

HIV-Positive “Ex-Gay” Pastor Links Gays With AIDS

December 8, 2011 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

✘ Pastor Phillip Lee, founder and executive director of the “ex-gay” [His Way Out Ministries](#) of Bakersfield, Calif., [wrote an op-ed](#) in the Sunday, Dec. 4, edition of *The Bakersfield Californian* linking gays with AIDS. Lee is HIV positive and claims to no longer be gay.

From his op-ed:

"While AIDS is not solely a homosexual disease, the disease was confined almost exclusively to homosexuals in the beginning years of the epidemic in the United States. I personally witnessed this horrific tragedy unfold while living in San Francisco, having several personal friends die of AIDS at the beginning stages of what is now a pandemic. Tragically, the reality and threat of AIDS has not stopped men from engaging in unprotected sex and the continued risk-taking by many does not appear to result from a lack of awareness.

“There is, therefore, little to no evidence that homosexual practice can be anything other than a severe threat to the sanctity of life. That said, all efforts should and must continue to better understand and find a cure for AIDS and AIDS-related diseases. However, if the sexual behavior that is fundamental to most homosexual practice constitutes the primary means of transmitting such disease, then it only makes sense for society to do all it can to decrease such behavior, which ultimately protects the sanctity of life.”

Advocate.com has posted [this statement](#) from the newspaper’s editorial page director Robert Price explaining the decision to run the op-ed:

“We thought Phillip Lee’s perspective as a ‘former homosexual’ who happens to be HIV-positive, and who lost several friends to AIDS, gave him some standing on the issue, dubious and antiquated as his views might have been. We also thought our consistent editorial positions on gay rights would mean something here... We do publish opinions we don’t agree with ourselves.

When we choose to do so, we are almost always pleased to see perspectives of dubious merit answered thoughtfully by others in the community, with the result being a more complete understanding of the issues. I am certain that is happening in this case...

We have already published several letters in response to Lee's op-ed (some also taking us to task for publishing it in the first place) and will publish several more, and we have invited GLAAD to write an op-ed on the subject. Our original thinking here was that we wanted to encourage some conversation on this topic. Well, I guess we succeeded."

The pastor's belief that AIDS justifies suppressing homosexuality--which I completely disagree with--is beside the point in this situation. Anti-gay forces have been using the "gay equals AIDS" equation since AIDS became a pandemic 30 years ago. [And they still are today.](#)

What I find little patience for in this situation is the decision by the newspaper to publish the op-ed in the first place.

Being HIV positive and having lost friends to AIDS makes Lee no more qualified to be allowed to advance his "gay equals AIDS" rhetoric than being HIV positive and having lost friends to AIDS would make someone qualified to be allowed to deny HIV causes AIDS.

I doubt that the newspaper would have allowed Lee a platform to deny HIV causes AIDS (at least I bloody well hope so). I see no difference.

