

I request that I would be put on the schedule to speak and provide verbal testimony at the hearing. My name is Daren Mehl, I'm a resident of Warroad Minnesota, I am a Pastor, and I also once lived as a homosexual but I do not anymore. My romantic and sexual desires / attractions have changed. I want to address the committee directly verbally during the hearing.

I have also attached testimonies and their supporting documents related to HF16 and would like these provided to the committee and made available on the website.

1. Daren Mehl Testimony – Minnesota HF16.pdf
2. Gracie Poole Testimony – Minnesota HF16.pdf
3. Agape-Guide-1.1.pdf
4. Daren Mehl 8 week Study.pdf
5. G Zachariah White - Successful Resolution to Sexual-Religious Identity Conflict.pdf
6. Amazon Censors alternative views on Homosexuality.pdf
7. Changed Book Testimonies.pdf
8. differingviews.pdf
9. Facebook restores Christian ministries' pages after being removed _ U.S. News.pdf
10. Frontiers-in-Psychology-A-Retrospective-Study-of-US-Sexual-Minority-Adults-2016-2018.pdf
11. NATIONAL-TASK-FORCE-FOR-THERAPY-EQUALITY-FTC-COMPLAINT.pdf
12. Petition update What is _ex-gay_ and why do their books matter _Change.org.pdf
13. Two Prisms - Blogs and bits.pdf

I request that I would be put on the schedule to speak and provide verbal testimony at the hearing.

Thank you,

Pastor Daren Mehl
Warroad, MN

My name is Daren Mehl. I was created by God as a heterosexual male, was deceived to believe I was a gay man, lived as a homosexual for many years, and then Jesus Christ set me free from the death of that lifestyle and set me free from the desire to be sodomized by men or to sodomize other men. I am now a Pastor and a licensed minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ and provide spiritual and pastoral care to anyone who seeks to align their beliefs and behaviors to the teachings of Jesus Christ. I believe HF16 will harm me and those who seek to leave the LGBTQ cult community if it is passed and becomes law in Minnesota. I also believe it is wholly unconstitutional abridgement of my free speech and practice of religion.

To understand the claims I have about HF16 you must understand my journey of faith in Jesus Christ. Let me briefly tell my testimony of Jesus Christ:

Having been relentlessly teased by girls and boys in elementary and high school as a sissy, pansy, girly boy, gay, queer, and other pejoratives, I began to embrace the thoughts that perhaps they were right, I was gay. So I did what is common among many bullied people, I took the humiliation of being called gay and made it my identity, believing it would rob them of their strength and lose its power over me. However, in hindsight, adopting the homosexual identity became a power over me that lead me away from Jesus Christ and into a lifestyle of sin. And so I found I chose homosexuality as an identity to try to live out what I thought was how I was created (as gay) and never would be able to achieve the dream of having a wife and kids. It just wasn't in the cards for me. I was "other".

Even though I was a confessing Christian at the time of choosing a homosexual identity and behaviors, I couldn't reconcile that chosen behaviors of sodomy with the teachings of Jesus Christ. So for a time I chose to merge them into a vain imaginary 'gay Christian' identity. I tried this identity and belief merger by ignoring what I read in the Bible where sodomy is called a sin and that practicing homosexuals do not inherit the Kingdom of God. I also adopted an imaginary belief not found in the bible, but taught to me by the LGBTQ church, that I was created gay by God and couldn't change and didn't need to because it was a gift from God. With these in mind I hoped perhaps I could find peace as I lived this way for 8 years. I even attended a gay affirming church and had several serial "romantic" and "monogamous" relationships with men, practicing sodomy as an outward expression of what I believed at the time was love for them.

By the grace of Jesus Christ, because of a close friend choosing to share deep truths about God from his own journey with Jesus and the grace of God given to him, I was lead to begin a healing journey with Jesus. Jesus took me back to my childhood and started removing the barbs of lies and hurts that were tied around identity as a gay man.

As Jesus worked on my heart and mind over several years, I asked God to be made righteous according to God's standards through faith in Jesus Christ. By the mercy and grace of God, Jesus Christ delivered me. God gave me grace through faith in Jesus Christ resulting in persistent change of identity, desires, and behavior. I experienced change from exclusive homosexual desires to exclusive heterosexual desires. Jesus did this through at least a dozen sovereign interventions such giving me grace to forgive those who bullied and shamed me, lead me to being disciplined by reading the Bible and other testimony/discipleship books (some now banned by Amazon), speaking to Christian licensed therapists, prayer with others, and receiving pastoral care. All of which today according to HF16 would be labeled 'conversion therapy' and be prohibited.

When I accepted the homosexual identity, I had to give up my boyhood dream of being married to a woman and having children. But by the miracle of God, Jesus Christ restored that dream and now I've been married to my wife Rhoda, a female woman, since Dec 11, 2005, and we have a male son, Sebastian, born in 2013, and a female daughter, Esther, who was born in 2015.

I have experienced my romantic and sexual desires restored to heterosexual orientation, and in doing so I believe they are rightly ordered in righteousness and holiness before God. I have been given a family of my own and affirmed as a man and image bearer of God. I believe all this was the

redeeming and sanctifying work of Jesus Christ. I can attribute these miracles and the sustaining power to no other. And HF16 would prevent me from testifying and teaching of Jesus doing so for others.

The irony of my testimony of Jesus Christ that I just shared, in context of HF16, is that it would be labeled as ex-gay ministry, aka 'conversion therapy', and therefore categorized as disproven, discredited, harmful, and discriminatory against the LGBTQ community, and consumer fraud. The government has no authority to declare the work of Jesus Christ in my life as disproven and discredited, or that seeking Jesus, who said He is the way, the truth, and the life, to be harmful and discriminatory, nor a fraud. HF16 would do a great harm to my freedom to live my faith.

I believe I will be harmed by HF16 as it will likely empower the medical associations, specifically the LGBTQ religious belief affirming ones, the ones who see Christianity as a religious stigma to be avoided, put into their practices the "science" to diagnose my beliefs as an illness and recommend treatments to deprogram me from harmful religious dogma. As many statements already made by LGBTQ leaders and these medical associations suggesting that ex-gays are just suffering from 'internalized homophobia' or are victims of stigma created by religion and therefore denying our 'true selves'.

I am a Pastor and a licensed minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ. HF16 would have an effect to chill my free speech and the free exercise of my Christian religious belief to 'go and make disciples of men'. I would not be able to provide pastoral care for those who as seeking to align their behaviors and identity to the teachings of Jesus Christ. It would be deemed fraud to say that a homosexual man can repent and experience change in romantic and sexual desires by renewing of the mind by washing of the Word and by grace through faith in Jesus Christ.

HF16 would carve out a community of people, those who identify as LGBTQ, and prevent me from evangelizing and discipling them in the Christian faith. HF16 would prohibit proselytizing the LGBTQ community. Scripture says to go and make disciples of ALL people and I believe that to mean all people, even those who have isolated themselves in the LGBTQ community and identity away from Christianity. According to HF16, offering to disciple someone leaving the LGBTQ community and identity would be treated as 'conversion therapy' and be prohibited and considered discriminatory and fraud. God desires all to be reconciled to Him. Who am I not to live out in my calling and offer repentance, salvation, sanctification to those who seek it? No law can stop God's power to bring the Gospel to all people, and I will not stop.

Why does the government decide that LGBTQ identified people are not allowed to hear The Gospel or choose to become Christian disciples? In effect, that's what HF16 does. It chills, if not prevents, conversion from LGBTQ religious beliefs to Christian religious beliefs, especially in recognizing we are all created heterosexual by nature and all have the potential to be healed by Jesus out of the 'sexual orientation' of homosexuality. Effectively, HF16 is the state establishing the tenets of the LGBTQ religion as state doctrine, choosing one religious belief over another, and worse, criminalizing religious beliefs that the state doesn't endorse.

If sexual orientation and gender identity defines LGBTQ in HF16, my faith in Jesus Christ and my sexual orientation as now-heterosexual (ex-gay) and my identity as fully male defines me in the 1964 Civil Rights Act. My sexual orientation, gender, and faith should be treated equal under the law. Yet HF16 allows the state to discriminate against my faith? May it not be so! Sharing the Gospel message is the commandment from my Lord Jesus Christ to share with everyone, and it is GOOD NEWS, not bigotry or fraud. Why does HF16 in spirit work against my faith and make it unlawful to disciple LGBTQ identified people who want to identify as Christian? What interest does the government have in preventing LGBTQ people from converting to Christianity? Why does the government choose the LGBTQ beliefs to be the state's approved religious standard and prohibit my beliefs? Why can't I live out my faith as guaranteed by the First Amendment?

What is the test for religious discrimination if not the discrimination based on the message of the sincerely held belief? I sincerely believe I am heterosexual male created by God and that Jesus was the one who delivered me from sin, sanctified my thinking and desires, away from homosexuality to heterosexuality, away from the LGBTQ community and made me a member of His kingdom and a son in His royal family. He gave me new desires that are not an abomination, but are aligned to His will and to His love, and now I desire to serve Him for His glory.

My work as a Pastor and licensed minister will become restricted by HF16 which would prevent me from using my Constitutional rights to speech and practice of my religion but would call such speech and religious practice as fraud. It is tacitly admitting the goal of the bill is to impact religious practice and free speech. [This of course has been the LGBTQ lobby's agenda from the beginning. <https://bit.ly/SBProxy01>] And so it is targeting my religious belief by denying my Civil Rights and my First Amendment Rights to free speech and free practice of my Christian faith. "You Hypocrites!" What a double standard HF16 would be.

It is also my belief that HF16 would harm my rights as a father to my children. I believe that God ordained my children to be a male son and a female daughter. If my children become confused about their sex, and it is harmful to affirm a child as the opposite sex, both mentally and spiritually, I would be prevented from seeking assistance to help the child align to reality of them being male or female. HF16 would come between my rights to direct the lives of my children according to reality of sexed bodies and the convictions of our religious beliefs in Jesus Christ.

My Christian faith will be discriminated against even more with the passing of HF16. There is nothing equal under the law about how it treats me or those who want to leave LGBTQ. This is effectively a "must stay gay" bill. Those ideologies which cannot stand the test of truth use such tyranny as HF16 by force of law. Our civil rights will be decimated by this bill. We aren't just being sent to the back of the bus in our country, we'll be told to get off the bus, we aren't welcome in public. And then we'll be denied being able to purchase parts to build our own bus! If by some miracle we can build a bus, we won't be allowed to drive where we want to go. All the roads will lead to LGBTQ religion.

HF16 will harm me and our community of ex-LGBTQ Christians (Christians formerly identified as LGBTQ) if it is passed into law. Where is our equality? Are some more equal than others?

In Service and Obedience to Jesus Christ,
Pastor Daren Mehl
Warroad, MN

Religious Doctrines

Sanctification is the work of God to transform us into the image of His son, Jesus Christ. The bible clearly teaches that evil desires are idolatry, and that transgenderism and sodomy are abominations and sin. Yet God has a path for the person trapped by those sins. God demonstrated His love toward us that while we were enemies of our Creator, Jesus died for us. Jesus alone is the savior who reconciles us to Jesus. When the homosexual or transgender receives the gift of repentance, and believes on Jesus as Lord and Savior, they are made new, born again as saints of God, adopted into the Kingdom of God as coheirs with Jesus, children of God. While the new believer is yet a babe in the faith, God's grace through faith in Jesus will persevere them through many trials and testings. God the Father will wash His children's minds with the Word of God, and through baptism of water and with the baptism of the Holy Spirit, the believer will be given grace through faith in Jesus to repent of evil desires.

God created us with needs. How we meet those needs, through behaviors, are based on what we believe are the best sources to meet our needs. God has promised to meet ALL OUR NEEDS in Him. When we get our needs met outside His will, in our own way turning to sin, that demonstrates

that we have an idol in our life. Sodomy is a belief that 'love is love' and that the act of sodomy with a man is an intimate and loving thing to meet the needs of male/male bonding. God makes it clear, and natural understanding available to all people makes it clear, that the act of sodomy is not how our bodies were designed. God also defines love as not harming others, not unbecoming, and not rejoicing in evil. Because God has defined sodomy as evil (an abomination as well), we know that it is evil and cannot therefore be called 'love'. We also know that our bodies were not made for penetration the way sodomy does, as it is harmful and everyone in the gay community knows what must be done to reduce harm, pain, and disease, up to and including using drugs. Again, we know for that reason it is not love.

God has created male intimacy in a spiritual brotherhood. There is an intimacy that a man can have with another man which is not romantic or sexual, but brotherly. This is how God has willed that men relate to each other. And by the power of God through faith in Jesus, the repentant homosexual can have a right-mind about relating to men. God can change a man's belief system and heart toward other men such that they no longer desire romantic / sexual behaviors, but rather seek friendship and brotherhood. This is the sanctifying power of God to transform.

God's desire is that none should perish but to repent and come to knowledge of Him. And once we repent, God begins to sanctify us and make us like Jesus – who is perfect and only did the will of the Father. God is a loving God who is the author of life and our lives. He has created every human as male or female for the purpose of marriage and carrying on the image bearing of God through procreation of new human children. The marriage between a man and a woman, for the sake of procreation of more humans, is for the glory of God and for mankind to enjoy being in fellowship with God. The sin of pride entered the world and disrupted our lives and worse separated us from our Creator. Our Creator rectified this through Jesus. Those who believe and confess Jesus as Savior and Lord are reconciled to relationship with God. Sodomy and transgenderism is a prideful belief in self that separates the person from God and leads them to eternity without God, and that place is called hell. We desire to teach people there is life in God through faith in Jesus Christ and that eternal life with God is possible through repentance. And after repentance, the joy of living IN THE SPIRIT is to know God and be in fellowship with Him. To be in love with God, in Him, is our destiny. And the Christian is commanded to tell of this good news, this Gospel of Jesus Christ. And this good news is to be told and offered even to the LGBT identified individual. No false law of man can prohibit the good news being told to anyone nor can any false law of man call discipleship in Jesus Christ fraud.

I have attached "DiffereingViews.pdf" as a brief summary of the different doctrines related to LGBT. What I have explained is the fourth column, "Rebuild: Transformation" which would be considered "conversion therapy" and "fraud".

Other Evidence of Change is Possible

Lisa Diamond has made it very clear that sexual orientation is fluid and not immutable. HF16 assumes that sexual orientation is fixed and ontologically people ARE LGBTQ. This is not true nor does science support that claim. Rather that people are LGBTQ and cannot change is a false religious belief claim. See <https://bit.ly/LDExplains01>

Changed Movement

In 2018 a community of overcomers who are no longer sexually attracted to the same sex, that is ex-gay, gathered on the steps of the captiol in California to testify against AB2943 ("Conversion Therapy Ban & Fraud bill, similar to HF16) that Jesus does change hearts and minds and sets people free from homosexuality and that the AB2943 bill is harmful to people who want to leave LGBTQ to follow Jesus. www.changedmovement.com See attached "Changed Book Testimonies.pdf" for more information. Selling this book would be considered "Conversion Therapy Fraud" if HF16 were passed.

Therapy Equality / Scientific Integrity

There is a website I found very useful to explain the harms of therapy bans. www.therapyequality.org and a report about the deceptive APA – The APA REPORT <https://www.therapyequality.org/apareport/index.htm>

There is ample scientific evidence for change that the LGBT lobby works over time to discredit and censor. Attached is the following:

1. *Frontiers-in-Psychology-Absence-of-Behavioral-Harm-Following-Non-efficacious-Sexual-Orientation-Change-Efforts-A-Retrospective-Study-of-US-Sexual-Minority-Adults-2016-2018*
2. *NATIONAL-TASK-FORCE-FOR-THERAPY-EQUALITY-FTC-COMPLAINT.pdf*
3. *Two Prisms - Blogs and bits.pdf*
4. *G Zachariah White - Successful Resolution to Sexual-Religious Identity Conflict.pdf*

Continual Persecution and Civil Rights Violations under the banner of “Conversion Therapy”

Businesses are regularly emboldened to discriminate illegally against Christians for their religious views. Regularly we are being censored from social media just for telling our testimonies. In June 2022 I opened a Instagram account and began sharing testimonies of Jesus setting people of evil desires, the desires for sodomy or transgenderism. Within 3 days my account was closed for ‘policy violations’. These organizations use the euphemism of “policy violation” as a means to discriminate against religious views of Christians. They regularly deny us access to their services because of our religious message of sanctification and healing of the repentant homosexual, a civil rights act violation. See the attached evidence of such discrimination,

1. Facebook restores Christian ministries' pages after being removed _ U.S. News.pdf
2. Amazon Censors alternative views on Homosexuality.pdf
3. Petition update · What is _ex-gay_ and why do their books matter_ · Change.org.pdf

I would also encourage you to visit <https://www.voiceofthevoiceless.info> who educate people about alternative views about homosexuality – specifically they amplify the testimonies of those who have left the LGBTQ community to follow Jesus Christ and also provide educational information about the healing / sanctifying process from evil desires for sodomy and transgenderism.

Agape First Ministries

Agape First Ministries equips the church with sound biblical doctrines around the transforming power of Jesus Christ to set the sinner free of sin and to restore them. The ministry has seen many individuals come out of the lgbtq identity and lifestyle to follow Jesus Christ as a dedicated disciple and experience fundamental healing of romantic and sexual desires which were to the same sex to develop for the opposite sex. We have seen many people go on to live full lives in heterosexual marriages and bear their own children, living life abundantly and authentically in Jesus Christ.

Attached is our ministry guide (Agape-Guide-1.1.pdf) which could be considered “conversion therapy” materials and labeled as fraud for claiming freedom in Christ for the repentant homosexual if HF16 were to pass.

The guide provides Christian doctrine, evangelistic information, and discipleship information. These are the kinds of materials that are regularly censored by those who promote LGBT religion and are bigoted toward Christians. We have a 1st amendment guarantee to be able to share this information in public.

The file “Daren Mehl 8 week Study.pdf” is an outline of a class I teach which includes my testimony and biblical study around human sexuality and freedom from homosexuality and transgenderism.

1/17/2023

My name is Grace Poole. I'm from the Twin Cities where I lived openly as a lesbian for 16 years. I moved two and a half years ago just West of the Twin Cities because my life had changed when I met Jesus and I desperately needed a fresh start away from the old LGBTQ identity and community. They rejected my new life and identity as a heterosexual Christian.

I was quite a young woman when someone first labeled me as gay. That false rumor spread and soon most people I knew labeled me as gay as well. The truth is, I had never even had a romantic or sexual thought about girls. I only saw them as friends. People told me I was denying who I was. They said it was clear to them I was queer. I ended up living in shame under the gay identity and an inauthentic life for a long time.

Looking back now over 19 years ago, I see how the loudest voices bullied me and manipulated my thoughts, and formed a gay identity for me based on their biases. I wasn't strong enough, big enough, or loud enough to speak up to defend myself, deny their oppressive labels, or assert my authentic self. I didn't have a safe space.

Now I am speaking up. I am speaking up for all of those who aren't strong enough or loud enough to speak for themselves. I am speaking up for all of those who are bullied and manipulated based off of other's biases.

My life went from dark, lost, scared, angry and confused to finding an unspeakable joy, love like I have never known, and very much found. I was lost but I was found by the love of Jesus. "For the Son of Man came to seek and save the lost." Luke 19:10 NIV

I found myself one night, very late, on my knees, begging God to take this from me. I didn't want it anymore. I wasn't asking God to take my life. I was asking Him to take this need I had to be affirmed by others of who I was.

It didn't happen right away but the walls that I had built so high started to come down. I found a community of other Christians, and a church that supported me and loved me in my brokenness. They encouraged me as my life changed right before their eyes. They loved me in practical ways and came alongside me and told me that I belonged.

The more time that I spent reading the Bible and spent time with other Christians the faster the dominos of sadness, shame, fear, and hopelessness, they all just faded away. They were replaced with an incredible love and an unspeakable joy.

My life will never be the same because of the love of Jesus and a few college friends who loved me enough to hang with me while God worked in me. I found a community where I belong and where I have been able to find healing.

Just like the caterpillar ceases to exist when the butterfly emerges, so to it was with me. I am someone completely new, with a new perspective, and a new purpose. I can stand tall, and complete not dependent on who anyone else says that I should be. I know who I am and Who's I am.

Please vote no on this bill. There are so many others with a story like mine that have been bullied and manipulated. Give them the chance to find that unspeakable joy and love if they so choose. Don't force them to stay trapped in darkness and pain when some of them long to find healing and hope.

Gracie Poole
Annadale, MN



AGAPE FIRST MINISTRIES

FREEDOM UNITED

MINISTRY GUIDE

A collection of teachings from Agape First Ministries

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This guide can be found on our website at <https://www.agapefirstministries.org/ministryguide>

All Agape First Ministries team members are missionaries and are self-funded. Please consider supporting Agape First Ministries directly as well as individually for each missionary.

<https://www.agapefirstministries.org/agapestaff>

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Understanding Homosexuality: How Sin has Impacted Our Sexuality

"For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

Ephesians 5:31-32

Introduction

Every good story ends with a wedding. It is the ultimate consummation of love and devotion. Our desire for a wedding is built into the very fabric of our DNA. Why is this so important? This is our story. This is our destiny. As God's people, we were created by Love for Love to love. We were created for a wedding, to be Jesus' equally yoked partner for all of eternity. What a high and lofty calling!

However, for every truth there is a counterfeit; and the devil, the enemy of your soul, is working overtime to distort and destroy the high calling of God for your life. *"The thief does not come except to steal, and to kill, and to destroy"* (John 10:10). Homosexuality is one of the significant ways the enemy is trying to destroy the destiny of this generation. As homosexuality distorts our understanding of sex and gender and God's desire for a wedding, it keeps God's people from embracing the fullness of His destiny for them as the Bride of Christ.

The Beginning of Understanding

To understand homosexuality biblically, we must go back to the very beginning. Genesis 1:26-27 says, *"Then God said, 'Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness...' So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them."* Men and women are called to bear God's image here on the earth. Individually, both men and women equally reflect unique aspects of God's image. God's design for His people is communion, so when man and woman come together in marriage, they bear the fullness of God's image here on the earth. It is in the context of heterosexual marriage that we have the fullest picture of who God is and how He acts in relationship. It is the great dance of the masculine and the feminine on full display.

We were also created for intimacy without shame. Genesis 2:24-25 says, *"Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."* In God's original design, Adam and Eve were completely known and yet, felt no shame about who they were. Life in the garden was perfect. Adam understood what it meant to be a man created in God's image. Likewise, Eve understood what it meant to be a woman created in God's image. They understood that when they came together in marriage, they formed a more complete picture of who God is. There was no confusion or disorder.

Yet despite their intimacy with God, Adam and Eve entered into a conversation with darkness (Gen. 3:1). Dialogue with darkness *always* ends in darkness. Adam and Eve were deceived. They sinned. They forgot who they were and to whom they belonged. This led to fear, shame, hiding, confusion, and disorder. The results of this conversation are still seen today.

At the core of the homosexual struggle is identity confusion. Each of us—regardless of whether or not we struggle with homosexuality—is struggling to figure out who we are. There are powerful voices all around us—the enemy, the world, our flesh—that try to name and speak identity into us apart from the reality of who God created us to be. Homosexuality is just one more way to try to find what was lost in the garden: identity. Deception leads to identity confusion, which leads to gender confusion, sexual confusion, and marriage confusion. There is a disconnect between the goodness of our given identity and our self-understanding of that identity. As Dr. Joseph Nicolosi, a leading therapist for the treatment of homosexuality, puts it,

Self-deception about our gender is at the heart of the homosexual condition. A child who imagines that he or she can be the opposite sex or be both sexes is holding on to a fantasy solution to his or her [gender] confusion. This is a revolt against reality and a rebellion against the limits built into our created human natures
A Parent's Guide to Preventing Homosexuality, Nicolosi, 22

A Basic Understanding

Regarding the issue of homosexuality, God's Word is very clear: homosexual behavior is always sin (Lev. 18:22, 1 Cor. 6:9-10). Period. That being said, whenever homosexuality is referenced, the Bible always addresses the behavior of homosexuality, not the person. This is a crucial distinction to make. While God clearly condemns homosexual behavior, He honors the reality that even those who struggle with homosexuality have been created in His image and have intrinsic value and worth. In other words, you and I are not simply the sum of our sin and brokenness. **We are not named or identified by our fallenness. This means also that there is no such thing as a homosexual person from God's point of view, only broken heterosexuals in God's heterosexual creation.**

The development of homosexuality is a very complex issue. It would be unfair to generalize how and why different people develop homosexual attractions. Each one struggling is an individual with a unique story, and there are a multitude of factors that may set someone up for a struggle with this issue. While the particulars of a struggle may be different, ultimately homosexuality is not really about sex; instead it is a confused desire for love. We were made with a desire to love and be loved at the core of who we are. Yet when that deepest longing of the human heart isn't met, it can become confused and even sexualized.

Before we go any further, let's look at some oversimplifications about homosexuality:

"People choose to be homosexual." People do not choose to have homosexual attractions. In fact, for many the revelation of these attractions can be a terrifying discovery. That said, one always has the choice of what to do with homosexual attractions and whether those attractions will become a part of one's identity (i.e. gay).

“Homosexuals are demon-possessed.” Whenever there is a stronghold of sin and brokenness in one’s life, the presence of demonic strongholds must always be considered. However, the presence of homosexual attractions demonstrates a breakdown in personal, spiritual, and relational development. Thus, homosexuality should not simply be understood as a spiritual stronghold in need of deliverance.

“People are born gay.” There is no scientific proof that homosexuality is inborn. None. However, homosexual attractions are often the result of longstanding relational patterns, and thus have been developed and reinforced over a significant period of time. In other words, while homosexual attractions may not be inborn, in many ways they may feel “natural” to those who experience them.

At the core of a homosexual struggle (or its variants) is attachment loss. For whatever reason baby boy or girl was not able to attach to mom or dad and their same-sex peers in a way that their identity was fully informed. (Remember our attachments inform our identity.) The Good News is Jesus has made a way for us to once again experience attachment to the Heavenly Father, and the Father has all the information needed to inform our identities.

A breakdown in healthy bonding can be caused by many factors:

- Physical, emotional, or spiritual absence of the father
- Emotionally engulfing mother
- Abusive parent
- Illness in baby or mom after birth
- Early childhood exposure to pornography
- Positive reinforcement of same-sex sexual experiences
- Teasing / bullying
- Childhood sexual abuse
- Generational sin

Generally, it is not usually one of these factors, but several, that add up over time. When baby, or little boy/girl, does not form the necessary attachments to inform their identity, the little one will struggle to develop a healthy sense of belonging. Foundational truths such as, “I belong to a family; I belong to the world of my same-sex peers;” or simply, “I belong;” never take root. This lack of sense of belonging can make it really hard for a same-sex attracted person to assimilate into a Church body.

More Specific Understanding Regarding Men and Women

For men, a struggle with homosexuality is indicative of a **disconnection** from the masculine (a core sense of strength.) It is through little boy’s attachment to dad (or a father substitute) and the world of men that he comes to understand who he is as a man. Men learn how to be men by being with other men and doing what they do.

Disconnected from the true masculine, little boy will instinctively look for a solution to repair the deficit in his soul. The enemy is quick to offer sex as a solution to little boy’s attachment

loss and sense of gender emptiness. The lie being, “maybe if you attach to another man sexually you will get the missing information about who you are as a man.”

For women, a struggle with homosexuality reveals a **rejection** of femininity. Many women struggling with same-sex attractions report experiencing some form of abuse as a little girl, or they witnessed mom experiencing abuse. Femininity becomes a vulnerability and is rejected as a way to self-protect from further hurt (usually from a man.)

Nevertheless, little girl remains disconnected from a vital part of her identity as a woman. And, once again, sex is offered as a solution to said disconnect. Attaching to femininity in another woman through sex soothes the pain of being internally disintegrated from the good the feminine.

But sex can never put back together the fractured parts of our identity. For this, we need a Savior. Through the cross, men and women alike can reconnect with the Heavenly Father. And, rightfully bonded to our Creator, the broken person can finally receive the Truth that will heal the gender disintegration hindering their capacity to love and be loved rightly.

Ultimately, homosexuality is an affront to the image of God and His created intent for His people. The enemy knows this and is using this issue to plant deception in the hearts of God’s people about who they are and how they should act.

How God Heals

The good news of the Gospel is that Jesus Christ has life-changing power. He has power to heal and restore. The power of God, made available through the finished work of the cross, is a reality available to all believers, even those struggling with homosexuality. God is in the business of healing and transforming lives affected by homosexuality!

Ultimately, the foundational work of healing is about receiving a new identity. For those who are in Christ, that new identity is one that is bestowed at salvation:

Or do you not know that wrongdoers will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived: Neither the sexually immoral nor idolaters nor adulterers nor men who have sex with men nor thieves nor the greedy nor drunkards nor slanderers nor swindlers will inherit the kingdom of God. And that is what some of you were. But you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God.

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NIV)

Jesus has been in the business of healing homosexuality and giving new identity for over 2000 years!

Healing means that homosexuality no longer has the power to name you. Often a struggle with homosexuality can be life-dominating. Rooted in stunted emotional, spiritual, and relational development—it feels very natural. Though it is a broken attempt at receiving love and identity, much of its power comes from the fact that it does, in some ways, meet those needs. It gives

meaning to one's pain and often provides the struggler with a sense of belonging (i.e. the gay community). Nevertheless, because of the new identity bestowed on all believers at salvation, we have been given a new identity and the power to live beyond the pain of our unmet needs. In fact, God can meet those very needs!

Healing is about coming into agreement with God regarding who He is and His original intent for humanity. This means renouncing lies about who you are. This includes false names and labels spoken over you such as "gay," "queer," "girl," "dyke," and "lezzie." Renouncing these labels means taking authority against the lies of the enemy through the power of the blood of Jesus.

Healing also involves moving beyond lies and embracing the fullness of your true identity in Christ. As men and women, each of us has been given the honor of bearing God's image in our bodies and in how we relate to others. For your part, you must choose to come into agreement with God's Word about who He has created you to be as a man or woman. Regardless of feelings, this is an essential part of the healing process, and one that must be walked out daily. Just as false names and labels often form identity and self-perception, so the process of renewing your mind and bringing it into alignment with God's mind is just that—a process. Say yes to the process, and God will be faithful to daily meet you and strengthen you as you come into agreement with His heart. He is for you!

Journeying Toward Wholeness

God's healing work in your life is a process. Healing can be an event, but it is also something you must walk out daily. Ultimately, God heals the homosexual the same way He heals everyone: through the finished work of the Cross. Through relationship, we are filled and empowered to live differently. Healing is about relationship.

This means healing isn't about getting a quick fix. God isn't interested in "zapping" you so that you can simply go back to living a selfish, narcissistic life. Instead, He desires that in the place of your wounding, you will experience healing. Although we are all wounded in relationship, our healing comes through relationship as well. Healing comes in learning to live in relationship with God.

Homosexual attractions may not simply disappear after six months (or ever, for that matter). In calling us into relationship with Himself, God does not take away our past. He doesn't give us a frontal lobotomy. We must cooperate with Him in doing the hard work of living differently, making different choices about who we are, and determining where we will look to for love, life, meaning and purpose.

Ultimately, the opposite of homosexuality is not heterosexuality, it is holiness.

Conclusion

Jesus wants a wedding. Revelation 19:6-7 says,

And I heard, as it were, the voice of a great multitude, as the sound of many waters and as the sound of mighty thunderings, saying, "Alleluia! For the Lord God Omnipotent reigns! Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready."

Jesus is returning for a pure and spotless bride. The real question this generation must ask is *not*, what is my sexual identity? Am I gay, straight, or bisexual? The most important question you can ask yourself is, am I ready for Jesus? Is my heart ready to meet Him? Am I prepared for eternity?

Some Pastoral Care Helps:

1. **Attachment.** *"At the core of a homosexual struggle (or it's variants) is attachment loss."* Helping the struggler attach to God in a meaningful way should always be first and foremost in our pastoral care. This includes helping the struggler learn to have a life-giving prayer life as well as how to connect with God in worship and through acts of service. This is a time to model unconditional love and grace to the struggler. They will not be able to attach to God and the body of Christ if they do not first feel safe, and their sense of safety is bolstered by building trust over time with a pastoral caregiver.
2. **Identity.** *"Our attachments inform our identity."* Providing a healthy diet of truth to the struggler regarding who they are as a man or woman created in God's image is essential. It is paramount that the struggler grows in their understanding of their intrinsic value and worth simply because they are created in God's image. Truth about our identity is a powerful force against shame and fear. Knowing that they are known by God and others (e.g. the pastoral caregiver) is another means of building trust and establishing a sense of safety.

Belonging. *"When baby, or little boy/girl, does not form the necessary attachments to inform identity, the little one will struggle to develop a healthy sense of belonging."* The struggler may need lots of help integrating into your church body. Again, time and grace are of the essence. It is important here to major on the majors and minor on the minors. Some things, while they may be off putting to some in church culture, really aren't worth correcting on the front end.

Confronting "Gay Christian" Theology

I have been in ministry to people with unwanted same-sex attractions for over 20 years. During this time, I have watched the cultural landscape shift radically in regard to the issue of homosexuality. Nowadays, the "gay lifestyle" is embraced, accepted, and even celebrated in all spheres of life. It is normal to see gay couples get married or engaging in sexual behaviors on primetime television. This was not the case all that long ago. The shift came quickly and took many in the Church by surprise.

Now I am watching the landscape of the Church change in this regard as well. In the same way, the shift is coming quickly and is taking many by surprise. Most mainline denominations more than tolerate—they ordain gay clergy, marry gay couples, and encourage same-sex attracted youth to embrace their “gayness” as a gift from God and a blessing to others. What is even more shocking is now, once-stalwart evangelical churches and organizations are falling prey to “gay Christian” theology—the thinking that it is okay to be a Christ-follower and embrace a gay identity. While there are different expressions of the “gay Christian” (some choose celibacy while others marry their partners), the bottom line is clear: to embrace the gay identity in any way is an affront to the image of God in men and women, and it is contrary to what God has commanded in His Word.

God’s creation is heterosexual (Genesis 1:26-27). Within God’s heterosexual creation, there are two sexes: male and female; and two genders: masculine and feminine. (“Sex” is the unchangeable biological reality of being male or female. In this article, I am using the traditional/Biblical definition of the term “gender” which speaks of spiritual realities found in the Image and character of God.) In God’s created order, there is always one and then the other. In the macro understanding of this principle, we have God who, in the masculine, initiated a love relationship with the Church, His Bride. We see the macro played out in the micro: married love between a man and a woman (Ephesians 5:31-32).

“Hetero” is different from the prefix “homo” which means “same.” There are, not two, but one. The good news for the same-sex attracted is that in God’s creation, there is no such thing as a homosexual, only heterosexuals, however broken he or she may have gotten in this world. We all have to live in the flow of the reality God has established, regardless of our feelings or attractions.

Gender is a way of categorizing characteristics. The historical meaning of gender is “things we treat differently because of their inherent differences.” Biblical gender is the compilation of characteristics that make up who God is (the feminine) and how He acts within relationships (the masculine.) It includes the distinction between God’s being and His activity. Right away in Genesis 1:1, we see God as a gendered being—In the beginning God (being) created the heavens and the earth (activity). God continues to make distinctions as He creates: light and dark, day and night, land and sea, the heavens and the earth. God solidifies distinction within Himself—He IS and He DOES. He creates for six days (activity) and on the seventh day He rests (being). Distinction is important to God.

God continues to make distinction in Genesis 1:26-27: Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

In God's creation, unity or union does not do away with distinction. There will always be a distinction between God and man, man and creation, and male and female.

Paganism always tries to do away with distinction. The goal of paganism is that all would become one; God and man, man and creation, male and female, etc. are simply "one with the universe." We see this lack of distinction being played out in human culture's many sordid expressions of sexuality. It seems anything goes these days! Culture wants to do away with any gender distinction or the gender binary. Dr. Peter Jones, author of *The God of Sex*, says that when the primary binary (God and His creation) is eliminated, all other binaries crumble.

Homosexuality has its roots in paganism. This is why the movement to promote homosexuality is so powerful. It is not just about sex, or even whom you choose to love; it has a spiritual component. When the creature is worshiped rather than the Creator, demons are present. Our sexuality is a reflection of our spirituality.

To take on a gay identity is to step outside of God's created order and out of the flow of reality. It is to reject one's sense of belonging in God's creation. Taking on a gay identity essentially shuts down the healing process and hinders receptivity of future blessings the Lord has in His heart for the struggler. It is letting the "old man" remain and refusing to walk in righteousness and holiness. God will never ask you to be or do what He forbids in His word.

But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness (Ephesians 4:20-24).

These words may seem bold or even harsh, but now is the time for boldness and courage, Church! I believe that "gay Christian" theology (in all its varied forms) is the greatest danger to the Western Church today. It threatens the very foundation of our understanding of God, His creation, and our place within His creation. It is an assault on the image of God and the distinction He has established between Himself and creation.

Let me conclude by clarifying a couple of issues. First, one's temptations and life-dominating issues do not determine salvation. There are many individuals who are born-again believers, yet they still struggle with unwanted same-sex attractions. We are saved by God's grace available through Jesus Christ, not by our ability to keep His Law or to avoid temptation.

Second, God loves everyone within the "gay community." His heart is burning to see His children return to Him. Many individuals have been wounded and rejected by the Church's poor response to their struggle with same-sex attractions. A compassionate, biblical understanding of homosexuality within the Church has been needed for a very long time.

With that said, the current “gay Christian” conversation and shift that is now taking place within the Church is not based on a biblical understanding of homosexuality. The Church is sorely lacking a scriptural understanding of biblical gender and the image of God.

We must be firm in our convictions in this hour. We must dig deeply into Genesis 1:26-27 and seek the Lord for wisdom and understanding of His image. There is great clarity that comes from returning to the Word of God and beholding His character. Let us make haste to see God rightly for only then can we truly see one another as He intended.

Understanding Biblical Gender: How Men and Women are Created in God’s Image

Then God said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, over all the earth and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” So God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.

Genesis 1:26-27

While the biblical witness is clear that the living God transcends sexuality, that he is neither male nor female, it is equally clear that he encompasses masculinity and femininity within himself. Indeed, we are created in his image as male and female. (See Genesis 1:27; 5:1,2)

Donald Bloesch, The Battle for the Trinity

Gender is a reality and a more fundamental reality than sex.

C.S. Lewis, Perelandra

Introduction

You were created to bear God’s image. Your spirit, soul, and body were meant to reflect the nature and character of the One who created you. This is a privilege that has only been given to human beings. Think about it: the God of the universe not only *allows* you; He *calls* you to demonstrate who He is to the world. This means something to God, and it means something to the enemy as well.

Before we get too far, let’s start with some definitions. In this resource guide, the terms sex and gender will be used *differently*. Biblical gender is the characteristics that make up who God is and how He acts in relationship. This is different from the term “sex,” which refers to the physical characteristics that distinguish male and female. Biblical gender is about spiritual

realities found in the image of God which we discern through the Bible. Sex is about our bodies. Culture would say gender is a social construct or something that originates in the mind; but God is the source of gender and the goal of this resource is to point you to Him.

As Sam A. Andreades, author of *enGendered*, wrote, “Gender is hard to understand because God is hard to understand.” But, we are praying for a great release of wisdom in the body of Christ—that the knowledge of the Holy would once again be among us. For, it is only when we understand our relationship to our Creator that we can truly relate to one another in love and truth.

God—the Source of Gender

God has gender. That is to say, He is fully masculine and fully feminine. Within the Image of God we see the power to act (the masculine) and the capacity to be (the feminine.) In fact, we see God as a being with gender right away in Genesis 1:1: *In the beginning God (being) created the heavens and the earth (doing).* God IS and God DOES. Understanding gender within the Image of God helps us understand ourselves as men and women and it points us toward our eternal destiny as Image Bearers. Andrew Comisky, founder of Desert Stream Ministries and pioneer in ministry to the sexually and relationally broken, writes, “Gender difference—and harmony in that difference—points beyond itself; it offers us a glimpse of heaven. Rightfully ordered, the dance of [masculinity and femininity]—desire and restraint, initiative and response, fruitfulness and frustration—gives us a window to our cosmic destiny.”

When we lose a right view of the Image of God, we lose touch with who we are as Image Bearers. The wisdom of righteousness is interpreted as chains and shackles that bind instead of truth that sets one free to truly love (See Proverbs 29:18; Psalm 2.)

And, in knowing this proverbial reality we can clearly discern the enemy’s strategy: systematically remove the good of gender distinction from society so that men and women do not order their lives in such a way that they get to the marriage supper of the Lamb. First, he sought to undefine marriage and now gender is in his sights. Beloved, it is time for the Church to rise up in strength and declare the truth. Time is of the essence. This guide will help you.

Understanding Gender—Spirit, Soul and Body

God is spirit. Therefore, to be “created in His Image” goes much deeper than just our physical bodies. Your human spirit is the deepest part of who you are. It is the place you were meant to have union with God—His Spirit and your spirit communing together. Your human spirit reveals the Image of God, as does your soul and your body. Your body (the physical) reveals something about your spirit (the unseen part of you.) This means your biological sex (the body you were born in) matters in light of eternity.

Your body denotes the gender to which you *belong*—men to the masculine and women to the feminine. This is not to say that women do not possess the power to act and men are not able to simply be. Quite the contrary. Men are made to be as well as do, but they must do it as men

in a male body. And likewise, women are made to act as well as be, but they must do it as women in a female body.

Mario Bergner, author of *Setting Love in Order*, writes, “Clearly, it is correct for a man to say that his is a masculine gender identity and for a woman to say that hers is a feminine one. We not only possess masculine and feminine qualities, but also by our sex we belong to one gender or the other. A secure sense of belonging to one’s gender is central to having a healthy personal identity.”

Our Creator, holding all that is true and real within Himself, reflects both the masculine and feminine, and so do we. The more nearly we function in His image, the more nearly we reflect both the masculine and the feminine their proper balance—that is, in the differing degrees and aptitudes appropriate to our sexual identities as male and female.
Leanne Payne, *Crisis in Masculinity*

As we walk out the truth of who we were created to be (spirit, soul, and body) we are walking in radical holiness. And this holiness is available to all who make Jesus Christ Lord of their lives—no matter how marred God’s Image is within them. Jesus died to set those bound up in unrealities regarding their sex and gender free. And, there is power in His blood for the hurting to make peace with his or her sex and gender. Through the cross, Jesus has made a way to bind up the *disintegrated* parts of who we are and fully transform us into His likeness. For, *by His wounds we are healed* (Isaiah 53:5d).

God’s Heterosexual Creation

God’s creation is heterosexual. The prefix “hetero” means, “different or distinction.” This is opposed to the prefix “homo” which means “same.” In God’s creation there are always two—one and the *other*. This is the foundation for gender distinction or the gender binary. Culture wants to do away with the gender binary; but such an action would be doing away with the image of God as revealed in male and female, masculine and feminine.

God’s image cannot be seen or experienced within homosexuality (or its variations) because there is no binary—there is no other. This is why so called “gay marriage” is so destructive to society. Again, no right vision of God, no restraint in our behavior.

“Our sexuality is a reflection of our spirituality” (Dr. Peter Jones, *The God of Sex*.) The issue of homosexuality is not just about who one chooses to love, it is about our view of God who is Love. Despite what culture may say, “love” is not always Love.

Understanding the Divine Order

What is above and beyond all things is so masculine that we are all feminine in relation to it.

C.S. Lewis, That Hideous Strength

In God's heterosexual creation, both the masculine and the feminine are needed, as each represent aspects of who God is and how He acts in relationship. One isn't better than the other. In fact, they complement one another. Biblical masculinity and femininity highlight different characteristics of God's heart. That being said, in God's design there is an order: the masculine comes first and the feminine follows.

In relation to God, we are all feminine. According to 1 John 4:19, God, the Great Initiator, first loved us, and this selfless love has awakened our hearts to respond to Him in love and adoration. "...All of humanity, males and females alike, are in the feminine position of responding to God's acts of initiation. Moreover, when we refer to the church as she (or as the Bride of Christ), we do not mean that it is composed of females. Nor when we refer to God as He (or to Christ as our Bridegroom) do we mean that God is male (Mario Bergner, *Setting Love in Order*).

This Divine Initiative and human response are at the heart of our understanding of creation and our place within it as gendered people. God is the Creator and we are His creation. He is the Potter and we are the clay.

The Broken Image

In Genesis 3:1, Adam and Eve were invited into a conversation with the serpent, "Has God indeed said ...?" With one simple question, the enemy attacked the True Masculine and the True Feminine. As the serpent came into the garden, Adam, who was called to embody the True Masculine, was meant to protect Eve from the deception of the serpent. He did not act. Unprotected, Eve responded to the serpent by simply operating in her natural capacity for relationship, True Femininity. Her protector was not present to keep her from deception, and as a result, gender has been disordered ever since.

We live in a fallen world. We are wounded by the presence of sin and brokenness, hindered in our ability to give and receive love. Ultimately, we are hindered in our ability to bear God's image in and through our bodies. As men and women, we are all created to uniquely bear God's image. But as we pursue life and relationship apart from God, that image in us is distorted.

Dialogue with darkness ends in darkness. We were never meant to have conversations with the enemy. It didn't end well for Adam and Eve and it won't end well for us. Our attachments (securely formed relationships) inform our identity. In the garden, the enemy called the character of God into question which caused Adam and Eve to doubt the goodness of the Lord. The enemy attacked Adam and Eve's secure attachment to the Lord. Disconnected from their Source and walking in unbelief, Adam and Eve were disempowered to walk in the good of their gender.

Enter fear, shame, and disorder. But, we must remember this was not God's original intent. We cannot deny the reality of sin's impact on creation in the face of the massive gender confusion present in society. As the Church, we must lovingly and gracefully correct the unreality of the sexually and relationally broken. For, "love does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth"(1 Corinthians 13:6).

A Call to Action

We are living in a Psalm 2 crisis. The people are plotting in vain and the rulers have set themselves against the Lord and His Anointed saying, "Let us break Their bonds in pieces and cast away Their cords from us." Culture desires to cast off the restraint of gender difference and sexual boundaries set forth by our Creator to protect us and free us to love rightly.

Our first course of action as a Church must be to REPENT.

"...If My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land" (2 Chronicles 7:14).

I want to highlight 5 areas where the Church of America needs to repent regarding the LGBTQ issue:

1. **Passivity**—Like Adam in the garden we have allowed the serpent to walk right into our congregations and inform the people on issues of sex and gender. "Did God really say homosexual behavior was sin? Did God really say a man dressing like a woman (or vice versa) was sin? After all, Jesus didn't have a sexual ethic, He only had a love ethic." Our passivity has led to a great deception in the Church and the only cure is to turn to God. Like the Laodicean Church (Revelation 2:14-22) we must anoint our eyes with eye salve so that we can clearly see the wave of delusion sweeping across the Body of Christ.
2. **Fear of Intimidation**—One of the main strategies of the LGBTQ activists is intimidation. They threaten lawsuits, defamation of character, and the destruction of businesses that uphold Biblical values. And, to be fair, the gay lobby *is* powerful and well-funded. But, have we forgotten our Lord Jesus is far more powerful and far more well-funded? It is time for the strength and courage of Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-Nego (See Daniel 3). We know our God is mighty to save, but even if He doesn't, we must no longer bow down to the god of this age.
3. **Agreement with Culture**—The Biblical witness is clear. God is never found in agreement with the understanding or expression of sexuality promoted by culture. In fact, He sent prophet after prophet to exhort His children to turn from the worship of Baal and Asherah—worship which included homosexual practice and temple prostitution.

Sadly, many churches are now walking in agreement with the witness of culture instead of the Biblical witness on LGBTQ issues. We must break our agreement with this present darkness and come into agreement with what God says regarding sex and gender.

4. **Denying the Transforming Power of the Gospel**—Jesus Christ has life-changing power that can radically transform the core of the repentant sinner. Unfortunately, many in

the Church no longer believe this truth for the LGBTQ person. Instead, they encourage gay and lesbian men and women to wear the label “gay Christian.” “It’s OK to be gay, just don’t act it.” WRONG!

Jesus Christ is able to transform anyone who humbly turns to Him—homosexuals included (See 1 Corinthians 6:9-11). We must have a higher vision of Jesus and His ability to perfect our faith. The process may take a lifetime, but nonetheless He is able to complete the good work He began in us. (More on this later...).

5. **Not Having the Lord’s Heart for the LGBTQ Community**—Jesus longs for those lost in the LGBTQ lifestyle to return to Him. They are dear to Him. He died for them. Those in the LGBTQ community are precious to the Lord and we must share His heart as we seek and save the lost.

We must make a place for LGBTQ people to belong in our congregations, even while they are still being sanctified. They are not going to do the process perfectly, but no one does! They need grace, and safety, and lots of love if they are going to learn the trust they will need to attach to the Lord and His body in such a way that they can heal and overcome their brokenness.

And so, let us make haste to the place of prayer. Let us repent deeply that we might shine brightly. And let us hold out the word of life to a world desperately in need of True Love.

Maintaining Hope

...those who hope in Me will not be disappointed (Isaiah 49:23)."

Upon the heels of the US Supreme Court legalizing “gay marriage” in all 50 states, the transgender movement exploded on the scene, further muddying the waters of sex and gender. Now parents are raising their children “gender neutral,” allowing for time for them to decide their sex at will.

As strangers in this world, we don’t understand such episodes and examples of nonsense, wickedness and evil. As believers we should be ever growing in our comprehension of love. Darkness makes less and less sense to those living in the light. It’s true that we too once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air and were, therefore, sons of disobedience (see Eph. 2:1-3). But, now we have been made alive. The curse has been reversed. We are sons of God. And we see things very differently now. We have hope.

But how do we maintain this hope in the midst of growing confusion, darkness, nonsense, and evil?

To hope is to desire with expectation of obtainment, to expect with confidence. The biblical concept of hope is not mere expectation and desire, as in Greek understanding, but includes trust, confidence, and refuge in God.

For Christians, hope is supernatural. It is the result of the Holy Spirit empowering our desire for God and His great and precious promises. This supernatural hope empowers the soul to trust in the character of

God even, as Corrie Ten Boom says, “when life gives you reasons not to.” Our hearts can be confident in love before God.

God is the source of our expectation—He gives us vision. We begin to hope. By hoping we are coming into agreement with God—He is the God of all hope. Where there is agreement with God there is blessing and empowerment. There is unity with the Holy Spirit in our souls. We walk by faith.

Life in this fallen world is hard. It can be discouraging to be surrounded by so much evil. But, in the midst of the difficulty, we must maintain our hope. Hope is the basis of our faith in God. It is an expression of our love. And it is a powerful weapon of righteousness. The enemy of our souls desires to destroy our hope! But we must not lose heart.

A hopeful soul is an empowered soul. A downcast soul is a disempowered soul. Beloved, in this hour of human history we must hold onto hope for dear life!

The key to maintaining hope (and joy for that matter) is to choose to see Love and the opportunity for togetherness in every situation. It is the attitude of relationship.

The despairing soul is not able to see Love in every circumstance. It is the attitude of abandonment. With no hope of togetherness all that is left is the lonely task of trying to do the impossible by oneself. Talk about depressing!

If you have lost hope in a particular area of life, you need a fresh vision of Love in this matter. New vision gives new opportunity to choose hope. Remember, the Holy Spirit will be quick to empower you in the hard work of hope!

I’ll never forget a scene one month after the Sandy Hook Elementary School massacre when 26 people were murdered by pure evil. Some of the parents of the murdered children spoke out at a press conference. A mom whose little girl, Anna, had been tragically ripped from her life, talked of how her faith in God had been a sustaining factor in the midst of unthinkable tragedy. Her closing statement was this: “We choose love. Love wins in Newtown and may love win in America.” WOW! She maintained hope because she could see Love in the midst of evil!

Hope does not disappoint. There will be justice for this precious mom and the many others who lost loved ones in this tragedy. Ultimately, there will be justice for those who choose to stand for the truth of God’s image in the midst of great sexual immorality. Evil does not win. Terror does not win. LOVE wins! WE WIN!

Very soon “The kingdoms of this world [will] become the kingdoms of our Lord and of His Christ, and He shall reign forever and ever” (Revelation 11:15). There is much to hope for in this hour. Jesus is soon returning and He will make the wrong things right. He brings judgment to those who refuse Him and reward to those who love Him.

I hope for that day of victory. I hope for the fullness of my salvation—a new, resurrected body. I hope for justice once and for all—evil driven off of the planet forever. I hope for eternity with my Bridegroom—the One who loved me and gave Himself for me. I hope for the Father making His dwelling place, His resting place, with me eternally. I will not be disappointed. And neither will you, my friend.

My hope is a powerful weapon. It sustains my heart through trial and tribulation. It supports my faith in times of suffering. It drives my heart into joy. Hoping in the Lord renews my strength and guards my soul against weariness (see Isaiah 40:31).

As you seek to grow in hope, pray Ephesians 1:17-19 for the opening of your eyes of faith.

Do not be downcast. Do not be disturbed. Learn to see love in every situation. Look for the opportunity for relationship with God in every circumstance. Choose to walk and to love in every situation. Watch mountains move and see that relationship with God works every time.

Now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope by the power of the Holy Spirit

Romans 15:13

God's Strategy in the Midst of Persecution

Overcoming the life- dominating aspects of unwanted same-sex attractions (SSA) is difficult. Homosexuality is rooted in deep woundedness and driven by pain and anger; it can feel like the prison door will never open. Add to that the shifts in our culture and freedom can seem even more elusive. Nearly all spheres of life are now supportive of embracing a gay identity, including much of the Western Church. Someone who chooses to walk away from unwanted SSA in this day and age is a target for much persecution. We at Agape First Ministries are very much a hated entity by the world in which we live.

But we do not lose heart. Jesus warned us of such hatred and persecution. In fact, His counsel was to not be surprised by such things—the world hated Him first because He testified that its works are evil (John 7:7). “If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you (John 15:18). We are in good company. Furthermore, He went on to say, “If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore, the world hates you (John 15:19.) The hatred of the world is a testimony that we are not of the world. We have been chosen OUT of this world! Hallelujah! Therefore, we do not marvel at the world’s hatred of us but at the reality that we are now God’ children by His love. We do not fix our eyes on hatred, but on love.

The key to moving well through persecution is where we fix our gaze. The devil loves to pull away our focus. In many ways, his primary goal is the persecution of the saints—to get their eyes off of Jesus, the author and finisher of their faith.

King David understood the importance of gazing upon the beauty of the Lord in times of trouble. Psalm 27 is a prime example of his warfare strategy. In verses 1-3, he declared that the Lord is his light and his salvation in the midst of impending war. His confidence came from what he saw in the light: a strong God who was fighting for him. What did he have to be afraid of? God was on his side.

In 27:4 he proclaimed, “One thing I have desired of the Lord, that will I seek: that I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the Lord, and to inquire in His temple.” David did not want to be caught up in what he could see or hear in the natural realm. He wanted to behold the beauty of the Lord and talk to God about the many issues he was facing as the new king of Israel. What a profound strategy and life vision!

When I fail to see God in my circumstances, I quickly lose hope. I mean, let's face it, no one wants to experience hatred. We certainly weren't created for such an experience. Persecution for the Christian faith is happening in our country and will most likely increase in the coming years. I refuse to let self-pity or fear rob me of my glory as a son of God.

King David made good on his life vision. After he was anointed king over all of Israel and established his throne in Jerusalem, he brought the Ark of the Covenant to Mount Zion and established a worship center. The sacrifices offered in this tabernacle were very different from the tabernacle of Moses; they were not just animals, but ones of praise, joy, and thanksgiving (Psalm 95:2, 100:4, 141:2). David hired, and paid out of his own pocket, for singers and musicians to worship the Lord day and night. David and his kingdom were blessed and protected.

In this evil age, I have taken a page out of David's playbook and established a House of Prayer with the goal of offering the sacrifices of praise, joy, and thanksgiving, as well as our petitions to the Lord day and night. I am convinced that this is the only way to operate wisely in the changing culture. Like David, we believe we will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living (Psalm 27:13). We will be blessed and protected.

Fixing our eyes on the Unseen can be difficult. It definitely takes practice. I have learned to quiet my heart at different points throughout my day and simply ask the question, "Jesus, where are You?" I am not doubting He is with me, but reacquainting myself with the reality of His presence. This has been called "practicing the presence of God" by saints of old. Ultimately, it is about doing my day with God, from the mundane to the serious.

Practicing God's presence has been a saving grace for me on many occasions, especially during various forms of persecution. Knowing God is with me and for me truly is, like David said, the strength of my life.

Practicing His presence, it is also the key to my working with mentees. Oftentimes, the issues of opposition they report are quite overwhelming. One can wonder how in the world they will overcome. But as I remember that not only is Jesus with me but He also lives in me, I have hope. Christ in me is the hope of glory (Colossians 1:27)! If Jesus lives in us, there is always hope for overcoming unto glory.

Times have changed. Persecution is beginning for Christians in this nation, but God is still on the throne. He is still sovereign and still beautiful. If the shifting culture has gotten you down, turn off the news, open your Bible, and gaze upon God's endless beauty. "Wait on the Lord; be of good courage, and He shall strengthen your heart; wait, I say, on the Lord" (Psalm 27:14).

Discipleship Matters

As believers, we have the wonderful comfort of the instruction of the Word of God; but to those who depart from it, there is little hope (see Matthew 28:18-20 and Mark 16:15-18). Isn't it reassuring that we have received instruction from our Lord and Savior? He instructed us to, "Go make disciples." Scripture is unmistakably clear on this issue (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-18).

Our goal in discipleship is the maturing of a believer into the character of Jesus and helping them make additional disciples.

Often, as it was with Jesus, we must go up to the mountain with the Lord and seek Him on who we will disciple and allow Holy Spirit to hover over our hearts. (Luke 6:12-16) Discipleship often begins with intercession as we go to God on behalf of another. The discipler must divest themselves of any agenda and fully surrender to the Lord. With the guidance of Holy Spirit the discipler must be prepared to be humble, a good learner of people, able to model and practice the fruit of the Spirit as well as Christlike character. It is important to recognize that we are not trying to make converts. When trials or difficulties come, converts fall away. Disciples are willing to die for the One whom they love.

To the extent that we allow Jesus to transform us, lead us, teach us, and correct us, we will be used in the discipleship of others. In our obedience to the Lord's commission, we are either modeling Christ for them, or we are modeling ourselves to them. Therefore, people will either be growing in Christlikeness because of our relationship with Jesus Christ, or they will be becoming disciples of us and our own imagination of who Jesus is. Their progression in discipleship will reflect our maturity in Jesus Christ (John 15:1-17).

Parenthood is a wonderful illustration of discipleship. For many people, their children may have been their first experience with discipleship. In the same way we don't leave a newborn to fend for itself, we also should not leave a new believer to fend for themselves. They may come into The Kingdom loud, messy, disruptive, needy, etc. and requiring a great deal of kindness and patience. We will need to teach them to worship, pray, study their Bible, love, serve, and so on. Most of this they will need to see in action. When guiding individuals out of the LGBTQ community to become a disciple of Jesus, we must have both a father's heart and a mother's heart toward them.

The disciple maker has the authority of Jesus Christ to disciple from any tribe, tongue, or people group, including the LGBTQ community. We are called to baptize them in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit and teach them everything Jesus has taught us. We are to teach the disciple all of Scripture, and to build in them the fullness of Christ until the end of the age.

In making disciples, we must always remember that the divine instructions given by God in Genesis 1:26-28 applies to all disciples. Affirming the individual that they have been given the authority and divine empowerment to accomplish these instructions is critical to the development of the identity of a disciple. Those coming out of the LGBTQ community to be disciplined, often come with doubts that they are part of God's Kingdom and that the Genesis 1 mandates cannot, or do not, apply to them.

These mandates are to:

- Have authority to rule (have dominion over) the earth
- Be fruitful and to multiply
- Tend to and cultivate (bring out the best in) all of God's creation
- Continue living out our commission until death

Finally, remember this model for discipleship as it is demonstrated in Acts 42-47:

1. Disciple maker does, disciple watches
2. Disciple does, disciple maker watches
3. Disciple does (goes and make disciples)

Relationship Building Ideas For Discipleship

Healthy discipleship exists in relationship between Jesus and the disciple; as well as the disciple maker and the disciple. Here are some key ideas to help you build relationships that will lead to productive discipleship in Jesus Christ.

Practical Considerations

- Get their contact information, full name, cell phone number, email address
- Talk to them about the next time you will both meet to do discipleship, and then immediately send them a follow-up communication
- Schedule regular meetings with them (no less than once a week, no less than 1 hour)
- Let them be part of you everyday life. Include them in special events like holidays, birthday parties, family outings. Take them with you as you disciple others, go to the grocery store, go to the gym. Find out what they like to do and do it with them.
- Avoid pairing disciples and disciple makers who struggle with the same relationship sins; such as addiction to porn or acting out sexually in any way
- Meet in public places such as at church or at a coffee shop
- Agree to an appropriate Bible translation, but be mindful of where they are, not where you want them to be. Understanding and comprehending the content of some translations as well as literacy in general is still a common issue for many. Use a children's Bible or audio version if needed.

Holding Disciples Accountable

- Hold them accountable to reading Scripture and to times of prayer:
 1. Plan mutual times of reading and praying together with you
 2. Have them plan times of reading and praying on their own
- Watch for forward progression in their maturity, if there isn't there may be a number of reasons (religion, lack of being in the Word, an area of freedom needed, misbeliefs, heart issue). Inquire of the Lord how to proceed.

- Cultivate humility and teachability by modeling it. It is prudent for us to take the learners chair and ask questions that will encourage the disciple to look to God's Word as their source for truth. Character issues will resolve in a community focused on joy and connection with a strong group identity. Insisting they fully engage in a faith community is crucial.
- Teach them about God honoring relationships and to discern which friends or relationships are edifying to their spiritual growth, maturity, or walk with Jesus Christ

Discipleship of the LGBTQ+ community

In regards to the discipling those coming out of the LGBTQ Lifestyle, there are several areas of awareness that will be of importance:

1. Community-the LGBT Community is know for its acceptance, sense of belonging, hospitality, lack of judgement, etc. In most cases the church currently fails at meeting the need for community. In order to be successful as a discipler, one must be willing to let people be part of your life.
2. Most individuals with LGBT history struggle with toxic shame and a lack of relational connection. This will require empathy and compassion to navigate them through.
3. Resources and testimonies of transformed ex-gays is vital as the disciple will benefit from a sense of being related to, knowing they can still be different and belong, as well as find comfort and hope in knowing someone else has overcome.

Remember: Our goal in discipleship is to help them become who God created them to be in order to fulfill their God given purpose in life and encourage them to follow the model laid out in Scripture. If we model discipleship as Jesus did our disciples will make disciples.

The Biblical Basis For Transformation

"Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God."

1 Corinthians 6:11 NASB95

"Such WERE some of you" -this indicates a change, which is transformation.

The definition of transformation according to the Oxford Dictionary is, "A thorough or dramatic change."

According to Webster's, the definition is, "The act or process of changing completely."

We see a lot of examples in the Bible of people struggling in sin, but then being transformed by the power of God. In the book of Hosea, Gomer, who was an adulterer, was reconciled to her husband, Hosea, and transformed into a godly wife. In the book of Exodus, Moses was identified as a murderer and hid from Pharaoh because of what he had done. Yet, this murderer

was later transformed by God into the leader of His people, and would stand up to Pharaoh rather than hide from him. In the Gospel of John, chapter 4, the woman at the well was transformed from adulterer into an evangelist because of Jesus' kindness and authority. Saul of Tarsus went from being known as the one who persecuted the Church to being transformed by Jesus into the Apostle Paul who wrote 13 of the 27 books in the New Testament.

"Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither can you unless you abide in Me. I am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing."

John 15:4-5

"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law." Galatians 5:22-23

When a sinner turns from their sin, towards God in true repentance, we begin to see the manifestation of transformation within them. We see this by way of the fruits of the Spirit as mentioned in Galatians 5; and in John 15 it mentions, "remain in me" and we will produce fruit. This shows us that we cannot make this change on our own. To achieve transformation, our part is repentance and obedience, His part is the sanctification*and transformation. Our part is faith, His part is grace.

Ephesians chapter 2 tells us, "As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the Kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of his great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions-it is by grace you have been saved."

Later, the Apostle Paul tells us in Ephesians 5:8-10, "For you were once in darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light (for the fruit of the light consists in all goodness, righteousness and truth) and find out what pleases the Lord."

The Bible clearly tells us that transformation is a changed life, and that life will bear new fruit. One who once lived a life contrary to what pleases God, bearing evil fruit, will change into a life that no longer conforms to the ways or the "pattern" of this world (Rom 12:2). This transformation occurs through the renewing of our mind and our flesh, and will then manifest itself through new actions, which is the bearing of good fruit. John 15 tells us that Jesus is the Vine, and we are the branches, IF we remain in Him, and He in us, we will bear much fruit—apart from Him we can do nothing. It is Jesus who causes fruit to bear.

More examples in the Bible can be found in places such as Colossians 1:9-10, which shows us that it is the Spirit that gives us wisdom and understanding in order that we may bear fruit in **every good work**; and this is a life that pleases the Lord.

Sanctification is a process

Philippians 1:6 says, “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” God never stops working within us. Those who were once in darkness and now are light in the Lord, the Spirit is constantly working in them to make them more in the likeness of Jesus. The veil in the temple was there to protect the people from the holiness of God; but when Jesus died, that veil was torn and that makes it so that we can come into His presence. We who come with “unveiled faces” are being transformed into Jesus’ image. This happens because of the Spirit and “where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom” (2 Cor. 3:12-18). No chains. No condemnation. Freedom. Transformation. Hope!

If God is constantly at work in us, then this is a continual process until the day of Christ Jesus. This process starts with the power of the Gospel of Jesus Christ (Rom 1:16). It is in the Gospel that we see that we need to put off the old nature, which belongs to our former way of living, and now put on our new nature (Eph 4:22-24). Other places, it says we are to “walk in the Spirit.” Transformation in the Bible is very much described like taking off old clothes. We take off, or as the Bible says, “put off,” or do away with our “old self.” If the old self has died, we cannot put it back on. We can only “put on” the new and learn to live in that new self.

Paul tells us that the Lord said to him, “My grace is sufficient for you, My power is made perfect in weakness” (2Cor. 12:9). We cannot be changed or transformed on our own. WE cannot “will” it in our own strength. It is by the power of the love of God through the constant work of the Holy Spirit in the life of a repentant heart that we will experience transformation.

How the Church Has Hurt the LGBTQ+ Community

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another, even as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”
John 13:34-35

“And He said to them, ‘Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.’”
Mark 16:15

Every day, headlines across the world mention the LGBTQ+ community. This topic is overwhelming our news outlets, our clothing stores, our advertisements, our places of employment, our doctor's offices, sports, and even our schools, colleges, and universities. So, why is it that all we are getting from the American Church on this topic is nothing but crickets?

According to a NBC news report done in 2020 by Dan Avery,

"The vast majority of religious LGBTQ Americans are Christian — split fairly evenly among Catholics (25 percent), Protestants (28 percent) and other Christian denominations (24.5 percent). Only about 2.5 percent identify as Jewish and 2 percent as Muslim."

Even with these numbers, the American Church continues to conduct *business as usual*. What is it that has made such a large group of people leave the Church in preference of the LGBTQ+ community? Or, to put it more plainly: *How has the Church hurt the LGBTQ+ ?*

When it comes to LGBTQ-identifying members of the church, we typically see two extreme approaches. On one hand, we have a watered-down gospel approach, full of acceptance and even an unchanged message. On the other hand, we see the opposite approach—they preach a message of condemnation, creating a hierarchy of sin, which leaves no hope.

Neither of these approaches follow what God's Word says the Church should do; and both of these approaches hurt the LGBTQ+ identified individual. Even more than this, it makes the challenge of sharing the need to repent an even more difficult task. We are Christ's ambassadors and, therefore, have *His* message to bring—not our own. We have hurt LGBTQ+ identified individuals by not bringing them the message of Jesus Christ. Instead, we have sent *our* message, and have become a stumbling block to those who are lost.

"Therefore, we are ambassadors for Christ, as though God were making an appeal through us; we beg you on behalf of Christ, be reconciled to God."

2 Corinthians 5:20

The world around us is changing; but if the Church focuses on being *progressive* and *inclusive*, instead of being doctrinally sound, we are bound to have some problems. All of the churches that desire to be inclusive and affirming of LGBTQ+ individuals may be coming from a place of wanting to show Christ's love, but they have lost sight of the truth. They have conformed to the thought process of this world—they have lost sight of what God's Word says; and that His Word is the highest authority.

“Love is patient, love is kind and is not jealous; love does not brag and is not arrogant, does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth; bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.”

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

“Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, in order that our body of sin might be done away with, so that we would no longer be slaves to sin.”

Romans 6:6

“So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, being darkened in their understanding, [excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.”

Ephesians 4:17-24

When we preach a message of acceptance rather than that of repentance, we are preaching a false sense of security, and that is not love. This message gives the lost the sense that they have no need for a Savior. They have nothing to be saved from because they can remain unchanged. There is nothing that they need to die to, and nothing to “put off.”

And He was saying to them all, “if anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross daily and follow Me.”

Luke 9:23

Would we say that it is love to allow our child to run through a burning building? It's what they want to do, and that is how they express themselves. However, I think that we would all agree that love in that case is to do whatever we need to do to protect our child from harm, or even death. This is what we are doing when we preach a message of acceptance rather than that of repentance; we are allowing others to run to the flames while we stand there and tell them you are loved.

Example: *“This is what the Church is doing when it preaches a message of acceptance rather than that of repentance. This false gospel affirms people in their current state—standing by and watching them run into the flames while the Church just stands by and loves them to death.”*

In addition to this fallacy, there is yet another error the Church clings to:

“You shall not lie with a male as one lies with a female; it is an abomination.”

Leviticus 18:22

It is from this word *abomination* that many churches use as a launching pad into a hierarchy of sin. This is the other extreme. Instead of being progressive, they are more legalistic. Their practice is led out of fear and leads to a lack of compassion as well as a lack of hope.

When we are led by fear it cripples us so that we are unable to move. If we are unable to move our lips, that makes us silent on issues that we should address. If we are unable to move, our hands we are unable to embrace the hurting. If we are unable to move our feet, we are not able to go to those who are so very lost. If we are unable to move our minds, from the things of this world to the things above, we will lack compassion. All of this breeds a lack of hope.

“For God has not given us a spirit of timidity, but of power and love and discipline.”

2 Timothy 1:7

These churches have lost sight of the fact that mankind is made in the image of God. To be made in the image of God means that, in the eyes of God, each of us are worth saving. All of us are in need of a Savior; and Jesus is willing to go get the one while leaving the ninety-nine. He does this so that each one can have a relationship with Him.

“Then God said, ‘Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.’ God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him; male and female He created them.”

Genesis 1:26-27

It is also here that we see a lack of understanding to what Jesus has commanded us to do— love! This may stir up some people who stand on this point, believing that to love is to accept everything and everyone just as they are. But is that what the Bible instructs?? What is it really that drives churches to say, *“I don’t want to compromise the doctrinal stance of our*

*denomination by showing the LGBTQ+ Community love.” Couldn’t one even argue that not showing love **IS** compromising your faith?*

If these two sides are not what the Bible tells us, then what is the solution? The American Church has hurt LGBTQ-identifying individuals by watering down the message of Jesus, as well as poisoning the Gospel with a lack of compassion for the lost.

When Jesus commanded us to love, He wasn’t telling us *anything goes*. He was telling us that love is selfless. Love is costly. Love keeps no record of wrongs. Love is not harsh. Love rejoices with the truth, but does not delight in evil. All of this tells us that to love is not easy; but loving one another is how the world will know that we are His.

The greatest commandment is to love the Lord our God with everything we have so that means everything stems from that commandment. If we first must love God and to do so we must keep His commandments, then that should lead us right to proclaiming what Jesus proclaimed, “Repent!” and that message is to who Jesus came for. Not the healthy but the sick. Sinners, not the righteous. He came to seek and save the lost. As His ambassadors, shouldn’t it be that we are to do the same? As His disciples, shouldn’t we be preaching that same message to the ends of the earth and walking as He walked?

God loved us—each and every one of us—while we were of least value. It was while we were there that He died for us. Not when our value increased, but while we were of least value. He did it all so that we could come to Him. That is love. It is that same unconditional love that we are to have as we encounter the LGBTQ+ community in order that we may share with them the message of hope found in repentance. If we remain silent, we only bring death, rather than life. If we continue to bring a false security, we allow them to be burned for all of eternity.

“Greater love has no one than this, that one lay down his life for his friends.”

John 15:13

In order for the American Church to show the love of Jesus to the LGBTQ+ community, we are going to have to start by humbling ourselves, and then ask God for the grace to love the way He wants us to love them. We need to understand that no matter where we have come from, or what we have done, nothing is so great that our God can’t handle it. No sin is so heavy that Jesus’ blood can’t cover it.

We need to come to a place of seeing that the hierarchy of sin is man made, and that every sin was bought at a price—the same price. Do we really want to show anyone that Jesus’ blood was not great enough to cover their sin?

We have created an atmosphere of hate rather than that of love. We are not to love the practices, but the people. Hate their practices, but to the people, we are to show love. Our

battle is not against the LGBTQ+ individuals, but we—the American Church—have forgotten this. Our battle is against the principalities and powers of this dark age.

We need to put on our armor of God and get rid of the spirit of fear. It has no place amongst God's people! This spirit of fear has caused us to be silent far too long. It has caused us to show a lack of compassion far too long. It has caused us to accept sin far too long. It has caused us to allow a lack of accountability far too long. But love . . . casts out fear.

How has the Church hurt LGBTQ+ individuals? In so many ways, but in short, we have made it so difficult for them to come to the feet of Jesus. We need to ask God to help us show them love, and be armed with the truth, seasoned with grace, in order that we may share with them the message Jesus has, Today is the day of repentance!

*"There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love."
1 John 4:18*

Finally, I want you to consider that these two extremes that we, the American Church, display are a fantastic comparison of the Jews and Gentiles. The Jews were very focused on the law. They were all about the law! The Gentiles were all about loose living. They lived the total opposite of what God required. They were the progressive type. It was Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection that bridged the chasm between the Jews and the Gentiles.

In the same way, Jesus' death, burial, and resurrection bridges the gap between the Church and the LGBTQ+ Community. It is not either extreme that God calls us to, but rather something more in the middle. He calls us to love with a love that demands change or rejection. This is the love that God showed us by sending Jesus to die when we were of least value.

Lord, please help the American Church show your love for the LGBTQ+ we pray!

*"But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us."
Romans 5:8*

Agape First Ministries Hallmarks

Connection verses Change

At Agape First Ministries, we stress connection with Abba Father rather than simply changing sinful behavior. We believe that as you connect with Abba, the change will happen in His timing. Our Heavenly Father meets us right where we are at. Jesus hung out with the broken, the sinners, tax collectors, drunkards, and prostitutes. His relational connection with them transformed them. Jesus died for us while we were sinners so that He could attach to us in that place of death and make us fully alive.

Made to Love verses Betrayal of False Identity

We each were made fully in God's image, and we were made to fully love. Sadly, the enemy has done much to confuse those with sexual brokenness about their immeasurable worth to Abba Father. Toxic shame can easily make us feel like we are deformed, an abomination, or our attempts to love God are wrong. Combine that with wrongly-applied Scripture, and toxic shame becomes enforced—giving us a false identity that yields betrayal. Deeper on the inside, beyond that false identity, we find the “Image of God” we were created in. This image remains unblemished regardless of how much trauma, abuse, or brokenness we encounter. Jesus sets us free to bring out the beauty of who He created us to be—Lovers of God that love others well. This forges us deeply into the identity He sees us as, not the identity the world, others, or that we ourselves would assign to us. Furthermore, we have been made expressly to worship God, and to love Him in a First Love capacity. As we grow in our true identity, being Lovers of God becomes our primary desire.

Freedom to Walk in the Spirit verses Right Behavior through Rules

Many of us make the mistake of just crucifying the flesh with its passions and desires, but never walking into the resurrected life on the other side of that cross we each bear. As Jesus transforms us from the inside out, we learn the freedom His Father created us to have—a vibrant life of walking with the Holy Spirit, who gives us grace. Simply trying to follow rules only ends in failure and further mars our hearts in comparison with the deep healing touch only Jesus can bring. As we learn to walk in the Spirit, we learn to guard our hearts and minds in such a way that the workmanship He is making us into comes forth; and every work becomes His work through us.

Immaturity verses Rebellion

There is a huge difference in the eyes of the Lord between rebellion and immaturity. Even as we struggle with habitual sins, if we have a sincere desire to follow Jesus' lead, we are not in rebellion, and we are not His enemy. We are beloved sons or daughters and there is grace to learn to love Him fully by doing what He commands—to love God fully and love others. There is grace to grow into everything Abba has designed and desires for us to be. The Lord is very patient and kind—He disciplines us as children, He doesn't judge us as He does His enemies. He fights against anything that would hinder us from fully encountering His love.

Fully Integrated & Alive verses Suppression

Suppressing our struggles, locking them away in the depths of our souls, and pretending they are not there is not healing. For most, sexual brokenness is an arrested development. When we have encountered trauma (an overwhelming situation we cannot overcome) we become stuck emotionally, mentally, spiritually, even possibly physically—thus not being able to grow. This suppression begins to fragment who we are in our internal world, causing more rules to follow, more addictions to act upon, more over compensation, all while not being able to return to joy, or to the image of God we were created in. As we begin to bring our trauma in connection with Jesus from a safe place, as we allow Him to unburden the fragments that exile us, and as we find our Abba Father enjoys being with us, even while walking through brokenness, integration releases fullness of life upon the undeveloped parts of us. We begin to actually live fully alive!

Self Acceptance—Seeing Glory & Discerning Identity by the Spirit

A huge part of walking out who God has created us to be is to stand outside of our struggles and let the very Mind of Christ inform us. As we become informed, taking every thought captive, renewing our mind, and guarding our heart and mind, becoming grace-filled—it simply flows naturally from the very presence of Immanuel (God with us.) As the Holy Spirit leads us deeper in our healing journey, the encounters of Jesus speaking our true identity takes place, resulting in transformation. As we begin to discern our true identity from the Word and our encounter, we begin to behold greater glory—we are children (sons or daughters) that have been made free by abiding in His Word, being His disciples!

We never overcome through religion

Having the "will power," striving, legalism, "just stop it," condemnation, and trying harder, are self righteous and only yield religion. This will never bring transformation. A deep, vibrant, relational connection with Abba Father, Jesus, and Holy Spirit bring a yielding of our will to His design, resting as He fights our battles, Christ's righteousness fulfilling the law so, we walk in the Spirit, true healing and deliverance and deep abiding intimacy with the One who created us and knows us better than we know ourselves! What a joy-filled life journey that lies ahead of us. We overcome by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus), the word of our testimony, and not loving our own life; but being willing to lay it down. We serve the Faithful Witness, He cannot lie about us. He is leading us into deeper trust, belief, and obedience to His way—LOVE. Welcome to Agape First!

Connecting with God in Hessed Community

How do we walk with each other in a hessed community that fully engages with God? The most practical answer is connection with Him in praise, worship, prayer, and intercession that keeps going back to hessed. A deeper look at the center of God's holiness is His mercy seat. The center of manifestive presence is loving kindness, a place where forgiveness flows; but there were also the tablets containing the 10 Commandments. The fellowship of believers dwelling in hessed is identically modeled: a place of love; but also purity. This mercy is not just functionally the way we treat each other's weaknesses; but it is who we are aspiring to be by walking out the life He has called us to—holiness!

Holiness was made possible by one Man (who is forever God) coming and fulfilling the Law by being sinless (perfect in keeping the righteous requirement) but also taking our punishment (for our disobedience to that Law). In light of Jesus' hessed, our own righteousness would still be filthy rags. Even a strong attempt to "keep or perform" the Law would still pale in comparison. So, what does the Lord require, especially in the light of hessed?

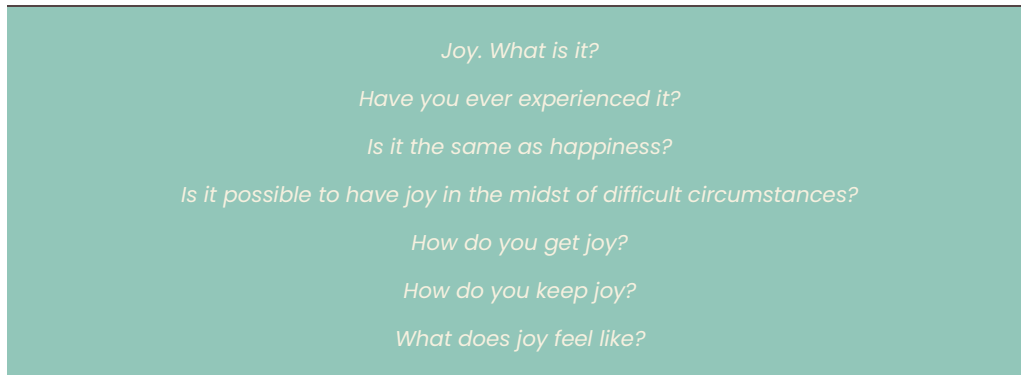
A proper way of understanding the Law Hebraically would be to actually "guard" the Law. I guard the Word of God by loving what it says, agreeing quickly with its truth (even if I have disobeyed); and I begin to see that abiding in His word has made me free of my bondage. I now guard that truth by continuing to abide in deep relationship with Him...(His name is The Word of God).

As Jesus was in the garden praying with His disciples, He admonished them to be on guard — “Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matthew 26:41). Jesus’ prescription to temptation is to be on the guard. What a beautiful way to guard His ways He has fulfilled for us, that we would be free to follow Him fully!

We are also told to “Keep (guard) your heart with all diligence, For out of it spring the issues of life” (Proverbs 4:23). The reality of not sinning isn’t to just do more good things. Psalm 119:11 tells us, “Your word I have hidden (guarded) in my heart, That I might not sin against You.” The Scriptures are clear that guarding the places His Word/Law dwell is of utmost importance.

“Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to God; and the peace (Shalom) of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Christ Jesus” (Philippians 4:6-7). This is how hessed works when engaged with our Abba who created us! We guard the way He has asked us to walk in, and He meets us with grace to overcome.

Immanuel Lifestyle Overview



These are all really good questions. Joy, according to the Dictionary of Psychology, is a feeling of extreme gladness, delight, or exaltation of the spirit, arising from a sense of well-being or satisfaction; or a feeling of great pleasure and happiness. It would seem that joy is the same as happiness, but more intense. If that is true, it would be very hard to have joy in the midst of difficult circumstances, because who is happy with adversity? Getting joy would seem to be getting a lifestyle without conflict, and keeping joy would seem only possible when you maintain a lifestyle without conflict. One dictionary says it is a feeling of extreme happiness or cheerfulness, especially related to the acquisition or expectation of something good, like a child on Christmas morning.

In the book “Building Bounce,” one of the authors wrote, “Life is hard. We all get overwhelmed at times. But some people seem to be able to handle hardship better than others...Thanks to the latest brain science, we now understand that there is a secret to emotional resilience. It is joy. The more joy you have, the more hardship you can handle.” Dr. Wilder explains joy as, “someone is glad to be with me.” We recognize this joy visually in the emotional (or right side) of our brain before we recognize it in the left side (or cognitive side) of the brain. How do we recognize it? Visually, by seeing someone's smile, or the light in their eyes when they see us.

Joy is relational. The more healthy, strong, and safe the relationships we have, the more joy we will experience. The Bible declares again and again that the joy of the Lord is our Strength; He gives strength to the weak and power to the powerless; He is able to make us strong and steadfast; He is our joy. The Bible also talks repeatedly about how God makes His face to shine upon us. He connects with us emotionally. He smiles on us. He is glad to be with us.

Our brains have “circuits” that guide our relational connections with God and others. These circuits are formed and changed in relationships, and so they are called “Relational Circuits.” Relational Connection Joy (or Connection) is the experience of being in an attuned relational engagement with God, oneself, or another person, AND perceiving that they are glad to be with you.

Attunement is an especially important form of interpersonal, emotional connection that feels like “we are on the same page”--we feel seen and heard; someone correctly understands our internal experience, and joins us in the emotions we are experiencing. Someone genuinely cares about us and is glad to be with us.

Our minds and brains have been designed to live in a relational world where everything is in shalom; where everything is in the right relationship, at the right time, in the right place, at the right strength, and in the right amount for God and people. At the center of this shalom is our brain’s relational circuits. If we lose our peace, particularly in relationships, these relational circuits can start to shut down. With our vital relational circuits partly or deeply off, problems get bigger, and we can start to treat people like objects. Our cravings become monsters, and we can deeply hurt those we love. We feel alone, disconnected, and purposeless.

The easiest way to know if your relational circuits (or RC’s) are on or off is to ask yourself a few questions:

- Is the problem bigger than the person?
- Do I really want to listen to what they are feeling or saying?
- Is my mind “locked onto” something upsetting?
- Do I just want to get away, fight, or freeze?
- Am I more aggressively interrogating, judging or trying to fix others?
- Do I even want to be connected with someone I usually like?

We can turn our relational circuits back on and regain shalom by deliberately focusing on appreciation/gratitude or having someone else “tune in” to us and how we’re feeling.

The Immanuel Lifestyle is a process that helps us to grow our emotional capacity to withstand adversity by helping us to grow our relational strengths. How do we do that? By helping to increase each person’s capacity to have an interactive relationship with God. It is this experiential connection with God that is the foundation for deep and lasting spiritual growth and maturity; for healing from painful experiences and life events; and for developing relationships with others and unity in the Body of Christ.

We use:

- Knowledge-based teaching that is informed by an understanding of the brain
- Experiential exercises to discover how relational connection occurs with God and others
- Specific explanations and skills to intentionally increase understanding of and capacity for relational connection
- Practical examples, demonstrations, and reflection on Immanuel as a lifestyle, with the foundation laid for Immanuel as an intervention & Immanuel as a prayer ministry.

Immanuel Prayer offers a process that is very useful to help people connect to the Lord in a prayer ministry session. It is a process of connection personally and interactively with the Lord, and removing barriers and hindrances to an intimate, interactive lifestyle of connection with Him. The goal is to build and deepen a securely attached relationship with the Lord, one that increases our capacity to stay connected to Him even in difficult life situations or painful experiences.

God's End Time Strategy is the Family

"Behold, I am going to send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord. He will turn the hearts of the fathers to their children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers [a reconciliation production by repentance], so that I will not come and strike the land with a curse" [of complete destruction]. Malachi 4:5

The moment that every parent anxiously waits for is the sound of their baby's first breath and its subsequent tiny wails. Sweet baby is immediately placed skin-to-skin with mom, which helps baby in many ways, such as: the regulation of body temperature, decreases crying spells, enables better digestion and food absorption, stabilizes heartbeat, helps baby breast feed, and reduces pain. This also allows mom to share antibodies with baby so baby begins to build a strong immune system. This skin-to-skin contact also enables baby's brain to begin to develop with positive sensory interaction with mom; and baby begins to experience safety in their new world. For mom, prolactin is released which is important for a strong milk supply; and oxytocin lowers risk of postpartum depression, stress hormones are reduced for both mom and baby, and both mom and baby form attachments to each other. These first close moments are critical for survival of baby, and often mom as well. This is just the beginning of a child's life, so, imagine what happens if secure attachments are well established throughout childhood.¹

Attachments formed where we are enjoyed, comforted, cared for, and protected help us to feel safe and to feel affirmed; and they give us increased capacity and resilience to thrive in life. Part of our role and mandate as parents is to be this example of secure attachment for our children so that they can learn to securely attach to Jesus. There is something that the father brings and something that the mother brings to the child(ren) through covenant that reveals the nature of the relationship between Jesus and His Bride, the Church (Ephesians 5:32). We were created for love, to belong to the One who knows us, and Who chose us on purpose. It's God's heart for each one of us to develop from a place of joy, fully enjoyed, as we mature and become who He has created us to be,

¹ <https://news.sanfordhealth.org/childrens/the-importance-of-skin-to-skin-after-delivery-you-should-know/>

"Blessed and worthy of praise be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly realms in Christ, just as [in His love] He chose us in Christ [actually selected us for Himself as His own] before the foundation of the world, so that we would be holy [that is, consecrated, set apart for Him, purpose-driven] and blameless in His sight. In love, He predestined and lovingly planned for us to be adopted to Himself as [His own] children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the kind intention and good pleasure of His will"

Ephesians 13-5

Unfortunately, many of us have not had healthy, secure attachments with our parents or caregivers. Sometimes, children come into the world amidst chaos and unrest in a family, or there are environmental stressors like an absent parent, poverty, homelessness, illness, and so on, that can cause this lack. Often, because of these difficult and painful things in life we look to fill that place, where we were created for love, with other things. No matter our story, Jesus is there waiting with the Father for us to respond to His call for us to come home to His loving arms.

"But when he [finally] came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired men have more than enough food, while I am dying here of hunger! I will get up and go to my father, and I will say to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight. I am no longer worthy to be called your son; [just] treat me like one of your hired men.' So, he got up and came to his father. But while he was still a long way off, his father saw him and was moved with compassion for him, and ran and embraced him and kissed him. And the son said to him, 'Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.' But the father said to his servants, 'Quickly bring out the best robe [for the guest of honor] and put it on him; and give him a ring for his hand, and sandals for his feet. And bring the fattened calf and slaughter it, and let us [invite everyone and] feast and celebrate; for this son of mine was [as good as] dead and is alive again; he was lost and has been found.' So they began to celebrate"

Luke 15:17-24

God desires reconciliation in all the broken places where we have known only rejection and betrayal; where we are terrified to hope or try because the disappointment is just too painful. The places where our trust has been violated, Jesus is waiting. In those dark places, He desires to bring life, hope, and joy. Jesus wants us to partner with Him in this ministry of reconciliation where we go to those who are lost and hurting on behalf of Him. As we are securely attached to Jesus, we show them, by our love, that He has lavished on us what it is to have family. This may be with our biological family; but it may also be with those He wants us to add to our family. With this family, bonded in love, we can go forth in boldness and strength as warriors and take back the land the enemy has stolen, and see captives released. Jesus came to destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8).

Therefore if anyone is in Christ [that is, grafted in, joined to Him by faith in Him as Savior], he is a new creature [reborn and renewed by the Holy Spirit]; the old things [the previous moral and spiritual condition] have passed away. Behold, new things have come [because spiritual awakening brings a new life]. But all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ [making us acceptable to Him] and gave us the ministry of reconciliation [so that by our example we might bring others to Him], that is, that God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not counting people's sins against them [but canceling them]. And He has committed to us the message of reconciliation [that is, restoration to favor with God].

2 Corinthians 5:17-19

We, as representatives of the family of God, have been commanded to go to people on behalf of God, securely attached to Jesus, while practicing safe and healthy attachments. Jesus set this example by spending three years traveling, preaching, teaching, caring for, eating, and doing life with His disciples. Yes, He preached on hill sides and did miracles, but He also slept near them, wept with them, shared meals, spent time in their homes, and went away alone to pray. As fathers and mothers in Christ we must live this out with people through secure attachment in order for reconciliation to take place. It is hard work and will cost us everything. This is the place where we are victorious in love through secure attachment with Jesus and others. This will sustain us and increase our capacity to remain faithful together until Jesus returns for us and brings us home.

Paul describes the faithfulness and trustworthiness required as a steward of the Gospel, and the example He set that is tested by many trials and tribulations. He lived like his sons were watching him, exemplifying for us that there is more required of us than simply offering people guidance. Paul suggests we imitate him and become like fathers to those we are discipling.

"For though you have countless guides in Christ, you do not have many fathers. For I became your father in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I urge you, then, be imitators of me. That is why I sent you Timothy, my beloved and faithful child in the Lord, to remind you of my ways in Christ, as I teach them everywhere in every church"

1 Corinthians 4:15-17

Daren Mehl presents: Christianity and LGBTQ: A Comprehensive Review: Understanding the Truth and the Lies; Finding Freedom; Enduring Transformation; Ministry of Reconciliation for those trapped in LGBTQ – The doctrines of sanctification, sin, redemption, salvation

It is reported that 39% of Gen Z and 30% of Gen Z Christians identify as LGBTQ. For the average believer, it is incredibly hard to grasp what is happening when it comes to LGBTQ. Simply knowing homosexuality is a sin is not enough. Daren Mehl will be sharing important and comprehensive information regarding understanding and ministering in the LGBTQ space. He will be bringing forward the needed truths to combat the culture drift away from Biblical faithfulness. The first week Daren will be sharing his encouraging testimony of leaving the gay life, getting married to his wife, and finding ensuring freedom in Jesus Christ. Each following week he will cover the top most sought after discussions regarding the truth and lies related to LGBTQ.

Questions answered include:

- What are the predominant four LGBTQ doctrines and which ones are Biblical?
- What is our position as a church? What is the spiritual battle in the church related to these doctrines?
- How can we be faithful to the Lord and love those trapped in the LGBTQ community?
- How do we preserve a Biblical identity in our family and children?
- Do we affirm their identity in LGBTQ or lead them out of it, and is that love or not?
- How do we pray for our prodigals?
- Are there causes to homosexuality? Will seeking Jesus for healing result in depression and suicide?
- What is the history of how we arrived at a culture that embraces LGBTQ as a core identity?
- What is love? What does God say?
- Does the LGBTQ lobby threaten our rights as believers? What can we do about it?
- What does the science say? Are people born gay? Can people change or be healed? Is the brain fixed or can it change? Do desires change?
- How does pornography play into the issue?

There are many more questions that will be discussed and answered during the classes. Daren will help you to love those who identify as LGBTQ boldly, equip you with Biblical truth regarding God's good design for human sexuality and gender, and encourage you to stand for the transforming power of Jesus.

Starting xxxxxxxx, at 9 AM (Room x), Daren will be teaching for 30 minutes and then open the class to 15 minutes of dialog to discuss what was covered. If you cannot make the 9 AM, come to 11 AM! The class will be repeated. We know that the Holy Spirit guides us in truth, so join us as we seek the truth together regarding this very complex issue.

Attendees will receive helpful handouts each week which document the critical truths covered and direct them to further home study on the topics. Pastor Scott and Pastor Daren will be available throughout the week for individual pastoral care and counseling in this area as well. You can schedule a call with him.

Class Outline:

Week 1 - Testimony of Transformation - How a gay identified man married a queer woman and God healed him from homosexuality. The powerful testimony of the transforming power of God's grace through faith in Jesus Christ and a Biblical identity in Jesus Christ. A discussion of desire and identity, sanctification, and the enduring power of Grace.

Week 2 - Same Sex Attraction (SSA) and the Brain - Same sex attraction is very often an attachment problem, a detachment from God and others, and so the person is often only informed by trauma in their isolation. Many times we find ourselves disconnected from God and others, isolated, left on islands of anger, despair, disgust, fear, shame, and sadness. However, our brains are wired for joy! Returning to joy happens in a secure relationship with Jesus. Intimacy with Christ leads to truth, freedom, and healing. We will discuss this spiritual truth which is supported by scripture and is a common thread in the testimonies of those who have come out of LGBTQ and found enduring transformation.

Week 3 - Beliefs related to LGBTQ fall into 4 major religious doctrines which have matured over decades and generations. **We will cover the CHURCH position first.** We will then review the most common doctrines surrounding the LGBTQ issue and how to identify where the person is and how to move them toward Jesus and the truth.

Week 4 - Continuing discussion on LGBTQ religious doctrines and turning to the the Bible for answers. Equipping believers to identify and respond to false doctrines by knowing the truth. Learn how LGBTQ religious beliefs are backed up by their "science" and how is it all manipulated. We will discuss the definition of love, review holiness, righteousness, grace, desire, transformation, and enduring faith. We will cover how living in the spirit different is than living in the flesh. What hope does someone trapped in LGBTQ (sin) but wants to leave have in Jesus?

Week 5 - LGBTQ Living Loud- What are the cultural ramifications of embracing LGBTQ for decades? How has the LGBTQ weaponized their religious beliefs with the help of popular culture including politics (law), news media, education, science, and entertainment. What are the threats to the church, the family, parents, women, and children and how can we boldly and courageously respond as Christians. Where is the safety and victory for our children? What are the most effective ways Christians can be influential in their communities, being the salt and light in the LGBTQ space? How do we protect our children? How can we minister to other families, individuals, and children?

Week 6 - LGBTQ and Parenting - How do parents respond to a child who "comes out?" How do family members respond? Learn how to stand in truth and navigate what it means to love our children and family well in truth and faithfulness to Jesus. What is the definition of love? What is the design of family and what are the roles for father and mother? What is biblical identity and how do we preserve it for our children? Daren will pass out copies of the parent's guide and discuss other resources that will be helpful.

Week 7 - <Siblings in Christ, The Church> LOVE WELL

Week 8 – Message to the silent/hidden struggler – come out as Christian. They have a safe place to be disciplined and to have safe fellowship. You now have a voice of the voiceless in your church. They will stand with you and not lead you astray. <<>> Church: Go be the voice of the voiceless and set the captives free!

[Class curriculum subject to change based on needs of attendees and church leadership.]

SUMMARY OF FINDINGS FROM
SUCCESSFUL RESOLUTION OF SEXUAL-RELIGIOUS IDENTITY CONFLICT:
A QUALITATIVE STUDY OF PROCESSES AND OUTCOMES

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Department at Argosy University Twin Cities in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Psychology in Clinical Psychology

Eagan, Minnesota
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Demographic Information

One bisexual man, one gay man, and six lesbians participated in the study. There was one participant in the 26 to 30 year age range, one in the 31 to 39 year age range, two in the 40 to 49 year age range, and four in the 50 to 59 year age range. Participants were asked to identify their own ethnicity or race. Two participants self-identified as African American, four as Caucasian, and two as White.

Participants were asked to identify their religious affiliation at three stages of life: their religious affiliation as a child, their religious affiliation as an adult, and their current religious affiliation. Four participants reported a childhood religious affiliation of Catholic, one of Southern Baptist, one of Baptist, one of “Methodist by family,” and one of Lutheran. One participant reported an adult religious affiliation of “Quaker” (The Religious Society of Friends), one of “spiritualism,” one of “UU” (Unitarian Universalist Association), one of “MCC” (The Universal Fellowship of Metropolitan Community Churches), one of “United Methodist” (The United Methodist Church), one of “Christian,” one of “Lutheran,” and one of “Church of Christ” (Churches of Christ, distinct from United Church of Christ). One participant reported a current religious affiliation of “Quaker,” one of “spiritualism (mostly consisting of Native American and Buddhist practices),” one of “Pagan/Wiccan”, one of “Unity” (Association of Unity Churches International), one of “United Methodist,” one of “Christian – Non-denominational,” one of “Lutheran,” and one of “Naturalist.” Regarding level of activity or observance of their spiritual or religious practices, three participants reported being “very involved,” three reported “regular” involvement, and two reported being

“sometimes” involved. No participants reported “minimal” involvement or being involved “not at all.”

Regarding highest level of education completed, one participant reported obtaining a high school degree or equivalent; one reported obtaining an associate’s, vocational, or technical degree; two reported obtaining a college degree; two reported obtaining a master’s degree; and two reported obtaining a doctorate. Regarding current occupation, two participants reported a current occupation of “psychologist,” one of “RN [registered nurse],” one of “management consultant,” one of “supervisor – group home for MI/MR [mentally ill/mentally retarded],” one of “information technology,” one of “nanny,” and one of “grad student.”

Participants were asked about their current sexual relationships and whether they have children. Regarding current sexual relationship status, five participants reported having one monogamous partner, one reported having “recently broke[en] up after three years,” one reported having casual sexual partners, and one reported having no sexual partner. Regarding children, six participants reported having no children, one reported providing adult foster care for two men in their thirties, and one reported having fourteen foster children aged eighteen to twenty-six. One of the participants reporting no children, hoped to have a child “soon.”

Every participant was given a pseudonym to preserve anonymity. The pseudonyms given are Alice, Connie, Felix, Gina, Olivia, Quinton, Whitney, and Zelda. Within quotations, names of others have been changed and personally identifying details have been omitted.

Exploration

Exploration is a key component of sexual identity development models, as described above. Exploration is also a key component of the stage of spiritual development (as described by Fowler, 1981) that is often brought on by such precipitating factors as sexual-religious conflict. Participants were asked to tell the story of how their sexual identity and spiritual or religious identity came into conflict and how they resolved that conflict. The most prominent theme of participants' stories was that of the process of exploration as it applies to sexual-religious conflict resolution. All eight participants in this study reported extensively on exploratory activities related to their attainment of sexual-religious conflict resolution.

Modes of Exploration

Exploration took many forms. The various modes of exploration are enumerated here. The pseudonyms of the participant whose responses were categorized with a given mode of exploration are listed in parentheses after that mode. A brief description of each mode is given along with select quotations exemplifying the mode.

Contemplation (Connie, Gina, Quinton, Zelda). A number of participants described how they engaged in contemplation to evaluate conflicting concepts. Gina said, "I just started going through all of the arguments that everybody had made all along, and I started arguing them in my own head." For Quinton, contemplation was an efficient and effective means of resolving conflict:

The way my mind operates, or the way I operate is I try and gather, when it comes to, like, any kind of major decision making, is I sit, and I ponder. I gather as many facts and as many things as I need, give myself a chance to kind of, like, ruminate over them, and then, eventually, a decision comes, and when it does, it's pretty decisive.

Connie was deeply involved in contemplation: “I couldn’t wait to get done with work and come home and get in my process. You know, sit down, and I had this list of ideas to ponder and things to research.” For Gina, contemplation, beyond its utility for resolving her conflict, is a life-long process. “[Resolution] took years of exposure to alternate thoughts, and I’m not done. I’ll continue on that journey forever.”

Counseling (Felix, Quinton, Whitney, Zelda). Participants described their experiences with counseling. Whitney found counseling very helpful once she found a compatible therapist.

What happens when you’re ashamed and embarrassed, you’re angry all the time, and angry becomes explosive. Any little thing happens, and all of a sudden, you’re bearing all this extra garbage, and then you’re upset, and you don’t even know what it was that triggered you being upset, but you’re upset. So therapy really helped me focus on who I was, and did I want to change who I was, and then if I didn’t want to change who I was, I needed to live with what decision I made. An exceptional, exceptional therapist, and know that in my journey to find a therapist, she was probably the fifth person. . . . The journey to find a good therapist is not an easy one, and you have to realize when you, the match isn’t there, you almost have to find a soul mate to be a good therapist ‘cause you just don’t want to talk to somebody, they need to truly feel and understand, and then I don’t want to be molded by the therapist’s ideas, I need to form my own. The greatest gift my therapist gave me was that when I would ask her what should I do, she’d never answer the question, and I would say, ‘Well just tell me what to do, and I’ll just do it,’ and she’d always say, ‘No, I can’t do that. You already have all the answers to who you are inside. The best thing I can do for you is to teach you how to unlock those answers that you already possess.’ Most wonderful, wonderful person on the face of the earth, and so that’s exactly what she taught me, an incredible amount of who I was, where the conflicts came, my conflicts with my parents, you know, that old saying, you know, well I don’t want to talk about do I love my mother, my father, that’s, you know, always been like garbage, but you know, that is where the conflicts were.

Quinton used counseling in his preparation to explore relationships in the GLB community:

I didn’t really know what was out there, in terms of what’s out there in the gay and lesbian world, so I decided to do a little bit of therapy to kind of find out, what’s, you know, what’s out there, what’s, you know, and how does one integrate into that? So I did an intake interview at the old Gay and Lesbian

Community Services, which existed in the early '80s, and they actually referred me to a counselor at Catholic Charities, who was a gay man who worked there and was, you know, fairly out, so I did a little bit of work about three months with him, and then kind of, you know, turned myself loose.

Zelda attempted to use counseling in her exploration process. She encountered a therapist who violated appropriate boundaries in his role as therapist:

I went to the counselor, she's like, 'Um, I'm going to refer you to the psychologist 'cause you don't want to do anything that you're going to regret later,' so I get referred to the psychologist, very nice man who wound up being a very good friend for a long time, but he's like, after a number of sessions, 'Are you sure?' I was, 'Yeah, I love her da-da-da.' 'Well, have you tried a man?' 'No.' 'Well, would you like to try a man?' 'I don't think so.' 'Well, um, you could try it with me, and we could see.' 'No thank you.' Boundaries, I realized later.

Felix said he "never went to counseling" but he did report going to an introductory meeting of Exodus, an "ex-gay" ministry:

They gave you a whole spiel about, you know, 'I was gay, and now I'm married,' and I realized that was so not for me because they looked at it as like a cure, sort of. I mean, not to stereotype, but I mean, it was really close to, you know, 'I've been cured,' and I so didn't think that it was a disease to be cured, and—so I didn't even—I went to a dinner where they introduced the whole concept, and that was it. I said no way.

Discussion (Alice, Connie, Felix, Gina, Zelda). Discussion was a common mode of exploration among participants. Felix described the importance of a particular discussion with the woman whom he would later marry:

I was hanging out with Tillie on my own, we had some really heart-to-heart talks about Christianity, and how I view it, and the fundamentals that I believe in, and the way I want to live my life. . . . That was when I kinda started to realize my conflict because I never had anybody to talk to about it with—talk about it with them. So Tillie was the first person I actually really talked about it with. I mean, I'd sorta told Charles [a good friend], but Tillie, being third party that I kinda don't know yet—you know, there's no harm in telling her, kinda thing? So I let it all out, and then we hung out again and again.

Connie demonstrated that different modes of exploration (e.g., reading, education, and discussion) interact with one another:

I read about every book I could find, and then I talked with people. I talked with people about my process, my feelings, and also about what I was reading. Yeah, so education, primarily, or knowledge, and then processing that with people.

Education (Connie, Felix, Quinton, Whitney, Zelda). Pursuing higher education was a part of the exploration process for participants. Course content exposed some to new ideas, and extracurricular contact with others allowed for new experiences.

At private school, I was at a Friends school, Quaker school, so it was a wonderful to have that meditation time. That was something I learned there, the silence of it, what some of the principles were around social justice, so that was a very wonderful learning experience (Zelda).

At that time, my concept of God had begun to change, though. God was no longer a male, or an old white male who was kind and gentle and wise. God became something that was more spirit based and without form, and so without gender, also. And that concept of God was more freeing to me. It seemed to fit more with where my thinking was going, from what I had learned in college, and from what I had seen about—seen and studied more about the other, all the other different kinds of religions. ‘Cause every religion I had studied at that point, if I remember correctly, or most of them, certainly, said that they were the one, and then even particular groups within the religion said they were the one, so So I wanted to have something for myself that didn’t get stuck in all that stuff. So I’m glad that my view of God had begun to change and open up because I really needed that in my struggle of ‘be who I am’ (Connie).

I had dated girls all through high school and it wasn’t until I got to college, like out of [my home town] that I realized, ‘Oh my god, there’s a different world out there’ (Felix).

The atmosphere [in graduate school] was very different. Most of the instructors were lay, were laypeople that, non-clergy, non-religious, not priests or nuns. Probably the majority were women, and where I was actually one of the youngest in the program, even at, what was I, I was 30, and I was one of the younger people in the program, so it was a very different environment, a much more free environment to inquire, to look at issues, to deal with issues, that kind of stuff (Quinton).

Experience with spiritual community (Alice, Felix, Gina, Olivia, Quinton, Whitney, Zelda). Participants reported on experiences with spiritual communities. Felix described experiences within spiritual community that helped him develop his faith:

My youth leader, and the [family I lived with], neither of them really looked at homosexuality as, you know, like it's a worse sin than any other sin. They just focused, helped me focus on my relationship with God, and in learning about God and that kind of stuff, and learning how to be like Christ, stuff like that. So it was character development, and they weren't—you know, the rule was is I couldn't, obviously, have sex and I had to be home at a certain time and stuff like that just to keep me accountable to my faith (Felix).

Many experiences took the form of testing out new spiritual communities for compatibility. Zelda said she tried many congregations over a number of years. She described her strategy for assessing her fit with a community:

I had decided any church I go to I'll come, share time for, you know, three to four months to really see what it's like. Be consistent, and then see what I'm hearing in the message. Hearing negative things about issues I think are important to me and to my well-being, and to the universe, or in political issues, where is the leaning of this, seemingly, of this minister and congregation. If I think I might be getting close to a place that could meet my needs with music, spiritually, the types of programs they have, I'm gonna go to the minister, and ask them about their theology on GLBT issues, the theology of the church.

A number of attempts to find a home church resulted in participants being rejected in some way for being gay or lesbian. Olivia described her experience with one congregation she tried:

I was at a church . . . for a while, and I'm a nanny, I take care of kids for a living, it's what I do full time, and you know, I love kids. . . . I was with them all the time, alone, you know, with the girl, one-on-one alone and stuff, and I went to this church, and I said, you know, I wanna go on these retreats, I wanna go on these trips, and they're like, 'You know what, you're gay. You can't be with these children alone.' I'm like, 'Are you kidding me?' Like, 'No, you can't. You can't come to these things. We don't want you at these things. What if you?' You know, and we went out of town for a music festival, and had my own pup tent, so I was very excluded with the women in the church, and the children of the church, and I'm like, this is not a place for me, so it didn't really turn me off to Christianity, just to that church pretty much.

Quinton described a precipitating event that ended a long-time effort to be both gay and involved in Catholicism:

In 1988, I was still involved at [a progressive Catholic parish], and I believe that's when the Vatican declaration on, you know, treatment of homosexual persons

came out that said basically, you know, if you're gay and lesbian, you're intrinsically evil, blah-blah-blah-blah-blah. That was the end of my involvement at [that parish] and pretty much the Catholic Church. I decided, 'This is a crock of shit,' and a lot of people basically, sooner or later, came to that same conclusion who were involved at [that parish]. There was, I remember specifically, there was a gay male couple that was involved there, and they sent out a letter, general letter to the entire parish community explaining what they felt, you know, how they felt, and why they could no longer in good conscience serve in that parish, so that was kind of like the end of that.

Some experiences with spiritual communities were generally positive, yet did not result in a match for more subtle reasons. Such was Alice's experience.

I belonged to a meditation center for 10 years. And that was very good I learned a lot, but the community didn't quite work, and there was, maybe spiritually even, there was something that didn't quite resonate with me.

At one point in her exploration, Alice attempted to leave spirituality behind altogether.

I tried to be an atheist 'cause I was mad at God, but it didn't work 'cause I just have this, just so a part of me, this sense of something greater than myself, this sense of wanting to connect, wanting to have this kind of spiritual support and stream of something in my life, so it's just always been with me.

Physical sensations and feelings of attraction (Alice, Felix, Olivia, Zelda).

Experiences of the physical sensations of loving others and of having a body were areas of exploration that some participants discussed. Alice recommended, for others facing a religious-sexual conflict,

that they use their body, not just read and talk, but that they actually get more familiar, do more physical things. I'm going on a hiking thing . . . actually, in a couple weeks. Just be more embodied. You know, dancing, singing, massages, you know, just more physical things.

Interactions with GLB people (Felix, Quinton, Zelda). As noted above, Quinton consciously undertook an exploration of integration into "the gay and lesbian world" and used therapy to prepare for his new interactions with GLB people. Felix reported that his understanding of what it means to be gay began to develop during his interactions with other GLB people. "I was going to college, and I was starting, you know, it's in the city,

so I'm starting to meet gay people, and I'm starting to learn what it means to be gay."

Zelda's description of meeting other LBG people demonstrates the exhilaration she felt.

I went to visit my cousin, a good cousin who I used to hang out with all the time when I was a little kid, and I got there, and she was looking kind of butchy, and—but then she introduced me to her friend who was like really butchy, and I'm like, ah, something's going on here, and she's—and so then, you know, after she left that night, she says, 'I have to tell you something. I'm a lesbian.' I'm like, 'Oh, okay, so am I.' 'Oh, great!' We're like, [squeal]!

Interactions with members of other faiths (Gina, Quinton, Zelda). One way that Gina developed her current religious beliefs was through "exposure to people who seemed a hell of a lot more comfortable worshipping Gaia and being one with their Earth than being punished by an angry male-figure God." A person of another faith challenged Zelda on her spiritual practices.

A friend was challenging me, she's a Native American woman, and she does all of her spiritual work by herself, she said, 'Zelda, why do you need to need to find a church? Why do you need to?' I said, 'cause I want camaraderie. I want a communal feeling.

Quinton became involved with a new spiritual community through an invitation from a friend. "I kind of gravitated mostly because a very good friend of mine was involved in the Universalist-Unitarian church. . . . So I got active in them for about a year, or probably closer to two."

Introspection (Alice, Connie, Felix, Gina, Quinton, Whitney). Many participants described how they engaged in the exploration of their own thoughts and beliefs through direct and conscious examination of them.

One of the things that I did is I self-reflect and said, 'What are my priorities? What's important to me?' And I actually did write them down, and my top priority was my relationship my Creator, and then everything else came underneath that. So I looked at my priorities, and I said, 'What am I doing that doesn't match my priorities?' (Felix).

It took years to ask myself question after question after question of what I believed (Gina).

You really have to examine because I would have told you I had no inner conflict at the time of the first breakup, that I was perfectly comfortable, and that was absolutely untrue, and so you have to really look inward to yourself to really resolve your own inner conflict (Whitney).

That was a time of suffering for me, was time of going through the fire, examining everything about what I believed and about who I was and about from where I came, and not from a physical sense, but from a spiritual, metaphysical sense. . . . I would go through piece by piece and just, really just examine everything in me (Connie).

Observation (Alice, Connie, Gina, Olivia, Quinton, Zelda). Many participants reported incorporating observations of others into their exploration. Participants often developed evaluations of their own behavior and sense of belonging based on their observations. Alice observed how her peers engaged in sexual relationships.

My friends had resolved that [the issue of whether to be sexually active outside of marriage] for themselves, and so people were sleeping with their boyfriends and, you know, and living together and, you know, and so, you know, it was like it didn't seem like a very big deal at that point. Although it was [a big deal] earlier.

Olivia's observations of other LGB people as members and leaders within the church allowed her to model her own identity from their examples.

I knew she [my pastor] was gay, and then I knew my friend's sister was gay, and I'm like, 'Everybody, they're all gay, and they've all, I've all,' like these people all growing up and stuff, and they're all, you know, really into church, so it's like, 'Well, I guess, then that's kind of how I am, so I'm in a church, and I'm gay, and it's okay.'

Connie, Gina, Olivia, and Zelda reported being affected by the hypocrisy they observed in church members and leaders. Connie, like others, cited her observation of hypocrisy as a major factor in reducing her adherence to her family's religion.

I could have walked into that [my family's religion] more long term if I had seen people observing the same rules that they made sure that I observed. And this lack of rule observance, and from what I had been taught through Sunday school,

lack of being Christian, or Christ-like, that that was a problem, and that led to a reduction in my faith and certainly a questioning of many things.

Olivia rejected the condemnation of her same-sex relationships by others in her church, pointing out the hypocrisy of their positions.

I have the choice to not be sexual, I guess, and be physical, but it's a choice I made to be physical, to, you know, meet my earthly needs, or whatever they may call it that they don't appreciate, but, you know, how many people do I know that had sex in high school with random, lots of random boys and are Christian. . . . Or do it now with guys. How many people that go to church have sex with random guys that are straight, and that's okay, but because I'm gay, it's absolutely a sin, horrible and wrong?

Political action on GLBT issues (Quinton). Quinton cited political action on GLBT issues as an important part of his exploration.

I went to the march for GLBT rights in Washington in '93, and, you know, and 'empowering' gets so overused, but that truly was, to be in a place where there were, like, literally millions of us, kind of opened my eyes and actually finally gave me the impetus to do what I wanted to do.

Prayer (Alice, Felix, Whitney). Some participants reported engaging in prayer in the process of exploration. Felix's prayer was both an expression of his desire for relationship and an opening to being shown what that might be.

I reflected on my faith, I told God, I said, 'I don't care what everybody's telling me.' You know, some people say it's okay to be gay, some people say it's wrong, some people say gay marriage is okay, some people say it's wrong. I said, 'I don't care. I want a relationship on Earth that's physical,' and I said, 'I believe it's your plan for me to have a relationship.' . . . I said, 'Just whatever, you know, when you tell me this is the person, I will believe you.'

Whitney described her use of prayer, which helped her in her exploration and continues to help her.

I believe that Jesus and God already have a path for me, and I'm already moving in a path that they've already told me to move into. I do pray a lot, and I meditate because only in silent meditation can you hear the prayers being answered. When your mind is all cluttered, and—Trust me, there are days where I couldn't hear a prayer to save my soul because I'm thinking about work and about the hundred different projects I have to do at work, then I hear nothing, but when I can quiet

my mind and ask one question and then quiet it enough, God has always given me an answer, and so that's, this is the answer, this is the direction I'm following is His direction, and He'll lead me, and if it's meant that I need to come out and say who I am and all, then I guess that's the road I'll take.

Alice did not use the word "prayer," but rather reported turning to an "internal experience of the divine" for "guidance."

Reading (Alice, Connie, Gina, Whitney). Four participants claimed that reading was an important part of their exploration process. Participants read the Bible, books about the Bible, and books about other religions. Whitney's description is representative of others. "I not only read the Bible regularly, but I read books about the Bible, and then I read books that aren't necessarily by religious historians because sometimes it's nice to get the whole, a different picture."

Speaking or preaching (Felix, Whitney). Felix and Whitney reported preaching on topics important to each one's faith. Whitney's preaching was intertwined with her reading activities.

I do quite a bit of speaking. As I do speaking, I do reading. Pastor James was just gone on vacation for two weeks, and so I did the Sunday service, and I guess in reading, it is not so much—I'm not a fan of the Old Testament. I'm clearly a fan of the New Testament, and really have my heart set on preaching the Word of Jesus Christ.

One way that Felix explored love was by preaching on his understanding of the nature of love.

That's what God had been laying on my heart, and actually what I preach in [my church]. It was four years long. It was a sermon that God was giving me for four years about what it means to love.

Writing (Felix). Felix reported using writing to facilitate the examination of his priorities. "I actually did write them [my priorities] down."

Relationships (Alice, Connie, Felix, Gina, Olivia, Quinton, Whitney, Zelda).

Relationships were the primary mode of exploration facilitating sexual orientation identity development. Every participant spoke about the learning and growth that occurred within the context of relationships with friends and with partners while flirting, dating, and exploring sexuality. Felix reported “exploring [his] sexuality online” and “chatting online with gay people” before he “actually got the boldness to go meet somebody.” He described his journey to sexual-religious resolution largely in terms of what he learned in relationships with others. For example:

Being in a relationship with Andrew for two years was a good thing. It really helped me understand myself and what I wanted. Oh it’s such—what a good self reflection. It did. It really helped me realize what I wanted in a relationship and what I didn’t want. There’s a lot more of what I didn’t want. And it also taught me my sexuality, you know, what I liked, what I didn’t like.

It was through his experiences in relationships with both men and women that Felix’s sexual orientation identity changed from gay to bisexual.

I knew that I was bi because I really, with the right woman, I really enjoy women, you know? And with the right guy, I enjoy guys, so my sexuality is, you know, it’s more that emotional tie is what it is for me, and then sex is just a physical thing, to me. It is intimate, yes, with the right person. Other than that, it’s just a fun thing to do.

Likewise, Gina’s experiences in relationships with both men and women played a major role in the confirmation of her sexual orientation identity as a lesbian.

I should note that in between these experiences with women, I did attempt to have several experiences with men, including some sexual experiences to try to cure myself and to try to do what God wanted and what the church wanted and what the school and my friends wanted. After a number of tries, where I very much cared about the man that I was with, and I would have physical responses to the man that I was with, it just became absolutely, undeniably clear that where it was at for me was with women.

It is clear from her explanation that she might not have attempted to have sexual relationships with men had she not been attempting to reconcile her sexuality with her

religion. Connie found that she could cope with the tension between having same-sex attraction and living with her religion's prohibitions against same-sex relationships until she experienced something new in relationship with another woman.

I first became aware of the conflict when I wanted to have—when I fell in love with someone. I was aware that I was attracted to women, but I could have that feeling, or I could be attracted and maybe, you know, go on a date from time to time or whatever, but I could always back away from it. But when I fell in love with someone and realized that I want to be with this person. It's not that saying, 'Oh, I want to be a Lesbian.' I wanted to love someone and do what I needed to do to have that happen if she were in agreement also to have a relationship occur and not be circumvented from doing that by someone else's thoughts or my own chains. So that's when I realized that love made me see the chains that bound me.

Some participants spoke about a direct relationship with the divine and its impact on their spiritual development. The relationship with the divine, as mediated by prayer and internal experience, is described in the section on prayer.

Aids to Exploration

Participants were asked what they found helpful as they attempted to resolve conflicting sexual and religious identities. The following items were identified as facilitating the exploration process. As in the previous section, participants who gave responses indicative of each item are listed in parentheses, and select quotations are given as examples.

Being rejected by others condemning of same-sex attraction (Felix, Quinton, Zelda). Some participants described being rejected by friends, family, or community for being or being perceived as LBG. Participants sometimes characterized these rejections as “unhelpful” perhaps because of the painful emotions they prompted. However, the experiences of rejection described by participants invariably led to further exploration of other relationships or communities.

One of the things that really pushed me over the edge with deciding to go gay, you know, to try homosexuality was a good a chunk of my Christian friends, when I told them that I was gay, or that I was struggling with homosexuality, more or less didn't want to have anything to do with me. For some reason, they forgot about love and not judging and caring for one another, and when my best, best friend growing up through life broke ties with me that was—that pushed me over (Felix).

Separation from others with negative views of same-sex attraction (Alice, Connie, Felix, Quinton, Whitney, Zelda). Most participants reported separating themselves or becoming separated from family or communities that condemned any exploration of the implications of their same-sex attraction. Zelda said, "I'm not having any downers, any people who just can't get beyond using religion and its constructs to oppress other people, whoever they are, whatever religion or non-religion." Felix said, "Staying away from the Christians that were condemning helped." Connie reserved space in her life for her contemplation, reading, and introspection away from others who might discourage her.

When I have my mind set to something, I create a space to do it in, and maybe that's part of it, too, is that I do my life, and whatever I need to concentrate on, I carve out space, specific space to do that in. Then I do the rest of my life over here as I figure this out. And then, once it's figured out, I integrate it. And that's the way I did this as well. Like when I went to work and stuff, I tried to leave this [sexual-religious conflict] at home, and I just worked or did whatever. And then when I came home, you know, there were no people standing in my way saying, you know, 'Don't do this.' or 'What're you thinking about this?' or whatever like that.

Individuation (Alice, Connie, Quinton, Zelda). The developmental process of individuation was described by some participants. Individuation, the separation from the beliefs and values of one's parents, facilitated participants' exploration of their own values and beliefs. Individuation is evident in Connie's separation of her beliefs from others' beliefs.

And according to the New Testament, I was not condemned to Hell, and that was fine with me. Some people would still interpret it otherwise, but I did not through my search and inquiry. And other people who said that the New Testament did condemn me or that God did or whatever, then my response simply was, to myself is, 'That is not my God. That's your God, but it's not mine.'

Zelda reported a major turning point after which she undertook an extended period of spiritual exploration.

That was college, and so by then, I was like, 'I'm not going to church,' when I came home. 'Not going. Why should I? What's so good about them? How are they any better than me?' You know, and I think, so I think that's when I began the defiant rebellion. 'I'm not going to church, you know, this happens there, that happens there. What's the good in it?' So, you know, I think that's where maybe I made my stand, you know.

The process of individuation reported by participants coincided with going to college or graduate school in early adulthood.

Self-validation (Alice, Felix, Gina, Quinton, Whitney). Many participants described the development of self-validation, which helped them to continue their exploration of what fit for them. Alice's self-validation was related to her individuation from her family.

I think I had come to a little more trust of my own inner process, and so—and since I wasn't—I was never into dogma anyway and biblical stuff, it was more kind of—it was just it's more the community thing, and it was just kind of, you know, and could I break with my family about this.

Quinton reported having sufficient love for himself to take his own path. "After a while, I kind of just tired of the whole Jesus loves you thing. I really don't particularly care if Jesus loves me or not. I love myself."

Deepening spiritual journey (Alice). Asked what was helpful to her, Alice answered, "I would say my deepening spiritual journey. I would say that that's been the most helpful thing." She explained further, "I think it's really been my own deepening

experience of connection, I think. To me, connection is what it's about, you know, am I an acceptable person in all ways, my sexual orientation, just other things about me.”

Emotional healing from other things (Alice). Alice reported that “emotional healing from other things” not directly related to her sexual-religious conflict helped with her exploration process.

Exploring with others (Alice, Felix, Quinton, Zelda). Some participants cited exploring with others as an important asset to their own exploration. Quinton said nothing impeded his exploration partly because “most of [his] friends at [the parish he attended] were gay and lesbian as well, and they were going through similar struggles.” Alice said, “as other people have struggled, friends, have struggled with these kinds of things, kind of a collective struggle . . . that we've done together is very helpful.” Zelda reported that sharing the exploration with others was the single most helpful thing for her.

What have I found helpful? To have other people I can talk with who practice, who are attending to their spiritual growth. They may not be practicing any particular religious construct, but who know themselves as perfect beings just as they are, with their flaws, but it's okay to be gay or lesbian, and it's okay to be a person of color at the same time, and it's okay to believe in God, or believe in a Higher Power, or believe in a Goddess, or to be a witch, white witch, green witch, you know, so having people around me who I can talk to about our spiritual interests, and beliefs, and that's it.

Relationships with others supportive of exploration (Alice, Connie, Felix, Quinton, Whitney, Zelda). Many participants reported being supported in their exploration by friends and family. Quinton knew he had his family's support.

Probably the best thing is have a strong support system because that makes all the difference, and by support system, I don't mean just friends and family, but friends and family that truly you feel care for you as a person. My family's love for me was not something that I ever particularly doubted at any particular time in my life. When I came out to my family, I didn't expect, you know, the big blowups or anything else like that or it's like, ‘Oh, god, you're no longer my son. Get out of here. Get out of my sight,’ or whatever, and that stuff. That just wasn't going to happen, for many of my family, and it didn't.

Connie was intentional about choosing friends who supported her in her exploration.

I grew up in a quite dysfunctional family, and, you know, I couldn't choose my family either, but as I got older, I realized that I could create add-ons to my family, good friends and community. And who I chose was my choice. So as I grew older and became an adult, I chose friends who were supportive and not closed minded. And so people who stand in my way aren't my friends.

Felix stressed repeatedly the positive impact and importance of the “unconditional love” he received from a very few of his Christian friends.

Charles being a real Christian, what I would consider a real Christian, unconditional love, no judgment, always being there, living like Christ, setting an example, believing in you, you know, not condemning you. It was a real Christian person that, you know, he trusted God to take care of me, that he didn't have to be God.

Just as important to Felix was the acceptance of his spiritual exploration he received from a man he was dating. “So, I [was] dating Andrew, and he [let] me experience my spirituality however I want, you know, he [had] no pressure on me whatsoever, you know, to not be a Christian or anything.”

Separation of focus (Felix, Gina, Quinton). Three participants found it helpful to separate the issues of sexual orientation and spirituality and focus on each independently. Gina recommended this approach to others facing a sexual-religious conflict.

Figure them out separately. I think it's too much to take it on. I think it's too much to try to determine what your spiritual beliefs are and what your affectional and sexual preferences are as one subject. I wouldn't say that you just need to live in a state of limbo and either be nonsexual while you figure out your religious, or be nonreligious while you figure out your sexual, but I would say just be patient with both sides, both portions of yourself, and nonjudgmental with both portions of yourself, but very much figure them out separately, and then see how they fit together.

Quinton decided to put aside his focus on attaining priesthood to focus on exploring life as a gay man.

Part of what I did in that time period is I decided I was going to let, you know, the whole seminary, priesthood issue just simply rest for a year, and kinda like put

that aside and, considering that I had been in that whole [seminary] system for almost, over ten years, I decided, you know, I need to find out what's out there, you know, what's out in life, what's out in the big bad world, and so I just said I'm just going to experience life for a year, and then I'll make a decision what I want to do.

Felix criticized his own level of exclusive focus, but acknowledged the benefit of the approach.

It was like, well, you know, I'm so worried about being gay, and everything was gay for a long time, you know, everything funneled through, you know, gay thing because I started focusing on my sexuality. 'Cause you're right, I'm in a conflict. I could focus on my religious side or I could focus on my gay side, so I started focusing on my sexuality, and everything became gay. You know, my movies, my entertainment, my internet, everything became gay, and went through the gay lifestyle, the gay community. It became my focus. Just like I was way too focused on my Christianity for quite a few years, I was getting way too focused, you know, because—I don't know, I guess that's just human nature is to grab onto something and do it, you know. But it was very good for me in the long run because I really dived in for three to four years to really understand my sexuality.

Impediments to Exploration

Participants were asked what impeded their progress toward resolution. Items that interfered with the process of exploration are detailed below. The pseudonyms of participants who gave responses indicative of each item are listed in parentheses after the item. Select quotations representative of each item are given as examples.

Abusive counseling (Zelda). As described above, Zelda encountered a therapist who conflated his own desire for sexual gratification with Zelda's search for clarity, resulting in a therapeutic boundary violation. What was lost was the opportunity for Zelda to sort through her thoughts and feelings in a safe and supportive environment without having to fend off unwanted sexual propositions.

Church's condemnation of same-sex partnering (Connie, Whitney). A church atmosphere condemning of same-sex partnering limited the exploration of some

participants. Connie delayed exploration of same-sex relationships because of her religious upbringing.

The most significant factor in my not coming out sooner was that I was a Christian and that in the Christian, at least as I grew up, Christian philosophy was, if you date someone of your own biological sex, you will go to Hell. And I didn't want to go to Hell, and I didn't want to be displeasing God.

The atmosphere at Whitney's church prevented her from engaging in discussion about matters of same-sex attraction, one of the modes of exploration detailed above. "I knew, even before I read the Book of Discipline, what the United Methodist Church stance was on homosexuality. So I didn't really say anything to anybody."

Deferment (Connie, Felix, Olivia, Zelda). Some participants reported that, at some point, they deferred addressing sexual-religious conflict. Zelda put off thinking about spiritual matters for a while. "I don't think I thought about, does God think this is good or does God think this is bad, I just let it go. I just, I think I tried not to think about it." In a similar way, Connie delayed her spiritual search.

I knew that I was a spiritual person and wanted to have a conscious, active relationship with, at that time I called it God, but I knew that what I was in was not it. And so I knew that when I got older I would search for something else. . . . I had kind of put the search off until the future.

Felix went through a period of time when he did not address matters of his own sexuality because he was not ready to address them yet.

I was really religious and I guess how I was dealing with it at that time was I just wasn't dealing with it, you know. It's like I just put it under the rug and I wasn't going to deal with it 'cause I had so much other things to focus on. I wasn't ready for a relationship. I wasn't ready for sex. I wasn't ready, you know, I mean, I didn't have any time to do anything like that.

Fear of exploration (Connie, Whitney). Two participants cited fear as a block to exploration. Whitney said she "was intimidated for a long time to move forward."

Connie avoided exploration of same-sex relationships out of fear that she would “go to Hell” and “be displeasing [to] God.”

Guilt (Felix). Felix put off exploration of same-sex relationships for periods of time because of the guilt he felt over his exploration.

That was my first crush and my first breakup. . . . I said I was done, you know, I should never have done it; it’s against my beliefs, and all that kind of stuff. And for the longest time, I didn’t—I mean, that was my one touch with the gay world for a while—just—for quite a while.

Invalidation (Felix, Olivia). Two participants described invalidating experiences with friends, family, and church leadership as unhelpful in their exploration process.

Olivia was told several times that she was not really gay.

My youth director freaked out on me. She’s like, ‘How can you be gay? You’re just a phase you’re going through. It’s just, you know, you’re not, you know, a phase.’ I’m like, ‘No, it’s not. Something is really going on here,’ and she didn’t believe me. . . . My friends telling me that I was, it was a phase I was going through. My dear friends saying, you know, ‘You’re a church-goer. You’re not gay. You’re not. It’s just, you know, she’s got, she’s controlling your mind. You’re not really gay,’ and my family, I really didn’t come out to my family for a long time, so, you know. My mom still doesn’t believe that I’m gay. She thinks that there’s still a phase after, you know, how many years since I was 14. I’m [in my early thirties] now, so.

Felix’s friends pressured him to accept the label “gay” even though his experience contradicted that label.

[My friends] kept saying, ‘Felix you’re so gay. You’re so gay.’ I’m like, ‘No, I’m not going to be gay.’ And really, I—I think if it wasn’t for [these friends], I probably wouldn’t have tried homosexuality, you know, because I had them constantly telling me I’m gay. But yet I didn’t really feel gay. I mean, really, I was just a messed up bisexual, I guess, because I really did like women, but I liked men, too.

It is worth noting here that even though Felix’s friends may have fostered exploration of his sexuality in some form by pressuring him to think of himself as gay, Felix’s exploration may have taken a different form if those around him had

acknowledged the elements of Felix's experience that contradicted that label. Thus the same event may be seen as both an aid and an impediment to exploration.

Lack of a partner (Alice, Felix). Sometimes the lack of a partner to explore with is an impediment. Alice said, "I would like to grow more in this area with another human being, with a woman . . . and I haven't been in a relationship in a while." At times, Felix was not able to do some of the exploration he would have liked due to the lack of a female partner.

Living with family aligned with strict religious teachings (Alice). Some impediments to exploration are the converse of aids to exploration. Separation from others with negative views of same-sex attraction is described above as an aid to exploration. It is the converse of Alice's experience of "living at home as an undergraduate" with her parents, who disapproved of sexual activity outside of marriage.

No one to talk to (Zelda). Zelda reported a difficult period of time in her attempts to resolve her sexual-religious conflict. "Who do I turn to? Where do I go? There's nobody to talk to."

Partial acceptance from church (Quinton). Quinton reported a long-time effort to reconcile being gay with being Catholic. He described the irony that partial acceptance from his church delayed his exploration of alternatives.

In some ways, back then the Catholic Church was much more flexible and much more trying to reach some kind of honest appreciation of the gay and lesbian people that were in their parishes, in their life, and stuff like that, so in some ways that was very good because it, you kind of felt like we were still trying to, like, kind of, like, journey together kind of stuff, but on the other hand, they would only, you would, you knew it could only go so far, and then the, you know, then that was it. If they had been more intransigent, back then, like they are now, I would have made those decisions sooner, or else I might not ever have really gotten, you know, stayed involved from my seminary days. I probably wouldn't have gone into the seminary in the first place if it had been much more, if it had

been more obvious like it is now. So in some ways that, you know, that was more helpful. In some ways it was more harmful 'cause I stayed in a situation that, looking at now, you know, I shouldn't have been in because it was still so, I don't want to say friendly, but maybe accommodating.

Pity from friends (Connie). Connie found pity an impediment to her exploration process.

I think though that of the people who cared about me who were involved in my process, which supposedly all of them, the thing that stood in my way the most, and to that degree, was people's pity or sorrow. . . . That is what stood in my way sometimes, them feeling bad about my suffering because then it made me start thinking about, 'Oh, I'm causing them the suffering.' I just needed to get done with my process. Support me 'cause I'm going to do this. Don't be like, 'Oh, I'm so sorry you're so—you're suffering. I'm sorry this is so hard for you.' That wasn't helpful.

Rejection of God due to others' abuses (Zelda). There were times in Zelda's process when she rejected God altogether because she did not like how others related to God. "I used to let what somebody outside was doing, and because they weren't doing it right, then I'm not going to believe in God at all, not believe in a spiritual being."

Shame (Alice, Felix, Whitney). Two participants described experiencing shame around matters of sexuality. Regarding impediments to the resolution of her sexual-religious conflict, Alice said, "It just seems like shame is at the basis of things." Felix said he refrained from talking with some people he respected about his sexuality because of the shame he felt. "I did not come out to the Jensens . . . because I felt so ashamed, because I love them and respect them so much that I didn't want to let them know that I was dating a guy." As a consequence, Felix could not explore matters of sexual orientation with an otherwise supportive family.

Hidden sexual identity (Whitney). Whitney described some of the impacts of hiding her sexual orientation from her church. She has not been able to share openly in the exploration of marriage with other couples in her church even though she herself has

been in a committed relationship for many years. During a time of distress after a difficult breakup, Whitney was unable to share the full reason for her suffering, receiving only part of the support she might have otherwise received.

Portraits of Resolution

Each participant's version of resolution is described in turn. Included are descriptions of beliefs and practices that reconcile previously conflicting aspects of sexual orientation and religious belief. In the descriptions, focus is placed on participants' relationships with their respective religions and spiritual practices rather than the specifics of their denominations. This focus is a matter of clinical utility: Clinicians are more likely to have influence on the approach their clients take to their religious practices and are less likely to recommend changes in religious affiliation.

For all participants, resolution involved the acceptance of same-sex attraction as part of their identity even though one male participant chose to marry a woman. Many participants reported that the realization that their same-sex attraction was not a choice facilitated their sense of acceptance for themselves.

Six of the eight participants reported disassociating from former religions condemning of same-sex partnering. Felix continues to align himself with the religion he adopted in early adolescence. Olivia has not yet found a home church, but is looking for one within the denomination of her childhood. As noted above, all participants reported being at least somewhat involved with religious or spiritual practices.

Alice

Resolution for Alice included a turn toward “following one’s own inner guidance” and away from “the dogma of the church.” Her exploration of different religious paths, including Eastern religions, led her to a “broader view of what it is to experience God.” In addition to her turn toward “following [her] own inner guidance,” Alice described a transition “far away from religion.” She said, “I wouldn’t even use the word religious. . . . I would use the word spiritual.” She reported that her “own deepening experience of [spiritual] connection” allowed her to feel more and more that she is “an acceptable person in all ways, [including her] sexual orientation.” She described the work of resolution as “an internal kind of a job of really coming to believe . . . that me as a sexual person, as with everyone, is a good thing and that it is something that God not only approves of, but recommends greatly.”

Corresponding to these shifts in perspective, Alice made changes in her religious affiliation. As a young woman, she disassociated herself from her childhood religion. Many years later, in middle adulthood, some friends invited Alice to join them at their place of worship. “I immediately felt that I had found my spiritual home and [it] has felt that way ever since. . . . I’ve not doubted one bit.” Alice described her new spiritual home as “open” to her, as a place where her inner experience is respected, and as a place where her social needs are met.

Although Alice reported having resolved the basic conflict between her religion and sexual orientation, she said that she has “a long way to go” before she is satisfied with the fit between the spiritual and sexual parts of herself. Remaining areas of growth

that she identified include “remnants of . . . shame” about her sexuality from her family culture and her ability to accept the erotic parts of life:

It’s like expanding the idea of sexuality beyond just genital sex . . . in terms of ‘Am I okay with myself as a sexual person?’ . . . and ‘Do I really invite the erotic in my life?’ And it doesn’t have to be just sex. I mean . . . ‘Am I in love with life?’

Alice said that some of this remaining work “is my own relationship with God and my body and life,” but that some of her growth might only be accomplished with another person who, like Alice, is “into sex in a committed relationship.”

Connie

Connie’s achievement of resolution was marked by a number of conclusions drawn from a period of intense reading and contemplation. One conclusion was “that the God that I created inside myself and that I had envisioned would not condemn me for being who God made me to be.” She decided that, even if others were correct about God condemning her for being lesbian, she “was going to live free anyway.” She described changes in her concept of God that allowed for resolution:

God was no longer a male, or an old white male who was kind and gentle and wise. God became something that was more spirit based and without form, and so without gender, also. And that concept of God was more freeing to me.

From her examination of the Christian Bible and numerous Christian texts, Connie

decided . . . that, yes, there were some things that I read in the Old Testament that one could say condemned homosexuality, but if we were supposed to be Christians, then Christ came to fulfill that and that was no longer what we lived under anymore. We were to live under Christ’s main rule, or main premise, main guideline for our lives, and from all that I understood at that time, and I still believe that, was love. And I thought that was, as Christ has said, the number one thing.

At the time of her resolution, Connie disidentified as Christian and began to identify as “spiritual.” Connie currently engages in a collection of spiritual practices cultivated from a number of religious and spiritual traditions.

Connie said her sexual self and spiritual self “fit very well together.” She described how she views sexual expression as one way to achieve spiritual growth:

When I think about spirituality, I think about . . . practices that allow one to become more like the aspect of the Great Spirit within us. . . . Things that lend themselves to feeling like that, to moving toward the oneness, increasing oneness, to me, that is spirituality. And so sexuality, to me, is a very blessed and holy, wonderful way to become close to someone, which I think is more like a physical way of practicing the metaphysical way of increasing spirituality, becoming closer to the oneness. So I think they kind of merge like that, but the process is more physical, and it’s directed toward one person. But then that relationship itself takes on an aspect of spirituality because . . . I want to help my partner, and I want to allow my partner to help me, to become the best me that I can and develop the best we that we can. And to me, that is also Spirit because I think this life is kind of like school, and I want to help my partner get an A in spirituality and she me. And I think that sexuality is one way to help do that.

She expanded on her description of sexuality and revealed that she has rediscovered some values about sexuality that are a part of her childhood religion:

Many times in our society, sexuality is shortened to mean intercourse or . . . something that’s more kind of carnal or lustful. . . . Sexuality has never been about that for me . . . probably because I rejected a lot of those things growing up [in my religion]. And as I rethought things and came up with my own way of seeing, I thought, ‘Okay, yeah, I, too . . . do not want to have that associated with something that I consider holy.’ And I think it’s okay to be active and passionate and all those kinds of things, but I think that sex is holy and my sex in my relationship and sexuality in my relationship fits very well with that belief system.

Connie said that achieving resolution of her sexual-religious conflict was “pivotal” for her continued growth. Although she acknowledged the difficulty of achieving resolution (“After I was through it, I was so tired I just wanted to rest.”), Connie said, “I just encourage other people [facing a religious-sexual conflict] that the big conflict leads to, if you travel the path, it leads to a lot of peace, peace and clarity.”

Felix

Felix had a conflict between his sexual relationships with men and what his “conscience” told him:

I always felt that God was telling me that, for me . . . I shouldn’t be pursuing men . . . you know, that homosexuality wasn’t right for me . . . because my . . . perspective on life is that I want to live my life for God, find out what His desire for me is, what His plan is . . . His will for my life and then follow it. And I’d always felt that . . . it just, it didn’t fit right. It wasn’t right for me.

In his achievement of sexual-religious conflict resolution, Felix retained his religious affiliation, broadened his sense of sexual identity from “gay” to “bi,” and married a woman with whom he felt spiritually and sexually compatible.

Felix shared a number of “revelations” he had that allowed him to come to this resolution. Felix described a shift in perspective that reduced the intensity of his conflict:

Part of the conflict [resolution] was a revelation that sexuality was not who I am, you know, my sex, my—hetero, homo, or bi—is only a small fraction of who I am. I’m a hell of a lot more interesting person than being just gay or bi or straight. And having that revelation really helped. That just came out of nowhere, you know, just one day just I realized, well, why is this such a big deal?

He spoke about the discovery that he could be sexually satisfied in a relationship with a woman:

Really, what I liked about homosexual sex was anal sex. I actually do enjoy that. And it never occurred to me that a woman might not care about that . . . playing that way. You know, there’s toys for that. And I would’ve never guessed that. If someone would have told me that I can date a woman and she will . . . do something like gay sex with me, then, hello, I could have . . . because I, actually, have always wanted to have sex with a woman while a guy is having sex with me. I mean, that was something I always wanted to do because I enjoy having sex with women, actually more so than I do with guys if . . . I could have a toy, so great! . . . I mean, it’s kind of naïve . . . that I didn’t realize that. I mean guys, gay guys have toys and do that, why couldn’t they do that with a woman? But I am still open minded enough to be attracted to men, and I do find the male figure attractive, so, I mean, I know I’m bisexual, but still. . . . My sexual desires are met, so my wife is perfectly comfortable with anything I bring up, and there’s

nothing that's off limits, and she can, you know, do anything any of the guys could do, so I'm happy.

Another revelation was the discovery that he is not alone in struggling with lust:

[My friend] never questioned whether or not, you know, this was a legitimate struggle, you know, he saw it as a legitimate struggle, and he said something that totally blew me away. I mean, it was like so common sense, but, you know, I said, 'God, I just, I struggle with, you know, lust for guys, you know, sometimes I'll see a really hot guy, and I know he's gay, and then it just throws me over the edge, and then I start struggling with gay things again,' and he says, 'You know what? I see a really hot woman, and I struggle with that, and I'm married.' He goes, 'Everybody struggles with lust.' And I thought I was so isolated in it, you know. And when he brought it into perspective, that, you know what, even straight people struggle with that. You know, and that was part of my religious struggle, was lust. You know, that was the biggest thing, you know, and when I realized that, you know, there's a parallel, it's just life, you know, I'm not alone.

In sum, these revelations facilitated the subjugation of Felix's sexual attraction to men to his understanding of what God wanted for him, marriage to a woman.

Felix reported that the emotional intimacy he has with his wife is much deeper than he previously achieved with male partners. The approach Felix and his wife currently take to their relationship is to be extremely open with and accepting of each other:

Pretty much anything goes as long as it's not a secret. . . . We don't keep secrets from each other, so everything's out in the open, all our desires, everything that we think, and we're completely open with each other, like naked emotionally and spiritually.

The intensity in Felix's description of his openness in his relationship with his wife is also present in his description of his feelings about achieving resolution:

There's the joy of where I am today, and the sheer, utter happiness that I'm in with [my wife], and the unbelievable happiness I am with where I am with my relationship with my creator, and how much I love Him for giving me [my wife], and helping me through my struggle.

Contrasting this description of intense happiness, Felix acknowledged that some of his sexual fantasies will go unfulfilled: "Marriage, I believe, is forever, and . . . I got all my sex in with guys as . . . I'll have 'cause [my wife is] not into three-ways, so that's that."

Gina

Gina's resolution included disassociation from her previous religion. As a young adult she "started believing in spirituality and not religion." She developed a sense of acceptance regarding her sexual orientation:

If it's true that everything is created with a purpose, even the good and the bad, then I would have been created with a purpose, and my affectional and sexual desires would have been created with a purpose.

For Gina, a sense of clarity came following exploration of sexual relationships, adding to her acceptance of her sexual orientation:

Between [my] experiences with women, I did attempt to have several experiences with men, including some sexual experiences to try to cure myself and to try to do what God wanted and what the church wanted and what the school and my friends wanted. After a number of tries, where I very much cared about the man that I was with, and I would have physical responses to the man that I was with, it just became absolutely, undeniably clear that where it was at for me was with women. Once I came to that realization, I started caring less about what others thought, and being more comfortable and secure in, 'Look, you can't say that I'm with women because I was sexually abused as a child. You—I mean, you could say it, but I don't think it's true. You can say that I don't like men, but actually, I'm really much more comfortable with men as friends than I am with women, which is kind of odd, but it's true. You can't say that I want to be a man because there are times when I can look kind of butch, and there are times when I can look pretty femme,' and at the time, I looked pretty damn femme. I just started going through all of the arguments that everybody had made all along, and I started arguing them in my own head. I started saying, 'Well, no, that's not it, I am just, I just am. You can find a gene. You can find the hypothalamus, whatever you want to find. This is just me, and I am not, I don't believe that I am harming anyone. I'm not sexually assaulting anybody. I am not proselytizing. How can that be wrong with a spiritual being that creates beautiful trees that shelter and creates tigers that kill deer? There's the good and the bad. There's the parts that we understand and the parts that we don't, the parts that people like and the parts that people don't, parts that we're comfortable with and uncomfortable with, and I just am.' Once I started having those realizations, over a span of many years, I became comfortable with all of the arguments and rationalizations and defenses and coping mechanisms in my own head, and then I conversed fine, quite calmly to others, and that, in turn, fostered more calmness in myself.

Gina said she is “very satisfied” with the fit between the sexual and spiritual areas of her life. However, she conceded:

I have dissatisfactions with the two subjects [sexuality and spirituality] individually, but I have great satisfaction with how they fit, with how they mesh, that there’s not a conflict large enough to make me feel like I have no foundation. It’s just conflict enough to make me continue to think [and] learn.

Describing further some of her current conflict, Gina said:

The only conflict there is now is my long-time partner comes from a very strict [religious] family, and it took about ten years before she would say anything [about our relationship] to anyone of her family members, and we’re still expected to attend church functions, although I don’t believe in many of the rituals that they perform. . . . I’ll go because it makes my partner happy and because I enjoy seeing some of the family members, and some of the experience at the church is intriguing and interesting and even uplifting.

Olivia

Olivia has maintained her association with her childhood denomination. Although some in her church have criticized her for having same-sex relationships and have labeled her behavior as sinful, Olivia maintains a set of beliefs—reinforced by church leaders and gay and lesbian active church members—that ground her in self-acceptance. Olivia explained what she believes the Bible says about homosexual relationships:

I talked to my pastor, who I believe is bisexual. . . . He just told me . . . part of what the Bible says was, you know, what his interpretation was, the men, it wasn’t okay for the men to be with the boys. It never said anything about the women being with other women, and all the, you know, the men can’t be with small boys. I’m like, I agree with that ‘cause I don’t think men should be with children, so that’s fine, so that’s kind of what his explanation was to me, and, you know, it’s fine what you are.

She explained her belief that God made her as she is:

I just knew that [being lesbian] wasn’t a choice. I knew that I couldn’t control it. . . . Why would God make me this way if it wasn’t the way I was supposed to be? Like, this is not fun. This isn’t an easy life. Why would I choose to be with a woman when I want to have kids and get married? Why would I feel this way when I do when I’m with a woman and, you know, try to date boys, it’s like,

there's nothing, nothing there. There's no chemistry. It's not happening. Like, 'Maybe it's just not the right guy.' No, you know, 'cause with every single girl, it's like something more is there, so it wasn't really a struggle for me . . . 'cause I pretty much always knew, since that first time she kissed my hand . . . something was different.

These beliefs, some modeled by church leaders, allow Olivia to remain engaged with her religion without adopting the condemnation of some others in her denomination.

One remaining struggle for Olivia is finding a new church. Olivia said that her "home church was . . . cool" regarding her sexual orientation, but that she now lives in another city.

I haven't really found a [new] home church yet that actually . . . preaches to a people that are accepting of gays and are [my denomination]. I haven't really found one yet. I'm looking for one that kind of fits . . . what I really need. . . . There's one [in this city] but it's just a little bit too stuffy for me, I think, and there's one in [a neighboring city] I haven't checked out yet, but I need to get over there.

She said she tried attending a "gay church" but found that she did not agree with the message:

I tried it. I'm like, you know, I wanna go to a gay church 'cause I'll be accepted there, but, [the church I tried] is so all inclusive, they're like, 'Okay, if you believe in a god, we don't really care which one you believe in, just come and believe in a god, and we'll accept you, and we love you, and you're gay, and let's, you know, we love you for who you are, if you're broken,' and I'm like, 'I'm not broken. I'm gay, and I'm a lesbian, and I'm a Christian,' so it's like, 'Deal with it.'

Although Olivia observed that her religion and sexual orientation are "not really conflicting" at this time, she has some conflict between some of her sexual behavior and her morals: "I feel guilty with the whole being sexual with people I'm not in love with sometimes, but, you know, just maybe morals more than my Christianity kind of thing, but so it's not a huge, huge struggle."

Quinton

Quinton said the resolution of his conflict regarding religion and sexual orientation was “pretty short and pretty fast and pretty decisive.” He denied ever having any feelings of distress about being gay. (“I’ve never particularly felt like unclean, like I’m dirty, or that God doesn’t love me.”) His conflict was not marked by distress, but rather was reflected in a long-time effort to integrate his sexual orientation into his intended life as a priest. After an impasse was reached in this effort, Quinton disassociated from his original religion. He “pretty much left religion of any sorts” for about ten years after that, but has since found a spiritual community that “resonates” and feels “natural” and “comfortable.”

One of the pieces that allowed Quinton to achieve resolution, a strong sense of self-loving, was obtained as a young adult. He had graduated from a high school seminary and was in his second year of a college clergy preparation program with the intention of becoming a priest. He described how working through a personal crisis led to the achievement of radical self acceptance, explaining that his sexual orientation, while not a “central” issue, was a “good focus point . . . that other issues could crystallize around.”

My big conflict . . . was not religious in nature, it was much more personal. It was much more finding a place . . . where I felt loved, and that happened to me in my very, very early 20s, and it was not specifically, you know, religious or—It was dealing with gay issues within myself, but it was in a larger context, and just in terms of, ‘Who am I as a person? You know, what am I doing here? What’s, you know—Am I loved? Am I, you know, is there anyone who can, you know, who’s concerned about me?’ And it came at a point where I was actually on retreat in my college seminary, with my college seminary class, and came to the point where I was almost ready to commit, to consider suicide because I was at a very low point in my life. I was a sophomore in college, really confused about where my life was going, what I was doing. All of the friends that I made in high school were gone ‘cause they went to a completely different place, so didn’t

follow any of my schoolmates from high school. [I] made some good friends in my freshman year college. They all left the seminary program at the end of that year, so I . . . felt like really alone, really not having any friends, not anyone I could talk to. [I] was starting, you know, to do the adult thing of just, you know, moving myself away from my family to become more an adult, and stuff like that, and through about two nights, and it's one of those about five instances in my life that I can, you know, count on one hand that were really life changing for my life, and, you know, whether it was a moment of transcendence or what it was, however you would describe that, I decided that it was going to be sufficient for my life that I love myself, and over a two-week period, that just strengthened and kind of grew, and that was a launching point, I think, for my personality, for my person for probably the next 30 years, so, you know, was it religious? Yeah, kind of. Did it involve sexuality issues? Yeah, but it was bigger than that, although that was certainly . . . the impetus to look at some deeper issues that were within myself.

Quinton continued to progress through the seminary system, maintaining the goal of becoming a priest. However, he was dismissed from the seminary before he could achieve that goal.

[I] went to [a seminary] for graduate school for three years, and then was kicked out, not because of necessarily of sexuality issues, but some of the staff was wondering if I was questioning my sexuality or anything else like that. I wasn't questioning my sexuality. What I was questioning was what was the best way to integrate it into a life of, you know, priesthood and quote-unquote celibacy, and stuff like that. Basically, ostensibly, the reason that I was kicked out was 'cause I did not have the proper respect for authority.

After he was dismissed from the seminary, Quinton continued to be involved in a "progressive" parish of the same religion until it became clear that no reconciliation could be made between his sexual orientation and the church. He said,

[In the] conflict between my Catholicism and my sexuality, my sexuality won hands down. It just might have taken a while for it to . . . finally crystallize, and then when it did, around that Vatican statement [describing homosexuality as 'objectively disordered'], then it was no contest.

Following his disassociation from Catholicism, Quinton experimented with a few different spiritual communities. He said he now has a high level of satisfaction with the fit between his sexual self and his spiritual self.

The way I look at it now is . . . basically, my body, my sexuality, and the expression thereof is as much an expression of the divine or the demonic as anything else about me as a person. There's nothing that specifically says, you know, 'Oh, gay sex is bad,' you know. No, it's just like every other aspect of myself as a person, and of any other person. You know, you can make it good, you can make it bad, and that's as much an expression of the divine as anything else.

Quinton said he is pleased that he is in a committed relationship with his partner, "something that I've always wanted."

Whitney

Whitney disassociated from her childhood religion, but has been very active in her current church for many years. She has been in a monogamous same-sex relationship for many years. Whitney said she has reconciled her beliefs about God with her lesbian identity such that she experiences no internal conflict about the fit of these two areas.

I guess they fit together for me because I'm comfortable with who I am, and I know Jesus Christ is comfortable with who I am. You know, when I think about the teachings of Christ, He wanted me to be kind, compassionate, giving to other people. You know, I think He wanted that monogamy. He didn't want you to commit adultery. You know, He wanted you to be kind in word and deed, and . . . I basically try very hard to lead my life in the teachings of Jesus Christ, and I don't feel that His teachings are in any way in conflict with the relationship I have with Erica. Like I said, we are monogamous . . . and we have a very loving relationship, and it's very thoughtful, and, you know, we still do the please and the thank yous and appreciate what each one does for the other.

Whitney said she feels a sense of "peace and resolve" regarding her sexual orientation in the context of her relationship with God. Having come to this resolution, Whitney said, "It's easier for me to preach . . . because I don't believe I'm a hypocrite." She has attained a level of comfort with herself:

I'm a Christian first and believe in the principles of Jesus Christ, and, you know, maybe I'm gay second, but to me there is no conflict, and because I don't feel any conflict with that, it's easier for me to talk about it, and I hope . . . that's the

message I portray to you, that I'm comfortable with who I am, and I hope that's the message I give to other people.

In contrast to her internal sense of resolution, Whitney has found it necessary to be somewhat secretive about her sexual orientation ("I'm not out at church.") because of her denomination's rules about those seeking ministry.

I've been very active in church. I sit on many committees at church. I do a lot of functions, but there always kinda hidden in the background—I have wanted to pursue ministry for probably the last ten years, but always in the back of my mind, it's, 'I'm gay. I can't be a minister.'

Some in her church, including her pastor, know that Whitney is a lesbian and are supportive of her pursuit of ministry. As she prepares for possible scrutiny of her sexual orientation, Whitney has decided that she will not lie if confronted. If discovery of her sexual orientation should bar her from ministry within her current denomination, Whitney intends to change her affiliation to another denomination that she believes to be more accepting of gay men and lesbians in the ministry so that "I can come out and move forward."

Zelda

In achieving resolution between her religious upbringing and her sexual orientation, Zelda rejected external authority on the meaning of the Bible—and rejected the Bible itself as a definitive text—turning instead to an understanding based on her own inner knowing.

When people bring up, you know, Sodom and Gomorra to me or, you know, the Bible says this or that, I am not a scholar of the Bible. I—The best I can say is, you know, the Bible or the Torah, the Bible I can say for sure, I would imagine the same for the Torah, and for the Qur'an, and other religious books, they were written by men. Why—How in the world can every document be written by men, and be exactly right and perfect for everybody? It can't be, that's what. That's what I tell myself. And for the Bible, I know. It is a known fact that there were

other books that were set aside, that it has been revised by different, different elements of the Christian religion, that no books by women were accepted into it as a representation of whatever was to have gone on before Christ, and during Christ, and after, and what was written about Christ was sometimes hundreds of years later, so anybody comes to me with the Bible, I could dismiss it all. It's like I don't have to believe any of it, but the way in which I want to believe it. I'm satisfied with the metaphysical. I'm satisfied with the idea of giving a metaphysical interpretation to it. That's just as good as somebody preaching it strictly that you're supposed to do this. Well, if you're going to preach it strictly, where's the hand for a hand, and the eye for an eye? Where are all those very specific things going on in today's world? You can't apply it in that way.

Zelda couples her reliance on inner knowing with an acceptance of her sexual orientation as a part of her: "My sexual self is a part of me, just like I'm an African American, I'm a woman, I'm a feminist . . . I'm a social justice advocate, I am a spiritual being, I am a spark of the Divine." Zelda reported that she is "very satisfied" with the fit between her sexual orientation and her sense of spirituality.

Zelda now attends a church that resonates with her internal sense of knowing and with the principles of a "metaphysical" interpretation of the Bible. She reported that she finds participation in the church socially satisfying:

People support me and my partner. . . . I have what I feel is a church family there, people who support me, people who accept me for who I am, people who call upon me for my skills . . . and they don't worry about other things [my sexual orientation], and that makes me feel good.

Zelda added that she finds the church open and relevant to her as an African American and a lesbian:

They have lots of persons of color in leadership roles, ministry. They have GLBT ministers. They have GLBT weekend focuses, just like they have focuses on other things, on an annual basis. So there's a support group there, and so that makes me feel good.

Zelda noted ties to her childhood religion. She still at times considers the church she grew up in to be her church:

I still know people from the church. I kinda still call it my church when I go back to [my home town] because I know people who're there, [even though] many of them, the elders who I would be with, with my mom, have passed away.

The other tie she noted was that, after she joined her current church, Zelda realized that her mother had often shared publications from this denomination with her.

And so I came full circle of being in the church . . . and thinking that the church as an institution is just a terrible place, and totally forsaking it, and coming back around to a place where I felt I could trust an institution.

Zelda was surprised to find that her current spiritual practices were, in part, a reflection of the values her mother shared with her as a child.

Zelda noted some remaining questions about her current church. She said she is concerned about how the church started (“focused on the male . . . as the founder”) and about the church’s history of racial discrimination prior to the 1960s.



Reverse Amazon's decision to censor alternative views on Homosexuality.



Voice of the Voiceless started this petition to [Amazon.com](#) and [4 others](#)

Last week Amazon abruptly removed several books which represented alternative views on homosexuality. This included a variety of personal testimonies (autobiographies), religious texts, Reparative Therapy, psychological research, and addiction recovery resources. This is tantamount to religious discrimination and discrimination based on sexual orientation.

We are outraged that a smear campaign by one individual ([who stated here that he never read these books](#)) could convince Amazon to censor all books, audiobooks, and Kindle material related to our experiences and viewpoints.

For every major issue there are two sides to each story. For one side to be bullied and censored on every platform is counter to the values we have long held in common with Amazon.

We demand an immediate reversal of this decision and the restoration of these and all other books that were removed on this topic:

- [7/22/2019] **Achieving Heterosexuality: A Universal, Scientific, and Faith-Based Perspective** - By Marie Davidson
- **Shame and Attachment Loss: The Practical Work of Reparative Therapy** - by Dr. Joseph Nicolosi
- **Restoring Sexual Identity: Hope for Women Who Struggle with Same-Sex Attraction**: by Anne Paulk: 9780736911795
- **The Battle for Normality: A Guide for (Self-)Therapy for Homosexuality** by Dr. Gerard J. M. Van Den Aardweg
- **Healing Homosexuality: Case Stories of Reparative Therapy** (9780876683408): by Lucy Freeman and Dr. Joseph Nicolosi
- **Coming Out Straight: Understanding Same-Sex Attraction** - by Richard Cohen
- **Growth into Manhood: Resuming the Journey** - by Alan Medinger



- **A Parent's Guide to Preventing Homosexuality** - by Dr. Joseph Nicolosi and Linda Nicolosi
- **Reparative therapy of male homosexuality: A new clinical approach** - by Dr. Joseph Nicolosi
- **Straight Talk about Homosexuality: The Other Side of Tolerance** - by Richard Cohen
- **Desires in Conflict: Hope for Men Who Struggle with Sexual Identity** - by Joe Dallas
- **Orientation and Choice: One Man's Sexual Journey** - by David A Robinson
- **and all other books that were censored for this topic.**

CHANGED

#ONCEGAY STORIES

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DISCLAIMER

Every effort has been made to ensure events, locales, and conversations are accurately as possible from the memories of those who by their words, letters, interviews, review of photographs, photos, identifying characteristics, and details such as physical appearance, occupations and places of residence have been changed to preserve the privacy of individuals.

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Thank you to the leadership team of Equipped to Love and Bethel Church for enabling the power of testimony.

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Can a person leave homosexuality behind?

"CHANGED" began as an effort to highlight the unspoken journey of men and women who have confronted this question in their own lives. Finding themselves sexually attracted to the same sex, or uncertain of their gender, the men and women featured in this book took unusual paths of self-discovery that led to transformation.

Today, many face this daunting question alone. Sometimes answers seem beyond reach—you are not alone.

We are a growing community of men and women who have explored the depths of our identity and found it whole again. We have confronted the pain, rejection, and despair that often accompany the homosexual experience, and so our approach is sensitive. Compassionate. Genuine.

This is an invitation to go deeper. To find meaning in the journey. And to embrace process. We have looked beyond the cultural labels and expectations and found lasting fulfillment.

Inside this book are vulnerable, authentic and sometimes raw accounts of the hope and prosperity all of our journeys offered as we questioned our sexuality and gender identity. We are changed.

THANK YOU

...in every person who has shared their story for the creation of this book. Your courage and vulnerability are remarkable.



BRIAN BARLOW



DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES
Living Waters / desertstream.org

I heard about a program that helps individuals overcome unwanted same-sex attraction. It offered me freedom and clarity.

BRIAN BARLOW

I grew up hiding my same-sex attractions from others because I felt that it wouldn't be right for me to act on them. But after college, I sought out a counselor and talked about my same-sex feelings and resulting internal conflict for the first time. After meeting with him for a few months, he looked at me and said, "Well, maybe you should go to the gay men in Chicago. That might be how God created you." I was 21, and his response devastated me.

Early in my life, I'd been ridiculed by family members and peers for behaviors they believed were feminine, but my defense was I didn't have any homosexual experiences. I was looking for someone to confirm my belief and hope that this was not my identity. Instead, the counselor I met with held the door open to homosexuality and said there was no hope for change. So, I settled on that of despair for conversion and began to live as a homosexual in the gay community.

This opened a door to sexual behaviors that I didn't have peace in pursuing and emotional and relational confusion. The despair felt further diminished my ability to relate as a whole person, and I became overly sexualized, separating me from my family, faith community, and friends. I became void of all identity, following after someone who paid attention to me. I was vulnerable to abuse by others because I was desperate for love and had no boundaries.

I read faith-based books that told the stories of other

people who had unwanted same-sex attraction. Then I heard about a church that offered a program to help individuals overcome unwanted same-sex attraction, so I enrolled in the program. It offered me freedom and clarity. For the first time in my life, I had language to describe what I was experiencing.

Afterwards, I connected with many people whom I could trust with my story and who helped counsel me through it. I pursued help and encouragement through groups that met to process same-sex attractions. Emotionally healthy, I began to experience attraction for women. My same-sex desires no longer captivated me and consumed my thoughts. My confidence grew as I began to live out my God-given gender identity, fully male.

It was then that I met my wife at church. The clarity I received in my journey to wholeness made it possible to step into this relationship. We married six months later. Six years later, we have

three children. For several years we owned and operated a faith-based art gallery in Palm Springs, California. There we built relationships with individuals in the LGBTQ community. The arts gave us common ground to talk about faith and identity. Individuals would come back again and again, as we shared our story of hope. We had today my soon-to-be-born son, but I am more alive than I could have ever imagined.

DREW BERRYESSA

No one there was trying to coerce me into changing my behavior, but they helped me pursue a healthy heart and lifestyle.

DREW BERRYESSA



I lived in what felt like a secret prison of hopelessness and helplessness. I was addicted to pornography and masturbation, and I had a really hard time making friends. I also dealt with same-sex attraction and felt extremely internally conflicted and frustrated about it. I had no idea what to do with my struggles.

At my lowest point, I was in despair and had no hope that things could change. I started to believe that gay love was better than no love at all and entered into a gay relationship. For a few months it felt fulfilling, but then I quickly realized it wasn't what others had made it out to be.

Realizing that even that relationship wouldn't meet my heart's desire or satisfy me, I considered suicide. I saw no way forward, but I kept trying through faith.

I wanted to have a family someday, to be married to a woman, and to have kids. Although I honestly didn't think it would be possible for me, and I always had a deep feeling that same-sex attraction was not what was best for me, I struggled to overcome my feelings and my faith. There were two main maintainers for me to pursue change.

There were many things that helped my process, including an album of a worship leader who shared his story of coming out of faith and was the first time I knew how to overcome fear, and gave me hope. There were also books of other

stories of loving homosexual lifestyles that encouraged me. I then joined a program that offered specific counseling and pastoral care for people who struggled with their sexuality. No one there was trying to coerce me into changing my behavior, but they helped me pursue a healthy heart and lifestyle, which then led me to change my behavior, as well. The people there encouraged me and helped me see what I really was. That meant being gay of the ways the rejection, abuse, and struggle had affected my mind.

Now I have been married for almost 10 years to my wife, and I am the father of three beautiful children. There are two individuals I never thought I would be able to have. I am gay to experience them every single day, and it's amazing. I have an immense number of healthy, supportive friendships, and I have had reconciliation with each of my family members whom I felt isolated from in the past. I'm happy, excited, and met about life.

I'm looking forward to watching my own daughter grow and eventually get married and to being a grandpa. I'm looking forward, on a really immediate level, to my youngest grandson who will be born next year so that my wife can be a first grandparent, but more. There are all the sweet little mundane things about faith that I never would have had the opportunity to look forward to had this not happened in my life.

A LIVING LETTER MINISTRIES
alivingletter.org

There was no manipulation or shame, just unconditional love.

LIZ FLAHERTY



LIZ FLAHERTY

LIZ G. FLAHERTY
lizgflaherty.com

My family moved to a small California town when I was young. I faced a lot of rejection growing up there for multiple reasons, one being that I was overweight and the other that I was a Christian. Attempting to fit in, I continually sought out romantic relationships, mental pain, and alcohol. With plummeting self-worth, I gave myself to any guy willing to give me attention.

During high school, I found my relationships with men to be shallow and became caloused towards them. I found my relationships with women to be much deeper and more fulfilling. I experienced same-sex attraction from a young age but hadn't talked to anyone about it.

One night I was with my friends. I had what I believed was my grand epiphany: I was a lesbian. I thought the pieces of my puzzle were coming together.

One afternoon at work, I became greatly aware of the severity of my depression and feeling of disconnection from God. I began to pray. "Go not away from me, for I am alone when I'm high, but I can't get myself out of this." Suddenly,

I was overwhelmed with the feeling that God truly loved me. For the next few days, I tried to ensure my regular routine; however, when I went to work again, I felt that I was going to die. I didn't want to quit, but eventually I realized that, clearly, I was to follow a different path going forward.

After this experience, I reoriented my focus on my faith in God, including how it related to my sexuality. And even in the midst of all that, I continued to experience same-sex attraction.

After researching to understand my same-sex attraction, I was introduced to a sexual wholeness program that emphasized finding one's true identity. It was led by a married couple who had walked through similar struggles. The group met once a week and formed a loving environment where we could open up, receive encouragement, and work healing. These leaders led us by our own selves, all the while helping us to grow. There was no manipulation or coercion, just unconditional love in that season of my life. I grew to understand where my desires and attractions came from and how to get deep emotional needs met in an appropriate and effective way.

These days, same-sex attraction no longer drives me. I know who I am and have a tremendous amount of peace and joy. I've been married to a wonderful man for 16 years now. I'm no longer in the painful cycle of trying to fulfill my needs through same-sex relationships with women.

“

God enabled me to love myself exactly as I was before I experienced any change in my sexuality.

CHRISTOPHER SIMS

I was raised in a severely abusive Christian home. Abuse and pornography were secrets I was used to hearing. Being accused to gay was also a secret I carried and felt ashamed of, and though I had my sexual attractions, people still called me gay and mistreated me because I was effeminate. I could handle being mistreated, but feeling like God didn't like me was unbearable. By the age of eighteen, I stopped pursuing a relationship with God, came out, and was celibate.

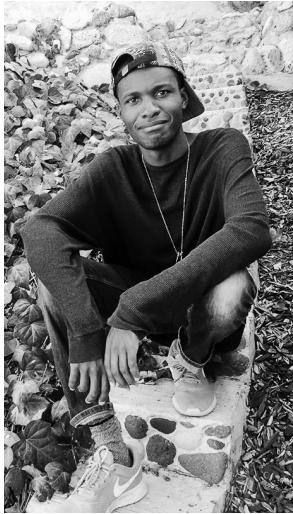
I really love my life today.

That year, I fell deeper into porn addiction, online sex chatting and gender dysphoria. I learned to live from the affirmation I got from chosen alpha male types who were attracted to me. My lowest point in life was a crushing experience that hit me every time I felt like I wasn't pleasing or good enough, or when I felt like a failure as a man. This happened whenever emotional situations or even our sexual physical touch triggered my memories of the abuse, leaving me panicked and ashamed. I decided to work change in my life because I realized that I was too broken to be forgiven with anyone. I wanted professional help.

In addition to getting counseling for childhood abuse, I created a list of God's love to myself. "Everyone who told me about You was a hypocrite, but I want to know You who You really are!" Then I heard His voice answer in my heart, "Christopher, I love you." I was corrected. I felt it, I wept because I finally knew that God not only loved me, He liked me! God enabled me to love myself exactly as I was before I experienced any change in my sexuality.

Today my sexual attractions to men are gone. I am attracted to women, and I have not watched pornography in six years. I experienced these changes as a result of finding real friendship with God. Rejoicing anyone who abused me, and surrounding myself with a healthy, loving Christian community, especially other girls.

I even used to struggle with seeing myself as a woman. Now, I am myself as a man and enjoy being a man. I used to feel filthy and full of shame, but now I feel clean and free entirely shame-free. I absolutely love my life today, and I am proud to be a great blessing to those who have been hurt by anyone. I wanted professional help.



CHRISTOPHER SIMS



BREE STEVENS

“

Counseling helped me revisit the sexual assault. I discovered that it was linked to all my health issues, PTSD, and same-sex attraction.

BREE STEVENS

When I was fifteen, I was blindsided by sexual assault. For years afterward I battled depression, self-harm, self-hatred, pornography and masturbation, fear of men, and PTSD. I was terrified of revisiting the incident, so I suppressed it and went on medication to cope with my health and psychological issues.

In college I met a girl who, on this day, my best friend Our friendship developed quickly, and we became extremely close. Although we'd suffered different forms of abuse, we became the answer to each other's pain, and the emotional intimacy we shared turned sexual.

I could never fully reconcile with identifying as lesbian or bisexual, yet I couldn't deny that I was in a same-sex relationship with my best friend. I found out what we were doing in secret, and I never found lasting fulfillment. The script I sought from my sexual trauma by being with her was short.

But they embraced us. I got pastoral counseling and read books about finding freedom in my sexuality. Counseling helped me revisit the sexual assault, and I discovered that it was linked to all my health issues, PTSD, and same-sex attraction. Within months, my PTSD symptoms disappeared, I started medication, and the sexual abuse I had toward her began to change. She went through her own healing process too, and we're both healthy and free for four years now. That sexual trauma and complicity are gone. We love our friendship this way.

Today, I feel whole. God said around men again, and it is no longer difficult to look them in the eyes. I am now looking forward to dating again, something I have not felt in years. I love my body now and deeply restored.

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“

I had been wanting to pursue change for quite some time before the tragedy at Pulse happened.

ANGEL COLON

My life before I pursued change in my sexuality was what I would call "a hot mess." Lonely, empty, unhappy, unskilled, and unloved were the ways I felt for eight years as a father I came out. The more unhappy I was, the worse it got. My life was so consumed by homosexuality, drugs and liquor that I wouldn't give the time of day to my family. Having been raised in a abusive Christian home, I felt a deep conflict between what I had known to be good and right, and the life I was living.

I can now say I know what true happiness is, what true love is, and most importantly, what true peace is.

I worked up bangs on June 11th, 2016, after a night of drinking and drug use. That evening my friends and I went to Pulse, a club in Orlando at 2021, where everything changed. While seeing our friends, we heard a big hit that I dropped my drink, realizing the woman was genuine. As we ran, I was shot several times and fell down, pulling my friends with me. Struggling to stand back up, I felt a hot sting behind my left leg and heard a loud bang which resulted in my left femur breaking. I couldn't move or even feel my legs, so I covered my head and stayed still. While I believed my chest still had a pulse, I started wondering the lady lying next to me, whispering to her to get up to the club. I looked at her and heard a loud shot. As her eyes shut,

I couldn't believe I just witnessed her death. I was terrified I would be next. Feeling the blood between my fingers, I realized what I thought would be my last prayer. Even in that terrible moment, the peace and hope of God flooded me. I heard a loud shot and felt my body jump up and down. I thought I was dead. After several minutes, I started hearing my mother. I raised my hands, calling out, "Please come get me! I'm dying!"

I had been wanting to pursue change for quite some time before the tragedy at Pulse happened. I missed my faith, and I missed feeling true peace and happiness. I had started praying for God to do something to change my life.

As I recovered, the support of my patients became a lifeline. I found that I could talk to them about anything without judgment or rejection and receive comfort and help. Since they started my treatment, I've been able to embrace crucial help and resources to aid me in rediscovering my life and living. This is all recovering but very grateful I am here today. My life now is a complete 180 from the life I had before.

Feeling happy and loved today was always my dream, but I can now say I know what true happiness is, what true love is, and most importantly what true peace is.



FEARLESS IDENTITY
fearlessidentity.co

ANGEL COLON

Orlando Pulse Nightclub Shooting Survivor

KEVIN WHITT

KEVIN AS A TRANSEXUAL PROSTITUTE



COMING OUT, INC.
comingoutglobal.com

“

I did not come to Christ seeking change in my sexuality. I simply came to Him with the desire for a healthy life. He did the rest.

KEVIN WHITT

I grew up in a dysfunctional home with a very abusive father. As a child, I endured verbal, physical, and sexual abuse. In several more instances than other boys, words were powerful, and I believed those lies I began having same-sex attraction at a young age, by age 15, I came out and started drinking.

As soon as I was old enough, I got into the club scene as an entertainer. I desperate for money, I started working in the adult industry as a transsexual prostitute, phone sex, escorts, escorts, and webcam.

I found Christ because all I'd ever been taught by the Church was that gay people were going to hell and their punishment from God was to commit AIDS and die. So, I figured if I'm going to hell, might as well have fun doing it. Eventually I worked how toxic and addictive my lifestyle had become. Many friends and acquaintances had died young from HIV, and I saw others ruin their lives with drugs and

alcohol addictions. One day, while working in a male strip club, one of the strippers boys invited me to go to church. I thought it was weird, but I was open to it and I went. That day a word was planted in my heart. A few months later, I got invited to church on Easter Sunday. God grabbed my attention through a manly-dresser I played out on stage, and I began to cry. I saw that that Jesus had done for me. That was the first day of my walk with Christ.

Eventually my desire to do drugs, party, or have sex was gone. God began speaking to me and I got rid of all of my male clothing and accessories. My heart began to change drastically as God continued to show me my true identity. I did not come to Christ seeking change in my sexuality. I simply came to Him with the desire for a healthy life, and kept an open mind and loving heart. He did the rest.

I now understand that my sexuality and interests in art, fashion, and beauty do not equate to homosexuality. A creative culture places a stigma on men. If we don't reach forward and act in certain way, we must be gay. But that is a lie. I am created in God's image, and He gave me a creative mind. I have being man just the way I was designed to be.

I love being a man just the way I was designed to be.

Eventually my desire to do drugs, party, or have sex was gone. God began speaking to me and I got rid of all of my male clothing and accessories. My heart began to change drastically as God continued to show me my true identity. I did not come to Christ seeking change in my sexuality. I simply came to Him with the desire for a healthy life, and kept an open mind and loving heart. He did the rest.

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“

One book I read about a guy coming out of homosexuality changed my life.

ANDREW FRANKLIN

In 2006, I was fresh out of college. I had a career in musical theater in New York City. I was gay-identified, and I was usually addressed in a room or audience or occasionally did shows and regularly dated men. I was socially involved with other men and had many one-night stands, through Craigslist or other ways. I was in relationships after relationships that failed and had hookup after hookup that just made me feel bad about myself and the hookups was making. But I was what all my friends were doing. It was just life.

My favorite point came when a party that I had gone to one night with a few friends. I had gotten drunk and three drags, so when I woke up the next morning I didn't remember anything from the night before. I just felt really bad about whatever had happened. I called some friends and found out that I had disappointed my friends in really bad ways and sexually assaulted another man. That's when I knew what I was doing with my life wasn't working. That led to something.

I began practicing Christian faith shortly after that, but I didn't know how that was supposed to help me with my sexuality. A friend recommended I talk with a pastoral counselor who had also come out of homosexuality, and I met with him weekly for the next several years. He helped me to understand why I was feeling the same-sex attraction, why I had always felt different as a boy and as a man than the other

“normal” guys. I began to understand the reasons why. One book in particular about a guy coming out of homosexuality changed my life. It resonated with me to hear someone else's story of being gay-identified, and it gave me a vision for having intimate relationships that weren't toxic like the ones I used to have. I also attended a support group for men struggling with unwanted same-sex attraction, homosexual sexual addiction, and pornography addiction. I was known there, and I learned how to live honestly.

It resonated with me to hear someone else's story.

Today I am no longer sexually addicted. I've been sober from sexual addiction for about 13 years now. I realized my greatest act of sex with men actually came from deep emotional needs. I've found that having healthy, platonic relationships with them is much more fulfilling than having sexual encounters with them.

Several years after making those life changes, I met a woman from my church who is now my wife. We've been married for five years and have three children. I have crazy, amazing children and a fulfilling marriage, and I'm learning how to best love her and make her feel safe and come alive. I'm counseling patients and ministering to many individuals and help them. My life looks drastically different than it did 13 years ago, and I'm so thankful for that.

ANDREW FRANKLIN



ANTIOCH NORMAN antiochnorman.com

KRIS OLSEN



COMING OUT AGAIN comingoutagain.org

“

I needed a counselor, someone who could help me unravel the deep emotions.

KRIS OLSEN

I was attracted emotionally to other girls in junior high school. In my late teens, I started feeling physically attracted to girls. I never got identified, so I didn't like the feelings and wanted them to go away. I was frustrated, had no idea where the attraction was coming from, and wanted nothing to do with it.

In my early 20s, I had a powerful encounter with Jesus and learned how to love Jesus. I thought that as a Christian, I would no longer experience same-sex attraction anymore. But although I wasn't acting on it at all, it did not go away. I'm a member of the LPGA and was so focused on my career that attraction faded to the background.

About six years after becoming a Christian, while in a business meeting, I looked across the room and made eye contact with a woman. I was immediately attracted to her, and I could see in her eyes that she was extremely attracted to me, too. I didn't want to pursue anything with her, so I resolved to keep my distance.

A couple of months later in another business meeting, she came next to me. She asked how I was doing, and I ended up unloading all of my work-related frustrations and struggles on her. She offered to help me because she'd had similar experiences, so I agreed. We struck up a friendship, which became a relationship, and I entered into the world of lesbian

I enjoy my freedom and am happy.

sexuality. She was practically my dream girl, but all along, I felt unsettled about it and very internally conflicted.

Suddenly I knew I wasn't at all in control of choosing my faith or her in that moment. I chose my faith.

It was the hardest decision I had ever made, and I know I needed serious help to work through it. I needed more than just reading Scripture; I needed a counselor, someone who could help me unravel the deep emotions from a faith-based perspective. I ended up joining a Christian recovery program where I gained understanding about where my same-sex feelings had come from. I also attended a conference and read a couple of books on the topic of transforming unwanted same-sex attraction. All of those things were helping for me.

Today, I'm no longer attracted to women, and I have attraction toward men. I'm currently single, enjoy my freedom and am happy with being released from the intense conflict in my soul over my sexuality.

“

I learned how to be a good friend to guys (hard at first) and to love a woman whom I married. Best choice ever.

ANDREW COMISKEY

My freedom from the domination of homosexuality began with a revolution of the Cross. God's radical will to give God go all and all the world in that gave Him all. That took time. Young and sexually charged. I found going up “gay men” hard. I know deep down that my ways were destructive, but I had not enough restraint with Christians to discover how divine love could express my feelings. I walked between gay and Christian culture for a while before I got the Cross. Surrender to Jesus made the difference.

God invited me to dig deeper into why I was at odds with my masculinity.

Surrender. God showed me I was created in His image—a man intended for a woman. That is an unchangeable truth, but my Bible-reading world seemed what I should not do sexually rather than who I was as God's gendered guy. That invited me to dig deeper into why I was at odds with my masculinity and to get on with the business of relating to women. Gender reconciliation became a priority in my

thinking and in my daily decisions. I learned how to be a good friend to guys (hard at first) and to love a woman whom I married. Best choice ever.

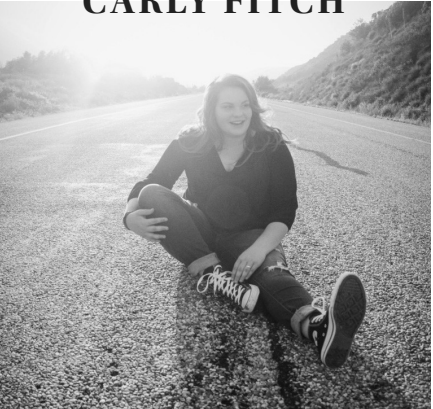
I also learned that unless I was rooted in a dynamic community of faith, I would be sucked back into perverting my need for love in His Word and faith, to create, and in our efforts to create a home for Him. As we gathered at the first Vineyard Church in Los Angeles, He deepened authentic discipleship. There my faith and I began to gather with gay-identified persons whom we helped to love Jesus. Together we discovered His strength perfected in weakness. His love became the basis for living Waters, a group I still run as a Catholic in my private, our groups now flow out in every continent (desertstream.org). My well-being is bound up in helping make the broken body of Christ beautiful for Jesus.



ANDREW COMISKEY

DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES desertstream.org

CARLY FITCH



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I love the way that I look; I enjoy being a woman and can now express that healthfully.

CARLY FITCH

Starting from a very young age, I experienced a deep desire to be a boy, and as I grew older I was only attracted to females. I looked at boys as my brothers and best friends. Women were what I wanted: chicks, pretty and sweet my emotions and feelings like, whereas, boys

First focused to me, then and a half year later, and a lot has changed for me as a woman. I see the way that I look (love my hair and really enjoy getting dressed up and fancy). I see that that my body can birth children. And I have found that I enjoy being a woman all around and can now express that healthfully. I've now found myself dating men and noticing different things that I desire in my future husband. I've looked forward to marrying a man and starting a family with him. God led me on a journey that completely changed my life through many different means, and my life has never been better.

My attraction to women completely disappeared.

Eventually, I found myself in a relationship with a woman, whom I wanted to marry. But, my girlfriend broke up with me, and I was left alone. I was so depressed, realizing that I had nothing and that I didn't want the life that I had been living for years. I wanted to die and couldn't see a way out for myself.

In my pain, I asked something for God. I didn't know what to do, so I asked for His help because I didn't want to live

a lesbian life. I began to go to church and read books and loads of books on sexuality. I found myself listening to hundreds of different podcasts. While I did that, over the course of about four months, my attraction to women completely disappeared.

I was attracted to men, then and a half year later, and a lot has changed for me as a woman. I see the way that I look (love my hair and really enjoy getting dressed up and fancy). I see that that my body can birth children. And I have found that I enjoy being a woman all around and can now express that healthfully. I've now found myself dating men and noticing different things that I desire in my future husband. I've looked forward to marrying a man and starting a family with him. God led me on a journey that completely changed my life through many different means, and my life has never been better.

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I felt like I was a prisoner of my own emotions. But I didn't know how to deal with any of it.

HILARY EIRICH

I'm a girl, but my whole life I wanted to be a boy. I felt very confused and never felt like I knew who I was. I started using alcohol to help me cope with life, and I was coping in other unhealthy ways, as well. At one point, I romantically fell in love with a woman. It was an infatuation, really. It never felt right to me. I was never happy, and I continually had nightmares while I was with her. I had started down this path with her, but I knew I didn't want to follow her to that path. Deep down, I believed that I was created to be a female, who wasn't designed to love another female. I was also depressed. I had no peers, and I had a sense of anxiety. I felt like I was a prisoner of my own emotions. I was miserable, and I wanted to die. But I didn't know how to deal with any of it. I eventually decided to stop drinking and partying, and I started seeing a counselor. We were just exploring what was going on, and for the first time, I realized that my confusion about my sexuality was causing all of my acting out even though I had been denying it.

After that, I reached out to a friend who had gone through this process of pursuing sexual sobriety, and she helped me process my next steps. Her ministry found a faith-based group specifically for people who struggle with their sexuality, and I attended their 30-week program. We would meet twice a week to help us gain perspective on our sexuality and needs for dealing with unwanted sexual attraction. The ability of the group grew me to the ability to talk freely about it and not feel alone or isolated in my experiences. I chose those times each week to attend this group every time I met, and it was extremely helpful for me in seeing that for the first time in my life. Today, I can truthfully say that I love being a girl. I'm no longer controlled by my sexual desires. I'm free dating a guy, and I feel more peace within myself than I ever have in my whole life.



HILARY EIRICH

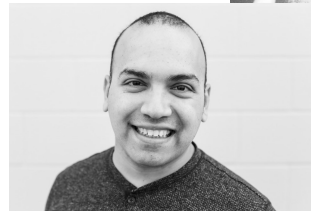
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Seeing and knowing other men as human beings instead of sexualizing them has been a life-changing transformation.

DANIEL DELGADO

I was a child of divorce. My father was a violent man; my mother was clinically depressed, and in my adolescence, I was sexually abused. As a child, I wanted the girl and her dad being a boy. At 13 years old, a counselor encouraged me to embrace a gay identity. He said things would get better if I did. So during my freshman year of high school, I came out to everyone. But things didn't get better for me. When I was 18, my suicide attempt was interrupted by a neighbor lady inviting me to church. She later told me that her dad had told her to do so. I found myself surrounded at her church by men—young and old—who were praying for me, offering me to leave by their car for me, and ending my suicidal thoughts that day. But, as powerful as that moment was, I still needed so much healing. My deep need to feel loved and accepted persisted, and I continued to embrace a gay identity. At age 18, I began living like a woman and even combed

in professional pageantry for about two years. One night, when taking the make-up off of my face, I couldn't even recognize myself in the mirror. That terrified me. I had to make my efforts to become Miss Gay Texas were leading me nowhere. Many of the men around me were going with each other—they didn't want that to be my story. On a Sunday night in December, when I was 20 years old, I met Jesus in a very experiential way. I remembered my life in Him. Jesus was and will always be my only hope for real freedom. His Church is my family and my home. I have begun to read many books and attend a program that ministers to those with gender confusion. In many painful hours in my life were addressed there. Over time, I began to accept and be at home in my own skin as a man. Seeing and knowing other men as human beings instead of sexualizing them has been a life-changing transformation. I'm so thankful for the new life God has given me. Today, I enjoy life and get to point others to the hope I've found.



DANIEL DELGADO

DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES
desertstream.org

TODAY

INTERVIEW BY B. BISHOP

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I could have come out and said, "I'm going to live a homosexual lifestyle," but I didn't want it.

DAVID REECE



DAVID REECE

From the time I was age three to seventeen, my life was marked by addiction to pornography, same-sex porn, and other relationships, emotional toxicity and sexual abuse. I lived a double life with a lot of behind-closed-doors behavior. I seemed like a great kid. No one suspected I was in pain, but I was lonely and confused. My cousin mistook me from age three to eleven. From the age of four, I was attracted to other boys. In high school, I was addicted to porn and had one-night stands with other boys, so I thought maybe I was gay. But when a classmate came out, I knew it wasn't what I wanted and made a conscious decision not to go down that path. In college, I didn't act out in homosexual behavior but used pornography to comfort myself in my loneliness and brokenness. When I met my wife in 2006, she was the first person I was honest with about my lifelong addiction to porn and same-sex attraction. I was very afraid to be her but didn't have hope to receive that with the conflict raging within me. In 2008 we married, and I took my porn addiction into my marriage. By the second year of marriage things got really tough. I have desperately needed help. One night a friend told me about a program he was that was helping him experience healing and understand his sexuality, and he encouraged me to check it out. That was the turning point for me. Right away I started counseling sessions that helped me get out of pain and confusion and understand that just because I was confused at three didn't mean I was gay. Then I went through a 21-week program directed at sexual brokenness and relational trauma. In 2015, through counseling and the 21-week program, I got freedom and healing from the roots that had been causing all my pain and sexual confusion, and it's been an acceleration since. Before I walked out of same-sex attraction, I only knew like happiness. Today my life is every good and full of joy. For the first time in my life, I have freedom and clarity, and things keep getting clearer every day. I'm finally genuinely connected to myself and others. I have confidence in relationships and myself, and everything so much is care now. There are so many things that I had not had access to the counseling, books, and programs I went through, it would have been wild or exciting. I could have come out and said, "I'm going to go live a homosexual lifestyle," but I didn't want it. I didn't know what to do, and I was so desperate. I had so many thoughts of suicide and so much darkness surrounding my life because it was so lonely and depressing. If I had not had the opportunity to pursue the healing and wholeness I was longing for, I would be dead today.

I have freedom and clarity.

TRUE.NORTH / MissionTrueNorth.com

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My life is so much different now, and I have no regrets.

JOSHUA BUCHANAN



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I was from North Carolina and had a great family as a young child, but I grew up being bullied for neighborhood high school. I started to hear and begin going to church. Most and "God" that I began to believe that was really who I was. When I was ten, my parents divorced, after which I experienced even deeper heartache as a result of our broken home. Throughout my middle and high school years, I experimented with drugs and partying and became really confused about my sexuality. In high school, I started becoming more comfortable with identifying as gay. After graduation I was fully into the lifestyle, with continued drug use and promiscuity. As a result, I was kicked out of my father's house, which led to what I perceived as rejection. In 2009, that my lowest point in life—finding out that I was HIV positive. My life crumbled, and I thought that it was over. However, I started to hear and begin going to church. Most importantly, I met the Bible and was able to open up with church friends that believed in me and loved me. This new family comforted me and experienced emotional healing. Because of my faith in God and the community of believers, I am healthier and more fulfilled than ever before. My life today is so much different. I no longer identify as gay, and none of the trauma and alcohol was part of my life. I completed my Master's degree in Theology at Regent University in Virginia Beach, VA, and met and fell in love with a woman for missions work. My life is so much different now, and I have no regrets.

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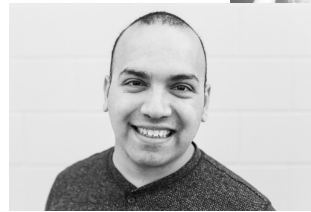
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“

I couldn't imagine fighting the same-sex desires my whole life or bearing the weight of loneliness and self-hated. Counseling saved my life because it gave me hope and encouragement.

KEN WILLIAMS

From the time I was a young boy, I didn't fit in with the other kids in every class and had great difficulty in keeping up with the boys. My off-the-wall mathematics teacher would call me things like "logos," "homos," or "derp!" So I found no refuge in school and no social interactions afforded by recess and lunch break.

I finally told my parents about the depths of my pain, and on my own initiative, I started Christian counseling. That counseling saved my life because it gave me hope and encouragement. My counselor connected me with a support group of people who were also living homosexually. I found the program and reached for the first time that I wasn't alone.

I found the program and reached for the first time that I wasn't alone. They also pointed me to books, which I devoured, containing examples of people whose sexual orientation had changed. The books also helped me recognize underlying issues contributing to my gender confusion.

Today, I have peace. I'm blessed with plenty of friends, and I feel known and valued by my community. I laugh and enjoy life with my wife and four kids. None of this was true before.

KEN WILLIAMS



EQUIPPED TO LOVE equippedtolove.com changedmovement.com

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I realized I was never going to get the identity or affirmation from any of the men I was with. I never felt more alone.

DEAN GREER

I was very insecure as a boy. When I was eight, I was introduced to child molesters by my grandfather. My emotional damage became monumental, and I began longing for some sexual encounters I wasn't very able and was ostracized in school, called names like gay and fat. I decided that it must be true because after all, I was sexually attracted to children.

I went home and told my family I was gay and HIV positive. I anticipated rejection, but they were very loving. I met with a family friend who had also experienced same-sex attraction. He was now married with three kids and no longer living homosexually. He helped me understand how my childhood had so I had it and moved away to join the Navy. Suddenly, when I had three sources of shame was celebrated. I was rejected and no longer the ostracized man. I went from one homosexual relationship to another.

I'm so grateful I didn't settle for less than what I hoped was possible.

After about two years, I was diagnosed with HIV on a self-administered screening. I was 100, and I was 21. I was told I had 10 more years left. I forced me to re-examine my life, and I realized I was never going to get the identity or affirmation from any of the men I was with. All they wanted was the sex. I never felt more alone in the world.

DEAN GREER



DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES desertstream.org

AMANDA SMITH

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It's not about religion telling me what to do; it's something that's coming from the inside out.

AMANDA SMITH



DESERT STREAM MINISTRIES / desertstream.org

I used to be a serial datee. I'd hooked up with a guy and had one relationship after another. Plus, I had problems with addictions to drugs and alcohol, and I was violent and angry. When I came to faith in Christ, I no longer wanted to feel same-sex attraction. Of course, many people said I shouldn't have those attractions because of what the Bible says about homosexuality, and I agreed with them. I didn't feel like I should have those attractions to other women.

So I found myself isolating from Christian women, and it caused me a lot of depression and anxiety. I didn't feel free in my relationships, and I was falling into an emotionally dependent relationship with my female I got close to. It went beyond sexual attraction; the pull I felt towards women had to do with my desire for closeness.

When feelings of isolation and depression became worse, I reached out to a lady who worked at a ministry and had left a lesbian lifestyle behind. She walked with me through my process for a couple of years and her story gave me hope.

Late, I found another ministry that helps people deal with attractions that they don't want. I went through those of their past programs, and they were extremely helpful for me. They equipped me with a handful of books with stories

of people with same-sex attractions and how they dealt with them. Those stories reached me because they showed me I wasn't alone and gave me practical ideas for how to handle my attractions.

Counseling was also really important for me because it helped me with the battle in my mind. I had a lot of cultural and thought patterns about who I am specifically as a woman. I was constantly comparing myself and creating underlying convictions. Therapy helped me learn how to get rid of those thoughts.

My heart's coming alive in a new way.

Today, I'm a single woman. I don't want to be single, and I hope one day that a guy will come along. I don't have to be concerned about being around women. In the past I couldn't see the good in another woman without latching on to her or detaching when I was on a woman. But now, I have deeper relationships with women and am secure in myself.

I want to close like a man and talk like a man. And it's funny because now I actually desire to be feminine in ways that I never had before, and I love it. My heart's coming alive in a new way. It's not about a religion telling me what to do, it's something that's coming from the inside out. I feel like God is changing me on the inside, and it's being shown on the outside.

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[Trauma therapy] helped me realize that the root cause for calling myself a lesbian was deep-seated pain and not an actual desire to date women.

AMY CRAPSON



AMY CRAPSON

When I was a child, I was a victim of verbal abuse. I also witnessed the rage of a young girl by a man. As a result, I developed a wall that had hardened towards men. I was severely depressed and tried to find significance, worth and healing in the arms of women. Unfortunately, every relationship that I was in was very physically and emotionally abusive, and it spiraled me into deeper depression.

I realized that I needed to make a change and that dating women wasn't the answer to the trauma I had experienced. When I became single, I finally reached out for help—first through trauma therapy and then through faith-based, Christian healing opportunities. I also found help through trauma on childhood sexual abuse. All this helped me realize that the root cause for calling myself a lesbian was deep-seated pain and not an actual desire to date women. I'm not here or outside anymore.

Today I'm in healthy relationships with both men and women, and I am discovering who I am as a woman. I have a heart to help others who question their sexuality to better understand the roots of their trauma. The most important thing in my journey is that I learned to forgive myself and my abusers. I am healthier than I have ever been.

I'm indebted to the programs and counselors that helped me get my life back.

CECIL JACKMAN

CECIL JACKMAN



ANCHORED FOR LIFE anchored4life.org

I was raised in church. Growing up, I bonded with girls more than boys. My grandma was also my biggest love. I didn't bond with my dad. He was a workaholic and abusive both verbally and physically. I was sexually abused from a young age, raped at age four by my half-sister in the bathtub. I felt that if I had been a girl, she wouldn't have done that to me. At school, my third grade teacher's aide told the entire class I was a homosexual and explained in detail what that meant. My inclination became 'God the Father' through the eighth grade. In eighth grade, I was fondled by my male teacher. Not being good at sports involving a ball, I was constantly made fun of by gym class, which further convinced me from boys my age. In college, I became a frequent at the adult bookstore. I became addicted to hardcore gay porn and masturbation, though I had no relations until I was 26. I decided I would be a good, coltish, gay Christian man. I decided to work as hard as I could for God. In five months, that change never happened. So after a couple of years of serving in every ministry I could find, I became convinced God hated me. At 26, I ran into a gay cousin I hadn't seen in years. The next night, we went to a gay bar & killed it. I was with guys like

me. But while I sat there having a beer, I felt like God said, 'What are you doing here?' So I got up, told my cousin I had to go home and left. The next week, I felt that same conviction, but this time I drank my beer, partied and had sex with another man. I had only technically come out for two months, but I hit bottom fast. One night when I was driving home from a night of gay clubbing, I realized I wasn't feeling the same of connection to God anymore. It hit me feeling alone and empty. I was depressed and put myself into a rehab program in New York. The pastor there said he could help me. It wasn't an easy process, and I wanted to quit at times. But I was in my mind and determined to press forward. I met with a counselor every day. We worked through different things like forgiveness. It was difficult, but I eventually felt much love. I also received with two heterosexual men and bonded with them in a healthy way for the first time in my life. The change wasn't overnight, but it was continual. Seven years later, I married a woman named Christa. In addition to the programs and counselors that helped me get my life back, after the trauma and despair, I never imagined I could feel this much hope about the future.

I never imagined I could feel this much hope.

Six years after leaving the gay lifestyle, I met my wife, Amanda. I love being a husband and "Daddy" to our three children.

JIM DOMEN

JIM DOMEN

CHURCH UNITED churchunited.com



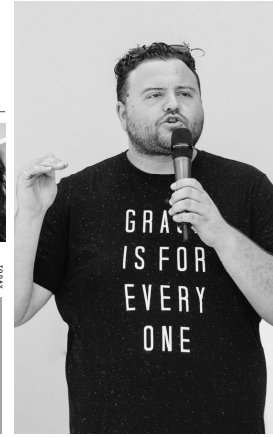
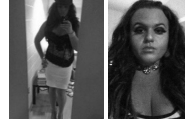
I never imagined that I would enter the homosexual lifestyle after being raised in a God-fearing home and accepting Christ at age seven. However, after I graduated from college, I was desperate to love and be loved that didn't take care that my partner was HIV and hepatitis C positive. Nonetheless, when I lost all my worldly possessions on June 8, 2002, God changed my life forever. I heard God's voice telling me to come back to Him. I said God, 'I'm yours again,' and began to realize that His strength is made perfect in my weakness. The next morning, I heard His call on the sidewalk. The second I picked it up, I heard God say, 'I took care of the troubles in the desert. I'll take care of you in yours.' This was the first of many miracles that began my journey of transformation. I pursued years of professional therapy, as well as programs through Dawn Brown Ministries (Cross-Carpet and Living Waters). These tools were instrumental when it came to understanding same-sex attraction and walking in freedom from homosexuality. Although the counseling and programs never

promised I would be freed from temptation, they provided tools to pursue a way of life using God's design for sexuality. Then in 2003, I began dating a woman thinking, 'Wow, God. The chemistry was designed for the opposite sex as I was working.' Although I dated many women, I never thought I'd find a wife because I was so sure and the spirituals were already taken. That's when I gave up my quest and told God I would love to live in His kingdom. Yes, God had something better planned for me. Six years after leaving the gay lifestyle, I met my wife, Amanda. 'God's gift from heaven' was more exact in 2005 and four years later God blessed us with our daughter, Abigail, whose name is Hebrew means "according to God." In September 2016, Amanda gave birth to our son, Abner, whose name means "opening leader." In 2018, our third child, Asher, Elizabeth, was born — and I couldn't be more blessed. I love being a husband and "Daddy" to our three children and am no longer desperate to love and be loved.

I am no longer desperate to love and be loved.

JEFFREY MCCALL

JEFFREY AS "SCARLET"



FOR SUCH A TIME, INC. 4suchatime.org

PHOTO: JEFFREY MCCALL

I realized I am fine just the way I was created—as Jeffrey. I don't have to try to become something I wasn't born to be.

JEFFREY MCCALL

When I was 12 years old, I started having homosexual thoughts. I didn't know where they came from, but they were going on. When I was 16, I had my first sexual encounter with a male, and by the age of 18, I was living in an LGBTQ community in Nashville, Tennessee. I dated many different men and started experimenting with hard drugs. I had a job as a clerk, and I put my identity in being a homosexual male. My lifestyle became so destructive I decided to move to Georgia and go back to school. I thought if I left the drugs and partying, people wouldn't see the sexual going on inside me. It worked, and I did so well in school that everyone on the campus thought I was fine. That's until I was 20. During my last semester as an under graduate, I met a professor who had been through a lot of the same things that had been through growing up. But unlike me, she was happy. She was full of life, peace, and joy. She talked to me about how and the way that He changed her life. I started to live a more complete life as a woman, believing it would give me a new view on the world. I even did an interview with ABC News to speak on my rights in my city. My lifestyle had left. I realized I am fine just the way I was created—as Jeffrey. I don't have to try to become something I wasn't born to be. I feel comfortable in my own skin.

I feel so comfortable in my own skin.

to think about killing myself. Authorities at my school found out, and I had to spend four days in mental health facilities. My professors and doctors treated me as Scarlet, the woman I was trying to be. Eventually, I was diagnosed by a psychiatrist with gender dysphoria, which allowed me to begin pursuing sexual reassignment surgery. I thought my life was progressing and that once I had the surgery I would finally be happy. But my life got progressively worse. I had quit drugs and tried changing things on the outside, but I was still deplete inside. Finally, I decided I wanted to change internally and live in relationship with Jesus, whom I had heard about all my life but never knew personally. I took all the things that were in my life as Scarlet and threw it in a dumpster. I made a video to post publicly about cutting ties with my past. From that time, I began to break through the shackles and locked-up prison that I had about felt. My life has changed so much since leaving behind my false identity as Scarlet. I now have peace and joy and much more satisfaction in my new lifestyle than I did in the one I was living before. All the things that had come from not knowing my identity have left. I realized I am fine just the way I was created—as Jeffrey. I don't have to try to become something I wasn't born to be. I feel comfortable in my own skin.

VOICE OF THE VOICELESS voiceofthevoiceless.info

DAREN MEHL



God healed my mind and my heart, and then my behavior and sexual attractions changed.

DAREN MEHL

In my early twenties, I attempted to live as a celibate gay. But that all changed the night I was raped at a party. The trauma drove me into a spiral of same-sex encounters. To avoid HIV, I started to use my boyfriend and worked into a monogamous relationship. For nearly a decade, although I looked happy on the outside, I lived in constant inner turmoil and stress because I knew my homosexual behavior wasn't who I was. I did my best to ignore my inner voice, but doing so came at a high cost: my personal peace and conscience. All that began to change the night I was invited to a prayer service and said a friend about my inner battle. Every since I knew I had been created gay but couldn't reconcile why I had same-sex attraction. My friend prepared for me, and for the first time in my life, I saw clearly that my issue was sexual addiction, not sexual orientation. That night, my hope was renewed in my longlost dream to marry a woman and have a family. Right then and there, I asked God to end my same-sex relationship because I knew I couldn't do it myself, and I asked Him to arrange so I could marry a particular woman. Without me knowing that night, my boyfriend abruptly ended our relationship, and soon we were dating and eventually married the same woman that prepared for me. I was so happy, fulfilled, and in a way I was one-year-old and three-year-old daughter.

I now see other men as potential friends, not sexual partners.

fulfillment, even as a happily married man, I could not break my sexual addiction to gay men. Despite my best efforts, I cheated on my wife with another man. In an instant, instead of feeling fulfilled and satisfied, I felt dead. I thought I'd lost it all—my wife, my children, my best friends—but by a miracle of mercy and love, my wife took me back. Desperate for help to get free from gay porn, I pursued spiritual counseling. Over the next year, through the help of many powerful people and mentors, weekly prayer and support from a faithful friend, and my wife's unconditional love, I found my true identity. For the first time in my life, I began to see the false beliefs I had about myself, men, women and my sexuality, and my sexual orientation changed. God healed my mind and heart, and then my behavior and sexual attractions changed. I now see other men as potential friends, not sexual partners. The journey wasn't easy, but it was worth it. Today I am a whole person living authentically as who I am. My sexuality and behavior are in line with my original design. For the last 12 years, I've been married to my beautiful wife, my gay porn addiction is gone, and now my sexual energy is directed toward her. I'm not happy, fulfilled, and in a way I was one-year-old and three-year-old daughter.

GWEN GIBSON

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Seminars helped put words and understanding to what I was experiencing. I no longer experience same-sex desires and have walked over 20 years in my choice.

GWEN GIBSON

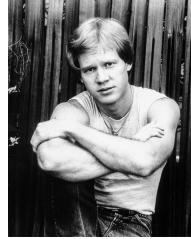
Most of my life, including my childhood, I knew my attractions to women were not like those of my peers. I can't remember a time in my early life that wasn't filled with that thought. It wasn't until much later, after college, that I began to seriously consider coming out to friends and family. I confided my own feelings and revealed into a same-sex relationship. I thought I'd be fulfilled, happy or at least relieved but felt little more than momentary satisfaction. The emotional struggle, heavy thinking, depression and other relational disconnects in my life remained. Honestly, I was surprised I thought a gay life was responsive to my desires. I had grown up in a Christian home and in the church. While I respected going to church about others, I never lost the sense of loving God. It was the one relationship that felt more

I'm living an abundant life.

to me than any other. I began an honest pursuit of God. It led me to books from others who had similar stories to mine, someone that helped put words and understanding to what I was experiencing, and supportive prayer and spiritual counseling that helped me along the way. I was grateful for Christian pastors who were accepting and gracious for both my struggle and broken friends, who were genuinely supportive of my choice to live as a homosexually-oriented woman. The change was steady, but not instant. I never no longer experience same-sex desires and have walked over 20 years in my choice. Much of my life has changed, including my emotional well-being and the lack of same-sex attraction. I'm living an abundant life as a single woman and have never considered living as I did before. I've been really happy with the choice I've made, even on the difficult days.



DAVID KYLE FOSTER



PURE PASSION MEDIA, MASTER OF LIFE MINISTRIES purepassion.us

“ The things that turned me on in men symbolized what I believed were absent in me.

DAVID KYLE FOSTER

Before I pursued change in my sexuality, I was deeply involved in the gay lifestyle while working as an actor in Hollywood. I was a lonely existence because the gay community was obsessed with youth and beauty. The challenges of it all was very disconcerting. Relationships had a very short time. Love was more sex and romance than commitment. As a young man, I was hit on by older men daily, sometimes violently. The corruption of youth and the blind eye that everyone else turned was deeply troubling to me. Life as a young homosexual, I was not through hundreds of partners trying to find someone who was capable of actually loving me, and it just wasn't there. We were all trying to fill a deep inner need that simply could not be found in gay relationships. Before it was all over, the emptiness and disillusionment of it all had made me suicidal, alcoholic, drug addicted, severely depressed, and very, very afraid. The so-called committed relationships were highly toxic, but in reality were non-existent. In every case I knew I did owe both partners regularly cheating on their lovers, sometimes within. There were no exceptions.

I've never been healthier in my life, and I would never go back.

After leaving the gay lifestyle and receiving healing for these underlying issues, my fear of women went away. My desire for a father figure was replaced with God being my father. As the loneliness was healed, my addiction simply went away because the pain that drove them was healed. And I finally was able to see myself complete as a man without trying to extract masculinity from other men. As a result, my unhealthy coping mechanisms went away. The alcohol, the drugs, the sexual addiction and the suicidal thoughts all vanished. I've never been healthier in my life, and I would never go back to such a destructive life. I don't think I was ever as close to death as I was when I was an

19 longer young and beautiful. And as a result, no one wanted them. The only sex they got was when they paid young men to go to bed with them. I decided then and there I was not going to end up like that. At the same time, my substance abuse and sex addiction were not a concern because I was using them to cope with the pain that came with my lifestyle. So I gave it all up and begged God to rescue me. I found my salvation through faith-based resources and pursuing a personal relationship with God. I discovered that my homosexual drive stemmed from a need to find a missing father figure. The things that turned me on in men symbolized what I believed were absent in me, which stemmed from several bad experiences with women during my youth. After leaving the gay lifestyle and receiving healing for these underlying issues, my fear of women went away. My desire for a father figure was replaced with God being my father. As the loneliness was healed, my addiction simply went away because the pain that drove them was healed. And I finally was able to see myself complete as a man without trying to extract masculinity from other men. As a result, my unhealthy coping mechanisms went away. The alcohol, the drugs, the sexual addiction and the suicidal thoughts all vanished. I've never been healthier in my life, and I would never go back to such a destructive life. I don't think I was ever as close to death as I was when I was an

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This ministry was my place of healing. They loved me every step of the way. This kind of love offered me hope, not just something to numb my pain.

CARMEN VAUGHT

Life before I pursued change felt out of control. It was a constant battle to find peace in what I was used to people I was good. When I started to love feelings for other girls, confusion ensued as I had no safe place to talk about it, and I believed the shame I carried would only grow if I admitted how I was feeling. Because I was not like other girls and felt rejected by guys I think I felt completely on my own. In my early 20s I began meeting people in the gay community, and I felt like I finally fit. This community changed me to come out. As I ran into the arms of this so-called love, my shame and self-hatred actually grew, and I felt that people in the Church and my family also hated me. I thought that if my family would just accept my sexuality, then I would be at peace and life would be amazing. After twelve years of family, healthcare and separation, they started to express their love and admiration for me and to express their desire for relationship. I knew they didn't agree with my lifestyle, yet I felt their love for me. I thought I'd be ecstatic about that, but actually I found myself thinking, maybe I don't accept this life for myself. Six months later, my girlfriend of three years was cheating on me and moved out. I was miserable. The life I had dreamed to find fulfillment left me at rock bottom instead. I was so

I love who I am. My life now has so much purpose.

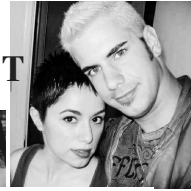
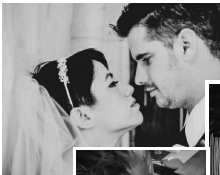
scared to walk away from that identity because I didn't know who I was without it. I finally told God, "I have no idea who I am, but You created me so You're going to help me." I decided to go back to church, to my first visit. I found an announcement for "a Christ-centered healing and support group for those working with, and/or in their struggle and relationship with God." I attended the first meeting and when I saw my name to share why I was there, all I could say through my tears was "self-worth." This ministry was my place of healing, for the first time in my life. I felt like I could share my pain with others. We met for several months, uncovering the wounded places, and they loved me every step of the way, even in my mess. This kind of love offered me hope, not just something to numb my pain. As I continued to love, my heart changed, and I began to understand who God created me to be in a relationship with Him, not a set of rules. Now the internal battle is over, and I can walk in peace in my true identity. I love who I am and that I'm different than a lot of others. My life now has so much purpose. I got to use my profession of photography in ministry, went around the world, and being able to others with my story of God's love. His plans are way better than anything I ever imagined!



CARMEN VAUGHT



APRIL LOCKHART



I watched personal testimonies on YouTube of many other ex-gays who talked about their journey. If they had found genuine transformation, then I could, too.

APRIL LOCKHART

My former life looked flashy and full of fun—lots of sex, alcohol and crazy parties. But I was just trying to distract myself from my own misery. I hoped for stability and a relationship that would last. I felt like I was in an emotional roller coaster. These were times that felt good, but there were also a lot of tears. I experienced so much anxiety and depression that I began to believe those feelings were a part of me. I was gay or he back as I can remember. I had never done it to make companionship because the opposite sex was repulsive to me. Just to make sure I was really gay, I dated two guys, and honestly, none were of no interest to me. Relationship with them felt forced and awkward. Even when I found the girl of my dreams who was perfect in every way, I was so unhappy in the relationship. There was always something missing, but I could never figure out what it was. No matter what I did, I couldn't fill this longing. I was so unhappy, unattracted, and my depression and anxiety were reaching a point where I was suicidal. I began planning my own suicide. I didn't want to break my mother's heart, so I planned to do it in an accident. I had found some beautiful homes. Fear was like today. My life is the polar opposite of what

It was the best choice I ever made.

it was before. I'm 100% free of the emotional roller coaster and have no desire to engage in same-sex relations. I married an absolutely incredible man and have two boys. They are my constant reminders of how good God is to me and how he pulled me out. I don't suffer from depression or anxiety and I'm not on a constant search to fulfill an inner void. My once heavy heart now feels light. Some days I cry because I like me. I decided I didn't want to be homosexual anymore, although I was in a process. I read books that encouraged me and joined a small group Bible study that let me be open, share my struggles, and have access to encouragement. I read my Bible consistently and implemented its principles in my life. I personally did not know of any other gay people like me that I could partner with, so I watched personal testimonies on YouTube of many other ex-gays who were coming out to talk about their journey. I found it extremely helpful to see how others had experienced change in their sexual desire. It was like a candle of hope held up for me when I grew weak. If they had found genuine transformation, then I could, too. I did. And it was the best choice I ever made.

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Today, I am wholly content in a female body with no desire to be a man. I am completely free from the desire for a sex change.

LINDA SEILER

I was transgender and exclusively attracted to women until my 20s. I have no memories of being content in a female body. By the age of nine, I'd made plans to change my name to David and get a sex change operation, but I never went through with it.

In the middle of that, I found a compassionate community of people, met Jesus, and, through an 11-year journey of transformation, found my true love.

I love my femininity and thoroughly enjoy being a woman.

As I continued to pursue healing for my heart, attractions to men began to surface—which was thrilling, yet awkward, for me because I was in my mind-female. As I continued to experience transformation, a greater desire for the opposite sex was awakened. Since then, my attractions to men have steadily increased. I've discovered what "my type" is and hope to marry someday.

Today I am wholly content in a female body with no desire to be a man. I love my femininity and thoroughly enjoy being a woman. I am completely free from the desire for a sex change, the sexual divide for adults, and all sexual addictions. I see now that all of those desires were attempts to console my broken heart. My sexual brokenness was simply a mirror reflecting the deep wounds in my soul that need healing.

Each day as I live with more freedom, I give more and more sexual to my femininity. I'm a sporty gal and will probably never be extremely girly, but I'm comfortable with who I am and content as a female in a female body.

LINDA SEILER

LINDA SEILER
lindaseiler.com



MJ NIXON



UPROOTED HEART, INC.
uprootedheart.com

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Community and accountability were key in my journey. I began to understand the truth of who I truly am.

MJ NIXON

Being born into a conservative Christian family, I was brought right from weeing at young age, but I could never reconcile my faith with the attractions that ignited within. Being the middle child with two brothers, I started taking on their attributes and personalities.

This shaped my emotional from a healthy understanding of femininity to embracing a more masculine identity. Outcasts, I was a rough and tumble member, but sexually, attractions towards females began to grow. Not knowing who to talk to or how to even share that my attraction to my whole childhood and adolescence.

In college, everything changed. I was away from home and was finally in an environment of acceptance. One day, a woman caught my eye, a friendship was formed, and a sexual relationship followed. Through this one relationship, I exposed my hidden inward attractions toward females for the first time in my life. We lived together for five years

and continued a future together. Despite the deep bond this created, there was still a pull to end that relationship and seek after one with God. I really had always had an inner tug of war going on that caused me to question my attractions to her and my relationship with Jesus. Ultimately, I understood this inner conflict was directing me to the truth of my life as a woman.

Now I live to share my story and tell others about the transformation I have experienced.

The Bible was the greatest resource in my journey of freedom from homosexuality, along with videos of former LGBTQ members on YouTube and Vimeo. I attended a small group for people seeking healing from sexual brokenness, which was huge support for me. Community and accountability were key in my journey. I began to understand the truth of who I truly am. Now I live to serve others, share my story, and tell others about the transformation. I have experienced and had have seen God heal others into happy and free lives, healing their hearts the way He did mine.

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I found resources online that were really encouraging to me in my process. Today, I have a greater sense of wholeness and inner stability than I've ever felt before.

LAUREN HART

LAUREN HART



When I was living a lesbian lifestyle, I had a lot of inner conflict that didn't know what to do with. I thought things like, I can't fully give my life to this. However, I couldn't remember feeling as loved as I expected until I met my girlfriend. It was a relief to find someone who loved me. Some people said living as a lesbian suited me, while other people said it didn't make sense for me. And in many ways seemed to fit—I did not have nearly as many emotional struggles or insecurities being with women as I had with men.

As a Christian, I wrestled a bit with what my faith meant for my lifestyle. I was experiencing a form of love and comfort, but I still felt like I was compromising on something I could have that would be much greater. I would have considered myself a Q in the LGBTQ. From experiencing sexual verbal and physical bullying from young boys, along with sexual assault from a man to my teens, feeling comfortable around men was a challenge.

I had someone I could go to, we went on what I considered 1-on-1 meetings with her one day, talking about my inner conflict. She said to me, "I'm going to see you no matter who you pick." In that moment, I felt this space of love to truly watch this not instead of feeling backed into a corner either way.

I also found resources online that were really encouraging to me in my process. I searched for any story of anyone who had ever come out of homosexuality. I even heard about a homosexual couple who had both been gay before they got married. I remember being shocked. I finally felt hope, I wanted to know that it was possible, that I didn't have to choose a lesbian lifestyle, and that I did have to define me.

Today, I have a greater sense of wholeness and inner stability than I've ever felt before. The people who had that got to receive love in a wholesome way that just keeps going. It doesn't give you it can take. It gives because it doesn't run out.

FATHER OF GLORY
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ANDREW MEDINA



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I found a ministry focused on getting to know the heart of who you are, rather than focusing on the behaviors you're doing.

ANDREW MEDINA

Moving up, I wasn't a typical boy who liked sports. I was sensitive and enjoyed playing with dolls and dancing. People were always telling me that I wasn't manly enough, and I was mocked about it from grade school through high school. I was also sexually abused when I was young, and I was bullied frequently. Then in high school, when I became more aware of my sexual orientation and heard people saying that this is what it means to be gay, I decided, "Okay, I failed at being straight. Maybe I could try being gay."

So, I began identifying as gay, and I found a lot of confidence in being accepted by the gay community. I started drinking, doing drugs, and being promiscuous as an early age. Then I started to drink more and to more drugs until I was having a lot of blackout nights and not remembering on the next day what I had done the night before. I was having multiple sex partners without using protection, and I was working men through outlets that were bad.

Then I began having suicidal thoughts. I felt really empty because there was something inside me that thought, "I've never been this. But I didn't know how to get out of the lifestyle. Still, I know I continued in it, it was so ingrained and well-

I found a ministry focused on getting to know the heart of who you are, rather than focusing on the behaviors you're doing. I learned about my true identity and how to have real relationships. I was broken about my same-sex attraction, and my friends there still accepted me and were a safe place for me to open about my story. I was scared to be authentic at first, but they didn't judge me; instead they encouraged me. I was surprised by the healing experience.

Now I'm dreaming about having a wife and kids.

I began to process through many emotions and events that I thought I had dealt with, learning to see the truth in them. I realized that many of the labels that had been put on me were just lies. I learned to feel accepted and loved by God. And I am even able to forgive the people who sexually abused me.

I've also learned that it's okay to be a sensitive man. I like to love people, hear their stories, and work with children. I didn't get experience those things before because of all the shame I felt.

I had girlfriends when I was young, but men were saying that I wasn't man enough to have a girlfriend. So I experimented a bit of rejection and abuse that influenced my mindset. Now, I'm dreaming about having a wife and kids one day, which are things I never thought would be possible for me.

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Today I am happy, joyful, and feminine—all things that I never was while living as a lesbian. I am no longer sexually attracted to women.

ELIZABETH WONING

Throughout most of my life I never belonged. I always felt excluded, and I questioned my sexuality and my gender. I found the idea of being feminine beautiful but so strange. I didn't feel like a girl, but I also didn't identify as a boy. I made my first meaningful connection with another woman when I was in my mid-teens. We had such deep intimacy and love that our bond set a standard for my other relationships for several years. Through 1 occasionally dated men, and briefly in my early 20s was married to a man, I never developed fulfilling or loving relationships with them. I "came out" when I was in my early twenties after my brief marriage fell apart. I felt liberation explained my childhood and young adult experiences. I thought I was finally being authentic and true to myself. It's like I felt powerful and asserted myself in an unacceptably masculine way. I adopted men's attire and a career.

I am a strong advocate for their empowerment to overcome the effects of injustices against them.

During these years I raised family and support as a lesbian living within the gay community of large cities. I decided I wanted to attend seminars and did so as one of just a handful of openly gay students. After attending 1 began working with youth, but questioned my faith. In that season I investigated what I believed about God, what I believed about the Bible, and what I believed about myself. Through that process I realized it was possible that

some of my ideology had been wrong. I reached to follow my faith sacrificially, which required re-evaluating what I understood the Christian sexual ethic to be. Up to that point, I believed I was born gay and that God had created me that way. As I further studied Christian doctrine, eventually I no longer believed I was born a lesbian. My experience of God's love, the Christian community around me, and my desire to please a God of grace had a dramatic influence on my life. I came to see with the impact ideology had on my self-perception and personal pastoral care and counseling, that addressed childhood hurts and perceptions. Above all, I acknowledged I had created myself as a woman. I did not specifically seek change in my sexuality; nonetheless, I began experiencing change in my sexual desire. I became attracted to a man, which was one of the most unexpected and humbling experiences of my life, since I had so fully identified as a lesbian. He and I got married and have had a strong marriage of 17 years that we today can happily joyful and domestic—all things that I never was while living as a lesbian. I am no longer sexually attracted to women. Rather, I am a strong advocate for their empowerment to overcome the effects of injustices against them.

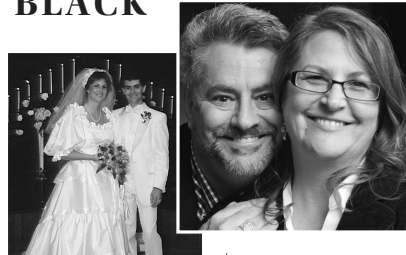
ELIZABETH WONING



EQUIPPED TO LOVE equippedtolove.com changedmovement.com

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STEPHEN BLACK



FIRST STONE MINISTRIES firststone.org

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I began to pursue change through counseling and getting help with emotional healing. A year and a half later, I met my wife. We have now been married for 33 years.

STEPHEN BLACK

I was mislabeled as an 18-year-old, and again at age ten. I was bullied a bit and got beat up by the time I was in junior high, everyone was calling me gay, and I believed it. I was deeply depressed by eighth grade and had an older guy tell me he wanted to "show me the ropes" of the homosexual community. For the next eight years, I lived in that community and had relationships with a number of very wealthy and powerful men. I was a boy toy. I did have a couple significant gay relationships, but by the end of the 60s, I became very disillusioned. Then my little brother died, and his death caused me to reevaluate my life and what I believed. I got a wife and a half a century of life when I believed, and then I gave my life to Jesus. I told God that if He would change me, I was willing to change. I began to pursue change through counseling and getting help with emotional healing. A year and a half later, I met my wife. We have now been married for 33 years. We have three children and four grandchildren. The first time I was about 14 and I decided I wanted to change, my attraction to men was fading away. Those last 17 years, I stopped experiencing same-sex attraction altogether.

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I started seeing a Christian counselor, attended conferences and found some books. These were all very instrumental in bringing about change and healing in my life.

JEFF JOHNSTON

At five years old, I struggled to social play and was introduced to social things by other young boys in my neighborhood. That caused me to pull back from connecting with other boys because I didn't want to happen again. So, I wanted to connect more with girls. In junior high, I discovered pornography and hooked up with a lesbian and girl, afraid that someone would find out what I was doing. I became even more distressed when my fascination with pornography began to shift from women to men. But I worked to maintain an image of being heterosexual, even as the sexual addiction and homosexual attraction increased. Then in my early 20s I went to Australia as a missionary for several years. When I came back, I was working with a high school group and was making the end of my rope. The constant tension, struggling internally with my sexuality and being teased in the classroom extremely difficult. But during that time, I went to a conference called "Hope and Healing for the Homosexual." It was the first time I had heard anyone talk about potential reasons behind same-sex attraction or that it was possible to reach heterosexuality.

That conference was a turning point for me, and within a week, I started going to a support group for people who also wanted to live heterosexually. I had kept this part of my life hidden for years, but slowly I began talking to friends and family about my struggle. When I learned rejection, I

usually found contempt and criticism. I also started seeing a Christian counselor, attended conferences about healing sexually and found some books on the issue. Those were all very instrumental in bringing about change and healing in my life. Although I started out strong in my journey out of homosexuality, I went through a period of time where I really questioned my faith and my identity as a Christian. I started going to clubs and having sex with men I had just met. There was a lot of talk about HIV/AIDS during that time, and I knew my choices were very risky. Finally, I made a return to my faith and to the Church. Instead of pursuing a role in leadership, I just focused on pursuing health, non-sexual relationships with men. I had a mentor and girlfriend who were accountability relationship groups. I had gay friends who loved and accepted me where I was but who would also call me out when I did things that weren't good for me. And I realized that straight men's that different from some of their struggles. Those relationships were incredibly healing and transformative for me. A few years later, I began leading a group at my church, and a young lady came, who I thought was cute. Just and I ended up dating and from getting serious. We are still married and have a healthy relationship and have three sons together. Our oldest is 21, and we have twins who are 18.

JEFF JOHNSTON

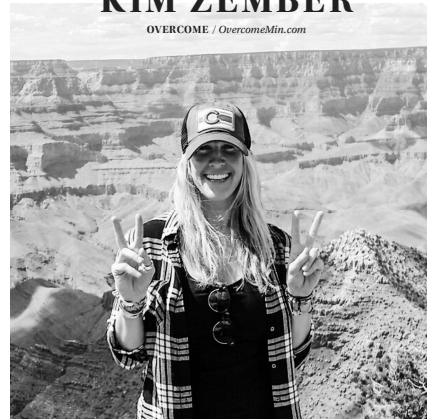
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KIM ZEMBER

OVERCOME / OvercomeMin.com



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In contrast to what most people would think, I actually found great freedom [to stop acting on my same-sex desires].

KIM ZEMBER

I started having homosexual desires in high school and began acting on them when I was 17. For many years, I hid them from my family and friends because I felt so much shame and guilt about them, which came from a deep feeling I had personally that I wasn't meant to live a homosexual lifestyle. I was living a double life, and it consumed me. I had that very first experience with a girl and being a boy toy. I had that very first experience with a woman, but was not in love with. Then I changed my heart with a woman. After that happened, I was heartily forced to come out with the life I was choosing to live. The people I was close to me accepted me and were supportive although I felt in my heart that they believed, as I did they thought, that my lifestyle wasn't good for me. Coming from relationship, I was never at peace in my heart, and I finally hit rock bottom when one of my girlfriends cheated on me. At that point, I realized that I was in a vicious cycle of relationships that weren't fulfilling for me. Even though everyone around me supported my lifestyle and told me I was OK, I felt deeply convicted that I needed to make a big change if I wanted different results in my life.

For the first time, my life felt full.

I was not easy to stop acting on my same-sex desires, but I had the support I needed to choose not to do anymore. I actually found great freedom in putting up these boundaries for myself. I was also free from the anxiety, depression, and duplicity that were continually present in my past lifestyle. I now walk in an authenticity that I didn't know was possible.

Kim's heart also overflowed with joy and love for children in Ethiopia. Visit her ministry at www.thefirststone.org.

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After deciding I wanted to come out of the homosexual lifestyle, I met Garry, who is now my husband. We have been married 12 years, and we have two children.

MELISSA INGRAHAM

WIFE TO GARRY / PAGE 82

From the outside, my life looked pretty perfect. I was attending a private university and was in a long-term relationship with a guy. But inside, I was growing more and more depressed with a huge sense of emptiness. I felt confused and unsatisfied, so I began to question my sexuality.

My senior year of college I began a lesbian relationship with a woman. At first I thought, this is what I've been looking for my whole life, but then I experienced a lot of internal conflict between feeling like it was right, and a nagging sense that it was wrong. I felt a lot of shame, and I had no peace. Our relationship was very intense, but short-lived. She ended things quickly and was devastated.

At that point it felt like all my relationships had come crashing down on me, and I reached my lowest point. I felt like I was being punished. So, I began to ask God for help and look for help externally, as well.

I was nervous to tell my mom and twin sister that I thought I was gay because they were Christians and I thought they would respond harshly. Instead, they both responded by saying, "We don't think this is God's best for you, but we love

you anyway." My sister invited me to a Christian conference, and I went with her. While I was there, I came to believe that just because I felt something, that didn't make it right.

I began to read books and web pages about healthy sexuality, which were very helpful in providing me with a pro-ways-to-get information that I understand I still lack a lot of shame in the beginning. I then joined a local ministry for me in my process of helping me deal with brokenness in my family and helping me to avoid forgiveness. A part of that ministry was joining a peer support group, where I learned how to build healthy relationships.

I also sought counseling, and attended conferences. Each of those things was instrumental in my healing process.

My life today is 100 times better than it was then.

About five years after deciding I wanted to come out of a homosexual lifestyle, I met Garry, who is now my husband. We have been married 12 years, and we have two children. My husband and I have a great sex life, and my level of same-sex attraction is extremely small compared to what it was.

MELISSA INGRAHAM

LOVE AND TRUTH NETWORK / loveandtruthnetwork.com



GARRY INGRAHAM

LOVE AND TRUTH NETWORK / loveandtruthnetwork.com



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I was able to find solid, legitimate support that helped me determine my sexuality in a way that lined up with my faith and desires.

GARRY INGRAHAM

HUSBAND TO MELISSA / PAGE 81

My life as a homosexual was pretty chaotic. There were certainly some high points when I was living in sexuality and heterosexual at the same time, but for the most part, the lows were extremely low, and there were really no highs. The more I continued to live in homosexuality and identify as gay men, the more miserable my life became.

I was using a lot of alcohol, and other types of distractions in order to just cope with life. I would say that my life was going out of control. I experienced a lot of depression and anxiety. I had a close relationship with my parents, but to just cope.

Eventually, I got to a point where the euphoria of coming out, leaving Bible studies, finding my first gay bar, and feeling like I had finally found my people started to fade. It was about two years in, and I was starting to feel hollow. My desire had always been to find the right and walk down. When that didn't happen, and I was with countless numbers of guys, it was something about that aspect of it. I realized there was no hope or joy. There was nothing in it for me.

I got up going to church, but had experienced some negative aspects. Even as an adult, I have fantasies. But I started to have a desire to discover God in a way that was very different

from what I used to know. The desire didn't have anything to do with wanting to change my sexuality. (At that point, it felt impossible.) All I knew was I needed to turn the reins over to something else.

The journey was painful, but good. I started to go to different conferences annually. Those were transformational. I learned from people who were dealing with some of the same issues, and I got me insight into how some of them had developed in my own life. I wasn't told exactly how it happened, but it helped me put the dots together and realize, Oh, this makes a lot of sense.

Books and tapes were also provided for me. They really gave me hope when I was beginning to panic and worry a big part of that brought the change. Counseling also played a crucial part. I was on a pretty desperate journey but was able to find solid, legitimate support that helped me determine my sexuality in a way that lined up with my faith and desires.

I've been happily married almost 12 years now to my wife, Melissa. Today I sometimes say, "I wouldn't trade my wife for anything for my best day time." It's true. There's so much stability, love, and growth in my life now, and there has been for a long time. I'm so thankful.

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I started to ask questions. I needed answers or else I was headed toward ending my life.

EDWARD BYRD

I used to be known by the name "Rem," a female persona I used to mask the dysfunction and pain of my past. During the course of my life I pursued my dream and rock 'n' roll. Finding it difficult to understand my pain, I turned to stepping and found myself involved in exotic sexual activities to find worth and value within myself. I was connected with the culture and lifestyle of homosexuality. I became convinced it was my only identity.

However, I began to feel severe depression and felt disappointed about life. I had found so many disappointments, as well as broken and abusive relationships. Recognizing the destructive cycle I continually found myself in, I started to ask questions. Could this be all there is to life? Will I ever experience a truly fulfilling life? I needed answers or else I was headed toward ending my life.

Finding desperate, I searched for other stories like mine on YouTube. Finding videos of people who sought help to find freedom for themselves led me to prayer counseling, support groups and online teachings. Some key social groups supported my efforts to leave that life that had led to further pain and destruction. Through those resources I learned that I had built my life on so many fabrications, and I had to deconstruct the false realities to discover my true identity.

My life today is a whole new person inside and out. I am a whole new person inside and out. I have incredible purpose, joy, love, acceptance and peace in my life. Nothing in my past compares to the truth and joy I have today. I have received freedom from Christ and I no longer look for fulfillment in dangerous places; I am fulfilled and secure in my sexual identity as a man.

EDWARD AS "REM"



TODAY



EDWARD BYRD MUSIC / facebook.com/edwardbyrdmusic

OVER THE RAINBOW
LUCIA JO
facebook.com/Over-the-Rainbow-Lucia
1951-17931.357924/

LUCIA GROPPOLI



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I didn't know my own body had rejected me. I didn't realize that my body was simply responding to abuse.

LUCIA GROPPOLI

I was born a woman and endured molestation as a child, which left me feeling unprotected and unworthy of someone else. I came to the mistaken conclusion that "girls are victims and boys are abusers," and this was the only two options I had. Not wanting to be the victim, I subconsciously decided being a boy was safer. Wearing my brother's clothes and using the boy's name in the mirror certainly had an effect on me. I felt powerful and in control, nothing like how I viewed myself as a girl-weak.

I didn't know my own body had rejected me. I didn't realize that my body was simply responding to abuse and that I was experiencing an autoimmune reaction to an abnormal situation.

My family took me to University of Minnesota's Program in Human Sexuality. It was there after much testing that they concluded I had gender dysphoria. The doctor claimed I received the wrong chromosome in relation to my hormones and told me how to stop this way and face my gender, or have a sex change. At that time, I thought, that's perfect! I had my own way out. I learned all about how to transition: if you get your name changed, live full-time on the opposite sex,

and qualify to have hormone therapy, then you can get the operation. I changed my name and lived full-time as a man, but I was never happy. I began to get negative and/or violent and some unethical what I believed as a child: boys are abusers. I became very abusive and ended up in jail several times. I never went further with the process of getting a sex change.

Three years later, the woman I was living with told me I was going to die with her. I needed to attend church and Bible study. The first time I went to church, a pastor came over and prayed with me, and I encountered a God that I had never known before. After that moment, everything changed; my understanding of right and wrong became more defined, and my heart began to question the life I was living.

As my minister began to change, suddenly I didn't want to be a man. I started to ask my minister to help me transition. One day when we were holding hands, I looked down at our hands and said, "Why am I holding a woman's hand? I'm a woman. I'm made for a man!"

Some other, I moved away from my girlfriend. I was met with love by the Christian community and began to learn about absolute surrender to freedom. I've been free eight years now, and I'm actually loving being single.

GABRIEL PAGAN



LOVE REVOLUTION CHURCH
lovechurch.com

Today I live knowing that what once brought me the most shame is completely taken away by a God who didn't avoid my pain or questions.

GABRIEL PAGAN

I used to be very depressed and constantly paranoid about what people thought about me. I explored sexually in high school and being exposed to sexual activity and pornography as a kid. Acting out through masturbation and substance became an obsessive habit to which I lost all control. It got to the point where I was acting out in public what I was seeing on screens. This brought me to my lowest point, so that I wanted to kill myself. I discovered that people were praying for me. I suddenly felt motivated to change my life. Someone reached out to me on social media and shared Jesus with me. I accepted Jesus Christ in my driveway, where the Holy Spirit fell on me like fire and led me through a series of spiritual encounters. Later, I received prayer ministry and saw Jesus holding me the first time I was touched inappropriately. I told the Lord that I would never

sleep with another man if I could have His presence like that forever. Seven years later and I'm free from being bound to same-sex attraction, and I'm now married to the love of my life. Having an intimacy and connection with her is my biggest gift from God besides my relationship with Jesus. I'm happy and being a wild life of adventure following Him. Today I live knowing that what once brought me the most shame is completely taken away by a God who didn't avoid my pain or questions. I serve as a pastor at my local church and lead people through inner healing sessions. My greatest joy is seeing Jesus crush satanism by stepping into people's pain and teaching them encounter the God that kept me from ending my own life. I was addicted and now I'm free from depression and now I'm filled with joy. I was full of shame and now I'm moved by love.

Now I'm free and full of joy.

I feel comfortable and at peace embracing being a man. I am free.

JOSHUA PEREZ-RIJOS

I came out and told my mom and stepdad that I was gay when I was in middle school. I had grown up in church, and, before coming out, I had contemplated committing suicide. God didn't change me. Throughout high school and my early college years, I performed in drag shows as a gendered act in the midst of those hardcore years in the St. Louis club scene. I went to Puerto Rico every year to visit my dad. God spoke to me in such a profound way through him. My dad knew about sinners I'd been in, and through Ed had changed. I had never told anyone. I would return to St. Louis feeling freedom and joy and wanting to leave the lifestyle I was living, but I worried about what people were going to think and why because I had made a name for myself in the club scene. God spoke to me during one trip to Puerto Rico and said that classic things were going to happen, but that he was going to protect me. A month later, my city of St. Louis was in flames.

A young Black man, Michael Brown, had been killed by a police officer and the city was in an uproar. At that moment, I realized this world I lived in wasn't the wonderful I had thought I wanted to change my life. I quickly began about this move. Anger came around and I was driving while high. My heart started racing and my vision went white. I pulled over and began to weep. That was the first time I recognized God speaking to me. He said, "Stop filling yourself with that and lift yourself up with me." From that moment on, I chose Jesus. Being sober has taught me how to build healthy and transparent relationships with people. Before it used to never be that way. I am being out my persona in a church community. My sexuality belongs to Jesus, because I hope to be married to a woman and have a family, and until then, I feel comfortable and at peace embracing being a man. I am free.

JOSHUA PEREZ-RIJOS



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KRISTI STIRLING



I now am totally free to love without the burden I once carried.

KRISTI STIRLING

Growing up I never felt fully female. I never wanted to figure out or enjoy normal, healthy friendships with other girls, and I was never attracted to men. Friendships cyclical between "too close" or "not-existent, because having a friendship like my heart was being torn in half. This finally continued for 20 years, until I gave up close to a woman I mentored. Same-sex attraction both tantalized and terrified me until I finally was honest with myself and God about where that attraction would take me. I began to open up and share with different people, which helped me step out of the fog of condemnation into wholeness. Despite having hidden my confusion and pain for nearly two decades, sharing my deepest insecurities with trusted friends gave me the support I needed instead of the condemnation I had feared. During this time I found myself going through a "sexual puberty," which allowed me to revisit misconceptions I had believed about myself as a 12- to 13-year-old. I was able to recall certain behaviors that had been ruled out for me early on, like wearing red lipstick, which had severely affected my self-image. I discovered that my same-sex attraction had been closely connected to the pressure of spiritual perfectionism around me and that that led to my up to a negative, color-blind standard of behavior. I realized I was no longer bound by those rules, but that the freedom to make my own decisions for my own good. Another surprising change I experienced was becoming free from certain emotional triggers. For example, a certain song playing on the radio had once triggered a deep sense of loneliness and longing in my soul for someone my friend was

at the time. But eventually, that same song would play and I wouldn't even notice it. Later I would remember that I sang "My heart was becoming more whole, and recognizing this change made me realize I could and should celebrate my process. I also discovered during that second puberty phase that I am free to "love and be gay." I learned that I could have a healthy, intimate friendship with another woman without my heart being torn in half when the level of intimacy decreased. In the past I always wanted one friend exclusively, and I didn't want her to have other friends or to extend her secrets to anyone else. Now I am free to remain true, healthy, friendly friendship with many different women. This simply was n't possible for me in the past, but now it is no longer an issue. To this day, I am deeply satisfied with genuine heart-to-heart connections with a number of friends. Over time, this process of learning to be honest about my same-sex attraction led me to an intense six-week counseling, during which a lifetime of the pain of self-rejection and fear of others' rejection came rushing to the surface. The image I saw in my mind most of a someone's reaction to me, such as that of an illustration of one of those deeply painful moments. I realized that God had been with me, experiencing my pain with me at every turn. This truth led me to my heart being and removed the sting of that lifetime of pain. I was able to finally face my love without the burden I once carried. My heart is whole again, and I can enjoy genuine friendship pain-free. I would not return to my former life self for anything in the world. I believe the process of self-discovery, and this level of freedom, are both real and attainable for everyone. They can be discovered and given time.

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KATHYGRACE DUNCAN

PORTLAND FELLOWSHIP
portlandfellowship.com

KATHYGRACE IN HIGH SCHOOL



PRESENT



My life is very full now. I've been out of the lifestyle for 26 years.

KATHYGRACE DUNCAN

I wanted being a woman. I hated everything about it. I was never attracted from my emotions. Even as a kid, I felt like I just existed. I wasn't unhappy. I was a preacher and churchwoman, and I loved making people laugh. But always in the back of my mind was a longing to be a boy. I think that's where the personality came from. I thought it was a boy's personality. My hatred for being a woman made me desperate, so I decided I wanted to live as a man. And I did for 11 years. There was something exciting about being able to date women, and I felt it would make my life complete. I wanted to be free and have all the things I dreamed about come true. What pulled me out of that lifestyle was women in my life who were married and straight and spoke truth into my life. My pastor and my church were a great help for me in the first five years out. They came alongside me and showed me my Bible's choices had really been about my sexuality and were meant to protect me from emotional, mental, and breakdown. They helped me become more attached to who I am and my emotions, and I began to embrace what was a woman.

I decided I wanted to live as a man. And I did. For 11 years.

I also went to a couple of conferences for transgendered people passing wholeness. The men there offered me an

a woman, and I got to see myself the way God sees me. Over time, I began to realize it wasn't necessarily about just being back to being a woman but returning to how God created me to be. My life is very full now. I've been out of the lifestyle for 26 years. When I think back to those years of living as a man, it feels like a whole other world. I still have my memories, but it seems like I was another person. I will am a preacher and churchwoman, but never I'm different. But then I remember I lived in fear of someone finding out who I was and what would happen to me then. I don't live in that place anymore. I know who I am, and each new day is something to look forward to instead of dread through. I now value being genuine instead of trying to hide all the time. Coming up to me as about I would be expected if I showed any emotion or anything about who I was. That was scary. Now, that's not true. Here I am. This is who you are. I got broken from external expectations. And I understand now I'm a good person. I know I'm loved, and I find great value in life. I can't say I like that my before. I have confidence in who I am now and that I have value. I may not get it right all the time, but what I have to offer is good.

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At the core of all of this has been a belief that God's power is real and active today.

RODGER GASKIN

I was born "that way," or at least that is the way it felt. For most of my life I was only sexually attracted to men. While I longed for both emotional and sexual intimacy with a man, I also felt as though I didn't belong with other men and that I was a Kingdomer. At the same time, most of my life I have been surrounded by men who school and pursued non-sexual relationships with me. They didn't see me as an outsider or as less-than. Many of these men I struggled with homophobia, but this didn't deter them from caring for me. But I didn't connect with them. I was deeply uncomfortable with them while longing to be with them. In my 20s, I started to explore ways to better integrate my faith and sexuality. I began reading books on the topic, and I extended conversations for people with unreciprocated sexual attractions. I saw a therapist and worked on many issues, including childhood trauma and depression. And I spent time, often at these conferences or other gatherings, with men and women who had experienced significant change in their sexual orientation. These resources gave me a vision and hope that real change was possible and that it wasn't a fraudulent claim. At

the core of all of this has been a belief that God's power is real and active today. With this, I have a personal commitment to the belief that sexual relationships are intended to be expressed between a man and a woman only. At this point in my life, I have experienced magnificent change in the quality of my life. The greatest change has been in love I relate to other men. While I previously felt like an outsider and like I didn't belong, I am now very comfortable in my relationships with other men. Amazingly, I also felt myself emotionally attracted to women, what an oddly wonderful experience. With this, there has been a change in my sexual attraction towards men. The more comfortable and closer I have come relationally with other men, the less sexual attraction I have for men. As I have addressed areas of confusion, trauma, and fear, the power of homosexual desire has lessened. My attention has gone from dealing with the attraction itself to dealing with the one issue behind it. The overall quality of my life has improved, and I am confident and secure in who I am as a human who is fully made. I continue to respond to a man and a follower of Jesus.

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I now have a reconciled relationship with my family and the privilege of helping others know that change is possible.

LUIS RUIZ

I always knew I wanted to marry a woman and have a family of my own. So when I realized in my childhood that I was attracted to the same sex, I felt my dream might not be possible. I felt prey to the world's narrative that "you are born gay," which left me feeling confused and hopeless. How could it be that I have my same-sex feelings with my parents and my church? I felt disconnected from God and my family because of the tension between my desires and my beliefs. While I served in the US Army, I recently explored gay clubs where I met several men. I wanted to pursue a relationship with one of them. I wanted to drown out the pain of not feeling attracted to women. Throughout these years, I continually felt there had to be more to life than what I was living. When I got out of the Army, I was depressed and alone. On June 12, 2016, I was celebrating my birthday at Pulse

in Orlando, when a pastor entered the building and opened fire. After losing many of my friends and being taken to the hospital for wounds sustained during the shooting, I came to learn I was HIV positive. At that moment, I dropped to my knees and wept. I wanted to live a healthier life, one that was not centered around sex and damaging behavior. I started going to a church where I received pastoral care and began connecting with a supportive faith community. I began to talk into me with the faith of my childhood. These resources allowed me to build healthy relationships and pursue a relationship with God. I chose to leave the homosexual lifestyle to pursue my true identity. Unable to pursue my true identity in love, I now live a life free of depression, anxiety and fear, having a reconciled relationship with my family and the privilege of helping others know that change is possible.



LUIS RUIZ

Orlando Pulse Nightclub Shooting Survivor
FEARLESS IDENTITY
fearlessidentity.co

RODGER GASKIN



DEREK PAUL

IDENTIFY MINISTRIES, INC.
identifyministries.org



I am sexually attracted to my wife and more content in my marriage than I could have ever dreamed.

DEREK PAUL

I have peace and no longer feel conflicted.

My wife and I have been married for 13 years and have 3 children. I am sexually attracted to her and more content in my marriage than I could have ever dreamed. I am no longer burdened to wrestle men; I have peace and no longer feel conflicted. My relationships with family and friends are full and enjoyable, and I have gained a lifestyle that surpasses all my expectations.

I had my first wife. She was the first Christian to suggest I could seek recovery because of her own experience with God's power and love. I met her through support and discipleship in an accountability partner and a local support group. Because of the changes in my relationship with God and my supportive Christian community, I felt secure enough to challenge perspective and worldviews that had gone unquestioned in my heart. Today, the Christian woman who was my first wife has since become my wife. We have been married for 13 years and have 3 children. I am sexually attracted to her and more content in my marriage than I could have ever dreamed. I am no longer burdened to wrestle men; I have peace and no longer feel conflicted. My relationships with family and friends are full and enjoyable, and I have gained a lifestyle that surpasses all my expectations.

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I no longer struggle with the needy feeling that drove me into relationships with men and women. I am happy and whole.

MACKY DIAZ



MACKY DIAZ
justmacky.com

MACKY DIAZ

I knew that something had changed. I knew I was loved and would never be alone. I felt different.

I grew up believing in God and did all the things that Christians do. As a young woman, I married a man and had a daughter with him. In 1996, that marriage ended and I found myself in another relationship with a man who was abusive. When I got out of that relationship, I made a decision. That's it. I came out of the closet and to me, I was gay. So I proudly carried the label of lesbian for 12 years. That label did not have the power to make me happy, though. I was still going from relationship to relationship with no joy and no satisfaction. My heart was broken. I could never find satisfying answers to the questions everyone asks: "Who am I?" and "Who do I belong to?" Every relationship ended with me feeling empty.

One night, while living with a girlfriend of five years, I woke up one morning. I tried to be quiet so I wouldn't wake my girlfriend, but I felt such an overwhelming presence of love in the room. I immediately knew that something had changed. I knew I was loved and would never be alone. I felt different. So

every next day, I packed up all my favorite things and moved out of my girlfriend's home. My daughter, who had started going to church and building her own relationship with God, had been praying for me. The church she had been going to also decided to pray for me. After leaving my girlfriend, the questions that haunted me before began to be answered. I started going to this church, and they supported me and accepted me. I began to listen to every teaching and message I could find and accepted God. The transformation was truly miraculous. Today, my life is completely different. Sometimes my friends don't even recognize me. I used to be extremely needy, couldn't sleep without the TV on, and had to have people to love me in the way I wanted to be loved. Now, I have no problem being alone. In fact, I enjoy it. I feel loved, valued, and that I belong. I don't feel like anything is missing. I no longer struggle with the needy feeling that drove me into relationships with men and women. I am happy and whole. I understand who I am now and where I belong.

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I became so miserable that I started looking for other ways to fill the void in my soul, including drugs and bulimia.

JANET BOYNES



JANET BOYNES

JANET BOYNES
janetboynesministries.com

TODAY



BEFORE

The trauma and pain from my childhood, which was filled with physical and sexual abuse, led me into a series of broken lesbian relationships. Before I entered into a lesbian lifestyle, I had been a Christian and was engaged to be married. My fiancé was gone a bit, and I found myself alone and ignoring a lot of time with a woman from work. This interaction opened the door to my first sexual encounter with a woman, leading me away from God and my fiancé and into a life of lesbianism for 14 years.

Each time I tried to return to God, I felt pulled to hold onto that lifestyle. I was tormented with the idea of getting sex therapy to make the relationship more "normal," but couldn't bring myself to go through with it. However, an acquaintance that I started loving for other ways to fill the void in my soul, including drugs and eventually bulimia.

I had finally found what I was looking for.

One October morning on a grocery store I encountered a woman who invited me to her church. I knew right then and there that our meeting was not a coincidence and that this was a new beginning for me. Through this encounter in 1996, God intervened in my life and called me out of the lesbian lifestyle. He led the body of people at Maple Grove Assembly of God in Minnesota. I never looked back. I had finally found what I was looking for. After living a lesbian lifestyle for 14 years, I found freedom through Jesus Christ.

In 2006, Janet Boynes Ministries was incorporated, with the mission of reaching those who are trapped in the struggle that I once found myself in, and on April 20, 2018, I was ordained as a pastor by the General Council of the Assemblies of God.

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My life without sex addiction or lesbian attractions is more fulfilling than I ever could have imagined.

LYNETTE DOWELL



LYNETTE DOWELL

AQIM RESTORE MINISTRIES
Aqim-restoreministries.org

TODAY

I was confused twice as a young child, and my sense of attraction started at age seven. When I was 16, I was sexually diving into pornography and masturbation, and I just wanted to be normal.

At 18, my first marriage began, and our first son was born a year later. While my mind was to be the best mother and wife that I could be, my hidden life remained, and I became depressed during my second pregnancy. That marriage had also been compromised by our own individual porn addiction. Wanting to make a better life for me, I started college. However, not long after our third son arrived, I completed my degree in nursing and returned to the US Army as a Nurse Officer. Since some same-sex behavior was not allowed in the service, I turned to sex addiction.

As my military career took over, I found myself in a second marriage, which was more difficult than the first but had another son and daughter while working as a Critical Care Nurse. Still, I became very depressed and wanted to hurt myself. I tried psychiatric help, but nothing seemed to address the deep shame of my same-sex attraction, masturbation, and my sex addict behavior. As a result, I left my second husband and children at the age of 34. I had been fighting my same-sex attraction for 24 years and had all kinds of excuses. My favorite excuse became, "I cannot help myself." I was made this way. However, excuses did not pull my life up from a downward spiral. One day I picked up my diary Bible and started to reread it and verses a right spirit within me." This became an anthem for me, and I went to see a friend.

My heart changed. With counseling, prayer, and reading the Bible, my life started over. My children came back into my life, and I am now happily married to her, my loving husband of 24 years. I have never felt so whole. My life as a wife and mother, without sex addiction or lesbian attractions, is more fulfilling than I ever could have imagined.

I have never felt so whole.

LYNETTE DOWELL

AQIM RESTORE MINISTRIES
Aqim-restoreministries.org

TODAY

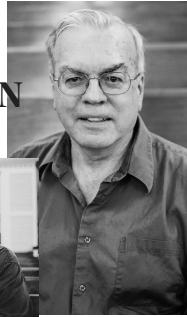
BEFORE

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I joined a group of married men who also struggled with homosexuality, and we all encouraged each other and shared our stories. Today I'm happy and peaceful; a better husband and father.

DAVID RASMUSSEN

DAVID RASMUSSEN



TODAY

David and I went to high school together and planned on getting married. I didn't have same-sex attractions until college. At college, I discovered pornography and homosexuality. I was setting out, going to parks, bookstores, restaurants, and bath houses. I didn't know anything about homosexuality. I was just taking it in, and it was a weird thing I had in. I was surprised, and before we got married, I had to tell her I had an STD that I had gotten from a man.

We both went into marriage thinking it would be a cure. We learned quickly that marriage was not a cure. We were able to be intimate, but I started being a double life and continued acting out. I put on a facade that everything was fine, but inside I was a mess.

I experienced a lot of guilt and shame, but I didn't know it was a wedding. I felt that what I was doing was wrong, but I didn't know what to do about it. Eventually, I was in a committed adultery, which made things even worse.

At one of my lowest points, I was in a bathhouse, and an unattractive older man approached me. He asked me to have sex, offering to pay me \$200. I refused, and he asked me to buy him for \$200. I gave him a bag and told him to keep his money.

We've been married 48 years and have a very strong marriage.

But when I got home, I looked in the mirror, and I was that old man. And I saw my future life: no wife, no children, all alone, having to pay for meals, I started to cry and get on my knees, desperate to change. Finally, I became desperate enough that I pursued change and started a relationship with God.

I started building a healthy relationship with men for the first time in my life, and I learned a lot about being a man, husband, and father through them. I also shared about my struggle publicly at church, and everyone stood and applauded my courage. I also found out about a program that helps people with unresolved same-sex attractions, and that gave me books on the topic. Most importantly, I joined a group of married men who also struggled with homosexuality, and we all encouraged each other and shared our stories.

Despite my mistakes and my struggle, I have chosen to stay with me through it all. She chose to forgive me, and we went to the nearest of healing together. We have now been married 48 years and have a very strong marriage. Today, it is so nice to be living a desirable life anymore. I am authentic and let people see who I really am. I don't have to carry a burden anymore. I'm happy and peaceful; a better husband and father.



CALEB BOGGAN

“

The gay identity I once explored had only limited my ability to fully express myself.

CALEB BOGGAN

I've spent my whole life knowing that I was different and that I would never fit in. It wasn't until third grade, when a classmate called me "gay." That I began to question myself or not something or was wrong with me. This "gay" label started to paralyze me in my own mind, leading to bookshelves and eventually feeling on the outside of masculinity. With a wife and a dramatic and a love of all things Disney.

Disappointment, and grief, I felt there was no place for my version of masculinity and even began to question whether it should have been a woman.

I studied every my emotions and ignored my fears.

Eventually though, I felt like I had no choice but to accept this identity that others had given me and began to wear a gay identity. So I turned my back on my core values and began to explore whether this gay identity was a long-term solution to my issues and I never found the fulfillment was looking for in men. I realized how miserable I'd become and how much of myself I'd lost.

I decided that something had to change and began the journey of rediscovering who I was. I discovered that I didn't

have to be gay to be fully me—glitter and all. I eventually found a Christian community where I could be authentic and be open about my struggle so that I could discover for myself the truth about who I was, who God was, and how I wanted to live.

Through open and honest conversations with a few trusted people, I experienced acceptance in my expression of masculinity. It had not been available to me. I would have been completely alone on that journey. I also realized that God was so much better and kinder than I'd ever known.

Today, I'm more fully myself than I ever imagined possible. Being me, fully male and fully alive, is how I find joy and happiness. The gay identity I once explored had only limited my ability to fully express myself. Now I feel comfortable in who I am as a man. I have been on a beautiful journey to rediscover the core aspects of my identity and personality that were part of my expression of masculinity. I can create love, friendship, and true emotions, and I raise of the mistakes that my son and I have made together and I have more hope and vision for my life than I've ever had.

Now I feel comfortable in who I am as a man.

BEFORE

TODAY

“

During the years I felt like a man trapped in a woman's body, my heart was closed and isolated. But now, I realize I truly am a woman.

DEBBIE RARICK

Growing up, I felt lost and overlooked within my family. I escaped that loneliness by being outdoors, building fires, picking blueberries or swimming in the lake. I loved being out in the woods alone or with other kids. But there was one thing I never felt like I fit in among other girls or among the boys.

Now, I no longer am sexually attracted to other women.

When I was nine, I saw a movie preview where I felt turned about someone living a sex change operation. With this introduction to transsexuals, I began to believe I was a boy in a girl's body. Knowing other people had a similar experience was comforting, but it became my dark secret. I was afraid to tell anyone, and I isolated myself from other girls because I believed I didn't belong.

At age 11, I went to church camps in the mountains outside Madrid, Spain. There I first learned about and experienced the love of God. I believed in Jesus, but as a boy, I continued to be attracted sexually to females. I never could connect to my

emotions, which set me apart from other girls. I wanted to stop having those feelings sometimes, but I never could on my own.

I was taught more about Jesus and began to live out my Christian faith. In college, I became attracted to a man from my ministry group, which at first felt awkward and unfamiliar. We began to date and soon married. We were married nearly 12 years. While enduring a divorce I did not want, I attended a women's prayer group and developed healthy connections to other women. Their love and acceptance healed my heart and became years of respect and misplaced emotions.

Three years of healthy community among women helped me value and accept my femininity. Now, I no longer am sexually attracted to other women. Finally, in celebrating the unique aspects of my life as a woman, whom before I rejected myself, during the years when I felt like a man trapped in a woman's body, my heart was closed and isolated. But now, I realize I truly am a woman. I am passionate, hopeful, vulnerable and learning. Love and grace are the ways I never believed would be possible.



DEBBIE RARICK

YOU SEE ME FREE MINISTRIES youseebefree.org

JENNIFER THORNE



JENS CHAT ON THAT / jenschatonthat.blogspot.com

I pursued growth in my Christian faith, and it began to change me and the way I viewed life.

JENNIFER THORNE

I didn't know how to relate to other women, and I didn't know how to relate to men, either. Growing up I'd had two close female who were girls. I was a tomboy and played with the boys. So, it felt as though I had gone from having an relational connection with women whenever to having sexual relationships with them. I felt that men were unsafe, and I couldn't connect with them emotionally.

I started living a homosexual lifestyle when I was a teenager, and I was sexually promiscuous. When I was 24, I became close friends with a woman who was wanting to go sexually involved with me because I'd lost shame over Christian faith. I was miserable and in an emotional downward spiral. Thankfully, some family members offered me some much-needed unconditional love and were there for me to help answer my questions.

My cousin gave me books regarding the reality of God, and I took them deeply to my personal. I prayed to become a Christian, but secretly my motivation was to coerce this woman to have

a sexual relationship with me. After I did become a Christian, she had no more conversations about being with me, and we lived together as if we were married for two years.

I pursued growth in my Christian faith, and it began to change me and the way I viewed life. I reached a point where I felt that it wasn't healthy for me to pursue homosexual relationships anymore. So eventually, my girlfriend and I broke up.

Today, I no longer experience same-sex attraction at all.

I began pursuing relationships with women who were safe and who accepted me where I was, even with my complete lack of understanding of how to relate appropriately to women. They helped me learn how to have real, healthy relationships. Now I live the world of women, it's my favorite place to be. I love to lead, teach, and encourage women, and my relationships are extremely different from before. Today, I no longer experience same-sex attraction at all.

Two years after breaking up with my girlfriend, I married my husband. We have been married now for 20 years. We have five children together, and the youngest is 13.

“

I'm no longer in a place of hopelessness, shame, and regret. Instead, I feel happiness, fulfillment, and acceptance.

JONATHAN HACKER

I grew up as a pastor's kid and, therefore, spent a lot of time in church. As a kid, I didn't have many friends and found myself always searching for attention and acceptance. As an adult, I was overwhelmed by a man close to our family. As a result, I learned some things that would forever affect me. I dated girls as I went through middle school and high school, but I also experimented with guys whom I was friends with.

At the age of 20, I started dating a girl I thought was "the one," but she ended my breaking my heart. I made a vow to never be hurt again by a woman. That is when I started dating guys and I felt that was getting more attention and acceptance. I thought that my parents wouldn't love or accept me because of the life that I chose, and I moved to Atlanta, where I started using and selling meth.

Eventually, I got involved in the gay adult entertainment industry, doing shows and magazines. At this point, my life was out of control. I was arrested multiple times and found myself potentially facing sentences of up to 10 years in prison.

But because of God and a praying community, I received a court order to go to a place called No Longer Bound, which is a regeneration program. There I found God again. I always thought that to be gay and had done so much stuff I'd have to be forgiven. But the guilt and shame fell away, and love and acceptance came. I was healed by Jesus' death, and I learned how to forgive the people who hurt me in the past. I was able to move on.

I really didn't have anyone when I first decided to change my life. All I had was my faith. My church was a big support, and church members also made me stronger. It seems that the harder I try to do it is truly trust God. But He did have a plan for my life.

My life now is awesome. God brought me out of a 12-year destructive lifestyle and compared my worth to His. I'm no longer in a place of hopelessness, shame, and regret. Instead, I feel happiness, fulfillment, and acceptance. I have been married to my wife for three years and have three children.



JONATHAN HACKER

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#ONCEGAY STORIES

Differing Views on Christian Doctrine, Identity and Homosexuality

Used for discussion purposes. Some authors or organizations may fluctuate between categories.

LGBTQ

CHRISTIAN

Revel

(Gay Partnership)

"God made me this way to enjoy partnership."

Identity: Gay-Compelled

Determined from feelings and behaviors

Belief/Response:

"Open and Affirming"
Celebrate gay relationships

Biblical View:

Revisionist Pro-Gay theology
Liberal sexual ethics

Origin:

Born this way, and God designed it this way

Emphasis:

Live and let live
Gay partnerships/marriage

Strongly Opposed to:

Healing/transformation
SSA roots and contributing factors

Proponents:

- *Q Fellowship / GCN* -
Matthew Vines:
God and the Gay Christian
Justin Lee:
Torn
Mel White:
Stranger At The Gate
Randy Thomas:
Former VP Exodus

Resist

(Gay Identified)

"I'm choosing to be obedient with my unchangeable affliction."

Identity: Gay-Constrained

Comfortable with LGBTQ+ label and Identity in Christ.

Belief/Response:

Love the Gay Christian as is
Encourage abstinence

Biblical View:

Traditional Biblical ethics
God affirms and loves people

Origin:

Born with inclination, but God did not design it this way

Emphasis:

Living a chaste, abstinent, God-centered life

Silent and/or Opposed to:

Healing/transformation
SSA relational roots and contributing factors

Proponents:

- *Revoice.us* -
Wesley Hill:
Washed and Waiting
Gregory Coles:
Single Gay Christian
Nate Collins:
All But Invisible
Preston Sprinkle:
People To Be Loved

CHRISTIAN

Renounce

(Repentance)

"I surrender my false identity and sinful behavior."

Identity: God Conquers

Found in Christ, not in the struggle

Belief/Response:

Call to repentance and obedience in Christ

Biblical View:

Traditional Biblical ethics
God loves us in weakness

Origin:

Primarily a sin nature issue
Result of The Fall

Emphasis:

Support for godly living
God will sustain you

Silent or Opposed to:

Healing ministry
SSA relational roots and contributing factors

Proponents:

- *The Gospel Coalition* -
Rosaria Butterfield:
Secret Thoughts of an Unlikely Convert
Christopher Yuan:
Out of a Far Country
Sam Allberry:
Is God anti-gay?
Ed Shaw:
SSA and the Church

Rebuild

(Transformation)

"My hope is in Christ for a truly transformed life"

Identity: God Created

Found in Christ and His transforming work in us

Belief/Response:

Repentance and discipleship towards obedience and healing

Biblical View:

Traditional Biblical ethics
God loves, heals and redeems

Origin:

Both a sin nature and a developmental issue

Emphasis:

Godly living, relational healing and gender wholeness/design

Promotes:

Hope and healing through Jesus, His Church, counseling and discipleship programs

Proponents:

- *Restored Hope Network* -
Joe Dallas:
Desires in Conflict
Portland Fellowship:
Taking Back Ground
Andrew Comiskey:
Living Waters
Anne Paulk:
Restoring Sexual Identity

Change **IS NOT** possible, desirable, realistic and/or a focus.
Belief or Mindset
Change **IS** possible, desirable, realistic and/or a focus.

THE CHRISTIAN POST

CP U.S. | WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 09, 2022

Facebook restores Christian ministries' pages after being 'incorrectly removed'

By [Brandon Showalter](#) ⁽¹⁾, Senior Investigative Reporter [🐦](#) ⁽²⁾



The Facebook logo is displayed at the 2018 CeBIT technology trade fair on June 12, 2018 in Hanover, Germany. | Alexander Koerner/Getty Images

Facebook has now restored the pages of Christian ministries it says were "incorrectly removed" from its platform amid a purge of content that offers "services that aim to change people's sexual orientation or gender identity."

The head of Help 4 Families ⁽¹²⁾, a Christian ministry and its sister organization called Living Stone Ministries, which aim to help individuals and families seeking to live in accordance with Christian sexual ethics, said Facebook removed the organizations' pages from its platform at the behest of LGBT activists.

Denise Shick, the director of Help 4 Families and Living Stone Ministries, both of which Facebook recently removed, said in an email to The Christian Post on Monday that the pages were taken down after a report was released by the Global Project Against Hate and Extremism ⁽¹³⁾ that compiled a list of groups and organizations ⁽¹⁴⁾ that minister to and counsel people struggling with unwanted sexual attractions or gender confusion. GPAHE has been pushing for social media giants like Facebook to ban these organizations — many being Christian — from its platform.

Although the GPAHE report acknowledged that the two Christian ministries create "safe places for individuals and families to openly share their grief and pain about homosexuality" and transgenderism, they were still deemed too controversial to remain on the platform, Shick told CP.

The GPAHE report argues that the views espoused and promoted by these ministries and other groups, such as so-called "conversion therapy," which, according to the United Nations, is tantamount to "torture" and an "egregious violation of rights."

From Feb. 2-8, Shick couldn't access her account, and her pages were taken down without notification.

Eleven years' worth of pictures are now gone, she lamented to CP after the ministries' pages had been taken down.

"If we are offering 'safe places' to 'openly share,' how is that hateful or extremist?" she asked. "We offer opportunities for people to share their struggles without condemnation. That is the definition of love and acceptance."

Shick is the daughter of a man who told her when she was 9 years old that he wanted to be a woman.

"This implies that what my father believed to be true was true for him. But my dad actually said that he wanted to be a woman. The word 'believe' means 'to consider to be true.' The word want, on the other hand, means 'to have a strong desire for.' My dad didn't believe he was a woman. He knew he was a man, but he wanted to be a woman. That desire became an obsession, and that obsession led to much pain for him and his family," she explained.

The social media giant no longer believes in the right to freedom of speech without censorship, Shick said. Her ministries notified their supporters and readers via email of the latest developments and have also moved their online communications on social media to MeWe.

"For over 200 years, people in the U.S. were free to hold differing beliefs and to speak about them without censure," Shick added, noting that this has changed because of the efforts of LGBT activists.

"Our voices need to be heard by contacting our congresspersons and senators," she added.

Following two inquiries from CP, late on Tuesday, a Facebook employee with knowledge of the matter said Shick's pages were "incorrectly removed and [have] been restored."

Shick confirmed Tuesday night that both Facebook pages had been restored.

CP was earlier informed that Facebook bans pages that contain the following:

- Our policies prohibit content explicitly providing or offering to provide products or services that aim to change people's sexual orientation or gender identity.
- Under our policies, this includes products or services with the goal of changing an individual's sexual orientation; or changing the gender identity of a questioning or transgender person to being cisgender (i.e. match between their gender identity and assigned sex). Examples would include: Providing or offering to provide products aimed at offering or facilitating conversion therapy (e.g., books, apps, audiobooks, etc.). Providing or offering to provide services aimed at offering or facilitating conversion therapy (e.g., talk therapy, conversion ministries, clinical therapy, etc.).

In October 2020, Facebook, which has since been formally renamed Meta, removed without explanation the page of Restored Hope Network, a network of parachurch organizations offering therapeutic options and pastoral counseling resources for those desiring to leave the LGBT lifestyle and follow their convictions pertaining to sexual ethics.

Anne Paulk, the executive director of RHN, said at the time that the tech giant's move was an example of viewpoint discrimination.

"Their dismissive action — canceling our page as if it never existed, leaving a vague 'the link may be broken' message in its place — is shameful. Not even extending us the courtesy of a notification, a chance to offer our side of the very politicized story, is unconscionable."

She added in a follow-up interview Monday that the tech giants are silencing the voices they disagree with no matter how reasonable or compassionate those voices are.

"Truthful content is being removed that is outside of their approval zone — outside of the LGBT talking points," Paulk said.

"It is only a matter of time before the censors also get censored as well. This move to silence views leads directly to totalitarianism, speech control, and criminalization of speech that is unpopular of any kind. Courage is needed to counter these demands, to resist cancel culture, to speak despite pressures and outcomes no one likes. We at Restored Hope Network will continue to speak truth kindly."

The removal of RHN from Facebook came on the heels of Paulk's books and other authors who formerly identified as LGBT having their work taken down from online retail giant Amazon in 2019. The latest Big Tech scrubbing appears to be more of a deliberate and thorough effort to weed out and take down any perspectives that adhere to historic, theologically orthodox standards on gender and sexuality issues.

"Tech companies say they have taken steps to ban harmful content related to conversion therapy. But they have to do more, especially in non-English languages," Wendy Via, president and co-founder of GPAHE, said last month, according to Forbes.

Via, who is also a co-author of the report, went on to say that until online searches "lead people to only authoritative, trustworthy information about the dangers of conversion therapy, tech companies are complicit in spreading anti-LGBTQ hate."

"This disinformation causes mental and physical harm for individuals, and furthers societal harm."

Some of the ministries that have since been taken down have managed to evade detection by Facebook's algorithms because of the language being used in their materials. But that is not stopping GPAHE's efforts to remove them.

"Too much harmful misinformation is slipping through, especially in non-English languages," Via said.

Stephen Black, who leads First Stone Ministries in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and who was previously banned from using the platform and believes he's still being shadow-banned, told CP in a Monday interview that the Big Tech censorship tactics are as forceful as they have ever been, and they are not limited to Facebook.

"The level of aggression against free speech, choice, and self-determination is at a fury of assault unlike any other time in recent U.S. history. I have personally been shadow-banned, limited for many weeks, and scrubbed from social media at different times over the past five years," Black said.

"This secular humanistic faith is demanding censorship of sincere Christians believing in a choice to change and repent from sexual sin. Locally, here in Oklahoma City, we have gay activists who have called for the burning down of churches that will not affirm LGBTQ+ behavior as normal."

Black shared with CP a screenshot of a now-deleted Facebook post from activist Sara Cunningham of Free Mom Hugs promoting an upcoming Lifetime documentary about her story, saying that she hopes one of the effects of the movie will be "to burn the main-stream evangelical conservative non-affirming church doors DOWN. To the ground."

"Facebook and other social media outlets are being used broadly and unfettered to promote LGBTQ+ activists' messages of real hate and even calling for violence, while the Gospel of Jesus Christ and His love is being called hate speech," Black said.

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Absence of Behavioral Harm Following Non-efficacious Sexual Orientation Change Efforts: A Retrospective Study of United States Sexual Minority Adults, 2016–2018

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Background: Do sexual minority persons who have undergone unsuccessful sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) suffer subsequent psychological or social harm from the attempt? Previous studies have conflated present and past, even pre-SOCE, harm in addressing this question. This study attempts, for the first time, to isolate and examine the question of current psychosocial harm for former SOCE participants among sexual minorities in representative population data.

Method: Using nationally representative data ($n = 1,518$) across three cohorts of sexual minorities (centered in 1969, 1987, and 2003) in the United States (U.S.), persons exposed to SOCE were compared with the remainder not exposed to SOCE on two measures of internal distress—psychological distress (Kessler scale) and current mental health—and seven measures of behavioral harm: substance abuse (DUDIT); alcohol dependence (AUDIT-C); self-harm; suicide ideation; suicide planning; suicide intentions; and suicide attempts.

Results: The SOCE group was statistically indistinguishable from the non-SOCE group on any measure of harm. For behavioral harm, risk ratios were 0.97–1.02. Harm was equivalent for the two groups despite the SOCE group having experienced higher lifetime and current minority stress, greater childhood adversity, and lower socioeconomic status. Logistic regression models that adjusted for these differences suggest that SOCE exposure reduced the effect of minority stress and childhood adversity for suicide attempts, although this effect did not fully account for the equivalence between the SOCE and non-SOCE groups.

Conclusion: Despite higher exposure to factors predicting behavioral harm—minority stress, childhood adversity, and lower socioeconomic background—sexual minority persons who had undergone failed SOCE therapy did not suffer higher psychological or social harm. Concerns to restrict or ban SOCE due to elevated harm are unfounded. Further study is needed to clarify the reasons for the absence of harm from SOCE.

Keywords: sexual orientation change efforts, conversion therapy, minority stress, suicide, sexual orientation

BACKGROUND

Sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) is a summary term for therapies or programs that support change from same-sex to opposite-sex orientation in sexual attraction, identity, and/or behavior. The practice is subject to intense controversy. Sharply divergent bodies of research have presented evidence that it is ineffective and harmful (Drescher et al., 2016, p. 7; Blosnich et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2020) and that it is effective and of psychological benefit (Beckstead and Morrow, 2004; Jones and Yarhouse, 2011; Dehlin et al., 2015; Sullins et al., 2021). Currently, 20 U.S. states have imposed limited restrictions on SOCE, while in four states injunctions or legislation prohibit such bans (Movement Advancement Project, 2020). Opponents to SOCE claim, and proponents deny, that it currently includes proscribed techniques, such as aversive punishment or electric shock (Flentje et al., 2013; Rosik, 2017), and bans are typically written very broadly. The American Psychological Association (APA) Task Force on the topic has expressed concern that the practice of SOCE has “become mired in ideological disputes and competing political agendas” (American Psychological Association, Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, 2009, p. 92).

The differing findings may be due, in part, to differing definitions regarding what constitutes SOCE. The precise range, harshness and focus of SOCE interventions is in dispute, with opponents defining them more broadly, aversively, and focused on same-sex conversion, while proponents define them as benign talk therapy or teaching that may or may not include changing sexual orientation in accord with the client’s goals.

As recently argued elsewhere (Sullins et al., 2021), the disparate research findings on SOCE may be due to incommensurable samples selected for study: those who find little efficacy but substantial harm from SOCE tend to select samples “exclusively or mostly dominated by LGB (lesbian, gay, or bisexual) identified participants” (Sullins et al., 2021), that is, persons for whom SOCE has, by definition, failed with respect to sexual orientation identity; while those who find more efficacy but little harm tend to select samples largely from persons who reject a former LGB identity (Jones and Yarhouse, 2011; Pela and Sutton, 2021; Sullins et al., 2021), that is, persons for whom SOCE has by definition succeeded in reframing sexual orientation identity. Two recent studies have examined samples comprised of both types of former SOCE participants, both finding no difference in harm (Lefevor et al., 2020; Rosik et al., 2021).

Recent claims of harm from unsuccessful SOCE, that is, among former SOCE participants among current sexual minority persons, have also entailed another form of bias, arguing from a lifetime association of increased psychological morbidity with SOCE exposure that SOCE induces harm (Meanley et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2020; Salway et al., 2020; del Río-González et al., 2021). The analytical challenge for such claims is that, unlike the morbidity observed, SOCE therapy is not lifelong or continuous, but is confined to a definite, restricted time in the life course, usually lasting less than a year. Recent re-examination of one such study by Blosnich et al. (2020, 2021)

claiming that SOCE “may compound or create ... suicidal ideation and suicide attempts” has found that failure to adjust for pre-existing suicidality invalidates its conclusions (Blosnich et al., 2020; Sullins, 2021). The problem was not only that much of the harm predated SOCE exposure and that harm following SOCE was substantially reduced compared to sexual minorities who had never engaged in SOCE, but also that other precipitating factors that may account for harm were not examined.

Blosnich et al. (2020), using the same data as the present study, did improve upon previous research by controlling for demographic covariates (although as we shall see their set of measures can be improved), and they carefully considered the differential experience of adverse childhood experiences (ACEs). However, they ignored every other factor that may have affected differences in outcome associated with SOCE exposure. They did not consider any comorbidities, such as alcohol dependence, substance abuse, self-harming behavior, mental health, or psychological distress, all of which are known to be associated with suicidal morbidity and were measured in the Generations data used in their study. While speculating about the association of concealment with SOCE, they did not consult the well-constructed measure of concealment present in their own study’s data, which contradicted their speculation (as discussed further below). Most notably, although Blosnich et al. (2020, 2021) included strong proponents of minority stress theory (MST), which attributes harm outcomes among sexual minorities to the effect of stigma, discrimination, and other social stress, and despite speculating that higher stress may explain higher suicidality among former SOCE participants, they did not examine any of the multiple indicators of minority stress that were readily available in the data.

The aim of the present study is to amend this gap in the evidence, in part, by examining a larger set of covariates that may (or may not) help explain observed differences in harm outcomes for sexual minority persons who have been exposed to SOCE. Such an analysis, as already noted, has limited application to the adjudication of SOCE harm in that it does not represent all SOCE alumni, but only those who have not succeeded in at least one of the possible aims of SOCE, i.e., to support the re-orientation of persons from sexual minority to heterosexual identity. This limitation notwithstanding, comparison of this group with sexual minority persons not exposed to SOCE can shed light on two theoretical questions pertaining to the question of harm from SOCE. First, how much harm actually exists? Since studies of unsuccessful SOCE participants have generally agreed in finding higher harm than among successful ones, examining the unsuccessful SOCE participants can help determine the upper extent of possible harm. Recognizing the amount of harm among current sexual minority persons, moreover, is of clinical significance for this population even if net harm from SOCE, when both successful and unsuccessful participants are considered, were negative. As noted, prior studies finding harm from SOCE in the sexual minority population have only examined lifetime harm, including harm that occurred before SOCE, not present harm. The present study, by contrast, aims to examine the possibility of present

harm associated only with past SOCE involvement, not possible future SOCE. This is important for the question of causation, since harm associated with possible future SOCE cannot be an effect of SOCE involvement. Second, to what extent, if any, is current harm associated with past SOCE affected or explained by early life covariates, current comorbidities, or differences in minority stress? To the extent that both SOCE and harm associated with SOCE are mutually associated with factors that may independently precipitate harm, the attribution of such harm to SOCE involvement is spurious. In this case, SOCE involvement would serve merely as a marker for a set of conditions that would predict harm for any sexual minority person, regardless of SOCE involvement. The answers to these questions may help to characterize the sources of SOCE-linked harm, or its absence, with broad application to theories of sexual minority psychological distress and clinical interventions and have particular application to the controversial question whether SOCE therapy should be banned to prevent harm to sexual minority persons. To my knowledge, the present study is the first empirical examination of such questions in population-representative data.

DATA

The data for this study were collected as part of the Williams Institute's Generations study, an epidemiological study designed to examine the health and wellbeing of three generational cohorts of non-transgender sexual minority persons in the United States (Meyer, 2020). The cohorts consisted of persons aged 52–59 (Pride Generation), whose sexual coming of age took place around the time of the Stonewall riots and the start of the gay liberation movement; persons aged 32–41 years (Visibility Generation), whose early life experiences coincided with the beginning of the AIDS (acquired immune deficiency syndrome) epidemic and greater visibility and social acceptance for LGB people; and those aged 18–25 in 2016 (Equality Generation), whose early life experiences were affected by the growing focus on LGB marriage and employment equality. Eligibility was also restricted to the three largest United States racial and ethnic groups (Black, Latino, or White, although multi-ethnic identities that included one of these were also included; Krueger et al., 2020).

Participants were screened by the Gallup Organization's daily random digit dialing assay (both landline and cell phones) for 1 year beginning March 2016. Recruitment for Black and Latino participants extended for an additional year, until March 2018. Respondents who identified as "lesbian, gay, or bisexual" but not transgender (who were recruited into a separate companion study) were invited to complete a self-administered online or paper questionnaire, which required fifth-grade English proficiency. Calls to 366,640 Americans resulted in a sample of 3,525 eligible participants (1%), of which 1,518 (43%) completed usable interviews. Statistical weighting adjusted for the complex survey sample design, differential non-response, the extended sample of Black and Latino respondents, and known characteristics of the sexual minority population as

reflected in prior data collected by Gallup and the United States Census. The resulting data are designed to be generalizable to the United States population of sexual minority adults and have formed the basis for numerous prior studies and estimates for this population (Nock et al., 2009; Rothblum et al., 2020; Meyer et al., 2021). More information about the study's methodology and sample characteristics is available online at <http://www.generations-study.com> and in several published reviews and methodological reports (Krueger et al., 2020; Meyer, 2020; Meyer et al., 2020).

MEASURES

For SOCE participation respondents were asked, "Did you ever receive treatment from someone who tried to change your sexual orientation?" and if so, their age when such treatment last occurred. Sociodemographic covariates included race and ethnicity, with categories of white, black, Hispanic, and other; educational attainment, with categories of high school or less, some college, college degree, and more than a college degree; poverty income, ranging from below poverty to over four times poverty income; self-rated current health, with categories of excellent, very good, good, fair, and poor; sexual identity, with categories of lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, pansexual, asexual, and other; sex assigned at birth, with categories of man and woman; and age in years.

Minority Stressors

The Generations data contained extensive measures of minority stress. Seven variables in all captured indicators of discrimination, stigma, or other stressors that could be related to SOCE. In addition to lifetime discrimination and childhood bully victimization, two variables—everyday discrimination and stressful life events—assessed current discrimination experiences. Follow-up questions for these four variables enabled the respondent to specify adverse experiences due to minority sexual orientation. Two variables—felt stigma and internalized homophobia—measured the respondents' attitudes, or perceptions of others' attitudes, due to their LGB identity. Finally, a series of variables labeled "chronic strains" assessed personal stress conditions, such as isolation, exhaustion, or conflict, but not specifically due to sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI). The following paragraphs describe these variables in more detail.

Discrimination Since Age 18

A series of nine items asked respondents how often since age 18 they had experienced discriminatory behavior or violence, such as being physically attacked or sexually assaulted, had property stolen or vandalized, had been verbally insulted, or had been denied a job or promotion. The response options for the nine items were never, once, twice, and three or more times. Analyses incorporating multiple instances were explored and found to differ very little from those simply reflecting the extent of any discrimination, so the last three response options were collapsed to form indicator variables indicating any experience (vs. none) of each of the nine forms of discrimination. One

item, on housing discrimination, yielded too few cases of sexual orientation discrimination (only 12) and was dropped from the analysis. The remaining eight indicators were then combined into a summative scale ranging from zero to nine expressing the extent of discrimination experienced by each respondent.

Stressful Life Events or Perceived Stress in the Past 12 Months

Eleven items asked about adverse experiences in the past 12 months. Most of these were similar to the events in the lifetime discrimination sequence, for example being robbed, having property destroyed, or fired from a job. Some items were very different, however, such as getting divorced or suffering a major financial crisis. Response options were only yes or no, indicating whether the event had occurred or not.

Everyday Discrimination in the Past Year

Another series of nine items asked whether “in your day-to-day life over the past year” the respondent had experienced such less extreme adverse actions as being treated with less courtesy or respect than other people, receiving poorer service at restaurants, being threatened or insulted, or having people act as if they were not honest or smart, or felt superior or were afraid of them. Response options were often, sometimes, rarely, and never. A variable constructed by the Generations staff reversed and combined the nine items into a single variable expressing the respondent’s current level of everyday discrimination experience ranging from 1 (low) to 4 (high).

Childhood Bully Victimization

Respondents were asked “How often, if ever, were you bullied before you were 18 years old?” The mean of the 4-point response scale (often, sometimes, rarely, and never) was reverse coded so that higher scores indicated more frequent childhood bully victimization.

For the previous four measures, respondents who indicated having experienced any of referenced discriminatory behavior were asked follow-up questions whether the adverse experiences had been due to their age, sex, sexual orientation, transgender status, gender presentation, race/ethnicity, physical appearance (e.g., weight, height) or religion/spirituality. Respondents were instructed to indicate all causes that applied. Persons who included sexual orientation, transgender status, and/or gender presentation among the causes they listed were classified as having received SOGI discrimination, regardless of what other causes they may have also indicated. Those who did not include one or more of these three causes were classified as having received non-SOGI discrimination. SOGI discrimination and non-SOGI discrimination were therefore not mutually exclusive; a respondent could report experiencing multiple or intersecting forms of discrimination for the same or different adverse experiences.

Felt Stigma

Three items asked the respondent’s level of agreement or disagreement with statements about the perceived opinion of

“most people (employers) where I live”: they “think less of a person who is LGB”; “will hire openly LGB people if they are qualified for the job”; and “would not want someone who is openly LGB to take care of their children.” Response options were strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree. A constructed variable included on the data file combined these items, the second one reverse coded, into a measure of current stigmatizing attitudes in the respondent’s community of residence.

Unconcealment (“Out”)

Four questions asked whether the respondent had disclosed his or her sexual identity to all, most, some or none of his or her family, co-workers, heterosexual friends or health care providers. Alpha (the intercorrelation coefficient) for the four items was 0.80. Following Pachankis and Bränström (2019), the degree of unconcealment or “outness” was measured as the average of those responding over the four items, thereby expressing the proportion of sexual identity disclosure to the groups to which one could reveal one’s sexual identity.

Other Stressors

Other items measured stress that was not specifically identified as being related to minority sexual identity. This is not to imply that these stressors may not be empirically associated with sexual minority status, but only that they were not measured as pertaining uniquely to sexual minorities.

Adverse Childhood Experiences

The ACE score was expressed as the additive index of eight indicators of childhood experiences identified by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) to be negatively related to adult health outcomes: sexual abuse; physical abuse; emotional abuse; substance abuse in the household; intimate partner violence in the household; mental illness in the household; a family member imprisoned; and parental separation or divorce. Three ACEs figured prominently in the analysis. Mental illness, emotional abuse, and sexual abuse were assessed with questions asking whether before age 18 the respondents had “live[d] with anyone who was depressed, mentally ill, or suicidal,” had been sworn at, insulted or put down, or had been made to have sex or touch or be touched sexually by someone at least 5 years older. Indicator variables coded 1 for the presence or zero for the absence of each of these experiences.

Chronic Strains

Respondents rated 12 statements about their current lives as true, somewhat true or not true. The items related to general personal difficulties in life management, such as “you are trying to take on too many things at once,” “your job often leaves you feeling both mentally and physically tired,” “and you are alone too much.” A three-point scale of general chronic strains was aggregated from the responses. Unlike the other stressors measured, chronic strains were not specifically related to minority sexual orientation.

Internalized Homophobia

Internalized homophobia was measured by agreement or disagreement with five statements relating to dissatisfaction with having an LGB identity. Response options were strongly disagree, somewhat disagree, neither agree nor disagree, somewhat agree, and strongly agree. Two of the component items were collinear with SOCE therapy: "I have tried to stop being attracted to people who are the same sex as me;" and "I would like to get professional help in order to change my orientation from LGB to straight." These two items, which report on past or prospective actions, were not highly intercorrelated with the remaining three items on the scale, all of which report current attitudes: "If someone offered me the chance to be completely heterosexual, I would accept the chance"; "I feel that being LGB is a personal shortcoming for me;" and "I wish I were not LGB." Removing the first two items improved scale alpha from 0.75 to 0.83. Thus, to achieve an unbiased measure for purposes of the present study, the scale was adjusted to include only the last three items. Average response on the items were combined to create a scale ranging from 1 to 5 measuring internalized homophobia.

Psychological Distress (Kessler Scale)

The Generations survey included the Kessler Scale of Psychological Distress (K6), consisting of six questions designed "to identify persons with a high likelihood of having a diagnosable mental illness and associated functional limitations" (Pratt et al., 2007). This 24-point scale, developed by a Harvard Medical School team led by Dr. Ronald Kessler (Kessler et al., 2003), has been validated by dozens of studies and is used to estimate the prevalence of mental illness in WHO surveys worldwide as well as most National Health Surveys in the developed world, including those of Germany, Australia, Canada, and the United States. Following Kessler's scoring scheme and CDC usage, persons scoring 13 or higher were classified as experiencing non-specific serious psychological distress (SPD).

Current Negative Mental Health

Respondents were asked, "Now thinking about your mental health, which includes stress, depression, and problems with emotions, for how many days during the past 30 days was your mental health not good?" The reported number of days was taken as an indicator of the current level of negative or poor mental health.

Behavioral Harm

Alcohol and Substance Abuse

Alcohol and substance abuse were measured using the Alcohol Use Disorder Identification Test (AUDIT-C; World Health Organization, 2001) a 3-item scale ranging from 0 to 12, and the Drug Use Disorders Identification Test (DUDIT), (Berman et al., 2005) an 11-item scale ranging from 0 to 35. Both instruments are responsive to criteria of the American Psychiatric Association's (APA's) Diagnostic and Statistical Manual (DSM), widely used internationally, and have been well-validated for good psychometric properties in predicting active alcohol or

substance use disorders (Berner et al., 2007; Hildebrand, 2015). Following prior research (Berman et al., 2005; Berner et al., 2007), and as recommended by the Generations data documentation (Krueger et al., 2020), the prediction cutoff score for alcohol-related disorder on the AUDIT-C was assessed at 5 for men and 4 for women, and the score for substance-related disorder on the DUDIT was set at 6 for men and 2 for women.

Suicidal Behavior

Suicidal behavior was assessed using an instrument developed by the United States Army to assess risk in service members (Nock et al., 2014). Four questions asked, "Did you ever ... in your life have thoughts of killing yourself?"; "... have any intention to act on thoughts of wishing you were dead or trying to kill yourself?"; "... think about how you might kill yourself (e.g., taking pills, shooting yourself) or work out a plan of how to kill yourself?"; "... make a suicide attempt (i.e., purposefully hurt yourself with at least some intention to die)?" Response options were "No," "Yes, once," and "Yes, more than once." Follow-up questions for the yes responses asked how old the respondent was when they engaged in the suicide behavior or both the first and most recent of multiple instances of that behavior. For each behavior, current suicidality was indicated by having engaged in the behavior at least once in the past year.

Self-Harm

The survey instrument also asked about purposeful non-suicidal harm to oneself, such as "cutting yourself, hitting yourself, or burning yourself." As with suicidal behavior, follow-up questions specified the timing and single or multiple instances. Current self-harming behavior was measured by a variable indicating the presence of any self-harming behavior in the past year.

MATERIALS AND METHODS

The analysis proceeded in two stages corresponding to the two analytical questions of interest. First, the difference of means or proportions between the SOCE and non-SOCE groups for behavioral harm outcomes, covariates, and stressors was examined to determine the presence and extent of harm from SOCE. This analysis was performed using unadjusted population-weighted estimates so as to accurately reflect the level of harm in the presenting clinical population. Statistically significant differences were assessed by *t* test or *f* test as appropriate and effect sizes computed for those differences that were significant. In the second stage, possible covariate influence on harm associated with SOCE was examined by assessing the odds ratio for SOCE therapy from logistic regression models predicting each behavioral harm outcome after adjustment for demographic characteristics, early life covariates, current comorbidities, and differences in minority stress.

All analyses were adjusted for the complex sample design and employed survey weights to allow for generalization to the United States population of sexual minority adults, ages

18–27, 32–43, and 50–61. All regression models were certified for proper model specification using the Pregibon/Tukey goodness of link test (Pregibon, 1980) and for acceptable fit to the data using the Hosmer and Lemeshow goodness of fit procedure for complex sample designs (Archer et al., 2007). The variance inflation factor (VIF) for all included covariates ranged from 1.1 to 2.75, indicating a low level of multicollinearity. Analyses were performed using SPSS 25 and Stata 13 statistical software. As a secondary analysis of pre-existing public data, the present study's methods were determined to be exempt from human subject ethical review under 45 CFR 46.104 by the Catholic University of America Institutional Review Board in Certificate 21-0016 issued March 12, 2021.

RESULTS

Sample Characteristics

Table 1 presents selected demographic characteristics of the sample, comparing sexual minority persons with SOCE experience ("SOCE alumni") with those who had not experienced SOCE.

Blosnich et al. (2020, 2021) present the same findings for education, age, sexual identity, and race, but do not include income and health status. Blosnich et al. (2020, 2021) reported gender identity (with categories of man, woman, and non-binary) rather than sex assigned at birth (with categories of male and female), however in the present analysis breaking out the small number (94) of binary cases introduced an unacceptable number of empty cells, and since the Generations sample screened out transgender persons, all persons identifying as man or woman were congruent with their birth sex, so the two measures are the same for these categories. **Table 1** reports raw case numbers, but population-weighted percentages within covariates, to facilitate comparing the SOCE and non-SOCE groups.

As **Table 1** shows, 6.9% of sexual minority persons in the United States have experienced SOCE therapy of some sort. This group differed significantly from the remainder who had not undergone SOCE (93.1%) on several demographic dimensions. SOCE alumni tended to be less affluent, less educated, less white, more black, and more male than were the persons who had not undergone SOCE. A total of 29% of the SOCE alumni were in poverty, compared to only 18% of the non-SOCE group; and almost half (47%) of the non-SOCE group, compared to under a third (29%) of the SOCE group, had income greater than three times the poverty level. Over half (51%) of the SOCE group, compared to only 42% of the non-SOCE group, had only a high school diploma or less education, and smaller proportions of the SOCE group had begun or finished college. **Table 1** likely understates these educational differences relative to the actual population, since sample selection screened out persons with less than a fifth-grade education. The SOCE alumni included a higher concentration of black persons and a lower concentration of women than the non-SOCE group; these differences were significant at the 0.10 critical level. SOCE alumni were no

TABLE 1 | Demographic characteristics of lesbian/gay individuals, by experiencing sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE), counts, and weighted proportions: probability sample of sexual minorities, United States, 2016–2018 ($N = 1,518$).

| | Overall sample, N (%; SE) or mean (SE) | Experienced SOCE | | P |
|--|--|--------------------------------|---------------------------------|--------|
| | | NO N (%; SE) or mean (SE) | YES N (%; SE) or mean (SE) | |
| SOCE experience | | 1,410 (93.1; 0.81) | 108 (6.9; 0.81) | – |
| Income (as percent of poverty income) | | | | |
| <100% | 210 (19.1; 1.37) | 187 (18.4; 1.41) | 23 (29.3; 5.71) | 0.0631 |
| 100–199% | 279 (22.5; 1.41) | 251 (22.0; 1.45) | 28 (29.9; 5.86) | 0.1912 |
| 200–299% | 192 (12.7; 1.06) | 179 (12.8; 1.10) | 13 (11.6; 3.55) | 0.7468 |
| 300%+ | 810 (45.6; 1.60) | 766 (46.9; 1.66) | 44 (29.3; 5.35) | 0.0017 |
| Educational attainment | | | | |
| High school diploma or less | 309 (42.5; 1.69) | 283 (41.9; 1.75) | 26 (50.9; 6.08) | 0.1554 |
| Some college | 492 (31.9; 1.40) | 464 (32.4; 1.46) | 28 (25.6; 4.79) | 0.1767 |
| College degree | 429 (16.0; 0.86) | 403 (16.4; 0.91) | 26 (10.4; 2.27) | 0.0152 |
| More than a college degree | 288 (9.6; 0.62) | 260 (9.3; 0.64) | 28 (13.1; 2.77) | 0.1913 |
| Age in years | 30.9 (0.37) | 30.7 (0.38) | 32.7 (1.43) | 0.1846 |
| Sexual identity | | | | |
| Lesbian/Gay | 833 (46.9; 1.59) | 757 (45.3; 1.64) | 76 (68.0; 5.94) | 0.0002 |
| Bisexual | 493 (40.6; 1.62) | 476 (42.0; 1.68) | 17 (21.7; 5.70) | 0.0006 |
| Other sexual identity | 181 (12.5; 1.04) | 166 (12.7; 1.09) | 15 (10.3; 3.14) | 0.0000 |
| Race/Ethnicity | | | | |
| White | 931 (59.5; 1.56) | 871 (60.2; 1.61) | 60 (50.5; 6.14) | 0.1284 |
| Black | 180 (13.5; 1.09) | 162 (12.8; 1.10) | 18 (22.2; 5.36) | 0.0858 |
| Latino | 158 (10.8; 0.98) | 145 (10.7; 1.01) | 13 (13.1; 4.10) | 0.5696 |
| Other racial/ethnic identity | 249 (16.2; 1.14) | 232 (16.3; 1.18) | 17 (14.2; 4.21) | 0.6234 |
| Health | | | | |
| Poor | 56 (3.7; 0.62) | 49 (3.5; 0.63) | 7 (6.7; 2.94) | 0.2859 |
| Fair | 206 (16.2; 1.27) | 189 (16.1; 1.31) | 17 (17.6; 5.10) | 0.7809 |
| Good | 480 (33.2; 1.53) | 448 (33.6; 1.59) | 32 (27.7; 5.33) | 0.2942 |
| Very good | 569 (34.9; 1.51) | 538 (35.2; 1.56) | 31 (30.0; 5.75) | 0.3821 |
| Excellent | 187 (12.0; 1.04) | 167 (11.6; 1.06) | 20 (18.0; 4.52) | 0.1701 |
| Sex at birth | | | | |
| Woman | 812 (60.0; 1.53) | 765 (60.8; 1.57) | 47 (49.2; 6.15) | 0.0679 |
| Man | 706 (40.0; 1.53) | 645 (39.2; 1.57) | 61 (50.8; 6.15) | 0.0679 |

Values shown are weighted for population and survey design. CI, confidence interval; RR, risk ratio.

less healthy than the non-SOCE group, although their health was a little more diverse; higher proportions of the SOCE alumni reported being both in excellent and in poor health. Over a fifth (22%) of SOCE alumni were black, and although three-fifths (60%) of sexual minorities were female, the SOCE group was evenly split between men and women.

Table 2 compares the SOCE and non-SOCE groups on psychological health and the experience of minority stress. According to the MST, higher exposure to minority stressors should be related to lower psychological health, but in these data the SOCE alumni experienced higher trauma and discrimination, but did not express higher psychological

TABLE 2 | Minority stressors and mental health by experiencing SOCE, counts, and weighted proportions: probability sample of sexual minorities, United States, 2016–2018 ($N=1,518$).

| Stressors | Overall sample ($n=1,518$), %; SE or mean; SE | Experienced SOCE | | P | Effect size (d) |
|---|--|--|--|--------|------------------------|
| | | No ($n=1,410$), %; SE or mean; SE | Yes ($n=108$), %; SE or mean (SE) | | |
| Adverse childhood experiences (ACEs)—mean (0–8) | 3.33; 0.071 | 3.27; 0.073 | 4.18; 0.306 | 0.0041 | 0.035 |
| Bullied in high school due to sexual orientation or gender presentation—mean (0–4) | 1.89; 0.041 | 1.85; 0.041 | 2.50; 0.169 | 0.0002 | 0.478 |
| Percent often bullied in high school due to sexual orientation or gender presentation | 19.1; 1.29 | 17.6; 1.29 | 38.0; 6.08 | 0.0011 | 0.485 |
| Lifetime victimization/discrimination due to sexual orientation or gender presentation—mean (0–8) | 1.44; 0.071 | 1.29; 0.067 | 3.47; 0.379 | 0.0000 | 0.844 |
| Percent ever assaulted due to sexual orientation or gender presentation | 18.7; 1.24 | 16.8; 1.23 | 43.8; 6.12 | 0.0000 | 0.626 |
| Everyday discrimination (past year) due to sexual orientation or gender presentation mean (0–4) | 1.51; 0.027 | 1.48; 0.027 | 1.92; 0.125 | 0.0005 | 0.641 |
| Felt stigma (past year)—mean (0–8) | 2.71; 0.030 | 2.68; 0.031 | 3.13; 0.097 | 0.0000 | 0.338 |
| Chronic strains (past year)—mean (0–8) | 1.62; 0.011 | 1.61; 0.012 | 1.74; 0.050 | 0.0103 | 0.397 |
| Internalized homophobia (adjusted)—mean (1–5) | 1.63; 0.029 | 1.62; 0.030 | 1.81; 0.114 | 0.1062 | – |
| Percent unconcealed (“out”) | 56.4; 1.19 | 55.4; 1.23 | 69.8; 3.90 | 0.0005 | 0.292 |
| Psychological distress (Kessler)—mean (0–24) | 8.82; 0.18 | 8.77 0.19 | 9.39; 0.78 | 0.4408 | – |
| Percent severe psychological distress (SPD—Kessler >12) | 26.2; 1.50 | 25.6; 1.54 | 33.9; 6.11 | 0.1903 | – |
| How many days in the past 30 days was your mental health not good? | 11.9; 0.34 | 11.9; 0.35 | 12.0; 1.38 | 0.9587 | – |

Values shown are weighted for population and survey design. N , unweighted number of cases; SE, standard error; P , value of p of t test result; d , Cohen's D .

distress, than did sexual minorities who had not experienced SOCE.

Those who would later undergo SOCE experienced significantly higher ACEs in childhood. Of the eight ACEs measured, the SOCE alumni experienced an average of 4.2, almost one ACE higher than the 3.3 average for the non-SOCE group, although the corresponding effect size for this difference was marginal. Those who experienced SOCE were also much more likely to have been bullied in high school due to their sexual orientation. Thirty-eight percent of SOCE alumni, compared to only 18% of the non-SOCE group, had suffered frequent bullying in high school, a difference in effect of almost half a standard deviation. Lifetime sexual orientation victimization, a summary scale of eight adverse discrimination experiences, was also over twice as high for SOCE participants (3.5–1.3) as for other sexual minorities. This difference is highly significant, with a strong effect, at over 80% of a standard deviation. Forty-four percent of the SOCE alumni had been assaulted for their sexual orientation, compared to only 17% of those who had not participated in SOCE. The heightened adversity suffered by SOCE participants was not confined to the past. Significantly higher proportions of SOCE alumni had also experienced everyday discrimination, felt stigma and chronic strains, all measures of discrimination, stigma, and stress, within the past year.

Despite experiencing higher stress and stigma both currently and over their lifetimes, however, the SOCE alumni did not manifest higher psychosocial distress or even higher discomfort with an LGB sexual identity. There was no difference between the SOCE alumni and the non-SOCE group on internalized homophobia (as adjusted), psychological distress, the proportion found to be in severe psychological distress, and the number of days of poor mental health in the past month. Moreover,

the SOCE alumni were more likely to be unconcealed (“out”) about their sexual minority identity. Almost half (44.6%) of sexual minorities who had not experienced SOCE concealed their sexual minority identity from family, friends, co-workers or healthcare providers, but such concealment dropped to under a third (30.2%) for those with SOCE experience. The proportion of those who were “out” to at least one constituency was almost 22 percentage points higher with SOCE experience, and over a quarter (25.6%) of SOCE alumni were completely unconcealed to any constituency, compared to only 18.2% of those without SOCE experience (not shown).

The absence of SOCE-associated internal distress or disability is mirrored by similarly benign findings regarding behavioral harm. **Table 3** compares unadjusted mean values by SOCE experience for the seven behavioral harm outcomes measured by the Generations data: non-suicidal self-harm, substance abuse disorder, alcohol dependence, suicide ideation, suicidal intention, suicidal planning, and attempting suicide. None of the seven behaviors have any statistical association with having undergone SOCE therapy, as indicated by value of ps ranging from 0.30 to 0.92 for t tests testing the difference of means. Indeed, for five of the seven the population risk with SOCE therapy is identical, to two decimal places, to the risk with no SOCE, and the highest risk ratio for all seven behaviors is just 1.03. The current risk of these harm behaviors for those who have experienced SOCE is no different than it is for those who have not experienced SOCE. In sum, SOCE experience has no statistically discernible effect on the risk of any present harm measured in these data: psychological distress, lower mental health, alcohol dependence, substance abuse, suicide ideation, suicide planning, suicide intention, and attempting suicide.

TABLE 3 | Unadjusted means and risk ratios, and adjusted AORs, showing current behavioral harm by experiencing SOCE, counts, and weighted proportions: probability sample of sexual minorities, United States, 2016–2018 ($N=833$).

| | Overall sample ($N=833$), N (%; SE) or Mean (SE) | Experienced SOCE | | Yes = No, P | Risk (odds) ratio | Multivariable AOR, P |
|--|---|--|---|---------------|----------------------|---------------------------|
| | | No ($N=1,410$), N (%; SE) or Mean (SE) | Yes ($N=108$), N (%; SE) or Mean (SE) | | | |
| Behavioral harm outcomes | | | | | | |
| Self-harm (cutting, etc.) | 47.23; 1.63 | 47.39; 1.69 | 45.08; 6.25 | 0.7217 | 1.00 | 1.03, 0.95 |
| Substance use disorder (DUDIT)—percent | 37.8; 1.58 | 37.8; 1.64 | 37.2; 5.85 | 0.9208 | 1.00 | 0.92, 0.80 |
| Alcohol dependence (AUDIT-C)—percent | 39.4; 1.55 | 39.1; 1.60 | 43.6; 6.15 | 0.4744 | 1.00 | 1.42, 0.23 |
| Suicide ideation | 45.4; 1.61 | 45.7; 1.66 | 42.5; 6.12 | 0.6167 | 1.00 | 0.76, 0.45 |
| Suicide planning | 32.9; 1.53 | 33.0; 1.58 | 31.7; 5.87 | 0.8341 | 1.00 | 0.71, 0.32 |
| Suicide intention | 15.6; 1.22 | 15.2; 1.25 | 21.0; 5.49 | 0.2984 | 1.02 | 1.24, 0.63 |
| Suicide attempt | 5.8; 0.84 | 5.8; 0.87 | 6.8; 3.28 | 0.7573 | 0.97 | 0.21, 0.03 |

Values shown are weighted for population and survey design. N , number of unweighted cases; SE, standard error; P , value of p of t test result; AOR, adjusted odds ratio. Mean comparisons were unadjusted. Column 4 tests the difference of means; column 6 tests the departure of the AOR from unity. Multivariable logistic regression models for column 6 were weighted and adjusted for demographics (age, sex at birth, sexual identity, race/ethnicity, education, health, and income; see **Table 1**); minority stressors (ACEs, psychological distress (Kessler), past month mental health, concealed sexual identity, internalized homophobia (adjusted), bully victimization, lifetime victimization/discrimination, everyday discrimination, felt stigma, and chronic strains; see **Table 2**).

Observed equivalence in the population, of course, may reflect the net result of covariate influences that counteract that of SOCE therapy. The findings presented in **Tables 1** and **2**, showing lower socioeconomic status and higher minority stress among the SOCE alumni, suggest that such influences are more likely harm-enhancing than not. In this case equivalent harm would indicate that SOCE likely had an ameliorating effect to bring the predicted excess of harm due to minority stress and/or poor early life influences into equivalence with the non-SOCE population, who were subject to lower stress. It is possible, however, that the reverse is true, with SOCE aggravating unobserved influences that would have otherwise lowered current harm for the SOCE group below that of the non-SOCE group.

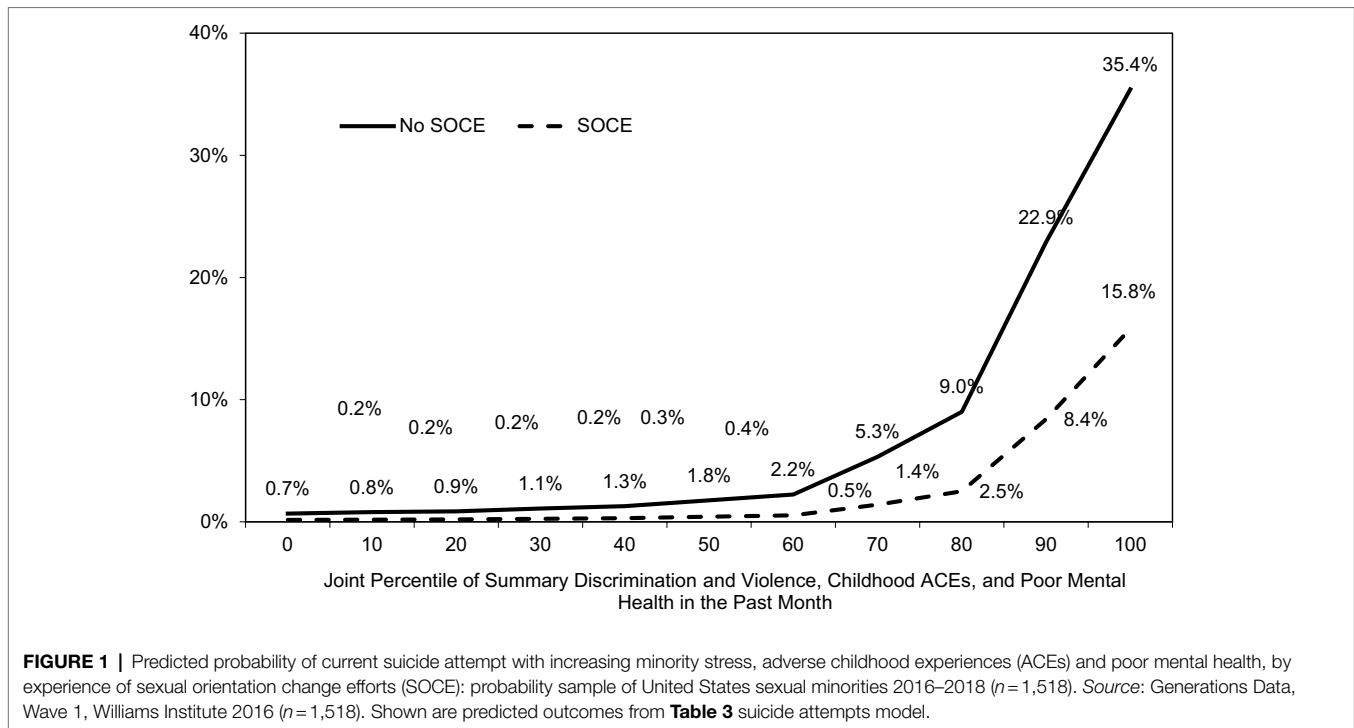
To address these possibilities, I examined logistic regression models adjusted for all of the demographic and stressor covariates presented in **Tables 1** and **2**. The corresponding adjusted odds ratios (AORs) for SOCE, with values of p indicating statistical significance, are reported in the **Table 3** column labeled “Multivariable AOR.” Six of the seven AORs were non-significant, indicating that differences in stress and demography do not account for the lack of an association of SOCE therapy with these behaviors in the sexual minority population. Given this limitation, the sample AORs suggest that alcohol dependence and the declaration of suicide intentions may be moderately aggravated, and influences toward higher suicide ideation and planning may be moderately reduced, for the SOCE alumni.

The results for current suicide attempts are strikingly different. For this outcome, the AOR for SOCE is both statistically significant and strongly negative, indicating that those exposed to SOCE were about five times less likely to currently attempt suicide than were persons of comparable demographics and stress experience who were not exposed to SOCE. Unlike for the other six harm outcomes, the model for suicide attempts does not have an acceptable fit to the data, indicating that it is necessary to consider other factors, beyond the scope of

the present study, to fully account for current suicide attempts among sexual minority persons. With regard to the question under examination here, however, the model indicates that the experience of SOCE therapy was associated with a sizeable decrease in the risk of a current suicide attempt that would otherwise be predicted by higher exposure to childhood and minority stress experienced by the SOCE alumni.

Figure 1 illustrates the effect. The figure reports the predicted probability of a suicide attempt by joint deciles of three stressor covariates: ACEs, lifetime sexual orientation victimization and discrimination, and current poor mental health. Two effects in the figure should be noted. First, the probability of suicide attempts increases with increasing stress, but the increase is not linear. The marginal effect of higher levels of stress increases much more rapidly after the 50th or 60th percentile. Like the straw that broke the camel’s back in the fable, a unit of additional stress on top of that of persons who were already highly stressed increased suicide attempt risk by a much greater amount than if it added to a low level of stress. Second, at every level of stress, past exposure to SOCE was associated with reduced suicide attempt risk, compared to those not exposed to SOCE. However, the effect of SOCE also increased sharply at higher levels of stress. In this model, for persons of equivalent stress, exposure to SOCE reduces the risk of suicide attempt, but we know from **Table 2** that stress is not equivalent between the SOCE and the non-SOCE groups. In the joint distribution shown in **Figure 1**, median stress for the non-SOCE group is roughly 12 percentile points lower than that of the SOCE group. The figure illustrates that, as a result of these combined effects, the following claims can both be true: (a) SOCE reduces suicide attempt risk; and (b) the unadjusted probability of suicide attempts for SOCE alumni is equal to or greater than that of persons not exposed to SOCE.

It should be emphasized that this effect, while present in the data, does not by itself fully explain the observed equivalence



of the SOCE and non-SOCE groups on the risk of current suicide attempts. The development of a comprehensive model of suicide attempts among sexual minorities awaits further research beyond the scope of the present study.

DISCUSSION

The present findings starkly contradict those of a body of research that claims to find invidious harm, in particular suicidal morbidity, among persons exposed to SOCE therapy. By contrast, the present study, examining a large, credible representative sample of sexual minority persons using multiple well-validated measures appropriately sensitive to harm, has found that the experience of SOCE therapy was unrelated to any measure of present harm. Those who had undergone SOCE were no more likely to experience psychological distress or poor mental health, to engage in substance or alcohol abuse, to intentionally harm themselves, or to think about, plan, intend or attempt suicide, than were those who had not undergone SOCE. This finding is all the more striking since the SOCE alumni examined were characterized by conditions that, in prior research, have repeatedly been associated with higher levels of such behaviors: an unsuccessful SOCE outcome, higher minority stress, higher childhood ACEs, and lower socioeconomic status. This group constituted not only a test, but a stress test of the hypothesis that SOCE therapy induces harm. If any group were likely to suffer harm from SOCE therapy, this group would have done so.

To the extent that minority stress may induce or encourage the risk of suicidal behaviors, furthermore, in these data it

did so less strongly among persons exposed to SOCE than otherwise for the most serious suicidal behavior—suicide attempts. Although the reduction in suicide attempt risk with SOCE was sufficient to bring suicide attempts for the SOCE alumni into equivalence with non-SOCE group, with its lower experience of stress, this need not be the case. As **Figure 1** illustrates, due to their higher exposure to stress and childhood adversity, it is possible that the SOCE alumni could benefit from SOCE exposure and still also have shown higher harm.

As with any therapeutic intervention, clinical concern for aggregate outcomes following SOCE is rightly focused not on history but on prognosis. It would be a perverse policy indeed, for example, for heart surgery to be discouraged or even banned because those undergoing it experienced higher rates of cardiac dysfunction than the general population before the surgery. Yet that is the form of argument being put forward in many settings to restrict or ban SOCE therapy for sexual minorities. As the present study has found, the majority of suicidal morbidity occurred prior to SOCE, and the most serious form of suicidal morbidity was reduced following SOCE. Yet Blosnich et al. (2021), for example, dismissed concerns that morbidity may have predated SOCE exposure in advocating a ban on SOCE due to its association with higher lifetime suicidal morbidity. Other recent studies have presented the same flawed form of argument (Ryan et al., 2020; Salway et al., 2020; del Río-González et al., 2021). For these reasons, proposals to restrict therapeutic interventions based on superficial claims of lifetime harm should be met with skeptical caution.

Proponents of the argument from lifetime suicidality have attempted to defend such dubious reasoning by claiming

that persons undergoing SOCE are more exposed, as a group, to minority stressors, which in turn induce greater personal harm. Blosnich et al. (2020, p. 1027–1028), for example, attributed harm from SOCE to “the construct of perceived burdensomeness” resulting from minority stress, calling for further investigation into “specific constructs and mechanisms (e.g., enacted stigma, internalized stigma, and identity concealment) that could incite perceived burdensomeness and create the risk of suicidal thoughts and behaviors among survivors of SOCE.”

This argument also founders on the direction of causation. Since most suicidal morbidity occurred before recourse to SOCE, it is more likely that higher stress induced recourse to SOCE than the reverse, rendering this claim a good argument for reducing minority stress but a poor argument for restricting SOCE. The present findings, moreover, confirm predictions of higher minority stress, both currently and over their lifetimes, but fail to find any corresponding present harm, among those exposed to SOCE. Recently Meyer, the original proponent of MST, similarly found that changes in minority stress were not correlated with cohort trends in suicidal behavior in the Generations data (Meyer et al., 2021).

It is not possible for the present study to determine the mechanisms which reduce suicide attempts among former SOCE participants, but some suggestions in support of future research may be in order. With respect to MST, the present findings suggest three possibilities: either SOCE ameliorates the risk of harm deemed to be created by minority stress experiences; or those experiences do not induce harm, or as much harm, as MST predicts; or a combination of both.

Minority stress theory itself theorizes that minority stress may increase resilience under certain conditions (Meyer, 2003). In examining the possibilities, research might be rewarded by more fully elaborating the association between minority stress and harm, as in, for example, stress process theories which examine the interaction of individual characteristics with social processes, including cultural norms, in affecting stress responses throughout the life course (Pearlin et al., 1981; Lazarus and Folkman, 1984; Carver and Connor-Smith, 2010). In their classic typology of former SOCE participants, Shidlo and Schroeder found that about 10% of those they interviewed experienced a “resilient recovery of gay identity: ...these participants reported few or no long-term damaging effects and actually felt strengthened by their experience of having tried to change. Their failure at conversion therapy freed them to embrace their gay or lesbian identity without ambivalence or guilt” (Shidlo and Schroeder, 2002, p. 254). It may be that this result is more common than was reflected in Shidlo and Schroeder’s non-probability sample, accounting for the results observed in the present study. These ideas are presented as suggestions to be sorted out by future research and not as firm conclusions from the present study.

Scholarly proponents of SOCE restrictions have also suggested that restrictions or bans are warranted, or perhaps acceptable on other grounds, because it is not effective (Blosnich et al., 2020; Ryan et al., 2020). As already noted,

this claim is empirically dubious because the evidence cited for it is based almost exclusively on samples of self-identified sexual minorities, which have explicitly screened out anyone for whom SOCE may have been successful. But even when SOCE is unsuccessful, as must be true sometimes even if it is not true always, such a deficit would only be pertinent to a risk/benefit evaluation if there were a corresponding risk. The present study has found that, even for persons for whom SOCE has had no efficacy, there is no discernible psychosocial risk.

Limitations

As Blosnich et al. (2020, p. 7) noted, the SOCE measure developed by the Generations researchers has not been validated and may not capture all forms of SOCE experience or all persons engaging in SOCE. They speculated that this may be due to greater concealment among SOCE alumni, but the present study has found the opposite to be true: SOCE alumni were significantly more likely to be “out” about their sexual orientation than were those not exposed to SOCE (See **Table 2**). Rather, the SOCE question likely was specified too narrowly: “Did you ever receive treatment from someone who tried to change your sexual orientation?” This prescriptive wording seems not to take seriously the claim of many SOCE practitioners that the goal of such therapy is to resolve psychological distress or value conflicts related to same-sex attractions, behavior or identification, which may or may not involve seeking to modify the current state of these elements of the client’s sexuality. (Opponents still define this as SOCE because the therapy is still open to the possibility of changing sexual orientation if desired.) Likely confusion or uncertainty over the SOCE question may be evidenced by the fact that almost half (49.1%, SE 6.12) of those who responded “Yes” to the SOCE question, indicating that they had gone through SOCE therapy, did not agree with the statement, “I have tried to stop being attracted to people who are the same sex as me.”

In addition to low specificity, the SOCE measure may also exhibit low sensitivity. In the Generations data, attempts to resolve or change same-sex attractions were much more widespread in the sexual minority population than was indicated by the proportion who have undergone SOCE therapy. Almost a third (30.9, 95% CI 27.9–33.9) of the sexual minority population reported having attempted to change their sexual orientation to become heterosexual, but the SOCE question only captured under 7% of respondents, an amount four times lower.

Although the Generations data used in the present study have many strengths, they also have some limitations. The strong complex survey design assures that they were accurately representative of the target population, but they did not include the entire LGB population. As with any cross-sectional data, causation cannot be attributed with certainty. Some age ranges were screened out, as were persons below a fifth-grade education and some smaller racial minority groups.

CONCLUSION

Examining a strong representative sample of sexual minority persons in the United States, the present study has found that the prevalence of current or prospective behavioral harm among sexual minorities is statistically identical for those who have experienced SOCE and those who have not. These findings not only fail to find harm, but also present positive evidence of the absence of harm, from SOCE therapy. With respect to suicide attempts, SOCE appears to mitigate the harm attributable to elevated stress. Further study is needed to clarify the reasons for the absence of current harm, despite not only higher minority stress, but also higher childhood stress and lower socioeconomic status, experienced by those exposed to SOCE.

DATA AVAILABILITY STATEMENT

The data for this study are publicly available from the following data repository: Meyer, Ilan H. Generations: A Study of the Life and Health of LGB People in a Changing Society, United States, 2016–2019. Inter-university Consortium for Political and Social Research [distributor], 2020-08-25. <https://doi.org/10.3886/ICPSR37166.v1>.

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ETHICS STATEMENT

Ethical review and approval was not required for the current study in accordance with the local legislation and institutional requirements. As a secondary analysis of pre-existing public data, the present study's methods were determined to be exempt from human subject ethical review under 45 CFR 46.104 by the Catholic University of America Institutional Review Board in Certificate 21-0016 issued March 12, 2021. The patients/participants provided their written informed consent to participate in the underlying survey data collection.

AUTHOR CONTRIBUTIONS

DS: conceptualization, data analysis, writing—original draft preparation, and writing—review and editing.

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NATIONAL TASK FORCE FOR THERAPY EQUALITY

REPORT TO THE FEDERAL TRADE COMMISSION

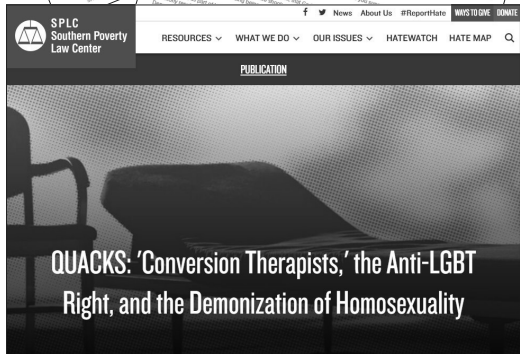
MAY 2, 2017

In Their Own Words LIES, DECEPTION, AND FRAUD

Southern Poverty Law Center, Human Rights Campaign, and the National Center for Lesbian Rights' Hate Campaign to Ban Psychotherapy for Individuals with Sexual and Gender Identity Conflicts



The National Task Force for Therapy Equality is a coalition of licensed psychotherapists, psychiatrists, physicians, public policy organizations, and psychotherapy clients/patients from across the United States of America. Their purpose is to secure therapy equality for clients that experience distress over unwanted same-sex attractions and gender identity conflicts



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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In February 2016, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Human Rights Campaign (HRC), and National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) filed a complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) against People Can Change (now called Brothers Road), accusing the Virginia-based non-profit organization of committing consumer fraud, namely, by offering, marketing, selling, and performing services that purport to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity, commonly referred to as "conversion therapy." This complaint was a part of the Respondents' ongoing effort to curtail the therapy rights of individuals, and their families, who experience sexual and gender identity conflicts by enacting legislation to ban licensed psychotherapy on the state and federal level.

This complaint prompted the National Task Force for Therapy Equality, a coalition of psychotherapists, psychiatrists, physicians, public policy organizations, and clients who experience unwanted same-sex attractions and gender identity conflicts, to launch a comprehensive investigation titled:

In Their Own Words — Lies, Deception, and Fraud: The Southern Poverty Law Center, Human Rights Campaign, and National Center for Lesbian Rights' Hate Campaign to Ban Psychotherapy for Individuals with Sexual and Gender Identity Conflicts

As this report will detail, the three Respondents have been actively working together for at least five years in a deceptive and fraudulent hate campaign with the goal of deceiving law makers on the state, federal, and international level to enact legislation to ban licensed psychotherapy for clients (minors) that experience unwanted same-sex attractions and gender identity conflicts. To date, six states and several cities and jurisdictions have passed such legislation into law, prompting several lawsuits across the country.

This report will demonstrate the following:

- The three Respondents have actively and knowingly engaged in deceptive and fraudulent marketing practices of the kind the FTC considers malicious, which are particularly deceptive and misleading to consumers and the general public. This complaint is pursuant to the FTC's definition of unfair practices, defined as those that "cause or are likely to cause substantial injury to consumers which is not reasonably avoidable by consumers themselves and not outweighed by countervailing benefits to consumers or to competition" (15 U.S.C. Sec. 45(n)).
- The three Respondents have supported witnesses on the state, federal, and international level that have delivered unverifiable and fraudulent testimony in front of law-making bodies in the effort to persuade legislative action to ban psychotherapy. Through multiple examples, it has now been proven these witnesses have lied and engaged in a variety of deceptive practices on behalf of the Respondents' hate campaigns to ban psychotherapy.
- The three Respondents, through their marketing campaigns, are actively raising large sums of money in the effort to ban psychotherapy by using deceptive and fraudulent practices. These practices are misleading to the general public, and, as this report documents, it is highly unlikely that the three Respondents are unaware of the false and misleading nature of how their statements distort the facts and research around psychotherapy to help clients with sexual and gender identity conflicts. As such, they are knowingly misleading consumers in their efforts to profit from such activities.
- The three Respondents, through their marketing campaigns, have actively and knowingly distorted the research to promote efforts to ban psychotherapy for clients with sexual and gender identity conflicts, including misleading statements regarding the 2009 American Psychological Association Task Force Report on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, as well as other research (e.g., Ryan et al., 2009). The three Respondents use these misleading statements to make false and misleading claims that psychotherapy is harmful and ineffective for minors who experience sexual and gender identity conflicts.
- The three Respondents, through their marketing campaigns, have actively distorted the scientific research in promoting the "Born Gay" hoax, a notion that has been dis-

As this report will detail, the three Respondents have been actively working together for at least five years in a deceptive and fraudulent hate campaign with the goal of deceiving law makers on the state, federal, and international level to enact legislation to ban licensed psychotherapy for clients (minors) that experience unwanted same-sex attractions and gender identity conflicts.

The National Task Force for Therapy Equality (NTFTE) respectfully requests that the Federal Trade Commission ("FTC") investigate and stop the libelous, slanderous, deceptive, and misleading actions of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Human Rights Campaign (HRC), and National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), which have made broad-sweeping claims of fraud and harm towards professional sexual orientation change therapies, and their clients.

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I. INTRODUCTION

A. Formal Purpose of this Complaint

The National Task Force for Therapy Equality (NTFTE), the following licensed therapists, and the following therapy clients respectfully request that the Federal Trade Commission ("FTC") investigate and stop the libelous, slanderous, deceptive, and misleading actions of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Human Rights Campaign (HRC), and National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR), which have made broad-sweeping claims of fraud and harm towards professional sexual orientation change therapies, and their clients.

In accordance with the substantial scientific and anecdotal evidence that demonstrates sexual orientation change is possible for some individuals, and the lack of accurate research to support the assertion that Sexual Orientation Change Effort (SOCE) therapy is fraudulent and/or harmful, the NTFTE, licensed therapists, and therapy clients who report successful change in sexuality support the complaint herein.

The actions of the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR seek to invalidate and end the practice of professional sexual orientation change therapies and will result in a denial of free speech of therapists and therapy clients, restraint of trade, loss of religious rights, and in some cases, may pose harm to the mental and emotional health of clients, who could experience depression, anxiety and/or suicide ideation due to a lack of available therapists who share their values and goals.

As such, we define the efforts of the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR as malice, and are particularly deceptive and misleading to consumers and the general public. This complaint is pursuant to the FTC's definition of unfair practices, defined as those that "cause or are likely to cause substantial injury to consumers which is not reasonably avoidable by consumers themselves and not outweighed by countervailing benefits to consumers or to competition" (15 U.S.C. Sec. 45(n)).

We respectfully request that the FTC take enforcement action to end the actions of the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR, which seek to defame change therapies, change therapists, and their clients, or to render a judgment against the three organizations for their actions, which are deceptive and misleading to consumers and the general public. We also ask that the FTC require these organizations to cease publishing slanderous remarks about change therapies, change therapists, and their clients, and require them to cease and desist publishing all deceptive statements including those within their public speeches, social media, online videos, and on their websites.

B. Overview of the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC), Human Rights Campaign (HRC), and National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)

Southern Poverty Law Center – Respondent

Respondent Southern Poverty Law Center ("SPLC"), located in Montgomery, Alabama (www.splcenter.org) is a multi-million dollar law firm, organized as a non-profit, committed to targeting and prosecuting SPLC identified "Hate" groups. Until recently, the SPLC included an interactive "Hate Map" that identified nearly 100 therapists and ministries that help individuals with sexual and gender identity conflicts. The Respondent recently removed this map in the aftermath of Floyd Corkins, a gunman that was inspired by the SPLC's "Hate Map" to enter the Family Research Council in 2013 and attempt to murder conservatives.¹ The SPLC LGBT Human Rights Project is dedicated to the fraudulent pseudoscience of proving genetic homosexuality and to profiting from alleged harm of falsely named "conversion therapy." The SPLC initiated the lawsuit of Ferguson v. JONAH, exploited recruited plaintiffs, biased court proceedings, and manipulated overly broad consumer fraud laws in a New Jersey State court to target and persecute this organization.² In 2014, the Federal Bureau of Investigation removed the SPLC from the "Resources" page of its Civil Rights Division. An internal FBI e-mail seems to suggest that the decision to remove the SPLC from this list was prompted by a meeting with Congressional staffers, who expressed the concerns of the head of the Family

¹ Peters, C. (May 30, 2015). I was traumatized by the Southern Poverty Law Center's hate campaign against ex-gays. Retrieved online at: <http://www.voiceofthevoiceless.info/7s-hate-map>
² L. Haynes, & C. L. Mandri (2016). JONAH Case: The Time for Legal Protection for Sexual Orientation Change Efforts is Now. <http://www.wnd.com/2016/02/sexual-orientation-change-efforts-under-attack/>

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proved and refuted by organizations such as the American Psychological Association through their 2008 Position Statement and 2014 *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*. The Respondents have perpetrated this lie to further their respective political agendas, and in so doing, have raised untold sums of money from unsuspecting consumers and the general public.

- The three Respondents have also engaged in smear and defamatory attacks on licensed psychotherapists and faith-based ministries providing help and assistance to those who experience sexual and gender identity conflicts. Until recently, one of the Respondents (SPLC) included an interactive "Hate Map" that identified nearly 100 therapists and ministries on their website. The Respondent recently removed this map in the aftermath of the crime of Floyd Corkins, a gunman who was inspired by the SPLC's "Hate Map" to enter the Family Research Council in 2013 and attempt to murder conservatives.
- One of the Respondents (SPLC) was also reported to the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) in 2017 by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR) for engaging in practices of using "opinion-based smears and innuendos" as though they were educational while violating governmental regulations and using tactics that it claims shields it from liability lawsuits. The Respondent's blatant engagement in political activity is a clear violation of their 501(c) (3) status with the IRS, says the complaint.

By engaging in these deceptive and fraudulent practices, the National Task Force for Therapy Equality accuses the Respondents of perpetrating undue harm on millions of consumers and the general public, hundreds of licensed mental health providers, and thousands of clients and potential clients that experience sexual and gender identity conflicts. Because their hate campaigns have already resulted in therapy bans enacted in at least six states and several other cities and jurisdictions, this report respectfully requests the FTC to review these fraudulent and deceptive practices and to promptly order the Respondents to cease their activities in the effort to protect therapists, clients, consumers, and the general public from further harm. In addition, we respectfully request the FTC to order the three Respondents to issue press releases, correct inaccurate statements on their websites, and actively work with legislators across the United States to reverse legislation that has been passed into law so that further harm can be avoided.

Research Council (FRC), whose presence on the SPLC's "hate watch" list inspired Floyd Corkins the gunman that targeted the FRC in 2012 in order to "kill as many employees as possible."³

Human Rights Campaign – Respondent

According to their website (www.HRC.org) the Human Rights Campaign is located in Washington, D.C. and is "America's largest civil rights organization working to achieve LGBTQ equality. By inspiring and engaging individuals and communities, HRC strives to end discrimination against LGBTQ people and realize a world that achieves fundamental fairness and equality for all. The Human Rights Campaign envisions a world where lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people are ensured equality and embraced as full members of society at home, at work and in every community." While HRC works to defend the rights of the LGBTQ community, they have actively worked to marginalize, defame, and discriminate against individuals that experience unwanted same-sex attractions and gender identity confusion. Until recently, they have distanced themselves from formal efforts to end what they label "conversion therapy" for minors. "However, in a February 14, 2017 press release on pending legislation in New Mexico to ban "conversion therapy," they stated: "NCLR and HRC have partnered with state equality groups across the nation to pass state legislation to end conversion therapy."⁴

National Center for Lesbian Rights – Respondent

Located in San Francisco, CA, the National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) launched the #BornPerfect campaign in June 2014 to end "conversion therapy" in five years by passing laws across the country to protect LGBT kids from these dangerous practices, fighting in courtrooms to ensure their safety, and raising awareness." According to their website (www.nclrights.org), the NCLR "focuses on employment, immigration, youth, elder law, transgender law, sports, marriage, relationship protections, reproductive rights, and family law to create safer homes, safer jobs, and a more just world. Each year, NCLR shapes the legal landscape for all LGBT people and families across the nation through its precedent-setting litigation, legislation, policy, and public education. For more than three decades, NCLR has led historic cases, and it is still blazing trails in pursuit of justice, fairness, and legal protections for all LGBT people."

II. THE PARTIES

A. Licensed Psychotherapists

Over 20,000 licensed petitioner therapists, psychiatrists, and physicians represented by the National Task Force for Therapy Equality.

B. Therapy Clients/Patients

Petitioner therapy clients include over 1,000 individuals and families who seek help from licensed professional therapists to heal trauma from sexual abuse, to resolve unwanted same sex attractions and/or gender identity conflicts, and to heal from the consequences of homosexual activity, including depression, anger, addiction, disease, and suicide.

C. Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC)

D. Human Rights Campaign (HRC)

E. National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR)

III. WRITTEN AND VERBAL STATEMENTS FROM THE SPLC, HRC, AND NCLR

A. Applicable Law

Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act ("FTC Act") prohibits unfair and deceptive acts and practices, including statements. The FTC considers whether there has been a rep-

³ Bennett, J. (2/3/2017). EXCLUSIVE: FBI Removed SPLC, ADL From Resources Pages Over 'Number Of Concerns'. Retrieved online at: <http://daily Caller.com/2017/02/03/exclusive-fbi-removed-splc-and-adl-from-civil-rights-resources-pages-because-of-a-number-of-concerns/>
⁴ Miller, H. (2/14/17). Bill to Protect LGBTQ Youth from "Conversion Therapy" Moves Through New Mexico Senate Committee. Retrieved online at: <http://www.hrc.org/blog/bill-to-protect-lgbtq-youth-from-conversion-therapy-moves-through-new-mexico>

resentation, omission, or practice that is likely to mislead the consumer. The FTC also asks whether the representation, omission, or practice is a "material" one. Neither an intent to deceive nor actual consumer harm is required to find an act deceptive under the FTC Act. The analysis focuses on the risk of consumer harm. Both express misrepresentations and implied misrepresentations are violations of the FTC Act. If a claim is likely to be misleading without qualifying information, the qualifying information must be disclosed in a clear and conspicuous manner. Clear and conspicuous disclosure is required. A disclosure can qualify or limit a claim to avoid a misleading impression; it cannot, however, cure a false claim.

SPLC, HRC, and NCLR's false and misleading spoken and written practices concerning professional psychotherapy for unwanted same-sex attractions/gender identity confusion is deceptive, contains material omissions, and does not objectively consider all the research that has been completed to date. Publishing false and misleading information will result in harm to consumers by infringing upon their right to accurate information. The Respondent's researched evidence shows no proven conclusions by any psychological association in the United States, and its citations of the American Psychological Association (APA) are misleading.

1. Assumption 1: Everyone who experiences same-sex attraction is born gay.

On the American Psychological Association's (APA) own website (www.apa.org) under sections dealing with causation of homosexuality, it clearly indicates there is no "gay gene" and that other biological studies are inconclusive. It states that causes for homosexuality are most likely a combination of genetic and environmental influences. In other words, no one can be certain of causation in terms of proof at this point in time. The APA's Position Statement in 2008 reads:

There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.⁵

2. Assumption 2: Sexual orientation and gender identity (SOGI) therapies are harmful and ineffective for minors who experience sexual and gender identity conflicts.

As a basis for many of their statements, the three Respondents make references to the American Psychological Association, specifically a report that was produced in 2009. On pages 83-85 of the APA Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation,⁶ the APA concludes there is no proof of harm done to anyone undergoing sexual or gender identity (SOGI) therapies:

There are no scientifically rigorous studies of recent SOCE that would enable us to make a definitive statement about whether recent SOCE is safe or harmful and for whom.⁷

When it comes to the effectiveness of SOCE for children and adolescents, the APA Task Force said the following:

There is no research demonstrating that providing SOCE to children or adolescents has an impact on adult sexual orientation. The few studies of children with gender identity disorder found no evidence that psychotherapy provided to those children had an impact on adult sexual orientation.⁸

Therefore, there is no evidence to conclude SOGI therapies are harmful or ineffective. The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR are distorting the research by publishing false and misleading information.

5 American Psychological Association. (2008). Answers to Your Questions For a Better Understanding of Sexual Orientation & Homosexuality. Retrieved online at: <http://www.apa.org/topics/lgbt/orientation.aspx>
6 APA Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation. (2009). Report of the Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.
7 *Ibid.*, p. 83. note: this was for all populations, children/adolescents as well as adults.
8 *Ibid.*, p. 85. note: the Task Force did not find any outcome research for children/adolescents undergoing SOCE therapy and fails to include language in their report that specifically states this.

As stated above, there is not one single outcome-based study in the scientific literature of minors undergoing SOCE therapy to back up these claims. Thus, to cite these potential health risks of SOCE therapy for minors is false and misleading. All three of the organizations in this complaint have cited similar claims on their websites and published materials, and are therefore guilty of misleading consumers and the general public.

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As this report will show, most individuals who experience same-sex attractions also experience change in sexual attraction, behavior, and identity toward or exclusively toward heterosexuality. Anecdotal claims of harm ignore the majority of individuals who can and do change, with or without the help of therapy.

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about therapy to help individuals with unwanted same-sex attractions and gender identity confusion:

Not only does it (SOCE therapy) not work, it's harmful to LGBT people and their families. People who have undergone conversion therapy have reported increased anxiety, depression, and in some cases, suicidal ideation. It can also strain family relationships, because practitioners frequently blame a parent for their child's sexual orientation.¹²

We will discuss more examples of misleading statements in the SPLC's paper later in this document.

The National Center for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) has said similar outrageous and inaccurate statements:

In the past, some mental health professionals resorted to extreme measures such as institutionalization, castration, and electroconvulsive shock therapy to try to stop people from being lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender (LGBT). Today, while some counselors still use physical treatments like aversive conditioning, the techniques most commonly used include a variety of behavioral, cognitive, psychoanalytic, and other practices that try to change or reduce same-sex attraction or alter a person's gender identity.

Conversion therapy can be extremely dangerous and, in some cases, fatal. In 2009, the APA issued a report concluding that the reported risks of the practices include: depression... and a sense of having wasted time and resources.

The risks are even greater for youth. Minors who experience family rejection based on their sexual orientation or gender identity face especially serious health risks. Research shows that lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults who reported higher levels of family rejection during adolescence were more than eight times more likely to report having attempted suicide, more than five times more likely to report high levels of depression, more than three times more likely to use illegal drugs, and more than three times more likely to report having engaged in unprotected sexual intercourse compared with peers from families that reported no or low levels of family rejection.¹³

As evidence to implicate SOCE therapy for minors, the NCLR refers to a study by Ryan et al. (2009), which equates poor health outcomes for LGBT youth as synonymous with therapy outcomes. This statement is a common misuse of research by the NCLR and other gay activists. They cite a study that attributes high levels of family rejection to increased health risks for sexual minority youth and report that these outcomes are attributed to or somehow associated with youth undergoing SOCE therapy. In fact, none of the outcomes in this study were attributed to youth undergoing SOCE therapy, nor did the study even discuss therapy.¹⁴

The Human Rights Campaign (HRC) has also made similar outrageous and unfounded claims:

So-called "conversion therapy," sometimes known as "reparative therapy," is a range of dangerous and discredited practices that falsely claim to change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity or expression... Minors are especially vulnerable, and conversion therapy can lead to depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness, and suicide.

In February 2016, the Human Rights Campaign, National Center for Lesbian Rights, and Southern Poverty Law Center filed a consumer fraud complaint with the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) against People Can Change, a major provider of conversion therapy. The complaint alleges that People Can Change's advertisements and business practices which claim they can change a person's sexual orientation or gender identity constitute deceptive, false, and misleading practices and can cause serious

12 <https://www.splcenter.org/issues/lgbt-rights/conversion-therapy>
13 <http://www.ncdrights.org/bornperfect-the-facts-about-conversion-therapy/>
14 Ryan, C., Huebner, H., Diaz, R.M., & Sanchez, J. (2009). Family Rejection as a Predictor of Negative Health Outcomes in White and Latino Lesbian, Gay, and Bisexual Young Adults. *Pediatrics*, 123,1.

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tion to the general public to achieve their respective political agendas. As will be demonstrated later in this report, the Respondents distort the research often, and in a variety of ways.

B. SPLC, HRC, and NCLR's false and misleading spoken and written practices concerning professional psychotherapy are deceptive and contain material omissions, which result in harm to the consumers by infringing on their right to accurate information.

1. Origins of false and misleading statements in California State legislation

In 2012, gay activist organizations, including but not limited to, SPLC, HRC, and NCLR began working with politicians in the state of California to pass legislation to prohibit licensed mental health practitioners from helping minors who experience unwanted same-sex attractions or wish to change their sexual orientation.

On September 30, 2012, Governor Jerry Brown signed into law Senate Bill 1172, essentially outlawing the practice of sexual orientation change effort (SOCE) therapy for clients under the age of 18. In a press release from the Governor's office, Brown said the following of SOCE therapy: "These practices have no basis in science or medicine, and they will now be relegated to the dustbin of quackery." As justification for the law, SB 1172 said the following in Section B:

Sexual orientation change efforts pose critical health risks to lesbian, gay, and bisexual people, including confusion, depression, guilt, helplessness, hopelessness, shame, social withdrawal, suicidality, substance abuse, stress, disappointment, self-blame, decreased self-esteem and authenticity to others, increased self-hatred, hostility and blame toward parents, feelings of anger and betrayal, loss of friends and potential romantic partners, problems in sexual and emotional intimacy, sexual dysfunction, high-risk sexual behaviors, a feeling of being dehumanized and untrue to self, a loss of faith, and a sense of having wasted time and resources. This is documented by the American Psychological Association Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation in its 2009 Report of the Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation.¹⁵

Despite the claims of harm cited in SB 1172, the American Psychological Association Task Force did not actually provide scientific evidence to back up the 28 health risks listed above. In fact, none of these health risks have been documented in the scientific peer-reviewed literature outside of a few published and unpublished anecdotal reports from adults, none of which have studied SOCE therapy outcomes for minors.¹⁶

As stated above, there is not one single outcome-based study in the scientific literature of minors undergoing SOCE therapy to back up these claims. Thus, to cite these potential health risks of SOCE therapy for minors is false and misleading. All three of the organizations in this complaint have cited similar claims on their websites and published materials, and are therefore guilty of misleading consumers and the general public.

As this report will show, most individuals who experience same-sex attractions also experience change in sexual attraction, behavior, and identity toward or exclusively toward heterosexuality. Anecdotal claims of harm ignore the majority of individuals who can and do change, with or without the help of therapy.

2. Misleading Statements and False Claims of Harm and Therapy Torture

In May 2016, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) published a paper that was posted on their website and said the "National Gay and Lesbian Task Force reacted with alarm," and "warned that the ex-gay industry was under-mining the battle for LGBT rights by suggesting that homosexuality is a choice, not an unchangeable condition like skin color." Such a statement is meant to convey to the reader that sexual orientation is unchangeable, like skin color.¹⁷ Over the years, the SPLC has said a number of deceptive and misleading statements

9 http://www.lginfo.ca.gov/pub/11-12/bill/sen/sb_1151-1200/sb_1172_bill_20120416_amended_sen_v97.html
10 Phelan, J., Goldberg, A., & Doyle, C.J. (2012). A Critical Evaluation of the Report of the Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, Resolutions, and Press Release. *Journal of Human Sexuality*, 4, 41-69.
11 Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) (May 2016), "Quacks: Conversion Therapists," the Anti-LGBT Right, and the Demonization of Homosexuality," p. 9. <https://www.splcenter.org/20160526/quacks-conversion-therapists-anti-lgbt-right-and-demonization-homosexuality>

harm to consumers, all in direct violation of Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act.¹⁸

Not only do these misleading statements attribute SOCE therapy as causing depression, anxiety, drug use, homelessness, and suicide for youth, they falsely accuse People Can Change (now called Brothers Road) of being a "conversion therapy provider" when in actuality, Brothers Road is a peer-lead, non-therapeutic experiential weekend for adult men who experience unwanted same-sex attractions. They do not provide any form of psychotherapy to adults, and they do not work with minors.

3. "Conversion Therapy Torture Camps" in New Jersey

In March 2013, the New Jersey Senate Health, Human Services, and Senior Citizens Committee held a three-hour hearing on a bill that would take away the rights of minors who experience unwanted same-sex attraction (SSA) to receive therapy from licensed mental health professionals. Representatives from gay rights organizations, including the Human Rights Campaign, Garden State Equality, and the Trevor Project, as well as several mental health associations, testified at length about the so-called dangers of "conversion therapy." While all of these organizations used misleading statistics and false statements to condemn SOCE, one testimony in particular stood out that was particularly fraudulent.

Brielle Goldani, a transgendered woman from Toms River, New Jersey, stated she was tortured at an Ohio-based "conversion therapy camp" in 1997. "Twice a week I was hooked up to electrodes on my hands," she said. "I, a child, was shocked repeatedly by people who had my parent's permission to torture me." Goldani claimed that the torture occurred at a "conversion camp" called "True Directions." "This is nothing more than legalized child abuse," claimed Goldani at the hearing.

According to the office of the Ohio Secretary of State and Attorney General, no such camp called "True Directions" has ever existed. In fact, the only trace of this camp is from a 1999 movie titled "But I'm a Cheerleader," starring drag queen RuPaul. In the film, the main character is suspected of being a lesbian by her family members, who then proceed to send her to a fictitious "conversion therapy" camp called "True Directions." Throughout the course of the film, two disgruntled gay men encourage the campers to rebel against the program and discover their true identities as gays and lesbians. The final scene of the film shows the main character's parents attending a Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays (PFLAG) meeting to accept their daughter's homosexuality.¹⁷

Later that spring, on May 6, 2013, representatives from Garden State Equality, New Jersey's largest gay rights organization, made further false and misleading statements at a press conference at the State Assembly House in Trenton, New Jersey.¹⁸ At the press conference, representatives of Garden State Equality claimed that six other "conversion therapy torture camps" existed in Ohio (and other states) with similar names as "True Directions." Garden State Equality Executive Director, Troy Stevenson, was asked at the press conference where the alleged camps were located and their names, and promised to provide all members of the press corps the names of these camps right after the press conference. However, Stevenson failed to provide any of these details, even after multiple phone calls were made to his office.

It is important to note that state policy organizations such as Garden State Equality have worked very closely with the HRC, SPLC, and NCLR in their campaigns to make SOCE therapy illegal. They act as local liaisons, recruiting, prepping, and providing talking points to witnesses at committee hearings. In the experience of the NTFTE, the vast majority of witnesses recruited and ultimately those who testify in front of state legislatures have never undergone professional psychotherapy to resolve same-sex attractions or gender identity conflicts with a licensed mental health practitioner. They are typically gay-identified advocates of local and state gay activist organizations or work on behalf of mental and mental health associations within (and outside) the state that oppose SOCE therapy.

15 https://www.splcenter.org/sites/default/files/ftc_conversion_therapy_complaint_final.pdf
16 <http://www.hrc.org/resources/the-lies-and-dangers-of-reparative-therapy>
17 Doyle, C.J. (March 21, 2013). Transgendered 'woman' lies about therapy 'torture'. Retrieved online at: <http://www.wnd.com/2013/03/transgendered-woman-lies-about-therapy-torture>
18 Video footage of this press conference was obtained by representatives from Voice of the Voiceless, and can be found here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=LkDlVnTnttI>

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In some cases, these witnesses are receiving compensation to attend and testify at hearings to promote therapy bans.¹⁹ One prominent gay activist that has made a career from opposing SOCE therapy is Wayne Besen, Founder and Executive Director of Truth Wins Out. Besen has testified at state hearings to ban SOCE therapy, espousing the so-called horrors of "conversion therapy."²⁰ However, like many of his colleagues, Besen never received "gay to straight" therapy as he calls it, yet makes a living from his tabloid-style website that spins half-truths and lies about mental and medical health practitioners that work with clients who experience unwanted same-sex attractions and gender identity confusion.

Besen was one of nearly twenty witnesses that testified against SOCE therapy in the New Jersey General Assembly in the spring of 2013. Like Garden State Equality, Besen is not employed by the three organizations this report is filing a complaint against; however, the SPLC has acknowledged Besen for playing a major part in their efforts to end SOCE therapy. After this bill passed both houses in the New Jersey Legislature, Governor Chris Christie signed the bill into law on August 19, 2013.

4. Ice Baths in the State of Washington

In 2014, gay activists working with Democrat lawmakers in the state of Washington introduced HB 2451. The bill contained similar language to other legislation in California and New Jersey, and the tactics used by gay activists were very similar to that seen in New Jersey. Joseph Backholm of the Family Policy Council of Washington documented the almost unbelievable testimony of one witness:

Proponents of the bill told stories about children being subjected to shock therapy and ice baths against their will. While that kind of aversive therapy is broadly condemned, there is little to no evidence that such therapy is done commonly if at all. The Washington State Department of Health said they have received no complaints about therapists performing coercive sexual orientation change therapy of any kind—much less ice baths and shock therapy—against the will of a client.²¹

The Senate ultimately killed this bill in 2014. However, in 2015, the same bill was introduced and passed by the House, only to be amended in the Senate to ban all therapy (not only therapy intended to reduce or eliminate homosexual feelings) that used methods such as electroshock or electroconvulsive therapy. This bill would keep "talk therapy" of any kind legal. But when that bill was sent back to the House for consideration, something remarkable happened. According to Joseph Backholm of the Family Policy Institute of Washington:

The same people who spent the last year talking about the need to protect children from ice baths and shock therapy suddenly and strongly opposed a bill specifically designed for that purpose. What was the problem? The bill didn't go far enough. "It must restrict talk therapy," they said. Last year, not a word was uttered about the need to ban talk therapy because everyone was so horrified by the stories of involuntary shock therapy. All they talked about was the need to protect kids from child abuse. But now that they have been given the chance to stop involuntary shock therapy without the ability to regulate conversations... suddenly shock therapy wasn't such a big deal. There are two things we can learn from this recent development. First, the advocates of this bill have always been mostly interested in prohibiting conversations they dislike, not stopping physical forms of child abuse everyone opposes. The attempt to focus on stories of abuse was just part of the bait and switch. People suspected as much before, but now they have admitted it. Second, and maybe more importantly, the fact that they are willing to oppose a bill to stop child abuse in the hopes that they can pass a bill to ban conversations illustrates the depth of their conviction about this issue. From their perspective, telling kids same-sex attraction is not necessarily permanent is child abuse. The harm of involuntary shock therapy and the "harm" of a child being told change is possible are the same. If this tactic is successful now, it won't just be the therapists who are affected. If it were "child abuse"

19 For example, Sam Wolfe of the SPLC and Alison Gill of the HRC testified in Washington, D.C. on June 27, 2014 in a hearing to ban "conversion therapy" for minors. See: <http://fims.dccouncil.us/Download/29657/B20-0501-CommitteeReport.pdf>. Similarly, Samantha Ames of the NCLR testified in Geneva, Switzerland on November 11, 2014 in front of the United Nations. See: <http://www.nclrights.org/geneva/video/>

20 See: <https://www.truthwinsout.org/president/2013/06/29/65/>

21 Balkholm, J. (February 14, 2014). "House Passes Ban on Life Change Therapy 94-4." Retrieved online at: <http://www.fpiw.org/blog/2014/02/14/house-passes-ban-on-life-change-therapy-94-4/>

Besen never received "gay to straight" therapy as he calls it, yet makes a living from his tabloid-style website that spins half-truths and lies about mental and medical health practitioners that work with clients who experience unwanted same-sex attractions and gender identity confusion.

Perhaps the most disturbing part of Shurka's testimony is that no one, not even the press, asked him why he didn't report the so-called "deaths" that occurred during his experience with Journey Into Manhood. Surely, if a crime, suicide, or homicide had occurred, a police report would have been filed. Yet, these stories continue to be recorded as testimony in front of state legislatures and printed in gay activist media outlets such as GAYRVA.com.

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for a therapist to tell a child that sexual desires can be controlled or changed, why wouldn't it be child abuse for someone else to say the same thing?²²

This legislation was ultimately defeated again in 2015, was not introduced in 2016, and reintroduced again in 2017, only to fail once again.

5. "Not everyone walked out alive" in Virginia

The Commonwealth of Virginia has been a tough battle for gay activists to convince lawmakers to ban SOCE therapy for minors. Three years in a row, gay activists valiantly showed up to testify at the Republican-dominated legislature, only to see their bill die in committee. In 2016, one of the more shocking witnesses was Matthew Shurka, who is a prominent spokesperson for the NCLR's #BornPerfect campaign. During the late January committee hearing, Shurka (who allegedly went through "ex-gay therapy" from the age of 16-21) testified of the following (according to an article in a gay activist website):

"I was in camp in Charlottesville," he said about a short stint in a conversion therapy camp called Journey Into Manhood located about 50 miles outside of RVA. "Not everyone walked out alive." Shurka has been involved in fighting ex-gay therapy since he abandoned the treatment, and he is unafraid to share some of the darker parts of his treatment, including "masturbation therapy" and being kept from his mother and sister for three years to avoid picking up feminine traits. He said folks like himself entered the treatments believing they could change, hoping to please their family and/or their faith, and were emotionally destroyed when they failed. "Every week someone is committing suicide or overdosing on drugs because they know they can't succeed," he said.²³

Perhaps the most disturbing part of Shurka's testimony is that no one, not even the press, asked him why he didn't report the so-called "deaths" that occurred during his experience with Journey Into Manhood. Surely, if a crime, suicide, or homicide had occurred, a police report would have been filed. Yet, these stories continue to be recorded as testimony in front of state legislatures and printed in gay activist media outlets such as GAYRVA.com.

6. Samuel Brinton, Washington, D.C. and the United Nations

Another one of NCLR's prominent spokespersons to end SOCE therapy is Samuel Brinton, who has testified on multiple occasions in state legislatures and, in 2014, even traveled to Geneva, Switzerland to speak of his "therapy torture" at the United Nations. When Washington, D.C. considered (and ultimately passed) a bill to ban SOCE therapy for minors in 2014, one witness, Dr. Gregory Jones, included this quote (in part) from a TIME Magazine article telling Brinton's story:

Sam Brinton says that his father first tried physical abuse to rid his young son of homosexual feelings. When that didn't work, Brinton's parents turned to something called reparative therapy. Some of the memories are hazy more than 10 years later, but Brinton does remember the tactics the counselor used. There was talk therapy, about how God disapproved, and there was aversion therapy, during which pictures of men touching men would be accompanied by the application of heat or ice. "It was pretty much mental torture," Brinton says. "To this day, I still have light pain when I shake hands with another male."^{24, 25}

On November 14, 2014, Brinton spoke at the United Nations in Geneva, Switzerland to testify of the alleged abuse he suffered from an unnamed licensed therapist. According to CNSNews.com, Brinton "testified about the licensed psychotherapist who tied his arms down, wrapped his hands in hot copper coils, and stuck needles in his finger to channel electric

22 Balkholm, J. (March 25, 2015). "Who Doesn't Oppose Child Abuse?" Retrieved online at: <http://www.fpiw.org/blog/2015/03/25/doesnt-oppose-child-abuse/>

23 Kutner, B. (January 26, 2016). Virginia legislator compares being gay to cancer as ex-gay therapy bill voted down in Senate subcommittee. Retrieved online at: <http://www.gayrva.com/news/vnews/senator-compares-being-gay-to-cancer-as-ex-gay-therapy-bill-voted-down-in-sa-subcommittee/>


24 Sprigg, P. (August 27, 2014). "Ex-Gay Therapy Debate: The Truth Matters." Retrieved online at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/ex-gay-therapy-debate-the-truth-matters-12547/>

25 Steinmetz, K. (June 23, 2014). "The New Campaign to End Gay Conversion Therapy." Retrieved online at: <http://time.com/2907989/bornperfect-gay-conversion-reparative-therapy/>

shocks whenever he was shown a picture of men kissing."²⁶ Even more troubling, Brinton later authored (with the help of NCLR staff) a fundraising letter that was published on the NCLR blog of his experience at the United Nations:

November 18, 2014

Samuel Brinton: "A Therapist Told Me I Was Sick" by NCLR Staff



#BornPerfect Campaign Leader Samuel Brinton Addresses U.N. Co...

I never imagined I would be in Geneva, Switzerland, but last week there I was. I was no tourist. I was there to testify before a United Nations Committee. To say this was surreal would be a vast understatement.

In the two minutes that I was given to address the U.N.'s Committee Against Torture, I fought back tears as I described how a psychotherapist, at the request of my parents, tried to change my sexual orientation through conversion therapy when I was 10 years old.


You can help NCLR's #BornPerfect protect LGBT kids with your donation. Will you support us in our fight to end this dangerous and discredited practice?

I told the Committee how the therapist said I was sick, that God hated me, and that the government was exterminating all LGBT people. My voice shook as I detailed the physical abuse I endured in an effort to make me straight, including being restrained and physically hurt.

But last week, as part of NCLR's #BornPerfect campaign delegation, I was finally vindicated. Our testimony resulted in the Committee addressing the issue of conversion therapy with the U.S. State Department for the first time in history. We brought international awareness to conversion therapy, a dangerous and discredited practice that is still wreaking havoc in the lives of youth across the country.

As co-chair of the #BornPerfect Advisory Committee, I hope that my testimony will save other children across the U.S. and around the world. No one should ever be told that they need to change who they are. WE ARE ALL BORN PERFECT.

Will you help us in our fight to end this practice in the next five years by donating today?


Samuel Brinton
#BornPerfect Advisory Committee Co-Chair

While Brinton's story sounds compelling, it has yet to be confirmed by any legitimate source or news outlet. According to a 2014 article, some pro-gay media tried to verify this report—and couldn't.²⁷ Even Wayne Besen, the most rabid "anti-ex-gay" activist, declared, "[U]ntil he [Brinton] provides more information to verify his experience, he makes it impossible for us to use him as an example. Indeed, it would be grossly irresponsible for us to do so."²⁸

26 Hunter, M. (November 14, 2014). "LGBT Activists: UN Should Classify Gay Conversion Therapy as Torture." <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/melanie-hunter/lgbt-activists-un-should-classify-gay-conversion-therapy-torture>

27 "The Mystery Surrounding 'Driftwoods' Tortured Ex-Gay Survivor." (October 10, 2011). <http://www.queerty.com/the-mystery-surrounding-driftwoods-tortured-ex-gay-survivor-20111010>

28 Sprigg, P. (August 27, 2014). "Ex-Gay Therapy Debate: The Truth Matters." Retrieved online at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/ex-gay-therapy-debate-the-truth-matters-12547/>

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This method is guilt by association, a sleight of hand, and it permeates the SPLC's paper. The high powered and well-financed lawyers and professionals who work for the SPLC do know the difference between criticism that applies to some individuals in a group but not the whole group, between religious practice and psychotherapy, and between licensed and unlicensed, and they do know what they are doing when they use this deceptive practice.

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7. SPLC Opinion-Based Smears and Innuendoes Convey Sexual Orientation is Unchangeable, and Efforts to Change Do Not Include Aversive Therapy or Electric Shock But Regularly Lead to Suicide

In May 2016, the SPLC published a paper on its website titled: "Quacks: 'Conversion Therapists,' the Anti-LGBT Right, and the Demonization of Homosexuality."²⁹ The SPLC's "primary technique[s]" in its "Quacks" online paper are "opinion-based smears and innuendoes" and "smearing by association, some of the same techniques that another organization, the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR), documented in its complaint against the SPLC to the IRS."³⁰

The Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) is a megalithic organization with a war chest of hundreds of millions of dollars. Since it has the means to hire a multitude of attorneys and any other consultants it wishes, one can be rather sure this report represents what the SPLC considers the best case it has to offer against therapy that is open to a client's goal of sexual orientation or gender identity (SOG) change. With all the SPLC's resources, it should know whether its claims misrepresent current and scientifically accurate information or not.

The SPLC used the term "conversion therapy" about 250 times and never mentioned the terms actual psychotherapy providers use such as "sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE)," "sexual attraction fluidity exploration through therapy (SAFE-T)," or "heterosexual-affirming therapy."³¹ "Conversion therapy" is a term regularly used by opponents of real psychotherapy that is open to sexual orientation or gender identity (SOG) change. Even unlicensed religious practitioners generally do not use the term "conversion therapy." They may speak of "religiously-mediated sexual orientation change efforts." Why avoid the actual terms in usage for the very subject of the paper?

The term, "conversion therapy" deceptively associates religious practice, "conversion," with the term appropriate for licensed professions, "therapy." Religious practices are not psychotherapy, and psychotherapy is not religious practice. The term "conversion therapy" also helps opponents lump unlicensed and licensed actors into one group. In this way, the SPLC can collect smears on a lay counselor, member of the clergy, or coach, none of whom are licensed psychotherapy professionals, and make it appear that such smears apply to all unlicensed and licensed actors.

This method is guilt by association, a sleight of hand, and it permeates the SPLC's paper. The high powered and well-financed lawyers and professionals who work for the SPLC do know the difference between criticism that applies to some individuals in a group but not the whole group, between religious practice and psychotherapy, and between licensed and unlicensed, and they do know what they are doing when they use this deceptive practice.

Anti-change therapy activists have scandals of their own. Some leaders have left, claimed to change their sexual orientation, and married an opposite sex partner. And there have been scandals of another sort. As Rosik said:

I would find it contemptible if someone argued that because some highly influential gay rights leaders have recently been fighting charges of felony sodomy and sexual abuse with teenage boys and felony possession of child pornography that this must be the case for all such leaders.³¹

29 Southern Poverty Law Center, Quacks: "Conversion Therapists," the Anti-BGBT Right, and the Demonization of Homosexuality, May 2016.

30 FAIR press release, April 5, 2017, <http://www.fairus.org/news/fair-files-formal-exhaustive-complaint-with-the-irs-splc-violated-its-tax-exempt-status-repeatedly>. The entire complaint can be found at http://www.fairus.org/DocServer/media/SPLC_Complaint.pdf. This complaint to the IRS about the SPLC used "opinion-based smears and innuendoes" and "smearing by association." We found the same.

31 C. Rosik, My conversation with a typical opponent of professional therapies that include change, Journal of Human Sexuality, 2016, p. 8. J. Manning, J. Terry Bean: Charges of sex with a minor cast shadow over gay rights crusader's accomplishments. The Oregonian, Dec. 4, 2014. Retrieved from http://www.oregonlive.com/politics/index.ssf/2014/12/post_166.html; S. Mays, Sex crime charges against Terry Bean will be dismissed; key witness won't testify. The Oregonian, Aug. 28, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2015/08/judge-dismisses-sex-crime-charge.html>; S. Mays, With star witness absent, sex crimes case against Terry Bean and ex-boyfriend will be dismissed. The Oregonian, Aug. 28, 2015; <http://www.oregonlive.com/portland/index.ssf/2015/08/judge-dismisses-sex-crime-charge.html>; K. Wilson & N. Jaquis, Terry Bean's problem: A prominent Portlander fights his reputation after a love affair goes wrong. Willamette Week, June 3, 2015. Retrieved from <http://www.week.com/portland/article-22648-terry-beans-problem.html>; V. Ho, S.F. gay rights advocate sentenced for child porn. SFGATE, 2016.

26 Hunter, M. (November 14, 2014). "LGBT Activists: UN Should Classify Gay Conversion Therapy as Torture." <http://www.cnsnews.com/news/article/melanie-hunter/lgbt-activists-un-should-classify-gay-conversion-therapy-torture>

27 "The Mystery Surrounding 'Driftwoods' Tortured Ex-Gay Survivor." (October 10, 2011). <http://www.queerty.com/the-mystery-surrounding-driftwoods-tortured-ex-gay-survivor-20111010>

28 Sprigg, P. (August 27, 2014). "Ex-Gay Therapy Debate: The Truth Matters." Retrieved online at: <http://www.christianpost.com/news/ex-gay-therapy-debate-the-truth-matters-12547/>

The SPLC itself specifically has the scandal that it has targeted organizations of traditional values on a hate map leading to a gunman opening fire at the Family Research Council.³² We doubt the SPLC would accept the accuracy of their smear-by-innuendo-and-association method if it were applied to itself.

The SPLC conveys deceptive perceptions indirectly not only about individuals who provide religious practices or professional psychotherapy. It also uses indirect methods to purvey false information about sexual orientation such as the falsehood that it cannot change. Here are some examples.

A Pew Research Center poll finds that 51% of Americans do not believe that gay men and lesbians can change their sexual orientation, while 36% think they can. Answering the same question for Pew a decade earlier, in 2003, 42% said sexual orientation could be changed and 42% said it could not.³³

The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force...warned that the ex-gay industry was undermining the battle for LGBT rights by suggesting that homosexuality is a choice, not an unchangeable condition like skin color.³⁴

The SPLC is careful not to put the generalization into its own mouth that sexual orientation never changes or is like skin color. Instead, it always presents the assertion from the mouths of others. There is a very good reason it is so careful. Research has established that the assertion is false. The organization may think if it cannot be pinned with actually stating a falsehood itself, it cannot be accused of being a purveyor of a falsehood. Thus, the SPLC shields its misrepresentations behind the assertions of others throughout the paper.

We will document that the American Psychological Association (APA) says in the *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology* (2014) (*APA Handbook or Handbook*) and other researchers show that sexual orientation changes for many who experience same-sex attractions. In addition, the co-editor-in-chief of the *Handbook* (Dr. Lisa Diamond) has been telling political activists since 2008 to stop the "born-that-way-and-can't-change false claim" because it harms those who change—most same-sex attracted individuals, as we will also later document. Yet the SPLC has continued to propagate this deception.

The SPLC paper also conveys the impression that sexual orientation is dichotomous, that is, that it predominantly comes in two types—"gay" or "straight," barely acknowledging bisexuality. We will show that the *APA Handbook* says this portrayal is false; the vast majority of same-sex attracted individuals are also attracted to the opposite sex, and those who are exclusively same-sex attracted are the minority. We will substantiate that the majority of individuals who are both-sex attracted experience changes in their sexual attraction, behavior, and identity self-label—all three. This is the case for both men and women and for both adolescents and adults. Most of their change is toward or to exclusive opposite-sex attraction. We will substantiate all of this.

The term "bisexual" is used only 2 times. In one of the two uses of the term bisexual, the paper says Ted Haggard, leader of the National Association of Evangelicals, had "intensive counseling with senior evangelicals for three weeks," was pronounced "completely heterosexual" by one of them, but later said "that if he were 21, he would consider himself bisexual."³⁵ We would question what would be accomplished in three weeks of "intensive counseling" with an apparently uncensored counselor in any case. But the SPLC seems to infer that if someone were to change from exclusive homosexual attraction to bisexual attraction, and did not change to exclusive heterosexual attraction, he would not have experienced sexual orientation change.

As we will show, most researchers and the *APA Handbook* would consider a change from exclusively homosexual attracted to bisexually attracted to be sexual orientation change. Even a change of one point on a five point continuum from exclusive heterosexual to most-

child-porn 6, 2014; Retrieved from <http://www.sfgate.com/crime/article/S-F-gay-rights-advocate-sentenced-for-child-porn-5292163.php>

32 Cratty, C & Pearson, M. (February 7, 2013). DC shooter wanted to kill as many as possible, prosecutors say. Retrieved online at: <http://www.cnn.com/2013/02/06/justice/dc-family-research-council-shooting/possible-prosecutors-say>

33 Ibid., p. 35.

34 SPLC, 2016, p. 9.

35 SPLC, 2016, p. 34.

contemporary form of talk therapy. RT, however, is a specific form of therapy pioneered by the late Dr. Joseph Nicolosi. Nicolosi laid out RT in his book, *Shame and Attachment Loss: The Practical Work of Reporative Therapy*.⁴⁴

Nicolosi considered reparative therapy appropriate for about 80% of men who seek professional psychotherapy for unwanted same-sex attraction. The SPLC uses the term RT frequently and as a synonym for any effort to change sexual orientation, even though they quote Chambers as correctly designating RT as a type of professional psychotherapy that not all therapists who are open to change use. By knowingly misusing the term, the SPLC emphasizes that some therapists think there could be something in same-sex attractions to repair, a possibility the SPLC denies, even though the APA acknowledges trauma could be a potentially causal factor of same-sex attractions because research has shown that,⁴⁵ and even though excellent research shows absence or loss of a biological parent—an attachment loss, especially the loss of the parent of the same sex as the child, is potentially causally related to same-sex attractions.⁴⁶

In this interview, Chambers reportedly said there were about 30 therapists in Exodus, and about 10% focused on RT, hence about 3 therapists focused on RT then. Therefore, according to the SPLC's report, only 30 members, or a tiny number of Exodus members, actually were licensed mental health professionals providing therapy that is open to change, 5 of which did not. Actively same-sex attracted members were not representative of professional sexual orientation change efforts. Also, notably, by the SPLC's report of Chambers own words, Chambers never experienced RT or probably any professional therapy that is open to a goal of change. Therefore, Chambers is not an example of a therapy failure. Nicolosi published his book on RT in 2009. He was still training a handful of people. Chambers did not know enough about it and did not try it.

It is possible that the men who gave their opinions that no one changed were using the erroneous model that sexual orientation comes in two discreet categories rather than a continuum, so if any amount of same-sex attraction remains, they might make the interpretation that no sexual orientation has occurred.

It is also possible that the men who testified that neither they nor anyone changed simply believed sexual orientation never changes for anyone, with or without therapy. A 2014 study gained insight into non-heterosexuals who held such a belief. These researchers studied spontaneous change, not change through therapy. In their non-representative study of non-heterosexual young adults, the researchers found, unsurprisingly, that the majority reported they had experienced spontaneous sexual attraction fluidity, some of them more than once. What was interesting was that the minority who had not experienced sexual attraction fluidity themselves, especially among men, more often believed sexual orientation is not changeable for all non-heterosexuals, contrary to findings in their study and in research broadly as we will later show.⁴⁷

Alan Chambers and some others said they did not change through religiously-mediated efforts and believed no one else did either. In the case of Alan Chambers, the former president of Exodus International, his view also was contrary to actual research specific to Exodus. There is a prospective, longitudinal study on religiously-mediated sexual orientation change efforts that was conducted with individuals who were participating in some programs of member organizations of Exodus. It has been published in a book and a peer reviewed journal.⁴⁸ The study showed that some individuals diminished their same-sex attraction, some

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The SPLC also leaves the reader with the impression that contemporary licensed mental health professionals generally claim they can make everyone go from exclusively gay to exclusively straight. However, licensed mental health professionals generally do not claim they can make anyone do anything, but they can assist individuals in the work they do in psychotherapy, and some individuals, though not all, make a significant and meaningful change through therapy.

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There is no credible scientific evidence that therapy that is open to change leads to harm, as the APA Task Force Report said in 2009, yet the SPLC repeatedly conveys it. The assertion of "leading with grim regularity to suicide" is a particularly egregious misrepresentation of therapy that is open to change provided by licensed mental health professionals.

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ly heterosexual to bisexual (attracted about equally to both sexes) to mostly homosexual to exclusive homosexual is considered change in modern research. Further, a change to bisexual or mostly heterosexual would allow an individual to live in a heterosexual relationship in accordance with the individual's desire.

The SPLC conveys the impression that no can go from exclusively same-sex attracted to exclusively opposite-sex attracted. Research shows some do make that kind of change, as we will document.

The SPLC also leaves the reader with the impression that contemporary licensed mental health professionals generally claim they can make everyone go from exclusively gay to exclusively straight. However, licensed mental health professionals generally do not claim they can make anyone do anything, but they can assist individuals in the work they do in psychotherapy, and some individuals, though not all, make a significant and meaningful change through therapy.⁴⁹

The SPLC also leaves the reader with the impression that therapy that is open to change harms many people. However, there is no scientific evidence that meets scientific standards for that claim, again made through the mouths of others whom the SPLC quotes. The "Report of the Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation" for the APA in 2009⁵⁰ said it was unable to conclude from scientific evidence whether gay affirmative therapy or therapy that is open to a client's goal of change is safe or effective.⁵¹

The vast majority of the SPLC paper is not about professional psychotherapy; it is about religious support groups, but the reader gets the impression that all of the tabloid smears of religious support groups apply to licensed professional psychotherapists. The following are examples of the SPLC's presentations in its paper of what some individuals believe about whether sexual orientation can change through religious support groups. These examples have the effect of conveying to the reader that sexual orientation is immutable or never changes through religiously-mediated practices and through professional psychotherapy.

John Paulk said that he did not believe that sexual orientation change was possible. He also said: "I do not believe that reparative therapy changes sexual orientation; in fact, it does harm to many people."⁵²

Michael Bussee, one of the 5 co-founders of Exodus International, said: "I never saw one of our members or other Exodus leaders or other Exodus members become heterosexual" and added that it had harmed many people.⁵³

Here are some quotes from an interview with Alan Chambers, former leader of Exodus International, whom the SPLC quotes extensively:

Alan Chambers...led his board to close down the largest religiously based conversion therapy group in the country.⁴¹

You've said that trying not to be gay is 'one big excruciating struggle, because it is impossible.'⁴²

...I publicly denounced reparative therapy in 2012 after repeated calls from reparative therapists offering me free counseling to 'cure' me of my same-sex attractions.⁴³

The term Reparative Therapy (RT) appears here. Therapy that is open to change generally is not a form of therapy but a therapist's openness to a client's goal of change using any

36 What Research Shows: NARTH's Response to the APA Claims on Homosexuality (Summary), p. 1, Family Watch International, http://www.familywatchinternational.org/foi/NARTH_what_research_shows.pdf; The summary was of a full article, J. Phelan, N. Whitehead, & P.M. Sutton, What research shows: NARTH's response to the APA claims on homosexuality: A Report of the scientific advisory committee of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, 2009, *Journal of Human Sexuality*, 1: 1-121. Available at https://media.wix.com/ugd/ect6e9_04d46d-5b704428bc26e478b33632.pdf

37 APA Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation. Report of the Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, 2009, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

38 Ibid., p. 3, 42, 83.

39 Ibid., pp. 9, 10-11, 12.

40 Ibid., p. 10.

41 Ibid., p. 11-12.

42 Ibid., p. 47.

43 Ibid., p. 46.

also developed heterosexual attraction, and some did not change. Out of all the subjects in the sample, there was one who reported change and later said he did not change. When Chambers took a position generalizing from his experience to the supposed experience of all members, he was wrong. Member organizations correctly disagreed with Chambers, left him, and formed new organizations (specifically, Restored Hope Network and later, Hope for Wholeness), effectively closing him down within a year of his taking his erroneous stand.

In addition to arguing indirectly that sexual orientation cannot change generally, and cannot change in therapy, the SPLC makes a claim coming from its own mouth directly that efforts to change sexual orientation through therapy are harmful. "The 'science' examined here actively harms people, leading with grim regularity to suicide, depression and an array of self-destructive behaviors."⁵⁴

There is no credible scientific evidence that therapy that is open to change leads to harm, as the APA Task Force Report said in 2009, yet the SPLC repeatedly conveys it. The assertion of "leading with grim regularity to suicide" is a particularly egregious misrepresentation of therapy that is open to change provided by licensed mental health professionals.

The SPLC also said: "Leelah Alcorn, 17-year-old transgender girl in Ohio, commits suicide... her parents... forced her to go to a Christian-based conversion therapy program."⁵⁵

Leelah's suicide note did not say her parents "forced her to go to a Christian-based conversion therapy program." It says the parents provided therapy from Christian therapists.⁵⁶ The SPLC merely projects that onto the story, or assumes that all Christian counselors do "conversion therapy," which, of course, is far from the truth, since most have not been trained in it.

Even if Leelah's therapist were so trained, we believe the therapist would not do that kind of work with Leelah. Leelah said in her note that she did not want therapy to change her gender identity. A contemporary licensed professional psychotherapist, Christian or not, who is open to a client's goal of change in gender identity would accept that Leelah did not have a goal of change in gender identity and would not pursue that therapy goal with her. Contrary to what opponents regularly say, therapists open to change do not coerce a therapy goal.

The suicide note also cites disappointment in peers, saying, "I finally had my friends back. They were extremely excited to see me and talk to me, but only at first. Eventually they realized they didn't actually give a s**t about me, and I felt even lonelier than I did before. The only friends I thought I had only liked me because they saw me five times a week. After a summer of having almost no friends..." Leelah reports multiple stressors.

The SPLC implies from one sensational and questionable story that therapists who are open to a client's goal of change have clients' suicidal right and left. There are more examples of statements in the SPLC paper show their use of innuendo to misrepresent therapy open to sexual orientation or gender identity change.

The SPLC says: "[E]lectric shock therapy...has virtually disappeared at this point."⁵⁷

We note that even the SPLC can no longer assert SOCE uses an electric shock method, but still brings it up to keep the association ongoing. Electric shock was an experimental and small part of mainstream behavior modification therapy in the 1960's to early 1980's that was not created just for unwanted sexual behaviors. It was used for other unwanted behaviors such as smoking cessation and control of alcohol abuse.⁵⁸

Another example from the SPLC is:

Mediated Sexual Orientation Change. *Journal of Sex & Marital Therapy*, 2011, 37(5), 404-427.

49 SPLC, 2016, p. 4.

50 K. Corcoran & C. Spargo, Suicide note of 17-year-old transgender girl is deleted from her Tumblr page after her Christian parents demand message blaming them for her death be removed, Jan. 3, 2015, <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/news/article-3895318/Heartbreaking-suicide-note-17-year-old-transgender-girl-DELETED-Tumblr-page-candell-vigils-held-honor.html>

51 SPLC, 2016, p. 29.

52 A.D. Byrd & J.E. Phelan, Facts and myths on early aversion techniques in the treatment of unwanted homosexual attractions (no date), <https://www.narth.com/aversion-techniques>

44 J.J. Nicolosi, *Shame and Attachment Loss: The Practical Work of Reporative Therapy*, Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP Academic, 2009.

45 B. Mustak, L. Kuper, and G. Geene, Chapter 19: Development of sexual orientation and identity, In Tolman, D., & Diamond, L., Co-Editors-in-Chief, *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, Volume 1. Person Based Approaches, 2014, Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

46 Frisch, M. and Hvidt, A., Childhood family correlates of heterosexual and homosexual marriages: A national cohort study of two million Danes, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 2006, 35(5):537-547; Francis, A. M., Family and sexual orientation: The family-demographic correlates of homosexuality in men and women, *Journal of Sex Research*, 2008, 45(4):371-377, DOI:10.1080/00224490802983575; JR, Udry & K. Chantala, Risk factors differ according to same-sex and opposite sex interest, *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 2005, 37:481-497, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0021932004006765>.

47 Katz-Wise, S.L., & Hyde, J.S. (2014). Sexual Fluidity and Related Attitudes and Beliefs Among Young Adults with a Same-Gender Orientation. *Arch Sex Behav*, 2015; 44(5):1459-70.

48 S. L. Jones & M. A. Yarhouse, Ex-Gays? A Longitudinal Study of Religiously Mediated Change in Sexual Orientation, 2007, Downer's Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press; S. L. Jones & M. A. Yarhouse, A Longitudinal Study of Attempted

Historically, attempts to 'cure' gay people of their homosexuality have been marked by real horror stories—the use of castration, shock therapy, brain surgery, aversion therapy, the implantation of a heterosexual man's testicles and more.⁵³

None of this bears any resemblance to contemporary professional therapy by licensed professionals, but there is little doubt that reporting this is intended to create such an association in the mind of the reader. By saying electric shock therapy and aversion therapy are historical, that is, not current, the SPLC is creating a current association between electric shock and archaic forms of medicine with contemporary talk therapy.

What the SPLC has actually established inadvertently is that even the SPLC—a staunch opponent of therapy that is open to change, with all its resources to research the matter and with its high motivation to find every possible flaw, acknowledges that such therapy does not use electric shock therapy or aversion therapy.

The SPLC also acknowledges a small number of researchers who had something positive to say about change therapy. Given that there are over 600 research publications, mostly peer reviewed, that span 125 years, the SPLC is quite minimalistic. These researchers pose a problem for the SPLC's disparagement of therapy that is open to change. We will illustrate how the SPLC deals with them.

Even Masters and Johnson, the pioneering sexologists who were the first to show that homosexuality is common, claimed that gay people could be converted.⁵⁴

Again, the inappropriate term "converted" falsely associates professional psychotherapy with religious practice in the mind of the reader. This is a misrepresentation. Saying only that the researchers "claimed" same-sex attracted individuals can change is an understatement. Masters and Johnson actually published research showing they had a high success rate at sexual orientation change therapy, using the behavioristic methods of their day (but not electric shock), that were similar to the methods by which Alfred Kinsey, arguably the father of the scientific study into homosexuality and himself a bisexual, also successfully helped homosexual men change sexual orientation.⁵⁵

Notably, the SPLC embedded Master's and Johnson in the context of truly archaic medical practices such as an experiment with a testicle transplant, an "icepick" lobotomy, convulsive therapies using drugs, and Nazi experiments, as though these have any bearing on licensed mental health professionals using contemporary talk therapies. Clearly, the purpose is to create associations in the readers' minds that flagrantly misrepresent contemporary therapy and distract the reader from actual research showing change therapy that is safe and effective.

Sigmund Freud is also mentioned:

But it was Sigmund Freud, the father of psychoanalysis, whose ideas about homosexuality, developed in the first decades of the 20th century, formed the basis of what most conversion therapists today believe. Although Freud did not demonize gay people...he did see homosexuality in both men and women as a former arrested psychosexual development...the triadic family... A closely related theory blames early childhood trauma like sexual molestation... Today, the consensus of the vast majority of psychologists, psychiatrists and other counselors is that the model is entirely false.⁵⁶

This passage conveys that the link between childhood trauma like sexual molestation and same-sex attractions is a false model. The APA takes a position that sexual variations are normal, but since its 2014 Handbook, at least, is not consistent with that view. The APA Handbook said there is a potentially causal link between documented cases of childhood molestation and having a same-sex relationship.⁵⁷ The APA Handbook also says there are "psychoanalytic" factors in same-sex attraction.⁵⁸ Excellent research shows there is also a potentially causal link between same-sex attraction, behavior, and self-label identity and absence of a biological parent, especially the parent of the same-sex as the child, as through death, divorce, end of

53 Ibid., p. 38.
54 Ibid., p. 7.
55 W. Pomeroy, Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research, 1972, N.Y.: Harper and Row, Pub., pp. 72-75.
56 Op cit.
57 Mustanski, Kuper, & Greene, 2014, 1:609-610.
58 Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2014, 1:583, in APA Handbook.

Again, the inappropriate term "converted" falsely associates professional psychotherapy with religious practice in the mind of the reader.

Through this illustration and others, it is clear that the SPLC is a bully that tries to destroy volunteer-run religious support groups and psychotherapy for victims of sexual molestation and parent loss linked to same-sex attractions through suppressing, denying, and misrepresenting accurate scientific information and through viciously perpetrating falsehoods and deception.

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More evidence of the SPLC's practices of using "opinion-based smears and innuendos" as though they were educational and of violating governmental regulations comes from a 2017 Complaint against the SPLC to the IRS filed by the Federation for American Immigration Reform (FAIR). A press release published by FAIR that summarizes their complaint is titled, "FAIR Files Formal Exhaustive Complaint with the IRS: SPLC Violated Its Tax Exempt Status Repeatedly in the Last Election Cycle Alleges FAIR."⁶³

The following quotes are from FAIR's press release summary of the complaint and address SPLC smear tactics:

The SPLC used its tried and true formula of opinion-based smears and innuendos - tactics that it claims shield it from liability suits - to engage in blatant political activity masquerading as 'teaching tolerance.' The complaint reiterates that 'smear[ing] by association' is a 'primary technique of the SPLC'....

According to IRS rules, organizations are not deemed educational, for instance, if their 'principal function is the mere presentation of unsupported opinion', if they 'fail [to] provide a factual foundation for the viewpoint or position being advocated' or they lack a 'full and fair exposition of the pertinent facts' which 'permit[s] an individual or the public to form an independent opinion or conclusion.'

These statements from the FAIR complaint also accurately describe the SPLC 2016 paper published on its website.

C. Summary

The purpose of this section was to highlight a few of the more egregious examples of false and misleading statements by the HRC, SPLC, and NCLR, their colleagues, and spokespersons.

Based on public statements on their websites, the NTFTE can now prove that these three organizations worked together, officially, in many of the campaigns described above. At the very least, it is clear they have cooperated with each other in other campaigns, spreading lies and providing misleading and false information to state liaisons (such as Garden State Equality) and actively promoted false stories of therapy torture, such as Brielle Goldani and NCLR spokesperson Samuel Brinton, while supporting persons who are providing misleading statements in front of state legislatures, such as the NCLR's spokesperson, Matthew Shurka, and Troy Stevenson, former Executive Director of Garden State Equality.

Additionally, SPLC also admits to working in cooperation with figures such as Wayne Besen, an active purveyor of tabloid-style journalism that regularly spins half-truths and lies of SOCE therapy on his website. In many cases, these three organizations (including Wayne Besen's Truth Wins Out) actively fundraise by promoting false and misleading statements about SOCE therapy. We believe this constitutes a clear violation of the Federal Trade Commission's consumer fraud laws.

We also want to acknowledge that while many additional inaccuracies have been told in front of state legislatures in the last five years by gay activists and other organizations working in cooperation with the HRC, SPLC, and NCLR, it would, however, be virtually impossible to document all of the fraudulent testimony and misleading statements. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of additional examples of fraudulent and misleading statements that exist in the public record of each of the twenty-five or so states that have introduced bills to ban SOCE therapy for minors.

IV. PETITIONERS' (LICENSED THERAPISTS AND CLIENTS) STATEMENT AND REQUEST

The Petitioners respectfully request that the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) investigate and put an end to the damaging, deceptive, and misleading hate campaigns of the SPLC, HRC and NCLR.

Pursuant to the FTC's mission to protect consumers from egregious, unfair, deceptive and fraudulent practices, in violation of Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act, we request that the FTC take enforcement action to stop the deceptive practices promoted by the SPLC, HRC and NCLR, including advertising, marketing, and other business practices in all

63 FAIR press release, April 5, 2017, http://www.bizjournals.com/prnewswire/press_releases/2017/04/05/DC54600; Find the full complaint at http://www.fairus.org/DocServer/media/SPLC_Complaint.pdf

We also want to acknowledge that while many additional inaccuracies have been told in front of state legislatures in the last five years by gay activists and other organizations working in cooperation with the HRC, SPLC, and NCLR, it would, however, be virtually impossible to document all of the fraudulent testimony and misleading statements. There are dozens, if not hundreds, of additional examples of fraudulent and misleading statements that exist in the public record of each of the twenty-five or so states that have introduced bills to ban SOCE therapy for minors.

Despite the abundance of the historical and present day evidence of more than 125 years determining that traditional psychotherapy for unwanted SSA is effective in changing sexual attraction, behavior, and/or identity and is as effective as therapy for any other behavioral or emotional issue, Respondents' hate campaigns continue to mislead the public and pose serious health and safety risks to consumers, including the increased risk of death by suicide.

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parent co-habitation, or unknown paternity, and especially during the first six years of life and, for girls, in the case of a mother's death during adolescence. Denying these realities suppresses knowledge from individuals who have been injured and stand to benefit from accurate knowledge.

Another religious support group is brought up as the SPLC focuses on its lawsuit against JONAH (Jews Offering New Alternatives to Healing):

The judge in the case barred almost all testimony from the six experts proffered by the defendants, saying that 'the theory that homosexuality is a disorder is not novel but—like the notion that the earth is flat and the sun revolves around it—instead is outdated and refuted.'⁶⁴

The SPLC makes much of its victory over JONAH. JONAH was a two volunteer non-profit dependent for its defense on the pro bono services of a small law firm going up against the SPLC with its multitude of attorneys and probably quarter of a billion dollar resources. As a non-profit, JONAH simply engaged in no commercial activity, a requirement to be covered by the Consumer Fraud Act. JONAH's attorney and a co-author summarized:

The Court allowed the New Jersey Consumer Fraud Act (CFA) to be applied to a religious organization and a non-profit organization for the first time ever, and allowed recovery for non-economic damages, even though the New Jersey CFA specifically disallows such recovery. In retrospect, this was the first sign that the lawsuit had a pre-determined outcome.⁶⁵

The Court conducted the trial on the assumption that same-sex attraction, unlike seemingly every other aspect of human experience, is remarkably never affected by trauma. As we have said and will later document, however, research shows potentially causal links between childhood sexual molestation and parent loss with same-sex attraction.⁶⁴

Through this illustration and others, it is clear that the SPLC is a bully that tries to destroy volunteer-run religious support groups and psychotherapy for victims of sexual molestation and parent loss linked to same-sex attractions through suppressing, denying, and misrepresenting accurate scientific information and through viciously perpetrating falsehoods and deception.

The SPLC also reports research of another famous clinician and researcher:

The NARTH Institute/Alliance for Therapeutic Choice presents 'initial data' from a longitudinal study of 102 psychotherapy patients at NARTH founder Joseph Nicolosi's Thomas Aquinas Psychological Clinic. Nicolosi and Alliance President Carolyn Pala claim that 12 months of data show 'statistically significant reductions in distress and improvements in well-being, significant movement toward heterosexual identity, and significant increases in heterosexual desires and thoughts with accompanying significant decreases in homosexual thoughts and desires.'⁶⁶

This study is being conducted to meet the recommendations of the APA Task Force in 2009 for research that can show that therapy causes sexual orientation change and is safe. The SPLC has to include this research so as not to be embarrassed by critics pointing it out and so as not to be accused of not offering other views to the reader. Ironically, the SPLC surrounds the study with a chorus of unsupported opinions that SOCE is "potentially harmful" in an effort to dilute the study's impact on the reader. But this credible evidence that SOCE is safe and effective undermines the position of the SPLC that it has spread in courts and legislatures—that sexual orientation never changes, especially never changes through therapy, and that efforts to change it through therapy are harmful. The result has been depriving children of therapy—children who are victims of child abuse and other trauma that forced same-sex attraction on them. Another result has been discouraging adults who were such children from even trying therapy that addresses their childhood trauma.

59 SPLC, 2016, p. 4.
60 L. Haynes & C. L. Mandri, JONAH case: The time for legal protection for sexual orientation change efforts is now, <http://www.wnd.com/2017/02/sexual-orientation-change-efforts-under-attack/>
61 Mustanski, Kuper, & Greene, 2014, 1:609-610.
62 SPLC, 2016, p. 37.

forms, including through their websites, brochures, videos, social media, fundraising e-mails, and other advertisements and promotional materials.

A. The Respondents Violations of Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission

The Three Respondents' hate campaigns are intended to provide the public little or no choice in how to respond to unwanted same-sex attraction (SSA). The hate campaign propaganda is based on the false premise that being lesbian, gay, or bisexual is an unvarying and inborn characteristic of humanity.

There is no competent and reliable scientific evidence that has determined that SSA is fixed and not fluid. There is no scientific evidence that people are born gay. For those who are unhappy feeling SSA, a choice should be permitted. In fact, over the past 125 years there has been substantial valid and reliable scientific evidence that traditional therapy can work as well for unwanted SSA as it does for any other unwanted human behavior. Claims by respondents that therapies for SSA are ineffective are false and harmful to the public. Further, statistics show that both male and female homosexuals experience serious physical and emotional health risks as a result of their sexual behavior.

Despite the abundance of the historical and present day evidence of more than 125 years determining that traditional psychotherapy for unwanted SSA is effective in changing sexual attraction, behavior, and/or identity and is as effective as therapy for any other behavioral or emotional issue, Respondents' hate campaigns continue to mislead the public and pose serious health and safety risks to consumers, including the increased risk of death by suicide.⁶⁴

Section 5 of the Federal Trade Commission Act (FTC Act) prohibits unfair and deceptive acts and practices.⁶⁵ To determine whether business practices are deceptive, the FTC considers three elements.⁶⁶

First, it considers whether there has been a representation, omission, or practice that is likely to mislead the consumer. Second, it examines the practice from the perspective of a consumer acting reasonably in the circumstances. Third, it asks whether the representation, omission or practice is a "material" one. Neither an intent to deceive nor actual consumer harm is required to find an act deceptive under the FTC Act.⁶⁷ This analysis focuses on the risk of consumer harm.

Both expressed misrepresentations and implied misrepresentations are violations of the FTC Act. If a claim is likely to be misleading without qualifying information, the qualifying information must be disclosed in a "clear and conspicuous" manner. Clear and conspicuous disclosure is required because the FTC focuses on the overall net impression of an advertisement, and if a disclosure is not seen or comprehended, it will not change the net impression consumers take from an advertisement. A disclosure can qualify or limit a claim to avoid a misleading impression; it cannot, however, cure a false claim.⁶⁸

The FTC has also issued rules for specific areas relating to deceptive acts or practices, such as the use of testimonials in advertising.⁶⁹

64 What Research Shows: NARTH's Response to the APA Claims on Homosexuality (Summary), p. 1, Family Watch International, http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fwi/NARTH_what_research_shows.pdf; The summary was of a full article, J. Phelan, N. Whitehead, & P.M. Sutton, What research shows: NARTH's response to the APA claims on homosexuality: A report of the scientific advisory committee of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, 2009, *Journal of Human Sexuality*, 1: 1-121. Available at https://media.wix.com/ugd/ect6e9_04d4fd-5b7e044289c8e47dbaf13632.pdf
65 15 U.S.C. paragraph 45
66 FTC Policy Statement on Deception (1983), appended to Clifflade Associates, Inc., 103 F.T.C. 110, 174 (1984), available at <http://www.ftc.gov/bcp/condom/ftcstmt/ftc-decept.htm>
67 See FTC vs Verity International, Ltd., 443 F.3d 48, 63 (2nd Cir. 2006)
68 See FTC.com Disclosures: How to Make Effective Disclosures in Digital Advertising 5 (2013), available at: <https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/press-releases/ftc-staff-revises-online-advertising-disclosure-guidelines/1303120disclosures.pdf> ("[A disclosure] cannot cure a false claim. If a disclosure provides information that contradicts a material claim, the disclosure will not be sufficient to prevent the ad from being deceptive.")
69 FTC, Guides Concerning the Use of Endorsements and Testimonials in Advertising, 16 CFR Part 255, available at https://www.ftc.gov/sites/default/files/attachments/press-releases/ftc-publishes-final-guides-governing-endorsements-testimonials/091005revised_endorsementguides.pdf

B. The "Born Gay" Lie is a Deliberate Hoax Perpetrated by the Respondents

According to Kirk and Madsen, authors of *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90's*, the central role to be played by gay victimhood in the homosexual revolution, was that gay strategists would espouse the theory that homosexuals are "born that way" - in other words, that their sexual orientation is already determined at birth-whether or not there existed any scientific basis for such a claim. Individuals developing the hate campaigns of the HRC, SPLC, and NCLR, according to Kirk and Madsen, counsel their followers that they should portray themselves as victims of circumstances who "no more chose their sexual orientation than they did, say, their height, skin color, talents, or limitations." Revealingly, gay individuals such as Kirk and Madsen stress the need for homosexuals to stand behind the "Born Gay" theory—even though the authors themselves recognize its invalidity: "For all practical purposes, gays should be considered to have been born gay—even though sexual orientation, for most humans, seems to be the product of a complex interaction between innate predispositions and environmental factors during childhood and early adolescence."^{70, 71}

The need to portray gays as victims is inseparably linked to the "Born Gay" hypothesis and needs to be addressed directly.

Jan Clausen, a former leader of New York's lesbian community (later expelled by her comrades for marrying a man) details how gay advocates developed this "born gay" fictive science as a tactic to influence public perceptions of sexual identity: "Fueled by the prestige of contemporary genetic science, the craze for biological explanations of all sorts of human behavior has given boost to 'born that way' theories of erotic attraction." Such pressure from "determinist" quarters, as well as "high profile campaigns for basic rights for gay men and lesbians" resulted in "obsessive media coverage of scientists' efforts to identify possible biological influences on sexuality," which, as the author herself acknowledges, were "commonly reported in oversimplified terms that foster notions of genetic determination not claimed by the researchers themselves."⁷²

It bears stressing that as of the date of this publication, no genetic earmark distinguishing homosexuals from heterosexuals has been identified. So far as science has been able to discover, homosexuals and heterosexuals are genetically indistinguishable.⁷³ Moreover, as noted in

"People very much want to find simple answers... A gene for this, a gene for that..."

Human behavior is much more complicated than that."

A 1993 scientific literature critique by Byne and Parsons in Archives of General Psychiatry reviewed more than 130 major studies on the subject and found no evidence favoring sexual orientation being either genetically or biologically determined

70 Madsen, H. & Mashall, K. (1991). *After the Ball: How America Will Conquer Its Fear and Hatred of Gays in the 90's*. Plume, p. 184.
71 Some of this text has been adapted from material published in: *Light in the Closet: Torah, Homosexuality, and the Power to Change*, Los Angeles: Red Heifer Press, 2d printing, 2009.
72 Jan Claussen, *Apples & Oranges: My Journey Through Sexual Identity*, Boston & New York: Houghton Mifflin (1999), p. 235.

73 Not one of the researchers commonly cited by gay activists has reported anything even close to proving the genetic nature of sexual orientation. Not one study claiming results favorable to the "gay gene" theory has ever been replicated under the scrutiny of rigorous experimental controls. The three most cited studies are not only seriously flawed, but the authors themselves have admitted that those studies should not be cited as proof of the gay gene theory. For example:

1. Dean Hamer claimed his study showed a statistically significant correlation between homosexual orientation and the genetic sequence of the top of the X chromosome. His study has been widely criticized for lacking a control group and for a statistical methodology that, according to charges by a former research colleague, was flawed by data selectively chosen to enhance Hamer's thesis. Even Dr. Hamer admitted that "These genes do not cause people to become homosexuals...the biology of personality is much more complicated than that." *Time*, April 27, 1998, cited in Chad Thompson, *The Homophobia Stops Here: Addressing the Ex Gay Perspective in Public Schools*, Des Moines: In Query (2004), p. 10.
2. In an attempt to show that sexuality is hard-wired into the brain via the hypothalamus, Simon LeVay examined the corpses of 19 homosexuals who died of AIDS complications and compared them with a group of 16 male and 6 female corpses he presumed were heterosexual. His debatable conclusion noted a difference in the size of a specific neuron group (NA H3). His results, too, could never be replicated. Shortly after the study's publication, an openly homosexual reporter correctly observed, "It turns out that LeVay doesn't know anything about the sexual orientation of his control group." Critiquing LeVay's claim that "he knows his control group are heterosexual because their brains are different from HIVer corpses," the same commentator jibes, "Sorry, doctor, this is circular logic. You can use the sample to prove the theory or vice versa, but not both at the same time." Michael Botkin, "Salt and Pepper," *The Bay Area Reporter*, September 6, 1991, pp. 21, 24, as quoted in Anton M. Marco, "Gay Marriage," <http://www.marcho.com/docs/marco.html>. LeVay himself is on record as stating: "The most common mistake people make in interpreting my work" is either that "homosexuality is genetic" or that it can prove "a genetic cause for being gay." Discover, March, 1994, as cited in Thompson, supra, p. 9. Hence, in spite of the torrents of propaganda about claimed differences - versus "heterosexual" brains, no credible evidence has yet been found to support such claims. As Masters & Johnson conclude, "no serious scientist" would apply the "simple cause-effect relationship of the genetic theory of homosexuality." Wm. Masters, Virginia Johnson, Robert Koldofsky, *Human Sexuality*, Boston: Little Brown & Co. (2d ed. 1985), p. 411.

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so biased and ignorant that they were unable to see the huge flaws and [are] essentially ignorant of the literature."⁷⁴

3. The media was quick to carry Bogaert's claims but not the criticisms. Dr. Stanton Jones noted in his review:
 - a. Bogaert [then] analyzed two smaller nationally representative samples, finding an exceptionally weak "older brother" effect only for same-sex attraction (and no effect for same-sex behavior).⁷⁵
 - b. Bogaert then assessed "an independent . . . and representative sample eight times the size those of his previous studies, in which he found that the older brother effect had disappeared."⁷⁶
 - c. A study of two million Danish subjects⁷⁸ and another of 10,000 American adolescents also identified no "older brother" effect.⁷⁶

The genetic hypothesis of same-sex sexual orientation has long held sway in the media, and twin studies helped propel this. Michael Bailey and colleagues conducted numerous studies in an attempt to show a statistically significant concordance of homosexuality in identical twins. Since identical twins share the same gene pool, the existence of a "gay gene" should have produced a near 100% rate of concordance. However, the highest percentage ever tabulated was just over 50%. When Bailey tried to replicate his findings with an Australian population of twins, his new study showed homosexuality occurring in less than half the number claimed in his original study. Dr. Neil Whitehead has extensively analyzed these studies and debunked the genetic theories.⁷⁷

Prof. Jones wrote that in a 1991 Archives of General Psychiatry study, J. Bailey claimed that the concordance rate for homosexuality was 52 percent in identical male twin pairs.⁸⁰ Bailey had second thoughts about how his study subjects were recruited through advertisements in Chicago's gay community (multiple biases). He next examined samples from the Australian Twin Registry, producing an identical male twin homosexual orientation concordance rate of 20 percent with simple descriptive matching at 11 percent. Bailey reported that the genetic contribution to homosexual orientation failed to show statistical significance, but the media did not tune in.⁸⁰

A 2010 study of the Swedish Twin Registry found only 9.8 percent of identical male twin pairs matching for homosexual orientation.⁸⁰

Dr. Francis Collins, who was the director of the Human Genome Project at the National Institutes for Health stated: "... the likelihood that the identical twin of a homosexual male will also be gay is about 20% (compared with 2-4 percent of males in the general population), indicating that sexual orientation is genetically influenced but not hardwired by DNA, and that whatever genes are involved represent predispositions, not predeterminations."⁸¹

Per Dr. Neil Whitehead's analysis: "... if one identical twin—male or female—has SSA, the chances are only about 10 percent that the co-twin also has it. In other words, identical twins usually differ for SSA."⁸²

82 <http://www.narth.com/docs/bogaert.html>
83 A. F. Bogaert (2003), "Number of older brothers and sexual orientation: New tests and the attraction/behavior distinction in two national probability samples," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84 (3), 644-652.
84 A. F. Bogaert (2010), "Physical development and sexual orientation in men and women: An analysis of NATSAL-2000," *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39, 110-116.
85 M. Frisch, & A. Hviid (2006), "Childhood family correlates of heterosexual and homosexual marriages: A national cohort study of two million Danes," *Archives of Sexual Behavior* 35(5), 533-547.
86 A. M. Francis (2008), "Family and sexual orientation: The family-demographic correlates of homosexuality in men and women," *Journal of Sex Research*, 45, 371-377.
87 See Whitehead, N. www.mygenes.com.
88 J. M. Bailey & C. P. Pillard, "A genetic study of male sexual orientation," 1991, *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 48, 1081-1096.
89 J. M. Bailey, M.P. Dunne, N. G. Martin, "Genetic and environmental influences on sexual orientation and its correlation with twin samplings," 2000, *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 78 (3), 524-536.
90 N. Långström, Ö. Rahman, E. Carlström, & P. Lichtenstein, "Genetic and environmental effects on same-sex sexual behavior: A population study of twins in Sweden," 2010, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 39, 75-80.
91 Byrd, A.D., "Homosexuality Is Not Hardwired," Concludes Dr. Francis S. Collins, Head of The Human Genome Project. [NARTH.com](http://www.narth.com). April 4, 2007.
92 <http://www.narth.com/docs/ismoinr.html>.

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the highly respected British Medical Journal: "From an evolutionary perspective, genetically determined homosexuality would have become extinct long ago because of reduced reproduction."⁷⁹

C. Evidence Against the Genetic/Biological Argument for Homosexuality

Genetics researcher Neil Risch noted in an August 1998 Newsweek article that the public has misunderstood behavioral genetics. "People very much want to find simple answers. . . . A gene for this, a gene for that. . . . Human behavior is much more complicated than that."⁷⁹

Researchers Dar-Nimrod & Heine conclude:

As there are no known complex human behaviors in which genetics render the actor unable to resist performing a behavior, we contend that genetic etiological accounts should not serve as the basis for moral evaluations. . . . There are many other sources of influence at play. . . . Furthermore, the amount of influence that genes have on behaviors is considerably smaller than one might think.⁷⁹

The three rules of behavioral genetics by genetics researcher Erik Turkheimer (University of Virginia) are:⁷⁷

1. All human behavioral traits are heritable.
2. The effect of being raised in the same family is smaller than the effect of genes.
3. A substantial portion of the variation in complex human behavioral traits is not accounted for by the effects of genes or families.

A 1993 scientific literature critique by Byne and Parsons in Archives of General Psychiatry reviewed more than 130 major studies on the subject and found no evidence favoring sexual orientation being either genetically or biologically determined.⁷⁸

In 1987, sociologist Lee Ellis proposed the Maternal Stress Theory, which argues that maternal neurohormones functioned in determining the sexual orientation of a fetus.⁷⁹ In January 2012, psychology professor Stanton Jones posted an essay: "Sexual orientation and reason: On the implications of false beliefs about homosexuality." Jones details three primary theories in the debate regarding biological origins of same-sex sexual orientation: Maternal stress, fraternal birth order, and genetics. In reviewing Ellis' work on Maternal Stress Theory, Jones found strong selection bias in Ellis' study in that Ellis surveyed mothers of gay sons while the mothers were being instructed about maternal stress theory itself.⁸⁰

In 2003, Anthony Bogaert of Canada's Brock University published a survey study showing that fraternal birth order of men, specifically the number of older brothers born to the same mother, correlated to increased chances of homosexual orientation. The theoretical explanation was that the mother's immune system became sensitized to male-derived proteins.⁸¹

1. Recruitment bias in the study led to non-representative sampling.
2. Canadian Psychiatrist Joseph Berger, M.D., a Distinguished Fellow with the American Psychiatric Association, said: "It [Bogaert's study] is rubbish. It should never have been published. I suspect it was not peer-reviewed properly or was reviewed by someone

74 Miron Baron, "Genetic Linkage and Male Homosexual Orientation," *British Medical Journal*, Vol. 307 (Aug. 7, 1993), p. 337, cited in Peter Sprigg and Timothy Daley (eds.), *Getting It Straight: What The Research Shows About Homosexuality*, Family Research Council, Washington, D.C. (2004), p. 13.
75 Leland, J. & M. Miller, "Convert?" *Newsweek*, August 17, 1998, p. 49.
76 Dar-Nimrod, L. & Heine, S.J. (2011b). Some thoughts on essence placeholders, interactionism, and heritability: Reply to Haslam (2011) and Turkheimer (2011). *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(5), 829-833.
77 Current Directions in Psychological Science, Vol. 9, N. 5, Oct. 2000, 160-164.
78 Byne, W. & Parsons, B. (1993), "Human sexual orientation: the biologic theories reappraised." *Archives of General Psychiatry*, 50, p. 229-239.
79 L. Ellis and A. Ames (1987), "Neurohormonal functioning and sexual orientation: A theory of homosexuality-heterosexuality," *Psychological Bulletin*, 101, 233-238.
80 Stanton L. Jones (January, 2012), "Sexual orientation and reason: On the implications of false beliefs about homosexuality," digitally published at www.christianethics.org.
81 A. F. Bogaert (2003), "Number of older brothers and sexual orientation: New tests and the attraction/behavior distinction in two national probability samples," *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 84 (3), 644-652.

Dr. Erik Turkheimer, psychologist and behavioral genetics researcher, indicates there are two reasons why identical twins raised in the same family do not have identical outcomes. One is measurement error. The other: "... is the self-determinative ability of humans to chart a course for their own lives. . . . in a phrase, is free will."⁸³

In a review by Kelly Servick in 2014, it was reported that Bailey and Sanders presented another X-linked "gay gene" study. Scientists were not impressed because "genetic linkage" was used for DNA analysis rather than the current "genome-wide association" (GWA), and the researchers took an awfully long time to get published. They didn't show underlying/causative genes, and Sanders reportedly admitted the Xq28 linkage was not statistically significant. (Neil Risch's 1999 study disproving Xq28 was cited).⁸⁴

D. So how much of sexual orientation is genetic versus environmental?

Eric Turkheimer, an expert in the field, warns that heritability statistics are tricky due to difficulty in clearly seeing and assessing environmental factors, which he feels contribute strongly to development.⁸⁵

Elsewhere, Turkheimer states: "... the amount of influence that genes have on behaviors is considerably smaller than one might think."⁸⁶ He insists: "... genetic essentialists were wrong about gay genes and similar nonsense."⁸⁷

Epigenetics analyzes the interaction of genes and environment. There is a life-long interplay between our genetic blueprints and our chains of choices and their consequences. For example, the more weight one gains, the more likely diabetes manifests. But even in the genetically disposed, diabetes can often be avoided or reversed by the right choices over time. Epigenetics changes constantly in response to environment and the choices we make. Looking for causation there is a recipe for misunderstanding behavior. Again, genes determine predispositions, not destiny. Heritability is not inevitability.

A UCLA team reported at the October 2015 American Society of Human Genetics conference identifying epigenetic markers with which they could predict with nearly 70% accuracy if men were homosexual. The media reported approvingly, and the scientists at the conference tore it apart for poor method and poor validity of results. Dr. John Greally (Albert Einstein College of Medicine) stated: "We can no longer allow poor epigenetics studies to be given credibility if this field is to survive. . . . The problems in the field are systematic."⁸⁸

Notwithstanding the flaws in "gay gene studies," and thanks to the constant bombardment of misinformation and disinformation by the media and the hoax perpetrated by SPLC, HRC and NCLR, the myth of a "gay gene" has seeped into the public consciousness. For example, after the 1993 publication of Dr. Hamer's study, the New York Times headlined "Report: 'Suggests Homosexuality is Linked to Genes,'" while the Wall Street Journal trumpeted, "Research Points Toward a 'Gay' Gene." Two later headlines in the New York Times illustrate the ongoing effort to keep the theory alive: "Study Reveals New Difference between the Sexes" and "For Gay Men, Different Set of Attraction."⁸⁹

Prof. Paul McHugh of Johns Hopkins University said: "Unlike the traits of race and sex, and again despite popular beliefs to the contrary, no replicated scientific study supports the view that sexual orientation is determined at birth."⁹⁰

93 Turkheimer, E. (2011). Genetics and human agency: Comment on Dar-Nimrod and Heine (2011). *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(5), p. 826.
94 K. Servick, Study of gay brothers may confirm X chromosome link to homosexuality, Nov. 17, 2014, <http://news.sciencemag.org/biology/2014/11/study-gay-brothers-may-confirm-x-chromosome-link-homosexuality>.
95 E. Turkheimer (2000), "Three laws of behavior genetics and what they mean," *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9, 160-164; quotes p. 162.
96 Dar-Nimrod, L. & Heine, S.J. (2011b). Some thoughts on essence placeholders, interactionism, and heritability: Reply to Haslam (2011) and Turkheimer (2011). *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(5), 829-833. (quote on p. 831).
97 Turkheimer, E. (2011). Genetics and human agency: Comment on Dar-Nimrod and Heine (2011). *Psychological Bulletin*, 137(5), 825-828.
98 No, Scientists Have Not Found the 'Gay Gene', theatlantic.com, Oct. 10, 2015.
99 New York Times, March 17, 2005, p. A25; and New York Times, May 10, 2005, p. 1.
100 Dr. Paul McHugh's amicus brief to the SCOTUS on *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

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The American Psychological Association has reviewed the research literature on origins of same-sex sexuality in the *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology (APA Handbook)*.¹⁰² There is no question that the APA considers its *Handbook* to be authoritative. In its "Series Preface," the *APA Handbook on Sexuality and Psychology* states:

With the imprimatur of the largest scientific and professional organization representing psychology in the United States and the largest association of psychologists in the world, and with content edited and authored by some of its most respected members, the *APA Handbooks in Psychology* series will be the indispensable and authoritative reference resource to turn to for researchers, instructors, practitioners, and field leaders alike.¹⁰³

The American Psychological Association (APA) could not confer any higher authority on the *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology* than it does, bestowing its "imprimatur" and calling it "authoritative." In addition, Dr. Lisa Diamond, a self-avowed lesbian, is co-editor-in-chief of the *Handbook*, and she authors and co-authors chapters in it. She qualifies as one of the APA's "most respected members."

Regarding whether there is a "gay gene," Rosario and Scrimshaw say in the *APA Handbook*, "[W]e are far from identifying potential genes that may explain not just male homosexuality but also female homosexuality."¹⁰⁴ The authors of the *APA Handbook* still hold that as-yet-undiscovered genes contribute toward same-sex attraction in some way.

Diamond and colleagues said in 2016, "To provide a basis of comparison, it is helpful to note that higher estimates of heritability (ranging from A [40%] to B [60%]) have been found for a range of characteristics that are not widely considered immutable, such as being divorced, smoking, having low back pain, and feeling body dissatisfaction."¹⁰⁵ One may well note that these conditions (with the exception generally for lower back pain) are also widely considered to be changeable for some through psychological intervention and without harm.¹⁰⁶ Estimates of heritability for same-sex attraction are 40% to 50% in the *APA Handbook*¹⁰⁷ but 32% in more recent publications of Diamond and colleagues.¹⁰⁷

With respect to the role of epigenetics, Diamond and Rosky point out, "In essence, the current scientific revolution in our understanding of the human epigenome challenges the very notion of being "born gay," along with the notion of being "born" with any complex trait. Rather, our genetic legacy is dynamic, developmental, and environmentally embedded" (emphasis added).¹⁰⁸

Regarding the fraternal birth order hypothesis, Diamond and Rosky conclude: "Prenatal hormones potentially contribute to same-sex sexuality in some individuals but do not determine it."¹⁰⁹

Historically, some have conceded that some same-sex sexuality is not biologically determined while maintaining that some is. Kleinplatz and Diamond conclude: "The inconvenient reality... is that social behaviors are always jointly determined by 'a range of constitutional propensities interacting with a range of facultative opportunities'... rendering the entire constitution-facultative distinction (and, of course, its implied nature-nurture distinction) overly simplistic."¹¹⁰

Diamond and Rosky explain: "Even if sexual orientation were wholly determined by genes or by perinatal hormones, it would not mean that it was immutable, given that immutable means unchangeable. Although the status of a trait as biologically determined is

Diamond and Rosky explain: "Even if sexual orientation were wholly determined by genes or by perinatal hormones, it would not mean that it was immutable, given that immutable means unchangeable. Although the status of a trait as biologically determined is often inflated with its capacity to change over the life course, these are not synonymous constructs."

In 2001, a study published by Tomeo, et al. found that 942 nonclinical adult participants: homosexual molestation was reported by 46% of the homosexual men, but 7% of the heterosexual men; and 22% of lesbian women, but only 1% of heterosexual women.

often inflated with its capacity to change over the life course, these are not synonymous constructs."¹¹¹

In summary, the scientific literature does not (emphasis added) support sexual orientation being genetically or biologically determined.

E. What Else Contributes to Same-Sex Attractions and Gender Dysphoria?

The 2008 American Psychological Association's brochure (and their current website, April 2017) states:

There is no consensus among scientists about the exact reasons that an individual develops a heterosexual, bisexual, gay, or lesbian orientation. Although much research has examined the possible genetic, hormonal, developmental, social, and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no findings have emerged that permit scientists to conclude that sexual orientation is determined by any particular factor or factors. Many think that nature and nurture both play complex roles; most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.¹¹²

Dr. Jeffrey Satinover says of homosexuality: "It is most often a deeply-embedded condition that develops over many years, beginning long before the development of moral and self-awareness, and is genuinely experienced by the individual as though it was never absent in one form or another. It is, in other words, similar to most human characteristics, and shares with them the typical possibilities for, and difficulties in, achieving sustained change."¹¹³

Dr. Nicholas Cummings, Ph.D., Sc.D. (past APA president, 20 years Chief of Mental Health of Kaiser-Permanente HMO, practiced in San Francisco) oversaw the treatment of 18,000 gay and lesbian clients in their system over the years with conflicts over their homosexuality and personally treated 2000.¹¹⁴ He concluded:

There are many kinds of homosexuality: "There are as many kinds of homosexuals as heterosexuals. Homosexuality is not a unitary experience. [Some gays were quite promiscuous in response to a chaotic upbringing; some had wonderful families. Some were very conforming with traditional gender roles and others were not.]" No single cause for all homosexuality: "Dogmatism about causes is unwarranted... clinical experience contradicts efforts to reduce homosexuality to one set of factors."¹¹⁵

In 2001, a study published by Tomeo, et al. found that 942 nonclinical adult participants: homosexual molestation was reported by 46% of the homosexual men, but 7% of the heterosexual men; and 22% of lesbian women, but only 1% of heterosexual women.¹¹⁶

In the *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, Mustanski, Kuper, and Greene confirm there is excellent research evidence for "associative or potentially causal links" between childhood sexual abuse and ever having same-sex partners, especially for some men.¹¹⁷ They said, "The largest reviews of the literature in this area indicated that MSM [men who have sex with men] report rates of childhood sexual abuse that are approximately three times higher than that of the general male population (Purcell, Malow, Dolezal, & Carballo-Diequez, 2004)."¹¹⁸

Mustanski and colleagues continue in the *APA Handbook*: "One of the most methodologically rigorous studies in this area used a prospective longitudinal case-control design that involved following abused and matched nonabused children into adulthood 30 years later. It

101 D. Tolman & L. Diamond, Co-Editors-in-Chief, 2014, *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology* (2 volumes). Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

102 *Ibid.*, 15xvi.

103 Rosario & Scrimshaw, 2014, 1:579, in *APA Handbook*.

104 Diamond & Rosky, 2016, p. 4.

105 As an example, for smoking, the APA developed and offers a psychological intervention in the form of a free mobile app, which lists evidence-based smoking cessation interventions and other resources (APA, 2016, p. 76).

106 Rosario & Scrimshaw, 2014, 1:579, in *APA Handbook*.

107 Diamond & Rosky, 2016, p. 2; taken from Bailey et al including Diamond, 2016, p. 76.

108 *Ibid.*

109 *Ibid.*, 2016, p. 4.

110 Kleinplatz & Diamond, 2014, 1:257, in *APA Handbook*.

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111 *Ibid.*

112 <http://www.apa.org/topics/sexuality/orientation.aspx>

113 Satinover, Jeffrey, MD, "Dr. Jeffrey Satinover, M.D. Testifies in Mass. in Defense of the Family," www.satinover.com, 4/29/2004.

114 Cummings, N. (July 30, 2013). Sexual reorientation therapy not unethical: Column; Southern Poverty Law Center wrongly fighting against patients' right to choose. <http://www.usatoday.com/story/opinion/2013/07/30/sexual-reorientation-therapy-not-unethical-column/2601159/>

115 Warren Throckmorton, Ph.D., "Homosexuality and Psychotherapy: An Interview with Nicholas Cummings," February 19, 2007.

116 Tomeo, ME, "Comparative data of childhood and adolescence molestation in heterosexual and homosexual persons." *Arch Sex Behav*, 2001 Oct;30(5):35-41.

117 Mustanski, Kuper, & Greene, 2014, 1:609-610, in *APA Handbook*.

118 *Ibid.*

found that men with documented histories of childhood sexual abuse had 6.75 times greater odds than controls of reporting ever having same-sex sexual partners (H. W. Wilson & Widom, 2010...The effect in women was smaller (odds ratio = 2.11) and a statistical trend (p = .09)."¹¹⁹

Not only sexual trauma, but psychoanalytic factors also contribute to same-sex attractions, according to the *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology* upon which the APA confers its imprimatur and which it declares "authoritative." In the *Handbook*, Rosario and Scrimshaw say: "Biological explanations, however, do not entirely explain sexual orientation. Psychoanalytic contingencies are evident as main effects or in interaction with biological factors... A joint program of research by psychoanalysts and biologically oriented scientists may prove fruitful."¹²⁰

There is excellent research showing loss of living with a biological parent, as through death, divorce, end of parent co-habitation, or unknown paternity, is potentially causally linked to same-sex attraction, relationships, and self-label identity. Evidence comes from three large, prospective, longitudinal, population-based studies.¹²¹

In the most stunning of these, a study of an entire population cohort of 2 million Danes found that loss of a biological parent—especially the parent of the same-sex as the child, especially during the first six years of life, and for girls the death of the mother during adolescence—was potentially causally related to entering a same-sex marriage rather than an opposite-sex marriage. The effects were stronger for boys than for girls.¹²² The study found no evidence of the FBO effect. These findings give evidence that potentially causal social environmental factors have effects in the earliest years of childhood development. Hence, evidence for an early origin for same-sex sexuality does not in itself argue for a biological origin.

In America, similar evidence was found by studies that used the data set of the National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health, or Ad Health.¹²³ In one of these studies, Francis¹²⁴ looked at the first two waves conducted with participants at ages 16 and 17. He found that growing up without a biological mother increased the likelihood of identifying as non heterosexual by 9.5 percentage points for girls and by 4.5 percentage points for boys. Thus, mother absence was related to increased non-heterosexual identity, especially in daughters. A boy growing up without either biological parent increased the likelihood of same-sex attraction, behavior, and sexual orientation identity. The study failed to find evidence for the FBO effect.

But Francis did not find a relationship specifically between absence of the father and same-sex sexuality for a son during the first two waves of the Ad Health study. Udry and Chantala¹²⁵ looked at the first three waves, obtaining data at ages 16, 17, and 18 through 24, from the Ad Health data set. Unlike Francis, Udry and Chantala measured sexual attraction on two separate scales for degree of same-sex attraction and degree of opposite-sex attraction. They found that among boys who had strong same-sex interest, 90% had absent fathers, a very strong affect. The stronger the degree of same-sex attraction, the greater the likelihood of father absence, delinquency, and suicidal thoughts. As opposite sex attraction also rose, that relationship completely disappeared.¹²⁶ Where the biological father was present, boys were likely to experience opposite-sex attraction, possibly alongside same-sex attraction. Girls who grew up with their father absent evidenced high sex interest directed at either sex.¹²⁷ Thus, father absence was related to same-sex attraction, especially in boys.

There is evidence that transgender identity also may not be a normal sexual variation. The APA Handbook says the origin of transgender identity is "most likely the result of a complex interaction between biological and environmental factors..."

The falsehoods that the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR promote lead the public and some mental health professionals to assume that all individuals who experience any same-sex attraction are really exclusively homosexual and would be happier leaving their heterosexual marriage and breaking up their family to go have same-sex relationships.

Regarding childhood gender dysphoria or distress, the *APA Handbook* has some important things to say. There is evidence that transgender identity also may not be a normal sexual variation. The *APA Handbook* says the origin of transgender identity is "most likely the result of a complex interaction between biological and environmental factors... Research on the influence of family of origin dynamics has found some support for separation anxiety among gender-nonconforming boys and psychopathology among mothers."¹²⁸

Further, Bockting says in the *APA Handbook*: "Premature labeling of gender identity should be avoided. Early social transition (i.e., change of gender role, such as registering a birth-assigned boy in school as a girl) should be approached with caution to avoid foreclosing this stage of (trans)gender identity development." If there is early social transition, "the stress associated with possible reversal of this decision has been shown to be substantial..."¹²⁹

The American Psychological Association, in its *Handbook*,¹³⁰ and the American Psychiatric Association in its Diagnostic and Statistical Manual¹³¹ say there are three approaches to treatment: attempts to lessen the dysphoria and nonconformity, attempts to get the environment—family, school, and community—to fully accept the child's gender-variant identity, and the wait-and-see approach. The *APA Handbook* warns that the full acceptance approach "runs the risk of neglecting individual problems the child might be experiencing and may involve an early gender role transition that might be challenging to reverse if cross-gender feelings do not persist."

F. Living Things Change and So Can Same-Sex Attraction: Change is Well Documented in Adolescents and Adults without Intervention

Conventional wisdom that the *APA Handbook* says it is not true is that same-sex attraction never changes. The *APA Handbook* states: "[R]esearch on sexual minorities has long documented that many recall having undergone notable shifts in their patterns of sexual attractions, behaviors, or [orientation] identities over time."¹³² "Although change in adolescence and emerging adulthood is understandable, change in adulthood contradicts the prevailing view of consistency in sexual orientation."¹³³ "Over the course of life, individuals experience the following...changes or fluctuations in sexual attractions, behaviors, and romantic partnerships."¹³⁴

The *APA Handbook* states: "[I]n all studies, heterosexual identified individuals show greater stability than non heterosexual..."¹³⁵ That is, change is greater for same-sex sexuality than for heterosexuality.

Many individuals who seek therapy with the goal of making a significant and meaningful shift in their sexual attraction already begin with some degree of opposite-sex attraction alongside same-sex attraction, and the combination generally increases potential for change. In the *APA Handbook*, Dr. Diamond states: "Hence, directly contrary to the conventional wisdom that individuals with exclusive same-sex attractions represent the prototypical 'type' of sexual-minority individual, and that those with bisexual patterns of attraction are infrequent exceptions, the opposite is true. Individuals with nonexclusive patterns of attraction are indisputably the 'norm,' and those with exclusive same-sex attractions are the exception." This pattern has been found internationally.¹³⁶

119 *Ibid.*, p. 609.

120 Rosario & Scrimshaw, 2014, 1:583, in *APA Handbook*.

121 Frisch, M. and Hviid, A., Childhood family correlates of heterosexual and homosexual marriages: A national cohort study of two million Danes, *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 2006, 35:533-547; Francis, A. M., Family and sexual orientation: The family-demographic correlates of homosexuality in men and women, *Journal of Sex Research*, 2008, 45 (4):371-377, DOI:10.1080/00224490802398357; J.R. Udry & K. Chantala, Risk factors differ according to same-sex and opposite-sex interest, *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 2005, 37:481-497, <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s0021932004006765>.

122 Frisch & Hviid, 2006, p. 545.

123 K.M. Harris, C.T. Halpern, E. Whitsett, J. Hussey, J. Tabor, P. Entzel, and J.R. Udry, The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health: Research Design, 2009, <http://www.cpc.ncep.cdc.gov/projects/adhealth/design>

124 A. M. Francis, Family and sexual orientation: The family-demographic correlates of homosexuality in men and women, *Journal of Sex Research*, 2008, 45 (4):371-377, DOI:10.1080/00224490802398357

125 Udry, & Chantala, 2005.

126 *Ibid.*, p. 487.

127 *Ibid.*, p. 491.

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128 Bockting, W. (2014). Chapter 24: Transgender Identity Development. In D. Tolman, & L. Diamond, Co-Editors-in-Chief, *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology* (2 volumes), 2014, Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association.

129 *Ibid.*, 1:744.

130 *Ibid.*, 1:750-751.

131 American Psychiatric Association, 2013, DSM-5, p. 455.

132 L. Diamond, "Chapter 20: Gender and same-sex sexuality," in D. Tolman & L. Diamond, Co-Editors-in-Chief, *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, 2014, Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1:636.

133 M. Rosario & E. Scrimshaw, "Ch. 18: Theories and Etiologies of sexual orientation,"

in D. Tolman & L. Diamond, Co-Editors-in-Chief, *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1:563.

134 B. Mustanski, L. Kuper, and G. Greene, "Chapter 19: Development of sexual orientation and identity" in D. Tolman, L. Diamond, Co-Editors-in-Chief, *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 2014, 1:619.

135 Diamond, 2014, 1:636.

136 Diamond, 2014, 1:633.

Plentiful evidence (multiple large, prospective, longitudinal, representative sample and cohort studies) makes clear that both-sex attracted individuals (including bisexual and mostly heterosexual individuals) account for most same-sex sexuality, and both-sex attracted individuals experience the most change in attraction, behavior, and identity over time.¹³⁷

Kleinplatz and Diamond say: "Historically such individuals [mostly heterosexual] have been treated with skepticism and suspicion by laypeople and scientists alike. They have been viewed as either closeted lesbian, gay, or bisexual individuals (who cling to a mostly heterosexual label to avoid the stigma associated with same-sex sexuality) or as confused or questioning 'heteroflexibles.'"¹³⁸

Kleinplatz and Diamond urge that "it is critically important for clinicians not to assume that any experience of same-sex desire or behavior is a sign of latent homosexuality and instead to allow individuals to determine for themselves the role of same-sex sexuality in their lives and identity."¹³⁹

The falsehoods that the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR promote lead the public and some mental health professionals to assume that all individuals who experience any same-sex attraction are really exclusively homosexual and would be happier leaving their heterosexual marriage and breaking up their family to go have same-sex relationships. An anecdotal illustration of the harm comes from the experience of a man whose therapist told him his sexual attraction could not change, and he would be happier leaving his wife and daughter to have gay relationships. In despair, not relief, he left his marriage and family, and for nine years he had gay relationships, living a life he did not want to live. At the end, he decided to get help to change his sexual attraction, and he married a woman. But he grieves the years he and his daughter lost that he was not living with her and raising her full time, a loss that can never be made up to them.¹⁴⁰

Yes, they should. Some non exclusively same-sex attracted individuals want to protect their heterosexual relationship and family by stopping periodic same-sex behavior. Should they be able to get that help? Yes, they should. Some non exclusively same-sex attracted minors or young adults aspire to be able to be in an opposite sex relationship and to procreate children with their partner and raise them together, as many people aspire to do, but they may need help to change periodic or a small amount of same-sex attraction. The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR tell them they can never change and try to make therapy to help them be illegal.

Also, both the American Psychiatric Association¹⁴¹ and the American Psychological Association¹⁴² recognize childhood transgender identity fluctuates. As many as 75% to 98% of gender-confused boys and as many as 75% to 88% of gender confused girls will eventually accept their chromosomal sex by adolescence or adulthood if allowed to do so.

Change is the norm for sexual orientation and childhood gender dysphoria. Therapy that is open to exploring an individual's potential for a shift in sexual attraction or gender identity is better aligned with the norm of change and direction of change for sexual orientation and childhood gender dysphoria than is gay-affirmative or transgender-affirmative therapy.

Adolescents who experience any same-sex attraction, behavior, or identity self-label should not be led to interpret these as meaning they have a stable sexual orientation trait. Researchers nowadays do not even try to measure homosexuality as a stable or coherent trait. Instead, they often measure sexual orientation by one or more of three separate components: sexual attraction, behavior, or self-label identity. The *APA Handbook* says these do not necessarily match within the same individual.¹⁴³

137 R. Savin-Williams, K. Joyner, & R. Rieger, Prevalence and stability of self-reported sexual orientation identity during young adulthood. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 2012, 41:104, 106, 109; Diamond & Rosky, 2016, pp. 6-9; see Table 1 on p. 7; Diamond, 2014, 1263-635, in *APA Handbook*.

138 Kleinplatz & Diamond, 1:256, in *APA Handbook*.

139 *Ibid.*, 1:257.

140 Personal communication between this man and one of the authors of this document. This man was not a client of anyone associated with this document.

141 American Psychiatric Association, *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition (DSM-5), Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, 2013, calculations from p. 455 yield the 98% and 88% figures.

142 W. Bockting, "Chapter 24: Transgender Identity Development," in D. Tolman & L. Diamond, Co-Editors-in-Chief, *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, Washington D.C.: American Psychological Association, 1:744 gives the 75% figure.

143 Rosario & Schrimshaw, 1:558-559; Diamond, 2014, 1:834; both in *APA Handbook*.

Reflecting on the first four waves of the Ad Health study, Savin-Williams and Joyner in 2014 observed that: "approximately 80% of adolescent boys and half of adolescent girls who expressed either partial or exclusive same-sex romantic attraction at Wave 1 'turned' heterosexual (opposite-sex attraction or exclusively heterosexual identity) as young adults."¹⁴⁴

There has been some debate as to whether some of the adolescent participants that Savin-Williams and Ream studied in the first three waves acted as "jokesters" in their responses, resulting in the high rates of same-sex attracted adolescents becoming heterosexual.¹⁴⁵ However, the authors had noted that their findings are consistent with those of other highly regarded studies, including that of Laumann and colleagues. The latter, one may note, obtained their findings from retrospective reports by adults aged 18 to 59,¹⁴⁶ not from 16 or 17 year olds. Savin-Williams and colleagues had highlighted that Laumann et al. "expressed doubt about the extent to which non heterosexual sexual categories, behaviors, and attractions remained stable over time.... Yet, researchers readily acknowledge the existence of such sexual groups ('gay youth') with little evidence that these individuals will be in the same group a month, a year, or a decade henceforth."¹⁴⁷

It was important that students' sexual confusion is not entrenched by the born-that-way-and-can't-change rhetoric of the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR. The norm is that most will experience change if allowed to. It is possible, however, that some may need help from therapy in the process.

Prof. Paul McHugh said: "... researchers have found that all three of the most frequently mentioned dimensions of sexual orientation - attraction, behavior, and identity - are subject to change over time."¹⁴⁸

From Columbia University Press: "At clinical conferences one often hears ... that homosexuality is fixed and unmodifiable. Neither assertion is true... The assertion that homosexuality is genetic is so reductionist that it must be dismissed out of hand as a general principle of psychology."¹⁴⁹

Dr. Dean Hammer said: "Women tend to be more sexually fluid. We've interviewed lesbians who have always identified as lesbian but who fantasize about men."¹⁵⁰

Dr. Lisa Diamond determined from her research: "Sexuality identity is far from fixed in women who aren't exclusively heterosexual."¹⁵¹

Dr. Lisa Diamond, co-editor in chief of the *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, an avowed lesbian, and a political activist, is adamantly on a campaign to get political activists such as those at the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR, to stop perpetrating the harmful claim that sexual orientation does not change, like skin color. For nearly a decade, she has not backed down on her mission, yet the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR have knowingly continued to push their false and misleading claims.

The following are some examples of her statements that such claims are false, misleading, and harmful.

Dr. Diamond reported on her 10-year longitudinal study of non-heterosexual women in her book, *Sexual Fluidity: Understanding Women's Love and Desire*. This book won the "Distinguished Book Award" from the APA Division 44 (LGBT). In this book, Dr. Diamond weighed in on the harm of political activists promoting the "can't change" myth. She acknowledged that, for political motives, some activists "keep propagating a deterministic model: sexual minori-

154 R. Savin-Williams, & K. Joyner, The dubious assessment of gay, lesbian, and bisexual adolescents of Ad Health. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 2014, 43(3): 413-422. See p. 416 for quote. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1007/s10508-013-0219-5>

155 For an overview of the debate, see L. Mayer, & P. McHugh, Sexuality and gender: Findings from the biological, psychological, and social sciences. The New Atlantis, A Journal of Technology & Society, Special Report, Fall 2016, 50:1-143. <http://www.thewantants.com/publications/executive-summary-sexuality-and-gender>

156 Laumann et al. 1994.

157 Savin-Williams & Ream, 2007, p. 389.

158 Dr. Paul McHugh's amicus brief to the SCOTUS in *Obergefell v. Hodges*.

159 Friedman, R.C. and Downey, J.L., 2002. Sexual Orientation and Psychoanalysis: Sexual Science and Clinical Practice. New York: Columbia University Press, p. 39.

160 John Gallagher, "Gay for the Thrill of It," *The Advocate*, Feb. 17, 1998.

161 Diamond, L.M., Sexual Identity, Attractions, and Behavior Among Sexual Minority Women Over a 2 Year Period, *Developmental Psychology*, 2000, 36(2), pp. 241-250

Diamond and Rosky concluded: "Several... studies have now been completed and they unequivocally demonstrate that same-sex and other-sex attractions do change over time in some individuals." Across several large, population-based, prospective, longitudinal studies, among same-sex attracted individuals who changed, 50 to 100% changed to exclusive heterosexuality.

Udry and Chantala, examining the data from the first two waves, found 89% of exclusively same-sex attracted boys experienced change in sexual identity in just one year from age 16 to age 17. After one year's time, only 11% remained identified as exclusively same-sex attracted. The majority, 54%, migrated toward to or exclusive heterosexuality, with 48% exclusively opposite-sex attracted and 6% newly attracted to both sexes. These results show that nearly half of adolescent boys changed from exclusive homosexual attraction to exclusive heterosexual attraction in just one year.

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Dr. Lisa Diamond, co-editor in chief of the APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology, an avowed lesbian, and a political activist, is adamantly on a campaign to get political activists such as those at the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR, to stop perpetrating the harmful claim that sexual orientation does not change, like skin color. For nearly a decade, she has not backed down on her mission, yet the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR have knowingly continued to push their false and misleading claims.

The SPLC has admitted electric shock is not presently being used at all in psychotherapy to change sexual attraction or behavior. As we will document, so that would mean they admit it is not being used on minors. Is there credible evidence that electric shock has ever been used on children or adolescents to change sexuality?

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For example, heterosexual minors who had same-sex attraction and behavior forced upon them by childhood molestation could have bisexual attraction, homosexual behavior, and heterosexual identity, if there is a sense that the same-sex sexuality does not represent the authentic self.

Diamond and Rosky concluded: "Several... studies have now been completed and they unequivocally demonstrate that same-sex and other-sex attractions do change over time in some individuals."¹⁴⁴ Across several large, population-based, prospective, longitudinal studies, among same-sex attracted individuals who changed, 50 to 100% changed to exclusive heterosexuality.¹⁴⁵

Opponents of SOCE often claim that sexual attraction can never change from exclusively same-sex attraction to exclusively opposite-sex attraction. But that is not true. The University of Chicago 1994 (US) National Health and Social Life Survey (UHSLS) conducted by Laumann and colleagues reported that "men who report same-gender sex only before they turned eighteen, not afterward, constitute 42 percent of the total number of men who report ever having a same-gender experience."¹⁴⁶ This study continues to be highly regarded and has not ceased to be cited by leading researchers to this day, as exemplified by numerous citations in the *APA Handbook*.¹⁴⁷

There is yet more excellent evidence of complete change from exclusive same-sex attraction to exclusive opposite-sex attraction in adolescents. The National Longitudinal Study of Adolescent to Adult Health (Ad Health) is also highly regarded and is reviewed in the *APA Handbook*. It has now gone through five waves of data collection on a large, nationally representative sample. Udry and Chantala, examining the data from the first two waves, found 89% of exclusively same-sex attracted boys experienced change in sexual identity in just one year from age 16 to age 17. After one year's time, only 11% remained identified as exclusively same-sex attracted. The majority, 54%, migrated toward to or exclusive heterosexuality, with 48% exclusively opposite-sex attracted and 6% newly attracted to both sexes. These results show that nearly half of adolescent boys changed from exclusive homosexual attraction to exclusive heterosexual attraction in just one year. For 35% of the boys, same-sex attraction dropped out, but heterosexual attraction had not developed. They became neither-sex attracted. Boys who were neither-sex attracted in early adolescence went on to develop attraction to women in the Ad Health study as Savin-Williams and Ream continued to follow them.¹⁴⁸

In support of findings of Savin-Williams and Ream, it may be noted here that similar results were found in the Growing Up Today Study (GUTS) in 2013. This study is a large, prospective, longitudinal cohort study of the children of women participating in the 'Nurses' Health Study II. The researchers, Ott and colleagues, documented the plasticity of same-sex sexuality of youth beginning at ages 9 through 14 and following up every two years thereafter.¹⁴⁹ They found that youth who were unsure or uncertain of their sexual identity predominantly migrated to an exclusive heterosexual identity.¹⁵⁰

Savin-Williams and Ream (2007), commenting on the findings of the first three waves of the Ad Health study, said that, overall, the majority of shifts in sexual behavior were toward heterosexuality.¹⁵¹ "Participants indicating non heterosexuality in Wave 1 were often not the same individuals who indicated non heterosexuality one and five years later."¹⁵² "All attraction categories other than opposite-sex were associated with a lower likelihood of stability over time."¹⁵³

144 Diamond & Rosky, 2016, p. 6.

145 *Ibid.*, p. 7, Table 1.

146 E. O. Laumann, J. H. Gagnon, R. T. Michael, & S. Michaels, *The Social Organization of Sexuality: Sexual Practices in the United States*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994, p. 296.

147 Examples in *APA Handbook*, 2014: Diamond 1:645; Rosario & Schrimshaw, 1:557, 558-559, 564.

148 Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2014, 1:256, in *APA Handbook*, regarding Savin-Williams & Ream, 2007.

149 M. Ott, D. Wypij, H. Corliss, M. Rosario, S. Reisser, A. Gordon, S. Austin, Repetited changes in reported sexual orientation identity linked to substance use behaviors in youth, *Journal of Adolescent Health*, 2013 52(4): 465-472. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.jadohealth.2012.08.004>

150 Rosario & Schrimshaw, 2014, 1:562, in *APA Handbook*.

151 Savin-Williams and Ream, 2007, p. 386.

152 *Ibid.*, p. 393.

153 *Ibid.*, p. 389.

ties are born that way and can never be otherwise." She addressed the question, "[I]t really so bad that it is inaccurate?" Her answer was, "Over the long term, yes, particularly because women are systematically disenfranchised by this approach." She said this deceptive practice does harm to women who have experienced sexual attraction fluidity and have "thought there was something wrong with them." She said this "silencing is ironic," because it is being inflicted by the modern lesbian/gay/bisexual rights movement.¹⁶²

In a 2013 lecture to an LGBT audience at Cornell University, Dr. Diamond said, "I feel as a community, the queers have to stop saying, 'Please help us. We're born this way, and we can't change' as an argument for legal standing. I don't think we need that argument, and that argument is going to bite us in the ass, because now we know that there's enough data out there, that the other side is aware of as much as we are aware of it."¹⁶³ In other words, she said, "Stop saying 'born that way and can't change' for political purposes, because the other side knows it's not true as much as we do."

A 2016 "Annual Review of Sex Research Special Issue" of the *Journal of Sex Research* features a review by Diamond and attorney, Rosky. The abstract says, "We review scientific research and legal authorities to argue that the immutability of sexual orientation should no longer be invoked as a foundation for the rights of individuals with same-sex attractions and relationships (i.e., sexual minorities)....arguments based on the immutability of sexual orientation are unscientific, given what we now know from longitudinal, population-based studies of naturally occurring changes in the same-sex attractions of some individuals over time.... arguments about the immutability of sexual orientation are unjust...."¹⁶⁴

In this paper, the authors further said: "We hope that our review of scientific findings and legal rulings regarding immutability will deal these arguments a final and fatal blow."¹⁶⁵

Diamond and Rosky testify that the immutability claims of activists, such as those in the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR, are "unjust." Diamond testifies such claims cause harm, and the methods of political activists who perpetrate the falsehood inflict "silencing." They lead individuals who experience change in same-sex attractions to think there is something wrong with them and can leave them feeling alone in their experience.

H. No "Electric Shock," "Electroconvulsive Shock," or Credible Evidence of Harm

The SPLC Has admitted electric shock is not presently being used at all in psychotherapy to change sexual attraction or behavior. As we will document, so that would mean they admit it is not being used on minors. Is there credible evidence that electric shock has ever been used on children or adolescents to change sexuality?

An extensive research review by an APA task force in 2009¹⁶⁶ concluded there is no research on sexual orientation change efforts for children¹⁶⁷ or adolescents.¹⁶⁸ Although the task force conducted a review of behavior modification research on sexual orientation change efforts, it found no research showing that electric shock has ever been used or coerced on children or adolescents to modify sexuality. In fact, it said there is no research on change therapy for minors whatever. Those who make such claims furnish no scientific research or reliable evidence of such a practice either. The petitioners of this complaint to the FTC do not use electric shock methods, nor do they know of anyone who does, and certainly not with minors.

Historically, aversive methods such as electric shock were used with informed and consenting adult clients by mainstream psychotherapists, especially in the 1960's and early 1980's, as a small, experimental part of the dominant form of psychotherapy at the time called behavior modification. The philosophy of behavior modification was to treat only objectively observable behaviors, not internal experiences per se. Behavior modification provided pos-

162 *Ibid.*, 2008, pp. 256-257.

163 Diamond, L. (Published Dec. 6, 2013). Lisa Diamond on sexual fluidity of men and women, Cornell University. From Diamond, L. (Oct. 17, 2013). Just how different are female and male sexual orientation? Human Development Outreach and Extension Program. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=m2R7HD0uUBw>.

164 Diamond & Rosky, 2016, p. 1.

165 *Ibid.*, p. 3.

166 APA Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, Report of the Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, 2009. Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

167 *Ibid.*, p. 72.

168 *Ibid.*, p. 73.

itive consequences for behaviors a client wanted to increase and aversive consequences for behaviors a client wanted to decrease. When electric shock was used, an adult client chose the level of shock, and the shock was delivered into a muscle in an arm or leg, never the genitals. The use of electric shock was voluntary, not coerced. Aversive methods such as electric shock certainly were not used just for unwanted sexual behaviors. They were also used for cessation of smoking and for alcohol abuse.¹⁶⁹

Behavior modification was so popular among therapists that an individual practically had to be a behaviorist to be the chair of a psychology department in a college or university. Therapists flocked to huge conferences on behavior modification. Use of electric shock to diminish same-sex attraction stopped, not because of lawsuits, but because the American Psychiatric Association removed homosexuality from the Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, second edition. By the end of the 1980's, behavior modification was being replaced by cognitive behavioral therapy (CBT) that was becoming dominant, and aversive methods such as electric shock went by the wayside.

To our knowledge, psychotherapists have not used electric shock or other aversive methods for decades, and we know of no reliable evidence that licensed psychotherapists ever used electric shock on minors for sexual behaviors. If anyone who was born in recent decades claims they received electric shock or aversive methods from a licensed mental health professional when they were a child, especially for same-sex attractions or gender identity, their claim should be taken with a very large grain of salt. But if there was a case where such a method was used, the claimant should make a complaint to the licensing board in their state, and doing so will stop its use.

There is no evidence that "electroconvulsive shock" was ever used by licensed mental health professionals to modify sexuality, contrary to the claims of the NCLR and Washington state bill HB 2541 quoted above. Electroconvulsive shock therapy (ECT) is a method used by some psychiatrists for the most severe cases of depression, mania, or some other severe psychiatric disorders.¹⁷⁰ Electroconvulsive therapy is not the electric shock method that was used in behavior modification to modify behavior. We know of no instances where clients were caused to convulse from electric shock as a method of modifying behavior or sexuality. There is little doubt that the purpose in using the term "electroconvulsive electric shock" is to alarm and deceive legislators into banning therapy.

The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR claim that therapy with minors that is open to SOGI change results in "suicide" or "death." Opponents frequently cite research by Ryan et al. (2009) about suicide in same-sex attracted minors as if it is about SOCE change therapy, but therapy that is open to SOGI change was not even mentioned in the study, and there was no indication any of the participants had such therapy.¹⁷¹

Opponents not only regularly claim therapy that is open to change employs aversive methods such as electric shock or electroconvulsive shock therapy and leads to suicide and death. Opponents also often claim the American Psychological Association Task Force Report in 2009 found scientific evidence that sexual orientation change efforts are ineffective or harmful, even using such words as "dangerous," "psychologically damaging" or "stark," but such claims are false. Diamond and Rosky are guilty of this, as a review by Rosik penetratingly critiques.¹⁷²

In reality, the APA task force report found research evidence for the safety and effectiveness of both therapy that is open to change and gay-affirmative therapy to be inconclusive. "Inconclusive" just means the task force had no idea. The Task Force also reported that no data for the safety of gay-affirmative therapy existed.¹⁷³ Lack of evidence as to whether a

169 D. Byrd & J. Phelan, Facts and myths on early aversion techniques in the treatment of homosexual attractions. <http://www.narth.com/aversion-techniques>

170 Electroconvulsive therapy and other depression treatments. WebMD, <http://www.webmd.com/depression/guide/electroconvulsive-therapy#1>

171 Ryan, C., Huebner, D., Diaz, R. M., & Sanchez, J. (2009). Family rejection as a predictor of negative health outcomes in white and Latino lesbian, gay, and bisexual young adults. *Pediatrics*, 123, 346-352. doi: 10.1542/peds.2007-3524.

172 C. Rosik, Research review: The quiet death of sexual orientation immutability: How science loses when political advocacy wins, 2016, <http://www.javascript.org/images/quiet-death-of-sexual-orientation-immutability.pdf>

173 American Psychological Association Task Force, Report of the Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, 2009, Washington, DC: American Psychological Association.

those who seek it.¹⁷⁴ Rebutting controversy, the editor of the prestigious journal that published the study confirmed the research was sound.¹⁷⁵

An early report on a current longitudinal research being conducted in response to the APA Task Force recommendations is finding reorientation therapy to be safe and effective.¹⁸⁰ Testimonies of real individuals who actually experienced successful and safe change in sexual attraction through therapy can be found at: Voices-of-Change.org.

V. PETITIONERS' STATEMENT: PROTECT THERAPY QUALITY FOR MINORS THAT HAVE UNWANTED SAME-SEX ATTRACTIONS OR GENDER IDENTITY

California was the first of a handful of states to ban sexual orientation or gender identity (SOGI) change efforts for minors. Since that time, several states and multiple cities and other jurisdictions have moved to enact similar bans, despite having truthful and scientifically accurate information. Thank you for the opportunity to provide information and share concerns about the unintended consequences we have seen from this anti-change-therapy legislation, and the three organizations discussed in this complaint that are known to be pushing these bills across the country.

Therapy that is open to SOGI change is generally not a form of therapy but openness to a client's freely chosen goal of change using any contemporary form of talk therapy. Contemporary licensed mental health professionals use no coercion or aversive methods. If any exceptions occurred, licensing boards would address these issues. The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR grossly misrepresent therapy that is open to a client's goal of change in sexual attraction or behavior or gender identity. Their flagrant and deceptive claims scare minors and adults and are used to deprive children of therapy.

The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR also perpetuate the false and misleading impression that sexual orientation is immutable like skin color. Sexual orientation is not resistant to change; in fact, it is the norm for sexual orientation to change. The American Psychological Association recognizes sexual orientation change.¹⁸¹ Abundant excellent research has now established that sexual orientation—including attraction, behavior, and identity self label—all three—is fluid for both adolescents and adults and for both genders, and exceptions for LGB individuals are a minority. Change from exclusive homosexual attraction to exclusive heterosexual attraction occurs frequently among adolescents.¹⁸² Sometimes sexual attraction and identity change more than once.¹⁸³ Imagine a statement that skin color changes, sometimes from extremely light to extremely dark, in both adolescents and adults and in both men and women, sometimes more than once, and the exceptions are the minority. Such a statement would be absurd. Sexual orientation is not like skin color. "Born that way and can't change" is not true.¹⁸⁴

In addition, both the American Psychiatric Association¹⁸⁵ and the American Psychological Association¹⁸⁶ recognize gender identity fluctuates for the vast majority of minors, again, unlike skin color.

Individuals who experience same-sex sexuality and gender variation have a right to know the truth about change. Perpetrating the falsehood that same-sex sexuality and childhood gender variation do not change leaves those who experience change—most individuals who experience same-sex sexuality or childhood gender distress—to think there is something

174 R. L. Spitzer, Can some gay men and lesbians change their sexual orientation? 200 participants reporting a change from homosexual to heterosexual orientation. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 2003, 32(5):403-417. doi: 10.1023/102175-000.

175 Dreger, A., How to ex an "ex-gay" study, April 11, 2012, *Psychology Today Blog*. <http://www.psychologytoday.com/blog/fetishes-i-dont-get/2012/04/>

180 Pella, C. & Nicolosi, J. (March 10, 2016) Clinical outcomes for same-sex attraction distress: Well-being and change. Conference of the Christian Association for Psychological Studies (CAPS), Pasadena, CA. <http://www.joseph-nicolosi.com/collection/outcome-research>

181 Diamond, 2016, 1:642, in APA Handbook.

182 Udry & Chantala, 2005, found that 48%, nearly half, of exclusively homosexually attracted boys aged 16 became exclusively heterosexual one year later at age 17. Laumann et al., 1994, found that 42% of men who ever had same-sex relationships never did so again after age 18.

183 Katz-Wise & Hyde, 2014.

184 Per research reviews by Diamond & Rosky, 2016, and by Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016.

185 American Psychiatric Association (2013). *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders*, Fifth Edition (DSM-5). Arlington, VA: American Psychiatric Association, pp. 451-459. See especially pp. 455-456.

186 Becking, 2014, 1:744, in APA Handbook.

The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR claim that therapy with minors that is open to SOGI change results in "suicide" or "death." Opponents frequently cite research by Ryan et al. (2009) about suicide in same-sex attracted minors as if it is about SOCE change therapy, but therapy that is open to SOGI change was not even mentioned in the study, and there was no indication any of the participants had such therapy.

Yet the evidence that sexual orientation change efforts, or SOCE, are harmful is virtually all anecdotal - the kind of evidence which critics of SOCE refuse to accept with regard to the effectiveness question.

[T]he APA reported anecdotal evidence of both benefits and harms, but ultimately declared that "the recent studies do not provide valid causal evidence of the efficacy of SOCE or of its harm."

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The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR also perpetuate the false and misleading impression that sexual orientation is immutable like skin color. Sexual orientation is not resistant to change; in fact, it is the norm for sexual orientation to change. The American Psychological Association recognizes sexual orientation change.

Most adolescents and adults who identify themselves as same-sex-attracted will change toward or to exclusive opposite sex attraction. Therapy that is open to change is far more congruent with the norm of change in adolescent and adult sexual attraction development than is gay-affirmative therapy. So it should be successful for some, and how dangerous can it be?

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therapy is safe or effective—whether the therapy be heterosexual affirmative therapy or gay affirmative therapy—does not equal evidence that the therapy is ineffective or harmful. Put another way, lack of evidence does not equal evidence of lack.

If lack of conclusive research evidence is grounds for labeling a goal of therapy, "harmful, quackery, snake oil, bogus, consumer fraud" and something that "should be banned," then gay-affirmative therapy, transgender-affirmative therapy, "wait-and-see" therapy, and many other approaches to therapy should be given those same labels and be "banned."

Peter Sprigg, senior fellow for policy studies at the Family Research Council, offered the following analysis of what the APA has said about sexual orientation change efforts in his testimony to the state of Vermont.¹⁷⁴

The American Psychological Association (APA), under the sway of ideological opponents of reorientation therapy, has criticized and discouraged (but never banned) reorientation therapy. Yet even the APA acknowledges that: "participants reporting beneficial effects in some studies perceived changes to their sexuality, such as in their sexual orientation [attraction], gender identity, sexual behavior, [and/or] sexual orientation identity."

Critics cite another APA statement that there is "no sufficiently scientifically sound evidence that sexual orientation can be changed." This, however, means only that the evidence does not meet all the criteria for "gold standard" social science research, such as large, random samples, a prospective and longitudinal design (tracking people before, during, and after therapy), and use of a control group.

Yet the evidence that sexual orientation change efforts, or SOCE, are harmful is virtually all anecdotal—the kind of evidence which critics of SOCE refuse to accept with regard to the effectiveness question.

...[T]he APA reported anecdotal evidence of both benefits and harms, but ultimately declared that "the recent studies do not provide valid causal evidence of the efficacy of SOCE or of its harm."

Psychotherapy, in general, results in harm for 5-10% of adults and 15-24% of minors.¹⁷⁵ For anti-change therapy activists to justify their claims, they would need research that meets scientific standards and demonstrates that harm from therapy that is open to change significantly exceeds the general rate of harm and is prevalent. No such data exists.

Wild anecdotes claiming harm from therapy that is open to change that some opponents' repeat should be carefully checked for validity. The fact is, there are 600 reports of successful sexual orientation change spanning 125 years. Dr. Alfred Kinsey himself, arguably the father of scientific study into homosexuality, helped more than 80 homosexual men make a "satisfactory heterosexual adjustment, which either accompanied or largely replaced earlier homosexual experience." The record includes that he helped "a boy"¹⁷⁶

Former APA president Nicholas Cummings initiated the 1975 APA resolution that homosexuality is not a mental illness. As Kaiser San Francisco psychology chief, he saw "hundreds" of homosexuals "change and live very happy heterosexual lives."¹⁷⁷ Dr. Robert Spitzer, famous for his parallel resolution to remove homosexuality from the list of mental disorders in the American Psychiatric Association, published research showing change therapy is effective for

174 P. Sprigg, Written Testimony in Opposition to Vermont Bill S. 132, Re: Prohibition of "conversion therapy" on minors, February 26, 2016. <http://www.frc.org/testimony/testimony-by-peter-sprigg-in-opposition-to-vermont-bill-s-132>

175 Lambert, M. (2013). The efficacy and effectiveness of psychotherapy. In Michael J. Lambert (Ed.), *Bergin and Garfield's Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change* (6th Edition), pp. 169-218. Hoboken, NJ: Wiley; Lambert, M., & Ogles, B. (2000). The efficacy and effectiveness of psychotherapy. New York, NY: Wiley.

176 Pomeroy, W. (1972). Dr. Kinsey and the Institute for Sex Research. N.Y. Harper and Row, pp. 75-77.

177 See: N. Cummings, 2011 NARTH Conference. Dr. Cummings, Convention, National Association of Research and Therapy for Homosexuality (NARTH), Phoenix, AZ. See 29:20 min to 33:10 min. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KxY8ch2LVm>. Cummings also submitted an affidavit in the SPLC's lawsuit against JONAH.

with them, and it subjects them to feeling alone in their experience. As Rosik summarized with Diamond and Rosky:

"Immutability arguments actually marginalize and stigmatize those who do not experience their sexuality as fixed,"¹⁸⁷ namely, most same-sex attracted minors and adults.

Non-heterosexual adults who have not experienced fluidity themselves are the minority and are more likely to believe sexual orientation is resistant to change for all non-heterosexuals,¹⁸⁸ contrary to abundant and conclusive research.¹⁸⁹ The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR seek therapy bans that privilege minors who do not change over minors who do change or could change with help from therapy, that is, most SOGI minors.

One gets the impression from the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR that same-sex attracted minors and adults are exclusively and permanently same-sex attracted, so attempts to change same-sex attraction are attempts to change a person's essential or core self, hence impossible and harmful. However, abundant research has established that the majority of individuals who experience same-sex attraction (SSA) not only experience change in sexual attraction, they also already experience opposite-sex attraction (OSA). In fact, the majority of individuals who experience SSA are mostly opposite sex attracted (mostly OSA). These mostly heterosexual individuals are greater in number than all other individuals with gay, lesbian, and bisexual attractions combined. The majority of bisexually attracted individuals experience change toward or to exclusive heterosexual attraction. The majority of mostly heterosexually attracted individuals undergo a complete transformation to exclusive heterosexual attraction.¹⁹⁰

Some who are attracted to both sexes are in heterosexual relationships and desire therapy to help them be faithful and keep their families together. Some youths are not yet in relationships, but they aspire to have faithful heterosexual relationships and families and need therapy assistance to fulfill their potential to do so. The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR create a false portrayal of sexual orientation that excludes them—the vast majority of same-sex attracted individuals—and deprives them of therapy appropriate to their needs.

Most adolescents and adults who identify themselves as same-sex-attracted will change toward or to exclusive opposite sex attraction.¹⁹¹ Therapy that is open to change is far more congruent with the norm of change in adolescent and adult sexual attraction development than is gay-affirmative therapy. So it should be successful for some, and how dangerous can it be?¹⁹²

According to the American Psychiatric Association's Diagnostic and Statistical Manual, Fifth Edition (DSM-5) and the *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*, as many as 75%¹⁹³ to 98%¹⁹⁴ of gender dysphoric boys and as many as 75%¹⁹⁵ to 88%¹⁹⁶ of gender dysphoric girls eventually accept their chromosomal sex. Therapy that is open to change is far more congruent with the norm of gender dysphoria development in minors than is transgender-affirmative therapy, so it should be successful for some, and how dangerous can it be?

There is credible scientific evidence that childhood sexual molestation¹⁹⁷ and parent absence through death, divorce, end of parent co-habitation, or unknown paternity are potentially causally linked to same-sex sexuality.¹⁹⁸ Some individuals would like to decide for them-

187 Rosik, 2016, p. 10.

188 Katz-Wise & Hyde (2014). Sexual fluidity and related attitudes and beliefs among adults with a same-gender orientation. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*. DOI 10.1007/s10508-014-0420-1.

189 See their reviews: Diamond, L. (Published Dec. 6, 2013). Lisa Diamond on sexual fluidity of men and women, Cornell University. From Diamond, L. (Oct. 17, 2013). <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mzrTHD0uUw>; Diamond & Rosky, 2016; APA Handbook, 2014; Whitehead & Whitehead, 2016.

190 Diamond & Rosky, 2016, p. 7 and Table 1; Savin-Williams, Joyner, & Reiger, 2012, APA Handbook, 2014.

191 Udry & Chantala, 2005; Savin-Williams & Ream, 2007; Laumann et al., 1994.

192 Savin-Williams & Ream, 2007; Savin-Williams, Joyner, & Reiger, 2012; see analysis of these studies in Whitehead & Whitehead 2013, Ch.12, pp. 231-235.

193 American Psychiatric Association, 2013, DSM-5, calculated from p. 455.

194 Becking, 2014, 1:744, in APA Handbook.

195 American Psychiatric Association, 2013, DSM-5, calculated from p. 455.

196 Becking, 2014, 1:744, in APA Handbook.

197 Rosario & Shrimshaw, 2014, 1:583, in APA Handbook; Tomeo, M.E., "Comparative data of childhood and adolescence molestation in heterosexual and homosexual persons." *Arch Sex Behav*. 2001 Oct;30(5):535-41.

198 Frisch, M. and Hvidt, A., Childhood family correlates of heterosexual and homosexual marriages: A national cohort study of two million Danes. *Archives of Sexual Behavior*, 2006, 35(5):547; Francis, A. M., Family and sexual ori-

selves whether their sexual orientation or gender identity (SOG) represents an authentic or positive variation of sexuality for themselves. No activist organization, professional organization, or legislature should decide that for others. A position that sexual variation is always normal and positive marginalizes and stigmatizes those who are experiencing a painful link between trauma, parent loss, other psychoanalytic injuries, and same-sex sexuality.

The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR have, through propagating falsehoods to legislatures, caused therapy to be denied to heterosexual children who had same-sex sexuality forced on them through childhood molestation. These children specifically want therapy that will help them CHANGE their attractions and behavior. Depriving children of therapy to help them change same-sex attraction or behavior abuses victims of childhood sexual abuse.

All have a right to know that non-heterosexual orientation and childhood gender confusion change spontaneously in most cases and therapy assistance may be needed to help.

Therapy that is open to change seeks to help parents love their same-sex attracted (SSA) or transgendered or gender non-conforming (TGNC) minor who may have suffered psychological injuries and respect their child's wish to have or not have therapy that is open to change.

The American Psychiatric Association could not conclude whether various therapeutic approaches for children—to change gender dysphoria, to affirm TGNC identity, or to “wait and see”—affected whether gender dysphoria persisted or changed, because no systematic longitudinal studies of gender dysphoric children exist, nor can conclusions be made on safety or harm of these various psychotherapeutic approaches.¹⁹⁹

Bocking says in the *APA Handbook* that there is evidence of pathology in the etiology of transgender or transsexual identity.²⁰⁰ He warns against early social transitioning, because most children will eventually identify with their chromosomal sex, but transitioning may foreclose a child's gender identity development.²⁰¹ If the child transitions back to identifying with the chromosomal sex, it may be challenging to reverse the social role, and the stress of doing so has been shown to be substantial.²⁰² Early social transitioning also risks neglecting individual problems that the child might be experiencing.²⁰³ Children should be able to receive therapy for such problems that may be leading to their transgender identity. Unfortunately, opponents seek to deprive such children of therapy, contrary to the advice of Bocking in the authoritative *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*.²⁰⁴

Protocols for chemical transitioning of transgender adolescents and adults are based on research that is rated to be of poor and very poor quality. It is known that puberty blocking hormones and cross-sex hormones (testosterone and estrogen) are associated with dangerous health risks.²⁰⁵

Changes in sexuality are not only spontaneous. Sexual orientation also may change through an individual's choices. On choice, Rosik quotes Diamond and Rosky this way, in a not-so-subtle rebuke to the APA, the authors observe that, “Both scientists and laypeople commonly claim that same-sex sexuality is rarely or never chosen (e.g., American Psychological Association, 2008), and individuals who claim otherwise (or who imply the capacity for choice by using terms such as sexual preference instead of sexual orientation) are often interpreted as misguided, insensitive, or homophobic. Yet similar to bisexuals, individuals who

entention: The family-demographic correlates of homosexuality in men and women. *Journal of Sex Research*, 2008, 45 (4)371-377. DOI:10.1080/00224908.2008.31857; Udry, J.R., & Chantala, K., Risk factors differ according to same-sex and opposite-sex interest. *Journal of Biosocial Science*, 2005, 37, 481-497. <http://dx.doi.org/10.1017/S0021932004006765>.

199 American Psychiatric Association, 2013, DSM-5, p. 455.

200 Bocking, 2014, 1:743, in *APA Handbook*.

201 *Ibid.*, 1:744.

202 *Ibid.*, 1:744, 750.

203 *Ibid.*, 1:750.

204 Bocking, 2014, 1:743-744, 750, in *APA Handbook*.

205 See: Olson-Kennedy, J. and Forcier, M. (November 4, 2015). “Overview of the management of gender nonconformity in children and adolescents.” UpToDate. http://www.uptodate.com/contents/overview-of-the-management-of-gender-nonconformity-in-children-and-adolescents?source=search_result&search=overview-of-the-management-of-gender-nonconformity-in-children-and-adolescents&selectedTitle=19671510; Hembree, W. C., et al. (2009) Endocrine treatment of transsexual persons: An Endocrine Society clinical practice guideline. *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism*, 94: 3132-3154. <http://press.endocrine.org/doi/pdf/10.1210/jc.2009-0345>; Moore, E. Wisniewski, A., & Dobs, A. (2003). Endocrine treatment of transsexual people: A review of treatment regimens, outcomes, and adverse effects. *The Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism* 88(9):3467-3473. doi:10.1210/jc.2002-021907. <http://press.endocrine.org/doi/pdf/10.1210/jc.2002-021907>.

Protocols for chemical transitioning of transgender adolescents and adults are based on research that is rated to be of poor and very poor quality. It is known that puberty blocking hormones and cross-sex hormones (testosterone and estrogen) are associated with dangerous health risks.

Many minors who actually do have same-sex attraction or gender distress think their experience is something they are born with that can never be otherwise, potentially leading to depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts for some minors, excessive distress for their parents and families. These beliefs also lead to depression and anxiety for some adults, and excessive distress for the spouses and children of same-sex attracted adults who may fear marriage and family breakdown as a result. Attacks on therapy add to these harms.

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become one more thing adolescents are having to worry about without good reason, and their parents and teachers do not have the accurate knowledge to help them through it either.

Many minors who actually do have same-sex attraction or gender distress think their experience is something they are born with that can never be otherwise, potentially leading to depression, anxiety, and suicidal thoughts for some minors, excessive distress for their parents and families. These beliefs also lead to depression and anxiety for some adults, and excessive distress for the spouses and children of same-sex attracted adults who may fear marriage and family breakdown as a result. Attacks on therapy add to these harms.

The public should have a right to know that no one is born with a same-sex sexual orientation or transgender or nonconforming identity. Adolescents and adults should have access to accurate scientific knowledge that same-sex attraction, behavior, and self-label identity as well as childhood gender distress change for most, mostly toward or to the norm of heterosexuality and identity with one's chromosomal sex.

Individuals should have the right to know that many, though not all, make a significant and meaningful shift in their same-sex attraction or gender identity variation, some of them assisted by therapy that is open to their goal of change. In the best study on adolescents, 89 percent of same-sex attracted boys changed, and in just one year. Only 11 percent did not change. The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR make a claim (which has poor empirical support) that “reorientation therapy may harm the self-esteem of those who do not change”—the 11% in this study. But it makes no sense to address that theoretical harm by hiding the truth from, and denying help to, the 89% of teens who may lose, or overcome, their same-sex attractions,” explains Peter Sprigg, senior fellow for policy studies at Family Research Council.²⁰⁸

For those who do not change in therapy, not all regret that they tried. Therapy has many benefits. Laws that ban therapy privilege those who do not experience sexual orientation or gender identity change over those who do and who are the majority.

There are other harmful results of the “can't change” deception being perpetrated by the SPLC, HRC, and NCLR. Individuals with same-sex attractions who change, the majority, are left to feel there is something wrong with them and that they are alone in their experience.²⁰⁹ Another harm of the “can't change” falsehood is that children with a gender identity variation who believe they are born that way and can never change may pursue hasty social transitioning of gender identity or even premature chemical or surgical gender transitioning contrary to the advice of the *APA Handbook of Sexuality and Psychology*.²¹⁰ It is tragic that minors may permanently remove healthy parts of their own bodies and render their bodies forever infertile when, if allowed, they more than likely would come to accept their chromosomal sex.

The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR conspire to keep from the public the knowledge that some children had same-sex attraction forced on them because a pedophile or older adolescent sexually abused them. For some children, absence or loss of a biological parent, especially a parent of the same sex as the child, affected the development of the child's sexual orientation. Other psychoanalytic or social environmental factors may also have diverted a child's sexual orientation.²¹¹

Some of these children do not experience their sexual variation as normal or authentic for them. They are marginalized by the generalization that sexual variation is always normal. They desire therapy to help them change their unwanted sexual attraction or behavior. Treatment for links between their sexual variation and childhood sexual molestation, the effects of an absent parent—especially the parent of the same-sex as the child, or other social environmental factors could lead to a significant and meaningful shift in that variation for some. The SPLC, HRC, and NCLR seek to make helping these children change their sexual attraction or behavior illegal. Banning therapy for children whose sexual orientation or gender identity may have been injured also bans speech about such realities from therapy.

Some individuals who have changed through therapy have regretted that these political organizations, some professional organizations, their culture, or their family led them to believe they could not and should not try to change their sexual attraction or behavior through therapy. They feel they have lost years of their lives that could have been lived the way they are now able to live because they finally did have therapy.

Coercing any goal of therapy on a client is unethical, because it violates the client's right to self-determine the goal of therapy and risks being ineffective and harmful.

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perceive that they have chosen some choice in their same-sex sexuality are more numerous than most people think.²⁰⁶

What we know is that sexual orientation ordinarily changes, some individuals change by choosing to change, and same-sex sexuality is potentially causally linked to childhood molestation, parent absence, or other psychoanalytic factors that are treatable. Since we know these things, it makes little sense to say the only place where sexual orientation does not change is in therapy. We also know childhood gender dysphoria usually resolves toward the child accepting the chromosomal sex by adulthood if allowed to, and the condition may be due to pathology. Childhood gender dysphoria, too, should be changeable in therapy.

All have a right to know that therapy that is open to a goal of change is an option by which some, though not all, make a significant and meaningful shift in their sexual orientation or gender identity. A research review of “600 reports of clinicians, researchers, and former clients—primarily from professional and peer-reviewed scientific journals” conducted over “125 years of clinical and scientific reports...documents[s] that professional-assisted and other attempts at volitional change from homosexuality toward heterosexuality has been successful for many and that such change continues to be possible for those who are motivated to try.”²⁰⁷

VI. CONCLUSION

The HRC, SPLC, and NCLR have been documented in this report to be actively promoting harmful, dangerous, deceptive, and misleading campaigns to mislead and deceive the public and shut down licensed therapists who are helping clients distressed by unwanted same-sex attractions and gender identity confusion. The National Task Force for Therapy Equality respectfully asks the Federal Trade Commission to review their hate campaigns and immediately order them to cease operating.

The SPLC, HRC, NCLR, and others are continually portraying that same-sex attractions comes in two types, gay and straight, that are fixed at birth and never change, like skin color. Their portrayals also create the impression that the probability of being LGBT is far higher than it actually is. Gallop polls indicate these organizations, along with other willing organizations and individuals, have successfully convinced a majority of the American public to believe these deceptions.

A Gallop poll also shows the public has believed that the large numbers of LGBT displayed to them in the media accurately indicate how many people of LGBT. Gallop reported: “The American public estimates on average that 23% of Americans are gay or lesbian, little change from Americans’ 25% estimate in 2011, and only slightly higher than separate 2002 estimates of the gay and lesbian population. These estimates are many times higher than the 3.8% of the adult population who identified themselves as lesbian, gay, bisexual or transgender in Gallup Daily tracking in the first four months of this year.

There is anecdotal evidence that many adolescents think there is a high probability they could be LGBT, and they are worried over it. Teens are straining to detect whether they might be same-sex attracted based on very little evidence. They are wondering, if they admire another teen of their own sex that does mean they are gay? If there is any indication of any degree of potential same-sex attraction, that would mean they are gay, and only if there is none would it mean they are straight, with no in-between.

Whichever it will be permanent and determine their future. Parents are hearing from their children that their children are confused, worried, and even downright panicked. Many youths are wondering whether they are transgender. Not only is the extreme and false message of sexual variations being delivered, but there is anecdotal evidence it is being concerningly overdone. Research evidence indicates that unsure youth turn out to be heterosexual, but for many of them, worrying over what their sexual orientation or gender identity is has

206 Rosik, 2016, p. 11, quoting Diamond & Rosky, 2016, p. 20.
207 What Research Shows: NARTH's Response to the APA Claims on Homosexuality (Summary), p. 1, Family Watch International, http://www.familywatchinternational.org/fsi/NARTH_what_research_shows.pdf; The summary was of a full article, J. Phelan, N. Whitehead, & P.M. Sutton, What research shows: NARTH's response to the APA claims on homosexuality: A report of the scientific advisory committee of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, 2009, *Journal of Human Sexuality*, 1: 1-121. Available at https://media.wisc.com/tsgd/ect6e9_94d4645b7204428c8e472ba13632.pdf

Therapy bans for these children are cruel and unjust. In effect these children are victimized twice, first by their sexual abuser or other life injuries, and second by these organizations that deprive them of therapy. Heterosexual-affirming therapy is more appropriate for them than gay affirmative therapy, but opponents want them only to have a choice of gay-affirmative therapy or therapy that will not lift a finger to try to help them change their attractions and behaviors to match who they feel themselves most authentically to be.

Some individuals who have changed through therapy have regretted that these political organizations, some professional organizations, their culture, or their family led them to believe they could not and should not try to change their sexual attraction or behavior through therapy. They feel they have lost years of their lives that could have been lived the way they are now able to live because they finally did have therapy.

A small minority of states has banned therapy that is open to sexual variation change. Lawmakers in these states failed to foresee that individuals who are distressed by their unwanted sexual orientation or unwanted gender identity are not going to go to a gay-affirmative or gender-variant-affirmative therapist or a therapist who does not share their values and whom they do not trust. They are now being sent to unlicensed counselors or getting no help at all. These minors are not being served. Some have been victims of sexual abuse and are suicidal. Some aspire to live according to their chromosomal gender or to be faithful in a heterosexual relationship with family, as do most individuals.

Therapists should not have to abandon such individuals under threat of being thrown out of their professional organizations, losing their licenses, or being bankrupted. Banning sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts for individuals who desire it has been harmful and ineffective.

It should not be missed that laws banning openness to sexual variation change place all therapists in a dangerous trap—regardless of their view on sexual orientation, gender identity, or therapy that is open to change. If a client desires help to change sexual attraction or behavior, it is unethical for any therapist to provide gay- or gender-variant-affirmative therapy, because the client does not want it. Coercing any goal of therapy on a client is unethical, because it violates the client's right to self-determine the goal of therapy and risks being ineffective and harmful.

The therapist cannot provide or refer the client for therapy that is open to change, because doing so is against the law. Ethically, the therapist cannot abandon the client. If the therapist agrees to treat the client for other concerns though not for the goal of changing sexual attraction or gender identity, there is the real possibility that fluidity, fluctuation, or change in the client's sexual orientation or gender identity will occur, and then it is an open question as to whether the therapist may be in violation of the law. At least, the therapist is opened up to liability.

Some therapists are afraid of treating adolescents who want therapy that is open to sexual orientation or gender identity change, and at the same time, they are afraid of discriminating against taking some adolescents as clients based on unwanted sexual orientation, unwanted gender identity, or goal of therapy. An unintended consequence of the laws passed already in a handful of states has been that some therapists are discerning that their only protection is to stop treating all adolescents or all adolescents who have unwanted same-sex attraction or unwanted gender variation, and most especially if they want therapy to explore their potential for sexual variant change.

Some sexually variant minors are already being turned away from professional mental health services. For example, the California Board of Behavioral Science has been asked more than once to clarify the law on this very liability question and has declined. All banned providers and their sexually variant minor clients are endangered. Bans on sexual orientation or gender identity change efforts are not safe or effective, and the work of HRC, SPLC, and NCLR are actively putting minors, and their families, in danger of not receiving competent, qualified mental healthcare while deceiving consumers and the general public. We respectfully ask you to put an end to these dangerous and deceptive hate campaigns so that future lives can be saved.

208 Sprigg, P. (February 26, 2016). Testimony delivered against S. 132. Retrieved online from: <http://legislature.vermont.gov/assets/Documents/2016/WorkGroups/Senate%20Health%20and%20Wellness/Bills/S.132/S.132-PeterSprigg20160226family%20Research%20Council-Write%20Testimony%20-%20%20position%20on%20the%20bill-3-11-2016.pdf>

209 Diamond, 2008, pp. 256-257.

210 Bocking, 2014, 1:744, 750, in *APA Handbook*.

211 Rosario & Schrimshaw, 1:583, in *APA Handbook*; Bocking, 2014, 1:743, in *APA Handbook*.

SIGNATORIES

American College of Pediatricians
Christian Medical and Dental Associations
Alliance for Adolescent Health
Family Watch International
Voice of the Voiceless
Center for Family and Human Rights
Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity
Jewish Institute for Global Awareness

What is "ex-gay" and why do their books matter?



SEP 11, 2019 —

In the context of Amazon censoring "ex-gay" testimony books of Anne Paulk, Joe Dallas, and others, someone asked, "what does ex-gay even mean?"

"Ex-gay" is a label used to describe someone who once lived or identified as gay or lesbian before, but no longer do. Labels are of course something one chooses to self-identify with. "Ex-gay" also has been used by individuals who once had same-sex sexual desires but never lived or identified as gay or lesbian.

The "ex-gay" label sometimes is also used by those who are just starting a journey out of homosexual behavior, lifestyle, and identity, for which they believe it is a sin that separates them from God. These individuals are new in their faith walk in Jesus Christ. They are desiring to live fully authentic as they believe God has destined for them, and so they choose to use that label in faith as it becomes the truth.

Christian ministry has always included evangelism of the faith, as commanded by Jesus. It includes discipleship in the faith. These are accomplished through solid biblical teaching, life testimonies (Rev 12:11) and life experiences of those who have gone before. Those books being censored by Amazon share the authors understanding of how Christianity directs us to live in Christ, mind, body, and spirit. Those books are being censored, solely because of their religious message. It is religious discrimination.

Our "ex-gay" Christian community desires to be a safe space for people who seek authentic discipleship in the Christian faith with their goal of aligning their lives, behaviors and identities included, with the teachings of Jesus Christ. These books are a needed and desired part of our Christian community.

We are disciples of Jesus, and our life stories are being censored because of a lie.

The "conversion therapy" straw man lie used to censor our books is conflating our testimonies of conversion to Christ with faux claims of electroshock therapy, drug aversion techniques, and coercive shameful behaviors by imagined licensed therapists. It is incredibly defamatory towards and bullying of our ex-gay Christian community. Our lives and our faith in Christ is not personally harmful to people who identify as LGBT. Not a single one of these Christian testimonies and discipleship books speak of harming anyone identified as LGBT but instead encourages love, life, peace and joy everlasting in Jesus Christ.

Again, it is a lie that these books are pushing "conversion therapy", the pejorative term used by those activists who identify as LGBT. In truth, these books are Christian testimony and

discipleship books. Hope for those seeking to walk a journey of faith in Jesus. They guide people out of sinful behaviors and by that nature, it frequently occurs the reader elects out of the LGBT community and elects into the flock of God, into the church fellowship, into life in Jesus Christ.

Renouncing our former way of life as gay-identified, and pursuing Jesus, creates a problem for the narratives of the LGBT community who are determined to silence and erase our community.

The political and cultural lobbies aligned to LGBT identity have a death grip on the narrative that you're born gay or that once identified as LGBT one cannot change, that sexual orientation is fixed, immutable. Both are untrue beliefs or faith statements. The recent gene study showed we are not born with gay behaviors, and Lisa Diamond research shows sexual orientation is fluid. Also, common sense tells us desires can change. They use this false belief narrative in every place and every way possible to attempt censorship or erasure of our community or anyone else who subscribe to their faith.

The spirit (Eph 6) behind the LGBT activism against "ex-gays" is the same spirit against Jesus. We are Jesus' workmanship, evidence Jesus is alive and has authority, that he heals, changes hearts and minds, that He is who he says he is, the Lord, the King of Kings, the judge of mankind. That spirit is offended at our choices. In fact, our choices simply existing as a contrast to their choices, is too much to bear for their seared conscience. The work of Jesus in our lives, as written in the books being censored, weighs too much on their conscience as well. So they do everything they can to censor and bully us.

They wrapped their disdain for Jesus, for our choices to follow him, and our telling of His works, into a strawman lie, known as "conversion therapy."

What is this spirit (Eph 6) behind the censorship really saying? "How dare you suggest people can convert to follow Jesus and leave OUR community! How dare you say we are wrong. We are offended. You are pushing conversion [to Christ] therapy. What you are saying is hate speech!" And so they send their hate our way, encourage others to do so, including Amazon via their censorship.

Again, these books are encouraging Christian discipleship, which is a lifestyle choice where we pour all our heart, mind, body, strength, and soul into, including our identity and behaviors. Now, because God desires that none should perish, we pray for those who persecute us. Love does no harm. Love is patient. In our "ex-gay" community, love our neighbors has a meaning. Do unto others has meaning. "If you love me, obey my commands" has meaning. "God loves you" has meaning. "Jesus is Lord" and "Jesus is my Lord" has meaning. We have love, as God defines love, for those who who are still identifying and living as LGBT.

The manner of our ex-gay stories is testimonies of Jesus, the living Savior and Lord of our lives, working in us. The one whose workmanship is ever healing and sanctifying. He sustains us for today and gives us hope for tomorrow. He rescued us from eternal death and brought us into the light. And as Jesus said, he is "the way, the truth, and the life". We believe that, and try to live it the best we can by his grace. And we have the right to write about it and we have civil

rights protecting our books from discrimination based on our religion. This is religious discrimination.

Sign the petition asking Amazon to restore the Christian books they have censored!

<http://chnng.it/QhpmXG4PHY>

Please share this petition again! Keep the momentum going. Let's aim for 25k signatures this week.

Please like our facebook page for more updates

<http://www.facebook.com/exLGBTRights>

Please sign up on our website so we can stay in contact with you.

<https://www.voiceofthevoiceless.info/subscribe>

Other synonyms for "ex-gay" include ex-LGBT, X-LGBT, LGBT-EX, LGBT-X.

#oncegay #changedmovement #changedmvmnt #censored #christian #exLGBTRights #exlgbt
#voiceofthevoiceless #stopcensorship #freedomofreligion #civilrights

2/9/2020 0 COMMENTS

WHAT IS CONVERSION THERAPY?

October 17, 2019 by Elizabeth Woning

THE “CONVERSION” OF THE APA

The drama around so-called “conversion therapy” is not new. In fact, Americans have seen all this before... in the 1970s as LGBT activists first began attacking therapeutic approaches to homosexuality. Political pressure by early activists resulted in the removal of homosexuality from among the American Psychiatric Association’s listing of diagnoses. In the same way today, Christianity is in the crosshairs. Will prohibitions against homosexuality be removed from the Bible? Or worse, will Christianity, with its historic teaching about male-female marriage, be banned? That certainly is the direction LGBT activists are headed. Conversations focusing on the efficacy of so-called “conversion therapy” reveal a legacy of moral questioning that modern psychology and Christian faith have grappled separately with for decades. Central to the debate is a conundrum that continues to linger: should homosexual behavior be accepted and even promoted in society when the feelings can be reduced or eliminated?

To read the entire article please [click here](#)0 COMMENTS  SHARE

9/17/2019 0 COMMENTS

Are Ministries Helpful or Harmful to LGBT People?

[A link to an article that shows the truth for those who care about truth on whether Christian beliefs are harmful or helpful to LGBT people](#)

https://www.thepublicdiscourse.com/2019/09/56790/?fbclid=IwAR3RAyzzwAyyIq4fOMnyMarSjVeum8xpbjVWU16_z2kb3NJxTytdidFtLhAY

0 COMMENTS  SHARE

9/1/2019 0 COMMENTS

I AM NOT A GAY CHRISTIAN – Daniel Mingo



Two Prisms

called the Gay Christian Network. Quoting from their website, www.gaychristian.net, “Founded in 2001,

the Gay Christian Network (GCN) is a nonprofit Christian ministry dedicated to building bridges and offering support for those caught in the crossfire of one of today's most divisive culture wars. Our membership includes both those on Side A (supporting same-sex marriage and relationships) and on Side B (promoting celibacy for Christians with same-sex attractions)." Side A believes Father blesses same-sex marriages, while Side B believes celibacy is more in line with Father's will. Personally, and for the record, I would lean more towards Side B because of its stance on celibacy. But that's really not why I'm tackling this topic today, or why I would choose not to affiliate myself or Abba's Delight with this network. What would absolutely prohibit me from identifying with either group is the fact that they have found and majorly declared their identity to be in their sexual preference. I find the use of the adjective "gay" not to be Biblically sound—not because the word "gay" is not used in the Bible, but because there is no support in Biblical text for such a description of a Christ follower. Rather, Biblical text calls for Christians to separate ourselves in all ways from that which has kept us in sin. By our actions, as well as mentally, physically and verbally. As a born-again believer, I learn to become more perfectly conformed to the image of Jesus, the Word of God made flesh. If I then identify myself as a gay Christian, I am branding myself with a name and identity that Father neither meant for me to have, nor that He has Biblically authorized. The fact is, there is not even one portion of Biblical text that approves homosexual acts. Those who support same gender sexual behavior, I believe, have taken passages out of context not considering the entirety of what Scripture has to say about living a life of holiness, in an attempt to conform the Bible to their feelings and attractions, rather than holding their feelings and attractions in obedience to the Scriptures. Paul tells us, "Therefore from now on we recognize no man by what he is in the flesh...Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. 2 Cor 5:16a,17. If I am a new creature in Christ, why would I ever want to take on an identity for myself that is contrary to His life in me? That would be counter-productive to becoming more perfectly conformed to the image of Jesus. Therefore, I train myself to think in agreement with the Scriptures, speak things that are in agreement with the Scriptures, and act in ways that are only in agreement with the Scriptures. To me, this leaves no room for taking on a gay Christian identity. This brings up another interesting thought! Have you ever heard any believers identify themselves as depressed Christians? Or slothful believers? Or fear-filled disciples? I'm sure there are many Christians who suffer depression, are slothful and live in fears of all kinds, but you don't see them identifying themselves in those ways or making declarations to justify/build their identities around those issues. There would seem to be a significant amount of deception in taking on identities that move us away from being more perfectly conformed to the image of Jesus, rather than closer to it. Maybe in my walk I have been fortunate in my understanding of where my identity lies. I knew instinctively my same-sex attractions were not in line with Father's design for human sexuality as set forth in the Word. I never wanted to take on a gay identity. There was never a time when I thought hooking up with guys was an OK thing with God, whether for relationships or just for sex. So, I learned early the importance of having my mind renewed; and the power words have that we speak; and that my true identity is in Christ and not in my sexuality, career, roles as husband or father, or anything else. When it came time to come clean with my wife about my attractions and the behaviors I'd engaged in, she knew immediately this was not who I was. As she has described it, she had seen the man of God I was, how I pursued my relationship with Him. Paraphrasing her, this sin had leached itself onto me, and we just needed to figure out how we were going to get it off of me. That was 21 years ago when I began my healing journey. I read an article last week called, "Love Wins: The Shifting Landscape on LGBT Issues in the



from a conservative family fighting for a progressive cause.” I recommend the article, although there is much to disagree with in it. There were some good and truthful points in it as well. What was glaring to me, though, was the beginning of the title “Love Wins...” As I read through the article in its entirety, I was looking for something specific in what he might say about love, since he declares himself to be a Christian. I was looking for any indication of how we express our love for God. As it turns out he means how we love one another—gay-to-gay and straight-to-gay. In one of the article’s section-titles called “Love wins,” Snyder writes, “One of the recent rallying cries for the LGBT movement has been ‘Love is love.’ One of the most common phrases in Christianity is ‘God is love.’ Everyone is pushing the Love agenda but not enough of us are practicing it. Love means listening more and yelling less. Love means pausing long enough to consider another perspective. Love means making an effort to get to know someone from a dissimilar background. Love means taking risks and stepping outside of what’s comfortable. Love means being willing to face criticism for ceding an inch to the other side.” And for me, this is where the biggest deception of all comes in. Everyone will forever talk about learning to love each other, and the different ways to go about doing that, but what about our love for God? “We love Him because He first loved us.” (1 Jn 4:19) And Paul writes to the Corinthian believers that nothing will ever separate us from His love: nothing we can do or say, nor any identity we can attach to ourselves. Nothing. Our primary charge is to love Him in return. We express that love in our obedience to Him. Jesus fulfilled the Law and summed it up by saying for us to love the Lord our God with all of our heart, soul and mind; thus declaring love to be the greatest commandment. Jesus also said in John 14:15, “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” Yet another time, Jesus spoke to the Pharisees saying, “For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say and how to say it. And I know that His commandment is eternal life; therefore, the things I speak, I speak just as the Father has told me.” John 12:49,50. Jesus instructs us to love the Father the same way He loved Him, by being obedient to His Word. Jesus did not reinvent or reinterpret Father’s message, but that is exactly what is being done by those who justify their same-sex love relationships. The article omits obeying God as our primary charge from our Father in our days on earth conforming to the image of Jesus. Rather, Snyder goes right to the gay Christian’s entitlement to love the way they want to love and hope Father will bless it. Reinventing and reinterpreting God’s Word to fit our feelings is one way we “worship and serve the creature rather than the Creator,” as Paul wrote to the Corinthian church. So, how do I identify myself as a Christian as it relates to my same-gender attractions? I am an adopted son of the Most High God, a brother to and co-heir of King Jesus, saved by His grace for good works towards building His Kingdom. I am dying daily to my flesh, and the sins that so easily beset me (of which homosexual lust is one). And I am daily being more perfectly conformed to the image of Jesus.

0 COMMENTS  SHARE

5/27/2019 0 COMMENTS

Why do Some Gays hate ex-gays so much?

Phillip Lee



Two Prisms

While not entirely, our conversation(s) and our exchange largely began because I became concerned and alarmed with all the media attention given to the bullying of members of the gay community, and, not much, to my knowledge, was or is being offered, mentioned, or discussed regarding the hate that is often spewed and perpetrated against men and women that have said, "No" to homosexual practice and have rejected the gay identity.

Yes, I am using the word "hate."

I am confident many today are not aware there continues to be men and women with unwanted same-sex attraction that have and are making the personal decision to leave homosexuality. As a result, formerly gay-identified men and women are often reviled simply because they dare to exist.

Should not "diversity" and "tolerance" be a two-way street by recognizing and including the once gay-identified man or woman? We are real, and we are here. Therefore, I must express my growing concern of the often widespread "intolerance" practiced against those who decide to face and break free of the snare of same-sex attraction.

Here's the question: Why do some gays (hate) ex-gays so much?

Thirty-three years ago, I said goodbye to homosexuality and the gay identity. Like all faithful followers of Christ Jesus, I had to face the decision of accepting or rejecting Christ's Lordship. Coming out of homosexuality required deep emotional healing and a restructuring of my whole identity, as our Creator, God, is the only One who knows exactly how to restore our personality.

I remember so vividly when coming to know Christ at the age of 35, what it meant for the first time in my life to be a man. But more importantly, what it meant to be a godly man. For me to deny or not share what Christ has done in my life would be the equivalent of denying Him.

Thankfully and gratefully, I am far from the only individual that has experienced change. God has not been silent to the cries of men and women wanting freedom from homosexual feelings and behavior. Many have experienced the power of Christ to address the deep needs of both men and women trapped in same-gender struggles.

One gay activist challenged me by stating, "Phillip, while I commend you regarding your concern about 'intolerance,' I just can't get my head around (ex-gay). Why don't you just be true to yourself?"

"Be true to myself?"

"That is exactly what I am doing."

What makes one individual happy and content may not make someone else happy, because we are all individuals. I, like any man or woman, deserve the right to self-determination and happiness. To give sexual orientation protection to one group while excluding another is outright discrimination.

Without testimony from all sectors of society, including the ex-gay community, public policy on the topic of homosexuality is seriously flawed.

Ex-gay men and women are routinely denied equal access to participate in public school events and present on diversity day.

Ex-gay conferences, workshops and seminars are frequently picketed by pro-gay protesters.

Transgendered individuals are affirmed for changing their gender, but former homosexuals are ridiculed for making the decision to address and change their sexual orientation.

Ex-gays are subject to an increasingly hostile environment where they are labeled as perpetrators of (hate) simply because they advocate for or live out a different belief and view of homosexuality.



homosexuality honestly, compassionately, and courageously.

Yes, homosexuals have the right, as do others, to believe that homosexual behavior should be accepted as normal. However, they do not have the right to demand everyone else agree with them.

True love is loving in spite of our differences and treating each other with kindness and respect. This is what it means to live in a society in which freedom of speech, religion (and belief) are guaranteed.

I'm real. I'm here. I will not be silent.

Pastor Phillip Lee

Executive Director

His Way Out Ministries

www.hiswayout.com

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When a Former Homosexual Says That They have Been Healed or Changed, What do They Mean? by Dr. David Kyle Foster

PURE PASSION·SUNDAY, 7 APRIL 2019

A Symphony Without Music

It is a constant mantra of activists, that people who are same-sex attracted are born that way and that there is no hope for change, -i.e., they can never develop opposite-sex attractions or lessen their same-sex feelings. No wonder the suicide rate among homosexuals is 3-5 times the average, even in locations around the world that are the most supportive of such a lifestyle! No hope is being given to the vast numbers of homosexuals who don't want to be gay.

Their minds, bodies and souls are telling them that there is something wrong with being sexually attracted to people whose bodies are not designed for committing such acts, so much so that every time a male homosexual commits one of the most common sexual acts on their partner, he actually damages the mind, soul and body of that partner (1 Corinthians 6:18). When pressed, most any proctologist will admit to that, even those whose livelihoods depend on such patients.

Ask yourself, "Would a good God really create someone with an orientation to act in ways that He condemns and that does harm to his partners? Would a good God really create someone with an orientation that results in domestic violence rates, substance



Such activists use their mantra to orchestrate special rights and to force legal and professional adherence to their point of view. The consequence of non-compliance to their demands is censorship as well as personal and professional persecution and destruction (2 Timothy 3:12) – even fines and imprisonment. In truth, a class of people who have faced persecution in the past can now be counted among the most heartless and frenzied persecutors on the planet.

For the Activist, What if the Claim of Change is True?

One claim that makes such activists furious is the assertion by former homosexuals that God can and has changed them to one degree or another – that the causes of their homosexual attractions are dysfunctional and can be healed, resulting in the waning of homosexual desire and in some, the rise of natural, heterosexual desire. [The reason for this breadth of transformational outcomes is complicated and an important teaching all its own – a teaching that can be found in the [Sexual Healing Reference Edition](#)].

- Their fury undoubtedly stems from the fact that if this claim by former homosexuals is true, then people are not born that way and can change if they surrender to the Lordship of Jesus Christ and the sanctifying leading of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:16, 24). You can see scores of testimonies to that fact in the video, [Such Were Some of You](#).

- If the claim is true, then there is no basis for special rights or forced compliance.
- If the claim is true, then people who want to leave the lifestyle can find hope, healing and God's direction for walking free from those things that have caused their same-sex attractions.
- If the claim is true, they can have hope that the Lord will forgive, heal and transform them as they pursue an intimate relationship with God the Father.
- If the claim is true, as stated clearly in 1 Corinthians 6:9-11, then the impending sentence of eternal separation from God for those who commit homosexual acts can be rescinded by Almighty God.

What Happens to Those Who Reject God's Will

Alternately, those who harden their heart against God's loving commands will eventually lose the conviction that they must have in order to repent (1 Timothy 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 5:19; Acts 28:27; Ephesians 4:19, 30). They will lose the God-given



Isaiah (64:7) clearly laments, “There is no one who calls on Your Name, who arouses himself to take hold of You; for You have hidden Your face from us and have delivered us into the power of our iniquities.”

Reminiscent of Satan’s first lie, (Genesis 3:1), they will fall for another of his lies: “Did God really say that you must repent of homosexual behavior?”

The sad truth is that these precious people are being led down a path that leads to destruction. They are being persuaded by those who do not know God to ignore His will in the matter. They are missing out on His saving grace and His power to bring healing, change and transformation to every area of their lives.

Just the Facts!

Surprisingly, a number of secular therapists (some of whom are lesbian) have gone public in declaring that science has proven that sexual desire can change.

(See <https://www.frc.org/sexualorientation> and <https://www.frc.org/issueanalysis/are-sexual-orientation-change-efforts-soce-effective-are-they-harmful-what-the-evidence-shows>).

Dale O’Leary has compiled an impressive list of 440 studies, articles and books relating to conversion therapy, many from peer-reviewed and professional journals, and provided excerpts from them totaling in excess of 45,000 words. You can find this incredibly useful resource here. <https://daleoleary.wordpress.com/2018/08/13/change-of-sexual-orientation/#more-540>

A recent book by Stephen Black ([Freedom Realized](#)) also bears witness to the power of God to change anyone who will forsake their sin in order to follow Christ. In the 25 years that he has been helping homosexuals, among those who made a serious attempt via his ministry program to experience change through Jesus Christ, at least 72% found lasting freedom from sinful behavior. In former lesbian Anne Paulk’s book, ([Restoring Sexual Identity](#)), she reported that up to 81% of lesbians who made an earnest attempt to find healing and transformation through Christ found lasting freedom.

So What Do Former Homosexuals Mean When They Say That God Has Changed Them?

1. For some, they mean that in humbling themselves before God and turning away from



24).

2. For some, it means that in pursuing an intimate relationship with God the Father, with all their heart, (Deuteronomy 4:29; Psalm 105:4; Jeremiah 29:11-14; Hebrews 11:6), they have received from Him divine revelation as to the causes of their aberrant attractions (in addition to the primary cause, which is our fallen nature). And on the heels of that revelation, they have pursued Him for the healing of such traumas as well as for a supernatural impartation of those things that went missing during their childhood and adolescence.

3. For some, it means that they have learned not to try to find healing or the power to achieve freedom on their own, (2 Corinthians 2:21; Philippians 2:13), but have wholly relied on God to not only show them what is wrong, but to empower them to renounce and refuse any such behaviors in the future (Acts 17:28; Galatians 2:20; 2 Peter 1:4; Jude 24).

4. For some, it means that in finding healing for the deficits and traumas that lie behind their same-sex attractions, such enticements have progressively lost their coercive power. In essence, the attractions have begun to wane in substance and power, causing their identity to change from being “a homosexual” to being “a chaste child of God”.

5. For some, it means that they have found a true identity in Christ that joyfully adheres to His moral commands, no matter what temptations may linger. Their stony heart of rebellion has been replaced with a heart for God. Their rebellious will has been transformed by His grace, love and the beauty of His holiness (Titus 2:11-14; Romans 2:4, 5:14, 6:8-14, 8:5-14; 2 Corinthians 5:14).

6. For some, it means that over time, their homosexual attractions have (to one degree or another) been replaced by natural heterosexual attractions.

7. For some, it means that the transformation has been so complete that the old homosexual identity and attractions have lost all power and presence. They now enjoy sexual relations with a marriage partner of the opposite sex.

The Transforming Mercy & Love of God

To sum it up, the grace, mercy and love demonstrated by Jesus' death on the Cross has persuaded such former homosexuals to receive the love that they've always craved. They have been supernaturally changed in what they hold dear and have surrendered their will to the will of God. And they have been infused with the life of God, who has given them everything they need for life and godliness, through their knowledge (intimacy) of



Two Prisms

The world would like us to think that for someone to be changed, they must be zapped

free from all temptation to that behavior - a claim that is nothing more than sophistry. It is a standard that those same people don't require for alcoholics, drug addicts, sex addicts and a host of other disorders.

Yes, the road to freedom from bondage can be long and arduous. We are strengthened in such trials. We are healed, delivered and transformed by such trials. In a sense, our brokenness has provided an opportunity to be made more Christlike, to be strengthened in our new identity in Christ, and to respond to His love with a sacrificial commitment of our own - one that results in being transformed into His image from one degree of glory to another (2 Corinthians 3:18).

That's what it means to be changed! But no matter what level of change a person realizes in this life, in forsaking sin to follow Jesus Christ, they have become born again and will soon be on their way to meet the true lover of their souls - the one who demonstrated His love for them on the Cross (Romans 5:8) - and a marriage with Him that will last forever (Revelation 19:9).

Can the God who created everything and everyone change a person who experiences same-sex attraction? Let me answer the question with another question: "Is there anything that the creator of all things cannot do?"

From Facebook - [click here](#) for the original

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Dr. David Kyle Foster (M-Div, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; D-Min, Trinity School for Ministry) is the author of *Transformed Into His Image and Love Hunger* and is the founder/director of Pure Passion Media (www.PurePassion.us). Read more of his take on sexual sin and brokenness in his newest book, [The Sexual Healing Reference Edition](#).

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Why Some People Remain in Sin, Bondage & Brokenness by David Kyle Foster

PURE PASSION · THURSDAY, 9 MAY 2019



Two Prisms

It's a problem of putting the cart before the horse. We too often launch off into man-made solutions that

can never produce the interior transformation that is necessary for lasting freedom. Such “solutions” often teach us (overtly or covertly) to rely on a “system” rather than on God.

Worldly solutions are “maintenance programs” that teach us to keep ourselves from falling by our own wisdom, discipline and power. They can be helpful in a secondary way, but should never be offered as the primary solution.

In contrast, God offers a “transformation program” by which He heals the underlying wounds, transforms the will and keeps us from falling by His power and love (Jude 24; Psalm 37:23-24, 55:22; 1 Peter 1:5).

True freedom comes not from focusing on the bondage, but on the Savior. In 2 Peter 1:3, the Holy Spirit says that through our knowledge of Him, God’s divine power has already given us everything we need for life and godliness. The solution, therefore, is not found in the wisdom of the world. It is found through intimate knowledge of Him and the appropriation of the power that already resides within us by virtue of His divine presence.

Self-Deception

Some people don’t want to change because they receive too much sympathy, affirmation and attention by staying broken. Others recoil because of the pain that results from revisiting the wounds that have contributed to their dysfunctional behavior.

Our inclination is to deceive ourselves into believing that we want freedom from something when we really don’t. Our hearts are deceitful and duplicitous (Jeremiah 17:9; Matthew 15:19). For example, I used to regularly cry out to God for freedom from a particular bondage. One night the power of God fell on me and I knew that He was finally answering my prayer. But to my utter shock, my first thought was “Oh no!” In that moment, I realized that I had been begging for deliverance from something that I still wanted. Hidden within the recesses of my mind, I didn’t think I could live without it. Deep in the interior of my heart, I still loved it. My pleas for help had not been coming from a desire to walk in holiness, but from self-deluded, performance-based religion.

Primary Reasons for Failure to Find Freedom

1. Failure to Make an Across-the-Board Commitment to Holiness

The Kingdom of God is not a supermarket. We cannot say that we want freedom from one sin without being willing to be freed from them all.

God wants us to commit to holiness at every level. Thankfully, He does not lay them all upon us at once, but brings them up as we are ready to deal with each one. As we forsake the things of the world and fix our heart permanently toward the things of God, He then responds with revelation and empowerment.

2. Failure to Believe In and Act Upon God’s Power to Deliver and Keep Us

Most of us haven’t a clue just how much power God has and how little power Satan has. We need to pursue God in His Word to understand and believe who we are in Christ and the authority He has given us (Luke 10:18-19).

I recommend “truth therapy” - regular meditation on the truths of Scripture, even when they seem to contradict what we feel and experience in our battle with sin (Hebrews 11:1).

Some of us are so enslaved to our feelings that we are incapable of believing anything else. When I fail to become planted in the ground of my identity in Christ, His call on my life, and His empowerment of that call, I’m a sitting duck for the lying thoughts and feelings that invade my soul.

3. Failure to Undergo a Transformation of the Will Through a Belief In and Embracing of God’s Unconditional Love (Jeremiah 31:3b-4a)



One day, I was in the midst of committing a besetting sin when the Lord spoke to my heart, saying, “If you turn to me right now, I will love you, forgive you and embrace you.” Ignoring the voice, I continued with my sin until satisfied, at which time the Lord repeated the same words to me.

It was a moment I’ll never forget as I realized that His focus was not on my sin, but on His desire to communicate to me that all He really wanted was for me to turn to Him and receive His love. In that moment, He had so taken my heart by this otherworldly love that I now wanted to do His will. In essence, He changed my will through the repeated experience of His grace and love. For the first time, I chose to do His will, not because I was supposed to, but because I wanted to (Titus 2:14). “For it is God who is at work in us both to will and to do that which is according to His good purpose” (Philippians 2:13). In essence, we just need to get under the spout where the glory comes out!

4. Failure to See Healing as a Process with a Purpose

As we live in intimacy with Him, God shows us the root causes of our behavior, the needs that we have been trying to meet, and His more perfect provision to meet those needs. Through our pursuit of healing, we develop a relationship of love and dependence on God because we have need to turn to Him often for power over temptation and healing from brokenness.

Bondage is essentially a problem of broken relationships – first with God, and second, with human beings. We must come to know Him as He really is and forsake the fiction that our minds have created that has convinced us to run from Him and not to trust Him.

5. Failure to Develop an Intimate Relationship with God the Father

Many of us fear intimacy. It is where we’ve been hurt. But intimacy with our perfectly loving Father is another matter. Jesus said that if we have seen Him, we have seen the Father (John 14:9). Do you love Jesus? The Father is just like Him!

Another fear is that we intuitively know that intimacy with someone means commitment and a loss of independence. But we soon learn that intimacy is the deepest level of knowing, of loving and of feeling. It produces the fruit of inner joy. Foundationally, it has to do with our response of love to the sacrifice of Jesus on the Cross.

6. Failure to Humble Ourselves in Absolute Dependence on God

The pride of self-sufficiency and independence is the fruit of ignorance. The truth is that we are already, completely dependent on God’s power and wisdom in order to have any kind of meaningful existence.

In our culture, humility is considered a weakness. We think that life’s problems are challenges that God expects us to deal with on our own. However, without continual dependence on God, we’re like infants left out in the middle of a freeway. We are completely dependent on God to reveal to us what is true as distinguished from what the world says is true (1 Corinthians 1:18-31).

Jesus said that without Him, we can do nothing (John 15:5). Consequently, the closer I get to Him, the longer I sit at His feet and allow Him to uncover the depths of my heart, the more I am going to grow in the humility of understanding the grace that I stand in, and I will love Him even more. And so, our first response to bondage, brokenness or temptation must always be one of utter dependence that turns to God for power, wisdom and strength.

7. Failure to Learn & Practice Spiritual Warfare

The Bible teaches that the weapons of our warfare are mighty to pull down strongholds – but only when employed in the ongoing reality of these first six pillars of incarnational relationship and empowerment. In other words, spiritual warfare involves using the power of God, the wisdom of God, the discernment of



received the depth of the revelation of His love and awesome beauty that transforms the heart and mind. Once that has been accomplished, without even realizing it, we will find that we are already wearing the weapons of our warfare (Ephesians 6:10-18) and have been marked by the evil one as dangerous.

First Things First

The primary reason that so many of us do not experience victory over the sin and brokenness that so easily besets us is that we do not put these spiritual principles first when attempting to find freedom. In fact, one second of revelation from the God who loves us is worth a lifetime of therapy. This is not to say that therapeutic approaches are unimportant in some cases. It is simply a matter of placing first things first so that any help that we receive from men will bear fruit that will last (John 15:16).

* * * * *

Dr. David Kyle Foster (M-Div, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School; D-Min, Trinity School for Ministry) is the author of [Transformed Into His Image](#) and [Love Hunger](#) and is the founder/director of Pure Passion Media (www.PurePassion.us). Read more of his take on sexual sin and brokenness in his newest book, [The Sexual Healing Reference Edition](#) and listen to his twice-weekly podcast at <http://www.purepassion.us/index.php/podcasts>.

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