

The Shofar

Newsletter of Kol Hadash
Humanistic Congregation

Contents

Shalom from Rabbi Chalom	1
Message from the Chair	2
Upcoming Events	3
From the Youth Ed. Director	4
Sunday School News	5
Welcome New Members	6
Meet a Member	7
Community Service Corner	8
Cornerstone Campaign	8
News & Announcements	9
This Month's Yahrtzeits	9
Family News & Events	9
Thank You!	9
Follow Us Online	10
Tributes, Donations & Gifts	10

If you would like to contribute materials to the Shofar, please contact Editor Mark Friedman (shofar@KolHadash.com). The Shofar is mailed to Kol Hadash members and is posted on our website (www.KolHadash.com) during the last week of each calendar month. You can always find our events calendar on our website as well.

Kol Hadash members also receive a weekly e-mail with details of upcoming events and other Kol Hadash news. If you are not receiving the weekly e-mail and would like to be added to the list, please contact us at info@KolHadash.com.



Shalom from Rabbi Chalom

Coming Out

*by Rabbi Adam Chalom
(rabbichalom@KolHadash.com)*

Are we “in the closet” as Humanists and as Humanistic Jews?

In recent years, the greater Humanist community has begun to learn from the experience of the LGBT (Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender) world. In a May 2011 study by the Pew Research Center, more than 60% said a presidential candidate being gay would make no difference in their potential support, and 33% would be less likely to support him/her for this reason. If the candidate did not believe in God, however, only 33% said it made no difference and fully 61% said they would be less likely to support him/her—significantly worse than “never held elective office” (51% less likely to support), “had an extramarital affair” (46% less likely), or even “been an elected official in Washington for several years” (25%).

Choosing to publicly self-identify with a disliked group is an act of courage and dignity, but it is also a challenge.

Several key lessons stem from the LGBT journey over the past few decades that we can take to heart.

- **Visibility is a key step toward tolerance.** The more people who knew, worked with, or were related to someone gay, the harder it was to demonize, or even to deny, basic rights to the group. “Coming out” proved to be beneficial not just to the individual, who could now live authentically, but also to the community, which was no longer invisible or on the margins. Joining a Humanistic congregation is just such a step toward authenticity and, we hope, visibility.
- **Self-advocacy requires courage.** LGBT individuals, like Humanistic

Jews or Jews in general, tend to look like everyone else. So they often hear jokes or comments they would not were they visibly different like African-Americans or Latinos. The question then becomes: when to speak up, and when to remain silent? The more we self-identity, and self-defend, the more we risk the disapproval of others. But whose respect would we rather deserve, other people’s or our own?

• **Believing is better than non-believing.** What we stand for is even more important than what we stand against. While some of the fruits of the LGBT experience have included challenging traditional gender roles and social institutions, standing for loving partnerships and equal inclusion has been a much stronger position. We are not “non-believers” with no positive content. Rather, we believe, we have values, we live out those values in the world.

• **Coalitions build strength.** There are times and places to do things for ourselves, and other times to work together on shared goals. Joining forces with existing civil rights organizations like the ACLU was crucial. We have issues of common concern with other secular, Humanist and like-minded organizations, no matter what names we choose. Visibility, and ultimately acceptance, is a collaborative effort.

I have read that many in the LGBT world have drawn encouragement from the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s—from its legal strategies, its patience and perseverance, its coalition-building and its ultimate success. In 1978, 74% of Americans said they would not vote for a gay presidential candidate. Thirty years later, the numbers have flipped. Now it’s our turn to live our truth.