



PFLAG BOULDER COUNTY

PFLAG Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

February 2009

PFLAG Program - Prayers for Bobby

Wednesday, February 25th, 7pm

On February 25, at 7:00pm, PFLAG Boulder County will screen the Lifetime television drama "Prayers for Bobby," at the Boulder Public Library Auditorium at 1000 Canyon Blvd (Canyon and Ninth). A reception will precede the film at 6:00pm. *This program will replace PFLAG's regularly scheduled program on February 19.*

Academy Award nominee and Golden Globe winner Sigourney Weaver stars in this emotional true story about a 1970s religious suburban housewife and mother who struggles to accept her young son Bobby's sexual orientation. What happens to Bobby is tragic and causes Mary to question her faith; ultimately this mom changes her views in ways that she never could have imagined. Based on a book of the same name by Leroy Aarons, award-winning journalist and founder of the National Lesbian and Gay Journalists Association, the presentation will feature a guest appearance by Ron Aarons, brother of the author. Copies of the book will also be available for purchase with proceeds benefiting PFLAG Boulder County.

National PFLAG Stands Up and Speaks Out

In December, PFLAG officially launched *Cultivating Respect*, an expanded Safe Schools initiative. This comprehensive new program includes training seminars for local parents and allies, empowering PFLAG supporters at the local level to work directly with their community leaders and school administrators to protect LGBT students. PFLAG plans trainings across the country in 2009, following initial training sessions held earlier this year in Ohio and Tennessee.

PFLAG's public education campaign on transgender issues, *This Is Our Love Story*, selected Calpernia Addams as its spokeswoman (one of *Out Magazine's* 'Out 100' in '08). PFLAG applauded the selection of our country's next Secretary of Education in a widely distributed *Huffington Post* column. Duncan, who has served as the head of the Illinois Public Schools, has been a long-time champion of Safe Schools initiatives in the state. As the CEO of the Chicago Public Schools, the third largest school district in the country, Duncan has been attuned to the pervasiveness of homophobic bullying and harassment and its negative impact on students, families and personnel who are or are perceived to be LGBT. He has been a proponent of organizing and professional development efforts in support of Safe Schools initiatives, too.

National PFLAG weighed in regarding the future of the military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" ban on LGBT troops. Following an interview with CNN, PFLAG's communications director wrote that, "In answering inquiries about the military's ban, General Powell has raised more questions than he has offered answers about where he stands on the issue." PFLAG leaders also responded to a controversial *Newsweek* cover story about faith and marriage equality. When reporter Lisa Miller's article, *The Religious Case for Gay Marriage*, came under attack by anti-equality advocates, PFLAG wrote a letter to *Newsweek*, noting that, "Lisa Miller's superb analysis of the arguments surrounding scripture and same-sex marriage points to an unmistakable, common-sense conclusion: Marriage - both gay and straight - is about a fundamental respect for families, and families are rightfully both revered and respected by every religious doctrine. To read more complete and in depth stories like this, go to www.pflag.org/blog.

Meetings

PFLAG Boulder County
First United Methodist Church
1421 Spruce Street
14th & Spruce - 303.444.8164

6:45 PM - Support & Advocacy Groups Meet
7:30 PM - Program

At 6:45 p.m. a support group, especially intended for newcomers and others dealing with personal LGBT-related issues, meets in the library as long as needed. Confidentiality is promised. At 7:00 p.m. refreshments will be served before the 7:30 p.m. program in the parlor. The public is always welcome to the main program at 7:30 p.m. on the 3rd Thursday of each month.

February 25th

PFLAG Program -
Prayers for Bobby

February 16th, 8am - 12pm

LGBT Lobby Day
The Center, 1050 Broadway,
Denver 80203

Prayers and Mixed Blessings

By Kit McChesney, PFLAG Board Member



January turned out to be a big month for prayers. First came the Right Reverend V. Gene Robinson's pre-inaugural invocation, delivered two days prior to the presidential inauguration, to a crowd of hundreds of thousands gathered on the steps of the Lincoln Memorial for "We Are One," the official kick-off of the inaugural festivities. Two days later, Reverend Rick Warren, the pastor of Saddleback, the Evangelical megachurch in ultra-conservative Orange County, California, delivered the inaugural invocation. The inaugural ceremony was closed by the benediction delivered by Reverend Joseph Lowery, icon of the civil rights movement. Four days later, Lifetime premiered "Prayers for Bobby," a made-for-television movie starring Sigourney Weaver, dramatizing the story of Mary Griffith, a suburban housewife whose zealous devotion to her Presbyterian faith drove her gay son to commit suicide, a crisis of faith that prompted her to take up the cause for gay rights. (PFLAG Boulder County will screen this moving story at the Boulder Public Library Auditorium on February 25).

Openly gay Gene Robinson, Episcopal Bishop of New Hampshire, shared the stage with the ranks of other entertainers like Beyonce, Bruce Springsteen, Herbie Hancock, Cheryl Crow, and Stevie Wonder. His election to high office in the Episcopal Church has made Robinson a superstar of sorts in the LGBT community, sparking the threat of schism in the worldwide Anglican church. Featured in the film "For The Bible Tells Me So," Robinson has been an outspoken critic of the push to drive LGBT people out of the church. For our movement, Robinson's presence on the national stage was a landmark, though HBO's decision to eliminate his invocation from the televised broadcast was widely interpreted as a snub to the LGBT community. Though Obama's people denied it, insisting that Robinson's prayer had been scheduled long before the Warren fiasco broke out, most believe that Robinson's presence was intended to assuage hurt feelings over the selection of Warren to deliver the opening prayer at the inaugural. So much for that. I don't think I'm alone in feeling none-too-assuaged.

Obama's choice of Warren to offer the inaugural invocation infuriated the LGBT community and its allies. And rightly so. An avowed homophobe who has made statements equating marriage for same-sex couples with pedophilia and incest, Warren zealously supported California's Proposition 8, the measure nullifying that state's landmark Supreme Court decision affirming marriage equality, joining forces with other conservative religious organizations, including the LDS Church, to push LGBT rights back into the proverbial closet. The best-selling author of *A Purpose Driven Life* has been unwavering in his opposition to recognizing the rights of LGBT people. Being chosen to deliver the inaugural prayer did cast harsher light on Warren's anti-gay views, rendering him somewhat less palatable to the public. His church also removed some of its more rabidly anti-gay language from its web site, but the softening of the rhetoric has not altered the fundamental message of Saddleback and other churches: that LGBT people are sinners, unwelcome in their congregations, and worthy of exclusion from society at large. What other message could possibly be interpreted from a statement that equates an entire class of law-abiding citizens with criminals?

To say we were incredulous by the selection of Warren would be a gross understatement. That someone whose pronouncements are so damaging and degrading to an entire community—and seemingly so at odds with Obama's image as a promoter of unity and inclusion—could be considered for this honor leaves most of us speechless, and deeply hurt. Never mind that that the prayer itself turned out to be totally unremarkable and uninspired. Aside from its tired, predictable rhetoric, the prayer was overtly exclusionary: Warren invoked the name of Jesus no fewer than four times. So LGBT people should not be too insulted since we share good company with Muslims, Jews, Hindus, Buddhists, and anyone outside Warren's narrowly defined sphere who were all excluded from the scope of the prayer's reach. No doubt the content of the prayer has already been forgotten, if the significance of Warren's invitation and top billing on this symbolic day has not, and should not, be overlooked.

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Had Warren delivered the invocation for the previous administration, we would hardly be surprised. Over the past eight years, disappointment has become predictable and routine. Warren's prayer would have been right at home then, and here it is, making a new home with the new administration. What should we make of this?

I have a different question. Did we believe that the election of one man would fundamentally change the world? Obama was supposed to be our man in Washington, the one who could, and would, deliver the goods for our long struggle for equality. The one who supported our struggle, the one who understood us, the one who wouldn't forget us once he was elected. The one who would make everything all right. And there we were, on day one, already disappointed, the first prayer of the morning delivered by one of our staunchest foes, and openly endorsed by our hero. We were let down even before the party started, thrown under the bus. We were deflated. Betrayed, we were ready to throw Obama overboard, to give up. Once again, another promising leader, full of promises, literal and implied, had let us down.

What's wrong with this picture?

What's wrong is that the struggle isn't over. Not even close. It's barely begun. We're not there yet. Obama's election, though without doubt a huge gain for our community—after all, the man isn't afraid to use the words "gay" and "straight" in the same breath—isn't going to change much more than the tone of the debate in this country about equal rights for LGBT people. Obama's sweeping victory did change the ranks of Congress, ushering in slightly more receptive representation for our people than we've had in the past eight, or even the past sixteen, years. The climate is slightly warmer. But the struggle is not over, and as odd as it sounds, maybe that's a good thing.

We need to work harder. We need to sweat more. The work is there, and it needs doing. We need to hone our message so that it is sharp and clear. We need to work our activist muscles so they're ready for the long haul, for the endurance that this marathon work requires. We have to take this message to every individual who doesn't understand why this issue is so important and explain why it is. Over and over and over again. We need to work so hard that in our own lifetimes, a majority of people will no longer consider LGBT people beyond the pale, so that our children won't have to hear gay slurs in school, from their friends or from their teachers. As helpful as judicial and legislative gains may be, they aren't going to ensure equality. Executive orders won't deliver equal rights. Look at what has happened to affirmative action in the past few years. If we can learn anything from the civil rights struggle that made it possible for a man whose father would not have been served in a restaurant in the nation's capital forty years ago to become president, it's that equality is not granted; it has to be wrenched from the clenched fists of those who are in a struggle to the death to keep it. The roots of our inequality are intertwined with the roots of our culture. And if we think that someone in power is going to hand us our liberation on a silver platter, we're fooling ourselves. We have to stop begging for crumbs, stop praying for a messiah to deliver us from our oppression. We have to stand up and demand nothing less than equality, in a big way, in a much bigger way than we have thus far dared. Today is the day. This struggle isn't going to progress by dint of piecemeal efforts. This struggle requires revolutionary thinking and hard work.

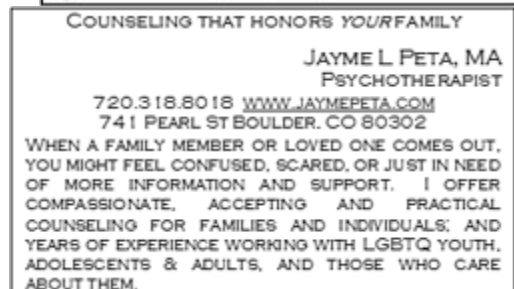
That we have been presented with four different prayers, all in one month, should be a signal. It is before those for whom prayer is so important that we have to bring our case. Our setbacks stem from a breakdown in the division between religion and civic life, in a country that professes to separate church and state, but which is fundamentally incapable of doing so. We have to bring our cause before people of faith and change their minds and hearts. It will not happen any other way. As much as we want to believe that this is an issue that should stand outside the complicated relationship between church and state, it is inextricably intertwined



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with it. They are inseparable.

We have a lot of work to do. And the work is good, will be good for us, and good for those whom we need to convince. The loss of California to Proposition 8 should remind us that even in one of the most liberal states in the country, we have plenty to do. But the losses in Arkansas and Florida and Arizona are even more stark than in California, where the margin of opposition to marriage equality has continued to narrow during the past eight years. In Arkansas and Florida, LGBT people are banned from adopting children. In our own military, LGBT people are still being persecuted. While Iceland is about to place a lesbian at the head of its government, dozens of other countries consider homosexuality a capital offense, and the Roman Catholic Church opposes the repeal of capital punishment for homosexuality in countries where it is illegal.

What we risk by pinning our hopes, and prayers, on a single person, is the loss of our collective initiative. We risk losing the very thing we need most, our solidarity. Complacency is our worst enemy. It's easy to think that since we now have "our man" in Washington, accompanied by a few openly gay members of the House, that we can heave a sigh of relief, thinking we've accomplished something more significant than we have. But this struggle is going to take more than three openly gay legislators and a president who is tolerant. Our struggle is just beginning. This is the time to seize the day, to push hard while the time is ripe.

Civil rights icon and leader of the march from Selma to Montgomery, Reverend Joseph Lowery delivered the message we need to hear in his benediction, gave us the mantra we need to keep repeating, to anyone who will listen, and to many who haven't yet learned to hear. His words resonate with the same messages embedded in PFLAG's mission. "And now, Lord, in the complex arena of human relations, help us to make choices on the side of love, not hate; on the side of inclusion, not exclusion; tolerance, not intolerance."

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Poll Reveals Positive Support for LGBT Equality

The Gill Foundation recently mailed a letter to each Colorado legislator with the results of a state-wide survey taken in November by Harris Interactive among 502 Colorado residents age 18 and older. The poll results show that Coloradoans are strongly committed to equality for gay and transgender people in our state. In fact, on most issues – including marriage – Coloradoans' level of support is higher than the levels of support found on the same poll questions at the national level. Key poll findings include:

- Eight out of 10 (83%) Colorado adults believe gay and lesbian couples should either be able to form domestic partnerships, marry or have all of the same rights as marriage while only 15% say there should be no legal recognition. Coloradoans overwhelmingly support legal recognition for gay and lesbian families. Coloradoans support gay and transgender-inclusive hate crimes laws (63%) and non-discrimination laws (56%). These proposals are similar to those already on the books in Colorado, signaling clear public support for those laws.
- Nearly three out of four (73%) of Coloradoans also oppose attempts to ban qualified gay and lesbian couples from adopting. This finding signals strong support for existing Colorado law that allows for second-parent adoption in the state.
- Two-thirds of Colorado adults (66%) favor allowing openly gay military personnel to serve in the armed forces.
- Two out of 10 Coloradoans (21%) say that their feelings about gay and lesbian people have become more favorable over the past five years. The survey shows that greater acceptance is tied to conversations with family, friends and clergy; what people see in news and entertainment media; and the fact that laws have been passed to protect gay and lesbian people. But most importantly, it's tied to personally knowing someone who's gay or lesbian.
- Nearly three out of four (74%) of Coloradoans know someone who is gay or transgender. And half of those know six or more gay or transgender people.

Colorado's Anti-Discrimination Laws: Making Colorado a Better Place

By Linda Lidov

It is hard to imagine that less than two years ago, it was actually legal in Colorado to discriminate against gay and transgender people simply for being who they are. But thanks to legislation that has passed under the Democratic-led legislature and Governor Bill Ritter, LGBT people in Colorado are now protected from discrimination in areas of employment, public accommodations, and housing. We can be proud that Colorado now joins 19 other states and the District of Columbia that have updated their nondiscrimination protections to include sexual orientation. Thirteen of these states, including Colorado, also include gender identity/expression. Here is a brief summary of each law:

- **EMPLOYMENT:** Passed in May 2007, the Employment Nondiscrimination Act expands Colorado's employment nondiscrimination protections to include sexual orientation, defined as heterosexuality, homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender status, or perception thereof. It makes it illegal to consider these things when making employment-related decisions or to make any inquiries about an applicant's sexual orientation, inclusive of transgender status. The law applies to employers, employment agencies, labor organizations, on-the-job training, and vocational training programs and schools.
- **PUBLIC ACCOMMODATIONS:** Passed in May 2008, the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act prohibits discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation or transgender status in public accommodations. Covered entities may not deny a gay or transgender person participation, entry, or services. A place of public accommodation is any place of business that offers sales or services of any kind to the public, or that offers facilities, privileges, advantages or other accommodations to the public, such as hotels, restaurants, stores, hospitals, clinics, and health clubs.
- **HOUSING:** Also passed in May 2008 as part of the Colorado Anti-Discrimination Act, this law prohibits unfair housing practices on the basis of sexual orientation or transgender status. It applies to landlords, lessors, sellers, homeowner associations, lenders, real estate agencies, insurers, advertisers, cities, counties, government agencies, and others involved in showing, selling, renting, transferring, or leasing housing or residential real estate.

Individuals who have experienced discrimination and would like to file a complaint should contact the Colorado Civil Rights Division at 303-894-2997 or by visiting the web:


www.dora.state.co.us/civil-rights/complaint_process.htm; more info at www.ColoradoProtectsAll.info.

Advocacy!!

(202) 224-3121 - Capitol Switchboard [based on zipcode]. Call up and let Congress know that you're a constituent would like them to support ENDA (the Employment Nondiscrimination Act). Then call back and leave messages for your two state senators about Senate Bill 88 (state health insurance for government employees).

1-800-257-8443 - Campbell Soup
Campbell's *Home for the Holidays* campaign featured a lesbian couple and their son which caused uproar with the American Family Association. Call them up and let them know how *thankful* you are that they support the GLBTQ community.

In addition, send along an email to **Anthony Sanzio**, for his support of the 2009 Straight for Equality Awards on February 5th in Times Square.
-- anthony_sanzio@campbellsoup.com



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PFLAG Boulder meets the 3rd Thursday of each month at First United Methodist Church, 14th and Spruce, Boulder, Colorado. Sharing time begins at 7:00 pm, program at 8:00 pm.

REMEMBER, our confidentiality pledge must not be broken.

Newsletter is published monthly. A subscription is included with each membership to PFLAG. Material related to PFLAG is welcome from any source. Deadline is the twentieth of each month. The editor reserves the right to accept, reject, or edit any material submitted.

Membership Categories

- \$25.00 Individual
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- \$10.00 Student
- \$10.00 Newsletter Only
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Membership dues are renewed on October 1st of each year. Send address changes and membership information to PFLAG, P.O. Box 19696, Boulder, CO 80308.

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OUR MISSION

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gays, 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 civil rights.

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

Local Family Creates Fashion for Equality

Eric and Karen Boelts, a Boulder PFLAG family, has started a web-based t-shirt business - "Call Me Little Bridget". Their motto is "Making the world a better place...one shirt at a time." Eric, a graphic designer, and Karen, an artist in her own right, believe that in creating an artistically pleasing, everyday-wearable t-shirt, they can impact change toward normalizing LGBT acceptance. *Call Me Little Bridget* currently has three designs available on line, www.callmelittlebridget.com, or by calling 303-588-3696.

Colorado Coalition of PFLAG Chapters Winter Meeting

The Colorado Coalition of PFLAG Chapters met in Evergreen on January 10. Morning business included deciding how to use the \$5000 profit made at the Mountain West Regional Conference sponsored by the Coalition and held in Boulder in Sept. Plans were discussed to bring in Suzanne Greenfield, National PFLAG Safe Schools coordinator, to do a state-wide Safe Schools training. The afternoon featured two presentations. The main program was delivered by Julie Graves, PhD candidate at CU Boulder. She described her work in the field of straight identities as related to homosexuality. She also told us about the Colorado Queer Straight Alliance, a state-wide network she oversees. A speaker from Equality Colorado told us about the upcoming Lobby Day in Denver in February.

The Red Party for Boulder Pride

On Saturday, February 14, 2009, Boulder Pride is pleased to present the Red Party at the Rembrandt Yard at 1031 Spruce Street, Boulder. This year will

surpass your expectations for a night of wonderful company, delectable food, fabulous drinks, and amazing entertainment and dancing. There will be silent and live auction items (including a cruise, airline tickets, a scooter and more!). In addition, we will be offering delectable bites, entertainment designed specifically for this event, and dancing, dancing, and more dancing! Devilishly Delicious Drinks FREE, from 7-8pm only. Rocky Mountain Oysters will be performing at 8:15pm. The live auction begins shortly after! To volunteer, contact Aicila at red-party@boulderpride.org. The cost is \$25 (students with valid ID \$20). VIP tickets \$50.

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