



HeartBeat

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays



Olympia, Washington

Issue 83 Sept.-Oct. 2007



PFLAG members chow down at the annual picnic in Priest Point Park.

Our journey with our trans son

By Kristin Stewart

We are the parents of two sons; the elder son straight and the younger transgendered. We are proud of them both, and our pride has to do with the people they are, rather than their sexual orientation. Granted, our journey with our younger son has been a bit more challenging. When Ty came out to us as trans, it did make the puzzle pieces of his childhood and adolescence fall into place. But of course, the challenges for our family didn't end there. There have been the explanations to grandparents, aunts and uncles, cousins, and long time friends, as well as relatively recent friends, neighbors, and acquaintances. We are also proud, and lucky, that with varying degrees of understanding and acceptance, all these people have stood by us and our son. Our biggest concern though, is for our son and the issues he faces every day. The challenges for Ty are so much greater than ours. There have been major problems in employment, medical care, and housing, not to mention navigating interpersonal relationships. There are complications we would never have considered, and there is very little we can do to resolve them. And so we love him, and try to be supportive in whatever way we can.

Which leads me to the real message from me for this newsletter! We have long had gay and lesbian friends, and more recently bisexual, transgendered, and queer friends and relatives. I am firmly committed to the belief that "if you are not part of the solution, you are part of the problem". What that means for me is that I will speak up, and I will be forthright, although I do try not to be confrontational or defensive. If folks choose to end our relationship, I am of the opinion it will be no real loss for me, as they cannot have been real friends. I have no idea what folks say after they leave my presence, or are gathered together when I am not there, but in general, people have been remarkably open. I hope that my approach is a lesson in acceptance and love. I do not mean to trivialize this whole issue by adding a final thought. "Lessons from the dog": Our now almost elderly Border Collie has known and loved our younger son for 12 1/2 years. The dog did not blink an eye, or change her attitude one iota when Ty changed his name and his sexual identity. The dog has always loved this person, and continues to do so. The dog knows it is the same person he has always loved. We should all do the same!

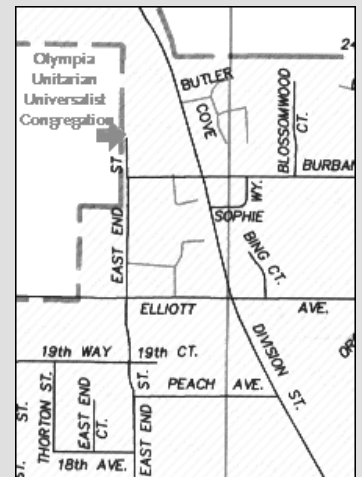


▼ SUNDAY, SEPT. 9, 2-4:30 PM

The Bible and Homosexuality: Religion, Spirituality, and Personal Intimacy, a discussion led by Gib Rossing.

▼ SATURDAY, OCT. 13, 7-9 PM

Silent Auction to benefit PFLAG-Olympia. To be held at the Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 2200 East End St. NW, Olympia. Please come and bring friends.



▼ SUNDAY, OCT. 14, 2-4:30 PM

Monthly Meeting: We will have the regular monthly meeting but with an unstructured discussion instead of a structured program or presentation.

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

COLORS IN THE RAINBOW: RACE, CULTURE, AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION

PART 6 OF A 6 PART SERIES: PART VI: ISLAMIC CULTURES

BY STEPHEN M. WHITE, PSY.D.

Islamic cultures tend to be highly condemning of homosexuality. The Qur'an has passages that, like some Judeo-Christian scripture, appear to forbid some sexual activity by men. These passages are interpreted different ways by different groups, but the vast majority of current Islamic societies consider homosexuality unacceptable. Some argue that historically Islam was more tolerant of homosexuality until the 1800s, when negative attitudes developed.

Despite the popular Western stereotype of Arab Muslims, the country with largest Muslim population is Indonesia. Large Muslim populations exist in South Asia, Sub-Saharan Africa, North Africa, and other Middle East/Arab countries. Large Islamic populations are also found in Central Asian countries such as Afghanistan and Azerbaijan, as well as Turkey and Albania.

The majority of countries with a significant Muslim population have outlawed homosexuality, with the significant exception of Indonesia, Turkey, Cyprus, and Albania. The

penalties and enforcement of these laws vary widely, but they often involve harsh penalties including capital punishment. After the hard-line revolution in 1979, Iran imposed the death penalty for homosexual activity, and began executing gay men. This practice had become less visible following international protests, but was renewed in 2005, when two teenage boys were publicly hanged. In Taliban-ruled Afghanistan the penalty for transgressors was to lie in a trench and have a wall bulldozed over them. Homosexual activity remains illegal, though such relationships have been reported after the U.S. invasion of Afghanistan in 2001.

In Turkey has police have banned gay-related activities on "public morality grounds." Attempts by Lambda, Istanbul to hold LGBT public gatherings have been denied on this basis. More than any other group, there is a dearth of openly gay figures in Islamic societies, making it difficult for young gay men and women to find role models. Despite the general lack of gay figures in everyday life there are some portrayals of gay characters in film and literature.

Gay characters in most films from Islamic societies tend to be subtle and often portrayed in a negative light. More direct and positive portrayals include Salah Abu Saif's Hamam Al-Malatili (The Malatili Bath, 1973). Realistic gay characters are also seen in Youssef Chahine's Iskindiriyya Leeh? (Alexandria, Why?, 1978), and Hadduta Misriyya (An Egyptian Fairy Tale, 1982), and Yousri Nasrallah's Mercedes (1993). Films by female directors include Unveiled by Angelina Maccarone and Beest Angosht (20 Fingers, 2004), by Mania Akbari. An important 2003 documentary, I Exist, portrays the circumstances Middle Eastern gay men and women who are living in the United States (available through www.unlearninghomophobia.com).

As with films, gay characters in literature are few in number. Among the more noteworthy novels are Ana Hiya Anti
(Continued on page 3)

NEW or RENEWAL MEMBERSHIP

Please check the membership types you prefer:

- Individual \$35
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- 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: _____

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

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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 might like 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.

by Elham Mansour, *The Stone of Laughter* by Hoda Barakat, and gay characters in the early novels of Nageeb Mahfouz. Non-fiction books include Stephen O. Murray & Will Roscoe's *Islamic Homosexualities: Culture, History, & Literature*, as well as more recent titles *Sex, Longing & Not Belonging: A Gay Muslim's Quest for Love & Meaning* by Pakistani author Badruddin Khan, and *Unspeakable Love: Gay and Lesbian Life in the Middle East* by Brian Whitaker.

It can be very difficult for gay men and women to find support in Islamic communities. Online resources include the Gay and Lesbian Arabic Society (GLAS), an international organization established to promote a positive image of gay men and women in Arab communities and to help members network. It currently has chapters in New York, Los Angeles, Lebanon, and Egypt (www.glas.org). GLAS is also developing a service for Arab lesbians called Lazeeza (www.glas.org/lazeeza.html).

Other online resources include Queer Jihad, featuring an excellent set of internet links and an extensive online library of essays on Islam and homosexuality, and al-Bab, a website designed to introduce non-Arabs to Arab culture. A Gay and Lesbian Arabs resource list (www.albab.com/arab/background/gay.htm) offers many helpful links. The Gay Arabs Chat Channel and Mail List (www.gayarab.org) has been in existence since 1992.

Support for family members can also be difficult to find. PFLAG has some resources available through the Families of Color Network section of their website (www.pflag.org), and Imaan, a group from the UK, offers some advice for parents (www.imaan.org.uk), including a description of what the stages of coming to acceptance are.

Despite the modern Muslim antipathy, there is evidence that homosexuality has been tolerated at many times and

places throughout the Middle East and other Islamic countries. The ancient Egyptians Khnumhotep and Niankhkhnum may have been the first recorded male couple in history, circa 2300 BCE. The couple were buried together, with tomb decorations showing them in a highly intimate embrace, and with their names combined, practices which parallel the burial conventions for married heterosexual couples.

Egyptian poet Beha ed-Din Zoheir (1186-1258) wrote several poems with bisexual content, and there is homoerotic content in *The Book of One Thousand and One Nights*, *The Rubaiyat of Omar Khayyam*, and in the poetry of Persian poets Attar, Rumi (founder of the Whirling Dervishes), Sa'di, Hafiz, Jami, and Iraj Mirza.

The future of gay men and women in Islamic societies remains unclear. There are few signs that major change will come in the immediate future, but the evidence that homosexuality has been accepted at various times and places gives hope that Islamic cultures may find a way to become more accepting of their non-heterosexual members.

Resources/Organizations

- Gay and Lesbian Arabic Society (GLAS): www.glas.org
- Lazeeza (Arab Lesbians Online): www.glas.org/lazeeza.html
- Queer Jihad: www.well.com/user/queerjhd/index.htm
- al-Bab: www.al-bab.com/arab/background/gay.htm
- Gay Arabs Chat Channel and Mail List: www.gayarab.org
- GLAAD's Muslim/Arab American page: glaad.org/poc/muslim/index.php
- Imaan (support for UK LGBT and family): www.imaan.org.uk

SILENT AUCTION to benefit PFLAG-Olympia

PFLAG promotes 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.

One of our key current programs is outreach to the community to advance understanding and for a visible, unequivocal supportive and activist presence. We print and distribute informational and educational brochures, "I'm loved by PFLAG" stickers, we arrange public speaking events, we provide free Pancakes in the Park for Pride, and we answer many calls for help. In order to continue our activities, we need your support.

PFLAG is holding this silent auction to raise funds to continue the outreach work. PFLAG would appreciate a donation from you for the silent auction. Contact Shirley Pearson at 943-9590 or e-mail her at shirley.jp@comcast.net if you would like to join us in this effort.

The auction will be held Saturday, October 13, from 7 to 9 p.m. at Unitarian Universalist Congregation, 2200 East End St., Olympia (see map in event calendar, page 1).

Our regular monthly meeting will take place the following day, Sunday, Oct. 14 from 2 to 4:30 p.m.

THE BIBLE AND HOMOSEXUALITY

Religion, Spirituality, and Personal Intimacy

September's PFLAG program features an interactive discussion facilitated by Gib Rossing on issues concerning formal religion, individual spirituality, and intimate personal relationships that arise in response to one's view of the Bible and of homosexuality.

The discussion consists of three parts. The first part is "*Your view of the Bible and homosexuality*" that allows audience members an opportunity to express what for some may have been a very disturbing spiritual conflict while for others may be a total non-issue. The second is "*Conservative religion's view of the Bible and homosexuality*" that opens the floor to discuss the ways formal religion drives one side of the culture war against GLBT folk. The third part is "*Gib's view of the Bible and homosexuality*" during which the audience will be invited to consider and appreciate a unique principle of the Bible that is seldom expressed positively regarding same-sex relationships in discussions about sexual identity.

This program will take place from 3:30 to 4:30 p.m. during the regular monthly PFLAG meeting at First United Methodist Church, Sunday, Sept. 9.

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.

PFLAG Olympia welcomes all allies - straight and GLBTQ.

Our chapter's monthly attendance typically has an equal number of both.

“Gays and lesbians stood up for civil rights in Montgomery, Selma, in Albany, Ga. and St. Augustine, Fla., and many other campaigns of the Civil Rights Movement, Many of these courageous men and women were fighting for my freedom at a time when they could find few voices for their own, and I salute their contributions.”

- Coretta Scott King



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http://www.cafeshops.com/pflag_oly



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 (except in August when we have our annual picnic at a local park.) It is handicap-accessible.

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>

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 10/15/2007

Mail submissions to:
HeartBeat
P.O. Box 12732
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Or email to: newsletter@pflag-olympia.org