

THE ANTI-GAY LOBBY

The Family Research Council,
the American Family Association
& the Demonization of LGBT People

*A Special Report from the Southern Poverty Law Center
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THE SOUTHERN POVERTY LAW CENTER is a nonprofit organization that combats hate, intolerance and discrimination through education and litigation. Its Intelligence Project, which prepared this report and also produces the quarterly investigative magazine *Intelligence Report*, tracks the activities of hate groups and other extremists. Its Teaching Tolerance project helps foster respect and understanding in the classroom. Its litigation arm files lawsuits against hate groups for the violent acts of their members.

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Executive Summary

Together, the Family Research Council (FRC) and the American Family Association (AFA) may comprise the most important anti-gay lobby in this country. Since 2006, the FRC has hosted the Values Voter Summit, an annual conference for social conservatives that attracts numerous public figures — and whose latest edition opens today in the nation’s capital. Equipped with a \$12 million budget and led by a former Louisiana state representative, the FRC is politically powerful, with its spokesmen appearing regularly in the national media and many friends on Capitol Hill. The AFA, a sponsor of the FRC’s Values Voter Summit, has a \$20 million budget and a network of about 200 radio stations, is regularly quoted in the press, and has worked to organize grassroots Christians to lobby for its goals. The FRC and the AFA are certainly among the most powerful groups on the American religious right.

They are also among the chief purveyors of lies about LGBT people. They have both regularly pumped out propaganda asserting that gay men molest children at far higher rates than their heterosexual counterparts — a claim that has been debunked by virtually all the recognized scientific authorities in the field. The FRC has claimed that gay activists “work to normalize sex with boys,” seek to “abolish all age of consent laws and to eventually recognize pedophiles as the ‘prophets’ of a new sexual order,” and support anti-bullying programs solely in order to promote homosexuality. The AFA has declared that “homosexuality gave us Adolph Hitler ... the Nazi war machine and six million dead Jews,” suggested that gay sex be punished like heroin use, and said that the “homosexual agenda” endangers “every fundamental right” in the Constitution, including religious freedom. Both groups have enthusiastically promoted “reparative therapy,” which claims against the bulk of the evidence that it can “cure” gay men and lesbians and make them heterosexual, but in fact has left a string of people behind who were badly hurt by the process.

Words have consequences. While the FRC and the AFA would certainly deny it, it seems obvious that their regular demonizing of members of the LGBT community as child molesters and the like creates an atmosphere where violence is all but inevitable. And that violence is dramatic. A study by the Southern Poverty Law Center found, based on an analysis of 14 years of FBI hate crime data, that LGBT people were by far the American minority most victimized

by such crimes. They were more than twice as likely to be attacked in a violent hate crime as Jews or black people and more than four times as likely as Muslims. And that doesn’t include the anti-gay bullying that has resulted in so many teen suicides.

Based on the foregoing and other evidence, the Southern Poverty Law Center (SPLC) last year began listing the FRC and the AFA as hate groups. The listings, as was said at the time, were based on the groups’ use of known falsehoods to attack and demonize members of the LGBT community — not, as some have gratuitously claimed, because the groups are Christian, or because they oppose same-sex marriage, or because they believe the Bible describes homosexuality as a sin.

Many thoughtful Christian commentators have said as much. Warren Throckmorton, a respected professor and past president of the American Mental Health Counselors Association, wrote last December that “the newly labeled hate groups” were seeking to “avoid addressing the issues the SPLC raised, instead preferring to attack the credibility of the SPLC.” Reviewing an SPLC list of myths propagated by anti-gay religious-right groups, he said many are “provably false” and “rooted in ignorance.”

The SPLC’s criticisms, Throckmorton concluded, are “legitimate and have damaged the credibility of the groups on the list. Going forward, I hope Christians don’t rally around these groups but rather call them to accountability.”

We hope public figures will do the same.

PROFILE

Family Research Council

Founded: 1983

Location: Washington, D.C.

The Family Research Council (FRC) bills itself as “the leading voice for the family in our nation’s halls of power,” but its real specialty is defaming gays and lesbians. The FRC often makes false claims about the LGBT community based on discredited research and junk science. The intention is to denigrate LGBT people in its battles against same-sex marriage, hate crimes laws and anti-bullying programs. To make the case that the LGBT community is a threat to American society, the FRC employs a number of “policy experts” whose “research” has allowed the FRC to be extremely active politically in shaping public debate. Its research fellows and leaders often testify before Congress and appear in the mainstream media. It also works at the grassroots level, conducting outreach to pastors in an effort to “transform the culture.”

In Its Own Words

“Gaining access to children has been a long-term goal of the homosexual movement.”

— Robert Knight, FRC director of cultural studies, and Frank York, 1999

“[Homosexuality] ... embodies a deep-seated hatred against true religion.”

— Steven Schwalm, FRC senior writer and analyst, in “Desecrating Corpus Christi,” 1999

“One of the primary goals of the homosexual rights movement is to abolish all age of consent laws and to eventually recognize pedophiles as the ‘prophets’ of a new sexual order.”

— 1999 FRC pamphlet, *Homosexual Activists Work to Normalize Sex with Boys*

“[T]he evidence indicates that disproportionate numbers of gay men seek adolescent males or boys as sexual partners.”

— Timothy Dailey, senior research fellow, “Homosexuality and Child Sexual Abuse,” 2002

“While activists like to claim that pedophilia is a completely distinct orientation from homosexuality, evidence shows a disproportionate overlap between

the two. ... It is a homosexual problem.”

— FRC President Tony Perkins, FRC website, 2010

Background

The Family Research Council (FRC) emerged from a 1980 White House conference on families. James Dobson, founder of the religious right powerhouse Focus on the Family, met and prayed with a group of eight Christian leaders at a Washington hotel, leading ultimately to the creation of the FRC in 1983 under the initial direction of Gerald Regnier (formerly of the Department of Health and Human Services). The group became a division of Focus on the Family in 1988 under Gary Bauer, a religious right leader who would use his post as a launching pad for a failed 2000 run for the presidency. Bauer had been the undersecretary of education and a domestic policy advisor to President Reagan.

Bauer raised the FRC’s profile, increased its effectiveness, and built a national network of “concerned citizens” during the Clinton Administration. But the FRC separated from Focus on the Family in 1992 over concerns that its very political work might threaten Focus’ tax-exempt status; Dobson and two other Focus officials joined the FRC’s newly independent board. As an independent nonprofit, the FRC continued its work in “pro-family” areas, working against abor-

tion and stem cell research, fighting pornography and homosexuality, and promoting “the Judeo-Christian worldview as the basis for a just, free, and stable society.” That work would establish the FRC as one of the most powerful of the far right’s advocacy groups.

Bauer brought in several anti-gay researchers who pumped out defamatory material about the LGBT community. Robert Knight, a long-time conservative writer and journalist and major anti-gay propagandist, served as the FRC’s director of cultural affairs from 1992 until 2002, when he went to Concerned Women for America (CWA; Knight later moved on again and is currently senior writer at Coral Ridge Ministries). During his years at the FRC, Knight penned anti-gay tracts that used the research of thoroughly discredited psychologist Paul Cameron, head of the Colorado-based hate group the Family Research Institute. Knight authored numerous anti-gay papers, and even used Cameron’s infamous “gay obituary” study in testimony he offered before Congress to oppose the Employment Non-Discrimination Act (ENDA) in 1994. In his prepared statement on that topic, he said, “A study of more than 6,400 obituaries in homosexual publications reveals that homosexuals typically have far shorter life spans than the general population.” Cameron’s study has been thoroughly discredited for several reasons, one of which is its deeply flawed methodology. When asked in 2004 about using Cameron’s work, Knight, by then with CWA, responded, “Yes, we have used his research. So what?”

While at the FRC, Knight also co-wrote (with Robert York, a former editor at Focus on the Family) a 1999 booklet with the attention-getting title of *Homosexual Activists Work to Normalize Sex with Boys*. Among its more remarkable claims was the baseless assertion that “one of the primary goals of the homosexual rights movement is to abolish all age of consent laws and to eventually recognize pedophiles as the ‘prophets’ of a new sexual order.” The same publication argued that the “homosexual rights movement has tried to distance itself from pedophilia, but only for public relations purposes.” The booklet has since disappeared from the FRC’s website, but the organization has not withdrawn the claims it made.

Since Bauer left the group in 1999, the FRC has had two presidents and has also emerged as one of the most powerful religious right lobbying groups in the country, with a bevy of policy researchers and writers and numerous E-mail feeds geared to a variety of causes. Kenneth Connolly, a Florida attorney and leader in the pro-life movement, served as president from 2000 to 2003. During his tenure, the FRC’s

agenda focused on abortion, traditional marriage, religious liberty, parental choice in education and tax relief for families, though a central part of its mission is still working against equal rights legislation for LGBT Americans.

The FRC also strongly promotes the “ex-gay” movement as a way to combat LGBT civil rights measures, though professional organizations have repeatedly called so-called “reparative therapy” (which seeks to turn gays and lesbians into heterosexuals) into question and issued statements that don’t support it. For instance, the American Psychological Association issued a report in 2009 reviewing studies of “ex-gay” therapy. The report found that, “contrary to the claims of practitioners and advocates, recent research studies do not provide evidence of sexual orientation change as the research methods are inadequate to determine the effectiveness of these interventions,” according to Dr. Judith Glassgold, the lead author.

In 2003, Anthony Richard “Tony” Perkins became president of the FRC after a failed 2002 run for one of Louisiana’s U.S. Senate seats. Under his leadership, the group continues to peddle its false claims about gays and lesbians and has made combating the “homosexual agenda” a seemingly obsessive interest.

Before joining the FRC, Perkins served two terms as a Louisiana state representative (1996-2004). He is also a veteran of the Marine Corps and a former police officer and television news reporter. In addition to his numerous appearances in the media and his work with the FRC, he recently co-authored *Personal Faith, Public Policy* (2008) with Bishop Harry Jackson, Jr., senior pastor at Hope Christian Church in Washington, D.C. (Jackson, who is African American, runs the virulently anti-gay Hope Christian Church in Lanham, Md. He is a leader in an effort by white and black religious right preachers to work together against gay rights).

In his official FRC biography, some facts about Perkins’ life do not appear. According to *The Nation*, in 1992, while a reserve police officer in Baton Rouge, Perkins failed to report an illegal conspiracy by anti-abortion activists to his superiors. That was Operation Rescue’s “Summer of Purpose,” when the group targeted the Delta Women’s Clinic in Baton Rouge. Perkins was dividing his time between his duties as a volunteer for the city’s police force and his job as a reporter for “Woody Vision,” a local right-wing television station owned by his mentor, Republican State Rep. Louis “Woody” Jenkins.

Perkins and his camera crew were a frequent presence outside the clinic, *The Nation* reported. According to Victor Sachse, a classical record shop owner in the city who volunteered as a patient escort for the clinic, Perkins' reporting was so consistently slanted and inflammatory that the clinic demanded his removal from its grounds. In order to control an increasingly tense situation, the police chief had a chain link fence erected to separate anti-abortion activists from pro-choice protesters, and he called in sheriff's deputies and prison guards as extra forces. Perkins publicly criticized the department and the chief and then, after learning about plans for violent tactics by antiabortion activists to break through police lines and send waves of protesters onto the clinic's grounds, failed to inform his superiors on the force. As a result of his actions, Perkins was suspended from duty in 1992, and he subsequently quit the reserve force.

In 1996, while managing the U.S. Senate campaign of Woody Jenkins against Mary Landrieu, Perkins paid \$82,500 to use the mailing list of former Klan chieftain David Duke. The campaign was fined \$3,000 (reduced from \$82,500) after Perkins and Jenkins filed false disclosure forms in a bid to hide their link to Duke. Five years later, on May 17, 2001, Perkins gave a speech to the Louisiana chapter of the Council of Conservative Citizens (CCC), a white supremacist group that has described black people as a "retrograde species of humanity." Perkins claimed not to know the group's ideology at the time, but it had been widely publicized in Louisiana and the nation, because in 1999 — two years before Perkins' speech to the CCC — Senate Majority Leader Trent Lott had been embroiled in a national scandal over his ties to the group. GOP chairman Jim Nicholson then urged Republicans to avoid the CCC because of its "racist views."

The Duke incident surfaced again in the local press in 2002, when Perkins ran for the Republican nomination for the Senate, dooming his campaign to a fourth-place finish in the primaries.

Part of the FRC's recent strategy is to pound home the false claim that gays and lesbians are more likely to sexually abuse children. This is false. The American Psychological Association, among others, has concluded that "homosexual men are not more likely to sexually abuse children than heterosexual men are." That doesn't matter to the FRC, though. Perkins defended the "gay men as pedophiles" claim yet again in a debate on the Nov. 30, 2010, edition of MSNBC's

"Hardball With Chris Matthews" with the Southern Poverty Law Center's Mark Potok. As the show ended, Perkins stated, "If you look at the American College of Pediatricians, they say the research is overwhelming that homosexuality poses a danger to children. So Mark is wrong. He needs to go back and do his own research."

In fact, the SPLC did. The college, despite its professional-sounding name, is a tiny, explicitly religious-right breakaway group from the similarly named American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP), the 60,000-member association of the profession. The American College of Pediatricians (ACP) splintered from the AAP because of the AAP's support of gay and lesbian parents. Publications of the ACP, which has some 200 members, have been roundly attacked by leading scientific authorities who say they are baseless and who also accuse the college of distorting and misrepresenting their work. (Chris Matthews offered a clarification on a follow-up show to describe what the American College of Pediatricians is and separate it from the AAP.)

Perkins dove into the immigration issue in 2006, signing a statement along with leaders of the anti-immigrant Minuteman movement that called for strong measures aimed at halting increased immigration. Perkins said the effort was necessary, not so much for guarding America's security as to protect its "cultural fabric."

Other anti-gay propagandists at the FRC include Peter Sprigg, senior fellow for policy studies, who joined the organization in 2001. Sprigg authored a 2010 brochure touting "The Top Ten Myths about Homosexuality." In the brochure, Sprigg claimed that ex-gay therapy works, that sexual orientation can change, that gay people are mentally ill simply because homosexuality makes them that way, and that, "Sexual abuse of boys by adult men is many times more common than consensual sex between adult men, and most of those engaging in such molestation identify themselves as homosexual or bisexual." He also claimed that "homosexuals are less likely to enter into a committed relationship" and "less likely to be sexually faithful to a partner." Sprigg's sources are a mixture of junk science issued by groups that support ex-gay therapy and legitimate science quoted out of context or cherry-picked, a tactic long used by anti-gay groups to bolster their claims about gay people. Several legitimate researchers, like NYU's Judith Stacey (a source Sprigg uses), have issued public statements condemning the practice and requesting that anti-gay groups stop misrepresenting their work.

In 2004, Sprigg and FRC Senior Research Fellow Timothy Dailey co-authored the 2004 book *Getting It Straight: What the Research Shows About Homosexuality*. In it, they repeat claims that gay men “commit a disproportionate number of child sex abuse cases,” that gay people are promiscuous, and that lesbians exhibit “compulsive behavior.” Much of the book’s content can also be found in separate articles put out by the FRC.

In March 2008, Sprigg responded to a question about uniting gay partners during immigration by saying, “I would much prefer to export homosexuals from the United States than import them.” He later apologized, but in February 2009, he told Chris Matthews, “I think there would be a place for criminal sanctions on homosexual behavior.” “So we should outlaw gay behavior?” Matthews asked. “Yes,” Sprigg replied.

Dailey, who joined the FRC staff in 1999, is the author of the luridly titled book *Dark Obsession: The Tragedy and Threat of the Homosexual Lifestyle* as well as several policy papers on the dangers of homosexuality. In *Dark Obsession*, Dailey describes the tragic life of one young man who died of AIDS. He also includes claims about homosexuality and pedophilia, the instability of LGBT relationships, and links homosexuality to a variety of sexually transmitted diseases. In some of his other papers like “Homosexuality and Child Abuse,” Dailey links homosexuality to pedophilia, and claims that “a tiny percentage of the population (homosexual men) commit one-third or more of the cases of child sexual molestation.”

In another paper titled “Homosexual Parenting: Placing Children at Risk,” Dailey quoted from a study that claimed, “A disproportionate percentage — 29 percent — of the adult children of homosexual parents had been specifically subjected to sexual molestation by that homosexual parent... . Having a homosexual parent(s) appears to increase the risk of incest with a parent by a factor of about 50.” Dailey

took that data from Paul Cameron, whose work has been repeatedly denounced as shoddy and biased by the scientific community.

More recently, the FRC set its sights on ensuring that the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy in the military remained in place, although it was, in fact, repealed in 2011. In late 2010, Perkins held a web-cast to discuss the dire consequences of allowing gay men and lesbians to serve openly in the military, using dubious statistics from a poll the FRC commissioned. According to a report, “Mission Compromised,” authored by retired Army Lt. Col. Robert Maginnis, who is the FRC’s senior fellow for national security, allowing gay men and lesbians to serve openly will undermine morale and discipline and infringe on the religious freedom of military chaplains, who will be forced to accept homosexuality and will no longer be permitted to express their religious beliefs about it. In addition, Maginnis predicted that heterosexual service members would be forced to take “sensitivity classes” that promote the “homosexual lifestyle” and added that: “Homosexual activists seek to force the U.S. military to embrace their radical views and sexual conduct, no matter the consequences for combat effectiveness.”

The group has also waded into the debate over anti-bullying policies, which became a matter of national debate after several gay students committed suicide in late 2010. On Oct. 11, 2010, Perkins managed to get the *Washington Post* to run his op-ed, in which he reiterated his point that anti-bullying policies are not really intended by their supporters to protect students. “Homosexual activist groups like GLSEN [Gay, Lesbian and Straight Education Network] ... are exploiting these tragedies to push their agenda of demanding not only tolerance of homosexual individuals, but active affirmation of homosexual conduct and their efforts to redefine the family.”

PROFILE

American Family Association

Founded: 1977

Location: Tupelo, Miss.

Initially founded as the National Federation for Decency, the American Family Association (AFA) originally focused on what it considered indecent television programming and pornography. The AFA says it promotes “traditional moral values” in media. A large part of that work involves “combating the homosexual agenda” through various means, including publicizing companies that have pro-gay policies and organizing boycotts against them. The AFA has a variety of outlets to disseminate its message, including the American Family Radio Network, its online One News Now and the monthly *AFA Journal*. In early 2011, the AFA claimed more than 2 million online supporters and 180,000 subscribers to its *Journal*.

In Its Own Words

“[T]he homosexual lifestyle is characterized by anonymous sexual encounters and celebration of sexual obsession and perversion unparalleled in any other social group.”

— Richard Howe, “Homosexuality in America,”
AFA publication, 1994

“As with smoking, homosexual behavior’s ‘second hand’ effects threaten public health... . Thus, individuals who choose to engage in homosexual behavior threaten not only their own lives, but the lives of the general population.”

— Gary Glenn, president of
Michigan chapter of AFA, 2001

“Homosexuality is not only harmful to homosexuals themselves, but also to children and to society.”

— Stephen Bennett, AFA writer, 2004

“If President Obama, Congressional Democrats, and homosexual activists get their wish, your son or daughter may be forced to share military showers and barracks with active and open homosexuals who may very well view them with sexual interest.”

— AFA press release, February 2010

“The homosexual movement is a progressive outgrowth of the sexual revolution of the past 40 years

and will lead to the normalization of even more deviant behavior.”

— Don Wildmon, AFA website, 1999
(still posted as of 2011).

“Homosexuality gave us Adolph Hitler, and homosexuals in the military gave us the Brown Shirts, the Nazi war machine and six million dead Jews.”

— Bryan Fischer, AFA director of issue analysis
for government and public policy, 2010

Background

Founded in 1977 by Methodist minister Donald E. Wildmon as the National Federation for Decency, the American Family Association (AFA) worked in its early years to remove what it considered indecent programming from television. Its other major focus was battling pornography. In 1988, the group’s name was changed to the AFA, because the organization’s concerns, Wildmon said in 2007, had expanded.

In 1985, Wildmon was appointed to former Attorney General Ed Meese’s Commission on Pornography by its director, Alan Sears, who later would become president of the Alliance Defense Fund, a Christian-based legal organization. Wildmon successfully orchestrated the removal of *Playboy* and *Penthouse* from some 17,000 convenience stores. Also in the 1980s, Wildmon started ramping up the AFA’s anti-LGBT propaganda and succeeded in getting some corporations to pull their ads

from shows like “Thirtysomething,” which had been added to Wildmon’s list of “Trash TV” because its plot included a gay romance.

Wildmon has never made a secret of his anti-LGBT views. One of his statements on the AFA’s website reads, “I never dreamed I would see the day when sodomy would be called normal, and those who held to traditional values based on Christian teaching would be called bigots.” According to the AFA, the primary goal of the “homosexual movement” is to “abolish the traditional, Judeo-Christian view of human sexuality, marriage, and family.”

The AFA has been extremely vocal over the years in its opposition to LGBT rights, marriage equality and allowing gay men and lesbians to serve in the military. The group’s arguments are filled with claims that equate homosexuality with pedophilia and argue that there’s a “homosexual agenda” afoot that is set to bring about the downfall of American (and ultimately, Western) civilization. In one October 2004 article, the *AFA Journal* suggested that gay influences are leading to a “grotesque culture” that will include “quick encounters in the middle school boys’ restroom.”

For years, until 2010, the AFA had a section on its website that supposedly exposed “The Homosexual Agenda.” There, a reader could find articles and other AFA publications that claimed LGBT people were trying to force the acceptance of homosexuality on children through sex education programs in schools; condemned companies like Disney for supporting LGBT rights and programming; and, also until 2010, featured a particularly noxious booklet the AFA had published in 1994. That booklet, *Homosexuality in America: Exposing the Myths*, included the bogus research of thoroughly discredited psychologist Paul Cameron as a source. One of the publication’s authors, Richard Howe, used Cameron’s “research” to claim that LGBT people don’t live as long as heterosexuals, that they’re more promiscuous and that the “disgusting details of the homosexual lifestyle explain why so many diseases are present in the homosexual community.” Another claim was that “[p]rominent homosexual leaders and publications have voiced support for pedophilia, incest, sadomasochism, and even bestiality.”

In 1998, in what would become a scandal for the group, the AFA signed on to a huge television and newspaper “ex-gay” campaign called “Truth in Love,” a project that advocated an idea popular in religious-right circles: that LGBT people can be “cured” so that they become heterosexual. A man named Michael

Johnston was the star of the campaign. In one television ad shot with his mother present, Johnston discussed “leaving homosexuality” and was open about his HIV-positive status. Previously, Johnston had worked with Jerry Falwell as an ex-gay leader and done a “Truth in Love” commercial for Coral Ridge Ministries. He had also started his own ex-gay ministry, Kerusso, in 1989. Johnston was extremely active on the ex-gay circuit, and was the founder of “Coming out of Homosexuality Day” (which coincides with National Coming Out Day).

In 2000, Johnston’s story was made available as a film by the AFA, titled “It’s Not Gay.” In the film, he is joined by other ex-gay activists who load the film with unsupported statistics, like “80% of homosexual men have a sexually transmitted disease.” One of the other ex-gay activists in the film, Richard Cohen, has been discredited for his “healing touch” therapy, in which grown men are cradled and held like babies to get used to “appropriate male touch” and to “re-create the father-son bond.” A broken father-son bond, Cohen claims, can “cause” homosexuality. In other “therapy” sessions, Cohen has clients beat pillows with tennis racquets while blaming their mothers for making them gay.

Three years later, in 2003, news outlets reported that Johnston, while traveling around the country decrying “the homosexual lifestyle,” was hosting orgies, taking drugs and having unprotected sex with other men without disclosing his HIV status. In the publicity and accusations that ensued, Johnston shut down his ministry and sought refuge at a live-in facility with Pure Life Ministries in Dry Ridge, Ky. As of 2011, Johnston was listed as Pure Life’s director of donor and media relations. He states in his bio that in 2002 he “was living a completely double life” and is “now walking in true freedom.”

The AFA, meanwhile, admitted that Johnston had “relapsed.” In early 2007, Wayne Besen of ex-gay watchdog group Truth Wins Out, filed complaints with two attorneys general against the AFA and another anti-gay group, Americans for Truth About Homosexuality, for promoting and selling “It’s Not Gay,” which Besen called “deceptive.” The AFA addressed Besen’s complaints in an article in its March 2007 *AFA Journal*. Buddy Smith, AFA executive assistant then, claimed that the AFA had stopped selling “It’s Not Gay” as a result of the scandal. But in 2005, the AFA started selling the DVD again, after meeting with Johnston at Pure Life. Smith stated that the AFA felt confident then “that Michael had been

fully restored and was walking in victory.” The DVD is still available on the AFA’s website, without any mention of the scandal. It is described as “a fair and balanced approach to this challenging subject.”

The AFA’s fundraising appeals are known for their shrillness. One mailer from the early 2000s read: “For the sake of our children and society, we must OPPOSE the spread of homosexual activity! Just as we must oppose murder, stealing, and adultery!” It continued, “Since homosexuals cannot reproduce, the only way for them to ‘breed’ is to RECRUIT! And who are their targets for recruitment? Children!” In other appeals, the AFA has used a standard propaganda ploy against LGBT individuals: They’re a danger to children.

In the summer of 2010, the AFA announced a boycott of Home Depot stores because Home Depot allegedly supports the “homosexual agenda.” The AFA said that the home repair chain was “deliberately exposing children to lascivious displays of sexual conduct by homosexuals” through its support of pride parades.

The AFA has had very active state chapters, many of which have served as training grounds for anti-gay activists like Scott Lively, founder of the anti-gay hate group Abiding Truth Ministries. Lively, a former director of the AFA’s California chapter, claimed in his discredited 1995 co-authored book *The Pink Swastika* that Germany’s Nazi Party was full of gay men who were primarily responsible for the Holocaust. In 2007, Lively co-founded the virulent anti-gay group Watchmen on the Walls, which is particularly popular in Eastern European countries and among some Eastern European immigrants to the United States.

Gary Glenn, current president of the AFA’s Michigan chapter, maintains a “Homosexual Agenda” link on the AFA-MI website. He has called anti-bullying legislation a way to indoctrinate children – and, by extension, American society – with “the homosexual agenda” (a common claim used by the anti-gay right). He has claimed that gay soldiers would cause disease in the military’s ranks through “battlefield blood transfusions” and that gay soldiers are respon-

sible for high rates of sexual assault in the military.

In 2009, the AFA hired Bryan Fischer, the former executive director of the AFA-affiliated Idaho Values Alliance, as its director of issue analysis for government and public policy and as a radio host. Taking a page from Lively’s book, Fischer claimed on his radio show in May 2010 that Hitler chose gay soldiers as his elite officers because they were far more brutal and savage than heterosexual soldiers. In defense of that show, Fischer wrote that “homosexuality gave us Adolph Hitler, and homosexuals in the military gave us the Brown Shirts, the Nazi war machine and six million dead Jews.” He also called for criminalizing gay sex in a February 2010 blog post – because doing so would ensure that “controversies” over “gays in the military” and “gay indoctrination in the schools” would end. He has also advocated forcing gay people into ex-gay therapy, which supposedly can “cure” their condition, because homosexuality should be treated in the same way as intravenous drug use. “Both,” he told radio host Alan Colmes, “are equally dangerous and risky to human health.” By August 2010, the AFA had appended a disclaimer to Fischer’s posts, stating that his opinions are his own.

That didn’t stop Fischer’s outrageous postings. In early 2011, Fischer called for an end to Muslim recruits in the U.S. military and an end to Muslim immigration to the U.S. At around the same time, he claimed that Native Americans remained mired in poverty because they refused to accept Christianity. The outcry over that blog post was so great that the AFA actually took it down. A week later, Fischer published a blog item stating that Native Americans should have followed Pocahontas’ lead, because she had accepted “the superior culture” of the new arrivals to the New World.

In 2010, Don Wildmon stepped down from his chairmanship of the AFA after 33 years, citing health problems. His son, Tim, took over, continuing the group’s long tradition of anti-gay propagandizing and activism.

THE MYTHS

10 Tall Tales Debunked

Ever since born-again singer and orange juice pitchwoman Anita Bryant helped kick off the contemporary anti-gay movement more than 30 years ago, hard-line elements of the religious right have been searching for ways to demonize gay people — or, at a minimum, to find arguments that will prevent their normalization in society. For the former Florida beauty queen and her Save Our Children group, it was the alleged plans of gay men and lesbians to “recruit” in schools that provided the fodder for their crusade.

But in addition to hawking that myth, the legions of anti-gay activists who followed have added a panoply of others, ranging from the extremely doubtful claim that sexual orientation is a choice, to unalloyed lies like the claims that gay men molest children far more than heterosexuals or that hate crime laws will lead to the legalization of bestiality and necrophilia. These fairy tales are important to the anti-gay right because they form the basis of its claim that homosexuality is a social evil that must be suppressed — an opinion rejected by virtually all relevant medical and scientific authorities. They also almost certainly contribute to hate crime violence directed at the LGBT community, which is targeted for such attacks more than any other minority in America. What follows are 10 key myths propagated by the anti-gay movement, along with the truth behind the propaganda.

MYTH # 1

Gay men molest children at far higher rates than heterosexuals.

THE ARGUMENT

Depicting gay men as a threat to children may be the single most potent weapon for stoking public fears about homosexuality — and for winning elections and referenda, as Anita Bryant found out during her successful 1977 campaign to overturn a Dade County, Fla., ordinance barring discrimination against gay people. Discredited psychologist Paul Cameron, the most ubiquitous purveyor of anti-gay junk science, has been a major promoter of this myth. Despite having been debunked repeatedly and very publicly, Cameron’s work is still widely relied upon by anti-gay organizations, although many no longer quote him by name. Others have cited a group called the American

College of Pediatricians to claim, as Tony Perkins of the Family Research Council did in November 2010, that “the research is overwhelming that homosexuality poses a [molestation] danger to children.”

THE FACTS

According to the American Psychological Association, “homosexual men are not more likely to sexually abuse children than heterosexual men are.” Gregory Herek, a professor at the University of California, Davis, who is one of the nation’s leading researchers on prejudice against sexual minorities, reviewed a series of studies and found no evidence that gay men molest children at higher rates than heterosexual men.

Anti-gay activists who make that claim allege that all men who molest male children should be seen as homosexual. But research by A. Nicholas Groth, a pioneer in the field of sexual abuse of children, shows that is not so. Groth found that there are two types of child molesters: fixated and regressive. The fixated child molester — the stereotypical pedophile — cannot be considered homosexual or heterosexual because “he often finds adults of either sex repulsive” and often molests children of both sexes. Regressive child molesters are generally attracted to other adults, but may “regress” to focusing on children when confronted with stressful situations. Groth found that the majority of regressed offenders were heterosexual in their adult relationships.

The Child Molestation Research and Prevention Institute notes that 90% of child molesters target children in their network of family and friends. Most child molesters, therefore, are not gay people lingering outside schools waiting to snatch children from the playground, as much religious-right rhetoric suggests.

Some anti-gay ideologues cite the American College of Pediatricians’ opposition to same-sex parenting as if

the organization were a legitimate professional body. In fact, the so-called college is a tiny breakaway faction of the similarly named, 60,000-member American Academy of Pediatrics that requires, as a condition of membership, that joiners “hold true to the group’s core beliefs ... [including] that the traditional family unit, headed by an opposite-sex couple, poses far fewer risk factors in the adoption and raising of children.” The group’s 2010 publication *Facts About Youth* was described by the American Academy of Pediatrics and the American Psychological Association as non-factual. Francis Collins, director of the National Institutes of Health, was one of several legitimate researchers who said *Facts* misrepresented their findings. “It is disturbing to me to see special interest groups distort my scientific observations to make a point against homosexuality,” he wrote. “The information they present is misleading and incorrect.”

MYTH # 2

Same-sex parents harm children.

THE ARGUMENT

Most hard-line anti-gay organizations are heavily invested, from both a religious and a political standpoint, in promoting the traditional nuclear family as the sole framework for the healthy upbringing of children. They maintain a reflexive belief that same-sex parenting must be harmful to children — although the exact nature of that supposed harm varies widely.

THE FACTS

No legitimate research has demonstrated that same-sex couples are any more or any less harmful to children than heterosexual couples.

The American Academy of Pediatrics in a 2002 policy statement declared: “A growing body of scientific literature demonstrates that children who grow up with one or two gay and/or lesbian parents fare as well in emotional, cognitive, social, and sexual functioning as do children whose parents are heterosexual.” That policy statement was reaffirmed in 2009.

The American Psychological Association found that “same-sex couples are remarkably similar to heterosexual couples, and that parenting effectiveness and the adjustment, development and psychological well-being of children is unrelated to parental sexual orientation.”

Similarly, the Child Welfare League of America’s official position with regard to same-sex parents

is that “lesbian, gay, and bisexual parents are as well-suited to raise children as their heterosexual counterparts.”

MYTH # 3

People become gay because they were sexually abused as children or there was a deficiency in sex-role modeling by their parents.

THE ARGUMENT

Many anti-gay rights proponents claim that homosexuality is a mental disorder caused by some psychological trauma or aberration in childhood. This argument is used to counter the common observation that no one, gay or straight, consciously chooses his or her sexual orientation. Joseph Nicolosi, a founder of the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, said in 2009 that “if you traumatize a child in a particular way, you will create a homosexual condition.” He also has repeatedly said, “Fathers, if you don’t hug your sons, some other man will.” A side effect of this argument is the demonization of parents of gay men and lesbians, who are led to wonder if they failed to protect a child against sexual abuse or failed as role models in some important way. In 2010, the *Journal of Biosocial Science* published a study by Kansas State University family studies professor Walter Schumm arguing that gay couples are more likely than heterosexuals to raise gay or lesbian children. (The *Journal* was previously affiliated with the Galton Institute, a British organization formerly known as the Eugenics Society.)

THE FACTS

No scientifically sound study has linked sexual orientation or identity with parental role-modeling or childhood sexual abuse.

The American Psychiatric Association noted in a 2000 fact sheet on gay, lesbian and bisexual issues that “no specific psychosocial or family dynamic cause for homosexuality has been identified, including histories of childhood sexual abuse.” The fact sheet goes on to say that sexual abuse does not appear to be any more prevalent among children who grow up and identify as gay, lesbian or bisexual than in children who grow up and identify as heterosexual.

Similarly, the National Organization on Male Sexual Victimization notes on its website that “experts in the human sexuality field do not believe that pre-

mature sexual experiences play a significant role in late adolescent or adult sexual orientation” and added that it’s unlikely that someone can make another person gay or heterosexual.

With regard to Schumm’s study, critics have already said that he appears to have merely aggregated anecdotal data, a biased sample that invalidates his findings.

MYTH # 4

Gay men and lesbians don’t live nearly as long as heterosexuals.

THE ARGUMENT

Anti-gay organizations want to promote heterosexuality as the healthier “choice.” Furthermore, the purportedly shorter life spans and poorer physical and mental health of gays and lesbians are often offered as reasons why they shouldn’t be allowed to adopt or foster children.

THE FACTS

This falsehood can be traced directly to the discredited research of Paul Cameron and his Family Research Institute, specifically a 1994 paper he co-wrote entitled, “The Lifespan of Homosexuals.” Using obituaries collected from gay newspapers, he and his two co-authors concluded that gay men died, on average, at 43, compared to an average life expectancy at the time of around 73 for all U.S. men. On the basis of the same obituaries, Cameron also claimed that gay men are 18 times more likely to die in car accidents than heterosexuals, 22 times more likely to die of heart attacks than whites, and 11 times more likely than blacks to die of the same cause. He also concluded that lesbians are 487 times more likely to die of murder, suicide, or accidents than straight women.

Remarkably, these claims have become staples of the anti-gay right and have frequently made their way into far more mainstream venues. For example, William Bennett, education secretary under President Reagan, used Cameron’s statistics in a 1997 interview he gave to ABC News’ “This Week.”

However, like virtually all of his “research,” Cameron’s methodology is egregiously flawed — most obviously because the sample he selected (the data from the obits) was not remotely statistically representative of the gay population as a whole. Even Nicholas Eberstadt, a demographer at the conser-

vative American Enterprise Institute, has called Cameron’s methods “just ridiculous.”

MYTH # 5

Gay men controlled the Nazi Party and helped to orchestrate the Holocaust.

THE ARGUMENT

This claim comes directly from a 1995 book titled *The Pink Swastika: Homosexuality in the Nazi Party*, by Scott Lively and Kevin Abrams. Lively is the virulently anti-gay founder of Abiding Truth Ministries and Abrams is an organizer of a group called the International Committee for Holocaust Truth, which came together in 1994 and included Lively as a member.

The primary argument Lively and Abrams make is that gay people were not victimized by the Holocaust. Rather, Hitler deliberately sought gay men for his inner circle because their “unusual brutality” would help him run the party and mastermind the Holocaust. In fact, “the Nazi party was entirely controlled by militaristic male homosexuals throughout its short history,” the book claims. “While we cannot say that homosexuals caused the Holocaust, we must not ignore their central role in Nazism,” Lively and Abrams add. “To the myth of the ‘pink triangle’ — the notion that all homosexuals in Nazi Germany were persecuted — we must respond with the reality of the ‘pink swastika.’”

These claims have been picked up by a number of anti-gay groups and individuals, including Bryan Fischer of the American Family Association, as proof that gay men and lesbians are violent and sick. The book has also attracted an audience among anti-gay church leaders in Eastern Europe and among Russian-speaking anti-gay activists in America.

THE FACTS

The Pink Swastika has been roundly discredited by legitimate historians and other scholars. Christine Mueller, professor of history at Reed College, did a line-by-line refutation of an earlier (1994) Abrams article on the topic and of the broader claim that the Nazi Party was “entirely controlled” by gay men. Historian Jon David Wynecken at Grove City College also refuted the book, pointing out that Lively and Abrams did no primary research of their own, instead using out-of-context citations of some legitimate sources while ignoring information from

those same sources that ran counter to their thesis.

The myth that the Nazis condoned homosexuality sprang up in the 1930s, started by socialist opponents of the Nazis as a slander against Nazi leaders. Credible historians believe that only one of the half-dozen leaders in Hitler's inner circle, Ernst Röhm, was gay. (Röhm was murdered on Hitler's orders in 1934.) The Nazis considered homosexuality one aspect of the "degeneracy" they were trying to eradicate.

When the National Socialist Party came to power in 1933, it quickly strengthened Germany's existing penalties against homosexuality. Heinrich Himmler, Hitler's security chief, announced that homosexuality was to be "eliminated" in Germany, along with miscegenation among the races. Historians estimate that between 50,000 and 100,000 men were arrested for homosexuality (or suspicion of it) under the Nazi regime. These men were routinely sent to concentration camps and many thousands died there.

In 1942, the Nazis instituted the death penalty for gay men. Offenders in the German military were routinely shot. Himmler put it like this: "We must exterminate these people root and branch. ... We can't permit such danger to the country; the homosexual must be completely eliminated."

MYTH # 6

Hate crime laws will lead to the jailing of pastors who criticize homosexuality and the legalization of practices like bestiality and necrophilia.

THE ARGUMENT

Anti-gay activists, who have long opposed adding LGBT people to those protected by hate crime legislation, have repeatedly claimed that such laws would lead to the jailing of religious figures who preach against homosexuality — part of a bid to gain the backing of the broader religious community for their position. Janet Porter of Faith2Action was one of many who asserted that the federal Matthew Shepard Hate Crimes Prevention Act — signed into law by President Obama in October 2009 — would "jail pastors" because it "criminalizes speech against the homosexual agenda."

In a related assertion, anti-gay activists claimed the law would lead to the legalization of psychosexual disorders (paraphilias) like bestiality and pedophilia. Bob Unruh, a conservative Christian journalist who left The Associated Press in 2006 for the right-wing,

conspiracist news site WorldNetDaily, said shortly before the federal law was passed that it would legalize "all 547 forms of sexual deviancy or 'paraphilias' listed by the American Psychiatric Association." This claim was repeated by many anti-gay organizations, including the Illinois Family Institute.

THE FACTS

The claim that hate crime laws could result in the imprisonment of those who "oppose the homosexual lifestyle" is false. The Constitution provides robust protections of free speech, and case law makes it clear that even a preacher who suggested that gays and lesbians should be killed would be protected.

Neither do hate crime laws — which provide for enhanced penalties when persons are victimized because of their "sexual orientation" (among other factors) — "protect pedophiles," as Janet Porter and many others have claimed. According to the American Psychological Association, sexual orientation refers to heterosexuality, homosexuality and bisexuality — not paraphilias such as pedophilia. Paraphilias, as defined by the American Psychiatric Association, are disorders characterized by sexual urges or behaviors directed at nonhuman objects or non-consenting persons like children, or that involve the suffering or humiliation of one's partner.

Even if pedophiles, for example, were protected under a hate crime law — and such a law has not been suggested or contemplated anywhere — that would not legalize or "protect" pedophilia. Pedophilia is illegal sexual activity, and a law that more severely punished people who attacked pedophiles would not change that.

MYTH # 7

Allowing gay people to serve openly will damage the armed forces.

THE ARGUMENT

Anti-gay groups have been adamantly opposed to allowing gay men and lesbians to serve openly in the armed forces, not only because of their purported fear that combat readiness will be undermined, but because the military has long been considered the purest meritocracy in America (the armed forces were successfully racially integrated long before American civilian society, for example). If gays serve honorably and effectively in this meritocracy, that suggests that there is no rational basis for discriminating against them in any way.

THE FACTS

Gays and lesbians have long served in the U.S. armed forces, though under the “Don’t Ask, Don’t Tell” (DADT) policy that governed the military between 1993 and September 2011, they could not serve openly. At the same time, gays and lesbians have served openly for years in the armed forces of 25 countries, including Britain, Israel, South Africa, Canada and Australia, according to a report released by the Palm Center, a policy think tank at the University of California at Santa Barbara. The Palm Center report concluded that lifting bans against openly gay service personnel in these countries “ha[s] had no negative impact on morale, recruitment, retention, readiness or overall combat effectiveness.” Successful transitions to new policies were attributed to clear signals of leadership support and a focus on a uniform code of behavior without regard to sexual orientation.

A 2008 *Military Times* poll of active-duty military personnel, often cited by anti-gay activists, found that 10% of respondents said they would not re-enlist if the DADT policy were repealed. That would mean some 228,000 people may leave the military in the wake of the 2011 ending of that policy. But a 2009 review of that poll by the Palm Center suggested a wide disparity between what soldiers said they would do and their actual actions. It noted, for example, that far more than 10% of West Point officers in the 1970s said they would leave the service if women were admitted to the academy. “But when the integration became a reality,” the report said, “there was no mass exodus; the opinions turned out to be just opinions.” Similarly, a 1985 survey of 6,500 male Canadian service members and a 1996 survey of 13,500 British service members each revealed that nearly two-thirds expressed strong reservations about serving with gays. Yet when those countries lifted bans on gays serving openly, virtually no one left the service for that reason. “None of the dire predictions of doom came true,” the Palm Center report said.

MYTH # 8

Gay people are more prone to be mentally ill and to abuse drugs and alcohol.

THE ARGUMENT

Anti-gay groups want not only to depict sexual orientation as something that can be changed but also

to show that heterosexuality is the most desirable “choice” — even if religious arguments are set aside. The most frequently used secular argument made by anti-gay groups in that regard is that homosexuality is inherently unhealthy, both mentally and physically. As a result, most anti-gay rights groups reject the 1973 decision by the American Psychiatric Association (APA) to remove homosexuality from its list of mental illnesses. Some of these groups, including the particularly hard-line Traditional Values Coalition, claim that “homosexual activists” managed to infiltrate the APA in order to sway its decision.

THE FACTS

All major professional mental health organizations are on record as stating that homosexuality is not a mental disorder.

It is true that LGBT people suffer higher rates of anxiety, depression, and depression-related illnesses and behaviors like alcohol and drug abuse than the general population. But studies done during the past 15 years have determined that it is the stress of being a member of a minority group in an often-hostile society — and not LGBT identity itself — that accounts for the higher levels of mental illness and drug use.

Richard J. Wolitski, an expert on minority status and public health issues at the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, put it like this in 2008: “Economic disadvantage, stigma, and discrimination ... increase stress and diminish the ability of individuals [in minority groups] to cope with stress, which in turn contribute to poor physical and mental health.”

MYTH # 9

No one is born gay.

THE ARGUMENT

Anti-gay activists keenly oppose the granting of “special” civil rights protections to gay people similar to those afforded black Americans and other minorities. But if people are born gay — in the same way people have no choice as to whether they are black or white — discrimination against gay men and lesbians would be vastly more difficult to justify. Thus, anti-gay forces insist that sexual orientation is a behavior that can be changed, not an immutable characteristic.

THE FACTS

Modern science cannot state conclusively what causes

sexual orientation, but a great many studies suggest that it is the result of biological and environmental forces, not a personal “choice.” One of the more recent is a 2008 Swedish study of twins (the world’s largest twin study) that appeared in *The Archives of Sexual Behavior* and concluded that “[h]omosexual behaviour is largely shaped by genetics and random environmental factors.” Dr. Qazi Rahman, study co-author and a leading scientist on human sexual orientation, said: “This study puts cold water on any concerns that we are looking for a single ‘gay gene’ or a single environmental variable which could be used to ‘select out’ homosexuality — the factors which influence sexual orientation are complex. And we are not simply talking about homosexuality here — heterosexual behaviour is also influenced by a mixture of genetic and environmental factors.”

The American Psychological Association (APA) acknowledges that despite much research into the possible genetic, hormonal, social and cultural influences on sexual orientation, no evidence has emerged that would allow scientists to pinpoint the precise causes of sexual orientation. Still, the APA concludes that “most people experience little or no sense of choice about their sexual orientation.”

In 2010, the *Journal of Biosocial Science* published a study by Kansas State University family studies professor Walter Schumm arguing that gay couples are more likely than heterosexuals to raise gay or lesbian children. (The *Journal* was previously affiliated with the Galton Institute, a British organization formerly known as the Eugenics Society.) Schumm told a reporter that he was “trying to prove [homosexuality is] not 100% genetic.” But critics suggested that his data did not prove that, and, in any event, virtually no scientists have suggested that homosexuality is caused only by genes.

MYTH # 10

Gay people can choose to leave homosexuality.

THE ARGUMENT

If people are not born gay, as anti-gay activists claim, then it should be possible for individuals to abandon homosexuality. This view is buttressed among religiously motivated anti-gay activists by the idea that

homosexual practice is a sin and humans have the free will needed to reject sinful urges.

A number of “ex-gay” religious ministries have sprung up in recent years with the aim of teaching gay people to become heterosexuals, and these have become prime purveyors of the claim that gays and lesbians, with the aid of mental therapy and Christian teachings, can “come out of homosexuality.” Exodus International, the largest of these ministries, plainly states, “You don’t have to be gay!” Another, the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, describes itself as “a professional, scientific organization that offers hope to those who struggle with unwanted homosexuality.”

THE FACTS

“Reparative” or sexual reorientation therapy — the pseudo-scientific foundation of the ex-gay movement — has been rejected by all the established and reputable American medical, psychological, psychiatric, and professional counseling organizations. In 2009, for instance, the American Psychological Association adopted a resolution, accompanied by a 138-page report, that repudiated ex-gay therapy. The report concluded that compelling evidence suggested that cases of individuals going from gay to straight were “rare” and that “many individuals continued to experience same-sex sexual attractions” after reparative therapy. The APA resolution added that “there is insufficient evidence to support the use of psychological interventions to change sexual orientation” and asked “mental health professionals to avoid misrepresenting the efficacy of sexual orientation change efforts by promoting or promising change in sexual orientation.” The resolution also affirmed that same-sex sexual and romantic feelings are normal.

Some of the most striking, if anecdotal, evidence of the ineffectiveness of sexual reorientation therapy has been the numerous failures of some of its most ardent advocates. For example, the founder of Exodus International, Michael Bussee, left the organization in 1979 with a fellow male ex-gay counselor because the two had fallen in love. Alan Chambers, current president of Exodus, said in 2007 that with years of therapy, he’s mostly conquered his attraction to men, but then admitted, “By no means would we ever say that change can be sudden or complete.”

THE MATH

Anti-LGBT Hate Violence

In 2010, the Southern Poverty Law Center analyzed 14 years of FBI hate crime data in an effort to determine which American minority group was most victimized by violent hate crime. To the surprise of few who study such crimes, the LGBT community was targeted far more than others.

The bottom line: Gay people are...

More than twice as likely to be attacked as black people
 More than twice as likely to be attacked as Jews
 More than four times as likely to be attacked as Muslims

Here is an explanation of the SPLC's methodology:

The national hate crime statistics published each year by the FBI are notoriously sketchy, in large part because, as a 2005 Department of Justice study found, most hate crimes are never reported to police and those that are typically are not categorized as hate crimes by local jurisdictions. Nevertheless, by examining FBI data, it is possible to make reasonable estimates of the rates of victimization by various targeted minority groups.

To calculate these rates for five categories of minority victims — LGBT people, Jews, blacks, Muslims and Latinos — the SPLC first determined the percentage of the U.S. population represented by each victim group: gay people, 2.1%; Jews, 2.2% (Census Bureau's 2009 Statistical Abstract); blacks, 12.9%; Muslims, 0.8% (2009 estimate from the Pew Research Center); and Latinos, 15.8%. Of these, the percentage of gay men and lesbians in the American population is the most debatable. We use figures on self-identified gays, lesbians and bisexuals from a National Health and Social Life Survey that were also cited by a coalition of 31 leading gay rights organizations as "the most widely accepted study of sexual practices in the United States." The 2.1% proportion is calculated from the finding that 2.8% of men and 1.4% of women are gay.

Next, we compiled the total number of hate crimes against persons (that is, excluding hate crimes against property) in those categories for the years 1995-2008, the period for which there was complete data. We then totaled the crimes for those 14 years in each category and calculated what percentage of all hate

crimes against persons they represented. There were 15,351 anti-gay hate crime offenses during those years, for instance, which amounts to 17.4% of the total of 88,463 reported violent hate crimes. The figures for the remaining victim groups were Jews, 7.7%; blacks, 4.1%; Muslims, 1.5%; and Latinos, 8.8%.

Using the figures from the above two paragraphs, we then compared the level of hate crime aimed at each group to that group's percentage in the population to determine the group's rate of victimization compared to its representation in the population. For gay people, for example, it was calculated that they are victimized at 8.3 times the expected rate (17.4 divided by 2.1). The other categories were as follows: Jews were victimized at 3.5 times the expected rate, blacks at 3.2 times, Muslims at 1.9 times, and Latinos at 0.6 times.

Last, we compared the rate of victimization for gay men and lesbians to that of the other groups. The figures show that gay people are 2.4 times more likely to suffer a violent hate crime attack than Jews (8.3 divided by 3.5). In the same way, gay people are 2.6 times more likely to be attacked than blacks; 4.4 times more likely than Muslims; and 13.8 times more likely than Latinos, according to the FBI figures. (It should be noted that undocumented Latino immigrants, probably the largest group of Latino victims, are also likely the least likely to report attacks to police because of a fear of deportation. Therefore, the figures for Latino victimization rates in this analysis are probably the least reliable.) The basic pattern holds by years as well as across the years.

About the Report

This report was researched and written by Heidi Beirich, Evelyn Schlatter and Robert Steinback, and edited by Mark Potok. It was designed by Russell Estes.



MEDIA AND GENERAL INQUIRIES

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