

## PFLAG Presents

Welcoming Cultures—What We  
Can Learn From Them



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### Structure of This Presentation

- Examine the GLBT affirming parts of cultures
- Examine what we can learn from these cultures and apply to our own
- Concluding remarks
- Questions and comments

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### Ancient Greek Culture

- Lamda Warriors history
- Deities including Zeus, Ganymede, Apollo, Camilla, Sappho
- Transgender leaders and authority figures
- Sexual relationships between men were seen as a social norm



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### Ancient Greek Culture: What We Can Learn

- Understand the importance and social value of all genders—in Greece, individuals could fall anywhere on the gender identity spectrum and still be seen as authority figures
- Normalize and even celebrate the GLBT elements in culture



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### Native American Two-Spirit Culture

- Commonly shamans by profession or other spiritual leaders
- Children discover their own gender identities, and parents embrace their identities
- The vast majority of tribes have a strong two-spirit heritage



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### Native American Two-Spirit Culture: What We Can Learn

- Binary gender identity does not fully articulate the gender spectrum.
- Children can understand gender and sexual identity on a level that many cultures do not often believe they can understand.



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## Latin American Urban Cultures

- Buenos Aires is said to be the "Paris of South America" and has the largest gay club in the world (Club Rosada del Alma).
- Bars for lesbians, gay men, and transgender individuals are reported to have opened in Mexico City as early as 1901, whereas first reports of bars for gay men in the US are documented in the 1930's and 40's.
- Both Mexico City and Buenos Aires offer civil unions to gay and lesbian couples.

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## Latin American Urban Cultures: What We Can Learn

- Freedom of expression is found in these urban centers.
- Strong sense of family drives a lot of the more progressive municipalities to move forward with marriage equality initiatives without the backing of their state or local governments.



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## The Netherlands Culture

- Public support of gay marriage is highest of anywhere else in the European Union, at 82%.
- In 2001, the country was the first in the world to legalize gay marriage.
- The only time in the history of the country that efforts were made to limit GLBT affirming legislation was during World War II, during Nazi control.



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### The Netherlands Culture: What We Can Learn

- Considering that the earliest pro GLBT law on record was passed in 1811 in The Netherlands, we can learn that progress is possible and something to hope for. If we just remain patient and fervent, we can succeed.
- With 200+ years of pro GLBT legislation, the country is still thriving.



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### South African Culture

- The new constitution does not allow for discrimination on the basis of sexual orientation.
- The gay and lesbian rights movement has actually moved faster than the women's rights' movement.
- While anti-discrimination and marriage equality have been passed into law, 63% of South Africans still do not believe "homosexuality should be accepted."

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### South African Culture: What We Can Learn

- Minority rights do not necessitate majority support.
- Progressive causes move at different rates in every culture and go through different stages—we must be careful to not assume that we understand the experience of another culture.



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## East Asian Cultures

- Early European travelers were taken aback by the acceptance of these cultures towards GLBT individuals
- Japan's Buddhist monastic life and Samurai tradition
- Thai tradition of Khatoey—recognized in Thailand as a third gender



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## East Asian Cultures: What We Can Learn

- Teachings of Buddhism and other religions are respectful towards the gender spectrum, the concept of a third gender, and same-sex relationships
- Interesting to note the early differences between Eastern and Western thought



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## Concluding remarks

- There are strengths in every culture which can contribute to global GLBT equality.
- We should learn from other cultures and think outside the box of our own cultural struggle for equality.



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## Tips for Moving Forward

- Start a diversity advisory board for your chapter.
- Call PFLAG National at 202-467-8180. Kimberly Jones can be reached at extension 229 and e-mail [kjones@pflag.org](mailto:kjones@pflag.org).

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