

## Opinion

by Rev. Irene Monroe . Contributing Writer

### Ted Haggard's not fooling anyone

No lie lives forever. And no one should know this better than Rev. Ted Haggard.

First he lied about being gay and now he's lying about being "cured" of his homosexuality in only three weeks. But since the average "treatment" period is almost four and a half years, even his Christian cohorts are not buying it.

So what's behind Haggard's tall tale? Internalized homophobia.

Excommunicated from the GOP inner sanctum and the Christian Right's hallowed sanctuary, Haggard now hopes to regain the creature comforts he once had — a political platform, a bully pulpit and heterosexual privilege. And to regain it all, he must whore himself as the pitchman for "reparative therapies."

Once a national bigwig, Haggard is founder of the 14,000-member New Life Church in Colorado Springs, Colo., and was president of the National Association of Evangelicals. He wielded influence on Capitol Hill as part of a cadre of men who participated in conservative Christian leadership conference calls with the White House.

As a GOP insider, Haggard was one of this nation's key advocates for a constitutional amendment to ban same-sex marriage.

After Massachusetts legalized marriage equality in 2004, Haggard, along with others, began aggressively organizing state-by-state opposition that resulted in pushing Colorado's

same-sex marriage ban for the 2006 ballot.

But as one of the GOP's closeted front men, he facilitated in demonizing homosexuality while his party politicizes it. And in the face of his own truth that he is gay, Haggard ranted and railed against gays, while privately living a different life, one on the down low in drug-fueled homosexual trysts for at least three years.

And in his effort to convert gays to a life of Jesus, Haggard fronted a "conversion" ministry to frequent gay bars while inviting these lost souls not only to his congregation for worship, but also to his hotel suite for sex.

In spite of the overwhelming scientific evidence from major health and professional associations such as the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the American Psychoanalytic Association, the American Medical Association and the American Academy of Pediatrics, so-called "conversion therapies" do not work.

Instead, they produce politically and religiously Biased Agenda-Driven (aptly abbreviated "B.A.D.") science like "reparative therapies," attempting to justify them by presenting LGBT people as genetically flawed. This charge is eerily reminiscent of the scientific racism and sexism that once served as the foundation for treatment of blacks and women as morally inferior due to supposed genetic flaws. And



back in the day, "reparative therapies" consisted of testicular castration, electroshock therapy and lobotomies.

But the truth is that these "ex-gay reparative therapies" have a failure rate of 90 percent, and several "ex-gay" groups have had to shut down when their leaders finally dealt with the reality of their own homosexuality.

Case in point: John Paulk, once a nationally known "ex-gay" poster boy, appeared in Human Rights Campaign's (HRC) 2000 photo album with a one-word caption: "Gotcha!"

That Kodak moment was captured by Wayne Besen, then HRC's associate director of communications, as he snapped a picture of Paulk in a Washington, D.C., gay bar. In that moment, pandemonium broke out in the bar, as the series of flashes from Besen's camera were assumed by some to be those of a homophobic harassing a patron. But as Paulk hunched down trying to conceal his face, he learned that he could neither run nor hide. Paulk said he went into the bar just to use the bathroom — an unlikely story, as 40 minutes after entering the bar, he was still there, keeping company with both a drink and a fellow patron.

Paulk, a former drag queen known as Candi and a one-time first runner-up in the Miss

Ingenue pageant, is presently married to a self-proclaimed former lesbian who also underwent counseling in an "ex-gay" ministry run by Exodus International. Today, they both don the drag of being heterosexually married. They prominently graced the cover of *Newsweek*, appeared on "60 Minutes" and "Oprah" and wrote the book that gave Focus on the Family the name for its "ex-gay" conferences — "Love Won Out," a memoir depicting the Paulks' flight from gayhood.

When we miss the essential point that human life is varied, precious and of equal worth, such as "reparative therapies" do, we

ignore the unique gifts that each life brings to each other and the world. "Ex-gay" ministries do not focus on this human uniqueness, but instead blur the distinctiveness that makes us who we are — a human tapestry of variety. And diminishing that variety not only diminishes ourselves, but also violates our basic civil rights.

Haggard's fall from grace is his act of infidelity toward his wife. His sin, however, is not his sexual orientation, but rather his participation in this country's political and religious institutional structures that fight against

LGBT people's rights of selfhood, including his own. And his biggest lie is when he says he is healed. ▀



The biggest lie: Ted Haggard says he's 'cured.'

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