



Parents, Families & Friends
of Lesbians And Gays

PFLAG WEAVER

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays/Dallas

February, 2004

Our Mission

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.

PFLAG provides the opportunity for confidential dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

WEB SITES

NATIONAL – www.pflag.org

DALLAS – www.pflagdallas.org

PFLAG/Dallas

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Newsletter

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Newsletter Deadline:

February 12, 2004

by mail, fax or e-mail

Next Meeting

February 12, 2004

Second Thursday, 7-9:30 p.m.

Midway Hills Christian Church

11001 Midway Road, Dallas

Soulforce calls civil unions 'separate and unequal'

Signs on to 'Friend of the Court' Brief in Massachusetts

GLAD (Gay & Lesbian Advocates and Defenders) and other legal experts recently filed "Friend of the Court" briefs arguing that the recent court decision by the Massachusetts Supreme Judicial Court (SJC) granting equal marriage rights would not be satisfied with a "civil unions" bill. Soulforce signed on to the "Amici Curiae Brief of Civil Rights Leaders."

The expert briefs were filed in response to the Massachusetts Senate's request for an advisory opinion from the SJC as to whether a civil unions bill would satisfy the SJC's ruling that granted equal marriage rights in the state of Massachusetts to same-gender couples in the case of *Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health*.

"The Amici Curiae Brief of Civil Rights Leaders states that creating a separate status for same-sex couples is not equality, and separate is inherently unequal. The Massachusetts Constitution strictly forbids any system that creates a separate, second-class status of citizens.

"Soulforce, Inc. is pleased to have signed on to this brief, written on behalf of John Lewis, one of the original speakers at the 1963 March on Washington, the Boston Bar Association, and 27 other local and national civil rights

groups," said Karen Weldin, Soulforce Director of Operations. "We look forward to the day when all people will be treated equally, with dignity and respect, and no one will be regarded as a second class citizen in a country that guarantees the right to life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness."

Soulforce is a national interfaith network committed to ending spiritual violence perpetuated by religious policies and teaching against gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people. Soulforce teaches and employs the non-violent principles of M. K. Gandhi and Martin Luther King Jr. to the liberation of sexual and gender minorities.

Founded in 1978, Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders (GLAD) is New England's leading legal rights organization dedicated to ending discrimination based on sexual orientation, HIV status and gender identity and expression. Gay & Lesbian Advocates & Defenders were lawyers for the seven same-sex couples who won a historic court victory on Nov. 18, 2003, in the case of *Goodridge v. Dept. of Public Health* which granted equal civil marriage rights in Massachusetts.

What kinda deal is this? No newsletter; now two newsletters?

Well, stuff happens. What happened last month was that two holidays and an early meeting ran slap into my schedule and the printer's. So I missed their slot, and they delivered the newsletter here on meeting day ...

So here's a rehash of the newsletter subject. We're pruning the list. You can:

1. be put on an e-mail list to be notified of when the newsletter hits the Web site – send me an e-mail with your e-address and your Zip code;
2. renew your membership and continue to receive a mailed version;
- or 3. send me \$5 and stay on the mailing list. Choose none of the above and March will probably be the last newsletter you get. Mailing and e-mail addresses are in the column on the left. (See the January issue for a membership breakdown.)

PFLAG/Dallas appreciates your continued support.

Our neighbors sound off about Britney Spears

Fort Worth Star Telegram editorial: Goin' to the chapel

For those who believe that overly liberal courts and lawmakers pose a revolutionary threat to the sanctity of the marital institution, consider Exhibit "B" – as in Britney Spears.

Didn't she and her "childhood friend" just profoundly demonstrate the esteem with which pop culture views marriage?

Apparently acting like a pair of drunken goobers (whether or not that actually was their status), Spears and Jason Allen Alexander of Louisiana rode a lime-green limo to a Las Vegas wedding chapel, "took a joke too far" and got hitched in the wee hours of a Saturday.

Spears reportedly attached so much gravity to the occasion that she wore jeans and a baseball cap and walked down the aisle with a hotel bellman.

This pair, old enough in theory to know better at 22, took their commitment so seriously that they immediately cried, "Oops!" and dashed for an annulment.

Keep in mind that Spears is an entertainment fabrication who craves young men's adulation and young women's emulation – not to mention as many dollars as she can vacuum from their unguarded wallets.

Be assured that she'll laugh all the way to the bank, given the media hoopla over her brainless antics – from Melbourne to Provo, Chicago to Glasgow, Jerusalem to Contra Costa, Calgary to Seattle, with Voice of America getting into the act along with Teen Hollywood.com and MTV.

So much for same-sex unions being the most potent threat imaginable to holy matrimony.

Letters: With this ring

I was very disturbed to read the *Star-Telegram's* stories this week on Britney Spears' wedding and subsequent annulment.

Notice that I wrote wedding, not marriage. What she entered into wasn't a marriage – it was a heartbreaking mockery of what should be one of the most sacred commitments ever made.

But that wasn't the only thing that bothered me. I was disgusted to read the last lines of the Sunday article: "Spears released her fourth album, 'In the Zone,' in November. It debuted at the top of the album charts. She begins a concert tour March 2 in San Diego."

The fact that Spears has just released a CD or that she's about to begin a concert tour has nothing to do with the wedding, which was what the article was about. But that information was tacked onto the end of the article in the *Star-Telegram* and to an Associated Press story that I read online.

This is disheartening to me because of the message it sends

to Spears and other celebrities: Do something shocking (which usually translates into illegal or immoral), and you'll get incredible free publicity.

Not just free publicity in the sense that the celebrity's name will be in the media spotlight, but in the sense that very specific information about a recent CD or upcoming concert tour will be distributed to millions of people at no cost to the celebrity.

We can decry acts of celebrity immorality, but unless the media stop rewarding bad behavior with free publicity, Hollywood will never behave any way but badly.

So cover newsworthy celebrity stories, but refrain from including unrelated promotions of celebrities' newest releases.

Meredith Simons

Fort Worth

The marriage of Britney Spears and ... Jason Alexander on Saturday and the subsequent annulment of that marriage prove that the United States needs to amend the Constitution to protect the sanctity of marriage from that dangerous homosexual agenda.

David Currier

Grapevine

Jeffery's terrific letter

Congress wants to strip me of my rights

For the first time in my life as an American citizen, and at age 58, I am faced with having my civil rights removed by the United States government. I, a gay American, am told that I have no right to marry another man. I am told people are uncomfortable with this, that marriage is sacred.

To them I would say, as my nephew is fond of saying, "and your point is?"

It has been proposed in the U.S. House of Representatives and Senate that the U.S. Constitution, the foundation of all law in this country, be amended to restrict civil marriage to one man and one woman. This is being done on religious grounds. Never mind the separation of church and state. Never mind that those who legislate this claim to be followers of Jesus Christ. Never mind that many claim homosexuality is wrong and a sin according to the Bible.

No one has ever been able to quote Jesus on the subject of homosexuality. It is only some of the followers of Jesus who make this claim. Jesus said, "This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12) Love of one

Continued on page 4



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Jewish umbrella group endorses civil marriage

by Michael Paulson
The Boston Globe

The Jewish Community Relations Council, the major public policy voice of the Jewish community in Greater Boston, has voted overwhelmingly to endorse same-sex marriage.

The endorsement, by an umbrella organization representing 42 Jewish groups, is part of a growing effort by liberal religious voices to counter the strong opposition to same-sex marriage voiced by the state's Catholic bishops. The bishops of the state's four Catholic dioceses today plan to announce a major campaign to defeat same-sex marriage.

"This is a critical time, and there are a lot of faith groups lining up on the other side, but we will now have the authority to speak in support of the Supreme Judicial Court decision," said Nancy K. Kaufman, executive director of the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston. "We would oppose any effort to compel religious leaders of any faith to perform ceremonies they don't condone, but as long as marriage is recognized as a civil institution, we feel that to deny the right to civilly marry is an act of discrimination against same-sex couples."

Several Jewish organizations had already endorsed same-sex marriage, including the largest Jewish denomination in the country, the Union for Reform Judaism, and the Northeast region of the Central Conference of American Rabbis, the association of Reform rabbis that voted unanimously this week to support same-sex marriage. But same-sex marriage is opposed by leaders of Orthodox Judaism, a denomination that makes up a small minority of Greater Boston's 250,000-member Jewish community. The board of trustees of the Jewish Community Relations Council, made up of Jewish religious and social service organizations and prominent Jewish individuals, on Wednesday night voted 51-5 in favor of the resolution endorsing same-sex marriage.

"The Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston urges our elected officials to enact legislation providing for same-sex marriage, in accordance with the recent ruling of the Supreme Judicial Court in the Goodridge case," the organization said. The group said it also "opposes any effort to amend the state Constitution to bar same-sex couples from marrying, or to deny legal benefits to same-sex couples and their families." One supporter of the resolution said she believes same-sex marriage will strengthen the institution of marriage, contrary to the arguments put forward by opponents.

"The Jewish community has been in support of civil liberties because we understand that discrimination against one group leads to discrimination against all," said Rabbi Barbara Penzner

of Temple Hillel B'nai Torah, a Reconstructionist Jewish congregation in West Roxbury. "I have officiated at wedding ceremonies for gay couples for 15 years, and I believe that gay marriage will do more for stable families and will not harm one single heterosexual marriage."

Same-sex marriage has become a hotly contested issue in Massachusetts because of a ruling by the state Supreme Judicial Court in November declaring that "barring an individual from the protections, benefits, and obligations of civil marriage solely because that person would marry a person of the same sex violates the Massachusetts Constitution." Gay rights advocates say the state must now issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples; opponents are pushing for a constitutional amendment that would bar same-sex marriage, and the state Senate has asked the Supreme Judicial Court if civil unions would satisfy its ruling.

The leader of the Orthodox opposition to the Jewish Community Relations Council vote, Rabbi Gershon C. Gewirtz of Young Israel synagogue in Brookline, declined to comment. The Coalition for Marriage referred calls to Rabbi Chaim Schwartz of Agudath Israel of New England, an Orthodox advocacy organization, who said, "This is an issue we believe is bringing about decadence in society."

"It's not that we do not believe in the civil rights of gay couples – we believe each person should be able to live in this great country – but we don't believe in calling it marriage," Schwartz said. "It's morally incorrect, and what's next? Bestiality? Marrying a dog? Marrying your cat?"

The resolution was welcomed by the leaders of the Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry, a multifaith organization.

"This is hugely important, and it reflects the broad base of support for civil marriage within the Jewish community," said Rabbi Devon A. Lerner, coalition cochairman. "It has been difficult for us to counter the large voice of the Catholic Church, but our supporters represent thousands of people, and we believe there's a very large constituency of people of faith who...support civil marriage."

The Religious Coalition for the Freedom to Marry is supported by 500 clergy and congregations from a variety of religious denominations who endorse gay marriage. Among the most prominent supporters are the Unitarian Universalist Association and the president of the Massachusetts conference of the United Church of Christ.

But the religious voices of supporters of gay marriage have been overshadowed by a chorus of opposition to gay marriage from leaders of the state's largest religious denomination, the Catholic Church, as well as from evangelical and African-American Protestant leaders.

The Catholic bishops of Massachusetts today plan to unveil an aggressive strategy to defeat same-sex marriage. They plan to outline steps they will take in trying to persuade lay Catholics to urge legislators to pass an amendment to the state Constitution that would define marriage as a union of one man and one woman.

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Meeting schedule

7 to 7:15 p.m.: Newcomers meet for orientation
Oldtimers hear announcements, etc.
7:15 to 8:15 p.m. (approx.): Rap groups
8:15 to 9:30 p.m.: Speaker, meeting

Page Four

From the President

Hey, Puddin's –

Happy Valentine's Day!

Speaking of coming from the heart, a broken heart is one the most difficult things to deal with. I'm talking about a broken heart from anything that we've had our hearts set on, like a child getting married. When a GLBT child comes out, one of the first things many parents think is they'll never see their child get married.

It isn't that GLBTs don't want to get married; it's that some people are trying their darndest to stop same-sex unions. They want to decide what marriage is for everyone. This year the neo-puritans are attempting to define marriage under their terms, thinking their prejudiced view is the only healthy definition of a committed couple. They are using unhealthy scare tactics and pushing their uneducated point by proposing the "Marriage Act Amendment." It states any couple not officially married as "one man and one woman" won't have civil rights under the U. S. Constitution. That rules out a lot of people and a lot of families. It's heartbreaking.

When we allow someone else to define who we are, we lose our identity. We become one big blob with the people we let define us. No one can make us be something we're not. When we allow ourselves to become like everyone else, we can't complain that we have no rights. We can't argue that we're helpless. The only person who can really help you is you. You have to get out of your comfort zone on your own. That may mean getting yourself to a PFLAG meeting. You have to search for answers. They don't just come to you.



It's very humbling to ask for help when we think that it's a sign of weakness. We get confused and we may end up going to hurtful people to "fix" us or our GLBT loved ones. We grasp for any answers that fit into our tight, boxed-in way of thinking. But it's very rewarding to break out of old molds that don't define us any more. When our hearts are broken, we need to dig deep and discover who we really are. We need to look at how we define our relationships to others, especially to our GLBT loved ones.

Do we have to settle for a broken heart, or is there something we can do to understand the situation? Are we strong enough to challenge our outdated views? Sometimes we need help with that. Sometimes we're so worried about what other people think, that we don't even know how to think for ourselves. We need to hear from all sides. But most importantly we need to think from the inside; from the heart.

PFLAG helps parents, families, and friends of GLBTs think for themselves. Two people who are in a loving committed relationship represent a healthy family whether they are GLBT or straight. They deserve civil rights. Don't let someone else define who you or your GLBT loved ones are. Take that gutsy move and look into yourself. Look into your beliefs; question if they are really yours, or have you felt pressured and scared? Look and see if your people support system is positive or negative. It's easier to go with the crowd, but where has that left you and your relationship with your GLBT loved one/s? Could it be that if you really looked at the situation from an objective viewpoint, you'd understand that GLBTs are normal? You don't need to have a broken heart. You can follow your heart.

We thank The Texas Gay Rodeo for making our chapter an official beneficiary for 2004. If you like rodeo, we'll need members to volunteer to work PFLAG tables at various TGRA events. No, you won't have to be a rodeo clown. No bull is gonna chase you

around the arena. However, in April TGRA has a big talent show. We'll be looking for help with our entry. We'll keep you posted.

Pat Smith

Co-president

Fashion Statement:

Fighting homophobia? Fine by me

by Kate Zernike

Last spring, a group of 10 Duke University students sat around a dinner table discussing how homogenous their campus felt – by which they meant the same style of dress, same handbag, same political attitudes. The conversation quickly focused on antigay sentiment (a few years earlier, a *Princeton Review* guide had named Duke the nation's most homophobic campus).

The friends, both gay and straight, came up with a style idea of their own: T-shirts that read, in one-inch type, "gay? fine by me." Among them, they decided they knew 450 students and faculty members they could persuade to wear the shirts on one designated day. "We thought maybe it was possible that these people didn't have a way to make it clear that homophobia is not something they believe in," says Leila Nesson, a graduate student in history. "We would give people a really visible but not aggressive way to say, 'I'm not homophobic.'"

"Most of the protest activity on campus had fallen into a hackneyed method," she adds. "There was a lot of marching around with signs. It was too easy to dismiss. We wanted to try to do something that was much more inclusive and reached a broader audience."

On April 14, the group gave away 700 shirts, and most recipients put them on immediately. Crucially, they made sure they got basketball players (this being Duke) and professors. They also produced baby-doll-style shirts so no one could complain the tees weren't cute enough.

The shirts quickly became popular. What began as a T-shirt giveaway has evolved into a nonprofit organization (finebyme.org), with shirts selling for \$7 each. More than 2,000 have been distributed at Duke, and the idea has moved to other campuses, including the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and at Greensboro, Wake Forest, Bucknell, Arizona State and the University of New Hampshire.

As a sign of success, the phrase has entered the Duke lexicon. An editorial about parking tickets in the student newspaper last fall ran under the headline: "Tickets? Not fine by us."

Jeffery's excellent letter from page 2

person for another sounds sacred to me. Enshrining that love in a legal and moral commitment by two people of whatever gender sounds Christian to me.

On any grounds this is blatant discrimination and disenfranchisement of millions of American citizens and taxpayers. For the first time in United States history, the Constitution is being used to strip Americans of rights of citizens. The Founding Fathers would be amazed. I urge all Americans to prevent this from happening.

Cornelius Jeffery Weber

Dallas, Texas

Jeffery is PFLAG/Dallas' treasurer and librarian. His letter appeared in the *Dallas Morning News* and on the national newswire, *Fenceberry*. Good work, Jeffery!