

Nov./Dec., 2020 - Thankfulness Despite Challenges



Graphic Composition by (PFLAG Member) Sean S.

The PFLAG Banner



the president's
message

December, 2020

Dear PFLAG New Orleans Family, Friends, and Followers,

2020 has been a challenge for all of us; I wish I had been spared some tragedies, like work challenges, (what seemed like) vicious hurricanes, and the loss of not one, but two close friends (Wayne Christenberry to cancer and

Jules Duhe to Covid-19, when he and I were both ailing with Coronavirus).

Now, we are faced with spending the New Year celebrations away from our families, missing jam-packed parties, and eating meals by ourselves instead of with our friends. What can we do to stop a possible tidal wave of despair?

We can stop for a minute and reflect on what we have to be thankful for--and I challenge each of you to do this same thing right now.

Personally, I am very thankful that my son and I recovered from our Covid-related illnesses, I appreciate every day that my elderly parents avoid the virus, and I am so glad that my friends and PFLAG family remain safe.

When I was very young, my younger brother, Mom, and Dad and I moved away from Puerto Rico; we lost complete contact with my older half-brother and half-sister--that is, until this past month, after a three-day long research effort. All of us were able to reconnect in time for the holidays! The happiness, thankfulness, and relief in our hearts cannot be measured.

Finally, we observed Transgender Remembrance Day on November 20. I am thankful that my participation in PFLAG has helped me understand the struggle of Transgender victims of hate crimes and also appreciate the Transgender Champions that are still among us today.

Please take a few minutes to remember what we are thankful for not only will it brighten your day, but it will also help dispel the shadow of oppressiveness left by this most challenging year.

Keep love and hope in your heart this New Year,

Alberto Oliver

President

PFLAG New Orleans

PS: The Board Members of PFLAG New Orleans are thankful to represent all of you and are sharing their intimate appreciation in this issue. Do you have something that you are thankful for? Click below and it will appear in the next issue of The PFLAG New Orleans Banner.

Tell us what YOU are thankful
for!

Join Our Support
Group Meeting

7-9 PM
Thursday, Jan. 14



Please Click [HERE](#) to
Email Your R.S.V.P.



**Meeting doors open at
6:45 PM on Thursday.
Jan. 14.**

Our work continues. PFLAG is here to support you, so you can support your LGBTQ+ loved ones. PFLAG Connects is a new virtual meeting space for the PFLAG Chapter Network. You can join by video, audio or chat - whatever you're comfortable with.

All of our groups are led and facilitated by PFLAG New Orleans volunteers. Safety is of our utmost priority for all of our virtual support group meetings. We will discuss privacy, confidentiality, and group agreements at the start of the meeting.

Please send us an email (by clicking on the RSVP button) to let us know who will attend the meeting. Once you submit this Email, we will send you a reply with instructions on how to join the group.



IT IS SCHOLARSHIP APPLICATION TIME

**The PFLAG New Orleans Scholarships
Application Period is Now Open.**

Are you a post-High School LGBT Student? Is your LGBT child preparing to go to college or other post-secondary training institution? This program may be perfect for you!

The PFLAG New Orleans Scholarship Program recognizes outstanding LGBTQ+ students from Louisiana, encourages continuing education for self-identified LGBTQ+ students, and fosters a positive image of LGBTQ+ individuals in society.

Want more info? [Click Here.](#)

New Applicants Click Here

Returning Applicants Click Here



Community Calendar

The Community Calendar site is currently down. Do you know of one that PFLAGers can refer to for now?

Send a message to
[**info@pflagno.org**](mailto:info@pflagno.org).



Breaking News: Ochsner Health has shared its extensive information resources with members and followers of PFLAG New Orleans!



[CLICK HERE TO VISIT THE NEW RESOURCE PAGE](#)

Your PFLAG Board Members Are Thankful.



Vanessa Carr Kennedy



Shares Her Thankfulness

I am thankful that we will very soon have a new administration in the White House. I am also thankful we are organized to demand rights that our families, and constituents deserve. I am thankful to be in a family that is accepting and loving. I am thankful that PFLAG has been patient with me as I seek to find the talents I need to be an effective member of the Board. I am thankful to be surrounded by positive influences, and attitudes about our world. And lastly, I am thankful to know so many dedicated activists that inspire me to keep fighting for an even better world.

Thankfulness Reflection by Brian, Board Member

I am thankful for my husband, Keath, who has been a wonderful pandemic partner and keeps me fed and perhaps a bit spoiled.

I am thankful for my kitty Esmerelda Elizabeth who tolerates being petted and kissed and cuddled daily.

I am thankful for friends and family - far and near - virtual and in person.

I am thankful for the return of hope in the new year.

Comments on Gratefulness From an Inspirational Trans Board Member



What am I grateful for? I will honestly admit that gratitude is a tough notion for me. I spent most of my life hating my life and hating myself; it sometimes is not unchallenging to turn around and be grateful for the same. They say we choose whom, how, where we are born, and it is up to us to determine the "why." Perhaps that is why my birth month is November, the 'thankfulness" month.

That said,... I can say that I am grateful I am not as angry, bitter, despondent over things I cannot change, for the most part, compared to how miserable I was once. Some days and weeks are better than others, but I can say I generally am not as miserable or desperate as I once felt. I am grateful I have not yet been beaten up or felt gravely in danger for being trans. So there's that.

This year has been hard as hell. Harder than any I remember so I guess I am grateful that I'm still standing.

I'm grateful my two daughters are healthy. I hope they are happy. I am grateful to have the time and devotion to help them work through their mixed feelings about my own transition and hopefully help them heal from feeling like I split our household by leaving them. I am grateful for the hope that I can give them more of the life I want for them.

I am grateful for my parents and that they are healthy. I am grateful for their support and am quite sure I would be in a worse place without it. I have not been able to figure out how to stop blaming them however, so I struggle in my vacillation between thankfulness and bitterness.

Also I am grateful my landlord has not evicted me even though he seems to have discerned recently, after 4 years, that I have since transitioned; I am not mentally, emotionally or financially able to stand packing and moving right now. So there is that.

I am grateful for my clients who trust me with utmost responsibility for some of their most important concerns.

Lastly, I am grateful for the opportunity to learn from my lessons, and improve myself along the way.

Every time I sat down to consider what I am grateful for, I have been overwhelmed by the many responses that popped into my head. I will try to edit as I write so I can answer your request.

First, I am so grateful for my parents who, despite their own internal battles and scars from surviving the Holocaust, were able to teach me the importance of family, hard work and living with integrity. They provided me with love and support the best way they knew. (And a special thank you to my father for passing on his sense of humor!)



I am thankful for my family, especially my 2 children, Danny and Nancy. Looking at them now, successful in their careers and in their adulthood, you would never suspect the challenges each of them faced in their younger years. Through these struggles, faced together, I developed more patience and more confidence in myself as well as learned how to communicate about really tough issues. I now have a much deeper understanding of the transformative power of listening without judgement and loving even when someone feels unworthy.

I am thankful for my faith which has provided me with inspiration and guidance throughout my entire life. I enjoy the many facets of being Jewish. The history and teachings in our scriptures, the rituals which add meaning to holidays and everyday, the acceptance of people without judgement, a strong sense of community and of course the culture (especially the food!) form a kaleidoscope of ever changing beauty to my life.

I am thankful for my friends and the many things I have learned from them. So many of you are in this category. During times in my life that were SO HARD, my friends have been there to dust me off, pick me up and gently hold my hand while I worked through the situation. Which brings me to something others may think is strange. As difficult as those awful times have been, I am also thankful for them - for forcing me to reach out to new people and resources for help. In acknowledging my vulnerability and pain, I not only got the help I needed, but met the most giving, supportive, real and loving people I have ever met. PFLAG is one of the best examples of this.

Gratitude Sparks a Memory by B.A.M., a Member of the Board



Capdau Junior High, New Orleans, 1967

"Hey, fruit!" I heard him before I turned to see him headed my way, cigarette tucked behind his ear. I knew exactly who he was talking to. He circled my wincing body and knelt.

"You act like a girl. Now you're gonna play like one!"

It was recess, and sitting like I tended to sit was like waving a red flag in front of a bull(y). I was among my 25 seventh grade classmates sitting on the staircase. My tormentor was a truant we often saw wandering the streets but on this day, he was laser-focused on me. He had decided that I needed to be singled out for a double-dose of humiliation in a cruel game.

Always chosen last in sports, this could have been my one opportunity to leapfrog to first pick. If only it weren't for the utter degradation to come, this might have resulted in an upgrade in status! He motioned me down. Beet red, I descended the stairs, painfully aware of the stares from my classmates.

Leading me to the asphalt where hopscotch had been drawn in chalk, he pounced at me and demanded,

"Hop!"

I did.

"Hop!"

I did.

And so forth. After several squares, the final block was the triangle. The end.

He commanded, "Twirl!" I did so. This clearly amused my classmates.

There was no one to stop this torture. I was alone. With my heart in my throat and my ears ringing, the palpable shame was piercing. I was a freak that had been spotted simply by sitting a tad bit "sidesaddle." It was nauseating.

What I wouldn't have given to tell someone. Someone I loved. Someone who cared. Someone who knew someone like me. I never even told my parents. Fortunately, over time, I grew up and out - way, way, way out. My career took me across the country and I finally finally found my place in the world of gay folk.

But that bully looms mammoth in my life, and he always will. I'm a senior citizen trapped in junior high.

Then, a very cruel turn came to this senior citizen in 2016. I'm relatively happy and nearly retired, and a more insidious Goliath-sized bully burst onto the scene. This one had 24/7 news coverage and overflowing rallies with hate filling the air. He grabbed women by their lady parts and encouraged thousands of his followers to be bullier than thou. At age 63, I watched his rallies in horror. For me, he was saying "Go find a boy sitting sidesaddle and make America Hate Again!" Then, the unthinkable happened: he won.

I was just too darn tired to hop and twirl for a tidal wave of newly-emboldened homophobes. Heartsick for myself and for gay kids everywhere, I drowned my sorrows. I bellied-up to the bar and I tried to erase those hopscotch nightmares with just scotch--many, many of them. Staggered by the news, I staggered out of the bar. Halfway home, I fell and gashed my forehead on the sidewalk--a literal nosedive.

In Alcoholics Anonymous, I learned of an open and loving God - not the punishing, guilt-inducing one that had been driven down my throat. I learned that the bully and the pressure cooker I endured as a lonesome gay teen contributed to my problem drinking. Filled with resentments, I had become a boozy senior citizen overnight. I went from hop-sotch to just scotch and all the way back. Today, I'm a strong sober gay man. I hop and twirl when and where I choose.

But I wake up every day of my life wondering if some poor, lonesome 7th grade boy is sitting sidesaddle, being tormented with sidewalk chalk. Today, most kids can go home and tell the family and a family can find oceans of support at PFLAG. Because of PFLAG, a kid can stop the hopscotch stalker and hopefully avoid the buckets of scotch to drown his sorrows. Our work is never-ending.

Capdau Junior High has been renovated and will soon open as a Senior Living Center. There's literally a room in Building B that rests on the precise spot of my bullying nightmare. What a place that would be to watch my life sunset. The chalk faded long ago. My memories never will.

I serve PFLAG New Orleans because some 7th grader is being bullied today the way I once was.

LGBT in the News

Here are some news articles you may have missed this month.

[Trump Names Conversion Therapy Clinic Owner to a 2-Year Position](#)



[A Transgender Woman Won Jeopardy!](#)

[Court Blocks Trump's Ban on Diversity Training](#)

[How Did the LGBTQ+ Community Vote in the Presidential Election?](#)

[Lesbian Moms Win in Supreme Court](#)

Do you have a comment about an article? Send your thoughts to the [Banner Editor](#).



Questions about the Eviction Moratorium?



The LA Fair Housing Action Center has stepped forward with a Q&A on the Eviction Moratorium. The page is updated regularly. Click on the icon to go to the page.

Nobody's Home: Modern Southern Folklore



An Interview with Foster Dickerson, Author

Note: this project is neither explicitly endorsed nor connected directly with PFLAG.

Editor: Tell the readers about your exciting new project.

Foster: I am creating a new project called *Nobody's Home: Modern Southern Folklore*. The project, which I am conducting through a Literary Arts Fellowship from the Alabama State

Council on the Arts. It will be an online anthology of creative nonfiction works about the prevailing beliefs, myths, and narratives that have driven Southern culture over the last fifty years, in the late 20th and early 21st centuries. *Nobody's Home* will collect and publish personal essays, memoirs, short articles, opinion pieces, and contemplative works about the ideas, experiences, and assumptions that have shaped life below the old Mason-Dixon Line since 1970. I would like to invite PFLAG Followers to submit a work for possible inclusion.

The website for *Nobody's Home* is now online, and the initial call for submissions is underway. My hope is that this online anthology will serve as a compendium of voices expressing ideas and sharing perspectives that are less-often heard by mainstream America. Though attention is often heaped on the voices within the South that maintain the status quo and the voices outside the South that perpetuate stereotypes, one goal of this project is to offer readers a digital resource for ideas and perspectives they may not have considered, or that they may not have known existed.

Editor: Is this an LGBTQ+ project?

Foster: The project is not specific to the LGBTQ community, but it is open to sharing a wide variety of voices in the South. If you'll notice, in the submission guidelines, that among the categories for works are family, gender, healthcare, sexuality, and others that you or another writer may find relevant to LGBTQ issues. Rather than breaking the anthology into rigid categories, I wanted the project to be inclusive and fluid, allowing more leeway for writers to define the parameters.

As you consider whether or what to write, I want to encourage you to share the experiences and expertise from your PFLAG chapter. I would like to include a broad cross-section of ideas about what the modern South is, what it can be, and what stands between the two. If you are interested – and I hope that you are – please check the submission guidelines for more information: modernsouthernfolklore.com/submissions.

Board Member Tony is Thankful For . . .

PFLAG is a mirror of all that is good in our country; kindness, compassion, loving, accepting, and most of all, a beacon of hope and support for not only our LGBTQ+ brothers and sisters, but for all of us as a nation. As this exiting administration has brought out the worst among our people, it is my hope and prayer that the incoming administration will bring out the best in our nation. Today, I am once again proud of who we are as a country and as a people. Our better selves have spoken and light and hope have returned .

I am most thankful for my husband, Ken who has traded with be being the rock of our relationship. There have been times in the recent past where we've taken turns being the "strong one". He is a great blessing to me and my dearest love.

I am thankful for my children and grandchildren. I made the hardest decision of my life to ultimately be who I am and will pay for that decision for the rest of my life, I suppose. But, I love them no less and thank God for all of the wonderful times and memories we have had together. Perhaps, one day, things will be better.

Thanks From Our Former President, Julie

I am profoundly thankful for those who have gathered around me since the death of my husband,. Joe. This includes friends and family and sometimes strangers. People who have listened to me, helped me, advised and encouraged me in my new life.

My PFLAG family has been a big part of this. There is so much love there. It just fills my heart and makes me feel safe.

I thank God every day for all of you.

I am thankful for my dear friends; those who have been chosen family and those who newly are.

And finally, I am thankful for my life, my health, and all of the great, good fortune I have enjoyed in my life. In spite of the bad times, most have been spectacular!



We Are Thankful for Your Donations

Our PFLAG New Orleans chapter is funded entirely by members' dues and donations from concerned individuals and foundations. We do not receive funds from the national organization and can only accomplish our mission with your help.



Special thanks to these recent generous donors:

Anonymous, The **Gulf South LGBT Chamber of Commerce**: \$1000 Scholarship

Proud members: Ellen E., Erin R., Joe Melcher, Echo M., Bennett R., Ellen F., Louis and Nicole W., Aimee R.

In Memory of Wayne Christenberry: Courtney Sharp, Charlene Berry

In Memory of Stewart Butler: John Davis, Raymond Boyce

In honor of the marriage of Denise McCain and Kiana Turner:
Dr. Lynn Friedman

Also: Many others who donated in person or through other events.

Special thanks to all of those who supported PFLAG through donations, Amazon purchases, and memberships this year. Our mission continues because of your generosity.

Press Here to
Donate



SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

For Southern Louisiana! (on ZOOM)

SAVE THE DATE!

Thursday, January 14

7:00 to 9:00 PM

Email SupportGroup@pflagno.org

to reserve your spot.

MUSICAL INTERLUDE: 12 Carols of Christmas by Laveau Contreau.
Get ready to laugh your butt off!






[Check out our HALL OF FAME!](#)

[Podcasts are available for download \(here\).](#)



Help bring joy this season

Buy your gifts at smile.amazon.com
or with AmazonSmile ON in the app
and Amazon donates




Consider shopping at
Amazon Smile and
designating PFLAG New
Orleans as your
charitable organization.

FOLLOWERS OF PFLAG NEW ORLEANS:

Newsflash: There is a Pandemic going on! You're using Amazon to buy your items, right? Please use AMAZON SMILE and a portion of your purchase amount will be donated to PFLAG New Orleans! Click the button above.

*AmazonSmile has donated over \$200 million to charities worldwide! You can help increase AmazonSmile donations to **Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays New Orleans** by shopping at smile.amazon.com/ch/58-1706391 or with AmazonSmile ON in the Amazon Shopping app.*

Staff of PFLAG N.O. Banner



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[To contribute ideas or join the staff, click here.](#)

