

PRESIDENT'S MESSAGE: Our Voices Heard

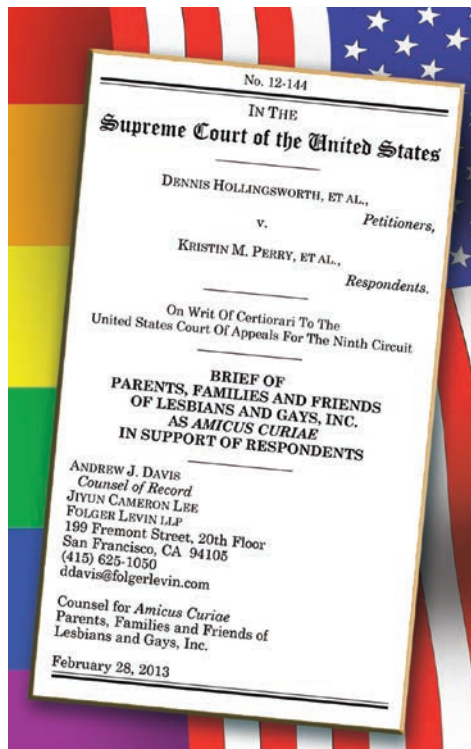
So many members and friends of PFLAG Los Angeles make their voices heard in lots of different ways. The speakers in our speakers bureau, the friends who invite us to visit their schools and other organizations, the meeting facilitators, event coordinators, website developers, and contributors who support us through dues and donations. Everyone's voice is important. Because of all of you, we sometimes have the opportunity to speak and be heard by powerful people in ways that create change.

On March 26, the Supreme Court heard oral arguments on a case deciding the fate of Proposition 8. At the request of the lead attorneys Olson and Boies, PFLAG National assisted with a "friend of the court" (amicus) brief in support of the rights of LGBT persons to marry. LGBT people, their families and friends whose stories speak directly to issues in the case were asked to participate, and I was fortunate to be among them. It was an honor to speak on behalf of all the members of PFLAG Los Angeles, and to have a small part in this historic struggle. You can read the brief in its entirety on our website: pflagla.org.

We know that people do listen and respond when we speak. Over the holidays, many of you probably saw a Salvation Army Kettle at the door of a supermarket or drugstore. You may not know that a portion of the money donated goes to lobbying efforts by the Salvation Army that include opposition to LGBT rights. Lynette Sperber, a longtime PFLAG Mom, was both aware and upset when she walked past a bell ringer at her local Gelson's Market. She made an appointment with the store manager and brought materials outlining the Salvation Army's anti-LGBT campaign. The manager contacted the corporate office. Forty-five minutes later, the kettle was gone and disappeared at another store as well. Our voices are heard and do make a difference.

A way to make your own voice heard is to celebrate at the PRIDE Festival and Parade on the weekend of June 7-9th. Last year footage of our contingent appeared on the local news of three television networks, and some of our marchers were interviewed. This year we celebrate four new states where LGBT persons can marry the ones they love. If timing is right, we may be cheering the overturning of Proposition 8. Complete, up-to-date information can be found on our website, where you can let us know you're coming and volunteer for our Festival booth.

In this newsletter we are launching a new feature called "Our Stories." We begin with a column by Karen Mason, who has served for a long time on our board of directors. Other officers and chapter members will be contributing from time to time in the future. We'd like to encourage you to think about sharing your own stories. In future newsletters, we'll tell you how to submit them. — *Mariette*



Our Stories

In September, 2000, my son Josh wrote a carefully lettered post-it-note with two words on it—"I'M GAY." After a festive family dinner with the desert dishes and coffee cups still on the table, he passed the note to his cousin. It went down the row of assembled guests from sibling to cousin to aunt to grandmother to his father and then to me. I can still remember the pain, shock and fear I felt when I read that note. I conveniently cannot recall all the terrible things I said to him but I know I said, "How can this be? How do you know? Is God punishing me?" My husband, who was also surprised by this news, handled the announcement much better than I did. We were all grim the next morning as we drove to the airport. Josh had an early flight back to New York to start his junior year at Columbia University. In the beginning, I felt great despair and I cried a lot. I knew many gay people and considered myself open and accepting. I had no idea I would react so badly to having a homosexual child. He was unsure of what to do next. He returned to his dorm but failed to call and say he had arrived. I waited and worried and finally I picked up the phone and called him. "No matter what you are," I told him, "you still need to call your mother and tell her you returned safely to school." That was the beginning of the new normal.

When he came out of the closet, I went into it. For nine months, I only spoke of his homosexuality at PFLAG meetings. For the first few months, I could not speak at all but I listened. In the closet, I heard the whispers, slurs and off-color jokes about homosexuals. I learned the feeling of us—the heterosexual majority—and they—the maligned minority with the unconventional sexual orientation. I realized in the closet what it was like to find out you are different while everyone around you assumes you are just like them. **Continued inside**



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(1.888.735.2488)
www.pflagLA.org

PFLAG Los Angeles is an all volunteer, non-profit 501(c)3 charitable organization run by parents, family members, LGBT persons and their friends. Each of us came for help, found support, and joined the organization to assist others on their journey to acceptance. Our chapter, together with a group in New York City, founded the national PFLAG organization, which provides assistance to over 350 independent chapters nationwide.

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Legislative Corner From the editor

When we as a country are willing to break down barriers that prevent fellow Americans from equal protection and equal opportunities we're one step closer to a more perfect Union. Barriers were broken down on Election Day November 6, 2012, when Maine, Maryland and Washington became the first U.S. states to legalize same-sex marriage by popular vote. History was made on March 1, 2013, when the Obama Administration filed a Supreme Court amicus brief in regard to Prop 8, arguing that a law denying loving and committed gay and lesbian couples the ability to marry is unconstitutional.

I always find it striking that organizations like the National Organization for Marriage (NOM) fight for the status quo of the definition of marriage as we know it today when we all should know that marriage has had different legal implications for the parties involved at different times in history. Traditionally, marriage was a contract between two MEN, the father of the bride and her soon-to-be husband. Traditionally, marriage between members of different races was against the law. Traditionally, interfaith marriage was frowned upon, and under the Catholic Church's doctrine was considered invalid. Now, it is said that Maggie Gallaher, co-founder of NOM, is or was married to Raman Srivastav. It can be assumed that she married her husband because they loved each other, whether he follows a different religion than she or not. And why shouldn't they? After all, our marriage laws are NOT based on anyone's

religion for good reasons. Civil marriage comes with rights and obligations. The only immoral issue is NOT providing same-sex families with the same protections that opposite-sex families enjoy. Ms. Gallagher thinks that marriage is only good for heterosexuals and that no same-sex couple should have the right to protect their relationship and family under our civil laws. This makes no sense. Either marriage is a legal institution that strengthens our society, in which case one should argue that the more marriages the better, or it is about some peoples' distaste for gay and lesbian Americans that is used as a moneymaking machine. But it is hard to argue that if Ms. Gallagher gets married it is a good thing, yet if Jane and Jill want to get married it is bad and needs to be prevented at all cost.

This graph will help people like Ms. Gallagher better understand what happens if gay marriage will be legal. [Source: www.prosebeforehos.com]

What will happen if gay marriage is legalized?



- Gay people will get married
- A third World War will break out
- Various plagues — locusts, frogs, etc. — will erupt
- Schools will begin teaching kids how to have gay sex
- The terrorists will win

Please support our work. Renew your membership, make a special gift, or join us for the first time TODAY!

As an all-volunteer organization, our work is made possible only with the generous contributions of our members and donors. Your contributions support our monthly meetings, website, helplines, Speakers Bureau, and outreach to ethnic and faith communities. PFLAG Los Angeles is a 501(c)3 charitable organization and 100% of your donation supports our programs.

Please Note: When you pay dues to PFLAG Los Angeles, a portion of your dues (\$15) goes to PFLAG National and makes you a member of both PFLAG Los Angeles and PFLAG National. However, if you pay dues or make donations directly to PFLAG National, 100% of your dues/donation stays with PFLAG National making you only a PFLAG National member.

Use the envelope provided or donate on-line at www.pflagLA.org/Join-Donate.

LA PRIDE 2013 is coming!

Festival June 7-9 and Parade on June 9

MARCH WITH PFLAG LOS ANGELES
AND VISIT OUR FESTIVAL BOOTH

Find up-to-date information and volunteer to work
at our festival booth on our website: pflagla.org



Spreading the Word in the community through our Speakers Bureau engagements/education, activism & advocacy

Sylvia Weisenberg talked to a group of 9th graders at Temple Ahavat Shalom.

Gizella Czene, Nathaniel Grey, Lisa Kimsey, and Liz Mullen were invited to talk to students of the Peer Helping Program at L.A.C.E.S. (LA Center for Enriched Studies), a magnet junior and senior high school.

Tim Ky and Liz Mullen spoke at a Cal Tech staff training to bring awareness of LGBT families in a child care setting and to show how to create an inviting classroom atmosphere.

Raphael Arenas, Marco Castro-Bojorquez (Lambda Legal), Gizella Czene, and Bamby Salcedo (Children's Hospital Los Angeles) participated in a PFLAG LA sponsored LGBT panel for the Animo Charter School Parent Education Day.

Stuart Huggins, Lisa Kimsey, Heather Mickelson, and Alex Robin presented an educational session at the Archer School for Girls.

Gizella Czene and her son Anthony were the keynote speakers at the 3rd Annual GSA Conference at Roosevelt High School. Panel speakers were Lisa Kimsey, Tim Ky and Liz Mullen.

Our Stories Continued from cover

The closet is a confining and constricting place. I came out slowly to close friends in a very methodical way—scheduling a series of one-on-one lunches to “discuss something very important.” Each meeting was the same. I would say, “Josh is gay,” and then wait for a response and watch for a reaction. They would say “Oh.” And then wait. Finally they would ask, “What else?” There was nothing else. He was still doing well in school, still diving, still the same great kid and in a short time we were back to other topics.

Unlike many parents who find the understanding and accepting they need and then move on, I have never left PFLAG. I received so much help in those early months that I have made it my mission to continue to help others who, like me, had a hard time accepting. Along the way, I have become an advocate for change—for equal inclusion, equal

marriage rights and equal benefits under the law. I rarely miss a PFLAG meeting and I know I have been helpful to parents and children who stumble into our gatherings full of the pain and fear and grief I felt when I first encountered homosexuality in my own family. I know my voice is powerful because I am advocating for my child.

I wish I had a better coming out story—one where I embraced my son and told him how much I loved him and assured him that we were in this together. Although I can't rewind my reaction, I can say that my love for him never wavered. He is a wonderful young man living his life in the way he was meant to live it. I am doing my part every day to make it easier for the next generation to come out to parents whose arms are open wide.

— Karen Mason

Quote - Unquote

"Gay people are born into every society in the world. Being gay is not a Western invention. It is a human reality."

— Hillary Clinton, Former U.S. Secretary of State

SUPPORT

MEETINGS CONTACTS ORGANIZATIONS

PFLAG LOS ANGELES MEETINGS

WESTWOOD*

Westwood United Methodist Church
10497 Wilshire Bl.
Los Angeles, 90024

3rd Wednesday of each month
7:30 - 10:00 pm
Free Parking

*Visit our website for upcoming speakers

SILVER LAKE

Metropolitan Community Church
4953 Franklin Avenue
Los Angeles, 90027

2nd Thursday of each month
7:30 - 9:00 pm
Street Parking

CONTACTS

PFLAG Los Angeles Speakers Bureau
Contact Liz Mullen at
SpeakersBureau@pflagla.org

Asian Pacific Islander
www.sgvapipflag.tumblr.com

HELPLINES

PFLAG Los Angeles & Pasadena
1.888.PFLAG 88 (1.888.735.2488)
English and Spanish

Transgender Support
818-985-9319 (Chris)

The TREVOR PROJECT
24-hour suicide prevention line
866.488.7386
www.thetrevorproject.org

ORGANIZATIONS

PFLAG National: 202-467-8180
www.pflag.org

REMEMBER

When you no
longer need PFLAG
that's when PFLAG
NEEDS YOU!

www.pflagLA.org



P.O. Box 24565
Los Angeles, CA 90024

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) promotes the health and well-being of Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender persons, their families and friends through: support, to cope with an adverse society; education, to enlighten an ill-informed public, and advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights. PFLAG provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

TransAction

Historical Moment For Transgender Women In California!

She made headlines and she made history. And she opened the door for California's transgender women who have always dreamed of participating in the Miss California beauty pageant. Her name is Kylan Arianna Wenzel. She is Miss California USA's first transgender contestant. I asked Kylan what she would like to share with our PFLAG parents: "The best thing you can do to ensure the happiness and the best well-being of your child is simply to allow them to be who they authentically are. You can't control how your children are born, but you can control how you react to the circumstance. All your child needs is love, and to love them unconditionally is to let them know it's more than okay to be themselves." And to the kids and anyone who is transgender: "The best thing you can offer to this world, to yourself and to the people around you is to be your authentic self. It's always better to be

honest and true to yourself, and as long as you do that, you will always end up all right." Check out Kylan's website at <http://www.kylanariannawenzel.com>.

My Authentic Life

If you have not yet seen it, check out the Transgender Law Center's "My Authentic Life" at <http://transgenderlawcenter.org/authentic>. "My Authentic Life is about sharing the real stories of transgender people and our loved ones. By sharing your story and sharing the stories of others, you're helping change hearts and minds to build support for justice and equality!"

Brown University Offering Trans-Inclusive Health Care

By Tracy Garza, Communications Associate, Transgender Law Center [excerpt]

Brown University announced that it would start covering transition-related health care for students starting this fall. That this should have caused a minor uproar is all the more surprising

considering that other Ivy League universities like Cornell and Harvard, as well as top West Coast colleges like Stanford, already offer similar health coverage for transgender students. The conservative critics who have poured scorn over Brown's decision are either being dishonest about the realities of medical treatment for trans people, or they truly don't grasp the most basic facts behind the issue of trans health care.

Transition-related health care has been deemed medically necessary care by the American Medical Association. Gender reassignment procedures, and other trans-specific health care, can be prohibitively expensive even for folks on a relatively good income, given that many insurance companies don't cover them.

Making sure that all folks have adequate access to the health care they require to be in good health and enjoy life to the fullest isn't something anyone should criticize; what deserves a lot of criticism is any kind of health or insurance policy that deliberately excludes transgender men and women.