

PFLAG Palm Springs / Desert Communities

THE BANNER OF THE DESERT

The Newsletter of PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities Chapter

Our twenty-third year. April 2018, Volume 23, No. 4

PFLAG MEETING

SUNDAY, April 15TH, 2:30 P.M.

CATHEDRAL CITY LIBRARY, COMMUNITY ROOM

The meeting facilitator is Dan Smith and the discussion topic is:

What is an activist? Do I see myself as an activist?

Does having strong feelings to show support for someone in need make me an activist?

Does PFLAG Palm Springs need me as a supporter or an activist?

Light refreshments provided by Dr. Diane Ross

Please volunteer to bring light refreshments to a future meeting.

Email: info@PSpflag.org

A MESSAGE FROM THE EDITOR

—MIKE BALASA

Carol and I attended for a brief time the rally at the Palm Springs High School to protest the frequent school shootings. It brought a tear to my eye to see over 3,000 people attend the event. The diversity was wonderful. Elderly people were there, many people from the LGBTQI community and every ethnic identity. It brings hope that the many needed social changes might occur with this generation. We had to leave early to staff a PFLAG information table at the ONE-PS picnic with Dan Smith.

So many citizens do not involve themselves in current issues. Too many people get cursory news from television - more entertainment than factual accounts. Many of the TV news outlets have a political bias and are almost nothing more than propaganda machines. Only the better educated people I know read creditable news media and are conversant about current issues. I suspect the wide spread ignorance and indifference by so many people accounts for the easy success the Russian propagandists had in influencing the last presidential election.

Worst of all is the staggering low voter turnout. Elderly people vote and people who attend church vote, too. Even though churches are not supposed to be political they can discuss issues and suggest which candidate supports the issues important to their religious beliefs.

The best hope we have of maintaining the hard fought for rights is to get people who care about civil rights to vote. I know many people believe that their vote doesn't count, that big money is going to buy every candidate and the common people will continue to have their problems ignored. That feeling of despair is exactly why our nation is in trouble. All of us should feel the duty to pressure everyone we know to register and vote. Get them to vote by mail. The mail-in ballot is much less trouble than waiting in line after a hard day's work. And a voter has time to make good choices.

If the young people I saw at the stadium live up to their promise, the future might be more positive. Young people have many world problems to face, and they must stay concerned and active.

Queer Eye On Netflix

I was browsing Netflix's listings trying to decide on our evening entertainment, when I came across a new series called "Queer Eye". It is based on the 2003 series, "Queer Eye for the Straight Guy" on the Bravo channel. The series won an Emmy on 2004 for best reality program. An original "gay eye" was Ted Allen who now hosts the popular cooking competition show, "Chopped". David Collins who was one of the producers of the original program is credited as the creator of the new series. The original series was on the air until 2006. David Collins said that the original show had as a goal to further tolerance. The new show has the goal of furthering acceptance.

The concept of gay men giving straight people advice on fashion, style and elegant living is not a new concept. In 1882 a 27-year-old British citizen arrived in America with the goal of improving the country's aesthetics. The man was Oscar Wilde. Wilde told reporters, "I am here to diffuse beauty, and I have no objection to saying that." He spoke in more than 100 cities even in the far west and Canada. His speeches covered "The English Renaissance", "The House Beautiful", and "The Decorative Arts". Wilde is credited with substantially changing the American standard of interior design.

In the new "Queer Eye" the five-man team of experts include Tan, a fashion expert of South Asian descent; Karamo, a black man who gives encouragement to raise confidence; Bobby, a designer; Antoni, the food expert; and, Jonathan, the groomer. This time the five gurus are stationed in Atlanta. The first series originated in New York. Atlanta is in the heart of Trump country, which gives the message the show is advancing a more immediate urgency. The people experiencing the ministrations of the fashion experts include self-professed "red necks", a white Christian father, a firehouse full of white men, a closeted gay black man and a man living in a house in need of rehabbing.

I found the interaction of the gay men with the Southern men fascinating. It was obvious the straight men had a learning experience. As the program develops and each gay man gave his advice and assistance, the friendships and acceptance grew. By the end of the show, there is obvious affection between the men. Carol and I both ended up with tears in our eyes after each of the eight episodes.

Evidently others found the show compelling as well. Netflix has given the "go ahead" for a season two. This time the program will move from Georgia to Ohio. In this time of division and hate, a show that proves that distrust and animosity can be eliminated with familiarity is badly needed.

Myths And Misconceptions About Gender-Nonconforming People

“You’re In The Wrong Bathroom” by Laura Erickson-Schroth and Laura A. Jacobs, published in May of 2017 by Beacon Press examines the false information that is frequently cited by politicians and religious zealots. The book is available through Amazon.

The authors examine in detail numerous misconceptions and use documented research to provide accurate and creditable information. Here are a few of the topics covered: Happiness and adjustment of transgender persons after transition: In the past, trans people were viewed as dysfunctional exhibiting a form of mental illness. Many therapists believed that if a transgender person was properly motivated they could learn to accept and live with the gender assigned at birth. There are a minority of professionals who still believe this. Numerous studies have indicated that trans persons are happier and more well-adjusted after transition. Research has found decisively that there is no form of therapy that is successful in making trans people conform to the sex assigned at birth. The studies that show trans people have mental health issues clearly show that distress is caused by living in a society where trans people are rejected, despised and often the targets of violence.

Therapy for transgender persons: Studies indicate that no form of therapy is successful in changing a trans person’s identity. Trans people have a long history of being pathologized by the medical and mental health community. “Transsexualism”, as it was first labeled, was listed in the American Psychiatric Association’s “Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders” in 1980. Initially the manual almost always described trans women who wished to rid themselves of their male genitals and live lives as females. Unfortunately, the Manual labeled the trans condition as indications of severe mental illness. In 1994, the “transgender condition” was changed to “gender identity disorder”. This was not much of an improvement as the condition was still considered abnormal and in need of treatment. In 2013 the 5th version of DSM changed the terminology to “gender dysphoria”. The new categorization is more flexible and supportive of transgender people.

In 2013, The “International Classification of Diseases”, used the term “gender incongruence”. This term treats being transgender as a non-mental health issue and less pathologizing but would allow for reimbursement of care.

PFLAG National Message

Our chapter received an E-mail from Jean Hodges, President, PFLAG National. She informed the general membership that the Executive Director, Jaime Grant, departed her position. Grant was hired in September of 2017. Also leaving was the Director of Financing, Brian Carney. Hodges gave no reason why the two executives were let go. In an article in “LGBTQ Nation”, reporter Bil Browning wrote that PFLAG National was in financial decline with a deficit over the past few years of over a million dollars. Hodges wrote that that Browning’s assessment that PFLAG might be failing was in error. She wrote Browning the following note, “Dear Bil: PFLAG is alive and well, despite your regrettably misleading headline, as evidence by our continued robust chapter growth over the last several years alone. All leaders come and go, but as many might say, “nonetheless we persist” along with our movement of families, friends and allies advocating full LGBTQ equality.” Hodges added, “. . .the PFLAG Board has a plan in place to manage expenses and support our programs and national staff, while increasing revenue. PFLAG has been serving the LGBTQ community for 45 years and is needed now more than ever. We will indeed, persist.”

Bil Browning reported in his article that other organizations are suffering similar financial problems, "Contributions to LGBT organizations dwindled after the marriage equality win at the Supreme Court . . . In 2010 , less than 3% of LGBT adults in the U.S. gave money to any national LGBT organization. The majority of funding to LGBT comes from foundations and corporations."

Several LGBTQ activist groups have closed their doors over the past year. GetEQUAL, an advocacy group founded in 2010, is the latest casualty of the funding problem. Other groups that have shut down include National Stonewall Democrats, Empire State Pride Agenda, the Gill Action Fund, American Foundation for Equal Rights (AFER) and Freedom to Marry.

All are concerned about National PFLAG, but we have confidence in President Jean Hodges and the excellent Board of Directors (our local PFLAG members Susan Thronson and Charles Middleton are members of the National PFLAG board). Our chapter is thriving with excellent meeting attendance and a healthy treasury. We intend to continue serving the Coachella Valley for many more years.

Harvey Milk Diversity Breakfast

The annual event will take place on Friday, May 18th at the Palm Springs Convention Center. Registration begins at 8:45 a.m. and the programs begins at 9:30 until 11:00 a.m. Cost is \$65 which includes a breakfast. To order tickets on line go to: <https://pspride.org/harvey-milk-2/> You may also donate a ticket to allow a student to attend the event. Cost is \$56. Proceeds benefit Coachella Valley youth through Gay Straight Alliance clubs and LGBT youth related programs.

Facebook and Home Town-A Second Look

by Bob Warburton

In the last few months I wrote about my home town's pro-LGBT progress, and my return to Facebook after years away from the social network. Today I return with a quick look at both. Looking at the news it appears I picked a fine time to return to Facebook when it has been revealed that 50 million subscribers had their information scrubbed, sent to Russia, and used to elect Donald Trump President without their knowledge. And to think I just wanted to share cat pictures. Facebook for the first time in its history has lost significant stock price recently and a large number of people have abandoned the network.

Facebook has changed a great deal since 2010 when I was flung off it for no reason. For me now it is mainly high school friends catching up, and political contacts, contacting each other. I can easily see how for families this would be a perfect way to communicate and send pics, and for the small business person to communicate and advertise. In other words it is really boring. When I was on earlier, half of my friends were 20 to 35 year old Gays from around the world who wanted to communicate with an out married person. Now I have just one interested Gay GI in Iraq who wants to talk. There are a number of scantily clad young women I don't know who mysteriously want to friend me (delete immediately), as there were in the past. A new thing is many people with my name write me.

I allow them friend status, which has allowed me an insight into the odd side of Facebook. People with the name Warburton have the spectrum of views, and I found the opposite of the New York Times does exist. For example, I was stunned at the strange horrible things that were being said about the Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School Students: that they were professional actors, not really there at school the day of the shooting, and paid to talk on TV by liberal groups. All this was being written within days of the

shootings, long before the March on Washington. This is proof positive that false news reports are manufactured and spread on Facebook like a virus. I had found the FAKE NEWS, and unfortunately, it is alive and well.

AND I RESOLVE.....

In last month's "Banner" column I wrote about a LGBT Resolution passed in my home town of Casper, Wyoming on November 21, 2016. Here is the verbatim wording of that resolution: "A resolution stating the policy of the City of Casper is to promote a diverse community and ensure that discrimination of any kind is not accepted:

WHEREAS, Casper is a diverse community with a long tradition of pursuing full equality for all its citizens; and, WHEREAS, the full inclusion and acceptance of lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGTB) citizens is fair and just; and, WHEREAS, we affirm the right of LGTB citizens of Casper to live free of discrimination in all of its forms; and, WHEREAS, discrimination in all of its forms includes: on the basis of race, color, religion, national origin, sex, gender identity, age, marital status, sexual orientation, family status, veteran status, disability, and source of income are wrong and presenting and present a stumbling block to the pursuit of full equality.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED...it is the policy of the City of Casper to reject discrimination of any kind and to respect the inherent worth of every person, without regard to (lists forms). The City affirms that its personnel policies protect employees and potential employees from discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity."

More Interesting Facts From The Animal Kingdom

Have you ever heard of the desert grassland whiptail lizard? They aren't here in the Palm Springs area but are common in South to Central Arizona in the Sonoran Desert. They range along the Rio Grande in New Mexico and can be found in the deserts of Northern Mexico. They are large enough to be noticed: 2 3/4 to 5 1/4 inch body with a tail usually longer than the body.

What I find interesting about the whiptail is that this creature is exclusively female. There are no males of the specie. They reproduce by parthenogenesis - their eggs undergo a chromosome doubling after meiosis (cell division), and the new lizard develops without being fertilized. Now here is the lesbian part: the ovulation only occurs when there is a female to female courtship and mating ritual. Whatever they do, zoologist report that it mimics the sexual activity of closely related species that reproduce sexually.

I hope you find this interesting and can use it at your next dinner party.

(more on following page)

TIME TO JOIN PFLAG? TIME TO 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