

Press Release



Pro-equality groups come together in response to “Ex-gay” thrust

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On November 7, 2009, Focus on the Family is bringing their “Love Won Out” conference to Metropolitan Church of God near Birmingham with a message that they say has “changed the lives of thousands.” But are they changed for the better?

This conference is also being sponsored by Exodus International, a so called “ex-gay” ministry.

We say “so called” because such attempts to change one’s sexuality have been condemned by¹:

- **American Psychiatric Association** (“the risks... are great” and include “self destructive behavior,” and “reinforces self hatred...already experienced by the patient”)
- **American Psychological Association** (“so-called conversion therapy is not supported by the science”)
- **American Medical Association** (“oppose any psychiatric treatment, such as ‘reparative’ or ‘conversion’ therapy”)
- **American Counseling Association** (supports “appropriate interventions in order to counteract bias that is based on ignorance or unfounded beliefs about same gender sexual orientation)
- **American Academy of Pediatrics** (Therapy directed specifically at changing sexual orientation is contraindicated...provokes guilt and anxiety while having little or no potential for achieving changes in orientation)
- **National Association of Social Workers** (No data demonstrate that reparative or conversion therapies are effective, and in fact they may be harmful).

We believe that truth wins out, and here are the facts. Gay teens are four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers², and are at higher risk of dropping out of school, being kicked out of their homes, and turning to life on the streets for survival.³ They are at risk because their distress is a direct result of the hatred and prejudice that surround them, not because of their inherently gay or lesbian identity orientation.⁴

The following organizations are joining in protest against this attempt to influence parents to direct young people toward counseling aimed at changing one’s sexual orientation using methods that are unscientific and have been proven to be ineffective, in fact harmful.

Equality Alabama. Contact Bob Palmatier [205-994-3431 or 205-296-4547]. The mission of Equality Alabama is to advance full equality for ALL the people of Alabama through education and advocacy.

Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays of Birmingham (PFLAG). Contact – Patty Rudolph [205-871-5317 or 205-306-3211]. We are working to keep families in loving relationships by helping them understand and affirm their gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender family members.

Central Alabama Pride. Contact – Johnathan Quinn. Our mission is to promote pride within and understanding between gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender communities and all other communities in central Alabama through education, public forums and organized social and recreational activities.

Covenant Community Church – Contact Kay Hendrix. An Inclusive Community of Faith in the City of Birmingham, Alabama. Offering Hope + Showing Faithfulness + Sharing Joy

Four Events Scheduled to Respond to Focus on the Family's Birmingham Invasion:

[1] Wayne Besen, author of “Anything But Straight: Unmasking the Scandals and Lies Behind the Ex-Gay Myth” (Haworth, 2003), former spokesperson for HRC and founder of Truth Wins Out, will be speaking at **Alumni Auditorium at Hill University Center** 1400 University Blvd., Birmingham on **Thursday, November 5, 2009 at 7:00 PM.** *Truth Wins Out is a non-profit organization that defends the GLBT community against anti-gay misinformation campaigns, counters the so-called “ex-gay” industry and educates America about gay life. Our goal is to help people be true to themselves and lead genuine lives of honesty and integrity.* Learn more about Truth Wins Out here: <http://www.truthwinsout.org/our-vision/> This event is being co-sponsored by The Alliance for GLBT Equality at UAB and UAB's Office of the Vice President for Equity and Diversity. Certainly the GLBT community wants to attend, but especially young people, teens, questioning youth, their parents and the general public.

[2] Silent Demonstration/Prayer Vigil at site of Ex-gay Workshop; We will gather on November 7 at 7:30 AM near 2800 Metropolitan Way (next to the Hoover Board of Education) to offer parents an alternative: to love your children as they are, after all, they are a product of yourselves; to love them unconditionally; to hope for happiness and equality for your children; and an opportunity to seek faith in a loving God who does not make mistakes.

[3] Lunch-time Demonstration at site of workshop; Those able to return between 11:00 am and 1:00 pm on November 7 will show a presence as conference participants take their lunch break.

[4] Regular PFLAG Support Meeting invites parents and youths to attend to learn how the support system works and to make contact with others who have happily survived learning their children are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgender. The meeting is at **7:00 pm on Tuesday, November 10, 2009 at the Unitarian Universalist Church** at 4300 Hampton Heights Drive, Birmingham, AL 35209.

¹ Truthwinsout.org (<http://www.truthwinsout.org/what-the-experts-say/>)

² Massachusetts 2006 Youth Risk Behavior Survey

³ American Academy of Pediatrics; Sexual Orientation and Adolescents (2004)

⁴ National Mental Health Association website (<http://www.nmha.org/go/information/get-info/children-s-mental-health/bullying-and-gay-youth>)