



JUST FOR US

FOCUS ON CHANGE

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2009

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

ELEPHANT HUNTER

HOW A LITTLE SNOT CAME TO TERMS WITH HIS GAY MOM

BY TROY JOHNSON

Four out of five former homophobes deny ever being homophobes. I am not one of them. I won't say I hated homosexuals, but I did refer to them by the less-respectful "homos." I even used other words.

I found out my mom was gay when I was 10. I didn't know what the word "gay" meant at the time. It sounded like a bacterial infection that would eventually eat her face off. This was during the 1980s, before Ellen DeGeneres, before Rosie O'Donnell, before homos could hold hands in public without causing old ladies to make ugly faces and die in the street. The only people talking about gays were men with Bibles and toupes who explained it in scientific terms: "Gays are the reason hell is really hot." As for my relatives? They made it sound like Santa Claus would hover his sleigh a safe distance above our

house. Wearing a gas mask and a red Haz-Mat suit, he'd lob a few secondhand stocking stuffers onto the lawn.

I wondered if I was living with a lunatic. I treated her like a semi-crazy person who must be monitored at all times. Maybe I could put some substance in her cereal that would change her back into the "normal" moms and dads on TV? Surely, she'd forgive me for drugging her Special K. She'd treat me like a faith healer, and buy me expensive stuff in appreciation of my powers.

That didn't work. Grinding up Vitamin C doesn't change gay people into straight people. It makes super-gays who're immune to the common cold.

As a result, my mother and I weren't close. This gay thing was the big, pink elephant in the room. It prevented us from hugging, rib-poking, and all the

other silly hand gestures of love. It mocked me with loud gay noises out of its big gay trunk.

Something needed to change. Needless to say, that something wasn't me. I grew more sure of this as I became a teenager. Puberty grants humans special gifts. They include zits, the ability to sleep until 5pm, and a strange desire to scream loudly in the middle of otherwise calm conversations. One of the less-reported effects is that the gene responsible for stubbornness becomes inflamed



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ALL OF US CAN MAKE CHANGE

BY MONA SGAMBATI



I have been attending COLAGE at Provincetown Family Week since I was ten months old, but it has really taken on more meaning over the past few years. Now it really is a week to be with a family that is more than the three people I see every day. The people that I see at Family Week have grown with me, and we have all faced the same obstacles. I love the people there like they are my family. Oh yeah! They are.

Even though Family Week is amazing, there is one down side. When you leave, you step back into reality. Now that I am part of COLAGE, I feel even more that the kids there are my brothers and sisters. Every year when I leave I feel like a small piece of me goes with everyone I met there, ensuring that I'm not totally me until I'm back with all of them.

I consider myself a very lucky person for many reasons. One reason is that I was able to find COLAGE. Another reason is that I am lucky enough to be able to attend a very open school, where my friends are supportive and respect my family and me. Manlius Pebble Hill (MPH) is definitely not perfect,

but I would be lying if I did not say that people are amazing there and I love it. My friends there are just about as accepting as I could expect from seventh graders. MPH tries to make everyone feel like they count, and I think that most of the time this shows through the students as well as the teachers. I am very open about having two dads, so open that I think even some people I don't know, know I have two dads.

This year for my birthday, I decided to raise money for COLAGE because it is an amazing organization, and I wanted to contribute to our mission. Also, I felt that kids at my school would be receptive. I guess I was right. Nineteen of my friends attended my party, and with their help, I raised \$425.

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LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR



My lesbian mother used to always tell me, "the only thing that is constant in this world is change". Although she meant to comfort me with these words, as I recall, she reminded me of this reality in the tense moments when I was attempting to fiercely resist some form of change occurring in my life or our family. She would literally challenge me to stand against a wall and try to be completely still or stop change from happening; of course she was

proved right every time. So if change is the only constant, why do we COLAGErs work so hard every day for change?

I'll venture to say we work to make societal change because we know that it's up to us to create the changes we need and want. If we want all youth and families to be affirmed and celebrated, we must stand up for this vision. If we don't live and advocate for the changes we seek—safe schools, universal health care, economic security and equitable distribution of resources, immigration and family equality, sexual and gender liberation, religious affirmation, environmental sustainability, peace and justice—we will end up with someone else's vision instead. Change can happen with a single or millions of calls, emails, and votes, as we witnessed during the November 2008 simultaneous positive election of this nation's first black President alongside the passage of numerous detrimental and discriminatory laws in many states.

We human beings are social creatures and we are all interconnected. This means a change in one of us ultimately evokes a change in all of us. When one of us takes a stand for

equity and justice, others are uplifted. A mentor of mine says, "Change happens when you set a goal, say it, write it, tell someone else, break it down into small steps, do it and celebrate it." You just have to decide what you want to be different and then make it happen. This advice is so simple that I share it with you as a potent reminder. We are all in this together and we can all make change.

If I've learned anything at COLAGE, it's that empowered youth make change. Time and time again, I have seen youth emerge from COLAGE programs changed and ready to impact the community around them. By finding a community of peers and role models and learning about social justice, COLAGErs feel connected, able, and inspired to make change, from becoming an ally to those bullied at their school to speaking out against injustice and oppression in other public venues where they live, work, play, and pray.

This issue of Just For Us examines the idea of change from many diverse angles, ranging from the personal and familial to the historical and political. As a national multi-cultural, intergenerational movement of children, youth and adults with LGBTQ parents, we have experienced and caused significant change. I hope that our amazing contributors enthrall you to envision and carry out the changes you desire and deserve in this lifetime and for future generations. If you need training, tools, tactics, or technical assistance please let us, at the COLAGE office, via the on-line communities or in your local chapter, know. We want to celebrate your steps forward and catch your backward stumbles. After all, in the powerful words, I heard first from June Jordan, "we are the ones we've been waiting for."

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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AMERICAN PRIMITIVE

COLAGE is excited to be partnering with a new narrative film, *American Primitive*. The film portrays two sisters who find out that their father is gay during the 1970s and features a talented cast that includes Adam Pascal, Josh Peck, Tate Donovan and Stacey Dash. *Just For Us* sat down with the director of the film, Gwen Wynne, an adult COLAGER, to talk more about the project.



Gwen (front) on set with Josh Peck and Danielle Savre

Tell me a little bit about yourself.

I was born in Washington DC and my father was British and my mother was a first generation Italian American. After going to Brown, I started a nonprofit theater company before eventually falling in love with film, photography and directing. Now I am married and live in Los Angeles.

Why did you make this film?

Being born in the 60s and growing up in a culture that was all about having a social conscience really shaped who I am. As a young person I always had indignation about prejudice. I was drawn to stories trying to understand the human experience and how people deal with adversity. Making the film helped me make sense of my own situation of having a gay father and dealing with prejudice. One of the other big reasons I made this film is there are so few movies that are tackling stories from female perspectives and youth perspectives. I had never seen a movie looking at what it's like to grow up in a gay household from the teen girl's perspective.

What was the most exciting part of this film project?

The process of working with the actors to explore the emotional inner life of the character is what I live for. With this film in particular, I enjoyed the side effects of learning other peoples' stories. Everyone involved in the film wanted to combat prejudice through the movie because they themselves felt passionate about someone in their life who was gay.

What is American Primitive about?

The film is about two sisters that come to Cape Cod with their father after their mom passes away. As typical teenagers they have attractions to boys and are trying to fit in. One night they go to a risqué club that turns out to be a gay disco and the lead character Madeline sees her father dancing with his business partner who is also male. The film looks at how she first tries to change her father out of intolerance but then grows to accept him.

How much of the film is based on your own life?

The circumstances of the film are real. My mom did die and my father did have a business partner who turned out to be a romantic partner. He kept it a secret from my sister and I until we were well into our twenties. They even had separate bedrooms to try and hide it from society. That's real but the rest is fictionalized. Every teenager who has a parent come out

probably thought it was weird at some point in time. I did; even though I loved my father. And I show that through Madeline.

When and how can JFU readers see the film?

American Primitive will debut in festivals around the country through the year and are working to secure a theatrical release. We are hoping it will be out by fall 2009. At this point, people can help us get the last round of finishing funds for the movie. But we also hope people will get involved with our marketing campaign connected to the movie to make a cultural impact by combating prejudice.

How do you think the world has changed for kids of LGBTQ parents since the 70's?

The major cities seem to be a lot more supportive of same-sex couples raising children. Whereas I think before when I was growing up gay people having kids really raised eyebrows. They worried it hurt the child. And many people still think that way but there has been a shift in certain communities. Probably because there is a lot more openness about sexuality in most regards. And the biological technology has changed so more couples can have children. More people talk about LGBTQ issues and families. I think if you are personally involved with a friend or family member who is gay, it makes a big difference.

What change do you hope the film will create?

I think to lift the veil that is still there. There is still a prejudice against gay parenting and gay marriage. So much of the furor and culture clash around marriage is because people are at root worried that LGBTQ couples will raise children. I hope this film can help create a dialogue. The characters are so empathetic and you can go on the journey that Madeline makes from intolerance to tolerance.

Anything else you'd like to share with the COLAGE community?

Change has happened but there is still a lot of work to do. We need to figure out ways to unite and talk about our experiences in positive ways so that we can influence those 'on the fence' who still don't know how they feel about gay people and families. Plus I am so excited to hear responses to the film from COLAGE members and get them engaged in this project.

American Primitive will be coming to film festivals near you this spring and summer as well as screening at COLAGE's Family Weeks. To learn more visit www.americanprimitivemovie.com

All Of Us, continued from page 1

For kids living with LGBTQ parents, always remember that you don't have to tell everyone about your family right away. When you are ready you will tell, and you will make the right choice. All I can say is don't hide your family and

don't be ashamed, because having LGBTQ parents is a unique and wonderful thing. And if people are really your friends they will accept you and your family no matter what. And all of us can make change!

Mona Sgambati is twelve years old and lives in Syracuse, New York with her two dads, her grandma, two dogs and a guinea pig. She is a 7th grader who also takes tap and hip hop classes, plays the piano and writes and performs her own songs. She is a part of the track and cross-country teams at her school, and plays basketball.

COLAGE CHAPTER PROFILE

NYC - GOING FORWARD

BY DANIELLE SILBER

Transitioning into the role of chapter coordinator at the beginning of 2009, I was struck by a confluence of my own experiences coming from the chapter I ran in St. Louis, the diverse regional backgrounds of the NYC adult COLAGEr community (many adult COLAGErS specifically moved to NYC from other parts of the country because of the LGBTQ friendly reputation) and the thirst of our COLAGEr youth to reach out to their peer COLAGErS in other states negatively impacted by the anti-family propositions passed in Arkansas, Florida and California. Going forward, NYC COLAGErS decided to focus on three priorities for the coming year: building community for COLAGErS in the NYC region, growing the visibility of COLAGEr families within New York, and launching a traveling COLAGE "mascot" and blog to help interconnect COLAGErS and COLAGE chapters across the country.

COLAGE teens are taking initiative and partnering with NYC Adult COLAGErS to conduct outreach through schools, places of worship and other social justice organizations in order to connect and engage COLAGErS from all walks of life in the NYC chapter. For the first time, COLAGEr families will be represented at LGBT lobby day in Albany, to work alongside other LGBT groups to discuss issues of school safety, transgender rights and family equality with NY legislators. After many bakesales and other fundraisers, COLAGE NYC will maximize our visibility in the NYC Pride March with our very own customized COLAGE float. Finally, COLAGE NYC is eager to solicit ideas from other chapters across the country to create a COLAGE mascot that can be sent to each chapter in the country in order to learn more about COLAGErS in every region, strengthen the COLAGE network and invigorate our COLAGE movement of solidarity for social justice and the idea that love makes a family.

Danielle Silber began COLAGE St. Louis and is now heading up COLAGE NYC. The daughter of 6 LGBT parents herself, Danielle is passionate about working with youth and peer adults to develop community, empower the voices of COLAGErS, and work towards equal rights for LGBTQ parented families. When not working for COLAGE, Danielle does development work for the International Rescue Committee.

REFLECTION ON CHANGE- PAST AND FUTURE - IN COLAGE NEW YORK CITY

BY DORI KAVANAGH



Dori (far left) and Danielle (3rd from left)
with COLAGE NYC Adults

On October 4th, 2007, COLAGE-NYC was honored at a fundraising event at a gallery in Chelsea. A Proclamation from the city of New York was presented to myself and Martha Walker, a lesbian mother in Brooklyn who was a huge driving force in re-starting youth programming in the chapter back in 2005. We were completely validated for the work that we had put into creating and maintaining an active chapter, something that I enjoyed doing because it needed to be done.

Upon entering grad school, I began to become more and more open about having a lesbian mother. Then, I felt the need to find other adults like me. Thank goodness for Google. I went home thinking that I needed to find an organization or support group for adults and youth that had LGBTQ parents. If I couldn't find it in a basic internet search, then I knew I had to create it myself. I simply typed in "kids with gay parents" and COLAGE came up on top.

COLAGE-NYC existed before us but hadn't been active or organized for a few years. Martha was extremely respectful of the fact that COLAGE is an organization for the sons and daughters of the LGBTQ community so she said "Dori it's you. It has to be you." I had about 2 months of beginner social work, community organizing and group work under my belt, plus 24 years of personal experience so I said yes. We managed to have about 4 or 5 events that first school year with a wide array of youth from many different ethnic backgrounds, kids of trans, bothies and youth wanting to meet their donors. I became a girl obsessed with this community. Hearing the stories of heterosexism and homophobia that the young people continue to face, even in New York City where you would think everyone is accepting, made me realize that my experience was still relatable.

My mother came out when I was about 6 or 7 years old and even though I didn't have the words to describe who she was, I knew she was a woman who wanted to be with other women. My parents divorced officially when I was 10 and my mother's partner at the time moved in. When I was 11, my mother and her partner sat me down and told me they were gay. Right there I knew nobody at school could know- at my school, gay was bad. My mother and her partner agreed that this should stay in the house, and to protect me they even slept in separate bedrooms. I would wake up in the morning everyday trying to have an explanation for who this "other woman" was in my house, why there were two cars in the driveway instead of one, and how I could keep the secret until I was out of high school. It was a constant act that created a lot of anxiety and lying. I didn't say out loud to anyone "my mother is a lesbian" until I was 18 years old and 100 miles away at college. Before I found COLAGE, I really was the only child of a lesbian anywhere.

COLAGE-NYC was booming by 2006 and 2007 - we went on retreats in the country, hosted a fantastic talent show fundraiser, we marched proudly in the pride parade and were welcomed with open arms by the other LGBTQ organizations. We were established and it felt good.

COLAGE-NYC and COLAGE national gave me the opportunity to finally meet other adults who shared similar stories as mine. I was no longer the only child of a lesbian, I was one of 4-14 million. My weakness was now my strength.

As I pass the torch on to the marvelous Danielle Silber, my friend, and a person who also lives, breathes

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In some ways it matters less when you're older that your parents are gay. This is an observation I'm making at the wizened age of twenty-seven; crazy old right? Whereas, in childhood the revelation of my parents' sexuality could mean the cancellation of playdates; now it's more what I say in social situations when people ask me what my "Dad" does. Even then, I can answer with the truth- he is a lawyer- as irrelevant as this fact might be to my life since I was raised by lesbians- and in doing so avoid any discussion of my Queenspawn upbringing.



When you are a child, your family is an external thing. They are the people who surround you daily. Your family and their configuration and sexual orientation are part of your external reality and your interaction with the rest of the world. Your parents are in control of your life. You are greatly impacted by the decisions they make.

Now, my family is largely internal to me, in the form of the lessons they instilled in me and my perception of the world. It is sort of like being a turtle, able to carry your home with you wherever you go. My family isn't visible to the people who interact with me; that is unless, of course, I'm wearing my "I love my lesbian moms T-shirt". I can choose how much I want to involve myself with the Gay community these days, what alliances I foster, what causes I champion. I am supported by the foundation of values bestowed unto me by my mothers in these decisions, but they are now mine to make on my own.

Although I am very close with my moms, they have less involvement in my current day to day life. Of course they are always there to talk to, to love me unconditionally, and to support my decisions. Nonetheless, up until recently, it was usually only on those occasions that people discovered my unusual upbringing and asked me to explain my parentage,

that I was reminded my family was different. I take it for granted in a way that I couldn't during the years of family trees in school.

Lately, however, I've been trying to make it center stage once again. I admit it: I'm trying to exploit my upbringing for personal gain, using my "different" status as niche marketing. I'm writing and trying to sell a memoir. I'm highlighting it in the bio for the play I'm currently in and other publicity materials. Everyone else's says "favorite roles include Lady Macbeth in Macbeth and Li'l bit in How I learned to drive". My bio thanks

the quartet of lesbians that raised me and paid my way through NYU.

Questions arise for me. Why, now that my parents' sexuality is no longer quite as central, do I feel all the more inclined to seek out my peers? I become Facebook friends with people whose sole connection to me is their having been raised by queer parents. Is it because I am lonely and looking to feel special? Is it an attempt to better understand the self that I am establishing? We are all partly explainable by our parents and who they were, what they did or didn't do for us.

One night I was up past when I should be sleeping, past when all four moms have gone to bed. I was working on teasing apart memories for the memoir I am writing. I was struggling to remember how primary my parents being gay felt to me when I was five or nine, how that shaped my world view as a whole. In the current moment, it is hard to separate what I am looking for from what was.

Kellen Kaiser was raised by a fabulous quartet of lesbians in the SF Bay Area. She is currently writing her memoirs and pursuing dreams of movie stardom in Santa Fe, New Mexico. Feel free to contact her with any offers.

Troy, continued from page 1

and hyperactive. I wasn't willing to "pick up those clothes from the middle of the dining room floor!" let alone change my idea that mom was a weirdo for being gay.

My grandmothers, grandfathers, uncles and family friends backed my position on this issue. They freely told me that my mother was, at best, the victim of a brain injury. At worst, a softball-loving Antichrist.

Luckily, the world was changing for me. More and more people announced they were gay. A lesbian got a TV show with her name on it. Straight men realized gay men could teach them things—like how to use utensils and get Cheeto stains out of quality fabric. Straight people even stopped looking the other way when gay people got beat up by bored jocks.

But college brought the biggest change. If you want to continue hating

people for being different than you, I suggest not going to college. The more you learn ("Socrates had a boyfriend? Woah."), the harder it is to think straights are better, saner or more "natural" than gays. Not only did the world have bigger problems (war, theft, high fructose corn syrup), but homosexuality didn't seem to be a "problem" at all.

The night I finally became human was also the ugliest night of my life. The head of our college dormitory was a flamboyant gay man who often wore a t-shirt with a photo of two men kissing and the word "TOLERANCE." We got into an argument that night. My half-formed brain was unable to argue better than he could, so I eventually just blurted out the worst thing I could think of.

"Faggot!"

It was the word I had wanted to yell at my mother for years. The hurt in his eyes

was instantaneous. My shame was just as quick and intense, like fire in my blood. Anyone could see that "Gay Billy" wasn't the ugly person in the room. He wasn't "wrong" or amoral.

I was.

And ugly and amoral is no way to go through life. Ugly, amoral people aren't the cool ones at parties. It was my responsibility to change. And as I slowly worked on doing so, the big gay elephant that stood between my mother and I grudgingly marched out of the room.

Troy Johnson is the author of Family Outing: What Happened When I Found Out My Mother Was Gay (Arcade Publishing, 2008). His writing has appeared in Rolling Stone, Spin, Surfer and Paper. He is currently the senior editor of Riviera magazine in San Diego, where he is working on his second book. And he loves his mother.

MEMBERSHIP TO MY FAMILY

SACHA FINN



Raised by lesbian parents, I often got asked questions such as; “So, who’s your father?” “Would you rather have a normal family?” “Is it better having two moms instead of a dad?” I am a donor conceived child by an anonymous donor. I grew up always knowing how I was conceived. My parents made sure to enroll me in schools where my alternative family was accepted, tolerated, or at least not questioned. During elementary school, I hardly ever felt that I was missing out. I had two parental figures in my

life and that was enough.

It was not until sixth grade, when my science teacher had us construct a biological family tree, that I found myself having to deal with not knowing the other half of my genetic identity. All of my classmates came to school with the names and pictures of their extended family, while I walked in with the ten page Donor History Form, which my mother had received from the sperm bank. The form included personal information such as weight, height, and hobbies of the members of my donor’s side of the family, but it excluded the vital information of their names, phone numbers, and addresses. Somehow I survived that day in school. It didn’t dawn on me yet that many donor conceived children were seeking to meet their donor and their half siblings.

All that changed when one of my mother’s came across an article in the LA Weekly. The article mentioned a donor conceived teenager named Ryan Kramer, who became interested in learning more about his genetic origins. With the help of his mother Wendy, he created a small Yahoo group. That small discussion group has grown into the Donor Sibling Registry (DSR), a non profit organization, serving more than 20,000 donor conceived children, parents, parents-to-be and donors around the world. My mother was fascinated by the website, so she created a profile for me under my donor’s number and the name of the sperm bank she had used. To my surprise, soon after, she had a computer print-out picture of a little boy in a blue shirt sitting on the back of a metal gorilla in a zoo. Next to it was one of my own toddler pictures. My mom asked me to look at the obvious similarities between the two faces. This resemblance was present since we were conceived using the same donor. I learned that my half-brother is three years younger than me and lives in Missouri. He is a son of a heterosexual couple that had difficulty conceiving and chose to keep the fact that they used a sperm donor a secret. As a result of my half-sibling’s family dynamics, it is not possible for me to meet him. Before this incident, I had no interest in finding my half-siblings or my donor since I did not want to give strangers a membership to my family.

Becoming aware of the Donor Sibling Registry changed my belief that being a donor conceived child was just another complication of my upbringing. I still see myself as just a typical teenager, but now I know that I cannot disregard the role my unique conception had on my life. I am ready to accept that it involuntarily connects me to a group of people that I do not know, but share a similar history with. I know that this is only the first step of a long journey, but it has already taken me to places that I did not expect.

Sacha is a seventeen year old donor conceived child who lives with her lesbian mothers in Los Angeles, California. She has just started a support group for donor conceived teens in Los Angeles. The group link is <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/donorconceivedyouth/>. To view the Donor Sibling Registry go to www.donorsiblingregistry.com.

TRANSITION

BY MATTHEW SMITH-GONZALEZ



Change. Alter. Transform. Modify. I’ve been thinking a lot about this concept of change over the past few years. What does it mean? I’m a second generation queerspawn, meaning not only am I blessed to have a gay father, I also am queer myself... transgender for that matter. And right now I am in the process of my own rather extraordinary transfor-

mation. I can’t help but think a lot about this concept of change as my born female body slowly morphs to become what our society recognizes as male. I change it in order to feel more comfortable in my own skin. I change and watch as people relate to me differently.

Change. How do we create it? My physical change is done by hormones. One little hormone that changes the way I am perceived in the world. Yet there’s so much more to my transition than just physical change. Those old mantras, *change begins with you, be the change you wish to see in the world*, I really do believe them. There came a point in my life when I could no longer ignore my authentic self. I had to stand in my own truth and trust myself every step of the way. It has been scary at times, but I just listen for my own inner knowing. **My transition has led me down a path of example, an example that was set for me by my father when he chose to follow his heart and his happiness and come out as gay. I resolve to live my life authentically as my father did before me.**

My father told me when I came out to him as transgender, “Find your happiness and do not worry about who likes you and who doesn’t. Too often we spend time trying to make sure everyone is “OK” with us - but trust me - it will never be so. Live your life - Lighten up - and Love UNCONDITIONALLY!!!! You know you are loved by many people - that is what matters. Do not live with any regrets only satisfaction in knowing you did everything you could to make this world a better place for the ones you love by being there for them and being happy with yourself.”

It’s a challenge to follow your heart at times, to trust yourself, to know that you may hurt those around you who may have attachment to the way things are. But all things change. We change everyday, growing older, learning new things, our bodies, our minds, our thoughts, different from one moment to the next. Ever changing, ever evolving. Like ripples on a pond, our changing impacts those around us and they in turn affect us. When we live our lives authentically, others can see it and feel it. We never know who may be affected by our example. My father created his own change and by example paved a path for me to follow to create my own. That is real love. That is real change.

Matthew lives, works, and plays in San Francisco with his wife Maya and Maya’s 5 year old daughter Zai. Together they work to challenge the gender binary with the hope of working towards giving ALL children a place in this world. They are currently working on self-publishing a coloring book, “Gender Now” for children to explore their own authentic sense of gender. More information at coloring-books@reflectionpress.org.

DON'T ASK DON'T TELL :

MY CLOSET WITHIN A CLOSET

BY PAULIE MILAGROS SCHRECK

I am a proud daughter of a lesbian mother. I also am a proud daughter of a military mother. "How can this be?" many would ask since the US doesn't allow gays in the military. This is where Don't Ask Don't Tell (DADT) comes in.

For those who may not be familiar with DADT, it is the law banning openly lesbian, gay and bisexual Americans from serving in the military. Prior to 1993, homosexuality in the military was banned by regulation. During his first campaign for president, Bill Clinton vowed to lift the ban by executive order. President Clinton's attempt to allow open service failed; instead, it resulted in the passage of the "DADT" law.

I've swapped stories with others who grew up with military parents and have found some similarities. There are the obvious things such as having to move around a lot from state to state and the occasional overseas moves. We talk about having to decide what things would have to be left behind or sold at garage sales. After a while one gets used to making friends and switching schools. Avoiding the instinct to hide behind my big square frame glasses and instead be the first to say hello became natural and necessary. But because of DADT and homophobia in the military, my experience had some unique challenges.

We had just moved to a new assignment in Ft. Sheridan, near Chicago, when Mom started coming home late in the evening. She started going on more TDY's (another military term for temporary deployment). When she was home she would often be on the phone or in her office. She started staying nights away from the house and would say it was because she was working late and didn't want to risk waking us up.

As time progressed things began to shift and change and I wasn't the only one wondering where mom was. Our neighbors on base started to become suspicious and ask questions. People wondered if mom and dad were separating. The question of mom seeing another woman was too taboo for anyone to talk about.

On Christmas morning during the 2nd grade, both of

my parents were crying and that was that. Mom moved her things out to her 'friends' house just a couple days later. I was told that I couldn't tell anyone, not even my friends. If anyone were to find out that it was just my dad and I living in our military housing we would have been not only in trouble but forced to leave our home altogether. It would just be until the end of the school year so we could make a plan as to what to do next.

Our life as a lie worked for the most part. When people would call and ask for mom I would say she was in the shower or at work. When I needed things signed my dad would do it. When I wanted my hair braided for picture day my dad did that too. Still it wasn't uncommon that my mom would hear threats or taunts about the rumors that she was gay, making us all go further into the closet.

As I write this now I finally feel the weight of my mom's absence burn in my belly. At the same time I don't know that if I were her I would have done things much differently. Working for the military, your life is no longer yours; even now my mom cannot live one hundred percent openly. **Even though my mom retired and now works as a Civilian for the military, she is still doesn't feel safe or secure to come out at work. Despite 25 years of devoted service to the US military, the burden of DADT still impacts her as well as me.**

Not just because of the closet my mom has had to live in but for the one that my dad and I were also forced into, I firmly believe that DADT must be repealed. **No one should have to live a double life as my family did. No child should have to lie about their family just to ensure they have a roof over their head. I hope and believe that change will come soon for those who identify as LGBTQ serving in the military, and their families.** There will be no better day then when I can tell my mom that finally, "Don't Ask Don't Tell" is over and she can go to work feeling at least a little more protected. Change will come; this I believe.

Paulie Milagros Schreck is the daughter of a Puerto Rican lesbian mother and a white, straight father. She joined COLAGE as our Community Organizing intern in September 2008. When not building the movement she enjoys rock climbing.



NYC Chapter Update, continued from page 4

and sleeps for this organization, I feel excited knowing that the Chapter is being picked up right where it left off and being expanded on a national level. We are becoming more political and reaching out for more diverse Queer Spawn including people of color and more youth with trans parents.

We now have a committed group of adult COLAGERS who meet monthly to relax, share, cry and discuss steps for change. There are still days when I gear up for a presentation for parents or programming with youth and I remember the little Dori who was so silenced by her environment, and it's hard to keep

going. But I do. We are unstoppable.

Dori is a graduate of the Hunter College School of Social Work who led COLAGE NYC for over three years. She lives in Brooklyn, NY and also runs a training business about working with youth with LGBTQ parents that you can check out at www.includemedori.com.

COLAGE EVENTS SCRA



Jordan, Paulie and Samuel on the Eve of Justice



Carissia Keeling at the Prop 8 Rally for the California Supreme Court Oral Arguments



Youth speak out at Lobby Day in Sacramento



The COLAGE Youth at the Los Angeles One-Day Program



COLAGE leaders Cha



Adult Queerspawns at Creating Change 2009 in Denver, CO



Youth at the COLAGE Bay Area Digital Storytelling Training



A Reu

P B O O K



The COLAGE National Board of Directors in Atlanta, GA October 2008



People from across the United States unite at the Center for the Study of the 4th Amendment, November 2008



Group of Family Week Teens in Newburgh, NY

UPCOMING COLAGE EVENTS

PRIDE AND JOY FAMILIES WEEKEND

April 24 - 26, 2009
Radisson Hotel, Utica, NY
COLAGE coordinates a youth track at this exciting new event!
www.prideandjoyfamilies.org

PHILLY TRANS HEALTH CONFERENCE

June 11-13, 2009, Philadelphia, PA
COLAGE Presentation: "Supporting the Children of Transgender Parents"
www.trans-health.org

FAMILY WEEK MICHIGAN

July 10 - 17, 2009, Saugatuck and Douglas, MI
Join COLAGE and Rainbow Families Great Lakes for the Midwest Family Week- fun and empowerment for the whole family!
www.rfgl.org

FAMILY WEEK PROVINCETOWN

August 1 - 8, 2009, Provincetown, MA
Join COLAGE and Family Equality Council for the largest gathering of LGBTQ families and COLAGE's annual community building and youth empowerment program for 3rd-12th graders.
www.colage.org/programs/events/ptown.htm

KESHET CAMP

September 3rd-6th, 2009, Middle Fork, Tuolumne River, CA
COLAGE is excited to be partnering with Camp Tawonga to provide youth programming at this camp for LGBT families in Northern CA.
www.tawonga.org/weekend-programs/keshet.php

For more details and information about upcoming COLAGE events, visit our website at www.colage.org

OUR EXPERIENCE OF CHANGE

BY COLAGE DC

i saw the sunrise over the capitol
i felt sheer joy that day
everyone was a family
i stood on the cement wall and looked over and all i could see
was the heads of the people standing
people were selling commemorative inaugural hand warmers.
only 5 dollars.
i heard obama's inaugural oath messed up
tears of joy fell down my face as i watched change happen
i cried when i saw yo yo ma performing
my president is black
the crowd was like a smoothie -
you took lots of different colors and mixed them all together
and everything changed
i saw the bands marching up and down the streets
you know people are desperate when they climb on top of
porta-potties
i watched Obama step out of his car during the parade
i stayed at home waiting to hear all the stories they had to
share with me.



COLAGE DC youth created this poem at their January event. They wanted to share their unique opportunity to experience the inauguration with the rest of COLAGE. To learn more about COLAGE DC, visit www.colage.org/dc/.

ADVOCACY AND ACTION

INSPIRATION FOR CHANGE

“Be the change you want to see in the world”

– Mahatma Gandhi



Mahatma Gandhi was an advocate and pioneer of nonviolent social protest. He led the struggle for India's independence from British colonial rule.

One way to live by Mahatma Gandhi's quote is through family activism. Family Activism, a book written by Roberto Vargas, states there are “five principles that can guide you through family activism, (1) View everyone as family. Recognize that everyone you care for and who cares for you is family. (2) Care for family. Support everyone in getting what they need for health, growth, and happiness. (3) You and your family are the change. You and your family model the change you desire in the world. (4) Teach positive family power. Teach love and caring to create positive family power. (5) Encourage vision and transformation. Advance social transformation through vision and personal change” (2008).“



“Education is the most powerful weapon which you can use to change the world.”

– Nelson Mandela

Nelson Mandela was the first President of South African to be elected in a fully democratic election. Before his presidency, Mandela was an anti-apartheid activist who was jailed for his leadership. Apartheid in

South Africa ended in 1994.

At COLAGE we agree that education is a crucial tool for change. To this end we have created tools for students and schools in addition to working at state and national levels for policies that make schools safer. We also educate by teaching our friends, our communities and our elected officials what it is actually like to have an LGBTQ parent. YOU, too, can raise visibility and knowledge about COLAGERS and our families and join our efforts to change the world.

SOCIAL CHANGE ORGANIZATIONS WE LOVE



THE CENTER FOR COMMUNITY CHANGE The mission of the Center for Community Change is to build the power and capacity of low-income people, especially low-income people of color, to change their communities and public policies for the better). www.communitychange.org
WHY COLAGE LOVES THEM: Center for Community Change is a hub for community organizing. If you are into making a difference in your local community, this organization is for you. We especially like that they focus on leadership development for people of color and low-income people to help them become activists.



SONG/SOUTHERNERS ON NEW GROUND SONG was founded in order to advance Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer multi-racial, multi-issued education and organizing capable of combating the Right's strategies of fragmentation and division. www.southernersonnewground.org
WHY COLAGE LOVES THEM: We applaud SONG's intersectional approach to doing organizing, political education and social justice work. Many of our activist crushes are on the fierce leaders of SONG.



THE FELOWSHIP is the intentional inclusion of all persons; especially people who have traditionally lived at the margins of society, such as people suffering from substance abuse; people living with HIV/AIDS; same-gender loving people; the recently incarcerated. The Fellowship is a coalition of Christian churches and ministries which recognize the need for networking, accountability, fellowship and resource facilitation. www.radicallyinclusive.com/
WHY COLAGE LOVES THEM: The Fellowship provides a great listing of churches across the United States that are open and affirming to LGBTQ families. For COLAGERS of faith, it's important to know where you can find a faith community that will embrace and celebrate your family. Plus, the Fellowship is doing groundbreaking work beginning dialogue about race and sexual orientation in Black churches.

A VERY ABBREVIATED HISTORY OF NOTABLE WAYS CHANGE HAS BEEN MADE IN THE LAST 50 YEARS

COMPILED BY TIFFANY ROSS

To know where we are going as we continue to make change, it's important to reflect on our past. This very abbreviated timeline shows just a few milestones related to COLAGE's work for family recognition as well as social, racial and economic justice.

1963 Bayard Rustin, a gay, African-American leader, the prime architect of the 1963 March on Washington and aid to Martin Luther King, Jr. from 1955 to 1960, helps organize the Montgomery bus boycott in support of the refusal of Rosa Parks to ride in the back of the bus.



1969 The North American Conference of Homophile Organizations adopts the slogan "Gay is Good" inspired by "Black is Beautiful."

1972 Camille Mitchell is the first open lesbian to be awarded custody of her children in a divorce case. That Certain Summer, a made for TV film about a fourteen year old boy who discovers his father is gay, airs on ABC.



1974 Black lesbians are active in the formation of the National Black Feminist Organization.

1988 Artie Wallace, a gay father, becomes the first person with AIDS to win a custody battle.

1989 A New York State court rules that a gay couple could be considered a family for purposes of rent controlled apartments. In many urban areas, including Seattle and San Francisco, partners' regulations extending certain protections and rights to unmarried couples, straight and gay, are adopted.

1990 COLAGE, then known as Just For Us, is founded. In the same year, the country's first Gay Straight Alliance Club was founded by queerspawn Meredith Sterling and others at Concord Academy in MA.

1992 Domestic partners of employees of Levi Strauss & Co. are granted full medical benefits.

1993 Hawaii Supreme Court rules that state cannot deny same-sex couples the right to marry unless it finds 'a compelling reason' to do so. However, Amendment 2 stops marriage equality in the state.

2000 US rabbis approve gay partnership; Vermont civil union bill becomes law.

2003 Ontario and British Columbia Canada legalize same-sex marriage; Massachusetts Supreme Court enacts marriage equality LGBTQ-couples in MA gain access to marriage in May 2004.

2005 WNBA Star, Sheryl Swoopes, a lesbian mother, comes out.



2005 Pennsylvania courts rule that someone who assumes parental status and performs duties with the consent of a legal parent may seek visitation and custody—and that the legal parent cannot prevent visitation by alienating the child from that co-parent.

2006 Indiana court approves joint adoptions by same-sex couples in an appeal; Lambda Legal wins a unanimous ruling in the New Jersey Supreme Court that same-sex couples must be provided all the rights and responsibilities of marriage; this ruling leads to the quick passage of a civil union law.

2007 An Oklahoma law that denied recognition of out-of-state adoptions by same-sex couples is held unconstitutional. The United States Social Forum convenes in Atlanta, GA and is one of the largest gatherings of US activists in recent history. COLAGE Executive Director, Beth Teper participates in "Building a Queer Left Movement" Institute.

2008 In Florida, the statute forbidding adoptions by gays is struck down by local Judge Cindy Lederman and is now awaiting review from the Supreme Court. California followed by Connecticut become the 2nd and 3rd states to achieve marriage equality. Proposition 8 in CA later takes away marriage rights from LGBTQ couples.



2009 Barack Obama becomes the first African-American President of the United States. His administration includes more out LGBTQ individuals than any other. Iowa and Vermont enact marriage equality; in both states the rights of children of same-sex couples are cited as a large reason for the shift.

QUEER REALNESS

BY RAMZI FAWAZ



This semester I've been teaching a class titled "Three Hollywood Stars: Shirley Temple, Judy Garland, Marilyn Monroe." My colleagues have assured me this is the gayest course that has ever been offered to freshmen at George Washington University. Over the last eight weeks, my fifteen brave students have come to embrace the queerness at the heart of our class: three weeks ago they thought "camp" literally meant pitching tents. Now they watch "Paris is Burning" and know a camp diva when she walks out on a stage.

For many of us in the queer community, "Paris is Burning," Jennie Livingston's now classic documentary about New York's underground drag ball culture in the 1980s, was a founding document of our gay identity. Few of us, I suspect, left our "Gender Studies 101" courses without it seared into our memory. On the contrary, my students had never even heard of it, let alone prepared to identify with the personalities of its larger-than-life performers, when I decided to add it to my syllabus to illustrate "camp" style. It was this film, however, that got my students to see the real life stake people have in popular culture, to understand why any marginalized group would turn to culture to develop a picture of itself different from the dominant narratives that served to narrow what life could mean to those outside the norms of gender, race, or class.

On the day of our discussion, each of my students voiced empathy and connection with the people in the film, people whose personal lives, class backgrounds, and queer identities seemed light-years away from their own experiences. They understood why a drag ball could be a place of pleasure and survival, a source of entertainment and a site for the performance of politics, a stage for self expression and community building. Most of all, they understood that these pleasures and performances were the basis of a new kind of kinship, a queer family of a very different stripe.

You may be wondering why I've spent so much time relating this kernel of a story. Earlier this month I was asked to write a little something for JFU about queer families in popular culture, a seemingly impossible task in such a short space. It would be easy (and in large part true) to suggest that images of queer families in American popular culture have suffered from censorship, repression, and stereotyping with a loosening up of these realities only in recent years.

Teaching my class this semester, however, I've been reminded that queer families have a long history in American popular culture and that perhaps every family in every TV show, every comic book, every film we watch is somehow, inevitably queer. It's true that representations of actual gay, lesbian, bisexual, and

transgender parent-households have been historically rare, but one of queer culture's greatest strengths has been its ability to read the world against the grain, to find queerness where it seems least apparent. For my students, the realization that stars

like Judy Garland (and films like "Paris is Burning") were part of gay fan communities and had reshaped the meaning of gender in American culture came as both a surprise and a great pleasure.

Wherever actual queer families failed to appear on the silver screen, audiences found ways to rewrite or re-imagine those characters as part of their queer identities - from gay Judy Garland fans to Star Trek viewing communities, from lesbian pulp fiction of the 1950s to the gender bending performances of New York drag balls, from the queer dance communities of 1970s disco to the readers of Armistead Maupin's "Tales of the City," the kinships of American popular culture are everywhere right in front of us. My students are seeing these relations for what they are, abandoning any notion of a progress narrative of "diversity in popular culture" while still learning to demand representations that are more nuanced than what has come before.

This issue of JFU is about change and social transformation - as COLAGERS it seems to me there is one thing we know how to do better than most, and that is to change the meaning of family and kinship, to push at the limits of what counts as community and shared history. As we demand, produce, and seek out images of LGBTQ families, we would do well to look for the queer kinships that already appear all around us. This might mean looking back at the very texts we thought were repressive and narrow to find pleasure in the process of re-interpretation. What would it mean to look back at Dorothy and her companions on the yellow brick road as sharing a queer kinship? What would it mean to identify with the Wicked Witch just as equally as our heroic companions? Perhaps a queer vision could embrace all of these positions, and more. In some humble way, I hope that the artifacts I present to my students offer a glimpse of such a world. So far as I can tell, they'd rather be at a ball than anywhere else.

Ramzi Fawaz is a Ph.D. candidate in American Studies at the George Washington University. He teaches courses on the history of American popular culture and is currently working on his dissertation. Originally from Lebanon, he grew up with his lesbian moms and stumbled upon COLAGE at a pride festival years ago and has been involved with the movement ever since.

SCHOLARSHIP ANNOUNCEMENT

COLAGE is pleased to announce that we are once again sponsoring the **Lee Dubin Memorial Scholarship** for Undergraduates with one or more LGBTQ parents. This scholarship program celebrates the leadership and academic achievement of COLAGERS by supporting their undergraduate education.

The deadline for this year's program is **Friday, May 1st**. To learn more and download an application, please visit: www.colage.org/programs/academic/leedubin.htm.

FAMILY IS WHAT YOU MAKE IT

BY TATIANA YOUNG



The nuclear family stands as the standard, often preferred family structure in the U.S.—a potentially problematic concept when it leads to the exclusionary practices of other forms of family. Unfortunately, we see these exclusions everywhere in America on a social, cultural, religious and even political levels. The nuclear family isn't a bad thing, but it is important to realize it just one idea of family and doesn't always remember the true purpose of family: to establish personal relationships built on unconditional love and support. Other families may look different, but there is no less love shared between them.

In Disney's *Lilo & Stitch*, Lilo says, "*Ohana* means family and family means that no one's left behind or forgotten." While the movie is problematic in its stereotypical and exploitative depictions of Native Hawaiian people, it does a fair job illustrating what *ohana* can mean. As a *mahu* (gay or transgender) woman of Native Hawaiian descent, I grew up surrounded by my grandparents, aunts, uncles, community members, and cousins. Additionally, *ohana* also means you can choose your own family members and thus create alternative forms of family consciousness. The latter notion I learned (in part) from my Auntie Franny.

The year is 1991 and I am in the back of Auntie Kuna's pickup truck at the Annual Waianae City Parade. My cousin Arlette is Cinderella this year, my closest cousins Jacob and John and I sit in the uncomfortable truck bed. Arlette is decked out in expensive jewelry and a silver and blue gown to match a beautifully constructed "carriage" made from an antique camp trailer. As she gracefully and elegantly waves to passersbys through the carriage window, I quietly whisper to myself, "There can be no better Cinderella than Arlette. She looks as good as I do in a gown."

Passing Tamura's Supermarket, I catch a glimpse Auntie Franny's float and secretly plot my exit strategy. As is common in these small town parades, the truck stops and I make my escape, kissing my cousins. I quickly join Auntie Franny, Auntie Kim and Auntie Booga on their festive floral float constructed from a large trucking crate masterly decorated with every imaginable plant and flower. My Auntie Franny carefully guides me onto the float and together, we sing along with Sister Sledge, "We are family. I

got all my sisters with me..."

I can recall yearning for a family that accepted my identity as *mahu*, seeing my true feminine character. That day, Auntie Franny, Auntie Kim, Auntie Booga and I became part of a new family, one that embodied the spirit of being *mahu*. These aunties were not related to me by blood, but by spirit and shared struggles and confusions. As Hawaiians, we were in the right place, but oftentimes in the wrong place for being *mahu* as growing religious conservatism forming in Hawaii made life difficult for us as Hawaiian *mahu* women.

These strong *mahu* women of my youth helped me realize I can create new family. Despite facing tremendous adversity, they were able to move beyond pain to inspire change for the betterment of our entire community regardless of whether or not they received respect for it. At the heart, a family involves establishing networks that uphold tenets of unconditional love and support. We should remember humans have the power to create what is lacking in society and family units are no exception. Today, I have five mothers including my biological mother.

Everyone should have the freedom to consensually construct loving family settings and not feel excluded from experiencing family because they do not fit the standard. No matter how conventional or unique, one's family structure shouldn't be swept under the rug and ignored. One day, I hope to see my ideal picture, humanity as one large family, actualized. I'd like to think I am doing my part to bring the dream home by continuing to make family wherever I go.

Along with being a busy UT student and working at the GSC, Tatiana works with Transgender Texas, an organization that strives to educate and inspire UT-Austin and its surrounding community on issues of gender identity, gender expression, and trans-identities. Both trans and trans allies are welcome. For further information, they can be reached at transgendertexas@gmail.com and visit their website: <http://groups.yahoo.com/group/tgtexas>

SPEAK OUT



One change I would like to see in the United States is for people to be more open minded towards other's and learn to truly follow the constitution, not just the parts they like. - Lena, Age 15,

I wish that gay people could get married. - Sam, Age 11,

In my AP Government class we were working on an assignment that would help us to determine if we were liberal or conservative. Living with my two lesbian mothers all my life, I was of course a hard core liberal. But when I started to talk about such issues as gay rights with friends, I found a

What is one or more change/s that you would like to see in the United States?

lot of prejudiced people. I asked one friend, "should gays be allowed to be married?" She said, "No, they should not even be allowed to have kids". I was floored. How can you be so discriminatory to people who are like each one of us? I would be so proud of America if gays could be happy and married equally alongside heterosexual couples. I think it would help the children of these people be proud in their parents and not have to hide who they are from an intolerant world. I would like to see this change in America as well as an increased environmental protection policy. I am willing to do whatever I can to help. Obama said it and I stick to it. "Yes We Can." - Jackson, age 17

COLAGE NOTES

COLAGE WELCOMES TIFFANY ROSS AS OUR SOCIAL WORK INTERN

TIFFANY ROSS has a Bachelor of Science in Sociology from the University of Houston-Downtown and is currently pursuing her Masters of Science in Social Work from the University of Texas at Austin. Her professional experience highlights include group facilitation,



TIFFANY ROSS WITH COMEDIAN WANDA SYKES

volunteer coordination, event planning, information and referral services for youth and families, and case management. Her professional and personal experiences helped her to become passionate about working with the LGBTQ community which led her to intern at COLAGE. Tiffany was the Case Manager for the Girl Scouts Beyond Bars Program, providing pre-release education and post-release case management services to the mothers of the girls in Troop 1500—a special Girl Scout troop in Austin who all have mothers in prison. In her spare time she enjoys reading, dancing and hanging out with friends.

As her internship draws to an end, Tiffany reflected to JFU, "I've enjoyed interacting and meeting new families from all backgrounds. I thank COLAGE from the bottom of my heart for giving me the opportunity to do community outreach to families and LGBTQ organizations. I've also enjoyed being apart of the Voices Raised project. Working behind the scenes of creating and implementing the survey and putting together focus groups have been a challenge yet an experience that I will never forget. Overall, COLAGE

has really had an impact on the type of social worker that I want to be once my internship ends."

INTRODUCING... VOICES RAISED

COLAGE announces the launch of Voices Raised, A POC led project of COLAGE, whose mission is to seek, celebrate and reflect the unique voices and experiences of COLAGERS of color who have or had one or more LGBTQ parent/s or guardian/s of color.

As part of the Voices Raised project, we are launching a survey intended for all children, youth and adults who identify as Asian-American, Bi-racial, Black/African-American, Latino/a, Mixed, Multi-racial, Native-American, Pacific Islander ,Multi-National, and/or people of color and who have/had a parent or guardian of color who identifies as Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, Two-Spirit and/or Same-Gender Loving.

Do you identify as a person of color and have/had one or more LGBTQ parent or guardian of color? If so, take the Voices Raised survey and enter our raffle to win an iPod shuffle by Monday, April 30th, 2009. One survey participant will receive



a new iPod shuffle as a thank you for your time and energy!!

Just go to www.colage.org and click the link that says Take the Voices Raised Survey. In addition to the survey, COLAGE will be hosting focus groups for youth, adults and parents of color in select cities as well as virtually this spring. To participate or learn more about Voices Raised, email voicesraised@colage.org

COLAGE WELCOMES NEW BOARD MEMBERS

CAITLIN MACINTYRE is the proud daughter of the most stupendously radical ally mom and two wonderful gay dads, Daddy and Daddy Tony. A resident of New Jersey, she currently attends Rice University in Houston Texas where she serves as president of her school's LGBTQQA Association. Most recently she was privileged to have the life-changing experience of the 2008 Soulforce Equality Ride where she non-violently spoke truth to power and built wonderful relationships with oodles of people from all different walks of life. Community organizing and anti-oppression activism are her joy and her bliss and she is always looking for exciting new ways to advocate for justice and liberation.

She looks forward to working with COLAGE, learning, growing, being challenged, and continually empowering young people to be voices for their own liberation.

CATHY SAKIMURA is an attorney at the National Center for Lesbian Rights. She coordinates NCLR's Family Protection Project, which supports free and low-cost family law services for low-income LGBT parents and their children, with a focus on increasing services to families of color. Before she became a lawyer, Cathy worked at Gay-Straight Alliance Network, where she empowered young people to combat homophobia and transphobia in their schools and participated in a multi-organization project linking work against homophobia with work against racism. Cathy and her partner Ellen coordinated the COLAGE Pen Pal Program as volunteers for 7 years, starting after Cathy worked with COLAGE on their Bay Area programming in 2001. Cathy is hapa (half-Asian) and grew up on the Big Island of Hawaii.



CAITLIN MACINTYRE



CATHY SAKIMURA



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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.