

Project 10: Gay Advocacy, Not Just Tolerance

by Tim Rymel

Project 10 keeps young homosexual strugglers
from knowing the truth: that freedom is possible

The following is an excerpt of an article entitled "Project 10: Coming to Your Town?" by Tim Rymel, Director of Outreach Ministries for Love in Action, International. Here, we have reprinted those portions of the original article which are applicable to a readership of diverse faith traditions. Copyright ©1994 by Tim Rymel.

Distributed by Love in Action

Dr. Virginia Uribe, a lesbian high school teacher at Fairfax High in Los Angeles, Calif, first established Project 10 in 1984. She began an informal "rap" session for young people dealing with homosexuality, and felt the need to provide a support group for other homosexual youth in the public school education system.

There are three basic principles of this program (quoting directly from the Project 10 manual):

- 1) To develop programs in each high school which will support gay, lesbian and bisexual youth through education and counseling.
- 2) To provide support for gay, lesbian and bisexual youth within the community through education and referral networks.
- 3) To provide education to help sensitize all students, faculty and school staff to the presence of, special needs of, and concerns of these minority youth.

At face value, this program appears to be nothing more than a philanthropic gesture of kindness to an "underprivileged" minority of individuals. But there are several elements that need to be considered. A closer look reveals biased assumptions and inaccurate information.

How Many Gays?

To begin with, the name "Project 10" is derived from Alfred Kinsey's 1948 study on human sexuality. This study is given credit for stating that 10% of the American population is homosexual. However, Kinsey never actually said that the ten-percent figure was that of the general population. Rather, he said that "10 percent of white American males are, more or less, exclusively homosexual for at least three years of their lives between the ages of 16 and 65" (June M. Reinisch, *The Kinsey Institute New Report on Sex*, St. Martin's Press, New York; 1990, p. 140).

According to Reinisch, he gave a national statistic of 5% of the male population as homosexual, and 2.5% of the female population as homosexual.

Since that study nearly 46 years ago, new and more accurate statistics suggest that a significantly lower percentage of the population is homosexual. For example, a 1989 study conducted by the National Opinion Research Center at the University of Chicago found only 0.6 to 0.7 percent of their 1,537 participants were exclusively homosexual. Similar surveys in Britain and France found 1.4 percent of men and 0.4 percent of women had any homosexual involvement in the five years preceding their survey. These findings repeated themselves in Canada, Norway and Denmark (*New York Times*, March 31, 1993).

Contrary to the name of Project 10, the percentage of homosexuals is significantly less than the claimed ten percent of the population. Likewise, much of the basis for this pro-gay school program is based on Kinsey's now debunked statistics. (For more information on Kinsey's Report on Human Sexuality, see *Kinsey, Sex and Fraud* by Dr. Judith A. Reisman et al., Huntington House, 1990).

The Project 10 manual is filled with inconsistencies. For example, Uribe says that she realized in her initial support group that a majority of homosexual youth experienced "low self-esteem, feelings of isolation, alienation...inadequacy...self-destructive behavior, including substance abuse and attempted suicide." Yet later she notes that "Studies have shown no significant difference in self-acceptance or other measures of psychological well-being [comparing homosexual and heterosexual individuals]. (p. 59) Much of the main thrust of the program is an emotional plea for the acceptance of homosexuality.

A Normal Alternative Lifestyle

Looking at the content of the program, its first and second goals are similar. Project 10 wants to establish education about homosexuality in high schools as part of the human sexuality curriculum, and offer counseling and referral services which promote homosexuality. This curriculum will not only teach tolerance to young people, but validate homosexuality as a normal alternative to heterosexuality.

The first obvious problem is the assumption that homosexuality is as normal and healthy as heterosexuality. Startling statistics show this is not true. For example, a 1978 study found that 43% of white male homosexuals had

sex with 500 or more partners, and 28% reported having sex with 1,000 or more partners. Seventy-nine percent indicated that more than half of their sexual partners were strangers (*Homosexualities*, Alan P. Bell and Martin S. Weinberg, Simon & Schuster, 1978).

In addition, homosexually-active youth are 23 times more likely to contract a sexually-transmitted disease than heterosexual youth (Family Research Council newsletter, June, 1992, p. 6). It would be a disservice to young people to propagate homosexuality on par with heterosexuality and not disclose the true facts.

The second problem is the development of education on homosexuality. Who is going to do this? Parents? Religious leaders? Hardly. The gay community, namely gay educators and psychologists, want to write this material. But how can we trust the accuracy when they don't believe the condition is changeable? When there is so much disagreement among educators and clinicians as to the development of homosexuality? Yet Project 10 claims to have the definitive answer on the homosexual issue and seeks to advance its hypothesis as though it were fact.

The third problem is counseling. Project 10's counselors are either gay or gay sympathizers. What about the young person who does not want to be gay? Will he be told there is no other option? Yes. That is exactly what a young person will be told.

The Forbidden Question: "Are You Sure You're Homosexual?"

Recently I was interviewed by a newspaper reporter on why I opposed Project 10. He said, "Supporters of Project 10 say it is not true that they funnel everyone in one direction as you accuse them of doing. How do you respond?" Immediately I reached into my file drawer and pulled out the Project 10 manual. I quoted from a section in their own book which tells teachers and parents what not to say when a young person confesses he is struggling with homosexuality.

Under the listing of "IT IS NOT O.K. TO SAY..." I found such items as—

- * "How do you know?"
- * "Are you sure?"
- * "I don't agree with it, but I still like you."
- * "Have you tried to change?"
- * "I accept you, but I don't agree with your choice."
- * "You need counseling."

If it is *not O.K.* to ask "Are you sure?" then how is it possible to discern that homosexuality is actually the problem? And if it is the problem and the young person does *not* want to be a homosexual, how is he supposed to get help if it is *not O.K.* to tell him that he needs counseling?

Sexual-Identity Confusion is Common

The truth is, according to a major study at the University of Minnesota Hospital, 25.9% of children surveyed at the Minnesota school questioned their sexual identity at the age of 12. That number decreased to five percent by the age of 17. For all age groups, ages 12-19, only 0.8% of the boys claimed their orientation was homosexual and 0.7% bisexual. For girls, the figures were 0.9% and 0.2%, respectively (*Pediatrics*, the Journal of the American Academy of Pediatrics, April 1992). The prospect of early labeling and its consequences is truly frightening.

Only Gay Advocacy Groups are Listed

Fourth, the referral networks used by Project 10 are organizations such as the Gay and Lesbian Community Services Center, Children of the Night, L.A. Sex information Helpline, and other pro-gay social services. How can these organizations adequately counsel or help the child who chooses to resist being homosexual?

If Project 10 is impartial, as it claims, then why doesn't the manual list the services of Exodus International, local ex-gay ministries, or professional psychological services which offer alternatives? Clearly, from only a brief look at goals one and two, Project 10 does not have in mind the interest or emotional well-being of the homosexual youth it professes to help.

The Goal: To "Sensitize" Students

Goal number three is "to provide education to help sensitize all students, faculty and school staff to the presence of, special needs of, and concerns of these minority youth." Once again, Project 10 fails to meet its stated goal. More accurately, Project 10 seeks to DE-sensitize students, faculty, school boards, and parents by placing the homosexual person on the same status as someone who is of an ethnic minority. The more subtle goal is to change the way people think about homosexuality, undermining parental and religious values for more socially acceptable, politically correct thinking.

For example, a "What is Your Opinion" scale is shown in the manual (p.60) A reader gains points for having "correct" opinions to questions like, "I find the thought of homosexual acts disgusting." If a person answers yes, he receives one point. If a person answers no, he receives ten points. How this "opinion" scale helps sensitize people to the special needs and concerns of the homosexual youth is unclear.

One thing is clear: Parents who do not share the same philosophy as Project 10 face a tough battle. Project 10 is not interested in the opposing moral views of parents or students.

continued on page 30

In fact, according to an article in the August 8, 1988 issue of *Valley Magazine*, Virginia Uribe spoke to 150 students at San Fernando High School in California in February of that same year. Students were pulled from their regularly scheduled classes to hear her speak. They were not told beforehand what the topic was about, and no permission slips were requested from parents.

A Quiet Beginning

Uribe was able to initiate her support group at Fairfax High, and ultimately her national program, without even consulting her county school board or Fairfax High parents. The high school's principal excused this fact because her program required no school funding. Therefore, the school board did not need to get involved in the decision to approve or disapprove of Project 10. And since it did not need school board approval, there was little publicity to obstruct its beginning.

But all parents should be aware that their children are protected legally from discussions on sexuality. For example, section 51240 of the Education Code of California says,

"Whenever any part of the instruction in health, family life education and sex education conflicts with the religious training and beliefs of the parent or guardian of any pupil, the pupil, on written request of the parent or guardian, shall be excused from the part of the training which conflicts with such religious beliefs."

Unfortunately, programs such as Project 10 are able to work around such laws because parents and students are unaware of their legal rights.

Since its inception eight years ago, Project 10 and similar programs have sprung up all over the nation. Most of these programs were started by a small group of homosexuals and/or homosexual sympathizers who found favor in the eyes of the school principal.

Newsweek Cover Story on Sexual-Orientation Change

The August 17th issue of *Newsweek* ran an eight-page story entitled "Gay for Life? Going Straight: The Uproar over Sexual Conversion," picturing married ex-gay couple John and Anne Paulk on the cover. The article was, according to several NARTH observers, surprisingly even-handed and objective.

Media interest had been sparked by a recent nationwide advertising campaign, sponsored by a coalition of traditionalist groups, featuring full-page ads in major newspapers which conveyed the message, "We've changed, and so can you."

A Response

So what can you do about all of this? Get involved! It doesn't matter whether you're a parent, a grandparent or a single person. Find out what is happening in your local schools. If a program has already started, you have a lot of work to do to stop it. If it has not, now is a good time to get involved before it comes. *And believe me, it will.*

Here are some practical things you can do:

- * Call the principal of your local school and ask about groups that might be visiting to discuss any areas of sexuality with the student body. Project 10 is only one program. There are other, similar programs under different names. So you will want to ask specific questions about the types of groups or individuals the principal or others might invite to speak to the student body or the faculty.
- * Invite other parents, church youth leaders and pastors to be involved. There really is strength in numbers. You want to make it clear to the principal that you are not alone and that many others are behind you.
- * Form a coalition, making yourselves available to students for support, counsel and advice. It is important to have a multi-cultural group. This will allow your group access to various ethnic backgrounds. It also speaks of your willingness to work with diversity.
- * Look for professional counselors who are part of your community and willing to donate their time.
- * When naming your group, try to use the word "family" somewhere in the name. This word denotes stability and will help you gain the trust of the school board. It helps them to see that you may have single parents involved and that you have a broad, realistic definition of family.
- * If you find that your school board members oppose you, let them know that you will not vote for them when their term is up. If you can, actively campaign against them and tell them that you are doing so. The school board should have your interests—and the students' best interests—at heart. If they fail in that obligation, vote them out of their position. ■

The Newsweek follow-up story warned of the fallacy of the genetic theory of homosexual orientation: "Researchers say the public has misunderstood behavioral genetics. Unlike eye color, behavior is not strictly inherited; it needs to be brought into play by a daunting complexity of environmental factors...Most scientists postulate that homosexuality results from some combination of genes and environmental factors..."

NARTH was mentioned, and several former clients of NARTH therapists gave background interviews for the article.