



GLSEN Puget Sound condemns Exodus International's "ex-gay" proselytizing

The Gay, Lesbian & Straight Education Network (GLSEN) Puget Sound is outraged to learn that Exodus International is hosting a conference this Thursday, October 27, in Redmond, WA, which encourages lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and questioning (LGBTQ) teens to enter into unsafe, unproven and abusive "ex-gay therapy."

"Every mainstream medical and psychological organization has condemned the type of 'therapy' offered by Exodus and their ilk," said Robert Raketty, GLSEN Puget Sound's Executive Director. "True therapy is about building up youth's self-esteem and helping them to become whole; not espousing intolerance and rejection cloaked in the language of love. Exodus bases their 'therapy' on biased and unproven research. Being gay is not a mental disorder and should not be treated as such."

"Ex-gay therapy" has been discredited and deemed unethical by numerous mainstream psychological associations, including the American Psychiatric Association, the American Counseling Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, the National Association of Social Workers, and others.

High School teacher, Gay-Straight Alliance Advisor and GLSEN Puget Sound Education & Training Director, Joseph R. Bento, M. Ed., speaks from professional experience (corroborated by GLSEN data*) when he says that "having a message on campus taunting [LGBTQ teens] to change [in order] to be mentally healthy, to be moral... can send [LGBTQ] students into confusion about who they are and in many instances can lead to suicide.

"When gay students are harassed, they tend to skip class, miss school, and their grades decline because they don't want to come to school because they fear for their personal safety.

"Bullying students about their sexuality is a type of harassment. ... Bullying and harassment of any kind is not acceptable. Until we teach that all prejudice is wrong, bullying will flourish in our schools."

- **Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender (GLBT) youth do *not* need to change in order to be mentally healthy, moral human beings.** GLBT people are, as a group, no more and no less mentally or morally healthy than heterosexual, non-trans people.
- **GLBT youth and adults, as well as their loved ones, deserve accurate information from credible sources** (peer-reviewed journals, respected universities, government agencies, mainstream professional associations), ***not* from bigoted and widely discredited religious ministries like Exodus International.**

The Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Education Network (GLSEN) Puget Sound is a non-profit organization working to end anti-gay harassment and bullying in K-12 schools. One of our current programs is the Washington State Gay-Straight Alliance Network. We provide support and programming ideas to these student-led GSAs who courageously work to end harassment and homophobia in their schools.

**2003 National School Climate Survey, GLSEN. Online at <http://www.glsen.org/cgi-bin/iowa/all/library/record/1413.html>*

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