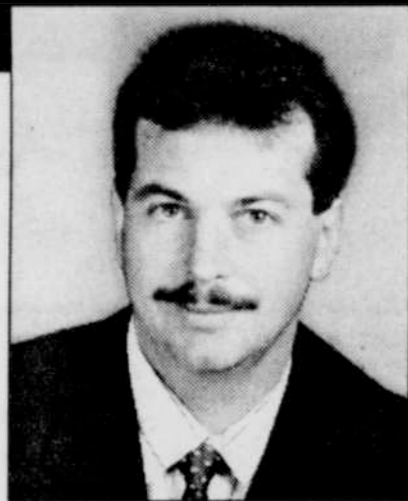



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NATIONAL news

A report released by the Family Research Council claiming gay men are avid child abusers is "methodologically unsound, totally lacking in credibility and a blatant attempt to forward a homophobic agenda in the name of research," critics said May 31.

"The American people must recognize this so-called report for what it truly is: nothing more than hateful, pathetic and misleading propaganda that has little to no basis in fact," said Lorri L. Jean, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force executive director. "Its solitary goal is to create an atmosphere of hate while capitalizing on tragic events unfolding within the Catholic Church."

As proof of its claim that gay men account for one-third of all child abuse cases, the report cites only a single study conducted by Kurt Freund and published in the *Journal of Sex Research*. However, contrary to the council's blatant misrepresentations, he actually found "homosexuals are no more likely than heterosexuals to be attracted to children."

"It is astounding that an organization that claims to promote Christian values can with such hostility and willfulness spread lies about a group of people," Jean said. "This is more than offensive; it's dangerous."

Homosexuality and Child Abuse was written by council staffer Dr. Timothy J. Dailey, who is not a medical doctor or psychiatrist but holds a Ph.D. in religion. "This report distorts the facts and deliberately cited research out of its proper context in an effort to advance the...anti-gay political agenda," said Wayne Besen, Human Rights Campaign associate communications director.

The council has a long history of producing misleading and disreputable "studies" spreading lies about gay and lesbian people. The 1999 report *Homosexual Activists' Work Is to Normalize Sex with Boys* relied heavily on discredited psychologist Paul Cameron, who proposed "the extermination of homosexuals" at a 1985 conservative conference and has called for tattooing people with AIDS and castrating homosexuals.

MISSOURI

A dozen protesters were arrested June 12 when they took their message opposing Southern Baptist Convention anti-gay teachings to the floor of its annual meeting at the America's Center in St. Louis. An additional 38 people were taken into custody while trying to enter the venue.

The Rev. Mel White, Soulforce co-founder and director, sent a letter May 23 to convention president James Merritt asking him to denounce the anti-gay rhetoric of Alabama Supreme Court Chief Justice Roy Moore, a Southern Baptist. The correspondence stated that nonviolent protesters would disrupt the meeting if he refused.

"For three years we have tried to get James Merritt to hear our stories, to consider the evidence that shows that homosexuality is not a sickness and not a sin," said the Rev. Jimmy Creech, Soulforce board chairman. "Because of the suffering caused by their teachings, we were compelled to carry our message into the Southern Baptist Convention's annual meeting."

Creech and the 11 other people arrested inside the center were booked on a felony charge of ethnic intimidation and a misdemeanor trespassing charge. The felony charge was dropped, and they were allowed to go on their own recognizance.



Police arrest a Soulforce protester June 12 outside the America's Center in St. Louis

Those arrested outside were charged with two city ordinance violations and released after a few hours. Bond was set at \$200, and court cost will be added.

A total of 200 Soulforce participants had lined the entrances to the center and cheered while the arrests were being made. A banner reading, "Southern Baptist Teachings Are Killing God's Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Children" was displayed prominently for all those who were watching.

MONTANA

The Montana University System is engaged in a "desperate and cynical" attempt to keep a state court from hearing a civil rights lawsuit on behalf of gay and lesbian employees who can't get health insurance and other benefits for their families, according to attorneys.

In legal papers filed June 6, the American Civil Liberties Union urged judges to deny an effort to have the case dismissed. The brief disputes the university's arguments that the court can't extend equal benefits without legalizing gay marriage and that the Legislature should decide whether same-sex couples are entitled to equal treatment.

"The University of Montana System's Regents clearly need to sit in on some freshman government classes," said Scott Crichton, ACLU of Montana executive director. "The role of courts is to interpret our Constitution and make sure all of us are treated equally under the law. Our clients deserve their day in court, which is what we're fighting for today."

Crichton said the university is "waving gay marriage in front of the court like a red cape in front of a bull" to deflect attention from the fact that its denial of equal health benefits effectively compensates gay employees less for doing the same work as straight employees—and directly conflicts with explicit rights in the Montana Constitution. "If we prevail once this case is heard, lesbian and gay employees will be able to buy health insurance for their families the same way straight employees do, but the state's marriage laws will be unchanged."

TEXAS

The U.S. Supreme Court declined June 3 to hear an appeal from Texas authorities who claimed a man received adequate representation from a public defender who slept through substantial portions of the trial, which was tainted with anti-gay bias. Calvin Burdine's 1984 conviction was overturned three years ago.

The American Civil Liberties Union's brief in the appeal also argued that the trial was tainted with homophobia from the prosecuting attorney. In the final moments of his closing argument, he argued that life imprisonment is a less severe pun-