



HeartBeat

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays



PFLAG Olympia, Washington

Issue 78 Nov.-Dec. 2006

Carry on ...

by Jeff Loyer

My High School Class of 1976 is having their 30 year reunion this year. Mesa High Jackrabbits, with the motto "Carry On". Unfortunately, they decided to have it over Thanksgiving, so I won't be going. Probably wouldn't know many people there anyway - I went to the "Alternative School" to study auto mechanics. Junior year schedule was 3 hours of auto mechanics, 1 hour of no-sweat PE (no showers available), and 1 hour of economics. Flunked economics. Mom wasn't impressed, to say the least...

I've changed a bit since then. College grad and Engineer now, and all three of my own daughters are out of high school. My politics have changed a lot, too. "Commies" don't seem quite so evil, and "Free Enterprise" and Democracy seem to have a few warts of their own.



The world has changed a lot, too. Obviously technology is a whole new world now, but politics has also evolved. Globalization is making allies of some of our past enemies, while new forces put us at war with countries we formerly didn't pay much attention to. In some ways it feels like things haven't changed so much; we've just changed enemies.

And of course I'm struck by the change in attitudes (mine included) towards homosexuality and gender identity. Bigotry in this area is getting as outdated as 8-track tapes. Of course, it's not gone, and neither is bigotry on account of race. But, it's certainly been knocked down a lot. And the most wonderful part of it, in my opinion, is that there's no going back. Now that frank discussion is taking place, and people are studying the issue with some semblance of openness, the only conclusion that can come out of it is that the old ways were wrong.

I'm convinced that, on this issue (GLBTQ...), we will only get wiser, and our policies will evolve to eradicate the enormous inequities that exist. I'm an optimist. (More bad news for pessimists, by the way - optimists live longer). But, I also know it's not going to come about quickly or without a lot of work. And PFLAG will be an essential part of the change, with its unique position to garner support for the cause. I'm excited to be part of the change.

I'd encourage all of you to take heart in how far we've come. I'd also say that we're not done yet. As the Mesa High Jackrabbits would say: Carry On!

HeartBeat is a free publication of the PFLAG chapter in Olympia, Washington, published six times a year. The editors are Alec & Gabi Clayton.

Unsolicited articles are welcome and are due by the 10th of even-numbered months. The editors reserve the right to reject or edit material.

The deadline for the next issue is 12/15/2006

Mail submissions to:

HeartBeat

P.O. Box 12732

Olympia, WA 98508-2732

Or email to: newsletter@pflag-olympia.org



▼ SUNDAY, NOV. 12, 2-4:30 PM

Home for the holidays

Visiting friends and relatives during the holiday season can often present perils and pitfalls, as well as joy for gays, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning people. How to make the best of the holidays will be the subject of our program at the November meeting.

▼ SUNDAY, DEC. 10, 2-4:30 PM

Our Annual Points of Light Celebration

Members and visitors come forward one at a time, if they are moved to do so, to light candles in honor of those persons who have been points of light in their lives.

PFLAG-Olympia Alert

PFLAG-Olympia Alert is an email service of PFLAG-Olympia designed to inform members of upcoming events, programs, and more. Email updates are sent out prior to each of our the regular second Sunday meetings and whenever something comes up that we think our members and friends need to know about. You can subscribe to the alert by sending an email to our newsletter editor at newsletter@pflag-olympia.org — put "Subscribe PLAG-Olympia Alert in the subject line.

PFLAG-Olympia meeting format

2:00-2:30 p.m.	Introductions
2:30-2:40 p.m.	Announcements
2:40-3:15 p.m.	Support
3:15-3:30 p.m.	Social time/snacks
3:30-4:30 p.m.	Program (see above)

Double Whammy?

by Barb Kline

I was watching a little of the debate between Darci Burner and Dave Reichart tonight, and somehow, flitting thoughts brought me to the realization that tomorrow (October 11th) is National Coming Out Day. National Coming Out Day was a big thing to me when I first came out. The idea of a special day for coming out to someone new was stirring, although truthfully, I am not sure I ever actually took the opportunity it presented. I always intended to, but that is a different story!

National Coming Out Day slowly lost some of it's appeal over the years. After living in Washington, and specifically Olympia, for a few years, National Coming Out Day was not nearly as significant in my life. In fact, I couldn't think of anyone I could come out to, aside from perhaps the checker at Target. Even the brigade of baristas at my two favorite coffee places all know I am lesbian. So coming out was not an issue... until...

As many of you know, I was diagnosed with Multiple Sclerosis about three and a half years ago. As with being me (gay, lesbian, whatever!), I had no problem sharing this diagnosis with people. In fact, I was very "out" with my disease, as I believe exposure to that which is different is the best way to learn about differences. I also believe that, as with other medical issues such as cancer, the more people are somehow touched by or know someone with a disease, the more people there will be supporting the search for a cure.

Advocacy and Education are as much a part of me as a person with MS, as they are a part of me as a member of PFLAG. But how does this all fit with the PFLAG newsletter, and National Coming Out Day?

A little over three months ago, I changed jobs. I am now working driving a truck at a very physically demanding job... one that could be affected if my MS were to flare up.

I had, as you might imagine, some issues to consider before applying for and taking this job. MS is very unpredictable. Many people know this, and whenever I talk to or see friends who haven't seen me for a while, they always ask about my health. There is not one person among those I consulted who wasn't worried about how the job might affect the MS, and how the MS might affect the job. And thus began a new chapter in my Coming Out Story.

In order to get this job, I had to have a commercial drivers license (CDL), and a physical for commercial drivers. I have had a CDL for years, and when I went for my physical, I nervously disclosed to the doctor that I have MS, knowing that it could mean the loss of my CDL, and the loss of my chance at this new job. She paused, asked a few questions, and signed off on my physical saying that I am fit to drive.

Since taking this new job, I have told only the Human Resources manager of my MS. She has proven to not be as discreet as I would like, but I still believe she may have only told the top management. I am also guessing these folks have never had any real experience or exposure to MS, as no one has approached me about it. Still, I have a bit of a dilemma here. If I "come out" as a person with MS, will my managers loose faith in my ability to always do my job? Will my partner on the truck try to take on more responsibility, or perhaps trust me less to be able to hold on to a 40 lb dolly carrying a 200 lb washing machine up a flight of stairs? Will I be demoted if I do have any problems that may possibly be attributed to MS?

Unfortunately, these are real possibilities. My orientation does not seem to matter to these people, but while they may like me, a dormant illness, especially one like MS, can be cause for doubts in my ability. I haven't come out at work. Although I am fairly sure they know my orientation, I am even more certain they do not know my greater secret...

National Coming Out Day... What does it mean to you?

NEW or RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP

Please check the membership types you prefer:

- Individual \$35
- Household \$50
- Senior/Student/Low Income \$15

New Renewal

Membership \$ _____

Add this amount as my tax-exempt gift (thank you!) \$ _____

TOTAL MEMBERSHIP AND GIFT \$ _____

I want Olympia's bi-monthly newsletter *HeartBeat* (which is mailed in an envelope with no identified return address.)

I want the national quarterly newsletter *PFLAGpole* (which is not mailed in an envelope).

I want to be added to the PFLAG-Olympia email alert/announcement list (include your email address.)

DATE: ____/____/____ PHONE: (____)____-____

SIGNED: _____

PRINT NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____ STATE: _____ ZIP: _____

EMAIL ADDRESS: _____

Mail with your check to: PFLAG Olympia, P O Box 12732; Olympia, WA 98508-2732

PFLAG is a tax-exempt non-profit 501(c)(3) organization not affiliated with any political or religious institution.

Women "coming out" after 30 a peer-facilitated support group

for women over the age of 30 who are "coming out" or have previously come out as queer, lesbian or bisexual, or who are questioning their orientation.

**Meets 1st and 3rd Tuesday of every month
from 5:30 pm – 7:00 pm**

Unity Church of Olympia; 1335 Fern Street SW

For more information, please contact Carmen
360-870-8585 ~ carmen333@comcast.net

COLORS IN THE RAINBOW:

RACE, CULTURE, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION ~ PART I OF A 6 PART SERIES: AFRICAN-AMERICAN CULTURE

BY STEPHEN M. WHITE, PSY.D.

Gay men and women of color often contend with challenges specific to their historic and cultural heritage. "Colors in the Rainbow" is a series of articles detailing the unique perspective on homosexuality held by different racial and cultural groups.

Homosexuality has long divided the African-American community. The increasing emphasis on the pursuit of gay civil rights in the 21st Century inevitably calls to mind the Black civil rights struggles that came to prominence in the 1960s. Some members of the Black community see genuine parallels in the two movements, while others see them as completely distinct, and may resent any effort to link the two.

Many influential Black politicians have spoken in support of gay rights, including 2004 U.S. Presidential candidates Carol Moseley Braun and Al Sharpton, former Surgeon General Joycelyn Elders, and South African Bishop Desmond Tutu.

Among those who oppose greater legal protection for gay men and women is Project 21, a Washington-based alliance of Black conservatives. Members of the Congressional Black Caucus were skeptical when John Kerry drew parallels between civil rights movement and gay rights, and Jesse Jackson surprised many when he voiced opposition to gay marriage, saying, "In my culture, marriage is a man-woman relationship."

Jackson is not alone among the clergy in his lack of support for gay rights. Many Black ministers have concerns about homosexuality. Rev. Richard Bennett Jr. of the African American Council on Christian Clergy has said, "Just because I don't want a gay man to teach my son in school, that is not discrimination." The AACCC invoked the legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., when in 2002 it distributed fliers to Black churches in Miami indicating that King would have been "outraged" at the comparison of gay rights with the Black civil rights movement.

A different point of view was

provided by Dr. King's widow, Coretta Scott King. In 1998 she told Reuters, "I still hear people say that I should not be talking about the rights of lesbian and gay people...I hasten to remind them that Martin Luther King Jr. said, 'Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.' I appeal to everyone who believes in Martin Luther King Jr.'s dream to make room at the table of brother- and sisterhood for lesbian and gay people." The late Reverend's son, Martin Luther King III, has also been a supporter of gay rights.

Many took notice when Julian Bond spoke in support of gay marriage. "I see this as a civil rights issue...that means I support gay civil marriage." The weight of this endorsement is underlined by Bond's credentials in the Black community. Bond helped found the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee in 1960, and provided narration for the *Eyes on the Prize* series.

Gay African-American characters in film have included Whoopi Goldberg's lesbian and bisexual characters in *The Color Purple* and *Boys On the Side*, Queen Latifah's lesbian character in the 1996 film *Set It Off*, and Cuba Gooding, Jr.'s excellent supporting role in *As Good As It Gets*. Will Smith played a gay man in *Six Degrees of Separation*, but sparked controversy when he balked at a same-sex kiss in the script and made insensitive comments in the press.

Hip-hop and rap music are a reflection of Black culture, but are also a powerful force in the creation of attitudes and behavior. Early rap recordings were almost universally negative toward homosexuality. This trend was first challenged by Disposable Heroes of Hiphoprisy's "Language of Violence" in 1992, followed by Digable Planets, and top-selling artist Kanye West, who spoke out against homophobia after he learned that his cousin was gay.

Openly gay athletes are few and far between, let alone Black gay athletes. Sheryl Swoopes, a star basketball player with the Houston Comets, began to change this situation when she came out as a lesbian in 2005.

Important literary works include

The Fire Next Time, a classic 1963 treatise on American race relations by James Baldwin. Though not addressed in his book, it is intriguing to consider how much his double minority status informed his writing on discrimination. Keith Boykin, the executive director of the National Black Gay and Lesbian Leadership Forum, has examined the complexities of being Black and gay in his 1997 book *One More River To Cross* and in 2005 discussed men who identify as heterosexual even though they may seek sex with other men in *Beyond the Down Low*.

The Black community is clearly struggling to come to terms with homosexuality. But why should this issue be so difficult for African-Americans? In the 1994 documentary *Black Is, Black Ain't* the late Marlon Riggs suggested that gender roles may be at the root of this issue. The fear that male homosexuality indicates a lack of masculinity takes on a different meaning for a group that is already facing social oppression, and a man who willingly gives up the privilege that comes with the traditional male gender role may be regarded with contempt.

As with any prejudice, the gradual reduction of bias toward homosexuality in the African American community will take time. But with the courage and determination shown by many leaders there is every reason to expect that Black American will be more open to the gay and lesbian members of their family.

Organizations/Resources

National Black Justice Coalition (NBJC):
www.nbjcoalition.org

PFLAG's Families of Color Network (FOCN): www.pflag.org/Families_of_Color_Network.focn.0.html

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Stephen M. White is a clinical psychologist in San Diego, and facilitates a PFLAG meeting in Carlsbad. He is completing a book to help parents adjust when they learn they have a gay child. He can be reached at swhite@the-rainbow-connection.org

The PFLAG Mission

To promote the health and well-being of

gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered 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.

To me, being queer isn't who you're sleeping with; it's just an idea that sexuality isn't gender-based, that it's love-based.

~ Ani DiFranco

Election of new board members

We will have elections for new board members at our November meeting. The elections normally take only a few minutes and will not interfere with our regular business and program.

Alec Clayton has completed his second term as president of the board and will be stepping down. Jeff Loyer has agreed to accept the nomination as the new president. Jeff currently handles the chapter's library. He has previously served on the board, and was chair of the Out House to the School House committee.

The board will have to choose a new librarian to take Jeff's place. Any member who would like to be the new librarian is encouraged to let the board know.

Gabi Clayton is also dropping off the board, as are Beth and Gib Rossing and Darrelyn Kamerman. Gib has been our treasurer.

Gabi and Alec will continue to do the newsletter and website.

Current board members who will continue serving are: Virgil Clarkson, Richelle Lanning, Beverly Schouviller, and Julianne Wasilausky.

Julianne has agreed to take over as Secretary, and Richelle is willing to take over as Treasurer if no one else steps forward.

Other members who will be running for a position on the board are: Marsha Weaver and Kristin Stewart.

Any member may place his or her name for a position on the board. The board meetings are from 7-9 p.m. on Tuesday evenings after the monthly PFLAG meetings.



PFLAG

Olympia, Washington

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

MEETS at 2PM on the second Sunday of each month at First United Methodist Church, 1224 Legion Way SE, Olympia. It is handicap-accessible. (Except in August when we have our annual picnic at a local park.)

DIRECTIONS: from Sylvester Park on Capitol Way and Legion Way, go 12 blocks east on Legion Way to Boundary Street. Turn left around the church. Park in the lot at 5th Avenue and Boundary and enter through the glass doors.

Letters, articles and requests for literature are welcome.

Mailing address:

PO Box 12732; Olympia, WA 98508-2732

For information or to discuss personal matters with an understanding parent and experienced PFLAG member,

**CALL the PFLAG-Olympia HELPLINE:
(360) 866-0511**

Email: info@pflag-olympia.org
Website: <http://www.pflag-olympia.org>

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