

# NARTH BULLETIN

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## IN THIS ISSUE

### PAGE

- 1 Protest at the APA
- 3 NARTH Ad in USA Today
- 4 NARTH Studies Published
- 5 Response to "Just the Facts"
- 9 APA Statement on Therapy
- 10 Making Schools "Safe"
- 15 Developmental Factors Ignored
- 16 APA Reorientation Symposium
- 16 NARTH Notes
- 23 Handbook of Religious Diversity
- 24 Q & A
- 25 Lesbian Finger-Length Study
- 26 When Dissent Is Stifled, by Lynn Wardle
- 32 Gays Discuss Unsafe Sex
- 33 Letters
- 34 Strategies to Promote Treatment

## On the Right to Self-Determination



*The American Psychiatric Association recently cancelled a debate which was to explore the ethics and effectiveness of reorientation therapy.*

*In protest, approximately 45 ex-gay ministry leaders flew to Chicago from around the country—some walking with their spouses and children at their sides—to protest the debate's cancellation. Their message was, "We have a right to define who we really are."*

*NARTH's President Joseph Nicolosi and Vice President A. Dean Byrd, Ph.D. appeared at a press conference outside the A.P.A. meeting alongside Robert Spitzer, M.D., on the day of the cancelled Psychiatric Association debate. The group defended the right to therapy and self-determination.*

*Dr. Nicolosi called for the A.P.A. to help dissatisfied homosexuals "pursue their own personal dreams," exactly as gays have. The following are Dr. Nicolosi's comments to the media:*

My name is Dr. Joseph Nicolosi. I am a California State licensed clinical psychologist and President of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality. NARTH is a professional scientific organization, representing several hundred licensed psychiatrists, psychologists and counselors around the country who are professionally committed to assisting individuals who are transitioning out of homosexuality.

As mental-health professionals, we have organized ourselves under NARTH to protect our right to assist persons dissatisfied with their same-sex attractions.

More importantly, we are committed to protecting the **client's own right to self-determination**. We are defending his right to choose professional support and assistance toward fulfilling the goal of sexual reorientation—a right that is now increasingly under threat from our professional associations.

## A.P.A. Says It Will Reconsider A Debate

Following the picketing of the American Psychiatric Association meeting in May, NARTH sent a copy of its most recent *Bulletin* to each of the A.P.A. trustees, along with a letter calling for a debate on the ethics and effectiveness of reorientation therapy.

In response, the Chairman of the A.P.A. Ethics Committee, Dr. Richard Malone, wrote NARTH to explain that A.P.A. "certainly supports the concept of free and open debate on scientific matters within the A.P.A."

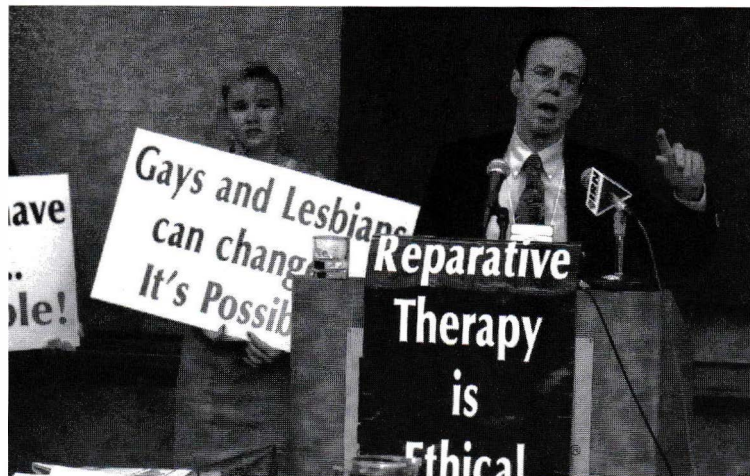
"I have asked the Scientific Program Committee to consider your concern," Dr. Malone said, "so that attention may be given to your request for an open scientific debate."

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## NARTH Press Conference at APA Annual Meeting

(Continued from page one)

Gay activists, I believe, are blocking the patient's right to self-determination because they feel threatened by the voices of men and women who have come out of homosexuality.



At the press conference, Robert Spitzer, M.D. defended the possibility of sexual reorientation.

But we say to them: We would hope that with your own recent gains in public acceptance and political recognition—which we recognize as your right—you will feel secure enough in your own successes to allow these men and women—who don't want to be gay—to pursue their own personal dreams, just as you have.

Granting ex-gay men and women the right to self-determination doesn't mean diminishing your right to pursue a different lifestyle.

There are many psychiatrists, psychologists, and other members of the mental health profession who stand with NARTH in support of struggling men and women whose dream it is to move away from behavior that displeases them, and to fulfill their desire for marriage, family and conventional lifestyle, in keeping with their own values and traditions. But the Psychiatric Association is making it increasingly difficult for such therapists to help them.

So we are making an emotional appeal to the psychiatric

community: "Get to know these men and women. Find out: Who are they? What are they trying to accomplish for themselves? How can our profession help them?"

The A.P.A. can't just keep offering every patient a "one-size-fits-all" philosophy, which is "Accept your homosexuality—and keep working on getting rid of your homophobia." This is not psychotherapy. *These may be your values, but these are not their values.* This is not a problem of homophobia; it is a question of their right to autonomy and self-determination.

The picketing we are seeing here today at the American Psychiatric Association Convention is a repeat of the appeal made to this very same association in 1973—involving the same issue, same tactics—but this time, you are seeing not gay men and women, but EX-gays. And they are making

more than a simple emotional appeal for the freedom to define themselves. They, and we at NARTH, are also making an intellectual appeal, asking you to look at the research—look into the data.

We came close to getting the evidence out for open discussion, because Dr. Robert Spitzer had scheduled today—this morning!—an open forum on the ethics and effectiveness of reorientation therapy. After the debate had been formally put on the meeting schedule, the two gay-activist psychiatrists who were debating in the opposing position dropped out and shut down the forum.

Our challenge is to the A.P.A. Board of Trustees: Look at the data. It's either one way or the other: If people *do* change, then you have a responsibility to change your policy. If they *don't* change—that is, no behavioral or identity shift is

accomplished, and they leave therapy feeling worse about themselves than when they came in—then we really are doing harm to our patients.

We're ready to open the debate; let's put the evidence on the table.



At the APA Convention in Chicago, 56 ex-gay ministry leaders from around the country gathered to protest the APA's cancellation of the debate on reorientation therapy.