



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

Our Chapter's 25th Year, October 2020, Volume 25, No. 10

VIRTUAL PFLAG MEETING
SUNDAY, OCTOBER 18TH 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 18th 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 October meeting even if you had sent in a request for the September meeting. You can expect an email invitation to arrive Sunday and can join with audio/video or by phone.

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

Please attend the virtual meeting above, or call the PFLAG information line at 760-202-4430

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

-Mike Balasa

I often see messages from Facebook friends telling of their anxiety and depression on the turmoil going on in this country. The division and contempt between people seems to worsen as the election rhetoric heats up. The rioting and demonstrations across the country are as bad as the tumultuous days of the 1960's. There are no leaders in power doing anything to bring peace to this country. Other countries are looking at us in shock and disdain at our failure to cope with our problems. Canadians I know can only extend their sympathy and understanding for us.

PFLAG has always provided support and encouragement, first for parents and friends of LGBTQI persons and for those coming out. Now we are providing support and friendship for those dismayed by the current climate. When we come together in our monthly meeting, each of us can find a sympathetic group of like-minded people who only want the best for each other. It is so important in this time when isolation is necessary, to come together and find kindness and a chance to voice fears, hopes and visions of a better future.

Personally, I am often in a state of high anxiety thinking of what the next presidential election will bring. Is it possible we can elect a President who can bring us back together and begin the steady climb to a better, more tolerant country? Can we elect a Congress that can work together and solve the many social problems facing this country? Maybe it has to get worse for change to occur. In the 1940's and 50's,

change occurred: we got Social Security, workers began earning livable wages, the armed forces were integrated and the economy boomed. Unfortunately, we had to hit bottom with the great depression and World War II. Do we have to endure another 4 years of what is going on now to finally motivate political leaders to take necessary steps to make this a great, loving nation?

All we can do now is be active politically, support our candidates who we think can bring us back and most of all support each other. Reach out and be kind.

WHAT IS NON-BINARY

It is not unusual for supporters of LGBTQI issues express confusion over the issue of non-binary. At this time most people are understanding of transgender and intersex gender identities, but more education is needed to help people be sensitive and supportive of non-binary persons. Christy Oleski, PhD, Director of Yale Medicine's Gender Program gave this definition, "Non-binary is a term used to identify a person who does not identify within the gender binary (male or female). Essentially, non-binary-sometimes shortened to NB or enby-is a type of gender identity. Some individuals do not identify as male or female, but as a mixture of the two - something other than male or female or with no gender at all. Some folk have an identity that fluctuates over time." As a rule you can't tell if someone identifies as non-binary just by looking at them.

The Human Rights Campaign defines non-binary as "an adjective describing a person who does not identify exclusively as a man or a woman. Non-binary people may identify as being a man and a woman, somewhere in between, or a falling completely outside these categories." HRC explains that while some non-binary people also identify as transgender, not all non-binary people identify that way.

The National Center for Transgender Equality also clarifies that being non-binary is not the same as being intersex, or being born with anatomy that doesn't fit the typical definition of male or female. Most people born as intersex identify with a specific gender, while those who are non-binary are usually born with specifically male or female anatomy. There are a number of specific ways non-binary people may identify. The NCTE recommends that it is important to ask each individual how they identify. Non-binary includes the following gender identities:

Agender: like the name suggests, agender refers to having no gender identity or identifying as gender neutral.

Bigender: those who are bigender identify as having both gender identities of male or female. This can mean they switch from male to female or identify as both simultaneously.

Gender Fluid: means an individual moves between gender identities.

Gender Queer: this term encompasses all people who identify as non-binary.

Third Gender: this term is used to describe anyone who doesn't identify with binary options. Hence, a third sex.

All non-binary supporters emphasize the importance of being respectful with the use of pronouns. While most non-binary persons prefer the pronoun "they", it is recommended to always ask what pronoun a person prefers. It can be awkward when a person looks male or female and one doesn't know that they are non-binary. In that situation, the non-binary person should request the pronoun they prefer. Some pronouns are unfamiliar and it can be difficult to remember them or use them comfortably. Some examples of creative pronouns are Ze/Zie, Hir, Hirs, Hirsself, Xe, Xem XYR Xyrs, Xemself, Ve, Vir, Vis and Verself.

Supporting non-binary people is important to their self-esteem and well-being. Non-binary people must be allowed to live and dress how they want in public places; especially, at work and school environments. They must be allowed to use the bathroom facilities of their choice.

Finally, it is essential to realize that everyone's experience being non-binary is different. The only true way to understand and be an ally for the non-binary community is to familiarize yourself with those who identify as such, through talking to them and listening to their stories.

TRANSGENDER AND NON-BINARY YOUTH HAVE HIGH SUICIDE RATES

A national survey by the Trevor Project found that 40% of LGBTQI youth contemplated suicide in the last year. Those youth who identify as transgender or non-binary reported they considered suicide at a rate over 60%. The survey questioned 40,000 youth in the 13 to 24 age range who identified as LGBTQI. The current political climate was mentioned by 86% of the youth as a factor in their sense of well-being. Many of the youth, 33%, reported they were physically threatened or harmed over the past year.

Transgender and non-binary youth reported they were less likely to have thoughts of self-harm when "having pronouns respected by all or most people in their lives".

The Trevor Project began collecting data last year and plan to repeat the survey each year. The purpose of the project is to provide "critical insights around LGBTQI youth mental health disparities, housing instability, barriers to affirming health care, subjection to conversion therapy, and suicide." Suicide is the second leading cause of death of LGBTQI youth between the ages of 10 and 24.

SUPREME COURT NOMINEE IS ANTI-LGBTQI

President Trump announced that his choice to replace Ruth Bader Ginsburg on the Supreme Court is Amy Coney Barrett, a U.S. Court of Appeals Judge. Barrett has a record of supporting religious conservative views on social issues. She signed onto a 2015 letter issued by the Ethics and Public Policy Center for Catholic Women, opposing marriage equality. She was opposing Obergefell v. Hodges Supreme Court ruling that made marriage equality legal in all states. Critics accuse her of using her conservative interpretation of the Bible to influence her interpretation of the Constitution. She has made speeches at the notorious Alliance Defending Freedom meetings. The ADF is anti-LGBTQI and listed as a hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.

Lambda Legal CEO, Kevin Jennings said, ". . .it is impossible to overstate how much is at stake for, not only for LGBTQ people and everyone living with HIV, but for our entire country. If confirmed Amy Coney Barrett will unleash a Supreme Court majority that is hostile to all of our basic civil rights, and the impact will be felt for decades. Barrett's personal belief that marriage is between a man and a woman, coupled with her unwillingness to affirm that the Supreme Court's decision making marriage equality the law of the land is settled law, should sound the alarm for anyone who cares about LGBTQ people and their families."

Barrett's confirmation would give the Supreme Court a six to three majority to conservatives who would likely continue to target LGBTQI rights. In November, the Court is expected to start hearings on a case involving the rights of adoption agencies to bar same-sex couples from adoptions.

Lambda Legal is vigorously attempting to delay confirmation to the Supreme Court until after the election. The Republican Senate refused to act on a Supreme Court nomination by President Obama in 1916; because, it was an election year. They should not change the policy this election year. Kevin Jennings said, "The Supreme Court of the United States, the court of last resort for justice in our country, should not be up for a power grab. We are a democracy, and the people are currently casting their votes to decide who should lead our country, and in particular, who should be entrusted with important decisions filling a seat on the Supreme Court. This attempt to confirm a nominee while an election is underway is undemocratic and indefensible."

LGBTQIA AND GET OUT YOUR VOTE

by BOB WARBURTON

Last month I wrote about how GAY it is to vote. I mean it is absolutely LGBTQIA friendly to vote, and if we want to protect our Rights we all should vote. We should look at the candidates, decide if they are good people, if they support our ideals, and then vote for candidates and propositions you believe in.

Having said that, most anyone reading this will vote. We in California do not have to worry about voter suppression. There is no one trying to stop certain segments from voting. Our Governor has directed every County to mail everyone a ballot during this COVID Pandemic. You can mail or place ballots in drop boxes which are located around Riverside County. Addresses can be found on line at the Riverside County Registrar of Voters website. That all sounds positive.

The negative to all this is that in the 2018 election a full 23% of mail in votes in California WERE NOT COUNTED/WERE DISCARDED! When I first heard this statistics I was shocked. I found that some of the waste comes from people who do not sign their ballots. Where you seal the ballot there is a large notice saying one must sign one's ballot, and only slightly less than 2% are discarded because they are not signed. The largest group are not accepted because the signature on file does not match the signature on the ballot.

What is the "official signature" on file? It is your driver's license. Last year I sat down with an official at the Registrar of Voters and she told me not to worry. In my case they would call me if there was a problem as I had provided a telephone number. However, I wondered how many people remembered to tell the Registrar when they change their phone number. Signatures change over time. What if you do not include your middle initial? Your ballot can be one of the 23% not counted.

Luckily there is a way you can mail in your ballot and then check to see if it is accepted. If it is rejected you can call the Registrar of Voters at (951) 486 7200, say what's up with that, and explain differences or maybe challenge the decision. How do you find out whether your vote is accepted or rejected? Just sign up with "ballottrax.com." Sound legit? Well I was not sure, but the California Secretary of State and many other states are using this system. And it works to the point that they emailed and texted me to say my ballot is on the way. Another way to find this link is through "WheresMyBallot.sos.ca.gov."

I intend to vote and then check out whether or not my vote really counted. Make sure that this year your vote really counts.

WHAT IS THE STATUS OF THIS YEAR'S PRIDE PARADE IN PALM SPRINGS?

The Pride Parade, at the time of this writing, has not been finalized. Ron deHarte, the Palm Springs Pride, CEO, has a plan. He proposed a vehicle caravan. Only one vehicle per group and each vehicle would have only family or safe riders that would cover a five-mile route through the city. There would be no people on the street observing the procession - it would be streamed on the internet. There would be no marchers, only enough people involved to drive the vehicles. People who have marched and carried banners in past Pride Parades would not be involved this year.

Ron deHarte wrote, "People in the same household can be invited to decorate their cars, make some signs, and get dressed in costumes to come together. Pride events normally create that community gathering and we just can't do that in the time of COVID, so we really have to rethink." He said safety is the top priority of this year's festival. The proposed plan involves no street closures, no stages and no gatherings of any type. "This year is especially important as it falls the weekend after the nation will have chosen a president. We'll be celebrating or will be mourning".

The city council has not yet approved a plan for the Pride Caravan. As news develops, information will appear on the Palm Spring's PFLAG Facebook page.

JUSTICE GINSBURG WILL BE MISSED

Katie Carter, CEO of the Pride Foundation in Seattle, wrote, "Gratitude for this feminist icon, this trailblazer for LGBTQ+ rights, gender equity, and reproductive and disability justice. Whether through monumental majority decisions, or blistering dissents, Ruth Bader Ginsburg saw what was at the core of every single ruling: the actual people who would be impacted by those decisions. From her assertion that gender equality is a constitutional right to fighting to protect the 1965 Voting Rights Act, to striking down harmful restrictions on abortion to granting marriage equality in all 50 states - and so, so very much more - this brave woman was defined by her willingness to dissent and advocate far beyond the courtroom".

(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.

smile.amazon.com