

PFLAG - PERTH



NEWSLETTER MAR / APR 2008

PARENTS FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS PERTH INC

THE OBJECTIVES OF PFLAG ARE TO:

- Provide a support system for families and friends of lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* & intersex people, in an effort to understand, accept and support them with love and pride.
- Offer loving support and understanding to lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* & intersex people.
- Support and encourage the recognition of full human rights for them.
- Help parents, family members and friends to learn what the current members of PFLAG have already learnt and to help change attitudes and create an environment of understanding, so that all lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans* & intersex people can live with dignity and respect.

PRESIDENT'S REPORT

Hello Everyone,

I was saddened to read recently about the plight of a young, gay Iranian man who had been studying in Britain. His boyfriend in Iran had been tortured and killed because of his sexuality and was forced to name the young man who was still in Britain. Luckily, the British Government has halted deportation proceedings against this young man as he says that he will be hanged if he returns to Iran because he is gay. His uncle, who lives in Britain has said that if the authorities do not kill him, his father will !

I am so glad that our gay children do not have to suffer this fate and that we live in a country which is becoming more tolerant of GLBTIQ people and issues.

We will soon have a new and updated website thanks to the wonderful efforts of a supporter and friend of PFLAG, Denise. We are most grateful to Denise for volunteering to do this work.

Cheers for now,

Jen xx

WE DO CARE!

As some members know, Sarah, our Newsletter Editor has been going through a very rough time recently with family troubles. Our thoughts are with you at this time Sarah and hope all ends up well for you.

“Mary Griffith's Story” By Robert Bernstein

Mary Griffith's story perhaps reflects the ultimate human tragedy. She blames herself for the death of her son. Mary says Bobby was "kind and gentle, with a fun-loving spirit." He was handsome, with clean-cut features and an Adonis-like body perfected by weight lifting. He loved old movies, particularly *The Seven Year Itch* with his favorite star, Marilyn Monroe. He loved Italian food and meeting people. But the diary that he kept for the last two years of his life reveals a tortured soul. Tortured by passions he had been taught were sinful. Tortured by the bondage of what he called "society's rules." Tortured by fear of hell. "Gays are bad," he wrote, "and God sends bad people to Hell I guess I'm no good to anyone, not even God. Sometimes I feel like disappearing from the face of this earth."

The Griffiths attended Walnut Creek Presbyterian Church in Walnut Creek, California. There, Mary said, the ministers and the congregation were clear that homosexuals were sick, perverted, and condemned to eternal damnation. "And when they said that," Mary recalls, "I said, 'Amen.'" For her part, Mary just knew that homosexuality was "an abomination to God." And even before she knew Bobby was gay, she conveyed her feeling to him in no uncertain terms. She remembers in sadness one incident that occurred when Bobby was fourteen. He had introduced her to a friend of his, a young girl. For some reason, Mary had loaned the girl a coat. Later, Mary learned that the girl had once had a lesbian encounter, and found herself unable to wear the coat again herself. "You can't love God and be gay," she told Bobby.

At about the same time, Bobby told his brother he was gay. Two years later, his brother told their parents. That night, the family was up until 4 A.M. talking and crying. They all agreed Bobby was a sinner, that he had to be cured by prayer and Christian counseling. Mary told him he had to repent or God would "damn him to hell and eternal punishment." She had faith that God would come to Bobby's rescue, but only if he read his Bible. The Christian counselor recommended prayer and suggested that Bobby spend more time with his father. But Bobby's diary revealed that nothing was changing. "Why did you do this to me, God?" he wrote. "Am I going to hell? I need your seal of approval. If I had that, I would be happy. Life is so cruel and unfair." His mother kept telling him he could change. "It seems like every time we talked, I would tell him that," she says. "I thought Bobby wasn't trying in his prayers." When Bobby became more withdrawn, she simply chalked it up to God's punishment. "Now," she says, "I look back and realize he was just depressed."

When Bobby was twenty, in desperation the Griffiths decided he should move to Portland, Oregon, and live with a cousin. At first, the move seemed to help. He worked as a nurse's aide in a senior citizens' home and developed something of a social life. But the depression returned and deepened. A few months later, in his diary, he cursed God and added, "I'm completely worthless as far as I'm concerned. What do you say to that? I don't care." Again and again, he emphasized the shame and self-blame he felt over his sexual orientation. "I am evil and wicked. I am dirt," he wrote. "My voice is small and unheard, unnoticed, damned."

One Friday night in August 1983, Bobby had dinner with his cousin. She noticed that he seemed thoughtful, perhaps depressed. He seemed to want to talk about something, but said little. Then he left, saying he was taking a bus to go dancing downtown. Early the next morning, two men driving to work noticed a young man, later identified as Bobby, on an overpass above a busy thoroughfare. As they described the next few moments, the boy walked to the railing, turned around, and did a sudden back flip into mid-air. He landed in the path of an eighteen-wheeler.

Bobby's body was returned to Walnut Creek for funeral services in the Presbyterian church. The minister told the mourners that Bobby was gay, and suggested that his tragic end was the result of his sinning. Later, the Griffiths met with their pastor for grief counseling. In her despair, Mary was seeking ways to atone for the loss of Bobby. She told the pastor she knew there were "other Bobbys out there" and asked how she could help them. The pastor merely shrugged his shoulders - and Mary never again returned to that church. However, she did not lose her sense of religion. Her speech resonates with the tones of spiritual awareness. But she has found a very different God from the one she worshiped at Walnut Creek Presbyterian. She re-read her Bible with fresh eyes, and sought out secular books about homosexuality. She concluded that there was nothing wrong with

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Bobby, that "he was the kind of person God wanted him to be an equal, lovable valuable part of God's creation." She says now, "I helped instill false guilt in an innocent child's conscience." Bobby Griffith's fate is not uncommon among gay youth. One report chartered by the government suggests that gay adolescents are nearly three times more likely than other teens to attempt suicide. Some 30 percent of all youth suicides, it says, can be traced to the pressures generated by "a society that stigmatizes and discriminates against gays and lesbians." But Bobby's story stands out for two reasons. Unlike other youths who kill themselves, Bobby left an extensive written record of his anguish. And unlike other parents, his mother has not denied or buried her role in the tragedy, but has leveraged her remorse into aid to others.

Shortly after Bobby's death, Mary Griffith discovered PFLAG. For some years, she was president of an East San Francisco Bay PFLAG chapter and appeared frequently on television talk shows, usually wearing a button with Bobby's picture and another with the PFLAG message, "We love our gay and lesbian children." She has cooperated in the filming of documentaries about the Griffith family tragedy, and is the subject of a the book "Prayers for Bobby: A Mother's Coming to Terms with the Suicide of Her Gay Son", by Leroy Aarons, founder of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association and a former national correspondent for the Washington Post. She campaigns tirelessly for the cause of public school counseling supportive of gay teenagers, believing that Bobby would still be alive if his high school had had such a program. And she has a guiding standard for other parents. Listen to your instincts as a mother or father, she tells them, not to those who urge you to violate your parental conscience. "All we had to do was say, 'We love you, Bobby, and we accept you,' and I know Bobby would be here today. Part of me wanted to reach out and tell him, 'You're fine just the way you are.' To me, that was my mother love, that was my conscience. But I didn't have the freedom to listen to my own conscience."

*Reprinted with the permission of Robert A. Bernstein and Thunder's Mouth Press.
From the PFLAG website.*

Same Sex Domestic Abuse Group (ssdag)

A recent study which looked at the health of Australians with diverse sexuality and /or gender (DSG) found that 32.7% of respondents reported their partner was abusive. This is higher than the rate reported by heterosexual people, which is approximately 25%.

The Same Sex Domestic Abuse Group (SSDAG) is a non-government organisation which aims to raise awareness of relationship, family and domestic abuse amongst people identifying with DSG.

SSDAG provides training and resources which raise awareness of the issues of relationship, family and domestic violence in communities of DSG expression, and builds the capacity of mainstream services to respond to family and domestic

violence occurring between individuals with DSG in Western Australia.

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SSDAG's workshop 'Speaking Out' consists of four modules over the course of one day:

1. Diverse Sexuality and/or Gender: Introduction & Terminology.
2. DSG Relationship, Family and Domestic Violence.
3. Transgender & Transsexuality Relationship, Family and Domestic Violence.
4. Service Provision & Good Practice.

If anyone would like to attend a free one day workshop, please contact:

**SARAH JAGGARD, Manager,
Same Sex Domestic Abuse Group**
c/o Hepatitis Council WA
4th Floor, 102 James St
Northbridge WA 6003

M: 0428 958 873 T: 08 9227 9802
F: 08 9227 6545
W: www.ssdag.org.au

WORLD NEWS !!!!!

"West Australian" 22/2/08

Israeli quakes caused by gays, claims MP

JERUSALEM

An Israeli parliamentarian claims that several earthquakes felt in Israel recently were a consequence of gays and Parliament's acceptance of them.

Shlomo Benizri, of the ultra-Orthodox Jewish Shas Party, said on Wednesday the way to stop the tremors was for Parliament to reverse its trend of liberalising laws concerning homosexuals.

Two quakes originating in neighboring Lebanon shook much of Israel last week, the first coming two days after Israel's Attorney-General ruled that same-sex couples could adopt children.

During two weeks of November and December, four earthquakes shook parts of Israel, Jordan and the Palestinian territories. None of the tremors caused any serious injuries or major damage.

"Why do earthquakes happen?" Mr Benizri said during a parliamentary debate on earthquake preparedness, "One of the reasons is the things to which the Knesset (Parliament) gives legitimacy, to sodomy." He said a cost-effective way of averting earthquake damage would be to stop "passing legislation on how to encourage homosexual activity in the state of Israel, which anyway brings about earthquakes".

Representatives of Shas have issued statements in the past that other Israelis found outrageous, such as blaming a 1985 train-bus accident that killed 22, mostly children, on failure of Israel's to follow Jewish ritual.

The adoption decision by Attorney-General Meni Mazuz last Sunday followed other successes for Israeli gays, including inheritance rights, which have outraged religious conservatives.

Domestic Abuse Group Workshop:
"Speaking Out".

4.

Story of penguin pals ruled too gay for kids

WASHINGTON

A children's book about two male penguins that hatch and parent a chick has been pulled from library shelves in some US primary schools after a parent complained that it promoted a gay agenda.

The decision by school Supt Edgar Hatrick led many parents and gay rights advocates in Loudoun County, Virginia, to rush to the penguins' defence. Many say the school system should not have allowed one complaint to limit children's literary choices.

The book is based "on a true story ... of what happens in the animal kingdom", said David Weintraub of Equality Loudoun, a gay rights organisation. "It's about the joy of being part of a family. These penguins love each other." The book *And Tango Makes Three*, by Justin Richardson and Peter Parnell, draws on the real story of Roy and Silo, two chinstrap penguins at Central Park Zoo in New York.

As the book says, Roy and Silo were "a little bit different" than the boy and girl penguins who noticed each other and became couples. "Wherever Roy went, Silo went too." After they tried to hatch an egg-shaped rock together, a zoo-keeper gave them a fertilised egg to nurture. Experts say male chinstraps typically share incubation duties with females.

The book topped the American Library Association's list of banned or challenged books in 2006.

In Loudoun, it was challenged at Sugarland Elementary School a few months ago, officials said, by a parent they declined to name.

Following school system policy, the principal convened a panel of principals, librarians, teachers and parents to review the book. They deemed it acceptable, and the principal agreed. The parent appealed and another committee reviewed the book and recommended it remain in the library.

Mr. Hatrick made the final call. He thought the book's content might not be developmentally appropriate for some students.

At 16 primary schools, the book is now part of the professional collection, where it is stored with instructional texts and can be checked out only by parents or teachers.

Wise words from Sam Levenson, heard on 720 ABC.

- "Many wise words are spoken in jest, but they don't compare with the number of stupid words spoken in earnest."
- "The first screw to get loose in your head is the one that holds your tongue in place."
- "You're only young once. After that it takes some other excuse for behaving like an idiot."
- "Even if the majority agrees on an idiotic idea, it is still an idiotic idea."
- "The greatness of this or any other country may still be measured by the number of people trying to get IN versus the number of people trying to get OUT."
- "The best defence of our country is to keep it at all times WORTH defending."
- "War doesn't prove who's right; only who's left."
- "War is better at abolishing nations than nations are at abolishing wars."
- "You can't shake hands with a clenched fist."
- "The UN has been as effective against war as foghorns have been against fog."
- "There are more important things in life than money. The trouble is they all cost money."
- Re: Sex education in schools:
"Let them teach it! If the schools teach sex the way they teach everything else, the kids will lose interest anyhow."

Quips from "Ginger Meggs" comic strips in the "West Australian".

- If it wasn't for the optimist, the pessimist wouldn't know how happy he isn't.
- It's never too late to have a happy childhood.
- They said it couldn't be done and I proved it.
- Just when I was getting used to yesterday along comes today.

- Time waits for no man and very few women.
- "On your journey through life, you'll learn lots of things ---- you'll forget lots of things! It's nature's way of not letting your brain get too full!"
- There has been an alarming increase in the number of things I know nothing about.
- Given the choice between two theories, take the one which is funnier.

5.

Being Gay Is

Being gay is having the capability to love a member of the same sex to a much greater depth than a person of the opposite sex.

Being gay is a matter of love, not a matter of sex.

Being gay is who you are, not what you do.

Being gay is part of you, not a separate entity.

Being gay is being okay -- the sin is living a lie.

Being gay is not chosen -- if it were, there would be no gays.

Being gay is to be ridiculed about something you can do nothing about.

Being gay is not changeable -- but it is liveable.

Being gay is accepting yourself when others are not accepting of you.

Being gay is being who you are - even though you don't understand it.

Being gay is gentleness, warmth and sensitivity, when you are not at war with the outside world.

Being gay is different, and the definition of different is not "bad".

Being gay is reaching the autumn of your years and wondering why you have spent most of your life trying to get acceptance from people who don't know you and who don't understand you.

Being gay is you -- and nothing in this world is more important than that.

(Copyright 1985, Shirley M. Hunter)

Extract from :

"EX - GAYS ? THERE ARE NONE"
by Rev Sylvia Pennington.

Published by: Lambda Christian Fellowship
PO Box 1967, Hawthorne,
CA, 90250, USA
Used with permission from S.Pennington.

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- Foresight? Knowing when to shut your mouth before someone tells you to!
 - The easier it is to do the harder it is to change.
 - I'm an optimist but I don't think it helps much.
 - Misers make wonderful ancestors.

PFLAG **INFORMATION**

REGULAR PFLAG MEETINGS

PFLAG meets at 1.30pm, on the
2nd Sat of each month at:

Women's Health Care House
100 / 102 Aberdeen St
NORTHBRIDGE

ALL WELCOME!

(The Blue CAT bus passes the door)

NEXT PFLAG MEETINGS

For 2008:

Saturday April 12th @ 1.30pm
Saturday May 10th @ 1.30pm
Saturday June 14th @ 1.30pm

ALL WELCOME!

NEXT COMMITTEE Meeting

Saturday April 12th @ 12.00 noon

Office located at:

WA AIDS Council
664 Murray St
WEST PERTH

PFLAG is here for YOU

City Helpline: (08) 9228 1005

PFLAG Country Contact:

Bunbury: (08) 97971470 (Jill)

<p>CLOSETS ARE FOR CLOTHES NOT PEOPLE JOIN PFLAG</p>

6.

NEWSLETTER ITEMS

PLEASE !!!

*Tell us your story,
(this may be anonymous)*

Send us a joke

Have a grouch!

Write a poem or a letter.

Offer a suggestion, (Not rude)

*Or just write to us
for any reason at all.*

Please Forward contributions to
Postal Address:

Newsletter Editor
PFLAG-Perth Inc
PO Box 354
NORTHBRIDGE WA 6865

Or - PFLAG Editor email at:
sazabelrulz@hotmail.com

Or – NEW PFLAG email address:
pflagperth@hotmail.com

NB: Any previous email address for
PFLAG-Perth is no longer valid – we
apologise for any inconvenience.

Website (Up and coming):
<http://www.pflag.org.au>

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