



News & Views

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

Volume 16, Number 2

March/April 2015

“Mom, I’m Gay” — A Mother and Son Explore the “Journey” Together

By Debby and Jordy Shulman, March 24, 2015

The following is a reprint of “A Note to My Kid”—a project of PFLAG National—that gives the parents, families friends, and allies of the LGBTQ community the opportunity to share their unconditional love, via notes, photos, and videos.

PFLAG National is grateful to have adopted A Note To My Kid from its founders, Patrick Wallace, Mike Curry, and Michael Volpatt.

This is a really wonderful and moving post, and we're grateful to its co-authors, Debby Shulman (www.debbyshulman.com) and her son Jordy, for letting us share it with you today. If you like this post, be sure to follow Debby on Twitter at @debbyshulman13!

Debby

The physical pain was overwhelming. My heart was racing and I felt short of breath. My mouth went dry. I remember wanting to grab my son tightly just to let him know that whatever he needed to say, it would be okay. But his hands were over his eyes, his head down to shield his face and he was sobbing. It was horribly sad to watch because he could not look at us. I was terribly afraid that I wasn't going to say the right thing or act the way I was supposed to...but there's no rule in the Parenting Book about what happens when you're faced with a child who is telling you he is gay.

Jordy

These are the things I knew:

I was gay.

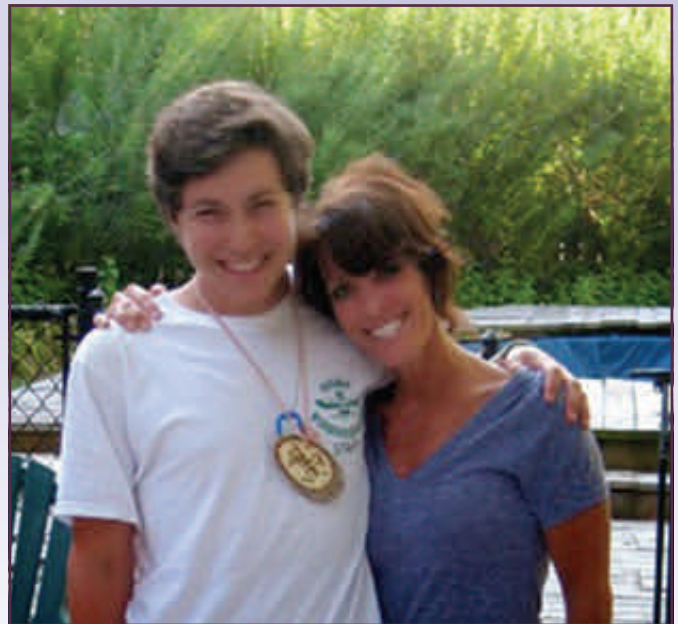
I left my Facebook logged on, after having a conversation with someone about my sexuality.

My mom read a conversation that no parent would want to see.

I was in a state of shock, and caught completely off guard.

I was embarrassed for myself. I felt like a disgrace.

These are the things I didn't know:



Jordy Schulman with his mom, Debby.

How people would treat me.

How society would have an impact on me.

How to be confident in myself.

How to love myself.

How to be myself.

It is every closeted teen's worst nightmare: Having your parents find out you're gay was probably worse than anything else you could possibly think of.

Although I knew that I would be loved all the same, there was always the “what if” factor, and that is what scared me the most.

(Continued on Page 5.)

IN THIS ISSUE

2

PFLAG
Pride Fest
Volunteers
Needed!

3

Attleboro, MA
PFLAG Chapter
Opens

4

See TransJour-
ney Documen-
tary at Boston
LGBT Film Fest
on April 12th

4

Register Now
for October
PFLAG Na-
tional Confer-
ence in Nash-

6

Using “They”
as a Singular
Pronoun

7

Indiana Gover-
nor Signs Anti-
Gay “Religious
Freedom Bill”

8

Member
Resources



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 gender non-conforming 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

President: Sandra Richard

Vice-President: Jane Eastman

Treasurer: Peter Sharkey

Secretary: Denise Messier Reynolds

Members-at-Large: Jill Duff, Roy Eastman, Barbara Metz, Scott Mirani, Christine Noel, Dianne & Joe Ordog, James Rotondo

Ex-Officio Past President: Myra Shays

Newsletter Editor: Sandra Richard

**WE'RE
HERE
FOR YOU!**

news from our chapter

Good Time at the RI Pride Open House.

Our PFLAG Chapter was honored to be asked to co-host the RI Pride Open House on Wednesday, February 25th. In fact, we enjoyed ourselves so much that we forgot to take photos! They had a really good turnout considering how cold and icy it was outside. Our PFLAG President, Sandie Richard, described the history of PFLAG as an organization, our mission and how our meetings work, as well as her personal story of how she came to be part of our PFLAG family. If you are interested in attending future Pride meetings, the monthly Open House is held at the RI Pride Center located at Hope Artiste Village, 1005 Main Street, Unit #1105, Pawtucket RI 02860. For more information email info@prideri.com or call 401-467-2130.



Trans* Day of Empowerment on April 25th

TGI Network is hosting a Trans* Day of Empowerment Event on Saturday, April 25th from 10am-2pm at Bell Street Chapel.

More details soon; but for now save the date!
www.tginetwork.org



**Lesbian? Gay?
Bi? Trans?
Queer? Ally?**

PFLAG National wants to support your leadership with their **2015 PFLAG National Scholarships!** Now available: Scholarships up to \$5,000 each!

To qualify, you need to:

- Be a graduating senior entering higher education for the first time in 2015. (If you graduated in 2014 and took a year off you are still eligible to apply.)

- Self-identify as gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ), or as a straight ally.
- Have proven or demonstrated an interest in service to the LGBTQ community.
- Apply to an accredited higher education institution.

The scholarship is open to U.S. and non-U.S. citizens. (Non-U.S. citizens are eligible as long as they attend an accredited institution in the United States.)

Applications open February 15, 2015 at www.pflag.org/scholarships. All materials must be submitted and signed by April 30, 2015.



Our PFLAG chapter is once again gearing up to participate in Pride Fest on Saturday, June 20, 2015. It's a fabulous and fun event and an awesome way for family, friends and allies to support the LGBTQ community. We will once again have a PFLAG booth and are seeking volunteers to help staff it. If you are able to give us a hand, please contact our Pride Fest Coordinator, Jill at pflagprovidence@gmail.com.

If you are interested in volunteering, please let her know which one of the following 2-hour shifts you would like to work:

- 12 pm - 2 pm
- 2 pm - 4 pm
- 4 pm - 6 pm

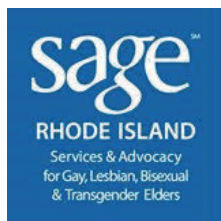
Booth volunteers will be responsible for the following:

- greet festival attendees that stop at our booth
- pin on rainbow ribbons
- hand out brochures
- answer questions about PFLAG
- collect donations
- enjoy the camaraderie of the day

If you've never volunteered before, don't worry. Others will be there to help you out.

We also plan to march in the Illuminated Night Parade which starts at 8:45 p.m if there is enough interest; so please contact Jill at pflag-providence@gmail.com if you are interested in marching with PFLAG in the parade.

SAGE-RI Presents: Put A Little Silver In Your Rainbow



Get out your dancing shoes, sharpen your artistic appreciation and come prepared to enjoy champagne and dessert at this fabulous event supporting SAGE-RI on Saturday, April 18th from 7:00 to 10:00 p.m. at the Warwick Art Museum.

The evening will include an art auction featuring local artists, champagne (and other beverages), chocolates & desserts, and a DJ & dancing. Tickets are \$50 per person and must be purchased in advance. You can purchase them online at Eventbrite (<https://eventbrite.com/event/15858237415>), or via mail by mailing your check payable to SAGE-RI to SAGE-RI at 235 Promenade Street, Suite 500, Box 18, Providence, RI 02908.

If you or your employer are interested in sponsoring this gala, contact SAGE-RI at sagerinfo@gmail.com for the details. Sponsorship opportunities range from \$250 to \$1000.



The Providence Gay Men's Chorus (PGMC) is looking for a Business Manager.

The position of the Business Manager is a part-time, compensated, position requiring that all necessary administrative duties be completed in a timely and efficient manner.

The Business Manager will be responsible for coordinating all administrative functions of the PGMC to include, but not limited to:

1. Basic office functions,
2. Maintain all postal mail and e-mail correspondences,
3. Maintain and update patron mailing list in conjunction with the Development Director,
4. Accept payments and makes deposits, track office inventory, maintain vendor invoices, bills in conjunction with the General Treasurer to process check(s) and payments to vendors,
5. Process ticket sales (both manual and online), credit and cash receipts.
6. Work with the 5th Section Chair to coordinate volunteers for both front of house and backstage duties,
7. Secure supplies/props/costumes for concerts based on request(s) from Pro-

duction Development Committee (PDC).

8. Coordinate scheduling of events/concerts/activities and contracts for venues based on request(s) from Artistic Director and/or Board,
9. Communicate task schedule(s) and other pertinent general information to PGMC members.
10. Support and supplement the Board as a non-artistic public representative of the PGMC as needed.
11. Recruit, supervise and delegate any functions listed above to a few essential and responsible members as needed.

Please respond with cover letter and resume. (The Providence Gay Men's Chorus is a 501c3 organization)



In less than two months Big Gay AI's will be kicking off its 16th Season.

Join Big Gay AI's at Town Hall Lanes in Johnston, RI on Tuesday, May 12th at 7:15pm, come back every Tuesday through mid-August for the largest Gay bowling league in the country (up to 32 teams!).

It only costs \$15 each week to bowl and all the money raised goes to a variety of charitable organizations. Over the past 15 years they have raised over \$75,000 for Aids Care Ocean State, AIDS Project RI, MERI, Options, our PFLAG chapter and Youth Pride.

Go online to their website to sign up: <http://www.bgalbowling.com/>



Dianne and Joe Ordog, founders of the new Attleboro Chapter of PFLAG

New Attleboro Chapter of PFLAG Opened Its Doors in March!

Congratulations on the successful beginning of a new chapter of PFLAG in Attleboro, MA started by two of our PFLAG Board members, Joe and Dianne Ordog. This new chapter will provide much needed services to Attleboro and its surrounding communities.

The Attleboro PFLAG chapter meets on the 3rd Wednesday of every month from 6:45 to 8:45 p.m. at the Second Congregational Church, UCC, at 50 Park Street, Attleboro, MA 02703. For more information email Joe Ordog at jordog555@yahoo.com or the PFLAG chapter at pflagattleboro@gmail.com. Or, call 508-455-5870.



PFLAG Greater Providence Chapter

Our chapter has a new mailing address and phone number!

Our new mailing address is:

**PFLAG Greater Providence
P. O. Box 41344
Providence, RI 02940**

Our new phone number to call or text us is:

(401) 307-1802.

Volunteers Needed!

"We make a living by what we do, but we make a life by what we give."—Winston Churchill

Our PFLAG chapter operates with an all-volunteer Board of Directors who are dedicated to fulfilling the mission of PFLAG for its members.

If we hope to grow and expand our outreach in Rhode Island, we need your help. Some forms of help are short and simple—like signing up to bring refreshments to one of our support meetings, picking up some of our new brochures to distribute in businesses and doctors' offices you frequent, or helping staff our booth at Pride Fest in June (see related article on Page 2).

We are also looking for someone to take over the design and production of this newsletter. Right now we publish every other month. If anyone is interested in taking on this task or volunteering for any of the above needs, please contact us at pflagprovidence@gmail.com.

news from all over

Boston LGBT Film Festival 31st April 2nd THRU April 12th, 2015 ANNUAL

TransJourney Documentary to Be Screened at the Boston LGBT Film Festival on April 12th

Join our chapter president, **Sandra Richard** and her daughter **Annabelle** at 2:00 p.m. on **Sunday, April 12th** for the screening of **TransJourney** at the Boston LGBT Film Festival. The screening will take place in the Bright Family Screening Room at the Paramount Theater, Emerson College, 559 Washington Street, Boston, MA 02111. Tickets are \$5 for students, \$7.50 for seniors, and \$10 for all others. You can view the trailer for this film at: <https://youtu.be/KRTMAqU0SfY>



The Boston LGBT Film Festival is the fourth oldest LGBT film festival in North America and the largest LGBT media event in New England. Founded in 1984 by film programmer George Mansour, the festival has been hosted by the Museum of Fine Arts, Boston since the early nineties. In 2009 the festival expanded to include

screenings at the Brattle Theatre in iconic Harvard Square, Cambridge, and the brand new Fenway Health Center on Boylston Street in Boston. In 2012 they screened over 120 films from 25 countries.

The Boston LGBT Film Festival celebrates, displays and distributes work by and for LGBT media makers – work that entertains, enriches and enlightens all audiences in the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and allied communities. The annual Festival screenings showcase international, US, and local film, video, and other media, fostering a greater sense of awareness and community among LGBT and LGBT-friendly audiences.

As New England's premiere LGBT film organization, the Festival reaches out to the culturally rich and diverse communities of the region through Screenings on Tour and Festival Partnerships, in collaboration with other film festivals. With its Young LGBT Filmmakers program, the Festival provides education, outreach and exposure for emerging filmmakers.

The Boston LGBT Film Festival aims to stimulate thought and encourage dialogue while offering exposure and continued presence for filmmakers, artists and community organizations.



PFLAG makes the world better, family by family. Become a member of our family. Use the form on the back page to

join today!



Join PFLAG in Nashville for the 2015 National Convention — We Are the Change!

Connect. Learn. Change. At the 2015 PFLAG National Convention to be held **October 16-18, 2015** you'll learn from experts from the PFLAG chapter network, leaders in the LGBTQ movement, and changemakers who are ready to share their knowledge to make you more effective than ever in moving equality forward. PFLAG's work started with one mother from New York City who raised a sign...and changed the world. As a catalyst for change, she inspired others to step up and advocate for change in their own communities, home states, and at the federal level. Now, for 43 years, more families, friends, and allies have united their voices with those of their lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer loved ones, standing up together in support of civil rights and equality and against discrimination and hatred.

Register now for the 2015 PFLAG National Convention, where that legacy of change will continue. Early bird registration (\$150) ends on April 30th. To register online go to: <https://community.pflag.org/2015registration>

This year's schedule will be full to the brim with training sessions, panel discussions, networking opportunities and, of course, time to explore all that the great city of Nashville has to offer.

This year's convention is in Nashville, Tennessee, at the beautiful, affordable, and convenient Nashville Airport Marriott Hotel. The low rates for hotel rooms with free hotel parking make attendance at the 2015 PFLAG National Convention more affordable, and easy to navigate, than ever before! Nashville is an exciting city where all attendees can support our great chapters in the Volunteer State and send a strong message that PFLAG's values are America's values. There will be incredible learning opportunities and the chance to network with PFLAG members and supporters from across the country.

Early bird registration is open! Join PFLAG supporters from across the country for two days and nights of honing skills, building relationships, and celebrating. Whether you're a seasoned leader or a new chapter member, it's the best way to gain new perspectives for your efforts to be a changing force in your community. Secure your spot before early bird registration ends on April 30th!

"Mom, I'm Gay" (Continued from Page 1.)

The hardest part was accepting myself, and by the time my parents found out, I was still not even close to doing so. It was so hard knowing that so many people in the country, or in the world for that matter, look down upon people like me. All I wanted was to be treated normal.

To BE normal.

Debby

Immediately, I began searching for a therapist, drowning myself in some meaningful 'gay mom' literature and allowing myself to be sad. A little known but widely accepted fact among mothers of gay kids:

We grieve for the life we thought our children were going to have, and we are saddened by the obstacles we know they will face.

We can look ahead to what struggles await them and prematurely worry about how they will survive it all. Will he know love? Will he be depressed? My concerns were endless.

Jordy wanted to come out on his own terms, and I was experiencing some pretty intense emotional needs as well. But respecting Jordy's privacy was paramount; something I have learned about the gay community. You do NOT out anyone ... ever. My husband and I met with an adolescent psychologist who was openly gay. He was more than informative; he was influential, spiritual, loving, and warm. He shared his life story, filled with truth, happiness and pain ... and so my journey began.

I discovered that by reaching out to every gay friend I ever had I would find some of the answers that would help me help Jordy. I never looked back.

Jordy

It was at camp over the summer when I told one of my best friends about my sexuality. Long story short — she was interested in being more than just "friends" with me. Little did she know that I had no interest, but not because of her. I just wasn't into, well ... girls. So I told her. And at that moment we both just started crying. She was the first friend I ever told.

It was the moment that I had been waiting for my whole entire life. Saying the words, 'I am gay,' turned my world completely around. In my mind, I thought, 'If I can tell Maddy, then I can tell anyone.'

So, when I arrived home in August, I began to tell my friends. At first it was so difficult, because telling people made it seem more real, and there was a period of time when I was still having trouble accepting myself — the most difficult challenge of them all. My grades started to drop, because although I was making progress, and although my friends loved me unconditionally, I still had obstacles to overcome. Hearing the words "fag and faggot" in the halls made me cringe.

Seeing political activists discriminating against the gay community made me feel subhuman. But I knew I had to trust myself. I knew I had to pull through. I knew I had to pay it forward.

Debby

I sent emails, letters and facebook messages to all of my gay friends, asking them the same questions: What did you need

as a kid? What can I do to help him feel beautiful, safe and loved? How do I help him through this?

The answers made me sob. In the car, on the computer, in the mail, they all wrote me back and told me their stories, some very sad and some truly inspiring. I turned to Jordy's teachers for support; they engulfed him with love. He had the respect of all who knew and loved him. After Jordy told us we were free to share his news, we talked about it openly with our close friends and siblings.

We were never embarrassed, but our candor made others uncomfortable. I didn't care. This was my kid and my life.

Jordy

Time goes by. I am so happy. My friends and family were all so supportive of who I was, it was impossible for me to not feel totally accepted. But I made myself believe that I was in a "perfect" world, when in reality it was far from that. I still heard unwanted remarks; using the word "gay" as a derogatory term.

Discrimination against gays was always in the news, and teens were still ending their lives because being gay was considered 'wrong' — I had to do something.

Every year my high school has an annual Variety Show, and I thought that it was the perfect opportunity for me to show people that being gay is okay. I wanted people to see how much the world was changing, but also the fact that there is always room for improvement. I created a video slideshow displaying photographs of openly gay celebrities, politicians, and athletes. Inspirational quotes from such brilliant people like David Bowie and Harvey Milk.

And I ended the slideshow with words that truly shaped the human I am today. These words were the ones that kept me going, and that made me think about how lucky I was to come from such an accepting community. These words made me proud of who I was, and gave me the hope for a positive future:

It gets better.

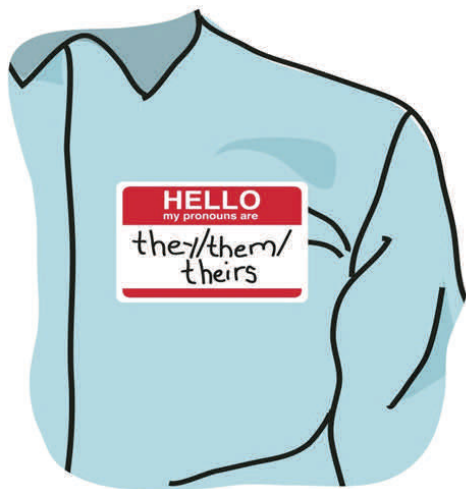
Debby

Watching Jordy create "Secrets" was powerful. As he researched and documented the public figures and quotes he wanted in the piece, he became more inspired. Recognizing the catharsis behind this project, my family encouraged him to put himself out there for the ones who couldn't. Over 6,000 people saw this performance and it was quite a moment for Jordy. I remember one performance where a community Rabbi stood up and began clapping vigorously before Jordy could even stop singing. I could barely make it through — our journey was both ending and beginning all at the same time. I have reached out to other parents going through what we did and I have continued to rely on my family and closest friends. But what has happened to Jordy can happen to any child that feels love, warmth, support and unconditional acceptance — and this is what we need to preach to our schools, communities, churches, synagogues and politicians.

Only **THEN**, will it truly get better.



Email Sandie at svrichard0104@gmail.com to sign up to receive the PFLAG newsletter by email only and help us save a tree (and postage too!)



How Using “They” As A Singular Pronoun Can Change The World

Hopefully, by now you know that calling people the pronouns they want to be called is a basic and necessary way to demonstrate respect for their identities. This includes learning to use non-binary pronouns, such as singular “they.”

But using singular they is far more than a way to respect friends who have gender identities outside the binary. Singular they has exciting potential to be part of a radical shift in the dominant gender culture. Changing the culture may seem like a mighty task for one little pronoun. But actually, it wouldn’t be the first time that a pronoun was near the center of a momentous cultural shift.

First, a quick review on singular they, for those who need to get caught up: Some people who fall under the broad definition of trans have gender identities other than man or woman. People describe these identities as non-binary, genderqueer, non-gendered, gender-fluid, and many other terms — some recently coined, and some stemming from long-standing traditions in various cultures from around the world. Some (not all) people who experience our genders in these ways ask people to avoid binary gendered language when referring to us, including the third-person pronouns “he” and “she.” To replace “he” and “she,” people have coined a variety of new pronouns. These haven’t caught on much outside queer spaces, for reasons that linguists can explain better than I can. Other people use “they” as a gender-neutral singular alternative, and this has proved comparatively easy for trans allies to respect.

Of course, some people still struggle with using they as a singular pronoun, or simply refuse to do it. One of the main excuses that people give for not using singular they, even

when someone has specifically asked to be called that, is that it is “grammatically incorrect.” This belief comes less from a nuanced understanding of grammar than from a felt sense that one is doing something wrong by using singular they. As someone told me recently, “It sounds like nails on a chalk board.”

Singular they might sound “wrong” because many of us were taught, corrected, and even disciplined in school to stop us from using they as a singular. Our teachers had to go to a lot of trouble to teach us this, because otherwise, we would have used singular they all the time — because despite being frowned upon by so many middle school teachers, it is actually a totally normal thing to do in standard English. Since long before it started being adopted by trans communities, people have used singular they to refer to a hypothetical person whose gender is unknown. It’s especially common in reference to a noun that is syntactically singular but logically plural, like “someone,” “anyone,” and “whoever.” We say things like, “Someone left their umbrella in the meeting room.” We *could* say, “Someone left his or her umbrella,” but using “their” is more common, easier to understand, and not wrong. Published examples of this usage abound, from as early as Chaucer through the present day.

The rule against using singular they is enforced neither because it preserves some consistent, objective grammatical standard, nor because it serves our communication needs. It is enforced because enforcing language norms is a way of enforcing power structures. Our pronoun problem isn’t just about gender — it’s about power.

Practically everybody uses singular they in informal settings. (I’ve even heard people use it unconsciously while explaining to me why they refuse to use it.) The skill of avoiding it in formal settings is both a marker of privilege and provides access to further privilege.

It’s a marker of privilege because people learn it in school. Knowing the rule requires a level of access to formal education. Caring about the rule requires finding school safe, welcoming, and relevant enough to sustain one’s engagement. Both factors are unevenly distributed across differences of race, class, queerness, dis/ability and so on. Following the rule provides access to further privilege because those who know to avoid singular they in formal situations come across as proper and educated, and stand to benefit from being perceived that way.

The rule functions to differentiate those who follow the rule from those who don’t; those with greater privilege from those with less —

in other words, to reproduce power differences. So if you object to singular they on the basis of its correctness, you’re not only dropping the ball on an important trans ally behavior; you’re also supporting a language and power system that you probably don’t agree with.

There’s also another, more specific sense in which our pronoun problem is actually a power problem. It’s not only the way the rule is enforced, but also how gendered pronouns work to begin with, that supports oppressive power structures.

People with non-binary gender identities continually face situations in which someone feels “forced,” by the language norms they’ve internalized, to call us either he or she — even if they’re not sure which one is right, and sometimes even if they have been told that neither is right. These moments, which seem to be about grammar rules, highlight a *gender* rule that doesn’t work for us: the rule that everyone must be either a he or a she, a man or a woman; that there are no non-binary genders. Avoiding singular they when talking about someone who has asked to be called “they” contributes to the erasure and delegitimization of non-binary identities, and implicitly supports the physical, emotional, and structural violence that faces too many of us too much of the time.

The good news is, singular they is not only coming into more common use but also has the potential to help shift the harmful power structure of binary gender. To explain, it helps to go back to another time when what was considered standard usage for pronouns changed — and it had to do with power then, too.

Today, “you” is both a plural and a singular. Originally it was plural (the singular form was “thee”). Beginning in the 16th century, “you” was also used for singular-formal address, when speaking to someone with high social status (i.e., royalty and nobility). Gradually, singular use of “you” expanded, first to any time a speaker addressed someone of higher status than themselves, and then to any situation in which the speaker wanted to flatter or show respect for the person they were addressing. “Thee” gradually fell out of use until it was heard mostly in intimate settings, such as among family members, and in situations of obvious hierarchy, such as a wealthy employer speaking to their servant. To call a stranger “thee” became an insult, because it implied they were of lower status than the speaker.

The difference between “you” and “thee” was one of class status. One’s decision to say “you” or “thee” in a given situation had real consequences in terms of status and power. It could highlight and reproduce a status

difference and power-over relationship, or it could downplay a status difference and create a tone of equality.

One driving force behind the drift from using “you” only for royal/noble address to using “you” for any respectful address was the relatively stable and powerful middle class in England at the time. Merchants and professionals increasingly saw themselves as entitled to respect of a kind that only the ruling class had previously been afforded. Using “you” with each other was a way to manifest that respect. Eventually, “you” became the only second person pronoun in general use.

As a result of this shift, the expression of class hierarchy in language became less mandatory. It became possible to construct a normal-sounding and easily understood sentence without knowing the status of the person one was addressing. The shift in language both resulted from and contributed to the shifting class structure.

We can use pronouns to shift the gender structure, too. Using singular they means we can construct a normal-sounding and easily understood sentence without knowing or announcing the gender of the person we’re speaking about. We can talk about gender diversity in all its nonbinary complexity, without constantly contradicting ourselves by using binary gendered pronouns.

So go ahead — use they. At the least, you won’t be an knowingly rude to your gender-queer friends. At most, we might just change the world.

(Credits: Davey Shlasko, www.Feministing.com, February 9, 2015. Image: “Think Again Training”)



Photo credit: reuters.com

Indiana Governor Signs Anti-Gay 'Religious Freedom' Bill At Private Ceremony

WASHINGTON -- Indiana Gov. Mike Pence (R) quietly signed legislation Thursday that could legalize discrimination against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender individuals.

The Religious Freedom Restoration Act would allow any individual or corporation to cite its religious beliefs as a defense when sued by a private party. But many opponents of the bill, which included business leaders, argued that it could open the door to widespread discrimination. Business owners who don't want to serve same-sex couples, for example, could now have legal protections to discriminate.

"Today I signed the Religious Freedom Restoration Act, because I support the freedom of religion for every Hoosier of every faith," Pence said in a statement Thursday. "The Constitution of the United States and the Indiana Constitution both provide strong recognition of the freedom of religion but today, many people of faith feel their religious liberty is under attack by government action."

The bill received national attention, but Pence signed it with little fanfare in a ceremony closed to the public and the press. The Indianapolis Star reported that members of the media "were asked to leave even the waiting area of the governor's office."

Pence's signature on the bill came despite concerns from organizers set to hold major events in the state. On Wednesday, leaders of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) sent a letter to the governor saying they were reconsidering holding their 6,000-person general assembly in Indianapolis in 2017 because of the legislation.

"We are particularly distressed at the thought that, should RFRA be signed into law, some of our members and friends might not be welcome in Indiana businesses -- might experience legally sanctioned bias and rejection once so common on the basis of race," they wrote.

Organizers of Gen Con, which has been called the largest gaming convention in the country, also threatened to stop holding its event in Indiana if RFRA became law. Adrian Swartout, owner and CEO of Gen Con, said more than 56,000 people attended the convention in Indianapolis last year, pumping more than \$50 million into the city.

Marc Benioff, CEO of the tech giant Salesforce, tweeted Thursday that the company would now be avoiding Indiana.

The Republican mayor of Indianapolis also spoke out against the bill, saying it sent the "wrong signal" for the state and city.

Hillary Clinton also weighed in on the new law Thursday night, criticizing it.

Conservative supporters, however, have denied that the bill is about discrimination and instead have argued that religious liber-

ties are under attack.

"This bill is not about discrimination, and if I thought it legalized discrimination in any way in Indiana, I would have vetoed it," Pence said in his statement Thursday. "For more than 20 years, the federal Religious Freedom Restoration Act has never undermined our nation's anti-discrimination laws, and it will not in Indiana."



But the Human Rights Campaign, which opposed Indiana's RFRA and other similar bills popping up around the country, has argued the potential for discrimination is huge.

"These bills are often incredibly vague and light on details -- usually intentionally. In practice, most of these bills could empower any individual to sue the government to attempt to end enforcement of a non-discrimination law," wrote the LGBT equality group in a report. "The evangelical owner of a business providing a secular service can sue claiming that their personal faith empowers them to refuse to hire Jews, divorcees, or LGBT people. A landlord could claim the right to refuse to rent an apartment to a Muslim or a transgender person."

In a statement Thursday, HRC Legal Director Sarah Warbelow said the Indiana General Assembly and Pence have sent a message saying, "as long as your religion tells you to, it's ok to discriminate against people despite what the law says."

"This new law hurts the reputation of Indiana and will have unacceptable implications for LGBT people and other minorities throughout the state," she added.

Arizona faced an uproar last year over similar religious freedom legislation, with then-Gov. Jan Brewer (R) ultimately deciding to veto the measure, saying it had "the potential to create more problems than it purports to solve."

(Credit: Amanda Terkel, huffingtonpost.com, March 26, 2015)

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 (Unity Building)
325 Public Street
Providence, Rhode Island

Upcoming Meetings

May 6, 2015
June 3, 2015
July 1, 2015
August 5, 2015

Contact Us

PFLAG/Greater Providence
P. O. Box 41344
Providence, RI 02940
Phone/Text: **(401) 307-1802**

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



Ideas for Topics/Speakers?

Do 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? If so, please contact **Scott at scmpmr33@gmail.com**.

Member Resources

Rhode Island Bi Resource Network

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

SAGE Rhode Island

235 Promenade Street, Suite 500, Box 18
Providence, RI 02908
401-528-3259
sageriinfo@gmail.com

TGI Network of Rhode Island

PO Box 40365, Providence, RI 02940
info@tginetwork.org
(401) 441-5058 (voicemail)
Family Support Group meets 2nd Monday each month from 6:30-8:30 pm at Bell Street Parish House, Bell Street, Providence

Youth Pride, Inc.

743 Westminster Street
Providence, RI 02903
(401) 421-5626
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
(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/>

Facebook Groups of Interest

Interweave Channing

Parents of Transgender Children

(Closed Support Group)

The Facebook Transgender Alliance

(Closed Support Group)

The Rhode Island LGBT Center



Check us out on Facebook at
[www.Facebook.com/PFLAG
Greater Providence, RI](http://www.Facebook.com/PFLAGGreaterProvidence,RI)



**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, P. O. Box 41344, Providence, RI 02940**.

☐

Household \$36

☐

Individual \$24

☐

Student/Limited Income \$16

☐

Additional Contribution \$ _____ in ☐ Honor or ☐ Memory of: _____

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.