



Buffalo / Niagara

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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, March 21, 2010
2:30–5:00 PM

The March meeting will include a video about the US military's "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy. After the video, there will be 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.

Held at a location convenient to those involved.

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.

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.

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:

Mar 1: Safe School Program for Youth in Massachusetts
 Mar 8: A Little Respect
 Mar 15: Choosing Children, Pt 1
 Mar 22: Choosing Children, Pt 2
 Mar 29: Our Brother, Dan
 Apr 5: An Unexpected Journey
 Apr 12: All God's Children
 Apr 19: Claiming America's Promise
 Apr 26: The Families We Choose

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

Thank You

The articles appearing in this newsletter are made possible by suggestions from two members: Arlene and Virginia. We are grateful for their support.

Can You Help With The Newsletter

It is time consuming to find interesting things to share with our members. We want to have an interesting and

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 Ronda Marvel
 Jeffrey McConnell & Fred Dansereau
 Mark Meyer
 Roger Seifert & Dennis Stuart
 Linda Stefaniak
 P. J. Tomczyk

content filled newsletter but sometimes that's hard to do within the time we have available. This month we have a few items submitted by members. The material on coping with the holidays is repeated from last year.

You can help in this process. When you're reading the news and you see something that would be interesting to our members, just send an email with the information to pflag@bfn.org and if you're reading on-line most sites have a button that easily allows you to share the article with us.

Do You Want To Help?

PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara is looking for people to serve on its Board and as officers. The primary role of members of the Board is to plan monthly meetings and to make decisions about the direction of the organization. Our Board will have four vacancies that need to be filled in this election.

The offices of President and Vice President have also been vacant for over a year. We need to fill these two positions. In the past, we have also had two people share the role of President instead of having a separate Vice President. In any case, the President is responsible for running Board meeting along with any initiatives the individual wants to pursue.

The continuing members of the Board are a very collegial group who work together well and support each other in the advancement of PFLAG Buffalo/Niagara. Board meetings are scheduled for the first Monday of each month. We typically skip January and June.

If you would like to help us plan monthly meetings and help set the direction for the chapter, please do not hesitate to talk to one of us at a meeting, call the helpline, or drop us an email. We would love to have you join the Board.

Debunking the "Myths" of Don't Ask, Don't Tell

Chris Geidner, Metro Weekly

In an unusual display of allied cooperation, a dozen organizations – including the Human Rights Campaign, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Servicemembers Legal Defense Network and Servicemembers United – plan to release a report, led by Media Matters for America, on Wednesday detailing and debunking common myths about the "Don't Ask, Don't Tell" policy.

The report, "Myths and Falsehoods on Don't Ask, Don't Tell," (<http://tinyurl.com/ykoxm7b>) a copy of which was provided to *Metro Weekly*, would fall during a week of Hill testimony by the service branch chiefs. Representatives from the Army testified before the Senate Armed Services Committee on Tuesday as their colleagues in the Air Force testified before the House Armed Services Committee.

Among the issues detailed in the report is the claim by Sen. John McCain (R-Ariz.) that the policy is working.

The report counters this by detailing that more than 13,500 servicemembers have been "fired" since the law was passed by Congress in 1993 – a number that "includes numerous decorated officers and, according to a 2005 Government Accountability Office (GAO) report, 54 servicemembers who spoke Arabic, and more than 750 servicemembers in 'critical occupations.'"

According to a joint statement representing the views of all the participating organizations to be issued with the report, "Claims that repealing Don't Ask, Don't Tell would adversely affect unit cohesion, retention, or the HIV rate among servicemembers are not based in reality. Similarly, the anti-gay rhetoric permeating many of these arguments only serves to cheapen the national discussion on this important issue."

The other organizations releasing the report include AmericaBlog, Courage Campaign, the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force, National Security Network, Truman National Security Project, VoteVets and Knights Out: West Point LGBT Grads, as well as West Point graduate Lt. Dan Choi.

"Because news outlets continue to repeat these outrageous claims, a coalition of organizations is banding together to combat misinformation about the Don't Ask, Don't Tell law," the joint statement says. "As Congress moves forward on this legislation, we will be vigilant in ensuring that news reports are accurate and fair. The public deserves an honest debate -- not one marred by blatant falsehoods and anti-gay attacks."

Among the other areas addressed in the report are unit cohesion and retention concerns, as well as the level of military expert and public support – including conservative and independents' support – for repealing the policy. As with the extensive Palm Center report issued Tuesday, the organizations also take aim at the claimed "irrelevance" of foreign militaries. Finally, the report also calls out the opponents of repeal, noting, "Prominent right-wing figures opposing repeal have a history of anti-gay rhetoric."

Flawed policy should change

Buffalo News Editorial

Perhaps, finally, it is a change whose time has come. With the nation's top two military leaders calling for an end to the controversial "don't ask, don't tell" policy on gays in the service, it is clear that the country and the military have come a long way since then-President Bill Clinton failed in his first-term effort to allow gays to serve openly.

The result of that effort was "don't ask, don't tell," a policy that prohibited gay and lesbian troops from talking about their orientation and, in the absence of evidence to the contrary, barring military brass from investigating them. It was, at best, an awkward compromise, one that ignored the fact of military service by openly gay troops in other countries.

Kay Patterson

Licensed Mental Health Counselor



Counseling for Change

5820 Main Street, Suite 203, Williamsville, NY 14221

Phone: (716) 838-1236 Cell: (716) 583-4902

Buffalo Gay Men's Chorus

Once Upon a Time


Friday June 18 (8 pm) - Unitarian Universalist Church
695 Elmwood Avenue, Buffalo, NY

Saturday June 19 (8 pm) - First Presbyterian Church
One Symphony Circle, Buffalo, NY

Sunday June 20 (4 pm) - Orchard Park Presbyterian Church
4369 South Buffalo Road, Orchard Park, NY

Tickets & info: 883-1277

www.buffalogaymenschorus.org



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It was something of that sort that got to Adm. Michael Mullen, chairman of the Joint Chiefs of Staff. "I cannot escape being troubled by the fact that we have in place a policy which forces young men and women to lie about who they are in order to defend their fellow citizens," Mullen told the Senate Armed Services Committee.

Meanwhile, his boss, Defense Secretary Robert M. Gates –appointed by former President George W. Bush– has said he "fully supports" President Obama's plan to end the policy, working in conjunction with Congress. It's the right move. With military leaders on board, and with much of the country having come to view homosexuality as falling within the sweep of mainstream life, it is hard to

argue that it is too soon to begin fully integrating gays into the military.

That doesn't mean the change will be easy or swift. Indeed, Mullen observed that it will cause "some disruption in the force," but social change always does that. That's what happened when African-American servicemen began serving side by side with white troops.

There will need to be changes, and although we were disappointed with the negative reaction of Sen. John McCain— who previously backed allowing gays to serve openly—he is correct that unexpected challenges may arise if the change occurs while the wars continue in Afghanistan and Iraq. That doesn't mean the Pentagon should wait until those conflicts end, though—it just means that they have to be factored into the planning.

Some troops won't want to serve alongside gay and lesbian members of the services but, as with the racial integration of the services, they can't be allowed to drive this policy. The fact is that, whether they know it or not, gays and lesbians already serve in their units. They already put their lives at risk for the country. It's time to let them serve with the honor and dignity that our military men and women deserve.

Have Faith in Love

Eric Lax, Op Ed Contributor, The New York Times

The election, two months ago, of the Rev. Mary Glasspool, a priest who has been in a committed relationship with another woman for more than 20 years, as a suffragan (assistant) bishop of the Episcopal Diocese of Los Angeles, has brought added turmoil to the Episcopal Church in the United States and to the worldwide Anglican Communion. There has been sporadic schism since the regular ordination of women as priests in 1977 and especially since the election of the Rev. Gene Robinson as bishop of New Hampshire in 2003. He is the first openly gay bishop in the history of those Christian bishops — Anglicans, Roman Catholics and Greek and Russian Orthodox among them — who trace their succession back to the apostles.

In protest, several dozen parishes have aligned themselves with conservative Anglican bishops in Africa, and the Roman Catholic Church has offered to take in disaffected Episcopalians. In 2008, the leadership of the Anglican Communion, to which the American church belongs, tried to keep things together by urging the Americans not to elect other openly gay people as bishops until the Communion could establish more common ground. The Los Angeles electors' choice of a gay woman as bishop has pushed the denominational envelope to the point of tearing.

The Glasspool election and its ensuing uproar make me realize how much has changed since 1976, when my father, who came to the Los Angeles diocese as a priest in 1947, died. About the biggest controversy within the church during most of his ministry was over proposed revisions to the 1928 Book of Common Prayer.

At that time, marriage was strictly Adam and Eve. Gays were closeted, whether they were in the congregation or the male-only priesthood. Until 1971, when women were first ordained as deacons, the highest post a woman could attain was member of the vestry, the elected group that manages parish business. But even that was uncommon; usually the highest ranking woman in the parish was the leader of the altar guild, which arranges the flowers in the church, sets up the Eucharistic vessels and washes and irons the linens used in the service. Women could not be priests because — according to the reasoning that had held for two millennia — none of the apostles was a woman. This made as much sense as saying that, as none of the apostles was a scholar, scholars could not be priests, or that because all the apostles were Jews, only Jews could be ordained.

In 1977, I interviewed one of the controversial new priests, the Rev. Carol Anderson, for an Esquire article, and thought she was simply marvelous. Twelve years later, as either coincidence or a wave of the hand of God, she arrived as the new rector of my now nominal parish, All Saints' in Beverly Hills, and we have become great friends. Oh, and now the presiding bishop of the Episcopal Church is a woman, Katharine Jefferts Schori.

These changes did not come until I was in my 30s. I had always been deeply devout, an altar boy from age 6, a regular at church camp and then on its summer staff, and the vice president and then the president of our diocese's Episcopal Young Churchmen. I attended Hobart College, in Geneva, N.Y., which is affiliated with the Episcopal Church, my tuition paid in part by a clergy scholarship. Until well into my 20s, I gave regular consideration to becoming a priest myself.

I had a good model in my father, a man of immense humor who understood the frailties of humanity and who annually challenged his faith by reading agnostics from Thomas Huxley to George Bernard Shaw. He was a solid defender of Anglican orthodoxy and the guidance of the New Testament, but he also believed that every bit of Christian teaching could be summed up in three words: God is love. "The miracles," he once told me, "are window dressing."

Love. Treat others as you would have them treat you. If you feel you are a child of God, then honor your common and equal status with others as children of God. Except (and there are always exceptions with sibling rivalry) if they are women and therefore not qualified to perform the holiest sacraments of the church. Except if two members of the same sex engage in long, committed and faithful love; God may be love, but this love is ungodly.

Just look, some vigilant Christians say, at the "clear teaching" in 1 Corinthians 6:9-10 ("Fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, male prostitutes, sodomites, thieves, the greedy, drunkards, revilers, robbers — none of these will inherit the kingdom of God."); in 1 Timothy 1:9-11 ("The

law is laid down ... for the unholy and profane ... for murderers, fornicators, sodomites, slave traders, liars, perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to the sound teaching that conforms to the glorious gospel of the blessed God.”); and especially in Romans 1:26b-27 (“Their women exchanged natural intercourse for unnatural, and in the same way also the men, giving up natural intercourse with women, were consumed with passion for one another. Men committed shameless acts with men and received in their own persons the due penalty for their error.”)

I know that this will offend some Christians, but the notion that Scripture is perfectly clear is wishful thinking, as a recent white paper prepared by the All Saints’ clergy demonstrates. The writers of the four Gospels don’t agree on even so simple a thing as which people were present at Christ’s empty tomb. Considering that, over the centuries, the Bible has been translated into and out of multiple languages, it only makes sense to consider the context of what’s written rather than believe that every word is literal divine revelation. In rebuttal to the notion of a clear teaching of Scripture, the evangelical author and speaker Tony Campolo has said that “sodomites” is a word of dubious translation. “Nobody knows what the word means,” he said. “Interestingly enough, up until the 14th century it was translated as masturbation.”

Timothy’s reference to sodomites, for its part, is in the context of boys who were castrated to maintain their feminine and childlike characteristics and then exploited for sex – a far cry from two consenting adults of the same sex consummating their committed love.

Today, there is much reference to the supposed Christian teaching that marriage is a sacrament between one man and one woman, but it was not until the 12th century that marriage became a sacrament in the Western church.

Sex, though, has always been a particularly Christian problem. Orthodox Jews are commanded to marry, but the early Christians found celibacy a high calling. St. Paul writes in 1 Corinthians 7 that he wished all Christians could stay single and celibate, as he had. He knew, however, that not everyone could and so he adds, “But if they are not practicing self-control, they should marry. For it is better to marry than to be aflame with passion.”

Less quoted than Paul’s advice that it is better to marry than to be engulfed by desire is what he says earlier in the passage: “I wish that all were as I myself am. But each has a particular gift from God, one having one kind and another a different kind.” One having one kind of gift and another a different kind is a pretty good definition of humanity in all our variety, and to me this passage expands the heart of what it means when two people, gay or straight, commit themselves to each other in the sight of a God who understands human differences.

A central tenet of Christianity is that all of us are born into sin. Then, as we grow older, we decide that some of our equals sin more than others, and in far worse ways than we do ourselves. We divine the word of God to mean that the acts we don’t like of others – what they eat, how they pray, whom they fall in love with – are an abomination in his sight, as if we can presume to decide in our own way what pleases God, and therefore what acts should be excluded and whom we can judge and damn in his name.

Exclusion always seems to become part of some people’s faith, though often over time what was excluded becomes accepted, only to be replaced by another ban: People of one denomination can’t marry those in another; people of one color cannot marry those of another.

Among my father’s parishioners in the 1950s were two men in their late 40s who came every Sunday to the 7:30 a.m. communion service and who shared a house. My parents referred to them as “confirmed bachelors,” code words for the love that dare not speak its name. They were kind and gentle men, who to even a 10-year-old obviously had some sort of special and personal bond. I am certain that they were in a loving and committed relationship that the church would then not recognize or bless, but as long as the fiction of their just being two people who happened to live together was maintained, they would continue to be accepted and valued members of the congregation. Which, of course, was well meaning but also hypocritical. Now, a multitude of parishes across the country would openly welcome the couple.

My own faith has eroded over the years, though my father’s belief in the supremacy of love still guides me. And so I can’t help but wonder, how can Christians not recognize and honor love that binds two people, any two people, together unto themselves? And if a priest has fulfilled her sacred duties with the distinction that persuades those to whom she would minister to elect her their bishop, and has led an open life of committed love that honors the essence of their God, why should her choice of a partner matter?

ABC gets eight GLAAD nominations

For the fourth year running, the ABC television network leads nominees for media awards from the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation.

The network earned eight nominations for the 21st annual GLAAD Media Awards, with “Brothers & Sisters,” “Grey’s Anatomy,” “Private Practice” and newcomer “Modern Family” among its contenders.

The GLAAD Media Awards honor the fair, accurate and inclusive representation of the lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community and the issues that affect their lives in the media. This year’s awards - with 152 nominees in 32 categories - will be split into four

ceremonies, held in Los Angeles, New York and San Francisco in March, April and June.

"Words and images matter," GLAAD President Jarrett Barrios said in a statement. "With these awards, we seek to recognize news coverage and entertainment programming that go beyond stock stereotypes with LGBT storylines that more fully reflect the challenges gay and transgender people face and the aspirations we hold for ourselves and our families."

ABC received the following nominations:

- "Brothers & Sisters" and "Grey's Anatomy" for drama series
- "Modern Family" for comedy series
- "All My Children" and "One Life to Live" for daily drama
- A "Good Morning America" interview with Chaz Bono for TV journalism segment
- Two nominations for "Private Practice" for individual TV episode

Among the other nominated broadcast networks, CBS garnered four nods, the CW and NBC earned two each, and Fox had one. The other drama series nominees are AMC's "Mad Men," BBC America's "Skins" and HBO's "True Blood." The other comedy series nominees are Fox's "Glee," Logo's "Beautiful People," ABC Family's "Greek" and Showtime's "United States of Tara."

Reality TV nods went to CBS' "The Amazing Race 15," Bravo's "Kathy Griffin: My Life on the D-List," Logo's "RuPaul's Drag Race," and MTV's "The Real World" and "Making His Band." Logo's "An Englishman in New York," MTV's "Pedro," Lifetime's "Prayers for Bobby" and BBC America's "Torchwood: Children of Earth" were nominated for TV movie or miniseries.

Documentary nominees are PBS' "Ask Not," HBO's "Be Like Others," Sundance Channel's "Derek," Logo's "U People" and Diva Productions' "The Topp Twins." Wide release feature film nominees are the family drama "Everybody's Fine," bromantic comedy "I Love You, Man," Harlem saga "Precious," 1960s period piece "A Single Man" and bohemian romp "Taking Woodstock."

GLAAD also announced that actress Cynthia Nixon will be honored with the Vito Russo Award, which is named after a founding member of GLAAD and is presented to a gay media professional who has made a significant difference in promoting equal rights for the gay community. The "Sex and the City" star will accept the special award at a ceremony in New York.

"Cynthia Nixon has been a vocal and visible advocate who has transformed cultural attitudes about our community," Barrios said.

Golden Boy Makes Good

Brandon Voss, The Advocate

Remember the hot captain of your high school football team – the class president and valedictorian voted most likely to succeed? If you grew up in Helena, Mont., he might be Kimberly Reed, a lesbian filmmaker now living

in Brooklyn, N.Y. Born Paul McKerrow but no longer hiding behind the drag of helmets and cleats, Reed displays her true identity at her 20-year high school reunion in *Prodigal Sons*, which reconciles her male past with her female present. Reed's documentary and directorial debut also explores her relationship with her younger gay brother, Todd, and a longtime rivalry with her adopted older brother, Marc, a brain injury survivor who – no joke – discovers he's the grandson of Orson Welles and Rita Hayworth. An international film festival favorite opening in New York City on February 26 and in select cities throughout March, *Prodigal Sons* will air this summer on the Sundance Channel. Reed speaks to *The Advocate* about the politics of "passing" and why she's no Chaz Bono.

***The Advocate:* Before we discuss your film, can we please talk about the fact that you recently appeared on *The Oprah Winfrey Show*, where you inspired Oprah to sing Beyoncé's "If I Were a Boy" to your face?**



Kimberly Reed: [Laughs] That was really weird. That was the only time I was afraid up there, because I was afraid she was going to ask me to sing. That whole experience was

pretty intense – it was my first trip to Chicago – and it all happened very fast. I really think my mom stole the show; what she said was awesome. But this whole thing's like a roller-coaster ride, so I'm just trying to hang on.

Like many people, I first learned about you and *Prodigal Sons* from reading your six-page profile in the January issue of *Details*. Since it's a men's magazine, the article focuses heavily on your previous life as a golden-boy jock. How did you feel about that piece as an introduction to much of the world?

Rick Moody is a great writer, so it was an honor to have him tell my story. I was a big fan of his writing even before I met him at the Yaddo artists' colony. I love his elevated style of writing – he gets enamored with his subjects and runs wild with them – so it was cool to see him do that with our story. A lot of the article was about my days in high school – the glory days and stuff like that – but that is a big part of my story and a big part of the film.

The *Details* piece points out that you can "pass," which is a term you use yourself in the film. Talk to me about your idea of passing, because that notion is often considered counterproductive or offensive within the gay community.

In the trans community, it may be issue number 1 – a big, big issue. It's exhilarating when you do pass, and it feels so right, so it's something that you really love. I don't really think about it anymore, but I certainly did at first. That idea operates differently in the trans community. If you're gay and trying to pass as straight, it might seem like you're trying to fit in and pretending to be something

you're not. But in the trans community, passing isn't about being something you're not; it has more to do with being seen for who you really are.

You speak in the film about how the majority of trans people don't acknowledge their pre-transition lives, even going so far as to burn childhood photos in some cases. So it's safe to say that there are very few trans people who would not only attend their high school reunion but also make a documentary about reconciling with that past. So, pardon the word choice, but that was pretty ballsy of you, right?

[Laughs] Yeah. And I think part of the audacity to do that involves erasing the issue of me being trans and speaking to human issues that we all have. We all have a history, and we all grow, change, and then have to figure out how to fit back into our families, which causes an enormous amount of tension. On one hand, our film is very specific and unique with a lot of crazy stuff going on – my story and my brother's story is not typical – but we've been taking the film to festivals all over the world, and it's really cool to see audiences of different cultures and religions connect with a message that isn't lost on those specifics. There's a much bigger, more universal story about family.

But because that sort of self-reflection isn't typical trans behavior, have you gotten any negative feedback from the trans community?

I can honestly say – and I'm knocking on wood here – there has been a flood of e-mail and Facebook messages, and I haven't gotten a single negative comment. I forward the messages to my mom because they've all been so great. A lot of people tell me about how they couldn't talk to their parents about being trans, but then they watched the film together and now they can talk about it. Somebody even said to me, "You just made life easier to live." I mean, how can you beat that?

Calpernia Addams, a trans entertainer, has a popular YouTube video called "Bad Questions to Ask a Transsexual," which details the many taboo topics to avoid when speaking to a trans person. Are there things that one should just never ask you, or do you welcome natural curiosity about your situation?

Both. Curiosity is good, but there are certain things you wouldn't ask any other stranger you bumped into on the street, so I do draw lines. In general, people put too much emphasis on the surgery – and there are probably multiple surgeries, and it's not all about the genitals. That's private. It is odd to have a complete stranger come up and initiate a conversation about your genitals. That's an awkward position to be in.

You could have used your film as an opportunity to answer a lot of questions people have on the actual transition process, but you skipped over those details.

It was a conscious decision to not get bogged down in that. There are films that do that very well, but there

aren't a lot of films that talk about the post-transition experience, especially a decade later. But that sense of renewal, change, and reinvention is something anyone can relate to on some level. You don't have to change your sex to reinvent yourself. Some people do it with a haircut or a new pair of socks.

Oprah, of course, went there with those personal questions. Was it difficult to discuss details of your physical transition on national television?

This film is the hardest thing I've ever done, and it involves me being really open about my story. We've been showing this film all over the world for the past year and a half, so I'm used to putting my story out there. I've made peace with my past, even if part of it was male. So I wasn't really breaking new ground on *Oprah*, but it did feel like I was reaching new people, which was incredible.

When it comes to your particular story, people seem most fascinated with the fact that you identify as a lesbian. Why can't people wrap their brain around that?

Because people conflate your identity with your sexual preference. A lot of gay people have to sort those two things out – just because you're a man doesn't mean you can't fall in love with a man or sleep with a man, and just because you're a woman doesn't mean you can't fall in love with a woman or sleep with a woman. So if you can accept homosexuality, you should be able to accept that someone would change their gender but still be attracted to the same people.

Whether you like it or not, your film makes you a poster child for the trans community. Are you comfortable being a role model and becoming more involved with trans activism? You'll no doubt be asked to march in pride parades all over the land.

Yeah, and I will. Call me! I'm ready. I remember when I was first trying to figure all this out. I was in, like, sixth grade, sneaking into the local public library to look at all the horrible '50s books on "transvestism" – such a horribly outdated clinical term – hiding them behind a magazine so no one would see me reading every single word. There was no Internet, so I felt like I was the only one going through this, and it was so alienating and difficult. I wish I had had role models when I was growing up. So if the film gets exposure and some of that exposure falls on me, I've got to do something with that, right? The coolest thing about Oprah is that she uses her influence to empower people and make the world a better place, which I applaud. So whether or not the attention is inordinate, and even if I don't consider myself the best role model, I do think it's incumbent on me to step into that position if other people think it's appropriate.

How do you feel about the current representation of trans people in television and film?

In general, trans issues are lagging behind the portrayal of lesbian and gay characters, but my response to that in our film is to let that issue recede. Just because a person

is trans doesn't mean that's what the whole film has to be about and the only thing anybody talks about. It's important to let that become just an aspect of who someone is instead of the entirety of who someone is. That's not to say that you don't talk about these issues directly, but there have to be other issues as well.

I'd argue that Chaz Bono has given transgenderism more mainstream visibility than it's gotten in years.

Absolutely, except for whatever Michael Jackson was doing. I'm really impressed with Chaz. That's a lot of pressure no matter who you are or how you go through it, so for Chaz to do it in the public eye is incredible, and I really respect that courage. When I transitioned, I couldn't even do it at the same job – I was an editor of digital films and became an editor of a magazine about digital films – so I basically jumped careers because I wanted to start over with a new group of people. I wish I had been courageous enough to do what Chaz is doing.

Are you already feeling the pressure to follow up *Prodigal Sons* with a second film?

Absolutely. I'm working on a couple other character-based documentaries, but who knows what will come to fruition first, so stay tuned. You know the Caster Semenya story – the South African runner who had the gender testing? About five years ago, I wrote a fictional screenplay that was precisely about that: It's about this Olympic athlete who takes a drug test, finds out about her chromosomes, which makes her wonder about her gender as a result. She's not sure what sex she is, so it deals with the implications that has on her relationship and her ability to get married on a state-by-state basis. So it's kind of this road trip romp through different Midwestern states where her gender switches with each state line she crosses. It's interesting in terms of biography because that was my first step to talk openly and publicly about the issue.

Because you were born a biological man, could you legally marry Claire, your biologically female partner of more than 10 years?

It's confusing and complicated, and it depends on the state. For a second I thought it would be kind of funny for us to do what I was talking about in that screenplay – go to Texas to try to get married, then go to Arizona and try to get married ... There's a lot more gray area in gender than many of us recognize, and when you try to polarize gender, it becomes really unhealthy. Any time we can blur those lines, there are valuable lessons to be learned.

Are cameras still rolling on any new milestones like film festival premieres, your TV appearances, or your family's reaction to seeing the finished film? That could make for an interesting *Prodigal Sons* sequel.

Our cameras aren't, but everybody else's cameras seem to be. I'm tired of being in front of the camera. You can see in the old Super 8 films used in our film – the ones that I shot, directed, and wrote when we were kids – that I've always been more comfortable behind the lens.

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2009–2010

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