



DATELINE

Monthly News Bulletin
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DignityUSA works for respect and justice for people of all sexual orientations, genders and gender identities—especially gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender persons—in the Catholic Church and the world through education, advocacy, and support.

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Happy Valentine's Day to All of Us!

By Marianne Duddy-Burke, Executive Director

Just days from now we will once again face the annual celebration of romance, love, and commitment known as Valentine's Day. This day can be a special event for you and your sweetie, a time of longing, another celebration of commercialism (yes, I just saw that ad promoting Valentine's Day as the impetus to run out and buy a washer-dryer system), a mad scramble for the class list your child insists she or he gave you last Tuesday, or a non-frenzied time to gratefully remember all those you love.

As Valentine's Day approaches, I am very aware of the battles that our romances, love, and commitment are subject to all across this country. Washington, DC recently joined Connecticut, Iowa, Massachusetts, New Hampshire, and Vermont in allowing same-sex couples to join in civil marriage. (Congress could still intervene in the District's decision, but as of this writing, same-sex marriages are scheduled to begin early in March 2010.) Washington, DC endorsed same-sex marriage despite threats from the Archdiocese to end Catholic Charities' publicly-funded social services should the measure pass. In New Hampshire, opponents are working to find a way to overturn our access to marriage just weeks after they began on January 1st. Maine, New York, and New Jersey all marked recent losses for equality, often with the Catholic bishops leading the campaign against us. And in California, the highly publicized lawsuit challenging the constitutionality of Proposition 8 continues. DOMA, the federal Defense of Marriage Act, remains the law of the land, meaning that even in those areas and jurisdictions where same-sex marriage is legal, we still lack the federal financial and legal benefits that straight married couples enjoy.

On this Valentine's Day, DignityUSA recommit itself to our part in the struggle to achieve full equality for same-sex couples and couples with at least one transgender member. We will continue to educate Catholics about the need for marriage equality, and we continue our spiritual celebrations of the love and commitment these couples share. We are absolutely committed to full equality for us as individuals and for those in loving relationships, both in civil society and in our Church. And on Valentine's Day, we honor and celebrate all of our members and friends, gay and straight, who strive to live in love every day.



The devastation caused by the recent earthquake and aftershocks in Haiti remind us of another type of love, and of the common humanity we all share. Many, many Dignity chapters have taken up special collections to help fund relief efforts in Haiti. I am aware of at least two Dignity members who are assisting with humanitarian relief and medical care in Haiti.

We hope that all of our members with family and friends in Haiti have heard good news from them. We urge all to continue to keep the people of Haiti in prayer, and to give as generously as possible to relief efforts, especially those that will help with long-term rebuilding efforts, as well as immediate response.

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National Office

DignityUSA
 PO Box 376
 Medford, MA 02155-0004
 Voice: 202-861-0017 or
 800-877-8797
 Fax: 781-397-0584
 Website: www.dignityusa.org
 E-mail: info@dignityusa.org

Staff

Marianne Duddy-Burke –
 Executive Director
executivedirector@dignityusa.org
 Voice: 617-669-7810

Peggy Burns – Operations Mgr
Info@dignityusa.org

Dateline & QV: Quarterly Voice Publications Team

Leo Egashira – Publications
 Committee Chair
Legashira@yahoo.com

Bill Welch – Editor
DUSAEditor@comcast.net

Peggy Burns – Proofreader
 Paul Keaveney – Proofreader

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DignityUSA Wins \$36,000 Grant

The Arcus Foundation has awarded DignityUSA a capacity-building grant of \$36,000 to conduct market research aimed at building our member and donor base over the next two to five years. The grant will enable DignityUSA to explore our value to certain demographic groups identified by the DignityUSA National Board. It will also help shape effective messages for outreach to each selected group. Marketing Committee Chair and Board Member Ramon Rodriguez will lead the work in conjunction with a professional market research firm that has extensive experience with progressive Catholic groups.

“This is the largest grant that DignityUSA has ever received from a foundation,” said Executive Director Marianne Duddy-Burke. “I am very excited about the opportunity this award presents us, and grateful that the Arcus Foundation has chosen to partner with us.”

The mission of the Arcus Foundation is to achieve social justice that is inclusive of sexual orientation, gender identity, and race, and to ensure conservation and respect of the great apes.

NOTE: Members and friends of DignityUSA who have expertise in market research and/or branding are invited to join the project team for this initiative. If interested, please contact Marianne Duddy-Burke at ExecutiveDirector@DignityUSA.org.

DignityUSA at Creating Change 2010

DignityUSA will once again have a strong presence at the National Gay/Lesbian Task Force Creating Change Conference, which will be held in Dallas, TX February 3-7, 2010. This conference, which draws over 2,500 people annually, is the largest annual gathering of LGBT advocates and allies.

Executive Director Marianne Duddy-Burke will present a session on “Mobilizing Pro-LGBT Catholics on Civil Rights Initiatives.” The session focuses on the divergence of opinion between the Catholic hierarchy and the grassroots Church, documents the involvement of bishops in funding and voter mobilization on key issues—primarily same-gender marriage opposition, and offers strategies for identifying and activating progressive Catholic voters. In addition, Marianne will participate in a number of panel discussions and sessions where religious leaders and political activists discuss the role of people of faith in achieving justice for the LGBT community, be part of a summit on the intersection of oppressions, and will attend a “boot camp” on social networking tools for LGBT activists.

Marianne will also be part of a meeting sponsored by the Arcus Foundation which will bring together faith leaders from about 20 denominations to assess the status of the work of faith-based LGBT groups in the LGBT justice movement. She is delighted that the conference provides the opportunity to meet with members and leaders of Dignity/Dallas, and that the Chapter will help staff an outreach table throughout the conference.

God's Love is Unconditional

Give Thought to Running for the Board of Directors

The April 2010 nomination due date is still three months away, but if you are contemplating becoming more involved in the governance of the organization at the national level, please give serious thought to running for DignityUSA's Board of Directors.

For information on the responsibilities of the Board of Directors, commitment, skills needed, and becoming a candidate, please see "Serving on the DignityUSA Board," at <http://www.dignityusa.org/serving-on-board>.

The section "Becoming a Candidate" will be updated with the formation and announcement of the DignityUSA Nominating Committee early in 2010.

Happy Anniversary & Congratulations to:

Austin (TX) - 31 years
Dallas (TX) - 35 years
San Francisco (CA) - 37 years

Sponsor a Board Member!

At its fall meeting, DignityUSA's National Board decided to begin raising funds to help defray the cost of traveling for our Board members. As many of you might know, due to the financial stress DignityUSA has experienced in the past few years, we have been asking our National Board members to pay for their own expenses when we meet in person, three times a year. Depending on where the Board member lives and where the meeting is taking place, the cost of airfare, hotel, meals, and incidentals can easily run over \$1,000 per trip.

We have been fortunate enough to have been able to have a group of talented and generous individuals who have been willing and able to assume both the personal and financial responsibility of being a Board member for many years now.

We understand, however, this is not the way we want to run the organization indefinitely. We are very aware that because of the financial burden that being a Board member entails, we are leaving out a number of talented individuals who would be able and willing to serve us well at the national level. We do not want finances to be the only reason why a skillful Dignity member chooses not to run.

It is for this reason that the Board has decided to enlarge the meaning of the Talent Acquisition Fund to include funds to help pay for some of the costs of our Board members. "Board expenses" is a new line item in our 2010 budget. In addition to that, we would like to introduce a new "Sponsorship" program. We imagine that there are members out there who might have the financial means to pay for the cost of being a National Board member but do not have the inclination to run for the Board themselves; or some of you who have served on the Board before but have no desire to do it again. But maybe you would be inclined to "sponsor" the expenses (partially or totally) of someone else. Perhaps you have a young leader from your chapter who you think would contribute a lot at the national level and you want specifically to sponsor him or her; or maybe you just want to contribute money to the TAF with a directive that the money be used to help sponsor a Board member. We can use your help. Please consider becoming a "Sponsor of a Board member." It is a good way to develop new leadership and ensure the future success of DignityUSA.

For further details and/or to make donations to the Talent Acquisition Fund or Sponsor a Board Member Project, please contact Peggy Burns, Operations Manager, at info@dignityusa.org, by phone (202-861-0017) or (800-877-8797), or by mail at Operation Manager, DignityUSA, PO Box 376, Medford, MA 02155-0004.

Let us hear from you. And thanks.

Transgender Committee Update

By Clarice Sevegney

The members of DignityUSA's Transgender Committee are involved in Transgender Conferences in their own local areas. Crystal Ann Gray and Shari Miller (Dignity/Denver) are working in the Colorado Gold Rush Conference, February 25-28, 2010. This conference is hosted by The Gender Identity Center of Colorado.

Ken and Marcia Garber (Dignity/Boston) attended their fourth First Event Conference hosted by the Tiffany Club of New England (www.TCNE.org), January 13-17, 2010. They staffed an information table with Dignity/Boston materials. Marcia noted there were workshops on spirituality at this event.

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2009 Tax Statements

End of year tax statements for 2009 were sent to donors of \$250+ at the end of January 2009.

People who have not received them by mid-February 2010 should contact Peggy Burns, Operations Manager at info@dignityusa.org.

Announcement

Jenn Gibson, author, is currently working on a new book that tells the story of same-sex couples at all stages of the relationship process. The book is in its early stages.

Jenn is looking for couples to interview. If you are interested in participating or desire further information, please contact happythebook@gmail.com.

Website:

<http://www.happythebook.com>

Facebook:

<http://tiny.cc/HappyTheBook>



Transgender Committee Update
Continued from page 3

Fredrikka Joy Maxwell (DignityUSA member from Nashville TN) sends us challenges with “hugs” and alerts us to transgender events nationally. Local Dignity chapters will be hearing from Peggy Burns, DignityUSA Operations Manager, in the near future about transgender events in their areas. Leo Egashira, DignityUSA Board Member, gives our efforts 100% support. Logan Bear, Webminister, has let us know that he will include transgender news items on the DignityUSA web site.

We still hope to include a transgender female-to-male (ftm) person on our committee. If you, or someone you know, are interested, please contact Clarice at claricerd@hotmail.com

In closing, I would like to remember CJ Garber, a female-to-male (ftm) person in a special way on the first anniversary of his death. We send love and consolation to his parents, Ken and Marcia Garber.

Receiving Hard Copy QVs Opt-out

The *QV: Quarterly Voice* of DignityUSA is mailed as a 12-page (occasionally more) hard copy journal to the paid membership of DignityUSA four times a year. Most *QV* articles are timeless and many members have commented that some issues are re-read two or three times or passed along to other people.

Several environmentally- and cost-conscious DignityUSA members have requested to receive only electronic copies of the *QV* via the DignityUSA website. Your thoughtfulness and concern are greatly appreciated.

The 1st Quarter 2010 *QV* is currently in production. If you wish to opt-out of receiving a mailed hard copy version of *QV* and access or read the online electronic edition only, please contact DignityUSA’s Operations Manager, Peggy Burns, info@dignityusa.org, indicating “QV opt-out” in the Subject heading. Thank you.

Prominent Dignitarians Featured in New Book

Long-time DignityUSA leaders John McNeill and Marianne Duddy-Burke (identified in the book by her previous last name Duddy) are profiled in the newly-released *Redemption Stories: Unwasted Pain* by Mary Ciofalo. *Redemption Stories* contains true stories of seemingly impossible changes made by ordinary people. Both John’s and Marianne’s stories date from 1995, and are among more than twenty profiles collected over a 15-year span.

The book can be purchased through its publisher, AuthorHouse, at www.AuthorHouse.com, through the author’s website (www.maryciofalo.com), as well as from Amazon.com and other booksellers.

CHAPTER NEWS

Dignity-Integrity/Rochester NY Bids Farewell to Long-time Chaplain

Dignity-Integrity/Rochester's long-time chaplain, the Rev. Michael J. Nicosia, presided at his final Liturgy of the Word with our community on the Feast of the Baptism of the Lord, January 10, 2010.

It was a doubly moving service, as it included member Yu Yi Tsang's baptism. As a personal touch, his baptism candle was crafted for the occasion with the words of John 1:5a, "The light shineth in the darkness," in Chinese characters.

The liturgy concluded with a farewell blessing of Chaplain Michael by Fr. Gary and the Chapter's incoming spiritual director, the Rev. Carolyn Lombard.

As a token of appreciation of Michael's twelve years of pastoral service, the community presented him with a rainbow stole (he received his certification as a Christian minister through the Federation of Christian Ministries this past year).

With a farewell cocktail party on January 23, 2010, the Chapter sent Michael off to join his partner Marc in Denver, Colorado. Community members were joined by his ministry colleagues from around town, as well as members of Interfaith Advocates for LGBT People.

Rochester's loss will be Denver's gain.

Dignity/Sarasota a Sponsor of Local Holocaust Museum Boxcar Project

Dignity/Sarasota (Florida), also known as DignityUSA/Sarasota, is one of 21 or more sponsors of a Holocaust Museum boxcar project to be held at the North Port High School, January 25 to February 5, 2010.

North Port High School (NPHS) Holocaust and Genocide teacher Carol LaValle has been working relentlessly to educate students on this gruesome reality by bringing an authentic boxcar to the high school's campus from January 25 - February 5, 2010.

Bernadette Bennett, the program specialist of social studies for Sarasota County school, Arlene Pearlman from the Congregation on Humanistic Judaism, and the Holocaust Museum of Southwest Florida have been major contributors to the success of this project.

In addition to the boxcar, LaValle has arranged for survivors and other speakers, including Ms. Stanlee Stahl, the Exec-

utive Director of the Righteous, to participate in a panel discussion, "The Righteous During the Holocaust," on February 3, 2010, from 6:30-8 p.m. at North Port High School.

Bart Coyle, Past President of Dignity/Sarasota, will serve as a member of the panel to speak on the GLBT experience during the Holocaust.

Dignity/Honolulu in Martin Luther King Parade and Hawaii State Senate Passes Civil Unions Bill

Members of Dignity/Honolulu joined members of PFLAG (Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) Oahu riding in a trolley float as a contingent in the Honolulu Martin Luther King Parade on January 18, 2010.

Gene Corpuz, DignityUSA Director-at-Large and longtime member, activist, and advocate of Dignity/Honolulu, was amidst the jubilant observers as the Hawaii State Senate passed a civil-unions bill 18-7 on January 23, 2010. The wide margin of the favorable vote is enough to override a potential veto from the governor.

The bill would give both same-sex and heterosexual couples the ability to enter into civil unions and have the same rights, benefits, and responsibilities as marriage under state law.



Members of Dignity/Honolulu in and outside parade trolley