

## President's Message



### PFLAG Silver Lake is Transitioning!

Starting in June, the meeting—while open to all—will become primarily gender focused. At an average PFLAG meeting, transgender persons and their families are often in the minority. Although we warmly welcome all participants, we can't always provide the deep level of understanding that comes with personal experience.

Transgender issues have become more visible in the media, and requests to PFLAG for gender identity resources have become more pressing. Fortunately, the leader of the Silver Lake meeting, Benji, is a gender activist who has been quietly fulfilling that role. At our board meeting in March, PFLAG Los

Angeles decided to make it official. The meeting formerly known as Silver Lake will devote extra focus and resources to people of a variety of gender experiences including, but not limited to, transgender, gender nonconforming, gender questioning, gender creative, queer, and transsexual. We hope their parents, family members and friends will also participate. The meeting will continue to welcome people wanting to give and receive support in the sexual orientation coming out process. We are still committed to united advocacy and education for LGBTQ issues, because our solidarity is vitally important for community and societal change. We recognize, however, that the daily life of someone amid a gender journey is often very different from someone amid a sexual orientation journey. The two may overlap, but are not identical. We aim to provide a special support space for the unique priorities and challenges associated with a wide diversity of gender journeys. Check out our website for an announcement of any changes related to this meeting.

### You turn on the lights

Every month when I walk into the PFLAG Los Angeles meeting room in Westwood, I am grateful for the donations of all our supporters. Without you, we wouldn't have this welcoming, safe space to hold our monthly meetings. Each month we unpack our supply of literature. They are free of charge to attendees, thanks to you. Newcomers tell me that they found out about our meetings from the website. You pay the cost of hosting it on a reliable server. Whether or not you make the trip to one of our meetings, you, our donors, are an important presence.

We work very hard to be good stewards of your donations. Our highly skilled newsletter editor, web designer, writer, and social media expert (to name a few) are all board members who contribute their services, amounting to thousands of dollars per year. But that doesn't pay rent, insurance, printing costs, telephone helpline, or expenses related to the Pride Parade and Festival or Models of Pride. For that we rely on the contributions made by our supporters.

Each donation also provides us with moral support—we know you are behind us—and numbers, when it comes to activities such as advocating for LGBTQ issues. We make sure your voice is heard.

If you haven't made a donation this year, consider doing so now. Our fiscal year begins July 1, and with your help we can continue to light up the lives of the many LGBTQ persons and their families who turn to us for help.



## Our Stories Gizella Czene, PFLAG Mom

My experience with the PFLAG support group began six years ago when my adorable little child, the first grandson, the one who loved to cuddle, who served as my muse for the extravagant Halloween costumes I sewed for him, revealed that he was gay. Somehow it never occurred to me that a child who loved dolls and dress up, who secretly painted his toe nails with my red polish, who could laugh and cry so easily, had any interest in sex. He wasn't my baby anymore. He also wasn't straight. The words of my family came back to me. They had warned me not to buy him Barbie dolls or allow his colorful clothing choices. At the time, I had dismissed their words. After all, how could playing with toys from the girls' aisle and wearing pink socks make someone gay? Now my family would say that they had been right all along. I also realized that without thinking, my son had been exposed to family and friends who were heteronormative. Straight was normal, gay wasn't. Then I had my own internalized homophobia and transphobia to deal with—what if my friends wouldn't allow him to play with their sons? What if it really was my fault? How could I respond to those who tell me it's a choice? What would I say to my deeply Roman Catholic relatives?

I took inventory and realized that none of my friends had queer kids. My openly gay friends had never talked about their coming out stories or shared with me the status of their relationships with their parents and I had never asked. They seemed happy. It never occurred to me that their openness came with a cost. I thought about the time I unwittingly caused a classmate to be labeled a lesbian after I complained about her physical, but innocent, displays of affection towards me. Later I had lived with gay, bisexual and transgender entertainers, but at the time it seemed to me to be more of a persona they assumed under the cover of night rather than simply who they were. Sure, I didn't laugh at gay jokes, but I also didn't challenge those who told them. *(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**

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## Legislative Corner

From the editor: Although we can pride ourselves on having numerous laws in place that protect LGBTQ Californians of all ages (voting DOES matter!), our fight is long from over. Hint: "Sodomite Suppression Act." This proposal was submitted by someone under the name of Matt McLaughlin, was received by the California Office of the Attorney General on February 26, and filed under 15-0008.

Here's an excerpt: "Seeing that it is better that offenders should die rather than that all of us should be killed by God's just wrath against us for the folly of tolerating wickedness in our midst, the People of California wisely command, in the fear of God, that any person who willingly touches another person of the same gender for purposes of sexual gratification be put to death by bullets to the head or by any other convenient method."

And although it is obvious from the filing that this person does not know how lawmaking works, it is equally obvious that this was drafted by one or more people with a very disturbed mind who use the Bible as a cover and use our democratic legal system and freedom of speech to promote their agenda. We've had bullets in gay people's heads here in California. And language like this always has the potential to turn unstable folks violent. So, whether this proposal is real or a hoax, it is a dire reminder that there is more work to be done.

This brings us to State Senator Mark Leno who introduced Senate Bill 703 (California Equal Benefits Bill). It builds on existing California law that prohibits employers from discriminating based on gender, including gender identity, in employee benefits. Sponsored by the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), Transgender Law Center (TLC), and Equality California (EQCA), the bill prohibits state agencies from entering into a contract in the amount of \$100,000 or more with any company that discriminates against their employees based on gender identity, including by denying transgender workers the same benefits and healthcare coverage they offer all other workers. [www.eqca.org]

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

Robin Gurse, Shervin Khorramian, Liz Mullen, and Chris Angel Murphy were invited by LACES High School to talk to a Peer Helping Class.

Stuart Huggins spoke at USC School Of Medicine during the university's Black History Month Observance.

Mike/Michelle Dennis, Bill Fields, Stuart Huggins, Shervin Khorramian, Barry Mason, Chris Angel Murphy, Stephanie Muscato, and Sylvia Weisenberg talked to about 200 high school freshmen at Santa Monica High School.

Stuart Huggins, Shervin Khorramian, Liz Mullen, Rudy Perez, and Jessica Sackman were invited by CSUN's MFT Graduate Program to be part of a class on diversity.

Maurie Davidson participated in the First Annual Southern California LGBT Health Conference at USC Keck School of Medicine. The Conference was conceived from a lack of health care education during a time of ongoing health disparities in LGBT communities, especially in communities of color, that have continued to persist despite advancement in medical care.

Betsy Hanger, Stuart Huggins, and Sarah Vitorino were invited to a class on sexuality to talk to graduate students at USC Graduate School of Social Work.

## Come march with us!

We invite you to march with us in this year's LA Pride Parade on Sunday, June 14, in West Hollywood. You'll find all the details at [www.pflagLA.org](http://www.pflagLA.org) starting in late May. Marching with us down Santa Monica Boulevard in support of LGBTQ family members, loved ones, and friends is a one-of-a-kind experience you'll never forget. There will be cheers and tears, and you may feel for a moment that you've never done anything more important in your life. Please wear a red T-shirt if you can.

### **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](http://www.pflagLA.org/Join-Donate).**

Visit  
the home page  
on our website  
for an exciting new  
way to support  
PFLAG Los Angeles with  
your online purchases.

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.

# We Need YOUR Stories!

We encourage you to share YOUR story with us. There will be at least one person out there who will benefit from what you have to share.

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.

**Please e-mail your story or request to be interviewed to [NewsletterEditor@pflagLA.org](mailto:NewsletterEditor@pflagLA.org).**

*(Our Stories: continued from cover)* Now I had a queer kid who had grown up in a straight world that did not accept, much less celebrate or love, kids or adults like him.

I don't know when I first heard about a support group for parents of LGBT kids. I thought that homosexuality was like abortion, a controversial subject that would have picketers at the entrance to the support meeting. I thought it would be for parents of older kids (who has a gay 11 year old?). My husband and I put off going, as if that would delay our child's sexual awakening.

So I was not prepared for what happened at the first meeting. I saw so many parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings and friends at that meeting, all there because someone they loved had trusted them enough to come out to them. They were there because even though the news was uncomfortable to hear and they were scared, they recognized their homophobia, as I had, and wanted to change their attitudes. Others came for encouragement. Some long-time members were there to educate and remove stigma and misconceptions. That very first night, I wasn't as bold and brave as many of the parents. I admired them, but I wasn't ready to stand up for our child. I was not even ready to put a rainbow bumper sticker on my car, much less wear rainbow earrings like another parent I saw. There was that homophobia "they'll think I'm gay".

Even though I had just started on my journey, I was already encouraged by others' progress.

Over the years, our society has changed, thanks in no small part to the efforts of groups like PFLAG. My family has also changed. We are now part of a wonderful and loving community of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer and straight friends of all ages and races. We talk about and actively work for marriage equality, nondiscrimination laws and rights for transgender youth and adults. We celebrate weddings, we use each others' preferred gender pronouns and try to learn to become better allies. Now I don't leave home without a rainbow accessory.

We have also had to say good-bye to relatives who will not recognize our child's right to love and be loved. Once we were out of the closet as a family, we wanted to show our pride in our child and the community and continue our active support of LGBTQ rights.

I still go to support meetings, but now it's to provide support to new parents and celebrate the power and beauty of unconditional love. I listen to parents share about their daughter's wife, son's husband or child's partner, and then to march with them in pride parades. I also go to listen to and support transgender youth and sexual minorities who have yet to enjoy their families' acceptance.

## Quote - Unquote

"No one who has served our country in uniform should be denied the benefits they've earned because of whom they love or where they live."

— Jeanne Shaheen, U.S. Senator, New Hampshire

## 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](http://www.pflagLA.org)

#### Silver Lake

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

#### Pasadena (Sólo Español)

Neighborhood Unitarian Universalist Church  
301 N. Orange Grove Blvd, Pasadena 91103  
1st Monday of each month  
7:30 - 9:00 pm / Free 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](mailto:SpeakersBureau@pflagla.org)

### 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](http://www.thetrevorproject.org)

### ORGANIZATIONS

PFLAG National  
202.467.8180  
[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)

REMEMBER

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

[www.pflagLA.org](http://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.

SPRING 2015

## TransAction

### Transgender Law Center (TLC) Welcomes Kris Hayashi

TLC welcomes Kris Hayashi as their new executive director. After accomplishing many victories for California, TLC will continue under the new leadership of Kris to advance laws and policies related to healthcare access, employment nondiscrimination, and schools to achieve legal equality and realize lived equality for trans people in California. TLC's new strategic plan also includes a focus on Movement Building 2015. *To read more about this exciting work please go to [www.transgenderlaw-center.org/archives/11402](http://www.transgenderlaw-center.org/archives/11402)*

### Army Takes First Step Toward Out Transgender Military Service

As reported by Chris Geidner, BuzzFeed News Reporter, the assistant secretary of the Army now has to approve the discharge of any soldier for being transgender, under a change implemented March 6. Prior to Friday, commanders in the field were authorized to initiate and finalize discharges of service members who are transgender.

"Today's action by the Army helps over 6,000 transgender soldiers serving in silence. It also helps their commanders, who are increasingly stymied trying to apply 1970's medical policy to today's Army," Allyson Robinson, SPARTA director of policy, told BuzzFeed News in a statement. "While transgender service members welcome this step, they recognize it is only a stopgap measure aimed at making a failing policy fail less. What they and their commanders need is a comprehensive, Department-level policy review."

The step only affects the Army, however, and does not, technically, change the fact that a transgender person is to be discharged from the military — including the Army.

### I Am: Trans People Speak

I AM: Trans People Speak is a project to raise awareness about the diversity that exists within transgender communities. It gives a voice to transgender individuals, as well as their families, friends, and allies. *To read more about this project, view video stories, or submit your own story, please go to [www.transpeoplespeak.org](http://www.transpeoplespeak.org)*

### Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie Support Their Kid Wearing Suits

As reported by Sunnive Brydum for the Advocate, the oldest biological child of Brad Pitt and Angelina Jolie, named Shiloh and assigned female at birth, has for years been stepping out at red-carpet events and family outings with the multicultural family in sharp suits, boyish attire, and ever-shorter haircuts.

Around the age of 3, the now-8-year-old asked the family to be called John and everyone in the family has obliged, according to U.K. newspaper The Telegraph.

Jolie discussed her first-born's tendency toward things generally considered masculine for the first time in a Vanity Fair interview in 2010.

Whether the young Jolie-Pitt will grow up to identify anywhere along a gender-nonconforming or LGBT spectrum is impossible to tell, but one thing is certain — having parents that embrace a child's curiosity, independence, and self-direction is sure to make that young person's life easier as they go through the fundamentally human process of discovering who they truly are.