



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

Our Chapter's 26<sup>th</sup> Year, February 2021, Volume 26, No. 2

**VIRTUAL PFLAG MEETING**  
**SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 21<sup>ST</sup> 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](mailto:info@PSpflag.org) prior to 2:00 the 21<sup>st</sup> 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 February meeting even if you had sent in a request for the January 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](mailto: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: February 3<sup>rd</sup> and March 3<sup>rd</sup> from 6 pm - 7:30 pm. Facilitated by Susan Thronson. Please email [info@trans.health](mailto: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

We have a new president and in the first week, a Presidential Executive order was issued that requires federal agencies to protect LGBTQI people from discrimination in employment, health care, housing and education. Non-discrimination will include eliminating the ban on transgender military service and encouraging the appointment of openly LGBTQI judges, executive officials and ambassadors. Adoption agencies receiving federal funds will no longer have the right to deny services to same-sex couples. Transgender children will find a safe place in public schools and can use the restrooms of their choice and participate in sports.

It is wonderful that the progress towards equality and respect is now back on track. Polls constantly reaffirm the fact that most Americans support non-discrimination laws. Same-sex marriages are accepted by a vast majority. Understanding transgender persons is still an ongoing problem for many people, but progress is evident. With a sympathetic administration encouraging equality, we can anticipate positive change.

The last four years, with a president who gained power by fostering differences and division, empowered a vocal anti-LGBTQI minority. I see their continuing rantings and hate on Facebook and other social media. They will never go away and now we know who they are. Their militant demonstration in the nation's capital and other state capitals, demonstrates how dangerous and determined they are to return this country to white, male, heterosexual supremacy. We didn't quite understand in 2016 what the phrase "Make America Great Again" meant, but now we know.

We can enjoy our victory over the hateful forces for now, but we must never forget that the war is not over. Now more than ever we must remain committed to the cause of justice and equality. I was proud of my daughter and wife who spent hours sending out handwritten postcards to elect supporting persons to office. Be determined to stay involved and secure equality.

### **A MESSAGE OF ENCOURAGEMENT FROM KATIE CARTER, CEO OF THE PRIDE FOUNDATION**

The Pride Foundation of the Northwest is a major LGBTQI organization that organizes and supports activists groups in several states in the Northwest. Their mission statement: Pride Foundation is building a better, safer, and more equitable world for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ+) people and our families in the Northwest. Our work is motivated by the fundamental belief that every person should be able to live safely, openly, and genuinely in the places we call home.

PFLAG received a message from Katie Carter, the CEO of Pride Foundation addressing the insurrection in the nation's capital. Here are some of the statement Carter wrote: "I watched in horror and anger yesterday as white supremacist terrorists led a violent insurrection that attempted to undermine our democracy, our election, and our voices... . This siege on our nation's capital has been years, even decades, in the making. The events that transpired were not surprising after years of the Trump administration and its allies consistently growing rallying cries and acts of violence that reflect the racism, misogyny, transphobia, xenophobia, and so much more. Many of our grantees here in the Northwest have been responding to and fighting against the resoundingly harmful impacts of this rhetoric and actions for years... . The response and collusion of law enforcement to yesterday's events is also a stark reminder of who our systems are set up to protect and who they target. This summer, protestors advocating for racial justice, civil rights, and an end to police violence against Black people, were forced down on their knees with their hands up, shot and bloodied before being arrested and held in jail. While yesterday a group of mostly white people, some armed, were allowed by law enforcement to move through barricades, up the stairs our country's capitol building, to terrorize our elected officials and subvert our democratic process. At Pride Foundation, when we say that we are fighting for a world where everyone has what we need to not only survive, but thrive, we do so grounded in hope — in The deep, unyielding belief that this future is actually possible. We do so from a deep belief in the power of abundance, love and liberation. We do so because the future of our communities depends on it.

### **THE EUROPEAN UNION MOVES FORWARD TO ELIMINATE LGBTQI DISCRIMINATION**

The EU Commission has issued a five-year strategy to adopt and enforce legal measures to address inequalities faced by European LGBTQI persons. The Commission vice-president, Vera Jourova said, "This strategy is not against anyone. This does not put anyone on a pedestal, but it is about guaranteeing safety and non-discrimination for everyone."

### **OREO COOKIES WORKING WITH PFLAG TO CELEBRATE THE LGBTQI COMMUNITY AND ALLIES**

A few days ago, PFLAG Palm Springs received a gift box from Oreo Cookies. They created a limited supply of Oreos with fillings in rainbow colors. Oreo is teaming with PFLAG National to celebrate the LGBTQI community and all those who love and support them.

Oreo produced a short film, and here is how they explained their goal: "This new film shows the love between Jen and Amy, exploring parent-child relationships, and the challenges of bringing a partner home for the first time – especially for the LGBTQ+ community. The film highlights the true importance of family love, support, and affirmation."

PFLAG National added this message: “The #ProudParent platform is our partnership with OREO, aimed at empowering and inspiring parents, families, and allies of to come out in loud, public support. Because every time a parent comes out in support of their child they inspire others to do the same – making the world a more accepting, affirming, and compassionate place.”

The film is beautifully done and well worth looking it up on the internet. It is only about 3 minutes long, but it will definitely bring a tear of happiness to your eye. You can view the film [here](#). Oreo made this statement: “Collectively, we can make the world a more accepting, affirming and compassionate place where all families belong.”

### **REMEMBERING DR. DIANE ROSS**

Diane Ross succumbed to the COVID-19, January 7th, 2021. Diane was a loyal member of PFLAG and regularly attended the monthly meetings. If you had attended a PFLAG meeting before the pandemic put an end to public gatherings, you would have met an energetic woman willing to greet you with a hug and big smile. You might have enjoyed one of the treats she often provided for the meetings. She was 83 but appeared much younger. Her professional life was dedicated to teaching physical education and staying healthy. She earned a doctorate in kinesiology and taught at the California State University, Fullerton until she retired in 2001 and moved with her partner of 33 years, Arta Alexander to Palm Springs. Arta passed in 2012.

Diane became well known in the Palm Springs community by participating and volunteering in many areas. She taught exercise classes at Mizell and the Inter Valley Health Plan. She also taught a class to seniors on how to use their iPads and iPhones. She was a member of the Palm Springs Unified School District oversight committee for construction bonds. She also was active in ONE-PS neighborhood association.

Diane was honored in 2019 at the 27th annual Senior Inspiration Awards. The County of Riverside and the nine Coachella cities honor senior citizens who inspire others through their volunteerism and active engagement in the community. In 2016 the Greater Palm Springs Pride awarded Diane with a Lifetime Achievement award. The award cited her work with Mizell, the Deepwell Neighborhood Organization, assisting in organizing the ONE-PS bringing together all the cities’ neighborhoods, and her involvement in working for LGBTQI candidates for city council.

PFLAG honored the memory of Dr. Diane Ross at the January Zoom PFLAG meeting. We shared memories and our feelings about losing a dear friend.

### **PFLAG TREASURER, PETER EAST, HONORED BY THE DESERT STONEWALL DEMOCRATS**

PFLAG’s beloved treasurer, Peter East, was given the Desert Stonewall Democrats award as “Volunteer of the Year”. Peter serves Desert Stonewall Democrats as the chapter historian, treasurer, and is a member of the voter registration and membership committee. The award made the following statement: “He cheerfully dedicates himself to these activities which require a significant commitment of time and effort.”

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by Bob Warburton

It was September, 1965 and I had moved on from a small rich primary school on the side of a mountain in Wyoming several miles to a large junior high school in town. I was talking with my friend Bruce from my old school, who was waiting for, and telling me about a new friend he had made at the new school, Rich. As we

talked Bruce pointed Rich out walking slowly across the football field with the sun shining off his blond hair. Rich was short, 4'10" and skinny as hell. It was love at first sight.

I was 12 years old and so was he. We became fast friends. By the next year Bruce moved to Texas, and we never saw him again. I was tall for my age, 5'8", and Rich would hang on my shoulder. Some girls in our class were deciding who in the class would "marry" who and they said "Oh Bob will marry Rich." I was embarrassed, said "no," and looked away, but thought "maybe." Sex came on my sixteenth birthday. We moved in together at 18 when we went away to university. By then he was 6'1" and 155 pounds. We lived together until we were 24.

It sounds rather ideal, but the truth it was not. Rich came from a past of grinding poverty, which he never really was able to shake. His Mom told me "I have never seen good times." Both Rich's Father and Grand Father died of alcoholism before I knew him, and Rich had addiction problems, too. At age 16 Rich was shot in the head with an arrow, almost died, and had issues afterward. I had a stroke at age 20 with lingering issues. He was Bisexual and I was jealous. He was not jealous, which drove me nuts. Importantly he helped me achieve and receive my MA, while he quit school with lots of school debt.

We remained very close, and Rich lived with Bob Edgerly and me in California after the economy collapsed in Wyoming in the 80s and 90s. When he moved back to Wyoming I visited him often, and when Bob and I moved back there to take care of my Mom we saw Rich at least weekly. Rich was poor, but he was a success. He stopped drinking at 20 because he had to, and for the last 15 years ran a cheap taxi company for those who could not afford regular rates. He worked all the time. He was always helping someone in trouble. He never lived with anyone after he broke up with me.

Recently I had not spoken with Rich because he worked so many hours, and I assumed all was the same. Surely someone would tell me if something was wrong, someone like his sister. Rich died December 28th from COPD, and there was not even a proper obituary in the paper. His sister died in 2018 and I was not told. There are several lessons learned here. For me I cannot believe I had not talked to someone for years. Sure he never wrote, so I must call. Another obvious lesson is smoking kills. My Father died at 64 of smoking; Rich at age 67. No one should die of disease that young these days.

However, I never told Richard to stop smoking as he had an addictive personality that caused death and destruction for much of his family. He relied on cigarettes to get by. He was a kind soul who always was ready to help. I also learned one never out grows one's first love. Quoting Carole Joyner and Ric Carney in their 1956 hit song "Young Love." "Young Love, First Love. Filled with true devotion. There will never be another for you or for me."

### **CALIFORNIA LAWMAKER REINTRODUCES A BILL FORBIDDING INTERSEX INFANT SURGERY**

One to two percent of all infants are born with variations in their sexual anatomy, hormones or DNA. Physicians perform surgery on these infants to give them a male or female identity. The surgery could include vaginoplasties, clitoral reductions or removal of gonadal tissues. Over the past decade there has been a growing condemnation of this practice. Results of these surgeries can include extreme scarring, chronic pain, incontinence, lost sexual sensation, post-traumatic stress disorder and incorrect gender assignment. Both the Human Rights Watch and World Health Organization condemned infant sex surgeries.

California State Senator, Scott Wiener from San Francisco, resubmitted the Anti—Infant Sex Surgery Bill this term. He is backed by intersex advocates and LGBTQI rights groups. The title is Senate Bill 225, Bodily

Autonomy, Dignity and Choice Act. Wiener first introduced the bill in 2019 but it failed in committee due to pressure from the California Medical Association and the Societies for Pediatric Urology.

Senator Wiener consulted with the California Medical Association and other medical groups to rewrite the bill to meet their objections. To date, none of the medical associations have commented on the bill, but Wiener is hopeful that it will pass.

*(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](http://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**

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PFLAG INFORMATION LINE: (760) 202-4430

EMAIL: [info@pspflag.org](mailto: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.

[smile.amazon.com](http://smile.amazon.com)