



Parents, Families & Friends
of Lesbians And Gays

PFLAG WAVER

Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians And Gays/Dallas

September, 2003

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 Deadline:

September 11, 2003

by mail, fax or e-mail

Next Meeting

September 11, 2003

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

Midway Hills Christian Church

11001 Midway Road, Dallas

Teach gay children to cope, not retreat

by Leonard Pitts
Miami Herald

New York City school administrators begin filtering back to work next week. Students will return next month. And Harvey Milk High will become reality.

That's Harvey Milk as in the openly gay San Francisco politician who was famously murdered in 1978. Milk High, you see, is the nation's first public school for gay students.

The school, which is actually an expansion of a program started two decades ago by a gay rights group, will cost \$3.2 million. It is supposed to provide gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered teenagers a place to study without facing the experiences they often do in other public schools.

Experiences like being threatened, getting harassed and having the crap beaten out of them. Milk High is supposed to offer them a sanctuary.

I've been trying to figure out why that bothers me. Most of the school's critics have had no such difficulty.

Some point out that high school is seldom a featherbed for anybody. Kids get picked on because they wear glasses, or they have bad skin, or they are fat. But school is, I'm convinced, a different order of hell for gay kids.

Teenagers often have a bottomless capacity for cruelty toward those who are different. And few differences are perceived as more of a threat than sexual orientation.

Other critics are affronted that public money is being used to fund a school that serves a single, narrowly defined group.

Though I question the wisdom of spending \$3 million this way at a time when schools in New York and around the country are in budgetary distress, the principle itself doesn't bother me. Mainly because public money already funds schools serving narrowly defined groups. What else is a school for the arts, a school with a math or science emphasis, or a school serving children with learning disabilities?

Finally, there's the question of whether, as a matter of principle, society ought to allow the

segregation of students. Didn't we settle that question with *Brown vs. Board of Education* nearly half a century ago?

But truth is, we never stopped segregating children. We only stopped – or said we would stop – segregating them according to the brutal calculus of Jim Crow, which mandated inferior schools for the so-called inferior race. But we segregate for benign purposes all the time.

For example, we segregate by gender under the theory that kids do better in an all-girl or all-boy environment. We segregate by faith: Christians and Jews often enroll their children in private religious institutions. We even segregate by race: Though nonblack students can and do attend historically black colleges and universities, those of us who support those schools believe they affirm and nurture black students in ways other schools do not.

Just as Harvey Milk High proposes to do for gay kids. So why does it trouble me, then?

Here's why: If the problem is straight kids harassing gay ones, I'm not convinced the best solution is to send the gay ones packing. Especially since the real world doesn't work that way, doesn't allow you to be sealed away in some safety zone from that which makes your life miserable.

If New York schools have \$3.2 million to spend on this problem, maybe they should use the money to do what schools are supposed to do: educate. Teach tolerance to little miscreants who think hitting a gay kid ... makes them bigger than they are. Teach it to educators and administrators who allow that behavior.

And if any of them still don't get it, show them the door and help them through it.

Seek ways to nurture gay kids through what will probably be the most traumatic passage of their lives. Help them come to terms with something that probably scares them as much [as] or more than anybody else.

Do that, I think, and you accomplish more than Harvey Milk High ever could.

It's fine to give kids a place to run to. But isn't it better to help them cope with what they're running from?

Parents join fight to let gays marry

by Deb Price
The Detroit News

Like many parents who learn their son or daughter is gay, Clarice Zieja's first thoughts were upsetting: Will Lauren be safe? And she'll never be able to marry.

Helped by joining PFLAG – Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays – Clarice and her husband worked through their initial shock and went on to fully embrace their daughter. Yet, a corner of Clarice's heart remained filled with sorrow and disappointment over what she thought was just an unfortunate, unchangeable reality – that her daughter would never enjoy the blessings of a loving marriage.

But one night, Clarice, who had jumped to the conclusion that being gay meant Lauren had no interest in marrying, made a joyful discovery. She and Lauren had just attended a PFLAG meeting where marriage came up. On the way home, Clarice recalls, Lauren confided, "The one thing that bothers me is that I will never be able to get married."

Clarice says, "At that point, everything flip-flopped in my mind. I was programmed to think the way that everyone else did, that gay and lesbian people are different. Once my daughter said that to me, I realized that she wasn't different in any way. She wants the same things in life – to form a strong connection with one other person ... Suddenly, it became clear to me that (not allowing gay couples to marry in this country) is wrong."

Clarice, who has been married 28 years, was not alone in her epiphany: Other New Jersey parents, emboldened by gay couples' suing for the right to marry in New Jersey and by heart-warming town hall discussions around the state, began talking to neighbors, friends at their places of worship and co-workers about why they want their gay children to be able to have the same right to a U.S. marriage license that their heterosexual children already enjoy.

The parents were delighted by how many people responded favorably. So PFLAG parents jumped at the chance to commission a poll to see if what they believed about New Jersey's enlightenment is really true.

And, yes, it is. By 55-41 percent, New Jersey voters support allowing gay couples to wed, according to a Zogby International survey conducted July 15-19. And by 57-39 percent, New Jersey voters say their state should recognize the Canadian marriages of American gay couples like Joyce and me.

The results are in keeping with surveys this year that show increasing support for same-sex marriage in the Northeast: New

Hampshire residents favor same-sex marriage 54-42 percent, a University of New Hampshire poll found. Meanwhile, a Boston Globe poll found that in Massachusetts, where the highest court is expected to rule any day on whether to open marriage to gay couples, residents favor gay marriage by 50-44 percent.

Nationally, support is growing as well: A CBS News/*New York Times* survey released July 30 found 40 percent of Americans favoring same-sex marriage, while 55 percent oppose it. And a new poll by the Pew Research Center for the People and the Press found that 38 percent of Americans favor same-sex marriage, while 53 percent oppose it. In 1996, the research group found far less support – 27-65 percent. (An out-of-sync Gallup poll recently found a decline in support since May for civil unions, 57-40 percent, but found Americans are in a statistical tie over whether to amend the U.S. Constitution to ban same-sex marriage.)

The New Jersey poll also found:

- Catholics favor allowing gay couples to marry, 57-39 percent.
- So do majorities of Democrats (68-28 percent) and Independents (60-36 percent). Republicans oppose it (33-64 percent).
- New Jersey voters overwhelmingly (by 67-26 percent) want their state government to stop fighting against gay marriage. Even most Republicans (52-42 percent) say the state should "drop the fight."

Thanks to the optimism of loving parents, we now know that, on gay marriage, New Jersey voters want to follow in Canada's wonderfully progressive footsteps.

You can reach Deb Price at (202) 662-7384 or dprice@detnews.com.

▼▼▼ *If the mail's running right...*

... you might get this before Sept. 7. If so, go to Don Carter's All Star Lanes Dallas – West at 2 p.m. and join PFLAG's Fabulous Family Flamingo Fling!

You can bowl 'til you fold, bid on neat stuff, buy tickets for other neat stuff, and win prizes for high score, low score, best costume, worst costume ... all that stuff that makes bowling such a popular sport. And you can help PFLAG.

To learn more and sign up your team, go to www.pflagdallas.org, find the application, print it, and bring it to the Flamingo Bowl.

Thank you, Shirley Cooper,
for your generous donation to our library.



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Senators go the distance for diversity

PFLAG is proud to have the partnership and support of senators Edward Kennedy and Gordon Smith in our effort to achieve a truly inclusive society. Kennedy and Smith both have signed the vital Congressional Diversity Statement. Their support and signatures were obtained as part of PFLAG's signature Month of Advocacy initiative to educate the legislature about the importance of including language that explicitly extends the constitutional rights of bisexual and transgendered citizens to equal treatment and protection.

It's especially gratifying to have the support of Kennedy and Smith because their commitment goes far beyond signing a paper. These two legislators have shown themselves ready to stand up and be counted on GLBT issues. Kennedy's forceful and moving testimony to the president and Congress in support of this profound issue is an inspiration and a call to arms for our society.

Recently, in his floor statement before Congress, Kennedy eloquently reiterated a message that PFLAG has worked long and hard to send, and when he said, "Hate crimes ... are crimes against entire communities, against the whole nation, and against the fundamental ideals on which America was founded," he spoke for all of us.

Sam Thoron

PFLAG National President



Editorial: Queer Eye For Straight Marriages

The Case For Gay Weddings

Philadelphia Daily News

If you're first cousins you can get married in Tennessee.

But don't bother moving to Kentucky. That state won't recognize your marriage as legal, even though other states will.

So note to the Vatican and President Bush: Never mind trying to stop gay marriages, maybe we should concentrate on fixing the confusing legal status of straight marriages instead.

If every marriage is different, every state's marriage law is different, too. What's of legal age in one state is, for all practical purposes, sexual assault of a minor in another. Generally speaking, though, all states tacitly recognize a couple as married as long as they can produce a marriage license. Kentucky, as far as we know, isn't stopping married Tennesseans at the border and asking for a chart of the family tree.

So if straight society is so accepting of different interpretations of marriage, why all the angst about gay marriages?

The Vatican has launched an offensive against gay marriages, calling it an affront to natural law. And President Bush has lawyers busy trying to protect a long-standing prejudice against gays who want equal protection.

But the issue of gay marriage has now reached a tipping point in America. The recent Supreme Court ruling and the increasing acceptance of gays in society and on TV helped put it there.

Our hope is that a long-standing prejudice against gay marriage is seeing its final days. Logic and compassion demand it.

The civil union of gays has been legal in Vermont since 1999. There we can see that all the illogical and emotional arguments against gay marriages fall apart. Straight marriages have not been threatened. Divorce rates have not changed. Incest has not become legal. Cats and dogs are not sleeping together.

Instead, lesbians – which studies have shown are much more monogamous than straights – and gays are finally enjoying the same legal status as straights. It's time other states, including

Pennsylvania, recognize Vermont's civil unions as legal.

Marriage is not a zero-sum game. Allowing one group to participate doesn't cheapen someone's marriage. Only the participants of a marriage can do that.



Gays the 'pinnacle of evolution,' study says

Gay.com U.K.

At a time when religious and conservative right wing groups are attempting to dismiss homosexuality as "unnatural," a leading zoologist says gays could be seen as the "pinnacle of evolution."

Speaking at the Edinburgh Book Festival, Clive Bromhall said that mankind's evolution has resulted in a present state of "infantilism," where we break the primate mould by being playful, creative and child-like right into adulthood.

"From men's obsession with swollen breasts to our constant search for a pseudo-parental God, everything about the human species is infantile," Bromhall said in a lecture.

"Like baby chimps we have soft downy bodies, flat faces and large rounded heads. Like them, we too want to be kissed, cuddled and stroked, and we remain playful, compliant and comparatively mild-mannered for the whole of our lives," he added.

Bromhall claims that this is rejected by straight people as they age, and that by remaining in same-sex relationships, gay men and women are actually displaying a superiority over their peers.

"We've known for years that homosexuality is linked to a playful, creative character," he said.

"Homosexuals excel as artists, thespians and other playful, mimetic professions. Being playful is at the heart of being human. It's something that should be celebrated. You could say that homosexuals are at the pinnacle of human evolution."

Bromhall was speaking to promote his new book "The Eternal Child" at the festival.



Ivins makes another pass at Bush

My favorite frothing-at-the-mouth columnist, Texas denizen Molly Ivins, who wrote "Shrub: the Short but Happy Political Life of George W. Bush," has written a follow-up that will hit bookstores this month.

The new screed is titled "Bushwhacked: Life in George W. Bush's America," and you can pre-order it from Amazon.com now.

Ivins is from Houston and now lives in Austin. She has degrees from Smith College and Columbia University, and studied at the Institute of Political Science in Paris. Her journalism career began in the Complaint Department of the *Houston Chronicle*. Next she worked for the *Minneapolis Tribune* as a police reporter. She later covered social changes among minorities, feminists and student protesters.

In 1970, Ronnie Dugger, publisher of *The Texas Observer*, hired Ivins as co-editor of his small but influential magazine about Texas politics. She covered the Texas Legislature when it was in session. In 1976 she became a political reporter for the *New York Times*. There she covered City Hall and the New York Legislature.

A year later, her writing skills led Ivins to three years of reporting on nine mountain states as chief, and sole member, of the *New York Times* Rocky Mountain Bureau. She returned to Texas in February 1982, and writes a column syndicated in the *Fort Worth Star-Telegram* and other newspapers.

Ivins' close friend Gov. Ann Richards, speaking at Black Tie this year, whacks a Bush pretty good, too. Remember her "Poor George ... he was born with a silver foot in his mouth"?

Order "Bushwhacked" now and avoid the rush! —LPS

Page Four

Hey, Puddin's –

September is "Be Kind to Editors and Writers Month." Be nice!

In case anyone didn't know, co-president Donna Akin is suffering from a broken leg. Anyone who knows her knows she is a very active woman. Walking with crutches is not her favorite thing. She's full of energy, with nowhere to burn it off. It's very frustrating. I understand; I've been there too. My point is that when an energetic person has to be slowed down, it's unnerving.

It's the sense of helplessness that drives us nuts. We get angry. We feel like victims. Parents of gays also feel helplessness, frustration, anger. They are powerless to control their child's sexuality. They feel there's nowhere to turn. So they come to PFLAG. Through our stories we help them understand that their child is normal.

It's like physical therapy. Patients have to work at it and allow the process to heal them. Same thing in PFLAG. It's a process. It takes time to heal injuries of the heart. Physical therapy can be painful. Stretching those muscles hurts. Stretching beliefs hurts, too: we get comfortable in them. But it's not healthy.

If an injured patient doesn't stretch the injured muscles, the muscles contort and can't perform as they were meant to. Same thing with a family struggling with sexuality issues. If the people who are having a hard time with a GLBT family member or friend and don't stretch their boxed-in ideas of what sexuality is, there is a contortion of the family or friendship.

The family or friendship doesn't perform its best. It has to heal properly. That can only come with hard work, and with understanding who GLBT people are. Some families or friends would rather look the other way. But that is cheating oneself of the chance to be healthy, to have healthy relationships based on love and respect. It is difficult, and it only works as much as we do. But it's well worth it. You'll be walking in no time!

Thanks to our members Kathy Collier and Ginger Georgulas for being panelists for our "Family Fundamentals Town Hall Meeting." It was a big success. Videos of the meeting will be available shortly. If you are struggling with religion and sexuality issues, you'll want to hear what our panelists had to say!

And thanks to Dan Eimenheiser and the Division of Equity and Diversity, UNT Ally Program, and the Gay and Lesbian Association of Denton, for making me an honorary Ally member, because of the "tremendous amount of support" that I gave them for their Judy Shepard lecture. My support was a "you can do it, I believe in you" attitude as well as some ideas on how to fund it. They had over 750 attendees, which reinforces the fact that people do amazing things when they have support!

Join us for the "Fabulous Family Flamingo Fling" – our new bowling tournament! It's Sunday, Sept. 7, 2 p.m. at Don Carter's West. Bring the family, and bring the extended family! Even if you can't bowl, it's fun to be a part of the excitement. For those of you who like themes, our theme is, "Family RV Vacation"! We have prizes for best costumes, highest scores, lowest scores, best team, worst team, etc. So come on down!

We will have a float in the Pride Parade Sunday, Sept 21 at 3 p.m. Come march with us! Or you can ride on the float! We set up at 1 p.m. on Wycliff. If you've never been in the parade, it's an experience you shouldn't miss. PFLAG always gets a big cheer: we represent the families and friends that some GLBT people don't have. It's a very moving, rewarding experience. See you there!

Pat Smith
Co-president

Texas Chapters to host National PFLAG annual meeting, anniversary celebration

Members of Texas PFLAG Chapters are encouraged to attend the National Annual Meeting and 30th Anniversary Celebration in Dallas Oct. 18-19, 2003, at the Wyndham Anatole Hotel and the Dallas Apparel Mart.

"It is important for members of the PFLAG chapters in Texas to support their national organization and welcome our leaders from all over the country to Texas," said Kathy Massey, National PFLAG board member.

On Saturday, Oct. 18, "Moved to Remember," an art exhibit, will be on display at 6 p.m. at the Wyndham Anatole Hotel. This traveling book show is a national centerpiece program based on the art book established at PFLAG's national conference in Columbus, Ohio. A reception featuring Judy Shepard will include a recognition ceremony for Texas PFLAG Pioneers.

The National Annual Meeting will be at 3:30 p.m. on Sunday, Oct. 19 at the Wyndham Anatole Hotel. The 30th Anniversary Celebration honoring comedian Margaret Cho begins at 7 p.m. at the Dallas Apparel Mart. The event will feature special appearances by Cho and the award-winning Turtle Creek Chorale, Dallas' 200+ male chorus.

Tickets to the Anniversary Celebration including Texas barbecue are \$75 per person and can be purchased from local PFLAG Chapters, or by contacting the national office at (202) 467-8180 or www.pflag.org. "The anniversary celebration is going to be an event that PFLAG members do not want to miss. We are honored that PFLAG chose Texas to celebrate 30 years of the success," said Dave Gleason, chair, Texas Council of PFLAG Chapters.

Hotel reservations at a special PFLAG rate can be made by calling Pat Dreggors at the Wyndham Anatole Hotel at 214/761-7658.



Dick and Jane join the PFLAG family

With great pleasure, we welcome Dick and Jane Gephardt into the PFLAG family. Dick and Jane have proudly and clearly communicated to the world their love and support for their daughter, Chrissy. They have been vociferous in spreading what is also PFLAG's message, that family ties are among the deepest and strongest, and that they should not be broken.

Our gay, lesbian, bi-sexual and transgender children, brothers and sisters, and fathers and mothers are dear to us, and we love them for who they are. Dick and Jane have opened their arms to Chrissy and her partner, Amy. They've acknowledged Amy with the respect and love due to a child's chosen life partner. Dick, with his very public role, has the ability to greatly influence awareness of the issues that PFLAG is devoted to.

At a time when conservatism is rising and right-wing ideologies attempt to control public discourse, it's crucial that fair-minded public figures come forth and speak with force and wisdom about the importance of fairness and inclusion for all. When that message is driven home by love such as that clearly demonstrated by Dick and Jane for Chrissy, its power cannot be denied.

We look forward to working with Dick and Jane to build a just society where everyone can live and love in harmony with his or her own self and others.



**Don't forget the Pride Parade, Sept. 21.
Walk the route or ride the float. You'll love it!**