

Blind LGBT Pride International

The "Inside Out" Newsletter

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The Inside Out newsletter is the quarterly magazine of Blind LGBT Pride International (BPI), a special-interest Affiliate of the American Council of the Blind. BPI 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 BPI Online at: <http://www.blind-lgbt-pride.org/>

Editor's Note: You may download this and past issues online by visiting <http://blindlgbtpride.org/newsletter/> and entering the password for members.

Want to get through the contents of the newsletter with ease? Using your screen reader, simply hit the "H" key to scroll through the various articles. You may also jump to a specific article by clicking on the article name in the table of contents.

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From the President's Desk

Submitted by: Guillermo Robles

Greetings from the nation's capital. I hope that this finds all of you well. As I write this, we are experiencing cool and comfortable weather for this area. For this California boy, this is what winter really feels like. In some places, you can still see snow on the ground. I have even had the pleasure of hurling a couple of snowballs at my gracious host. By the time you read this, the midyear meetings of

the American Council of the Blind will have already concluded. Before I cover the events of these meetings, let me say that there is much validation in the work that our organization is doing. It is wonderful to see that much of the leaders of ACB are in line with each other. The support and the exchange of information have been extremely beneficial to me as one of the current leaders of this organization. It is refreshing to know that we are on the right course for a successful expansion in all areas of this organization.

The Saturday sessions started with a brief introduction by ACB President, Kim Charlson and introduction of attendees. After which, the ACB social media presence was introduced. Following a brief overview of ACB's Facebook and Twitter presence, we were then given information about the upcoming leadership institute which will be taking place in Las Vegas at the upcoming convention. After the success of the first leadership institute, it will be offered as part of the preregistration option for anyone wishing to attend, rather than having a representative from each affiliate attending. This year a new approach is being taken in that there will be these types of leadership institutes organized regionally. We were informed of two such efforts. The first is the Midwest conference which will have taken place by the time you read this, and the second, being the Crossroads leadership training in Kentucky.

After lunch, we were treated to an update by one of the meeting sponsors, Vanda Pharmaceuticals who shared news of the FDA approval of the treatment for those dealing with the "Non 24" sleep disorder. I will not speak much on this as there were still a lot of questions on my mind after the presentation. Stay tuned to updates as to when the audio archives of this meeting will be shared for more information.

The next presenters were right up my alley as we are looking to incorporate an active youth/student presence. A lot of discussion centered on how we can empower our younger members and making sure we find a place for them so that they may be more productive and active in their affiliate. We also discussed some of the challenges we face in recruitment and outreach.

The Sunday session found us talking about the various fundraising opportunities that ACB has that would generate money for affiliates. A couple of these being the monthly monetary support program where members can have a set amount set aside as a contribution to ACB and an affiliate of their choice. The second was the ACB walk to take place during convention. 50 percent of these proceeds will go toward the affiliate of the registrant's choice.

Finally, the meeting concluded with discussions on the automated member management service which affiliates are using to certify its members to the national office and how best to use this system more effectively. After which, there was an hour long question and answer portion with the board where leaders could bring any concerns that they had. President Charlson closed the meeting by informing us that the midyear conference would be condensed to four days instead of the five to six days that has been done in the past. As such, the board meeting would be on Saturday, followed by the Presidents meeting all day Sunday, Legislative seminar on Monday, concluding with the day on the Hill on Tuesday. It is the ACB board's hope that this would make for some cost effective savings.

As always the ideas that were shared during these meetings were very valuable and are a true source of motivation to move us forward. I would be remiss if I did not offer my most sincere thanks to those BPI members who helped to make this trip possible. You know who you are. I thank you for stepping up and lending a hand where possible. Know that your contribution has been very much appreciated. Special thanks to returning member Michael Clark for opening up his home, sitting through these meetings, and showing me the sites. I will definitely be back next year. As always, let's keep onward and upward.

With Much Pride,

Guillermo Robles
President, Blind LGBT Pride *International*

What's In the Bank?

Submitted by: Gabriel Lopez Kafati
Treasurer and Finance Chair

Warm greetings from sunny Florida! It is with great satisfaction that I share with you a brief overview of our organization's financial standing. To begin with, I would like for all of you to track BPI's progress as reflected in the total of our accounts for the last three months. As we closed calendar year 2013, the total was reported at \$3,525.49. We opened 2014 with a total of \$4,294.81 as reported in the month of January. Our last report, corresponding to the month of February, showed a total of \$4,167.47. Our accounts have been showing a steady increase thanks mainly to the loyal support BPI receives from all of you through your yearly memberships. This year, we are also proud to announce that we have three additional Lifetime Members.

The Budget and Finance Committee has also been working around-the-clock to support the activities of BPI's Treasury. Our budget for the 2014 period was approved by the Board during the January meeting. In general, our budget shows an estimated

revenue of \$4,285.00, and an estimated total of \$3,100.00 in expenses for the year. According to this projection, we should close the current period with a net profit of \$1,185.00. Please keep in mind that these figures are projections and they are subject to change. This is particularly true in the case of revenues, for we are working in conjunction with the Fund Raising and Programs Committee in providing them with all the support they require in order to increment revenues. Please, also keep in mind that the activities that revolve around Convention make up a considerable of our budget regarding both, revenues and expenses. In this sense, All figures for our 2014 Convention have been projected on historic data, plus a corresponding 25% increase.

I would like to take advantage of this opportunity to invite all of you to actively join us in the different fund raising efforts that are being conducted. I also prompt you to, please, to address the Treasury and the Budget and Finance Committee with any questions, concerns, and/or recommendations you might have. In the meantime, please rest assured that we are working under a strict code of ethics to guarantee that your resources are being maximized and properly invested.

What's up, BPI!?

*Submitted by: Caitlin Hernandez
Membership Chair*

Just a quick note from Caitlin, your Membership Chair! Hope 2014 is starting off swimmingly for all of you. Here in Cali, it's weirdly warm, although thankfully we're finally getting a little bit of much-needed rain!

Thanks to those of you who've been awesomely proactive and paid your dues! We love you! If you haven't done so yet, shame on you! Just kidding ... we still love you. A lot. But you gotta step it up. Never fear, it isn't too late! If you paid before June of 2013, it's time for you to hurry scurry and renew your dues! Wend your way onto www.blind-lgbt-pride.org and take a few minutes to pay your dues and update your member information. For those of you who paid after June of 2013, we'll be chasing you for dues during our next dues campaign, so stay tuned!

As part of our dues campaign, we're getting in touch with current members who still need to renew, as well as inactive members who haven't been a part of BPI for quite a while. We're asking them what they want from our organization: what they might like to see more of, what they expect from BPI, and what kinds of ideas they have for expansion. We want all of you active, paid-up members to chip in on these matters, as well. You can always e-mail any of us board members with any comments, questions, criticisms, or, you know, random stories about hot dates you've been on. We love hearing from you!

Speaking of hot dates, have you heard about our Town Hall on March 15th? We're super stoked to talk about dating and safety, OUR way! Can't wait to hear all your voices. Be sure and keep up to date with the e-mail list to learn more about this meet-up and other events like it!

That's about all I've got for you for now! Thanks for reading, and I'll catch y'all on the flip-side!

Hugs, high-fives, and rainbows

The TechSpot

*Submitted by: Kevin Ratliff
Secretary and Elections Committee Member*

Welcome to The TechSpot, a resource for all of the happenings and going ons in technology. Tune in each issue for the latest assistive technology news, the hot new accessible apps, and thorough reviews. This article is a developing story, IE, work in progress, so your feedback and suggestions are very much welcome. Email me at

kevin-ratliff@sbcglobal.net.

Here is a sample of what you can expect to find at the TechSpot. This is only a sample. Come back next issue, and there will be much, much more!

RNIB Guide to Smart Phones

The RNIB has created a simple to follow spread sheet that lists a number of phone models with their price in the UK and the features that come with the phone. In many cases, the featured phones are also available in the US and other countries outside the UK.

This very useful guide can help users make informed decisions about what smart phone to choose.

<http://www.rnib.org.uk/livingwithsightloss/computersphones/updates/techknowmore/Lists/Posts/Post.aspx?id=261>

RIVO for Smartphones

RiVO (Remote interface to VoiceOver) is a revolutionary remote for blind smartphone users. This little device works with both iOS VoiceOver and Android TalkBack. It is about the size of a credit card, so it is very portable and yet comfortable with big keys. There are 12 keys in the middle just like a telephone

keypad, and there are 4 additional keys on the left and on the right, respectively. With RIVO, users can type and edit text fast and easy, and control music playback. RIVO Cost \$129.00 US.

<http://mobiience.com/rivo>

Chicken Nugget Twitter Client

Chicken Nugget is a fast and powerful Twitter Client for Windows that works extremely well with screen readers, and makes all aspects of Twitter accessible to the blind. You can [try it for free](#). And also [checkout an audio demo](#).

Text Detective

Text Detective has come to Android! It is a fully accessible app that reads text from your phone or tablet's camera within seconds. Point the camera and sort through mail,

Read menus, cards, product packages, medication labels, and all kinds of other print around you.

The text can easily be read, edited, copied and pasted into documents, emails or other apps. It even keeps the text in a history for future use.

<https://play.google.com/store/apps/details?id=com.blindsight.textdetective&hl=en>

Braille Printer with Legos

Shubham Banerjee, a San Francisco Bay Area seventh grade student, has developed BRAIGO, a Braille printer using Lego Mindstorms EV3, which could potentially slash the price of a printer from more than \$2000 to \$350, thereby making the Braille printer more affordable for blind individuals.

He built the printer using the Lego Mindstorms EV3 kit costing \$349 and some add-ons from Home Depot costing another \$5.

BRAIGO is short for Braille with LEGO.

<http://www.indiawest.com/news/16715-indian-american-7th-grader-develops-braille-printer-with-legos.html>

BETTING ON A WINNING CONVENTION IN LAS VEGAS

Submitted by: Don Brown

Programs Chair & Immediate Past President

The Monaco Tower of the Riviera hotel in downtown Las Vegas will be home to Blind LGBT Pride International from July 12th through 19, 2014

This year's convention theme "Out and Proud: Bet on it!" will be woven through the many activities in store for attendees.

Registration information is at the end of this column.

Following an experiment with convention scheduling last year, ACB has reverted back to the Friday through Saturday timeframe.

I'd like to share with you a very preliminary look at our convention program as it stands now, keep in mind that dates, times and activities are subject to change.

Stay up to date with Convention happenings by visiting www.blind-lgbt-pride.org

***** beginning of tentative schedule*****

Saturday 6:00

Dinner with the Board.

All members and friends are invited

Sunday 3:00

Welcome to Las Vegas Mixer (South of the Border theme)

Sunday 7:00

Opening Ceremony of the ACB Conference & Convention

Monday 8:00 - Noon

General Session

Monday 1:30

Workshop: Beyond myths and stereotypes toward inclusion and equality

Monday 4:00

Wine Tasting

Monday 7:00

Annual business Meeting and Elections

Monday 9:15

Caucus: Candidates for the ACB Board of directors

Tuesday 8:00 - Noon

General Session

Tuesday 1:30
Workshop B: TBA

Tuesday 3:30
Wine Tasting
Tuesday 9:30 (Following the Showcase)
Passion Event
Wednesday 8:00 - Noon
General Session

Wednesday 1:30
Workshop C: TBA
Wednesday 8:00 - Noon
General Session

Wednesday 3:00
Technology Info share

Wednesday 4:30
Wine tasting

Wednesday 7:00
Movie Night: Private screening of: "Beyond the candelabra, my life with
Liberace"
Starring Michael Douglas, Matt Damon, Dan Aykroyd, Scott Bakula, Rob Lowe,
Debbie Reynolds Music by Marvin Hamlisch

Audio description produced by AudioEyes
Thursday 8:00- Noon General Session

Thursday 2:00
Wine tasting

Thursday 4:00
Fund raising event: TBA
Friday 8:00 - 5:00
General Session

Friday

Farewell Event

TBA

**** end of schedule ****

•Hotel Information: Rooms at the Riviera are \$87.00 per night for one or two guests. Each additional guest (maximum of four guests per room) is \$10.00. Room tax (currently 12%) will be added to your room charge. When you make your reservation one night's stay will be charged to your credit card

Make telephone reservations by calling (800) 634-6753, make sure to mention you are with the ACB convention. You can also make reservations online at <https://gc.synxis.com/rez.aspx?Hotel=17104&Chain=6946&arrive=7/9/2014&depart=7/10/2014&adult=1&child=0&group=SACB7IB>

The Next Item up for Bid is

Submitted by: Richard Marion
Board Member-at-Large & Auction Chair

Planning for the 2014 BPI convention is well underway again. As with other years, finding new and interesting ways to fund this ever growing event is a challenge your fundraising committee takes very seriously.

Starting this year, BPI will be holding a silent auction during our national convention. Planning for this auction is already happening and soon we will be seeking donations of items we will be able to auction off. You are probably wondering how you can help, well, if you have any contacts in businesses that have products that would be useful to people from all across the country and even those attending from other countries, please let us know.

Over the next few weeks we will be sending out requests for donations. At this point, we are only expecting that the auction will be available to those attending the convention. This may change if we can develop a simple technical solution on keeping members informed on top bids for the items and being able to easily take bids from other locations. We will keep you informed about any developments in this area.

If you have any questions or would like to offer any assistance, please write to Richard Marion at member2@blind-lgbt-pride.org.

The Real Fun...Bylaws Proposals

Submitted by: Harlow Pease
Bylaws Chair

The First Objective Of the Constitution And ByLaws Committee was to complete the codification of the new Office of 2nd Vice President.

Here is the draft of proposed changes to Article VI to properly reflect the new position of 2nd Vice President.

Changes are reflected in Sections B, E, and G.

ARTICLE VI

OFFICERS:

A. The Board expects of itself and its members ethical and businesslike conduct.

This commitment includes proper use of authority and appropriate decorum in group and individual behavior when acting as Directors. Failure to do so will subject a Board Member to disciplinary actions contained in Section H of this Article. Board Members are expected to attend all board meetings. Failure to attend three consecutive board meetings may result in disciplinary action as delineated in Section H of this Article.

B. The officers of this organization shall consist of a President, a 1st Vice-President, a 2nd Vice President, Secretary, a Treasurer, the Immediate Past President and three At-Large Board Members.

C. These officers together constitute the organization's Board of Directors.

D. A majority of the members of the Board of Directors shall be legally blind.

E. The term of office of each officer shall be two years and shall begin at the close of the Annual Convention at which he or she is elected. The positions of President, 2nd Vice President, Treasurer and one Board Member At Large are elected in even numbered years and the positions of 1st Vice President, Secretary and two Board Members At Large are elected in odd numbered years.

F. Only a voting member of the organization may be elected to office.

G. If a vacancy should occur between Annual Conventions in any position on the Board of Directors, except the President or 1st Vice President, the Board of Directors, in conformity with the requirements for holding office contained herein or in the Bylaws, may by a majority vote elect an individual to serve in the position until the next Annual Convention, at which time, if necessary, the membership shall elect a successor to serve for the remainder of the term. If a vacancy should occur in the office of the President, the 1st Vice President shall succeed to that office and shall serve for the remainder of the term. If a vacancy should occur in the office of the 1st Vice President, the 2nd Vice President shall succeed to that office and shall serve for the remainder of the term.

H. Removal from office:

1. An officer may be removed from office for her or his failure to adhere to the provisions of the Constitution or Bylaws.

2. The Board of Directors, by a two-thirds vote of those present, may vote to initiate disciplinary actions in the form of a suspension hearing.

3. The Board of Directors may vote for an officer's suspension only after the officer for whom suspension is contemplated has been given twenty-one days' notice at his or her postal address of record in a pre-determined format which is accessible to that individual or at an email address that had been given by that individual as the preferred location to contact her or him. The notice shall contain reason(s) for the hearing and its date and time.

4. A quorum for a meeting to suspend an officer shall be five Board Members and the vote to suspend must be a two-thirds vote of those board members present.

5. The officer against whom suspension is contemplated may not cast a vote.
 6. If the board votes to provisionally suspend an officer, a two-thirds vote by Blind LGBT Pride members present at the next convention shall be required to confirm permanent removal from office.
 7. A President so removed shall not serve as immediate past President.
-

Our Next Objective was to complete work on recognizing Affiliates of BPI including their responsibilities to BPI, and their voting authority.

Proposal to modify Article V Membership

to cover more thoroughly voting procedures, and to specify affiliate voting; Move Section B, subsection 1 to Section E.

and Add Section D.

Modify Section C to more thoroughly clarify Dues Add Affiliated member to Section B to define this new class of an affiliate Proposed Language:

ARTICLE V

MEMBERSHIP, VOTING AND DUES

A. Membership

Any person at least 16 years of age who affirms the purposes of this organization is eligible to become a member of Blind LGBT Pride providing she or he complies with the provisions herein.

b. Classes of Members are as follows:

- Voting member: Anyone over the age of sixteen who supports the mission of BPI.
- Student Member: Anyone currently enrolled in a secondary or post-secondary educational institution.

Student member shall have full voting rights.

• Life Member: Anyone over the age of sixteen who supports the mission of BPI. Life Members shall have full voting rights.

Affiliated Member: any member who joins a recognized affiliate of BPI.

Affiliated Members are Voting members of BPI.

• Associate Member: Any ally or friend who supports the mission of BPI. Associate members shall have full voting rights.

• Supporting Member: Any individual or organization that supports the mission of BPI. Supporting members do not have voting rights.

Honorary member: An individual or organization for whom BPI offers special recognition.

Honorary members do not have voting rights.

C. Dues

Members shall remit dues in accordance with the Bylaws herein contained.

Dues are considered donations to the BPI as a non-profit organization and therefore are non-refundable.

D. Voting

1. Each Individual who is deemed to be a member in good standing shall be entitled to 1 vote.

2. An affiliate shall be entitled to 1 vote for each 7 members on its official role properly submitted to BPI as prescribed in the ByLaws.

3. When voting, the official representative for an affiliate of BPI shall cast his individual vote along with the vote(s) to which the affiliate is entitled.

E) ELECTRONIC VOTING

Each voting member and affiliate who will not be present at the Annual Convention of Blind LGBT Pride and who opts to vote electronically, does so with the understanding that they will not be able to cast a vote for a candidate running from the floor.

In addition to adding a new class of membership, we discussed dues in bylaw 1.

Proposed:

g. Affiliated membership dues shall be \$10 per member representing \$5 for ACB membership dues and \$5 for BPI membership dues. Dues representing ACB membership dues, should they change, shall increase or decrease proportionately.

Other modifications to define the responsibilities of Affiliates of BPI include:

Current Language of Article III, Section B, Subsection 1:

Old language:

B. Affiliation with Blind LGBT Pride

1. Blind LGBT Pride may grant recognition to any organization that seeks affiliation with Blind LGBT Pride at the Annual Convention of Blind LGBT Pride by majority vote, provided such organizations affirm the constitutional purposes of Blind LGBT Pride and that such organizations adhere to the Constitution and Bylaws of Blind LGBT Pride.

Proposed:

Add the following language to the end of the old language:

And meet the following criteria:

Any organization having at least seven (7) voting members, the majority of whom are visually impaired or blind, may apply for affiliate status with BPI by the submission of its Constitution and Bylaws, as well as dues and membership lists as set forth in the Bylaws of BPI.

Current Language of Article III, Section B, Subsection 2:

Old language:

2. Each member of an affiliate must be a member of Blind LGBT Pride.

Proposed:

Take out the word "must" and replace with "shall". So it will read:

2. Each member of an affiliate shall be a member of Blind LGBT Pride.

This report reflects those proposed amendments submitted for approval by the Board for consideration by the Membership.

Note to Members:

The entire area of Modification of the Bylaws to permit Teleconference Meetings of the Membership to conduct business outside the Annual Convention is under review and will have some impact even on these modifications. However, to give some idea of what is happening with proposals for changes to the bylaws, I am submitting these preliminary Proposals.

Books in Review

Submitted by: Barbara Matson
Member

ALL WE KNOW: Three Lives

Author: Lisa Cohen

This group biography plunges readers into the milieu of midcentury upper-class lesbians, portraying it as a beguiling, exclusive club. Cohen concentrates on three modernist tastemakers: the intellectual Esther Murphy, the arts enthusiast Mercedes de Acosta and the fashion editor Madge Garland.

Cohen "builds a rich picture of a lost world--and three 145 women who dared to inhabit it on their own terms," M.G. Lord wrote here. from PAPERBACK ROW by Ihsan Taylor, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, September 22, 2013

ODDLY NORMAL: One Family's Struggle to Help Their Teenage Son Come to Terms With His Sexuality

Author: John Schwartz

DB 75845

After coming out to his classmates, 13-year-old Joe, the youngest son of the New York Times national correspondent John Schwartz, tried to kill himself. (Joe was derided for much of his childhood because he was different.) "Oddly Normal," Schwartz's inspiring account of Joe's learning to embrace his sexuality, also reviews research on the experience of LGBT teens. from PAPERBACK ROW by Ihsan Taylor, THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW, September 29, 2013

PERV: The Sexual Deviant in All of Us

Author: Jesse Bering

Melissophilia, climacophilia, titillagnia: Bering provocatively examines notions of deviance and the wide-ranging triggers of human desire. from EDITORS' CHOICE THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW October 13, 2013

Getaway with BPI on the Norwegian Getaway !

Submitted by: Mickey Wiseman

Board Member-at-Large & Cruise Coordinator

Mark this date on your calendar: Saturday, November 8, 2014

WHERE: NORWEGIAN GETAWAY 7-DAY EASTERN CARIBBEAN

BPI Contact: Mickey Wiseman at wisemanmikey@gmail.com

Cruise Line **CONTACT: MICHELLE ZIMMERMAN 1-877-416-9722 EXT. 4398**

There really aren't enough adjectives to describe the colors of the Caribbean. The water shifts from aqua to turquoise to deep blue. Throw in some white-sand

beaches, yellow, pink and green architecture, some rather colorful colonial history, plus great dive spots, duty-free shopping and you've got one amazing cruise vacation. And with Freestyle Cruising, it becomes one of the most relaxing spots on earth. So go ahead, find your place on a postcard-perfect beach and do absolutely nothing!

Blind LGBT Pride International has scheduled this fun-filled vacation for all to enjoy! Join us as we travel to the ports of Miami, Philipsburg, St. Maarten, St. Thomas, US Virgin Islands, and Nassau, Bahamas

Here's what to do right now:

Register with our cruise contact **MICHELLE ZIMMERMAN, 1-877-416-9722 EXT. 4398. JUST LET HER KNOW YOU ARE CRUISING WITH BPI!**

BE SURE TO ASK ABOUT THE BEST PRICE GUARANTY !

Inside Cabin \$1529 (double occupancy), \$2094 (triple occupancy), \$2699 (quad occupancy)

Ocean View \$1669 (double occupancy), \$2294 (triple occupancy), \$2959 (quad occupancy)

Balcony \$1829 (double occupancy), \$2394 (triple occupancy), \$2959 (quad occupancy)

****RATES ARE SUBJECT TO CHANGE BASED ON AVAILABILITY****

If you have questions please contact BPI Board Member Mickey Wiseman at wisemanmikey@gmail.com

See you on the Getaway!

Won't You Consider Serving?

Submitted by: Will Burley

Vice President & Elections Chair

If you are interested in serving our organization, consider becoming a candidate for a seat on the Blind LGBT Pride International board of directors. These are volunteer positions that require attendance at monthly meetings conducted via

telephone conference as well as completing the duties assigned to the specific position.

This year there are Three positions open: President, Treasurer, and 1 Member-at-Large seat. Candidates are elected at the Annual Convention by the membership. Each position is a two year term beginning immediately after the close of the 2014 Convention.

You may request a nominations form for yourself or someone you wish to nominate. The deadline for submitting candidacy information is May 15th, 2013 at 5:00 p.m. EST. Please send your information to the Elections Committee at elections@Blind-LGBT-Pride.org with "Nominating Form" in the subject line,

All bio information and candidate statements will be included in the June issue of the InsideOut Newsletter. A candidates' forum will be scheduled prior to convention for those members unable to attend convention but wish to ask questions of those running for office.

Note: The office of 2nd Vice President has not been listed in this article as that position has to be ratified by the membership at convention. During last year's convention a 9th board seat was created but not made clear as to what that position would ultimately be. The Elections committee will work with the Bylaws Committee and Board on steps to have a special election during convention once the new board position name has been ratified.

In the News

What's New with Disability.gov? PSAs Challenge Assumptions about People with Disabilities

Syndicated from Disability.gov

It's a simple, yet powerful message: **People are not defined by their disability.** For instance, you may be someone who has cerebral palsy, but more importantly, you define yourself as a hard worker, tech savvy and spiritual. These skills and qualities matter much more than any perceived limitations others may have about you.

In support of this message, Disability.gov recently introduced [public service announcements \(PSAs\)](#) featuring eight of its *No Boundaries* participants – Adil, Anupa, Jeffrey, Leah, María, Pete, Rita and Robin.

To create the PSAs, our team asked each person to choose several words to describe him or herself. Some participants, like Leah, wanted to include their disability, while others preferred to highlight words they felt more accurately defined who they are at the core. Although only half of the participants chose the word “advocate,” the reality is that they all participated in the “No Boundaries” photo project to change the way people with disabilities are perceived and to advocate for a more inclusive culture.

Our team also wanted to remind you that “No matter who you are or what your goals in life may be, [Disability.gov](https://www.disability.gov) can help you.” The site connects visitors to thousands of resources across 10 categories, including benefits, employment and housing. Whether you want to learn more about [self-advocacy](#), [transitioning](#) from school to work or [where you can look for a job](#), there is information that can help you and your loved ones live life to the fullest.

Please help us spread awareness about [Disability.gov](https://www.disability.gov) by sharing these PSAs with your family members, friends and colleagues who may not know about the site.

Want to participate in a similar project? [Disability.gov](https://www.disability.gov) is seeking participants for its second *No Boundaries* photo project. [Learn more](#).

D.C. Mayor Makes Major Move Expanding Trans Health Care

Syndicated from The Advocate

Transgender Washington, D.C., residents will now be able to purchase insurance policies that include coverage for transition-related care on the D.C. health exchange or through Medicaid benefits.

Mayor Vincent Gray

In a major win for transgender people, Washington, D.C., mayor Vincent Gray announced today that all health insurance policies regulated by the D.C. government [will now be required to cover transition-related medical services](#), including gender-confirming surgeries. This new regulation will apply to Medicaid, D.C. government employee insurance policies, and plans purchased on D.C.'s health insurance exchange.

"Today, the district takes a major step towards leveling the playing field for individuals diagnosed with gender dysphoria," Mayor Gray said. "These residents should not have to pay exorbitant out-of-pocket expenses for medically necessary treatment when those without gender dysphoria do not. Today's actions bring us closer to being One City that values and protects the health of all of our residents."

D.C.'s [Department of Insurance, Securities, and Banking](#) issued a bulletin explicitly instructing insurers to include coverage for the medically necessary treatment of gender dysphoria. In a

press release, department officials say they consider "attempts by companies to limit or deny medically necessary treatments for gender dysphoria, including gender reassignment surgeries, to be discriminatory," adding that the department's position moving forward will be to require transition-related care to be listed as a covered benefit in all policies they regulate. Today's announcement follows up on a March 15, 2013, bulletin issued to health insurers within D.C. to remove gender identity-related discriminatory language from policies.

In keeping with today's announcement, the D.C. Department of Health Care Finance and Department of Human Resources also updated their policies. DHCF has [taken the position](#) that under D.C.'s Human Rights Act, it can no longer allow discrimination on the basis of gender identity and that treatment as outlined by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health Standards of Care falls within Medicaid coverage standards. DCHR has [updated policies offered to district government employees](#) to include this coverage, voiding documents, riders, or provisions inconsistent with today's announcement effective by each policy's next renewal period.

"This victory reaffirms growing agreement among advocates and the medical community that D.C.'s health care nondiscrimination laws require that insurance cover medically necessary transgender health care," National Center for Transgender Equality policy associate Andy Bowen [said in a press release](#). "Critically important is that as more states follow the district's lead, we'll be better able to educate the medical community about respectfully and comprehensively meeting our health care needs."

Mara Keisling, NCTE's executive director, added, "The insurance bulletin means so much to transgender people. It means health care is affordable and means we can access that care without delay or limitation. Here in the nation's capital, transgender people won't be forced to choose between paying the bills or paying for health care."

State Dept. Report Decries LGBT Persecution Around the World

Syndicated from The Advocate

Secretary of State John Kerry

The State Department's 2013 report on human rights around the world, released Thursday, focuses on the situation of LGBT people to a greater degree than previous ones and makes a strong statement against anti-LGBT discrimination.

"From Nigeria to Russia to Iran, indeed in some 80 countries the world over, LGBT communities face discriminatory laws and practices that attack their basic human dignity and undermine their safety," Secretary of State John Kerry said in introducing the annual ***Country Reports on Human Rights Practices***. "We are seeing new laws like the Anti-Homosexuality Bill enacted by Uganda and signed into law by President Museveni earlier this week, which not only makes criminals of people for who they are, but punishes those who defend the human rights that are our universal birthright.

“These laws contribute to a global trend of rising violence and discrimination against LGBT persons and their supporters, and they are an affront to every reasonable conscience, and the United States will continue to stand with our LGBT brothers and sisters as we stand up for freedom, for justice, for equal rights for all people around the world.”

This amounts to “the broadest statement yet that Washington considers the treatment of gays a key measure of human rights around the world,” notes [*The Washington Post*](#).

The previous day, in a roundtable interview with a small group of journalists, Kerry likened Uganda’s new law, which makes homosexuality punishable with prison sentences of up to life, to persecution of Jews in Nazi Germany and apartheid in South Africa, the *Post* reports.

“You could change the focus of this legislation to black or Jewish, and you could be in 1930s Germany, or you could be in 1950s or ’60s apartheid South Africa,” he said. “It was wrong there, egregiously, in both places, and it is wrong here.”

Read the *Country Reports on Human Rights Practices* [here](#).

Texas Attorney General Vows to Appeal Judge's Same-Sex Marriage Ruling Syndicated from The Advocate

Despite his friendship with one of the gay plaintiffs, Greg Abbott, the attorney general of Texas, promised to appeal Judge Orlando Garcia's recent overturn of the state's same-sex marriage ban.

Greg Abbott, attorney general of Texas

The attorney general of Texas has vowed to appeal a federal judge’s ruling that struck down the state’s constitutional ban on same-sex marriage.

The office of Greg Abbott is working on drafting an appeal of U.S. District Judge Orlando Garcia’s recent decision, reports the [Associated Press](#). Garcia [determined Wednesday](#) that the U.S. Supreme Court's rulings on marriage last summer trump Texas's state constitutional amendment, which was overwhelmingly approved by voters in 2005.

Garcia stayed his ruling from taking effect so that Abbott could bring his case to the Fifth U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. The federal judge said this case or one of 23 other pending state-level marriage challenges would probably head to the Supreme Court for a ruling.

After Garcia’s ruling, Abbott, a Republican who is a likely candidate to succeed Rick Perry as the governor of Texas, said, "There are good, well-meaning people on both sides" of this issue, but he would defend a state’s right to determine its own marriage laws. This right was also recognized in the [June 2013 decision by the Supreme Court to overturn key sections of DOMA](#), which both sides of the debate have been citing.

"I think it's pretty clear to see there may be multiple rulings by multiple circuits that will force this issue back to the Supreme Court," Abbott said. "We all think this is an issue that will be decided by the Supreme Court."

When Abbott referenced "good, well-meaning people," he may have been alluding to one of the gay plaintiffs in the case — Mark Phariss, who, along with his partner of 16 years, Victor Holmes, is suing to overturn the same-sex marriage ban.

Phariss told local news station [KERA](#) that he has known Abbott since they attended law school together at Vanderbilt University. Speaking about their relationship, Phariss recalled an incident in 1984 where he flew from Oklahoma to Houston in order to be by his old friend's hospital bed after a tree fell on Abbott and injured his spine.

"I was clerking in a law firm in Tulsa and I flew down to be by his side with his wife and his mother," Phariss said. "He was a very good friend then, and I consider him a very good friend now."

Op-ed: Arizona Vetoed, But Is The GOP Listening?

Syndicated from The Advocate

If Republicans learn anything from what happened in Arizona, it should be that the midterms face a huge distraction if they don't drop these bills and pass ENDA.

While on stage at the University of Miami on Wednesday night, Hillary Clinton broke the news that Arizona governor Jan Brewer had vetoed her state's "license to discriminate" bill, suggesting it could be a sign of the times. "Inclusive leadership is really what the 21st century is all about," Clinton said to huge applause. Any shrewd political operator could have told you that, but what's unfortunate is how many in the Republican Party seem poised to overlook the significance of this moment.

Bills like Arizona's [have been proposed](#) by conservative factions all over the country, in Maine, Idaho, Tennessee, Georgia, Ohio, Kansas, Mississippi, South Dakota, Indiana, and Texas.

As I watched Rachel Maddow last night flash on screen a map of all the places where Republican lawmakers have considered kindred antigay laws, it reminded me of a similar map she'd often pull up for dramatic effect during the last election (the one in which Republicans unexpectedly lost seats in both the House and Senate). A rash of bills sought to limit abortion to smaller windows during pregnancy, or used quirks in law to virtually eradicate all clinics from the state, and some states even proposed those weird bills that required a physical exam to get an abortion and had Maddow nicknaming Bob McDonnell of Virginia as "Governor Ultrasound."

All of that wackiness was happening in the background when the likes of Todd Akin, who was running for Senate in Missouri, started making clueless comments about rape. The "War on Women" became a winning theme for Democrats. And if Republicans don't wake up soon, Democrats may dare to take advantage with the "War on Your Gay Neighbor."

What was striking about the "War on Women" was how Republicans seemed to be caught arguing about issues from history books. Should women take birth control? I thought we'd resolved that.

The country also thinks we've resolved this thing about discriminating against LGBT people. Americans aren't OK with it. The [most recent poll](#) on this was released Tuesday by the Public Religion Research Institute.

Here's what should be a frightening finding for the GOP: "Solid majorities of both political parties and every major religious group support workplace nondiscrimination laws for gay and lesbian people," the poll concluded. The political reality is that not only does everyone think it should be illegal to fire me for being gay, Americans think it already is. This poll and numerous before it find that 75 percent of Americans incorrectly believe it's now illegal under federal law to be fired over your sexual orientation or gender identity. It isn't.

Meanwhile, what are the Republicans doing? They're trying to pass state laws like the one in Arizona, hoping no one really notices. Plus, Speaker John Boehner won't allow the actual federal law banning my firing for being gay, called the Employment Non-Discrimination Act, to even get a vote in the House. It's already passed the Senate.

LGBT Americans should give Brewer zero points in her favor for vetoing this bill, since she's not asking for any. In her [statement](#) announcing the veto, Brewer expressed concern that "long-held norms about marriage and family are being challenged as never before." She said "religious liberty is a core American and Arizona value. So is non-discrimination." But if she really believes that, then the governor should call on legislators to amend the state's non-discrimination policy to include sexual orientation and gender identity.

Pay no attention either to all the hubbub about how Mitt Romney plus Arizona's two Republican senators, John McCain and Jeff Flake, called for Brewer to veto the bill. They are not representative of their party. The actual chairman of the GOP, Reince Preibus, refused to comment on the bill. And congressional leaders Mitch McConnell and Boehner were also mum. Did you hear any of the party's prospective 2016 candidates speak up?

Politico actually tracked down Sen. Rand Paul and [asked](#) for his opinion. "Let me get back to you," Paul said.

Maybe he should talk to the likes of Apple, Delta, American Airlines, Pet Smart, and more, all of which said discriminating against LGBT people would make it hard to recruit new employees, could hurt tourism, and slow their profits.

While the business community seems to be getting a lot of the credit for successfully pressing Brewer to veto, my hope is the governor actually did it because it would have made Arizona and the GOP look outside the mainstream. That's what it really means when huge companies show no qualms about lining up to oppose you. Yes, their business interests were at stake, but in order to take a public position a company had better be sure the potential backlash against its opinion isn't going to damage the bottom line either.

It looks like Republicans are still making that calculation.

LUCAS GRINDLEY is editorial director for Here Media. Contact him on Twitter [@lucasgrindley](https://twitter.com/lucasgrindley).

Op-ed: Coming Out As An Evangelical Pastor

Syndicated from The Advocate

After decades of hiding his secret from his family and congregation, a pastor comes out and deals with the aftermath.

I tried to keep my head up as I held the hand of my 3-year-old son, walking into our evangelical church. I did not want him to think that this Sunday was different than another Sunday. But for me, this was the first time I had come back to church simply a member and not as a pastor. As we approached his Sunday school classroom, where I was looking forward to volunteering, I was met by the man who was hired to take over the job I had done for many years.

“It’s so good to see you,” he smiled. I wondered if he was sincere.

“You too,” I lied.

“Hey,” he continued, his demeanor changing from light small talk to a no-nonsense frankness, “I just want you to know that I spoke with Pastor John and everything’s cool.” I had absolutely no idea what he was talking about and had long since given up being polite and keeping my mouth shut.

“Everything’s cool with what?” I questioned.

“You volunteering in your son’s classroom. We’re all good.”

We’re all good. Really? We’re all good? We’re all good that for almost nine years I was one of the most highly respected pastors and leaders of this large evangelical church in Southern California and now I had to get special permission to volunteer in my child’s classroom?

And the only reason for this change is because I am gay.

I’m not “all good” with that.

The truth is, I was gay when I started working for this megachurch. But I was also married with two beautiful children and had spent the majority of the last 12 years in full-time Christian ministry. During my time at this church, I saw numerous promotions, role expansions, pastoral ordination, and ultimately a spot on the executive team, which gives overall direction to this congregation of more than 6,000 members.

As I came to the end of my 30s, I began to really wrestle with my physical attraction to men — attractions that had been part of my life since as early as I can remember. Wanting a family, romance, and all of the blessings of a heterosexual marriage, I was extremely happy when I met and fell in love with an amazing woman in college. We got married shortly after graduation. Although I realized early on that getting married and having plenty of heterosexual sex did nothing to take away my same-sex attractions, I figured it would be something I could live with, and something that I would have to keep to myself.

At least, that was my plan.

Nothing particularly changed in my life when my attraction to men began to grow, both in intensity and in regularity. I never cheated on my wife, but I knew that my growing desire to be close to a man — emotionally, physically, and sexually — was becoming a much bigger desire of my heart than it had ever been.

I needed someone to talk to, but I couldn't look inside the church. I had been there for long enough to know it wasn't safe to wrestle with one's sexual orientation. In my years as a leader there, I had been a part of turning away a volunteer in children's ministry because he had a past gay relationship and the decision to keep a lesbian couple from becoming church members, and I personally had to inform an employee that he could no longer work at our church once it was discovered he was gay. I knew I could not trust anyone there with my secret and the anguish it caused.

The thing I find most ironic is how this "sin" has been singled out in the evangelical community. I could struggle with just about anything else, and there would be a place for me to turn. If I had cheated on my wife and wanted a divorce, I could attend our church's "Divorce Recovery" ministry. If I was addicted to alcohol or drugs, I would be welcome at "Celebrate Recovery." If I couldn't stay off pornographic websites, I could find solace and empathy at the "Every Man's Battle." Unfortunately for me, and for thousands like me in churches across this nation, if you are drawn to give and receive love from someone of the same gender, you are on your own, and usually forbidden from membership, leadership, and volunteering.

Eventually my wife found out about my sexual orientation. It was the most difficult time in our lives. We talked, cried, and sat in silence for days on end. During that time we celebrated our 17th wedding anniversary. Sitting in that restaurant, neither of us knew what would happen to our marriage. The future was completely unclear.

One thing was certain: We could not tell anyone associated with our church. We both knew it would put my job in jeopardy. For the next two years, my wife and I tried to figure out if a marriage like ours could work, keeping our secret the entire time. Ironically, it was during this time that I did some of my best work as leader of all the family ministries at the church. I saw my influence grow, my responsibilities expand, and the number of people reporting to me nearly double. I received stellar performance reviews and often words of commendation and affirmation from our church's elders, pastors and members of the congregation.

When the issue of homosexuality would come up, it was clear that our church, like the majority of evangelical churches in America, simply had no idea how to respond to the increasingly common situation of Christians who want to worship, serve, raise children, and become members and who also happen to be gay. They did not know it, but my church leaders were about to have the opportunity to have a dialogue with me about how to respond to and love gay people in their church.

But they chose not to take the opportunity.

After a long, emotional journey, I made the difficult decision to end my marriage. I realized that because I love my wife and because I believe that faithfulness is essential to making a marriage work, I knew that I could not be the kind of husband that my wife deserved. The day came for me to tell my bosses, the senior pastor and the executive pastor, what had been going on with me for years. We had very good conversations. They were shocked to learn about my sexual orientation and were genuinely concerned for my family and me and all we were going through. "Even if I wanted to keep you," my senior pastor said, "you know it would never be accepted by the congregation."

I knew he was right. Our church is located in a very conservative, family-oriented enclave of Southern California, with very few openly gay people. However, I also knew that if there was an area in today's church that is in desperate need of a leader speaking out and standing up to forge a new path, it was in this area of homosexuality in the Christian church. Although I had not by any means been perfect in my journey of self-discovery, I also had not brought any scandal on the church and had done my best to protect it as I went through this process. I allowed myself a little hope, that maybe things would go differently than the way things typically go when there is a "scandal" or "fallen leader" in the church.

Unfortunately, I was wrong to hope.

Things happened quite swiftly from there. I was told to take the rest of the day off. And that turned out to be my last day in the office. I had follow-up meetings with well-meaning, albeit uninformed, church elders who insisted that the reason they could not have me work at the church any longer was because of my separation from my wife and not "the other issue." I didn't believe this, of course, since there were a number of people on staff who had been through a divorce. Less than three weeks later, when I would not voluntarily resign, I was terminated from the church, after almost nine years of exemplary ministry and service to others.

I have decided not to be part of a church that does not allow me to serve in the ministry, become a member, or celebrate my love with whomever I choose. My children still attend this church, as does my ex-wife. In order to experience the faith journey with my children, I attend periodically and serve alongside other parents in their Sunday school classrooms now that I have been granted permission.

The anger I felt through this process has been replaced with sadness. Not only is the evangelical church neglecting to guide, instruct, and affirm the faith of the scores of LGBTQ people in their congregations, they are actually damaging them by their inability and unwillingness to honestly

and compassionately find a way to walk together in love. I think most evangelicals would agree that our position in the kingdom of heaven is based not on anything we do or say, but on our belief and faith in God. That means that all followers of Jesus, whether gay or straight, will one day be side by side in heaven worshipping God together and enjoying him forever. I am so happy that I have now found a new, welcoming and affirming faith community that is practicing what we pray: "Thy kingdom come, they will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

KEVIN McCLOSKEY worked for over 20 years in full-time Christian ministry. He is the proud dad of three amazing kids and lives in Studio City, Calif. Currently he works as the operations manager for LifeWorks, the youth mentoring and leadership development program of the L.A. Gay and Lesbian Center

How Gay Denialism Became the New Homophobia

Syndicated from The Advocate

Denial, while being a general refusal to acknowledge or accept the truth, is being used as the next plan of attack for anti-gay conservatives. *Slate* contributor Mark Joseph Stern warns of this possibility in his article ["Gay Denialism Is the New Homophobia--and It's Terrifying"](#).

Stern writes of a perhaps little known article that shifts the view of homosexuality from one of conservative opposition to one of denying the fundamental existence of gay people, period. The article, deceptively titled ["Against Heterosexuality,"](#) is written by Michael W. Hannon and published in the magazine *First Things* and argues that people aren't gay, but choose to engage in same sex acts.

Referencing the article, Stern writes:

"According to Hannon, the notion of homosexuality as an identity--something you are, rather than something you do--is a "dishonest" and "artificial" construct. There are no gay people, he argues, only gay sex acts, and the mere recognition of a homosexual identity fosters "moral disarray." It isn't really heterosexuality, then, that Hannon is looking to debunk. It's homosexuality--and more specifically, the claim that gay relationships deserve any form of legal recognition or societal legitimisation."

Stern writes that the clever argument renders statements against homophobia obsolete by making the fact of same sex attraction incontestable. Basically, there is no homophobia without an LGBT identity to discriminate against. The argument positions LGBT identities as moral choices that should be open to resistance. In this way denial of LGBT identity becomes the new vehicle for homophobia, complete with justified discrimination.

Stern claims, however, that the nuanced language does not lessen the impact of homophobia. For Stern, the opposite is closer to the truth. "A certain faction of homophobes maintained their

insistence that the gay identity is an illegitimate construct--and now that mainstream homophobia is receding, this fringe group is taking center stage," he writes.

Stern's analysis is worth a read, just as he urges readers to give Hannon neo-homophobic argument a serious glance.

Hannon's call to challenge the existence of homophobia by denying LGBT people exist is part of an emerging trend of denialism that positions the homophobe as the victim. For instance, the gay marriage debate in Ireland has been stifled by moves to make the use of [the word "homophobia" illegal](#) by both sides of the argument. Irish drag artist and LGBT activist [Miss Panti Bliss](#) has been on a campaign to increase awareness about the subtle nature of homophobia, countering new ideas that those against gay rights are the ones being persecuted for their moral beliefs.

"And who, exactly, is Hannon to tell gay people not just that they're unequal but that they don't exist and their affection is a sham?" Stern writes. "Just an advocate of "Christian chastity" looking to turn the "tragedy" of all nonprocreative sex--with a recurring focus on homosexuality--into an "opportunity" to promote his cause."

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