

Mission Impossible:

WHY REPARATIVE THERAPY AND EX-GAY MINISTRIES FAIL

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"Opinions energetically propagated and spurious facts diligently disseminated color the thinking of the people, and not only the uneducated. The intellectual is deceived as easily as the untutored by sanctimonious professions that conform to the moral code of time and place and flatter the feeling of self-righteousness." — Franz Boas, 1927

Introduction

The Christian right has for years claimed that sexual orientation is a mutable characteristic -- but only when it comes to homosexuality. They assert that gay people (yet never heterosexuals) "choose" their sexual orientation and that with prayer and counseling -- and sometimes drugs or shock therapy -- they can leave the "gay lifestyle."

While some conservative Christians may believe it is their duty to lead gay people out of what they contend is an inherently sinful life, religious political activist organizations -- such as the Family Research Council and the Christian Coalition -- are motivated by politics. Public opinion polls consistently indicate that people who believe sexual orientation is a choice are less willing to support equal rights for lesbians and gays. For example, a 1996 poll found that among people who believed sexual orientation was a choice, 50 percent supported equal treatment of gays in employment; among those who believed sexual orientation was unchangeable, 69 percent supported equality in the workplace.¹ For religious political organizations seeking new fund-raising hooks since the fall of communism, this issue is a cash cow. These groups have consistently used the threat of what they have dubbed "the gay agenda" to motivate their adherents to contribute.

A recent spate of newspaper advertisements featuring people who claim to be ex-gay has revealed the fact that the sponsoring religious political organizations are promoting these techniques for political gain. The ads, which picture people who have undergone "conversions" to heterosexuality, have coincided with efforts by these religious political sponsors to derail the nomination of openly gay businessman James Hormel to be ambassador to Luxembourg; with an orchestrated effort to reverse President Clinton's executive order banning discrimination against gays in federal employment; and with an attempt to strip the San Francisco of federal housing funds because of its law requiring companies that do business with the city to offer domestic partner benefits.. The ads have also included statements by Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott, R-Miss., comparing homosexuals to alcoholics, kleptomaniacs and sex addicts.

The idea for the ad campaign grew out of a Focus on the Family-sponsored meeting of religious political groups in Colorado Springs, Co., in June.² "No focus groups, no polling," said Robert Knight of the Family Research Council. "We just did it."

These groups' assertions about sexual orientation are not borne out by the facts -- which doesn't stop the religious right from repeating over and over that they are correct and that gay rights organizations refuse to tell their community "the truth" about homosexuality -- namely that, in their minds, it is a mental disorder that can be cured.³

The facts

The psychological, medical and psychiatric establishments agree that sexual orientation cannot be changed, and that so-called "reparative therapy" aimed at altering gay peoples' orientations does not work and may, in fact, be harmful.

Here are some excerpts from position papers on this subject by the leading professional associations:

AMERICAN PSYCHIATRIC ASSOCIATION ⁴

- "There is no published scientific evidence supporting the efficacy of reparative therapy' as a treatment to change one's sexual orientation. It is not described in the scientific literature, nor is it mentioned in the APA's latest comprehensive Task Force Report, *Treatments of Psychiatric Disorders* (1989).
- "There are a few reports in the literature of efforts to use psychotherapeutic and counseling techniques to treat persons troubled by their homosexuality who desire to become heterosexual; however, results have not been conclusive, nor have they been replicated. There is no evidence that any treatment can change a homosexual person's deep-seated sexual feelings for others of the same sex.
- "Clinical experience suggests that any person who seeks conversion therapy may be doing so because of social bias that has resulted in internalized homophobia, and that gay men and lesbians who have accepted their sexual orientation positively are better adjusted than those who have not done so."

AMERICAN PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION ⁵

- "Even though homosexual orientation is not a mental illness and there is no scientific reason to attempt conversion of lesbians or gays to heterosexual orientation, some individuals may seek to change their sexual orientation or that of another individual (for example, parents seeking therapy for their child). Some therapists who undertake this kind of therapy report that they have changed their clients' sexual orientation (from homosexual to heterosexual) in treatment. Close scrutiny of their reports indicates several factors that cast doubt: Many of the claims come from organizations with an ideological perspective on sexual orientation, rather than from mental health researchers; the treatments and their outcomes are poorly documented; and the length of time that clients are followed up on after treatment is too short.
- "In 1990, the American Psychological Association stated that scientific evidence does not show that conversion therapy works and that it can do more harm than good. Changing one's sexual orientation is not simply a matter of changing one's sexual behavior. It would require altering one's emotional, romantic and sexual feelings and restructuring one's self-concept and social identity.
- "Although some mental health providers do attempt sexual orientation conversion, others question the ethics of trying to alter through therapy a trait that is not a disorder to an individual's identity.
- "Not all gays and lesbians who seek therapy want to change their sexual orientation. Gays and lesbians may seek counseling for any of the same reasons as anyone else. In addition, they may seek psychological help to come out' or to deal with prejudice, discrimination and violence.
- "For nearly three decades, it has been known that homosexuality is not a mental illness. Medical and mental health professionals also now know that sexual orientation is not a choice and cannot be altered. Groups who try to change the sexual orientation of people through so-called conversion therapy' are misguided and run the risk of causing a great deal of psychological harm to those they say they are trying to help."

AMERICAN ACADEMY OF PEDIATRICS ⁶

- "Confusion about sexual orientation is not unusual during adolescence. Counseling may be helpful for young people who are uncertain about their sexual orientation or for those who are uncertain about how to express their sexuality and might profit from an attempt at clarification through a counseling or psychotherapeutic initiative. Therapy directed at specifically changing sexual orientation is contraindicated, since it can provoke guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in orientation."
- "Pediatricians should be aware that some of the youths in their care may be homosexual or have concerns about sexual orientation. Caregivers should provide factual, current, nonjudgmental information in a confidential manner."
- "The psychosocial problems of gay and lesbian adolescents are primarily the result of societal stigma, hostility, hatred and isolation. The gravity of these stresses is underscored by current data that document that gay youths account for up to 30 percent of all completed adolescent suicides. Approximately 30 percent of a surveyed group of gay and bisexual males have attempted suicide at least once. Adolescents struggling with issues of sexual preference should be reassured that they will gradually form their own identity and that there is no need for premature labeling of one's sexual orientation."

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION ⁷

- "Most of the emotional disturbance experienced by gay men and lesbians around their sexual identity is not based on physiological causes but rather is due more to a sense of alienation in an unaccepting environment. For this reason, aversion therapy (a behavioral or medical intervention which punishes unwanted behavior, in this case, homosexual behavior, with unpleasant sensations or aversive consequences) is no longer recommended for gay men and lesbians. Through psychotherapy, gay men and lesbians can become comfortable with their sexual orientation and understand the societal response to it."

Despite these clinical judgments by the leading professional organizations of scientists studying the phenomenon of human sexuality, the Christian right continues to argue that gay people should and can change their sexual orientations. They rely on two primary sources, one overtly religious, the other secular. The religious sources are known as ex-gay ministries, and they are spread around the globe, although many of their early leaders have reverted to homosexuality and some have become the most vociferous spokesmen against these ministries.

The main secular organization promoting the notion that gay people can "change" is the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, or NARTH. Because it is led by psychotherapists and psychologists, NARTH has an aura of scientific credibility. Its research is sometimes cited by journalists and opinion leaders, despite its being highly flawed. On closer inspection, it becomes clear that NARTH's "change" rates are inflated, that its definition of "cure" is purposely overbroad and that its chief spokesmen are viewed suspiciously within the psychoanalytic community.

Who and What Is NARTH?

NARTH describes itself as "a non-profit psychoanalytic, educational organization dedicated to research, therapy and prevention of homosexuality." Founded in 1992, NARTH claims to have about 500 members who are "psychoanalysts, psychoanalytically informed psychologists, certified social workers and other behavioral scientists, as well as laymen in fields such as law, religion and education."

Its chief public spokesmen are:

- President: Charles W. Socarides, M.D. He is a member of the American Psychoanalytic Association and a clinical professor of psychiatry at Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City.⁸
- Executive Director and Secretary-Treasurer: Joseph Nicolosi, Ph.D. He is director of the Thomas Aquinas Psychological Clinic in Encino, Calif., and a psychologist.⁹

According to its policy statement, "NARTH's most important function is to provide psychological understanding of the cause, treatment, and behavior patterns associated with the homosexual condition."

NARTH begins its work with the presumption that homosexuality is a developmental disorder or a mental illness, which it frequently compares to alcoholism. It claims that "powerful political pressures have done much to erode scientific exploration and study of this disorder." It attempts to position its adherents as heroes swimming against the mighty tide of the brainwashed psychological community and the mainstream media.

This quote from a column Socarides entitled, "How America Went Gay" is telling:¹⁰

"FOR MORE THAN 20 YEARS, I and a few of my colleagues in the field of psychoanalysis have felt like an embattled minority, because we have continued to insist, against today's conventional wisdom, that gays aren't born that way. We know that obligatory homosexuals are caught up in unconscious adaptations to early childhood abuse and neglect and that, with insight into their earliest beginnings, they can change. This adaptation I speak of is a polite term for men going through the motions of mating not with the opposite sex but with one another."

On May, 17, 1997, NARTH announced the results of a two-year study of 860 clients and their more than 200 psychologists and therapists. Some results:

- when they entered therapy, 68 percent of respondents identified themselves as totally or almost exclusively homosexual; 22 percent said they were more homosexual than heterosexual when they left therapy; 13 percent saw themselves as totally or almost entirely gay; and 33 percent said they were exclusively or almost entirely heterosexual.
- 99 percent of respondents believed that treatment "can be effective and valuable."
- 95 percent of the therapists agreed that homosexual patients may be able to change their orientation to heterosexual.
- statistically significant decreases were reported of the frequency of homosexual fantasies, masturbation and homosexual activity.

This study has not been published in a peer-reviewed journal. (NARTH attempts to confer some credibility on it by stating on its website that the data were "tabulated by professionals at Brigham Young University.") The results are suspect for a number of reasons, not the least of which is that 63 percent of respondents were still undergoing "reparative therapy" at the time of the survey -- meaning that they were continuing to invest time and money in a treatment they hoped would ultimately change them. One-third of them were married at the time of the survey -- another indication that they were highly motivated to report "positive" results. And many of the patients were clearly bisexual to begin with, meaning that they have not changed in orientation at all; they are merely suppressing the homosexual side of their sexuality.

One of the biggest problems with research of this nature is it is not longitudinal; that is, it does not follow the sample over a long period of time to determine how permanent any changes in behaviors might be. And indeed, this oversight is inherent in all the "cure" claims of both the reparative therapists and the ex-gay ministers.¹¹

It is worth noting that most reparative therapists claim they have no desire to "change" any gay person who does not himself wish to change. However, these therapists ignore and/or refuse to deal with the key reasons why some gay people wish to go straight, namely, the disapproval of society and the religious establishment. Despite what reparative therapists affiliated with NARTH may state,¹² there is no empirical evidence that homosexuality per se is either an unhappy or unhealthy state of being.

Ex-Gay Ministries

These organizations selectively cite the Bible as proof that homosexuality is a sin, and attempt to "change" individuals' sexual orientations largely through prayer, meditation and programs that in some cases, are patterned on the 12-step program of Alcoholics Anonymous, and in others, have all the earmarks of a cult.

These groups are controversial even within Christian communities, and have been plagued over time by the "backsliding" into homosexuality of many of their leaders.¹³ To entice people into their programs, they promise to "cure" people of their homosexuality. What they may actually achieve, however, is far short of a change in sexual orientation. (As ex-ex-gay leader Rick Notch has put it, "You pick a prayer partner the first night of the convention, you pray with him the second night and by the third night, your prayers are answered.")

Reporter Justin Chin joined an ex-gay program affiliated with Exodus Ministries in California in 1995 as part of a project funded by the Fund for Investigative Journalism. His report was published in *The Progressive*, a left-wing political magazine:

"Ex-gays are sexually celibate but homosexuality is still central to them: Everything in their lives revolves around homosexuality and avoiding it. Listening to Exodus conference junkies and ex-program members speak, it is easy to see how this subculture is maintained.

"Ultimately, the difference between gays and ex-gays is like the difference between cheese and cheddar. The ex-gays try to drown their homosexuality in Bible verses, marriage, family, and their own new subcultural niche, but their homosexuality remains.

*"Even the leaders of the movement have some doubts as to the validity of their claims to curing' homosexuality. Bob Davies and Lori Rentzal, in their book, **Coming Out of Homosexuality**, a classic in the ex-gay milieu, say that a change in sexual orientation is not the goal; the goal, rather, is to have an intimate relationship with Christ and to be transformed by him. It's disturbing to realize that these groups know that the best they can do is suppress a person's sexual orientation, and yet they hold out an entire industry catered to curing' homosexuality."¹⁴*

Some of the leaders of these ex-gay ministries have gone on to become the most vocal and credible critics of ex-gay ministries, pointing up the folly of their promises. Many of the people who have gone through the programs say they don't work, and that they fail to deal with the root causes of many clients' unhappiness -- namely that society and many churches teach that homosexuality is abnormal and perverse and that it is not possible to be gay and live a fulfilled, happy life.

Exodus International, based in San Rafael, Calif., is an umbrella group that acts as a clearinghouse for people seeking referrals to programs in their local areas. It variously claims to have anywhere from 75 to 110 member ministries, with names like Straight Path Ministries, Cross Over, Breaking Free and Straight Ahead Ministries. To form a bona fide chapter, a ministry must be active for two years, and its directors -- if they were gay -- must have abstained from their "former lifestyle" for two years.

Exodus International is affiliated with the Protestant Christian belief system. In one of its pamphlets, "Exodus: A Way Out," it offers "Freedom from homosexuality, not through a method but a person, the Lord Jesus Christ!" It believes that only through total surrender to Christ can homosexuals hope to change into heterosexuals (although it does have special materials aimed at Catholics, Mormons and others). It offers a huge selection of educational items, including videotapes as well as audiotapes, and provides lectures on request. It also publishes a quarterly newsletter, "The Standard."

It was founded in 1976 by a group of people including Michael Bussee, who along with Gary Cooper, became one of the most infamous ex-gays in the movement's history. Bussee and Cooper became devout Christians in their late teens when both were troubled by their homosexuality. They met and became friends while working for a counseling and referral line at the Melodyland Christian Center in Anaheim, Calif. As they worked together to "convert" gay people, they found themselves falling in love. Eventually, they became lovers and left Exodus in 1979. In 1982, they had a marriage ceremony. Cooper died of AIDS nine years later.

"The desires never go away," Bussee has said. "The confrontations begin and the guilt gets worse and worse." Bussee recalls that some people who went through the Exodus program had breakdowns or committed suicide. "One man slashed his genitals with a razor and poured Drano on his wounds." Another man impulsively underwent an incomplete sex-change operation because he believed his sexual desires might receive divine approval were he biologically a woman.¹⁵

"After dealing with hundreds of people," Bussee concluded, he and his partner hadn't "met one who went from gay to straight. Even if you manage to alter someone's sexual behavior, you cannot change their true sexual orientation."

"If you got them away from the Christian limelight," he said, "and asked them, 'Honestly now, are you saying that you are no longer homosexual and you are now heterosexually oriented?'... not one person said, 'Yes, I am actually now heterosexual.'"

The Exodus policy statement on homosexuality:

Exodus upholds heterosexuality as God's creative intent for humanity, and subsequently views homosexual expression as outside of God's will. Exodus cites homosexual tendencies as one of many disorders that beset fallen humanity. Choosing to resolve these tendencies through homosexual behavior, taking on a homosexual identity, and involvement in a homosexual lifestyle is considered destructive, as it distorts God's intent for the individual and is thus sinful.

According to the 1994 PBS documentary "One Nation Under God," Exodus claims to have treated hundreds of thousands of homosexuals and boasts a success rate of 71.6 per cent. But Exodus keeps no follow-up records or statistics to validate the claim "although it's something we ought to be doing," a spokesperson told a Canadian newspaper. "People are always asking us for numbers."¹⁶

Some of the more prominent ex-gay ministries affiliated with Exodus:¹⁷

Transformation Ex-Gay Ministries/Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays, or P-FOX, of Washington, D.C. Both were founded by Anthony Falzarano, a self-professed ex-gay who claims he was a gay prostitute and one of Roy Cohn's "kept boys" when he was younger. He also claims unequivocally that "homosexuality is certainly not innate. It is a learned behavior."¹⁸

He frequently points to the fact that he was molested by his older brother as a reason that he became gay. And he claims -- without any substantiating factual evidence -- that "80 percent of homosexuals have been molested or raped as children."¹⁹

Falzarano, who is now married and has two children, is also a founder of the St. Augustine Sexual Healing Bookstore in Washington, D.C., which specializes in books about how gay people can change to heterosexuals.

P-FOX's website describes the group as "a Christ-centered network of the parents, friends and family of loved ones struggling with homosexuality. In order to restore families to wholeness, we support, educate and offer hope for counsel, and provide strategies on how to actively love the struggler and yet disagree with his or her lifestyle choice. We encouragingly support the work of the four Christian ex-gay networks and identify predominantly with Exodus International, of Seattle, Washington, which is the largest ex-gay network in the world."

The group's name is an intentional tweaking of the 68,000-member organization Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG). Falzarano has said he hopes to attract members of PFLAG who do not agree with the group's "pro-homosexuality stance" but who need the support.

Love in Action of Memphis, Tenn., was founded in 1973 by John Smid, who claims to be ex-gay. It was originally based in San Rafael, Calif., and, like most ex-gay ministries, is a rigidly controlled, live-in program for men.²⁰

This is from a feature story in the Memphis Commercial Appeal, Sept. 28, 1997:

"At the center of Smid's approach is Love In Action's residential treatment program, formerly located in three houses in the Bay Area, now concentrated in a six-bedroom farmhouse somewhere on the outskirts of Memphis -- he refuses to divulge its location -- where a clientele of about 10 men ranging in age from 21 to 50 live while they work to become formerly gay.

Most clients spend 13 to 18 months in the program, moving one step at a time through a five-phase program that begins with becoming open and honest about personal struggles and challenges' and culminates in encouraging other clients toward healing.'

"Financial aid is available for some clients who have entered the program but whose income won't support the \$ 950-a-month fees. Supervised by a married couple who serve as house managers, residents drive their own cars to off-campus jobs they find on their own, have dinner every evening together at a big dining room table, then trek off most evenings to Central Church or the Love In Action office for counseling sessions led by two full-time and two part-time counselors. They take turns cooking meals, gather around a piano and sing hymns, play cards or read, indulging in what Smid and Johnson describe as a relaxing, homey atmosphere.

"The house is a safe place' that provides a structured environment for clients whose lives, typically, have been in turmoil, Smid said. Clients still in the first two phases of the program, which usually last six to seven months, aren't allowed to go anywhere alone. Nobody leaves the house without telling people where he's going. Other prohibitions: No television (although one video per week is allowed), no drugs, no alcohol."

One participant in Smid's program, Tom Ottosen, claimed it had all the earmarks of a cult. "Due to the fact that members are not allowed to question anything the hierarchy says, most members who were forced out or who have left on their own end up extremely guilt-ridden, very confused, dogged by the religious dogma given them by the groups, and most end up worse than ever before," he said.²¹

OTHER EX-GAY MINISTRIES:

Homosexuals Anonymous (formerly known as Quest) Quest's onetime leader, Colin Cook, was ousted in 1987 for having sex with male counselees over the previous six years. During counseling sessions, Cook allegedly participated in "nude massages, erotic hugging and a few instances of mutual masturbation," according to a report by HA coordinator Dan Roberts. Indeed, leaders of Quest and Homosexuals Anonymous knew as early as 1985 that Cook was "slipping" but kept him on because he had become prominent in the ex-gay movement.²²

The purpose of H.A. is "to be a resource and support for individuals seeking freedom from homosexuality. Group support is available through weekly H.A. meetings. Guidance is received through the shared experiences and growth of others. Strength is acquired by training the faith responses through the 14 steps of H.A."²³

The only requirement to be a member is "a desire to be and remain free from homosexuality." "Homosexuals Anonymous members learn to see themselves not as another homosexual subculture but as God's children, created heterosexually [sic], who are experiencing struggles with feelings of attraction towards the same sex, and who, by faith in God, may learn to experience freedom from those feelings as their identity is established in Him through Jesus Christ, and their needs are fulfilled in Him and in the community of believers that He has created."²⁴

Like Alcoholics Anonymous, Homosexuals Anonymous is decidedly Christian but non-denominational. It claims to be different from Exodus Ministries in a number of ways, including that its meetings are open and are not led by trained counselors. HA says it never charges fees. Its marketing methods are different in that Homosexuals Anonymous tries to promote itself directly to the gay and lesbian community through ads in local papers while Exodus focuses on presentations at local churches, tables at Promise

Keepers events, and other Christian community outreach.

Courage, of New York, which bills itself as the "'official' lesbian and gay Catholic group," is actually an anti-gay organization that tries to persuade gay Catholics to abstain from homosexual sex. It, too, is modeled on the AA 12-step program.

Courage was founded by the Rev. John Harvey, a New York Catholic priest who was one of the first to offer sympathetic counseling to gay people. In the 1950s and 1960s it was common for Catholic priests to react angrily and with derision to gay people. Harvey's approach was much more sympathetic, and he accepted, in contrast to the long church insistence that homosexuality was just a matter of "acts," that homosexuality was an unchangeable "condition." Harvey was progressive, for his time. But he has refused to accept the legitimacy and reality of the gay community, and has always denied that gay relationships are acceptable.

Courage works on the assumption that homosexual behavior is bad, and that the only acceptable mode of life for gays and lesbians is sexual abstinence. Unlike the Protestant transformational ministries, Courage does not claim that gay people can be "changed." Nevertheless, some former members have said they were encouraged to attend "deprogramming" weekends in retreat houses outside New York City. Like the Protestant ex-gay ministries, Courage works on the presumption that homosexuality is a pathology, not a normal human variation.

Kerusso Ministries, based in Newport News, Va., describes itself as "the leading independent ministry in the country working to provide a balanced and biblical Christian viewpoint on the issue of homosexuality as it relates to ministry and public policy. Founded in 1989, Kerusso Ministries organizes evangelistic meetings and seminars, produces the weekly radio broadcast 'Truth Under Fire' and coordinates the National Coming Out of Homosexuality Day."

Despite this somewhat grandiose claim, Kerusso Ministries appears to consist largely of its president, the self-promoting Michael Johnston, a telephone answering machine, an email address and a post office box. Kerusso does not have a website per se; connecting to <http://www.kerusso.org> takes you to a site called "National Coming Out of Homosexuality Day," a project through which Johnston obtains a small jolt of publicity each Oct. 11.

However, Johnston told HRC that Kerusso operates two offices, "our main office and recording studio in Virginia and our West Coast office in Washington state. The ministry was organized and remains an independent ministry. With the exception of the National Religious Broadcasters, we maintain no formal association with any other organization. We are NOT an associate member or referral of Exodus International NA nor are we underwritten by any other organization. Our internal operations, including personnel information, is [sic] not a matter of public disclosure."

In contrast with many of the better-known "ex-gay" ministries, there appear to be no stories circulating in the media or elsewhere about peoples' experiences -- good or bad -- in Kerusso Ministries. Indeed, it is unclear that Kerusso "ministers" at all. But Johnston, its president and founder, promotes himself and his life story relentlessly. He sells a video, entitled "On Wings Like Eagles: The Spiritual Journey of Michael Johnston," for \$24.95. Other groups including the American Family Association hawk this product as well.

His story is much like those of other "ex-gays" who lead these organizations. From his personal bio, which is posted on the Internet: "Michael rejected his homosexual identity in 1988 and returned to his Christian roots, but not before he was infected with HIV, the virus that causes AIDS. His life story is available on the film 'On Wings Like Eagles.' He continues to offer a message of warning to individuals and society regarding the physical and spiritual consequences of homosexual behavior. That warning is always coupled with the eternal compassionate message of the Gospel."

Johnston has appeared somewhat frequently in mainstream media (although he is not as widely exposed as Anthony Falzarano of P-FOX). He was featured in one of the "ex-gay" ministry newspaper ads of 1998, telling his life story. The illustration for the ad was an old photograph of Johnston, at about age 5, blowing out the candles on his birthday cake.

Before moving his ministry to Virginia Beach, Johnston was based in Anchorage, Alaska, where he gained some notoriety for his political work as chairman of a group called Alaskans Opposed to Pro-Homosexual Policies. In 1995, under the aegis of his Kerusso Ministries, he tried to run bus ads about changing one's sexual orientation in response to an ad campaign of gay-positive messages. He also raised money against Alaska Gov. Tony Knowles in 1994 because of his supposedly "pro-gay positions." And in 1993, Johnston was "a leader in the effort" to repeal a gay rights law in Anchorage.

CONCLUSIONS

The purveyors of "reparative therapy" are well outside mainstream research and thinking in the psychotherapeutic world. They rail constantly that their work is being subverted by the professional associations, which they claim were hijacked in the 1970s by activist gay members into removing homosexuality from the official lists of mental disorders.

We question how it could be that the American Psychiatric and American Psychological Associations -- the pre-eminent professional associations in their fields -- could have been held captive by these so-called gay activists by more than 20 years. Surely if there were clinical evidence that homosexuality *per se* were a mental illness, this information could not have been suppressed by so many bright minds for so long. In addition, the "reparative therapists" protest loudly and often that homosexuality was removed from the *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual* without empirical research. We submit that it was placed in the DSM originally without such evidence.

It is our studied belief that the purveyors of "reparative therapy" refuse to confront the underlying reasons for the apparent unhappiness of many of the gay people who seek their help. They presume that all gay people are mentally unwell, ignoring the hundreds of thousands of happy, well-adjusted, successful lesbians and gay men across this nation. At the same time, we believe that human sexuality is a deeply complicated phenomenon that we are not even close to fully understanding. Until then, people need the support of a concerned, non-judgmental psychotherapeutic establishment to find their own paths, whether they are hetero-, homo- or bisexual.

As for ex-gay ministries, our research found that many of them dangle impossible promises before troubled people in order to lure them into their programs. The clearest evidence that these programs are not effective are the "ex-ex gay" testimonials of people who once participated in them -- and the fact that so many of the most prominent ex-gay leaders returned to their former gay lives, only to be replaced by people who were never gay themselves and therefore cannot create new public relations disasters. Like the so-called reparative therapists, these ministries play to guilt and unhappiness that have their roots in something other than peoples' intrinsic sexual natures.

ENDNOTES

1. From a poll of 1,007 voters conducted Nov. 5-6, 1996, by Greenberg Research Inc. for the Human Rights Campaign. It is also interesting to note that another poll, of 1,000 Americans, conducted February 1994 by Mellman Lazarus Lake Inc. for HRC, found 65 percent of Americans who did not know someone gay supported equal rights for gays but that number jumped to 87 percent support among Americans who did know someone gay.
2. Michael J. Gerson, "Out of the Political Closet: Religious Rights Seeks to Save Gay Sinners," U.S. News & World Report, July 27, 1998.
3. Advertisement placed by 15 religious political organizations in The New York Times, July 13, 1998, and USA Today on July 15, 1998.
4. From an American Psychiatric Association fact sheet, September 1994.
5. The American Psychological Association overwhelmingly passed a resolution on "reparative therapy" at its annual convention, Aug. 14, 1997.
6. From a policy statement entitled "Homosexuality and Adolescence," published in the journal Pediatrics, Oct. 1993.
7. Excerpts following are from "Health Care Needs of Gay Men and Lesbians in the U.S.: A Report Presented by the Council on Scientific Affairs to the AMA House of Delegates Interim Meeting," December 1994.
8. Socarides' son, Richard Socarides, is one of the best-known gay activists in the country. He is a special assistant to President Clinton and senior adviser for public liaison; one of his principle jobs is White House liaison to the lesbian and gay community. In his book "Homosexuality: A Freedom Too Far," Charles Socarides explains his theory that same-sex desire is a "neurotic adaptation" that can be traced to "smothering mothers and abdicating fathers." Asked once by a reporter whether his "lousy parenting" caused his son to be gay, "Socarides neatly places the blame on a combination of uncontrollable events,' like the fact that he and Richard's mother divorced when Richard was about 3 years old, the age at which the neurotic mechanism' of homosexuality can be implanted in a child. Socarides also says that Richard's now-dead mother was 'quite harsh towards my son' after the divorce." (Times Newspapers Limited, April 30, 1995) Charles Socarides has also run into trouble with the American Psychoanalytic Association (APsaA), of which he is a member. According to a letter from Dr. Ralph Roughton of the APsaA, Socarides misrepresented the position of the APsaA in a published paper and a court affidavit. Socarides attempted to make it appear that the APsaA agrees with his positions on homosexuality. He did this by quoting an APsaA document written in 1968, which supported his views and which he called the "official position" of the APsaA, while ignoring a 1990 revised statement that drastically contradicted his views. The Executive Committee of the APsaA instructed the organization's attorney to write a letter to Socarides asking him to cease this misrepresentation and threatening legal action if he continued. Additionally, the APsaA newsletter decided to stop printing advertisements for NARTH meetings because the organization does not adhere to APsaA's policy of non-discrimination "and because their activities are demeaning to our members who are gay and lesbian," according to Roughton.
9. Nicolosi is author of the book "Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality: A New Clinical Approach," Northvale, NJ: Jason Aronson Inc., 1991. In a review by James D. Weinrich, Ph.D., University of California, San Diego, Department of Psychiatry, called this "a precedent-setting book, but probably not in ways that the author would appreciate. It sets a milestone in the history of sexual orientation self-acceptance; after homosexuals and bisexuals, the latest out of the closet are non-gay homosexuals' -- Nicolosi's term for men who are homosexually responsive but who reject the cultural assumptions of the gay world. As the latest in a long list of books which offer therapy to men who wish to change a homosexual orientation to heterosexual, it sets another precedent in that the author is apparently the first to admit that this change is not possible. It is important to understand why the prochange' school has finally admitted this fact and why they believe that therapy is advisable nevertheless."
10. America, Nov. 18, 1995.

11. New York psychologist Ariel Shidlo is conducting one of the few detailed studies of people who undergo conversion therapies. He says that after interviews with 100 people, he and fellow psychologist Michael Schroeder have found that while the vast majority remain gay, a "handful" appear to have successfully altered the way in which they perceive their sexual identity. "They have gone through total existence changes in how they place their sexuality in the context of who they think they are," Shidlo told Newsweek in its July 27, 1998, edition. Many more, however, were psychologically harmed by the therapies, which can include powerful drugs and even shock treatment.
12. In his book "Reparative Therapy of Male Homosexuality," Nicolosi writes: "Two men can never take in each other, in the full and open way. Not only is there a natural anatomical unsuitability, but an inherent psychological insufficiency as well. ... Gay couplings are characteristically brief and very volatile, with much fighting, arguing, making-up again and continual disappointments. ... Research ... reveals that [homosexual relationships] almost never possess the mature elements of quiet consistency, trust, mutual dependency, and sexual fidelity characteristic of highly functioning heterosexual marriages."
13. "Our Reporter Survives the Ex-Gay Ministries. Exodus International Programs To Cure' Individuals of Homosexuality," The Progressive, December 1995.
14. "Ex-Gay Ministry Founders Recant," "Keeping in Touch," The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches, May 1990.
15. eye WEEKLY, (a Toronto newspaper), Feb. 9, 1995. Also, from Newsweek, July 28, 1998: "Because Exodus keeps no statistics and does no follow-up, it cannot say how many of the 200,000 people who have contacted the group since its founding in 1976 have actually maintained a heterosexual lifestyle." If Exodus' "cure rate" were so good and since so many people ask for substantiation, it is suspicious that the group has apparently not even attempted to institute a reasonable system for tracking its "success" rate.
16. For a full list of Exodus-affiliated ministries, see the website "Christian Ministries for People Wanting Help in Dealing with Homosexuality" at <http://www.messiah.edu/hpages/facstaff/chase/h/helplis.htm>.
17. Lambda Report, a publication of the Family Research Council, 1993.
18. CNN's "TalkBack Live," June 17, 1998.
19. Smid apparently believes his program also can "cure" child molesters. In November 1997, he testified in court on behalf of a convicted child molester who sought to enter Smid's program in lieu of prison. Smid said no convicted sex offender had ever entered his intensive, 15- to 24-month program, but testified that its success rate over 18 years has been high. "Sixty to 80 percent have effectively left behind their homosexual behavior," Smid testified, according to the Nashville Tennessean. The judge didn't buy it, and sentenced the molester to eight years in prison.
20. From an article in We The People, Sonoma County's lesbigay monthly newspaper, March 1994.
21. From an article by Ralph Blair, founder of Evangelicals Concerned, published in Open Hands, Vol. 2, No. 2, Fall 1986.
22. From a Homosexuals Anonymous website, <http://www.nw.com.au/~billb/hahome.htm>.
23. Ibid.