



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

Our Twenty-Third Year, May 2019, Volume 24, No. 5

PFLAG MEETING

SUNDAY, MAY 19th 2:30 P.M.

CATHEDRAL CITY LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM

Meeting Facilitator: Dan Smith

Discussion Topic:

How do you think about prejudice? Do you think that prejudice is immutable or changeable?
How would you help a child, partner, friend or yourself deal with internal or external prejudice?
Prejudice does not just magically go away. Any suggestions to stand up to prejudice?

Light refreshments provided by Diane Ross

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

No Meetings Until September

(Call the PFLAG Information line, 760-202-4430, for Support in June, July or August)

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

A Message From The Editor

– Mike Balasa

There are many people working at becoming the next President of the U.S. One person who is of interest to the LGBTQI community is Pete Buttigieg, twice elected Mayor of South Bend, Indiana. Mayor Pete is standing out from the crowd: he is Harvard educated, a Rhodes Scholar, speaks seven languages, plays concert quality piano, served in the military in Afghanistan, is openly gay and married to a male school teacher. At his press conference to officially announce his candidacy, his husband joined him at the podium and they warmly hugged and kissed, just as any happily married couple would.

Buttigieg is not afraid to take on the anti-LGBTQI religious right. He has stated, "I have a problem with religion being used as a justification to harm people". He responded to a comment from Vice President Pence, "If you have a problem with who I am, your problem is not with me. Your problem, sir, is with my creator." He went on to defend his same-sex marriage, He said his marriage made him, "more compassionate, more understanding, more self-aware and more decent. My marriage to Chasten has made me a better man. And, yes, Mr. Vice President, it has moved me closer to God".

Mayor Buttigieg is also a devout Episcopalian and has the religious devotion that gives him authority to defend his religious faith. My hope is this remarkable young man, he is only 37 years of age, will bring the debate between the LGBTQI community and the Evangelicals out into the open. Buttigieg has already criticized the Evangelicals for supporting a man who has shown little piety and a great deal of sinful behavior. He has the knowledge and personal convictions to meet Evangelicals on their own terms and

challenge their anti-LGBTQI beliefs and actions. Buttigieg has stated, "People will often be polite to you in person, while advancing policies that harm you and your family. You will be polite to them in turn, but you need not stand for such harms. Instead your push back, honestly and emphatically, so it goes in the public square."

The U.S. Has Already Had A Gay President And Maybe Two

Mayor Pete Buttigieg would not be the first gay President should he be elected. That honor goes without debate to James Buchanan, He was elected our 15th President in 1857. His long time lover was William Rufus King, a Senator, ambassador to France and Vice President to Franklin Pierce. They lived together for many years and when King was sent to France, Buchanan was lonely. A note he wrote to a friend is frequently cited as proof of his sexual orientation, "I am now solitary and alone, having no companion in the house with me. I have gone wooing to several gentlemen, but have not succeeded with any one of them. I feel that it is not good for man to be alone; and should not be astonished to find myself married to some old maid who can nurse me when I am sick, provide good dinners for me when I am well, and not expect from me any very ardent or romantic affection."

The other President that several historians have attempted to prove was gay is Abraham Lincoln. There is a still no consensus among historians about Lincoln. While he often shared his bed for several years with male companions and was rumored to have had an affair with a military officer assigned to the D.C. area, there is no hard proof. Historians explain the behavior by citing customs of that time of men sharing a bed as normal companionship and a means of staying warm in the winter when central heating was unheard of. One historian claims to have a diary found in the home of Lincoln's business partner and bed companion of many years, Joshua Speed. The diary is said to contain detailed and graphic occurrences in their relationship. The diary is not available for other historians to examine so the Lincoln rumor will continue to exist without a definite answer.

In the past few months another historical figure was outed to be transgender. The evidence was reported on the Smithsonian Channel documentary titled, "The General Was Female". A team of anthropologists from Georgia Southern University examined the bones of Revolutionary War hero, Casimir Pulaski and came to the conclusion that the bone structure indicated that Pulaski was either female or intersexed. He was only 5 feet 2 inches tall with delicate facial features. Pulaski evidently had sufficient male hormones to have facial hair and male pattern baldness and his birth certificate listed him as male. Pulaski who formed the American cavalry for George Washington's Army died in battle at the age of 34 in 1779.

Not All LGBTQI Persons Live In The Cities

The Movement Advancement Project, MAP, an LGBTQI policy and research group, released a study of LGBTQI people living in rural areas. They found that of the 62 million Americans who live in rural areas, up to 5% of them are LGBTQI. The study found rural life is the preferred situation for over three million gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender Americans. The last U.S. Census reported that same-sex couples were rearing children in rural areas at a higher rate than in the cities. The MAP report stated, "Rarely do we see images of LGBTQ people in rural areas, and when we do they are portrayed as the only one there and stick out like a sore thumb or a target of violence. It's a stereotype that's not the case." Recent polls have found that in rural areas, 62% of residents support nondiscrimination laws for LGBTQI rights and among the younger generation, 18 to 29 years of age, the support rises to 75%. In Urban areas 72% of persons support nondiscrimination laws.

While many persons interviewed for the research indicated they feel safe in their rural communities, there are problems. If there is a local church that is vocally anti-LGBTQI, there can be instances of denial of jobs and services from local providers who attend the church. There are also few LGBTQI support services and groups in the rural areas; especially, medical facilities that are sensitive to LGBTQI needs. The research found that negative gay words were heard more often in rural areas (78% compared to 66% in urban areas); transgender slurs were reported at 53% compared to 41%.

Gay Straight Alliances were in only 36% of the high schools as compared to 58% in urban schools; supportive school administrations were reported in only 30% of the schools while urban schools had 45% supportive administration; and, only 37% of rural schools had designated safe spaces for LGBTQI youth as compared to 57% in urban schools.

An example of a satisfied gay rural resident is a gay 46 year old man living in Miles City, Montana. After college, he moved back to his home town where he coaches 5th and 6th grade football and participates in a local acting group. He is married to another man, and together they have fostered 14 children. His only problem in Montana was when he applied for a job with a Catholic Boarding School on a reservation and was turned down because he was married to a man. But overall, he said his experiences were positive, "Montanans are conservative but fiercely independent: you mind yours, I'll mind mine."

Anti-LGBTQI Evangelicals Are Threatened By Mayor Buttigieg

The young mayor, age 37, of South Bend, Indiana, Pete Buttigieg, who in April formally announced his candidacy for President, is openly gay. He is not only open about his orientation, but proudly includes his husband at rallies and speaking engagements and even shows a normal couple's affection. He is also a devout Episcopalian and is comfortable using the language of faith, is familiar with the Bible and enjoys discussing issues of morality. In a recent interview he criticized Vice President Pence for remaining silent about President Trump's personal behavior but vocally opposing same-sex marriage and LGBTQI equal rights. Even right-wing commentator, Rush Limbaugh, warned his listeners that Buttigieg was an opponent to fear, "that someone as articulate, personal, and seemingly reasonable as Buttigieg would be a strong candidate." An Evangelical blogger suggested that Buttigieg ". . . would be O.K. with using the government to persecute Christians."

As Buttigieg continues to rise in the polls, right-wing anti-LGBTQI fundamentalists are finding it difficult to remain quiet. One wrote that it was reasonable to fear that Buttigieg would bury Evangelicals if not challenged. Ralph Reed, founder of the Faith and Freedom Coalition, said, ". . .Buttigieg's approach struck me as odd given how so much of his message has been focused on unity . . .restoring relationship with voters who are more religious. . ." The strategy that Buttigieg is following is more likely to not try and convince Trump's most loyal religious supporters, but to convince reasonable moderates that the issues of sexual orientation and marriage equality are open to a more accepting and compassionate Biblical interpretation.

Pete Wehner, a former advisor to President George W. Bush and an Evangelical, has stated that within the Evangelical community there is a deep divide over Trump's profane, brash and unpredictable behavior. He said the Buttigieg's ability to talk comfortably about Christianity would be welcomed in the religious community, "It is not a foreign language to him like it is to Donald Trump, so you are not going to get "Two Corinthians" from him. He speaks about faith in a way that is largely nonthreatening and not filled with anger. That is a real opening".

Jonathan Merritt, an Evangelical author stated Buttigieg has arrived at the right time to help religious people clarify their morality and shed the appearance of hypocrisy. Despite all "character" stills matters.

HAPPY MOTHER'S DAY

by Bob Warburton

My Mother passed 5 years ago and not once in 83 years did we celebrate Mother's Day. Jacquie did not believe in it. That was just another made up holiday. She was happy to celebrate her birthday, but not Mother's Day. In 2011 Mike Balasa asked me to write a column on her and her work with PFLAG in Wyoming. She was never one to toot her own horn, but I was more than happy to take part in a front page above the fold article on my Mom in Wyoming's only State wide distributed newspaper in 2007 where she was lauded for beginning the Chapter of PFLAG in 1980, and shepherding it for 20 years. In 2011 I

thought I would just find that article and reprint parts of it; however, I could never find it. I asked everyone; I tried to obtain a reprint; but to no avail. Therefore, I wrote an article without this information.

However, I just found the original article, and I think some of the quotes are very interesting. In time for 2019 Mother's Day, come reminisce with me. My Mom was a math and science teacher; leader of her union for years. Sounds like a lifelong Democrat, doesn't she? Yet life was different in the fifties and sixties, and voting straight ticket in Louisiana in 1962 meant voting for "Uncle" Earl Long for Governor and many white segregationists. My parents voted for the Party of Lincoln. That did not matter as Republicans never won. Dad, George, worked all day while Mom was Vice Chair of the local Parent Teachers Association. This was Shreveport where KKK graffiti decorated the railroad overpasses and my brother and I went to a segregated school. Jacque wanted to be more involved with her children's education and was chosen to run for the Presidency of the Jewella Elementary PTA, but that was never to be. She was at the home of another Mother who asked, since my Mom was originally from the North (Colorado), what did she think about integration. She answered that she was all for it.

The phone calls started that night. The death threats the next day. My parents kept things from my younger brother, and tried not to worry me, but I knew things had radically changed. The White Citizens Council had her resign from the PTA. No crosses were burned. No children were killed, but those were the threats. We were happy to move out of town the next year. All in all I am very proud of my parents, as they did all they could do at that time. I was so proud of my Mother telling the truth to a bigot.

Luckily Jacque was finally able to obtain a BS and a ME and began her 25 year career teaching science and mathematics and as a union leader. Becoming a Democrat was fairly easy as all it took was Richard Nixon becoming President. The only time I saw her star struck was when in 1980 on the floor of the National Convention, she as a Carter Delegate and me as a Carter Alternate met Jessie Jackson. She was thrilled.

Also in 1980 Jacque listened to a talk by Betty Fairchild the author of "Now That You Know: A Parent's Guide to Understanding Their Gay and Lesbian Children," and agreed to set up a chapter of what was then called Parents and Friends of Gays in Casper, Wyoming. Quoted in that 2007 article Jacque Warburton stated she felt "lonely" when she learned I was Gay and she had no one to talk to. "I was scared to death myself that if I were to , as it were, come out of the closet, and tell people that my son was Gay I could have probably lost my job. It came up later on there wasn't anyone else to do anything and so I had to do something."

The reporter Christine Robinson wrote of my Mom, "She approached her crusade the same way she approached life; calmly and quietly. She wrote a bi-monthly newsletter and sent it to anyone in the state who was interested and also to the varying other Parents and Friends groups popping up around the country." Mom met with small groups in town and spoke with people over the phone. "It seemed like every person and every family had a different conversation....For years, I would get calls from people who wanted to know what horrible things they had done (as parents) and I tried to convince them it was nothing they had done and the organization was just be there for people who were experiencing this for the first time," she said.

"One of the largest hurdles for a person who is 'coming out' is gaining acceptance from their family. She believed if parents are supportive and loving with their child he or she has an exponentially greater chance of living a healthy and happy life," Jacque said. I remember during this period until 1999 my Mom was talking to LBGQTQIA people all over Wyoming. Heck, some people vacationed in Wyoming from as far away as California just to meet to my Mom. During the AIDS epidemic she became an AIDS buddy as some came home to Wyoming to die. She made sure people had someone to talk to.

My Mom was a proud PFLAG Mom, and I am surely a proud PFLAG son. Happy Mother's Day.

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