



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

Our Twenty-Third Year, August, 2019, Volume 24, No. 8

PFLAG MEETING

SUNDAY, AUGUST 18th - 2:30 P.M.

CATHEDRAL CITY LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM

Meeting Facilitator: Dan Smith

Discussion topic: Has our PFLAGPS chapter been useful to the community this last year?
Are there ways that we can be more supportive, continue our educational efforts
and step up our advocacy for the LGBTQI community? Let's review and look forward.

Light refreshments provided by: Jean and Craig Dunham

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

There is no meeting in August

(Call the PFLAG information line, 760-202-4430, for Support)

A Message From The Editor

— *Mike Balasa*

Yearly survey results on the public's acceptance for LGBTQ people were released by the Harris Poll and the Gay, Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, GLAAD. Surprisingly the evidence suggests that LGBTQ support is eroding. The poll asked people if they would be comfortable with an LGBTQ person in various situations such as their doctor, teacher for their children or having a family member come out. Overall 49% were accepting and supporting but this is a drop from 53% just two years ago. What was unexpected was a dramatic drop of support from young persons, 18 to 34 years of age. Two years ago 63% were comfortable with LGBTQ persons; but, since Trump's election, support has dropped to 45%.

John Gerzema, CEO of the Harris Poll said, 'We typically see in our surveys that younger Americans can be counted on to advocate for issues like gender equality, immigration and climate change. So it is surprising to see a notable erosion of acceptance for the LGBTQ community, which counters many of the assumptions we make about their values and beliefs. In this toxic age, tolerance - even among youth - now seems to be parsed out'.

Sarah Kate Ellis, President of GLAAD, responded, “The sharp and quick rise in divisive rhetoric both in politics and in culture is now having a negative influence on younger Americans and coinciding with an alarming pattern of anti-LGBTQ violence and discrimination.”

Obviously our culture is undergoing a shock as our political leaders use division and distrust to shore up their supporters. People now have permission to find scapegoats for their dissatisfaction. Immigrants, people of color, religious minorities and the LGBTQI community are easy targets for resentment and blame. I can imagine young teens frustrated with their hopes for the future resenting their LGBTQI classmates for getting too much attention and sympathy. Hate and prejudice rise in difficult times - every one of us must step up and resist. Now is the time to be active and speak out.

Verizon And PFLAG Create Emotional Ad

Viewers of the June 9th Tony Awards had the wonderful experience of seeing the ad “Love Calls Back”. This TV ad sponsored by Verizon in partnership with PFLAG depicts four families reconnecting after a bad experience when a close relative called to come out. The theme of the ad is, “It’s never too late for love to call back.”

The spot begins with a young woman who tells her story of that coming out call to her mother. The woman says, “Me and my mom were always BFF’s until I called her and told her I, like, want to date a girl . . . And she lost it.” The scene changes to the mother who says, “It was a shock. It’s not what I wanted for my daughter. . . She has to live her own life and do what she wants. I haven’t said that to her—but I think that would have made a big difference.”

The scene changes as the mother is calling her daughter to say, “You know when you first called me, I should have told you how much I love you then.” The conversation ends when the mother says, “Whoever you bring into this home will have my love also.”

Another segment features a Jamaican-American who first came out to his family as Bi. His religious family was not supportive and had the usual negative stereotypes of the gay “lifestyle”. Eventually he once again shocked his family by coming out as transgender. This time most of the family was understanding except for his brother. In the clip, the two brothers reconnect and with both crying his brother apologizes and professes his love and gives assurance that he will always be there for him.

PFLAG and Verizon cooperated in the making of this ad and enlisted Lee Hirsch as Director. Hirsch was the director of the award winning documentary *Bully*, which depicted the lives of 5 teens who experience bullying in their lives. Verizon pledged a \$250,000 donation to PFLAG. This is the second year Verizon has given PFLAG a substantial donation.

The clip is easily found on the internet. You Tube has the clip available and if you Google, “Love Calls Back”, there are several entries where the ad is available along with comments. The comments are interesting. One person wrote that they love watching the Tony’s, but it was the “Love Calls Back” ad that left them in a puddle of tears.

United Methodists In Turmoil Over Anti-LGBTQI Vote

Last February at the international conference of United Methodist Churches (UMC), delegates voted to uphold bans on same-sex marriage and the ordination of LGBTQI clergy. Worldwide there are 12.6 million members with 7 million in the United States. The vote to uphold the anti-LGBTQI policies was 438 to 384. The majority of U.S. delegates voted against the measure, favoring some form of compromise - a favored plan was to allow each congregation to set their own policy. Delegates from Africa and the Philippines, who tend to be conservative on LGBTQI issues, swung the vote to the conservative policy.

The resulting turmoil has divided the Methodist Church with many liberal congregations considering the option of leaving the organization. A nine member Judicial Council is currently meeting to consider challenges to the conservative policy which, if successful, would only renew the debate at the 2020 general meeting.

The largest UMC congregation in Kansas City is protesting the vote by withholding funds from the general conference. Annually the Kansas City Church contributes 2.5 million dollars but is withholding half that amount. The head pastor, Adam Hamilton, said the Kansas City Church would eventually pay the back funds, but wanted to show the impact that would occur if the UMC splits.

There is a scheduled meeting for liberal congregations to consider the options. Two plans have emerged: one is to leave the UMC and form a new group. This plan is not likely as the dissolution process would be complicated with property and other rights needing adjudication. The other plan and most likely to be adopted is to remain in the organization and fight the ban from within. The liberal clergy believe that many of the conservatives are tired of fighting over the issue and would be more than happy to leave the organization.

Despite the long-held ban, individual congregations have performed same-sex marriages and have out LGBTQI clergy. The enforcement of the ban is spotty and mostly non-existent. Many of the new ban supporters hoped that the new ruling would beef up enforcement of the rules and eliminate open and affirming churches. A UMC spokesperson commented that it is likely that a compromise will eventually be worked out as a split would be disastrous.

St. Cecilia Catholic Community

Father David Lynch of St Cecilia, a liberal church in the Catholic tradition, is supportive of everyone with all sacraments. He will perform same-sex marriage with Nuptial mass, baptisms, quinceaneras and funerals with no fees or classes. Mass is at 10:30 A.M. Sunday and Low Mass 12:15 P.M. Wednesdays. Father Lynch writes, "If you've been rejected at other churches, we want you and need you."

This musical faith community is located at 555 N. Commercial Road, No. 1, Palm Springs.
Phone: 760-223-7091 or visit the web site: www.SaintCeciliaCatholicCommunity.org

U.S. House Passes Tax Bill Benefitting Same-Sex Couples

The “Pride Act” will now go to the Senate for approval. The act updates the tax code guaranteeing that same-sex married couples will be treated the same as heterosexual couples under the tax code. For same-sex couples treated unfairly in the past, the bill provides that they may apply for refunds with no statute of limitations. House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said, “Discrimination has no place in our society or in our laws. In passing the Pride Act, Democrats are honoring our diversity and providing long-overdue justice to countless same-sex couples across the country who have been denied critical tax refunds because of who they are and who they love. By eliminating gendered language that discriminates against same-sex couples and putting money back into the pockets of families who have earned it, this critical legislation offers common sense fixes that modernize our tax code and honor our bedrock values.”

Judy Chu, U.S. House Representative for California’s 27th District which covers Western San Gabriel Valley including the city of Pasadena, was cited by Speaker Pelosi for writing the legislation. Chu said of the bill, “Love is love. That is what the Supreme Court decided when they recognized same-sex marriage. But you wouldn’t know it by looking at our tax code. Representative Chu has the distinction of being the first Chinese-American woman elected to the U.S. House of Representatives in 2013.

The bill is now headed for the U.S. Senate, and Speaker Pelosi urged the Senate leadership to “quickly pass and reaffirm that all Americans, included LGBTQ Americans are entitled to be treated equally under the law. Advancing the Pride Act is a critical step in bringing our nation closer to fulfilling its Founding promise that all are created equal. As we celebrate this important success, House Democrats will continue to drive progress for all Americans, making clear that liberty, justice and equality are America’s guiding principles – not bigotry or discrimination.”

MAKE MEXICO LINDO (Beautiful) AGAIN

— *Bob Warburton*

Last year I wrote a long complicated analysis of Mexico's recent Presidential election and whether or not the changes the electorate seemed to have voted for would actually come about when the government actually changed on December 1, 2018. This year I revisited the Country in July and surprisingly have some good news to report. First the new, President Andres Manuel Lopez Obrador, made history by mentioning our Community in his inaugural speech, and with large majorities in local and national assemblies, leftists are pushing for LBGTQIA rights.

In Mexico City the new Mayor, Claudia Sheinbaum, has mandated a new gender neutral school uniform policy. Considering the hundreds of thousands of students in the streets of the Capitol every day now being able to demonstrate some sort of alternate gender identity, this could be a huge step forward. I also reviewed a large number of judicial cases throughout the country, and there were a number of victories, mostly state by state, allowing same gender marriages or allowing transgender rights. On 4-11-19 the Prime Minister of Luxembourg Xavier Bettel who is Gay, addressed the Senate saying, "I know that Mexico is more advanced than other countries on all of these (LBGTQIA) issues."

Bettel spoke of the differences between the countryside where Gay Rights are few and far between and the cities where all people are basically equal. Sounds a lot like the old USA. In the Senate they are working on passing a bill banning Gay conversion therapy, and Bettel met with Lopez Obrador and members of his government. This July saw a record breaking crowd celebrate Pride and the number of LGBT businesses is growing in the City.

Besides the Gay issues how is the new President doing? One friend told me she just wished his appointments were more competent. Another said compared to Trump and the last one, Pena Nieto, he is fine. He added, "A few weeks ago Trump threatened to destroy Mexico's economy and our President stopped him," referring to Trump's threats of tariff increases. Polls show Lopez Obrador at 55% or higher in the polls despite a continued extreme murder and kidnapping rates. Mexico's economy is at best a mixed bag. The President's anti-corruption campaign seems popular.

At least I can say the naysayers who feared the leftist strongman would fight our President Trump and wreck Mexico's economy were exactly wrong. I am happy to see most leftist, local, state, and federal entities continue to be generally pro our community. Hopefully, as with any administration, competency rather than corruption will win out.

(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,
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