



2013: A Year of Change



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Publisher's Note



Kevin M. Manz

Candy canes, antlers, stars, and elves...24/7 holiday music starting in October...

trees and presents and extraordinary meals. Distractions abound. Current culture focuses on how much can be accomplished in the shortest time, acquisition of material goods without substance, and shallow displays of resources. In spite of everything, we try to find time for family and friends. We long for a quality of life that we somehow miss during other seasons. May we all find moments to act on our best intentions and bring a sense of joy and hope to all who are important in our lives, now and throughout the coming year.

2013: The Year of Love

by Matthew Burlingame

2013 has been an amazing year, particularly for the LGBTQ community. The Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA) being struck down by the Supreme Court on June 26 signaled a new era in the fight for equality — both on the marriage front and civil liberties. “Gay marriage” was subsequently redefined as simply ... marriage.

The same day as the DOMA opinion came down, California also received the Supreme Court's decision to lift Proposition 8, which defined marriage as being only between one man and one woman. The controversial state constitutional amendment was voted into effect after California had begun issuing marriage licenses to same-sex couples on June 16, 2008 as the result of the Supreme Court of California ruling,

which found that not allowing same-sex couples to marry violated the state constitution.

The DOMA and Prop. 8 decisions, while significant, were just two of many strides in marriage equality made in 2013, both nationally and globally. This year, same-sex marriage was legalized in Maryland (Jan. 1); New Zealand (April 19); Rhode Island (May 2); Uruguay (May 3); Delaware (May 7); Minnesota (May 14); France and Brazil (May 18); California (June 26); England and Wales (July 17); New Jersey (Sept. 27); Hawaii (Dec. 2); and New Mexico (Dec. 19). The passage of same-sex marriage in Hawaii stands out as it was the first state to face a legal challenge regarding the issue in 1991.

While love and marriage were the most visible news stories of the year, other less LGBTQ-friendly stories also made headlines. The most notable was Russian President Vladimir



Pvt. Chelsea Manning mural: Recently updated in light of her change of name. Photo by Timothy Krause <http://www.flickr.com/photos/timothykrause/9632091382>

Putin signing into law a bill banning “gay propaganda” in June. Russia decriminalized homosexuality in 1993, but under Putin, stigmatization and hostility against the LGBTQ community has risen to near Hitleresque proportions. There is now widely reported violence and even murder

of Russian citizens thought to be homosexual or transgender. Russia also banned citizens of countries that allow same-sex marriage from adopting Russian children.

Another story that caught the mainstream press and put our community in the spotlight was that of Pvt.



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Chelsea Manning, a U.S. Army soldier who was convicted in July of violations of the Espionage Act and other offenses after releasing the largest set of classified documents ever leaked to the public. What is the connection to our community? Manning was born Bradley Manning and diagnosed with gender identity disorder while in the Army. In a statement issued after her sentencing, she stated she wanted to be known as Chelsea and desired to begin hormone replacement therapy. Suddenly, the story became less about her conduct and duty and more about her gender identity.

However, the changes in the U.S. kept coming. After years of scrutiny, the Boy Scouts of America finally allowed openly gay youth into its ranks (effective Jan. 1, 2014). The policy for adult Scout leaders was not altered. In a policy statement, the organization confirmed it will not grant membership to adults who are "open or avowed homosexuals."

Another group that changed its anti-gay stance was Exodus International, a Christian nonprofit founded in 1976. The organization catered to ex-gays, preaching the message that being homosexual was a choice. In June, the group issued a statement recanting its long-held mission, and apologized for the harm its pursuit caused to the LGBTQ community. Also in the religious arena, Guy Erwin became the first openly gay bishop in the Evangelical Lutheran Church of America, and the newly elected Pope Francis stated, "If someone is gay and he searches for the Lord and has good will, who am I to judge?"

The world of sports received a wake-up call when NBA player Jason Collins told Sports Illustrated, "I'm a 34-year-old NBA center. I'm black. And I'm gay." The first actively playing athlete to come out in the "Big Four," Collins made headlines and drew attention to the need for equality and acceptance within the world of team sports. While his bravery was commendable, the push-back against gays in sports was evident as more than six months later, Collins, who last played for the Washington Wizards, is still unsigned.

While gains were great with the number of high-profile celebrities who came out in 2013 — such as Wentworth Miller, Matt Dallas, Raven-Symone and Jodi Foster — one of the most notable losses was that of Jose Julio Sarria, aka Her Royal Majesty, Empress of San Francisco, Jose I, The Widow Norton. The first openly gay candidate to run for public office in the United States. Sarria died on Aug. 19, at age 89. His



legacy, the Imperial Court System — a network of nonprofits and charitable organizations throughout the U.S., Canada and Mexico — lives on, raising hundreds of thousands of dollars to those in need each year.

Meanwhile, hundreds of significant and historical LGBTQ stories got little attention. For the first time, an out gay man climbed Mount Everest, planting a rainbow flag at the top; Army Reserve officer Tammy Smith became the first out, active duty general; Tammy Baldwin was sworn in as the first out LGBTQ person in the U.S. Senate; and the increase of homeless LGBTQ in the larger cities went largely unreported. Among San Francisco's almost 6,500 homeless residents, nearly one in three identify as LGBTQ.

2013 has had its low points for our community, but has also given us some giant strides forward to a world of equality for all.



(Clockwise from top) Photo of the steps of the United States Supreme Court building on the morning of June 26, 2013, hours before the court overturned the Defense of Marriage Act. There are people in line to enter the Supreme Court, as well as people in support of the eventual overturning; Boston Celtics forward Sasha Pavlović (left) and Atlanta Hawks center Jason Collins (right) during the first half of game two in the Eastern Conference quarterfinals of the 2012 NBA Playoffs at Philips Arena. Photo by Joshua S. Kelly - USA TODAY Sports <http://www.flickr.com/photos/joshuak8/7135731729/>; Tammy Baldwin became the first openly gay member of the U.S. Senate in history; Vladimir Putin, Photo courtesy www.kremlin.ru; Photo of José Sarria dining at Eastern Standard restaurant in the Hotel Commonwealth, Kenmore Square, Boston, Photo by John Stephen Dwyer.

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For ad inquiries, please call 916-498-1600 ext. 08 **Publisher** Kevin M. Manz **Editor** Matt Burlingame **Copy Editor** Carol Couk **Designers** Brian Breneman, Serene Lusano **Sales Manager** Debi Smith **Sales Consultants** Rich Jones, Andy Sem **Contributors** Jovi Radtke, Melissa Martinez, Wayne Myrick, Shane Maloney, Jerri Cuerden, Ken Pierce, Jen Thorpe, Michael R. Gorman, Craig Cannon, Marina Martinez **Creativity Contributor** Linda Birner www.pridemedia.net | 1122 Del Paso Blvd. Sacramento, CA 95815



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Sacramento Rainbow Families

by Jerri Cuerden

For Sacramento LGBTQ families looking for a way to get out, have fun and meet new people — the search is over. Sacramento Rainbow Families (SRF) is an area group offering everything local parents could want or need to not feel isolated from their community in a warm, accepting environment.

SRF is a social and support group that strives to give local LGBTQ parents a chance to make connections and share resources with others who share similar family structures. The group, which operates primarily through meetup.com was founded in May 2012 by two area mothers interested in finding a place where they could connect with new people and show their children that there are other families out there that look like theirs.

"The community center put out a call for people interested in a parenting group," says Carrie Lewis, one of the group's co-founders. "I had just had my daughter and was looking for families like ours. I showed up to the meeting, and there was only one other mom there. They said, 'OK, you guys can lead it,' and we thought, 'OK, we'll give it a shot.'"

Lewis started a meetup.com page for the group and saw the number of responses as a sign of the need for an organization like SRF. "It just grew and grew, and I couldn't just drop it, even though it's quite a lot of work," she explains.

The group now has nearly 200 members and sees new faces at every event. With so many members, Kimberly Bushard, who joined the group last year, has recently taken on the role of co-facilitator.

"With this many people, it's hard for me to be able to serve all their needs, so I'm really glad that Kimberly came on as a co-



Photo courtesy of Rainbow Families

facilitator," says Lewis. "Now we can plan even more events and the more active we are, the better."

Bushard, who is a single mother of 3-year-old twins, says, "It's important for the parents to be able to have other parents to talk to about challenges and concerns and for the kids to be able to feel normal. These families aren't just in Lavender Heights and downtown, and I don't want [them] to be overlooked," Lewis says.

Families involved with SRF have children ranging in age from newborns to teenagers, and just this year, the group has taken part in myriad events, including trips to Funderland, Dave's Pumpkin Patch and a pre-Pride Parade Rainbow Up Stroller Decorating party at the Crocker Art Museum. Lewis and Bushard have quite a few upcoming events planned that they hope will bring even more new members to the group. A light tour in December, a scrap-booking workshop in January, and a "Parents and Poppets" Valentines party are just a few of the exciting things members have to look forward to in the coming months.

"I think the biggest thing that people should know is that we're here, and that

we're excited about bringing some new things to the table for 2014, and we really want to provide some opportunities for shared experiences with other gay and lesbian families," says Bushard.

Families interested in learning more about SRF can go to: meetup.com/Sacramento-Rainbow-Families. For the full version of this story, visit pridemedianet.net.

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