

Coaching through Understanding: Retired Pastor and His Wife, a Realtor, Speak Out on the LGBT Community

Carl & Deila Mangold • Phoenix, Arizona

Carl Mangold is something of an expert in helping people better understand themselves, their feelings, and the world around them. For more than forty years – even throughout his time working as a Lutheran pastor and social worker – he has provided counseling to people. Often, the people Carl counsels are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender – people, he said, who are “discovering their true identity, or who already knew their identity and were having relationship or employment difficulties.”

He has helped people come to terms with who they are – and, often more challengingly, has helped the family members of LGBT individuals understand the people they love.

“One of my techniques as a counselor is to plant seeds,” he explained. “It’s better to plant seeds for people to come to their own understanding, rather than tell them what to believe or what to do. For the person whose family member has come



out – as gay, as transgender, whatever – that revelation sometimes shakes them to the core about their own sexuality. It makes them say, ‘Oh my god, I never knew this. I thought they were like me.’ This can be an earthquake experience for them.”

Carl finds great joy in working with people in his community to better understand – and ultimately, accept and embrace – their LGBT family members and friends. He loves seeing a person go through the process of opening their minds, and reevaluating their hearts.

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Carl himself went through his own journey. For many years as a pastor, he held the mindset of “love the sinner, but not the sin” – a place of conditional acceptance that he could reconcile with his Bible-based beliefs.

“I was challenged by some of the people I counseled back in the 1980s, who told me, ‘That’s not acceptance,’” Carl explained. “I wrestled with this very often – and I began to see that they were correct. And gradually, I moved to where I am now.”

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Carl has lived in Arizona for more than 21 years. There’s a lot to like about living there, he said – but he knows that the state has often presented roadblocks and challenges for LGBT individuals working to build their lives in the state.

“We have a history of passing all kinds of negative bills – and it’s embarrassing,” he said, referring to SB1269, the 2013 bill that granted businesses and individuals a broad “license to discriminate” against LGBT people in Arizona. The bill was ultimately vetoed before it became law – but now, three years after a national, very public outcry, LGBT people still have no state-level legal protections from discrimination.



Carl and his wife Deila have been invested in the LGBT community for many years. In fact, their shared understanding of treating all people equally was one of their initial bonding points, back when they first met in 1992 in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, where Deila worked as a realtor and Carl served as a pastor.

“He got me some business,” Deila remembered. “His substitute organist, who was gay, was looking for a home. Carl knew I would treat them fairly.”

Fairness has long been critical to Deila and her work as a realtor.

“I like people, I like houses, and I like to put people in houses,” she laughed. “And I just never saw the difference in who those people were. When I started selling homes to the gay community, I didn’t have much of a connection to the community, but I certainly wasn’t going to discriminate against anyone.”

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Now that she lives in Arizona, she knows how reaffirming it would be to see state lawmakers pass LGBT-inclusive non-discrimination protections, especially those closest to her heart – housing.

“I think we need this law – it’s definitely necessary,” Deila said. “It’s necessary to have on the books that Arizona does not discriminate.” She said it’s especially important to pass at the statewide level because LGBT people live all over the state. “There isn’t really one area of Arizona that’s LGBT-friendly,” she said. “LGBT people are spread out all over the place, which means it’s even more important to pass a uniform law.”

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That’s why Carl and Deila are so supportive of LGBT-inclusive non-discrimination protections, and a general push forward for LGBT Arizonans.

Carl has seen how greater understanding is achieved – in his personal life, in the lives of his clients and their family members, and, increasingly, across the country. He’s hopeful that this understanding continues to swell, larger and larger, until no one – in Arizona and nationwide – faces discrimination because of who they are or who they love.

The country, he said, is already on the right path: “Many younger people, no matter where they grow up – they have friends who are gay, lesbian, transgender, and they don’t see a problem with it at all. That’s my hope for the future.”

Together, Carl knows, we can continue to push forward and build a nation that has truly come to an understanding about who LGBT people are – and why basic, elemental protections are so vital.

Story by Adam Polaski