



PFLAG

Fort Collins / Northern Colorado

Next Meeting— Foothills Unitarian Church

Date: November 12, 7PM Program, 8PM Support

Program: Transgender Advocacy in the Schools

Location: Foothills Unitarian Universalist Church, 1815 Yorktown Avenue (just off Drake between Shields and Taft Hill in Fort Collins)

This month's program features the story of a local teen's transition from male to female in a Loveland middle school. The program includes the parent's perspective, the Bill Reed Middle School staff perspective, and the trans teen's perspective both in middle school and now in high school.

The presenters have shared this story at the American Psychological Association conference in San Francisco, as well as the Colorado Society of School Psychologists conference in Vail.

Transitioning while still in school can be extremely challenging. Please join us to learn more about this groundbreaking success story.

PFLAG Annual Report

The PFLAG Fort Collins / Northern Colorado board of directors and interested members held their annual planning retreat on Saturday, October 20. Ten people attended the meeting, which was held at Plymouth Congregational Church.

The Year in Review

As you'll see when we publish our annual report, your local PFLAG chapter had a very active year. We appreciate and need your support, both through active participation in PFLAG events and as paid members of the organization.

Theme for 2008

The national PFLAG organization has introduced a major new initiative called Straight for Equality. While our local chapter plans to increase our efforts at outreach and education into the straight community, we decided on a theme of **"Together for Equality"**. We believe that parents, family, friends, and GLBT persons need to work together to build stronger allies in the straight community.

Goals for 2008

1. Make schools safe for all students
2. Deliberate outreach to schools, colleges, faith groups, service groups, and the general public
3. Build chapter strength

As our planning progresses, you'll hear more about our specific plans and your opportunities to be involved and help PFLAG make a difference in our community

Stay tuned!

Report on PFLAG Convention

Julie Wilson and Carl and Nancy Hane attended the national PFLAG convention in Washington D.C. in October. The convention provided an wonderful opportunity to gain new ideas and increase our knowledge. Some of the highlights included:

- Keynote panel on "Safe Schools: New Challenges, New Opportunities". Our regional director, Jean Hodges, was an outstanding member of this panel and provided excellent ideas on how to build a successful safe schools coalition.
- Keynote panel on "Faith Community Focus: What Works". The Right Rev. V. Gene Robinson, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of New Hampshire, was the outstanding speaker in this panel. He encouraged us to regain the rich language of faith as we advocate for GLBT rights.
- Keynote panel on "Diverse Communities: How to Reach Us". As part of the panel, Robin Ochs, a bisexual and LGBT activist for 31 years, provided insight into the diversity challenges of the bi community.
- Memorable breakout sessions included
 - Why Religion is Still Important
 - Massachusetts: A Marriage Equality Success Story
 - Creating a Safe Space: Chapter Support Facilitation 101
 - Speak Now! Starting and Developing a Speakers Bureau
 - Engaging Diverse Faith Communities
- Film screenings (with DVD's added to our library included "Inlaws and Outlaws" and "Anyone and Everyone".

Straight for Equality

PFLAG kicked off its newest program—Straight for Equality—at the national convention. This program strives to build intentional allies in the straight community. You don't need to march. You don't need to shout a slogan. But you may be surprised by how effective small changes can be. By speaking out about your belief in equal rights for everyone, including GLBT persons, you can make a difference.

To learn more about this important program, go to <http://www.straightforequality.org/>. While you are there, please take the Straight for Equality Pledge.

Events of Local Interest

Nov 9: Evening of Sweet Indulgence
Northern Colorado Aids Project (NCAP) will hold its annual fundraiser this Friday at the Marriott Hotel on Horsetooth Road in Fort Collins from 7:30-11:30.

The evening will include:

- ❖ A silent and blind auction of art, crafts, and gift baskets – great for holiday shopping!
- ❖ Live music from Gil Garcia & the Touch of Jazz
- ❖ Champagne, desserts, chocolate included with every ticket

Tickets: \$40 per individual, or \$360 for a reserved table of ten. All proceeds benefit the programs of NCAP for people living with HIV/AIDS. Contact Lucas at (970) 484-4469 or luke@ncaids.org for questions and tickets!

Events of Regional Interest

Nov 5: The Bride's Side

You are cordially invited to the first public reading of a new comedy about a gay son's experiences traveling to a family member's wedding with his parents and his lover. This free presentation takes place at 7:00, Crossroads Theater, 27th and Welton, Denver.
[\[http://www.amanandamouse.com/bride/bride.html\]](http://www.amanandamouse.com/bride/bride.html)

Dec 14: Winter Lavender Gala

The Rainbow Elders and Dancing Divas will host a winter dance and party with catered food and door prizes. It takes place at the Avalon Ballroom, 6185 Arapahoe Avenue, Boulder CO from 6:00-10:00 p.m. All LGBT, friends and family are welcome. Please RSVP to Emily Lewis at elewis@co.boulder.co.us to help organizers plan for food. Open Door Fund, Aging Services Foundation, Gill Foundation and Boulder County Aging Services Division will sponsor the event. The email provided no information about cost.

News of Regional Interest

If you have always had an interest in a trip to the Holy Land, St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Denver (an open and affirming church led by a gay pastor) is planning a

trip to Israel and Palestine from September 6-20, 2008. The tour operator is Shepherds Tours, based in Jerusalem, owned and operated for forty years by Mr. Raji Khoury, a Palestinian Lutheran, one of the largest tour companies in Israel. Contact Jan Miller (jan@stpauldenver.org) if you are interested or would like more information.

St. Paul's Lutheran Church of Denver is also planning a 14-day tour of the Holy Land, Austria, and Germany in May 2010. The Holy Land portion includes visits to Jerusalem, Bethlehem, Jericho, Massada, Nazareth and other sites. The Austria-Germany portion includes Vienna, Salzburg, and Oberammergau. The tour stop in this rural German village includes seeing the world-famous Passion Play, which depicts Jesus from the time he enters Jerusalem until the resurrection. The Play is performed between May and October only every 10 years. The trip cost is \$5700 per person. Periodic payments are made every three months. Contact Jan Miller (jan@stpauldenver.org) if you are interested or would like more information.

Tragic Transgender News

At our September PFLAG meeting, we focused on the issue of teenage suicide, especially among GLBT teens. At the national PFLAG conference, I had the privilege of meeting one of the founders of TransYouth Family Advocates (TYFA). I have been very impressed with the work this organization is doing. It is with great sadness that I share the news that a trans teen from Michigan, child of one of the TYFA founders, recently committed suicide. [[Holland Sentinel](#), Nov 1]

Transgender Advocacy

For most of this month, transgender rights have been the hot topic. At the national level, Congress removed gender identity from the protected classes for the Employment Nondiscrimination Act (ENDA). As reported last month, PFLAG remains firm in its conviction that legislation must include our transgender family members. As of the publication date for this newsletter, Congress has not yet voted on the bill. [[365Gay.com](#), Oct 31]

Safe Schools

TYFA has been actively working for transgender issues in schools. Keep in touch with their progress and issues at <http://www.imatyfa.org/>.

Equal Employment Advocacy

According to the sixth annual survey conducted by Out & Equal, Harris Interactive, and Witeck-Combs, nearly two-thirds of American adults (64%) believe it is unfair that federal law currently allows for an employer to fire someone because they are gay or lesbian. A similar majority (60%) of heterosexual adults were not even aware that federal law does not provide protections for

employees on the basis of sexual orientation. An overwhelming majority (79%) of heterosexuals also feel that how an employee does his or her job, and not their sexual orientation, should be the standard for judging an employee. When it comes to the issue of transgender employees in the work place, two thirds of heterosexuals (67%) also agree that employee performance should be the standard by which they are judged and not whether they are transgender. [[Harris Interactive](#), Sep 10]

In contrast, a [June 2007 report](#) from The Williams Institute confirms that employment discrimination is alive and well:

- ◆ When surveyed, 16% to 68% of LGBT people report experiencing employment discrimination.
- ◆ Fifteen to 57% of transgender people also report experiencing employment discrimination.
- ◆ When surveyed, many heterosexual co-workers report witnessing sexual orientation discrimination in the workplace.
- ◆ In states that currently prohibit sexual orientation discrimination, LGB people file complaints of employment discrimination at similar rates to women and racial minorities.
- ◆ Gay men earn 10% to 32% less than similarly qualified heterosexual men.
- ◆ Transgender people report high rates of unemployment and very low earnings.
- ◆ Controlled experiments reveal sexual orientation discrimination in workplace settings.

Finally, the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) recently completed a similar survey. Their [State of the Workplace](#) reports:

- ◆ Nearly 90% of Fortune 500 companies include workplace protections based on an employees' sexual orientation
- ◆ 25% prohibit discrimination against transgender employees and applicants
- ◆ 53% offer domestic partner (DP) benefits in the US
- ◆ 20 U.S. states prohibit discrimination based on sexual orientation and 12 based on gender identity

Nearly 70 companies have informed HRC that they offer comprehensive transgender health benefits. The HRC

database shows that 141 companies offer hormone therapy and 110 offer surgical procedures. Scholars have found that the cost to add trans health benefits is estimated to be only an addition 11 cents per insured.

Children of Gays and Lesbians

When PFLAG recently manned a booth at Bixpo, I was asked about resources for children of gays and lesbians. At the time, I didn't know what the resources were, but I learned about COLAGE at the PFLAG National Convention.

If you are a child struggling with issues because your parent is gay, or if you are a gay parent wanting to find support for your child, check out [COLAGE](#) (Children of Lesbians and Gays Everywhere). The nearest chapter is in Denver, but the web site provides the ability to join online communities and to find a pen pal.

The Reading/Viewing Corner

A focus on blogs:

- ◆ Straight, Not Narrow, a blog advocating for GLBT equality in the church and politics
[\[http://straightnotnarrow.blogspot.com/\]](http://straightnotnarrow.blogspot.com/)
- ◆ Pam's House Blend, one of the most admired and beloved blogs coming out of the GLBT community
[\[http://www.pamshouseblend.com/\]](http://www.pamshouseblend.com/)
- ◆ Good As You, a GLBT political blog
[\[http://www.goodasyou.org/\]](http://www.goodasyou.org/)
- ◆ HRC Back Story, containing HRC's perspective on the news, issues and events affecting the every day lives of GLBT people across the country
[\[http://www.hrcbackstory.org/\]](http://www.hrcbackstory.org/)
- ◆ Elder Wisdom Circle, a free service that answers thousands of requests each month from people with all sorts of problems including those of the LGBT community
[\[http://www.elderwisdomcircle.org/\]](http://www.elderwisdomcircle.org/)

Other articles of interest:

- ◆ Letter to editor regarding National Coming Out Day and the support PFLAG offers [[Abilene Online News](#), Nov 9]
- ◆ Fred Phelps' church loses \$11M judgment for protesting Marine's funeral [[NewsVine.com](#), Oct 31]

MEETINGS:

2nd Monday each month, 6:45 pm
Plymouth Congregational Church
916 W. Prospect Rd.
Fort Collins, Colorado

CONTACTS:

Local chapter: 970.407.0300
Julie 970.667.5236
Bev 970.484.0031
Don 970.278.0261

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

Web site: www.pflagftc.org
Email: info@pflagftc.org
Mail: 305 W Magnolia, PMB 117
Fort Collins, CO 80521

In addition to parents, families, friends, and GLBT people, we welcome anyone involved in the coming-out process.

We welcome anyone who supports the PFLAG mission of **SUPPORT, EDUCATION** and **ADVOCACY** for GLBT people.

I asked Whitney to provide an article for the PFLAG newsletter. Our PFLAG chapter has not addressed the topic of bisexuality recently. So I asked Whitney to provide her perspective and help build our understanding.

The Equal Opportunity Employer
Whitney Huggins

They're promiscuous. Just straddling the fence. They're opportunistic. No idea what they want. They're ambivalent. Nothing essentialist about a bisexual identity. They're experimental. If one can comfortably inhabit the normalized sphere of heterosexual sex, homosexual relationships are a choice

As a woman, if I tell a heterosexual man I'm bisexual it's an invitation for a threesome. As a lover of men, if I tell a homosexual woman I'm bisexual it implies I'm "flirting" with lesbianism. A phase to grow out of.

I read testimonies from people who spent twenty years of their adult lives with homosexual partners before becoming involved with someone of the opposite sex. I read about married mothers who, after a divorce, explored sexual relationships with women.

All the same, I can only moderately empathize. These examples seem to imply that bisexuals experience homosexual or heterosexual *phases* when my attraction for men and women hit me with the same impact at the same time. I become intimate with individuals, not with their gender. On a purely physical level, I crave both.

But if one can choose, why not choose the social norm? Why would anyone become a minority if he or she didn't have to?

Despite the fact that my first bona fide infatuation was with a female friend in middle school, I tried to be with men exclusively. As a Yang personality, I get along well with men and relate to them more often than women. In my writing, I assume a male voice more frequently than a woman's. Some of my most intimate moments have been with men. However, the presence of so much masculinity — be it an affectation of "maleness" or not — I always feel a disquieting imbalance in my personality. Female friends alone can't fill this void and my attachments to unavailable or heterosexual women upset me just as much as my breakups with men.

I tried to pursue women exclusively. They challenge me to dispel my cynicism and co-dependency. On a visceral level, they remind me of the importance of just *being*.

In short, I need the sexual presence of both to feel complete — that sexual tension amplifies my connection with any friend even if sex is not involved. When I try to ignore that feeling as I did with many of my female friends during puberty, I found myself searching for reasons to hate women. My repression took the ugly form of misogyny.

One would think being attracted to both genders would make it easier to form connections with others, but our society has promoted heterosexuality as the core sexual identity and homosexuality has been removed to the fringes. There is no bridge that provides easy access to both communities and to be part of one implies that one rejects the other.

They're in transition. Ultimately, they will have to choose one or the other.

If a heterosexual man chooses to be in a monogamous relationship with a petite woman, does this imply that he can't be attracted to tall women? If a lesbian's mate is the same race as her, does this imply she has no attraction for other races? For me, it is just as ridiculous to imply that I no longer find women attractive if I'm with a man or vice versa. The married mother who pursues lesbian relationships after a divorce doesn't necessarily need to reject her experiences with men as a transitional phase to her "true identity." It is true that many homosexuals engaged in heterosexual relationships before realizing their true disposition, but we are part of a culture that is eager to read the signs of each person's life as symptomatic. The truth is that the narratives of sexuality are complex. They overlap and conjoin and separate according to what an individual needs to be happy and those needs are fluid.

I am bisexual, polyamorous and omnisexual. An equal opportunity employer.