

## **RELIGIOUS COALITION FOR EQUALITY STATEMENT REGARDING THE EXODUS ORGANIZATION**

We in the Religious Coalition for Equality stand with the Safe Schools Coalition and speak out with great concern over the continued agenda of Exodus International, and their alleged “reparative” ministry.

We believe no one needs to be “repaired.” What instead needs to happen is we need to be part of restoration in our culture. We, the religious leaders of the RCE, teach in our traditions that we are called to restore our society to a culture of love, respect and acceptance of differences. After all, it is in our diversity we celebrate our unity in faith. As people of faith who minister to students who go to public schools, we teach in our churches, temples, and mosques that we are called to regard one another with respect, appreciation and ultimately love.

We are gravely concerned about the blatant discrimination thinly disguised as religion that the Exodus organization teaches. It harms not only those targeted, but those being trained to perpetuate this harassment as well. Too often in our past ‘Truth from the scripture’ has been used to justify slavery, racism, child abuse and the subjugation of women. We stand strongly and unequivocally opposed to this attempt to twist the real truth of scripture into a tool to demean, badger, and harass gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender youth ... especially in the name of compassion and love. And we *particularly* object to using schools as a venue to do it, using one student to make another student’s school experience unsafe ... in the name of spreading the gospel.

While we wholeheartedly affirm the right of every individual to believe as she or he sees fit, we want schools to understand that there are people of faith who support their protecting their students from other students’ testifying. Once a person asks another to stop, if they keep evangelizing anyway it’s called harassment.

And we want youth and their families to know that some communities of worship would welcome them *just the way they are*, not demanding that they change to earn our full respect. We are seekers of justice and the Exodus organization’s views run counter not only to science, psychology, experience and logic, but worst of all to the one unifying tenet of all of our religions: Love one another.

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The Religious Coalition for Equality is an interfaith association of lay persons and clergy committed to this twofold purpose: to educate Washington State citizens about and to advocate for marriage equality for all couples and the civil rights of all. <http://www.religiouscoalition-wa.org>