

northwest

Rebirth of Venus

Former pro-lesbian magazine publisher warns about gay agenda

by Teresa Coates

Conservative Christians from around the Portland area trickled into Rolling Hills Community Church on Feb. 23 to take part in the Restore America Conference. Just as Restore America failed to gather enough signatures to overturn Oregon's nondiscrimination and domestic partnership laws, it also failed to fill the Tualatin church for its two-day event.

The conference was hailed as an opportunity for local Christians to derive inspiration from the dozen motivational speakers flown in from around the country. All discussion topics were posed as questions: "Are We at War with Islam?", "Who Is Controlling Public Education?" and the ever-popular "Is Homosexuality Wrong?" In that session, led by Charlene Cothran, little time was spent facing the question, but rather on retelling her life story as an outspoken lesbian and magazine publisher, then her rebirth as an active Christian woman.

In 1992, Cothran, then loud and proud, began publishing *Venus* magazine for black gays and lesbians. For the next 10 years, she sailed along, attending any queer event she could to promote her magazine, protesting or supporting whatever legislation she could and forwarding her cause of equal rights for the sexual minorities community. Her magazine reached 90,000-plus households, and she was raking in the profits.

But then it happened, she explained. During a 2003 Pride event in Chicago, she looked around at her "brothers and sisters" and instead of feeling a sense of pride toward the hundreds of same-sex couples, "a shame fell over me that day," Cothran shared with the devoted who'd gathered to hear her speak. "I knew there was something wrong with this. This was the wide road to destruction."

Called to repentance soon after, Cothran continued on her lesbian path for another three years, conflicted, she said, by her successful career and powerful connections gained from being a lesbian. She felt her life was in conflict with what God was calling her to do: bring homosexuals to Christ. This battle of the spirit raged on until mid-2006, when she made the decision to change her magazine from pro- to anti-lesbian, dumped her partner of 10 years and started making speeches to bring her message to the masses.

Cothran spoke as an insider, still using the term "we" when referring to the queer community. Although she nearly bragged about her accomplishments in furthering the so-called "homosexual agenda," she clearly believed in her message that gays and lesbians should be removed from schools and government posts and deposited into churches.

Time and again, Cothran called out to the attendees to keep in mind that everything the

adversary (in this case, queers) does is an attempt to take control, to desensitize, to normalize their lives. She explained that queers are infiltrating the school system to spread the "lie that we are born gay" and that they will "start with seemingly harmless gestures" to encourage children to question their own sexuality.

Punctuated by amens and dramatic head-nodding by the audience, Cothran spoke for 90 minutes about the message of hate presented by the queer community and how they, as good Christians, must fight against the influences. "Lovingly present the truth," she told the audience. "Be a truth-teller!"

Unwilling to claim an identity other than celibate, Cothran made the point several times that her mission was not to change people from gay to straight, but rather to "bring them to Christ." Even her infamous article, the one that signaled the change in *Venus* magazine, is free of persuasion to change one's sexuality. It is titled "10 Ways to Get Out of the Gay Life, if You Want Out."

While she remains vague about her sexuality, there is no doubt that Cothran strongly believes the "gay agenda" is taking control of the United States. She warned against gay clergy, same-sex



Motivational speaker Charlene Cothran traced her path from lesbian activist to anti-gay prophet.

marriage and equal rights organizations. People are stuck in the gay and lesbian lifestyle, she claimed, who hate it and want out. She encouraged all who were in attendance to step up and help them.

The afternoon ended with a question-and-answer period. A teenage boy stood to share his own anxiety about his high school and its "path to destruction." Moved to prayer, Cothran asked the crowd to join in. Arms raised toward the ceiling as she led the prayer for his high school and every other high school in Oregon and Washington, pleading for relief from the evil influence of the gay community. 10

TERESA COATES is a Portland freelance writer and devoted mother of two.

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