Letters—December 2010

Your Feedback

November 12, 2010

Bad Religion

“Thou Shalt Fear AIDS” (September 2010) explored how the ex-gay movement and reparative therapy to “cure” homosexuality can lead to physical and psychological harm—including elevated risks for HIV.

It saddens me that so many gay people damn themselves over a man-made concept such as religion, allowing it to dictate how they should feel about themselves. By planting guilt deep within their victims, those in control of these religious movements have accomplished their mission for more control. I refuse to give them power over me. I neither need nor ask for their approval. I am far too secure with who I am to allow them to govern my happiness and existence.

Antonio Marquez
Denver

Great reporting! Indeed, it is often the “ex-gay survivor” who gets lost in the shuffle of Bible banging and [media shouting] and who feels like a failure. I too made it through these cult-like organizations to eventually accepting and loving myself for who I am. Now there is support, strength and community for others recovering from this kind of religious abuse. I am so glad I am gay! I have never been more content and happy. Ex-gay? No way!

Jallen Rix, EdD
San Francisco

Thank you so much for this article. It tells the truth of increased HIV risk for those who have gone through the ex-gay movement, reparative therapy or conversion therapy. Many of us who are working in HIV prevention, as I am, and who went through the ex-gay movement for years, as I did, have long understood these painful realities.

R. Scott Harrison
Pittsburgh

An important P.S. to this story is that behavioral scientists presented a number of papers at the recent XVIII International AIDS Conference in Vienna that scientifically prove that shame, guilt and internalized homophobia [during] childhood are directly related to increased risky sex and drug use and the resulting HIV infection and AIDS that we are seeing in adult MSM.

David G. Ostrow, MD, PhD
Chicago

In Memory Of Ryan White
In "The Importance of Remembering Ryan White" (September 2010), Shawn Decker recalled the teenage White's advocacy for all people living with HIV and his legacy, which continues to improve the quality of life for the HIV community.

Great article Shawn! The first time I heard about Ryan was when he passed away on my 25th birthday in 1991—I was in my second year of being HIV positive. As I learned more about Ryan's plight, I was inspired to become an advocate. I find it sad that today many who are positive do not know the true meaning of advocacy and what Ryan stood for. Had it not been for his struggles and tenacity, I'm afraid I wouldn't be here today. I hope that one day we will see more responsible sex education in schools and at home.

Patricia Steen
Kansas City, MO

Thank you Shawn for writing about Ryan White and evoking his memory, his story and his legacy with the children's museum. I am certain if Ryan were alive today and healthy he would continue to fight for treatment advocacy and equality for all living with HIV. As someone who was around when Ryan was still alive and who also benefited from the Ryan White CARE Act as an AIDS counselor back in those dark days, [I recall] Ryan's mother as the light that shone strong for us.

Sherri
Los Angeles

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