



### **PFLAG Seattle and Allies Expose Exploitation of Youth to Persecute Peers**

PFLAG is alarmed and angered that a conference called "Groundswell" is targeting our youth in Seattle on October 27th. This offshoot of the widely discredited Exodus International "ex-gay" ministries now appears to be recruiting young people to deliver their dangerous and misguided message in schools. They would have Christian young people become their newest evangelical weapon by training them how to badger their gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and questioning (GLBTQ) peers with the message that they can and should "change," derail Gay/Straight Alliance clubs, challenge or obstruct policies that address anti-GLBTQ harassment at school, and work to ensure the lives and concerns of GLBTQ students are not addressed through measures such as faculty training and appropriate inclusion in curriculum.

"Religious beliefs should be taught at home and at church. Not in our public schools" said PFLAG Seattle president, Barb Clark-Elliott. "It is not our gay kids that need to change. What needs to change is the unwillingness of some to accept the fact that they are perfectly healthy and normal just the way they are. It is time to stop pretending they do not exist and to acknowledge the pain and isolation our bigotry and discomfort have inflicted on them – and to address it. It is time for the torment and abuse to stop!"

National and area PFLAG members are working with other members of The Safe Schools Coalition including the Washington Association of Churches and The Gay Lesbian Straight Education Network to bring attention to this new strategy by Exodus International through Groundswell to exploit young people in their effort to marginalize and persecute GLBTQ youth and their supporters. Groundswell has also has similar training seminars scheduled for Orlando, FL and Boston, MA this year. PFLAG and their partners are holding a press conference and coordinating a broad range of spokespeople (including educators, mental health professionals, clergy, parents, students and survivors of anti-gay therapies and ministries) in order to make sure the public knows what they are trying to do and to provide accurate information.

Clark-Elliott said, "Groundswell argues that issues of concern to gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender young people and their supporters have no place in our schools, or that we are trying to promote an agenda. I have to ask, just who is it that has an agenda here? Their position ignores the fact that GLBT issues are already very much present in the form of rampant anti-GLBTQ hostility that has long been imbedded in our schools and sadly, considered perfectly acceptable. Well, it is not." Rather than foster responsible and compassionate attention to this problem, Groundswell wants to pit our youth against each other with the backing of powerful anti-gay organizations."

PFLAG Washington State Coordinator, Kathy Reim of Skagit, Washington, said, "People will have differing views on this, but policy, counseling practices and curricula should be based not on ideology or political motive, but on the best researched and professionally respected information available. PFLAG and our community allies are not alone in this – there are reasons major organizations like the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the American Psychiatric Association and the American Psychological Association have all said attempts to change sexual orientation do not work and are damaging. We will do everything in our power to get the truth out because we know lives are at stake."

Judy Hoff, Safe Schools Coordinator  
PFLAG National  
1726 M St. NW Suite 400  
Washington DC 20036  
202-467-8180 ext. 219  
[www.pflag.org](http://www.pflag.org)