

What You Need to Know About So-Called “Conversion Therapy” and Efforts to Ban It

Note: *This post, which is available online [here](#), has been adapted from an article I released on November 2, 2018. I've made only a few minor changes. The issues highlighted remain extremely pertinent, as efforts to ban so-called "conversion therapy" continue unabated.*

The original post is available [here](#).

—B. Nathaniel Sullivan, Word Foundations—

There are two brand-new movies that will be highly touted by Hollywood (just wait for the praises and awards to flow), and both seek to expose “conversion therapy.” One, called “Boy Erased,” “follows the son of a Baptist preacher who is forced to take part in a gay conversion program.” The other is called “The Miseducation of Cameron Post,” telling the story of “a 12-year-old Montana girl who is discovering her own homosexuality” and is subsequently sent to a “conversion camp.” It is difficult to describe just how much anti-Christian, anti-conservative, anti-change sentiment will be stirred up by these films, which in no way, shape, size or form will be fair or balanced, let alone biblical.

—Michael Brown—

I know full well, the average person doing ministry to same-sex attracted people has never even seen a counseling session in which people behaved the way they do in Boy Erased. We don't yell at people. We don't hit them with Bibles. We don't (as some people amazingly charge) offer shock treatment as a bonus. We take Biblical principles and help people apply them to all aspects of their lives, sexuality included. We talk, we listen, we advise.

—Joe Dallas, a once-gay man who now helps people overcome unwanted same-sex attraction—

Key point: Because therapy to overcome unwanted same-sex attraction is effective, gay activists are compelled to try to outlaw it. To accomplish this, they demonize legitimate therapy. The most effective weapon against these efforts is two-pronged: knowing the truth about therapy and sharing it.

View all the articles in this series [here](#).

Advocates of religious liberty and freedom of speech received good news on Friday, August 31, 2018. California Assembly Member Evan Low, a homosexual and the author of Assembly Bill 2943, withdrew the bill for this legislative session. Assemblyman Low had met with religious leaders who expressed serious concerns about the proposal. Pulling the bill, Low said, “I left those productive conversations feeling hopeful. I believe every person who attended these meetings left with a greater understanding for the underlying reason and intention of this bill to create a loving and inclusive environment for all. However, I believe there is still more to learn.”

Low added, “The best policy is not made in a vacuum and in order to advance the strongest piece of legislation, the bill requires additional time to allow for an inclusive process not hampered by legislative deadlines. With a hopeful eye toward the future, I share with you that, despite the support the bill received in the Assembly and Senate, I will not be sending AB 2943 to the Governor this year. I am committed to continuing to work towards creating a policy that best protects and celebrates the identities of LGBT Californians and a model for the nation to look towards.”

With the withdrawal, the proposed legislation dies for the time being. Many Californians and others are grateful to Low for his action, although at least one keen observer wonders aloud if Low is acting strategically in order to win, not just the legislative and/or legal debate, but the debate in the public square as well. (See “What Has Evan Low Been Up To—Really?” in this article.) Legislation similar to AB 2943 is certain to be introduced in the future.

What business does the government have banning counseling or therapy that people want and are willing to pay for?

Keep in mind that this bill in California would outlaw therapy altogether, making it impossible for those who want it to get it in locations where the law applies. What business does the government have banning counseling or therapy that people want and are willing to pay for? Be aware that without such a ban, no one is forcing anyone to participate in any therapy or treatment against his or her will. In other words, this is about eliminating freedom!

Misleading by Giving Wrong Impressions and Implying Falsehoods

Against this backdrop, on Friday, November 2, 2018, *Boy Erased* will hit theaters in the United States. It’s a movie about what some derisively call “conversion therapy”—therapy that’s seen by its opponents as an effort to “fix” homosexuals and turn them into heterosexuals, often against their wills. Here is the trailer.

As you can see from this promo poster, the movie narrative follows this line:

“THE TRUTH CANNOT BE CONVERTED.”

An individual doesn’t have to be an expert in psychology or human relations to see where this is headed. In fact, church groups are being encouraged to see the film. In a Facebook post, AMC Theatres issued this appeal: “*Boy Erased* is the story of a teenager forced to participate in a conversion program after being outed to his parents. Book a group showing at AMC for a church outing, school field trip or any group activity.”

Joe Dallas, a former homosexual who now helps people overcome unwanted same-sex attraction, summarizes the movie this way. *Boy Erased* is the sad and unfortunately

true story of a young man who went through what’s commonly called a “conversion therapy” program. He’s 19 years old, has just admitted to his Christian parents that he’s gay, and they insist he get help.

“Help”, they assume, will come through a program to which they’ll send him for weeks of daily group sessions and activities, allegedly designed to cure his homosexuality.

You can see where this is going. He eventually bolts from the program, accepts his identity as a gay man, and his parents – at least his mother, anyway – realize their error. Now, as an adult, he speaks against that damaging thing called Conversion Therapy.

The approaches depicted in the movie, unfortunately, are bizarre. While these experiences may have been real for Gerrard Conley, the man who wrote the account on which the film is based, the problem is that moviegoers will be quick to believe all approaches designed to address homosexuality and same-sex attraction are like those depicted on the screen.

It is in this sense that Boy Erased becomes propaganda. Thus, it is critical for people to understand what legitimate therapy is and is not.

What Does Effective Therapy Look Like?

Effective counseling and therapy that address unwanted same-sex attraction are not efforts that have homosexual attractions and activity as their exclusive focus, even though the client's ultimate goal certainly can be to move from homosexuality to heterosexuality. When a client has other objectives, no competent therapist ever will push the goal of heterosexuality on him or her. Yet when client and therapist agree that heterosexuality is the goal, counseling efforts that achieve it, or that help a client move toward it, focus primarily on the underlying causes of same-sex attraction. These causes often involve deep emotional wounds. When the wounds are addressed, healing occurs over time, and homosexual attraction automatically tends to diminish, often with a corresponding increase in heterosexual attraction. It is in this sense that such counseling is pro-heterosexual. Another important point: Effective counseling never, ever shames or coerces a client.

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Manipulation and Lies

LGBT activists are experts at choosing words to maneuver for advantage in a debate. They therefore use the term "conversion therapy" to demonize and malign all pro-heterosexual change efforts: Sadly,

those who profess to want to protect children from abuse, and relieve their suffering, actively advance legislation whose outcome is just the opposite. Many children want to be cured of same-sex attraction or being transgender. But because activists in our society a) refuse to accept that these are disorders, and 2) therefore, refuse to accept that such therapy can rightly be considered cures, they vigorously seek to outlaw such activities.

Be sure of one thing, whether or not electrical shock is employed is irrelevant. But don't expect to hear that admission.

In other words, people who seek bans on "conversion therapy" aren't primarily targeting shock treatments or other really harmful approaches. They are targeting any and all efforts to help people with unwanted same-sex attraction.

Exposing the Lies

The Family Research Council's Peter Sprigg expresses it well. After noting that bills like AB 2943 don't just outlaw harmful techniques, he exposes supporters' real intent:

When pressed, sponsors [of therapy bans] must admit that they seek to outlaw ordinary talk therapy as well. What these laws and bills target is nothing more or less than a goal: "to change behaviors or gender expressions, or to eliminate or reduce sexual or romantic attractions or feelings toward individuals of the same sex." This is extraordinary.

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Sprigg continues,

Supporters of the bans will also imply that people are “coerced” into undertaking SOCE [sexual orientation change efforts]. That problem (if it exists) could be resolved by requiring “informed consent” before therapy. The prohibitionists reject that, insisting on banning all therapy, even if the client desperately wants it. (Can you imagine the outcry from some of these same activists on the Left if conservatives argued, “Because some women are coerced into having abortions, the only solution is to prohibit any women from obtaining them”?)

Effective therapy is a threat to gay activists’ narrative, and this reality drives them to insist on therapy bans. Anyone who has moved from homosexuality to heterosexuality, by his or her very existence, counters the notion that gays are “born that way” and cannot change. Here are some of the experiences once-gay individuals are sharing. Here are some additional stories. Change is possible, but people need to be able to make the choices they desire to make.

Don't Be Deceived

Consider the irony of legislation forbidding therapy, even if the bans apply only to minors. How is it consistent to allow a teen to identify as gay, or as a member of the sex opposite that of the body he or she was born with, and not to allow a young person with unwanted same-sex-attraction to get help to overcome it? And think about this: Quite likely, in the vast majority of cases in which bans are being promoted or have been enacted, only a tiny number of legislators and policy makers (if any) supporting the bans are licensed therapists. Even if they are, it is clear that these lawmakers aren't even trusting the very therapists their own states have certified!

Do not be taken in by Boy Erased or other efforts to paint all therapy as abusive and harmful, even if the bans would apply only to minors. Therapy and counseling are not the problem.

The real problem is a failure among the masses, including well-meaning Republicans, to understand the truth about therapy. When people are ill-informed, freedom and liberty are threatened.

Hopefully this post helps to clear the air. You have the truth. Please share it.

Spread the word and help preserve freedom!

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For more information about this topic, please see the series "Clients' Rights and Government Wrongs."

Update, posted January 16, 2020—

A formerly gay man who affirms that counseling helped him overcome homosexuality says "conversion therapy" doesn't even exist. Here are excerpts from an article titled "Former homosexual says conversion therapy doesn't exist, efforts to ban practice will restrict freedom of choice":

“What the messaging of the Left has done is, it’s created this term ‘conversion therapy,’” he said. “I’m a former homosexual. I’ve never experienced conversion therapy. Of the hundreds if not thousands of people who have left the LGBTQ lifestyle that I’ve met, that I’ve counseled, that I’ve known, no one has ever experienced conversion therapy.

“It’s literally a term and something that has been created by the Left to try to say these horrible things happen.”...

The Left, as he puts it, often points to drastic, archaic so-called “conversion therapy” efforts that include electroshock therapy. But they also lump those efforts, which he called barbaric, with basic counseling.

If the abusive forms of conversion therapy are happening, Domen said he has a few questions.

“If any of these horrible things are happening to people, where are the insurance claims,” he asked. “Where are the police reports filed? Where are the arrests? Where are the medical malpractice lawsuits and awards? If half of what they’re claiming has happened to them, why was there nothing ever done criminally?”

“There is zero evidence that any of this is ever taking place.”

Instead, this issue has become an opportunity for LGBTQ activists to attack the idea that sexual orientation can be changed....

[Domen] cautions Republicans from getting on board with efforts to ban conversion therapy.

“Let’s give people the freedom to choose,” he said. “If you want to pass a bill that condemns conversion therapy [and the archaic practices associated with the term], fine, I support that. What traditionally has been defined as conversion therapy is horrible. What they claim has been done to people is barbaric. But they’ve taken the word conversion therapy and added anything like reparative therapy. They’re grouping all of it into one category and calling it conversion therapy. What I would say to Republicans is, let’s let people have the freedom to choose. The government needs to be out of the therapist room. The government doesn’t need to be in people’s personal matters.”

Update, posted January 16, 2020—

Read [this article](#) titled "Same-Sex Attraction and Therapy: It’s Time to Let People Choose" by Arthur Goldberg. It documents that fraudulent accusations have been leveled against licensed counselors. Here are a couple of brief excerpts.

Caleb Laieski, a resident of Virginia and self-described activist for LGBTQ causes, filed ethical complaints in Texas against four counselors, only one of which proceeded to a formal hearing. (All four are friends of mine.) Because Mr. Laieski filed his complaint without ever knowing, speaking to, or entering into a client relationship with any of the counselors, his ideological witch hunt was dismissed as “non-jurisdictional.”...

One may legitimately ask how someone who has never had a client relationship with the counselor—who has never even met or spoken with him—could possibly bring a complaint under a statute that permitted complaints to be received from “consumers” and “service recipients.” Instead of using the professional complaint procedures for their intended purpose of hearing complaints from dissatisfied clients, the complainant clearly abused the lawful process for hearing client complaints, filing a complaint without any basis either in law or in fact.