

Continuing Fallout from the JMFT Article

by Linda Ames Nicolosi

A client's religious beliefs about the meaning of sex and gender are to be considered "sacred," says the Association. Yet the Association claims it is "unconscionable" for the therapist not to challenge their validity.

After Christopher Rosik's article was published in the *Journal of Marital and Family Therapy*, the Board of Directors of the Association of Marriage and Family Therapists issued a cautionary statement.

Sexual Orientation Equated with Race

The statement agreed to "honor the diversity" of all the Association's members, including those of traditional religious faith. But the statement equated a homosexual orientation with inborn, unchangeable and morally neutral factors such as race.

The Association implied that sexual liberation ought to override the belief systems of traditional Christianity, Judaism and Islam; it would be "unconscionable," the Association said, not to challenge a client's traditional belief system about homosexuality.

The Board's statement said, in part:

"Marriage and family therapists provide professional assistance to persons without discrimination on the basis of race, age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, disability, gender, health status, religion, national origin, or sexual orientation. Therefore, as marriage and family therapists, and as an organization, we hold values of openness and inclusion, and the freedom of our clients to hold their own moral perspectives. ..

"Certainly our client's moral perspectives and understanding of right and wrong are a critical component of therapy, and those perspectives should be held in many respects as sacred themselves by therapists as part of treatment. At the same time, for example, if a person of color had been taught and came to hold the belief that he or she was deficient specifically and only because he or she were a person of color, we believe that it would be unconscionable not to address that conviction, whether as a moral, philosophical, religious, or scientific issue, as part of treatment.

"To take a client's current perspective or belief system as being the only legitimate perspective to be used as part of treatment would in many cases leave the therapist and the

client without the knowledge, research, or possibility of new insight and /or behavior which might lead to needed change—as defined by the client's presenting issues or goals of treatment. We believe this analogy is also useful in regard to issues of unwanted homoerotic attraction as well.

"...the larger and perhaps more personal question for the AAMFT is whether individuals who are gay or lesbian have a place in the organization, or are welcomed here. Conversely, perhaps, there may be those who hold certain religious views who would raise the same question.

"In conclusion, as an association, we also want to acknowledge that some of our members may not have historically felt the sense of welcome that we aspire to convey...we deeply regret that the publication the Rosik article in the JMFT exacerbates feelings of alienation or questions about the AAMFT and our value of inclusion. For that, as a Board, we make the commitment to continue our work toward embodying a sense of excellence, openness, and honoring of all of our members."

NARTH Criticized for Publishing Article

Another published letter by Mary Hotvedt, president of the Association, took NARTH to task for announcing the Rosik article on the NARTH web site. She also reiterated the Association's analogy of sexual orientation with race:

"...we are concerned about any therapy that would take at face value a client's sense of self deficiency, as defined by a societal prejudice, and base the treatment on that premise. This would be considered outrageous if a therapist were seeing a person of color who felt uncomfortable in the dominant society and then the therapist focused the work on helping them pass as white. We believe this analogy holds when the issue is unwanted homoerotic attraction.

"The board also recognizes the article is not merely an academic publication. It causes real pain for many of us within the organization, as well as in the public. NARTH has sought to exploit the publication on its website, thus compounding the damage."

Referral Therapists Sought

NARTH continues to seek referral therapists in all areas of the U.S. as well as Canada. If you are a licensed, insured psychotherapist in good standing with your professional association, please contact us for an application.