



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

Our Twenty-Third Year, December 2018, Volume 23, No. 12

PFLAG MEETING

SUNDAY, DECEMBER 16th 2:30 P.M.

CATHEDRAL CITY LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM

Meeting Facilitator: Dan Smith

Discussion topic:

The approaching new year is traditionally a time for reflection. Regarding LGBTQI issues this last year, what do you think was positive for the Community? As for your personal life, what stood out as an important milestone? How do these changes have potential to affect our future?

Light refreshments provided by Mike and Carol Balasa

Please volunteer to bring light refreshments to a future meeting. Email: info@PSpflag.org

FIRST THURSDAY OF EVERY MONTH:

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

Meeting facilitator: Susan Thronson

First Thursday, 7:00 P.M. Transgender Health and Wellness Center
35-325 Date Palm, Suite 107, Cathedral City

PFLAG ANNUAL HOLIDAY PARTY, DECEMBER 9TH 1:00 P.M.

Bring a share dish. PFLAG will provide table utensils, plates, cups, napkins, various soft drinks and wine. The event will be held at the home of Sly Zelnys and Christine Hammond.

Please call 760.202.4430 for the location.

We encourage our members to bring guests, friends and relatives

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

-Mike Balasa

Holiday family dinners occur during this time of year. This season those dinners are the subject of editorials, political cartoons, comedians and daily comic strips. Friends discuss how they can possibly enjoy a dinner with family members who support politicians who are racist and anti-LGBTQI. Most families try to get past this dilemma by having a rule about political discussions or watching the news on TV before or after the meal.

I want to believe that family members who voted against the best interests of my daughters, really didn't understand the issues. They cast their vote in hopes of solving the economic problems facing people in the fly-over states - manufacturing and mining jobs disappeared over the decade leaving only low paying service jobs. Some may be single issue voters - concerned only about abortion. It is easy to believe that they aren't anti-LGBTQI; they seem to accept and love their gay relatives. They may have religious beliefs that make it hard to fully accept a same-sex marriage, but I want to believe that they are trying to be fair and caring.

The difficult part is their continuing support of these politicians after the obvious bigoted behavior and proposals of the past two years: The attack on transgender persons serving in the military, allowing adoption agencies to discriminate against same-sex couples, allowing employment discrimination and appointing judges who are against same-sex marriage. Now the scapegoating, imprisonment and family separations occurring to immigrants is dismaying. The recent news of the violence at the border seems so wrong and unnecessary. Tear gassing women and children can serve no useful purpose other than to appeal to white racists.

I know that there is no value in confrontation. I use Facebook to post my indignation at what is going on. I am hard on fundamentalist Christians who seem to turn their backs on the concept of "love thy neighbor". We will try to convince family members to understand our concerns My wish for this season is a return to caring and kindness.

TRUMP ADMINISTRATION DETERMINED TO ROLL BACK LGBTQI GAINS

Trump's popularity has never exceeded 50%, and he realizes the need to keep his base loyal and involved. His base is primarily the "Evangelical" or fundamentalist Christians. Polls have consistently found that the best indicator of who supports Trump is their religious affiliation. That base has issues which involve the well-being of the LGBTQI community. While abortion is high on the fundamentalist's lists, they are also concerned about their right to discriminate against gay and transgender people.

There are two cases pending before the Supreme Court that involve employment discrimination. *Bostock v. Clayton County, Georgia*: a gay man brought a complaint that he was fired because of his sexual orientation. The 11th Circuit Court is using a 1979 precedent ruling from the Supreme Court that sexual orientation was not covered under Title VII's employment protection, even though the Supreme Court issued subsequent findings to the contrary. In another case from earlier this year, the 2nd Circuit Court arrived at an opposite conclusion in *Zarda v. Altitude Express*. In that case a skydiving instructor was illegally fired for being gay. The 2nd Circuit Court ruled that sexual orientation was covered under Title VII. These two cases will now come before the Supreme Court and it is considered likely by authorities that the Court will resolve the issue. With the addition of Kavanaugh to the Supreme Court the possibility that the LGBTQI community will continue to enjoy employment protection is under question.

Another case of employment discrimination involves a Michigan funeral home that fired an employee for being transgender. The 6th Circuit Court found that the firing was illegal under Title VII. The Trump administration filed a brief with the Supreme Court arguing that before ruling the transgender issue, the Court should consider the entire question of whether sexual orientation is protected under employment protection laws.

Both of these developments could open the door to allowing businesses to fire any employee who the employer claims is contrary to the employer's religious beliefs—not just LGBTQI persons but any minority.

Another Bakery case, *Sweet Cakes of Oregon* is asking the Supreme Court to allow them to discriminate against customers based on their religious beliefs. If the Supreme Court takes this case there is no guarantee that the Supreme Court will rule in favor of non-discrimination.

An anti-LGBTQI group Alliance Defending Freedom (ADF), is asking the Supreme Court to hear a case, *Doe v. Boyertown Area School District*. This case was brought by a group of families challenging a Pennsylvania school's policy of allowing transgender students to use the bathroom and locker room consistent with their gender identity. ADF argues that transgender students need to be segregated to single-use restrooms. They want the Court to rule that Title IX's protection does not apply to transgender students.

As of this date, the Supreme Court has not announced if any of these cases will be on their docket in 2019. James Esseks, ACLU Director, stated, "There are a wide range of questions about LGBT rights that could easily be before the Supreme Court over the next, even two years. LGBT rights are absolutely something that the country should be concerned about with the appointment of Kavanaugh".

VIOLENCE AGAINST TRANSGENDER PERSONS IS ON THE RISE

In the past few years the number of transgender persons murdered in this country has hit record highs. At the Transgender Day of Remembrance held at the Palm Springs City Hall on November 20th, the names of 26 transgender persons murdered over the past year were read. An ACLU report stated that the incidences of violence against transgender persons is on the rise and the government is not helping. Statistics are difficult to come by as many states do not allow transgender people to change their birth certificates or driver licenses to reflect their true sexual identity. The ACLU states, "Erasing the truth of trans lives, even in death, is also a demoralizing blow to the trans community." Activist and actress Laverne Cox recalled a time when she contemplated suicide and feared the truth of her life being erased in death. She continued, "Being misgendered and deadnamed in my death felt like it would be the ultimate insult to the psychological and emotional injuries I was experiencing daily as a black trans women in New York City, the injuries that made me want to take my life."

Without proper gender identification, transgender people can be outed in public places placing them in danger of harassment and violence. Lack of proper identification increases risk of unemployment and homelessness. Many transgender people are forced into dangerous drug and sex trades to survive.

A sad and distressing story of violence against a transgender woman was reported in a news story just a few days ago. Roxsana Hernandez Rodriguez, traveled two thousand miles from Honduras to seek asylum in the United States. She was taken into custody at the border in New Mexico and placed in a private prison, CoreCivic. Less than three weeks later she died. Rodriguez had been gang raped in Honduras by gang members and contacted HIV. She was not ill when taken into custody, but other inmates reported that shortly after incarceration she developed diarrhea and vomiting that went untreated until she became critically ill. She died a few days after admittance to a hospital. Autopsy results indicated that she was beaten about the body with a blunt instrument. She had extensive hemorrhaging on her wrist indicating injuries from handcuffs.

An attorney for Rodriguez's family said, "She journeyed thousands of miles fleeing persecution and torture at home only to be met with neglect and torture in this country's for-profit human cages. ICE officials report that she was hospitalized with symptoms of pneumonia, dehydration and complications associated with HIV".

Rodriguez had told BuzzFeed News a month before her death, "I didn't want to come to Mexico - I wanted to stay in Honduras but I couldn't . . . They kill trans people in Honduras. I'm scared of that. Trans people in my neighborhood are killed and chopped into pieces, then dumped inside potato bags."

She came to the United States to have a safe life. She didn't find it here.

GUMBO

-by Bob Warburton

Most as of the time when I write I have one purpose in mind such as last month's tale of a young man coming out. This month I have several themes, and I am going to try to keep things light. I enjoyed "Bohemian Rhapsody," the retelling of the Queen rock group story. I am sure many readers of the "Banner" have seen it. It is difficult to remember just how popular the group was and just how "Gay" Freddie Mercury acted on stage, but at least in this Country his sexuality was not discussed constantly. Freddie was not as much of the story as the music was.

This movie did fill in some information which we may have forgotten. By 1991 the entire world knew Mercury was Gay and HIV+, but he did not admit to anything being out of the ordinary and died the day after finishing the last album. 1991 was also the year we learned Magic Johnson was positive. This film and the American actor with an Egyptian background, Rami Malik, who plays Mercury takes us back to that time and to the music. Malik has won awards for his work on the TV show Mr. Robot.

On the local scene, we had several local LGBT candidates win non-partisan office. These included Pat Oygar to the Desert Water Agency, Raymond Gregory to the Cathedral City Council, Shelley Kaplan to the Desert Health Care District, and Gary Gardner to the Desert Hot Springs City Council. Nationally there were several new Congress Members elected. In Arizona Krysten Sinema became the first out bisexual Senator, and in Colorado Jared Polis became the first openly Gay Governor. Who won the election? Clearly the Democratic Party had its blue wave flipping 40 House seats and 6 governor mansions. Yet, I believe President Trump proved he still has the mojo to win in certain areas, keeping the Senate Republican and knocking off 3 incumbent Democratic Senators, and I do believe Trump's barnstorming was the difference in some states.

Finally, let's take a light hearted look at the news this moment. By the time you read this all may have changed. Matthew Whitacker, the new temporary Attorney General has not been approved by Congress as is necessary and is the focus of a previous fraud investigation. Paul Manafort who was convicted of crimes said he was going to plead States evidence. Instead he lied and gave information of the prosecution to the White House, and the President in appreciation said he is

2018 PRIDE PARADE WAS FUN AND ROUSING

A number of PFLAG members participated in this year's Palm Springs Pride Parade on November 4th. In addition to the walkers, we filled two convertibles with PFLAGers who acquitted themselves well with welcoming waves to the crowd lining the street the entire length of the one mile route.

Thanks to Sly Zelnys and Christine Hammond for the use of their convertible and to their friend Roy Clark for the use of his car. It is not easy driving cars in the parade - the driver has to stay on hyper alert for people and frequent stops. Sly Zelnys and Dan Smith did a professional job of driving. The PFLAG Banner was carried by Keith Knauss and Paula Auburn and George and Jacquie Spencer.

Other PFLAG participants were Jean-Marie Navetta and Jude Mederios, Susan Thronson, Ellie Rossi and Bill Stokes, Barbara Nappa and Susan Kross, Carol and Mike Balasa, Lynn Murray and Peter East. There were also two other for whom I didn't get a last name: Dan Smith's friend Tom and a visitor from Seattle, Cathy. A fun time was had by all.

THE TRANSGENDER HEALTH AND WELLNESS CENTER CHRISTMAS EVE PARTY

The Transgender Health and Wellness Center located at 35-325 Date Palm Drive, Suite 107, Cathedral City, will have a party on Christmas Eve at 1:00 P.M. Participants are asked to bring food to share with the group. A fun feature of the event will be a "White Elephant Gift Exchange". Bring a gift wrapped item valued somewhere between \$10 to \$15. If you would like more information or plan to attend please send an e-mail to: kit@transcc.org

(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, 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