

## PFLAG of Fort Wayne

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<http://members.aol.com/pflagfw/>

### Upcoming Events:

**February 12** - Fort Wayne PFLAG Meeting, 7:00 pm, Plymouth Congregational Church.

**March 12** - Fort Wayne PFLAG Meeting, 7:00 pm, Plymouth Congregational Church.

We meet the second Monday of each month 7:00 pm at

**Plymouth Congregational Church**

501 W. Berry Street  
(corner of Fairfield and Berry)

For more information call 260-497-8528 or e-mail: PflagFtWayne@aol.com

# PFLAG of Fort Wayne

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

## Colors in the Rainbow: Race, Culture, and Sexual Orientation Part II: Latino/Hispanic Culture by Stephen M. White, Psy.D.



Hispanic individuals come from many different countries and cultural backgrounds, making generalizations difficult. Despite these differences, the majority of Hispanic cultures regard homosexuality as unacceptable, particularly for men. This apprehension derives from different sources, including the cultural concept of *machismo* and the role the Roman Catholic church plays in the lives of Latinos.

Cultural issues strongly influence Latino views on homosexuality, especially male homosexuality. The concept of *machismo* dictates that men serve as a provider and protector of their family and act as the head of the household. Latino families also generally maintain traditional sex roles, with clear delineations of what is proper for men and women. For gay men, the adoption of what is seen as a submissive role is a serious violation of *machismo* and expectations of male behavior. Anyone who commits such a violation is subject to sanctions that range from disapproval to physical violence.

The conservative views on sexuality held by the Roman Catholic church are well known, and the Vatican continues to express disapproval of homosexuality. There is some variation in how much of a problem this conflict poses in different Hispanic countries. Despite the large number of Roman Catholics, homosexuality is more tolerated in Spanish culture than in many other Hispanic countries, as evidenced by the recent legalization of gay marriage in Spain.

Some Latino men avoid the stigma of homosexuality by denial: they do not identify as gay despite same-sex activity. The major disadvantage of this strategy is risky sexual behavior. In his book *Latino Gay Men and HIV*, author Rafael M. Diaz discusses the impact that the attitudes in Latino culture toward homosexuality has on the behavior of gay men, including decreased safer-sex practices.

Fortunately for the future of the gay Latino community, the denial of homosexuality in Latino culture is not universal. As more gay men and women come out in the broader culture, gay Latinos are also beginning to come out over time. Although they risk condemnation from traditionalists, brave figures in politics, film, and literature are beginning to acknowledge that they are gay.

Gay politicians are rare to begin with, much less openly gay Latino politicians. The small number of gay Latino elected officials have included Cuban-American Jarrett Barrios in the Massachusetts state Senate, Puerto Rican Margarita Lopez on the New York City Council, Louis Escobar, President of the City Council in Toledo, and Joe Santiago on the Cleveland City Council.

Gay Latinos in film have come a long way from George Hamilton's campy portrayal of *Zorro the Gay Blade* in 1981. Spanish filmmaker Pedro Almodovar has long been at the forefront of gay cinema, directing Antonio Banderas in *Labyrinth of Passion* and *Law of Desire* prior to Banderas' most visible portrayal of a gay man in the landmark film *Philadelphia*. Almodovar has made a number of other films of interest to LGBT audiences including *High Heels*, *Kika*, and *All About My Mother*.

In addition to Almodovar, acclaimed Mexican director Jaime Humberto Hermosillo has made over 20 films, and is best-known to U.S. audiences for his 1985 film *Doña Herlinda and Her Son*.

Gay Latino actors include Wilson Cruz of *My So-Called Life* and *Party of Five*, and the film *All Over Me* and bisexual actor Gabriel Romero on the Telemundo sitcom *Los Beltran*.

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Prominent gay Latino characters have also appeared in *Strawberry and Chocolate* (Cuba), and *A Year Without Love* (Argentina). Documentaries include *Paris Is Burning*, portraying New York's Black and Latino drag queen community, and *De Colores*, depicting the struggle of Latino culture to come to terms with homosexuality.

The literary world has also seen many important works by gay Latino authors. Among the most influential works of fiction are John Rechy's 1960s novels *City of Night* and *Numbers*, Arturo Islas' *The Rain God* and *Migrant Souls*, and Jaime Manrique's *Latin Moon in Manhattan*, as well as Michael Nava's mystery novels featuring a gay attorney.

Works by Latina authors include *This Bridge Called My Back: Writings by Radical Women of Color*, edited by Gloria Anzaldúa and Cherríe Moraga containing essays by many influential women of color. Also by Anzaldúa is *La Frontera/Borderlands*, a collection of essays and poems that examine race, Latin and Anglo culture, and sexual orientation.

Non-fiction books examining gay and lesbian Latino experiences include *Unrequited Love and Gay Latino Culture: What Have You Done to My Heart* by Daniel T. Contreras, and *Reading and Writing the Ambiente: Queer Sexualities in Latino, Latin American and Spanish Culture*, edited by Susana Chavez-Silverman and Librada Hernandez.

A book for parents of gay children is *Conversaciones: Relatos Por Padres y Madres de Hijas Lesbianas y*

*Hijos Gay*, edited by Mariana Romo-Carmona, featuring essays by parents about their child's coming out. Latino parents in the United States can face language barriers that may intensify isolation and limit the information and support available. PFLAG offers some resources through their "Families of Color Network" at [www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org).

This is a time of change for Latino communities in the United States. The growth of Latino families is translating into growing political force, and members of multi-generational families are dealing with the tension of different levels of acculturation to the larger society. While gay men and women have always been a part of Hispanic cultures, until recently they have been largely invisible. More and more, Latinos are learning that it is possible to be gay, Latino, and proud, all at the same time.

### Organizations

- Chicago: ALMA (Association of Latino Men for Action) [www.almachicago.org](http://www.almachicago.org), and Amigas Latinas, [www.amigaslatinas.org](http://www.amigaslatinas.org)
- Los Angeles: GLLU (Gay and Lesbian Latinos Unidos) (213) 660-9681
- Austin, Texas: ALLGO (Austin Latino/Latina Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Organization) [www.allgo.org](http://www.allgo.org)
- New York: LLANY (Latinas and Latinos de Ambiente/ New York) [members.aol.com/arcoirisny](http://members.aol.com/arcoirisny)
- San Diego: Gay and Lesbian Latinos con Orgullo (619) 692-1967

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## Be GLBT Aware when shopping

The Human Rights Campaign is encouraging supporters of GLBT rights to be aware of where they shop this holiday season by keeping in mind how business stand with regards to GLBT people.

Buying for Equality Guide rates more than half of the Fortune 500 companies and includes comparisons between products, services, and retail outlets that are used by consumers on a daily basis.

According to the new guide, 138 companies received a perfect score of 100. My comparing the ratings, buyers can chose between similar business such as between Best Buy (which rated highly) and Radio Shack (which came in low).

Shopping at Wal-mart this year may get attention as a number of Christian conservative foes of gay and lesbian rights were initially calling for a boycott. The American Family Association dropped the call Tuesday before Thanksgiving due to Wal-Marts promise to stay away from controversial causes.

The guide is available online at <http://www.hrc.org/buyersguide/>

## Mexico City Grants Gay Civil Unions

November 16th a new law was published in the city's official gazette making Mexico City passed a new law recognizing gay civil unions. This marks the first time such a law was passed in Mexico, a predominantly conservative and Roman Catholic country.

Mexico City is a federal district similar to Washington D.C. with its own legislature. The city's assembly passed the measure by a vote of 43-17, with all the opposition coming from the conservative National Action Party--which is the party of outgoing President Vicente Fox and President-elect Felipe Calderon.

While stopping short of granting full gay marriages, the new law allows gay couple who register their union with civil authorities access to inheritance and pension rights. Unmarried heterosexual couples are able to register under the same law.

Voicing support for the measure were a number of Mexican celebrities including actors Gael Garcia Bernal, Diego Luna and director Alfonso Cuaron., who were among 51 people who published an open letter to local newspapers.

The new law will take effect four months from the date of publication.