October Program To Address White Privilege

By Mia Furtado

On Thursday, October 6, PFLAG Denver will present its quarterly program, on dismantling white privilege within the queer community. In light of the recent troubling murders of people of color, the goal of this program will be to help white individuals identify their white privilege and how they can become allies to communities of color. The queer community has rightfully come under scrutiny for “whitewashing” tragic events such as Orlando, as well as historically neglecting queer voices of color.

Mia Furtado, a PFLAG board member, will present definitions of ‘privilege’ and explain how this applies to the white population and how white individuals can become aware of their innate privilege so they do not directly and/or indirectly pass on their ignorance and prejudice.

The program will be held at the CHUN Mansion, 1290 Williams St. in Denver, from 7:30-8:30.

The New Families Support Group will meet as usual at 6:30 p.m. and all will move to the Community Room at 7:30 for the program.

City Council Honors First Unitarian Society, Building

From Landmark Preservation News, a publication of the Denver Department of Community Planning and Development, August 23, 2016, with thanks to Judy Trompeter.

The First Unitarian Society of Denver building at 1400 Lafayette St., which served as a gathering place in the advancement of social justice issues in Colorado, became a local historic landmark via a vote of Denver City Council. The site, whose architecture and geography also meet the city’s designation criteria, is the first in Colorado to be recognized at the local, state or national level for its importance in the history of the LGBT rights movement.

The First Unitarian congregation has a long history of social justice work, including involvement with women’s rights and suffrage, civil rights and immigration justice. Over the years, it has welcomed social justice organizations that could find no other public venue for their meetings or presentations.

The congregation’s involvement in the LGBT rights movement began as early as the 1950s. At a time when few were willing to open their doors to the gay community, First Unitarian offered support to the Mattachine Society, one of the first gay rights groups in the United States, by providing space to organize. In the 1970s and 1980s, the Unitarian building was a de facto headquarters of the Gay Coalition of Denver, which is known today as The Center, an LGBT nonprofit located one block away from First Unitarian, on Colfax Ave.

The building itself has been occupied by the First Unitarian Society of Denver since 1958. The Richardsonian Romanesque style building, constructed in the 1890s, has retained its architectural integrity over the years. It features wide rounded arches, recessed entryways, a dramatic rose window, and rough surface stone quarried in Castle Rock, Colorado. Its architecture and its prominent location at the corner of 14th Avenue and Lafayette Street make it a unique orienting feature in Capitol Hill.

Landmark preservation is an important function of Denver Community Planning and Development. Denver City Council enacted the Denver Landmark Ordinance in 1967 to foster the protection, enhancement, perpetuation and use of structures and districts of historical, architectural and/or geographic significance.

“Preserving sites like this helps us tell our city’s story – the whole story,” said Brad Buchanan, executive director of Denver Community Planning and Development. “While Denver’s landmarks include buildings originally built by and for those with wealth and social status, they also include equally important places linked to people who may have been left out of the history textbooks.”

A memorial event for Barbara Sternberg, co-founder of PFLAG Evergreen, will be held on October 9. Barbara died on July 15, and PFLAG Denver was included in the list of non-profits to which memorial donations would be welcome (the Evergreen chapter is not presently active.) PFLAG Denver is genuinely grateful to Barbara and her family. Loretta Martin will attend the service and will express our thanks.
Recent Items of Interest from PFLAG National

PFLAG National is excited to announce the 2017 PFLAG National Convention will be held in Portland, Oregon, at the Portland Marriott Downtown Waterfront. The dates are October 20-22, 2017.

Media Matters
A record number of out LGBTQ athletes competed in this year’s Olympic Games in Rio, 49 in total. They performed extremely well, with nearly half of this group winning medals in their respective categories.

A kiss-in was staged on August 13 in a London grocery store after a gay couple holding hands was asked to leave. Hundreds of community members showed up in support.

Court Matters
In January, Illinois passed a ban on conversion therapy. Now some Illinois pastors have sued the state over passage of this law. Their lawsuit aims to exempt clergy from the ban on grounds of religious liberty.

State and Hemispheric Matters
Wyoming - Gillette has become the state’s third city to protect LGBTQ city employees from discrimination. On Sept. 22, the non-discrimination resolution passed with a 6-1 vote. Local PFLAGers led the way on this years-long victorious effort.

Canada - Prime Minister Justin Trudeau plans to issue a formal apology for the country’s past poor treatment of LGBTQ people. The apology will set a historical precedent in Canada and for others, pardoning all imprisoned and apologizing to Canadians previously fired or otherwise persecuted because of their sexual orientation.

Mexico - Marriage equality has generated unprecedented backlash in Mexico. While 10 states in Mexico approved marriage with little controversy this year, conservatives are now taking to the streets since the president now seeks to override the remaining 21 bans in its 31 states.

Can Humor Alleviate Election Fatigue?

By Sara Winter

My daughter Jennifer alerted me to a story that many of you are probably aware of: In May of this year the Richmond Times-Dispatch published an obituary of a woman named Mary Anne Noland, with this opening sentence:

“Faced with the prospect of voting for either Donald Trump or Hillary Clinton, Mary Anne Noland of Richmond chose, instead, to pass into the eternal love of God on Sunday, May 15, 2016, at the age of 68.”

The obituary started circulating on Face-book and was wildly popular on social media, but many viewers were skeptical about its authenticity. The obituary was in fact genuine. It was published in the Richmond Times-Dispatch on May 17, 2016, and the newspaper also referenced it in a separate article the following day: “Paid death notices are vignettes about a person’s life, as told by their family or friends. This isn’t the first time a paid death notice has been used to send a personal message to the world. Some have commented on favorite sports teams, places to visit, a drink of choice and yes, politics.”

The Richmond Times-Dispatch also pointed out that the obituary for Mary Anne Noland was not the first to mention politics. The obituary for Ernest Overbey Jr., for instance, ended with a call to “please vote for Donald Trump.” Similarly, the obituary for Katherine Michael Hinds said that “in lieu of flowers, do not vote for Donald Trump.”

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