DOMA Prevents HIV?

November 15, 2011 By Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.

I usually resist the temptation to spotlight over-the-top right-wing rhetoric related to LGBT issues or HIV/AIDS. My general impulse is to not fan the flames of ignorance.

Calling out such nonsense from time to time, however, can be a worthy exercise. It reminds me of how far we've come and how far we still have yet to go.

Matt Barber is director of cultural affairs with Liberty Counsel ("an international nonprofit litigation, education, and policy organization dedicated to advancing religious freedom, the sanctity of life, and the family").

He also co-hosts the *Liberty Live* talk radio program. In a video clip from his program posted by RightWingWatch.org that I ran across at the LGBT blog Joe.My.God, Barber makes outlandish claims about parenting, marriage and HIV.

Watch the clip:

In the clip, Barber claims that children raised by lesbian or gay parents are 8 times more likely to be lesbian or gay themselves. A study in 2010 supports that assertion, but if it's true -- and that's a big if -- could it be that these children are just more comfortable accepting their sexual orientations? I'm no researcher, so I'll move on.

Citing a questionable study correctly is bad enough, but citing statistics from a legitimate source incorrectly is a big no-no. And that's what Barber does next in the clip. Barber claims that the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) says one in five gay men in the United States are HIV positive and 40 percent of them are unaware of their status.

So, since lesbian and gay parents are more likely to have lesbian and gay kids who are more likely to contract HIV, the Defense of Marriage Act (DOMA), which forbids federal recognition of marriage for same-sex couples and interstate recognition of such marriages, should not be repealed. Ugh.

Barber almost got the HIV stats right, but he made a crucial omission that skews everything. From the CDC statement on the study: "Approximately one in five (19 percent) men who have sex with men (MSM) in a study of **21 major U.S. cities** is infected with HIV, and nearly half (44 percent) of those men are unaware of their infection."

I added the boldface to the quote above. Those statistics refer to urban areas, not a nationwide average. In a previous blog post, I did some math that shows about one in 10 MSM have HIV nationwide. There's a

big difference between one in five and one in 10.

And even if it were true that 20 percent of gay men had HIV (which it’s not, see above), I fail to see the logic behind connecting HIV prevalence to the denial of civil rights for LGBT people.

Obviously, this crowd isn’t done scapegoating LGBT people for all the ills of the world and isn’t sparing the rod when it comes to people with HIV/AIDS. For anyone that thinks otherwise, replay the clip above. We must remain ever vigilant.

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http://beta.docker.poz.com/blog/doma-prevents-hiv