



Every Vote Absolutely Matters An Interview with NCLR's Cathy Sakimura

OFC Executive Director Renata Moreira recently had the chance to talk about how the law and the upcoming elections impact our families with Cathy Sakimura, National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) Deputy Director and Family Law Director, whose history of advocacy includes

work with COLAGE and the GSA Network. She's been at NCLR for more than a dozen years.

RENATA MOREIRA: Can you share a bit about yourself, your family's composition, and your work?

CATHY SAKIMURA: My wife and I have one child, who just turned two, and we live in the East Bay. We used assisted reproduction and my family is mixed race. My wife and my daughter are native as well.

It's been 12 years since I came to NCLR to start the Family Protection Project. This project is focused on improving legal

services for low income LGBTQ families of color and how advocacy and existing laws impact low income families of color. Now I oversee all our family law work and see all the ways this area of the law impacts our entire community.

There's really been a huge change in California over the last decade and a half in terms of protecting LGBTQ parents and their children. We now have recognition of parental rights for unmarried parents, people who have not completed a formal adoption, and people who use assisted reproduction, as well as families with more than two parents. There are streamlined adoption processes for some families. Adoption is still necessary to make sure families are protected when they leave the state.

But one of the major things that's still missing is something we're working on right now. In California, there is a free process for people who believe they are biological fathers: they can sign a document with the person who gives birth while at the hospital, declaring that they are a father. And it has the force of a court order, as if you had done an adoption. It's free; all you need to do is understand the form and sign

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Part of What Happens Is Up to Us

By Laura Vyda

First, a little about my family: my wife and I have been together for 20 years; we have a 13-year-old son and a 7-year old daughter. We had them through IVF using my partner's eggs, donor sperm, and I birthed them. Our family is white and Jewish. We feel really fortunate to be a part of the big fabric of queer and radical community in the East Bay. I'm a femme cis queer woman and Rachel is a sharp, sexy, gender expansive butch.

I work as the Communications Director for IPEN, an international network of over 500 public interest organizations in 125 countries working together for better, toxics-free chemical policies for environmental health and justice. In this work I have seen up close how corporate lobbyists influence policies. When corporations get to run political decisions, be that locally, nationally or internationally, it is bad news for humans and the environment.

Working with colleagues in un-democratic countries—where there are no constitutional rights to free speech and assembly—has driven home how essential it is that



we do all we can to stop the current assault on democracy. But stopping the right is not the end game. We have transformative work to do so that everyone's human rights, dignity, and liberation are realized.

The conservative "religious-freedom" laws are not about cake. The "right to discriminate" argument left intact by the recent

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DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Be Heard; Be Counted

by Renata Moreira, Executive Director

The midterm elections are upon us—Tuesday, November 6th—and they will allow voters to significantly change the political landscape of the next few years as of this half-way point in Trump's four-year term. Not only will voters potentially change the makeup of Congress for the remainder of first term, but locally, our communities will change leadership in ways that will immediately impact us.

For this very reason, the cover articles in this quarter's newsletter address the impact of electoral politics on our communities. On November 6 (or earlier, through a mail-in ballot!) we all need to get out and vote, and we need to motivate our friends and family members to do so as well—here in the Bay Area, across the state, and across the country.

Much is at stake for LGBTQ families: the current administration—and, importantly, those congressional representatives who empower or enable it, many of whom come from our fine state—has levied more attacks against our communities and our civil rights than we ever have thought imaginable. But we are not powerless in the face of them. We have our voices; we have our ability to take action. And while the actions we can take are many, voting is an act we are honor-bound to take: it forms the cornerstone of our democracy. And it's one which many, many justice-loving people have sacrificed their lives to ensure and protect.

Laura Vyda—whom I've joined at the "Let Our People Go" actions she helped organize to protest the incarceration of immigrant families—puts it well: if there was no power in voting, conservatives would not spend so much time and resources trying to suppress it.

This newsletter also features Cathy Sakimura, National Center for Lesbian Rights Deputy Director and Director of the Family Law Project, whom I was able to talk with about the impact of the law and upcoming elections on our families. Cathy has been at the center of many historic legal advances for us in recent years, and is of one mind with me, Laura, and many others when she says: "we never would have come this far if there hadn't been people who were completely and utterly engaged."

Join us! Let the ballot box amplify your voice, and let that voice be heard from coast to coast: we are proud of our love; we are proud of our families; and we will be counted. 🏳️

Part of What Happens...

(continued from page 1)

Supreme Court ruling is not just a win for bigoted bakers; it's a profound threat. The move to promote religious "exemptions" to basic civil rights law is a move to legitimate the denial of a host of vital services to queer people from adoption, to housing, to healthcare. A real religious freedom law would ensure that Muslims, Sikhs, and other religious minorities would be safer to practice their religions. Clearly this is not the case.

For most queer and trans people, it's not only homophobia that determines what kinds of struggles we face against discrimination and threats of violence. We show up with all of ourselves, always—with our race, gender, class, and all. We need to embrace unifying politics that envision our collective liberation.

The ugly core of fascism is to amplify difference, wedge fear, and deny groups of people their humanity. But I'm finding hope in a growing resistance declaring that our humanity is not debatable, that black and brown lives matter, that love is love, consensual pleasure is a birthright, and that people should be put over profits.

Electoral politics is something like brushing your teeth. Consider it civic hygiene—something you can do to stop decay! And it's not just presidential and congressional seats that matter. Civil rights decisions, real decisions that matter to families, are made in state houses, city halls, and in California via ballot initiatives. Will the textbooks at your kid's school make no mention of LGBT history? Will they even have textbooks? Will you be able to afford health care for your family? Will jails collaborate with ICE or will we abolish ICE nationally? Can our kids access birth control and reproductive health services with dignity? Are queer and

If there was no power in voting, conservatives would not spend so much effort trying to suppress the vote.

trans kids safe? Is our water safe to drink? Will cops have license to terrorize communities?

Our rights, our collective well-being—all the important questions affecting our families—are impacted by those in power. Voting matters. If there was no power in voting, conservatives would not spend so much effort trying to suppress the vote. Transformation is never on the ballot in a capitalist two party system. But more progressive voting blocs means more progressive options. Just look at Oakland's mayoral race!

The far-right forces in control make no bones about calling for a white Christian theocracy, eradicating the separation between church and state, and structuring all institutions around their white, male, hetero profiteering, war mongering, and environmental destruction. They have a very clear mission, and it is one in which your race, your gender, your sexuality, your body's abilities determine your position in society, your life chances. This is truly what we are up against.

If you don't like the future we are heading towards, join movements to resist. Mobilize for dramatic and audacious change. Engage in civil disobedience and creative art action. Vote. Rebecca Solnit expresses my feeling so well, "Hope is a belief that what we do might matter, an understanding that the future is not yet written... It means... not assuming you know what will happen when the future is unwritten, and part of what happens is up to us." ☺



OFC's LGBTQ Family BBQ & Campout

JULY

21-22

Another year, another wonderful Campout! We couldn't have dreamed of a better weekend with our lovely families and kiddos.



CALENDAR

SAT Oct 6 10am–12pm	<i>LGBTQ Family Hike</i> CHABOT SPACE & SCIENCE CENTER (MEET AT THE BOX OFFICE), 10000 SKYLINE BLVD., OAKLAND Come join OFC on an exciting family hike with Chabot Space & Science Center. You'll get to explore and enjoy the beautiful redwood trees as we take the west ridge trail down through redwood bowl and up to redwood peak, the highest point of the city! As space is limited, remember to register online on our website.	
SUN Oct 14 10am–12pm	<i>Kidpower Child Protection and Cybersafety Workshop for Adults</i> OUR FAMILY COALITION OFFICE, 1385 MISSION ST., STE 340, SAN FRANCISCO OFC is excited to partner with KidPower on this workshop for parents and caregivers. The workshop will prepare adults to assist their children in developing healthy relationships and making safe choices with people including strangers, siblings, peers, and other people they know, in the real world and online.	SF
TUE Oct 9, 16, 23*, 30 Nov 6, 13 6–8pm	<i>Six-part Social Emotional Learning Series</i> BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE., OAKLAND Join trainer Shawn Bryant as he shares with us how we can effectively apply the attitudes, and skills necessary to understand and manage our children's needs and emotions. Through this Social Emotional Learning series, attendees will develop a behavior support plan for children needing individualized intensive interventions. *Oct 23 location: Habitot Children's Museum, 2065 Kittredge St., Berkeley	EB
FRI Oct 12 9am–4pm	<i>Make History, Teach History: An LGBTQ Stakeholders Forum</i> GOOGLE'S COMMUNITY SPACE, 188 THE EMBARCADERO, SAN FRANCISCO California has made an historic move being the first state to require LGBT representation in history and social science, K-12 textbooks. OFC has been at the forefront and is now hosting the LGBTQ History Stakeholders Forum where educators, historians, community members and anyone committed to the implementation of the FAIR Education Act, will begin to design an all state roll out of professional development for California schools. If you are interested in co-creating a high quality LGBTQ-inclusive professional learning program for teachers and administrators, please email education@ourfamily.org . A second forum will be held Feb 1 for our Southern California community in Los Angeles. Help us make schools FAIR!	SF
THU Oct 25 6–9pm	<i>Womb to Grow: Conception Reception</i> NILE HALL, PRESERVATION PARK, OAKLAND This evening event provides a comprehensive overview of alternative conception options for people who are looking to get pregnant and identify as queer women, gender non-binary folx, or transgender. Prospective parents will have the chance to hear from a range of LGBTQ-friendly fertility and reproductive service providers, legal experts, and non-profit organizations. \$20 per person, but no one will be turned away for lack of funds. Dinner will be provided with advance registration on our website.	EB
SAT Oct 27 1–4pm	<i>Monster Mash Halloween Bash</i> EMBARCADERO YMCA, 169 STEUART ST., SAN FRANCISCO Join us and other LGBTQ families for some swampy swimming, spooky dancing, creepy crafts and tasty treats. There will be fun activities for little monsters of all ages. Don't forget your costumes!	SF
THU Nov 8 6:30–8:30pm*	<i>Kidpower Child Protection and Cybersafety Workshop for Adults</i> HABITOT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, 2065 KITTREDGE ST., BERKELEY OFC is excited to partner with KidPower on this workshop for parents and caregivers. The workshop will prepare adults to assist their children in developing healthy relationships and making safe choices with people including strangers, siblings, peers, and other people they know, in the real world and online. *tentative, please check our website closer to date in case of any change	EB

*Free childcare and food are provided at all events, with advance registration.
For further information and event registration, visit www.ourfamily.org.*

SUN
Oct 21
1–3pm

Trans Family Event

COLLEGE HILL LEARNING GARDEN, 336 ELSIE ST., SAN FRANCISCO

Save the date for a fun OFC family event for trans, gender non-conforming and non-binary parents and their families. More info coming soon!

SF

SAT
Dec 1
10am–
12pm

Kidpower Safety Workshop for Parents and Kids (aged 6 -11)

BANANAS, 5232 CLAREMONT AVE, OAKLAND

Back by popular demand, KidPower and OFC are bringing you the Kidpower Safety Workshop for Parents and Kids again! Together, kids and their adults learn and practice age-appropriate social safety skills such as boundary setting, projecting awareness, protecting feelings from hurting words, advocacy, and effective helpseeking. Please note that the content for this workshop is strictly for kids aged 6 to 11 accompanied by their adult/s.

EB

SUN
Dec 9
1–4pm

LGBTQ Foster-Adoption Mini Conference

WOMEN'S BUILDING, 3543 18TH ST., SAN FRANCISCO

Save the date for information sharing, panel discussions, and an agency meet and greet for LGBTQ families exploring foster-adoption. Food and child care provided with advanced registration, walk-ins welcome!

SF

Every Vote Matters ...

(continued from page 1)

it. But it is only open to people, primarily cisgender men, who believe themselves to be genetic fathers—not people who have used assisted reproduction who aren't genetic parents. This is a process that's mandated by federal law—part of the requirements placed on states as a condition of receiving medicaid and federal welfare funds. It is particularly useful for low-income families in establishing parental rights.

We're trying to figure out a way to open this process up to be more expansive, including non-genetic parents and people of all genders to be able to use the process. California would be the largest state to have it in place, if we succeed. Which would be great: this state is a leader in assisted reproduction and more people use assisted reproduction here than in many other places.

RM: In what specific ways do federal and state policies impacting LGBTQ equity issues impact our families?

CS: There have been various efforts at the federal level to permit discrimination in foster and adoption services on a number of grounds, including gender identity and sexual orientation. Agencies involved with adoptions or foster care placement and approval that are religious would be allowed to discriminate based on a religious objection. This allows for discrimination against the prospective parents and the children and youth. It is a really important issue for LGBTQ families.

If this kind of law passes at the federal level, then it would apply to agencies in California, and it would be a first step toward allowing this same discrimination by other agencies and services.

“We never would have come this far if there hadn't been people who were completely and utterly engaged.”

RM: From your standpoint as an expert in LGBTQ family law, why do you believe electoral politics matter?

CS: Every vote absolutely matters to what could be the outcome on all these issues. The federal laws that get considered and passed are voted on by the actual people who are in Congress – so who your representative is really matters. Not just for you but for the whole country, in terms of what kind of policies and laws are going to be there for our families and our children later.

Even if you feel like your particular representative is great and completely represents your interests and they're not up for re-election or not likely to lose, remember: everybody deciding that they don't need to vote for their representative certainly could have that impact. Also, folks can get engaged in elections in their neighboring districts. There are many close elections throughout California where you may have an interest in helping out or doing more to support people in that district: who gets elected in that district can impact the policies that get passed in Congress later on for you.

It is so much about looking at the total arc of history. We have so much more to do, but we have also come a long way on a lot of issues. And we never would have come this far if there hadn't been people who were completely and utterly engaged. ↻

Want to hear even more? A full version of this interview is published at our blog on OurFamily.org/blog



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SUPPORT GROUPS

WEDNESDAYS

Oct 3
Nov 7
Dec 5
5:30–7:30pm

Rainbow Family Night

HABITOT CHILDREN'S MUSEUM, 2065 KITTREDGE ST., BERKELEY

LGBTQ parents are invited to join our facilitated support group to connect, share experiences, swap tips, and discuss issues relevant to our families, while kids have a great time playing at Habitot.

EB

TUESDAYS

Oct 2, 9, 16, 30
Nov 6, 20, 27
Dec 4
6–8pm

QTPOC Parent Support Group

OUR FAMILY COALITION OFFICE, 1385 MISSION ST., STE 340, SAN FRANCISCO

Navigating the world as a queer person of color and parent can be complex; finding a safe space to connect and build community with each other can be a challenge. Join OFC for an 8-week support group for queer and trans parents of color in San Francisco where you can be your whole self and talk about what matters to you. Dinner and child care provided free with advance registration.

SF

TUESDAYS

Oct 23
Nov 27
6–8pm

Drop-In Support for LGBTQ+ Parents

CHILDREN'S DAY SCHOOL, 333 DOLORES ST., SAN FRANCISCO

Enjoy a meal with your kids and other LGBTQ+ families, then parents and caregivers break off for facilitated discussions with their peers about family and child-rearing issues. Dinner and childcare provided with advance registration.

SF

PLAYGROUPS

TUESDAYS

Oct 2, 9, 16, 23, 30
Nov 6, 13, 20, 27
Dec 4, 11
10–11:30am

LGBTQ Parent-Child Interactive Playgroup (0–5 years)

DESTINY ARTS, 970 GRACE AVE., OAKLAND

Interactive play and circle time for infants, toddlers, and their grown ups, including fun activities like music, movement, and storytelling. Healthy snacks provided!

EB

FRIDAYS

Oct 5, 12, 19, 26
Nov 2, 9, 16, 30
Dec 7, 14
9:30–11am

Toddle with Me: Music & Movement Class (1–5 years)

COMMUNITY WELL, 78 OCEAN AVE., SAN FRANCISCO

Offered weekly for LGBTQ parents with young children, our music and movement classes promote kids' overall development. Using creative physical expression, this class promotes gross and fine motor skill development, coordination and balance, as well as early literacy, pre-math, and social-emotional skills.

SF

FRIDAYS

Oct 5, 12, 19, 26
11:30am–1pm

Baby & Me: Infant Class (0–12 months)

COMMUNITY WELL, 78 OCEAN AVE., SAN FRANCISCO

Want more quality time with your little one? OFC will be hosting an 8-week infant class for LGBTQ+ parents and caregivers. This parent-child interactive helps support child bonding and health and increases know-how about your infant's cognitive, physical, and language development!

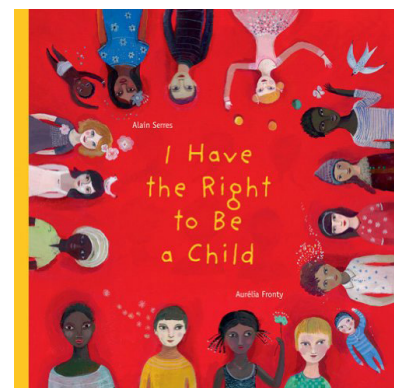
SF

BOOK CORNER

I Have the Right to Be a Child

by Alain Serres

From the publisher: With a very simple text accompanied by rich, vibrant illustrations a young narrator describes what it means to be a child with rights—from the right to food, water and shelter, to the right to go to school, to the right to be free from violence, to the right to breathe clean air, and much more. The book emphasizes that these rights belong to every child on the planet, whether they are “black or white, small or big, rich or poor, born here or somewhere else.” It also makes evident that knowing and talking about these rights are the first steps toward making sure that they are respected.



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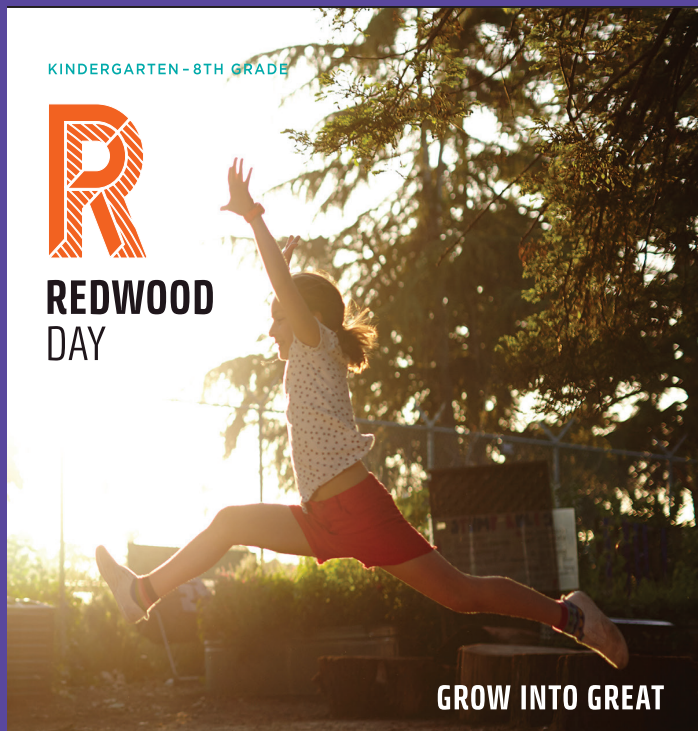
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OUR FAMILY COALITION'S ANNUAL NIGHT OUT

FRIDAY, MAY 11, 2018

CHAMPION



Steve Disselhorst & Lorevic Rivera

ADVOCATE



Michael Ginther & Jim O'Donnell

Martin Mitchell & Robert Cox



Our Family Coalition advances equity for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) families with children through support, education, and advocacy.

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www.ourfamily.org

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Corporate Partner Spotlight: NARVAR, INC.

OFC was proud to help kick off Narvar's 2018 Week of Pride celebrations at their San Francisco HQ with an interactive session from Executive Director, Renata Moreira. Renata discussed concepts and nuances around diversity and inclusion and led the group in activities aimed at identifying and understanding how our identities shape many of our experiences including those in the workplace.

The group discussed how employees must be supported in bringing their full selves to work and how diversity enhances workplace capacity when our identities are acknowledged and respected. Participants discussed how identities aligned with the dominant group benefit from privileges others are denied, resulting in less access to spaces, safety, and opportunities.

The session rounded out with an open and honest conversation on how each of us can take action as allies. Participants identified several key steps to showing up as an ally: Actively acknowledging our privilege and power and openly discussing those advantages; educating ourselves, and listening more and speaking less. OFC looks forward to continuing the conversation with Narvar and continuing to support equity for all families and individuals.





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Thursday, October 25
6:00pm-9:00pm

\$20 per person; no one turned away for lack of funds

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- LGBTQ-friendly fertility and reproductive service providers
- Non-profit organizations • Legal expert panel • LGBTQ parent panel

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