



P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

Telephone (713) 721-0788

January 1992

P-FLAG IS GROWING!

We welcomed approximately 40 members and guests to our Dec. party. IntraCare Hospital graciously provided the festive luncheon, complete with holiday decorations and music. THANK YOU IntraCare for your help and hospitality.

P-FLAG's monthly meetings are now at IntraCare, located at 7601 Fannin. (Map enclosed.)

RINGING IN 1992

Our chapter begins the new year with enthusiasm and energy, committed to spreading the word that P-FLAG Houston is here to help.

Mark your calendar now for upcoming meetings:

Jan. 12	July 12
Feb. 2	Aug. 2
Mar. 1	Sept. 13
Apr. 5	Oct. 4
May 3	Nov. 1
June 7	Dec. 6

Meetings are on Sundays at 2 PM at IntraCare Hospital. Sign in at the front desk where you'll be directed to P-Flag.

** Feb. 2 Meeting **

Dolores and Jerry McCall, old friends of P-Flag, will present a program about

Event in 3 Acts, a major happening touring the country. The event is sponsored by

NAMES Project Foundation and Designers Industry Foundation for AIDS, or DIFFA.

The first "act" of the trilogy is a musical, Heart Strings, to be presented at Jones Hall on April 29 and 30. Act 2 is the NAMES Project Quilt, which will be displayed at the University of St. Thomas May 1-4. Act 3, entitled "You," invites the community to get involved in AIDS education.

The McCall's have long been active in AIDS education and outreach. Dolores has high praise for the national quilt project, which she describes as "a gentle approach to AIDS" and "a lovely way to get through the hurt." A total of 14,000 panels now make up the quilt, covering an expanse equal to nine football fields.

LOOKING AHEAD

Carol Miller, our new vice president, has exciting plans for 1992 programs. Look in the next issue for specifics, including some surprises. If YOU've got any hot ideas for programs, be sure to give Carol a call at 580-6607.

P-FLAG FAMILY

Josie Duffey was recently quoted extensively in a Beaumont newspaper article on homosexuality. True to form, Josie, "told it like it is." We're proud of her--and appreciative of her hard work as P-FLAG president in 1991.

P-FLAG FAMILY (continued)

Carol Miller volunteered to serve Thanksgiving Dinner at Bering Care Center--and had so much fun that she went back with her son, who was visiting from California, to help serve Christmas dinner.

Stuart Kane was a featured panelist at the Jewish Community Dialogue on Gay and Lesbian issues.

P-FLAG presented a program for the University of Houston Gay and Lesbian Student Association. It was a very rewarding experience for us parents, and the kids were very appreciative.

READ ALL ABOUT IT

P-FLAG has a lending library, with books by Catholic priests and a major league baseball umpire, historians and parents, lesbians and gays. For many of us, learning is THE way to grow in our understanding.

KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

Inklings Bookstore at 1846 Richmond has an excellent selection of books on homosexuality. You can also order virtually any gay and lesbian book in print from Lambda Rising in Washington, D.C. Call 800-621-6969. They will send you a catalog--or offer advice if you tell them what subjects you're interested in.

SEND US YOUR NEWS

This is the first issue of the P-FLAG FLYER. We hope to cover everything from chapter news to opportunities for service to issues that we can take a stand on. Call, write, nudge, urge--we NEED to hear from you. (Gail Rickey, 440-0353)

OFFICERS FOR 1992

Presidents: Gail and Pat Rickey
Vice President: Carol Miller
Secretary: Nancy Camp
Treasurer: Barbara Hamel

OUR KIDS ARE FINE JUST THE WAY THEY ARE

PLEASE JOIN IN THE WORK OF P-FLAG

The financial support of members enables our chapter to expand our outreach to the community. We invite you to join us.

Individual membership: \$25; Couple/Family membership: \$40

You can mail in the attached form, along with your check, to P-FLAG, PO Box 692444, Houston, TX 77269-2444.

NAME _____

ADDRESS (include zip) _____

TELEPHONE _____

P-FLAG WELCOMES your help in whatever capacity you choose. Please check your areas of interest:

- Speaking as part of a panel to community groups, such as college organizations of lesbians and gays
- Telephoning members and visitors
- Publicity
- Working with the Youth Suicide Prevention Project instituted by the national P-FLAG office
- Service projects
- Promoting activities between P-FLAG and other gay-related groups
- Other _____



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February 1992

MEETING MARCH 1

Our meeting promises to be an exciting one, with Sergeant Laurence Newcomb of the Houston Police Dept. Sergeant Newcomb, field supervisor of the special Montrose Task Force, will speak about the task force's duties and responsibilities in the community.

Bring your questions and concerns to the meeting, and hopefully, P-FLAG can provide additional insight and sensitivity to the plight of our gay and lesbian children who are at risk of personal harm.

Carole Miller

VOLUNTEERS NEEDED---

* to speak to groups, such as gay and lesbian students (Requests for P-FLAG to speak are accelerating. Let us know if you're willing to be asked for a one-time commitment.)

* to serve on team that will implement national P-FLAG's campaign to get TV air time for public service announcements (PSAs) designed to attack homophobia Call Gail at 440-0353 if you can help.

CALENDAR

Feb. 1	P-FLAG Meeting 2 PM, IntraCare Hospital, 7601 Fannin
Apr. 5	P-FLAG Meeting
Apr. 29	Heart Strings

P-FLAG WELCOMES VISITORS

We're always glad to welcome newcomers to P-FLAG meetings. As parents of gay sons and lesbian daughters, many of us find that whenever we "come out" to friends, they tell us about other people who are in need of P-FLAG's support. Many of you have spread the word about P-FLAG, inviting others to join you at meetings. And as a result, our family grows, strengthening each other--and eventually, the community.

In late January, P-FLAG welcomed very special visitors, Harriet and Bill Dart, all the way from Michigan.

Harriet is vice-president of chapter development for P-FLAG nationally. (P-FLAG of Houston is one of approximately 120 chapters of the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.)

Harriet and Bill are strongly committed to P-FLAG, leading their own chapter in Detroit and visiting other chapters across the country.

Our officers met with the Darts for dinner and in-depth conversation. Together we learned, laughed, and encouraged each other in our personal journeys.

AIDS FUNDRAISER ENTERTAINS

Heart Strings, an upbeat show of music and dance, comes to Jones Hall on April 29. The touring company of professional singers and dancers is joined by a local

Heart Strings is part of a trilogy, An Event in 3 Acts. "Act Two" is the AIDS Memorial Quilt, a portion of which will be on display at the University of St. Thomas May 1-3. The quilt is "a visible symbol of compassion and hope--hope for the future, hope for understanding, hope for tolerance, and hope for help." It is the largest community arts project in the world.

The Event also includes "You," or volunteer involvement in such projects as student education. To participate in any phase of the project (quilt display, student programs, mailing, ticket sales), call 621-7989.

YOUR VOICE MATTERS

As a P-FLAGer, write a letter to Barbara Bush urging her to accept our federation's invitation to serve as an Honorary Director in order to help remove the social stigma associated with AIDS. (Barbara Bush, The White House, Washington, DC 20500)

Background: Barbara Bush helped dedicate a facility in Washington for people with AIDS and made a public statement full of compassion and concern. Meanwhile, President Bush made less-than-supportive statements about AIDS sufferers, referring to "wayward lifestyles."

"These two conflicting views...are obvious 'trial balloons'...to determine what position to take on AIDS,"

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Apr. 5	P-FLAG Meeting
Apr. 29	<u>Heart Strings</u>
May 1-3	AIDS Memorial Quilt Un. of St. Thomas
May 3	P-FLAG Meeting
June 7	P-FLAG Meeting
June 19-28	Gay Pride Week (Parade--Jun. 28)
July 12	P-FLAG Meeting
Aug. 2	P-FLAG Meeting
Sept. 5-7	P-FLAG National Convention, Seattle

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Heart Strings, an upbeat show of music and dance, comes to Jones Hall on April 29. The touring company of professional singers and dancers is joined by a local gospel choir, men's chorus, and children to create a compelling performance focusing on AIDS.

Tickets start at \$25; larger donations are encouraged. A portion of the ticket is tax-deductible. Call 621-7989.

Proceeds will benefit Houstonians living with AIDS. If you can't attend the performance but want to contribute, send donations to Heart Strings/Houston, 20 Greenway Plaza, Suite 210, Houston, TX 77046.

Quilt, a portion of which will be on display at the University of St. Thomas May 1-3. The quilt is "a visible symbol of compassion and hope--hope for the future, hope for understanding, hope for tolerance, and hope for help." It is the largest community arts project in the world.

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"These two conflicting views...are obvious 'trial balloons'...to determine what position to take on AIDS," says the P-FLAG Detroit newsletter, urging readers to write Mrs. Bush in support of her stance.

Quoting P-FLAG's national president, Paulette Goodman, speaking about P-FLAG's mission in general: "Although it is important for Parents FLAG chapters to help families, friends, and gay people, it is essential for our Federation to strike at the root cause of the problem and fight homophobia on a national scale."

RELIGION'S RESPONSE
TO GAYS AND LESBIANS

Gays of many faiths wrestle with their religion's response to their sexuality. Gay Catholics have formed Dignity, gay Episcopalians meet as Integrity, gay Methodists call their group Affirmation.

Each month in P-FLAG FLYER, we'd like to hear from a variety of faiths. Here's the first in our series.

The Methodist Church's Affirmation founded the Reconciling Church Program in 1984. Neither the group nor the program is officially recognized by the church, but both are gaining momentum.

Individual churches join the program, declaring themselves Reconciling Congregations, which means that they affirm gays and lesbians.

Earlier this year, Bering Memorial United Methodist Church became the first Methodist church in Texas to join the Reconciling Church Program. Those familiar with Bering's long-standing service to the gay community will note that the church needed no official designation to prove itself. Instead, Bering's membership enhances the program itself, challenging other churches to stand up and be counted.

The Methodist Church, which contends that homosexuality is "incompatible" with Christian teaching, is to review its position on homosexuality at its national General Conference in May. Methodists can express their opinions by writing the head of the Texas delegation: Rev. Joe Wilson, Marvin Methodist Church, 300 W. Erwin, Tyler, TX 75702.



HELP SESSIONS

JEWISH WORKSHOPS

Jewish Family Service, a counseling service focusing on personal and family problems, announces two 3-session workshops. One is for Jewish gays and lesbians. The second is for families and friends of Jewish gays and lesbians.

Dates are March 18, March 25, and April 1, 7:30-9 PM, at Jewish Family Service, located at 4131 S. Braeswood.

Contact Sharon Gerber, CSW-ACP, at 667-9336.

TEXAS SODOMY LAW
CHALLENGED ONCE MORE

The Third District Court of Appeals heard arguments on Jan. 29 challenging the constitutionality of the Texas Sodomy Statute (21.06), which labels homosexual activity a criminal offense.

The Texas Human Rights Foundation (THRF), a non-profit organization that fights discrimination against gay men, lesbians, and HIV-positive individuals, is sponsoring the lawsuit against Sec. 21.06 of the Texas Penal Code. According to THRF, no decision is expected for six to eight weeks.

In SUPPORT of the statute, 29 Texas legislators filed a statement that "homosexual conduct is per se contrary to society's morality and decency," and that "unrestrained homosexual conduct leads to other antisocial activities," i.e. "group sex and sex with minors" and "violent tendencies."

If--as the parent of a daughter who is lesbian or a son who is gay--you are offended by the 29 legislators, AND if you want to help educate them, write them at The Capitol, Austin, TX 78711.

Senators:

Chris Harris
John Leedom
David Sibley

LET'S GO TO SEATTLE!

Start planning your vacation!! P-FLAG will have its annual convention in Seattle on Labor Day weekend, Sept. 5-7. The theme is "Love In Action, Joy in Diversity".

The Seattle chapter is hard at work planning a pre-convention day-trip to Mount Rainier and a harbor dinner cruise as well as informative workshops.

On a recent trip to Seattle, we talked to president Ardyce Fish. "My daughter couldn't believe the outpouring of love (at a previous convention). It's a very supportive, encouraging environment."

Four of us are already making plans to go--and perhaps stay a while longer to explore the Pacific Northwest. The Seattle Hilton is the convention hotel (special rate of \$88 single or double, \$108 triple or quad). Travel Solutions, a gay-owned travel agency in Seattle, offers discounted air fares (800-211-7202). Convention registration is \$150.

Let's take Houston to Seattle, joining in the love and joy of the national gathering.

NEW BOOKS IN OUR LIBRARY

NOW THAT YOU KNOW: WHAT EVERY PARENT SHOULD KNOW ABOUT HOMOSEXUALITY, by Betty Fairchild and Nancy Howard (2nd copy)

PARENTS MATTER,
by Ann Muller

BUT LORD, THEY'RE GAY, by Sylvia Pennington

THE WALKING WOUNDED, by Beverly Barbo

THE QUILT, by Cindy Ruskin
(Donated by Jerry and Dolores McCall)

** If you read a book that you'd like to recommend, jot down your thoughts and we'll print your mini-review.

COMPUTER BUFFS

Thanks to a tip from Stuart, P-FLAG Houston is now listed on the Home Life bulletin board of Prodigy.

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HELP SESSIONS

The Montrose Resource Center has introduced a new series of sessions, all offered free.

Gay/Lesbian Teens meets on Sat. at noon; Gay/Lesbian Issues on Sat. at 1:30; Families and Friends of HIV Positive on Wed. at 8 PM.

The Montrose Resource Center, located at 811 Westheimer, #104, is sponsored by Stafford Meadows Hospital.

Contact David Fowler at 524-1069 for more information.

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Representatives:

Kevin Brady

Bill Blackwood

Ben Campbell

John Carona

Warren Chisum

John R. Cook

Tom Craddick

John Culberson

Dianne Delisi

Toby Goodman

Kent Grusendorf

Will Hartnett

Talmadge Heflin

Fred Hill

Mike Jackson

Ted Kamel

Dan Kubiak

A.R. Ovard

P.P. Patterson

Randy Pennington

Glenn Repp

Ashley Smith

Curtis Soileau

David Swinford

Robert Turner

Gerald Yost

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QUOTEABLE QUOTE

"There are neurotic family patterns and there are loving family patterns. Both types of families produce heterosexual and homosexual children. Loving, emotionally healthy families are very likely to produce emotionally healthy adults. That is the challenge to parents, regardless of the sexual orientation of their children."

Newsletter, P-FLAG of Phoenix



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March 1992

MEETING APRIL 5

Our meeting will feature Paul Wolfson, alcohol and drug abuse counselor and interventionist. Paul will speak about the disease of alcoholism, how it relates to emotional stability and lifestyles, and treatment alternatives.

Paul has extensive professional training in substance abuse issues, and he has experience in both individual counseling and facilitating therapy groups. His "down to earth" manner will prove enjoyable as well as informative.

Carole Miller

GAY TEEN SUICIDE ADDRESSED ON 20/20

ABC's 20/20 will feature Mary Griffith and the Walnut Creek, CA., chapter of P-FLAG in a segment on lesbian and gay teen suicide.

The scheduled, but not firm, date is Fri., Mar. 20. ABC will give P-FLAG's new toll-free number to callers who contact the network and affiliates.

CALENDAR

Mar. 5 P-FLAG Meeting
2 PM, IntraCare
Hospital,
7601 Fannin

Apr. 29 Heart Strings
Jones Hall

P-FLAG ON TV SUPPORTING FAMILIES and FIGHTING HOMOPHOBIA

The Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays has launched a nationwide public service campaign (PSA) to spread the word about P-FLAG's presence, with an underlying message designed to combat homophobia.

We just previewed the first 30-second PSA, titled "Family Portrait," and were IMPRESSED with the quality of the footage as well as the pro-family message. The PSA pictures a gathering of 20 or more people of all ages. Adults are playing with children, people of different ethnic backgrounds are greeting each other, and voices of parents are saying...

"At first, we didn't know what to think."
"We thought we had done something."
"I was so angry, so hurt."
"We didn't know where to turn."
"Talking to other families at Parents FLAG was a lifesaver."
"Now we're closer than ever."
"She's the same daughter she always was."
"We love him just as much as always."
"Parents FLAG helped us through it."
"You are not alone."
"Talk to us. We understand."
"For the parent's helpline

At press time, our chapter is preparing to take this PSA to local TV stations. We'll keep you informed of our progress, highlighting the stations that agree to show it and requesting that you express your support and appreciation directly to them.



SPEAKING OUT FOR PRO-FAMILY VALUES

P-FLAG's statement of position says that "...we are members of close-knit families who are pro-family in every sense and who affirm 'traditional values.'"

We applaud Donal Sacken, professor of education at Texas Christian University, who recently wrote an article titled "Family Values Include Tolerance and Respect For Others," published in the Fort Worth Star-Telegram. Here are some excerpts from Sacken's article:

We have permitted small-minded homophobes to seize ownership of a decent concept such as family values. Well, my family values include treating others with tolerance and self-respect, as long as they treat us

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"She's the same daughter she always was."
"We love him just as much as always."
"Parents FLAG helped us through it."
"You are not alone."
"Talk to us. We understand."
"For the parent's helpline nearest you, call 800-4-FAMILY."

The toll-free number accesses a recording that instructs the caller to enter an area code. Upon doing so, the caller is given the local P-FLAG telephone number.

One of the lines is for persons who speak only Spanish. (Four bi-lingual parents across the nation have volunteered to answer these calls.)

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We have permitted small-minded homophobes to seize ownership of a decent concept such as family values. Well, my family values include treating others with tolerance and self-respect, so long as they treat us in similar fashion.

My family values include teaching my children not to hate and fear differences in others, and to make decisions about the worth of other individuals based on experience and evidence, not prejudice and bias. My family values also include the concepts that all people are entitled to equality under the law and a presumption of decency and that every person is entitled to privacy over those matters he or she keeps private.

Those are my family values, and I support the public policy that promotes those values. So let's not accept that family values somehow mean those beliefs that are only mean-spirited or that such a honorable concept must emanate from our least admirable fears and biases. Leave that for the researchless and clueless.

**RELIGION'S RESPONSE
TO GAYS AND LESBIANS**

Each month we feature a different faith. If you would like to contribute to this column, please call Gail at 440-0353.

This month we hear from an Episcopalian P-FLAGer who is a member of Integrity.

Integrity is the national organization for gay and lesbian Episcopalians and their friends. It began as a newsletter sent out by Dr. Louie Crew in rural Georgia in 1974 in an effort to meet other gay Episcopalians. Integrity grew and now has over 50 chapters divided into four regions.

Integrity's ministry is to the spiritual needs of gays and lesbians, working for their full participation in church and society and promoting the study of human sexuality within a Christian context. The group also provides educational materials for clergy and lay persons which are distributed at local parishes and at monthly meetings. Additionally, members of Integrity are well informed on many issues discussed within the church. They maintain high visibility at local and national conventions, always available as a valuable resource.

The acceptance of the local Integrity groups depends largely on the diocese and the bishop over that diocese. The Right Reverend Maurice Benetiz, the Bishop of the Diocese of Texas, supports AIDS ministries. Generally, however, he is not supportive of gay and lesbian unions and "the gay lifestyle."

Nonetheless, the Houston chapter continues under the loving pastoral care of accepting clergy and committed lay members. Meetings are on the 2nd and 4th Mondays at Autry House. The 1st Friday of every month is a Eucharist, at Palmer Memorial Chapel. Much excitement and hard work are also going on now as we

**SELF-EMPOWERMENT GATHERINGS
FOR GAY MEN, LESBIANS**

Michael Ganther, son of P-FLAG Houston's John and Joy Ganther, is a founder of Shaman's Circle. Based in Austin, the group hosts gay gatherings "to share our collective energy in empowering ourselves, each other, and improving our world."

"Many ancient cultures and tribes honored their 'Gay' Men," says Michael. "Calling on this heritage through ceremony, creativity and group experiences, we celebrate our own Gay Spirits."

Shaman's Circle plans a variety of camp-out gatherings, held on a thousand acre ranch in the Hill Country, in upcoming months. Some are for gay men; others, for gay men and lesbians; gay fathers and sons/gay sons and fathers; and gay men and non-gay men. Prices are \$195 for a weekend; discounts available for families, groups, students.

For more information, call 800-828-1279 or 512-495-9737.

****JEWISH WORKSHOPS****

Workshops for Jewish gays and their families, sponsored by Jewish Family Service.

Mar. 18, 25; Apr. 1. Call Sharon Gerber, 667-9336.

P-FLAG RESOURCES

Booklets

Why Is My Child Gay

surveys 11 researchers

Can We Understand

guide for parents

About Our Children

overview of facts in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Japanese

Read This Before Coming Out

To Your Parents

stages of understanding parents go through; good reading for parents also

Position Papers

Supporting Our Gay Loved Ones

basics about homosexuality and coming out

Respect All Youth

issues that gay youth face; for teachers, religious leaders, counselors,

PRESIDENT'S PODIUM
by Pat Rickey

I'm glad, I'm mad, and I'm sad. Three little rhyming words that cover such a range of emotions. Am I confused about how I feel? No, it's just that there is plenty of emotion to go around in participating in our P-FLAG work in Houston.

I'm glad about our growth in attendance and membership, sharing of personal journeys, and hopefully, knowledge of who we are and how to get in touch with us. It's a great feeling to see someone new at a meeting who is obviously uncertain about whether he or she has done the right thing by attending that first meeting, and then opening up, sharing and lingering to chat after the meeting. I hope that trend continues.

I'm mad whenever I consider how much negativism and yes, hatred, our wonderful sons and daughters have to put up with. We parents know that they are the same beautiful people they have always been, and that they want nothing more than the same basic rights we all should share. Maybe we should all get mad.

I'm sad when I consider the numbers of gay and lesbian children in Houston, each of whom has two parents, and how few of those parents we see at our meetings. I'm sad for all those sons and daughters who don't feel they can come out to their parents. I'm sad for all those parents who are hurting and struggling to learn and find understanding who don't know about us or who are not ready to make contact.

I invite you to join me in my emotional spectrum.

**JOINING IN THE WORK OF
P-FLAG**

Thanks to all who have paid membership dues. Dues are our primary source of funds, enabling us to reach out to the community.

to meet other gay Episcopalians. Integrity grew and now has over 50 chapters divided into four regions.

Integrity's ministry is to the spiritual needs of gays and lesbians, working for their full participation in church and society and promoting the study of human sexuality within a Christian context. The group also provides educational materials for clergy and lay persons which are distributed at local parishes and at monthly meetings. Additionally, members of Integrity are well informed on many issues discussed within the church. They maintain high visibility at local and national conventions, always available as a valuable resource.

The acceptance of the local Integrity groups depends largely on the diocese and the bishop over that diocese. The Right Reverend Maurice Benetiz, the Bishop of the Diocese of Texas, supports AIDS ministries. Generally, however, he is not supportive of gay and lesbian unions and "the gay lifestyle."

Nonetheless, the Houston chapter continues under the loving pastoral care of accepting clergy and committed lay members. Meetings are on the 2nd and 4th Mondays at Autry House. The 1st Friday of every month is a Eucharist, at Palmer Memorial Chapel. Much excitement and hard work are also going on now as we are preparing to host the Integrity National Convention here in Houston in July.

If you would like more information about Integrity, please call 432-0414.

MINDS ARE LIKE
PARACHUTES:
THEY FUNCTION
ONLY
WHEN OPEN !



Shaman's Circle plans a variety of camp-out gatherings, held on a thousand acre ranch in the Hill Country, in upcoming months. Some are for gay men; others, for gay men and lesbians; gay fathers and sons/gay sons and fathers; and gay men and non-gay men. Prices are \$195 for a weekend; discounts available for families, groups, students.

For more information, call 800-828-1279 or 512-495-9737.

JEWISH WORKSHOPS

Workshops for Jewish gays and their families, sponsored by Jewish Family Service.

Mar. 18, 25; Apr. 1. Call Sharon Gerber, 667-9336.

P-FLAG RESOURCES

Booklets

Why Is My Child Gay
surveys 11 researchers

Can We Understand
guide for parents

About Our Children

overview of facts in English, Spanish, French, Chinese, Japanese

Read This Before Coming Out

To Your Parents
stages of understanding parents go through; good reading for parents also

Position Papers

Supporting Our Gay Loved Ones
basics about homosexuality and coming out

Respect All Youth

issues that gay youth face; for teachers, religious leaders, counselors, concerned adults

Paper 1: Who Is Killing Whom

Paper 2: You Can Help: Gay and Lesbian Youth In Crisis

Paper 3: Youth and Homosexuality: Implications of Sexual Diversity Throughout Childhood

Booklets: \$2; Papers (except for # 3): \$1; Paper 3: \$3

Reduced prices for non-profit groups and for bulk orders.

Order from Parents FLAG, PO Box 27605, Washington, DC 20038-7605.

All materials available at P-FLAG meetings.

a meeting who is obviously uncertain about whether he or she has done the right thing by attending that first meeting, and then opening up, sharing and lingering to chat after the meeting. I hope that trend continues.

I'm mad whenever I consider how much negativism and yes, hatred, our wonderful sons and daughters have to put up with. We parents know that they're the same beautiful people they have always been, and that they want nothing more than the same basic rights we all should share. Maybe we should all get mad.

I'm sad when I consider the numbers of gay and lesbian children in Houston, each of whom has two parents, and how few of those parents we see at our meetings. I'm sad for all those sons and daughters who don't feel they can come out to their parents. I'm sad for all those parents who are hurting and struggling to learn and find understanding who don't know about us or who are not ready to make contact.

I invite you to join me in my emotional spectrum.

JOINING IN THE WORK OF P-FLAG

Thanks to all who have paid membership dues. Dues are our primary source of funds, enabling us to reach out to the community.

If you haven't joined and would like to do so, the cost is \$25 for an individual, or \$40 for a couple/family.

If you don't want to join but believe in what we stand for, have been helped in any way, and/or would like to help us help others, we welcome any contribution that you make.

Quoting the New Orleans chapter's newsletter, "We won't send you a mug or even a bumper sticker. All you get is a good feeling and sincere thanks."

Gay Pride Week will be celebrated June 19-28. P-FLAG plans to participate in the parade on June 28 and to host a Coming Out workshop during the week.

Why gay pride, some readers may ask. Brian McNaught, a noted writer on gay issues, provides the definitive answer. The following piece, written on the close of a previous Gay Pride Week, can serve as an impetus for our participation in 1992.

Proud About What?

by Brian McNaught

Now that we have rolled up our banners, swept up our confetti and tucked away our Lesbian and Gay Pride T-shirts for another year, a bit of reflecting on our celebration seems in order. What are the particulars which make us proud about the gay and lesbian presence in the world?

I'm proud of our resilience. Most of us grow up in families which are afraid to know our secret, go through schools which deny our existence, head into jobs which encourage our duplicity, encounter doctors and ministers and other honored healers who seek to transform us and we nonetheless survive!

I'm proud of our history of heroes and heroines who, one by one, throughout time, pounded, shoved, scratched and oiled the hinges of our closet door.

I'm proud of how we gay men and lesbians today hang together when we deal with tragedies such as AIDS. Though we're the orphaned children of the civil rights movement; though we may have no family, church or other institutional support, we time and time again baffle our enemies by our ability to dig in, generously donate our time and money to take care of our own and sacrifice our private lives to make sure that no one who travels with us walks unassisted.

I'm proud of those lesbians and gay people of color and disability who struggle to stick with the movement when all too often able-bodied gay white men pretend they don't exist, or, worse yet, pretend that our agenda meets their needs. And I'm proud of those able-bodied gay white men who struggle to rid themselves of a limited agenda and world view.

I'm proud of those lesbian mothers and gay fathers who choose to fight for custody when they feel they would be the best parent to raise their children.

I'm proud of those gay and les-

I'm proud of those office workers who refuse to play charades with their peers and who therefore endure the daily cold shoulder rather than the daily lies. They know that if someone has to be uncomfortable about their being gay, it ought not to be them.

I'm proud of those gay men and lesbians who have gay literature and art prominently displayed in their homes and who do not put them under the bed when family arrives for a visit. It takes a while to understand that one's home is one's only space for free expression. If visitors are made uncomfortable by our self-expression, visitors should not visit.

I'm proud of those gay men and lesbians who recently marched in their first Pride Parade, even if it was in straw hat and sunglasses; of those who have bought their first lesbian or gay periodical or book from a straight sales clerk; of those who cautiously stepped foot into their first gay bar or attended their first meeting of a gay organization. I know how frightened they were and how much courage it took.

I'm proud of all those gay men and women who have written letters to the editor to protest inaccurate or nonexistent reporting on our community and of those who have made phone calls to station managers to compliment a sensitive portrayal of our issues. These gay people know the media must serve everyone.

I'm proud of the volunteers who staff our hotlines. They give up their free time so that lonely, frightened and often desperate people will have at least one friendly voice and open ear to rely upon. I know that the abuse they endure from those who call with death threats and obscene messages takes its toll.

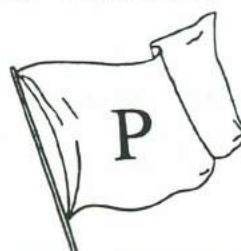
I'm proud of those lesbians and gay men who head up our local and national organizations. They are paid little, if anything, and put in far more time than is good for their health.

I'm proud of those who are still willing to take to the streets to draw attention to injustice against gay people and of those who are willing to work the system for change. I am most proud when both approaches are affirmed by gay men and lesbians as being choices and not mandates for everyone.

I'm proud of our free press which began as mimeographed sheets with misspelled words and has matured into a sophisticated network of independent professional periodicals which inform us, challenge us and enable us to express our feelings. And I'm proud of our lesbian and gay authors and poets and photographers and painters and recording artists and of our gay and lesbian publishing houses and record companies and radio shows, all of whom give us the sights and sounds of gay and lesbian celebration every day of the year.

These are only some of the particulars which make me proud about the gay and lesbian presence in the world. There are many more. I encourage you to think about them during a quiet moment. I encourage nongay people to think about them too. Perhaps if they were to become aware of the treasures that we hold and offer generously, they would add their own confetti to next year's pageant. λ

Let's add our own confetti to the celebration. Watch the newsletter for how you can participate. Meanwhile, mark June 28 on your calendar.



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I'm proud of those lesbian mothers and gay fathers who choose to fight for custody when they feel they would be the best parent to raise their children.

I'm proud of those gay and lesbian children who hold on to the dream of one day building a healthy and secure environment for themselves.

I'm proud of those gay and lesbian college students who don't give up when their posters are repeatedly torn down and of those who hold strong when their university refuses to recognize them as a legitimate group. They spend what little money they have to pay for the telephone, supplies and office space other student groups get for free.

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I'm proud of those lesbians and gay men who head up our local and national organizations. They are paid little, if anything, and put in far more time than is good for their health. Rarely are they adequately thanked. Too often are they senselessly criticized. Nevertheless, they have a dream and they are willing to sacrifice for it.

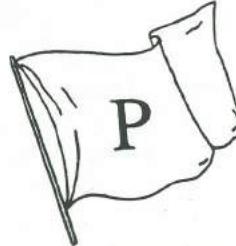
I'm proud of those gay Christians and Jews who won't give up on their institutions. Their's is a courage and faith even the churches will one day honor. And I'm proud of those who have held on to their spiritual beliefs though not their institutional ties. They have had the nerve to walk it alone.

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I'm proud of our free press which began as mimeographed sheets with misspelled words and has matured into a sophisticated network of independent professional periodicals which inform us, challenge us and enable us to express our feelings. And I'm proud of our lesbian and gay authors and poets and photographers and painters and recording artists and of our gay and lesbian publishing houses and record companies and radio shows, all of whom give us the sights and sounds of gay and lesbian celebration every day of the year.

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Brian McNaught is the author of On Being Gay. "McNaught has a special gift for enabling people to understand what it means to be gay," says Lambda Rising bookstore in Washington, DC, which specializes in literature on gay and lesbian issues. McNaught's book "has deep, spiritual dimensions. Few people have been so able to discuss their lives in such a delightful and moving way."

ACTION ALERT FROM P-FLAG NATIONAL OFFICE

Background: Quotations from a father and daughter...

Newsweek, 7/8/91

"Dad and I had breakfast this morning. We had a look at each other's speeches. He would have used mine, but he's not a lesbian. I would have used his, but I'm not a Republican."

*Psychiatrist Diane Mosbacher,
daughter of Commerce Secretary
Robert Mosbacher, during a commencement address at Pitzer College,*

"She is my daughter and I love her... We see things a little differently but just as I have a right to speak my mind, so does she. I am proud of her for what she is and I hope she feels that way about me."

Robert Mosbacher, responding
to his daughter's remark.

From P-FLAG's national office: Robert Mosbacher is the father of a lesbian daughter and the head of President Bush's re-election campaign. As a result of his recent meeting with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, he has received an onslaught of negative mail from highly organized groups who churn out form letters by the hundreds. Please urge your chapter to communicate with Mr. Mosbacher's office by mail or telephone. Stress the following points:

- o IDENTIFY YOURSELF AS A PARENT OR FRIEND OR FAMILY MEMBER OF A GAY OR LESBIAN PERSON—OR AS A GAY OR LESBIAN PERSON. If you're a voter, let them know. Help them see the broad base of support for the dialogue with the gay community. We will be doing our part in breaking down the stereotypes, and that can only help those who aren't as far along as we are. If you want to write a long, detailed letter, GREAT! But there is no need for verbosity. Sometimes, the simplest message makes the greatest impression. REMEMBER: If it's from the heart, it shows.
- o REFERENCE INFORMATION Make phone calls to (202) 336-7093. Send letters, etc. to MR. ROBERT MOSBACHER, BUSH-QUAYLE '92, 1030 15TH STREET, NW, WASHINGTON, DC 20005. Please send a copy of your letter or report your phone call to the P-FLAG office.

RESPONSE TO NEWSWEEK'S "BORN OR BRED"

Newsweek published a story on homosexuality, titled "Born or Bred," on Feb. 24, 1992. P-FLAG member Annette Brenner of the Chicago chapter was quoted in the article. So was Laurie Coburn, a staff member at the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays in Washington, D.C. Laurie's statement was taken out of context. Her letter to Newsweek follows.

If you would like to contact the magazine to follow up on Laurie's comments, call Newsweek at 900-990-MAIL, or write to Letters to the Editor, Newsweek, 444 Madison Ave., New York, NY 10022. Please send a copy of your letter or report your call to Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, PO Box 27605, Washington, DC 20038-7605.

Dear Editor:

Your quotation of my statement out of context changed its meaning, and I would like to make clear the sense of what I was trying to convey when I spoke with your reporter.

While it is true that I would not have chosen to have a child born with any factor that would automatically make life difficult for him or her, it is also true that my gay son is gifted and talented, and I would not now choose for him to be any different. He and his three equally marvelous siblings are the lights of my life. I love him just the way he is. His sexual orientation is not my concern. I am deeply concerned about the quality of his life.

I am proud of my gay son. I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to know him and the many openly gay men and lesbians whom I have met through his life.

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I am proud of my gay son. I am thankful that I have had the opportunity to know him and the many openly gay men and lesbians whom I have met because of him and my work with Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. I admire their courage and honesty in the face of all the adversity they have had to deal with.

Many of us in Parents FLAG are grateful for the spiritual journey that has been a result of this life experience. We have been forced to grapple with hard questions, with issues of integrity and authenticity and loyalty that might otherwise have escaped us. We have come to a new and deeper understanding of traditional family values.

We do not choose to change who our children are or worry about how they came to be that way; we choose to focus on changing the culture that daily threatens their dignity and self-esteem, their physical safety, and their human and civil rights. We choose to educate ourselves and society about negative myths and stereotypes that affect us all and to ensure the passage of local, state, and federal legislation to end the discrimination against lesbians, gay men, and bisexuals that is a disgrace in this nation and around the globe.

Sincerely yours,

Laurie Coburn
Program Director



P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

Telephone (713) 721-0788

April 1992

MEETING May 3

Representatives from HATCH (Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals) are our speakers. Jay Asher and Trish Morgan, co-founders, along with several teen members of HATCH, will address issues that gay and lesbian adolescents face in our society.

HATCH provides emotional support and a safe harbor for these youngsters to meet and socialize with their peers.

We are looking forward to a great turnout to show our support for these teens.

Carole Miller

COMING OUT WORKSHOP

For many lesbians and gay men, "Coming Out" to parents is a major event along their life journey.

P-FLAG will present a Coming Out Workshop on Sat., June 20, as an official event of Lesbian/Gay Pride Week 1992.

The workshop will include a panel of parents who will share their experiences.

For more information, call 721-0788.

CALENDAR

Apr. 29	<u>Heart Strings</u> Jones Hall (tickets: 621-7989)
May 3	P-FLAG Meeting 2 PM, IntraCare Hospital, 7601 Fannin
May 1-3	AIDS Memorial Quilt Inn of St. Thomas

P-FLAG PSAs BEGIN TO AIR

Channel 11 and Access Houston were the first to air P-FLAG's public service announcement (PSA).

Designed to let the public know that our organization exists--and that parents can turn to us for help, the PSA was produced by our national federation.

From some of the first calls...

"Our son just told us that he's gay. I feel like a bomb has gone off in our family. I feel like it's my fault, but I don't know what I did wrong. My (husband, wife, son, daughter) doesn't want to talk about it, doesn't even acknowledge our son as part of the family anymore. I'm hurting. I need information. I need to talk to another parent whose son is gay."

ACTION ALERT

** Write Dan Morales, Texas Attorney General, urging him NOT to appeal the decision of the Third District Court of Appeals that the Texas "sodomy" law is unconstitutional.

Advocate that taxpayers' money be used for education or other needs instead of for fighting to uphold this dehumanizing law. (Dan Morales, PO Box 12548, Capital Station, Austin, TX 78711)

RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

The National Institute of

GAY AND LESBIAN ISSUES IN THE NEWS

** In New Orleans

The City Council passed an ordinance banning discrimination in housing, employment, and public accommodation based on race, color, religion, national origin, ancestry, sex, age, marital status, creed, physical handicap, AND sexual orientation. P-FLAG New Orleans was very involved in the fight to pass the ordinance, and the chapter's president, Sandra Paillet, was a principal speaker at the city council hearing. The chapter participated in planning a strategy that included the testimony of psychiatrists, doctors, social scientists, lawyers, clergy, and families of gay men and lesbians.

** In New Jersey

In Jan., Gov. Jim Florio signed a law that gives victims of discrimination based on "affectional or sexual orientation" legal grounds to sue or file a complaint with the State Division of Civil Rights.

"Our P-FLAG families were notified prior to the voting and were encouraged to make their thoughts known to their elected legislators," reports P-FLAG's national office. "We can't help but feel that P-FLAG helped play an important role in this great stride forward."

New Jersey, the fifth state to enact such legislation.

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Jun 7	P-FLAG Meeting
Jun 19-28	Lesbian/Gay Pride Week 1992
Jun 20	P-FLAG hosts Coming Out workshop
Jun 28	Pride Parade
July 12	P-FLAG Meeting
Aug. 2	P-FLAG Meeting
Sept. 5-7	P-FLAG National Convention, Seattle

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RESEARCH VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT

The National Institute of Health is conducting a human sexuality study. The aim is to determine whether sexual orientation is influenced by heredity.

Participants need to be at least 18 years old and have two or more adult gay or lesbian relatives. The NIH is especially interested in families with three or more gay men or lesbians, and families in which both of the parents and the paternal grandfather of a gay person are available.

** In New Orleans

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New Jersey, the fifth state to enact such legislation, joins Conn., Mass., Wisconsin, and Hawaii.

** In Raleigh, N.C.

A Southern Baptist church, defying its parent church, has voted in favor of blessing a gay union.

** In Ontario, Canada

The province has extended life, medical, and dental insurance benefits to the partners of gay/lesbian provincial employees.

RELIGION'S RESPONSE TO GAYS AND LESBIANS

Each month we feature a different faith. If you would like to contribute to this column, please call Gail at 440-0353.

This month we hear from the Rev. Robert L. Schaibly, senior minister of First Unitarian Universalist Church of Houston.

Unitarian Universalism (UUism) is quite different from religion based on a "creed" or "revelation" from scripture. We say that together we must seek to understand the meaning of our lives, using the accumulated wisdom of humankind, reason, intuition, art and science, and the life-truths of our own people including those who are gay or lesbian. Of major religious bodies, we have by far the highest percentage of women and of openly gay men and lesbians as professional ministers. We feel that UUism is a serious spiritual alternative for the gay and lesbian community.

In our denomination's annual General Assemblies, we have:

-- In 1970, called for an end to discrimination against gay/lesbian people, declaring that private consensual sexual behavior is no one else's business.

-- In 1973, established an Office of Lesbian & Gay Concerns in denomination headquarters, which works closely with gay/lesbian groups in individual churches.

-- In 1984, recognized gay/lesbian services of union or commitment.

-- In 1987, called for full legal recognition of gay and lesbian relationships and an end to state "sodomy" laws, and urged UU's not to do business with companies that discriminate.

UU churches welcome gay men and lesbians as fully participating members. For further information, contact First UU Church of Houston.

classic stages of shock, anger, guilt, and sorrow. And then one day, we realize that not only do we accept, love, and treasure our own sons who are gay and daughters who are lesbian, but we want to shout to the world that discrimination against gays and lesbians is unconscionable and that homophobia is a blight on our society.

By taking action, we affirm our children, our families, and ourselves. Many P-FLAGers are already involved in service projects associated with gay causes. What can you do? Here are two suggestions.

Texas Human Rights Foundation

This non-profit organization fights discrimination against lesbian, gay and HIV-infected persons through education and litigation. It has led the fight against the Texas "sodomy" statute, 21.06 of the Texas Penal Code.

In a letter to P-FLAG Houston, THRF's Suzy Wagers wrote, "We are in desperate need of financial support of this lawsuit. Our court costs and attorneys' fees are already \$60,000. With Dan Morales' appeal to the Texas Supreme Court, that figure will reach over \$100,000."

To learn more about THRF's ongoing work, request a copy of their newsletter by writing THRF, PO Box 49740, Austin, TX 78765, or call 512-479-THRF.

Lewis-Scott Youth Center

Recently opened, this Montrose-area center provides social services for youth under age 21, especially those who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Targeted youth include those dealing with substance abuse, HIV, and suicide. "We're trying to weave a net to catch and save these kids," says a spokesperson.

Services will range from crisis counseling to providing a place for run-away youth to get a meal and shower.

The center needs volunteers and contributions of goods and

P-FLAG IN THE COMMUNITY

* Two mothers spoke at Sam Houston University's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual Association. It was a joyous, affirming gathering, with lots of sharing. "I certainly learned a lot," said one mom. "I hope they benefitted as much as I did. It gave me an opportunity to talk with gays and lesbians other than my own child, and to hear their opinions."

* Three fathers spoke at the Men's Network, a support group for gay and bisexual men at Montrose Counseling Center. The group was very responsive and let the P-FLAG dads know how encouraging it was to them to see fathers that are open and supportive.

* A parent team represented P-FLAG at Lord of Life Lutheran Church in The Woodlands. P-FLAG's presentation was part of a six-week study on homosexuality by an adult church school class.

* A mom and a dad spoke at HATCH. Expecting about 15 or 20 youth to attend, they were greeted by a crowd of more than 60. The parents' stories were warmly heard, followed by many questions and a round of applause. Many of the teens lingered to chat, wanting to ask about coming out or to share experiences with a supportive parent figure. "If you haven't participated in one of these presentations, you're missing a bunch of strokes and satisfaction," reports the P-FLAG father.

* In response to a request from our national federation, a group of Houston P-FLAGers, along with local AIDS-care activists, met with a representative from the national AIDS Action Council. The goal: To organize the group to address legislators, advocating the allocation of funds for AIDS research, care, prevention, and housing.

understand the meaning of our lives, using the accumulated wisdom of humankind, reason, intuition, art and science, and the life-truths of our own people including those who are gay or lesbian. Of major religious bodies, we have by far the highest percentage of women and of openly gay men and lesbians as professional ministers. We feel that UUism is a serious spiritual alternative for the gay and lesbian community.

In our denomination's annual General Assemblies, we have:

-- In 1970, called for an end to discrimination against gay/lesbian people, declaring that private consensual sexual behavior is no one else's business.

-- In 1973, established an Office of Lesbian & Gay Concerns in denomination headquarters, which works closely with gay/lesbian groups in individual churches.

-- In 1984, recognized gay/lesbian services of union or commitment.

-- In 1987, called for full legal recognition of gay and lesbian relationships and an end to state "sodomy" laws, and urged UU's not to do business with companies that discriminate.

UU churches welcome gay men and lesbians as fully participating members. For further information, contact First UU Church of Houston, 5200 Fannin, Houston, TX 77004-5899; 713-526-5200. Sunday services: 11:15 AM.

"HOW CAN I HELP"

by Gail Rickey

As we parents of lesbians and gay men become educated about homosexuality, learning that our daughters and sons can be happy, productive, fulfilled persons whatever their sexual orientation, we want to join in the good fight for human dignity.

Many of us go through

Texas Human Rights Foundation

This non-profit organization fights discrimination against lesbian, gay and HIV-infected persons through education and litigation. It has led the fight against the Texas "sodomy" statute, 21.06 of the Texas Penal Code.

In a letter to P-FLAG Houston, THRF's Suzy Wagers wrote, "We are in desperate need of financial support of this lawsuit. Our court costs and attorneys' fees are already \$60,000. With Dan Morales' appeal to the Texas Supreme Court, that figure will reach over \$100,000."

To learn more about THRF's ongoing work, request a copy of their newsletter by writing THRF, PO Box 49740, Austin, TX 78765, or call 512-479-THRF.

Lewis-Scott Youth Center

Recently opened, this Montrose-area center provides social services for youth under age 21, especially those who are lesbian, gay, or bisexual.

Targeted youth include those dealing with substance abuse, HIV, and suicide. "We're trying to weave a net to catch and save these kids," says a spokesperson.

Services will range from crisis counseling to providing a place for run-away youth to get a meal and shower.

The center needs volunteers and contributions of goods and money. Specific needs include a copy machine and an answering machine. Call 942-9884.

We love our kids.

They are OKAY.

And we are OKAY too.

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RESEARCH, from p. 1

According to the NIH, research will be conducted in private by a "gay-positive researcher," participants will be asked to donate blood samples, participants' identities will be kept confidential, and travel expenses and per diems will be paid for by the NIH.

If you are interested in volunteering, contact Dr. Dean Hamer, NIH Bldg. 37, Rm. 4A13, Bethesda, MD 20892, or call collect 301-402-2709.

"DON'T EXPECT ME TO MARCH IN ANY PARADES"

by Gail Rickey

Before I ever ventured out to my first P-FLAG meeting, I said to the sympathetic voice on the telephone, "Okay, maybe I will go a meeting. But I certainly don't intend to ever march in a parade or carry a sign.

I did indeed go to a meeting, and there I met other parents of lesbians and gays. Listening to their experiences and telling my own story encouraged me to grow in my understanding of homosexuality.

Until now, however, I've never marched in a parade or carried a sign, but come Pride Week 1992, I plan to do just that. For me, it feels right and good. But it is also important to me to repeat my deep-felt belief that acceptance of our gay children is an ongoing process, that whatever stage other parents are experiencing is real and okay, and that each of us has our own way of affirming our children and ourselves.

Here are the thoughts of some parents who have marched in Pride Parades in other parts of the country.

"I THOUGHT THEY WERE CHEERING DR. SPOCK"

In 1972, a young man named Morton Manford was leading a gay rights protest demonstration in front of a New York Hilton Hotel when he was physically attacked by a gay-baiting union leader. City policemen stood calmly by as Manford was beaten and pushed down a stairwell.

The officers' indifference touched off a chain of events that would ultimately give birth to the Federation of Parents FLAG.

As chance would have it, the episode of brutality was televised on a local newscast and viewed by the young man's astonished and outraged parents, Jules and Jeanne Manford.

The Manfords had for some time known and accepted that "Morty" was gay. But they were turned into activists by that close-up vision of the officers' failure to intervene in the beating of their own son.

Jeanne fired off an angry letter to the New York Post complaining of the police inaction. Its publication brought a wave of responses from other parents, and led to Jeanne's appearance on talk shows in New York and Boston—the first of more than 50 such appearances, including the Donahue Show, that she ultimately was to make.

From these events, the Manfords sensed the need for a parents' group. But the final push to its formation resulted from Morty's suggestion that Jeanne march with him in New York's 1972 Pride Day parade. She agreed, on the condition that he make a sign for her to carry. "Parents of Gays, Unite in Support for our Children," it read.

The response was overwhelming. For several blocks, however, Jeanne thought the roars of approval were intended for Dr. Benjamin Spock, the famed baby doctor who happened to be marching with a group of Viet Nam veterans just behind the Manfords.

She soon realized otherwise. "The young people were hugging me, kissing me, screaming, asking if I would talk to their parents," she recalls. "So many wanted me to call their parents that I realized we just had to form a group."

Jeanne Manford is P-FLAG's "Founding Mother."

Under the pastie: a wounded heart

By Mitzi Henderson

The gay pride parades are a memory, but their inspiration carries us forward. These are occasions to celebrate our gay and lesbian loved ones—both our personal family and our broader P-FLAG family. That act challenges us all, as we see the diversity of the homosexual community.

Under the T-shirts with their slogans, the leather chaps, the cos-

these? Do they really need and want the love of their families?

The pastie on the bare breast can't cover the wounded heart. Think of the applause of the tough guys in leather, some with tears rolling down their cheeks. Think of their hastily grabbed cameras, recording the unthinkable—parents openly proclaiming love for their homosexual children. Think of the elderly gay men saluting us, the young lesbian couples whistling and shouting their appreciation.

Their responses speak volumes about how important family love and acceptance are to them. And that is our inspiration—the opportunity to heal hearts and mend

by Ann Davidson

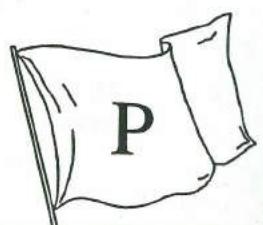
You are packed on Market Street ten deep
two hundred thousand, the papers said
on curbs, trees, bike racks, balconies
you go wild seeing the Parents' banner
cheer as Parents and Friends march by
what's it about, your applause that ripples for miles?
Sue takes my hand, be my mom today, she says
Gina dashes out, throws herself at me
a lanky man hands me a yellow rose
all I've done is love my son who loves Pedro.

You there holding your girl friend's hand
you there arm around your buddy
our eyes meet, I smile, blow a kiss
why do you cry?
Leaving the ranks, I run to you
hug fifty strangers.
You cling to me, your yearning palpable.

I know why we march and why you weep
it's for your mother in the closet,
your mom who says we love you but
don't bring your lover into our house
why must you flaunt it
don't hold hands in front of the neighbors
we can't tell Grandma or Uncle Jack
It's for your father who says no
son of mine can be queer, a goddamned fairy
For the Dad you can't be honest with
talk about work but not your beloved
For those who believe god
abhors your embrace.

Buttons on our chests declare
"we love our gay sons and lesbian daughters."
Seeing them you cry
Yet we cry too
how long it took
before we delighted seeing you
hold your loved one's hand
a long journey for us as well
to reach this day.

Reprinted from
The PFLAGer



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Under the T-shirts with their slogans, the leather chaps, the costumes, the nose rings and spiked hair are our children, or the children of our neighbors. Can we see the valuable individual in each of

these? Do they really need and want the love of their families?

The pastie on the bare breast can't cover the wounded heart. Think of the applause of the tough guys in leather, some with tears rolling down their cheeks. Think of their hastily grabbed cameras, recording the unthinkable—parents openly proclaiming love for their homosexual children. Think of the elderly gay men saluting us, the young lesbian couples whistling and shouting their appreciation.

Their responses speak volumes about how important family love and acceptance are to them. And that is our inspiration—the opportunity to heal hearts and mend broken relationships, to work for the day when support is no longer the exception to be cheered, but the normal, expected and accepted rule of family life.

*** YOU ARE CORDIALLY INVITED TO JOIN THE PARADE. SOME OF US WILL WALK, OTHERS WILL RIDE. TOGETHER WE WILL REPRESENT PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF LESBIANS AND GAYS. SIGN UP AT THE MAY MEETING, or call CAROLE at 580-6607 or DOLORES at 486-8411 (after 5 PM). ***

(Carole, who is helping organize P-FLAG Houston's participation, will not be able to march with us because she will be joining her children in the Gay Pride Parade in San Francisco. "I want to wear something that says lets everybody there know I'm from Houston," says Carole. We are grateful to Carole for her deep commitment to our chapter. She carries P-FLAG's "banner" every day, representing us in a variety of gay-related service projects.)

by Ann Davidson

You are packed on Market Street ten deep two hundred thousand, the papers said on curbs, trees, bike racks, balconies, you go wild seeing the Parents' banner cheer as Parents and Friends march by what's it about, your applause that ripples for miles? Sue takes my hand, be my mom today, she says Gina dashes out, throws herself at me a lanky man hands me a yellow rose all I've done is love my son who loves Pedro.

You there holding your girl friend's hand you there arm around your buddy our eyes meet, I smile, blow a kiss why do you cry?

Leaving the ranks, I run to you hug fifty strangers.

You cling to me, your yearning palpable.

I know why we march and why you weep it's for your mother in the closet, your mom who says we love you but don't bring your lover into our house why must you flaunt it don't hold hands in front of the neighbors we can't tell Grandma or Uncle Jack It's for your father who says no son of mine can be queer, a goddamned fairy For the Dad you can't be honest with talk about work but not your beloved For those who believe god abhors your embrace.

Buttons on our chests declare

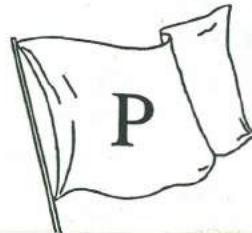
"we love our gay sons and lesbian daughters."

Seeing them you cry

Yet we cry too

how long it took

before we delighted seeing you hold your loved one's hand a long journey for us as well to reach this day.



Reprinted from
The PFLAGpole

DAUGHTER OF GAY FATHER OPENS HER HEART

The following letter was originally published in Dignity/Houston Newsletter.

To whom it may concern:

I loved it when my dad and I used to mow the grass together on the riding lawn mower. He would make it go and I would sit on his lap and steer, thinking that I was all grown up because I could drive. We used to go on camping trips too. We would pack and prepare for days so we could all drive to the lake and play and laugh for a few days. Dad and I listened to classical music together and he read me bedtime stories. He was my idol. I was his shadow. Nobody listened like him, hugged like him or laughed like him.

I hated him when I found out he was gay. The man I had always idolized wasn't perfect. I didn't understand how he could be my dad, or why it had to be him. I wanted it to all go away, but it didn't. He didn't tell me himself, but because of my own curiosity I just happened to ask the right questions. I was 15. That is a real traumatic time in a girl's life—or anyone else's for that matter. It was at a time when I was really starting to like boys, and I started running to them for security and comfort, no matter how they treated me. Even with all of the emotional torment I was putting myself through, I still did well in school and was successful in almost everything I touched. I wanted to prove to everyone that I was okay and could deal with anything, including my father's homosexuality.

But it wasn't really "ok" and I wasn't fine. Inside I was empty because I didn't know what to feel. I did not know if I was to hate, resent, love, or just forget. Anger filled my heart. I was so angry and didn't know where to vent it. My dad was gay. My dad would never marry. My dad would go to hell—because that is what we are taught.

At 16, he finally told me, in front of a priest, that he was homosexual, that he liked other men. I watched him cry. I didn't shed a tear. I should have

cried too. What was so terrible was that I felt his pain and fear. I still feel it; we are like that with each other. From that point on I went downhill. I knew that I wasn't coping. I tried to block it out, and run away from the pain and anger. My alcohol intake became intolerable. I drank alone and all of the time. I became infatuated with the idea of death and dreamed of living in darkness where there was no love, no hate, and no pain. I was, from the inside out, killing myself.

I wasn't my dad's fault that he couldn't change. All he could do was watch me deteriorate. He did not know how to save me. I moved away to save myself. I have since learned that I still love him and always have. I learned to distinguish between my dad and the man, as well as discover that in his way he is bringing out his own happiness and love. I know now that being homosexual isn't necessarily having sexual feelings for another person. It is having true emotions for another human being, the same as a heterosexual.

I know what it is like to go through finding out about a parent's homosexuality. I know what goes through one's mind and heart. I just want others to realize they are not alone. Even now as I write this article, I am crying, because I remember the pain. The only advice I can give is to open your heart and your mind. There are a lot of people in the world who are different, by race, religion, language, weight, and on and on, but they all have hearts, and brains and they are all capable of love and hate. It is only the decision to love or to hate that will make the difference, not just for one but for everyone.

—Love, Somebody's Daughter

QUOTABLE QUOTE

"Although it is important for Parents FLAG chapters to help families, friends, and gay people, it is essential for our Federation to strike at the root cause of the problem and fight homophobia on a national scale."

Paulette Goodman
Federation President



HOMOPHOBIA, HIV-AIDS AND 21.06

by Bob Hergenroeder

AIDS, a fatal disease, most often transmitted sexually, and predominantly affecting gay and bisexual men, continues to plague and cripple our society and our world.

Section 21.06 of the Texas Penal Code criminalizes sexual behavior between persons of the same sex. More popularly named the "sodomy law", section 21.06 is misperceived as silently inconsequential to our Texan life. Quite clearly, it is

educators are accused of promoting (illegal and immoral) homosexual lifestyles as well as sexual promiscuity among teenagers. Public "heroes" with HIV must declare themselves heterosexual and never tainted by homosexual relations in order to be credible. Better yet, if you can be declared an "innocent victim", you are easily and fully eligible for funding, compassion, and congressional ears.

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Section 21.06 of the Texas Penal Code criminalizes sexual behavior between persons of the same sex. More popularly named the "sodomy law", section 21.06 is misperceived as silently inconsequential to our Texan life. Quite clearly, it is being used to prevent state funds from being allocated as needed to confront AIDS and it is used to support discrimination against gay and lesbian persons.

Homophobia, defined as the irrational fear of homosexuality, reaches out from our souls and bodies to hate, to judge, to indict, to condemn, to discriminate against, and to bash and murder gay and lesbian persons.

Together, AIDS and 21.06 and homophobia form a lethal and violent force against any and all attempts towards a compassionate society. Gay men are seen as deserving of AIDS and responsible for its current scope. There is congressional suspicion that money allocated to PWA service providers is being used to further the gay and lesbian political agenda. AIDS

educators are accused of promoting (illegal and immoral) homosexual lifestyles as well as sexual promiscuity among teenagers. Public "heroes" with HIV must declare themselves heterosexual and never tainted by homosexual relations in order to be credible. Better yet, if you can be declared an "innocent victim", you are easily and fully eligible for funding, compassion, and congressional ears.

AIDS requires a lot more money and a greater national will to eradicate it. Both require a campaign against bigotry, homophobia, and the discriminating effects of Section 21.06.

Section 21.06 must be removed from the Texas Penal Code. With Ann Richards as governor, removal is likely. Such will require the defeat and/or silencing of many religious fundamentalists throughout Texas, people who will apply significant pressure upon their congressional representatives.

Homophobia, like sexism and racism, must be treated and cured as a social disease. Such will require large scale vacating of sexual orientation closets in order to grant vast visibility to a much misunderstood population.

reprinted from Dignity/Houston Newsletter



P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

Telephone (713) 867-9020

May 1992

MEETING JUNE 7

Mary Griffith, president of a P-FLAG chapter in California, has become a national leader for the prevention of gay and lesbian suicide (see p. 4). She helped launch national P-FLAG's project, "Respect All Youth," which addresses this grievous problem.

Mary comes to Houston June 5-6, and you're invited to meet her at a P-FLAG party as well as at a fundraiser for the Houston Institute for the Protection of Youth (HIPY), and MAYBE (we're keeping our fingers crossed) on a local TV program.

At our meeting we'll discuss Mary's visit and watch a video of one of her national appearances (past programs have included ABC's 20/20, Joan Rivers, and Sally Jesse Raphael).

Also, we'd like to hear mini-reports on books that you have found helpful. Not a formal book review--just a candid reaction.

Small group discussions--the heart of our P-FLAG meetings--will follow.

NOTE: Our two-part program on religion has been delayed until July and August.

P-FLAG ANNOUNCES
NEW PHONE NUMBER,
VOICE MAIL SYSTEM
867-9020

CALENDAR
Jun 5 P-FLAG Pot Luck
Dinner for Mary

P-FLAG PRESENTS
COMING OUT WORKSHOP
Sat., June 20
2 PM--4 PM
Grace Lutheran Church
2515 Waugh

NATIONAL SPEAKER COMES
TO HOUSTON,
VISITS WITH P-FLAG

In early May, Mary Griffith and members of her P-FLAG chapter in Diablo Valley, CA, appeared on ABC's 20/20 to talk about the prevention of youth suicide (see p. 4).

In early June, Mary comes to Houston, and P-FLAG welcomes her with a pot luck dinner. All P-FLAG members are invited to participate. We'll gather on Fri., June 5, at 7 PM. PLEASE call 440-0353 to say what dish you'll bring and to get directions to the party.

On Sat., June 6, Mary will appear at a fundraiser for the Houston Institute for the Protection of Youth (formerly the Lewis-Scott Youth Center). The event is at the Hiram Butler Gallery at 4520 Blossom, from 6 PM-8 PM, on Sat., June 6. Donations of \$10 or more are requested.

You can meet Mary, chat with Houston P-FLAGers, enjoy a jazz band and hors d'oeuvres, and help raise money for a valuable new resource for the community.

The Institute at 811 Westheimer serves "disenfranchised youth, filling in the gaps of existing services in the community," says Tracy

PRIDE PARADE

P-FLAG Houston joins the annual Lesbian/Gay Pride Parade on Sun., June 28, to show our love and support for our children.

TO PARENTS and FAMILIES:

You're invited to join in, IF you want to. You can march, cheer from the sidelines, be silently supportive--or think that those of us who march must be totally crazy.

This is NOT a challenge, but an opportunity, IF you want to participate. Our goal: to proclaim, "We stand by our children. They are okay, and we are too."

TO LESBIANS AND GAYS:

SOS! Action Alert! Send us your parents and families, your friends' parents and families, whether they have ever been to a P-FLAG meeting or not. We firmly believe that our P-FLAG family extends past the people who attend our monthly meetings to include everyone who reads our newsletters, calls us with questions or answers, or supports our work in any way. Tell them to look for the P-FLAG banner.

TO EVERYBODY:

Help spread the word. Tell anyone interested in joining us to meet on Sun., June 28, at 4PM (parade starts at 5PM) at the corner of Westheimer and Woodhead (school parking lot). Look for P-FLAG's

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NEW PHONE NUMBER,
VOICE MAIL SYSTEM
867-9020**

CALENDAR

Jun 5	P-FLAG Pot Luck Dinner for Mary Griffith; 7 PM (440-0353)
Jun 6	HIPY Opening Party, with Mary Griffith, (942-9884)
Jun 7	P-FLAG Meeting 2 PM, IntraCare, 7601 Fannin
Jun 18	P-FLAG Board
Jun 20	P-FLAG hosts Coming Out workshop
Jun 28	Pride Parade
July 12	P-FLAG Meeting
Aug. 2	P-FLAG Meeting
Sept. 5-7	P-FLAG National Convention, Seattle

**Sat., June 20
2 PM--4 PM
Grace Lutheran Church
2515 Waugh**

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For more information, call 942-9884. If you'd like to volunteer at the center (at least one P-FLAGer is already doing so) or donate needed supplies, call the same number.

P-FLAG Houston joins the annual Lesbian/Gay Pride Parade on Sun., June 28, to show our love and support for our children.

TO PARENTS and FAMILIES:

You're invited to join in, IF you want to. You can march, cheer from the sidelines, be silently supportive--or think that those of us who march must be totally crazy.

This is NOT a challenge, but an opportunity, IF you want to participate. Our goal: to proclaim, "We stand by our children. They are okay, and we are too."

TO LESBIANS AND GAYS:

SOS! Action Alert! Send us your parents and families, your friends' parents and families, whether they have ever been to a P-FLAG meeting or not. We firmly believe that our P-FLAG family extends past the people who attend our monthly meetings to include everyone who reads our newsletters, calls us with questions or answers, or supports our work in any way. Tell them to look for the P-FLAG banner.

TO EVERYBODY:

Help spread the word. Tell anyone interested in joining us to meet on Sun., June 28, at 4PM (parade starts at 5PM) at the corner of Westheimer and Woodhead (school parking lot). Look for P-FLAG's banner.

** P-FLAG will also have a booth at the rally after the parade. We'll pass out hugs, information, and support. Time of rally: approx. 7:30PM Place: 1022 Westheimer

If you want to help at the booth OR march, PLEASE call Carole at 492-6395, Dolores at 486-8411, or P-FLAG's voice mail box (867-9020).

P-FLAG: KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

RELIGION'S RESPONSE

TO GAYS AND LESBIANS

Each month we hear from a different faith. This month, we asked The Reverend Doctor Don Sinclair, pastor of Bering Memorial United Methodist Church, to write an overview of recent developments in the Methodist Church.

The General Conference of The United Methodist Church of 1988 asked that a study committee report in 1992 and recommend a policy on homosexuality. That committee voted 17-4 to recommend removing the "incompatible" phrase from our Discipline because so much data is debatable, we have no grounds for making such judgments. [editor's note: The Methodist church's official stance is that homosexual practice is "incompatible with the Christian faith."]

The 1992 conference approved five of the six parts of the Study Committee's report, but two-thirds of the 998 delegates rejected changing the wording that was inserted in 1972. This was a not-too-surprising disappointment to Affirmation, the gay/lesbian organization of United Methodists, and The Reconciling Congregation Program, a program of inclusiveness toward gay/lesbian persons. [Bering Methodist is the only Reconciling Congregation in Texas Methodism.]

During the debate in mid-afternoon May 11, 1992, delegates asked to allow a representative of Affirmation to speak. In response to the refusal, several Affirmation members brought a long "THE STONES WILL CRY OUT" banner to the front. When held up a few feet, it blocked the view of the presiding Bishop. This also signaled gay/lesbian persons and their friends to rumble their feet on aluminum bleachers. After a few moments the banner was lowered again, and the conference debate went on. This way Affirmation did not totally disrupt the proceedings, but the "stones" were heard to say

Bishop Lawson said, "You are right. I did tell them to leave, but they didn't." He continued with the meeting.

About 4:154 PM Bishop Lawson declared a recess announcing that a special event would follow in which several groups from several nations would be honored and declared to be independent Central Conferences. Affirmation members moved their banner high into one side of the bleachers until the vote was later made to continue calling them "incompatible with the Christian Faith." At this point Affirmation sang, "We Shall Overcome." The new presiding Bishop and the conference delegates and guests sat quietly until the third stanza, "We shall live in peace," was completed. The Bishop thanked the singers, and began other business.

It was sad, but I thanked God for those faithful and courageous gay/lesbian persons. I was so proud of them, and I knew once again that of all the people in that huge hall, they were the finest ones present. I hoped their parents know and believe how great they really are. The congregation I serve as Pastor is a mixed group of the finest, most creative, caring and "compatible" Christians I have ever known. I do not need to know a better people than the gay/lesbian members of Bering Memorial Church. I pray the religious bodies soon cease to fear and hate them and will begin to receive their greatness as God's gift to us all. One day religion will say "yes" to its finest. Until then, we shall work to overcome.

(P-FLAG Houston is proud to have Don Sinclair and his wife Katherine as members of our chapter.)

VOICE OF A SIBLING

by Susan

I attended my first P-FLAG meeting as a sibling last month. I'm not sure why I hadn't been before. I desperately wanted to go last

sister and I can't do things together with our husbands.

"I'm a young adult, a woman of the nineties," I thought. "I can deal with this gay stuff. I know plenty of people who are gay or who know gay people, so why should I go to a support group. My sister is still my sister, and I still love and accept her."

Besides, I wasn't sure if I really wanted to be in a room of people all talking about being gay and dealing with it in their families and in society.

How wrong I was. I did need to go. Participating in a meeting made me love my sister even more, if that is possible.

The meeting was nothing like I thought it would be. I'm not sure what I expected, but my main reaction was, "It wasn't long enough. We were just starting to get into some good discussions."

We talked and cried, but also laughed as we shared. I was glad to meet well-adjusted gay people who have good jobs and enjoy being gay. Before the meeting, I had seen "the gay issue" only from my sister's point of view and from what I was able to put together on my own.

If there are other siblings who have thought about going to a P-FLAG meeting but haven't had the time or desire, please try to go at least once. It will probably help you and others. I personally would like to meet other siblings and see what their "journey" has been like.

URGENT REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS FAMILY AIDS PROJECT

P-FLAG Federation is launching a national telephone network to help families and caregivers across the country. Callers will be referred to local volunteers who provide support and make referrals to existing resources.

Volunteers are desperately needed to serve as regional

phrase from our Discipline because so much data is debatable, we have no grounds for making such judgments. [editor's note: The Methodist church's official stance is that homosexual practice is "incompatible with the Christian faith."]

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The courtesy of Bishop Lawson and Affirmation toward each other made this a beautiful demonstration of the pain, anger, and love of the Church our gay/lesbian members feel even while being rejected as "incompatible." Bishop Lawson courteously asked Affirmation to leave, but they did not. He continued business, and when an angry woman delegate said, "I thought you told those people to leave,"

"We Shall Overcome." The new presiding Bishop and the conference delegates and guests sat quietly until the third stanza, "We shall live in peace," was completed. The Bishop thanked the singers, and began other business.

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by Susan

I attended my first P-FLAG meeting as a sibling last month. I'm not sure why I hadn't been before. I desperately wanted to go last year when I found out that my sister is a lesbian, but there was not an active chapter where I was in college.

I guess I learned to deal with "the gay issue" on my own. I didn't have the same guilt feelings that my parents did, fearing that it came from my side of the family or that maybe it was something I had done wrong in her upbringing. She is just my sister, period.

The biggest issue that I have dealt with is that I will never be an aunt, and that my

to go. Participating in a meeting made me love my sister even more, if that is possible.

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We talked and cried, but also laughed as we shared. I was glad to meet well-adjusted gay people who have good jobs and enjoy being gay. Before the meeting, I had seen "the gay issue" only from my sister's point of view and from what I was able to put together on my own.

If there are other siblings who have thought about going to a P-FLAG meeting but haven't had the time or desire, please try to go at least once. It will probably help you and others. I personally would like to meet other siblings and see what their "journey" has been like.

URGENT REQUEST FOR VOLUNTEERS

FAMILY AIDS PROJECT

P-FLAG Federation is launching a national telephone network to help families and caregivers across the country. Callers will be referred to local volunteers who provide support and make referrals to existing resources.

Volunteers are desperately needed to serve as regional organizers AND to staff the local helpline.

Ideally, they will be parents or family members who have experienced the trauma of HIV/AIDS through the entire caregiving cycle.

If you are able to serve, please contact Ernie P. [redacted], Family AIDS director, at 202-638-4200. For an information packet, call Gail at 440-0353.

Please share this request with anyone who might be able to help.

The following is excerpted from a piece in *Philadelphia Gay News*, which was reprinted in *The Philadelphia Parents-LAG newsletter*.

I came out to my mother around this time last year. To prepare myself, I rehearsed my reactions to every reaction I thought she might have.

Sitting over coffee at the kitchen table one beautiful Saturday morning, I finally found the courage to tell her that I'm gay. She surprised me with a reaction for which I had no prepared response. "Oh, I've known that for years," she said nonchalantly....

I didn't know what to do. If she had started screaming at me, accusing me of being a disgrace to the family, of robbing her of grandchildren in her old age, or if she had started crying and telling me that she'd never be able to face her friends or that she would find the best electro-shock therapist in the country to help me, I could have handled it.

She told me, "You're my son. I love you. What difference does it make?"

I learned at the Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays workshop, "Coming Out to Your Parents," last Sunday that my mother might not have been telling the

whole story. Her ability to squirm her way out of talking about my relationships with the men in my life has always bothered me. The workshop taught me that I must take the initiative to help her work through her problems with my sexuality - and apparently she does harbor some....

The centerpiece of the workshop was the panel of eight parents, each of whom told his or her coming out story. Yes, our parents do have coming out stories. Their stories include shock at finding out that a child is homosexual. They include denial of feelings, denial that the child is truly gay (one mother thought her son couldn't possibly be gay because he still drank milk with his meals ...)

These parents expressed feelings of guilt, guilt that they somehow failed to provide the proper role models, guilt that they failed to prevent a child from going through a great deal of pain. But each of these wonderful, loving parents eventually reached out to the child and began expressing feelings, feelings sometimes of anger and hurt as well as feelings of love. Feelings which stirred productive dialogue between parents and child, if both parties were willing to work through the problem.

One woman, whom I'll call Gail, told the story of her lesbian daughter Vicki went away to college in a distant city and drew further and further away from her relationship with Gail. By the time Vicki graduated college, there was a huge gap between mother and daughter.

Gail thought that Vicki might be a lesbian. She was scared to find out and hurt that her daughter didn't trust her enough to tell her. Her need to know finally overcame her fear

Believe it or not, they were shopping when 'the question' came up. ... Gail asked Vicki about the charm on her necklace ...

And then her mother said the words that began the process of restoration and renewal of their relationship, "Is it a lesbian symbol?" ...

Today Gail and Vicki have a good relationship. Gail still has difficult times, and she has concerns about the future, both for Vicki as well as herself. We may not always realize that parents of gays and lesbians can be concerned about losing their jobs and social standings for coming out about their children, just as we are concerned about coming out ourselves.

Gail and Vicki continue to work things through together, however, and Vicki comes home more often. Her lover is always welcome in her parents' home.

I wish I had room to tell you all the stories in that room that day, ...

Our enemies, homophobic activists for intolerance, often accuse us of being anti-family. What I saw at this family workshop dispelled that notion. These people come out because they care, both parents and children. They care for and love each other.

The most frequent reason that children gave for coming out to parents was that

they loved them and wanted to share their lives with them. If they were reluctant to come out to their parents, then it was because they didn't want to hurt them or lose their love. Many of these parents have come to realize that, not only did they not lose a son or daughter, they gained a sometimes huge extended family. Most importantly, these people have been courageous enough not to allow "polite society" to dictate what their families should be. □

My Son Saved Me! A Letter from a Mother (received by the pastor of the Tampa Metropolitan Community Church):

Two years ago any letter you received from me would have been one of hatred and condemnation. My son was "properly" put out of our house when he told us he was gay. Our pastor advised us in the methods of "tough love", cutting off our love to Bob until he changed his ways and stopped his sinful behavior. We did not see our son for three years, when we were informed that he was in the hospital dying from AIDS.

Bob did not die and my pastor told me that God was giving me a second chance to save my son's soul from the fires of hell. I was to go to him, stay with him and save his soul by bringing him to Christ! I went with Bible in hand and a missionary determination.

I moved in with my son and stayed with

I was with him when he went through a period of chills. I had brought my Bible but the next-door neighbor brought him an afghan to wrap around him.

I was with him when one of his friends wasn't doing well and having trouble keeping food in his system. I offered to read to his friend from the Bible, but Bob instead cooked him a special dinner that he ate and was able to keep in his system long enough to get nourishment.

I was with him when he went to get medical help. We had with "tough love" taken our son off our insurance policy. I sat in the hospital waiting room with my Bible in my hands watching all the "foster parents" struggle to help another abandoned child.

I was with him when he went to church. I took my Bible of course and prayed that words would be uttered which would get my son back on the right path. Instead my son was hugged and kissed and loved.

I FINALLY REALIZED THAT MY HANDS HAD BEEN SO BUSY HOLDING ON TO MY

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Bob did not die and my pastor told me that God was giving me a second chance to save my son's soul from the fires of hell. I was to go to him, stay with him and save his soul by bringing him to Christ! I went with Bible in hand and a missionary determination.

I moved in with my son and stayed with my son for the next eight months, determined to be with him wherever he went that I might change his ways and guide him toward the right path before he died.

I was with him when he picked up food. I found I had brought my Bible with me, but nothing for the pantry.

I was with him for his blood transfusions. I found I had brought my Bible, but Bob's friend read to him a story he liked since Bob's eyes couldn't see small print.

I was with him when he went through a period of chills. I had brought my Bible but the next-door neighbor brought him an afghan to wrap around him.

I was with him when one of his friends wasn't doing well and having trouble keeping food in his system. I offered to read to his friend from the Bible, but Bob instead cooked him a special dinner that he ate and was able to keep in his system long enough to get nourishment.

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I FINALLY REALIZED THAT MY HANDS HAD BEEN SO BUSY HOLDING ON TO MY BIBLE THAT I HAD NOT — IN THE SIX MONTHS THAT I HAD BEEN LIVING WITH MY SON — EVER ONCE TOUCHED HIM.

I hugged my son that day for the first time in 3-1/2 years. The God my son knew so well was not the God I had heard so much about or the God I was striving so hard to introduce Bob to.

I came that day, many months ago, to save my son; and praise God and your community! MY SON SAVED ME!

I pray you will not have to deal with many more parents such as the one I used to be, and if I meet any, I now have a lot of things to share with them.

GOD LOVE YOU ALL! Margaret.

**Mary Griffith, parent of a gay suicide victim, visits Houston
June 5-6 (see page 1).**

One of P-FLAG's most courageous members, Mary Griffith has turned a personal tragedy into a gift of public awareness and education. On August 27, 1983, Mary and Robert Griffith's third child, Robert, Jr., committed suicide in despair at being homosexual in a homophobic world. Mrs. Griffith publically acknowledges that in part it was her own fundamentalist bigotry that provoked her son's suicide, and speaks frequently before religious, civic, educational and other forums to educate others about homosexuality and to warn about the consequences of ignorance, hatred, bigotry, and prejudice for gays and lesbians and those who love them. As she said in a special report for the San Francisco Examiner (June 18, 1989), "I firmly believe -- though I did not back then -- that my son Bobby's suicide is the end result of homophobia and ignorance within most Protestant and Catholic churches, and consequently within society, our public schools, our own family. . . . We never thought of a gay person as an equal, lovable and valuable part of God's creation. What a travesty of God's unconditional love." In addition to her work with P-FLAG, Mrs. Griffith is a strong supporter of "PROJECT 10," a participant in family-oriented education programs about homosexuality, and a volunteer for BANGLE, the Bay Area Network for Gay and Lesbian Educators.

Griffith: "Before you say 'amen'"

Mary A. Griffith belonged to a mainstream church that took a traditional hard line toward homosexuality.

"When the clergy condemned homosexual persons to eternal damnation, I joined the congregation in saying 'amen,'" she recalls. "When the clergy said such persons were sick and perverted, I again said 'amen.'"

So when her own son, Bobby, said he was gay, she told him to pray to "cure" himself. In his diary, Bobby wrote: "I guess I'm no good to anyone . . . not even God. Life is so cruel, and unfair. Sometimes I feel like disappearing from the face of the earth."

At the age of 20, Bobby did just that, by throwing himself from a freeway overpass and into the path of an 18-wheel truck.

"Bobby was kind and gentle, with a fun-loving spirit. It was not God's will that he should die in that way," Mary Griffith says. "His



death was the direct result of my own ignorance and fear of the word 'gay.'"

"We want to let gay and lesbian young people know that someone in society cares about them. Bobby Griffith didn't live long enough to learn that."

"He was never able to find the non-judgmental compassion for which he was desperately looking."

Mary Griffith says the principal information then available to her and her son came from church pronouncements that homosexuality was a sin and a perversion.

"There were many times I wanted to reach out and hold Bobby and tell him, 'You're just fine the way you are,'" Mary remembers. "But I was told at church that Satan works in devious ways, and that urges like that were the work of Satan."

Now, she says, "I let reality shape my beliefs, instead of the other way around."

She now describes anti-gay religious teachings as "dehumanizing slander against our fellow human beings." And she has some advice for other parents:

"Before you echo 'amen' in your home or place of worship, as I did, think and remember: a vulnerable child may be listening."

It is with great pleasure that I join in the announcing of Parents FLAG's suicide prevention project for lesbian and gay youth. For me, there is special satisfaction in knowing that the funds for this project are provided by the Episcopal church.

And it is with deep pain that I admit to you I was an unwitting accomplice in my own son's death by suicide. In the past, I was one of those people who fly the flag of so-called traditional values. The result was that I sacrificed my own son.

As the Youth Suicide Report of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services correctly states, our society wrongfully stigmatizes its gay and lesbian young people.

My son Bobby--a kind and gentle young man with a fun-loving spirit--died in part because I once believed that homosexual persons are sick and perverted. I did not know then, as I do now, that Bobby did not have any more choice regarding his sexual orientation than did my other son and two daughters, all of whom are heterosexual. I did not know then, as I do now, that Bobby's homosexuality was, for him, natural and healthy.

More importantly, Bobby did not know these things either. There were no adults in his life, no school, church, or community

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More importantly, Bobby did not know these things either. There were no adults in his life, no school, church, or community programs that could have corrected what he was told by me at home and by others at our church. He prayed to God to be "cured" of his homosexual feelings. When that did not happen--as I now know it could not--he killed himself. After his death, we found his diary, in which he had written that, because of his homosexuality, "I guess I'm no good to any one, not even God."

I now know how wrong I was in believing as I did about homosexuality. But I also know how easy it is for a parent in our society to accept incorrect conventional views on this subject. That is why I am now active in Parents FLAG; because I want to educate other parents and adults who work with youth so that they will not make the same tragic mistake I did.

by Mary Griffith

And that is why I am here today--because I have learned in the most painful way possible that ignorance, hatred, bigotry, and prejudice lead to violence and tragedy for gays and lesbians and their families. And I have learned that love, honesty, support, and acceptance of the diversity of God's creation are the values that lead to health, wholeness, and self-esteem for our children.



P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

Telephone (713) 867-9020

July 1992

MEETING JULY 12

The first of our two-part program on religion will be led by Carolyn Mobley, assistant pastor at Metropolitan Community Church of The Resurrection (MCCR). Carolyn will be joined by several members of the MCCR congregation.

In August, we plan a panel representing a variety of faiths.

*** Our special guest will be Nancy Rodriguez, mother of Paul Broussard, murdered in Houston last summer as the victim of a gay hate crime. Nancy and her daughter and son, ages 20 and 27, are coming to Houston to participate in "Take Back the Streets II," a march and rally commemorating Paul. (See related story.)

After the meeting, we'll honor Nancy and her children at a P-FLAG gathering.

Place: Felix Mexican Rest.
904 Westheimer

Time: immediately after the meeting, approximately 5 PM (If you can't come to the meeting, join us at the restaurant.)

RSVP: VERY VERY helpful to us in making final arrangements.

Leave a message in P-FLAG's voice mail box: 867-9020

CALENDAR

July 11 Rally to commemorate Paul Broussard.

MOTHER ADVOCATES DEALING WITH FEELINGS ABOUT GAY CHILDREN FOR PERSONAL HEALTH

by Janelle, a P-FLAG mom

When someone helps you carry your heavy load, it doesn't seem so heavy.

That's what P-FLAG and the friends I've met here have done for me. And I'm so appreciative.

I have a good friend who didn't feel that she had anyone to help her carry her heavy load when she found out about eight years ago that her daughter is a lesbian. She developed breast cancer later, and she sincerely believes that the stress and her negative thoughts and feelings caused her immune system to break down and allow the cancerous cells that are in all of us all of the time to take hold and start spreading. My friend is fine now, and she attributes her good health to, among many other things, a wonderful support group. The love, caring and trust they share have enabled her to share her story and beliefs.

Valid scientific research now shows statistically how much the mind can influence the body. It affects our nervous systems, our hormones, our immune defenses. Evidence suggests that the systems respond to optimism, caring, intimacy, hope, and other positive cognitions.

These traits are found at P-FLAG. When I came to my

think that our P-FLAG support group will help me prevent breast cancer (I'm in the high-risk group). I do know that I go home after each meeting feeling so "energized," and I'm sure that's from all those hugs!!!!

Thank you, P-FLAG!!

MARCH AND RALLY TO COMMEMORATE PAUL BROUSSARD

Sat., July 11
8:30 PM

P-FLAGers are invited to join in a march and rally commemorating Paul Broussard, fatal victim of a gay hate crime, on July 4, 1991.

"Take Back the Streets II" follows last year's march protesting HPD's handling of the case.

This year's event focuses on calling to the public's attention that hate crimes are not a lesbian/gay issue but a human issue.

Speakers at the rally include State Representative Debra Danburg, Precinct One Constable Jack Abercia, and Nancy Rodriguez, mother of Paul Broussard.

Mayor Bob Lanier, who is very supportive of the gay community, is also expected to speak.

Community groups, especially those who are gay-sensitive and supportive, are being urged to support this event. The march starts at the corner of Montrose and West Drew, proceeding to

led by Carolyn Mobley, assistant pastor at Metropolitan Community Church of The Resurrection (MCCR). Carolyn will be joined by several members of the MCCR congregation.

In August, we plan a panel representing a variety of faiths.

*** Our special guest will be Nancy Rodriguez, mother of Paul Broussard, murdered in Houston last summer as the victim of a gay hate crime. Nancy and her daughter and son, ages 20 and 27, are coming to Houston to participate in "Take Back the Streets II," a march and rally commemorating Paul. (See related story.)

After the meeting, we'll honor Nancy and her children at a P-FLAG gathering.

Place: Felix Mexican Rest.

904 Westheimer

Time: immediately after the meeting, approximately 5 PM (If you can't come to the meeting, join us at the restaurant.)

RSVP: VERY VERY helpful to us in making final arrangements.

Leave a message in P-FLAG's voice mail box: 867-9020

CALENDAR

July 11	Rally to commemorate Paul Broussard. 8:30 PM, Montrose and West Drew
July 12	P-FLAG Meeting 2 PM, IntraCare Hospital, 7601 Fannin
July 12	P-FLAG dinner at Felix's honoring family of Paul Broussard 5 PM (approx.)
July 16	P-FLAG Board meeting
Aug. 2	P-FLAG Meeting
Sept. 5-7	P-FLAG National Conven., Seattle

FOR PERSONAL HEALTH

by Janelle, a P-FLAG mom

When someone helps you carry your heavy load, it doesn't seem so heavy.

That's what P-FLAG and the friends I've met here have done for me. And I'm so appreciative.

I have a good friend who didn't feel that she had anyone to help her carry her heavy load when she found out about eight years ago that her daughter is a lesbian. She developed breast cancer later, and she sincerely believes that the stress and her negative thoughts and feelings caused her immune system to break down and allow the cancerous cells that are in all of us all of the time to take hold and start spreading. My friend is fine now, and she attributes her good health to, among many other things, a wonderful support group. The love, caring and trust they share have enabled her to share her story and beliefs.

Valid scientific research now shows statistically how much the mind can influence the body. It affects our nervous systems, our hormones, our immune defenses. Evidence suggests that the systems respond to optimism, caring, intimacy, hope, and other positive cognitions.

These traits are found at P-FLAG. When I came to my first meeting a few months after our daughter had told us that she is a lesbian, I felt like I was carrying a very heavy load. I hurt. At the end of that meeting, another mother came to me, gave me a hug, and said, "I'm sorry you hurt. I know how you feel." And I knew immediately that she did know how I felt and that she was sincerely sorry that I hurt. I had never seen her before, but she immediately became a very special friend.

I'll never know for sure, of course, but sometimes I

group will help me prevent breast cancer (I'm in the high-risk group). I do know that I go home after each meeting feeling so "energized," and I'm sure that's from all those hugs!!!!

Thank you, P-FLAG!!

MARCH AND RALLY

TO COMMEMORATE PAUL BROUSSARD

Sat., July 11
8:30 PM

P-FLAGers are invited to join in a march and rally commemorating Paul Broussard, fatal victim of a gay hate crime, on July 4, 1991.

"Take Back the Streets II" follows last year's march protesting HPD's handling of the case.

This year's event focuses on calling to the public's attention that hate crimes are not a lesbian/gay issue but a human issue.

Speakers at the rally include State Representative Debra Danburg, Precinct One Constable Jack Abercia, and Nancy Rodriguez, mother of Paul Broussard.

Mayor Bob Lanier, who is very supportive of the gay community, is also expected to speak.

Community groups, especially those who are gay-sensitive and supportive, are being urged to support this event. The march starts at the corner of Montrose and West Drew, proceeding to Montrose and Westheimer.

The event is organized by Take Back the Streets II, an affinity group of Queer Nation. It is "in remembrance of Paul Broussard and all those who have faced the violence of those acting out of hate," says a group spokesperson. "We want to make people aware of the seriousness of hate crimes and their effect on the community."

If you want to join other P-FLAGers in this march, call 867-9020 and leave a message.

2

DISCRIMINATION OF BOY SCOUTS OF AMERICA
Addressed by P-FLAG

STATEMENT OF THOMAS H. SAUERMAN
Former Boy Scout
Executive Director, Parents & Friends of Lesbians & Gays

Feb. 21, 1992

By harassing and excluding gay teenagers, Boy Scouts of America perpetuates hatred and bigotry and contributes to the appalling rate of suicide of our children. Involvement in organized youth activities can serve to prevent self-destructive behaviors, and I vehemently reject the notion that our gay children deserve less support and affirmation than non-gay children.

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays' purpose is to keep families in loving relationships, and the well-being of gay, lesbians, and bisexual teenagers is the primary concern of our Respect All Youth projects. (editor's note: This is the project that Mary Griffith helped launch.)

I denounce the discriminatory policies of Boy Scouts of America. I encourage our members who are or have been active in Scouting to work in their communities to educate Scout leaders and change the archaic standards for participation. I further encourage all of our members and all persons of good will to support only organizations which have written policies prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.

RESOLUTION OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

April 26, 1992

WHEREAS the Boy Scouts of America (BSA) has a written policy requiring the complete exclusion of all gay, lesbian, or bisexual youth or adults from all Scouting programs and has publicly described gays as "immoral," "bad role models," and "counter to traditional values," and

WHEREAS this policy causes alienation and fear among gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth, putting them at high risk for substance abuse, homelessness, depression and suicide, with resulting devastation to their families, and

WHEREAS the negative stereotypes and attitudes engendered by this policy are detrimental to all youth and society as a whole, and

WHEREAS the injury caused by this discrimination and these attitudes violates the traditional Boy Scout values of honesty, friendliness, kindness, and fair play; therefore

BE IT RESOLVED that the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (Parents FLAG), an organization dedicated to the support of families, deplores the Boy Scouts of America's publicly stated policy excluding all gay, lesbian, and bisexual youth, leaders, and volunteers from its programs and services. We call upon BSA to change its policy and welcome our children and other family members into its ranks and to celebrate the diversity of the human family.

Parents FLAG encourages all of its members who are or have been members of BSA to write to the local, regional, and national offices of the Boy Scouts of America, requesting that BSA eliminate its discriminatory policy. We further encourage Parents FLAG members to withhold contributions to BSA until such time as it changes its position, and to contribute only to youth organizations which have a written policy prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation, and



P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

Telephone (713) 867-9020

July 1992

MEETING JULY 12

The first of our two-part program on religion will be led by Carolyn Mobley, assistant pastor at Metropolitan Community Church of The Resurrection (MCCR). Carolyn will be joined by several members of the MCCR congregation.

In August, we plan a panel representing a variety of faiths.

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CALENDAR

July 11 Rally to commemorate Paul Broussard.

MOTHER ADVOCATES DEALING WITH FEELINGS ABOUT GAY CHILDREN FOR PERSONAL HEALTH

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In April, Randalls Food Markets raised the ire of gay and lesbian-supportive Houstonians when the grocery chain removed the Houston Press from its stores, reportedly because it contained "gay personal ads," which Randalls management found offensive. Randall Onstead, chief operating officer, was quoted as saying that someday he would "have to stand before God."

P-FLAGers Gail Rickey and Jane Lobingier wrote letters to Onstead. Portions of Gail's letter follow. In response, Onstead called Gail, discussing his position in a 15 minute conversation. Within that conversation, he firmly stated that his reasons for removing the paper had nothing to do with homosexuality. Onstead's answer to Jane follows, along with her answer.

Dear Mr. Onstead,

I am writing to you as a Christian and as a parent. Obviously, you are a man of integrity, and I respect that very much. I'd like to ask you to open your mind and consider a point of view different from your own.

Two years ago, I had a view of homosexuality that was possibly similar to yours. That was before my husband and I learned that our precious daughter, now in her mid 20s, is homosexual. Since then, we've had a crash course in the subject, changing our minds and our hearts about what we thought we knew.

We learned that one out of every ten persons is homosexual, not just in our society, but throughout the world, and that one out of every FOUR families has a homosexual member. For us, the most significant fact is that our daughter did not choose to be homosexual. While experts still debate and research, I have no doubt that our daughter was born homosexual. I truly believe that God created her as she is, and for me to call that ugly would be a great sin, one that I would have to stand before God and answer for.

As the parents of a gay child, my husband and I went through all of the classic stages: shock, denial (trying to change or "fix" her), anger ("Why did she do this to us?"), grief ("She's not the person we thought she was, she'll never marry, we'll never have grandchildren"), and overwhelming daily sadness ("What will her life be like? How can she bear the discrimination and persecution?").

Day by day, we grew in our understanding--and acceptance. Undeniably, God's grace touched us, bringing peace and yes, even joy. Today, I am president of the Houston chapter of a national organization, Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays. We are a support group for families of gays and lesbians, and we're honored to have gays and lesbians themselves among our members.

For many of us as parents, we start off wanting to change our child. But once our eyes have been opened to the fact that homosexuality is natural and normal, we want to change the world, urging a homophobic society to recognize the harm that its persecution does to us all, whether we are heterosexual or homosexual. One of P-FLAG's missions is to support, defend, and enhance the human and civil rights of gay people.

continued, p. 4



Food Markets Inc.

June 12, 1992

Huston Lobingier
6150 Piping Rock Lane
Houston, TX 77057

(incorrectly addressed to
Huston, Jane's husband,
instead of to Jane)

Dear Huston:

I appreciate your letter in regards to my views on homosexuality. First, you should know that I spoke to Gail Rickey on the phone recently and made my views clear to her. I believe we had a good conversation.

Secondly, I believe you, like many others, have been victims of the press. You don't know me and I don't know you. How can you say I need to educate myself on homosexuality when you don't know my knowledge on the subject. Don't get me wrong! I'm no scholar on the subject, but neither am I misinformed either.

I don't believe you can or ever will find a quote from me that indicates that Randall's or Randall Onstead dropped distribution of the Houston Press because of any

R. RANDALL ONSTEAD, JR.
President
Chief Operating Officer

Dear Mr. Onstead:

Thank you for your very candid reply to my letter to you regarding the Houston Press and homosexuality.

Since 1974, when my daughter came out to me, I have known well many Christian homosexuals. Not one of the hundreds I've known chose his or her sexuality, any more than I chose my heterosexuality. It is wrong to discriminate against this natural condition and I try, at every opportunity, to help educate regarding this subject. We tend to judge all homosexuals by the few who are promiscuous and immoral. Many more sexual crimes are committed by

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I don't believe you can or ever will find a quote from me that indicates that Randall's or Randall Onstead dropped distribution of the Houston Press because of any gay-related issue. This is what the Houston Press has alleged but it's not true. The reasons behind our decision not to carry the Houston Press are business-related and have not one thing to do with their gay romance section.

I am not a homophobic, nor have I used Randall's to exploit my personal views on homosexuality. We employ hundreds of gay and lesbian employees in this city, and I am just as proud of them as those who are not gay or lesbian. Being heterosexual is not a condition of employment at Randall's nor is being gay a point of discrimination. We simply treat everyone the same, that is a policy that myself and my father hold firm.

Whether you choose to shop at Randall's is your business. I truly hope that you patronize places of business that provide you with the best overall value and naturally I'd like to have your business. If you have decided to not shop at Randall's because of what you read or hear, then I hope this letter has helped.

Sincerely,

R. Randall Onstead, Jr.

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I commend you on your employment policy and your taking the time to set the record straight with me. Gail Rickey and I shall explain to the P-FLAG organization your employment policy.

I do intend to start shopping at Randall's again and shall set the record straight with my friends also.

Sincerely yours,

Jane R. Lobingier
(Mrs. J. Huston)

Which brings me to why I'm writing this letter. Mr. Onstead, I am among the first to defend your right to have total control over what you sell/distribute/make available to the public. And I respect the fact that you stand up for your principals. But what I object to--very, very strongly--is your persecution, probably unknowingly, of a segment of the population that needs love, not rejection.

Everytime that someone of your stature makes a public statement condemning homosexuals, it adds weight to homophobia. And homophobia maims and kills, for it leads to teen suicide (one out of every five teen suicides is gay-related), gay bashing, resistance to funding for AIDS research and care, disintegration of families, and self-hatred by many gays and lesbians.

Sadly, the church community in general has heightened, not helped the problem. And yet, Biblical study by numerous scholars points out that interpretation of the Bible as condemning homosexuality is inaccurate. In fact, the Bible is silent on the subject of homosexuality as we define it today; what is addressed is male prostitution and rape. I am enclosing one selection as a sample.

Despite the fact that many modern-day churches reject homosexuals who choose to act in accordance with their God-given nature, gays and lesbians within most faiths have formed groups to minister to each other, retaining their allegiance to a church that rebuffs them.

... I don't ask you to carry The Houston Press or any other publication. What I do ask you to do is to read, evaluate, think, pray, and whenever possible, stand up against homophobia, a true enemy of families and a blight on our society.

Gail Rickey

To provide a support system for families and friends of lesbians and gays in their effort to understand, accept, and support their children and friends with love and pride.

To provide education for individuals and the community at large on the nature of homosexuality.

OBJECTIVES AND PURPOSES of P-FLAG

To offer support and understanding to gay men and lesbians.

To support the full human and civil rights of gay people.

To speak out and act whenever necessary to defend and enhance those human and civil rights.

THE SEARCH IS ON--

for books borrowed from P-FLAG's library

We're not librarians--or even good record-keepers. BUT, it is important to us to have the "right" book available to hand to someone who needs it.

Thus, this appeal:

- * If you've borrowed a book and forgotten to return it, please bring it to the next meeting.
- * If you don't want to part with a book you borrowed, send us a donation and we'll add one or more books to the library.
- * If you have a book that you've finished and want

P-FLAG NEEDS YOUR DUES, DONATIONS

P-FLAG's mission is to reach out to the community, offering support and understanding to families and friends of lesbians and gays and to gay men and lesbians.

Our primary expenses are printing and mailing the newsletter, buying educational information often distributed at no charge, and maintaining a telephone helpline.

The cost for an individual membership is \$25; for couples or families, \$40; for students/senior citizens/other cases of need, \$10 per person.

If you have been helped and

Acceptance of Gay Child An Ongoing Process

from Phoenix P-FLAG
newsletter

No matter how long we have known, parents are in process. How we will feel today is not how we will feel a month from now or a year from now. Coming out moves us toward a resolution of inner and outer conflicts. But this continuing act is very hard. Some parents have trouble telling other children in the family. Many are not able to tell neighbors or people they work with. So far we have not heard of anyone being sorry they let other people know about it. In fact, everyone

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If you have a book that you've finished and want to share it, donate it to our library.

If you have grown in your understanding and want to help others on their journey, make a donation to P-FLAG, specifying that it be used to purchase books.

P-FLAG has several book lists available upon request. Many titles can be purchased at Inklings book store, 1846 Richmond (521-3369), or ordered from Lambda Rising (800-621-6969)

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No matter how long we have known, parents are in process. How we will feel today is not how we will feel a month from now or a year from now. Coming out moves us toward a resolution of inner and outer conflicts. But this continuing act is very hard. Some parents have trouble telling other children in the family. Many are not able to tell neighbors or people they work with. So far we have not heard of anyone being sorry they let other people know about it. In fact, everyone we know who is "out" is happy about their experiences. It tends to be liberating to those parents who are able to get enough nerve to take the plunge. People often tell you about their own experiences when you confide in them. It is my belief that we cannot be at ease and happy with our children's homosexuality until we are able to talk to others about it. Of course, some of us have to protect our children and remain quiet, but the healing that comes with telling is deep.





P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

Telephone (713) 867-9020

SPECIAL EDITION

MEETING SEPT. 13
2 PM

Program: Self Esteem--Changing
Negative Thought Patterns,
Loving and Taking Care of Yourself
Linda Butterworth, L.P.C.

INTRACARE
7601 Fannin

In this special issue we highlight some of the challenges facing lesbians and gays today, and ways that parents and friends of lesbians and gays can make a difference.

For parents and friends of gays and lesbians, the Republican National Convention was tough to weather. Our sons, daughters, and friends--whether open or closeted--were verbally assaulted and abused. By the end of the week, many of us felt that we had personally been mauled.

"There has been no restraint in the openly homophobic attacks from speakers and delegates during this convention," said the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force in a statement released midway through the convention. "They have subjected lesbians and gay men to ridicule and hatred, attempting to establish us as a political liability to anyone who supports our lives and liberation efforts.

...Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson, a partnership of the Christian Right and the Far Right, are leaders influencing Bush and Quayle in this unprecedented, highly organized national attack against lesbians and gay men. They are framing hate-filled policies, under the guise of morality, that lead this nation upon a political course that will merge church and state and institutionalize bigotry and discrimination. Under their leadership, the Republican Party has adopted the politics of exclusion, not inclusion."

The executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, Urvashi Vaid, addressed a Town Meeting at the Unitarian Universalist Church near the end of the convention. Gays and lesbians are being used as the 1992 equivalent of Willie Horton in the 1988 Presidential campaign, or the threat of Communism in previous campaigns, she and other leaders contended. "We're the issue du jour," said Vaid. Throughout the campaign, "we'll be bashed by the full Republican machine."

How can those of us who care about gays and lesbians respond? "Nobody can afford to sit this election out," said Vaid. "Reach out to everyone within your own family network," she urged. "We have to defeat this strategy."

Several gays and lesbians from the audience added their support of "putting a face on homosexuality" by coming out to friends and associates. "When you appear as a wholesome good person, that may be one more vote," said one member of the audience.

"We have to name our vision (of our country) where everybody gets included," said speaker Suzanne Pharr, an author and activist in the feminist, anti-violence, anti-racism and gay/lesbian movement. "We have to talk about morality. We have to take the high road... We have to say, 'We will not be excluded'."

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Excerpted from a speech by Bill Clinton to 600 gay activists in Los Angeles on May 18, 1992.

"...And those of you who agree here tonight, you represent a community of our nation's gifted people who we have been willing to squander. We can't afford to waste the capacities, the contributions, the hearts, the souls, the minds of the gay and lesbian Americans either.

"Every day that we discriminate, that we hate, that we refuse to avail ourselves of the potential of any group of Americans, we are all less..."

"As soon as the Pentagon issued a study--ironically by a spokesperson who himself was said to be gay--which said there was no basis in national security for discriminating based on the sexual orientation of Americans who wish to serve in the military, I said I would act on the study. It seemed to me elemental that if a person, a man or a woman, wanted to serve their country, they ought to be able to do it."

COUNTERING RIGHT-WING RHETORIC

Responses to Anti-Gay Bigotry

by the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force

Right-wing opponents to civil rights for gay/lesbian people use similar arguments and rhetoric around the country, whether they're in Corvallis, Oregon; Albany, New York; Lebanon, Tennessee; or Phoenix, Arizona. This publication is a tool for action. It includes responses, ideas, and themes you may use when responding. Each topic begins with the rhetoric used by the right-wing, followed by some ideas on how to respond.

1. "Gay men and lesbians are already covered under the Constitution just like the rest of us. What they want is SPECIAL RIGHTS. We oppose SPECIAL RIGHTS for gay people."

RESPONSE: The right wing rhetoric of "SPECIAL RIGHTS" skews the issue. The right to get and keep a job based on merit is not a special right. The right to have housing is not a special right. The right to be served food in a restaurant or stay in a hotel are not special rights. The right to have and raise children without the state seizing them is not a special right. The right to walk down the street and not get attacked because of who you are and whom you love is not a special right. Gay and lesbian people want the same rights guaranteed to all American citizens. However, without civil rights laws which specifically ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, gay people can lose their jobs, their homes, and their families and be refused service at public accommodations simply because they are gay -- with no legal recourse. Right wing zealots who speak of special rights want the very special right to discriminate against those they hate.

2. "Local ordinances for gay men and lesbians force the rest of us to live against our religious beliefs. We're entitled to our rights too."

RESPONSE: Most civil rights ordinances provide exemptions for religious institutions. And extending civil rights to one sector of society does not withdraw rights from another. In addition, many gay and lesbian members of various religious denominations are organizing within their faith so that religious institutions may become more accepting of the diversity of their following.

3. "They want to be treated like a minority, like an ethnic minority. The Supreme Court says they're not. And we know they're not because they never rode in the back of the bus and they are not economically deprived."

RESPONSE: Like other minorities, gay men and lesbians face job loss, eviction, non-service at public accommodations, and the loss of our children simply because of who we are. And like other minorities, gay people face harassment, physical assault, and murder based on an assailant's hatred against us as a group. According to a national study, anti-gay violence and victimization rose 31 percent in 1991, and a Department of Justice study reported that "homosexuals are probably the most frequent victim" of hate crime. Our constitution says all citizens are created equal -- that must include gay and lesbian Americans.

4. "Homosexuals lead an abominable lifestyle. People who care about traditional family values must not encourage the open expression of this sexual depravity."

RESPONSE: Discrimination is the abomination, not gay and lesbian people. The family values we uphold are support, love, understanding and respect between family members. Discrimination and bigotry are not traditional family values.

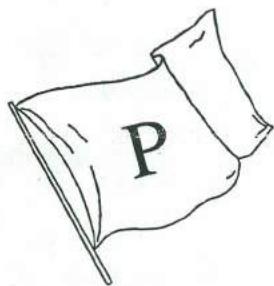
5. "Gay people want to force their lifestyle on us and take away our rights."

RESPONSE: Civil rights laws that include gay and lesbian people do not limit the rights of others. Instead, they extend to gay and lesbian people the same rights already enjoyed by most Americans -- the right to obtain and keep employment based on ability to do the job; the right to acquire housing; the right to raise their children; and the right to live free of violence. Gay people are not interested in forcing anything on anyone -- just the opposite. Most gay people would prefer to live in privacy, without intrusion by Far Rights bigots.

6. "You can't let gays be near children -- since they can't reproduce, they recruit. And they are all pedophiles."

RESPONSE: Statistics show that the vast majority of sexual abuse is committed by men against women, usually within the same family. Lies perpetuate stereotypes that are then used to deny gay people our rights. It is wrong to deny us our rights based on those myths.

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**MINDS ARE LIKE
PARACHUTES:
THEY FUNCTION
ONLY
WHEN OPEN!**



RESPONSE: Civil rights laws that include gay and lesbian people do not grant gay people the right to marry. While society perpetuates the stereotype of all gay people as sexually promiscuous individuals, it denies us recognition of our committed unions. However, gay people are struggling for legal recognition of our loving relationships, as well as acquiring employment benefits for spouses which are equivalent to our heterosexual co-workers.

8. "It's within our First Amendment rights to say what we think of homosexuals."

RESPONSE: Right wing organizations hide their homophobia behind the First Amendment. While the right wing demands the right to speak out against homosexuality, they are simultaneously running well-financed campaigns to censor and squelch positive images of gay and lesbian people on television, in schools, and in the arts. The hatred and lies that right wing organizations spew create a hostile environment for gay and lesbian people. Their rhetoric bolsters the hatred expressed by the bigots who physically attack gay men and lesbians. A national study conducted by the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force Policy Institute documented 1,822 anti-gay incidents in just five U.S. cities in 1991, a 31 percent increase over the number of incidents in 1990.

"WHEN DID I BECOME A FASCIST? WAS IT THE DAY I GAVE BIRTH TO A LESBIAN CHILD?"

Last fall, California governor Pete Wilson vetoed a state bill (AB 101) that called for non-discrimination of gays and lesbians. The Los Angeles chapter of P-FLAG held a family Thanksgiving rally in protest. The words of Adele Starr, president of the chapter, are relevant to today's troubled times, when politicians--and ministers--are using our sons and daughters to whip up hatred.

"Dear Governor Wilson and Reverend Sheldon: I am here today to celebrate my family--to let you know this American family, made up of a mother and father (married over 31 years), one daughter who was born a lesbian and one daughter who was born a heterosexual--this family is a very normal family, and one who lives by "traditional family values."

"So tell me Governor Wilson, when did I become a fascist? Was it the day I gave birth to a lesbian child" Or when I joined Parents FLAG and really became aware of the lack of civil rights for gay and lesbian people?

"...Look around you Governor Wilson and Reverend Sheldon, and try to figure out which 15 percent of your families are gay or lesbian. What civil rights would you want for them? The same as for yourselves, or less?

"Our children have value--to you and our country. What will it take to get you to recognize it?"

SPEAKING OUT

Those who oppose equal rights for gays and lesbians are quick to raise their voices to condemn our sons and daughters. It's up to us to let elected officials, the media, and commercial leaders who make a visible stance against homophobia know that we applaud them, appreciate them, and support them.

Homophobia is an enemy to us all--leading to gay teen suicide, gay-bashing, and resistance to funding for AIDS care and research, as well as the disintegration of loving families.

Please take time to communicate with one or more of the following. Even if you don't feel that you can be visible in the community, you can write a letter identifying yourself as a person who does not believe in discrimination.

** Levi Strauss, one of the world's largest manufacturers of clothing, has been deluged with protest calls from homophobic religious groups because the company ceased its financial support of the Boy Scouts of America, due to the Scouting organization's discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation. Levi Strauss has also introduced a "domestic partners policy," extending family benefits to partners of gay and lesbian employees.

Levi Strauss Community Affairs Dept., 1155 Battery St.,
San Francisco, CA 94111

OR Call 800-872-5384 [Editor's Note: I called and they were very appreciative. They ask for your name, mailing address, and phone no.]

** Toyota is under attack by the American Family Association (AFA), an anti-gay censorship group. AFA accuses Toyota of being "one of the leading sponsors of pro-homosexual programs on network TV," meaning shows that occasionally feature lesbian or gay characters. AFA provides its members with thousands of pre-printed postcards. Write Toyota saying that you appreciate their support of gay relationships.

Mr. Y. Togo, President, Toyota Motor Sales, PO Box 2991,
Torrance, CA 90509

** Bank of America has withdrawn funding from the Boy Scouts of America due to their discrimination against gay leaders and members.

Don Mullane, Executive Vice President, Bank of America,
Corporate Community Development 246, PO Box 37000,
San Francisco, CA 94137

** Melrose Place, a new TV series airing on Channel 26. One of the featured characters is a gay man who presents a positive image.

Peter Chernin, President, Fox Broadcasting, 10201 W. Pico Blvd.
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Ms. Jerry Marcus, General Manager, Channel 26, PO Box 22810,

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** Cheers introduced an openly gay character last season. If viewer response is positive, the character may return.

Les and Glen Charles, James Burrow, Executive Producers, Cheers,
Paramount Television, 5555 Melrose Ave., Los Angeles, CA 90038

* Murphy Brown. To counter anti-gay letters sent by the AFA in response to an openly gay character who dispels stereotypes, write your support for sponsorship of such shows.

Chairman Charles Harper, ConAgra Inc., One ConAgra Dr.,
Omaha, NE 68102 (Healthy Choice Foods, Morton frozen foods)

Chairman Henry Wendt, Smith Kline Beecham, PO Box 7929,
Philadelphia, PA 19101 (Aqua Velva, Calgon, Contact decongestant)

Diane English and Joel Shukovsky, Executive Producers of Murphy
Brown, 4000 Warner Blvd., Burbank, CA 92522

Michael Grant, Program Director, KHOU-TV Channel 11, PO Box 11,
Houston, TX 77001

We've talked to numerous P-FLAGers who were grieved during the RNC by some gay activist actions that seemed to go too far. "It's hard for me to stand up and defend gay rights when the public sees such a negative image of gays," said one P-FLAGer. "When they talk about slashing tires, they do much more harm than good."

The ACT-UP march on Aug. 17 prompted lots of media attention, most of it negative. The following article, published in the *Houston Press* (Aug. 20, 1992), presents a different view.

A protest in the dark turns brutal

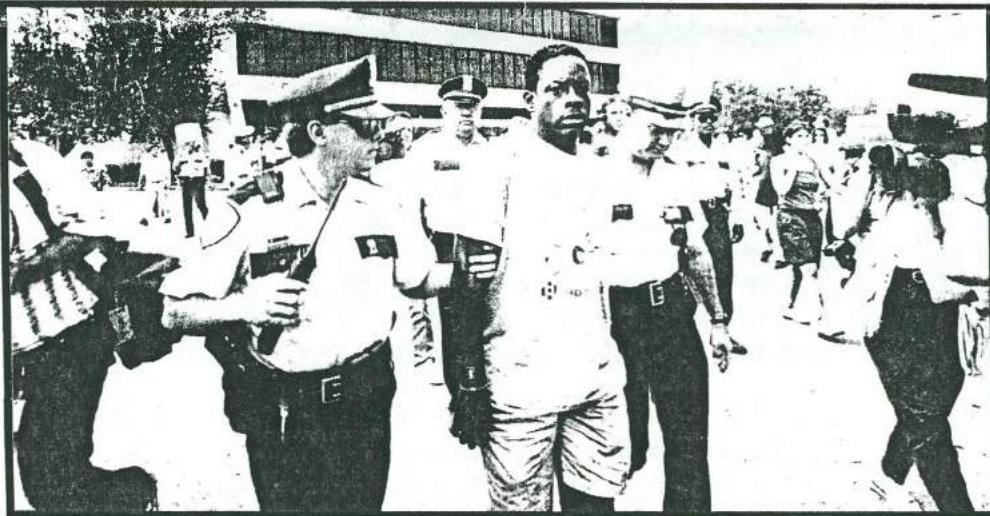
Acting Up

THIS MAY NOT have been on the scale of Chicago, 1968, but for those trapped in front of an advancing wall of flame-it mounted police Monday night outside the north gate of the Astrodome, the resemblance to convention apocalypse was close enough. ACT-UP, a gay and lesbian rights group, had marched from Hermann Park to the Astrodome. Participants reached the north gate of the stadium after nightfall and began burning a flag and a Bush effigy. Then mounted police suddenly charged into the crowd, swinging clubs and herding people, including media and non-protesters, into a fenced area described by one participant as "an urban box canyon" where they could not escape. Police spokesman Rick Hartley claims there's no indication officers used unnecessary force. But journalists who had arrived at the scene shortly before the incident tell a radically different story. These eyewitness accounts are by reporters who have requested anonymity because they work for different media outlets than the *Press*, but we vouch for their impartiality and credibility.

One of our witnesses arrived at the corner of La Concha and Stadium Drive

just as the George Bush dummy went up in flames. Minutes later a protester began burning an American flag. Eighteen officers on horseback lined up in front of the stadium gate with officers in riot formation on foot behind the horses.

"I was talking with an ACLU



A kinder, gentler arrest: a demonstrator is arrested before the billy clubs came down Monday night.

observer and I was about to ask her what she thought about the apparent restraint that the police were showing," says this

The only provocation this witness noted before the police charge was the flag burning. There was orange smoke in the air that may have resulted from a smoke bomb.

As to why the police charged, our second reporter says, "Something set them off. I don't know if there was an unspoken command." As to the police claim that demonstrators triggered the clash by throwing projectiles or smoke bombs at the horses, this source is doubtful. "I honest to God did not see that."

Police chased our first reporter and a group of people to the right across a field triangulated by Stadium Drive and La Concha. "It was completely dark, no photographers were in that field, and they were hitting lots of people," says this source.

"I saw more than a dozen people get struck, maybe two dozen. One woman dropped a sign on the ground and stumbled and tried to pick it up. The officer started beating the sign with his stick while screaming, 'Move it, move it, get

was no escape. To the left was a fence with barbed wire on the top and there was no place to go, but the cop pushed me into some TV cameramen."

Apparently the news video from the confrontation was confined to the side of the street where our second witness fled, rather than the field where our first reporter says mass beatings took place.

The second reporter managed to get away from the fenced area, only to confront a phalanx of cops on horseback. "I'm a little afraid of horses. And I got caught between the fence and a horse's butt. I was afraid of getting stepped on, and I kept telling the officer, 'I'm moving, I'm moving.' I tried to step a little behind the horse so I wouldn't keep getting squished up against the fence with it. The officer on the horse picked me up by the scruff of my neck and said, 'You're not going back there.'"

The second reporter and other crowd members finally got ahead of the horse phalanx and managed to escape.

"They [cops] were hitting lots of people. I saw more than a dozen people get struck, maybe two dozen," says one eyewitness to the ACT UP-police clash.

continued

This reporter and others finally talked their way through a police line and made it back inside the security of the Astrodome perimeter.

The first reporter who witnessed the police beatings can't understand why other media members at the scene have not disputed the police version of the

"outrageous thing," says Clark Read Foundation attorney and project coordinator Nancy Bunin, "is that the people they were choosing to beat were not involved in any kind of disobedience whatsoever. They were basically trying to flee the area." Bunin adds that some HIV-positive demonstrators and some with AIDS were too feeble to get away fast enough and fell to the ground.

The civil liberties attorney says the

journalist. "Before I got the words out of my mouth the horses started into the crowd and the police ran at people with billy clubs and they did swing into the crowd."

A second reporter backs up this account of the beginning of the ACT-UP clash. "I was getting a little worried about the burning flag scaring the horses, and then suddenly the guys on horseback — there was one woman — started coming toward us without warning. People are reporting the police warned us. I swear, I never heard word one and they just started coming at us."

The first reporter disputes police claims that bottle throwing started the melee. "A lot of people with ACT-UP were carrying Evian plastic water bottles. I didn't see anyone throw them."

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This source says police badge numbers and name tags could not be seen in the darkness. "I was shouting, I was frightened. I said, 'I'm a reporter, I'm a reporter. Please don't hit me.' And one officer said in the darkness, 'I don't give a — who you are, get out of here.'

Meanwhile our second source had been pushed to the left side of the street by the charge and had no view of what was happening in the field. "I was pressed up against a fence. I was in a corner and I thought 'Oh, God, another Who concert!'" The reporter says people tried to scale fences to escape to a neighboring hospital, but security guards on the hospital side armed with guns refused to allow them sanctuary.

"We were all in a corner, and there

At the Town Meeting referred to on p. 1, a young professional man, probably in his early 30s, stood up in the audience. Trying to control his emotions, he said, "I have never marched in a protest before Monday night. I was one of the marchers who was arrested, even though I was

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The first reporter who witnessed the police beatings can't understand why other media members at the scene have not disputed the police version of the incident. "There were not too many reporters there...and I don't know why [the ones who were there] are not saying what the police actually did. They were swinging at people right and left." While the dailies have carried accusations by protesters of brutality, no reporter to our knowledge has written a first-hand account of the beatings.

As far as assigning blame for the incident, this reporter says the police failed to give adequate warning before they moved into the crowd. "Yeah, it's illegal to burn city property, to start a fire in the street, but I think there should have been something over a bullhorn that said, 'Okay, time's up. We're moving into the crowd.' 'Cause I would have moved. I just felt completely shocked that they rode into the crowd and started hitting people."

"The outrageous thing," says Clark Read Foundation attorney and project coordinator Nancy Bunnin, "is that the people they were choosing to beat were not involved in any kind of disobedience whatsoever. They were basically trying to flee the area." Bunnin adds that some HIV-positive demonstrators and some with AIDS were too feeble to get away fast enough and fell to the ground.

The civil liberties attorney says the demonstration may have been intense, "but it was a lawful free speech activity."

— Tim Fleck and Jeff Tomich

Cops Act Out

THANK YOU so much for the most accurate account of the Monday, August 18, ACT-UP demonstration ("Acting Up," *Press Briefs*, August 20). I have been a neutral observer for local free speech events for many years in Houston and have never before observed such flagrant police misconduct with so many members of the media present. I am puzzled as to why the rest of the local press did not get the whole story. Thank goodness the *Houston Press* was there.

Nancy Bunnin
CLARK READ FOUNDATION

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For a moment, he was silent, and we could feel his pain and his humiliation. From the back of the room, someone stood to take his picture, and the young man said, "Please don't. I'm a teacher, and I want to keep my job."

Choking back tears, he said softly, "I don't know what I think anymore. But...if there were a march right now, I'd have to march."

In unison, the audience rose in tribute.

The Texas Human Rights Foundation (THRF), a non-profit litigation organization dedicated to fighting discrimination against gay men, lesbians, and persons affected by HIV and AIDS, is in danger of dying, due to a major cut in funding.

There is no other organization to do the important work that THRF does. THRF has led the fight against the Texas "sodomy" law (21.06), which is now on its way to the Texas Supreme Court. In addition, THRF helped more than 450 people by telephone last year, conducted advocacy which helped thousands statewide, was active in obtaining a Texas Attorney General's opinion which allowed the release of state funds to gay-identified organizations which are AIDS service providers, and was instrumental in a change in policy by the U.S. Public Health Services which now insures greater confidentiality of persons with AIDS.

THRF's need is IMMEDIATE. Send contributions to:

THRF, PO Box 49740, Austin, Texas 78765

RIGHT WING TESTS NEW STRATEGY

Both Oregon and Colorado are the target of a new far Right organizing tactic--anti-gay constitutional initiatives. The Oregon Citizens Alliance and Colorado for Family Values each have spearheaded campaigns in their respective states to amend the state constitutions and ban civil rights laws that include protection based on sexual orientation. Oregon's language goes a step further and would mandate that the public school system teach children that homosexuality is an abnormal behavior that must be avoided. If passed in November, these initiatives could mean that books that are positive or neutral about homosexuality would be removed from public libraries; gay organizations could lose or rent public spaces for events or meetings; gay professionals may not be able to receive licenses from the state; and the state, individual citizens and organizations would be free to actively and openly discriminate against gay and lesbian people. The threat of these initiatives does not stop at the borders of Oregon and Colorado--any town or state could be next.

HATE IS NOT A FAMILY VALUE

Send funds and organizational statements of support to No On 9 (formerly the Campaign for a Hate Free Oregon), P.O. Box 3343, Portland, OR 97208, (503) 232-4501; Equal Protection Campaign, P.O. Box 300476, Denver, CO 80203, (303) 839-5540. Also, send letters to the editor of major newspapers in each of the states, expressing your concern as a potential tourist and visitor: Portland Oregonian, 1320 SW Broadway, Portland, OR 97201; Denver Post, 1560 Broadway, Denver, CO 80202.

ACTION CONTINUUM

One of P-FLAG's missions is to combat homophobia, leading families, friends, and the community to support and appreciate gays and lesbians.

Last month, we published an attitude continuum--repulsion, pity, tolerance, acceptance, support, appreciation. Here is an accompanying continuum of action.

Oppressing: Telling gay jokes; avoiding people who are (or might be) gay, lesbian, or bisexual; discouraging the open acceptance of gay, lesbian or bisexual people; working to prevent the passage of gay-rights laws; participating in harassment of or violence against gay, lesbian, or bisexual people.

Denying/Ignoring: Allowing gay, lesbian, and bisexual oppression to continue. (This category includes behavior that is not actively anti-gay, but supports anti-gay actions with silent consent by denying or ignoring that such oppression is a problem.)

Recognizing/Not Acting: Recognizing

Educating Self: Taking action to learn more about lesbian, gay and bisexual people, homophobia, and heterosexism. Includes reading books, attending workshops, participating in discussion groups, joining organizations, and attending gay, lesbian, and bisexual cultural events. (This category is a prerequisite to the last three which involve interacting with others about homophobia. To engage others comfortable and confidently, we need to learn more ourselves.)

Educating Others: Rather than only objecting to homophobic behavior, engaging people in dialogue to increase their awareness of gay,

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Recognizing/Not Acting: Recognizing oppression and its harmful effects, but taking no action to stop homophobic behavior, because of fear, lack of information, or confusion about what to do; feeling discomfort with the incongruence between your inner beliefs and your lack of action on those beliefs.

Recognizing/Acting: Recognizing oppression and taking action to stop it. (Though your response may go no further than objecting to homophobic behavior, this is an important step in the transition from silent disapproval of homophobic actions to choosing to speak out against them.)

Educating Self: Taking action to learn more about lesbian, gay and bisexual people, homophobia, and heterosexism. Includes reading books, attending workshops, participating in discussion groups, joining organizations, and attending gay, lesbian, and bisexual cultural events. (This category is a prerequisite to the last three which involve interacting with others about homophobia. To engage others comfortable and confidently, we need to learn more ourselves.)

Educating Others: Rather than only objecting to homophobic behavior, engaging people in dialogue to increase their awareness of gay, lesbian, and bisexual oppression.

Supporting/Encouraging: Supporting and encouraging others who are speaking out against homophobia, or who are working to be more inclusive of gay, lesbian, and bisexual people.

Initiating/Preventing: Working to change individual and institutional actions that exclude or denigrate people because of their sexual orientation--for example, planning educational programs, including sexual orientation in institutional non-discrimination statements; explicitly inviting gay, lesbian, and bisexual people to become open and appreciated members of a community.

HETEROSEXUAL PRIVILEGE

- Living without ever having to think twice, face, confront, engage, or cope with anything printed below. Heterosexuals can address these phenomena but social/political forces do not require you to do so.
- Marrying . . . which includes the following privileges:
 - Public recognition and support for an intimate relationship (e.g., receiving cards or phone calls celebrating your commitments to another person; supporting activities and social expectations of longevity and stability for your committed relationships)
 - Joint child custody
 - Paid leave from employment when grieving the death of your spouse
 - Property laws, filing joint tax returns, inheriting from your spouse automatically under probate laws
 - Sharing health, auto and homeowners' insurance policies at reduced rates
 - Immediate access to your loved ones in case of accident or emergency
 - Family-of-origin support for life with a spouse
- Not questioning your normalcy, sexually and culturally:
 - Having role models of your gender and sexual orientation
 - Learning about romance and relationships from fiction, movies, and television
 - Having positive media images of people with whom you can identify
- Validation from the culture in which you live:
 - Living with your partner and doing so openly to all
 - Talking about your relationship, or what projects, vacations, and family planning you and your lover/partner are creating
 - Expressing pain when a relationship ends from death or separation, and having other people notice and tend to your pain
 - Receiving social acceptance by neighbors, colleagues, and good friends
 - Not having to hide or lie about women/men-only social activities
 - Dating the person of your desire in your teens
 - Working without always being identified by your sexuality/culture (e.g., you get to be a farmer, bricklayer, artist, etc., without being labeled the heterosexual farmer, etc.)
- Institutional acceptance:
 - Employment opportunity: Increased possibilities of getting a job, receiving on-the-job training and promotion
 - Receiving validation from your religious community, being able to be a member of the clergy
 - Being employed as a teacher in pre-school through high school without fear of being fired any day because you are assumed to corrupt children
 - Adopting children, fosterparenting children
 - Raising children without threats of state intervention, without children having to be worried which of their friends might reject them because of their parents' sexuality and culture
 - Being able to serve in the military

published in P-FLAG newsletters in Los Angeles and Philadelphia; re-printed in The SCWU Newsletter (Thanks to Arden for sending us a copy.)

The following article was written by John Murphy, a member of Live Oak Friends Meeting (Quakers) in Houston, and published in the group's newsletter, The Acorn.

"Quakers tend to become involved in social action as a result of our spiritual beliefs—that we are God's hands here on earth to work against oppression," writes Murphy.

The Rovcott at Randall's

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The Boycott at Randall's

Supporters of the Houston's gay and lesbian community have organized a boycott of Randall's supermarkets. Randall's have recently ceased distribution of the *Houston Press* based on the presence of gay and lesbian ads in its personals section. Such ads do not fit the "family" atmosphere Randall's wishes for its business.

Randall's is not opposed to all personal ads, however. Randall's currently carries the *Greensheet*. In fact, Randall's Shepherd Square store is the only major retailer in the Montrose area which carries the *Greensheet*. All other major Montrose businesses ceased carrying the *Greensheet* in support of their customer base after that publication refused to carry gay and lesbian ads in their personals section, claiming the *Greensheet* is a "family publication."

On the surface, the issue of personal ads is trivial. But such actions are a subtle continuation of the message gays and lesbians receive from society at large that our lives are not as valid as others. Gays and lesbians must endure not only small indignities offered by Randall's. It is still legal to deny gays and lesbians employment, health insurance and even leases and mortgages.

Such discrimination against any other group in this country would not be tolerated. There would be mass protests, editorials, presidential proclamations and laws passed by Congress. But society's continued silence in response to these issues has helped create an atmosphere where gays and lesbians cannot walk freely in our neighborhoods without fear of attack and even murder, simply because of who we are.

Buying your groceries in another store will matter little to Randall's, nor will it make the world a safer and more tolerable place for gays and lesbians. It may, however, change you. And it is by one person at a time that we make the world a better place.



P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

Telephone (713) 867-9020

August 1992

MEETING SEPTEMBER 13

Our speaker will be Linda Butterworth, M.A., L.P.C., L.M.F.T. All of those initials mean that Linda, a therapist in private practice, is well qualified to talk to us on a multi-faceted subject: loving and taking care of yourself, changing self-defeating thought patterns, getting going when you feel stuck, managing stress, and changing your environment to make it work for you.

Linda titles her presentation "Self Esteem: Where It Comes From and How To Get It."

As at all P-FLAG meetings, we will also break into small groups for sharing and discussion.

After the meeting, members and visitors are invited to meet at a nearby restaurant for a snack or a meal, conversation, and socializing.

We love our kids

They are OKAY

And WE are okay too!

CALENDAR

MOTHERS VOICES NEEDS OUR HELP

Mothers' Voices is an AIDS/HIV awareness campaign, dedicated to mobilizing families across the nation to raise their voices in support of AIDS-related education, prevention, and services.

In May, our chapter mailed out "Mother's Day" cards to President Bush and other elected officials from Mothers' Voices, asking for their support for AIDS funding.

Today, leaders in Mothers' Voices are in Houston to address the Republican National Convention, and they invite our help. Here's what you can do:

* Attend press conference on Tues., Aug. 18 at First Unitarian Universalist Church, 5200 Fannin, 11 AM, to support Mothers' Voices in their message to the RNC. You are invited to talk individually to media members about your concerns if you choose to, but if you want to be supportive by your presence only, that will be very helpful. FYI, Mothers' Voice is supplying five key speakers, including one from Texas. The group believes that the local media will be especially interested in comments from Houstonians, which is why they have asked for P-FLAGers who might be willing to be interviewed.

* Join with Mothers' Voices members to attend RNC caucuses and delegations (varying times Mon. through Thurs.)

CHANNEL 11 AIRS 35 SPOTS FOR P-FLAG

One of the first local TV stations to air P-FLAG's public service announcement was KHOU-TV Channel 11.

The 30-second spot has led many viewers to our helpline. Some are lesbians and gays who are glad to learn about P-FLAG and its support. Others are parents and siblings who want information and reassurance.

We believe that the benefits of airing positive messages about gays and lesbians in the family are immeasurable, for bit by bit, such messages help break down prejudices.

** We'd like to urge P-FLAGers and P-FLAG supporters to write letters of appreciation to Channel 11, letting them know that we recognize and value their support. Address letters to Cris Perez, Community Affairs Director, KHOU-TV, PO Box 11, Houston, TX 77001-0011.

HIPY REACHES OUT TO GAY YOUTH

HIPY, or the Houston Institute for the Protection of Youth, assists homeless and runaway youth, many of whom are gay. Some of the young people have been thrown out of their homes. HIPY--the only local organization of its kind--provides food, clothing, and counseling for these youth.

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CALENDAR

Aug. 20	Board Meeting of P-FLAG
Sept. 13	P-FLAG meeting 2 PM, IntraCare Hospital, 7601 Fannin
Sept. 24 & 25	Bishop Spong (see article)
Oct. 4	P-FLAG meeting
Nov. 1	P-FLAG meeting
Dec. 6	P-FLAG Holiday Party

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* Join with Mothers' Voices members to attend RNC caucuses and delegations (varying times, Mon. through Thurs.), with the intent of educating attendees. If can do so, call B.C. Craig at 521-1000 and leave a message. P-FLAGers can also call Gail at 440-0353 if you want to go as a group.

YOU CAN WRITE...

* Channel 8, thanking them for their continued programming that addresses gay/lesbian issues recent example: Lost Language of the Cranes

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HIPY has an ongoing need for our help. Specific needs include:

- * typewriter
- * fax machine
- * copier
- * non-perishable food

You can bring contributions to regular P-FLAG meetings, or deliver them in person to the HIPY office at 801 Westheimer, Suite 102.

Two P-FLAGers are now volunteering their time and talents. If you're interested, call Tracy Brown at 942-YUTH.

RELIGION'S RESPONSE TO GAYS AND LESBIANS

In each issue of the P-FLAG Flyer we feature a different faith. This month the column is written by David Taffet, a member of Congregation Beth El Binan in Dallas, and Karyn Berger, religious chair of the same congregation.

Judaism remains divided on the issue of homosexuality. Traditionally, sex in Judaism has been viewed as a normal, everyday part of life, essential to fulfilling the first commandment which is "Be fruitful and multiply."

The Orthodox movement believes that homosexuality is a choice, whether conscious or unconscious. The sages fiercely debated homosexuality and condemned male homosexuality only, using biblical arguments. Lesbianism is never mentioned in the bible but is referred to as "lascivious" by philosophers such as Maimonades.

While the Orthodox movement still rejects gays and lesbians, the Conservative movement recently voted to allow them to fully participate as members of the congregation but tabled a resolution calling for the ordination of homosexual rabbis. In practice, modern Conservative congregations range from nearly-orthodox condemnation to very liberal acceptance.

Ten years ago, the Reform movement accepted gays and lesbians into the congregation and within the past two years called for rabbinical schools to accept openly gay and lesbian students leading to their ordination. While homosexuality may not fit the traditional concept of being fruitful, gays and lesbians may fulfill this commandment in other ways--through teaching, by caring for children, the elderly or the sick, or by having children.

The Reconstructionists, a small fourth movement in

justify discrimination against gays and lesbians are all invalid when the most important rule of Jewish law is applied, "Do not treat others as you would not have them treat you."

In Dallas, Congregation Beth El Binah, which has served the gay and lesbian community since 1984, recently became a member in the Union of American Hebrew Congregations, the governing body of the Reform movement. Beth El Binah is also a member of The World Congress of Gay and Lesbian Organizations, a group of 41 congregations from five continents.

Currently there are three gay/lesbian organizations in Texas--Beth El Binah in Dallas, Mishpachat Am Echad in Austin, and Mishpachat Alizim in Houston.

(If you would like to contribute to this column, please call P-FLAG at 867-9020.)

BISHOP SPONG LECTURES IN HOUSTON

The Right Reverend John Spong, an Episcopal bishop and the author of Rescuing the Bible From Fundamentalism and Living in Sin? A Bishop Rethinks Human Sexuality, will speak at the Westin Galleria Hotel on Thursday, Sept. 24, and Friday, Sept. 25, at 7:30.

P-FLAG is proud to claim Bishop Spong as one of 25 honorary directors of our national organization.

"If people would read Living in Sin? before voting on policies concerning human sexuality, the world might be transformed into a more gentle, honest, and hospitable place," says Virginia Mollenkott, author of several books that examine homosexuality from a religious viewpoint.

In Rescuing the Bible, Spong writes, "...the purpose of a claim of biblical

TRIAL DATES SET IN GAY-BASHING CASE

At our July meeting, many P-FLAGers met Nancy Rodriguez, mother of Paul Broussard who was the fatal victim of a hate crime last year.

Several members offered to support Nancy by attending the upcoming trials of the young men accused of Paul's murder. (One has already been sentenced.)

The next trial dates are Monday, Aug. 24, and Monday, Sept. 14, at 9 AM. The case is being tried by Judge Brian Rains, 176th District Court, at 301 San Jacinto, 6th floor.

Call P-FLAG at 867-9020 and leave a message if you want to get in touch with other P-FLAGers who plan to attend.

ATTITUDE CONTINUUM (from Unitarian Universalists' "Welcoming Congregations" program)

Repulsion--Pity--Tolerance Acceptance--Support-- Appreciation

REPULSION: Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are sinful, sick, and immoral and their behavior must not be tolerated in any way.

PITY: Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are sad because they aren't normal and cannot live a happy heterosexual life. They need our help.

TOLERANCE: Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people exist and always have. We must tolerate them even if we object to their lifestyle.

ACCEPTANCE: Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are fine as long as they mind their business, keep to themselves, and don't flaunt their lifestyle or ask for "special privileges" (civil rights, open acknowledgment).

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The Reconstructionists, a small fourth movement in Judaism, fully accept gay and lesbian individuals and relationships. The ceremony of Affirmation, performed by Reform and Reconstructionist rabbis, binds and affirms the relationship between two gay Jewish men or women.

Rabbi David Stern of Temple Emanu-El Dallas equates biblical arguments against homosexuality to those commandments directing the sacrifice of animals, neither of which are particularly appropriate in today's world. Biblical arguments used to

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In Rescuing the Bible, Spong writes, "...the purpose of a claim of biblical literalism is revealed to be not to call people to the values of justice, but to justify existing prejudice by keeping oneself secure inside a way of life that cannot be challenged by any new insight."

Tickets for the lectures are available through Ticket Master, with outlets in Fiesta Mart, Sears, Foley's, and Sound Warehouse. Total cost at the outlets is \$11.75 (\$10 for ticket + service charge; by phone (629-3700), \$13.

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ACCEPTANCE: Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are fine as long as they mind their business, keep to themselves, and don't flaunt their lifestyle or ask for "special privileges" (civil rights, open acknowledgment).

SUPPORT: Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people deserve the same rights and respect as everyone else. I still may be uncomfortable, but I believe discrimination against gay, lesbian, and bisexual people is wrong.

APPRECIATION: Gay, lesbian, and bisexual people are valued members of the community and a valid part of the diversity of our community. My life is enriched because there are openly gay, lesbian, and bisexual people in my community.

RECORD ATTENDANCE AT
JULY, AUGUST P-FLAG MEETINGS

Our two-part series on homosexuality and religion, combined with our increasing visibility in the community, drew approximately 55 people to our July meeting and 50 to our August meeting.

The Houston Chronicle article, "Family Ties," prompted more than 30 calls to our helpline. That exposure, in combination with an earlier article in the Houston Post, the airing of P-FLAG PSAs over the last three months, and an increase of our visibility within the gay and lesbian community (marching in the Pride Parade, the volunteer work of P-FLAGers, networking within the community) is enabling us to build a stronger and stronger chapter.

ROOM TO GROW,
or

Where do we go from here?

by Gail Rickey

"What are P-FLAG's goals for the future," a reporter asked recently.

"To be visible enough for people to find us, and to be broad enough in our scope to be relevant to parents, siblings, lesbians, and gay men wherever they are on their journey," I answered.

To me, that is the challenge of P-FLAG today. Together, there is so much good work that we can do.

Quoting from a P-FLAG leader in another city, "If Parents FLAG has a single purpose, (it is) supporting new parents, providing literature they might otherwise be afraid to pick up, sharing personal stories and showing the light at the end of the tunnel. For families to stay stuck in fear, ignorance and isolation is an unnecessary waste."

As parents and other family members grow in their understanding and acceptance, they become invaluable to the group because they can reach out to others.

Some want to make their voices heard beyond the chapter--writing letters of praise or criticism to elected officials, TV stations, newspapers, merchants and others; speaking to groups such as university gay and lesbian organizations; working for political candidates who stand up for gay and lesbian rights--the possibilities are endless.

"Typically, the parent of a gay child passes through successive stages of shock, disbelief, sorrow, and sooner or later, acceptance," wrote Robert Bernstein, a national vice president of P-FLAG. "For many of us, however, there is yet another phase: outrage against society's stereotypical thinking that would relegate our gay loved ones to second class citizenship."

As the P-FLAG chapter located in the fourth largest city in the country, with a strong gay and lesbian community in our midst, a mayor who stands up for gay and lesbian rights, and a network of other organizations to support us, we have the potential for making a difference.

Where do we go from here? With a larger attendance, we can respond more effectively to specific concerns by forming sub-groups within the chapter, such as gay and lesbian parents, siblings of gays and lesbians, and persons with HIV-positive/AIDS concerns. With more people-power, we can respond to needs in the community--educating, volunteering, initiating new programs.

Where do you want P-FLAG to go? What are your interests? What would you like to assist with, facilitate, initiate? You're invited--and challenged--to use your talents and your love for the betterment of society.

Recently, another P-FLAG chapter in another city also asked the question, "What are the goals for our chapter?" One parent's answer speaks for us all: "To have no reason to exist." Together, let us work for that liberating day when society frees itself from the destructiveness of homophobia.

ACTION ALERT ACTION ALERT ACTION ALERT ACTION ALERT ACTION ALERT

The Department of Defense directive 1332.141 now reads:

"Homosexuality is incompatible with military service...The presence of such members adversely affects the ability of the Military Service to maintain discipline, good order, and morale, to foster mutual trust and confidence among service members..."

A P-FLAG activist, who is a retired Lieutenant Naval Commander and the proud father of a lesbian daughter, recently testified before the U.S. Congress. In his testimony, he called on the Pentagon to discard its discriminatory policy. "After meeting with senior members of Congress, including the Chairman of the Defense Appropriations Subcommittee, we're convinced we can win this battle--with your help," says our national office.

If you'd like to join the good fight, please sign the following petition and mail it to P-FLAG, PO Box 27605, Washington, DC 20038. You can enclose a contribution (tax-deductible), if you wish, to help support P-FLAG's campaign.

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Petition of Conscience

Chairman Jack Murtha
Appropriations Subcommittee on Defense
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Chairman Murtha:

As a supporter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians & Gays, I petition you to do all you can to reverse the Pentagon's directive against gays and lesbians.

The discharge of upstanding Americans solely because of their sexual orientation is a wasteful and unproductive policy. Please support H.R. 5208 and help bring an end to this injustice.

Signed: _____

Name: _____

Address: _____

The Vatican's recent directive to the American Bishops to oppose civil rights legislation protecting lesbians and gay men prompted an immediate response by Dignity/USA, the Catholic organization that affirms gays and lesbians. "Dignity/USA is outraged, saddened and dismayed by the recent Vatican document..." began the group's statement, issued at a press conference on July 20 outside the Vatican Embassy in Washington. Dignity was joined in the press conference by P-FLAG, the Human Rights Campaign Fund (HRCF), and Queer Nation.

The following article by Robert Bernstein, a vice president of the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, was published in the San Francisco Examiner on July 24.

Gays and the Vatican: A religious call to hate

CRITICIZING THE religion of others is risky business. The sanctity of personal belief and faith is an important part of the foundation of any decent society.

But private spirituality and organized churchdom are distinctly different matters. And silence itself becomes risky when a religious body acts in a way that threatens the lives of children and the stability of families.

So it is that one of the more incredible documents in religious history, issued by perhaps the world's most powerful and influential religious hierarchy, merits critical examination. Incredibly, it endorses bigotry against fully one-tenth of our country's population.

I refer to a recent statement by the Vatican, sent to all U.S. Catholic bishops in late June. It affirmatively endorses discrimina-

tion against lesbians and gay men in such areas as housing, hiring, health benefits and the military. It says governments should deny certain privileges to gay people to promote the traditional family and protect society. And it tells the bishops they have a responsibility to press the discrimination policy not only within the church itself, but throughout society as a whole.

Among other things, the pronouncement constitutes reckless endangerment of innocent lives. A U.S. government study reveals that gay and lesbian youths already account for nearly one-third of all teen-age suicides, and are three times as likely as non-gay adolescents to attempt suicide. And it tells us that the disproporti-

tion is directly traceable to society's misguided and already-profound hostility toward homosexuals.

Now the Vatican suggests in effect that even this lethal level of animus is insufficient, and needs further aid and abetment from the church and public bodies.

DESPITE ITS supposed dedication to "traditional family," the pronouncement almost certainly will unravel countless family ties. Statistics tell us that one family in four has a gay or lesbian member of its immediate household. All too frequently, it's a youngster, rejected by parents ignorant of the true facts of homosexuality, and thereby set on a path to substance abuse, homelessness

and general despair.

Now, the Vatican says, such virulent ignorance and its consequent disruption of families, should be not only applauded but reinforced by official government sanction.

There is a ray of light in this dismal scenario. Most U.S. Catholics simply don't buy the Vatican pitch. A Gallup poll last spring showed that 78 percent of American Catholics favor equal job opportunities for gay and lesbian people, up 20 percent since 1978. And a letter to parishioners from U.S. bishops last year called on "all Christians and citizens of good will to confront their own fears about

Catholic priest who heads the Center for Homophobia Education in New York. He says the new Vatican statement "unfortunately panders to some of the most primitive myths and stereotypes about homosexual people."

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The plight of Mary Griffith, a California mother of four, is a case in point. She used to belong to a Presbyterian church that preached the hard line on homosexuality. She blames the church, and her former unquestioning acceptance

Bobby was gay, and he believed his family and his church when they told him he could and must alter his sexual orientation through prayer and religious counseling. After four anguished years of an effort biologically predestined to failure, he threw himself from a pedestrian overpass into the path of a semi-trailer.

MARY GRIFFITH is determined to atone for her son's death by helping other parents avoid the same tragic trap.

"All we had to do was say, 'we love you, Bobby, and we accept

Cligion of others is risky business. The sanctity of personal belief and faith is an important part of the foundation of any decent society.

But private spirituality and organized churchdom are distinctly different matters. And silence itself becomes risky when a religious body acts in a way that threatens the lives of children and the stability of families.

So it is that one of the more incredible documents in religious history, issued by perhaps the world's most powerful and influential religious hierarchy, merits critical examination. Incredibly, it endorses bigotry against fully one-tenth of our country's population.

I refer to a recent statement by the Vatican, sent to all U.S. Catholic bishops in late June. It affirmatively endorses discrimina-

tion against lesbians and gay men in such areas as housing, hiring, health benefits and the military. It says governments should deny certain privileges to gay people to promote the traditional family and protect society. And it tells the bishops they have a responsibility to press the discrimination policy not only within the church itself, but throughout society as a whole.

Among other things, the pronouncement constitutes reckless endangerment of innocent lives. A U.S. government study reveals that gay and lesbian youths already account for nearly one-third of all teen-age suicides, and are three times as likely as non-gay adolescents to attempt suicide. And it tells us that the dispropor-

tion is directly traceable to society's misguided and already-profound hostility toward homosexuals.

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MARY GRIFFITH is determined to atone for her son's death by helping other parents avoid the same tragic trap.

"All we had to do was say, 'we love you, Bobby, and we accept you,' and I know Bobby would be here today," she says. "Part of me wanted to reach out and tell him, 'you're fine just the way you are.'

"I know now that he was fine just the way he was. But I didn't listen to my own conscience, because of what the church was telling me."

Which is it, America: the conscience of a loving parent, or the call to hate by a misguided religious bureaucracy?

* * * * *
* Part of the cost of mailing this newsletter *
* was defrayed by JAY ASHER our first *
* advertiser! (see enclosure) Jay is a *
* committed friend to gay and lesbian youth *
* and to P-FLAG. * * * * *

Robert A. Bernstein, a retired law professor, is vice president of the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays.



P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

Telephone (713) 867-9020

September 1992

MEETING OCT. 4

Our speaker will be Chris Bacon, president of the Houston Gay and Lesbian Caucus. Chris is a highly-respected voice in Houston's gay and lesbian community. A Harvard graduate and a lawyer with a prominent law firm, he is vice president of the Bar Association for Human Rights, composed of gay and lesbian attorneys.

Chris will talk about the legal issues that gays and lesbians face today.

Small group discussions are the heart of every P-FLAG meeting. Families and friends of gays and lesbians, gay men, and lesbians are cordially invited to join in the journey of learning, understanding, and love.

HOLIDAY PARTY Dec. 6

SAVE THE DATE!!
INVITE YOUR FAMILY AND
FRIENDS

Regular meeting date, but a PARTY, with a meal, entertainment, and plenty of time to mingle.

Details in next newsletter.

CALENDAR

Oct. 4 P-FLAG Meeting
2 PM, IntraCare
7601 Fannin

YOU'RE INVITED

to a

MOVIE/FUND-RAISER/PARTY
all in one night!

The MOVIE:

Torch Song Trilogy

3 episodes in the life of a young gay New Yorker, dealing with friends, lovers, and a mother. "Funny, sad, and thought-provoking," says one P-FLAGer. "It leaves people feeling good--and it's a great discussion starter."

The PLACE:

1020 West Cottage
in the Heights
home of a P-FLAG member
maps at Oct. meeting,
or call 880-1264
for directions

The DATE:

Saturday, Oct. 17
7:30 PM

The COST:

\$ 6 individual
\$10 for couple

SNACKS, SOFT DRINKS

Bring beer or wine if
you wish.

Hosts request: No smoking

PLAN NOW FOR NOVEMBER MEETING

"COMING HOME FOR THE
HOLIDAYS"

In "Coming Home for the Holidays," we will focus on the upcoming holiday season, which often intensifies emotions within the family.

Is this the first Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, or Christmas that you or your son or daughter has been "out"? Do you plan to break the news

In early 1993, we plan to present a follow-up program, focusing on siblings of lesbians and gays and the issues that they deal with.

P-FLAG NATIONAL CONVENTION Sept. 3-6, 1993 NEW ORLEANS

Pat and I attended P-FLAG's national convention in Seattle over Labor Day Weekend. There we met hundreds of heroes--men and women from across the nation who are proclaiming the message that "OUR KIDS ARE OKAY, JUST THE WAY THEY ARE." Many are at work in their communities every day, helping to transform homophobic attitudes.

We felt affirmed, inspired, and energized. Truly, it was a world turned upside down--and a vision of what our society can be--where our gay sons and daughters are loved, respected, and appreciated.

Over and over again, Pat and I wished for our friends in Houston P-FLAG to be there. "I wish ____ could have heard that speaker," or "____ would have loved that workshop," or "I can't wait to tell ____ about what the chapter in Phoenix is doing."

We'll be sharing some of what we learned through articles in this newsletter. Meanwhile, we urge you to put LABOR DAY WEEKEND, 1993, on your calendar. You owe it to yourself to experience the joy and sense of community. Next year, with the convention in New Orleans, we hope to have

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Details in next newsletter.

CALENDAR

Oct. 4	P-FLAG Meeting 2 PM, IntraCare 7601 Fannin
Oct. 11	National Coming Out Day
Oct. 15	Board Meeting Stuart's home
Oct. 17	P-FLAG MOVIE NIGHT (see related article)
Nov. 1	P-FLAG Meeting
Dec. 6	P-FLAG Holiday Party Food, festivity, socializing, sharing

MOVIE/FUND-RAISER/PARTY all in one night!

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In "Coming Home for the Holidays," we will focus on the upcoming holiday season, which often intensifies emotions within the family.

Is this the first Thanksgiving, Hanukkah, or Christmas that you or your son or daughter has been "out"? Do you plan to break the news to someone in the family during the holidays? Are you wondering how to respond to a new gay partner in the family--or a non-gay spouse who isn't supportive?

A panel of P-FLAGers and their friends who have dealt with past holidays will share what they have learned, and in our small groups we'll discuss individual concerns.

Parents, invite your non-gay children to this meeting. Lesbians and gay men, invite your brothers and sisters and parents.

continued

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Sept. 3-6, 1993

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Gail Rickey

CELEBRATING FAMILY



NEW ORLEANS STYLE

Y'all Come...

COMING OUT

A Gay Man Addresses His Family and His Friends

Coming Out is a process--and a challenge--for the families of gays and lesbians as well as for those who are gay.

Mike Comeaux shares excerpts from a letter he recently wrote to his family.

Dear Family,

NOW THAT YOU ALL KNOW ...that I'm gay...and that you are the parent/brother/sister/friend of a gay man, what does this mean to you?

I would encourage you to talk about it with a support system. You can always ask me questions. I'm here to give (and receive) support, but also I recognize that there is a closet where we hide secrets that want to breathe fresh air, and that this is one of them. I stayed in one for ten years, and it almost killed me.

I would actually appreciate it if you talked about it at work, and at social occasions, if you answered all of the people slamming homosexuals and blaming the problems of the world on gays and lesbians. It takes courage in the midst of a "fag joke" to say, "My brother is gay." I've found that nothing eats at me more than NOT speaking up for any underclass being slammed.

To gays and lesbians, Mike write about the inner voice that leads to self-discovery --and coming out.

GOD CALLS YOU OUT!!

by Mike Comeaux

Remember that "little voice"? You know, the one you were supposed to listen to, the one that would tell you what was right and what was wrong...what was evil and what was good...what was black and what was white. Some call it conscience. Some call it intuition. Some call it the voice of God.

Let's call it, for now, the voice of truth. Forget, for

OPEN HOUSE AT HIPY HOUSE

HIPY, the Houston Institute for the Protection of Youth, has opened a residence to serve the needs of runaway and "throwaway" gay youth.

You're invited to OPEN HOUSE on Sunday, Oct. 4, following the P-FLAG meeting (till 6 PM).

Several P-FLAGERS do volunteer work for HIPY. Currently the organization is seeking volunteer tutors. On-going needs are for clothing, food, and office supplies.

GAYS, LESBIANS, AND THE BIBLE

Six-week study offered

by MCCR

Sept. 24, Oct. 1, 8, 15, 22, 29

7 PM--9 PM

MCCR Fellowship Hall

1919 Decatur

This is the class that the Rev. Carolyn Mobley and the Rev. Ralph Lasher, our speakers in July, told us about.

If you missed the first session, you can still participate in the rest of the series. Several P-FLAGERS plan to attend.

Rev. Lasher and Rev. Ruby Grammer will discuss the Scripture passages in the Old and New Testaments that are traditionally used to condemn homosexuality.

FAMILY MEMBER GRIEF GROUP

For Parents, Siblings, and Adult Children

Offered by Bering Methodist Tuesdays, Oct. 13-Nov. 17

6:30 PM--8 PM

Bering Counseling Center
1440 Harold Street

SHAMAN'S CIRCLE

Gay Gatherings

Fall, 1992

Shaman's Circle, based in Austin, brings together gay people "to share our collective energy in empowering ourselves and each other--and thereby enriching our world."

Upcoming Weekend Gatherings:

Oct. 2-4

Reunion: Bonds between
gays, bisexuals, non-gays

Oct. 30-Nov. 1

THANKS

** to the 17 volunteers who devoted an entire Saturday to participating in a training session for group leaders

** to Mary Egert--a loyal P-FLAGER--who developed, organized, and led the training session

** to P-FLAG members who say YES when asked to talk to community groups. Recent speakers include Beth D., Carole, Walt and Lou, Corrine and Jerry, Barbara W., Alida, and Pat and Gail.

** to Joy Ganther, who took on the herculean job of applying for non-profit status for P-FLAG. Since January, Joy has spent a multitude of hours researching, filling in forms, and following up on the process.

** to John Ganther, the friendly voice on the phone who faithfully calls to remind P-FLAGERS of meetings.

** to Arden, who now shares the telephone duty, calling our expanding list of new members and visitors.

** To Mike Comeaux who represented P-FLAG on After Hours, a radio program aired live from midnight till 3 AM.

"What would happen if Phyllis Schlafly went to a P-FLAG meeting?" the hosts asked Mike, in reference to news reports that Schlafly's son recently came out as gay.

"First of all, we'd give her a hug," answered Mike.

** to our BOARD MEMBERS, who attend monthly meetings and cheerfully handle many of the details of running a rapidly-growing organization.

USA TODAY

"I hope my father and brother understand that the party they're working with could mean I could lose my job, other people could lose their jobs

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Let's call it, for now, the voice of truth. Forget, for now, that as life becomes more complex as we age, right versus wrong becomes a bit more fuzzy. Forget that black and white are both good, and so are all the grays in between. (Remember that we deal mainly with the grays in between.)

Let's get to the true voice. What does it say to you, here, now?

In dealing with sexuality and spirituality, many different voices, layer upon layer, seek to snuff out the

continued, p. 4

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Oct. 2-4

Reunion: Bonds between
gays, bisexuals, non-gays
Oct. 30-Nov. 1

Spirit: Adventures in
the web of life

Nov. 13-15

Rebirth: Pathways of
transformation

Shaman Circle founder, Michael Ganther, is the son of P-FLAGers John and Joy Ganther. Michael invites anyone associated with P-FLAG to participate in these gatherings at a reduced rate of \$125. "We operate on a very generous sliding scale beyond that," says Michael.

For more information, call 800-828-1279 or 512-495-9737.

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USA TODAY

"I hope my father and brother understand that the party they're working with could mean I could lose my job, other people could lose their jobs just because they're lesbian and gay, and that's scary."

— Diane Mosbacher, a lesbian and daughter of Robert Mosbacher, President Bush's chief fund-raiser, in The Washington Post

Diane was recently interviewed on a TV news program. Pointing out that gay-related hate crimes are up 30 percent this year, she labeled the rhetoric of the Republic National Convention "mean-spirited and dangerous."

"The problem is that every family has a relative who is gay or lesbian," said Diane. "We are your family."



P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

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October 1992

MEETING NOVEMBER 1

"Coming Home for the Holidays" focuses on the upcoming holiday season, addressing issues that are often raised in families with gay and lesbian members.

A panel of P-FLAGers and P-FLAG friends who have successfully dealt with these issues will share what they've learned.

Panel members will include parents of gays and lesbians, lesbians who have raised children, and a gay father. Mart Egert will be the moderator.

Small group discussions, which are the heart of P-FLAG meetings, will follow.

ELECTION OF OFFICERS

The nominating committee will present its slate of officers for 1993.

OIL PAINTING TO BE RAFFLED

A fine painting, 40" X 28", has been donated by Stuart Kane to raffle as a fundraiser. If you've always wanted a painting of Texas bluebonnets carpeting a pastoral landscape, this is your chance! The painting will be on view at the November meeting. Raffle tickets are \$2 for one ticket, for three tickets.

CALENDAR

Nov. 1 P-FLAG meeting
2 PM, IntraCare

*** HOLIDAY GALA ***

A festive gathering at the elegant Jags restaurant, owned by Houston's most famed caterer, Jackson Hicks.

Refreshments will be catered by the "Prince of Parties" himself.

Entertainment will be provided by talented P-FLAG musicians.

WHAT: Holiday party

WHEN: Sunday, Dec. 6
2 PM-4 PM
(regular meeting date and time)

WHERE: Jags, 5120 Woodway
(near corner of Sage; in Decorative Center)

WHY: To celebrate our friendships, to strengthen our circle, AND to raise funds for P-FLAG's work

WHO'S INVITED:

You, your family, and friends
(Parents, invite your gay AND non-gay children.)

COST: \$10 per person
(Larger contributions accepted.)

GIFT GIVING: You'll have an opportunity to donate cash to provide necessities for young people at HIPPY House--dedicated to serving gay youth.

VISITOR TO P-FLAG PRAISES PARENTS

We were very glad to welcome the son of P-FLAG parents and their son's partner to our Sept. meeting. Recently the partner wrote to us.

"I've wanted to write you for weeks to let you know how much I enjoyed the P-FLAG meeting. I'm really glad that our visit to Houston coincided with the meeting time. Paul and I were both pleased by how many nice people and good attitudes we encountered that day.

"Although I understand P-FLAG is primarily a support/action group for parents and friends, it seems that it is beneficial to have members' children and others from the gay/lesbian community visit your meetings. It seems to add a fullness that might otherwise be lacking. I have nothing but praise for...the many parents who take that difficult step of attending their first meeting.

"On another note, I sent the letters concerning Proposition 9. Paul and I pulled seven addresses from the hat that day and I've sent one letter to each."

(Editor's note: P-FLAG's membership includes many gay men and lesbians as well as parents and friends of lesbians and gays. P-FLAG parents agree that the involvement of gays and lesbians with the chapter promotes understanding and acceptance.)

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Nov. 11	Board Meeting/ (Wed.) Dinner; 6:30 PM Rickey's home
Dec. 6	HOLIDAY PARTY at JAGS 5120 Woodway (Sage) in Decorative Center 2 PM-4 PM (see related article AND reservation form)
Jan. 10	P-FLAG meeting IntraCare

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HIPY House--dedicated to
serving gay youth,
especially those who are
HIV+ and have been thrown
out of their homes.

ADDED ATTRACTION: Stuart
Kane, a loyal P-FLAGer, has
donated an oil painting
valued at more than \$200
for us to raffle.

Tickets go on sale at Nov.
meeting and will also be
sold at the Holiday Gala.
The drawing will be
during Gala.

BE THERE!!

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(Editor's note: P-FLAG's membership includes many gay men and lesbians as well as parents and friends of lesbians and gays. P-FLAG parents agree that the involvement of gays and lesbians with the chapter promotes understanding. Proposition 9 that the writer refers to is the measure that calls for discrimination against homosexuals, now on the ballot in Oregon. At our Sept. meeting, we invited P-FLAGers to voice their concerns by writing Letters to the Editor to newspapers in Oregon.)

KEEPING FAMILIES TOGETHER

RELIGION'S RESPONSE TO GAYS AND LESBIANS

Lutherans Concerned/North America (LC/NA) is an organization of lesbian, gay and non-gay Christians who are working to foster a climate of understanding, justice and reconciliation among all women and men, regardless of their affectional orientation.

The ministry is twofold: first, it offers a place of support and sanctuary for lesbian/gay and bisexual Lutherans who feel alienated from the church. Second, it seeks to be an advocate within the Lutheran church. Lutherans Concerned is most active in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the most moderate and the largest (6 million) Lutheran church in the U.S.

One of the exciting programs of LC/NA is to identify Lutheran congregations which engage in inclusive ministry with lesbian/gay individuals. These congregations are honored as "Reconciled in Christ" (RIC) churches. Similar programs are the "More Light" Presbyterian and "Reconciling" Methodist congregations.

There are now over 70 congregations, five ELCA synods, and the Lutheran Student Movement that have passed statements of affirmation and inclusiveness and are RIC churches. Two in Texas are the First English Lutheran Church in Austin and St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Fort Worth.

The year 1995 will be important for the ELCA and Lutherans Concerned because of an ELCA Social Statement on Sexuality that will be voted on by the ELCA National Assembly. In preparation, ELCA churches have been engaged in extensive study and discussion. A study guide was produced and distributed to all local congregations. Two LC/NA members were on the committee that wrote the

Anyone interested in helping to form a Houston chapter is encouraged to call Jim in Houston (973-1910) or Keith Miller, regional representative, in Fort Worth (817-924-3966).

"The next two years are going to be exciting and demanding for Lutherans Concerned as the ELCA makes major decisions concerning lesbians/gays in 1995," writes a spokesman in Fort Worth. "We need all the support we can get."

This article was supplied by the Fort Worth chapter of Lutherans Concerned.

WANTED:

BEAUMONT PARENTS OF GAYS AND LESBIANS

We've gotten numerous requests from the Beaumont area for a P-FLAG chapter. "We really need a group here, not only to help parents but to help teenagers understand," said one caller.

All it takes is a one or two parents who are willing to start the ball rolling. If you know of anyone living in the area who might be interested, let us know.

I'M OKAY NOW I DON'T NEED P-FLAG ANYMORE

That's good news, and we are truly happy for you. But P-FLAG still needs your help in bringing others up to your level of understanding and comfort.

You are invaluable in our rap groups when you listen and talk with troubled parents. Gay and lesbian people whose own parents may be less than accepting look at you and see hope.

With your active participation, our chapter can have an impact on the general public. You can be an ambassador of support and good information in many ways, some large, some small. Parents can make a difference!

In reality, the larger battle is not yet won. Our coming out process is never completely over. It is life-long. And homophobia will not be eradicated soon.

Originally printed in San Diego P-FLAG newsletter; reprinted from Phoenix P-FLAG newsletter

GAY AND LESBIAN STUDENTS, TEACHERS SOUGHT TO WRITE FOR LITERARY ANTHOLOGY

The co-editor of a new literary project seeks gay and lesbian students and teachers to write about their

working with lesbian and gay students, lesbians and student organizations, homophobic or non-homophobic encounters with administrators or parents, innovative and inclusive curriculum, etc.

the church. Second, it seeks to be an advocate within the Lutheran church. Lutherans Concerned is most active in the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA), the most moderate and the largest (6 million) Lutheran church in the U.S.

One of the exciting programs of LC/NA is to identify Lutheran congregations which engage in inclusive ministry with lesbian/gay individuals. These congregations are honored as "Reconciled in Christ" (RIC) churches. Similar programs are the "More Light" Presbyterian and "Reconciling" Methodist congregations.

There are now over 70 congregations, five ELCA synods, and the Lutheran Student Movement that have passed statements of affirmation and inclusiveness and are RIC churches. Two in Texas are the First English Lutheran Church in Austin and St. Matthew Lutheran Church in Fort Worth.

The year 1995 will be important for the ELCA and Lutherans Concerned because of an ELCA Social Statement on Sexuality that will be voted on by the ELCA National Assembly. In preparation, ELCA churches have been engaged in extensive study and discussion. A study guide was produced and distributed to all local congregations. Two LC/NA members were on the committee that wrote the document and helped make it a very honest and objective document. (Copies are available for postage and handling. Write Division for Church and Society, ELCA, 8765 West Higgins Rd., Chicago, IL 60631; 312-380-2719)

At this time, Fort Worth has the only chapter of Lutherans Concerned in Texas. A chapter in Dallas disbanded when two of its leaders died of AIDS. Several years ago, there was an active chapter in Houston.

continued

This article was supplied by the Fort Worth chapter of Lutherans Concerned.

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The co-editor of a new literary project seeks gay and lesbian students and teachers to write about their experiences. "We welcome submissions from any teacher or student with a story to tell about being lesbian, gay, or bisexual at a school or university. Anonymity will, of course, be protected if needed."

"We are looking for personal writing, narratives about experience in school, stories about a particular moment in class, a course, coming out, an important book or significant teacher,

working with lesbian and gay students, lesbians and student organizations, homophobic or non-homophobic encounters with administrators or parents, innovative and inclusive curriculum, integrating personal and professional life--vivid descriptive writing that renders the experience of being gay or lesbian in school at a certain time and in a certain place. We welcome drafts of 6-15 pages, poems, and are happy to work with writers on revisions. Our deadline is Nov. 15."

Call Ellen Hart at 408-287-0177, or write her at Cowell College, University of Calif. at Santa Cruz, Santa Cruz, CA 95064.

What a Difference a Gay Makes

On a spring afternoon in a simple hotel room in Rome, I began the journey from being one of the majority to being a majority of one.

That afternoon, I learned that my son was gay.

I love my son dearly. And it has been easy. He is bright, handsome, popular, and well educated. He is at home in the crowd. He is a member of the acceptable, popular, righteous majority. He is of the "right", "strong" gender. He smiles a lot. When he is angry, he can express it. He works hard knowing the value of the sweat ethic. He has excellent taste, knowing the value of refinement. He is a good friend, knowing the worth of being trusted and trusting.

That Roman afternoon, I began to learn about being a minority, an outsider, apart. I began to realize that I had prized in my sons mainly those ideas which society valued and which makes one an insider. I had overlooked or misunderstood qualities which are diverse and which make a unique and special person.

That Roman afternoon, I began also to learn how afraid I had been to stand apart from the crowd. How afraid I've been of being wrong in the eyes of one and many. How afraid I've been to be me, a diverse, growing, dying, learning, forgetting, spiritual organism called a human being.

My son has taught me to be a majority of one. He has taught me in words and deeds about courage. He has taught me how to stand apart from a crowd when I can not belong. He has taught me to act when that crowd is wrong.

What a difference a gay makes!

Keith Froehlich

Reprinted from Los Angeles P-FLAG newsletter; originally printed in P-FLAG Palm Springs newsletter.

Sexual Preference? by Gaye Deas

Scorned by hatred that wasn't earned,
For a sexuality born, not learned.
Can't you tell me that I'm okay?
Can't you love me even though I'm gay?
God in His wisdom must have known
That I'd travel much of this journey alone.

Scorned by hatred that was incurred
For a sexuality born, not preferred.

The mother who held me close to her breast,
Who gave me comfort, a place to rest,

Now looks at me with disgust.
Where can I turn? Whom can I trust?

Scorned by hatred that wasn't earned
For a sexuality born, not learned.

They say it's my preference, but what I'd prefer:
Just to be a him in love with a her.

Not having to hide my true self from my friend,
If they knew my secret, would our friendship end?

Scorned by hatred that was incurred
For a sexuality born, not preferred.

I have my own child, to marry my wife,
These things may never be part of my life.

To have the world know God does love me, too;
To enjoy the same laws and privileges as you.

Scorned by hatred that wasn't earned
For a sexuality born, not learned.

Reprinted from The Banner, published by New Orleans P-FLAG.

"When I received this poem, I assumed that it was written by a young lesbian," writes the Banner editor. "I was struck with admiration when I learned that it was, instead, her mother who had the insight and empathy to write it."

gender. He knows a lot. When he is angry, he can express it. He works hard knowing the value of the sweat ethic. He has excellent taste, knowing the value of refinement. He is a good friend, knowing the worth of being trusted and trusting.

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MISSION STATEMENT PARENTS AND FRIENDS OF GAYS AND LESBIANS 1992

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, and bisexual persons, their families, and friends through:

Support, to cope with an adverse society;

Education, to enlighten an ill-informed public;

Advocacy, to end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

P-FLAG provides opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human beings.

*The following reflection is written by
P-FLAG member Mike Comeaux.*

Sometimes I think it's just too much work.
Why deal with religion at all? Most churches
have stated publicly that they do not want
you or me (gays or lesbians); a couple (of
churches) have recently voted to maintain
their exclusion of honest, practicing
homosexuals from ordained ministry.

How dare we consider ourselves children of God!
That would mean that we matter.
Well, fact is, we do. WE DO MATTER!

*Mike's reflection led him to write down
his beliefs about God, expressing them
in his personal creed.*

CREED of John Michael Comeaux

I believe in a God of compassion,
a God of open arms,
always inviting, always calling me back,
always reminding me that I am loved.

I believe God is the ultimate man,
from whom I glean physical strength,
a thinking, rational mind,
a desire to instruct others, and to be listened to.

I believe God is the ultimate woman,
from whom I gain emotional fortitude,
a caring, loving, compassionate heart,
a desire to communicate and share with
and learn from others, a listener.

I am not afraid of the loins of the man-God,
nor the breasts of the woman-God,
for through both I am given a soul,
the breath of life, and the
nourishment which sustains life.

I believe God is more than the man-God
and more than the woman-God.
God is a Rock, a Fortress, a Comfort,
a Shepherd, a Light-in-Darkness.
MY Rock. My Fortress. My comfort.
My Shepherd. My Light-in-Darkness.
My Partner in creating a more just world,
walking with me, letting me know which path
to choose just now.

I believe God has always spoken and worked through
human beings, most of whom never received the
recognition of sainthood through the official institution.
Jesus did receive utmost recognition at the
inception of the church (though not at the end of
his life). Most prophets did not. Ezekiel, Jeremiah,
Isaiah...were listened to by only a few at first.

Prophets exist today. Martin Luther was a prophet.
Martin Luther King was a prophet. Sojourner
Truth was a prophet. None were listened to
by those to whom they spoke; in fact, they
were labeled heretical because their message
challenged the comfort of those in power.

I believe I am called to be a prophet, as is each one
reading this creed. We each hold a piece of the truth.
The only way to build the household of God is to listen
to, acknowledge, learn from those pieces, and then,
put the pieces together.

I believe that the Church is the People of God. As such,
and in our prophetic role, we are called to call the
hierarchy/institution to growth, and the institution
is called to listen. Only then can we build the City
of God, and the institutional church, which has so
often been guilty of promulgating injustice, intolerance,
and condemnation will become a church
which brings about and restores peace, justice,
and healing.

I believe that one day the wolf will lie down with the lamb,
and the powerful will not devour the small.
I believe it is my duty to work for that day.

I believe love is the way to growth,
and fear is the way we die.



P-FLAG FLYER

P.O. Box 692444

Houston, Texas 77269-2444

Telephone (713) 867-9020

November 1992

MEETING = PARTY! DECEMBER 6

Our December gathering is a party at JAGS restaurant, located in the Decorative Center at 5120 Woodway. We'll have food and beverages served by Houston's most celebrated caterer--Jackson Hicks, entertainment by comedian Mary Anne Pendino, holiday music by several talented P-FLAGers and their friends, and time for socializing.

Special guests will include Michael Ganther, son of P-FLAGers Joy and John Ganther and founder of Shaman's Circle in Austin.

This is a GREAT time to bring family and friends, whether they've ever been to a P-FLAG meeting or not. We'd especially like to encourage siblings of gays and lesbians to come, and we'll give them a chance to meet each other.

The cost of admission is \$10 per person. Larger contributions are gratefully accepted. Our top priority is providing a supportive environment for our P-FLAG family, so if the specified cost will keep you away, call Gail (440-0353) and she'll be glad to make arrangements for you to attend.

The party is being generously underwritten by Jackson Hicks and by an anonymous P-FLAG "angel." Their love and caring are

You can pin a gift of cash on a holiday tree at the party. The money will be used by residents of HIPPY House for basic needs.

ADDED ATTRACTION!!

Win an oil painting of Texas bluebonnets carpeting a pastoral landscape.

The 40" X 28" painting has been donated by Stuart Kane, a pillar of Houston P-FLAG.

Raffle tickets are \$2 for one ticket, \$5 for three tickets.

Proceeds will be used to support the work of our chapter.

P-FLAG 1993 BOARD ALREADY AT WORK

P-FLAG Houston's 1993 officers and board members met on November 7 to build plans and dream dreams for our chapter.

Enthusiasm was high as we talked about our group's potential.

At our Jan. 10 meeting, you can meet the new board and hear about our plans and aspirations.

New board positions include the following:

Membership
Publicity
Community Education
Advocacy
HIV/AIDS Concerns
Helpline
Hospitality/Social
Homophobia Workshop
(community event to be launched in 1994)

* NO NEWSLETTER *
* IN DECEMBER *



One of our major goals for 1993 is to increase P-FLAG's visibility in the community. We're open to your ideas, input, help, and participation!

Gail Rickey
co-president

CALENDAR

Dec. 6 Holiday Party

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The party is being generously underwritten by Jackson Hicks and by an anonymous P-FLAG "angel." Their love and caring are enabling our chapter to raise money for our work of supporting families and friends of lesbians and gays, community education, and advocacy to help wipe out discrimination.

GIFT GIVING**

During this season of gift giving, we have designated HIPY House as the recipient of our sharing this year. HIPY works with gay and lesbian youth, especially those who are HIV+ and/or have been thrown out of their homes.

on a holiday tree at the party. The money will be used by residents of HIPY House for basic needs.

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CALENDAR

Dec. 6 Holiday Party
 at JAGS
 5120 Woodway (at Sage)
 2 PM-4 PM
 (see related article;
 reservation form on
 back of red invitation)

Jan. 10 P-FLAG Meeting
 2 PM, IntraCare
 7601 Fannin

Jan. 21 Board Meeting
 7:15 PM
 Alida's home

Feb. 7 P-FLAG Meeting
 2 PM, IntraCare

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co-president



from P-FLAG
Grand Rapids

THE POWER OF THE AIDS MEMORIAL QUILT

Numerous Houstonians traveled to Washington for the display of the AIDS Memorial Quilt this past October.

Dolores and Jerry McCall from the Houston NAMES Project were prominent among Houston's representation.

We asked the McCalls, who are good friends of P-FLAG, to share their experience with our readers.

The first time that we saw the Quilt was in Washington, D.C., on Oct. 6, 1989. We had come to add our son's panel to the Quilt. The sight that we saw was completely overwhelming.

It was a beautiful weekend. The Quilt's 10,848 panels were laid out on the Ellipse in front of the White House.

We tried to do other sightseeing, but we found ourselves hurrying back to the Quilt. It was hard to leave. The power of the Quilt overtook us.

Since then, we have been volunteers with the AIDS Memorial Quilt. Our trip to Washington in October was not what we wanted, weatherwise. There was rain Friday and Sunday, making the grounds wet and soggy. This prevented us from displaying all of the Quilt as we would have liked to have done.

The crowd was huge. We could hardly move at times. People were concerned with the safety of their loved ones' panels, due to the weather.

All of us volunteers worked hard to protect the Quilt from the water and mud. Dolores and I had to close some of our sections and return a few of the panels to their boxes.

There was tension felt by all volunteers. We wanted to protect the Quilt--all 20,064 panels. The weather had dampened our spirits.

However, on Monday morning, Dolores and I were having breakfast before leaving for home. A couple from Florida

just two. How many more people went home wanting to do volunteer work?

We're sorry to report that over 2,000 new panels were turned in during this display. We're also sorry that among the leaders of our country who viewed the Quilt, the President of the United States was not one of them.

Our work is not done. As the Quilt grows, it becomes more difficult to display in its entirety. But we must continue--because in its entirety is its power and impact.

Jerry & Dolores McCall

USA Today reports that the quilt represents only 13% of all U.S. AIDS deaths and 2% worldwide. Without walkways, the size of the quilt in its entirety is equal to eight football fields.

"Each time a person stands up for an ideal or acts to improve the lot of others ...he (she) sends forth a tiny ripple of hope. And crossing each other from a million different centers of energy and daring those ripples build a current that can sweep down the mightiest walls of oppression and resistance."

Robert Kennedy

VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT TO SPEAK TO SCHOOL GROUPS IN AIDS EDUCATION PROJECT

PIONEERING AUTHOR IN HUMAN SEXUALITY, GAY and LESBIAN ISSUES To Speak At Fundraisers For HATCH

Dr. Charles Silverstein, fellow of the American Psychological Association and author of numerous publications, will speak at a series of functions, Dec. 4-6.

THE SPEAKER:

Dr. Silverstein, widely recognized in psychological circles as an expert in sexology, with a concentration in the area of human sexual behavior, especially in response to culture and environment

THE EVENTS:

Dec. 4--Cocktail reception
7 PM-9 PM

Crossroads Bookstore
610 W. Alabama
\$10 admission

Dec. 5--Workshop for mental health professionals
10 AM-2 PM

First UU Church
5200 Fannin
\$35 fee

(Reservations: 942-7002)

Dec. 5--Dinner Party
home of Hal Coley
4527 W. Alabama
\$100 per person

(Reservations: 942-7002)

FUNDS TO BENEFIT:

HATCH, a support group for gay and lesbian youth (ages 16-21) who meet for presentations on self-empowerment, problem-solving, suicide prevention and health issues. Carefully-screened adult volunteer facilitators provide support.

HOUSTON EDITOR SEEKS POEMS, SHORT STORIES FOR BOOK, OF LOVE AND PAIN

All of the entries will be by gays and lesbians, says

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There was tension felt by all volunteers. We wanted to protect the Quilt--all 20,064 panels. The weather had dampened our spirits.

However, on Monday morning, Dolores and I were having breakfast before leaving for home. A couple from Florida came up to us and said that they had never seen the Quilt before, and that the enormity of it had deeply touched them. They were returning home to do volunteer work--to do their part in combating this terrible disease.

The sun came out for Dolores and me. We had not failed, after all, even with the bad weather. The power of the quilt had once again done its job. The people who came up to us that morning were

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VOLUNTEERS SOUGHT TO SPEAK TO SCHOOL GROUPS IN AIDS EDUCATION PROJECT

Rex and Gloria King, whose son died from AIDS, head up a volunteer educational team that speaks to school groups about AIDS prevention.

The Kings are now seeking additional members for their team. Speaking engagements include classes of approximately 30 students.

If you can help, please call Rex and Gloria at 667-5301. No experience or specialized knowledge is necessary! The Kings will be glad to train you.

HOUSTON EDITOR SEEKS POEMS, SHORT STORIES FOR BOOK, OF LOVE AND PAIN

All of the entries will be by gays and lesbians, says Lance Caldwell, who contacted P-FLAG seeking editorial contributions. "This is an effort to join this population together for one common goal: the support of our own."

Lance notes that a portion of the proceeds from the sale of the book will be donated to AIDS hospices or to charities designated by the writers featured in the book.

Contact Lance at PO Box 8585, Houston, TX 77249-8585. You can also ask for information sheets at the Dec. and Jan. P-FLAG meetings.

"BEING GAY IS...

"Being gay is having the capability to love a member of the same sex to a much greater depth than a person of the opposite sex.

Being gay is a matter of love, not a matter of sex.

Being gay is who you are, not what you do.

Being gay is part of you, not a separate entity.

Being gay is being okay — the sin is living a lie.

Being gay is not chosen — if it were, there would be no gays.

Being gay is to be ridiculed about something you can do nothing about.

Being gay is not changeable — but it is liveable.

Being gay is accepting yourself when others are not accepting of you.

Being gay is being who you are — even though you don't understand it.

Being gay is gentleness, warmth and sensitivity, when you are not at war with the outside world.

Being gay is different, and the definition of different is not "bad".

Being gay is reaching the autumn of your years and wondering why you have spent most of your life trying to get acceptance from people who don't know you and who don't understand you.

Being gay is YOU — and nothing in this world is more important than that."

Shirley M. Hunter
(Copyright 1985)

Garth Brooks Takes a Brave Stand

The October 12, 1992 issue of Newsweek magazine featured an article on Garth Brooks, a big star in country-western music. Garth has a song on his new album called "The Chase" which is entitled "We Shall Be Free". The song has lyrics that say "when we are free to love anyone we choose, then we shall be free". Explaining the song, Garth said, "The way I remember it, traditional family values was encouraging children to be the best they can be. If your parents are black and white, if your parents are of the same sex, that's still traditional family values to me."

An article in the Los Angeles Times recently reported that the song was not getting the airplay that other songs of Garth's had, and so the song had not broken into the top ten of country-western music. Despite this, Jay Orr a reporter for the Nashville Banner newspaper said the fact that it received airplay at all shows a growth in country audiences' willingness to accept more socially themed lyrics. "I think it is a very positive thing for country music... that it can take in different points of view. Other artists have made overt statements, but they tended to be more right wing. . . . Five years ago, this song would have sounded radical."

headline event for our nation, for our children and friends, or for country western music. But it should not go unnoticed, because we need to honor the courage it takes to speak out - and in this case to sing out, against a world that can be cruel and discriminatory.

from P-FLAG Omaha newsletter



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Garth had expected a lot of anger from the religious community, but he has not received it. He did receive angry letters, and his response was that they always say, "[Gays] should be granted some rights" -- and it seems to be [only] the rights these people writing in think they should be allowed. Damn. I don't know where someone gets off telling human beings they can have some rights and not others."

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Newsweek said "this kind of progressive, topical songwriting coming from a rock or rap act, would be no big deal. But from Brooks, it is a revolution."

As caring parents and friends of lesbians and gays, we need to take heart in people like Garth Brooks who take "brave stands" on issues. It helps us to keep going and to keep our courage as we fight the everyday battles for the dignity of our children and friends. This song was not a

headline event for our nation, for our children and friends, or for country western music. But it should not go unnoticed, because we need to honor the courage it takes to speak out - and in this case to sing out, against a world that can be cruel and discriminatory.

from P-FLAG Omaha newsletter



LESBIAN SURVIVAL HINT #211:
WHEN THE TIME IS RIGHT TO
COME OUT, YOU'LL KNOW.

from P-FLAG
Grand Rapids

BECAUSE SHE IS MY CHILD
by Elise Self

In November, P-FLAG Houston was proud to welcome Elise Self to our meeting. She and her husband Jim live in Grants Pass, Oregon, where they have founded a P-FLAG chapter. In the following article, Elise shares with us the words that she read at a candlelight vigil that was held to call attention to the horrendously discriminatory Measure 9 on the Oregon ballot. The measure was defeated 57% to 43%, but the Selfs point out that work to combat hate-filled discrimination must continue.

BECAUSE SHE IS MY CHILD

She cannot be reduced to statistics, polls, stereotypes, nicknames, prejudice, opinions.

SHE IS MY CHILD.

I still have the same dreams. The details may have changed, but the dreams are the same: of happiness, love, children, home, family, meaningful work.

BECAUSE, YOU SEE, SHE IS MY CHILD.

She's not some monster to be feared, some pervert to be sneered at, some child molester, or convertor of adolescents.

SHE IS MY CHILD.

She's warm and caring and sensitive and vulnerable and angry and sad and funny and human.

YES, SHE IS MY CHILD.

She didn't drop from another planet to cause destruction and mayhem. She came from love between her father and me.

YES, SHE IS MY CHILD!

You will not harm her if I can prevent it. You will not hurt her.

SHE IS MY CHILD!

I join with every Black mother, every Jewish mother, every native American's mother, every Hispanic mother, every Asian mother, every disabled child's mother, every gay child's mother, and every mother whose child has known hatred and prejudice. And I say...

THEY ARE OUR CHILDREN, OUR VERY SPECIAL, PRECIOUS CHILDREN!

"WHY SHOULD I KEEP GOING TO THE MONTHLY MEETINGS? I'M DOING JUST FINE"

from New York P-FLAG

reprinted from Los Angeles and Grand Rapids P-FLAG newsletters

Exactly one day after my daughter made the oblique announcement to me that seemed to be saying she was a lesbian, I looked up "gay" in the phone book, found P-FLAG, and called. The following week I was at my first meeting and knew I had to join.

At that meeting, I related some of that important conversation my daughter and I had had. I told about my worry that I had let her down in my response, and my fear that her life from here on would be erratic, rootless, and difficult.

The other parents, without any attempt to sound like psychologists, enlightened and encouraged me. They relieved my guilt. And most important, the lesbians and gays me told me, in open discussion and one-to-one during the break, that many of their experiences paralleled my daughter's: going through career and social upsets while "coming out" to themselves. And they reassured me that I had not let her down.

I was given several very helpful pamphlets, but I knew they were not to substitute for the human contact I was to have. They were to help me frame further questions and reinforce

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I was given several very helpful pamphlets, but I knew they were not to substitute for the human contact I was to have. They were to help me frame further questions and reinforce all I was learning.

But gratitude for the help I received more than five years ago--and the wish to help other parents as I was helped--is only one reason I keep coming to meetings. Another big reason is that my lesbian daughter and I live many miles apart. The gays and lesbians who come to P-FLAG, whom I've come to know and consider friends, provide me with continuing insight that helps me understand my daughter though I can't be with her very much.

Some of my daughter's lesbian friends tell me their parents refused to have anything to do with them after they "came out." If any of the gay men and lesbians who come to our meetings are in that position, perhaps I fill a need for them.

I wish parents who need our meetings and haven't admitted it to themselves would give it a try. I wish I could tell them how un-awkward and immediately comfortable they would feel. I'd like to give them my personal welcome.

HOLIDAY *Happenings*

WHEN: Sunday, December 6, 1992
2:00 - 4:00 p.m.

WHERE: JAGS
5120 Woodway
(near corner of Sage
in Decorative Center)

COST: \$10.00 per person
suggested donation
(larger contributions
gratefully accepted)

WHO: Y'all come!
Members, Guests, Friends,
Family, Siblings, etc. etc.

*Parents And Friends
Of Lesbians And Gays*



Houston Chronicle
Section H
Sunday, July 12, 1992

Ben DeSoto / Chronicle

John David McDaniel, 28, right, "came out" to his mother, Ronalyn Hall, about 10 years ago. Both say their relationship is stronger than ever.

Some parents are stunned when they learn their children

FAMILY VIEWS

stunned when they learn their child is gay or lesbian. Others suspected but never dared ask. The revelation can break homes and hearts. But in the end, one parents' group says, what counts is love.

By BARBARA KARKABI
Houston Chronicle

On a hot morning in May, a 45-year-old woman from a small town in Georgia linked arms with a young gay activist in a downtown Houston park.

Nancy Rodriguez listened quietly as gay and lesbian activists announced the verdict that had just been handed down in the 1991 beating and stabbing death of her son, 27-year-old banker Paul Broussard.

Her stance was ramrod-straight, and her face had the composed, tight look of someone trying hard to control deeply felt emotions. Occasionally she pressed the hand of Scott Lewis, a member of the gay activist group Queer Nation who has become like a surrogate son, or touched a large college ring she wears on the third finger of her right hand. It was her son's ring. Rodriguez has not taken it off since his death.

In the year since Broussard was killed in a widely publicized "gay bashing" incident, his legacy has touched the lives of people who never even knew him. The shock of his killing has caused at least some parents of gays and lesbians to become more involved and to strengthen their relations with their children. It has brought home to parents, police and the general public how much at risk gays and lesbians are from anti-gay harassment.

"When I heard about his death, I thought, 'Oh, my God, that could have been my son,' "

FAMILY TIES



Robert Seale / Chronicle

The local P-FLAG chapter showed its colors in last month's Houston 1992 Lesbian/Gay Pride Parade in Montrose.

said Carole Miller, who has a gay son and a lesbian daughter. "I had already started to attend meetings . . . but this really motivated me to try and make a difference . . ."

Now Miller is vice president of the Houston chapter of the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, a national organization and support group that helps family members come to terms with their children's sexual orientation. Over the past year, the local P-FLAG group has begun to take a higher public profile, partly because of new leadership and partly because of the sadness and horror many parents felt at Broussard's death.

"We are not a cross section of parents. There are lots that we never see, who have thrown their children out or broken relations," said Gail Rickey, president of the Houston P-FLAG group. "Many of the parents we see are hurting and searching for answers but want to keep their relationships going with their children. Others have ac-

cepted and want to make things better for their own child and other children."

Rodriguez's search for answers and for justice has thrust the soft-spoken woman from Warner Robins, Ga., into a role she would never have imagined for herself. She has taken part in rallies, like the one that took place Saturday to commemorate her son's death, has made the long drive from her hometown to Houston more times than she cares to think, and has worked closely with local gay activists and the district attorney's office to hammer out an acceptable sentence for Jon Christopher Buice, 18, one of 10 young men accused in her son's death. Buice was accused of landing the fatal blow.

"I didn't decide to get involved. It just sort of happened," she said. "I'm doing it for my son — he can't be in the courtroom or in the marches, so I have to be there for him. If somewhere along the line it helps someone else's children not to (harass gays), he won't

have died in vain. There's enough problems in this world; we all need to learn to get along together."

In an interview in a downtown hotel room after the press conference announcing the 45-year prison sentence given to Buice after he pleaded guilty, Rodriguez described her emotions — relief at the stiff sentence, anger at her son's brutal slaying, sadness at the thought of a family atmosphere that might encourage gay bashing.

"I've been told you can't blame the parents. But they had to have been raised with some kind of prejudice," she said of the teens accused in the slaying. "I wasn't brought up that way. I was a GI brat, but you are taught to get along with everyone. I wasn't raised to hate people."

She admits it's been hard not to hate those charged with attacking her son with nail-studded boards and a knife about 3 a.m. on July 4, 1991, as he was leaving the gay

Support group helps parents come to terms

BY RAEQUEL ROBERTS
OF THE HOUSTON POST STAFF

I STOOD IN the shower and screamed. All I wanted in life was to be a good mother and here was living proof that I had failed at the most important thing to me in my whole life. I didn't know what I had done."

Sarah, a Houston mother, is recalling the day her daughter Anne told her she was a lesbian.

It wasn't a total shock, Sarah says. She and her husband, Jim, had always suspected something was different about their daughter, but it sent their family into a spin that they are only now recovering from, some two years later.

The couple, who prefer their real names not be used for fear of repercussions from neighbors and co-workers, credits the local chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, PFLAG, with helping them to better understand and accept their daughter.

PFLAG is an international federation — the federation's mailing list includes 17,000 households — that provides a support system for family and friends of gays, as well as counseling and education on homosexuality.

Parents join PFLAG hoping to get reassurance from other parents that their fears and prejudices toward homosexuality are not unique. Many grieve over the prospect of not having grandchildren. Others worry their children will get AIDS or be the victims of gay-bashing, and others are put off by the idea of homosexual sex.

Some find the group a perfect vent for the indignation they feel toward society's homophobic attitudes. All worry about their children's lives, particularly now that AIDS and gay-bashing are rampant.

"There is such a veil in our society over homosexuality," Sarah says, "that it was very important to find other parents to talk to . . . you are so hungry for comfort."

Carole Miller, the mother of one gay son and one lesbian daughter — and a straight son and daughter — says she attended her first meeting of PFLAG with no intentions of joining if it was "just a group of people moaning and groaning, poor me, my kid is gay."

She discovered PFLAG was an organization where parents were invited to participate on any level they chose.

"I wanted to go where I could do something and try to make a difference in people's understanding about this situation," she says. "I found I could be as active in PFLAG as I wanted to be."

Although there are no concrete statistics on the number of parents with gay



Susan Roden/The Houston Post

children, sociologists believe one out of 10 people, or 25 million Americans, is gay or lesbian.

Knowing there are so many parents out there who have gay children is comforting, says Jane Lobingier, a member of Houston's PFLAG whose daughter is a lesbian.

"The more numbers, the more effective we could be," she says. "There is a greater hope of eventually bringing about social justice."

Gail Rickey, president of the Houston chapter of PFLAG and mother of a lesbian, says the local chapter was started more than five years ago and now has about 70 members.

Today, the group meets monthly at a local hospital.

"We are open to anybody — lesbians, gays, parents, family, friends — anyone

in the community who is concerned about gay and lesbian issues," Rickey says. "Our logo is 'Our kids are fine just the way they are.'"

Rickey says she is not aware of anyone in their group whose child has committed suicide or been physically attacked but that it is a major concern of parents.

Many, she says, also worry about what kind of family life awaits their gay child. Who will take care of their children when they are old, the parents wonder, or when their child is sick?

One mother, whose son died from AIDS, says she too worried about this. But in the last weeks of her son's life, she found his friends as supportive as any family.

"They were so loving and caring," she tells the group.

Although Miller says she is now per-

fectly comfortable, she says, "It was easy."

Miller recalls reading a letter in California from a sexual. She expressed a desire to suicide.

"I was hysterical," she says.

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"I'll understand you again, how could he do that's when

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moment on."

Miller, who is most parents, went through it with her first.

"Then a father was pregnant. You cannot be the best she

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Parents come to terms with gay children



Susan Roden/The Houston Post



Carole Miller, who has a lesbian daughter and a gay son, says she joined Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays to help other parents understand their situation.

fectly comfortable with her children's lifestyle, that doesn't mean it has always been easy.

Miller recalls the terror she felt when reading a letter from her son, who lives in California, telling her he was homosexual. She remembers the sadness he expressed and how she worried he might resort to suicide.

"I was hysterical . . . not because he was gay, but because he couldn't face me," she recalls.

"The letter had such a down tone . . . 'I'll understand if you never want to talk to me again,' . . . I read that and thought how could he think such a thing and that's when I got upset and I called him.

"We've been fine with it from that moment on."

Miller, who is divorced, adds that like most parents of gay children, she still went through a period of guilt, particularly with her daughter, who came out first.

"Then a friend of mine, whose daughter was pregnant, called and I told her 'You cannot blame yourself for the fact she's pregnant. You brought her up to be the best she can be,' " Miller says.

"And I think at that point it clicked in and I realized I didn't do this to her. Accept it, she's living with it. You did not do this to her."

Lobingier, who learned her daughter was a lesbian nearly 20 years ago, says she had trouble, at first, telling others about her daughter.

"You are just not prepared to take the ugly things people say," she says. "I put

it off until I felt comfortable telling others."

Jim says he has gone through many stages in learning to accept his daughter's homosexuality.

"At first I told my daughter I think I can accept you, but I don't think I can accept a lesbian partner, but that was very early on," he says. "It was a big hurdle."

Many parents in PFLAG say they also struggle with their religious convictions — convictions that view homosexuality as a sin.

"The fact that organized religion does something, doesn't make it right or God's will," Sarah says, adding she and her husband have had long, "comforting" talks with their minister about their daughter's homosexuality. "It is wrong for individuals to have to choose between religion and a child."

Several parents in PFLAG say that as they've come to better understand their gay son or daughter they've taken comfort in knowing the secret burden their child has carried for so long, can now be lifted.

"Our daughter says she had no idea how it would change her self-esteem in telling us and being accepted," says one mother. "Her life is not as fragmented as it used to be. She says she wakes up every day with a realization about how much better she can feel about herself."

For more information on the Houston chapter of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, call 867-9020.

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Pride Committee of Houston

volume 3, number 7

august 1992

Pride Committee of Houston

by Carole Miller
P-FLAG, Houston

Sunday morning...June 28th... 10:30 a.m. Here I am, seated on a curb on Market Street in San Francisco surrounded by balloons, lawn chairs, people in various stages of dress and undress, and rainbow flags waving in the breeze. This was the event I had both looked forward to and feared since February when my son announced that my birthday present was a trip to California to march in the Gay Pride Parade. He said to be prepared to walk 1.5 miles with half a million people screaming at me. I admit to mixed emotions. "I'll be in San Francisco for Gay Pride week"; "What if I have to go to the bathroom?"; "I'll be able to walk proudly with my kids"; "I hate crowds, what if I have a major anxiety attack?"; "I want to be able to see my Houston friends and walk with my own P-FLAG group"; "It will be only 70 degrees and there'll be no humidity"; "I'll take Valium!"

At 11:00 a.m. an unholy roar arose, the ground trembled, and there they were - The Women's Motorcycle Con-

tingent - 400 "DYKES ON BIKES". Women in leather, spandex, lace, women with bare breasts, women with tattoos covering their bodies, women everywhere...what a sight...what a sound... the parade had begun. The theme banner went by - "A SIMPLE MATTER OF JUSTICE" - a quote from Harvey Milk stressing the necessity of legal protection for gays.

For the next two and a half hours I cheered and laughed at the floats and marchers as they passed. AIDS related floats; political groups; gay American Indians in tribal dress; gay Orientals (Queer Nasian); and the

My heart goes out to parents everywhere who are denying their children's sexuality and living empty lives because they cannot accept the diversity and utter normalcy of their own flesh and blood.

National Leather Association. Men with bare butts cut out of their leather pants; Radical Faeries who walked on stilts and whose nude bodies were spray painted silver. The only group which was soundly booed and disparaged was NAMBLA, North American Man Boy Love Association, a controversial organization which advocates legalization of pedophilia.

At about 1:30 p.m. the crowd went wild. There was the P-FLAG banner held aloft by two proud parents, followed by a contingency of smiling, waving family units. This is what I had been waiting for - my opportunity to march in the San Francisco Gay Pride Parade. My son, his companion and I jumped in and started waving, while my daughter and her friends took pictures. It was so incredibly emotional walking along and seeing the tear stained faces of these beautiful men and women applauding and cheering us. My thoughts were for their parents who were missing out on this bonding experience. I have never felt closer to my children than during that walk. The first time I left the group and ran to the sidelines to hug someone, my son asked if I

knew the young man to whom I had reached out. When I said I didn't, the woman walking in front of us turned around and said, "don't you know, we're mothers to them all". I cried that afternoon, from beginning to end of the walk.

Each of my children is an individual with special qualities and I love them all equally. Seeing my beautiful youngest daughter walk down the aisle at her wedding was such a proud and joyous moment; listening to my second son talk about his impending engagement and his life in Louisiana is special; looking forward to grandchildren is a definite highlight in my life; but to be able to share in this part of my gay children's lives was incredible.

My heart goes out to parents everywhere who are denying their children's sexuality and living empty lives because they cannot accept the diversity and utter normalcy of their own flesh and blood. To these brave, wonderful men and women, my message is one I wrote on the signature panel of the AIDS quilt - "I celebrate your uniqueness. You are all my children"! λ

'Coming out'

Be prepared financially and emotionally, experts say

"Coming out" is often difficult for both homosexuals and their parents.

Jay Asher, co-director of Houston Area Teen Coalition of Homosexuals, suggests that young people considering coming out to parents be financially able to support themselves, with a job and at least one month's rent, and that they try to finish high school within the family setting.

Gail Rickey, president of the Houston chapter of the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays, also offers tips for homosexuals and their parents.

For gays and lesbians:

- Pack an informational aid kit for parents. Include a good book, such as *Now That You Know: What*

Parents Should Know About Homosexuality by Betty Fairchild and Nancy Howard (Harbrace, \$8.95), as well as the P-FLAG help-line number — 867-9020 — and the name of a friend, therapist or religious adviser the parent can talk to.

- Choose a time when there is not already family stress.

- Come out in love, not anger or any other negative emotion.

- Be prepared for a continuing dialogue and be patient; parents often take one step forward and one step back.

- Although anyone can learn, it is not always advisable to come out to parents if they are abusive or rigid in their views. Find the most reliable relative to talk with,

such as a brother or sister, and build on that relationship.

For parents:

- Your child needs you and your love and understanding to be whole.

- Reach out to your child, learn all you can about homosexuality, and be there for your child.

- If you think your child might be gay, you may gently ask, but don't confront a child who doesn't want to talk about it.

- Contact P-FLAG so you can talk to other people who have walked the road you are walking.

— BARBARA KARKABI

Gay

Continued from Page 1H.

nightclub Heaven. Broussard died later at the hospital. The incident rocked Houston and gained national attention.

To Rodriguez, who struggles to find meaning in her son's death, letting people know that gays and lesbians have families who care about them has become a major goal. Although she has only attended one P-FLAG meeting (in Atlanta, two hours from her hometown), she speaks highly of the group.

Rodriguez has talked with Miller on the local P-FLAG help line, a number that gays and their parents can call to get information or just to talk. The help line is staffed by parent volunteers who check the answering machine frequently and

The tragedy of gay and lesbian suicide was discussed at the June P-FLAG meeting, during which a tape of a 20/20 segment on the issue was shown. Featured in the interview was a California woman named Mary Griffith, whose son Bobby killed himself in 1983, shortly after he turned 20.

Griffith, who was a fundamentalist Christian at the time of her son's suicide, recently visited Houston and talked to parents at a party hosted by P-FLAG president Rickey. Since her son's death, the guilt-stricken Griffith has dedicated her life to working with parents and children to prevent teen suicides and to promote understanding. While in town, Griffith spoke at a fund-raiser for the Houston Institute for the Protection

he'd change his mind about being gay. A Christian counselor told their son the same thing.

"By the time he was 18, Bobby decided none of that was true. That was just the way he was, and he was trying to accept it," she said. "Of course I discouraged that every step of the way. He was afraid that God would send him to hell, because that is what I thought."

"I think he finally felt that God's hell couldn't be any worse than what he was suffering. He felt rejected by God, church, family and society."

The morning Griffith learned that her son had jumped off a bridge into the path of an 18-wheeler, she remembers telling herself: "God's will be done. God knows best." But then she began to feel troubled. Why, she asked, hadn't God "cured" Bobby and made him straight? The more she thought about it, the more she re-



Carole Miller, mother of a gay son and a lesbian daughter, helps others.

into therapy to deal with it and seemed pretty open. Then she went to a revival and changed her mind. But I'm luckier than most because I haven't lost any of my family, and many of my friends have."

As for Rickey, the past year has brought changes, too. In June, she proudly marched down Westheimer and Montrose in the Houston 1992 Lesbian/Gay Pride Parade, something she might not have done in the past. She loved every minute of it, in spite of the blistering heat.

"Walking down that parade route, the crowd would look at our flag and cheer. The response was so incredible," she said. "The more I waved, the more they cheered. They said things like, 'Thank you for being here' and, 'I wish you would talk to my mom.' To do so little and get such a response was really touching."

Ronald Hall, president of Hous-

about. Some parents don't like that message and never return.

But everyone reacts differently. One father, who asked that his name not be used, read everything he could get his hands on. He found comfort in statistics and came to understand that his child's sexual orientation was natural. In the process, he also set aside the homophobic feelings he was raised with and brought his family closer together.

One mother recalled the years she spent suppressing the fear that her daughter was a lesbian.

"It was like, if we didn't name it, maybe it wouldn't be true. When I finally found out, I wanted to die. I prayed very hard to die, because all I knew was to flee or fight, and there was no place on the planet I could run to," she said. "I figured it was my fault and that my husband would blame me. But we went through it all together. I look at it as when I was

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The morning Griffith learned that her son had jumped off a bridge into the path of an 18-wheeler, she remembers telling herself: "God's will be done. God knows best." But then she began to feel troubled. Why, she asked, hadn't God "cured" Bobby and made him straight? The more she thought about it, the more she refused to accept that her son would burn in hell and that she would never see him again.

Eventually, she said, she sup-



Steve Campbell / Chronicle

Carole Miller, mother of a gay son and a lesbian daughter, helps other parents through P-FLAG.

into therapy to deal with it and seemed pretty open. Then she went to a revival and changed her mind. But I'm luckier than most because I haven't lost any of my family, and many of my friends have."

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Ronalyn Hall, president of Houston P-FLAG in 1990, and her son John David McDaniel, both marched in the parade, though with different groups. McDaniel, 28, came out to his

about. Some parents don't like that message and never return.

But everyone reacts differently. One father, who asked that his name not be used, read everything he could get his hands on. He found comfort in statistics and came to understand that his child's sexual orientation was natural. In the process, he also set aside the homophobic feelings he was raised with and brought his family closer together.

One mother recalled the years she spent suppressing the fear that her daughter was a lesbian.

"It was like, if we didn't name it, maybe it wouldn't be true. When I finally found out, I wanted to die. I prayed very hard to die, because all I knew was to flee or fight, and there was no place on the planet I could run to," she said. "I figured it was my fault and that my husband would blame me. But we went through it all together. I look at it as when I was sick and when I got better. I was real sick for three months, and after that I was just fine."

will join her in the Houston parade.

Since they lost their son to AIDS four years ago, Walter and Lou Porter have found comfort working with a Catholic AIDS support group and helping parents adjust to their children's homosexuality. A large color photograph of Walter Jr. dominates the couple's living room and reminds them of the promise they made him to help AIDS patients and their families. They began attending P-FLAG meetings six months ago and view that as part of their work.

"We loved our son, but we didn't condone or accept his sexual orientation," Walter Porter said. "I tell people, 'God gave us our children for a reason. They are going to be difficult, but we are going to love them because they are our children.' The alternative is to lose them. I think a lot of parents feel they will lose their friends, or kinfolks won't talk to them. But if that's what they think, they need more help than the gay person."

Fannin.

Since "coming out" is an important and often emotional time for gays and lesbians and their families, she may tell P-FLAG members about her son and their relationship. She may even talk about the day Broussard came home from Texas A&M University and told his mother he was gay.

"I guess he was about 18 or 19. He came home from college and said, 'I have something to tell you,' " she recalled. "We had just been to visit him and the fellow he lived with, and I had figured it out, but I thought it was up to him to bring it up. After he told me, I remember saying, 'If you want to talk about it, that's fine — but it's OK with me.' You see, I felt that it was his own business."

As she has told people over and over during the past year, "That's your child. If you loved them before they told you, why would you stop loving them after they tell you?"

Rodriguez was proud of her son. He was born in New Mexico and spent most of his youth in Warner Robins, Ga., where he and his brother and sister were raised. She loves to tell how Paul, who was an Eagle Scout and played in the school band, graduated 15th in a class of 469. He paid his own way through college by working at two jobs, and eventually found a job with Nations-Bank in Houston.

She knows that many parents of gays and lesbians do not accept their children's homosexuality, and few are as open to it as she was. Even so, many are having to come to terms with it. P-FLAG brochures quote Kinsey Report statistics estimating that 10 percent of the U.S. population is homosexual. One out of four families, they say, has a gay member.

Since Broussard's death, one of his teachers has visited Rodriguez and told her that she has a number of gay students in her class. A therapist who counsels Rodriguez said many parents of gay and lesbian children come to her and ask her to "fix" their children. She, like other parents, has learned over the past year that an estimated one-third of the teen-agers who kill themselves are homosexual.

"I would love to do something for those kids in my town," she said. "I told my therapist that I could open up my house for the kids, but she said the town would never accept it."



Larry Reese / Chronicle

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of Youth, a new group that helps disenfranchised youths.

"The family is a child's lifeline," Griffith said. "I firmly believe that if Bobby had family support or education in school, he would be alive today. For all of us it was the biggest secret. I didn't want anyone to know, and neither did Bobby. It's such a terrible trap for parents, and that is why P-FLAG is so good. The group is a godsend as far as I'm concerned."

When Bobby, at the age of 16, told his family he was gay, Griffith prayed that God would "heal" her son, and she believed that he would, right up to the day Bobby died. She constantly played a Christian radio station in their home and told her son to pray harder. Her husband thought that if Bobby would date more girls,

visit a minister at the Metropolitan Community Church near her home. MCC was founded in 1968 to minister to gays and lesbians. For the first time she was able to discuss homosexuality, her beliefs and her fears in a more open atmosphere.

Besides helping her along on her spiritual journey, she said, he also recommended that she attend a P-FLAG meeting.

"It's scary to believe in something so strongly and not know it's wrong," she said. "When I went to my first P-FLAG meeting, I was just amazed. I didn't know other parents existed, and it was like listening to myself talk."

"I had come to the conclusion there was nothing wrong with my son, and they reaffirmed that. This is how Bobby and other gays and lesbians were born — their feelings are just as natural as ours. It might have made a difference if I had known about P-FLAG before, but I probably would have thought they were from Satan back then."

Not everyone's journey to acceptance is so difficult. But many parents go through periods of anger and grief after their children "come out" to them, Rickey said. Once those feelings are processed, she and other parents said, relationships with their children have grown and their own lives have become more open to diversity.

Coming out makes a difference in their children's lives, too, Rickey said. Those who feel they have to hide their sexual orientation from their parents often lead unhappy and fragmented lives.

In the wake of Broussard's death, activist Lewis decided to tell his family that he was gay.

"It was a wake-up call to me. I left Heaven that night only 30 minutes after Paul and his friends did. What if they called my mother and said, 'Your son was killed coming out of a gay bar?'" Lewis said. "I needed to tell her myself, and I realized that until I told her, we could never have a complete relationship. She went

"We always had a good relationship, but now it's even better, and there are no secrets, no walls between us," he said. "Even so, the first thing she said was, 'Tell me it's not my fault.' That was a long time ago, before people realized that it's a genetic thing. The older I get, the prouder I get and the more I realize I'm OK."

Hall is proud of her relationship with her son. Over the years, she has tried hard to educate others about gay and lesbian issues and let people know that gays are not "evil, scary people."

"I joined P-FLAG because while I didn't need support myself, I thought I might be able to help others that did," said Hall, who is no longer as active as she once was. "The group has really grown this year, and I'm very pleased about that."

Rickey has watched as parents have clung together and cried their way through their first P-FLAG meetings. As parents learn and grow, some call her between meetings and tell her how much better they feel. She watches with pride as they in turn counsel other newcomers in the group.

Some parents who call the help line or attend meetings say they have suspected their children were gay or lesbian for years. Others have never had any idea. For all parents it is helpful if children prepare what Rickey calls a "psychological packet" containing suggestions on books to read and perhaps a therapist or friend to consult.

Sadly, many parents find out their sons are gay at the same time they learn of an AIDS diagnosis.

"I met one mother who seemed to be more upset about the fact her son was gay than the fact that he was dying of AIDS," said Walter Porter, a P-FLAG member whose son died of AIDS four years ago.

"I told her, 'Look, you can't do this. You have got to come to terms with your son.'"

Rickey quickly corrects visitors who hope P-FLAG will "fix" their children. That's not what the group is

doing. "I think the most important thing is that her daughter might be a lesbian was confirmed when she came home with her lover, a nurse, and told her mother the two had a special relationship. Still, she had never thought her son was gay. He had dated women and was close to being engaged when he told her."

"When my son came home three years ago and told me he was gay, I said, 'But how can that be? You're a terrible dresser and you always have holes in your socks,'" she recalled with a laugh. "Every gay man I knew was always such a snappy dresser."

Miller now is actively involved in gay and lesbian issues and is pleased at the pride her children feel in her commitment. She flew out to San Francisco two weeks ago to walk with her son in that city's Gay Pride Day Parade. Next year she hopes her children, who both live in California,

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"I visit his grave. I sit there and say, 'It's OK,' " she said. "Tell me, 'Mom, can we be alive. It's not a world, but if his people accept each other, then it's something."

Recommended reading

Parents by Margaret Mead, \$9.95.

From a religious

■ *Now That You Know: What Parents Should Know About Homosexuality* by Betty Fairchild and Nancy Hayward (Harbrace, \$8.95).

■ *Beyond Acceptance: Parents of Lesbians and Gays Talk About Their Experiences* by Carolyn Welch Griffing, Marian J. Wirth and Arthur G. Wirth (St. Martin Press, \$9.95).

■ *But Lord, Where Is the Homosexual?* by Letha Scanziani (McNeill Beacon, \$9.95).

■ *Parents Matter: Parents' Relationships With Lesbian Daughters and Gay Sons* by Ann Muller (Naiad Press, \$9.95).

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Rodriguez remembers her fears that AIDS would take Paul Broussard from her. She never worried about gay bashing. The anniversary of his death was tough as she recalled the early-morning call telling her that Paul was badly hurt and would probably not live.

Rodriguez rushed to Houston, hoping to get there and hold him in her arms one more time. But Paul died before she arrived. Now she often sits at her son's grave in Georgia, decorated with roses from her garden, and wonders why.

"I visit his grave almost every day. I sit there and say, 'Kid, let me know it's OK,'" she said. "I know he would tell me, 'Mom, cut it out. Let go of it.' Because some days it just eats me alive. It's not going to change the world, but if his death starts making people accept each other for what they are, then maybe it will mean something."

Recommended reading

Here are some books recommended by the Federation of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays and other sources:

■ *Now That You Know: What Parents Should Know About Homosexuality* by Betty Fairchild and Nancy Hayward (Harbrace, \$8.95).

■ *Beyond Acceptance: Parents of Lesbians and Gays Talk About Their Experiences* by Carolyn Welch Griffing, Marian J. Wirth and Arthur G. Wirth (St. Martin Press, \$9.95).

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■ *Coming Out to Parents — A Two-Way Survival Guide for Lesbians and Gay Men and Their*

Parents by Mary Borhek (Pilgrim Press, \$9.95).

From a religious point of view:

■ *Taking a Chance on God: Liberating Theology for Gays, Lesbians and Their Lovers, Families and Friends* by John J. McNeill (Beacon Press, \$10.95).

■ *Is the Homosexual My Neighbor?* by Letha Scanzoni and Virginia Ramey Mollenkott (Harper, \$9.95).

■ *But Lord, They're Gay* by Sylvia Pennington (Lambda Christian Fellowship, \$10).

Many of these books are available from the local P-FLAG lending library for people who attend the group's meetings (call the P-FLAG help line at 867-9020 for information).

The books can also be found or ordered at Inklings — An Alternative Book Shop, 1846 Richmond Ave.