



PFLAG *Southwest Washington Chapter*

January 2018 Newsletter

2018
Happy
New Year

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Join us:

We meet the 2nd Tuesday of each month at 7 pm at the Children’s Home Society, 1112 Columbia Street, Vancouver, WA 98660

Next Education and Support Meeting: January 9, 7pm

- Join us in watching the “Faces and Facets of Transgender Experience” video. A variety of transgender persons share touching stories about the journey from despair to the joy of being the gender they were meant to be.
- Our regular caring and sharing support session will follow.

2018 dates to remember:

- February 13, 7pm, PFLAG SWWA meeting **Annual Membership Business Meeting**
- March 13, 7pm, PFLAG SWWA meeting
- April 10, 7pm, PFLAG SWWA meeting
- May 8, 7pm PFLAG SWWA meeting
- June 12, 7pm, PFLAG SWWA meeting
- July 10, 7pm, PFLAG SWWA meeting

The Chapter Year in Review

February 14: Annual Business Meeting of the Members

In addition to celebrating the 21st chapter anniversary, the Board of Directors presented reports about communication improvements, advocacy efforts, membership, and finances. In addition, changes to chapter by-laws were approved by the membership. Finally, Board of Directors elections was held. Elected were: Barbara Aiken, President; De Stewart, Vice-President; Nancy Dresher, Secretary; Dale Clukey, Treasurer. Irene Dilley, Director-at-Large; and Phaedra Baldwin, Director-at-Large.



July 7: Initiative 15512 Fails

For the second year in a row, anti-transgender forces failed in their attempt to qualify a ballot initiative aimed at rolling back non-discrimination protections for our transgender family members, friends, and neighbors in Washington. The Secretary of State’s office announced that the I-1552 campaign cancelled its appointment to turn in 259,622 valid signatures. That meant the end of the road for I-1552, which, if passed, would have overridden state and local protections against gender-identity discrimination in certain public places, required that public schools restrict access to some facilities based on sex at birth, and allowed related lawsuits against schools. Under the leadership of the Washington SAFE Alliance, a coalition of LGBTQ allies including PFLAG, YWCA, Pride Foundation, and Washington Won’t Discriminate worked to stop to the initiative from getting on the ballot.

Chapter Year in Review (continued)

June 8: Clark College Pride Event

PFLAG Southwest Washington participated, with other LGBTQ organizations, in Clark College's Pride celebration. The event was put on by the College's Office of Diversity and Education. PFLAGers manned an informational booth and enjoyed a talent show and pizza.



July 8: Saturday in the Park

PFLAG Southwest Washington is a regular participant at the annual Saturday in the Park pride celebration at Esther Short Park. This year, PFLAGers manning our colorful booth gave out information about our chapter, provided LGBTQ literature, and answered questions. Traffic at our booth was heavy and numerous visitors signed up to receive meeting notices and our monthly newsletter. What a great day it was joining with others in the LGBTQ community in celebration of LGBTQ rights and the defeat of I-1552.

September 9: Peace and Justice Fair

PFLAG Southwest Washington joined over 100 other organizations, including the Children's Home Society, at the 14th annual Vancouver Peace and Justice Fair. Founded in 2003, the Fair builds community among grassroots peace and justice groups in Southwest Washington and highlights common goals of peace and justice at home, in our community, and the world.



November 21: Thanksgiving Harvest Festival Dinner Once again the annual Harvest Dinner, sponsored by the Children's Home Society, Triple Point, and PFLAG Southwest Washington, was a great success. Triple Point youth, parents, friends, counselors, and PFLAGers enjoyed a feast of turkey and all the trimmings including an amazing array of deserts. The participants enjoyed a get to know you origami getting to know you activity and the youth displayed their talents by singing and playing instruments.

December 12: Triple Point Holiday Gift Bags

Prior to the monthly "Caring and Sharing" PFLAGers and guests assemble 40 holiday goodie bags for Triple Point Youth. Various candies, mandarins oranges, and lots of love filled the bags.





From PFLAG National: THE TOP TEN BEST AND WORSE

2017 has been, arguably, a year of extremes: Extreme backlash, extreme advocacy and activism...and extreme passion for causes that affect the lives of so many. Let's take a look at our Top 10 Best and Worst moments from throughout the year...how many match your own lists of highs and lows?

Worst:

10) Chechnya: This part of Russia's efforts to literally eliminate LGBTQ people from its ranks [made world news](#). Even worse? The silence of too many U.S. leaders who did not speak out about their efforts. PFLAG National continues supporting international efforts, working with those who are starting PFLAG and PFLAG-like organizations around the world, and urging the Trump Administration to call for action in Russia about Chechnya. [Update: On December 21st, Pres. Trump issued [an Executive Order](#) threatening sanctions against countries that abuse human rights, so watch whether he adds Russia to the list, and count on PFLAG to work with global organizations and coalitions to press for it.]

9) Charlottesville: While we're calling out a lack of leadership in places like Chechnya, we'd be remiss if we didn't acknowledge the lack of criticism in events like Charlottesville from some leaders. Rampant racism was a constant theme in 2017, and the events in Charlottesville—including the death of an activist there—were a microcosm of the widespread events across the country.

8) U.S. natural disasters (and the ongoing person-made disaster in Puerto Rico): Obviously, the hurricanes in Texas, Florida, and Puerto Rico did enormous (and in some cases irreparable) damage. Among those hit were LGBTQ community centers and HIV service providers, making access to important connections and resources for the community even more difficult. With December 29th marking the 100th day since Hurricane Maria devastated Puerto Rico, it is dangerous and harmful that only one-third of the U.S. territory has electricity restored, and the rest is expected to be delayed until Spring 2018. This is unacceptable and requires stepped-up attention and action; PFLAG will keep this in our scope.

7) Trans school protections rescinded: In February 2017, the U.S. Departments of Education (DOE) and Justice (DOJ), under the Trump Administration, announced they were rescinding the guidance issued by the Obama administration's DOE and DOJ the year before. The guidance—issued in the form of a "[Dear Colleague](#)" letter, addressed to school districts and colleges that receive federal funding—was based on the Obama administration's interpretation of Title IX, the federal law that bans sex discrimination in schools, to include gender identity.

6) Murders of trans people climb in 2017: With the murder of Brandi Seals on Wednesday, December 13th, the count reached 26 murders (on record) of trans people in the U.S. in 2017. This is just one less than the all-time high of 27 murders last year.

5) An attempted ban on transgender servicemembers: Three tweets fired off by the U.S. Commander in Chief in July 2017 continue to haunt transgender servicemembers and their families. Despite repeated blocks by courts across the country—and military leadership speaking to the contrary—the prospect of a ban on transgender people serving their country in the military has been one of the more heinous affronts in the last year. Diego Sanchez, our Director of Advocacy, Policy and Partnerships, was a featured speaker as an “Army Brat” at a rally in 2017 in front of the White House to support trans military service and how eliminating it would affect military family dependents.

4) The cause of #MeToo: Though it didn't get heightened until actress Alyssa Milano called on all those who've been sexually harassed, assaulted or raped to use the now-famed hashtag, it was really started back in 1996 by activist Tarana Burke. Serving at that time as a youth camp director, a young girl approached Burke

and shared a story of sexual assault at the hands of her mother's boyfriend. At the time, Burke was so overwhelmed, she wasn't able to respond in the one way she thought would have been most helpful: To say, "Me too." LGBTQ people experience very high rates of such harassment: For example, black lesbians had the worst expulsion rates in the military at the time of DADT, because when they refused sexual predators they were often outed, then suffering dishonorable discharge on top of sexual violence. For the "Best" outcome—including the potential for the #MeToo movement to make a difference in LGBTQ harassment—see below!

3) The New Cabinet: It's a veritable who's who of anti-LGBTQ advocates, from Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos (who supports tax dollars going to private Christian schools which espouse anti-LGBTQ sentiments) to Housing and Urban Development Secretary Ben Carson (who once compared same sex-marriage to bestiality). Vice President Pence, a longtime anti-LGBTQ advocate, took the lead, seeing that the cabinet was entirely populated with people who, like him, support—among other anti-LGBTQ initiatives and ideas—a broad "license to discriminate" based on religious beliefs. Among the worst are Jeff Sessions who, as a U. S. Senator voted to amend the U.S. Constitution to ban same-sex marriage; voted against the Employment Non-Discrimination Act; co-sponsored the so-called First Amendment Defense Act, which would allow discrimination against LGBTQ people and others in the name of "religious freedom"; and voted against repealing "don't ask, don't tell." The upshot? Policies are only getting more and more dangerous and devastating for the LGBTQ community as time goes on.

2) The attack on immigrants: From the moment the order was issued barring travel to the U.S. for people from seven predominantly Muslim countries, there was utter chaos, from government agencies being ill- or not informed, to the massive protests that immediately took place at airports across the country. Additional attacks on immigrants include a vast shift in deportation policies from focusing on those with a criminal history to anyone who might be eligible for deportation; the phasing out of the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals program (DACA); and the end of the program allowing Nicaraguans and Haitians to live and work in the U.S. if their country has been hit by a natural disaster, a health epidemic or civil war. With the U.S. Supreme Court recently deciding to allow the third version of the ban to go into effect while legal challenges continue, it is clear that the safety of our loved ones who are immigrants—both LGBTQ and not—remains precarious at best. PFLAG's voice was heard at a rally near The White House in support of immigrant families, upholding our long-time position of keeping families stateside and together as a policy priority.

1) Advocacy fatigue: PFLAGers everywhere have been working tirelessly throughout the year, on a variety of fronts. Sometimes it feels like every day brings a new piece of bad news, which demands another action be taken. This kind of relentless need for advocacy is tiring for allies, but exponentially more so for those whose lives are directly affected by the onslaught. We encourage everyone, again, to commit to self care, so crucial in these times. And we're noting our community's humanity by naming fatigue.

Best:

10) Taking our fight to the streets: More than 3.2 million people participated in the Women's March across the country and around the globe. PFLAG was proud to be a partner for and participant in this historic event. In addition to the Women's March, there were advocacy-focused Pride celebrations, the March for Science, and countless advocates who staged protests at their elected officials' offices, restoring our collective faith in the power of protest.

9) Corporations Stepping Up: 2017 marked another historic year for workplace inclusion. A record number of organizations earned perfect scores on the Corporate Equality Index, more companies than ever engaged in Straight for Equality in the Workplace learning sessions, and corporate advocacy for equality became the norm.

8) LGBTQ-inclusive superheroes!: From Wonder Woman's messages of independence and inclusion, to the presence of LGBTQ characters on shows like *The Flash* and *Legends of Tomorrow*, to books like *Lumberjanes*, we loved seeing equality and fairness at the heart of the story for many of our favorite and most time-honored characters in pop culture.

7) The PFLAG National Convention: The perfect place—Portland, Oregon—and the perfect moment to gather led to one of our best conventions yet. Two-and-a-half days, 400 PFLAG members and leaders, and scores of learning sessions and volunteer opportunities were only part of the highlights. PFLAG Gives Back saw PFLAG members come together to volunteer time and support the Portland community (including its cats and dogs). The only downside to the convention? Having to wait until 2019 for the next one!

6) LGBTQ Candidates Win Big: With [eight trans candidates winning elections](#), and a whole host of lesbian, gay, bi and queer winners as well—[an entirely LGBTQ Palm Springs, CA City Council anyone??](#)—LGBTQ voices are being heard louder and stronger than ever before.

5) LGBTQ Stories in Film and TV: There was so much more visibility for our community this year, it's hard to pick favorites...but we will try. In film, the clear favorite for us was *Call Me By Your Name*. If you haven't yet seen this festival-winning, Oscar-and-Golden-Globe contending work of art, now is the time: the film goes into wide release within the next two weeks ([see the calendar here](#)). In television, the *Thanksgiving* episode of Netflix's show *Master of None* was a don't-miss piece of storytelling, beautifully crafted from the life experience of writer Lena Waithe ([one of this year's OUT 100](#)), who won an Emmy Award for writing the episode (alongside series creator Aziz Ansari), the first black woman writer ever to take home the coveted award. [If you missed her incredible acceptance speech, check it out here](#). Another favorite? The season opener of Disney Channel's *Andi Mack* and a coming-out story that moved us to tears...and got it so very, very right.

4) The Result of #MeToo: What started as a movement to help young women of color who had survived sexual abuse, assault and exploitation has since become a rallying cry for countless people everywhere. The perpetrators—from the most famous to the least known—are being called out, the brave Silence Breakers were announced as [Time Magazine's Person of the Year](#), and tonight at midnight, Tarana Burke will start the ball drop in the Times Square celebration of New Year's Eve in New York City.

3) PFLAG parents on the frontlines: From a PFLAG dad's powerful plea for his transgender son to a devastated dad speaking out against a sexual predator, PFLAG parents were engaged in some of the highest profile moments of the year. Ken Ballard, 45, engaged in advocacy in the most PFLAG way—by speaking about the difficult journey toward unconditional support for his transgender son, Ashur. The [video](#) garnered positive messages from around the world. In response to these messages, Ballard said that he was just doing his job as a dad. Ballard and his wife, Melissa, run a group for trans kids and their families which affiliates with PFLAG chapters in Texas, and testified in Texas to the state legislature, helping to successfully beat back anti-transgender legislation in that state. [Nathan Mathis shared his personal story](#) in order to make a case for keeping virulent anti-LGBTQ candidate Roy Moore out of office. [Years ago, his lesbian daughter died by suicide](#), and at the time he didn't support her. His regret has led him to become a vocal advocate. And Deb Munn, mother of Charlie Craig (the plaintiff at the center of the *Masterpiece Cakeshop* case, see #2 below) is a fierce advocate for her son, and also a PFLAG mom! [Read more from Deb here](#) about the case that is at the forefront of the movement for equality.

2) Demanding That Cake—and Justice—Be Served: PFLAG National was proud to participate not only in an amicus brief to the U.S. Supreme Court in favor of the plaintiffs in *Charlie Craig v. Masterpiece Cakeshop*, but also in a live rally outside SCOTUS on the day oral arguments were heard. Our Executive Director, Dr. Jaime M. Grant, spoke to all who gathered. In addition to PFLAG mom Deb Munn's support of her son, a PFLAG family's story is featured in Lambda Legal's amicus brief to the Supreme Court, part of the evidence for fairness submitted in this landmark case expected to be decided in 2018.

1) And, finally...Looking forward to 2018, with a New *Voice* and a big PFLAG anniversary: It's been four years since we first published *The PFLAG Voice*, our monthly newsletter expressly for PFLAG members. Come January we will launch a new-and-improved version, with a new look and content culled from current events, the PFLAG National blog, the Learning & Inclusion team, and more. And get ready: **2018 is the 45th anniversary of the founding of PFLAG...we can't wait to highlight the history of our amazing organization throughout the coming year!**

By Liz Owen