



# News & Views

**Greater Providence Chapter  
Parents, Families, Friends and Allies United with  
LGBT People to Move Equality Forward**

Volume 15, Number 2

March/April 2014

## Coming to Terms with Coming Out

### A Personal Story from Senator Donna Nesselbush



One of the objectives of PFLAG is to support and understand our LGBT community. We need to recognize that LGBT individuals are everywhere in our daily lives. They may be our classmate, postal worker, professor, nurse, or some of our politicians. At our March meeting, PFLAG was honored to have one such politician, **Senator Donna Nesselbush** (D-Pawtucket). As a resident of

Pawtucket, she was first elected to the RI Senate in 2010 and represents District 15. She is also a member of the Committees on Judiciary, Health and Human Services and Government Oversight and has served as Executive Director of the Rhode Island Coalition Against Domestic Violence. She also is co-founder of the Rhode Island law firm, Marasco and Nesselbush.

It is important to emphasize that **Senator Nesselbush** was the lead sponsor of the **S-38 Marriage Equality Bill** that was signed into law last April by Governor Chafee. Because of her tireless work, Rhode Island became the 10th state to legalize same sex marriage.

A native of a small town in New York, Senator Nesselbush described her early years in Rhode Island while a student at Brown University. She found the coming out process easier in the more liberal and accepting Providence area than she expected. "When I came out in college, I remember the poignant moment of thinking, 'Wow, I will never get married.' But I knew I was willing to pay that price to be the

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Coming out to her strongly religious family, however, proved to be a greater challenge. She expressed how

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PFLAG Board Member Scott Mirani, PFLAG President Barbara Metz, RI Senator Donna Nesselbush, and PFLAG member Christine Noel at the PFLAG March meeting.

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## Parents, Families, Friends and Allies United with LGBT People to Move Equality Forward

### Our Mission

PFLAG promotes the health and well-being of gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and intersex persons and their families and friends through:

**SUPPORT:** To support parents on their journey to understand and accept their gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children; and to help children, of whatever age, to understand and come out into loving relationships with their families;

**EDUCATION:** To enlighten an ill-informed public;

**ADVOCACY:** To end discrimination and to secure equal civil rights.

PFLAG provides an opportunity for dialogue about sexual orientation and gender identity and expression, and acts to create a society that is healthy and respectful of human diversity.

PFLAG is a volunteer grass-roots, tax-exempt, non-profit organization, not affiliated with any political or religious institution.

PFLAG is a welcoming place for parents and friends of all members of the LGBTQ community, but we are much more than that. Those who identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, or queer are also encouraged to attend our meetings., with or without their family members. Parents and friends may come with or without their loved ones who are members of the LGBTQ community.

Confidentiality is assured.

### PFLAG/Greater Providence

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# news from our chapter

## Coming to Terms with Coming Out: A Personal Story from Senator Donna Nesselbush

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pleased she was to see so many of us at this meeting and what a positive support PFLAG can be to those who are struggling with some of the same issues with which she and her family have struggled.

Coming out is an ongoing process. It was no different for Senator Nesselbush. Throughout her career, she learned that once your colleagues get to know you and respect you for your work, values and ethics, then coming out is inconsequential. It does not define who she is and never did.

As for Donna's early comment about never getting married, well that changed in 2013 when marriage equality finally became the law in Rhode Island. Soon thereafter, Donna Nesselbush and her long-time partner Kelly Carse, were married in a private ceremony in Rhode Island on September 20, 2013.



Newlyweds Donna Nesselbush and Kelly Carse celebrating after their September 20, 2013 wedding ceremony in Rhode Island.

"conversion therapy" forced upon her by her family with the hope of "praying away" her lesbianism, she told the Senate Health and Human Services Committee Tuesday.

Taylor testified on behalf of S-2510, a bill that would prohibit licensed health-care professionals from attempting to change the sexual orientation of children under 18 from homosexual to heterosexual, through the controversial "conversion" or "reparative" therapy. Violations would include fines and possible license suspension or revocation.

Taylor said that, at age 16, when she told her grandmother that she is a lesbian, "the next morning she pulled out her Bible and told me I was committing a horrible sin." After a family confrontation, Taylor's mother sent her to conversion therapy. Taylor did not last.

"It was a big battle to get out of the house," she said. Her parents were divorced, and she moved in with her father, adding, "He was the reason I survived."

David Allard, a middle-school teacher and membership director at Young Democrats of Rhode Island, said the bill is part of a state-by-state effort to ban conversion therapy, which "is based on biased views of homosexuality."

Senator Joshua Miller, D-Cranston, told Taylor, "Thank you for your bravery." He said he wanted to make sure the language of the bill is as tight as possible before it is voted on.

Karen Lee Ziner, Providence Journal, 3/19/2014

### Camp Aranu'tiq



5-day leadership camp for trans\*, genderqueer, etc. youth ages 16, 17, 18

**New England, June 24 - 28, 2014**

Weeklong summer camp for trans\*, gender-variant, etc. youth ages 8 thru 15

**New England, June 29 - July 5, 2014**

Weekend family camp  
ages 6 thru 16 and families

**New England, October 17 - 19, 2014**

[www.camparanutiq.org](http://www.camparanutiq.org)  
(617) 467-5830

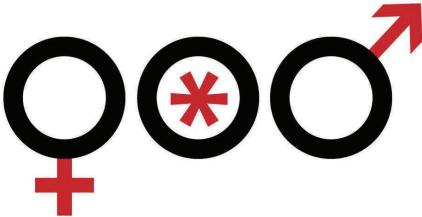
Financial aid is available for those who qualify.

## Lesbian testifies on her experience with 'conversion therapy'

Kristen Taylor is happily married to her wife. But long before the marriage, Taylor fled Kentucky to escape

## The quickly shifting language of the transgender community

He, she, ze, and how to navigate a new landscape



When Facebook announced in mid-February that users would be able to display 56 gender options beyond "male" and "female" in their profiles, the response was largely positive, outside of a few skeptical Fox News anchors. But there was also head-scratching. What exactly did words like "neutrois" and "two-spirit" mean? And why were quite so many words necessary? Various media sites, including Time, the Daily Beast, and Slate, published translation guides for those who might never have encountered "cisgender," "androgynous," or "genderqueer" before. "Confused by Facebook's new gender options?" a Washington Post headline asked, helpfully.

Not long ago, two genders were seen as sufficient for pretty much any form or sign-up page. But as trans or transgender people—umbrella terms encompassing both people who feel at home as members of the opposite sex of their birth, and people who feel their gender can't be reduced to male or female—have become more prominent and more vocal in America, the language is bending to accommodate more possibilities.

In just the last few years, people such as actress Laverne Cox, writer Janet Mock, screenwriter and director Lana Wachowski, and activist Chaz Bono have become household names. Major shifts in trans rights have happened even more recently. In 2013, the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, psychiatry's bible for diagnoses, replaced "Gender Identity Disorder" with "Gender Dysphoria" (implying that trans identity wasn't a problem, but pro-

found unhappiness about gender could be). The Senate passed the Employee Non-Discrimination Act, including protections for transgender people, in November.

This means that more and more Americans, even those who have always taken gender for granted, are reaching for words to talk to and about people in this group in an appropriate way. And it's not always easy: The transgender community tends to put considerable energy into thinking about how our understanding of gender and identity is shaped by language, and to tailoring and policing language accordingly. As the movement goes increasingly mainstream, it's entailing a new effort to translate its fast-evolving lexicon to outsiders—and even well-intentioned people may struggle to keep up.

Part of the difficulty in adjusting pronouns comes from the rigid, binary nature of English when it comes to gender. "In English you can't refer to an individual in the third person without either gendering them or referring to them with a word that generally connotes lack of humanity—you're either a he or a she or an it," said Susan Stryker, director of the Institute for LGBT Studies at the University of Arizona.

Some transgender people transition from one category to the other—he to she, or vice versa—and that's that. For others, however, a sense of existing outside those categories has inspired new words or usages altogether. One approach to the pronoun conundrum has been the singular use of "they/them"; another is the creation of neutral third-person pronouns like "ze/hir," and some college newspapers, including the Wesleyan Argus, allow for either depending on a source's preference.

The myriad new gender options on Facebook represent both a playfulness about language and an attempt to offer everyone a choice that feels right. They also reflect the speed with which words come and go. "Transgender" itself came into broad use only in the mid-1990s, a moment when the old words—"transsexual," which implies surgical intervention; "transvestite," a pejorative term referring to people who dressed as the opposite gender, or even the ac-

ceptable "cross-dresser"—were viewed as too narrow. "The word [transgender] was a way...of encompassing that variety of people who really wanted to do different things with gender than simply just have an operation," Don Kulick, a University of Chicago anthropologist who's studied trans communities, told me.

Many of the words on the Facebook list, such as "trans\*" (the asterisk indicates a "wildcard" search term, so the word means, basically, "trans-anything"), "genderqueer," "gender questioning," or "neutrois," come largely from younger people and online forums and suggest a much more fluid approach to gender. For newcomers, as the various media guides suggest, they may be puzzling. "Most of America probably hasn't experienced those words yet, and some of those just are very new," said Mara Keisling, founding executive director of the National Center for Transgender Equality.

So what's a would-be "ally" (the term for a nontransgender supporter of transgender rights) to do? Start by not presuming anything—like anyone else, transgender people have individual desires about the language they choose for themselves, including both how they describe themselves and what pronouns they use. Once you learn the language someone prefers, embrace it, as more and more publications, workplaces, and schools are beginning to do. "If someone says they are a man, and they don't want to be called a transgender man or a 'man who used to be a woman,' I think that's really important. That's just about respect," Keisling said. This is one area where words can either be a weapon or a powerful means of self-determination.

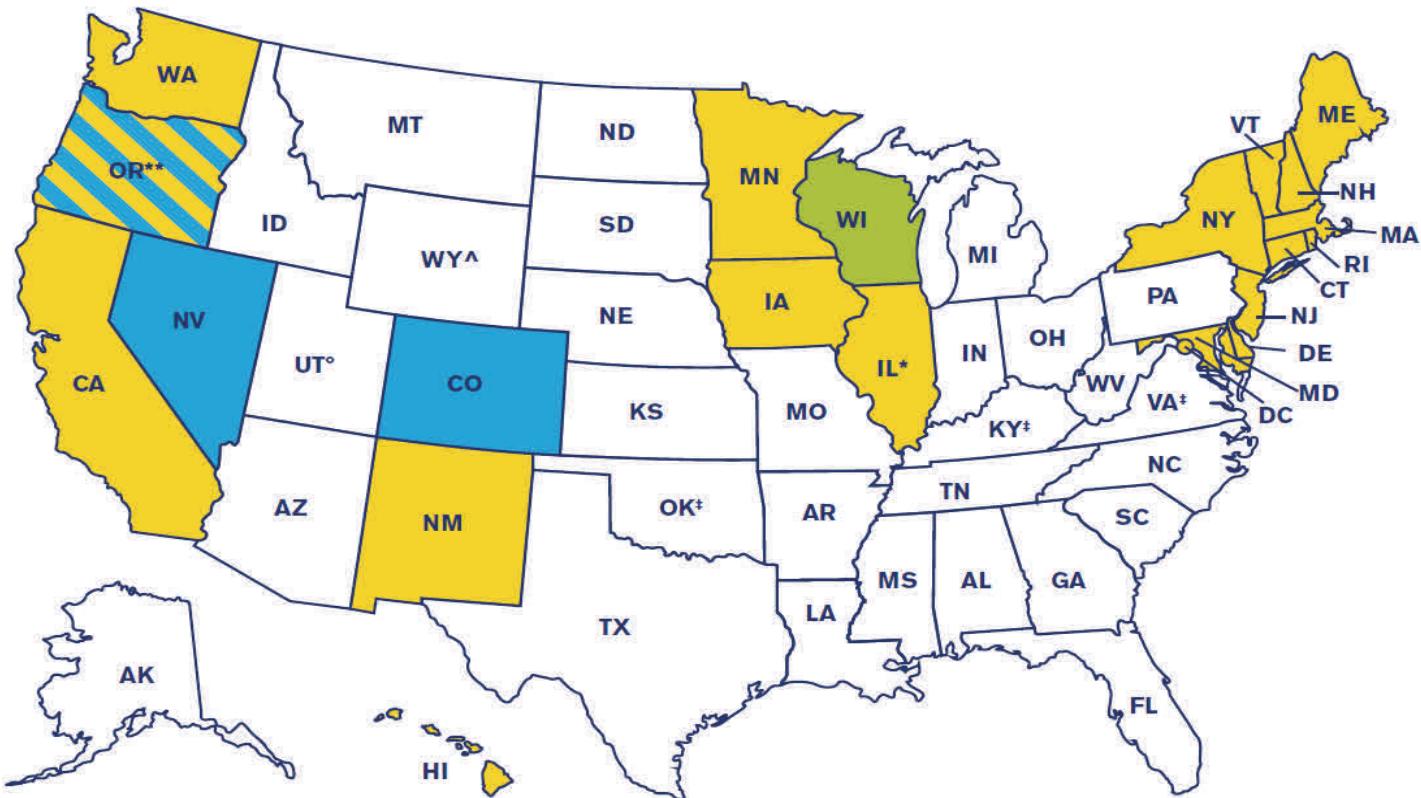
(Credit: Britt Peterson, *Globe*, Washington, D.C., 3/9/2014.)

NOT EVERYONE  
WILL UNDERSTAND  
YOUR JOURNEY.  
THAT'S FINE.  
IT'S NOT THEIR JOURNEY  
TO MAKE SENSE OF.  
IT'S YOURS.



# MARRIAGE EQUALITY AND OTHER RELATIONSHIP RECOGNITION LAWS

HUMAN  
RIGHTS  
CAMPAIGN®



Updated February 19, 2014



**States that issue marriage licenses to same-sex couples** (17 states and D.C.): California (2013), Connecticut (2008), Delaware (2013), District of Columbia (2010), Hawaii (2013), Illinois\* (June 2014), Iowa (2009), Maine (2012), Maryland (2013), Massachusetts (2004), Minnesota (2013), New Hampshire (2010), New Jersey (2013), New Mexico (2013), New York (2011), Rhode Island (2013), Vermont (2009) and Washington (2012).



**States that provide the equivalent of state-level spousal rights to same-sex couples within the state** (3 states and D.C.): Colorado (civil unions, 2013), District of Columbia (domestic partnerships, 2002), Nevada (domestic partnerships, 2009), and Oregon\*\* (domestic partnerships, 2008).



**States that provide some statewide spousal rights to same-sex couples within the state** (1 state): Wisconsin (domestic partnerships, 2009).

\* **Illinois:** Marriages will start taking place on June 1, 2014.

‡ **Oklahoma, Kentucky, Virginia:** On January 14, 2014, the United States District Court for the Northern District of Oklahoma ruled that Oklahoma's ban on marriage equality is unconstitutional. On February 13, 2014, the United States District Court for the Eastern District of Virginia ruled that Virginia's ban on marriage equality is unconstitutional. In both of these two cases the rulings are stayed pending appeal, meaning marriages will not occur immediately in Oklahoma or Virginia. On February 11, 2014, the United States District Court for the Western District of Kentucky ruled that the state's marriage amendment is unconstitutional and that the Commonwealth cannot refuse to recognize valid same-sex marriages conducted in other states. The state will likely appeal this decision and the Governor will ask for a stay of the order pending the appeal.

\*\* **Oregon:** On October 16, 2013, Oregon's Chief Operating Officer and Director of Administrative Services sent a memo to all state agencies ordering the recognition of all legal marriages performed out-of-state, including those of same-sex couples.

^ **Utah:** On December 20, 2013, a federal district court judge ruled that the state constitutional amendment barring same-sex couples from marriage violates the United States Constitution. Over 1,300 same-sex couples have gotten married. On January 6, 2014 the Supreme Court of the United States issued a stay prohibiting any further same-sex couples from marrying pending a decision on the merits.

▲ **Wyoming:** On June 6, 2011, the Wyoming Supreme Court decided *Christensen v. Christensen*, ruling that Wyoming trial courts have the ability to hear divorce proceedings terminating same-sex marriages created in other jurisdictions.

Human Rights Campaign | 1640 Rhode Island Ave., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 | [www.hrc.org/statelaws](http://www.hrc.org/statelaws)

# news from all over

## The 25 Best Companies For LGBT Employees

In today's workforce, employees still face persistent discrimination and unfair treatment due to their gender, age, race, and sexual orientation. But some companies have been better at embracing diversity than others.

[Glassdoor.com](#), an online jobs and career community where people share workplace insights, recently ranked the 25 best companies for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) employees.

To compile its list, Glassdoor looked at the 250-plus companies on the [Human Rights Campaign Best Places to Work 2013 list](#) and compared the companies' overall ratings on Glassdoor.com, which are based on employee-generated reviews from Feb. 2013 through Feb. 2014.

"This list underscores the companies where diversity is appreciated, supported, and embraced," says Scott Dobroski, Glassdoor's Community Expert. "At several of these firms we're seeing some efforts that specifically support their LGBT employees, from employee groups to community outreach."

Here are the 25 most LGBT-friendly employers, with an employee testimonial for each:

### 1. Bain & Company

"If there was ever a company that invested in its people it's Bain. Local and global training, formal mentorship and sponsor programs, diversity initiatives, customized learning, learning through apprenticeship — that's all Bain." —Bain & Company Manager (Sydney, Australia)

### 2. Orbitz Worldwide

"Diverse, very LGBT friendly, flexible work environment, and great benefits." —Orbitz Worldwide Employee (Chicago, IL)

### 3. Google

"Very pro-women, pro-LGBT, pro-minority environment. I'm a female software engineer and have not seen a shred of the sexism or attitude towards women that I've experienced at other workplaces." —Google Software Engineer III (Mountain View, CA)

### 4. McKinsey & Company

"Big brains, large network, fantastic diversity of people, studies, geographies, great support teams (research), superb professional development framework." —McKinsey & Company Associate (Brussels, Belgium)

### 5. Boston Consulting Group

"You get to work with very, very smart people. Unrivaled HR support related to diversity, benefits and life events." —Boston Consulting Group Employee (location n/a)

### 6. NIKE

"Employee groups for African Americans, Asian Americans, Disabled, Native Americans, Latinos/Latinas, and Gay, Lesbian, Bi-

Sexual, Transgender people." —NIKE Senior Business Systems Analyst (Beaverton, OR)

### 7. Intuit

"There is ton of diversity and some of the best people I've had a chance to work with." —Intuit Software Engineer (San Diego, CA)

### 8. Genentech

"Excellent benefits. High-performance culture. Company cares about its employees and patients. Promotes diversity and inclusion more than any employer I have ever worked for." —Genentech Employee (Oceanside, CA)

### 9. Chevron

"Good procedures and nice people around. Focus on safety, environment and diversity." —Chevron Senior Facilities Eng (Buenos Aires, Argentina)

### 10. Apple

"Apple covers same-sex couples on health insurance and includes the difference one has to pay for imputed income. Stock purchase plan is good, and so is the 401(k)." —Apple Business Specialist (Bellevue, WA)

### 11. Ford Motor

"Employees in the company value diversity." —Ford Motor Employee (location n/a)

### 12. Hyatt

"Hyatt offers endless career opportunities, always supports different organizations around the community, promotes and celebrates diversity!" —Hyatt Recruiting Manager (San Diego, CA)

### 13. eBay

"Employees are some of the most talented and intelligent I have met. Cultural diversity is amazing." —eBay Employee (San Jose, CA)

### 14. Bristol-Myers Squibb

"Very strong talent development culture and programs. Outstanding group of people to work with. Happy place to work." —Bristol-Myers Squibb Director (Lawrenceville, NJ)

### 15. Disney

"Overall fun perks, people who are passionate about the Disney Brands, engaging and inclusive environment, embrace diversity and promotes internal movement." —Disney Employee (location n/a)

(Credit: Jacquelyn Smith, Business Insider, March 6, 2014.)

Sign Up for to Receive the PFLAG Newsletter by E-mail Only and Help Us Save a Tree (and Postage too!)

Just e-mail Sandie at svrichard@cox.net to send you the PFLAG newsletter by e-mail only.



## Chapter Meetings

PFLAG/Greater Providence meets the first Wednesday of each month from 6:45 p.m. to 8:45 p.m.:

The MET School  
325 Public Street  
Providence, Rhode Island

## Upcoming Meetings

May 7, 2014  
June 4, 2014  
July 2, 2014 (Tentative)  
August 6, 2014

**May Guest Speaker:**  
Rodney Davis, RI Pride

## Contact Us

**PFLAG/Greater Providence**  
c/o 500 Angell Street, Apt. 212  
Providence, RI 02906  
(401) 751-7571

www.PFLAGprovidence.org  
Email: PFLAGprovidence@gmail.com

## Member Resources

### Rhode Island Bi Resource Network

<http://www.rbinetwork.org>  
<http://www.facebook.com/TheOtherBWord>

### SAGE Rhode Island

235 Promenade Street, Suite 500, Box 18  
Providence, RI 02908  
401-528-3259  
<http://www.sageusa.org>

### TGI Network of Rhode Island

PO Box 40365  
Providence, RI 02940  
[info@tginetwork.org](mailto:info@tginetwork.org)  
(401) 441-5058 (voicemail)

### Youth Pride, Inc.

743 Westminster Street  
Providence, RI 02903  
(401) 421-5626  
[info@youthprideri.org](mailto:info@youthprideri.org)  
<http://www.youthprideri.org>

### LGBT Caregiver Support Group

Child & Family Elder Care  
Calvary United Methodist Church  
200 Turner Road, Middletown, RI 02842  
[jgrapentine@childandfamilyri.com](mailto:jgrapentine@childandfamilyri.com)  
(401) 848-4119  
1st & 3rd Tuesdays each month from  
10:00—11:00 a.m.

## Blogs of Interest

### Faith Topics

#### **Susan Cottrell**

<http://www.FreedHearts.org>

### Kathy Baldock

<http://www.canyonwalkerconnections.com>

### LGBTQ Issues

#### **Think Progress**

<http://thinkprogress.org/lgbt/issue/>

### The Huffington Post

<http://www.huffingtonpost.com/tag/lgbt-blogs>

### Parenting a Transgender Child

#### **Gender Mom**

<http://gendermom.wordpress.com/>

### Raising My Rainbow

<http://raisingmyrainbow.com/>

## Ideas for Topics/Speakers?

If you have a specific topic you would like to have addressed by a speaker or know of anyone whom you would like to recommend as a speaker for our Chapter, please contact **Scott at** **scmpmr33@gmail.com**.



**Greater  
Providence  
Chapter**

## Membership Application

### Yes! I want to be a supporting member of PFLAG.

Please provide the information requested below and make your check payable to: PFLAG/Greater Providence. You may bring this form with your payment to the next chapter meeting or mail to: PFLAG, c/o 500 Angell Street, Apt. 212, Providence, RI 02906.

Household \$30

Individual \$25

Student/Limited Income \$15

Newsletter Only \$10

Additional Contribution \$\_\_\_\_\_

Name(s) \_\_\_\_\_

Address \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone No. \_\_\_\_\_ E-mail \_\_\_\_\_

I'll do my part to help save a tree. Please send me the newsletter via email only (.pdf format).



Memberships and contributions to PFLAG are tax deductible. All information will remain confidential. PFLAG does not sell, lease or lend mailing lists to any person or group.