

just asking As Portland prepares for June's Love Won Out conference, do you feel "ex-gay" ministries are a serious threat, or should they be ignored to avoid drawing attention to their message?

They are still a threat because of the vulnerable queer people who haven't accepted themselves yet who might fall prey to the ex-gay movement's misery-inducing garbage. It is also a threat because the ex-gay movement's spin on this tries to put a legitimate and caring face on harmful religious right bigotry. We should focus on exposing this spin as hypocritical.

The spin is that they are not biased against anyone but are rather just trying to help some individuals who don't like being queer and want to be straight. But we know that if someone came to them and said he or she wasn't happy being straight and wanted to become gay, the ex-gay movement would refuse to help this person because their religious agenda wouldn't allow for this. (Perhaps this would make a good Michael Moore-style publicity stunt when the conference comes to town.)

This proves the ex-gay movement's hypocrisy and proves they are fulfilling their own biases and their own intolerant religious demands. This in turn proves they are not really just trying to legitimately help people in need.

TOM SOPPE
Portland

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Ignore? I think not. Ignoring does not stop attention from happening.

Clear words about what is true for LGBT people makes more sense. The threat is for those of us who, for whatever reason, feel unsure or vulnerable about our lives. The ex-gay ministries are predatory and have an agenda that is unclear.

Perhaps *Just Out* could do some writing and examining and telling the true stories about people who have decided they are not gay or lesbian, what their lives are really like and their experience. I believe a clear message about our truths is the best way for others to see our truth.

SUSAN DETROY
Eugene

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Focus on the (Straight) Family has always been a force to drive God's queer chil-

dren out of the fellowship of his church. Events like Love Won Out rarely change participants' minds. Rather, it empowers them to act—in this case, to act hatefully in a loving manner. If the "love the sinner, hate the sin" mantra was applied as venomously toward divorce, domestic abuse, lying and hypocrisy by the love/hate congregations as they are toward the GLBT community, then this would be a much different world.

What should we do? We should send our pastors and church leaders to the conference to ask real questions and start real discussions. GLBT couples should silently and openly display our love right outside the conference. Loving churches should continue to accept, love and guide all of God's children. Ex-"ex-gays" should share their testimony publicly with all who will listen. GLBT Christians should come out of the closet.

Our love for each other is an extension of God's love for us. Eventually, love will win out.

CHRISTOPHER WEBSTER
Portland

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In the broadest sense, ex-gay ministries are not a serious threat, because they're wrong, and this will eventually become evident. But they are a serious threat to the mental health and well-being of many sexual minority youth and young adults. These ex-gay organizations preach a message that can trap kids with conservative religious backgrounds in years of self-doubt, even self-hatred.

I know whereof I speak, and I know it is important to shine the light of truth on these people. If only one person sees and finds a way out, it will be worth it.

STEPHEN SIMPSON
Portland

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I believe we should not ignore ex-gay ministries just like we would not ignore other groups that threaten truth, freedom and equal-

ity. Rather than being a threat to gays and lesbians, responding to ex-gay ministries helps expose their justification for intolerance through junk science and ridiculous religious posture.

Ex-gay ministries have a sustained and unhealthy preoccupation with gays and lesbians, what types of commitments they have and what type of sex they have. Gays and lesbians, on the other hand, have been a focused and powerful ally for other groups of people who are victims of racism, sexism, bigotry, misfortune and neglect.

It wouldn't do to let ex-gay ministries go unchallenged, just as it is shameful and wrong to allow other issues of bigotry and injustice go unchallenged.

FLORA M. RAMEY
Portland

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Neither—unless their message is hateful or homophobic. Someone who lives as a gay person and decides it's not for him or her should be treated no differently from the person who lives the heterosexual life, then realizes he or she is gay. The "ex-gay" person can be just as hateful as the "ex-straight" person. Everyone should receive respect just as everyone should give respect.

MELISSA SEVERN
Portland

next issue U.S. Attorney Michael Mosman, the leading candidate for a U.S. District Court seat in Portland, claims he doesn't have anti-gay views. Do you believe him? (Please see related item on Page 7.) Respond at www.justout.com. (Don't forget to include your name, city and daytime telephone number.)

this time, which is described in another book by Peter Wyden. (Both books still are listed for sale on Amazon.com.) Is this why Sen. Wyden refuses to reveal his stand on gay issues other than AIDS?

Ignoring well-funded ex-gay religious crusaders would be like ignoring Hitler. Christians democratically elected Hitler and let him slaughter Jews who were unable to pass as ex-Jews. Hitler also executed gays.

Anti-gay religious groups have been paying "university doctors" to get ex-gay "research" papers published in professional medical and science journals, just as Hitler did with the "science of eugenics." These papers must not be ignored, because they are being misused to give ex-gay therapists the medical authority, in addition to the religious authority, to modify homosexual behavior.

Contrary to popular belief, ex-gay therapy has not been banned by any medical organization. Doctors still are permitted to provide any "ethical" ex-gay treatment, provided it is not abusive or coercive. Of course, "ethical" ex-gay therapy is almost impossible to provide, given it is demeaning and abusive to most gay people.

Ex-gays have a right to practice their religious beliefs, but they do not have a right to prescribe harmful and unethical ex-gay medical treatments. They must be held accountable for the harm they are causing other people.

THOMAS KRAEMER
Corvallis

Caught in the middle

TO THE EDITOR:

Whether a teen-ager is a conformist in dress, manner, acting and, most importantly, thinking or is "different," both come at a cost. The "different" can experience social and physical abuse, often death, as did the young man just a few years ago in Wyoming.

The conformists and/or abusers unwittingly start to bring about their own internal destruction. It is no coincidence that so many of the most virulent men and women also develop serious drug, alcohol and emotional problems down the line.

There is a vast difference between honestly believing that nonstraight lifestyles are "against

God," "immoral," "damned," etc. and saying things deliberately to hurt, intimidate, haze, harass and physically hurt someone.

I absolutely never have seen or heard any gay man, lesbian, transvestite or transsexual go up to any straight people and harangue them because they were straight. Other than the occasional "drama" between certain "queens" and certain types of "dykes," I have not seen or heard it done within the nonstraight community. Oh, there are little "tiffs" between lovers, and I suppose not being able to rent a U-Haul on a particular day might cause abject consternation in a budding lesbian relationship, but these things are really nothing.

You would think that in difficult times people would pull together, but what tends to happen is "pack mentality." What really is needed is the very large group in the "middle" that stands by and does nothing to stand up for what is right. There is a famous quote: "For evil to succeed, all that has to be done is for good people to stand by and do nothing."

JOHN BOYNTON
Vancouver, Wash.

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