

INTERVIEW:

Anthony Falzarano

Anthony Falzarano is the founder of P-FOX (Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays) the alternative to the gay-advocacy group, P-FLAG. He is interviewed here by Joseph Nicolosi.

J.N.: Anthony, you've been a very public figure in the ex-gay movement recently. That recent series of newspaper ads—saying, "Homosexuals can change, because we've changed"—brought a lot of attention to the religiously-based ex-gay movement. Then you led a picketing of the American Psychiatric Association, which is described on the front cover of this current issue of this *Bulletin*. Tell us something about yourself and your background.

A.F.: I was raised in a typical middle-class family in northern New Jersey. My parents have been married for 50 years. On the surface, it always looked like we had a pretty normal family life. But in order to support the seven children in our family, my father had to work very hard and really was not around for me. He was quite psychologically absent in my life. My mother tried to make up for his absence, and she became quite dominant in my life and didn't allow me to break free and become a man.

J.N.: So it was a classic triadic relationship, with dominant, overinvolved mother and emotionally absent father?

A.F.: Absolutely.

J.N.: Did you have any older brothers?

A.F.: I had an older brother.

J.N.: How did you get along with him?

A.F.: He was quite verbally abusive to me.

J.N.: Freud said many years ago that if a homosexual man has an older brother, he will have a fearful, hostile relationship with him.

A.F.: Absolutely. He used to traumatize me as a child.

J.N.: When did you first become conscious of having homosexual attractions?

A.F.: I began to be sexually molested at the age of nine years old, and there were at least six different molesters between the time I was nine and sixteen. That further traumatized me.

J.N.: Who were these people?

A.F.: One of the molesters was a brother; one was a schoolteacher; one was somebody at church; some were strangers that I met on a family vacation; and one was someone I met when I went shopping.

J.N.: Do you think on some level, that you, yourself you were looking for this?

A.F.: With my brother, obviously no. With the stranger at the shopping center, I just held the door for him and then he asked me where I was going. He said that he was shopping too, and asked if he could he come along with me. I was very naïve and had no idea what was going on.

The time I was molested by the schoolteacher, we were at a KEY (Kiwaniis Educated Youth) Conference. It was a men's club national convention, and he was a teacher from a different town. I was actively homosexual at that point, and he zeroed in on me because he could see that I was looking for something.

J.N.: How old were you at this time?

A.F.: I guess around 16.

J.N.: Tell me briefly about the the experiences you had in the gay lifestyle.

A.F.: At 17 is really when I came out. The guy I met at the shopping center had told me about gay bars, and as much as it disgusted me, I found myself probably about a month later going out to my first gay bar.

J.N.: At 16?

A.F.: Right before my 17th birthday.

J.N.: And the bars let you in?

A.F.: Oh, yeah. Years ago, this bar was known as one of the "chicken" bars where the old guys would hang out, and the "chickens"—the young kids—would walk in and the owner would look the other way. So anyway, I walked into the bar that night because I was lonely. My father wasn't around, I had been rejected by my peer group, and the sexual molestation had at least given me a feeling of being close to someone. Here, all these guys were paying attention to me. I met this guy at the bar, and he introduced me to the gay subculture.

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J.N.: How many years were you in it?

A.F.: About nine years. About one year into it, I became the "kept boyfriend" of a well-known attorney. He introduced me to the whole Studio 54 group, the high echelon of gay society. I began to meet all these famous people who were homosexuals. He had a house in Greenwich, Connecticut; a yacht; and a house in Palm Beach. The lifestyle was unbelievable. That continued for two years, although he also had other boyfriends at that time.

Eventually I felt I wanted to leave him because he was older than me and I was really looking for someone my age. But by that time, I was so spoiled by the gay world and what an older man could offer me, that when I met this doctor from Philadelphia, I sort of became his kept boy, too. He would come see me about once a month, and give me the money I wanted. I did have a regular job but it opened up a whole gay world to me--Provincetown, all the gay playgrounds--Fire Island, Southampton. Then I began to become quite promiscuous and I had over 400 sexual partners.

J.N.: This is all before the AIDS epidemic?

A.F.: Yes.

J.N.: Then what happened?

A.F.: Then I had a born-again experience. This guy--he was a backsliding Christian--he came to my apartment one night. I met him from an ad, and he ministered Christ to me. He told me that he regretted what we had just done, that he was a backsliding Christian, that God doesn't want him to be gay, and God didn't want me to be gay either. I was pretty shocked by his boldness.

J.N.: This is after sex?

A.F.: Yes. He was very regretful about what had just happened between us. He takes out his Bible, and he says, "Don't be deceived; practicing homosexuals will not inherit the Kingdom of God."

From that point on, I was convicted about what I had been doing in my life. I began to cut down on the promiscuous behavior and I left New York for Boston, where the gay scene was quieter, and I could settle down and have monogamous relationships. But I could not keep a monogamous relationship. Either I would end it, or he would end it.

J.N.: So you tried to go from a promiscuous gay lifestyle to monogamous gay lifestyle?

A.F.: Right. I was bargaining with God. I said, "God, I

can't heal from this but at least I can be monogamous—I can stay with one guy, and have a gay marriage."

J.N.: But that didn't work either?

A.F.: No. That didn't work. I met the perfect guy--Harvard graduate, good looking, good job. I had my own business, I had my own home. But we just couldn't make it.

J.N.: How long did that relationship last?

A.F.: Four months. And then one day when I was on my way to a pornographic bookstore to do something I shouldn't have been doing, God spoke to me and said, "Anthony, I have been patient with you long enough. You either leave this lifestyle now, or you will die of AIDS." That's what He told me. This was 1982. So it literally scared the hell out of me, and I left the gay lifestyle behind and got married, thinking if a gay monogamous relationship isn't right, then I'll get married to a woman.

I had known Diane for about five years; she knew I was gay. She was doing the female corporate ladder thing and realized that was empty, too. We were both speaking to each other one night and I said, "Diane, you know, I really want to get married and have kids and I don't know how I can do this, but I really

feel God is telling me to leave this gay lifestyle behind." She told me she had been in love with me for years and that she thought I was happy being gay, so she never pursued it, but she was sick and tired of climbing the corporate ladder and she wanted to get married, too.

We were both Catholic, and we got married about eight months later. The priest who married us was gay himself, the organist at the church was gay...it was unbelievable. Everybody I ran into was gay, and here I was trying to do the right thing! The first year of marriage was really tough, leaving the gay lifestyle behind cold turkey--no counseling to change sexual orientation, and no premarital counseling.

J.N.: No therapy at all?

A.F.: Nothing. Just the Holy Spirit speaking to me directly.

J.N.: How many children do you have?

A.F.: I've been married now for 15 years and I have two children.

J.N.: So you were just determined to do what you believed to be the right thing, "cold turkey," even though there

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hadn't been a complete internal transformation.

A.F.: Exactly. Then I got a phone call from a former boyfriend who told me he was dying of AIDS, and he said that I better get checked. This was about two years into our marriage. It scared the hell out of me. After I got of the phone, I fell to my knees and cried out to God, "God, if you give me a negative AIDS test result, I will not only get help, I will never act out again."

I was scared that Diane would have been infected too, and at that time, she was pregnant with our daughter. Anyway, my test result was negative and shortly thereafter, I started going to a Sexaholics Anonymous group. I was still very addicted to pornography. Even though I was being monogamous with Diane, in my thought life, I was still very homosexual.

Then after attending SA for about six months, my masturbation and pornography began to come under control and then somebody walked up to me at a SA meeting and said, "Look, you're a Christian and you don't want to be gay, so you'd be a perfect candidate for Exodus." Exodus believes that through the power of Jesus Christ, you can heal totally. So then I began going to Regeneration Ministries, in Baltimore, Maryland--Alan Medinger's group. Went to the Exodus National Conference, began to work on my sexual molestation issues. Elizabeth Moberly's book helped me with the psychological understandings, and my regular Tuesday night Exodus group was helping with the confession to be accountable. And slowly, I just began to heal. Now I'm ten years clean from pornography, 14 solid years clean from men. I began to have an attraction toward women as the homosexual addiction slowly waned.

J.N.: It just comes up naturally, doesn't it?

A.F.: It really did. And getting back into church, getting into the Bible.

J.N.: Tell us about your work.

A.F.: I founded Transformation Christian Ministries, which has been in operation for ten years and has helped about 400 or 500 transitioning homosexuals. About three years ago, because I do a lot of media work, parents began to call me from all over the country. So we started P-FOX—"Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays." We started local chapters for suburban Maryland, suburban Virginia, and Washington, D.C. to help the parents whose sons or daughters were in the local TCM group. We now have 25

chapters across the United States.

J.N.: Tell me about the other group, P-FLAG—Parents and Friends of Lesbians and Gays--and how you contrast your work with theirs.

A.F.: We're the antithesis of P-FLAG. P-FLAG is a pro-gay group, and it indoctrinates parents of gays about the gay lifestyle. On the other hand, you could call us the Al-Anon of the ex-gay movement. We help family members deal with their children's homosexuality. We teach them to continue to love their children, but we strongly disagree with the gay lifestyle. For example, we don't think it's a good idea that the son brings the lover home for Christmas dinner. We believe in setting boundaries in the family unit. You should continue to love your child; however, if you tell your daughter that you disagree with her lifestyle, and then you invite her lesbian girlfriend home for Christmas dinner, you're sending her mixed messages.

J.N.: So basically, your eventual hope is to bring the children out of the lifestyle?

A.F.: Absolutely. These parents get together from all over the country, and they pray for their children and support their children. We help educate each chapter on how to minister to the attendees. We have a large national conference

once a year that's held in March in Washington, D.C., and we usually bring in the best people in the ex-gay movement.

J.N.: How old is P-FOX now?

A.F.: It started in 1996.

J.N.: Recently, the NARTH Bulletin did a feature story on P-FLAG, quoting from the sexually and socially radical literature that P-FLAG is promoting to teenagers. Do you think P-FLAG is doing damage to young people?

A.F.: First and foremost, P-FLAG is doing damage to parents. They're putting them on a guilt trip to convince them if they don't accept their child *as gay*, he will commit suicide. They're teaching the parents their children were born this way. They say it's the homophobia of society that's the problem, not the homosexuality. They say that by not accepting the child's homosexuality, they are causing his unhappiness, and that if they will only accept and affirm the child's homosexuality, then the kid will be happy--which is a lie. They're even getting into the religion business, and they are saying that the mainline churches are warping Holy Scripture. They are very politically active, and they are putting their programs into the high

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schools, the junior high schools.

J.N.: They're very well funded, aren't they?

A.F.: A \$1.7 million annual budget.

J.N.: Where do they get their money from?

A.F.: Different gay individuals.

There are a lot of wealthy gay people out there who support this endeavor. And the parents are supporting this themselves. Cher and Chastity Bono are financial supporters. You have all these famous people who do not want to deal with the part they played as parents in developing the child into a homosexual, so therefore, it is easier to affirm the child into the gay lifestyle. That way, they don't have to take any responsibility for the part they played in this.

J.N.: So Cher has been a booster of P-FLAG?

A.F.: She was the keynote speaker at last year's event. You know, Sonny Bono, who died last year, took a different approach with his daughter's lesbianism: he came out and said, "I do not agree with my daughter's lifestyle."

Parents like Cher say they are loving their children, but perfect love speaks the truth--and if more parents were

willing to admit their responsibility in the formation of their child's homosexuality, I believe we would see many more people healing. So basically, P-FLAG is doing an awful lot of damage.

P-FLAG has 400 chapters all over the United States, compared to only 25 for P-FOX. But we're growing very quickly and we're trying to get some major fund-

ing. We're looking for donors to support our endeavor to come up against P-FLAG. We don't blame the parents for their child's homosexuality---but we do ask the parents to take responsibility for whatever way in which they may have contributed to the problem.

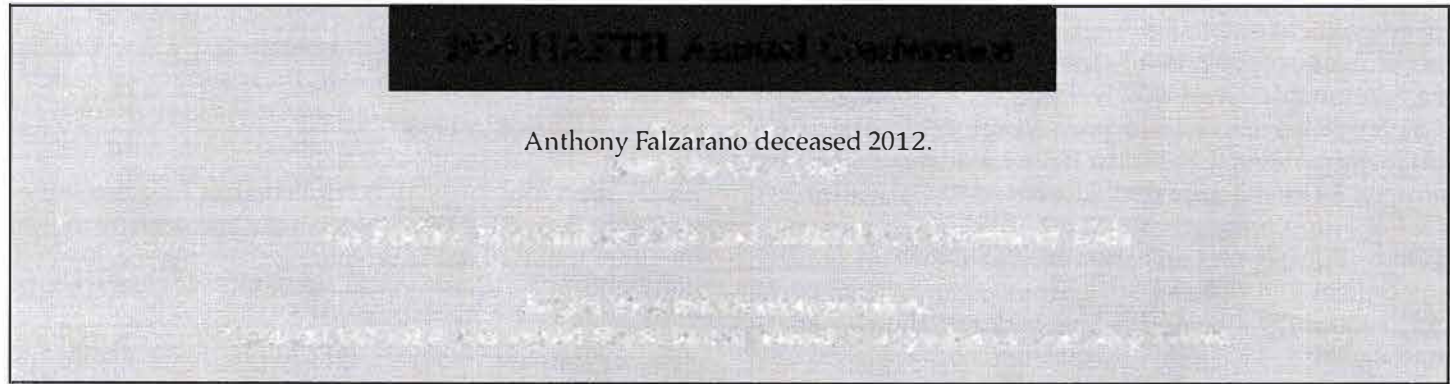
J.N.: It's not about blame...it's about understanding.

A.F.: Understanding and 'fessing up. Taking responsibility.

J.N.: Thank you for telling us about your life, and about P-FOX.

A.F.: For those people who want to contact us, our web site address is www.pfox.org. The phone number is (202) 371-2900. We have a national conference every year and would welcome any NARTH members who are interested in attending. ■

"We don't blame
parents for their
child's homosexuality,
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speak the truth."



Executive Officer Sought

As announced in our previous Bulletin, NARTH is actively seeking an experienced, highly motivated executive employee who will assume responsibility for fund raising, public relations, and financial management. Salary will be very competitive for the right individual. Passionate commitment to the cause is very important. Please call the NARTH office if you know of an experienced candidate for this key position.