



Interweave Connect

Coming Out
August 2013

In this issue

We Want You To Know Us Not Not Just Marry Us.....	2
Transitioning.....	3-4
Voices Among Us: LGBTQ Pride..	5-9
Living in Limbo: Lesbian Families in the Deep South.....	10
Sue Reamer's Coming Out Story... Group Celebrates Marriage Equality.....	11
Changing Your State Constitution.	12

Interweave Continental Board Members

Maryka Bhattacharyya, President
North Augusta, SC
marykahb@yahoo.com

Nisco Junkins, Vice President
Newsletter Production Manager
Eugene, OR
niscohappy@comcast.net

Richard Charbonneau, Treasurer
Hartford, CT
rcharbon@gmail.com

Tova Vitiello,
Newsletter Editor
Iowa City, IA
tovavitiello@aol.com

Rev. Michelle LaGrave
Petersham, MA
michellelagrave@gmail.com

Susan Gore
Fort Worth, TX
sgoretex@aol.com

Niala Terrell-Mason
Riverside, CA
scififreak35@hotmail.com

The *Interweave Continental* Board welcomes your articles for Interweave Connect. All articles will be given consideration for printing in our newsletter. Please note that members of the *Interweave Connect* staff reserve the right to edit all articles.

Interweave Connect Mission Statement

Interweave Connect offers a network of communication that fosters the spiritual well-being and social responsibility of LGBTQA individuals and their Unitarian Universalist congregations.

Dear Interweave Members and Friends,

It is with fear and trembling that I write this letter to you. When you hear why, you may think I am silly. But responsibilities always rest heavily on my shoulders, and I feel the responsibility of a commitment that Interweave Continental recently made to the Unitarian Universalist Funding Program. Through our newsletter, we have committed to make a major effort to grow the Interweave network of congregations and individuals who engage in Interweave Continental's activities and who support us through their membership.

Susan Gore, Niala Terrell-Mason, and Nisco Junkins, (our much loved newsletter producer), comprise our new Membership Task Force. You will hear from them through a number of new initiatives we will invite you to join. We are excited by our early ideas and, as we invest, we hope you will join in our excitement.

Some of you may think that, with progress towards marriage equality and more, the need for Interweave is less compelling than in the past. In truth, the need is not less compelling, but it is changing. We are coming on 50 years since the 1964 Civil Rights Act in the US, and yet the UU work of our Multicultural Ministries continues to take on new meaning. Such is the way for the work of Interweave.

Few have said it better than Niala, our new board member, whom I quoted in my last letter. Niala said, in her bio for board membership: "When my own congregation's Interweave group was talking about marriage equality as the end-all-be-all of gay rights, I brought their attention to the fact that their privilege was showing as middle-aged, white, middle-class and above gays, bisexuals and lesbians. It had not occurred to my well-meaning church friends that queer youth, people of color and transgender folks have other concerns and issues to deal with that take precedence over whether or not they can marry - issues like homelessness, elevated violence, racism and so on. I love that our faith is at the forefront of the marriage equality movement, but I believe that we have pushed other important struggles to the back burner. Employment discrimination, hate crimes legislation, substance abuse, youth homelessness and sexual exploitation, violence against trans folk ... I want to make sure we are fighting the good fight on multiple fronts."

Come join us in the important work of Interweave. We will be asking for your investment in specific ways in the near future.

All good wishes,

Maryka Bhattacharyya

President, Interweave Continental

WE WANT YOU TO KNOW US, NOT JUST MARRY US

I thought I was ready. At least that's what I told myself when as a green ministerial intern I met with a couple to plan my first civil union. After all I was a liberal in a liberal denomination; relatively self-aware and increasingly cognizant of the privilege afforded me as a straight white male. And I was a walker, not just a talker, wasn't I? I'd marched to "take back the night," cut the defense budget, save the planet and protect affirmative action. There was a rainbow sticker



on my car. Better yet, I'd recently organized and played at a benefit concert to raise funds for HIV/AIDS research.

And then came Paula and Dawn, two lesbians in their sixties. They had been together for more than two decades (sadly, both have since passed.) Paula was white and walked with crutches – the missing leg just one leftover from a brutal car crash. Paula had an edge. Short answers. Get on with it. She'd come to my office walled, suspicious of religion let alone preachers. Turned out, only the love for her partner could bring her to such a vulnerable place and time.

Dawn was an African American who had survived grinding poverty and forms of violence too dehumanizing to describe. She could barely maintain eye contact and I strained to hear her every word, so soft and halting were her responses. Dawn was

there, wounded and weary and looking for a way to celebrate the one thing in her life that was working: Paula.

I started out with the standard icebreakers: "Where ya from? How'd ya meet?" And it was right about there – right at the point where I normally took the time to get to know straight couples – that I skipped ahead to the flowers and the music and the minutia. No, what do love about each other? No, what dreams do you share?

Dawn caught it, and waited for an opening: "Can we tell you a little bit about us first? We want you to know us, not just marry us."

Twenty-five years up the road, I still invoke Dawn's words when at my homophobic worst. I remind myself that fear is an amazing and resilient thing. I remember that fear is a thing too often relieved by the scapegoat "Other" – a foreign and less-than-me someone who is not of my tribe and surely not worth getting to know.

And twenty-five years up the road, would that my phobia was exorcised that hot August day. Would that I've never again let fear get in the way of finding out what it's like to be somebody else. But I have. And I will again. And when I do, I will speak the name of the woman who would not be made an outcast to me. In that name will I claim grace for my fears and take courage for the next lesson. And the next. And the one after that.

Rev. Don Rollins, Interim Minister
Unitarian Universalist Church in Eugene, OR



Transitioning

It was 2006 Winter was rapidly coming to an end, and so was my life. I was sitting alone in my living room one evening holding a loaded, cocked pistol. I was ready to use it. At the ripe young age of 65, I was no longer able to continue living a lie. Stress and desperation had built to a final crescendo. There was just one possible alternative – the one I had been denying all these years. I put the gun down.

The next morning, I walked to my doctor's office and told him that I was a transsexual and needed to start on hormone therapy. He took one look at me and pulled out his prescription pad. When I left his office, I was walking on air! I now had a goal and there was a new life waiting at the end of the road.

I spent the next few months tying up the loose ends of my previous life, and I began planning for my future one. Eventually, I had to tell my kids that the father they had known was no longer going to be around. After plying them with pizza and wine, I laid it out: I was changing genders. They looked at me for a second, then said, "OK, so what else is new?"

By August, my surgery date was set for next fall and I was ready to change my name and my appearance. The Clerk of the Court told me that my name-change hearing would be mid-September, so I planned accordingly. On the 24th of August, the judge signed the order in chambers. So began a 6-month ordeal to get my name changed on all sorts of legal documents.

On September 1st, 2007, Robyn made her public debut. Months ago, I had promised a fraternity that I would help them collect money for Muscular Dystrophy on the Labor Day weekend. I saw

"...there was a new life waiting at the end of the road."

no reason not to keep that promise. I drove to a local Wal-Mart and parked the car. I sat there for a few minutes just getting up my courage. Then I got out of the car, took my jug and started collecting. I did get a few strange looks that morning, especially from my fraternity brothers, but no comments from the other shoppers, who donated generously.



Robyn resting at home – mid transition

"Yes, I have had it pretty easy. I've never been beaten or molested. "

That morning was also my first sojourn into a public women's restroom. No looks, no comments, no nothing.

Transitioning

continued from page 3



Definitely no perverts. We all just did what came naturally. Success that day gave me the confidence I needed to continue my transition.

If it all sounds easy, it was. But, I still had my share of setbacks. When I changed my name, some nosy Nellie found out about it and outed me to the entire fraternity and most of the state. The head of the fraternity forced me to resign under penalty of being thrown out due to a set of bogus charges. I asked permission to transition on the job (volunteer position) and was assured it would be possible, despite the fact that my boss kept a Bible on his desk. My fellow workers were fine with it, even asking questions. After a week or so, my clothing was suddenly no longer acceptable. In all the years I had been there no one had mentioned a dress code. Now there was one. Then my hours had to be changed. I would have to come and go during hours of darkness, so no one could see me. I tried that once and ended up feeling so dirty that I could not continue. I left a letter of resignation and my keys on the boss' desk. The next time he saw me, he didn't even remember my name.

I have had doctors throw me out of their offices, refuse to treat me and make crass comments about me while they were treating me. I have had lawyers refuse to take my case. One lawyer accepted a case, delayed doing anything about it and then turned it over to a clerk who had no idea what it was. Yes, I have had it pretty easy. I've never been beaten or molested. I haven't been thrown out of my home (that happened when I was fourteen). My only living relatives, my kids, have accepted me, as have most of my in-laws.

I had my genital reassignment surgery in October, 2008, with Dr. Marci Bowers. Was it all worth it? Oh, yes! Any regrets? Yes, one: I should have done this years earlier.

Robyn Kelly
Triangle Interweave
Lake County Fl

Voices Among Us: LGBTQ Pride

A sermon by Tova Vitiello

June 30, 2013

It was the year of *Demian*, *Siddhartha* and *Steppenwolf*. Students were munching sandwiches, drinking coffee and talking. A few wandered around the cafeteria looking for a place to sit. With a home-rolled cigarette pressed fiercely between her teeth, and rimless glasses sliding down her nose, Geraldine sat slumped over the table. Her face was hidden behind the pages of Millay. She was wearing a t-shirt and jeans.

I hadn't met Geraldine. My eyes scanned the room for a place to sit, and I noticed the empty chair across from her. Struggling in my stiletto heels, I balanced my lunch tray to the table and slowly lowered it. As I sat, I said "hello."

Raising her head just enough to reveal large brown eyes, Geraldine silently stared at me, and then lowered her head again. I felt awkward and ate quickly.

That afternoon in English class, Gery, as she liked to be called, sat behind me. I was unaware of her presence. Bending forward in her seat, she fumbled in her pocket for a piece of gum and asked me if I would like it. I never heard her ask. Clenching a fountain pen in her fist, she wrote in her notebook and vowed not to speak to me again.

The next day, the professor dismissed our class at noon. Gathering my materials, I began to leave. Suddenly, Gery appeared from behind, clutching a bundle of books which she almost dropped. Impulsively, I asked her if she wanted to get something to eat. She said, "yes." I couldn't believe it. I was so excited. Why was I so excited? Darn if I knew.

I was seventeen. I was thinking about a college degree, a teaching career, marriage, children and the war in Vietnam.

"Lesbian" was an unknown concept to me.

It is late when she offers to walk with me beneath snowflakes and street lights. Stepping without pause through the cold, we move in synchrony, elbow to elbow. As we walk, I watch snow drift and settle on rooftops, on pavement, on her tangled hair.

I wonder what attracts me to this woman who lives in a world of mountains and tea?

It is midnight when we arrive at my door.

Standing in silence, I feel her fingers smooth the rough edges of my wind-scratched face, and then she disappears into the night. Somewhere, she is walking with the moon.

So began my awareness of women loving women. Awareness, or my education, continued. I quickly learned from books and societal messages that homosexuality was "unnatural" and against the law. The psychological and medical literature described lesbians as "perverts" and "abnormal." Religious leaders said lesbians were immoral. Educational institutions would not allow lesbians to teach. The legal system denied lesbian mothers custody of their children.

I was silent. I didn't want to be fired from my high school teaching position.

At the age of twenty-five, Gery and I opened the closet. We came out, even though it was still unsafe.

Although we shouldn't live in the past, it is important to remember our herstory and our history. The voices of the past give us perspective.

There is evidence that queer people have always existed, even if they did not have a specific identity. The word, "homosexual," did not exist until 1869 when it was coined by Karoly Benkert, an Austrian born-Hungarian writer. In an open letter to the Prussian Minister of Justice, Benkert, a social activist, used the term to replace the pejorative words "sodomite" and "pederast."

Concepts and language are fluid. They shift and change. Until 1969, the term, homosexual, was used for those who were not heterosexual or bisexual. After 1969, the term "gay" was used. We now had gay people and the gay liberation movement. Gay had been an in-group synonym for homosexual.

Voices Among Us: LGBTQ Pride

continued from page 5

Some people find the word, “queer,” offensive; however, the younger generation has embraced it. In fact, on July 1, 2012, it was officially adopted by the UUA.

Most of you are familiar with the acronym LGBT --- lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender. The letter “Q” was added to represent the term, “queer” to be used in junction with LGBT. The word queer has become an umbrella term. It is used to include all lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender people, and those who feel they are a combination of the mentioned categories. Some people also use the letter “Q” to represent those folks who are “questioning” their gender and/or sexuality, so you may see LGBTQQ. In addition, you may see an “A” which stands for ally. Perhaps now you can understand why many of us prefer to use the word, queer, to represent all who challenge fixed concepts of gender, gender expression and sexuality.

Concepts and language are fluid. They shift and change. For many women who love women, their understanding of self and their recognition of their position in society resulted in a different label than homosexual or gay. Instead of identifying as homosexual or gay, they departed from the male-related identification and called themselves lesbians, women-identified-women. Politically, they were making a statement.

One by one, lesbians stopped participating in gay organizations because the men wanted lesbians to serve as secretaries and to make coffee. Women’s concerns were not important. At the time, many lesbians recognized that sexism pervaded our culture. Lesbians, however, did not expect it to be so rampant in the gay subculture.

In October, 1955, two women, Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon founded “Daughters of Bilitis,” the first national lesbian organization in the United States. The name came from “Songs of Bilitis” by Pierre Louys. In these verses, Bilitis is portrayed as a contemporary of Sappho and as a lesbian.

A year later, Daughters of Bilitis or DOB started the first lesbian publication called, The Ladder. For many lesbians, this was their only connection with one another.

In those early days, Mafia owned bars were the only places where queer people could meet one another. However, they were not safe. The straight bar owners made arrangements for the police to routinely raid their bars as part of a “payoff” so they could remain in business.

I recall dancing in a bar as the police rushed through the door, shouting and hitting gay men and lesbians with their clubs. Three large, dykes quickly pushed me into the corner and stood in front of me. They wanted to protect and hide me. I had no idea who they were, and I never saw them again. The police did not take everyone to jail that night. They arrested a few people and left.

Stonewall is a Greenwich Village, New York City, dance bar. In June 1969, lesbians, gays, and transgender people fought back against the constant harassment and raids by the local police. It began with the arrest of a lesbian. With the help and support from area neighbors, together they fended off the police. The riot at the bar lasted three days.



Del Martin and Phyllis Lyon cutting their wedding cake.

Voices Among Us: LGBTQ Pride

continued from page 6



Unitarian Universalist Society of Iowa City

After Stonewall, the Gay Liberation Front (GLF) emerged, one of the first specifically gay-rights organizations to form in the United States. LGBTQ people joined together to protest laws that made homosexual acts between consenting adults illegal, and social conditions that made it impossible to maintain jobs or rent apartments. Marching and chanting, “Say it loud, gay is proud,” Queer folks were coming out. However, the process was slow.

Because of sexism in the Gay Liberation Movement, lesbians formed their own groups and became active in the women’s movement. Many, who had called themselves “gay” were now referring to themselves as “lesbian,” and “gay” was becoming the label for men. However, lesbians soon discovered that anti-lesbian attitudes permeated the Women’s Liberation Movement.

In the mid-sixties, lesbians within the National Organization for Women experienced homophobia and discrimination. They were only allowed to work behind the scenes or within positions of power if they stayed closeted. By 1969, the oppression of lesbians heightened. Eventually, lesbians were purged from the organization.

Because of the homophobia and discrimination experienced by lesbians within the Women’s Liberation Movement, a lesbian-feminist group was created. The newly formed group decided to confront feminists in the movement. In May, 1970, the Second Congress to Unite Women, a women’s liberation organization, gathered in New York City to hold a meeting. They started to come to order when the group of 300 women found themselves confronted by the “Lavender Menace.” It was the first time that lesbians brought the issue of homophobia into the open.

The planned take-over was forceful, but it was conducted with humor. Seventeen women went to the podium and pre-empted the meeting. The women wore lavender t-shirts with the words, Lavender Menace stenciled across the front. Another group, of approximately twenty women, blended in with the audience. They gave vocal support and held signs saying, “superdyke loves you; take a lesbian to lunch.”



Voices Among Us: LGBTQ Pride

continued from page 7

In Iowa City, feminists (lesbian and straight) were also having political discussions, and we were involved in political activism. The police closely watched us. We were “subversive.”

Many of the women had become separatists and did not want to socialize with men. As one of the founders of Lesbian Alliance, I asked the minister of this congregation if we could hold women’s dances in Channing Hall, once or twice a month. I was told the guidelines and given a key. That was 1972.

And, I am still here! This UU congregation is very dear to me. Ten South Gilbert Street is home.

On Sundays, I do not enter ten South Gilbert Street to sit and sleep. I come to be awakened. I come to listen and to share.

When I was a child and adults told me things, my inner voice often responded with “I hear you, but I’m not listening!” Now I am an adult, and I admit, I sometimes have the same child response. However, it has not served me well. It stops me from being an ally to others.

We need to listen to the voices of lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, queer and straight people. We need to listen to the voices of our elders and to the voices of our youth. Our elders provide wisdom and experience. Our youth offer newness and energy. We need to listen to one another. We need to share our stories.

The visibility and political activism of previous generations of lesbians and gays, has contributed to the many social and legal advances that have been made for queer people.

On Wednesday, June 26th, the United States Supreme Court overturned the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) on the basis that it denied the “equal liberty guaranteed by the Fifth Amendment.” Legally married lesbian and gay couples had been denied recognition from the federal government. In addition, the Supreme Court dismissed Proposition 8. As a result, same-gender couples will again be able to marry in California.

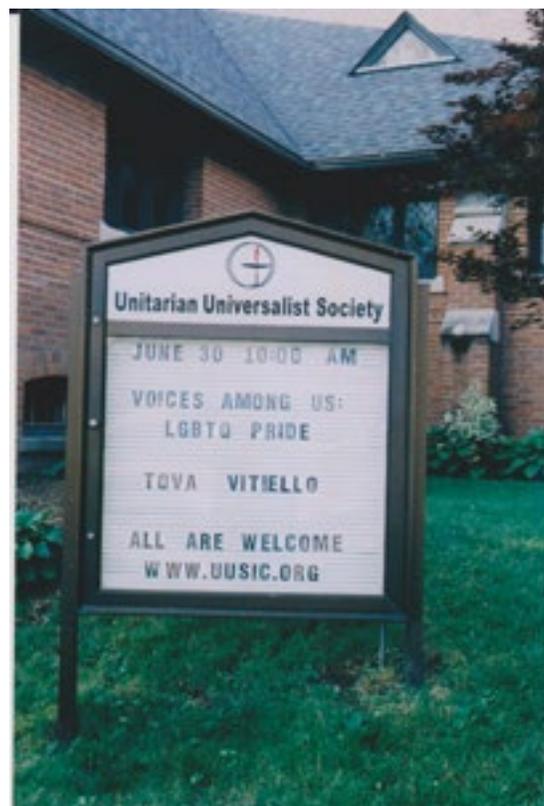
While we celebrate, it is important to remember that thirty-seven states do not have marriage equality. We still need our allies to speak out in support of

human rights. We still need our allies to promote justice for all.

For many of you, taking a lesbian or gay person “out to lunch” is no longer an issue. However, transgender people challenge some comfort zones. As members of a Welcoming Congregation, our personal work continues.

Transgender people remind us that we are not limited to only male and female gender identities. The terms male and female restrict our total understanding of gender, gender identity and gender expression. It has taken science years to find evidence that some people have a sex reversal in their chromosomal make-up. Research and individual life stories tell us that gender, gender identity, gender expression as well as gender roles are determined by many variables, among them are prenatal hormones, genes and social factors.

Transgender people continue to be discriminated in employment, housing, health care, education, and in our legal system. In addition, they are often rejected by their families and their religious institutions.



Voices Among Us: LGBTQ Pride

continued from page 8

As a welcoming congregation, it is important for us to pay attention to how we use words. Language can be a subtle and powerful tool to create space for people or to marginalize them. This is especially so if we want to include transgender people. A traditional example is the word, mankind, now referred to as humankind.

Because of word choices by members of religious organizations, transgender people often feel excluded from congregations. An example is when a congregation refers to its members as men and women. Those words limit rather than include or expand our concept of gender. More importantly, they exclude a large number of people. As an alternative, a congregation could say “people of all genders.”

The UUA and Interweave Continental (the national organization) have updated Welcoming Congregation materials with an emphasis on transgender issues and concerns. Both the UUA and Interweave Continental suggest that congregations use terms like Soprano and Alto instead of female voices or women’s voices; Tenor and Bass instead of male voices or men’s voices. Rather than saying “we are brothers and sisters,” we could say that “we are one.”

Recently I was writing material for a class and I typed: “Ask each person to state ...,” and then I realized that I would have to say “his” or “her” name because each person is singular. His and her exclude those people who do not identify as male or female. I deleted what I began to type and wrote instead: “Ask participants to state their names.” Language is constantly changing and expanding to incorporate new ways of understanding and interacting with our world. Sometimes this can feel awkward. It requires us to leave what is familiar and comfortable.

In an ever changing world, Welcoming Congregations do not remain stagnant because we, the members, are continually moving forward. We are not fixed in our seats, and we do not step backward. We are becoming.

Take a lesbian to lunch asked straight women to place themselves in a situation that required a stretch.

I invite all of you to move beyond what you believe to be your limits. Take a risk, move beyond your comfort zone.

Some of you in this congregation had the fear that we might become a “gay” congregation if we became Welcoming. But, you let go of whatever discomfort and fear you had. You took a risk. You had courage, and the vote was unanimous. We can all take a lesson from this. Ask yourself, what holds you back? What do you need to do to stretch your boundaries? What will it take for you to leave your comfort zone?

For me, it was coming out. At first, the process was scary because it involved being truthful, whatever the consequences. Letting go of my silence gave me my freedom. It allowed me to become my authentic self. One of the most self-empowering choices we can make is to view our anxieties and fears as doorways to inner freedom.

As I have aged, I have come to realize that life is about making choices and taking risks. When you awoke this morning, you were immediately faced with choices: You could use your energy being angry, anxious, and fearful, or you could use your energy to experience the day as a new and wonderful beginning.

Every day you make choices to direct your energy into attitudes, into memories, into creative acts, into positive feelings about yourself and others, or into negative feelings about yourself and others. You make the choice to fear your day or to love your day. You make the choice to fear this moment or to love this moment. How do you want to direct your energy? How do you want to interact with members of this congregation?

On this day of pride, I invite you to empower yourself, to stretch and go beyond your comfort zone. Take a risk and share with others. On this National Day of Pride, let us listen to the voices of each and every identity. On this National Day of Pride, let us all stand proud!

(This sermon was given at the Unitarian Universalist Society in Iowa City, Iowa on National Pride Day)

**“I invite you
to empower
yourself...”**



[Watch this video to learn more about how Living in Limbo was born in Birmingham, Alabama, the heart of the Civil Rights Movement](#)

Living in Limbo: Lesbian Families in the Deep South,

photographs by Carolyn Sherer is a contemporary exhibition honoring the current complexities of lesbian family life in the South. The exhibition provides an intimate view of a population that has been largely invisible or underrepresented in public art. The images challenge viewers to envision a world without prejudice and discrimination— a world that celebrates commitment, family and inclusion for everyone—a world without limbo.

[purchase the book](#)



Sue Reamer's Coming Out Story

Where to start sharing my coming out story with you? I'll start from my heart and with joy. For many years, I was focused on helping others as a nurse and UU Humanist - dedicated to making a difference for my patients, partner, children, and fellow humans in need. But over time, I lost myself and my happiness withered. It was time to find who I was again and what was meaningful, positive and fun for my own spirit. The critical move was getting a divorce, which led to my coming out to everyone on the front page of my local newspaper, The Brookline Tab; and I have relished the joy flowing into my life everyday ever since. So, making a difference for oneself is number one. You have to find and love yourself and make your own spirit sing.

I remain active in my lesbian community and doing so with good friends. I just came back from four days of laughing with Silver Threads North's friendly, supportive sisterhood (140 strong) in Rehoboth Beach, Delaware - clapping to Suede's music, dancing nightly, and waking to early morning beach walks. At Silver Threads, two friends and I presented an energizing "how to" workshop on why and how the three of us started a social group one year ago. The group, called RALLY, is a Greater Boston social group for lesbians 55+. There are 250+ members. It is on "Meet-up," and has an activity filled monthly calendar. The three of us together made this difference.

Sue Reamer
St Cloud, MN UU Fellowship



Group Celebrates Marriage Equality Ruling in Auburn, CA Streets

Weddings for same-sex couples set to resume
By: Jon Schultz, Journal Staff Write

A few months from their fifth wedding anniversary, The Revs. Wendy Bartel and Lynn Gardner celebrated Wednesday's U.S. Supreme Court

decision that paved the way, once again, for same-sex couples to marry in California....

<http://www.auburnjournal.com/article/groupcelebrates-gay-marriage-ruling-auburn-streets>

Changing Your State Constitution

As you all know by now, history was made on Wednesday, June 26, 2013 when the U.S. Supreme Court invalidated the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA). As with all social issues, I know some of you will disagree with this decision and others will celebrate.

I would like to use my time today to explain what this decision means to me – a gay man in a same-sex relationship for twenty-four years. We had a commitment ceremony conducted by a Baptist minister and an Episcopal priest. Our relationship was recognized by my employer and we receive the same benefits as a heterosexually married couple; but the Federal Government did not recognize our relationship, therefore we did not receive Federal benefits.

The Supreme Court ruling now allows same-sex couples in states that legally recognize their marriages to receive 1,138 federal benefits, rights and protections provided on the basis of marital status. However, since we are now retired and live in Florida, a state that has a constitutional amendment that does not permit same-sex marriages, we will not receive these federal benefits. So, what does that mean for us?

Since I am older than my spouse, more than likely I will die before he does. I will identify three Federal benefits that will greatly affect him financially if we are still living in Florida at the time of my death:

- He will not receive social security survivor benefits
- He will have to pay a federal estate tax on everything he inherits from me, which he would not if our marriage was recognized in Florida
- He will have to sell and move from our home, which we had built when we moved here fifteen years ago. The house is in our trust fund, which was established before we knew about Florida's homestead act. Our present property taxes he could afford to pay, however upon my death since we are not legally married in Florida the trust name changes, which changes the homestead we established when the house was built thus raising the property taxes about four times the present amount – which he could not afford to pay.

So what do we do? We talked about going to New York and getting married. However, the Supreme Court did not challenge another provision of DOMA that says no state must recognize a same-sex marriage from another state. Therefore, if we were

married in New York and returned home to Florida, which does not recognize same-sex marriage we would still not receive any of these federal benefits.

As you can see, Wednesday's victory was a joyous one, but at the same time a sad one for us. For the first time in my life, I feel like I am living on the bottom level of our nation's two tiers of equality. We can only have equality if we move to a state that recognizes gay marriage. However, that would mean leaving Florida – our home, our friends, our garden, and all the things we now love in our life. For now, we have decided to follow our lawyer's advice and stay in Florida. Like the thousands of other same-sex couples, we will join with Equal Marriage Florida whose purpose is to ensure that ALL Floridians have equal rights under the law to marry the person of their choosing, while protecting the religious freedoms of churches, individuals and faith organizations. We will circulate petitions to have a constitutional amendment allowing same-sex marriages in Florida and in November 2014, Florida voters will get another chance to decide the future of same-sex marriage in this state. The two of us will continue to fight for equality.

Kenneth George

Treasure Coast UU Congregation
Stuart, FL

