



Parents, Families & Friends
of Lesbians And Gays

PFLAG WAVE

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays/Dallas

March, 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.

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PFLAG/Dallas

(Newsletter and all correspondence)
P.O. Box 111148 • Carrollton, TX 75011

972/777 PFLAG

(972/777-3524)

PFLAG/Dallas Co-presidents:

Donna Akin – 972/443-1422

pflagdonna@yahoo.com

Pat Smith – 214/538-2574

psmith@pflagdallas.org

Newsletter

Phone 972/418-1898

Fax 972/417-0880

newsletter@pflagdallas.org

Newsletter Deadline:

March 11, 2004

by mail, fax or e-mail

Next Meeting

March 11, 2004

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

Midway Hills Christian Church

11001 Midway Road, Dallas

Homosexuals Destroying Marriage?

by Sean Turner

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Nothing bothers me more than seemingly intelligent (and not so intelligent) people making specious arguments in defense of their beliefs, in the guise of some “empirical truth.” Case in point – the so-called “debate” over same-sex marriages. Since the Massachusetts Supreme Court took up the issue last year, same-sex marriages have eclipsed all other news items – save the Democrat primary – including the conflict in Iraq. Everyone with an opinion – including myself – has weighed in on the issue; protests in support and opposition abound; and state legislatures are scrambling to write new laws and change constitutions. But back to the point ...

There seem to be as many *ad hominem* arguments opposing same-sex marriages, as there are all-stars for the Yankees to sign (sorry, Yankees fans). However, for brevity's sake, I'll attempt to cover just a few of them.

“The uniqueness of marriage” – This is a phrase being used by the Campaign For California Families, *et al*, as they remain strident in their efforts to stop the onslaught of same-sex marriages currently taking place in the Golden State. There is nothing unique about marriage. It has existed for millennia, for varying reasons and in a number of forms, both recognized and unrecognized by respective local governments. Over 2 million marriages occur every year, with a divorce rate nearly half the marriage rate.

“Homosexuality will increase” – Since when does a law, or lack thereof, determine one's sexual orientation? One doesn't suddenly become “gay” because same-sex marriages become legal everywhere. Homosexuality has existed for ages, and will continue to exist independent of its acceptance and/or recognition by the state.

“Opponents of same-sex marriage significantly outnumber supporters” – So? A few

hundred years ago, opponents of the abolition of slavery likely outnumbered supporters of slavery. Did that make those opponents correct? This is one of the most hackneyed, and weakest, arguments roaming the media by those supporting a ban on same-sex marriages. This implies the preference of mob rule to force the belief of a majority on a minority.

“Defend the sanctity of marriage” – Ah, the ubiquitous line of same-sex marriage opponents, and one apparently worthy of a State of the Union address. What exactly is being defended? From whom? This vague phrase is mere groupthink – implying that there is some sort of “national marriage” to protect. Since marriage is an agreement among individuals, the sole “defenders” of marriage are the parties of the marriage – not the courts, the president, government, or the “masses.” The parties of a marriage determine its sacredness, or lack thereof; and based on the divorce rates in the United States, it's a flip of the coin.

“The whole concept of marriage will be meaningless” – This is perhaps the saddest argument in opposition to same-sex marriages. It suggests that these individuals derive the meaning of their marriages from others with whom they disagree. My wife and I have and continually define our marriage on our own terms, regardless of the social trend du jour or majority opinion. If heterosexuals let homosexuals or anyone else define their marriages, then they have deeper issues to worry about.

“It's not God's way” – This basis for opposition is understandable, as many people believe that their respective religions forbid homosexual behavior. However, what should not be acceptable is the attempt by a majority to impose its religious or moral edicts on the masses. When this happens elsewhere, many here in America call that “tyranny” and “oppression.”

The opposition to same-sex marriages has taken many forms, with many positions, including erroneous comparisons to pedophilia – a

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PFLAG/Dallas appreciates your continued support.

Senior groups need to protect older gays

by Deb Price
The Detroit News

Gloria Bailey and Linda Davies laugh when they recall singing the Beatles' "When I'm 64" to one another when they fell in love as closeted social workers in Massachusetts.

Looking back, they say their younger selves could never have imagined they'd one day be openly gay, let alone one of the seven high-profile couples who persuaded Massachusetts' top court to rule they can marry beginning May 17.

But just as unfathomable, the couple of 32 years says, is that they'd ever be 64.

Growing old seemed to Linda and Gloria like something other people did. Or, more specifically, something older people did. But Gloria turns 64 next year and Linda is not far behind at 58.

"I'm happy to say I still love her," Linda says, breaking off to sing a few lines from the old Beatles tune. "But the years have gone by too fast."

With the years came a vacation home on Cape Cod, a fishing boat called the *Glory B* and a four-wheeler they drive along the beach. But also came Linda's double hip replacement, Gloria's high cholesterol and blood pressure, and membership in the American Association of Retired Persons (AARP).

When the nation's top advocacy groups for seniors think of the folks they're representing, Gloria and Linda probably aren't the first faces that come to mind. But as a new report by the Human Rights Campaign shows from Census Bureau data, at least one out of every 10 gay couples includes someone 65 or older, and nearly one in four same-sex couples includes someone 55 or older. The Stonewall generation is, well, now part of the Viagra generation.

And because older gay couples' relationships aren't recognized by the federal government, they face unique hardships right at the time they're experiencing the health and financial challenges that come with aging, HRC notes. Unlike with married heterosexuals, a surviving gay partner is unable to receive survivor Social Security benefits – which works out to be an average loss of \$5,528 each year.

A surviving gay partner also faces a big tax bill on an inherited retirement plan – 401(k) or individual retirement account – and even on a jointly owned home.

And if one older gay partner needs Medicaid assistance to enter a nursing home, the couple can be forced to sell their home in order to qualify financially. (See the report at hrc.org.)

These hardships on older Americans solely because they're

gay are simply unacceptable. That's far from a radical statement: 62 percent of Americans told Gallup last May that same-sex couples should have equal "health care benefits and Social Security survivor benefits." They felt that way even without fully understanding the heart-breaking financial consequences of current law on older gays.

The nation's top seniors groups could make a huge difference by adding their clout to the push to end this shameful treatment of a segment of America's elders. As the second-largest senior group, the National Committee to Preserve Social Security and Medicare, rightly notes on its Web page: "Congress and the White House listen when the National Committee speaks."

Those of us who want gay elders protected need to encourage the AARP and the National Committee to throw their considerable clout into erasing inequities.

The National Committee can be reached at 10 G Street, NE, Suite 600, Washington, DC 20002, or through its Web site at www.ncpssm.org. The AARP can be contacted at 601 E St., NW, Washington, DC 20049, or through its Web site at aarp.org.

Linda and Gloria look forward to the marriage certificate that will put them under the umbrella of state law protecting married couples. But until Congress changes federal law, the couple's marriage won't give them access to federal safety nets available to their heterosexual counterparts.

If Congress won't listen to its gay elders, perhaps it would listen to the advocacy groups whose mission it is to ensure no senior is left behind.

Deb Price writes for The Detroit News. You can reach her at (202) 906-8205 or dprice@detnews.com.



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separate and sickening issue. While it is fine to disagree on the issue, one must be wary of mob rule – or democracy, as it were – determining the fate of a nation. So, are homosexuals destroying marriage? Certainly not. Moreover, looking at the statistics, heterosexuals have been doing a good job destroying their own marriages without assistance.

Sean Turner is a member of the Project 21 Advisory Council of the National Center for Public Policy Research, a regular columnist for RenewAmerica.us, GOPUSA.com, MensNewsDaily.com, and a contributor to a number of news and political Web sites. His commentary also appears in the Atlanta Journal-Constitution, and the Washington Times. Readers can e-mail him at seanreplies@yahoo.com.



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Tired of waiting, gay couples decided to act

by Leonard Pitts Jr.
Miami Herald

It's a little-known fact that Martin Luther King Jr. didn't really lead the March on Washington.

What actually happened is that the marchers, a quarter-million strong, grew impatient waiting for the event to begin and stepped off the curb ahead of schedule. When they found out what had happened, King and other march "leaders" had to scramble to catch up. Freedom was in the air and the marchers saw no need to wait for permission to move.

Forty-one years later, that vignette from another era offers an irresistible analogy to frame what has been happening these past few days in San Francisco.

Public opinion seesaws between tolerance and intolerance, courts and legislatures debate civil union and marriage and abruptly, thousands of gay and lesbian couples decide to stop waiting for other people's decisions.

San Francisco Mayor Gavin Newsom makes the quixotic decision to issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples and suddenly gay men and lesbians are rushing as fast as planes, trains and Nikes will carry them, to the city where Tony Bennett left his heart.

Critics say the mayor has acted in defiance of state law, but Newsom calls same-sex marriage "inevitable."

In the long term, he might well be right. In the short term, it's a dicier question. The issue is being fought in the courts even as we speak and nobody can say with authority how it will come out. Gay marriage may move forward to legality, may move backward to prohibition; it remains to be seen.

The one thing that seems beyond debate is that the issue is indeed moving.

And there is, I think, something uplifting in the manner of that movement. Meaning that it comes not at the behest of some charismatic national leader or the bidding of some strident national organization. People are moving, rather, two by two, moving upon decisions made at dinner tables and in front of televisions, moving upon a conviction that now is the time.

Drops of water melting into a flood. The flood hurling itself against a wall, intolerance.

When you get past selective application of biblical injunctions and pious invocations of moral concern, that intolerance usually boils down to this curious bit of reasoning: Discrimination against gays ought to be allowed because, unlike skin color and culture, homosexuality is something people "choose" and therefore, can un-choose.

So, critics say, society ought not be required to extend civil

rights protections to gay people. Rather, gay people ought to be required to change.

The most absurd of the many absurd things about that argument is this: It asks us to believe a man might have his choice of a sexuality that is accepted and celebrated and one that will leave him open to ridicule, estrangement, physical abuse, job and housing discrimination, and the loss of basic legal protections ... and he would take the second one.

If that's not the dumbest thing I've ever heard, it's definitely in the top 10.

Granted, science has yet to figure out what causes homosexuality. Its roots may be psychological, may be physiological or may be, as I suspect, a combination of both.

But ultimately, it doesn't really matter, does it? Whatever causes a man to be gay or a woman lesbian is obviously powerful enough that they have no real choice in the matter. The people who have been flocking to Mayor Newsom's city did not decide to be gay. Anyone who is watching them with that thought in mind is missing – probably on purpose – the point.

What they have decided is that they are human beings worthy of human dignity.

What they have decided is that they are tired of waiting for people to get that.

What they have decided is that it's time to step off the curb.

UPS, employee settle same-sex lawsuit

by Louise Chu, Associated Press Writer
Atlanta Journal-Constitution

A gay man who sued United Parcel Service Inc. for allegedly denying him and his partner the same benefits as married couples withdrew his complaint Wednesday, after the two parties reached an out-of-court settlement.

Daniel Kline, 47, of San Francisco, had sued Atlanta-based UPS in Alameda County Superior Court last August, accusing the company of discrimination after it rejected his request for an out-of-state transfer as he sought to follow his partner, 51-year-old Frank Sories, to Chicago. The suit claimed the company's "Management Initiated Transfer Policy" violates the Federal Employment and Housing Act's prohibitions on marital status discrimination. Both parties announced Wednesday that they recently reached a settlement, the terms of which are confidential.

"We're hopeful that this lets other employers know that if they deny benefits to employees who are in same-sex relationships that they provide to married employees, they're opening themselves up to being sued," said Jon Davidson, senior counsel at the New York-based Lambda Legal Defense and Education Fund, an organization that fights for the legal rights of lesbians, gay men, bisexuals and those with HIV or AIDS.

Kline, who worked in UPS' Oakland, Calif. office, requested a transfer to Chicago last year after Sories' employer, United Airlines, closed its San Francisco office. The two had been in a committed relationship for 27 years. But according to the suit, UPS denied the transfer because Sories was not his spouse.

Kline and Sories lived apart for nine months before UPS granted the request last September, said Davidson, who noted his client had to submit repeated requests before that happened.

The couple has since been reunited in Chicago, and Kline continues to work for UPS.

"He's very happy about that. They were separated for more

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Insert Antiques Villa here. It runs until December.

Page Four

Hey, Puddin's,

Happy St. Patrick's Day! And all you Pats, Happy Name's Day! St. Patrick is known for chasing out the many snakes overtaking Ireland. In a sense, he "cleaned" it up. There are people in this country who think they can "clean up" society. They think that only people just like them should have rights and that everyone else is a "snake." They are somehow threatened by gays, lesbians, bisexuals or transgender people and they lash out insults in trying to make us change. They claim they are the saints, while GLBTs, families and friends are the snakes.

It's all about shame. The self-proclaimed saints shame the people they deem snakes. We don't have to slither into closets by taking on that shame. Being gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgendered, or loving a GLBT person, is nothing to be ashamed of. The whole purpose of shaming someone is to take away their dignity. Real saints would never do such a thing.

People who shame others are really hiding their own fears and inadequacies. So instead of dealing with themselves, they shame others. Unfortunately, people who are vulnerable fall for this shame; the "victim" sign being right on their forehead. They fall into a belief that somehow they are damaged goods and they should be ashamed of themselves. But it's not about them.

When we take on someone else's shame, it's like they put their heavy winter coat on you and tell you to wear it. The coat is oppressive and a burden. Before long, you could be wearing a lot of coats. It weighs you down. You feel there's nothing you can do about it. But there is ... take the coats off. Don't wear them. They are not yours. Don't take on someone else's shame.

Many times GLBTs take on incredible shame. I know of a lesbian college student who tried to commit suicide because she was rejected for who she is. Her sexuality became an issue. Feeling alone and vulnerable, she allowed a "coat" of shame to be placed upon her. The weight of it almost killed her.

Fortunately she realized that she didn't deserve to destroy herself just because someone else was ashamed of her and didn't approve. Instead of dying from shame, she called her true friends. They took her to the hospital which saved her life.

If you know anything about saints, you know that they were persecuted for having the courage to speak out against injustice. They spoke about love, not hate. St. Patrick was loved for ridding the country of a menace. Loving GLBTs, families and friends are not a menace. Shame is. Shame slithers and slides into your subconscious if you let it. At some point in all of our lives, we have had to deal with shame on some level. We may have let ourselves down in some way, or even let someone else down. We may question our self-worth. People who claim to be self-imposed saints or interpret what saints have said as a license to shame others are not dealing with their own sense of shame.

Love does not shame. PFLAG parents, families and friends throw those heavy coats off so they can embrace their loved ones. St. Patrick is the patron saint of excluded people. How about this St. Pat's Day, you include your GLBT loved ones in celebrating your family and extended family? Remember the Irish saying, "Many people will walk in and out of your life, but only true friends will leave footprints in your heart."

Our Fabulous Family Flamingo Fling bowling tournament is Saturday, May 15, 1 to 5 p.m. at Don Carter's West. Early sign-up for a team of four is \$80. Details will be posted on our Web site soon. We had a great time last year ... come join the fun with our Spring Fling!

Pat Smith

Walt Whitman joins Winfree Academy

Dallas Voice

In a strategic partnership designed to give Walt Whitman students access to an accredited diploma and expand its programs available to GLBTQ youth, The Walt Whitman Community School will join forces with the Winfree Academy Charter School (WACS) beginning with the Fall 2004 semester.

The Winfree Academy is an accredited Texas Charter School currently operating four campuses in the Dallas area and serving approximately 1,500 students. Throughout its history, Winfree has maintained a philosophy very similar to the mission of WWCS. Their 501(c)(3) mission statement states: "to create a supportive, safe environment that motivates, educates and trains students who have achievement, attendance and behavioral deficiencies so they can graduate from high school prepared with the skills and abilities needed for employment and life."

The alliance with Winfree will allow Walt Whitman to reach a significantly larger group of GLBTQ students from across the Metroplex than previously served. WWCS students enrolled this fall can attend any of the four existing campuses in Irving, Richardson, Lewisville or Grapevine. As a foundational part of the WWCS/WACS association, Winfree will add to its mission a statement of sexual orientation nondiscrimination for both students and faculty, and through diversity trainings and its active association with Walt Whitman, effect a fully inclusive environment.

Walt Whitman students will spend four hours of their school day in classes administered by Winfree Academy Charter Schools. This curriculum addresses the basic requirements for high school graduation in Texas. The remainder of their day will be spent in the Walt Whitman program where a variety of classes tailored to GLBTQ youth will be available. Counseling and support — historically what Walt Whitman has specialized in and built its reputation on — will continue to be emphasized and enhanced. Students from all of the Winfree Academy campuses will be eligible to participate in the Walt Whitman program.

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than nine months, maintaining two households and trying to keep a relationship together," Davidson said.

UPS spokeswoman Peggy Gardner said that the company already had expanded its transfer policy to include domestic partners before the lawsuit was filed, prompting officials to reverse their initial refusal of Kline's request.

"The policy had been changed earlier in the year but had not been fully communicated to all employees yet," Gardner said. She said UPS continually revises and updates employee benefits, which now include provisions for domestic partners.

"While you cannot do everything all at once, you attempt to add benefits to help the largest group of employees," she said.