



# JUST FOR US

FOCUS ON ECONOMIC JUSTICE

Vol. 20 #1  
2008

FOR PEOPLE WITH LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL, TRANSGENDER AND/OR QUEER PARENTS



## ENOUGH

**W**hen Zoe Greenberg was preparing for her Bat Mitzvah in 2004, she was assigned to study a portion of the Torah

that described the ancient practice of Jubilee. During Jubilee years, crops were neither harvested nor sold; all debts were forgiven; enslaved peoples were freed; and land that had been bought or sold was returned to its original owners. It was intended to be a time of social and ecological renewal that restored balance and redistributed the wealth of society among all people equally.

Zoe was already beginning to have experiences of her own that were opening her eyes to the realities of economic inequalities in the world around her. After 5th grade she transferred from the

Philadelphia public school she had attended since kindergarten and entered a small all-girls private school. The difference between the two environments was drastic. The public school she had attended did not have the resources it needed - it was overcrowded and teachers struggled to complete lessons without enough of the most basic classroom supplies. On the other hand, the private school where she transferred had class sizes of no more than 12 students, and every classroom was equipped with technological innovations such as "smart boards" (electronic white boards connected to computers that allow the teacher to project complex graphics and lesson materials to the entire classroom with great speed and ease).

Zoe knew from the Torah that economic inequalities were a concern in ancient times, and she knew from her own experiences that they continued to be an issue in the

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world today. With the support of two mentors (a professional filmmaker and family friend from the neighborhood), Zoe began making "Enough" - a film exploring young people's perspectives on class, inequality, wealth, and poverty. She asked students from her different schools and from around the neighborhood to answer questions such as: What is poverty? Where did it come from? And, how can we get rid of it? Their answers provide fascinating insights to common perceptions - and misperceptions

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## COMMUNITIES SHOULD WORK TOGETHER

By Aubrey Cunha

**T**here are a lot of things I like about my neighborhood. It has a lot of character. People there are real. It is not like places where everyone stays in their own house all the time. There are always people out in the street playing and talking to their neighbors. Most of the people in the neighborhood like similar things and can relate to each other.

Even though I like my neighborhood a lot, there are also some bad influences here. Sometimes I have seen people dealing drugs, and there are fights. I have seen prostitutes and pimps. Most of the people who do these things are looking for a fast way to get money. They don't want to get evicted. They can't get jobs because they haven't gone to college. They haven't gone to college because they couldn't afford to pay for it.

Another problem is that people tell them that they can't make it, and don't do anything to help them out. These people don't get any encouragement, and everyone needs someone to encourage them. Most people want to be good but they don't always have much of a choice.

I think it is up to the community to solve problems like these. Where I live, almost everyone wants to fix the problems in the neighborhood. But, there's not enough opportunity. There's not very much money in the community, and there aren't a lot of jobs. If I could sit down with the mayor of Oakland I would ask him to give the community more money and more opportunities, such as better schools and money for college. Then the people of the community would be able to work together to solve these problems and have better lives, which everyone wants to have.



Aubrey speaks out at a COLAGE rally

*Aubrey is 13 years old and lives with his lesbian mom in Oakland, CA. He enjoys listening to music and playing video games, especially "Need for Speed."*

## LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



**D**ear Friends and Family:  
Exciting things are happening at COLAGE! By the time you read this the Board will have approved our new strategic priorities for the next 3-5 years; the American Family Outing, a collaborative effort of Soulforce, National Black Justice Coalition, the United Federation of Metropolitan Community Churches (MCC) and COLAGE, in which LGBTQ families will engage in peaceful dialog with families at six mega-churches about faith, family and LGBTQ people will have launched; and a new landmark publication, the Kids of Trans Resource

Guide, written by our KOT Program Fellow, Monica Canfield-Lenfest, will have landed in the hands of hundreds of young people, transgender parents, ally organizations, community leaders and service providers across the country.

Please take some time to absorb and celebrate our new mission and vision statements, unveiled on page 15, and get in touch with any member of the board or staff if you have questions or want to be more involved with our growing and dynamic programs building community among people with LGBTQ parent(s) or guardians and working for social justice for all.

As a result of months of strategic planning discussions about prioritizing social, racial, and economic justice and after four members of our staff returned from the Task Force's annual Creating Change conference in February with piles of reading material, our whole staff decided to spend some time dialoging and learning about the topic of economic justice. One of the publications that struck me was *Queers for Economic Justice's* (QEJ) *Poverty, Public Assistance and Privatization: The Queer Case for a New Commitment to Economic Justice*. QEJ's groundbreaking article argues that for too long, huge sectors of the LGBTQ community have been silent on issues of economics and class and calls on LGBTQ groups to make economic justice a central part of our work.

Inspired by our readings, discussions and knowledge, we want to engage you, our larger community, on the topic by focusing this issue of *Just for Us* on economic justice. You will read personal accounts about the intersections of economics, wealth, class, race, poverty and politics in the lives of youth and adults with LGBTQ parents. Although the great majority of my lived experience has been one of financial stability and security with white, middle class privilege, I have also known and lived with the very real fear and knowledge of family financial vulnerability because my mom is a lesbian. As a child, I was well aware she could lose custody of me, lose her job, and we could be denied housing or be evicted due to the legal discrimination in housing, employment, and family law.

At COLAGE, we recognize that the systems and institutions which perpetuate homophobia and transphobia are connected to the systems that create poverty and economic injustice. Let's alter the historic invisibility and exploitation of poor and working class individuals and families in the LGBTQ movement and together bring about social, racial and economic justice for all children, youth and families.

Yours in solidarity,

Beth Teper  
COLAGE Executive Director

## COLAGE

**MISSION:** COLAGE is a national movement of children, youth, and adults with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer (LGBTQ) parent(s). We build community and work toward social justice through youth empowerment, leadership development, education, and advocacy.

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## CHAPTER UPDATE: COLAGE DC TRYING SOMETHING NEW

In COLAGE we teach that one sometimes needs to face their prejudices head on. I, as an atheist, had a difficult time partnering with or even understanding different faiths. As chapter leader, I soon realized that this “dislike” was prejudice and needed to be overcome.

As a chapter leader I was faced during each chapter meeting with low-turnout, despite the cry from parents that their “kids need COLAGE”. Creating events and activities only to have 1-3 kids come (most of the time all from the same family) was rewarding, and a great experience with those youth, but I know that the community is bigger than that. I get at least 3 e-mails a week from parents looking for a group for their kids.

So I decided to go where our families are already gathering. An area that, as an atheist, was foreign and a bit uncomfortable.... I went to church. Why church, as opposed to synagogue, mosque, friends meeting or such? Well I went to a Metropolitan Community Church - the “gay” church. There are dozens of families, with many kids there every Sunday.... And



Francisco and Aliya enjoy a recent COLAGE DC event

what are the kids doing? Not much, in fact most when asked said they were bored. Many of the families wanted a program for the kids. Well I had a program for COLAGE DC. So I decided to run my meetings at the same time as service. This creates a win-win situation. While the programming is not faith-based, the parents quickly realized the value of what the chapter was doing.

So what are we doing? We meet the first Sunday of every month. All the activities are run by and led by people with LGBTQ parents. We integrate 8 elements that build resiliency in youth, in order to build community,

leadership and positive mental health for youth with LGBTQ parents.

In January we focused on discovering self, setting goals and building unity with a group by using the messages of Dr. Rev. Martin Luther King, Jr. In February, with a Valentines theme we focused on love and community respect. We learned about homelessness and how we could make a difference. In March we worked on creative pieces for an art exhibit, and in April we got in touch with our “green” sides and learned about earth day and recycling.

While the chapters structure, time and location are all still new, we hope to expand the activities and have a social event once a month too in other locations.

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*Ryan Lalonde has been involved with COLAGE as the COLAGE Metro DC Coordinator, a member of the national Board of Directors, a facilitator at Saugatuck Family Week and workshop presenter. He is the son of a lesbian mother who lives in Maryland with his partner Chris. To learn more about COLAGE Metro DC and get involved, visit [www.colage.org/dc](http://www.colage.org/dc).*

## NATIONAL CHAPTER NEWS- COLAGE DEBUTS NEW AFFILIATION SYSTEM

In 2008 COLAGE debuted a new affiliation system for our local chapters. Through the Affiliation Agreement that all COLAGE chapters now sign, we have clarified the relationship between local groups and the COLAGE national organization. We now are able to offer fiscal management, a relationship of liability and greater simplicity in how we work with and manage the COLAGE chapter network. During this time of transition, we are also updating our chapter listings to ensure that each group we include as part of the COLAGE Chapter Network is actively offering events, networking or community for children, youth, adults and/or families in their local area.

At the same time, we unveiled a brand new edition of the COLAGE Chapter Guide. This greatly expanded resource provides

even more ideas about organizing, outreach, fundraising, programming and more for individuals starting or coordinating COLAGE chapters.

Lastly, we are excited to announce our second National COLAGE Chapter Institute. Following on the success of our first Chapter Institute which took place in Dallas in October 2006, we will be convening a leadership retreat of individuals involved in the coordination of their local groups this fall. Save the date of November 14 - 16 for the National Chapter Institute in the Bay Area, CA. More details will be available soon.

If you are interested in starting a COLAGE Chapter in your local area, contact Meredith Fenton, COLAGE Program Director at [Meredith@colage.org](mailto:Meredith@colage.org) or by phone at 415-861-KIDS x102.



# SPEAK OUT

**W**e talked to our friends in COLAGE Boston and to the youth at the Rainbow Families Minnesota conference about Economic

Justice and the ways these issues impact their lives. Here is what they shared with *Just For Us* to Speak OUT to the COLAGE community.

***How does the amount of money that your family does or does not have affect things that you can or cannot do, have or buy?***

We have enough money. We have food, a roof over our heads, clothes. We don't have a lot, but we have enough.

- Mateo, Tulalip, WA

I am able to go to a summer camp that costs my parents a lot of money because both of my moms work.

- Aaron, Cambridge, MA Age 14

In the same way that it affects every family, it affects where we live, and where we go.

- Catherine, Ashland, MA 12

I don't have to worry about the financial aid I get as a factor in choosing where I go to college next year.

- Lanie, Framingham, MA Age 17

We can't buy a lot of things because our dad doesn't have a job.

-William, Hastings, MN, Age 14

I can't always get or do the things I want.

-Andres, MN, Age 13

Well I can't get my shots done at school because of my parents insurance.

-Anonymous, St. Paul, MN, Age 12

***How do you, your friends, family or community share resources?***

My school is having budget problems, so our art teacher is using recycled and found materials to provide us with art supplies.

-Emma, Harvard, MA 14

At my school we hold bake sales and other fundraisers to offset the cost of school activities for students who can't afford them.

-Julia, Newton, MA 15

We donate money to organizations and give our old clothes to Goodwill.

- Claire, Minneapolis, MN, Age 14

Family does hand me downs, friends give me clothes.

- Margaret, Hastings, Age 12

Me and friends share games and money.

-Mac, Mendota Heights, MN, Age 13

## IN BETWEEN PLACES

Brownstone, Mediterranean, hi-rise, Victorian, Craftsman, clapboard houses, 60s stucco slums, basement apartments.

Late, and then Past Due, and then Final Notice, and then Duraflame logs in the fireplace for heat and homework done by kerosene lamp.

Moving boxes, masking tape, Sharpies, vans, both U-Haul and Ryder, pickup trucks and station wagons, self-storage units.

Eviction notices, piles of garbage, toys left behind: white stuffed dog, two years' worth of Lego blocks, pink and purple roller skates with glittery butterflies on the heel. Boxes of books, camping equipment, a sewing machine never seen again. Two puppies tied briefly to a parking meter (crying brought them back) then later abandoned for good at the pound (crying brought a smack).

Rooms, and couches, and fold-outs, and cots, and floors. Lots of floors. Cars, two motels, a friend's mother's double-wide, the shelter that one time.

Airports and train stations and subways and freeways and bus stops and parks.

Always leaving from, never going to.

Always in between places.

*Lauren Wheeler was born in Chicago and lived there with her grandmother until she was ten before living with her single lesbian mom in Oakland, Berkeley, and Miami Beach. She is a writer of short fiction and poetry and twice competed in the National Poetry Slam.*



## THAT'S SO WHAT?

**"D**on't use that word around Bethany. She doesn't like it," my friend quickly and loudly announced, I guess because she was worried about my response. We were sitting at a restaurant and our guest had just used the word "ghetto" twice in one sentence to describe not only a neighborhood but also the waitresses' clothes, the ripped menu, and seemingly an entire group of people.

I'm not entirely sure what my response would have been but I appreciated my friend trying to help. And actually she was right; I don't like that word. But I didn't want our guest to refrain from using the word "ghetto" because I didn't like it—I'm not the vocab police—I wanted him to choose another word because "that's so ghetto" has become a catch all term that is often used in the same negative way as "that's so gay". While I've heard folks quickly add their opinions about using "gay" as an adjective, they'll often use "ghetto" without thinking twice. The words we use have power and it is sometimes easy to forget that.

One of the earliest examples of a ghetto was at the end of the 1800s when in Italy the Jews were forced to relocate to small sections of a city in order for the government to be able to monitor and restrict the Jewish community. During

the Holocaust of World War 2, the Nazis created over 300 Jewish ghettos across Europe. These urban neighborhoods were overcrowded, impoverished and disease-plagued often physically blocked in my barbed wire, brick walls or wooden fences. Jews were not allowed to leave the ghettos by penalty of death. Nazis used them as holding areas for Jews who would be transported to concentration and death camps.

Today, ghettos are neighborhoods that are usually made up primarily of people of color, are usually underserved and also usually lacking the resources and funding that more affluent communities might have access to. Historically these neighborhoods may also lack political power due to redistricting—meaning when votes are cast at election time, the votes of the community may not count as a whole because the neighborhood lines have been drawn and redrawn which can break up the collective community voice. Songs, movies, and news media have painted ghettos to be full of crime, poverty, and gangs and while those things exist in these neighborhoods it is certainly not the only thing that comes out of the community.

The modern day "ghetto" is a neighborhood which, like any neighborhood contains beautiful reasons to celebrate and things that we wish we

could change. Yet, any time I have heard someone describe something as being "ghetto" it's always used to describe that thing as negative. When you think of something being "ghetto", what's the first thing that comes to mind? Is it something dirty, broken, used, or abandoned? We've become so used to associating the word "ghetto" with something negative that we forget what we're really saying—the same way using the phrase "that's so gay" to describe something in a negative way, distorts the meaning and understanding of gay identity and culture.

I'm actually glad my friend brought it up; our conversation that day in the restaurant ended up taking us in a new direction about our families, the neighborhoods we grew up in, and the assumptions we all sometimes make about first appearances. I invite you to have that conversation too.



*Bethany Lockhart is the new Program Coordinator at COLAGE. She wants to thank Laurence Tan whose conversations guided the thoughts shared in this article.*

## WE REALLY ARE EVERYWHERE

BY SUSAN RAFFO

**W**hat does it mean when COLAGE promotes "equality and justice for people with LGBTQ parents and our families"? How do we define equality and justice?

Right now equality and justice usually focus on two things: legal rights and acceptance. This means we want the right to marry or not marry each other - legally - and have all of the benefits that marriage gives you. We want the legal recognition of hate crimes, legal recognition of our families, the ability to prosecute homophobic teachers, and so on. Legal rights and acceptance are important, but are they all that we mean when we say equal rights and justice?

Let's say you're part of a family - lesbian moms, two kids, and a cat. Now let's say that one of your mothers got hit



Susan with her partner Raquel and daughter Luca.

by a car last year and she's still having a hard time recovering. She didn't have great health insurance so your family has big hospital bills. Life is hard but your other mother is working so you're scraping by. Then the company your other mother works for decides to close its offices in your hometown. They are laying everyone off without the hopes of any other job.

Now let's say you're like lots of people in the United States - your mom who just got laid off is over 50. She has always worked for the same company in all kinds of different jobs, but she doesn't have a college degree and the job she does, well, there aren't that many around.

So one mother can't work and the other just got laid off. Your family owns your own house - it's not big and fancy but you've always lived there. Neither of your moms can get another job except for minimum wage doing drive through at a fast food restaurant and you don't have grandparents or aunts or friends with much extra money. Maybe, if you sell your car, you have enough money to pay bills for a few months before, pretty soon, the bank comes and takes your house from your because you can't make the mortgage.

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# WE ALL HAVE TO WIN TOGETHER

By Tess Corcoran

**T**ess is the co-chair of the board of directors of Mountain Meadow, a progressive and diverse community dedicated to providing a supportive and safe space for all children of LGBTQ and other non-traditional families and their allies. Mountain Meadow's largest program each year is a summer camp that operates on a sliding scale where no one is turned away, regardless of their ability to pay. JFU sat down with Tess for a brief interview about her experiences and perspectives on class and inequality, working with children of LGBTQ parents, and building strong social movements that work for everyone.

## What kinds of experiences have you had with class and class inequality in your own life?

When my moms were together, one of my moms didn't have health insurance. My one mom did have health insurance, but her policy didn't recognize my other mom, so she had to pay all of her own health bills. She would have to choose between things like dental bills and home improvement. If they could have gotten married then they would not have had to make these types of decisions.

After my moms separated, they moved into different neighborhoods, so I grew up in a poor neighborhood with one mom and a middle class neighborhood with the other mom. I could see the differences in schools and other opportunities in these neighborhoods and how life was different for the people living there.

## Now that you're in college what new experiences have you had with class and your peers?

Well, for me and my family, paying for college has been a big issue. I have spent a lot of time getting scholarships, and taking out loans, so I can afford tuition, books, and all of those things. Class is not discussed by my peers very much and it can be more hidden in college because everyone is living in a dorm and your background might not be as obvious. But then you notice who is able to do things like go into the city and go shopping, what stores you shop at, whether or not you have scholarships or loans to pay back later.

## Do you think these differences make it harder for people to interact with each other?

When you grow up in such different environments and when everything you do is determined by your income...you grow up NOT going shopping, NOT going out to dinner, NOT spending money, and feeling aware of the need to save money. When it comes time to find things in common with other people, it can be harder to do that with someone from a more privileged background. They have grown up with a different environment, spend money more easily, and that makes your choices about what to do with each other and what shared experiences you can have different.

I'm not saying that you can't reach across the boundaries, but there has to be motivation and explicit discussion that you are reaching across them. You have to be aware and make sure your choices are accommodating to the choices other people can or



cannot make. You have to maintain awareness of the fact that your lives are different.

## On a social or political level, what kinds of changes would you like to see to address class inequalities?

I am strongly behind universal health care and the idea that everyone should have equal access. Health care shouldn't be different for the rich vs. the poor. Universal health care wouldn't just help the individual, it would help everyone. Other countries with universal health care have longer life expectancies, and lower rates of cancer. They spend less on health care overall, but have healthier people than we do.

## What message do you have for people or organizations that are trying to learn more about class privilege and make their programs more accessible?

When the organization itself is aware of class, it changes the way the organization functions. When there is no awareness or discussion, it's harder to address accessibility, so talking about it is the first step. Once you start talking about this you will also start talking about other forms of accessibility, like ability, race, and gender. One can lead to another and they can feed off of each other. This is always a good thing, because the more parts of the community you are including, the more likely it is that your work will really lift everyone up and not leave anyone behind.

## How does ignoring issues of class and race limit everyone? How do you see this in the LGBTQ movement specifically?

You can't have a real social movement without serious commitment to include all people of the community. This means talking about all of the different 'isms' that affect everyone in the community. And class is part of all of the isms. If you talk about racism, you have to also talk about class, if you talk about homophobia you have to also talk about class. They are all intertwined. If any movement is to take up the issues of equality and class, then LGBTQ people as a community need to do so because we have so much diversity of class background. You can't have an LGBTQ movement that only focuses on the wealthy elite of the community. We all have to win together.

*Tess is in her first year at Temple University after growing up with lesbian mothers in Syracuse, NY. She is a board member of Mountain Meadow Summer Camp ([www.mountainmeadow.org](http://www.mountainmeadow.org)) Check out their website to learn about attending camp in August 2008!*



## SCHOOLS REPORT UPDATE

**C**OLAGE is pleased to announce the February 2008 release of the first comprehensive report on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) families' experiences in education. The study was published by GLSEN in partnership with COLAGE and the Family Equality Council.

*Involved, Invisible, Ignored: The Experiences of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Parents and Their Children in Our Nation's K-12 Schools* examines and highlights the school experiences of LGBT-headed families using results from surveys of LGBT parents of children in K-12 schools and of secondary students who have LGBT parents.

On behalf of the millions of people who have one or more LGBT parents, COLAGE urges students, schools and communities to learn about this important issue as the first step in building safe school environments for all. We also applaud youth with LGBT parents who act as educators and leaders every day when they navigate often unwelcoming schools.

Highlights from the Report:

**Schools are not safe for students with LGBT parents.** Middle and High School aged youth with LGBT parents face heightened levels of bullying, name-calling and harassment. A majority of youth with LGBT parents often hear derogatory remarks about LGBTQ people and families in school. Over a third of youth with LGBT parents are being verbally harassed and a tenth of students experience physical harassment and assault. Many students (42%) reported having rumors or lies spread about them in school because they had an LGBT parent. More than half of students reported that they do not feel safe in their school because they have an LGBT parent and/or because other students assume that they, themselves are LGBT.

**Teachers and School staff often contribute to the problem of bullying and harassment faced by students with LGBT parents.** Only 38% of students reported that staff frequently intervened when hearing remarks about LGBT parents and even smaller percentages of teachers and staff intervene when they observe name-calling or bullying based on sexual orientation and gender identity. Even more upsetting, nearly a fourth of students have experienced negative comments or verbal harassment from a teacher and/or school staff about LGBT people and/or families. Any degree of biased or derogatory language from school staff should be considered unacceptable and not tolerated in our schools. Hearing biased language from teachers or other school authority figures may send a message to students that such language is tolerated and even acceptable.

**Students with LGBT Parents face barriers to participation in their school communities.** A fifth of students reported feeling excluded from school or classroom activities in the past school year because they had LGBT parents. Sometimes they feel excluded because they received negative responses about having LGBT parents or had been discouraged by school staff from being open about their parents or family. Students talked about the ways that parental forms are difficult to fill out because they are not inclusive for LGBT families. Many students described situations where they felt excluded from classroom activities, particularly activities that involved discussion of families, because there were no representations of LGBT families or the activity was based on the assumption that all students came from families with straight parents.

*Involved, Invisible, Ignored* gives our community just a snapshot of the experiences of students with LGBTQ parents and affirms COLAGE's ongoing commitment to education and advocacy work to create safer schools for all students. Visit our website to find out about COLAGE's visibility tools and curriculum available to schools educators, get resources about school environments, or to get involved in our efforts to impact school climates.

Other sections of the report discuss the experiences of LGBT parents in their children's schools. The full report is available online at [www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN\\_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/001/1104-1.pdf](http://www.glsen.org/binary-data/GLSEN_ATTACHMENTS/file/000/001/1104-1.pdf). You can also contact COLAGE for a hard copy.



## IT'S STILL ELEMENTARY

In honor of the re-release of *Its Elementary* and the accompanying follow up film, *It's Still Elementary*, one of the films' stars, Emily Rosen King shared her experience with *Just For Us*.

I had no idea at age nine how proud I would one day be to have been a part of *It's Elementary* - Talking About Gay Issues in School (the GroundSpark film that models how to address gay issues in age-appropriate ways). I got to be part of this project through a classroom discussion in my elementary school where I read an essay about being raised by two mothers. One thing people who have seen the film always ask me is if I was scared to get up in front of a class and talk about my family. I don't remember feeling scared- I remember being excited and proud. I guess in many ways it was something I had been doing for as long as I could remember: explaining my family to friends and their families and teachers and many people who had never heard of such a thing. I had no idea just how many people would see the film and that years later it would be something that, as an adult, I was proud to have been a part of and to continue to be a part of.

At the New York City premiere of *It's Still Elementary* (a follow up to the original documentary), which was held last October at Columbia Teachers College. I have wanted to be a teacher since I was in second grade and, as a senior in college, I am in the process of making plans for next year. I was thrilled to watch the panelists of educators and people involved in educational policy speak about the film as an educational tool and how helpful it has been to so many people over the past years. It occurred to me that I have

*continued on page 12*



Emily in *It's Elementary*, 1995

# SCRAP



Youth at the COLAGE program of Rainbow Families New Jersey



COLAGE facilitators Shova and Sarah at Rainbow Families Minnesota



COLAGErs gather during the COLAGE Reception in New York City



New friends meet through COLAGE at Rainbow Families New Jersey

COLAGE Connecticut October Potluck



Youth and adult COLAGErs gather for a special dinner in Minneapolis, MN



COLAGE New Orleans Families celebrate Spring



# BOOK



Youth from COLAGE Boston at the local premiere of *In My Shoes: Stories of Youth with LGBT Parents*



COLAGERS at the Rainbow Families DC Conference



The Queerspawn Caucus at Creating Change in Detroit, MI

COLAGE Program Director Meredith Fenton visits with Out Youth in Austin Texas



Teens Coming together at a COLAGE Boston event

## UPCOMING COLAGE EVENTS

### AMERICAN FAMILY OUTING May- June 2008

A collaborative project with Soulforce, the National Black Justice Coalition and the Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches. During the 6 weekends between Mother's Day and Father's Day, the American Family Outing will visit 6 US cities to spark dialogue about faith and families at some of the country's largest mega-churches.

[www.soulforce.org/afo](http://www.soulforce.org/afo)

### 30 DAYS PREMIERE June 24<sup>th</sup>, FX Channel

The premiere of an episode of Morgan Spurlock's 30 Days focused on LGBT families and including interviews with members of COLAGE Ann Arbor and COLAGE NYC.

Episode Four: [www.fxnetworks.com/shows/originals/30days/episodeguide.php](http://www.fxnetworks.com/shows/originals/30days/episodeguide.php)

### SAUGATUCK FAMILY WEEK

July 12<sup>th</sup>- 18<sup>th</sup>

Saugatuck and Douglas, MI

An incredible week of community and fun presented by COLAGE and Rainbow Families Great Lakes

[www.rfgl.org](http://www.rfgl.org)

### PROVINCETOWN FAMILY WEEK

July 26<sup>th</sup>- August 2<sup>th</sup>

COLAGE presents our dynamic program for youth in 3<sup>rd</sup>-12<sup>th</sup> grades and their families during the annual Family Week in Provincetown, MA.

[www.acteva.com/go/colage](http://www.acteva.com/go/colage)

### FAMILIES BY THE RIVER

August 15<sup>th</sup>- 17<sup>th</sup>

Guerneville, CA

Sponsored by Our Family Coalition, COLAGE and the SF LGBT Center, this is an amazing weekend of fun programming and community building in Northern California.

### COLAGE AT THE PARENTING WITH PRIDE CONFERENCE

September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Los Angeles, CA

COLAGE programs for youth ages 9 and up during this annual event.

### COLAGE CHAPTER INSTITUTE

November 14<sup>th</sup>- 16<sup>th</sup>, 2008

Bay Area, CA

Our 2<sup>nd</sup> annual leadership and community building event for leaders from COLAGE chapters from across the country. We'll be meeting at a beautiful lighthouse retreat close to San Francisco.



## HOW IS ECONOMIC JUSTICE A COLAGER ISSUE?

Some of you might be wondering why COLAGE chose to “focus on Economic Justice” for this issue of *Just For Us*. Issues of classism and economic inequality don't necessarily get a whole lot of attention from major LGBTQ rights organizations and talking about money is often discouraged in our culture. But, COLAGE knows that our families reflect the diversity of the broader society in terms of socio-economic status. Economic inequalities impact our families, so working for justice for COLAGERS means working for economic justice too.

For a lot of reasons, economic justice is a really important issue for children with LGBTQ parents and our families.

Some COLAGERS are part of families that rely on public assistance programs such as WIC (which provides support for low-income Women, Infants and Children), food stamps, and TANF (Temporary Aid for Needy Families). During the last decade, policy changes have made these programs increasingly hostile to our families. From 2002 -2004 alone, more than \$800 million of federal monies budgeted for social welfare programs were diverted to “Marriage Promotion”. Marriage Promotion gives preferential access to married heterosexual couples with children for benefits such as head start (a low-cost pre-school program), public housing, job training, and educational financial aid programs. These benefits are denied or restricted to single-parents and unmarried couples with children. Another set of programs - “Fatherhood Initiatives” - make it harder for married couples receiving public assistance to get divorced, and penalize women who don't know or don't wish to disclose the biological father of their children. Finally, “Faith-Based Initiatives” have been introduced, which transfer public monies to religious institutions that provide charitable services such as soup kitchens and emergency housing. Many of these institutions are openly hostile to LGBTQ families and are not required to follow anti-discrimination policies that state and federal agencies are bound by.

When public benefits like welfare are distributed unequally, it can be especially hard on LGBT individuals, couples, and families. According to the National Gay and Lesbian Taskforce (NGLTF) most LGBT individuals and same-sex households earn less than

their heterosexual counterparts, and unemployment rates are slightly higher. Factors such as employment discrimination, loss of support from family, harassment in the workplace, and pay inequities all contribute to this disparity. This means our families are likely to have fewer resources available to them when it comes to meeting basic needs such as housing, health care, food, and education - and at the same time homophobia, transphobia, racism and classism may prevent us from taking advantage of public programs that might help us meet these needs instead.

Another way that economic justice is an issue for COLAGERS and our families has to do with lack of relationship recognition, especially lack of marriage equality. This type of inequality has many political and legal impacts, including a lot of economic ones. For example, unmarried partners and their children aren't counted as “members of household” for the estimation of payments such as worker's compensation, social security, and disability pay - which means that some of our most vulnerable family members (unemployed, elderly, and disabled parents) are less able to care for themselves and their children. Despite unequal access to public programs such as social security, many LGBTQ couples who are not able to get married shoulder a heavier tax burden than their heterosexual counterparts - this means we're paying more than our fair share into these programs, but getting less than our fair share out of them. Lack of marriage equality isn't just about what we give and get from the government. Private companies such as those that provide life and health insurance often don't recognize our families, forcing families to choose between purchasing multiple insurance policies or going without insurance of any kind. Some couples are able to protect themselves from the kinds of injustices listed above by hiring lawyers to draw up documents and contracts such as wills, powers of attorney, and agreements about how to split up shared assets in the case of a break up; however this involves substantial legal fees that many middle and working class families simply cannot afford.

These are just a few of the reasons that classism and economic inequalities are an important issue for COLAGERS to think about. Keep reading for some ideas about how you can take positive action to bring about economic justice for our families and community.

### RESOURCES ON CLASS PRIVILEGE and CLASSISM – LEARN MORE

**Bridging the Class Divide and other Lessons for Grassroots Organizing**, Linda Stout, Beacon, 1996.

**Class Action** inspires action to end classism. Their website has a wealth of resources, books and activities to help address class including books about class issues for children. [www.classism.org](http://www.classism.org)

**Class Matters** [www.classmatters.org](http://www.classmatters.org)

**Classified: How to Stop Hiding Your Privilege and Use it For Social Change**. By Karen Pittelman.

**POOR Magazine** is dedicated to reframing the news, issues and solutions from low and no income communities, as well as providing society with a perspective usually not heard or seen within the mainstream media. [www.poormagazine.org](http://www.poormagazine.org)

**Queers for Economic Justice** [www.q4ej.org](http://www.q4ej.org)

Even more resources on on page 12!

# 10 THINGS YOU CAN DO TO WORK FOR ECONOMIC JUSTICE

## CLASS PRIVILEGE



**1** **EDUCATE YOURSELF.** Even reading this issue of *Just For Us* is a first step. All of us can learn more about privilege, class, economics and justice. Start with some of the books and organizations suggested here. Or seek out groups or workshops about class and privilege where you learn with others.

**2** **OWN YOUR PRIVILEGE.** Think about the ways that economic and other forms of privilege have impacted your life. Start conversations within your family and/or community about class.

**3** **SUPPORT POLICIES THAT CHALLENGE CLASSISM.** Push for higher minimum wages and the rights of workers to organize. Support universal health care for all U.S. residents, regardless of family or citizenship status.

**4** **ADDRESS OTHER FORMS OF OPPRESSION.** In order to deal effectively with classism, we need to deal with racism and sexism. Women and people of color are disproportionately affected by poverty and lack of access to health care, quality education, housing and other important resources and services.

**5** **USE YOUR DOLLARS** and other resources to make change.

**6** **BE AN ALLY.** Respectfully interrupt when you hear classist jokes, comments, or stereotypes. Offer information and different perspectives when you hear people perpetuating classist ideas such as the bashing of welfare recipients.

**7** **GET INVOLVED.** Find organizations that are working on economic justice issues and volunteer your time. Support the leadership of groups and individuals from low-income backgrounds who are working to impact change.

**8** **SUPPORT EMPLOYMENT NON-DISCRIMINATION LAWS THAT INCLUDE GENDER IDENTITY.** On state and federal levels there are laws that make it illegal for people to lose their jobs on the basis of different characteristics such as race, sex, or religion. A few states include sexual orientation as a category that is protected and a small minority include gender identity. Transgender folks face a lot of prejudice in the job market so its really important for non-discrimination employment laws to be inclusive of gender identity.

**9** **FIGHT FOR JUST PUBLIC BENEFITS SYSTEMS.** Oppose laws and programs that tie access to assistance for low-income people to marriage promotion or other faith-based initiatives that exclude or even attack our families.

**10** **CHALLENGE CLASSISM WITHIN OUR OWN MOVEMENT.** Question organizations or policies that focus solely on the needs of LGBTQ people and families with financial and other resources.

**10%** of the people in the United States own 71% of the wealth. How does that happen? One of the first answers is class privilege. Class privilege isn't just about money and who has it. A statistic like this also depends on it being easy for folks who have some money to keep that money and making it harder for poor folks and families to make progress.

Not all kids with LGBTQ parents come from middle class or wealthy families, but many COLAGErs do have a lot of class privilege.

What is class privilege? A privilege means getting special advantages because you belong to a certain group. In the case of class privilege it means you are getting advantages because you have wealth, your family has or had wealth, or you have had access to things like education, connections, property ownership or inheritances.

Having class privilege usually means that you have more access to options about school, jobs, where you live and how you live. If you have access to tutors, summer camps, and after school lessons, you will be a stronger candidate for college. If your family is able to fund your college education you have more choices about where you might go or if you can afford to go to college at all. If during college you don't have to work, you may have better opportunities to succeed.

These types of advantages happen in many other parts of our COLAGE community. For example, our families don't have equal access to health coverage because the United States builds health care access around marriage rights. However if our family has class privilege we probably receive health coverage through parents' jobs or through buying health plans. If your family is able to buy a place to live, you don't have the same concerns about having to rent from landlords who could be homophobic or transphobic. You also have more choices about what kind of neighborhood or city to live in which often means you can live in an area that will be accepting of you and your family.

The ways that LGBTQ families can protect themselves, for example, second parent adoption in states where it's available, are expensive processes accessible only to families with means. Some think that COLAGErs should go to private schools because they might be more open and affirming to youth from LGBTQ families. But these schools are often expensive and aren't an option for all queerspawn. These are just a few of the ways that class privilege brings choices and protections to some queerspawn and their families.

One of the first steps in acknowledging and addressing classism and privilege is merely talking about it. But it can be really hard to start talking about class privilege. We live in a culture that is both obsessed with money but also avoids actually talking about wealth and resources. Plus there are lots of complicated feelings- you might feel guilty for having money you didn't have to work for. Or you might be scared that people will think you are spoiled or that people will take advantage of you because of your access to money. Even though our society idolizes people with lots of money, there are also a lot of negative stereotypes about rich people that you don't want to be associated with.

However as long as those of us who do have class privilege hide it, we can't break the cycle of classism which creates the huge inequities in our world. Hiding privilege makes it seem that people who have more advantages must have done something special and that folks who are poor must not be trying hard enough to change their circumstances. By starting conversations about privilege in the COLAGE community, we are taking an important step towards envisioning and creating a world that is economically just for everyone.

# COLAGE BOARD OF DIRECTORS UPDATE

By Board Chair, Whitney Moses

On behalf of the COLAGE Board, I'd like to take this time to say farewell to our exiting members, as well as a thank you for all the work they've put in. Over the last year we've said good by to the following folks:

Ryan Lalonde, Christine Bachman, Oren Slozberg, Dale Liuzza, Gary Knoblock, Christy Hubert, Jessie Voors, Kate Kuvalanka, Orson Morrison, and Janet Stock. These amazing individuals are turning their efforts towards college, new families, local COLAGE organizing and other efforts.

Thanks again for adding your insight and skills to work of this organization.

We'd also like to welcome our newest board members! We're excited to be working with these folks and to see what they'll be bringing to the table.

Please give a warm hello to Julia Siegenberg, Michelle Duso, and Kate Oliver! Welcome to the family.



Michelle Duso brings nearly two decades of nonprofit and community building experience to the COLAGE board. She is the former executive director of a statewide nonprofit working with and for LGBTQ youth in RI. Michelle recently founded POWER4GOOD, a consulting firm specializing in youth development &

engagement, coalition building and work with LGBTQ communities. She lives with her partner and their three children, and became involved with COLAGE after enjoying Provincetown Family Week activities for several years.

Kate Oliver, is a Social Worker in private practice and lives with her husband and two daughters. Kate was raised by her father, mother and father's partner. Kate has been an advocate for her community for over a decade and has been on numerous Equality Maryland panels, testified on legislation that affects her family and created professional courses to educate other social workers about families in the LGBTQ community.



Julia Siegenberg, 15 years old, is the eldest of three sisters and lives alternately with her mother and mother's male partner and her gay father. She is a sophomore (10th grade) at Boston University Academy. Julia has attended many COLAGE Boston meetings and workshops; participated in Family Week in Provincetown for the past 4 years; and spoken on a number of panels focusing on children of LGBT parents.



## We Really Are Everywhere, Continued from page 5

Now your moms' families weren't too happy with them being lesbians. One mom's set of parents think that losing a house and a job is what a lesbian "deserves." Maybe the other set of grandparents are around but they would only let you and their daughter stay with them - not your other mother. They don't like the whole "lesbian thing." This happens a lot, too.

Basically, you can't find a place to live until you have money from a job and you can't find a job that makes enough money. All of this is happening pretty fast. Once the bank comes along and takes your house away, you can't just ask them to wait until you know where you're moving to next. You have to find something. Now.

So, one of your moms calls a family homeless shelter in the center of your town. It's a decent place for kids and their parents to stay while the parents go find work and get back on their feet. There's space in the shelter. You can move in that day. But there's a problem. They don't recognize lesbian families. Their rules say "family means mom and a dad" and you can't have two adult women living with kids in one room. And only families with children are allowed so you can't have one mom in one room and one in another.

You're not allowed to stay together in this shelter, either. (Oh, and by this time, your cat has to go somewhere else, too. No cats allowed in the shelter).

Now what do you do?

When we think about fighting for the rights of our families, do we think about all of our families? Do we remember that some of our LGBTQ families have members they love in prison, that some are on disability, while others are homeless? We have to be careful. If you believed what you saw on TV, you would think that most of us in gay families are white and all of us have a good job with enough extra money for fancy clothes and nice vacations. If we believe that, then we leave most of our families having to struggle for themselves.

Fighting for equality and justice for people with LGBTQ parents and our families means remembering that getting the right to marry or have kids together is only part of the work. There is no equality and justice for all of us as long as some of us are still struggling.

*Susan is a second generation lesbian living in Minneapolis with her partner, Raquel, and their daughter, Luca. She works with Queers for Economic Justice.*

## Its Still Elementary, from page 7

already been 'involved' in education for a long time now and it got me even more excited than before for my future as an educator. Now,

a few months later, I have my plans for next year sorted out- I'll be attending Teachers College. I am looking forward to continuing to share the film with educators who will soon be my peers and with my students to come. I cannot wait to see what progress is made by the time the next It's Elementary follow up comes out.



Emily in It's Still Elementary, 2006

*Emily Rosen King is from New York City and is currently a senior at Wesleyan University studying psychology. She was filmed in her third grade class talking about having lesbian moms for It's Elementary in 1995 and again for It's Still Elementary in 2006. More information and clips from these and other Respect For All Project films can be found online at [www.groundspark.org/films/index.html](http://www.groundspark.org/films/index.html).*

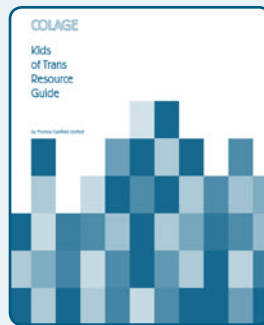
## KIDS OF TRANS RESOURCE GUIDE

**C**OLAGE is pleased to announce the release of our Kids of Trans Resource Guide, the first ever resource guide written by and for people with transgender parents!

From October 2007 through May 2008, COLAGE hosted Monica Canfield-Lenfest as our Kids of Trans Fellow. The culmination of her efforts is the brand new Kids of Trans Resource Guide, which provides valuable information for children of transgender parents, based on the actual experiences of people with transgender parents.

The guide features Transgender 101 for KOTs, Frequently Asked Questions, Transition, Family Shifts, Finding Support and Community, Coming Out as KOT, and more. There is even a special "Transition Tips for Parents" section with best practices for parents undergoing a gender transition. Our Transgender Family Resource List has been included and updated with even more movies, organizations, and publications for transgender people and their children. We are also pleased to offer a joint fact sheet with GLAD - Legal Q&A for Kids of Trans Parents. The Kids of Trans Guide will provide a valuable resource to people with transgender parents everywhere!

For more information and to get your copy of the guide, please contact Monica at [kidsoftrans@colage.org](mailto:kidsoftrans@colage.org). Suggested donation for this valuable resource is \$5-15 sliding scale, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds.



Resources on Class Privilege and Classism, Continued from page 10

**Queerly Classed: Gay Men and Lesbians Write about Class**, Susan Raffo, South End Press, 1997.

**Resource Generation.** A national organization that works with young people with financial wealth to effect progressive social change through the creative, responsible and strategic use of financial and other resources. [www.resourcegeneration.org/home.html](http://www.resourcegeneration.org/home.html)

**The Center for Community Change** helps low-income people build powerful, effective organizations through which they can change their communities for the better. [www.communitychange.org/](http://www.communitychange.org/)

**United for a Fair Economy** is a national, non-profit organization that raises awareness of how wealth and power undermine the economy, corrupt democracy, deepen the racial divide, and tear communities apart. [www.faireconomy.org/](http://www.faireconomy.org/)

**Where We Stand: Class Matters.** By Bell Books. Routledge, 2000.

## QUEERSPAWN UNITE TO DEFEAT PROP 98

**F**our long-time COLAGE members, staffers, and volunteers have been spending a lot of time with each other lately - and not just in the COLAGE office!

Vanessa Moses, who first got involved with COLAGE as a participant in the That's So Gay photo-text exhibit in 2003 has been working as an organizer at Just Cause Oakland (JCO) since 2006. Lauren Wheeler - COLAGE's Special Projects Coordinator - has been volunteering with JCO since 2007, and took a temporary position this spring to help run a special electoral campaign to defeat California's Prop 98, which will be decided by voters in a special election on June 3rd. Kelly Densmore (COLAGE board member, family week staffer, and former office assistant) as well as Jesse Carr (COLAGE Special Projects Assistant, family week staffer, and former Membership Coordinator), are both volunteering in the JCO office this spring as well.

In addition to having one or more LGBTQ parents, Moses, Wheeler, Densmore, and Carr are all Oakland residents who are concerned about what Prop 98 would do to their neighborhoods



and the larger community. Says Wheeler, "Proposition 98 will be presented to voters...disguised as protection against eminent domain seizure. What the proposition really calls for, however, is the end of rent control across California. Its passage would also prohibit inclusionary zoning practices and do away with various environmental protections."

If Prop 98 passes, rents throughout California will skyrocket, and thousands of people will be evicted from their homes, including many working class LGBTQ families. These four queerspawn are proud of their efforts to prevent this from happening. According to Densmore and Carr, having a strong sense of community responsibility as well as commitment to social justice, are values they learned from growing up with lesbian moms and in the larger LGBTQ community as a whole. All four invite COLAGERS everywhere to get involved wherever they live in working for economic justice for themselves, their families, and their neighbors.

To find out more about Just Cause Oakland's work, you can visit their website at [www.justcauseoakland.org](http://www.justcauseoakland.org).

- about class divides in the U.S.

What started out as a project for her Bat Mitzvah turned into something much larger after the film was shown to an audience that included Felice Yeskel, director of Class Action, a non-profit organization that inspires action to end classism. As soon as she saw it, Felice knew that "Enough" was a valuable tool for organizers, educators, and community leaders to engage youth and adults in discussion and activism around this important issue. Felice, Zoe, and a host of others worked together to create curriculum to accompany the 11 minute film, and now send trainers to schools throughout the country to lead teachers and students in dialog and workshop activities. Zoe herself co-facilitates 2 - 3 such workshops each month, in conjunction with Class Action.

When Zoe first started showing her film and giving workshops, she recalls worrying that no one would care, or

that there would be a negative reaction. For the most part, however, these fears have not been realized. Teachers are excited to see youth talking about this issue. Youth are grateful to have space to speak about their experiences. Sometimes people watching the film become angry - class is a very difficult and taboo subject of discussion. People without wealth sometimes feel angry at the opportunities they've been denied, while people with wealth can easily become defensive of or feel guilty about their privileged position. Despite these reactions, Zoe has remained firm in her belief that talking about this issue is an important first step towards solving it.

While it is sometimes frustrating to Zoe that she can't see concrete results of the work she knows how very important it is. Her goals of opening dialog and getting the issue on people's minds are first steps in what will be a very long process leading to social change. Simply raising

awareness can often lead people to vote in different ways and think about what they could do to change the systems that set up inequality. She recommends that other youth, "think about it, talk about it, bring it up in your community with your friends and family. It is an unknown issue, so make it known. That is a big step."

---

*Zoe Greenberg grew up in Philadelphia, and is co-parented by her queer mom and a gay man. They live in a co-op apartment committed to racial and economic diversity, and the family is full of activists. Zoe is currently a junior in high school. In the spring of 2007, "Enough" was awarded the Princeton Prize in Race Relations, and just this past March, Zoe won the New Filmmakers Award for "Excellence in the World of Film" at the 2008 Philadelphia Jewish Film festival. The film and accompanying curriculum are available for sale through Class Action's website, at [www.classism.org/Enough.html](http://www.classism.org/Enough.html).*



## UP CLOSE: THOUGHTS ON CLASS FROM A LOWER-MIDDLE CLASS TEEN

**P**overty is often thought of as those people on the television who live in Africa. They're starving, and usually they use a little kid

with tattered clothing to sucker you out of your (hard earned or otherwise) money. Sure enough, some random white guy with an obnoxious beard comes out of nowhere, asking you for money.

And this is so accepted that people never realize that there are people in awful living situations, right down the street, who look like normal teenagers just like me and don't even have hot water, or whose mother spends money on drugs instead of food for the six people living in the household.

I've lived as a lower-middle/middle class white girl in a little town (that I've not so fondly nicknamed "Hell") since I was three. I've always had some forms of struggle when it came to money, since my mum has been taking care of me without any help (other than forced child support, thanks to the state of Massachusetts).

She's worked as a single mom taking care of up to two kids with a full time job and two part time jobs, and somehow I still got almost everything I wanted.

One thing I will never ever take for granted is the miracle of single mothers. Honestly, I don't know that I could ever do it. Raising a kid with someone seems hard enough, but when you get rid of the spouse, add stress and financial problems to the mix...it seems enough to drive someone insane.

Poverty is something that you hear about or see on the television, but it's something completely different when you see it up close. Over the past few months, I've met a lot of people who don't have hot water, who barely have enough food to eat, and for whatever reason don't have the resources to get help.

One of my friends lives in a very conservative town, and he is openly gay. It's literally quite hard for him to get much food, because he lives in a poor town, doesn't have much money of his own, and his parents don't help him much as they don't approve of his identity. The local stores have turned him out, refusing to let him buy anything.

If he was rich, or from a town that

wasn't so small and prejudiced, he probably wouldn't have to go through these struggles. Life is hard enough, but when you add prejudices of any kind it complicates things. Everyone deserves to have their basic needs met and it's upsetting to see some of my best friends go hungry because of the combination of poverty and/or homophobia.

I'm lucky to be brought up in a household where, even though it's kind of hard sometimes because of our lack of money, I never go hungry and am encouraged to be myself. My mum doesn't limit my life anymore than she needs to in order to protect me, and even though I get struck with occasional teen angst (resulting in me being an ungrateful brat), things could be a whole lot worse. And, really it's done a lot of good too. I've learned things and met people that I would have never met if I was rich, so it's a bit of a blessing and a curse. Either way, the experiences I've had are some that I would never trade for all the money in the world.

---

*Morgan Lenfest is a feisty almost fifteen year old with a mind that's definitely not mainstream. She is a self-proclaimed "herdy alterna-emo/goth" with the explanation that no matter what label is applied, "it's at least part right."*



# COLAGE NOTES

## COLAGE WELCOMES NEW STAFF

COLAGE is thrilled to welcome Bethany Lockhart as our national Program Coordinator. She comes to COLAGE with a strong background in youth organizing, ethnic studies and creative expression education that she will use to help coordinate COLAGE programs nationally including events, the Lee Dubin Memorial Scholarship, the pen pal program and online communities.

Bethany grew up in Long Beach, California and has a lesbian African-American mother and straight White father. Bethany is brand new to the Bay Area having spent the last 10 years in sunny San Diego. She graduated from UCSD with degrees in Theatre, Dance, and Ethnic Studies. After college, Bethany continued her work in non-profit organizations with missions focusing on the performing arts and empowering youth through arts and/or education. Outside of her work with COLAGE, Bethany is training for her very first half-marathon, rearranging her Netflix queue, reading design blogs, and exploring her fabulous new city.

## STAFF TRANSITIONS

COLAGE extends a bittersweet thank you and fare well to Jesse Carr, Lauren Wheeler and Monica Canfield-Lenfest.

Jesse Carr has returned to COLAGE for 3 months as our temporary Special Projects Assistant. During his time with COLAGE, Jesse has supported the organization's transition to a brand new database system, helped edit this issue of *Just For Us*, and assisted the staff with a variety of Special Projects. Jesse formerly served as the COLAGE Membership Coordinator and will continue to be involved as a Family Week facilitator and member of the Board of Directors. Jesse is leaving the COLAGE Staff and the Bay Area to pursue a PhD in American Culture at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor.

Lauren Wheeler has worked with

COLAGE since September 2007 as our Special Projects Coordinator. During her time at COLAGE, Lauren managed many of our media and communication efforts, wrote our brand new Facilitator and Chapter Training Manual and edited our first-ever Annual Report. Lauren leaves COLAGE to work with Just Cause Oakland to defeat an upcoming anti-rent control bill in California.

Monica Canfield-Lenfest relocated to the Bay Area from Boston, MA for the Kids of Trans Fellowship. Over the last 9 months Monica has led assessment, programming, community building and resources development focused on COLAGE constituents who have or had one or more transgender or gender variant parent. The culmination of her fellowship is the publication of the first-ever KOT Guide (read more on Page 13). Monica will continue to be involved with COLAGE and the KOT Program as the moderator of our KOT Online Community, and as a presenter at upcoming workshops including the American Psychological Association, Philly Trans Health, and the American Family Therapy Association.

## SCHOLARSHIP

COLAGE is pleased to announce that we are once again sponsoring the Lee Dubin Memorial Scholarship Program with support from the Horizons Foundation. This program offers four \$1000 scholarships to undergraduate students with one or more LGBTQ parents. This year's deadline is June 2nd. For the full scholarship announcement and application, visit [www.colage.org/programs/academic/leedubin.htm](http://www.colage.org/programs/academic/leedubin.htm).

## STRATEGIC PLANNING AT COLAGE

For the past year, COLAGE has engaged an in-depth strategic planning process. We surveyed hundreds of members, convened focus groups, and discussed and debated for many long hours how to focus and evolve COLAGE's important

work. The results are in, and we will soon publish a summary of the priorities and questions that will guide our work for the next three to five years. Our new mission statement and strategic goals, reprinted below, are just a small glimpse of the values and goals represented by the larger plan. In June we will distribute an executive summary to our members, and look forward to your involvement and support moving forward.

## OUR NEW MISSION

COLAGE is a national movement of children, youth and adults with one or more lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and/or queer parent(s). We build community and work toward social justice through youth empowerment, leadership development, education and advocacy.

## STRATEGIC GOALS

COLAGE's overarching goals are to:

Create safe spaces for people with LGBTQ parents to be themselves, raise their consciousness and deepen their analysis of their own situation and its context in larger social struggles (including improving their understanding of power, oppression and privilege) while building relationships and alliances with one another across the differences that are part of our community.

Strengthen and develop pride in our families; define our place within LGBTQ culture and community and give back to our communities (both LGBTQ and others).

Develop youth capacities for speaking out and making change by offering skill-building trainings and opportunities, organizing and mobilizing youth into action, and connecting youth with change-making and leadership opportunities in their own communities.

Influence and create institutions that recognize, validate, celebrate, and protect the rights of children and youth, especially those with one or more LGBTQ parent/s.



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# COLAGE GROUPS

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Chapters are autonomous local groups that affiliate with COLAGE and are self-run. We strive to keep updated on local contact information. If you have difficulty reaching the contact listed please let us know. Thank you.