



San Jose ♦ Peninsula Newsletter

April 2010

www.pflagsanjose.org

P.O. Box 2718, Sunnyvale, CA 94087

♥ NEED HELP? ♥ Call the Help/Info Line: (408) 270-8182 ♥

QUEER RELIGION

by W. Smith

Many of us in this country were raised in religious traditions that express varying degrees of disapproval toward gayness, ranging from gentle discouragement of homosexual behavior to outright excommunication of gays and lesbians. So when we gays and lesbians proudly declare our sexual orientation, it's not surprising that straight people of faith assume we're intentionally rejecting their religion.

We in the gay community, however, experience this break differently. From our perspective, it often seems that religion has rejected *us*. Why, for instance, would God create us in this way which we know is immutable and utterly central to our being, and then forbid us from ever expressing our love for our same-sex soul mates? In the face of such unresolved paradoxes we have no choice but to distance ourselves from the traditions which nurtured our souls as children, but which now inflict great harm.

Into this gap step the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence. Predominately a group of gay men, the Sisters deeply admire Catholic nuns and seek to emulate them, especially in their tireless efforts to educate and minister to their communities. Among other things, the Sisters promote safe sex, educate about the dangers of drug use, and raise money for a variety of causes including AIDS and breast cancer.

The Sisters also borrow from another group of Catholics — the missionaries of old — by adapting their message using the symbols and metaphors of their local community. Thus, like Catholic nuns, the Sisters assume a distinctive appearance, but, unlike today's nuns, the Sisters' dress is gaily flamboyant and gender-bending — what the Sisters call "nun drag."

Although the Sisters, as a group, do not subscribe to any particular religion, there's no denying the spiritual impact their ministry has. Take, for example, this story from Sister Merry Peter: She was ministering at a gay nightclub one evening when she encountered a certain young man. She knew nothing about him, his life, or his relationships; yet, as if seized by the Holy Spirit, she told him, "The man you're with is not the one you need, and he is keeping you from being the man you must become." As she moved on, the young man appeared stunned, and he stood rooted to the spot for a very long time. After that night she never saw him until many years later. When they finally met again, the young man explained that he had, indeed, been in the thrall of another — a man who was his pimp and his pusher — and her words had had such a powerful impact that he soon broke free, went through drug rehab, and turned his life around completely.

Personally, I'm an agnostic atheist, but I appreciate the profound healing power that religious metaphors can have, especially when they're expressed in a manner that's meaningful to the community they're intended to serve. So when I look at all the good this group has done for the GLBT community, I can say only... **RIGHT ON, SISTERS!**

MEETING CALENDAR

~ APRIL ~

- Apr. 12 Redwood City Meeting - 7:30 PM
Sequoia Union H.S. District Offices
480 James Ave., Redwood City
(2nd Monday of the month)
- Apr. 14 San Jose Meeting - 7:30 PM
First Congregational Church
1980 Hamilton Ave. (at Leigh)
(2nd Wednesday of the month)
- Apr. 15 Straight Spouse Support - 7:30 PM
Call San Jose Helpline for info.
(3rd Thursday of the month)
- Apr. 20 Board Meeting
UU Church of Palo Alto
505 E. Charleston Rd., Palo Alto
(3rd Tuesday of the month)

ALL ARE WELCOME!



Gilroy — Call the Helpline
for support and information:
(408) 270-8182



*Newsletter Stuffing in San Mateo
Contact the editor for more info*

May Newsletter Deadline:
Friday, Apr. 26



PFLAG Annual Scholarship Awards Ceremony

7:30 PM

Monday, May 10 - Redwood City
Come Honor Our Outstanding Awardees!



Mark Your Calendars Now!

ANNOUNCEMENTS

PFLAG Support Meetings

Redwood City – April 12

Dr. Jerome Goldstein will discuss "The Neurobiology of Sexual Orientation." Since homosexuality was removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders* as a disease category in 1973, it has been mentioned as an illness only in the context of worsening anxiety states. The much debated issue is whether homosexuality is a choice, or whether it is a neurobiological entity significantly determined prior to birth and modified minimally after birth. Recent imaging, and genetic and endocrinology studies verify the latter.

The neurobiology of sexual orientation and the gay brain has far-reaching consequences beyond sexual orientation. Dr. Goldstein, a gay man, is a board certified neurologist and fellow in the American Academy of Neurology. He is the director of the San Francisco Clinical Research Center, the San Francisco Headache Clinic, and the San Francisco Alzheimer's and Dementia Clinic. With the recognition that headache and Alzheimer's Disease have neurobiological bases, he expanded his interest in neurobiology to research sexual orientation.

San Jose – April 14

Cassie Blume, Youth Outreach Services Manager at the LGBTQ Youth Space, will share information about their programs offered for youth and young adults. The LGBTQ Youth Space is an award-winning program of Family and Children Services, a Bay Area non-profit committed to community based mental health services. The program is located at the Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center.

Prior to her role in the LGBTQ Youth Space, Cassie managed the youth and volunteer programs at the Billy DeFrank LGBT Community Center as well as completing highly inspiring internships with Equality California and the LGBT Community Center of New York City. She is a graduate of the Community Studies Program at UC Santa Cruz and has a passion for youth empowerment. She and her partner have lived in San Jose for about 3 and a half years.

Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence Website

Learn more about the Sisters, their "Sistory" and their upcoming San Francisco events at www.thesisters.org

I have always been unsatisfied with life as most people live it. Always I want to live more intensely and richly. Why... conceal one's true longings and loves, when by speaking of them, one might find someone to understand them, and by acting on them, one might discover oneself?

Everett Ruess

July 4th - Exciting News!

The Peninsula Celebration Committee, in charge of the July 4th Parade, has given our Chapter permission to carry one sign stating our theme. The overall theme for the parade is *The Magic of Green* — so what better theme for us, than to look like Kermit and say: "It's not so easy being green!"



I found wonderful frog hats online for a very reasonable price; we can get a load of inexpensive white T-Shirts and throw them in the washing machine with packs of green dye — and our costumes are done.

Mark your calendars now to be in Redwood City on Sunday morning, July 4th for a march through downtown past tens of thousands of "middle Americans." Carrying our PFLAG banner and waving rainbow flags, we'll be a (green!) light to the community.

Laurie

All on Board!



Our Chapter PFLAG Board is always looking for new, creative ideas for helping families, getting our word out, raising money for scholarships, and just having fun together. We'd love to have you become part of the Board, just attend a meeting, or send us your ideas. Our next meeting is Tuesday, April 20th, at 7:30 PM at the Palo Alto UU Church on Charleston Avenue, just off 101. Take the San Antonio Road exit.

Get Your Calendar Ready for Pride Parades!

Put these dates on your Calendar now:

San Francisco Pride Festival and Parade — June 26-27
San Jose Pride Festival and Parade — August 21-22

Yes — San Jose Pride is in August this year, due to a scheduling conflict in June.

Mark your Calendar

Apr. 29	Out to Eat with Outlet
May 10	PFLAG Scholarship Award Ceremony - Redwood City
May 22	1st Annual Harvey Milk Day
Jun. 26/27	San Francisco Pride
Aug. 21/22	San Jose Pride

PFLAG Annual Meeting Report — with the Sisters of Perpetual Indulgence



This event turned out to be the best PFLAG program ever! Five Sisters graced us with their presence, their insights, and their inspirational stories. We learned so much and felt honored by their generosity in sharing their time with us. This evening was a lot of fun — and we received \$500 in donations to the PFLAG Scholarship Fund!



*Sister Jezebelle, Sister Merry Peter, Sister Mary Ralph,
Sister Tammy Faye Bakersfield, Sister Mary Timothy*



The delicious dinner provided by Tanya and Peter was awesome! Yummy ice cream for dessert was donated by Double Rainbow. Many thanks!!



PFLAG Annual Scholarship Award Ceremony

Our annual PFLAG Scholarship Award Ceremony will be held at the Redwood City support meeting on Monday, **May 10** - mark your calendars now!

This year five \$2000 scholarships will provide financial support for high school seniors who will be attending an accredited two- or four-year college, university, or business/technical school in fall 2010. Awardees will be individuals whose educational history, personal plans, and activities demonstrate support for justice and equality for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered persons. The awards are provided with the understanding that the funds will be used to offset the costs of tuition, books, or required fees.

This evening is always one of the most inspirational PFLAG events of the year — Don't miss it!



PFLAG Benefit Dance — Correction

Wendy Mines and Eleanor Sue donated 100% of the proceeds from the February 13th **Annual PFLAG Benefit Dance** — a total of **\$2,780!** — to our San Jose/Peninsula PFLAG Chapter Scholarship Fund. Wendy and Eleanor produced the dance, with support from many volunteers in our community, to benefit our PFLAG scholarship program. This event was incorrectly identified as a Peninsula Women's Group (PWG) effort - we apologize for the error.

Our heartfelt thanks go to Wendy and Eleanor, long-time faithful PFLAG members, for their continuous generosity and support of the San Jose/Peninsula PFLAG Chapter and Scholarship Program!



The Crisis Project

So far we have handed out about 30 copies of Mitchell Gold's book *Crisis - 40 Stories Revealing the Personal, Social, and Religious Pain and Trauma of Growing up Gay in America*.

We gave a copy to each of the Sisters and PFLAG members who attended the Annual Meeting, with instructions to read it and pass it on to an individual or group who would benefit from it — people who work at schools or with youth in other capacities, religious groups, counseling providers, etc. For any of you who would like a copy to read and pass on, copies will be available at our monthly meetings, or you may contact Laurie.



There's a part of every living thing that wants to become itself. The tadpole into the frog. The chrysalis into the butterfly. A damaged human being into a whole one. That is spirituality.

Ellen Bass

Hillsdale High School Laramie Project

by Laurie Carter

It was a thrill to share the stage with Senator Jackie Speier and State Assemblyman Jerry Hill on Saturday night at Hillsdale High School. Fred Phelps and others from the Westboro Baptist Church didn't show up, but at least 400 others did for a rally calling for acceptance and equality. 200 students and parents from the high school joined in a "love fest" in the courtyard of the school, where singing, sign waving and speeches brought many rounds of applause. Outside 200 more lined 31st Ave. holding signs, cheering, and waving at the many honking cars that passed by. The rally culminated in a sold-out performance of *The Laramie Project* — the cause of Phelps's ire.



The students in charge of the evening had asked that I speak for 10 minutes about how positive this event is, and then about what happens from here. I began with: *"Looking out at all of you, I see a beacon to the community saying that at Hillsdale High School, acceptance and unity rule the day. I'm really proud to be part of this event that says to the world that you will not tolerate the messages of hate brought here by Fred Phelps and his congregation."*

I introduced the idea of name calling with the words of actor and comedian Alec Mapa, whose story about growing up gay I recently read. He said, "Whoever said, 'sticks and stones may break my bones, but words will never hurt me,' was never called 'faggot' in front of the entire eighth grade. Words hurt like hell."

"We hear again and again from people who grew up gay, or are growing up gay now, that school is indeed hell for students who are different and may be taunted day after day. Many kids have gotten good at appearing to shake it off, pretending they don't care, but every day just getting up and coming to school can be painful and downright scary. This is why gay teens are 2-3 times more likely than straight teens to attempt or commit suicide. The pressure of pretending to be someone you're not, the daily bullying and taunting, the isolation, become too much to live with. You can all help to make this school a place where students don't have to face these life-destroying pressures."

Stressing the importance of continuing to work at making changes I quoted MLK's speech where he said, "History will have to record that the greatest tragedy of this period of social transition was not the strident clamor of the bad people, but the appalling silence of the good people."

"The tragedy today is not Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church with their hateful signs. The tragedy will be if all the good people here tonight return to school on Monday and turn their backs, keeping silent in the face of bullying, name

calling, and harassment. Every one of you can be an ally to kids who need support for any reason."

Many specific examples of how to make changes concluded the talk.

It was a truly amazing evening. It makes me really proud to be a spokesperson for PFLAG. I count on all of you to do the same!



PFLAG Speakers' Bureau

It's about changing hearts and minds — face to face

Are you looking for a way to make a difference? It's as easy as sharing a personal story. If you enjoy talking to people and sharing your experience, consider becoming a speaker for PFLAG.

For over 25 years, San Jose/Peninsula PFLAG's Speakers Bureau has provided speakers for schools, community, religious, and corporate organizations. We always need more speakers to fulfill the increasing requests for our programs.

Each year we offer a free, one-day training for LGBT people and their parents, families, and friends. Everyone has a story to tell! We will help you identify your story and train you to tell it in a way that sparks dialogue. Your story can make a huge difference in the life of a LGBT person and can create new allies.

Although you'll learn to talk to groups and answer questions confidently, you are not obligated to speak until you feel ready.

For more information about the San Jose/Peninsula Speakers' Bureau, please contact Stephen at: speakersbureau@pflagsanjose.org — or visit: <http://www.pflagsanjose.org/psb/>

Census Help at the DeFrank Center

In an effort to receive a higher response rate to the Census questionnaires, the Census Bureau is providing support to the public via **Questionnaire Assistance Centers**, located in convenient location. Each Questionnaire Assistance Center will be staffed by a trained Census Bureau Representative for approximately 15 hours per week to assist members of the public who walk in and request assistance with their 2010 Census form, to help those who need a form written in a language besides English, or who have lost their form, or believe they were left out of the form completed at their home.

The Billy DeFrank Center, 938 The Alameda in San Jose, is proud to host a Questionnaire Assistance Center:

Dates: Now through April 17

Time: Tuesdays, Wednesdays, Thursdays & Fridays,
3– 6 pm; Saturdays 11-2 pm

Location: DeFrank Center Library



Get a free Queer the Census sticker! — just send an email to sjp-pflagnews@comcast.net. More information on how to fill out the form as a GLBT couple is available at www.queerthecensus.org.

The PFLAG NEWSLETTER

Published monthly by San Jose/Peninsula Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, P.O. Box 2718, Sunnyvale, CA 94087, Phone: (408) 270-8182.

Peninsula Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays is a tax-exempt, volunteer, community based nonprofit organization.

The San Jose/Peninsula chapter is a member of National PFLAG which is headquartered in Washington, D.C..

Your contribution is tax-deductible to the full extent provided by law.

**Would you like to volunteer?
Call the information lines.
We need your help — Call today!**



MEETING TOPICS ♥ 2010



Meetings are held from 7:30—9:00 PM
Small groups for support are held at all meetings.

Redwood City: Dr. Jerome Goldstein speaks on
The Neurobiology of Sexual Orientation

San Jose: Cassie Blume, LGBTQ Youth Space



PFLAG'S MISSION

We provide love and support for all family members and friends. We work to create an environment of understanding so that our gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender loved ones can live with dignity and respect. These are our goals:

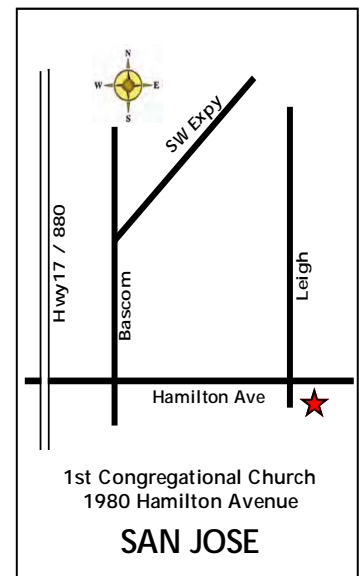
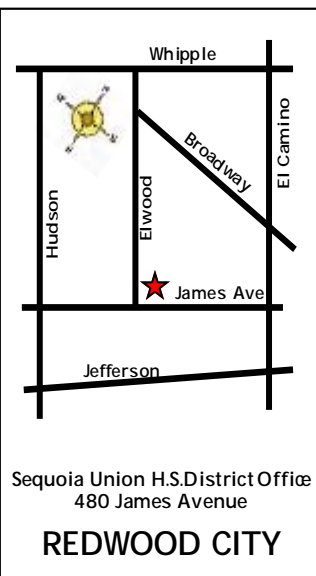
SUPPORT • EDUCATION • ADVOCACY



WHAT IS PFLAG?

"PFLAG" is Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays. We are a national support, education and advocacy organization for gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) people, their families, friends and allies. With 200,000 members and supporters, and local affiliates in more than 500 communities across the U.S. and abroad, PFLAG is the largest grassroots-based family organization of its kind. PFLAG is a non-profit organization and is not affiliated with any religious or political institutions.

Your financial support makes PFLAG's work possible. As a chapter member you can also become engaged in the vital work of providing support, education and advocacy in your community. Even if you're not sure that you need PFLAG, remember that PFLAG NEEDS YOU!



MEMBERSHIP IN SAN JOSE/PENINSULA PFLAG ~ 2010

Send in this coupon to join, renew, or change your address!

- New
 Renew
 Change Address
- Date _____
 Newsletter PDF via email
 I want to volunteer

- Individual Membership \$30
 Household Membership \$40
 Benefactor \$50
 Angel \$100 and up
 Diva \$1,000 and up
 Student or Newsletter Only \$15
 Gift Newsletter Subscription \$8
 (for those who are already members to give to others too far away to come to meetings)
 Donation for Scholarships \$ _____
 Endowment Fund \$ _____

Name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Phone () _____

E-mail* _____

*Required for PDF Newsletter. Send PDF? YES NO (circle one)

Make checks payable and mail to: PFLAG • PO Box 2718, Sunnyvale, CA 94087. Your donations & membership are tax deductible.