



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

Our Twenty-Third Year, March 2019, Volume 24, No. 3

**PFLAG MEETING**

**SUNDAY, MARCH 17TH 2:30 P.M.**

**CATHEDRAL CITY LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM**

Meeting facilitator: Dan Smith

Discussion topic:

What is the I for? Out of all the alphabet soup we use, LGBTQI, the I is least talked about and, seemingly, the most mysterious. Let's talk about the I – Intersex.

Light refreshments provided by Dr. Dianne Ross

Please volunteer to bring light refreshments to a future meeting. Email: [info@PSpflag.org](mailto:info@PSpflag.org)

**Notice: April PFLAG Meeting Date Change To Second Sunday: April 14th**  
**(Cathedral City Library is closed on Third Sunday)**

Please call the PFLAG information line (760) 202-4430 with any questions.

**FIRST THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH:**

**PFLAG and TCC Support Group For Families, Members Of Transgender And Gender Non-Binary People.**

March 7<sup>th</sup>, 7:00 P.M. Special Guest: Tori Stjohns,

Desert Sands Unified School District Consultant for Student Assistance Program.

Topic: Navigating Public Schools for Transgender/Gender Non-Binary Students.

Transgender Health and Wellness Center

35-325 Date Palm, Suite 107, Cathedral City

**A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR**

*-Mike Balasa*

A Facebook friend from the Midwest sent me a meme. The meme was the usual exaggerated and inflammatory propaganda against abortion. I was interested in knowing what organization published the meme and looked it up on Google. The originator was a Catholic group from Pennsylvania called American Society for the Defense of Tradition, Family and Property. They describe themselves as Christians students who believe in pro-family values.

The TFP Student Action web site was virulently anti-LGBTQI. I shouldn't have been surprised, such groups have existed for years, but I was distressed to realize that their publications are common reading fare for people who attend fundamentalist churches all over the US. I have talked to some of these Christians and they insist that they don't hate anyone and they have the right to believe the teachings of their church. Nobody I know who considers themselves liberal or open minded, care what others believe. What we care about is the way these beliefs translate into action and consequences. There are people hurt from the religious teachings that condemn and stigmatize others.

In the fundamentalist churches all over the U.S.; but, especially, in the Midwest and Southern states, people get a frequent dose of propaganda that accuses the LGBTQI community of corrupting youth and destroying families. From these churches we have voters who support politicians who promise to work against marriage equality and job protection for LGBTQI people. In these churches are young people who are gay, lesbian or transgender, and the damage done to them is immense and unforgivable.

In our safe and loving communities we have problems that occur occasionally, but nothing like what occurs every day in the rural areas. We must not forget that fighting for equality and dignity of LGBTQI persons is a struggle far from over. The existence of PFLAG in many of these rural communities is essential. Someone has to be a contrary voice to the hateful words coming from such groups as TFP Student Action.

### **Legislators Across The Country Are Introducing Anti-LGBTQI Bills**

The Equality Federation, an LGBTQI advocacy group working for effective state legislation, issued a report stating that there are 78 anti-LGBTQI bills in state legislatures across the country. That is substantially less than in 2016 when there were over 200 anti-LGBTQI bills introduced in state legislatures. Of the 78 bills currently working their way through the legislative processes, 18 specifically target transgender persons. The bills include limiting access to health care, defining gender on official documents and use of public rest room facilities. Other bills fit into the category of “religious freedom,” bills that would allow businesses and professionals to discriminate against anyone based on religious beliefs.

In Colorado, Kentucky and Tennessee, bills were introduced that would allow tax payer funded religiously affiliated adoption agencies to refuse child placement to any family they believe is contrary to their religious beliefs. GLAAD CEO, Sarah Kate Ellis and Ian Palmquist of the Equality Foundation made statements saying that these effort in legislatures are part of a coordinated campaign across the country to turn back the progress of LGBTQ people, and fair minded people will see right through this charade, which harms families and children by hiding behind the false guise of protecting religion. We’re seeing fewer religious exemption bill that would cover broad areas of the law and seeing more bills introduced that are focused narrowly on very specific areas of government work.

Rebecca Isaacs, executive director of the Equality Federation said that many of these bills were formulated in a 148 page plan called “Project Blitz” published by the Congressional Prayer Caucus Foundation. She wrote, “In 2018 alone, more than 70 of these Project Blitz related bills - including anti-LGBTQ bills, bills that would undermine reproductive health care, attempting to inject religion into public schools - these were bills that were introduced in state legislatures across the country, so it’s really something to look out for.” She went on to say that the Trump administration and a hostile Supreme Court are making it necessary to look to the state legislatures to advance equality. Currently 30 states have no laws that protect LGBTQI people from discrimination, but this legislative session there are 45 bills introduced in 18 of those states to enact protection and equality.

### **Deported Transgender Woman Murdered In El Salvador**

The Trump administration policy of discouraging asylum seekers had tragic consequences in February. Last year a transgender woman, Camila, entered the United States at a border crossing in California. An El Salvador LGBTQI activist reported, “She migrated to the U.S. because of threats she had received, but she was deported because they didn’t believe her.” After returning to El Salvador, she went missing after a few months. A Salvadoran trans advocacy group looked for her and found her gravely injured in a San Salvador hospital. After a few days, she succumbed to her injuries, dying on February 3rd.

El Salvador has a hate crime law that includes sexual orientation and gender identity, but because she died in a hospital, authorities refused to consider her death a hate crime. LGBTQI activists are angered that the El Salvador government is not responding, “We want justice and that these cases are investigated and the reformed penal code procedures to be applied when those who are responsible are found”, said a trans rights activist.

Currently over 100 transgender persons are in custody at U.S. border detention centers. Advocates are accusing the Immigration and Customs Enforcement officials of ignoring the dangers to transgender persons in El Salvador.

### **Bird Identified As Intersex**

Another blow to the belief that there are only male and female gender. A bird was photographed in Pennsylvania exhibiting half male and half female plumage. The Cardinal has a split coat - half of the bird has male plumage and the other half is female plumage. Actually this condition is observed in birds and also insects and crustaceans.

The condition has a scientific name: "bilateral gynandromorph" which means an organism has split sex characteristics making the animal both male and female. The situation occurs early in development as a result of an egg containing two nuclei. Daniel Hooper of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology said, "This remarkable bird is a genuine male/female chimera and it is not certain if the bird can reproduce. It's not exactly clear how often this occurs in animals capable of gynandromorphism . . ."

### **Hate Groups Increasing In The U.S.**

The Southern Poverty Law Center, which has maintained a list of known hate groups since 1971, has reported that the number of hate groups operating in the U.S. has increased to 1,020 from the record high of 1,018 in 2011. SPLC blames the increase on the policies of the Trump administration. The move to reduce illegal and legal immigration into the United States has encouraged discriminatory groups. SPLC defines hate groups as any organization that demonizes a category of people.

Heidi Beirich of the SPLC Intelligence Project said, "The numbers tell a striking story - that this president is not simply a polarizing figure but a radicalizing one. Rather than trying to tamp down hate, as presidents of both parties have done, President Trump elevates it - with both his rhetoric and his policies." SPLC has published accusations that some hate groups have prompted followers to take violent action. They cited the man who killed 11 people in a Pittsburg synagogue last October, who while shooting at worshippers shouted, "All Jews must die."

### **TV Ad Under Fire For Encouraging Males To Behave**

Gillette, a shaving product company, aired a TV ad that showed a man interfering with bullies, stopping sexual harassment by other men towards a woman, stopping men catcalling women on the street and interrupting a man who was speaking over a woman at a meeting. Surprisingly many men were upset and criticized the ad for demeaning typical man behavior. The frequent comment of critics was, "Let men be men."

The American Psychological Association agrees with Gillette's views that men should be held to a higher standard of behavior. The APA released guidelines to help psychologists who work with men and boys to overcome what they call, "toxic masculinity". The guidelines state, "Socialization for conforming to traditional masculinity ideology has been shown to limit males' psychological development, constrain their behavior, result in gender role conflict, and negatively influence mental health and physical health. The bad behavior results in disruptive behavior such as bullying, homosexual taunting, and sexual harassment rather than healthy academic and extracurricular activities."

### **WHEN GAY PEOPLE ARE THE PROBLEM**

*by Bob Warburton*

I first got to know and trust Harvey Levine when he was working for KCBS in LA doing investigative reporting on Workers Compensation Fraud, and as I was employed in the field I knew someone working with him on cases. I was impressed with his intelligence, knowledge of the law, and righteous dislike of thievery. A few years later I was somewhat surprised to see Levine had graduated to TMZ, a celebrity news investigation service, rather than something more like a news investigation service such as "60 Minutes." Was Harvey going to really cover the truth in celebrity lives or just make a buck like most celebrity gossips.

Then came Michael Jackson's death and even regular news stories where TMZ was spot on correct and scooped regular news outlets. Soon they were considered a fairly reputable news source. In 2010 Harvey came out as Gay.

When I read about the police report Jussie Smollett had filed after he had sought medical attention from an attack he suffered in Chicago, I turned to TMZ that evening to hear a more complete report from a Gay friendly source. Sure enough Harvey Levine gave a complete report on the attack; 2 white men hit and kicked Smollett while also yelling racist and homophobic jeers, putting a noose over his head and dousing him with bleach at 2 A.M. on the way back from a Subway Restaurant to his apartment. Smollett was hospitalized with facial lacerations and possible broken ribs. Levine added that Smollett was not just any guy but a really nice guy who had fought for Black Lives Matter and LGBTQIA matters. Okay, I cried, and I never cry.

Yes I have been a fan for several years. I loved how he played Langston Hughes in the movie "Marshall" about a period in Thurgood Marshall's life. But Jussie's claim to fame is his 5 years run as Jamal on the Fox TV Show Empire where he plays Jamal the talented Gay son of musical mogul parents. Producer/Director Lee Daniels modeled the character Jamal after himself, and with all the nefarious activity on the show he is almost the only positive character. I was therefore dumbfounded when police charged Smollett with orchestrating the hate attack on himself supposedly "to make more money."

I just cannot believe that Smollett, who was making the same \$100,000 per episode as the other major players on Empire did it for money, but what do I know? I cannot imagine someone who is well respected by our LGBTQIA and Communities of Color would ever do such a wrong thing. Maybe he was wanting to enhance a career that was not blooming? I do not care as any such action is so negative to our position. It makes real victims of hate crimes somehow suspect in people's minds. Why did Smollett have to include in his charade that his attackers shouted "this is MAGA Country." Why not get the President involved?

I will quote Harvey Levine one more time in this piece to say Smollett says he was attacked and he is innocent of what he has been charged. People are innocent until proven guilty, and he pointed to some things the police said that were incorrect. However, the two individuals who admitted to the attack were caught on store camera buying the rope alleged to have been used in the attack and received a check for \$3,500 written by Smollett. Which brings me back to the central point,: what do we say when Gay people are the problem besides NO!

### **Transgender Day Of Visibility**

The 5th annual Coachella Transgender of Visibility is scheduled of March 31st from 11:00 A.M. to 4:00 P.M. at Francis Stevens Park, 500 N Palm Canyon Drive, Palm Springs. The program speakers and entertainment start at 1:00 P.M.

This year the theme of the event is #TRANS-EXISTENCE "While we face an administration aimed at erasing trans identities from society, we still continue to fight and exist in the world and continue to live and thrive in society authentically".

For more information, contact Paulina Angel, [Transcommunityproject@gmail.com](mailto:Transcommunityproject@gmail.com).  
PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities is a sponsor of the event.

*(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/join donate.html](http://www.pspflag.org/join donate.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

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PFLAG INFORMATION LINE: (760) 202-4430  
EMAIL: [INFO@PSPFLAG.ORG](mailto: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 [www.Smile.Amazon.com](http://www.Smile.Amazon.com)