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national**NATIONAL****Ex-NBA Player Comes Out**

Former NBA center John Amaechi followed a small class of professional athletes that came out before him when he announced he is gay in his autobiography, *Man in the Middle*, which was released Feb. 14.

Amaechi, who spent five seasons on four teams, is the first NBA player ever to come out and the sixth male professional athlete from a major sport to openly discuss his sexuality.

Out lesbian tennis star Martina Navratilova supported Amaechi's decision and encouraged all gay athletes to come out as role models for queer youth.

A statement from the NBA commissioner indicated that sexuality is not an issue with the organization.

In his book, Amaechi wrote about the anti-gay culture and language fostered in locker room environments.

Other out athletes include former NFL running back David Kopay, who came out in 1977; offensive lineman Roy Simmons; and defensive lineman Esera Tuaolo, who graduated from Oregon State University. Former Los Angeles Dodger and Oakland A's player Glenn Burke and Billy Bean, a utility player, have also come out, both after retiring.

Amaechi, who was raised in England, competed for Penn State, then played in 301 NBA games during five seasons beginning with the Cleveland Cavaliers from 1995 to 1996. He continued to play for the Orlando Magic from 1999 to 2001 and the Utah Jazz for two seasons, until he was traded to the Houston Rockets and then to the New York Knicks. He retired in 2004 but came out of retirement to help England's men's basketball team win the bronze medal in the 2006 Commonwealth Games in Melbourne, Australia.

Freedom to Marry Observed

Freedom to Marry, the national organization working for marriage equality, is celebrating the 10th anniversary of Freedom to Marry Week through Feb. 17.

According to the organization, Freedom to Marry Week offers an opportunity to engage family members, friends and neighbors in the movement for fairness and equality for all.

John Amaechi, a former NBA center, came out in his autobiography, *Man in the Middle*.

The organization has set up a "story center" to read the stories of real people affected by marriage equality.

The group encourages participants to write to family and friends, telling them why marriage equality is important and asking them to care about it, too. Sample letters, a resolution and details about photo and video contests are available at www.freedomtomarry.org.

COLORADO**Self-Hating Reverend 'Cured'**

The Rev. Ted Haggard, the disgraced former head of the National Evangelical Association and leader of the 14,000-member New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., broke his silence from rehabilitation Feb. 6 and said that "Jesus is putting me back together again" and that he was "sorry for the things I've done." He also said he is convinced that he is "completely heterosexual," according to the Rev. Tim Ralph, one of the ministers who oversaw three weeks of intensive counseling with Haggard.

"Haggard should be seeking forgiveness for the way he used the Bible to bash gay people, the way he warped and damaged young people in his 'Jesus Camps,' the way he shamelessly mixed religion and politics for personal and partisan gain, and for defaming Mike Jones," said Matt Foreman, executive director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. "Instead, he's doing what all these preachers do when they get caught with their pants down—they make themselves the victims of a personal failing."

Jones, who exposed Haggard, said his recovery was hard to believe. "It's hard for me to believe that

he's recovered in three weeks when he'd been having oral sex with me for over three years," said Jones, the man who stepped forward to expose Haggard's hypocrisy in being a vehement supporter of a Colorado constitutional amendment prohibiting the recognition of same-sex marriage.

NEW MEXICO**Retirement Benefits Lawsuit Filed**

A lawsuit was filed Feb. 5 against the state of New Mexico on behalf of three lesbian couples seeking retirement health



The disgraced Rev. Ted Haggard claims he is now heterosexual.

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