



Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays

NPO number: 091 797

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5th February 2015

RE: CPE FOR DOTGAY LLC (.GAY)

Dear ICANN and the Economist Intelligence Unit,

I am the co-founder of Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) South Africa and I would like to contribute the following statements and information to the CPE panel for .GAY.

PFLAG South Africa is a support group of volunteers who are passionate about life and dedicated to the building of healthy empowered lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and intersex (LGBTI) persons in South Africa and internationally.

PFLAG caters to the needs of those closest to LGBTI persons, often to address the misunderstandings and misinformation that surrounds the gay community and what it really means to be LGBTI. PFLAG is considered among the strongest allies of the gay community, linked in large part by family, and our group is inherently and often exposed to the same societal stigma of LGBTI persons.

There have been questions of the inclusion of allies within the gay community, such as PFLAG and others like GSA Network and COLAGE. Anyone who knows the plight of LGBTI persons throughout the world can have no doubt as to how critical, and risky, the membership of allies are to the gay community and how important it is for ICANN to recognize them as such.

I would like to offer the following information for the CPE panel to further demonstrate the point. We look forward to a successful CPE result in the coming months.

Sincerely,

Kim Lithgow
(Co-founder of Amanzimtoti branch and Head of Pflag South Africa)

*"Sexuality is not a choice.
Pflag promotes understanding and acceptance.
Together, we are keeping families together."*



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CORPORATE ALLIES

First and foremost many allies are corporate entities which do not have gender. Though some enterprises do identify themselves as a gay friendly enterprise, many of those who are allies support the community in many ways, e.g by hiring community members and making sure that there is a gay friendly environment for all employees. Corporations seek to create a safe environment and one where LGBTI people feel they can succeed in. This includes Employee Resource Groups (ERGs) which are inclusive of internal “allies” who support the gay community internally and externally. Many of these corporations choose to show their support for the community by joining the gay community organizations. These organizations generally have very stringent requirements for such membership in the community as the community looks to them for a metric on how gay-friendly a company is. Metrics are reported and promoted annually. Some of the example requirements are:

- Anti-discrimination workplace policies
- LGBTQI partner benefits
- LGBTQI health benefits
- LGBTQI employee resource groups
- LGBTQI sponsorships of nonprofit organizations or events

The corporations often do this at a risk, and at a cost. In sense when these corporations come out as being part of and supporting the gay community they have been known to come under consumer and sometimes political pressure. Some examples that have been in the news of such risks include:

- Consumer boycotts and protest
- Board and Stockholder conflict
- International trade conflicts with countries that criminalize being gay
- Overlooked on new business & contracts
- Jeopardized business partnerships & distribution channels
- Endorsement withdrawals

OTHER ALLIES

Another kind of ally we find is the person who is perhaps not ready to come out, but who is looking for the gay community support during the process of coming out, a process that can destroy one’s life, lose one their family and sometimes land them in jail.

As the Pew Research poll¹ shows, being out is not a single state. A person can be out on the Internet but not out in the workplace or to their families. In many cultures the Internet and the various organizations on the Internet, many of whom will likely serve as Authentication Partners for the .GAY domain, are the first and sometimes only places where the questioning can come in contact with the gay community. In many cases, since they cannot risk declaring themselves as out, they register as allies. While many countries may make it impossible for organizations, businesses and individuals to own a domain (Russia, gay propaganda bill), .GAY resources will be available to the end user in a trusted .GAY environment.