

**National/Global**

**'Ex-gay' group threatens Va. colleges**

by Amber Galaviz :: GayRVA.com

RICHMOND, Va. — The "ex-gay" group, Voice of the Voiceless, is urging the LGBT student resource centers at universities in Virginia to provide ex-gay therapy and resources on changing sexual orientation. The group sent a letter to all Virginia state colleges late last month threatening legal action saying current resources are unsupportive and discriminating against their faith.

Christopher Doyle, co-founder and director of Voice of the Voiceless (VOV), went undercover with another ex-gay activist to see what services the LGBT departments at several Virginia universities would tell them when they asked about ex-gay treatment options.

"Myself and a colleague went into seven state-funded universities in Virginia presenting as a graduate student with unwanted same-sex attractions, meaning that we didn't identify as LGBT," said Doyle. "We were conflicted, unsure about our homosexual feelings, and we're looking for specific referrals or options for individuals who did not wish to live a gay life or identify as gay but would rather pursue sexual orientation change-over therapy or a helpful organization that would support us."

The resulting conversation with school officials was not what Doyle and VOV wanted to hear. One counselor at George Mason University told him ex-gay therapy would cause him to "become psychologically-damaged, depressed, and even commit suicide."

"What we found out was the LGBT resource centers and the multicultural centers, which are supposed to be places where students can go and get bias-free and neutral counseling from counselors, were anything but that," said Doyle. "They did not work with us on our goals, they did not provide us any resources."

According to VOV, information provided by the schools was biased and their viewpoints were discriminatory. This led the group to seek legal aid from Liberty Counsel, a Florida-based non-profit litigation firm that advances "religious freedom, the sanctity of life, and the family" according to its mission statement.

Doyle said Liberty Counsel "sent a letter to these universities saying that they're engaging in viewpoint discrimination because as a public forum they have an obligation to present all views on sexuality and not just one view."

Wayne Besen, founder of Truth Wins Out (TWO) and a former staffer of the Human Rights Campaign, says Doyle and other ex-gay advocates are pushing therapies that have been discredited.

"Chris Doyle is out of his mind," Besen said. "What you actually have these people doing is absurd."

Besen calls ex-gay therapy "child abuse" saying there's no reason for reputable establishments to offer it, and said he's got the science behind him to prove it.



A statue of Thomas Jefferson at the University of Virginia.

Photo Credit: Phil Roeder, via Flickr. Licensed CC.

"The American Psychological Association (APA) says point-blank that attempts to change sexual orientation can cause anxiety, depression and self-destructive behavior," Besen said about a resolution adopted by APA in 2009 which condemned ex-gay therapy.

Virginia's public universities have not publicly responded to Doyle's letters. The ex-gay leader said the schools had until Oct. 25 to do so. :

— A longer version of this article was originally published at GayRVA.com (bit.ly/H40LTP).  
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**QUICK HITS**

Oregon will now recognize same-sex couples' marriages performed in other states.  
more: bit.ly/16efSoN

Four men in Chile have been found guilty of first-degree murder in the brutal October 2012 killing of a gay man. The perpetrators also carved a swastika into the man's body.  
more: bit.ly/1i01alc

New Jersey Gov. Chris Christie said on Oct. 15 that if one of his children came out as gay, he would "grab them and hug them and tell them I love them," but that "Dad believes that marriage is between one man and one woman." The comments came during a debate with Democratic challenger Barbara Buono during a debate at Montclair State University.  
more: bit.ly/H43w7y

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