



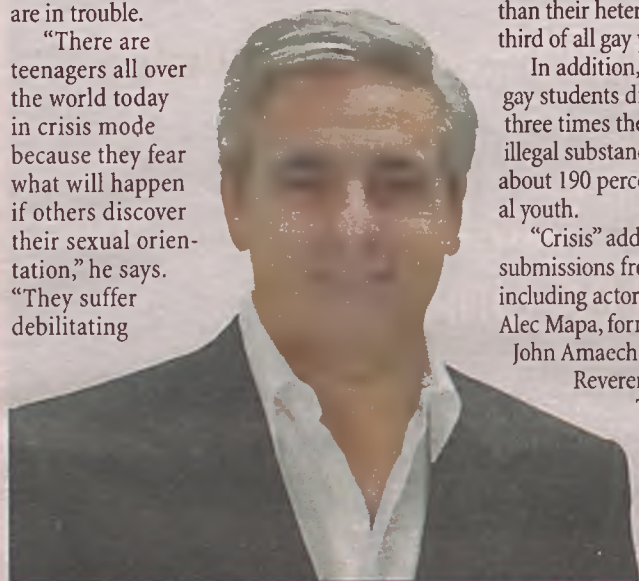
Documenting the crisis

Forty writers contribute essays, recollections, speeches and sermons to help gay youth

by David Stout . Q-Notes staff

If there is any uncertainty about the state of lesbian and gay youth in America, openly gay furniture magnate **Mitchell Gold** wants the truth to come out loud and queer: they are in trouble.

"There are teenagers all over the world today in crisis mode because they fear what will happen if others discover their sexual orientation," he says. "They suffer debilitating



'I hope and pray that not one more teenager will have to live this way, the way I grew up,' says 'Crisis' editor Mitchell Gold.

depression, isolation, addiction and possibly suicidal thoughts."

Gold's dismay has led him to assemble and edit "Crisis" (Greenleaf Book Group Press), a new hardcover collection of essays, recollections, speeches and sermons from 40 gay and allied individuals who document — to quote the book's subhead — "the personal, social, and religious pain and trauma of growing up gay in America."

"I hope and pray that not one more teenager will have to live this way, the way I grew up," says Gold, who has achieved much in life despite his painful experiences. In 1989, he established furniture company Mitchell Gold + Bob Williams with his namesake business partner,

also openly gay, in Taylorsville, N.C. The company now boasts more than 750 employees.

Many people don't realize how unbridled homophobia manifests in the lives of America's 1.6 million lesbian and gay teens, however, the facts are sobering. And literally a matter of life and death.

Because gay teens face an increased risk of violence, prejudice and shunning, they are up to four times more likely to attempt suicide than their heterosexual peers. Tragically, one-third of all gay youth try to end their own lives.

In addition, approximately 28 percent of gay students drop out of school, more than three times the national average. The odds of illegal substance use among gay youth are about 190 percent higher than for heterosexual youth.

"Crisis" addresses these issues and more in submissions from nationally known figures including actors Richard Chamberlain and Alec Mapa, former pro athletes Billy Bean and John Amaechi, Episcopal Bishop The Right Reverend Gene Robinson, U.S. Rep.

Tammy Baldwin, "Oprah" design guru Nate Berkus and MTV Networks President Brian Graden.

"Crisis" also benefits significantly from an appreciable number of contributors who are not famous, are not products of the nation's urban centers

and are still in their late teens and early 20s. A handful of these individuals even reside here in the Carolinas, while others are native to the region but have settled elsewhere.

Q-Notes Editor **Matt Comer** is among the the book's Carolina contingent. "At 22, I'm young enough that I still have vivid memories of my own challenges as a gay youth. And, to be honest, I sometimes feel the effects of those difficulties even now," he allows.

"You can't just walk away from all the hurts that accompany being gay or lesbian in this society and be instantly healed and completely self-accepting. You have to go through a

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AIDS prayer 'healing' draws fire

Play producers create 'Church Mess' at Winston-Salem university

by Matt Comer and David Stout
Q-Notes staff

WINSTON-SALEM — A play featuring anti-gay and "ex-gay" religious themes will be showcased at Winston-Salem State University by a traveling Christian production company headed by an African-American minister and his wife. The duo claims a person can be healed of HIV/AIDS through prayer and say an associate pastor with their company has done just that.

Winston-Salem State is a historically black university. The high rate of HIV infections among African-American women and men who have sex with men make these messages particularly controversial. (See story on page 13.)

On Sept. 28, the actors and actresses of "Church Mess" are slated to perform at Winston-Salem State's Williams Auditorium. According to C 3 Entertainment, the play "features the religious church mother, the money hungry deacon, the financially strapped college student that is having an affair with the deacon, the choir member that lives an alternative lifestyle, the members that are in love with the pastor, the 'down-low brother' that's hooked on pornography and the playboy minister of music."

C 3 Entertainment's management, the Rev. Chad Everette Cooper and his wife Alicia Robinson Cooper, also describe the play as portraying "the church as the best institution in the world for complete healing and deliverance."

In a February interview with "Praise the Lord," a program aired on Evangelical Christian broadcasting network TBN, the Coopers described homosexuality as a condition in need of a cure. They also related

the story of an associate pastor who was "healed" from homosexuality and AIDS.

Cooper told the TBN audience that Kofi Hemingway "was living a homosexual lifestyle 10 years ago. He gives his testimony at the end of the play about how he was so engulfed in this lifestyle that all of his partners died of AIDS."

Cooper further described how God cured Hemingway's HIV/AIDS infection.

"He was dying of AIDS," Cooper declared. He added that after three days of prayer and fasting Hemingway "began to pick up his weight and the sores began to



The ministry leaders producing the anti-gay 'Church Mess' hold skewed and dangerous views of the HIV/AIDS issue.

dry up and he went and took the test again and he's AIDS free."

Hemingway told Q-Notes that he truly believes he was cured of HIV/AIDS. However, when questioned further, he admitted that he had never taken an HIV test prior to his "healing."

"I was losing weight and my glands were swelling," Hemingway said. "What happened was I came into a Bible study and the pastor said that the Lord had shown him and his wife that someone in the congregation had the AIDS virus. At that moment I felt like it was me."

Hemingway said he felt he was infected and dying because of his weight loss, visible sores and the fact that he had been sexually involved with other men who subsequently died from AIDS complications.

The "ex-gay" pastor also allowed that it was possible he was HIV-negative prior to the "healing," accounting for the negative test result afterward.

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Hit hard

HIV rates continue to climb in gay, bi men
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PREVENTION



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Pride Guide

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