



Tips & Tactics

An organizational development resource for chapters

F&P Department

Ron Schlittler, Deputy Executive Director, ext. 226
• rschlittler@pflag.org

Field & Policy Coordinators:
Charles Cook, (AL, AR, FL, GA, KY, LA, MS, NC, OK, OR, PR, SC, TN, TX, WA), ext.230
• ccook@pflag.org

Jamie Curtis, (AK, CT, DE, ID, MA, MD, ME, MT, NH, NJ, NY, PA, RI, VA, VT, WY, WV), ext. 215
• jcurtis@pflag.org

Elizabeth Brown, (AZ, CO, IA, IL, IN, KS, MI, MN, MO, ND, NE, NM, OH, SD, UT, WI), ext. 211
• ebrown@pflag.org

Judy Hoff, Safe Schools Coordinator, ext.219
• schools@pflag.org

Brooke Smith, Senior Field & Policy Associate, ext.227.
• bsmith@pflag.org

Vacant Field and Policy Coordinator, (HA, CA, NV)

PFLAG Reaches Out to Families of Color

Being an ally to the GLBT community is one thing. Being a person of color and discovering the double or triple minority status of your loved one is often times a whole other reality. PFLAG's strategic goals have long included the inclusion and service to diverse racial and ethnic communities. In late 1999, PFLAG worked with activists to form the Families of Color Network (FOCN), which works with people of color to address GLBT issues in the context of their African-American, Arab-American, Asian/Pacific Islander-American, Latino/a and Native American/American Indian communities. PFLAG acknowledges that there have often been cultural disparities that have challenged the ability of some chapters to be useful to different communities of color.

This challenge has been overcome by some chapters around the country by creating independent chapters, separate meeting spaces or chapter subgroups for PFLAG Families of Color groups that can better relate to the multi-cultural issues that affect so many of our parents, families and friends.

This edition of *Tips & Tactics* describes what the FOCN provides to PFLAG chapters embracing the mission and goals of the FOCN. It also showcases chapters that work with families of color, resources available to chapters who have families of color as members or want to reach out to people of color in their communities, and the next steps the FOCN is making to strengthen our work to create an inclusive organization and build coalitions with people of color, low-income people and others in our local communities and on the national level.

Testimonial

"No matter what culture you are in, if you have a loved one that is gay and you've accepted them as a person to begin with then coming out gay is just another part of loving them. Regardless of what happens, that person is family, and family has so much more strength than anything else."

– Leonor Holmstrom, PFLAG en Español-Orange County.

The Families of Color Network Vision Statement:

To have us all -- people of different races, ethnicities and cultures -- standing together and united by the love of our gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender children, families and friends.

The PFLAG Families of Color Network Goals and Mission Statement

Goals of the Families of Color Network:

The Families of Color Network strives to make PFLAG chapters aware of cultural differences and issues regarding homosexuality. The pervasive oppression of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender (GLBT) individuals is what makes the support provided by PFLAG chapters so necessary. Just as PFLAG challenges "heterosexual privilege" — the obvious and not-so-obvious advantages that come with being straight (such as access to marriage, or not worrying about how your sexual orientation will affect your employment status) — we also acknowledge the interconnectedness of oppressions and challenge racism, and other “-isms” as well.

Mission Statement:

- ❖ The Families of Color Network is a collective group that facilitates PFLAG activists of color to work together on local and national levels to fight homophobia.
- ❖ The Families of Color Network strives to promote cross-culture synergism.
- ❖ The Families of Color Network strives to make our ethnic communities safe for GLBTs through education.

Tips: To best support visitors of color, we could ask the following questions:

- ❖ What does their culture believe about homosexuality?
- ❖ What is their predominant religion and what are its attitudes about homosexuality?
- ❖ Are there supportive ethnic churches that they know of?
- ❖ What are their particular family dynamics at this moment?
- ❖ Are there any immigrant vs. 2nd generation (or 3rd generation) conflicts?
- ❖ Do their parents or children speak English?
- ❖ If not, is there coming-out literature available in their native tongue?

Testimonial

“Given that support organizations are not part of most people of color’s culture, it is challenging persuading them to speak about topics considered sensitive in front of strangers. Much time and effort is required to achieve results. To find one person determined to assist in reaching out to his or her community is essential to make progress.”

- Nila Marrone, NYC Latino PFLAG – a group within PFLAG NYC

Bridging the Cultural Divide – Success Stories of PFLAG Chapters Working with Families of Colors

NYC LATINO PFLAG by Nila Marrone

I was born and brought up in Bolivia where homosexuality was taboo. All one learned about gay issues was from nasty rumors. When I was 25 I emigrated to the U.S. Many years later in 1983, my niece and godchild, Maria (then 18), came out as a lesbian, I became deeply interested in learning about homosexuality to help her and the family deal with the issue. Later, while in Granada, Spain, I met Frank, a young gay man who had been disowned by his family and was suffering rejection and loneliness. My husband Joe

and I pretty much adopted Frank, and helped him come to the U.S. to complete his education. Frank's experience made me aware of how important it was to join



Migdalia Santiago, Nila Marrone, and Javier Ruiz, of NYC Latino PFLAG, attending the International Summit of Parents, Family and Friends of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Persons in Buenos Aires, Argentina, April 9-10, 2005.

an organization like PFLAG to provide support and education to families dealing with LGBT children. Joining support groups has not been part of Latino culture. While I was living in CT, I was fortunate to encounter PFLAG Hartford, a group that exuded enormous warmth and support. I responded by becoming an active member of this effective PFLAG chapter. I was the only Latina and soon after formed a Latino group as part of PFLAG Hartford.

In April of 2002, after moving and living in Westchester New York for over a year, I joined PFLAG NYC and promptly initiated the NYC Latino PFLAG, as a subgroup. Latinos attend PFLAG NYC meetings. They are welcome and are provided printed information in English and Spanish. Most attend meetings once or twice only, but some request additional support by phone. Due to economic limitations, many cannot attend our regular meetings but

receive phone assistance and some have individual meetings with me arranged at more convenient times. For cultural and economic reasons, having Latinos make the transition from support-receivers to volunteer-helpers is quite difficult. However, during the last three years, I have succeeded in having two Latino mothers who provide help to others.

Harold and Ellen Kameya – API PFLAG in Los Angeles

Harold and Ellen Kameya are 3rd generation Japanese-Americans, born and raised in Hawaii. They have been married for 39 years and have a daughter and two sons. Their daughter Valerie, who lives in New York and is a member of PFLAG New York City came out to them in 1988. Two years later, they became members of PFLAG-Los Angeles. In 2001, they helped start an Asian Pacific Islander (API) PFLAG Project, where issues may be discussed in a culturally sensitive context. In 2004, the monthly meetings were discontinued; however their website (see page 4) continues to be active for on-line support. They have a speakers panel and organize the API PFLAG group in the West Hollywood gay pride parade. Breaking the silence in the Asian community is the main goal of the API PFLAG group.

Tips – The Essential Elements to developing a Latino PFLAG Subgroup – by Nila Marrone

- ❖ Members having an understanding of and a desire to promote ethnic, racial, class, and cultural diversity.
- ❖ Having a Latino Spanish speaking person available at meetings.
- ❖ Having the flexibility to have a separate Spanish speaking group, if needed.
- ❖ Having a native Spanish speaker as part of the answering service provided by the Phone Helpline.
- ❖ Having available brochures and other literature in Spanish.
- ❖ Reaching out to Latino organizations to inform them of PFLAG's services for Latinos.

Resources for Working with Families of Color

Tips – Reaching Out to People of Color

How can your local chapter reach out to GLBT people of color or their parents to attend your meeting?

- ❖ Find GLBT people of color to visit. Call the local gay and lesbian centers and ask for leads.
- ❖ Use GLBT people of color groups as a resource, even if they are not local (see above web links).
- ❖ Find a supportive ethnic religious institution that might host a panel on GLBT issues.
- ❖ Identify the cultural issues that should be addressed. Don't be afraid to ask!
- ❖ Find support literature in different languages.
- ❖ Publicize the group meeting in different ethnic papers, with an emphasis on confidentiality.

Tips - Don't Assume!

We all know what assuming does...if someone comes into your chapter and you are unsure of their ethnic make-up, ASK!

A PFLAGer writes:

“I am dark skinned and usually assumed to be black – which I do not identify as – I am mixed ethnically and I am proud of all my nationalities!! And we need to look at families with children of different backgrounds too – white parents may seek out people of color because they have a GLBT child who was adopted or from a mixed marriage.”

Web links

PFLAG Chapters

National PFLAG FOCN – www.pflag.org/index.php?id106

Asian Pacific Islander PFLAG Project – www.pflag.gapsn.org

Asian Pacific Islander Family Pride – www.apifamilypride.org

New York City Latino/a PFLAG – www.pflagnyc.org

PFLAG en Español in Orange County – www.ocpflag.com

PFLAG Español San Francisco – www.pflagsf.org

Ally Group Web Resources

Lambda Legal – Immigration and Coming Out Materials in Spanish:

<http://www.lambdalegal.org/cgi-bin/iowa/news/publications.html>

University of Richmond – Indigenous Literature for GLBT/Two-Spirit:

<http://oncampus.richmond.edu/faculty/ASAIL/Two-Spirit.htm>

Human Rights Campaign – Coming out materials for communities of color:

http://www.hrc.org/Content/NavigationMenu/Coming_Out/Get_Informed4/Communities_of_Color2/Coming_Out_in_Communities_of_Color.htm

If you know of other resources out there in cyber land, please let FOCN know by e-mail to focn@pflag.org.

Testimonial

“As gay minorities, it’s a different experience than just being gay. There are other factors that play more into someone’s lives as a racial minority that just their sexual minority status.” – Alicia Skillman, PFLAG Family Reunion-Detroit

The Future of FOCN

Right now, the FOCN is coming together to reexamine the resources PFLAG has for the chapters. They are working on getting translations for chapter materials, having specific welcoming packets for chapters that are forming in areas of diverse populations, and redoing the website. If you would like more information on how you can get involved in the FOCN and upcoming planning events, please e-mail focn@pflag.org.