email us at info@PSpflag.org prior to 2:00 the 21st and you will be added to the list. This will be an invitation-only meeting, so be sure to RSVP now! Note: you need to RSVP the March meeting even if you had sent in a request for the March meeting. You can expect an email invitation to arrive Sunday and can join with audio/video or by phone. Facilitated by Sly Zelnys.

Remember, your PFLAG-PS family is here and available to you by phone at 760-202-4430 or via email at info@PSpflag.org if you want to connect.

Visit our Facebook page and share your thoughts, feelings and insights on your individual experience and insights on current events.

SUPPORT FOR TRANSGENDER AND GENDER EXPANSIVE FAMILIES

Meetings are the first Wednesday of each month. Next Zoom meetings: April 7th and May 5th from 6 pm - 7:30 pm. Facilitated by Susan Thronson. Please email info@trans.health or call the Transgender Health and Wellness Center at (760) 202-4308 for more information.

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

-Mike Balasa

Now, as much as ever, we must be activists. It is time to resist the rise of white supremacists and religious fundamentalists who despise the LGBTQI community. When my wife and I started our activism in the 1990's, we had lots of energy, and, since we were newly retired, we had time. We participated in demonstrations, actively campaigned for supportive politicians, collected signatures for initiatives, lobbied representatives at the state capitols and registered hundreds of people to vote. As part of PFLAG, we were on the speakers bureau and in charge of the information table. It seems we had some place to go and work to be done on a daily basis. When not contacting people or marching on the street we wrote articles for the local LGBTQI paper and sent letters to the editor of our local papers.

Those exciting days are gone now. We are much older and have much less energy. We still can write letters and support candidates financially. Now we have Facebook and e-mails that we can use to voice our opinions. I never let a comment on Facebook that is anti-LGBTQI or racist go by without replying. No one should be able to write a disgusting comment and go unchallenged. I never write a comment trying to change the mind of the author, but others who read the comment need to know that someone thinks it is wrong

When it is safe again, we will attend rallies and, if necessary, march in protest. When called upon, we will contact our political leaders and lobby for our cause. Here in Southern California our representatives are usually on the correct side of important issues and they don't always need our letters of persuasion, but for major issues they need to know our strong feelings so they will give their best effort to passing needed legislation. Currently, in the U.S. Senate, the Equality

Act is working its way through committees. This is an important step in insuring equality for LGBTQI persons and other minorities. So called “religious freedom” activists want the right to discriminate. All of us must find a way to participate and never give up.

“THE NEW YORKER” MAGAZINE MENTIONS LOCAL MEN

In the March 8th issue of “The New Yorker”, a short article features the work of photographer, Karsten Thormaehlen, who is displaying her work at an exclusive senior living facility in Brooklyn Heights in New York City. The senior facility is run by Watermark and is marketing to the LGBTQI community. The article, by Michael Schulman, addressed the issue that many senior LGBTQI persons worry about: acceptance when entering a senior living facility. Watermark wants to create a label that welcomes LGBTQI seniors to their facilities nationwide.

The exhibit is a series of LGBTQI persons. By using a smart phone or a computer the browser can bring the photo to life and hear the person’s life story. Of the several photos featured in the article, one picture is of two local married men, Ray Cunningham and Richard Prescott. They are friends of the Palm Springs PFLAG chapter and residents of Palm Desert. The article has the following account of their lives: “Both served in the Navy in the fifties. One of Cunningham’s duties was to file paperwork for “undesirable” discharges, including homosexuals.” I realized that I could be in their boat-excuse the pun. It hurt, to the point where I went into the Navy with the idea of having a career and retiring in thirty-five years of whatever, and I couldn’t do it. I couldn’t live under those circumstances of always looking over my shoulder” He left the Navy and moved to San Francisco. He and Prescott were both middle-aged and driving buses when they met, in 1991. “We enjoyed camping. We enjoyed model trains.” They married in 2008, in Palm Springs. . . .”

MONTHLY PFLAG ZOOM MEETINGS TO CONTINUE

Please consider joining your PFLAG family at our monthly meetings held the third Sunday of each month. Sly Zelnys facilitates the meetings and gives everyone a chance to comment and discuss current issues. The March meeting guest, Ron deHarte, discussed issues concerning the Human Rights Commission. A lively discussion centered around the continued presence of the Bogart statue in front of City Hall. It seems the late Mayor Bogart had a reputation for enacting bigoted policies.

Watch your e-mail for instructions on how to join the meeting on your computer. It is quite simple and a wonderful way to stay in touch with all your PFLAG friends.

VATICAN RULING ON BLESSING SAME-SEX REALTIONS CREATES DIVISION AND TURMOIL

Catholic bishops and priests around the world expressed surprise and dismay at the Vatican ruling that the Catholic Church would not bless same-sex unions. The ruling was not expected as Pope Francis has made conciliatory statements and gestures to the LGBTYQI community. He has held meetings with gay couples and encouraged those who want to raise their children in the church to do so. In 2013 he made the now famous remark, “Who am I to judge” about gay people seeking God and trying to live by the Church’s rules.

Conservatives in the Church welcomed the statement. A spokesperson for U.S. based Catholic League said, “It is one thing to say all persons possess equal dignity in the eyes of God; it is quite another to say that whatever they do is acceptable to God. Human status and human behavior are not identical.” The Church has long taught that homosexual tendencies are not sinful but homosexual activity is an abomination in the eyes of God.

In Germany, more than 1000 church members, most of them priests, signed a petition in which they promised to continue to give blessing to same-sex couples unions. In some countries priests routinely bless same-sex marriages. The provost of the cathedral in Worms, Germany said, “If the Church does not have the power to bless wherever people yearn for blessing, has it not abandoned its most fundamental duty?”

A New York Jesuit, Father James Martin, made a statement expressing the concern that the directive may prompt, “. . .some LGBTQ Catholics to leave the church, after years of feeling rejected and unwelcomed.”

Johan Bonny, Bishop of Antwerp, Belgium, wrote in a Flemish newspaper, “I want to apologize to all those for whom this response is painful and incomprehensible. . . .their pain for the Church is mine today. . . .God has never been stingy or pedantic with his blessing on people.”

In Australia, Archbishop Mark Coeridge of Brisbane, expressed concern about the challenges the Church now faces, “It’s one thing to say we can’t bless same-sex unions. Well let’s then commit ourselves to grappling with the question about how else we might include same-sex couples. It’s just not enough to say ‘we can’t, we can’t.’”

THE AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION ISSUES POLICY BANNING TRANSGENDER CONVERSION THERAPY

The APA now condemns transgender conversion therapy as a practice that puts individuals at significant risk of harm. Gender identity change efforts “cause harm by reinforcing anti-transgender and anti-gender nonbinary stigma and discrimination; and by creating social pressure on an individual to conform to an identity and/or presentation that may not be consistent with their sense of self.”

APA President Jennifer F. Kelly said, “There is a growing body of research that shows transgender or non-binary gender identities are normal variations in human expression of gender. Attempts to force people to conform with rigid gender identities can be harmful to their normal health and well-being.”

The resolution states, “Individuals who have experienced pressure or coercion to conform to their sex assigned at birth or therapy that was biased toward conformity to one’s assigned sex at birth have reported harm resulting from these experiences such as emotional distress, loss of relationships, and low self-worth. The APA opposes the dissemination of inaccurate information about gender identity, gender expression, and the efficacy of gender identity change efforts, including the claim that gender identity can be changed through treatment, the characterization of transgender or gender nonbinary identity as a mental disorder and the promotion of treatment that prescribe gender identity as a mental disorder and the promotion of treatment that prescribe gender identity or expression consistent with one’s birth assigned sex as effective for clients with gender dysphoria.”

The Human Rights Campaign President Alphonso David issued a statement supporting the APA resolution, “There is no question that denying a person’s gender identity is wrong. The consensus from the APA further reinforces that we must rely on transgender people and their healthcare providers to determine treatment for gender affirming care in accordance with current medical best practices - this is not the place for politicians.”

ALAN TURING HONORED BY BANK OF ENGLAND

Alan Turing, a gay mathematician influential in the development of computer science and the person who assisted in decoding NAZI, WWII messages, will now have his photo featured on the 50-pound bill. Turing was persecuted after the war for being gay.

ELLIOT PAGE AND PRESIDENT JIMMY CARTER

by BOB WARBURTON

Usually I would not comment on the goings on in Hollywood, but how could one not comment on the picture in Time Magazine of Elliot Page who used to go by the name Ellen Page with the caption, "I am fully who I am." Page has always been a model spokesperson for LBGQTQIA Rights that no one could question, but this pic in "Time" says it all. Isn't this what we have been fighting for all these years?

On a completely different subject, this guy found me on Facebook and started asking me for information regarding my participation in the 1980 Democratic National Convention in New York 40 years ago. This guy is from England and seems to be in his 30s, but we kept missing each other. My big question was why out of 3,000 delegates did he want to talk to me as a Jimmy Carter Delegate who hadn't even met the President. It just did not make sense.

Finally I was interviewed by Harris Dousemetzis from Durham. He is writing a book about the Gay and Lesbian Caucus at the Convention and how the pro-Gay planks passed, leading the Party on the path consistently marching forward, never going back for the Democratic Party. And this document was one of the first Gay Rights governing documents worldwide. Isn't that always the way it is, you think the young man likes you because of your fast car, only to find out he wants to talk about LBGTQIA History.

At least now I knew why he was interested in me as I was one of 77 Caucus members and he wanted to know what happened. There were more Kennedy delegates than Carter in the Caucus, but we broke evenly with two Chairs, Tom Stoddard a Kennedy rep and Ginny Apuzzo a Carter delegate who worked well together. Apuzzo won accolades in the 1980s as Andrew Cuomo's AIDS Czar. In the caucus, and then on the floor of the convention we made sure that Mel Boozer was nominated as the first Gay Vice Presidential Candidate so he could give a speech in front of the full crowded convention about our rights.

Mr. Dousemetzis is a big Carter fan, and so am I, but I had to explain at the time the Carter Administration was not necessarily on the forefront of our rights as he was trying to be re-elected against arch-Conservative Ronald Reagan. I had to explain that Wyoming's 100% liberal just retired Congressman in 1980 was anti-Gay. At that point I advised him to speak to Midge Costanza who had been a White House Aide who broke with Carter. Harris said he would love to, but she had died in 2010. Then it hit me, the last time I had seen her was 2005. Luckily Ginny Apuzzo and I are still alive.

Time marches on and luckily with LGBTIA Rights in the United States life is improving. Luckily there is a young man in the United Kingdom originally from Greece who has heard my name.

Editor's note: Bob Warburton was mentioned in an article in the Washington Post, written at the time of the 1980 Democratic National Convention held in New York City at Madison Square Garden. The reporter, Eugene Robinson, reported on the presence of LGBTQI representatives at the convention. He wrote this about Bob, "Most of the homosexuals here are from urban areas that have large concentrations of politically aware homosexuals - San Francisco, Los Angeles, New York and Washington. ut there are also gays like 27 year-old Bob Warburton from Wyoming. 'I get mixed reactions,' said Warburton, a Carter alternative who said he didn't go with Kennedy because he didn't believe Kennedy could win. 'Wyoming is a western state, and most people think any way you want to live your life is all right.' Warburton said his mother is also attending the convention, as a Carter delegate. 'She's farther to the left than I am,' he said,"

THE EQUALITY ACT IN DANGER FROM A REPUBLICAN FILIBUSTER

Several Republican Senators have threatened a filibuster of the Equality Act. Senator Mitt Romney announced that he will oppose the bill unless it has a provisions allowing anti-LGBTQI Christians the right to discriminate. The Democrats could stop the filibuster by using their one vote majority to change rules and eliminate the filibuster. Passage would be assured as several Republican Senators said they would vote for the bill.

The situation becomes more complicated as two Democratic Senators have pledged to resist any attempt to eliminate the filibuster. Of the two Senators, one is Kyrsten Sinema from Arizona. Sinema is an out bisexual so her opposition was unexpected. The other Senator is Joe Manchin from West Virginia.

Allowing the religious exemption would make the Equality Act meaningless.

(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 Palm Springs and mail to:
PFLAG Palm Springs, PO Box 4326, Palm Springs, CA 92263

PFLAG INFORMATION LINE: (760) 202-4430

EMAIL: info@pspflag.org

Chapter Officers

Co-presidents: Christine Hammond, Dan Smith, Sly Zelnys, Treasurer: Peter East
Emeritus members: Mike and Carol Balasa

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.