

LIES WON OUT

Protest challenges "ex-gay" seminar's misleading messages

by Wayne Besen



A diverse crowd came from as far away as Roanoke, Va., to counter Focus on the Family's hateful symposium

The John Paulk Welcoming Committee picketed the anti-gay "Love Won Out" conference Nov. 2 in Springfield, Va. For three hours almost 100 demonstrators waved signs and demanded that Focus on the Family stop its campaign of discrimination, dishonesty and hate against queers.

The conference seeks to change a person's sexual orientation through discredited therapy and prayer. The symposium was led by "ex-gay" spokesman John Paulk, who was caught at a gay bar two years ago in Washington, D.C., despite appearing on *Oprah*, *60 Minutes* and the cover of *Newsweek* saying he had gone straight.

Several signs condemned his hypocrisy and urged him to stop deceiving and deluding people—including himself. "John Paulk Hit on Me" was scrawled by committee organizer Daryl Herrschaft, memorializing their Sept. 19, 2000, encounter at Mr. P's. Other signs read, "I Saw J. Paulk in a Gay Saloon" and "Paulk, Unlike Focus, We Love You for Who You Are."

"Our message made it to dozens of conferencegoers, some of whom were visibly depressed and conflicted," Herrschaft said. "They conversed with protesters and were drawn to the feeling of openness, acceptance and free expression that the demonstration provided. John Paulk and his cronies aren't helping these people or the other conferencegoers; they are hurting them and providing the tools and the justification for them to hurt others."

Close to 1,000 people attended the seminar at Immanuel Bible Church in suburban Fairfax County. The grassroots demonstration encompassed a coalition of organizations and individuals throughout Maryland, Virginia and the District of Columbia. Also on hand were "ex-ex-gays"—people who have been through the ministries and say these groups are harmful and ineffective.

Chants at the rally included: "Who do we want? John Paulk! Where do we want him? Mr. P's!"

According to the American Psychological Association, efforts to change sexual orientation can cause "depression, anxiety and self-destructive behavior." The American Psychiatric Association, American Medical Association and American Association of Pediatrics also condemn "reparative" therapy and say it often can be harmful.

From the very beginning, the ministries have been enmeshed in a series of high-profile failures. In addition to the crestfallen Paulk, these are the most well-publicized defections and scandals in the colorful annals of "ex-gay" history:

• In 1973, John Evans co-founded the world's first modern "ex-gay" ministry, Love in Action,

on the outskirts of San Francisco. However, after his best friend, Jack McIntyre, committed suicide in despair over not being able to change, he realized the program was not working and denounced it. To this day, he condemns the program as a dangerous—and sometimes fatal—fraud.

• In the early 1970s, Gary Cooper and Michael Bussee were counselors at an "ex-gay" ministry in Anaheim, Calif. In 1976, they organized the first "ex-gay" ministry national conference, where the world's largest "ex-gay" organization, Exodus International, was formed. While traveling on behalf of Exodus, the two men acknowledged that they had not changed and were in love with each other. They soon divorced their wives, moved in together and eventually held a commitment ceremony.

• In 1979, Seventh-day Adventist minister Colin Cook founded Homosexuals Anonymous. Appearing twice on *Donahue*, he solidified his reputation in the early '80s as the nation's premier "ex-gay" spokesperson. But Cook's efforts collapsed in 1986 after he was exposed for giving clients nude massages. He made a comeback in 1992 by helping Colorado for Family Values and Focus on the Family promote their anti-gay agenda. But in 1995, Cook's efforts unraveled once again after several of his clients accused him of phone sex and inappropriate hugs.

• In 1987, Jeremy Marks founded Courage, London's first "ex-gay" ministry. In 2001, after nearly 15 years of watching people—including himself—struggle in vain to change, he renounced Exodus' methods by saying they were failing in their efforts to change people's sexual orientation.

• In 2000, Wade Richards appeared as a media spokesman for a group called the Saviors Alliance for Lifting the Truth and gave his testimony of "change" at a major press conference sponsored by right-wing leader Peter LaBarbera, who now works for an affiliate of Concerned Women for America. But a year later, Richards rebuked the "ex-gay" ministries when he came out in an interview with the *Advocate* magazine.

"Those who do not study history are destined to repeat it," Herrschaft said. "And the history of the 'ex-gay' myth is clearly one of extreme sadness and failure. We implore Focus on the Family to stop this campaign of ill will and tell the truth: Many people escape the 'ex-gay' hoax and go on to live satisfying, spiritually fulfilling lives as openly gay men and women." □

WAYNE BESEN is the Human Rights Campaign deputy communications director and author of the upcoming book *Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth*.

E-CARR-MERCE YOUR NEXT SUBARU

With a few clicks on your computer you can research, and purchase Internet direct from the nation's #1 Subaru dealership. Tell me what you are considering in your next Subaru (New or Used). I will accurately answer your questions and provide you with an Internet direct purchase price on the car of your choice. You have my guarantee, this will change the way you purchase your next vehicle.

Precise, accurate and professional.

Schedule a time to take our "No Obligation Test Drive" and then decide. Over 350 new Subaru's in stock. We earn your business, not expect it.

"I will personally handle the entire transaction start to finish."

—Ken Eby, Internet and Fleet Sales Manager

2003 Forester 2.5X (AT)

PS/PW/PL, tilt, cruise, AC, CD, cass, air bags & more.

MSRP \$22,261.00

Dealer Invoice \$20,227.00

Internet Direct Price

\$20,327.00



Over 100 Outbacks, LL Beans & VDC Models

2003 Outback (AT)

PW/L, AT, tilt, cruise, AC, CD, cass, power drivers seat, power mirrors, all weather, and lots of extras.

MSRP \$24,948.00

Dealer Invoice \$22,519.00

Internet Direct Price

\$21,619.00

All purchases on advertised vehicles & price must be through internet. This offer not available through the retail sales dept.

The rates of
1.9% 24 Months
2.9% 36 Months
3.9% 37-60 Months
4.5% 60 Months
O.A.C.

The nation's leading
online Subaru distributor
—auto-dealerdaily.com

SUBARU 
The Beauty of All-Wheel Drive.

CARRSUBARU NORTHWEST

503-672-3318
keby@carrauto.com

11635 SW Canyon Rd

2 Blocks West of Highway 217 • Beaverton, OR

REALTOR



Elise Campbell, GRI, ABR

Real Estate Broker, Million Dollar Club

Service is the Key... *It's that Simple!*

Call Today! **503-307-1353**

Thanks Elise... "Elise was a great Realtor to work with as a first-time home buyer. She was patient, informative, helpful and fun! She made the process of buying our first house less hectic and possible by making herself available on the weekends. Thanks again and I hope you'll visit us soon." — P.B.

Email: Elise@Realtor.com
Web: www.EliseCampbell.com
Office: 503-233-4363
Fax: 503-233-4413

 **bender properties** 

Carrauto.com