

PFLAG Palm Springs / Desert Communities

THE BANNER OF THE DESERT

The Newsletter of PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities Chapter
Our twenty-second year. September 2017, Volume 22, No. 9

PFLAG Meeting
Sunday, September 17th, 2:30 pm
Cathedral City Library, Community Room
Info: 760-202-4430 – info@pspflag.org

Dan Smith will facilitate the meeting and the discussion topic is:

When you were faced with “coming out” issues,
did someone counsel with you or offer comfort to assist you
in the process - either your “coming out” or another’s?

In that time of difficulty, how were you able to make room, in your thinking
and in your heart, to embrace a new or a broader reality?

Light refreshments provided by: Carol Balasa

A Message From The Editor - Mike Balasa

I read an article by sociologist, Lilian Rubin, who quoted a white construction worker who wondered, “...is this a white country or not?” Rubin commented, “It’s a question that nags at white America, or perhaps that is articulated most often and most clearly by the men and women of the working class. For it is they who feel most vulnerable, who suffered the economic contractions of recent decades most keenly, who see the new immigrants most clearly as direct competitors for their jobs.”

Rubin wrote this in 1992, but it could have been written this year to explain the success of Trump in reaching the white working class (WWC). The WWC is not only fearful of immigrants, but people they see as below them in social status, the racial minorities, and those they see as threatening their fundamentalist religious beliefs: the LGBTQI community. Trump continues to play to the WWC by wanting to build the wall, restrict immigrations, overturn protections for sexual minorities and, most recently, banning transgender persons from serving in the military.

The rural WWC voter is receptive to this appeal to their prejudices and fears. Unfortunately, the rural population of the middle states have more influence and voter power than people who live in the coastal areas. Over the years, careful redistricting has created solid conservative legislative districts in every state. The fact that a lightly populated middle

American state can elect two senators adds to the unfair balance. Because of the Electoral College rural WVC voters have votes that count more than votes of urban voters in presidential elections.

PFLAG is well situated to reach the WVC. Our ranks are made up of people from all areas of the country and social class. As parents, we advocate for our children and insist that they be treated fairly and with dignity. We share a common concern with the WVC and all other groups of people: the protection of our families and children must not be threatened. We will never settle for a return to the days when our LGBTQI children were discriminated against and their lives threatened.

Parental Acceptance Of Transgender Children Improving

A Harris Poll commissioned by the American Osteopathic Association found that 53% of American parents would support a child who wanted to change sexual gender. Parental support has proven to be essential in helping a child in the transition process. Research has consistently found that young persons who have home support show improved mental, physical and emotional outcomes in dealing with “gender dysphoria”. Medical professionals use the term “gender dysphoria” to describe a person who has a dysphoria (discontent) with the sex and gender they were assigned at birth.

Dr. Laura Arrowsmith, a Doctor of Osteopathic medicine at a transgender clinic in Oklahoma, said, “Parents have a significant role in raising transgender kids. Once they get onboard—often after stages of denial, rejection, condemnation and grief—they become powerful advocates at school and with extended family. This is crucial to the child’s well-being.

Children who are faced with “gender dysphoria, have historically exhibited higher rates of homelessness, substance abuse, HIV infection, depression, anxiety, self-harm and thoughts of suicide at a much higher rate than the general population. The source for the danger and turmoil in a transgender child’s life is recognized to be from rejection. The rejection is not only from family, but also school mates, teachers, religious figures and even people they meet at random in their community. One report found that 80% of transgender youth reported harassment while attending school. The murder rate for transgender is also higher than any other category of minority. The reason for this is generally attributed to hate of women, but some evidence suggests that some men are attracted to transgender persons and this threatens their self-identity as straight males.

Transgender children living in a body that doesn’t match their self-concept have options how to proceed with their lives. Some choose to transition socially or to medically transition through surgery or hormone treatment. Most children with supportive parents undergo a social transformation assisted with puberty blocking medication to postpone physical traits. Stopping the onset of puberty is reversible and makes medical treatment easier when the transgender person decides to fully transition with some form of hormonal and/or surgical procedure. The survey was conducted within the U.S. in June of 2017.

Transgender Community Coalition To Receive The Palm Springs Pride Award

Palm Springs Pride announced that the Transgender Community Coalition, the largest transgender organization in the Inland Empire, serving the local transgender community is being celebrated as the Organization of the Year. They will be honored at a ceremony at the Hyatt on September 28th, and will have an honored presence in the November 5th Pride Parade in Palm Springs.

Transgender Community Coalition is a certified 501(c)(3) non-profit organization. It began as TDoR (Transgender Day of Remembrance) Palm Springs in 2014. In the beginning, its purpose was to raise funds for the first Transgender Day of Remembrance memorial cenotaph statue.

Due to the strong demand by the local transgender, intersex, gender non-conforming, fluid, non-binary community, the Transgender Day of Remembrance Palm Springs name no longer described the coalition.

The organization became the largest transgender organization in the Inland Empire serving the needs of the local transgender community. Their volunteers work in a wide range of social service, linkage to care, HIC/AID and PrEP education (PrEP is medication which prevents contracting HIV/AIDS), youth housing, employment and other supporting needs so this community can be empowered and reach their highest potential.

PFLAG congratulates the Transgender Community Coalition and the CEO of the organization, Thomi Clinton.

PFLAG National Convention To Honor Priest

Roman Catholic Priest and author, James Martin, is chosen by National PFLAG to receive the PFLAG National Flag Bearer Award. He has written several books and appeared on TV frequently with the message, “. . .all LGBTQ people are beloved children of God, that God made them who they are, and that they have as much place in our churches as anyone else.”

Jean-Marie Navetta, PFLAG Director of Learning and Inclusion wrote, “At a time when religion is too often manipulated to become a tool of discrimination and hatred, I am delighted and excited that we will elevate Father Martin’s healing and powerful voice at the 2017 convention.”

The Convention will be in Portland, OR, October 20 - 22.

Christine Hammond To Receive Life Time Achievement Award From Palm Springs Pride

Our long time PFLAG board member, Christine Hammond, was chosen to receive the 2017 Pride Honors Award. During this year’s Pride Parade, Christine will have a place of honor riding in a convertible at the head of the PFLAG contingency. She will be wearing our new PFLAG t-shirt, and we encourage all members participating in the Parade to wear the new teal blue t-shirt. The PFLAG shirts may be purchased at a PFLAG meeting. If you have any questions, please call the information line: 760-202-4430.

Christine has been a full time Palm Springs resident since 1998. Within a week of her arrival she became involved in neighborhood/community organizing and continues with that effort to this day.

An active member of the Organized Neighborhoods of Palm Springs (a coalition of 44 organized neighborhoods in Palm Springs), she serves on the ONE-PS Executive Committee and Chairs the ONE-PS Code Enforcement and Public Works Committee. This committee has provided City Council with recommendations for a streets maintenance program which has been in place for several years. The group has also taken an active role in advocating for pedestrian and bicycle safety needs and is currently reviewing City Ordinances impacting parking by vehicles of all kinds on residential streets.

In 2012 Christine was appointed by Palm Springs City Council to serve as a member of the then new Measure J Oversight Commission. Christine has combined her neighborhood advocacy work with Measure J efforts by working with neighborhood, business, hospitality and City representatives to identify and begin to address pedestrian, bicycle and vehicle safety concerns in the City. These collective efforts have resulted in grants, City and MJOC funding in support of over \$10 million for public safety projects.

Christine has been an active member and Board Director of the PFLAG Palm Springs/Desert Communities chapter since 1999, and has served as Board Secretary since 2014. Fortunate to have a supportive biological family, Christine has been a visible advocate for LGBTQI individuals and families in the Valley, representing PFLAG at community events, including chaperoning at the always-amazing Safe Schools-hosted Pride Prom!

In addition to living in this beautiful desert, Christine's greatest gifts are nearly 30 years with her love and inspiration, Sly Zelnys; amazing daughter Emily, son-in-law Geoff, and grandsons Oliver and Callum.

Pride Time Is Near: Here Is A Schedule Of Events In Southern California

Pride Honors Awards, at the Hyatt Palm Springs

September 28th (6 to 7:30pm)

Christine Hammond is one of the award recipients.

Tickets available at www.pspride.org

Palm Springs Pride Parade

November 4-5th, www.pspride.org

Transgender Day of Remembrance,

November 20th (5 to 8pm), location to be announced.

(continued)

Eclipse Fever

By Bob Warburton

8-19-17 We started our trek from downtown Denver north to the promised land. The road to the Wyoming border was heavier than normal, and at the border the WHIPS (Wyoming Highway Patrol) were pulling over cars left and right for minor infractions. Were they catching marijuana smokers? Probably not.

We turned west to Laramie and passed Wyoming Equality's annual Rendezvous campout in the mountains outside Laramie. In Laramie there were not many people here over night. School had not started, the dorms were not open, and it appeared the eclipse traffic was far to the east.

8-20 Where did all the people come from? All restaurants are full to overflowing, and the road north is full. Well, Wyoming full. I mean there are cars on the two-lane highway heading north, but no traffic jams. By the time we make Casper, all of this "traffic" had dissipated into the few homesteads.

However, in the big city of Casper (metro population of 75,000), the town was buzzing. We stopped, bought t-shirts about tomorrow's eclipse. What else? Then we were off down the road to Douglas, WY where we were to stay the night with friends.

8-22 We arose just as eclipse began. Immediately one notices something is wrong with the light. It seems as if there is a high cloud cover, but the sky is literally cloudless. The rest was spectacular, and very difficult to describe. The moon "snaps" over the sun suddenly and "diamond ring" of light turns into night. The sun is surrounded by solar flares/winds much bigger than the sun that I never knew were there. There is a 360-degree twilight at ground level. Planets can be seen in the sky. It is cold, as the temperature dropped 6 degrees where we were. A 15-degree drop was recorded in Casper. 2 minutes later it was over. We saw it in a backyard next to a golf course, with neighbors having a crowd which included about 10 children. We had a great view, plus the thrill of hearing little kids enjoying the scene.

We arrived back in Denver the next morning after 10 hours of driving either back roads or in the largest traffic jam in Wyoming's history. I tell you all of this to relate my experiencing what "The Economist" states is for many, "the most awe-inspiring sight you will ever see in your life." However, it is a LGBTQI story, too. The wonderful family we stayed with in Douglas are Vicky and Sissy, and here the T stands for transvestite. Sissy always wears a dress. I hadn't seen their son Travis since he was 11, and now Bob and I met her as Debbie and her husband Frank. We were able to enjoy this remarkable event with remarkable people.

News Of Interest

Texas GOP leaders are still trying to persecute same-sex couples. The Texas Supreme Court agreed to hear a case brought by a Houston Pastor and others to prohibit the Houston City Council and Mayor from extending benefits to city employees' spouses when the couples are of the same sex. The Texas Governor agrees with the law suit and filed a "friend of the court" brief that argued that extending spousal benefits is separate from legalizing marriage for same-sex couples. The court will begin hearing arguments on the case on March 1st of next year.

Human Rights Campaign, Lambda Legal and OutServe/Service Members' Legal Defense Network filed a federal lawsuit to challenge Trump's ban on transgender individuals. Peter Perkowski, legal director for Outserve/SLDN, said, "We promised we would sue if the president took this action. The law is on our side; justice is on our side. And we are on the side of every single transgender service member and those who want to serve. The nation's courts exist to protect the people whom tyrants would otherwise abuse. Trump can't tweet his way out of this one. . ."

India's Supreme Court has ruled that an individual's sexual orientation is protected under the country's right to privacy law. The decision states, "Sexual orientation is an essential attribute of privacy. Discrimination against an individual on the basis of sexual orientation is deeply offensive to the dignity and self-worth of the individual. Equality demands that the sexual orientation of each individual in society must be protected on an even platform." Civil rights activists see this ruling as the first step towards rescinding laws prohibiting same-sex relationships and to allow discrimination; especially, discrimination in the workplace.

The Mormon church supported a music festival that supports charities and services for LGBTQ youth. The LoveLoud Festival was held in Orem on August 26th. The LDS Church released a statement in support of the event, "We applaud the LoveLoud Festival for LGBTQ youth. Its aim is to bring people together to address teen safety and to express respect and love for all of God's children. We join our voice with all who come together to foster a community of inclusion in which no one is mistreated because of who they are or what they believe."

**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](#)

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.

(form on next page)

PFLAG PALM SPRINGS/DESERT COMMUNITIES MEMBERSHIP FORM

Name: _____

Additional Names: _____

Address: _____

City: _____ Zip: _____

Phone: _____ E-Mail: _____

Suggested Membership Donation:

Family \$50: _____ Individual \$30: _____ Other Amount: _____

We appreciate any dollar amount.

Budgetary restraints will not keep anyone from being part of our PFLAG family.

Make check payable to PFLAG and mail to:

PFLAG 611 S. Palm Canyon Drive / 7-262

Palm Springs, CA 92264

Info: 760-202-4430 – info@pspflag.org

Chapter Officers: President: Mike Balasa, Vice-president: Carol Balasa

Secretary: Christine Hammond, Treasurer: Ron Wallen

Directors: Gina Orban, Dan Smith, Sly Zelnys