



Buffalo / Niagara

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Buffalo, NY 14207

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PFLAG@bfn.org
www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org

We meet because we have learned that someone very close to us is Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, or Transgendered.

We try to help one another deal with this information in a positive manner.

Although we do not agree at all times, we try to be understanding.

We offer help to those who seek it, but do not force ourselves on others.

We strive to maintain anonymity while sharing on a level that is comfortable for all of us.

We encourage all to attend meetings for their own benefit as well as that of the group.

It is our hope that when each of us reaches a point of understanding and acceptance, we realize that this is when others need us the most.

Buffalo Monthly Meeting

Sunday, April 19, 2009
2:30 – 5:00 PM

The April meeting will include a video, discussion of the video, and time for sharing. As always, newcomers will be offered the alternative of meeting privately with a PFLAG parent.

Heritage Room, Westminster Presbyterian Church
724 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14209

Use the driveway to left of the church to reach the church parking lot. Walk behind the church to other side of the building (through the nursery school) and enter through the kitchen entrance.

New Parents Meetings

These meetings are scheduled as needed. Please call the helpline.

Christ United Methodist Church Library
350 Saratoga (corner of Harlem Road), Snyder, NY
North of the Harlem Road exit of Route 33

Enter through door closest to the lighted parking lot. This self-help one-on-one meeting deals with the concerns of parents and family members who have recently learned that a loved one is Lesbian or Gay.

For Niagara satellite meeting details, call 297-5785.

Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, Buffalo/Niagara, is a non-profit, all volunteer, community-based organization not affiliated with any ethnic, religious, economic, or political group. Membership is open to all. PFLAG membership lists are kept confidential and mailings are sent in plain envelopes.



Local News

Queer Journeys Programs

Queer Journeys is a cable access program sponsored by PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara and coordinated by Camille Cox and Babs Conant. The programs are based on documentaries on GLBT issues. This program only airs in Buffalo, on Mondays at 6:30 pm and Tuesdays at 1:00 am on Adelphia Channel 20.

The schedule for the next two months is:

- Apr 6: An Unexpected Journey
- Apr 13: All God's Children
- Apr 20: Claiming America's Promise
- Apr 27: The Families We Choose
- May 4: How Can I be Sure God Loves Me?
- May 11: Reading between the Labels
- May 18: Your Mom's a Lesbian, Here's your Lunch...
- May 25: Straight from the Heart

A short description of the storylines and a full schedule can be found on our website at:

www.PFLAG-buffalo-niagara.org/video_project.shtml

A Walk in the Vineyard

PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara will be hosting *A Walk in the Vineyard*, which will be a fund-raising event for our Safe Schools program. The purpose of the Safe Schools program is to end bullying (all bullying) in schools and to make our schools safe for all children. According to the CDC, 33% of gay youth will attempt suicide? In fact, gay teen suicide attempts are four times that of heterosexual youth. Here are some other alarming statistics contributed by Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN):

- Over 90% of LGBT youth report that they sometimes or frequently hear homophobic remarks in their school (words such as "faggot", "dyke", or "queer").
- 36% of lesbian gay and bisexual youth report hearing homophobic remarks from faculty or school staff.

Sponsoring Members

Anonymous (1)
John & Diane Covert
Bob Patterson
James & Mary Ellen Walsh

Supporting Members

Anonymous (3)
Jane & Tony Benfante
Babs Conant & Camille Cox
Shawn Cribari
Brian Hilton
Russel Hurlburt & John Percy
Donald Kreger & Ron Ehmke
Jeffrey McConnell & Fred Dansereau
Dennis Stuart

- 20% of secondary school counselors report that counseling a homosexual student concerning gay issues would not be personally gratifying, and do not consider themselves competent in counseling gay adolescents.
- LGBT youth are almost twice as likely as their non-gay peers to be threatened with or injured by a weapon at school.
- LGBT youth are more than four times as likely to skip whole days of school out of fear.
- Harassed youth are more than four times as likely to report having made a serious enough suicide attempt to have been treated by a doctor or nurse.

We would love to have all of our membership come out and help with this fund raising event. Even if you cannot help with the setup, the event itself, or the cleanup, please come and support us and the Safe Schools initiative.

Annual Meeting Notice

This is the official notice that PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara will hold its annual meeting on May 17, 2009 in the Heritage Room of Westminster Presbyterian Church 724 Delaware Avenue, Buffalo, New York 14209 at 2:30pm. At the meeting, a slate of candidates will be presented for the offices of President, Vice President, and Secretary as well as members of the Board of Directors. The Board is looking for people who are willing to serve as officers or on the Board. Please call the helpline if you would like to get involved. As PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara has become more active, we need more people who are willing to work as part of the board. Additionally, a set of amendments to the bylaws will be presented to update the membership structure to match current levels. Lastly, a Treasurer's report for the fiscal year running from April 1, 2008 through March 31, 2009 will be presented.

Buffalo United Artists Play

Buffalo United Artists (BUA) is presenting the play *In Gabriel's Kitchen*. The play is being directed by Chris Kelly and stars Adam Rath, James Konidis, John Kaczorowski, Kerrykate Abel, and Darryl Hart.

In Gabriel's Kitchen is the debut play of Salvatore Antonio centering on an Italian-Canadian family's reaction to their son's homosexuality. For Gabriel, the youngest son, falling in love leads to decisions which cannot be reversed. For Gabriel's family, the subsequent loss of their favorite child means a silence of denial and the slow crumbling of a family built on Old World morals.

The play will run Friday and Saturdays at 8:00 pm until April 18th plus a performance on Sunday, April 5th at 7:00 pm (no performances April 3 & 4) at the BUA Theater, 119 Chippewa Street, (between Delaware and Elmwood). Tickets are: \$23 general admission, \$20 seniors, \$18 BUA members, \$15 students. No one under 18 admitted. For reservations, call 886-9239.



Education

Vermont Senate Approves Gay Marriage Bill

Dave Gram, Associated Press

A state Senate committee unanimously approved a gay marriage bill on Friday March 20, 2009, moving Vermont one step closer to allowing same-sex couples to legally wed. (*Editor: In late breaking news, the full state Senate then passed the bill on March 23rd by a vote of 26-4.*)

"It provides ... gay and lesbian couples the same rights that I have as a married heterosexual," said Sen. John Campbell, vice chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee and chief sponsor of the bill. The measure would replace Vermont's first-in-the-nation civil unions law with one that allows marriage of same-sex partners beginning Sept. 1. The committee's vote ended an intense week highlighted by a public hearing Wednesday night in which more than 500 people swarmed the Statehouse to speak for and against allowing same-sex marriages.

If approved, Vermont would join Massachusetts and Connecticut as the only U.S. states that allow gays and lesbians to marry. Civil unions, which confer some rights similar to marriage, would still be recognized but no longer granted after Sept. 1.

Campbell said marriage is an improvement over civil unions both substantively and as a matter of wording. On the first score, he said, marriage is more widely legally recognized than civil unions. If a couple from Vermont got into an accident in Kansas, a spouse likely would have a stronger claim to hospital visitation rights if they were married than if they were in a civil union, he said.

Semantically, Campbell argued that if there were no difference, opponents of same-sex marriage would not be so vehement that the term marriage should apply only to heterosexual unions. "Children should be able to say to their friends that their parents are married, and not have to explain what a civil union is," he added.

Both Houses, under Democratic control, are expected to pass the measure. The Senate is taking the

lead and is expected to debate the bill next week. Gov. Jim Douglas, a Republican, has said he opposes the bill but has declined to say whether he will veto it if it reaches his desk. "I've made my position quite clear that I believe marriage is and ought to remain the union of a man and a woman, that our civil unions law affords equality of opportunities and rights under state law and that that should suffice," the governor said on the eve of the Senate committee vote.

The bill would exempt members of the clergy from performing same-sex marriages if their faiths forbid such unions, and would bar lawsuits prompted by such refusals. The exemption would not extend to justices of the peace and other public officials who perform civil marriages but who might object to officiating at same-sex unions. Those people are agents of the government and are barred by law from discriminating based on sexual orientation, Campbell said.

Vermont in 2000 became the first state in the country to pass a civil unions law, which grants many of the rights and responsibilities of marriage to same-sex couples. But gay marriage advocates have argued since then that the law does not go far enough. California, New Jersey and New Hampshire also permit civil unions.

Friday's committee vote followed the panel's rejection of an amendment proposed by Sen. Kevin Mullin, R-Rutland, that would have put the gay marriage question to a statewide referendum next March. After the amendment was defeated, Mullin joined his colleagues in voting 5-0 for the bill.

The committee's action drew praise from a leader of the Vermont Freedom to Marry Task Force, one of the leading organizations supporting gay marriage in the state, and condemnation from a leader of the anti-gay-marriage Marriage Advisory Council.

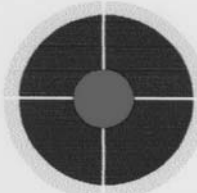
"The committee was attentive throughout the week. They heard a wide range of witnesses on a wide range of issues, and I think, ultimately, they did the right thing," said Beth Robinson, a Middlebury lawyer and chairwoman of the Freedom to Marry Task Force.

Stephen Cable, president of the group Vermont Renewal, an organization that opposes same-sex marriage, said the civil unions law and the possible passage of gay marriage bill shows the state "no longer

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seeks to promote that each child have a mother and a father. And I think that's shameful and very sad."

Two views on what marriage means

Rex W. Huppke. Chicago Tribune reporter

The similarities between the Neubeckers and Creswells are striking: young children, well-appointed Chicago homes, white-collar jobs, nightly dinners as a family. Each couple believes deeply in the love that binds them and in the institution of marriage, but through the nettlesome definition of that word, the Neubeckers and Creswells diverge. Disagreement over who has the right to marry has become commonplace, and much of the country now awaits a California Supreme Court ruling on the validity of Proposition 8, a ballot measure that outlawed gay marriage in the Golden State.

David and Lee Neubecker are gay and have adopted two children. They were married in San Francisco in 2004 during a brief window when the city married same-sex couples. California nullified the marriage less than a year later, but the men still consider themselves husband and husband.

John and Stacy Creswell were wed in California in 1999 and now have three children. They believe strongly that marriage should be the union of a man and a woman. But they empathize with gay and lesbian partners and believe society should find ways for them to share rights similar to those of married couples. "I don't think anyone wants to disenfranchise anybody," said Stacy. "If couples are having problems in certain areas, how can we as a society better help support these families?"

Each side in this debate tends to broad-brush the other: radical, bigoted, asking too much, giving too little. But in the calm reflections of the Creswells and Neubeckers, a more nuanced disagreement can be found. And while it may not be settled, it can at least be better understood.

The Creswells:

John and Stacy Creswell met in California in the late 1990s. They were both analytical and business minded—she was in graduate school and he had launched a career that would eventually lead him to a money management firm in Chicago.

Stacy's roommate introduced them, the man in the suit and tie and the woman in overalls and red Converse sneakers. Beneath different exteriors were two like-minded people; both were athletic and fascinated by processes and figuring out how things work.

They were friends for about six months, dated a year and were married 11 months later. Their wedding was in the church John went to as a child. They didn't have much money—their floral display consisted of about half a dozen poinsettias that wilted slightly before the

ceremony. The florist was kind enough to swoop in and give them an additional arrangement free of charge.

Rather than focus on finery, they put their energy into the meaning of the ceremony, the emotional and spiritual connection they shared and the excitement they felt to display their love before friends and family. In the months leading up to the wedding, Stacy lived with John's parents.

After the wedding, she walked into the home she and John would share and found that his family had already moved in all her belongings. "I got married and all of a sudden I go to the new house and all my clothes were in the closet," Stacy said. "It was such a wonderful way to start our lives together."

Stacy became a successful software engineer, and the couple wound up moving to Chicago in 2001. Four years ago they had their first child, followed by two more. Stacy decided to focus on the family.

Through their church, the couple have worked extensively with families in Chicago's housing projects, making close friends and witnessing an array of what they call "non-traditional families." They've seen firsthand how the legal definition of a family can work against people bound by love and support but not necessarily blood or formal documents. Still, John and Stacy look analytically at the issue of redefining marriage, respecting the long-standing tradition and worrying what might happen if the institution is changed.

"To change the rules begets the next question, which is 'Why stop there?' " John said. "The law doesn't allow blood relatives to marry, requires consent, says you must be over the age of 18 and can't be married to someone else. "It seems inconceivable to me that you'd say, 'OK, let's redefine marriage, let's go further with this experiment,' and then the next day there wouldn't be a polygamist at the door saying, 'What about me?' "

Stacy feels the debate about changing the meaning of marriage draws focus away from the need for broader family-friendly laws that could benefit everyone, gay and straight alike. "We should all respect each other for who we are and worry less about labels," she said. "Whether we're married or single or life partners or whatever. We're all people, and we're all unique. And we should put our focus on that."

The Neubeckers:

David and Lee met at a Chicago nightclub in 1999. Neither was looking for love, but it found them. They dated for about a year and then moved in together.

"When you look at our courtship, it was really pretty traditional," David said. Lee proposed to David at an Italian restaurant. He was nervous, holding the ring in one hand under the table and his menu in the other. The menu drifted too close to the candle and caught fire. Shortly after dousing it, Lee popped the question.

In 2004, Lee called David out of the blue: "Hey, you want to go out and get married?" San Francisco had just begun marrying same-sex couples. Lee already had the tickets. On the day they flew out, Feb. 19, 2004, Mayor Richard Daley was quoted in the papers expressing his support for gay marriage. Lee and David took it as a good omen. Outside City Hall in San Francisco, the couple waited in line for hours and wound up being the last pair married that day. They stood in the rotunda and called their parents on their cell phones to listen in. "We were just overcome," David said. "Growing up, you feel like a second-class citizen. To get to a point where you feel totally accepted by everyone, from the old ladies on the street to the government, it was just amazing."

The newlyweds returned to Illinois, where the marriage would not be recognized. And by August 2004, the California Supreme Court voided the Neubeckers' marriage, along with nearly 4,000 others. "There was some sadness because, for that short moment, we felt what most of society has felt most of their lives," Lee said. "Like we were equal."

The couple moved on, holding separate insurance policies and filling out "single" on almost any kind of official paperwork. "We emotionally consider ourselves married, but we're reminded at every turn that we're not," David said.

In August 2007, the Neubeckers adopted a brother and sister, now 5 and 6, respectively. They settled into the familiar pattern of family life: school, play dates, birthday parties. "Our lives are no different than any other," said David. "Unquestionably, we're their parents."

But marriage provides a level of legal protection that a gay couple simply can't get, particularly when children are involved. "For me, I care most that we have the same legal rights," Lee said. "We are citizens. And at this point I'd be happy to just be given equal rights."

Both David and Lee have parents who've had long and loving marriages. So while they might settle for the rights, the term "marriage" itself will always carry heavy meaning.

"Love makes a family," David said. "But our children, they deserve to say that their parents are married."

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Advocacy

Tell Congress: Repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell"

Colonel Dan Tepfer, USAF (Ret.), PFLAG National Board Member

By the end of today, two more service members will be dismissed from our armed forces under "Don't Ask, Don't Tell."

That's right: Two people are fired by our federal government, *every day*, simply because of who they are, and who they love. Since the law's inception, more than 12,000 men and women – including doctors, linguists, helicopter pilots and others – have been dismissed from the military. And as a retired Colonel, and a PFLAG dad, I find that number offensive. That's why I'm calling on Congress to repeal "Don't Ask, Don't Tell," and welcome LGBT Americans who want to serve.

I joined other veterans, activists and allies from around the country at the U.S. Capitol, and I'm honored to have spoke on our country's front lawn to bring the PFLAG voice to the campaign for repeal. But, as we all know, creating real change requires all of us to work together. So I'm asking that you join me in this effort.

Please email your Member of Congress and urge them to support repeal. Lawmakers are now considering The Military Readiness Enhancement Act – a bill that would end the prohibition on service by lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans – and they need to hear from their constituents about why this issue is so important.

To weigh in, and voice your support for repeal, simply log onto PFLAG's Online Advocacy Center (<http://tinyurl.com/cxhyisc>) and send a message to your elected representative. And remember, when you contact your Member of Congress, to highlight some of these important facts:

- "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" is anti-family, anti-military and un-American. The law prevents countless families with LGBT loved ones from continuing their long traditions of military service, and in turn prevents our country from benefitting from the talents of LGBT Americans.

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

695 Elmwood Avenue,
Buffalo, NY

Tickets & info: 883-1277

www.buffalogaymenschorus.org

Our military is stronger when qualified Americans who want to serve are allowed to do so, and our national promise of “liberty and justice for all” is strengthened when lesbian and gay Americans enjoy the freedom to serve.

- "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" impacts not only more than 65,000 lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans who are currently serving, but also their families, spouses/partners and children. Under the law, military families are denied the important benefits generally afforded to the loved ones of those who serve. Survivor benefits, military housing and the critically important support network provided by the Department of Defense are all off-limits to same-sex couples with a partner who is serving. Troops can put their careers in jeopardy simply by emailing three simple words – “I love you” – to a same-sex partner back home while deployed abroad. And the children of LGBT service members face unacceptable obstacles in receiving healthcare, education and other necessities that military families generally enjoy.
- An overwhelming majority of Americans – eight in ten – support repealing “Don't Ask, Don't Tell,” and a majority of service members, in a recent Zogby poll, have indicated they are ready and willing to serve with openly gay colleagues. Much has changed since 1993, when Congress last considered this issue, and there is a mountain of evidence to support repeal. As our country has moved forward in welcoming our LGBT neighbors, our men and women in uniform have also come to the unmistakable conclusion that open service only enhances our military's ability to get the job done.
- Respected military leaders support repeal. Some of our country's most admired military leaders, including retired Joint Chiefs Chairman Gen. John Shalikashvili and the first 3-star female Army General, Claudia Kennedy, have called on Congress to end the ban. Those who know the military best know that our national security is best served by recruiting and retaining the most qualified Americans, regardless of their sexual orientation.

Be sure to identify yourself as a PFLAG member, and to specifically ask your elected representative to co-sponsor The Military Readiness Enhancement Act. Then, ask your friends, neighbors and family members to email and express their support for repeal, too.

Military families deserve to be treated equally under the law. LGBT Americans deserve an opportunity to serve our country. And our country deserves a fighting force that includes the best and brightest our country has to offer, including lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender troops, too.

Join me in calling on Congress to repeal “Don't Ask, Don't Tell.” The time has come to end this discriminatory law and break down the barriers that prevent our loved ones from proudly defending the country we love.



Support

Transgender Support

For decades, PFLAG has been proud to serve as a resource for transgender and gender non-conforming people, their families and friends. We were the first national LGBT organization to include trans people in our mission statement and we were proud to lead the way in adopting a groundbreaking policy of only supporting legislation that protects our entire family – a family that includes our trans loved ones. *Welcoming Our Trans Family and Friends* - PFLAG's most recent trans resource – continues that tradition of unconditional support. This new publication includes insights from the parents of trans children, professional viewpoints from experts on gender issues, and information on terminology. Another resource is to watch *Transgender Basics*. (<http://tinyurl.com/5krprj>) This 20 minute educational film defines the concepts of gender and transgender people, targeting service providers and others working with the LGBT community.

Homosexuality: A Mother's Perspective

Becky Groves

At times in our lives we have defining moments that change us. As a parent of a gay child, this was definitely one of those moments. Before we were labeled “diverse”, we were pretty much the average American family. We were middle class. We raised our children with family values that any parent would be proud of. We took them to church. We spent time with them at their schools. We were the envy of a lot of our family and friends because none of our children had ever been in any kind of serious trouble a day in their lives. Our kids were straight A students, worked since they were in their early teens earning money to pay for their first cars and part of their clothes. They were responsible and hard working. All of them graduated in the Top 10% of their classes with honors. What more could we ask for?

Looking back, I guess I knew my son was a little different than most of the other boys. I had helped to raise a lot of them in my job as a child care provider. He was never rambunctious in the way a lot of them were. I remember an aunt buying him a toy Jeep at 5 years old and thinking he would never play with that. He was creative and intelligent and would rather be doing some kind of art project or baking cookies with his great-grandmother who adored him.

He never had an interest in girls. My husband thought maybe he was a late bloomer, like himself, but we were soon to learn otherwise. My son had always had trouble with transitions to new things so I wasn't all that concerned when the anxiety showed its ugly face when

he was transitioning from high school to college. It was never this bad though. He was vomiting and crying before he would leave to go in the morning. I was at a total loss as his mother not knowing how to help him feel better. It was at that time that I suggested counseling. It didn't seem to be helping at all. The only thing we learned from it is that he didn't really want to be a doctor like he had been planning all his life. He was worried about telling us that. Doug and I assured him he could be anything he wanted to be in his life. We would support him in any career path that he chose for himself.

On Martin Luther King Day, when my son was 19, he came out to me, his dad, and his sisters in e-mails. It was very short and to the point simply saying that he was still the same person and he would answer any questions we had. I couldn't sleep that night due to nerves about a class I was teaching that evening. I got up checked my e-mail and that's when I found it. I went in, woke his father, and said "Adam is gay." His response was "Oh, he is not. Go back to sleep!" One of my daughters was not surprised by this revelation at all, the other more so. When we got up the next morning, my husband and I went in Adam's room. I gave him a hug and told him I would always love him and it was okay. Adam's father was worried that it was something he had done or not done as a parent. I did express my upset that he would never get married or have children. He told me he wanted to adopt and that maybe someday the laws would change and he would be able to marry too.

We eventually sought out another counselor which did help Adam tremendously. It was like a load was lifted from his shoulders after he came out. It had been eating away at him for so long.

In the following days I did a lot of educating myself about homosexuality. I had always believed that gay people were born that way from the times that I had read about it or listened to people talk about it on talk shows. Even though our church was adamantly opposed to it and taught about the "sins" of homosexuality, I didn't believe that. Why would God make somebody gay and then send them to hell for it? That is not a loving God. I still believed this to be true.

I bought some books and started reading. I did a lot of reading and Doug did too. We had no problem loving and accepting Adam for who he is, but how would our families take the news? Well some took it very well and were supportive and some were not. Some remained neutral (at least to our face) and one person even called me up wanting me to attend a Christian "gay reparative therapy" conference.

Well in my reading, I learned that all major medical, pediatric, psychiatric, and psychological organizations oppose this kind of therapy yet these organizations are still going around preying on distraught parents who want to change their children because they are afraid for their salvation or afterlife if they accept their sexual orientation.

What they do is make the parents feel miserable and guilty wondering what they did wrong in raising their children and make the homosexual feel distraught, anxious, depressed and sometimes suicidal. They have little or no potential for changing. In fact, several leaders of these organizations have come forward saying they do not work. Some have even been photographed frequenting gay bars. I believe those that say they do work are simply suppressing their homosexuality and eventually the walls are going to come crashing down.

I was angry and hurt to receive that phone call. I was even asked "Don't you believe God loves homosexuals?" What? Well of course I do! God made my son gay and God would want him to live his authentic life in a committed relationship with somebody he loves. Pretending to be somebody you are not is deceitful and has the potential to ruin many lives. I was happy my son was brave enough to share with us who he was!

So this week I made a commitment to tell at least three people my story. Why? There are still a lot of people in this world who don't think that gay people deserve the same rights as everybody else. They are not "special rights". They are human rights.

To be fired from a job because a person is gay is deplorable. Gays and lesbians are not allowed to serve openly in the military. So when they are furthest from home, they are not allowed to talk about or share openly about the people back home that they love and care about for fear of being discharged. Horrible crimes against gays and lesbians happen every day because of the homophobia that still permeates our world.

Homophobia is being taught from the pulpits of our churches. There are many things written in the Bible that are not followed today even from the most fundamental believers in the Bible yet they still choose to ignore what science has learned about homosexuality and preach about this. Imagine a 13 year old gay kid sitting in church listening to this and think about what he must feel. It is hard enough to accept a sexuality that is different that most people but to sit in church and to be told you are going to hell for being who you are can break you from the core. I am a moderator on a forum with over 4000 gay and lesbian teenagers and I have seen their pain. Most of them turn completely away from God eventually because it's too painful to sit in their churches anymore and hear this stuff. Is this what Christians really want?

Today, the California Supreme Court will hear arguments again on the validity of Proposition 8 which banned same-sex marriage after over 18,000 couples got married. If you think that gays and lesbians cannot love with the intensity that any of us love our spouses, then spend some time with them. It is excruciatingly painful to have their relationships invalidated again and again.

So you might ask "why is marriage important"? Marriage offers 1,138 Federal benefits and responsibilities, not including hundreds more offered by

every state. We have domestic partnerships in Oregon but if a same-sex couple crosses the border into Idaho and has a car wreck, one partner could be denied hospital visitation rights because our laws don't cross borders. If these two people have children together, even though our laws in Oregon recognize both partners as parents and will protect them, if they move to Idaho and the non-biological parent suddenly dies the other partner will almost certainly have to go to court to fight for the right to raise the children they have already been raising since birth. Separate is not equal. Even in Oregon, domestic partners have to take additional legal steps to protect their families costing thousands of dollars in legal fees.

Marriage really is a civil right. People can choose right now if they want a religious ceremony or a civil

ceremony or both. The same would happen for same-sex couples. No church would be forced to grant same-sex marriages who were opposed to them and I don't know any gay couple who would want to be married in those kinds of churches anyway. Fortunately, there are many churches moving toward acceptance of gays and lesbians. I had the wonderful opportunity of visiting such a church yesterday.

I truly believe this will be an issue we will tell our grandchildren and great-grandchildren about and they will wonder what all the fuss was about. The same thing happened when interracial marriage was being fought for. The world did not come to an end. People are people and everybody deserves to be treated equally under the law. My gay son deserves the same rights as his two straight sisters.

PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA
2008 – 2009

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Tentative Meeting Schedule

All meetings will include time for sharing.

5/17 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Pride Planning

6/21 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara meeting: Father's Day and Post-Pride discussions

7/19 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara Annual Picnic

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| <p>Please circle item(s) ▽</p> <p>Please join our PFLAG chapter to support our mission at whatever level membership you can:</p> <p>▽ Lifetime Membership \$ 500</p> <p>▽ Benefactor Membership \$ 250</p> <p>▽ Sponsoring Membership \$ 100</p> <p>▽ Supporting Membership \$ 50</p> <p>▽ Household Membership \$ 30</p> <p>▽ Newsletter Subscription Only \$ 15</p> | <p>JOIN US!</p> <p>▽ New ▽ Renewal</p> <p>▽ Advertising member (Business Card Advertisement \$100. Annually for 10 issues)</p> <p>▽ Please contact me about volunteer opportunities</p> | <p>PFLAG BUFFALO/NIAGARA</p> <p>▽ Change of Address</p> |
| <p>Donations of \$50.00 or more can be included in the chapter newsletter. Please circle. OK to publish ▽ Do not publish ▽</p> <p>Your National PFLAG membership is included in your local chapter dues. You will also receive the quarterly PFLAG-Pole Newsletter delivered to your home or by email from the national office. Circle here if you don't want to receive the PFLAG-Pole Newsletter ▽</p> <p>Make checks payable to PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara and mail to: P.O.Box 617 Buffalo, NY 14207 PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara is a non-profit 501(c)3 and donations are tax-deductible as allowed by law.</p> <p style="text-align: right;"><u>Please write clearly</u></p> <p>Name (s) _____ Date _____</p> <p>Address _____ City _____</p> <p>State _____ Zip _____ Phone (____) _____ E-mail address _____</p> | | |