



Blind LGBT Pride The “Inside Out” Newsletter

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Blind Pride is a Special Interest affiliate of the American Council of the Blind and is dedicated to facilitating the free exchange of ideas, opinions and information relative to matters of concern to blind people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender. Visit us at www.blind-lgbt-pride.org

EDITOR'S NOTE:

You can skip to the next article or section of the newsletter by using your word processor's Find or Search function to find the ## sign.

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From The Presidents Desk

By Don Wilson

Greetings from the state of Georgia. Let me introduce myself; my name is Don Wilson and I am the newly elected President. I have served as Secretary of the organization for the past year. I have been vision impaired for over five years. My background is in Computer Information Systems and currently I work as a JAWS Scripter and information accessibility specialist.

In July at the ACB Convention Blind Pride held its annual business meeting. During this meeting elections were held and new officers were elected. Other officers elected include George Ashiotis as Vice President, George Abbott as Treasurer, Mikey Wiseman as Secretary, Timothy Miles as Member-At -Large & Jeff Harris as Member-At-Large. Jeff, Mikey and Timothy are new to the board. Also Chris Snyder was appointed as our national delegate.

Jeff Harris lives in Boston Massachusetts and has been employed with the Boston Public Schools as a research Analyst for the past 25 years. He became active in Blind Pride in 2007 and he has a passion for advancing our rights as both LGBT and visually impaired individuals. He hopes to bring to the board his research and survey skills and hopes that we can learn about the needs of our members.

Mikey Wiseman lives in Miami Florida. He has worked as a corporate trainer in an international company serving the highly regulated telecom industry and now dedicates his time to serve on city commissions and a myriad of local non profits. His forte is public relations and special event planning/fundraising.

Timothy Miles has been associated with Blind Pride since Las Vegas in 2005. He lives in the Chapel Hill North Carolina area, where he is presently the Executive director of the Orange County disability Awareness Council, a non profit organization. The mission of the Council is to identify and eliminate access barriers and by doing so enhance the opportunities for individuals with disabilities to be fully integrated into their communities. He has skills and experience in fund raising and resource development.

Also during the annual meeting two amendments to the Constitution and Bylaws were voted on and approved. One amendment makes a one time change to the time served by Vice President and Secretary to keep from electing almost all of the board at one meeting. The other amendment establishes guidelines for addressing affiliates that are not in compliance with our Constitution and Bylaws.

This year as a board we plan to focus on updating our Constitution and Bylaws. We will also be implementing new ways to obtain our newsletter, "The Inside Out". This year we will be investigating ways for members to vote who are not attending the convention. These include online voting and voting by telephone.

We have already established our Convention Committee to start work on next year's convention. ACB has already released information about the hotel and making hotel reservations. The information can be found on Blind Pride's website on the Convention 2011 page. The convention will be held in Reno, Nevada from July 8th to July 16th. This will be the 50th anniversary of the formation of the American Council of the Blind, so start making your plans now to attend.

As always we appreciate any comments or suggestions as to how we can better serve our membership. We will be developing surveys and questionnaires to find out what our members want out of this organization.

As your new President I look forward to serving you the membership over the next two years.

Best regards,
Don Wilson
President

##2010 CONVENTION REPORT

by Don Brown, Past President

Blind LGBT Pride celebrated its 10th anniversary and one of its best attended conference and conventions in the Grand Canyon State. Arizona's scorching July temperatures did not detour our members from making their way West.

Members and friends overwhelmingly attended our three free workshops and our 3 ticketed events.

First the workshops... On Monday afternoon, nearly 20 people attended a highly informative workshop led by Abigail Jenson, Executive Director of Transmentors International www.transmentors.org. Ms Jenson's introduction and overview led to a wide ranging question and answer session on issues faced by people in the Transgender Community. Health care, family dynamics, legal concerns, physical effects and related international issues were thoroughly discussed in this 1.5 hour breakout session.

On Tuesday, Assistant Secretary of U.S. Department of Labor and a BPI member, Kathy Martinez, updated an attentive group on Federal Initiatives impacting LGBT Federal Employees. Assistant Secretary Martinez encouraged attendees to coalesce with other groups and make their wishes known to their elected officials.

On Wednesday afternoon we welcomed Terra Hartwell, from Native Out, www.nativeout.org as presenter of our third and final workshop. Ms. Hartwell Presented a Native American cultural perspective on the two spirit tradition. She described Native Out's vision as being an effort to create social change in rural and urban communities that benefit Indigenous Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and Two Spirit people. She stressed how many Native American/Alaska Native/Native Hawaiian people have traditionally revered gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, Two-Spirit individuals within their communities.

As with the workshops, our three social events resulted in record attendance.

Blind Pride's Welcome Party continues to be the place to be Sunday afternoon of Convention Week. Guests were treated to an array of delicious appetizers, a full bar and lots of conversation and great fun.

On Wednesday evening, BPI's Board of directors hosted the organization's Tenth Anniversary Party. The many guests in attendance enjoyed live music and toasted our 10 years of accomplishments and expressed best wishes for future endeavors.

Twenty five convention attendees joined BPI on Thursday evening for refreshments and a private screening of a described version of the movie "Milk".

The success of each of our events is in part due to an incredible group of volunteers who quickly became our friends. Our lead volunteers Al and Donna Ellis and other PFLAG

Phoenix members were there to assist and join in with the fun. From Charlie's Bar of Phoenix we were joined by Michael and Javier as volunteers during our workshop sessions and Rubin and Leroy volunteered as professional bartenders. Pat and Charlotte came to us as volunteers from Human Rights Campaign of Arizona.

Again this year, the BPI hospitality suite was open to members and friends as a place to meet and refresh between meetings and activities.

During the Monday evening Annual Business meeting, the membership adopted two amendments to the constitution and elected three new board members and elected Don Wilson of Georgia as BPI's fifth President.

Plans are now underway for our next Conference and Convention scheduled for Reno Nevada, which will be held in conjunction with the American Council of the Blind's 50th Annual Conference and Convention. You can follow the details and developments by visiting www.blind-lgbt-pride.org.

Changes and Choices:

In order to more effectively serve our members and keep up to date with the digital advancements of our times, we are announcing that we are phasing out the cassette version of our newsletter. The September 2010 issue of Inside Out will be the last one produced on cassette. We regret having to make this decision but the reality is that it is more cost-effective for us to produce our newsletter digitally on CDs than it is on cassette. In addition, CDs are more durable and insure superior quality.

Also, as of the September issue, we will offer the audio version of Inside Out as an MP3 download on our website.

<http://www.blind-lgbt-pride.org>

Since most people have CD players, and an increasing number of blind and vision-impaired people have daisy MP3 players, these changes were necessary in order to move our media outreach to the next level. WE remind our readers that InsideOut is available electronically (via email) as well as in Large Print.

EXCITING NEWS! Look for monthly podcasts coming soon to the Blind LGBT Pride website.

Anyone wishing to receive InsideOut on CD should send an e-mail to:
Delegate@blind-lgbt-pride.org
or call Chris Snyder at: 602-904-5437

Federal Judge Rules Against Military

A federal judge in Riverside, CA on Thursday declared the U.S. military's ban on openly gay service members unconstitutional, saying the "don't ask, don't tell" policy violates the 1st Amendment and due process rights of lesbians and gay men.

U.S. District Judge Virginia A. Phillips said the policy does not preserve military readiness, contrary to what Justice Department attorneys and many supporters have argued, because evidence shows that the policy in fact has had a "direct and deleterious effect" on the armed services.

Phillips said she would issue an injunction barring the government from enforcing the policy. However, the Justice Department, which defended "don't ask, don't tell" during a two-week trial in Riverside, will have an opportunity to appeal that decision.

Number of Gays in the Military

An estimated 66,000 gay, lesbian and bisexual people are serving in the U.S. military, roughly 2 percent of all military personnel, according to a report released Tuesday by a gay rights policy center. The figures suggest a slight increase in the number of gays, lesbians and bisexuals in the military, and they provide opponents of the military's "don't ask, don't tell" policy with fresh data as they lobby the Obama administration for its repeal.

Gays, lesbians and bisexuals account for approximately 13,000 active duty service members, equal to less than 1 percent currently deployed, the report estimated. About 53,000 others serve in the National Guard and reserves, equaling about 3.4 percent.

The actual number of gays, lesbians and bisexuals serving in uniform is unknown; the military does not track such figures. The research brief was released by the [Williams Institute at the UCLA School of Law](#), a public policy

institute that studies sexual orientation law.

Its authors used a variety of statistical methods to arrive at the estimate, drawing in part on the Census Bureau's 2008 [American Community Survey](#) and the 2000 Census, in which some people identified themselves as gay, lesbian or bisexual and as serving in the military. A similar 2004 study, widely quoted by gay rights advocates and supportive lawmakers, estimated that roughly 65,000 homosexuals were serving in the military.

Though President Obama's top domestic policy aides insist that the president is committed to an equality agenda for gays and lesbians, many liberal and gay rights groups are unhappy that the administration has thus far failed to act on Obama's campaign pledge to end "don't ask, don't tell."

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GLAAD President on His Divorce

By Michelle Garcia

Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation president Jarrett Barrios says that while the main focus on gay rights may be marriage, it also includes the right to divorce.

Barrios, who was once a Massachusetts state legislator, said he lobbied hard to get the state to recognize marriage equality. When it did, he and his partner of 11 years went to the altar in 2004. However, Barrios and his husband separated last year, and he has been enduring a tough divorce.

"Just as gay and lesbian couples share the joys of marriage, we will share the pain of divorce, something for which we have no template," he wrote in the Boston Globe..

"Divorce plumbs impossible depths of sadness. It involves separating the dishes and the books and all the other things you acquired back when you both still felt the lightness of love, asserting to a judge at a public trial that, yes, your marriage has broken down irretrievably, and telling your parents whose marriage of 47 years hangs heavy over your anemic explanations to them."

Sex: the Root of Anti-Gay Sentiment

"If you just live together, maintain separate bedrooms and not have sex, God would overlook the fact that you're gay," said Michelle.

"So it's okay to be gay if I don't have sex?" I asked.

"Essentially, yes," she replied. "God will not condemn you for being gay as long as you don't have sex."

“Maybe God should have created people without the sex drive,” I suggested.

“Sex was designed only for the purpose of procreation,” she said with total seriousness. “It’s God’s gift to married couples who want children.”

I couldn’t help but think about the millions of unmarried people on this planet enjoying sex without the slightest intent of producing a child.

The conversation with Michelle took place over ten years ago. Today, Michelle’s attitude remains the same. Michelle and millions of other heterosexuals can not accept sex between two consenting adults of the same gender.

This view of sexuality is the root of anti-gay sentiment in most cultures around the world. From the beginning of time through the current century, sex is what troubles narrow minds the most. People have enough trouble dealing with straight sex, but the idea of sex between two people of the same gender sends most straight folks over the edge.

Sex between two women can be titillating for many straight men as long as they can join in at the height of arousal. Many straight men consider sex between two women as a temporary solution until one or both women find a man. Many men maintain the belief that a lesbian is only a lesbian until the right man gets her into bed.

Sex between two men, however, is generally considered a true abomination by straight society. Any act of male-to-male penetration is considered especially disgusting because in most cultures the act of penetration is based on male dominance over females. To be penetrated is to be inferior. Straight male culture as a rule, does not cope well with any perceived notion of male inferiority.

Thus, in straight society, sex between two women is seen as a preparatory and somewhat amusing pastime, while sex between two men is considered degrading and insulting to straight male sensibilities.

Straight society tends to see gay life as consumed with sexual activity and little else. They fail to notice that gay life consists of such mundane tasks as doing laundry, cooking, shopping, going to work, etc. Heterosexuals hold on to the inaccurate view that being gay not only means constant sexual activity, but that gays are seeking to “convert” everyone through sexual seduction.

If gays and lesbians are ever going to convince straight society that we are just like them except for who we love, our goals must include emphasis on our similarities. One of those similarities is the fact that neither we nor they are engaged in sex every waking moment.

Church: US minister guilty for marrying gays

A retired Presbyterian minister was found guilty of misconduct Friday by a church court for officiating the weddings of 16 gay couples when same-sex marriage was legal in

California. A regional commission of the Presbyterian Church (USA) ruled 4 - 2 that Rev. Jane Spahr of San Francisco "persisted in a pattern or practice of disobedience" by performing the weddings in 2008 before Proposition 8 banned the unions in the state. The church's highest court has held that Presbyterian ministers may bless same-sex unions as long as they do "not state, imply, or represent that a same-sex ceremony is a marriage."

By willfully challenging that holding, Spahr broke her ordination vows, the commission said in its majority opinion.

At the same time, however, the tribunal devoted most of its 2 1/2-page ruling to praising the 68-year-old pastor, a lesbian who founded a church group in the early 1990s for gay Presbyterians.

Spahr was acknowledged "for her prophetic ministry" and "faithful compassion." The commissioners called on the broader church to use her example "to re-examine our own fear and ignorance."

The six-member commission representing 54 Northern California churches censured Spahr with a rebuke as punishment. Spahr said she was disappointed by the verdict and would appeal to a midlevel church court.

It was the second time the regional Presbytery of the Redwoods convened a court to consider charges against Spahr for sanctioning same-sex relationships.

Family Indicted for Kidnapping Gay Teen

By Advocate.com Editors

The family of an Israeli gay man was charged with kidnapping, assaulting, and falsely imprisoning him after he posted photos of himself dressed in drag on Facebook.

The family was indicted in Tel Aviv district court on Thursday. According to the charges, as recently as a week ago, the family arrived at 19-year-old Angel's apartment, attacked him, and sprayed his eyes with tear gas.

They then forced him into a car, proceeded to tie his hands with belts, cover his eyes with tape, and threatened to stab him if he didn't keep quiet. They then drove him out of Tel Aviv toward his hometown of Tamra, chained him in a room and left him for several hours. Three weeks ago his mother sent him the following message on Facebook: "Either erase the pictures from Facebook or your family will come and get you and this will be your end."

The family is alleged to have kidnapped him on multiple other occasions. I was certain that I was going to die, and they also told me so," Angel told authorities.

Stimulate Your Brain With a Game

Now that the annual convention is over and the long winter looms ahead, why not pick up a new hobby? Why not learn to play chess? The game of chess is a fun and brain enhancing game that blind and visually impaired people of all ages can learn to play.

If you don't know how to play chess, you can take two chess courses through the Hadley School for the Blind. The courses are free and are taught via correspondence. You will learn how to play using an adaptive chess board especially designed for the blind, which will be sent to you free of charge when you sign up for the Beginner's course. For more information contact the Hadley School at 1-800-323-4238 or send email to:

info@hadley.edu.

Once you learn the game, you can play email chess against other blind and visually impaired opponents through the United States Braille Chess Association. You can also play on other chess playing websites that are not specifically dedicated to blind players. If you have low vision, you may be able to play on Chess World.net. While Chess World is not specifically for the visually impaired, it does work well with ZoomText magnification.

Some aspects of the Chess World interface can be customized: for example, you can enlarge the chess board or select different board color schemes.

There are also blind and low vision websites where you can play "real time" chess. The website "For the People," is one such site, where all you need is a microphone attached to your computer.

Chess is a great way to keep your brain in shape, so why not give it a try?

Women are strongly encouraged to learn to play. After all, the most powerful piece on the chess board is female: that's right, the queen!

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Editor's Trivia Spot

The U.S. city with the largest gay population is New York, with an estimated 272,493 gay residents. Los Angeles is second with 154,270, followed by Chicago with 114,449 and San Francisco with 94,234.

The Mayor Comes Out

Cambridge Mayor comes out during Pride Brunch

by Hannah Clay Wareham

Cambridge, Massachusetts Mayor David Maher publicly opened up about his sexuality for the first time during the city's 20th annual Pride Brunch, held on June 13. Maher is the third openly gay mayor in a row the city of Cambridge has seen.

"In the early 1990s my city council colleague Ken Reeves came out as the first openly gay mayor of Cambridge -- since that time Denise Simmons and I have both had the privilege and honor of serving as mayor," Maher told the group gathered inside the Council Chambers, acknowledging that he fits the recent trend of openly gay mayors in Cambridge.

"I have never made a secret about who I am or what I am," Maher later [told](#) the *Cambridge Chronicle*. "I've tried very hard to separate my public life from my private life."

The mayor said that his statement was not intended to be any kind of big announcement.

"It was done in such a lovely, unassuming way," said State Rep. Marty Waltz, the event's keynote speaker. "Like, 'this is who I am.'" Waltz told the *Chronicle* that she was proud of Maher's "courageous" words.

The *Chronicle* reported that Maher has been with his partner for more than 30 years.

In Review

OutLoud: The Best of Rainbow Radio

**A New book by Ed Madden and Candace Chellow-Hodge
Publication Date: June, 2010**

In August 2005, Rainbow Radio began broadcasting in Columbia, SC. Its purpose was to give voice to gay and lesbian South Carolinians, providing an opportunity for them to share their own stories, their lives, and how they were working for positive change in South Carolina.

OutLoud is a collection of many of those stories.

The stories in OutLoud might have originated in South Carolina, but the experiences shared are universal: coming out, gay shame, relationships with parents and partners and lessons learned from standing up for gay rights.

Included are stories such as: "Sheila Gets a Shave", "At the Corner of Sex and Dixie", "Smear the Queer: Lessons from the Playground", "Labels and the Gay Soldier" and "Lesbians of a Certain Age." Many of the stories are poignant and haunting.

OutLoud will appeal to a wide spectrum of readers, helping to develop understanding, and insight.

OutLoud can be purchased for \$14.95 from Hub City Press, 186 W. Main St., Spartanburg, SC 29306, or online at www.hubcity.org You may also find it at Barnes & Noble.

Gay Life Around the World

In 1990 Lithuania became the first of the Soviet republics to declare its independence, but Moscow did not recognize this proclamation until September of 1991. Same-sex sexual activity was decriminalized in Lithuania in 1993 and the age of consent was equalized at 14 years old to fulfill European Union accession criteria against discrimination.

Same-Sex Marriage

Same-sex marriage has been banned in the majority Catholic state since 1992. Article 38 of the Lithuanian Constitution states "Marriage shall be concluded upon the free mutual consent of a man and a woman." Article 3.12 of the country's Civil Code also states that "Marriage shall be concluded with a person of the opposite sex only." In 2008, same-sex couples

were excluded from the National Conception of Family Policy which defines marriage as between one man and one woman.

Discrimination Laws

In 2005, despite resistance in the Seimas (Lithuania's parliament), the Law on Equal Treatment was passed prohibiting discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation in the areas of employment, education and access to goods and services.

Gender Identity/Expression

According to Article 2.27 of Lithuania's Civil Code, any non-married person is allowed to change their legal gender.

Adoption

In Lithuania, only married couples are allowed to adopt children, subsequently same-sex couples are prohibited from adopting. Single parents can adopt at a social worker's discretion, but institutional barriers prevent single LGBT parents from adopting.

Military

Gays and lesbians can serve openly in the military.

Gay Pride

Under threats of violence, Vilnius, Lithuania's pride parade was banned. The ruling was [overturned by a appeals court](#) on April 7, 2010, allowing the five-day festival to commence.

Lithuania pride carried on as planned with hundreds of flag-totting participants. The march did have a few snags, as expected. The BBC reports that police fired tear gas and arrested at least 12 people who threw stones and fireworks at marchers. Luckily, no one was reported injured.

Board of Directors

PRESIDENT

Don Wilson

Georgia

404-826-2300

President@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

VICE-PRESIDENT

George Ashiotis
New York
Membership@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

SECRETARY

Mikey Wiseman
Florida
Secretary@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

TREASURER

George Abbott
Virginia
Treasurer@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

IMMEDIATE PAST PRESIDENT

Don Brown
California
PastPresident@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

MEMBER-AT-LARGE #1

Connie Torrisi
Massachusetts
LavenderQ@comcast.net

MEMBER-AT-LARGE #2

Tim Miles
North Carolina
MemberAtLarge@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org

MEMBER-AT-LARGE #3

Jeff Harris
Massachusetts
JDH9257@Yahoo.com

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