



Happy 2015 to PFLAG Parents,
LGBT Folks and Allies Everywhere!



The Voice of PFLAG Hartford

Caring

Volume 24, No. 1

January/February 2015

IN THE PFLAG HARTFORD FAMILY:

HARTFORD PFLAG IS PROUD TO HOST A RECEPTION & CHAT WITH AUTHOR, CANDACE WALDRON, prior to our regular meeting on Wednesday, January 21. **Reception begins at 6:00 p.m., with the author’s chat at 6:30. Books will be available for purchase/signing.** Her book, *My Daughter He: Transitioning with Our Transgender Children*, describes the interior journey the author took to let go of her beloved daughter so she could welcome her son. Waldron is a writer, educator, administrator, and public policy advocate in violence prevention and women’s health. She has served as executive director of a domestic violence agency, director of women’s health in a community hospital and the Massachusetts Department of Public Health, and coordinator of a rape crisis center. She currently co-facilitates PFLAG support groups for parents in the Greater Boston area. For more information on Candace, visit www.CandaceWaldron.com.

PFLAG is a welcoming place for parents and friends of lesbians & gays, but we are much more than that. Gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender people are also encouraged to attend our meetings. GLBT people come with or without their family members, and parents and friends come with or without their GLBT loved ones. PFLAG is for YOU!

PFLAG HARTFORD MONTHLY SUPPORT GROUP MEETS: Third Wednesday of each month, 7:30 p.m., Immanuel Congregational Church House, 10 Woodland Street (Just North of Farmington Ave.), Hartford. For more information, please call Donna at 860/505-7346 or Lori at 860/305-2743.

MEMBERSHIP DUES:

- Student/Limited Income: \$15
- Household Membership: \$40
- Individual Membership: \$25

MONTHLY MEETING REMINDER

- January 21 – 6pm Author Reception 7:30 reg. mtg.
- February 18 – 7:30 p.m.
- March 18 – 7:30 p.m.
- April 15 – 7:30 p.m.

(Paid membership includes a one-year subscription to Caring & The National PFLAG newsletter.)

Please make your check payable to **PFLAG Hartford** and send it to:

PFLAG Hartford, P.O. Box 260733, Hartford, CT 06126-0733

Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and questioning persons and their families and friends through:

SUPPORT: To cope with an adverse society

EDUCATION: To enlighten an ill-informed public

ADVOCACY: To end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

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

UPCOMING /ONGOING EVENTS

- **STONEWALL SPEAKERS** is an all volunteer speakers' bureau composed of LGBT people and allies dedicated to reducing violence and bias while promoting equality for all. We speak to thousands of Connecticut students and adults annually. Listeners will meet LGBT people and their allies in person; hear candid accounts of their lives; and receive honest, informed answers to any questions they have. Let your high school, college, business, religious group or community group know we are available. For more information please contact coordinator@stonewallspeakers.org.
- **XX CLUB "Twenty Club"** – The Transsexual Support Group of New England meets the 2nd & 4th Saturday of every month from 2-5 p.m. at The Hartford Gay & Lesbian Health Collective, 1841 Broad Street, Hartford, CT www.twentyclub.net.
- **LIVING SOULFULLY** (Men Loving Men In Community) meets the 4th Wednesday of every month, 7:30-9:30 p.m. at The Hartford Gay & Lesbian Health Collective, 1841 Broad Street, Hartford, CT. 860/278-4163.
- **Mpower CT** – Social gathering for gay and bisexual men ages 18-35 meets the 2nd and 4th Tuesday of every month from 7-9 p.m. at The Hartford Gay & Lesbian Health Collective, 1841 Broad Street, Hartford, CT. 860/278-4163.
- **The 9th Annual Transgender Lives: The Intersection of Health and Law Conference** will be held April 25, 2015 at the UConn Health Center in Farmington, Ct. For more information call (860) 255-8812 or e-mail conference@transadvocacy.org



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I JUST FOUND OUT MY BROTHER IS GAY, BUT I DON'T SUPPORT GAY MARRIAGE.

WHAT SHOULD I SAY IF HE ASKES ME ABOUT IT?

from the internet, by Mani Cavaliere

Look him in the eyes, and tell him you think he is - and should be - *always* - less of a person than you are, because of something arbitrary that he has no control over. In those words.

I'm not exaggerating; in many countries (at least in the US), marriage is considered a fundamental human right - and you think he doesn't deserve a fundamental human right.

If that seems like something you don't want to do, or don't really mean deep in your heart of hearts, or you just flat-out don't have the guts to say it to the face of someone you know who knows you... then maybe you should reconsider your stance on these sorts of issues.

Sorry if this seems confrontational, but the truth is, it isn't *you* who needs help navigating this situation. It isn't *you* who is at a disadvantage and risking something major (like the respect of a family member) over something you can't control (unlike a political opinion). If you truly think he is less of a human being than you just because he's gay, then you should tell him so, so that he can get started on cutting your toxic influence out of his life and you can both proceed to live happier lives apart.

If you *don't* think that poorly of him, though - and I'm giving you the benefit of the doubt that you don't (because despite my confrontational tone here, from your question I get the impression that you do care for him as your brother) - then your feelings about this real human being who you really care for, aren't compatible with your political stance on this topic. Pick one.

In the meantime, while you figure this out, as others have said - be honest. If you're wrestling with this, tell him - maybe something like "I still love you, it's just that I don't think you deserve the same rights as me...and I'm still working through that and trying to figure out how I really feel here." Do this to his face, though. You need to see his reaction to it. If he is hurt, or disappointed, you need to witness that firsthand. You should see what your political stance actually translates to, in real people and real emotions.

I hope for the both of you that things work out for the best. And (again, pardon my tone) I at least laud you for asking someone about it - and thus at least being open to investigate this - rather than simply being callous or unkind to your brother.



IF I HAVE GAY CHILDREN: 4 PROMISES FROM A CHRISTIAN PASTOR/PARENT*Huffington Post: 09/27/2014*

Sometimes I wonder if I'll have gay children. I'm not sure if other parents think about this, but I do -- quite often. Maybe it's because I have many gay people in my family and circle of friends. It's in my genes and in my tribe.

Maybe it's because, as a pastor of students, I've seen and heard the horror stories of gay Christian kids -- from both inside and outside of the closet -- trying to be part of the Church. Maybe it's because, as a Christian, I interact with so many people who find homosexuality to be the most repulsive thing imaginable, and who make that abundantly clear at every conceivable opportunity. For whatever reason, it's something that I ponder frequently. As a pastor and a parent, I wanted to make some promises to you, and to my two kids right now...

1. If I have gay children, you'll all know it. My children won't be our family's best kept secret. I won't talk around them in conversations with others. I won't speak in code or vague language. I won't try to pull the wool over anyone's eyes, and I won't try to spare the feelings of those who may be older, or easily offended, or uncomfortable. Childhood is difficult enough, and most gay kids spend their entire existence being horribly, excruciatingly uncomfortable. I'm not going to put mine through any more unnecessary discomfort, just to make Thanksgiving dinner a little easier for a third cousin with misplaced anger issues. If my children come out, we'll be out as a family.

2. If I have gay children, I'll pray for them. I won't pray for them to be made "normal". I've lived long enough to know that if my children are gay, that is their normal. I won't pray that God will heal or change or fix them. I will pray for God to protect them; from the ignorance and hatred and violence that the world will throw at them, simply because of who they are. I'll pray that He shields them from those who will despise them and wish them harm; who will curse them to Hell and put them through Hell, without ever knowing them at all. I'll pray that they enjoy life; that they laugh, and dream, and feel, and forgive, and that they love God and humanity. Above all, I'll pray to God that my children won't allow the unGodly treatment they might receive from some of His misguided children, to keep them from pursuing Him.

3. If I have gay children, I'll love them. I don't mean some token, distant, tolerant love that stays at a safe arm's length. It will be an extravagant, open-hearted, unapologetic, lavish, embarrassing-them-in-the-school cafeteria, kind of love. I won't love them despite their sexuality, and I won't love them because of it. I will love them; simply because they're sweet, and funny, and caring, and smart, and kind, and stubborn, and flawed, and original, and beautiful... and mine. If my kids are gay, they may doubt a million things about themselves and about this world, but they'll never doubt for a second whether or not their Daddy is over-the-moon crazy about them.

4. If I have gay children, most likely, I have gay children. If my kids are going to be gay, well they pretty much already are. God has already created them and wired them, and placed the seed of who they are within them. Psalm 139 says that He, "stitched them together in their mother's womb". The incredibly intricate stuff that makes them uniquely them; once-in-History souls, has already been uploaded into their very cells. Because of that, there isn't a coming deadline on their sexuality that their mother and I are working feverishly toward. I don't believe there's some magical expiration date approaching, by which time she and I need to somehow do, or say, or pray just the right things to get them to "turn straight", or forever lose them to the other side. They are today, simply a younger version of who they will be -- and today they're pretty darn great.

Many of you may be offended by all of this, I fully realize. I know this may be especially true if you are a religious person -- one who finds the whole topic disgusting or unpleasant. As you've been reading, you may have been rolling your eyes, or clicking the roof of your mouth, or drafting familiar Scriptures to send me, or praying for me to repent, or preparing to Unfriend me, or writing me off as a sinful, evil, Hell-bound heretic... but with as much gentleness and understanding as I can muster; I really couldn't care less.

This isn't about you. This is a whole lot bigger than you. You're not the one I waited on breathlessly for nine months. You're not the one I wept with joy for when you were born. You're not the one I bathed, and fed, and rocked to sleep through a hundred intimate, midnight snuggle sessions. You're not the one I taught to ride a bike, and whose scraped knee I kissed, and whose tiny, trembling hand I held, while getting stitches. You're not the one whose head I love to smell, and whose face lights-up when I come home at night, and whose laughter is like music to my weary soul. You're not the one who gives my days meaning and purpose, and who I adore more than I ever thought I could adore anything. And you're not the one who I'll hopefully be with, when I take my last precious breaths on this planet; gratefully looking back on a lifetime of shared treasures, and resting in the knowledge that I loved you well.

If you're a parent, I don't know how you'll respond if you find out your children are gay, but I pray you consider it. One day, despite your perceptions of your kids or how you've parented, you may need to respond in real-time, to a frightened, frantic, hurting child -- one whose sense of peace, and identity and acceptance, whose very heart, may be placed in your hands in a way you never imagined -- and you'll need to respond.

If that day should ever come for me -- if my children should ever come out to me -- this is the Dad I hope I'll be to them.



November 6, 2014

In an outrageous ruling, two judges on the U.S. Court of Appeals for the 6th Circuit upheld bans on marriage equality in four states: Tennessee, Ohio, Michigan and Kentucky.

Same-sex marriage bans will REMAIN in these four states.

This is the first time since the Supreme Court struck down the Defense of Marriage Act in 2013 that a court at this level has decided to uphold marriage discrimination. We cannot sit idly by as a federal court candidly permits discriminatory laws to persist--we must fight for justice to prevail.

Judges Deborah Cook and Jeffrey Sutton have chosen to cement their feet on the wrong side of history. They simply ignored the basic humanity of committed and loving gay and lesbian couples and their families.

A third judge who heard the case, Martha Craig Daughtrey, authored a powerful dissent slamming their reasoning: *"If we in the judiciary do not have the authority, and indeed the responsibility, to right fundamental wrongs left excused by a majority of the electorate, [...] the oaths to which we swore prove to be nothing but shams."* She's right, and this anti-equality ruling is deeply harmful. In the wake of this devastating decision and the losses equality faced in this week's election, we have a lot of work ahead of us – which is why ... we continue to advocate for LGBT rights and fight for marriage equality across the United States, from sea to shining sea.

Enough waiting. Delay causes harm to real people each and every day. The time has come for full marriage equality, everywhere, for everyone.

Chad Griffin, President
Human Rights Campaign



HERE'S A POST-THANKSGIVING NOTE SURE TO MAKE YOU FEEL GOOD

Thanksgiving. It always reminds me of coming out.

It was Thanksgiving 1973...in rural Kansas. My brother, whom I seldom saw because he was in the Air Force, was home for the holiday and picked up clues in my excitement about my new friend Sarah. He was curious in a big-brother way. He asked a few questions, and encouraged me to tell Mom and Dad.

I told. They listened politely, asking no questions, saying little, and offering their standard comment: "Oh?" Then, we drove to Grandpa and Grandma's for Thanksgiving dinner. We ate too much, we watched football, we napped, we drove home. Nobody told me I was bad. Nobody judged or condemned. Nobody asked questions. Nobody offered support. For the next 20 years. Even after I moved to New York In 1986 and started a public relations agency that focused on gay issues. Still, nothing was said by my family.

In my third decade of being the out, out, OUT professional lesbian daughter, my mother--without explanation--grew bold. She began talking... with family, with neighbors, with my high school classmates, with her minister...and talking with pride about my work and our relationship.

Mom never told me what had changed for her. But I can tell you what changed for me. Mom's public affirmation freed me. She also sparked change in my little hometown. Today, a gay couple owns the floral shop, a classmate has boldly acknowledged her gay son, high school reunions are open and welcoming of what few LGBTQ classmates there are. And my hometown welcomes differences of all types...not saying much but also not judging.

We enjoyed a warm and close relationship in her later years. My mom wasn't a firebrand like PFLAG's founder Jeanne Manford but, like Jeanne, she knew that she needed to speak up. There was no PFLAG chapter in my hometown but now that I am part of PFLAG, I know without a doubt that she was a PFLAG Mom; in her own way, she quietly took a stand for equality.

So today, as you gather with your families--and I gather with my chosen family of LGBTQ and ally loved ones--I want to thank each of you for taking a stand for equality. Your courage has made the difference for so many people who, like me, needed affirmation to feel whole.

Happy Thanksgiving to you and yours,
Stephanie K. Blackwood
Director of Development
PFLAG National



POLITICIAN ON TRANSGENDER SON: 'WE'RE PROUD OF HIM'*Jennifer O'Neill 11/19/14*

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When Florida Congresswoman Ileana Ros-Lehtinen talks about LGBT issues, she knows of what she speaks: Her son, Rodrigo, is transgender — and she's his biggest fan.

The Republican Rep. — and only member of Congress with a transgender child — took to TV on Nov. 17, during Transgender Awareness Week, in a public show of support for her 28-year-old, born Amanda. She urged other parents of transgender kids to have as much pride in their sons and daughters as she has in the eldest of her four children and stepchildren. “We know Rigo as our child, whether it's Amanda or now as Rodrigo, he's our son and we're proud of him,” the politician declared in an interview with CBS 4 News Miami. “We're very happy that our son is happy with who he is. And that's a blessing to us.”

Ros-Lehtinen is the first House Republican to support gay marriage and the only Republican on the 112-member Congressional LGBT Equality Caucus. And she's supported her son throughout his journey, which began when he came out to his parents as a lesbian in high school and then as transgender during college in 2007. “As parents, we wanted Rodrigo to understand that we're totally fine with it,” the congresswoman explained. “He's our son, we're proud of him.”

Now the mom is asking other parents to stand behind their transgender kids, too. “Don't freak out,” she advised. “Stay calm and don't be afraid. And love your child because that person is your child whether it's the person you wanted him or her to be or not. That's my advice to parents. Never, never reject your child. That's unconditional love, no matter what.”

That message is a powerful one to transgender kids and their parents alike, advocates tell Yahoo Parenting. “I hope that any parent looking at her will see a real role model,” says Eliza Byard, Executive Director of the Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN). “To take this step of talking publicly about her son is tremendously important, because she's a Republican, and this is not an easy issue to advocate within her caucus. It's still a leading edge issue and it's huge for people to recognize that when the wellbeing of children is at stake, we can all come together, no matter our political party or beliefs. This is about creating a world of opportunity for *all* of our children.”

With 74 percent of LGBT students reporting through GLSEN that they were harassed or threatened in the past year because of their sexual orientation, and 55 percent because of their gender expression, parental support is more important than ever, she notes. But Ros-Lehtinen isn't the first to stand up for her child.

The parents of 6-year-old Ryland Whittington posted a video tribute to their transgender son on YouTube in June, receiving 4.8 million views in just a few days. And last year, Coy Mathis' mom and dad scored a win for their transgender daughter, 7, when they got the court to rule that the Colorado Springs school district discriminated against her by preventing her from using the girls' bathroom.

“It's so important for all parents of trans people that other parents step up and support their children,” adds National Center for Transgender Equality executive director Mara Keisling. “All of our allies must go through a process to learn and understand who we are.”

The Congresswoman's championing of transgender children's rights was bolstered in April by the Department of Education's Office for Civil Rights, which decided that transgender students are protected under Title IX; it allows such kids to file a complaint with the OCR if they experience discrimination at school based on their gender identity. Ros-Lehtinen's outspokenness makes it easier for the parents of those kids, too.

“So many parents want to pray it away, punish their children, or encourage them to be different,” Trans Youth Equality Foundation director Susan Maasch tells Yahoo Parenting about the difficulties of kids coming out. She notes that without parental support, children often start having trouble at school and develop depression and anxiety. “So the more people who speak out the way Ros-Lehtinen has, the more comfort to other parents struggling with this journey and feeling really alone. They can see they're not the only ones.”

FROM PFLAG NATIONAL:

PFLAG National—along with 46 other LGBTQ organizations—signed on to an open letter entitled From Ferguson to True Freedom, in regards to the recent outcry in our country.

PFLAG was formed by a brave mother who stood up and marched, literally, to fight against violence that affected and endangered her own son, and is recognized in communities across the country as being an organization whose members and supporters speak up, take action, and advocate for change.

Nationally and across the country, PFLAG has an open dialogue with the law enforcement community and has leveraged who we are to educate police, prosecutors, judges—all who are involved in keeping our communities safe on a daily basis. Our conversations with law enforcement started because we recognized that they needed to be educated about how to serve and protect our loved ones. In many places, this dialogue and education has meant positive change, but we need to do more. We need to make sure our conversations are not just about the LGBTQ community but ALL who are marginalized.

It is important that we stand in solidarity, but we also have an opportunity to move into action, and be a catalyst for change in our hometowns. PFLAGers everywhere have the opportunity to leverage the unique strength of our mission to listen carefully, respond patiently, and never stop learning as we meet people where they are and build bridges. Here are some actions you can take right now as a PFLAG member or supporter:

- Offer support in social media and in conversations in your community. Be visible in your solidarity.
- Leverage your relationships, if you have them, with your local law enforcement community. Offer to be a bridge of understanding about issues of distrust and disenfranchisement because of potential or subconscious bias.
- Ask your community partners what you can do. If you do not already have relationships with people who are part of this outcry now is the time to reach out, introduce yourself, and ask what you can do to support them.
- Send a letter to the editor or op-ed to your local news outlet, sharing why these issues resonate with you.

PFLAG’s values are America’s values, and that includes standing in solidarity, asking others how we can help, and leveraging our strong, existing relationships to serve the whole of our community for positive change.

PFLAG has always stood for making the future brighter for the next generation, and that must mean for everyone.

Yours in solidarity,

Jody M. Huckaby, Executive Director, PFLAG National

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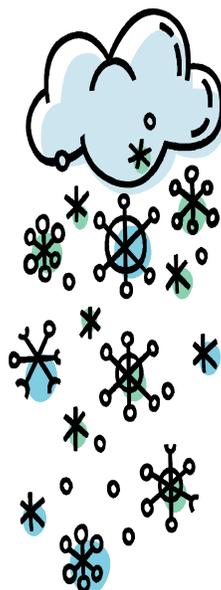
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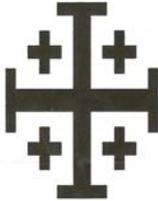
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Absolutely everyone is welcome at this parish where we hope you will find a community of faith to support and encourage you.

We worship God through a traditional liturgy, celebrated with open minds and generous hearts.



Sunday - 8:00 A.M. Low Mass
10:30 A.M. Sung Mass or Solemn High Mass
Tuesday - 5:30 P.M. Low Mass or Healing Mass
Wednesday - 7:15 A.M. Low Mass
Thursday - 5:30 P.M. Low Mass

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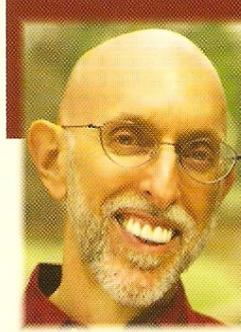


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Connecticut PFLAG Meetings

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When: Second Monday of every month,
Potluck at 6:00 pm; Meeting at 7:00 pm
Where: Noank Baptist Church,
18 Cathedral Heights, Noank (Groton)
Helpline: (860) 447-0884
Email: bjalthen@sbcglobal.net
Web site: www.pflagsect.org

PFLAG GREATER NEW HAVEN
Contact: David Knapp 203/453-1395
Email: davidwinthropknapp@yahoo.com

Central and Western Massachusetts

PFLAG FRANKLIN-HAMPSHIRE CHAPTER

Northhampton
When: Second Tuesday of every month
Where: Highland Valley Elder Services,
Cutlery Building, 320 Riverside Drive
Helpline: 413/625-6636
Email: jcmalinski48@gmail.com

Williamstown Area:
When: Second Sunday of every month, 2 pm
Where: First Congregational Church, Williamstown
Contact: (413) 243-2382

Springfield Area:
Where: Agawam
Contact: (413) 732-3240 or (413) 783-7709

Greenfield, MA
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E-Mail: PFLAGPV@valinet.com

CARING IS THE BI-MONTHLY NEWSLETTER OF PFLAG HARTFORD

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HAPPY 2015!



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In Connecticut and Western Massachusetts
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jcmalinski48@gmail.com
or at www.straightspouse.org

FOR OTHER PFLAG LOCATIONS

Contact a Hartford Chapter Board Member or call the National PFLAG office at (202)638-4200. You may also sign onto PFLAG's Home Page at www.pflag.org.