

President's Message

PFLAG Los Angeles is turning 40!

Forty years ago on March 26, 1976 the first meeting of PFLAG Los Angeles was held. Throughout this coming year, we will be celebrating how the chapter has advanced understanding and support for the LGBTQ community, culminating in the marriage equality victory last June.



Building on the marvelous work of our founders and past officers, and a host of board members, volunteers, and chapter members, we continue to offer support, provide education, and advocate with an increasing emphasis on serving communities of color and transgender persons and their families.

You can help us kick off the celebration with a donation that will help sustain our commitment to five monthly meetings—the traditional meeting, two Spanish language meetings, one serving South Los Angeles, and our Gender Focus meeting. Your donation also enables us to produce and/or purchase literature, to table at the annual PRIDE Festival in June and at Models of Pride in October, and to maintain our English and Spanish websites.

Celebrating Victories, Facing Challenges

During the winter holidays, we will all rejoice with the many LGBTQ partners celebrating this year as legally married couples—their families given the respect and rights that come with acknowledgement by the government.

But the battle for LGBTQ rights is far from over. Proposition 1, the Houston Equal Rights Ordinance, which offered protection against discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, was defeated by a large margin—61% to 39%. Opponents of the ordinance used lies and misinformation about transgender persons to get out the vote, calling it the “Sexual Predator Protection Act.” Nationally only 17 states have anti-discrimination laws that include both sexual orientation and gender identity, protecting LGBT persons from discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation.

In July, the Full Equality Act extending those protections to LGBT persons was introduced both in the House of Representatives and the Senate. It's time for us to put on our activist hats, and write, call, and email our senators and representatives to generate enthusiastic support for this bill.



Oral History Project

I'd like to encourage you to take a look at THE LAVENDER EFFECT'S project to capture the oral history of California PFLAG luminaries. This is the next step in their Oral History Projects supported by grants received from the California

Humanities, the City of West Hollywood, and Wells Fargo Bank among other generous donors. A donation of any amount will support the recording of people like Larry Starr, Harold and Ellen Kamaya, Marsha Aizumi, and long-time chapter member Betty DeGeneres. You will be preserving the stories of steadfast love, educational outreach, and courageous advocacy that make up our history. To find more information and/or donate go to www.thelavendereffect.org and click on projects.

Our Stories Laurie Cogan, PFLAG Mom

My son Cory is now 26. He was almost 15 when he came out as trans. But before that, at age 13, he was identifying as a lesbian. All of a sudden, she announced she was a lesbian. And part of this coming out included the formation of the first gay straight alliance in a Seattle public middle school. He actually got several leadership awards for that from the Mayor of Seattle, from an LGBT youth awards program, and from the principal.

Then we moved to Bellevue, Washington. About a month after starting the freshman year of high school he made announcements in all of his classes that he wanted to go by the name of Corwin, which later became the more familiar name of Cory, and also wanted to use male pronouns. The classes seemed to be ok. About a month later his English teacher asked him if he had talked to his mom about that.

So he did tell me and that was a complete total shock although he had been going to a weekly LGBT youth discussion group, and also had been to LGBT youth summer camp a couple of times, and had met some transgender youth and I had met them as well. Since we had some contact in that way, there was more familiarity than there would have been if he had immediately come out as trans. And, yes, it still was a shock because it was just overwhelming. 'Cause how can he not be that person that I've known all this time for over 15 years?!

His dad was kind of cool with it. The gender component of our child wasn't as prominent for him while I was strongly identifying as being the mother of a daughter. The main thing for me was telling myself that it's gonna be ok. And then I came to realize that it ended up being good and a real growth step for me. I learned a lot and I became more open in the process. The times I felt like my whole world was blown up became more and more a feeling of the past and I saw my child in a new way. The amazing child, my child, who lives his life *(continued inside)*



P.O. Box 24565
Los Angeles, CA 90024

info@pflagLA.org

1.888.PFLAG 88
(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, LGBTQ 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.

PFLAG LOS ANGELES BOARD
Adele Starr Founder

OFFICERS:

Mariette Sawchuk President
Stuart Huggins Vice President
Steve Krantz Secretary
York Knowlton Treasurer

BOARD:

Carol Cox
Gizella Czene
Maurie Davidson
Chris Haiss
Polly Kim
Barry Mason
Karen Mason
Liz Mullen
Daryl Parker
Alexander Sawchuk
Lucy Benji Terrell

Newsletter Editor:
Chris Haiss

Graphic Design:
York Knowlton / imagine-Y.com

Legislative Corner From the editor:

You may have heard that Houston, Texas, voted by referendum to overturn the city's one-year-old anti-discrimination ordinance. And you may have seen pictures of those in their T-shirts holding signs "NO Men in Women's Bathrooms - Vote NO on Houston's Prop #1." Their explanation why this law needs to be overturned: to prevent sexual predators claiming to be transgender or to have a female identity from entering women's bathrooms. This raises two questions: How many sexual predators entered women's bathrooms in Houston since the ordinance became effective in 2014, claiming to be transgender women? And why do they think a sexual predator will be deterred by the repeal of this anti-discrimination ordinance? Of course, this weird illogical way of thinking should not come as a surprise when even a presidential candidate said this: "Now I wish that someone told me that when I was in high school that I could have felt like a woman when it came time to take showers in PE. I'm pretty sure that I would have found my feminine side and said, 'Coach, I think I'd rather shower with the girls today.'" It's so clear that they just don't know what they are talking about when equating transgender women with predatory men. Let's not forget that 2015 was another year where many transgender Americans, primarily transgender women, lost their lives to violent attacks by men. We need education. We need to vote. Because voting does matter.

I'm thankful for our state legislators who do their best to make California safer and better for ALL Californians. Thank you, Governor Brown, for signing the following bills:

AB 959, authored by Assemblymember (AM) David Chiu, requires state health and social services agencies to collect data on sexual orientation and gender identity whenever demographic data is collected. Collecting this data helps address LGBT disparities in health and well-being and determine whether government programs successfully reach those in need.

AB 827, authored by AM Patrick O'Donnell, provides resources and information to aid teachers in identifying and assisting LGBT students in need of support in dealing with bullying or lack of social acceptance.

SB 703, authored by Senator Mark Leno, requires contractors doing business with state agencies to offer transgender employees the same healthcare coverage offered to all other workers.

AB 329, authored by AM Shirley Weber, updates the state's sexual health and HIV prevention curriculum to provide instruction that is more up-to-date, comprehensive and inclusive of LGBT people and their families.

AB 87, authored by AM Mark Stone, promotes and protects the right of all Californians, regardless of sexual orientation or gender identity, to serve on a jury.

AB 960, authored by AM David Chiu, updates California's assisted reproduction laws to recognize intended parents using assisted reproduction, whether or not a medical professional is involved.

SB 731, authored by Senator Mark Leno, keeps transgender kids safe in foster care by requiring social service workers to take their gender identity into account before placing them in a potentially hostile situation.

[Info provided by www.eqca.org]

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

Rev. Ed Hansen, Stuart Huggins, Mariette Sawchuk, and Sarah Vitorino presented the workshop "Keeping Faith: Honoring Your Child and Your Beliefs" at Models of Pride.

Stuart Huggins, Ellen Kameya, Harold Kameya, Domingo Torres-Rangel, and Evelyn Torres-Rangel presented the workshop "Coming Out in Families of Color," a session for youth, at Models of Pride.

Terrie Duba, Polly Kim, Steve Krantz, Barry Mason, Karen Mason, and Liz Mullen presented the workshop "Telling Mom and Dad - How Parents Get from Clueless to Activist" at Models of Pride.

PLEASE SUPPORT OUR WORK! Renew your annual donation or make a special gift today!

As an all-volunteer organization, our work is made possible only with the generous contributions of our 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 make a donation of \$35 or more to PFLAG Los Angeles, a portion of your donation (\$15) goes to PFLAG National and makes you a member of both PFLAG Los Angeles and PFLAG National. However, make donations directly to PFLAG National, 100% of your donation stays with PFLAG National.

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

Shop at AmazonSmile
and Amazon will make
a donation to:

PFLAG Los Angeles



Smile, you're supporting PFLAG Los Angeles
Your everyday purchases or gifts
can help PFLAG Los Angeles expand its
mission of support, education, and advocacy.

<http://smile.amazon.com/ch/95-3707419>

We Need YOUR Stories!

We all have a PFLAG story to share. Some are a testimony of growth and understanding, others are painful and heart-breaking. These stories of real peoples' lives can be major teaching moments to some and life-savers to others.

Please e-mail your story, request to be interviewed, or any questions to NewsletterEditor@pflagLA.org.

Mike/Michelle Dennis, Barry Mason, and Sarah Vitorino held two panel presentations at Santa Monica High School.

Christie Carney, Mike/Michelle Dennis, Stuart Huggins, Liz Mullen, and Cara O'Donnell spoke to the LGBTQ group of LA Southwest College.

Our Stories *(continued from cover)*

with courage and forges ahead with this is who I am, take it or leave it, is just amazing. It's just so - WOW, that's my kid?!

By the time Cory graduated from high school he had done some medical transition and entered college as a male. There he started a support and discussion group around gender issues that I think is still going on. He did some gender projects as part of his major and then started a process with some other folks that created gender neutral housing on his campus at Western Washington University in Bellingham, Washington. So that was pretty impressive. He graduated in 2011.

I don't know if he's playing it down for me 'cause he doesn't want me to hear about negative things, but he says that he was never really harassed in school or bullied. The main challenges were the bathrooms. That was a problem for a while because before he did medical transition it was difficult. So he used staff bathrooms in high school. This was before they had laws. Now things have changed a lot.

And then he began identifying as a gay man and started dating men. He met a really nice man named Chris and they started dating and he proposed and they got married in 2012. They have lots of friends, from work, from college, and they're doing great!

One of the things that really helped me was connecting with people who identify as trans, and also connecting with parents of people who identify as trans. At first it was hard to find people, but over time there've been more and more people to connect with. So, when I first started going to PFLAG I was the only parent of someone who is trans who was going to my chapter meetings. But that's

We encourage you to share YOUR story with us. The focus should be on your personal story as it relates to the coming-out of an LGBT family member/loved one. Maximum number of characters with spaces is 4,300. If you prefer, we can interview you over the phone and write the story for you!

All stories are welcome and submissions are subject to editing. By submitting your story you give PFLAG permission to publish it in our newsletter, on our website or other media to promote PFLAG. If requested, your name will not be published.

not true anymore. There've been several members who have transgender kids or adult kids. And people, kids and adults, who identify as trans or as genderfluid or some different kind of gender identity are coming to meetings more and more. So, my chapter meetings today have a much more diverse kind of membership or collection of people than 13 years ago.

Also, the following year after Cory came out as trans I had gone to a gender conference and I met some parents with whom I kept in touch. I also spent some time with the organizer of the conference and he was really helpful. Attending the conference seemed so foreign or strange at first but then it became not a big deal once you actually meet people. And then reading helped me. There are a lot more reading materials available now. But even then there were a couple of books about peoples' experiences and their gender identity, and reading those kinds of books was really helpful because you could get more of an internal sense of what somebody was experiencing.

I think there's so much more support now, and PFLAG has really done a lot in terms of providing information on transgender issues than ever before. I think getting support is really important and that's why I started going to PFLAG meetings.

Quote - Unquote

"Transgender Veteran:

I fought
for your right
to hate me."

— *Inscription on a T-Shirt
worn by discharged transgender
U.S. Air Force veteran Carla Lewis.*

RESOURCES

MEETINGS - CONTACTS - ORGANIZATIONS

SUPPORT MEETINGS

SPONSORED BY PFLAG LOS ANGELES

Westwood*

Westwood United Methodist Church
10497 Wilshire Bl. LA 90024
3rd Wednesday of each month
7:30 - 10:00 pm / Free Parking
**Visit our website for upcoming speakers
www.pflagLA.org*

Gender Focus

Metropolitan Community Church
4607 Prospect Avenue, LA 90027
2nd Thursday of each month
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Street Parking

East LA *(Sólo Español)*

Bienestar East LA
5326 East Beverly Blvd, Los Angeles 90022
3rd Thursday of each month
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Street Parking

San Fernando Valley *(Sólo Español)*

Bienestar Centro del Valle de San Fernando
8134 Van Nuys Blvd., #200, Panorama City 91402
4th Friday of each month
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Free Parking

South LA

La Tijera United Methodist Church
7400 Osage Avenue, LA 90045
2nd Thursday of each month
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Free Parking

CONTACTS

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

HELPLINES

PFLAG Los Angeles
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
longer need PFLAG
that's when PFLAG
NEEDS YOU!

www.pflagLA.org



P.O. Box 24565
Los Angeles, CA 90024

RETURN SERVICE REQUESTED

OUR VISION: PFLAG envisions a world where diversity is celebrated and all people are respected, valued, and affirmed inclusive of their sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression.

OUR MISSION: By meeting people where they are and collaborating with others, PFLAG realizes its vision through:

SUPPORT for families, allies and people who are LGBTQ; **EDUCATION** for ourselves and others about the unique issues and challenges facing people who are LGBTQ; **ADVOCACY** in our communities to change attitudes and create policies and laws that achieve full equality for people who are LGBTQ.

FALL 2015

TransAction

Trans Chorus of Los Angeles (TCLA)

Los Angeles now has a transgender chorus and it's the first of its kind in the nation. Their mission is to "fiercely empower Trans and gender expansive people to love their voices. Before and after transition, Trans people often experience a dysphoria that their voice and bodies don't match. Singing while living their truth empowers Trans people to accept themselves and their voices." To find out more about TCLA or how to join them, please go to www.transchorusla.org or check them out at www.facebook.com/TransChorusLA or contact James at JamesW@transchorusla.org.

VA transgender clinic opens in Cleveland, Ohio

The Department of Veterans Affairs opened a clinic specifically geared toward treating transgender veterans at the Louis Stokes Cleveland VA Medical Center that will provide primary care, hormone therapy and mental health care to up to 20 transgender veterans one day a month, according to

the Cleveland Plain Dealer newspaper. "I feel there are a lot of transgender patients in the veteran population who haven't been able to find the care they need," Megan McNamara, a VA physician who will run the clinic, told the Plain Dealer. "I really want to be able to provide comprehensive, one-stop care for those patients in a welcoming environment, a place where they're comfortable and accepted." According to the Williams Institute, a UCLA think tank that conducts research on gender identity law and policy, an estimated 134,000 U.S. veterans are transgender.

Transgender Equality Task Force

On November 27, the Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus announced that it has formed a Transgender Equality Task Force, and PFLAG was invited to be on the front lines. This task force - the first created by the LGBT Equality Caucus - has a clear and much-needed purpose: to analyze barriers to full legal and societal equality faced by the transgender community, as well as to design legislative and other initiatives to make the American Dream more accessible to all transgender people. Alongside the members of the caucus stood a transgender person of color invited to speak, our

own PFLAG National Director of Policy, Diego M. Sanchez.

Later in the day, PFLAG was asked to participate in a related Congressional forum on violence against people who are transgender, to be sure that the important parent voice was heard, loud and clear. Catherine Hyde, volunteer Regional Director and National board member, joined the panel of speakers, and shared the following as part of her testimony: "...We want for our kids what all parents want for their kids: that they be safe, happy and healthy. But when you parent a trans child, the fear for their physical and emotional safety is a constant anxiety...We need comprehensive legislation to protect our children, in school, at work and in public places."

Diego and Catherine both captured so beautifully the feelings of PFLAGers everywhere: we want nothing more than to protect ourselves and our transgender loved ones from physical, emotional, psychological, and social harm - nothing more, but nothing less, than ALL people want for themselves and those they love. [From: www.pflag.org]