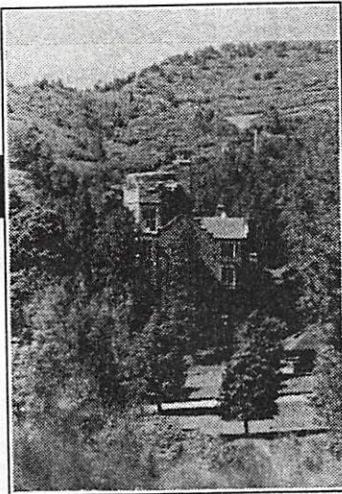


Freedom Writer

A HARD LOOK AT THE HARD RIGHT

Inside Glen Eyrie Castle

THE ORGANIZED ASSAULT ON GAY RIGHTS



Religious Right forces from around the country convened a secret summit meeting in Colorado Springs to formulate a moral mandate for the nation. Elimination of gay rights topped the list.

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 "I feel that there is not a more important meeting being held in these United States as is being held here these next two days. If we lose this battle, there are no more moral absolutes left for this nation."

— Will Perkins
 Conference participant

.....
 By Skipp Porteous

In 1990, *The Freedom Writer* announced the "rebirth" of the religious right. At that time, many observers thought the movement had run out of steam. Insiders knew better. "By the end of the decade," declared evangelist Paul Cain, "the whole earth will view the church in a different light. The church will no longer be mocked and despised, but either loved or feared."

Our readers were among the first to learn of the religious right's new two-fold plan of attack. In a simple but effective move, the religious right changed its focus from national politics to local politics. Additionally, the hard right abandoned its haphazard approach to politics and instituted long-term planning to achieve its ultimate objectives.

Now, the mainstream media is working hard to bring its reporting up to speed. Recently, *The New York Times* reported on the religious right's efforts to take over the Republican Party. In the November/December 1991 issue of *The Freedom Writer*, Frederick Clarkson wrote that the Christian Coalition "intends to take over the Republican Party from the inside, and elect thousands of right-wing Christians to state and local office — as well as the Congress — through a massive and disciplined bloc of voters." He continued, "At their recent 'Road to Victory' national leadership conference in Virginia Beach, almost every session was devoted to instruction in the mechanics of how to do it."

At that 1991 "Road to Victory" conference, Gary Bauer, of the Family Research Council (an arm of Dr. James Dobson's Focus on the Family ministry) set the tone

for the conference: "Obviously, this conference is about the 1992 elections," he said. The reason this and all elections are important, Bauer observed, is because "We are engaged in a social, political, cultural civil war."

While effective, the strategy of focusing on local elections and planning for the long-haul is not enough. A movement requires another ingredient. For years, in the shadow of communism, the hard right had a villain. And they milked it for all it was worth. The religious right took it a step further and ferociously attacked "secular humanism," a philosophy the Rev. Tim LaHaye called "the world's most dangerous religion."

With the fall of communism, however, the hard right lost a valuable element of its crusade. The movement was desperately in need of a new devil. For a while, the hard right rode on the wave of anti-abortion sentiment. Abortion is a losing political issue, though, and the religious right has, to a large degree, let the ultra-radicals in the movement deal with it. (One should not think that the fight to preserve choice is over. In some ways, that war is intensifying, simply because of the radical element carrying on the fight against abortion rights.)

The radical right thinks it has found the missing ingredient, the important social issue to galvanize the movement. It is "the militant homosexuals," or "the gay agenda."

For almost three years now, the majority of fund raising material coming from the religious right has focused on gay rights. These vicious and hysterical fund raising letters are proven moneymakers. Most of

Continued on page 3

LETTERS

Keep up the good work! Last month I attended the graduation of a friend's daughter at Wayne County High School. Imagine my surprise when, after both the valedictorian and salutatorian prayed, the speaker — the minister of Green River Tabernacle — not only prayed but gave a sermon (that was the commencement speech?!) and even made a crack about not being able to find the collection plate!

I'm not sure if it was the polyester suit or the bullet-proof hair... I live in a small town outside Nashville and had forgotten that there were even smaller minds left in the state!

THAIS CARR
THOMPSONS STATION, TENNESSEE

Your article on abortion myths (*Freedom Writer*, July 1994) was excellent, but with one glaring error, though. The writer fell in to the anti-choice group's trap of calling the pregnant woman "mother." She may or may not have given birth. She may or may not be a "mother." By calling all pregnant women "mother," you are saying that the fetus is a person, a "pre-born baby." The anti-choice people are very good at using emotional buzzwords. We freedom-loving types need to come up with better phrases. Until then we must be careful not to use theirs!

MARCIE LOVE
WINNETKA, ILLINOIS

"Abortion Myths" (*Freedom Writer*, July 1994) was excellent. The myth that "abortion is morally akin to the Holocaust" was created, I believe, by the National Right to Life Committee for its obvious shock value.

Here is a most devastating rebuttal for anti-abortionists who play the Holocaust or Hitler trump card:

- Hitler actually outlawed abortion.

- Hitler executed a doctor for performing abortions.

- Hitler was a Christian. He was born, raised, and died a Catholic. He was certainly never excommunicated.

Such facts do not sit well with the Religious Wrong — er, Right — who apologetically plead that Hitler wasn't a "true" or "real" Christian — whatever that means.

Anti-abortionists propagandize with lies, misinformation, and half-truths. They are fond of chiding the press to "tell the truth." Strange words, indeed, coming from religious zealots whose Bible is absolutely silent about abortion, and wrong about everything else scientific or medical.

NEIL NISSENBAUM
JACKSONVILLE, NORTH CAROLINA

Please send information about membership in your group and your publications. Donald Wildmon and his people have recently been here talking "facts" to our city council and they got so enthralled they almost made it illegal to wear a thong bikini — they still may!

ROBERT LOWELL
ATLANTIC BEACH, FLORIDA

Very essence of very existence, from conception to parturition, the fetus is one of substance with the woman by whom birth is given. As such, the woman has a substantive right to choose between reproduction and abortion.

A substantive right, according to Webster, is "a right held to exist for its own sake and to constitute part of the normal legal order of society."

At birth, the offspring enter a separate existence wherein that child's essence will unfold.

R. UPTON NELSON
BANGOR, MAINE

PLEASE CHECK YOUR MAILING LABEL!

Your *Freedom Writer* address label now indicates the status of your membership. Check your label so you don't miss a single issue! If your label says "LAST ISSUE! RENEW TODAY!", unless you renew immediately, this is positively your last issue.

Beginning with the January 1994 issue, *The Freedom Writer* increased publication from 6 to 12 times a year. Then, with the April issue, the size increased from 4 to 8 pages. We've done this without raising the \$25 a year membership fee. We hope you appreciate receiving *The Freedom Writer* and keep your membership current.

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the top religious right groups have picked up on this theme.

Groups such as the Oregon Citizens Alliance, and Colorado for Family Values (CFV), started fighting gay rights in their states at the grass roots. They introduced the term "special rights," to imply that gays and lesbians wanted more than equal rights. Only recently have larger national groups become involved in strategy and planning.

CFV succeeded in passing Colorado's Amendment 2, which denied equal protection for gays and lesbians. Amendment 2, the only statewide anti-gay rights measure to be approved by voters, was struck down by Colorado courts as unconstitutional.

Encouraged by its limited success, CFV held a small conference last year to discuss future strategy. As a result, CVF produced *The Colorado Model*, a workbook designed to help anti-gay activists in other states ban gay rights. The \$95 workbook came with nine audio tapes featuring the conference speakers. A newer version comes with two video tapes. Conference speakers appear on one. The other video, "The Gay Agenda," is a scurrilous film about gays and lesbians. With hundreds of thousands of copies in circulation, "The Gay Agenda" greatly influenced Colorado's vote

against gay rights.

Because leaders of religious right groups around the country responded so favorably to CFV's material and leadership in fighting gay rights, the Colorado group scheduled another conference.

According to a May 19, 1994 article in *The Washington Times*, "Leaders of anti-homosexual-rights groups across the nation wrapped up two days of top-secret meetings" in Colorado Springs. Representatives of about 35 state and national religious right organizations attended the meeting, according to the article. The purpose of the meeting concerned policy and strategy in dealing with the gay rights movement in the United States.

The Washington Times reporter, Valerie Richardson, noted that she was banned from the meeting because the sponsoring group, Colorado for Family Values, attempted to suppress media coverage. Nevertheless, Richardson's article got our attention and contained enough data for *The Freedom Writer* to launch an investigation of the clandestine conference.

The conference, *The Washington Times* article said, took place at the "gated" Glen Eyrie Conference Center. Glen Eyrie is operated by the Navigators, an evangelical group based in Colorado Springs.

The Freedom Writer commissioned a researcher and a photographer in Colorado Springs to go out to the conference center and look around. After clearance from the security people at the main gate, the two enjoyed limited access to the grounds.

The centerpiece of Glen Eyrie is a massive stone castle. Various dwelling places, or dormitories, dot the surrounding mountainous landscape. The CFV conference, attended by about 40 people, was held on a second floor meeting room in the castle.

Some members of conservative Christian groups in Colorado Springs provided helpful information, and, bit-by-bit, we pieced together the names of most of the people from about twenty states who attended the conference. In talking with some of them, we confirmed names, and gathered more information.

Some individuals interviewed by *The Freedom Writer* for this article were extremely closed-mouthed, while others even denied attending. One, in particular, was deceitful. Representative Darlene Cornfield of Kansas told *The Freedom Writer*, "I was not there. I don't know where that came from! I don't know why anyone would say I was there when I wasn't."

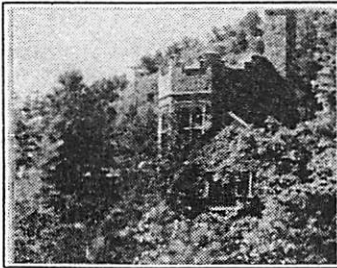
Judy Thomas, a reporter for *The Wichita Eagle*, told *The Freedom Writer* that Jim McDavitt of the Kansas Education Watch Network told her that he attended the conference with Darlene Cornfield. The significance of a state representative at this meeting was not lost; that's why we called Cornfield.

Cornfield, a conservative Christian, is up for reelection in November. Outspoken about her beliefs, Cornfield told *The Freedom Writer*, "I believe the Lord wanted me in the Legislature." She told us that she is anti-choice, and opposed to gay rights. "I just believe the Bible from cover to cover," she said.

Asked if there is any reason she wouldn't want someone to know she attended a conference of this type, Cornfield responded, "Of course not, everything I do is wide open."

Next, we called the Kansas Education Watch Network and talked to "Mary," McDavitt's secretary. She said McDavitt was away, and she denied knowing anything about any conference in Colorado Springs. We learned later that McDavitt was away speaking at a religious right conference in Indianapolis.

Continued on next page



Who was there?

SPEAKERS — Will Perkins, chairman of Colorado for Family Values; Robert Linden, conference moderator, and a production manager at Hewlett Packard; John Eldridge, director, Seminar & Research, Public Policy Division, Focus on the Family; Robert Skolrood, president, National Legal Foundation; Col. Ronald Ray, USMCR; Judith Reisman, Institute for Media Education, pornography researcher; Dr. Paul Cameron, chairman of the Family Research Institute; Peter LaBarbera, Accuracy in Media, past editor of Concerned Women for America's Family Voice magazine, and current editor of Lambda Report, an anti-gay publication; Frank York, an editor at Focus on the Family; Phil Butler, Public Policy, Focus on the Family; Kevin Tebedo, executive director, Colorado for Family Values.

GROUPS REPRESENTED — Accuracy in Media, American Family Association of Florida, American Family Association of Ohio, American Family Association of Texas, Christian Coalition of Colorado, Christian Coalition of New York, Colorado Eagle Forum, Colorado for Family Values, Concerned Women for America of Colorado, Conservative Caucus, Equal Rights Not Special Rights, Family Defense Council, Family Research Institute, Family Research Council, Focus on the Family, Institute for Media Education, National Legal Foundation, Oregon Citizens Alliance, Traditional Values Coalition, U.S. Taxpayers Party.

STATES REPRESENTED — Alaska, California, Colorado, Florida, Hawaii, Kansas, Kentucky, Michigan, Missouri, New Mexico, New York, Ohio, Oregon, Rhode Island, Texas, Virginia, and Washington.

PHOTO: With its turrets and impressive crenellation, Glen Eyrie Castle provided an extremely defensible location for the top-secret conference.

Apparently, McDavitt told Judy Thomas of *The Wichita Eagle* that the conference dealt with a number of different issues — not just gay rights. However, this was not the case. It focused solely on devising a strategy to deprive gays and lesbians of equal rights.

The whole story came out when someone in Colorado Springs obtained conference tapes from the Navigators. Recordings of the ten conference speakers are contained on seven tapes.

One speaker, Robert Skolrood, president of the National Legal Foundation, even referred to the wonderful work in Kansas of Darlene Cornfield, "who is sitting in the audience."

One conference attendee, Patricia Houston, of Warriors Not Wimps For Jesus, based in Las Cruces, New Mexico, offered high praise for Jim McDavitt of Kansas. "He was on fire for the Lord!" she told *The Freedom Writer*. "He had information much further along than anyone else. I learned a lot from him."

Houston expressed surprise that not everyone at the conference was a born-again Christian. She mentioned that one of the speakers, Judith Reisman, is Jewish. Houston said that McDavitt "witnessed strongly" to Reisman, trying to convert her.

"It was nice to see a legislator there," Houston continued, referring to Darlene Cornfield. According to Houston, McDavitt and Cornfield came together.

Houston said she attended the conference with Margaret Kramer, a spokesperson for a New Mexico group called Mothers Against Bad Government. According to Houston, the religious right of New Mexico is concerned about legislators who support gay rights.

"We have two people," Houston said, "two of our most powerful legislators, who openly endorse the homosexual movement." "One of them," she added, "has a son who is homosexual." "The legislator with the gay son," she claimed, "is Manny Aragon, and the other legislator is Raymond Sanchez."

Since 1973, another legislator, Tom Rutherford, has been, according to Houston, "introducing pro-homosexual legislation." "Though he's never come out and announced it," Houston said, "I've since found out he is homosexual."

Houston said that she was impressed by the number of men at the conference,

including Jim Woodall, a vice president for management of Concerned Women for America. "You know, men are the leaders of the country," she said.

According to Will Perkins, the purpose of the conference was "to come out of here with a plan...how we can impact this nation — our groups, our collective voices out there. If we have a good, strong, coordinated approach...they don't know who to shoot at if we have all of us out there."

"We need to hold pastors and churches and denominations accountable," Perkins continued, "who are condoning homosexual behavior. And [we

.....

"I would not say this in other cultural contexts, but the gay agenda has all the elements of that which is truly evil. It is deceptive at every turn. It is destroying the souls and lives of those who embrace it."

**— John Eldridge
Focus on the Family**

.....

need to] make the public realize that they are also condoning adultery, fornication, bestiality, and polygamy."

"I feel," Perkins said, "that there is not a more important meeting being held in these United States as is being held here these next two days. If we lose this battle, there are no more moral absolutes left for this nation."

Robert Linden, the conference moderator picked up Perkins' theme. "The absolute values that were established by God," he proclaimed, "are still absolute."

John Eldridge, the first speaker, brought "greetings and warm regards from Dr. Dobson of Focus on the Family." "Dr. Dobson," Eldridge told the group, "and those of us at Focus on the Family in the public policy fight, see this issue as one of the key issues of our time. So much hinges on what happens with the full agenda of the militant gay movement."

Eldridge outlined an agenda for the religious right to follow in its assault on gay rights. The agenda must:

- Change public perception about gay rights
- Use ideas and language that appeal to the public
- Create the impression that the anti-

gay movement is a grass-roots movement

- Use lay people to keep the anti-gay movement going

- Develop a long-term project to convince evangelical pastors to support the anti-gay movement.

We need to "tell America WHY heterosexuality is best for individuals and society." "That case," he said, "needs to be made strongly, and supported by what Americans consider 'gospel truth,' — that is empirical science. That is the high priest of our culture."

"Shrewdly," Eldridge continued, "we need to show why society needs to make certain demands on people sexually." He said that public perception has to be changed. "We must never appear to be attempting to rob anyone of their rights — their constitutional rights. We must never appear to be mean spirited or bigoted. We must be shrewd to get consensus for our position by appealing to shared values and concern, and issues of fairness and justice."

Eldridge stressed that the anti-gay movement must be "perceived as a genuine grass roots

uprising." He said that "home rule" is important, because a top-down approach doesn't work. If a community perceives that an outside, national group is behind local activism, the community will rebel against it. So, the perception of grass-roots organizing, or home rule, is critical. He explained that this is why Focus on the Family is staying in the background. His national group, he noted, is like an 800-pound giant compared to Colorado for Family Values, which has a half dozen people in a one-room office. (During the conference, Frank York of Focus on the Family admitted that Focus on the Family now has a \$150 million dollar-a-year budget.)

"I would not say this in other cultural contexts," Eldridge explained, "but the gay agenda has all the elements of that which is truly evil. It is deceptive at every turn. It is destroying the souls and lives of those who embrace it."

John Eldridge said several things troubled him greatly. "As an evangelical, there is no question that the church, being a house divided — having the Mel Whites, the Peggy Campolos, and that sort of thing — is extraordinary damaging to our movement." (Mel White is the gay ghost writer who formerly worked with Jerry

Falwell, Pat Robertson, Billy Graham, and Oliver North. He tells his extraordinary story in his fascinating book, *Stranger at the Gate*. Peggy Campolo is the wife of the popular evangelical motivational speaker Tony Campolo. The Campolos have expressed sympathy for gay rights.)

More than one speaker, including Eldridge, said that the anti-gay rights movement is being led by lay people, not the clergy. "Pastors are terrified that this issue will split their churches," Eldridge remarked. "The local church is a mess. The pastors are a long-term project."

Robert Skolrood, president of the National Legal Foundation also expressed ill feelings towards evangelical ministers. "Our pastors don't know anything," Skolrood declared. "And most of them are wimps."

Skolrood, an attorney who formerly worked for Pat Robertson, sometimes speaks more like a faith healer than a lawyer. He described the war against gay rights as "a spiritual battle" and spoke of the need to keep "demons from polluting the word of God."

Pastors aren't the only ones avoiding the controversial gay rights issue, Skolrood said, but "Christian legal organizations don't want to touch the issue." He said his group is available to help other groups initiate state referendums against gay rights.

Frank York, another Focus on the Family spokesperson, also addressed the gathering. He focused on computer and fax technology, which he explained "is an essential part of the battle we're in."

York encourage the group to use computers and facsimile machines to broadcast communications to: phone trees, congressmen and other politicians, conservative college newspapers, and churches.

Besides using computers to communicate within the religious right, York suggested that computers be used to gather intelligence on the enemy. "You have to know your enemy," he said. "Gays and lesbians are a large part of the Internet."

Monitoring on-line computer services, York said, "is an intelligence-gathering operation. They're not aware that you're gathering this information. It's very important to gather intelligence this way." He claimed that by monitoring online computer services he learned in advance of a lesbian sit-in at Focus on the Family.

Continued on next page

Conference speakers bare hidden agenda

By Mike Shaver

From the beginning, gay rights proponents have claimed that anti-gay measures like Amendment 2 are driven by individuals and organizations with an exclusive religious agenda, inherently at odds with basic notions of pluralism and political inclusion.

The anti-gay forces' success, therefore, has required establishing political credibility in the mantra "equal rights, not special rights." As important as this claim was during the Amend-

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"Homosexuality would be regarded as a sad pathology by implication."
.....

ment 2 campaign, taped sessions and documents from the Colorado for Family Values conference contained no references to this slogan, which was described by many as the genius of Amendment 2. Could it be that this was less about rights and more about a larger objective?

Robert Skolrood, who heads the organization that worked with Colorado for Family Values to draft and defend Amendment 2, prefaced his legal talk by emphasizing, "As you know, it's a spiritual battle and we at the National Legal Foundation use II Corinthians 10:3-5 as our scripture... Although we lead normal human lives, the battle we are fighting is on the spiritual level."

More revealing is the list of "foundational principles" which summarizes the conference. The list appears to be a set of agreed-upon tenets which came out of the group sessions following the presentations.

Objectives include getting elected officials to expose gay-friendly legislation and public policy, eliminating government dollars and resources

which are "the result of improper behavior brought on by their lifestyle (ex. AIDS) [sic]," and stressing family values so that "homosexuality would be regarded as a sad pathology by implication." Standing in marked contrast to these principles is item three, which reads simply, "Spiritual revival."

This item may have been inspired by Ron Ray, an active and vociferous critic of gays serving in the military. His presentation included several minutes of a religiously charged rhetoric.

"We're going to have to remember His standard," Ray said. "And then we can have repentance, because the problem is the church... Once we have repentance, we can have revival. Once we have the smoothing of the Holy Spirit, we can have restoration... All of us are working very hard at restoration, and the sad thing is that we're going to be bound by God's objective order."

"Sodomy, Sodom and Gomorrah, means the end or termination point... When you accept it in the law order, they have rendered thy word void, now the Lord will have to move."

Ronald Ray and Bob Skolrood were not alone in drawing on this theme. John Eldridge, who noted that Focus on the Family president James Dobson sees the issue of homosexuality as "one of the key issues of our age," outlined the work that Focus is doing to "raise the consciousness of the vast majority of Christians in the country who are woefully ignorant on these issues." Noting that the church is "slowly waking up," Eldridge promised that evangelical churches would turn "the great ship of evangelism back toward social engagement."

While these comments appear to stray from the conference theme, they bring to light what appears to be a shared motive of exclusion in the name of religion which is often hidden from the debate when the issue of gay rights unfolds in the public arena. ■

Mike Shaver is director of the Citizens Project in Colorado Springs.

One speaker, Judith Reisman, a self-professed sex expert, perpetrated the myth that gays try to recruit heterosexuals, bringing them into "the homosexual lifestyle."

"I would suggest to you," she said, "that while the homosexual population may right now be one to two percent, hold your breath, people, because the recruitment is loud; it is clear; it is everywhere. You'll be seeing, I would say, twenty percent or more, probably thirty percent, or even more than that, of the young population will be moving into homosexual activity."

Buzz Harris, who works with Sue Hyde in the New England office of the National Gay & Lesbian Task Force's "Fight the Right Project," said, "They want to stoke the flames of internalized homophobia in an attempt to 'convert' us to heterosexuality." "It is irrelevant," he continued, "to their closed-minded world view that the American Psychological Association, the American Psychiatric Association, and the U.N.'s World Health Organization have all stated clearly for many years that bisexuality and homosexuality are a normal and healthy part of human love and sexual expression."

In concluding her talk, Reisman said, "You will not ever be able to do anything about homosexuality until you address pornography in the church, pornography in your own lives; it is interlocked and related."

After all the speakers made their presentations, the group held a series of brainstorming sessions. The final session led to the top two "Primary Strategies."

Comprised of two main parts, the first "Primary Strategy" involves "Information & Data Exchange" and "Media." Under "Information & Data Exchange," the group aims to establish a computer network using a bulletin board service (BBS) or a commercial on-line service such as America Online (AOL). Focus on the Family, incidentally, is considering AOL as a way to distribute some of its publications.

The second part of "Information & Data Exchange" is the development of a central clearinghouse, with different organizations handling the following responsibilities:

- A gay office holders and activists data bank
- Information resources about ministries to convert gays
- Record anti-gay successes
- Record anti-gay defeats

- Track scientific literature
- Monitor corporations/who they fund/where they spend their advertising dollars

▪ Religious tracking/where evangelical churches and pastors stand on gay rights

- Monitor people in the media/their stand on gay rights
- Monitor national and state political candidates and gay office holders
- Monitor crimes committed by gays
- News clipping service

The second part of the first "Primary Strategy" deals with the media. The group hopes to "get all conservative organizations united to promote a mass-media/legislative blitz on Dr. Kinsey's child abuse data, calling for investigation and cessation of all tax money funding sexuality programs, until Kinsey's scientific fraud is proven."

The second aspect of dealing with the media involves writing letters and placing phone calls. The group plans to blitz newspapers with letters, and radio talk shows with phone calls. One aspect of this is to "I.D. favorable educators and get them involved with letters to the editor and interviews."

They also plan to buy radio ads in order to "access radio programs to reveal truth of homosexual lifestyle vs. heterosexual marriage."

Finally, the media blitz involves the development of "a base of letter writers and callers who can respond on a regular basis to editorials and news stories."

The second of the two "Primary Strategies" deals with "Legislative/Legal" concepts. First, the anti-gay proponents want to "enact legislation rewarding traditional families with tax rewards." Another long-term goal is to "pass resolutions in legislatures in the 50 states to affirm that the traditional mom and dad family is the superior or ideal model."

Their political agenda includes:

- Voter guides
- Precinct organization
- Leadership development
- Campaigning
- Voter education in the area of school board candidates and candidates for state legislators

- Fund raising

Particular attention should be paid to one other area of the anti-gay right agenda. It is the implementation of "Project Spotlight." This is a highly organized and detailed model currently underway in Ohio. The goal is to take over all the

legislative bodies in the state, including city councils and the state legislature. A crucial part of the plan is to identify exactly where every elected official and candidate stands on gay rights. The next step is to get 25% of the voters to sign a pledge not to vote for any candidate who supports gay rights. In this way, Project Spotlight is designed to defeat any candidate who supports gay rights. After the designated law-making bodies are taken over, the next step is to introduce new laws that ban gay rights.

The religious right is convinced that pornography and homosexuality are inextricably linked. The assumption is also made that organized crime controls most of the production of pornography. Therefore, the religious right concludes that gay rights lobbying is funded by organized crime. With this in mind, the religious right intends to "Educate the grassroots that homosexual, pornography and organized crime lobbying is [sic] one and the same."

Finally, the anti-gay rights movement is developing a litigation strategy. To do this, it plans to share research, resources, and coordinate involvement at the trial level. It intends to offer "legal support for workers being sued by homosexuals." This presumably deals with harassment in the workplace.

In its effort to deny gays and lesbians equal rights with other citizens, the religious right wants to take its agenda all the way to the Supreme Court. Currently, the movement is seeking the best case to take to the High Court. Utilizing "political experts, constitutional lawyers, and public relations experts," it has proposed the formation of an "advisory board to formulate the best case to take to the U.S. Supreme Court."

The Freedom Writer finds it significant that Dr. James Dobson and his Focus on the Family believe that gay rights is one of the most important issues of our times. Focus on the Family is arguably the most influential of all the religious right groups, leading in resources, outreach, and organization. The involvement of Focus on the Family in the anti-gay rights movement has profound implications.

Hopefully, Americans concerned about true rights for all people, regardless of religion, race, national origin, sex, or sexual orientation, will see the anti-gay rights movement as another ploy by the radical religious right to take political power.

Responding to homophobic rhetoric

Right-wing opponents to civil rights for gay, lesbian, and bisexual people use similar arguments and rhetoric around the country, whether they're in Prineville, Oregon; Colorado Springs, Colorado; Knoxville, Tennessee; or Anchorage, Alaska. This article includes responses, ideas, and themes you may use to counter their erroneous allegations. Each topic begins with the rhetoric used by the conservative right, followed by some ideas on how to respond.

Homosexuals are already covered under the Constitution just like the rest of us. What they want are special rights. We oppose special rights for homosexuals.

The right wing rhetoric of "special rights" skews the issue. The right to get and keep a job based on merit is not a special right. Equal access to housing is not a special right. Renting a hotel room and being served food in a restaurant are not special rights. The right to have and raise children without the state seizing them is not a special right. The right to walk down a street and not get attacked because of who you are and whom you love is not a special right. Gay and lesbian people want the same rights guaranteed to all American citizens. However, without civil rights laws which specifically ban discrimination based on sexual orientation, gay people can lose their jobs, their homes, and their families and be refused service at public accommodations simply because they are gay — with no legal recourse. Right-wing zealots who speak of special rights want the very special right to discriminate against those they hate.

Local ordinances for gay men and lesbians force the rest of us to live against our religious beliefs. We're entitled to our rights too.

Extending civil rights to one sector of society does not withdraw rights from another. Most civil rights ordinances provide exemptions for religious institutions. In addition, many gay and lesbian members of various religious denominations are organizing within their faith so that religious institutions may become more accepting of the diversity of their following.

They want to be treated like a minority, like an ethnic minority. The Supreme Court says they're not. And we know they're not be-

cause they never rode in the back of the bus and they are not economically deprived. Studies show that gay men have more disposable income than the rest of Americans.

Gay men and lesbians are a numerical minority in American society. Like ethnic minorities, we do face job loss, evictions, non-service at public accommodations, and the loss of our children simply because of who we are. And like other minorities, gay people face harassment, physical assault, and murder based on an assailant's hatred against us as a group. A Department of Justice study reported that "homosexuals are the most frequent victims" of hate crime. "Minority status" affords no benefits to anyone; rather it provides guidelines to attempt to redress the inequalities that impair the exercise of constitutionally guaranteed freedoms, including equal protection under the law. Our constitution says that all people are created equal — that must include gay and lesbian people as well.

Homosexuals lead an abominable lifestyle. People who care about traditional family values must not encourage the open expression of this sexual depravity.

Discrimination is the abomination, not gay and lesbian people. The family values we uphold are support, love, understanding, and respect between family members. Discrimination and bigotry are not traditional family values.

You can't let gays near children; since they can't reproduce, they recruit. And they are all pedophiles.

Statistics show that the vast majority of sexual abuse is committed by men against women, usually within the heterosexual family structure. Pedophiles are criminals who derive illicit pleasure from sexual abuse of children, and whose adult sexual attractions are almost always to members of the opposite sex. Most sexual abuse of children occurs at the hands of parents or relatives. Lies perpetuate stereotypes that are then used to deny gay people our rights. It is wrong to deny rights based on these myths.

Gay people want to force their lifestyle on us and take away our rights.

Civil rights laws that include lesbian and gay people do not limit the rights of others. Instead, they extend to gays and lesbians the same rights already enjoyed

by most Americans — the right to obtain and keep employment based on ability to do the job; the right to equal access to housing; the right to raise their children; and the right to live free of violence. There is no so-called "gay lifestyle." Gay men and lesbians are members of every social class, religious faith, ethnic group, occupation, and political affiliation. Gay people are not interested in forcing anything on anyone — just the opposite. We demand the freedom to live our lives with the same freedoms are rights that are accorded to all citizens, without fear that our liberty will be usurped by far-right bigots and religious intolerance.

What about bisexuals? They sometimes pretend to be normal heterosexual people, but they engage in the same abnormal, unhealthy sexual practices as homosexuals. Bisexuals are getting AIDS from homosexual sex and then spreading it throughout the heterosexual community.

Bisexual men and women live, work, and organizing within the gay and lesbian community and in the larger human rights community. Lesbians, gay men, and bi people are all targets of the same oppression, excused on the basis that we value sexual and affectional relationships with members of the same gender. The US Department of Defense "ban against gays in the military" also includes those acting or identifying as bisexual. Many right-wing initiatives, including Colorado's Amendment 2, target bisexuals along with gay men and lesbians in their petition language and in the effects of their discriminatory legislation. Lesbians, gay men, and bi people work together to oppose these attempts to legislate against our civil rights. AIDS is the cumulative effect of immunosuppression exacerbated by the presence of a virus (HIV) that critically impairs the ability of the body to keep itself well. Viruses do not target specific people or discriminate on the basis of sexual orientation or identity. The prevention of HIV/AIDS ultimately rests with each individual person's responsibility for his or her own actions, regardless of sexual orientation, class, race, gender, or sexual identity. ■

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