CONVERSION THERAPY ONLINE

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Players

ANTI-LGBTQ+ CONVERSION THERAPY PROONENTS WHO WRONGLY BELIEVE THAT SEXUAL ORIENTATION AND GENDER IDENTITY CAN AND SHOULD BE CHANGED HAVE FOUND A HOME ONLINE

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The Global Project Against Hate and Extremism is a nonprofit organization devoted to building a diverse global community by exposing and countering racism, bigotry, and hate and promoting human rights that are central to flourishing, multicultural societies and democracies. We believe that white supremacy, hate, and far-right extremist movements are existential threats to societies and democracies around the globe. Extremists’ hateful propaganda and actions don’t stop at a country’s borders and neither can those who work to stop it.
CONTENT WARNING
This report contains offensive and potentially triggering language, specifically in reference to anti-LGBTQ+ practices related to “conversion therapy,” which have in common the belief that a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity can and should be changed. These efforts are widely discredited by medical professionals in multiple countries and by international medical associations. These practices are inherently degrading and discriminatory and rooted in the belief that LGBTQ+ persons are somehow inferior, or sinful, and that they must at any cost modify their orientation or identity to remedy that supposed inferiority. These practices are employed by or promoted by organizations and individuals covered in this report. The authors chose to include offensive quotes in the report to illustrate the dangers of conversion therapy and to show why these groups and individuals should not be publicized or platformed by technology companies.

TERMINOLOGY
In this report, the term “conversion therapy” encompasses “reparative therapy,” “reintegrative therapy,” and all “SOGIE change practices” that attempt to change sexual orientation, gender identity, and gender expression change or suppression efforts, regardless of the provider, whether it be medical or mental health professionals, religious personnel, traditional or spiritual healers or practitioners, or other entities such as social or self-help groups. Other terms, such as “ex-gay therapy” and “same-sex attraction” are employed in our research to document the online ecosystem of conversion therapy. Our definition encompasses all forms of activities to change sexual orientation, gender identity, and expression. Not all the organizations and groups described in this report engage in the same activities, which include a wide range from support groups or talk therapy to versions of 12-step programs. Other work on conversion therapy has also documented “treatments” including coercive practices and physical abuse. What unifies all these degrading and dehumanizing efforts is the underlying and thoroughly discredited belief that sexual orientation and gender identity can be changed; that being LGBTQ+ is a disorder, illness, or sin that requires treatment or cure; and that cisgender heterosexuality is inherently normal and preferred.
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This report was written by Wendy Via and Heidi Beirich and edited by Kirsten Bokenkamp. Research for the report was conducted by Liz Bailey, Elissa Cobian, Thomas Grumke, and Muthoni Ngige. The report was designed by Square Lightning.

January 2022
INTRODUCTION
Conversion therapy never goes away, no matter the scandals, reports of its harms, official condemnations, or legislative bans. The movement, under new names and with new justifications and “therapies,” continually rebrands and resurfaces to carry on its demonization of LGBTQ+ people in a coordinated and international way.

Conversion therapy programs thrive even though several leaders of ex-gay and conversion therapy groups have denounced the practice, admitted it doesn’t work, and come out as LGBTQ+ after years of advocating for it. In 2013, Alan Chambers, who headed the largest conversion therapy organization in the world at the time, Exodus International, publicly apologized to the LGBTQ+ community for the “pain and hurt” Exodus had caused and announced that the ministry was permanently shutting down. The following year, in 2014, more groups shut their doors, including Love in Action, Evergreen International, and Australia’s Living Waters, and Love Won Out. A popular and devastating 2021 Netflix documentary, “Pray Away,” featured former leaders of Exodus International discussing the harm they had inflicted.

The practice has been condemned by dozens of medical and psychological professional organizations in several countries, banned in seven countries, and outlawed in cities and states in several countries. Ample research has shown these practices are extremely harmful and that “LGB people who experienced conversion therapy were almost twice as likely to think about suicide and to attempt suicide compared to their peers who hadn’t experienced conversion therapy.”

“LGB PEOPLE WHO EXPERIENCED CONVERSION THERAPY WERE ALMOST TWICE AS LIKELY TO THINK ABOUT SUICIDE AND TO ATTEMPT SUICIDE COMPARED TO THEIR PEERS WHO HADN’T EXPERIENCED CONVERSION THERAPY.”
INDEPENDENT FORENSICS EXPERT GROUP

The UN’s Independent Expert on violence and discrimination based on sexual orientation and gender identity, Victor Madrigal-Borloz, has described the practice as an “egregious violation of rights” and called for a worldwide ban. The UN special rapporteur on freedom of religion or belief, Ahmed Shaheed, has said that a ban on the practice would not violate freedom of religion or belief under international law, because of the harm involved in conversion therapy. He told British MPs considering such a ban in 2021, “International human rights law is clear that the right to freedom of religion or belief does not limit the state’s obligation to protect the life, dignity, health and equality of LGBT+ persons.” He added, “Banning such discredited, ineffective, and unsafe practices that misguided try to change or suppress people’s sexual orientation and gender is not a violation of the right to freedom of religion or belief under international law.”

And yet the providers and supporters go on, practicing their damaging techniques and promoting the idea that sexual orientation and gender identity can be changed; that being LGBTQ+ is a disorder, illness, or sin that requires treatment or cure; and that cisgender heterosexuality is inherently normal and preferred. Tragically, ongoing reporting indicates that forms of violent torture continue to surface in attempts to change the sexuality of LGBTQ+ people in various parts of the world.

Worryingly, the people and groups operating in this space continue to have access to power. The far-right Catholic movement-led “Rydyzk empire,” a Polish media conglomerate headed by Fr. Tadeusz Rydzyk whose radio station Radio Maryja and TV station TV TRWAM are frequented by far-right-wing politicians in that country, has advocated for conversion therapy as well as Holocaust denial, which has led the Anti-Defamation League to consider Radio Maryja “anti-Semitic.” In
November 2021, UK government officials from the Equalities Office met in secret with conversion therapy providers, including the Northern Irish Core Issues Trust. A representative from Core Issues Trust said it was the first time any government had “taken the time to speak to former-LGBT people.” The International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice, which backs the use of conversion therapy, invited UK Members of Parliament to its all-day conference in November 2021. Panel discussions had names like “Is the Government’s Conversion Therapy Ban Feasible” and “Sexuality in Crisis, Where is the Science?” And this while the UK is considering banning the practice. Also, the European Christian Political Movement (ECPM), a small European-wide political party, used its EU funding “to organise a ‘gay conversion therapy’ session in Bratislava, Slovakia, in May 2019 under the name ‘reintegrative therapy.’” In the U.S., the Christian right heavyweights Alliance Defending Freedom, Focus on the Family, and the Family Research Council have all advocated against bans on conversion therapy under the guise of protecting “religious freedom.” These organizations are central to the conservative movement in the U.S. and have close ties to powerful political figures, including former Vice President Mike Pence.

Unfortunately, in the years since Exodus International shut its doors, and Jews Offering New Alternatives for Healing (JONAH), was shuttered by a New Jersey court for “consumer fraud,” a new crop of organizations has moved into this space, rebranding themselves as friends of the LGBTQ+ community and featuring younger, hipper, more diverse faces. Many of these organizations claim they are victimized by modern society and therefore co-opt the language of the LGBTQ+ rights movement to assert liberation for what they call the X-LGBT community. This rebranding and co-opting is often referred to as “rainbow-washing.” And it does have one new element, targeting the transgender community for conversion to cisgender identities, which dovetails with the broader social conservative movement’s efforts to restrict transgender individual’s rights. These practices, too, like those of conversion therapy, have been found by a 2019 study in JAMA Psychiatry to increase the odds of attempting suicide.

These new rainbow-washed groups continue to work alongside organizations more akin to the former Exodus International, which are mainly religious-based organizations connected to the evangelical movement, as well as a longstanding Catholic network sanctioned by the Roman Catholic Church. In recent years, proposed bans on conversion therapy have motivated providers to organize and up their legislative and litigation games. Their activities are bolstered and promoted by powerful social conservative organizations and relatively new X-LGBT groups, such as the Changed Movement, in various countries.

As OutRight Action International has rightly said, more research is needed on the prevalence of conversion therapists around the world and about the practice in general. This report documents the entities that most often surfaced during Global Project Against Hate and Extremism’s (GPAHE) research into conversion therapy’s presence online. GPAHE researchers conducted thorough examinations of online content in six countries about conversion therapy efforts that appear on various platforms and in multiple languages. It includes all social media and websites for each of the organizations profiled. The research was conducted in English and Spanish in the U.S., English in Ireland and Australia, German in Germany, Spanish in Colombia, and English and Swahili in Kenya.

The conversion therapy organizations profiled in this report do not represent anything close to the number of providers worldwide, many of which do not have a web presence at all, or those that may exist online in languages that were not employed for this research.
Profiles of Conversion Therapy Providers and Proponents:

These profiles cover the entities and networks that most often surfaced during GPAHE’s online research on conversion therapy. The institutions profiled here do represent what individuals who are researching conversion therapy online in English, German, Spanish, and Swahili are most likely to find. These organizations are interconnected with each other and are essentially composed of three major networks. The first is organized around the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity and Joseph Nicolosi, Sr. This network is largely made up of American practitioners, though they practice their “therapy” in other countries and network abroad. The second network is primarily European and centered around the Northern Irish organization, Core Issues Trust, which has several partners in the UK and throughout Europe. The third network is connected to Exodus Global Alliance, which has allies around the world and offices in the U.S., Mexico, and Brazil.

*Groups in bold are profiled in this report.*

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### Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity

**MURRAY, UTAH**

https://www.therapeuticchoice.com
https://www.facebook.com/groups/112444148767418
@alliancetsi https://twitter.com/alliancetsi
PayPal https://www.therapeuticchoice.com/member-donor-information
Amazon Smile Eligible

Founded in 1992 under the name National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality, or NARTH, the 501(c)3 nonprofit organization rebranded as Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity (ATCSI) in 2014. It was founded by three stalwarts in this field — Benjamin Kaufman, Charles Socarides, and Joseph Nicolosi, Sr. Kaufman explained the decision to create NARTH in “In Defense of the Need for Honest Dialogue,” writing that the organization was created because the American Psychiatric Association and similar professional organizations “had totally stifled the scientific inquiry that would be necessary to stimulate a discussion” about homosexuality. NARTH claimed from the start that it was a secular organization advancing conversion therapy, but its links to religious organizations, in particular the Mormon Church, are extensive. The founders held that homosexuality is a treatable mental illness and that a person’s sexual orientation can be changed through therapy. It has pushed some strange ideas over the years, including suggesting male clients drink Gatorade, use the word “dude,” and increase muscle mass to fight homosexuality. In addition to lobbying for the ex-gay cause, the institution has primarily functioned as a research center and a referral service for clients seeking treatment for “unwanted same-sex attractions.”
It has generally adhered to a psychoanalytic model of homosexuality, seeing it as evidence of arrested development toward heterosexuality and blaming molestation of the future gay person as a child and/or the combination of an overbearing mother and a weak and distant father.\textsuperscript{25} In 2006, the American Psychological Association declared that NARTH created “an environment in which prejudice and discrimination can flourish.”\textsuperscript{26} NARTH has weathered several scandals, including a principal who was found to have employed a male prostitute as a travel companion\textsuperscript{27} and the publication of a racist essay that claimed the civil rights and gay rights movements are “destructive” and that Africans were fortunate to have been sold into slavery. NARTH eventually removed the piece.\textsuperscript{26} ATCSI is the main purveyor, along with the Core Issues Trust, of SAFE — Therapy,” an acronym for Sexual Attraction Fluidity Exploration in Therapy, a popular “therapy” for supposedly changing sexuality. The website has an intake form to direct those who write in to “licensed, professional therapists.” ATCSI’s board includes members of other conversion therapy outfits, including Mike Davidson of Core Issues Trust, and David Pickup and Robert L. Vazzo of Voices of Change, and Michael Gasparro, who lists himself as an employee of Joseph Nicolosi, Jr.’s Breakthrough Clinic.\textsuperscript{29} Though the group claims no religious affiliation, it hosts prominent social conservatives at its events, and its materials have been distributed by churches.\textsuperscript{30} The group’s current executive director, David Clarke Pruden, is a former head of the Utah Republican party.\textsuperscript{31} ATCSI’s April 2021 webinar featured Mat Staver, a former dean of Liberty University and committed anti-LGBTQ+ activist, who received the group’s President’s Award.\textsuperscript{32} ATCSI remains one of the main purveyors of conversion therapy, having also taken up anti-transgender issues. Its September 2021 conference featured panels on “Understanding the Transgender Phenomenon,” “What Every Individual, Family, and Religious Community Should Understand About Homosexuality,” and “The Importance of Both Physical and Emotional Connections in Overcoming Unwanted Sexual Impulses.” In recent years, ATCSI has also been active in lobbying against conversion therapy bans.\textsuperscript{33} ATCSI publishes the Journal of Human Sexuality which “particularly seeks articles relevant to the understanding and care of persons who experience unwanted same-sex erotic attractions or conflict between their biological sex and perceived gender identity and the clinicians who provide this care.”\textsuperscript{34}
The American College of Pediatricians (ACPeds), with a membership of maybe a few hundred people, is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that was founded in 2002 when a small number of socially conservative American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) members broke away after the group endorsed adoption by LGBTQ+ couples. ACPeds is listed as an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center and falsely presents itself as a premier association of pediatricians. The group actively promotes conversion therapy, networks among providers, and works against bans on the practice. ACPeds has been working with conversion therapy organizations since at least 2008, when the group joined the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity to attack a report put out by 12 reputable medical and psychological associations, “Just the Facts About Sexual Orientation and Youth.” The groups denounced the report and published a rebuttal, “Facts About Youth,” in 2010. That report made several false assertions including that “[h]omosexual attraction of young students is usually temporary (if not encouraged) and may be unwanted,” “[t]he homosexual lifestyle carries grave health risks, especially for males,” and “[f]or unwanted sexual attractions, therapy to restore heterosexual attraction has proven effective and harmless.” ACPeds has also called being transgender a mental illness, and opposes families’ support of their transgender children, calling such support “child abuse.” In 2010, ACPeds sent a letter to nearly 15,000 school superintendents endorsing conversion therapy and directing school administrators to its Facts About Youth website. The AAP put out a statement that ACPeds’ Facts About Youth campaign “does not acknowledge the scientific and medical evidence regarding sexual orientation, sexual identity, sexual health, or effective health education.” In March 2016, ACPeds published an anti-transgender statement, “Gender Ideology Harms Children,” falsely alleging that gender dysphoria “is a recognized mental disorder” in the American Psychiatric Association’s Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders, 5th edition (DSM-5). The statement called it “abusive” to support gender dysphoric children, and using twisted statistics alleged that “as many as 98% of gender confused boys and 88% of gender confused girls eventually accept their biological sex after naturally passing through puberty.” ACPeds leader Michelle Cretella was the keynote speaker at the reparative therapy organization NARTH Institute’s, now the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity, training in October 2017, and presented an anti-transgender session at the Minnesota Catholic Conference in December 2017. From 2010 to 2015, Cretella served as a board member for NARTH. Leaders of the group have long argued for conversion therapy and are frequent participants at conversion therapy events. In a prominent posting on ACPeds website reacting to possible bans of conversion therapy, the group writes, “Therapy bans deprive adults and children of the freedom to set their own counseling goals and objectives, and will likely drive some children and adults to suicide by forbidding therapy for underlying issues.”
Brothers Road

RUCKERSVILLE, VIRGINIA

WWW.BROTHERSROAD.ORG
HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/PCC.UNDERSTANDINGSSA/
HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/BR.ANOTHERWAYOUT/
HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/MARRIEDTOANSSAMAN/
HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/MARRIAGEANDSSA/
HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/JIMALUMNI/
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HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/GROUPS/577839012358869/
AMAZON SMILE ELIGIBLE

Founded in 2000 by Rich Wyler as People Can Change after he went through reparative therapy,45 Brothers on a Road Less Traveled, or Brothers Road (BR), which changed its name in 2016, is a 501(c)3 non-profit, multi-faith, international organization that says it services, “primarily men from bisexual or same-sex-attracted backgrounds who — for our own, deeply personal reasons — typically do not accept or identify with the label ‘gay’ and prefer instead to explore and address underlying issues and embrace our authentic masculinity.” The site includes a list of therapists and counselors for those experiencing same-sex attraction that includes well-known conversion therapists such as David Pickup and Robert Vazzo.46 The group hosts the Journey Into Manhood (JiM) weekend program.47 This weekend event lasts for 48 hours and includes psychodrama, visualizations, role-playing, and team-building exercises.48 According to a 2010 news story, Journeyers “are taught that their same-sex attractions are rooted in childhood traumas that pulled them away from male figures” and that to experience sexual orientation change, they “need to fulfill their needs for male attention through non-sexual platonic bonding.”49 Brothers Road does not promise immediate change, but says “the overall goal is to give the men a foundation so they can work on making the change over time.” JiM weekends also included an activity that the group described as “safe healing touch” or “father-son-style holding.” Wyler, who defended these activities, still directs the group. The organization has seven Facebook groups, one of which is public and the rest private, a series of webinars, and its website is available in several languages.
Core Issues Trust

BALLYNAHINCH, NORTHERN IRELAND

The Core Issues Trust (CIT) is an explicitly Christian, Northern Ireland registered charity and a powerhouse in the promotion of conversion therapy, particularly in the European space. It has been banned by Facebook, Instagram, PayPal, and Mailchimp, although it is back on Instagram as coreissuestrusttv. Founded around 2009, CIT not only runs its own programs, it also serves as the host institution for others, including X-OUT-LOUD and the film Voices of the Silenced. CIT personnel have a long history of working with Joseph Nicolosi Sr., and NARTH, now renamed the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity.50 CIT rejects the notion that being LGBTQ+ is innate and denies that it pushes conversion therapy. The group’s leader, Mike Davidson, describes himself as ex-gay and claims homosexuality is a “cult” you aren’t allowed to leave.51 He is also the founder and chairman of the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counseling Choice, which pushes these ideas internationally.52 One of CIT’s three trustees is Andrea Williams, the co-founder and chief executive of the British conservative evangelical organization Christian Concern, which campaigned against same-sex marriage, and the Christian Legal Centre.53 In 2014, Davidson was stripped of his membership in the British Psychodrama Association because of his practices, and since then he has operated independently, “providing counselling for people with unwanted same-sex attractions.”54 Also in 2014, Davidson and another CIT employee were expelled from the Association of Christian Counselors.55 Davidson has novel psychological theories, including the idea that homosexuality comes from something called “attachment hunger,” which he describes as a desperate need to connect with others of the same sex on an emotional, rather than a sexual level, because of negative early childhood experiences.56 Davidson says he uses “SAFE-T” - Sexual Attraction Fluidity Exploration in Therapy,57 which he claims helps those who choose to voluntarily leave their lifestyle through the use of “standard psychotherapeutic and counselling approaches that explores sexual fluidity.”58 He is also on record claiming being LGBTQ+ is related to child sexual abuse.59 In 2019, his techniques were exposed by the BBC when James Barr attended a therapy session with Davidson at his Northern Ireland home.60 Barr was asked to discuss past traumas and his relationship with his father before he chose to challenge Davidson, who admits to still being attracted to men. The group first came to attention in 2011 when it held a conference at Belvoir parish, Church of Ireland, that included sessions such as “how parents can help their children avoid homosexuality.”61 In 2012, CIT paid for advertisements to appear on London buses, saying: “Not Gay! Ex-gay, post-gay and proud. Get over it!” The ads were banned by Transport for London, a decision which Core challenged and ultimately lost in the courts. CIT says it does not consider homosexuality a natural human behaviour, but rather relational or sexual “damage” that causes “deviancy” that may be “cured.”62 CIT is perhaps best known for two controversial films it produced. In 2018, the Trust released the documentary Voices of the Silenced, which follows 15 gay and lesbian people going through conversion therapy.63 The film says it highlights the views of those “opposing the return to the pansexual cultures of the pre-Christian Graeco-Roman world.”64 It was heavily criticized by LGBTQ+ rights organizations, with Stonewall saying, “LGBT people aren’t ill. Being gay, lesbian, bi or trans is not something that should be ‘cured’ or changed.” In 2019, the Core Issues Trust produced and promoted the film Once Gay: Matthew and Friends about the X-Factor Malta contestant Matthew Grech, who announced his renunciation of homosexuality on television. The film was protested, and Grech later said he was still gay. In May 2020, the National Secular Society lobbied the Northern Ireland Executive over the charitable status of the group, writing “Bogus therapies which encourage people to change or suppress their sexuality are harmful and widely discredited. Those promoting them shouldn’t enjoy the tax breaks and public recognition that charitable status brings.”65 In 2020, Barclays Bank shut down CIT’s bank account.66 In recent months, Davidson has mostly been active lobbying against possible Irish and UK bans on conversion therapy.67 He met privately with UK government officials at their behest in early November 2021.
Courage, affiliated with the Catholic church, is a major international force, offering a 12-step program meant to help LGBTQ+ people abstain from sex.

Courage/EnCourage International

TRUMBULL, CONNECTICUT

HTTPS://COURAGERC.ORG
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PAYPAL HTTPS://COURAGERC.ORG/DONATE-COURAGE/

Courage International is a ministry authorized as an apostolate of the Catholic Church and conceived of by Cardinal Terence J. Cooke, the former archbishop of New York, as a “spiritual support system which would assist men and women with same-sex attractions in living chaste lives in fellowship, truth and love.” The organization, which is an American 501(c)3 nonprofit, does not believe people can be born LGBTQ+ and teaches them to live “chaste lives,” abstaining from sexual activity and suppressing their sexuality. The organization has chapters in 18 countries and its affiliate, EnCourage, for friends and relatives of LGBTQ+ people, has 106 chapters in 10 countries. Its leaders say they do not practice conversion therapy, but the founder, John Harvey, saw homosexuality as pathological, and the organization has long had a 12-step program, based on the Alcoholics Anonymous program, that’s meant to help LGBTQ+ people abstain from sex. In an early history of the group, found on the EWTN Catholic television website, it says sexual orientation change is possible and homosexuality is disordered. Although Courage has official status with the Catholic Church, there is considerable controversy in some countries over the Church’s role in promoting conversion therapy. For example, in Scotland, church leaders working with Courage came under heavy criticism in 2020 for establishing tight relationships in parishes with Courage chapters as the UK was considering banning the practice. Scotland was found at the time to have more Courage chapters than any other European country except Italy. Interestingly, in 2019, Pope Francis met with an anti-conversion therapy activist who shared her views on the dangers of conversion therapy and indicated that the Pope showed genuine concern about the practice.

Courage International has a Latin American division, Courage Latino, with its own social media and web presence (http://courageLatino.org; https://www.facebook.com/courageLat/; https://www.instagram.com/courage-latino/). Reporting by Correio Brasileiro in 2020 includes stories of Courage Latino events. One describes a young man who, when he revealed to his parents that he was gay, was kicked out of his home and taken by his father to a week-long retreat in Guadalajara, Mexico, organized by Courage Latino. He reported that he was told that homosexuality is related to childhood abuse. In another case, at a Courage retreat center in Mexico, a human rights activist reported that he witnessed brutal sexual conversion therapies in 2015, including children and adolescents driven into a kind of trance, who became unconscious after being forced to confess sexual experiences with other men, while a priest sprinkled holy water over them, and shook them while repeating, “What you have is the devil!”
Desert Stream Ministries/Living Waters

GRAND VIEW, MISSOURI

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PAYPAL GIVING FUND HTTPS://WWW.PAYPAL.COM/FUNDRAISER/
CHARITY/2273224

Created in 1980 by Andrew Comiskey, Desert Stream Ministries (DSM) is an “ex-gay” ministry that started in Southern California as a “support group for men” when that region was the center of the burgeoning ex-gay movement. It was part of Exodus International before that group shut down. DSM promotes the idea that members of the LGBTQ+ community need to be fixed and offers counseling and other activities for “men and women seeking Jesus in light of unwanted same-sex attractions.” Cominskey is popular in evangelical circles, having written several books on his techniques for avoiding his own sexual tendencies, including Pursuing Sexual Wholeness, and he has been featured on religious programs such as the 700 Club, where his appearance was billed as help for the “sexually broken.” DSM has several programs. Living Waters is a 20-lesson program taught in a closed-group format. CrossCurrent is an “introductory” level group for people exploring options in the “ex-gay” movement. Falling Forward is a 20-week support group “for men struggling with pornography, lust, masturbation and other forms of habitual sexual behavior,” and Men Pursuing Purity is a shorter, 8-week version of the same. In 1998, DSM was sued for allegedly abusing a teenager undergoing their counseling. The case was settled out of court for an undisclosed sum. Truth Wins Out found two other accusations of sexual abuse by DSM staff. In his book Anything But Straight, Truth Wins Out Executive Director Wayne Besen quoted a newsletter from the conversion therapy group that said, “At the end of 2000, we faced an unusual number of Desert Stream-related leaders who fell into sexual sin, or who at least demonstrated a colossal lack of wisdom in their social choices ... several were placed on different plans of discipline and restoration.” In 2011, Cominskey converted to Catholicism, but continued his ministry. He has since been featured at Catholic churches. DSM’s programs are promoted by other conversion therapy organizations, including the Restored Hope Network. It also has apps in the Apple App store and on Google Play for Desert Stream Ministries and Desert Stream Living Waters. The appropriate age for the second app begins at four years old. The group has affiliates in other parts of the world, such as Living Waters Philippines.
Exodus Asia Pacific

Exodus Asia Pacific (EAP) is a part of Exodus Global Alliance's network serving Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific and has been in existence since 1987. EAP greatly expanded its work in the Asian region about 20 years ago, when Melvin Wong began to seek out ministries in Taiwan, Indonesia, Hong Kong, and Malaysia. The group held its second conference in Hong Kong that year. Peter Lane, the father of the “ex-gay” movement in Australia who started his first ministry in 1978, leads outreach efforts in India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. It now has chapters in Singapore, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, Hong Kong, China, India, Indonesia, and Sri Lanka. EAP claims they do not “support aversion therapy, nor any attempt to force people to change, nor practices often associated with ‘conversion therapy.’” They claim instead that they “support the right for individuals to choose their personal path, practicing their faith and being free to hope for help from their churches.” EAP cloaks its position against conversion therapy bans as pro-LGBTQ+ and “Exodus Global Alliance views the proposed bans being proposed across many nations, to be discrimination against LGBTQ+ people who are followers of religion by making it impossible for them to seek religious services that integrate faith, gender, and sexuality. The bans proposed by governments will harm LGBTQ+ people who are religious,” reads their statement in reference to bans proposed in parts of Australia and New Zealand. EAP was long deeply affiliated with Renew Ministries, and Renew had been registered as a charity under the name Exodus Asia Pacific operating in Australia, New Zealand, and the Pacific. The group’s website insists it does not “force people to change” but, rather, aims to “release people into sexual and relational wholeness” through “repentance from sin.” It was run by Shirley Baskett, a Melbourne-based church trainer whose story of escaping lesbianism and marrying a man is emblematic of the ex-gay narrative. Renew is no longer in Australia, likely due to the ban on conversion therapy in Victoria state, but works from the U.S. to help men and women toward “holy sexuality.” Its website hints at the law as impacting their activities, “Because of laws in Australia that have denied people the right to self-determination in finding help as they choose, there has grown a need for ministries from other nations to be available to provide help.” The site recommends that visitors go to Living Hope Ministries as a member of Exodus Global Alliance and provides a list of providers throughout the Pacific regions.
Exodus Brasil

LONDRINA, PARANÁ, BRASIL

Exodus Brasil (EB) is a member of the Exodus Global Alliance. EB separated from Exodus Latino America in 2002, under the direction of Willy Torresin de Oliveira. According to Exodus Latino America, Torresin was openly gay, but agreed to translate for conversion advocate Sy Rogers, who was speaking at an Exodus Latino America congress in Brazil in 1989. Reportedly, the first words that Rogers spoke, and Torresin translated were, “I was once a homosexual, but I am no longer one.”

Torresin then joined the ministry and was trained by Exodus.95 EB says it works to “unite and develop a network of Churches affiliated to Exodus Brasil“ and to “help the Church to minister effectively regarding human sexuality.” EB distributes materials on conversion therapy, hosts seminars and presentations in churches, theological seminaries, and other institutions, and refers people seeking help to the nearest affiliated ministries.96 The group holds regular conferences. Andrea Vargas, a leader in EB who published several books and is a professor at Escola da Sexualidad in Avalanch Missões, argues that homosexuality is a sin that can and should be abandoned. The group works with evangelical churches, ministries that advocate conversion therapies, and psychologists.97

A reporter who attended an Exodus event said that, in addition to advising gays, lesbians, and bisexuals to “let go of homo-affective behavior;” transsexual women and men must discard their identities in order to be restored.98 Psychologist Charlisson Mendes was looking for an innovative approach to sexual identity when he attended a congress of Avalanche Missões, an Exodus affiliate, in Minas Gerais. “They claim to be modern, but they have an archaic view based on the argument that God created Adam and Eve – male and female – and, therefore, any other form of relationship is a sin,” he said.99 He recalls that speakers at the event said that “gay and lesbian relationships were unbalanced and did not last. And that these people were doomed to loneliness.”100 “Behind the Christian argumentation, Exodus promotes the pathologization of homosexuality,” says anthropologist and journalist Marcelo Natividade.101 Natividade collected reports from participants of events promoted by EB and its partners for years. He says that some of the interviewees reported attempts to instill traditional gender roles. “They taught gays to play football, lesbians to wash and iron and cook.” Natividade also said they would connect homosexuality with death and/or loneliness, “They showed pictures of homosexuals dying, decaying.”102 President Jair Bolsonaro’s government is close to the evangelical movement. Rozângela Justino, one of the founders of Exodus Brasil, is part of a group of Christian psychologists who met with the Minister for Women, Family and Human Rights, Damares Alves. According to OjoPublico, “Damares was once a pastor of the Baptist Church of Lagoinha, in which a young woman said that she was subjected to psychological violence for being a lesbian.”103 In 2017, members of this group – including Rozângela – managed to temporarily overturn the Federal Council of Psychology’s resolution against conversion therapies.104

Exodus Brasil produces materials and hosts seminars and conferences on conversion therapy and claims that LGBTQ+ people are doomed to loneliness.
Exodus Global Alliance

TROY, MICHIGAN

HTTPS://WWW.EXODUSGLOBALALLIANCE.ORG
DONATIONS THROUGH NETWORK FOR GOOD
AMAZON SMILE ELIGIBLE

Exodus Global Alliance (EGA), long headquartered in Canada, has been around since the late 1970s. EGA had been a part of Exodus International, and an advocate of that organization’s conversion therapy efforts, from its founding until Exodus International shut down in 2013. EGA, which continued its activities after Exodus International shuttered and is an American 501(c)3 nonprofit, maintained ex-gay ministries outside of North America while Exodus International mostly covered that region. It also has a process for “finding help.” According to EGA, “in addition to directly helping people through our member ministries, Exodus Global Alliance works to motivate and equip Christians and churches in their role of restoring sexual wholeness to men and women who desire to overcome their homosexuality. We assist local church leaders in dealing pastorally with issues related to homosexuality. And we come alongside new and developing ministries to nurture their growth.” The group appears to have chapters in several countries and hosts the websites of its regional affiliates. It holds annual conferences that include, “former homosexuals, people with unwanted same-sex attractions, pastors, therapists, spouses, parents and other interested persons.” The website hosts materials in several languages. EGA had been a registered charity in Canada, but that branch shut down in 2021 after Canada introduced legislation against conversion therapy and the group moved to Michigan. Though its ministries are technically independent entities for “helping homosexuals,” the work undertaken by EGA affiliates is part of an internationally organized effort. Resources, materials, ideas, and opportunities circulate through its transnational networks, particularly from U.S.-based Christian organizations and churches to ministries abroad. Today EGA counts over 200 ministries around the world among its affiliates, many of which fall under Exodus Latino America, Exodus’ Mexico-based regional office. A pie chart on the website of Exodus Global Alliance—broken down by region—claims that one of its goals is to reach the “155 million homosexuals” around the world with its message of change.
Exodus Latino America

CUERNAVACA, MEXICO

HTTP://WWW.EXODUSLATINOAMERICA.ORG/
HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/EXODUSLATINO
PAYPAL HTTPS://WWW.PAYPAL.COM/
DONATE?TOKEN=-0TBGFQ2DG2V3NDYVQAF3FWAY_4YKUYIDIBQZQV0XYUIPSAW0SHUQQFCQCLL4MCCEWHEG_S90MTCPV

Exodus Latino America has been reported to conduct ‘restoration rituals’ including the casting out of demons. YouTube has monetized its videos with advertisements.

Founded in 1994, originally in Colorado Springs, Colorado, but later moved to Quito and then Cuernavaca, Mexico, Exodus Latino America (ELA) held its first regional conference in 2000 in Quito. In 2002, Oscar Galindo became the executive director. By 2006, the group had launched ministries in Chile, Colombia, the Dominican Republic, Mexico, and Venezuela. ELA’s mission is to motivate, assist, and train the leadership of local churches to pastorally accompany, disciple, and provide spiritual counseling to people affected by sexual and relational disruption. Exodus Latino America also sends missionaries recruited during Exodus events abroad, where they conduct trainings, hold conferences, and distribute study materials and books. People in conflict with their own sexuality, especially young people, are the focus of Exodus conferences and programming, where homosexuality, usually called SSA (*same-sex attraction*), is treated as a sin. Exodus Latino America’s purpose is to “restore sexuality” to LGBTQ+ people, and the group believes society “is adrift” by favoring a lifestyle that is based “on the fluidity of feelings” that lack a moral basis and that pervert the law of God. Galindo associates male homosexuality with paternal absence and considers himself “ex-gay.” They operate with the support of evangelical churches like the Assembly of God, which has more than 6,000 centers across Mexico and one million followers. A report by Mexicanos contra la Corrupción, documented that, in church facilities, Exodus promotes “restoration rituals for homosexuals, including the casting out of demons.” Spiritual retreats are also held for LGBTQ+ people, whose families have taken them there to be “healed.” Some parts of Mexico including Mexico City ban conversion therapy. Churches such as the Assembly of God are strongly opposed to a bill pending in the Mexican Senate to turn these practices into a crime countrywide.
Homosexuals Anonymous

MUNICH, GERMANY

https://www.homosexuals-anonymous.com/
https://www.facebook.com/groups/27422967101436 (PRIVATE)

Founded in 1976 and now run by Robert Golwitzer, who created the closely-affiliated Jason Ministry, Homosexuals Anonymous (HA) describes itself as “an international self-support organization dedicated to serving the needs of men and women who struggle with unwanted same sex attraction” and claims to be “probably the oldest and longest-running organization in the world helping individuals with unwanted same-sex attraction (SSA).” It has a rather sordid history. It was founded by former Seventh-day Adventist preacher Colin Cook and Douglas McIntyre, both of whom claimed to have overcome their unwanted same-sex attractions. The group nearly collapsed in 1987 when Cook admitted engaging in erotic hugs, nude massages, and mutual masturbation with male clients. Its founders created a 14-step program for HA that they claimed would lead to “recovery from homosexuality.” This program was supported by the Adventist church with $47,000 a year and also money from its treatments. After the disclosures about Cook, he resigned and the Adventist church withdrew its funding. McIntyre took over and traveled the world preaching his program. When he died, Golwitzer took over, having run a ministry close to the group for some time. The group appears to have only one other advisory board member, “Andre B.” from Canada. The group claims they do not provide therapy, while simultaneously advertising “pastoral care, Christian counseling, individual talks or group meetings” for those who do not want to act on their same-sex attractions. Repeated warnings on the site that it doesn’t conduct therapy may be due to Germany’s ban on the practice. Their slogan is “not from gay to straight but from lost to saved.” The group claims to have chapters around the world and to be expanding into Russia (they have a page on the Russian social media site, VK). Golwitzer continues to proselytize the group’s 14-step method.


Institute for Healthy Families

MANASSAS, VIRGINIA

HTTPS://INSTITUTEFORHEALTHYFAMILIES.ORG/
HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/INSTITUTEFORHEALTHYFAMILIES

The Institute for Healthy Families (IHF) is an American 501(c)3 non-profit “therapeutic organization” guided by Judeo-Christian values. IHF is led by Christopher Doyle, a licensed psychotherapist in Virginia and Maryland, who has created several experiential therapeutic retreats for individuals, parents, and families “struggling with sexuality, sexual orientation, and gender identity.” He also works with minors.129 IHF specializes in Sexual/Gender Identity Affirming Therapy and works with clients and families all over the world who experience sexual and/or gender identity conflicts. The site says, “we will work to help you resolve internal and external issues that are getting in the way of your ability to embrace your sexual and/or gender identity; whether that is helping you work through issues with family members, friends, and loved ones, or working through inner conflicts in order to find peace.”130 Doyle is a principal in the Therapy Equality movement that argues against conversion therapy bans. He co-founded the National Task Force for Therapy Equality, which is a coalition of groups that fight such bans. As an advocate for individuals, families, and communities struggling with sexual identity, he founded Voice of the Voiceless in 2013. In September 2014, his work on the Therapy Equality campaign, to fight back against conversion therapy bans, was featured in the anti-LGBTQ+ Focus on the Family’s Citizen Magazine. In 2019, Doyle’s suit against Maryland’s conversion therapy ban was thrown out.131 The suit argued that the law would restrict the free speech and freedom of religion rights of both Doyle and his clients and was filed with the help of the anti-LGBTQ+ Liberty Counsel, which is listed as an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center.132 He made similar comments after major social media sites banned conversion therapy in 2020.133 At times, Doyle strikes out at LGBTQ+ rights organizations. After the conversion therapy organization JONAH was ordered shut by a New Jersey judge for consumer fraud, Doyle said, “It’s clear from the court affidavits that the lawsuit against JONAH was well-thought-out and coordinated in conspiracy fashion by certain gay activists.”134
International Federation for Therapeutic and Counseling Choice

LONDON, ENGLAND

https://iftcc.org
https://www.facebook.com/thietfcc/
@thietfcc https://twitter.com/thietfcc?lang=en
https://www.youtube.com/channel/UC2_F9K-VX0JwDPzAIzUVIQG

A London-based registered UK company launched in 2015, the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counseling Choice (IFTCC) is another project of Mike Davidson, who chairs its board. IFTCC bills itself as the “home for the once-gay, those coming-out, and the de-transitioners.”\(^{135}\) It attempts to present itself as a scientific organization, but it is clearly driven by religious beliefs. In 2020, Davidson, speaking as IFTCC Chairman, said that “pansexual humanism” is becoming a “driver of values” in the West resulting in “confusion and frightening sexual anarchy.”\(^{136}\) In 2018, the group published a document condemning the UK government’s plans to ban conversion therapy. The statement used as evidence for rejecting the ban references to therapists who supported the decriminalization of gay sex in the late 1950s but who simultaneously argued for the need for conversion therapy for gay men.\(^{137}\) IFTCC’s statement decries changing mores, writing, “Sixty years later the UK government is unwilling to listen to any practitioners in psychotherapy dealing with these issues, having chosen instead only to listen to gay male activists preoccupied with criminalizing therapy. This is despite the fact that evidence of the benefit of such therapies to clients has continued to be published internationally.”\(^{138}\) The statement then threatens that a ban will lead to “increased suicidal ideation” for those seeking conversion therapy. The group has posted complaints about the German ban, Northern Ireland’s consideration of a ban, and the UN’s denunciation of conversion therapy, among other similar government moves. Since 2015, the group has held annual conferences featuring other prominent conversion therapy providers including Joseph Nicolosi, Sr. and Davidson’s close partner Andrea Williams, among others. The 2020 conference was held in English, Hungarian, and Slovakian, revealing the group’s efforts to appeal to Eastern European audiences who may be more receptive to their views. More broadly, IFTCC’s main purpose seems to be connecting individuals with counselors for those seeking help with same-sex attraction and “gender confusion.” The group describes itself as offering “people high-quality, professional and discreet support to enable them to follow their life-choices” and says it is working to create a list of preferred providers. Although IFTCC tries to present itself as a more scientific organization than others that Davidson hosts or runs, language on its website attacking the “aggressive secular culture” against those “who do not want to embrace homosexuality, or transsexual ideology” demonstrates the religious nature of the group.\(^{139}\) IFTCC works with other conversion therapy organizations such as the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity to advocate against bans on the practice.\(^{140}\) It is a co-signatory on a letter about the bans with the American College of Pediatricians, a fringe medical association known for its anti-LGBTQ positions and junk science.\(^{141}\)
Joel 2:25 International

CARROLLTON, TEXAS

https://www.facebook.com/Joel225International
https://www.youtube.com/user/Joel225International
@Joel225NTL https://twitter.com/Joel225NTL
@VOVJEREMYSCHWAB https://twitter.com/VOVJEREMYSCHWAB
PayPal https://www.paypal.com/
Donate?token=LDCOAKPZ9PYHSCVRSLABXFFDMRAVPX5QUIWKB8SJCV_IS
Amazon Smile Eligible

Joel 2:25 International was founded as an ex-gay ministry by Jeremy Schwab, a former actor, and assigned its 501c(3) status in 2014 as a religious organization - general. According to its website, Joel 2:25 is a peer-led ministry providing resources and support for men, women, youth, and families affected by Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) across the United States and in 104 countries and with translations and support groups in 15 languages. Its mission statement includes, “We promote an alternative to homosexual behavior. For some, that may lead to a path of discovering their own underlying heterosexuality. For others, it may just mean a lessening of their eroticized same-sex attraction along with greater peace and need fulfillment.” According to its GuideStar profile, its “goal is to ensure Christian churches around the world have the right information and tools necessary to respond with compassion and truth to individuals and families affected and currently hosts weekly video-conferences in English, Spanish, Portuguese, Russian, Ukrainian, Arabic, German, French, and Italian with host groups in several cities. Our outreach efforts are growing with our new website (www.Joel225.org) and direct communication with churches and organizations in each country.” In explanation for his activism around preventing the banning of conversion therapy, Schwab has said “Reparative Therapy and this type of ministry work played a significant role in saving my life and I have been blessed to help many others over the past four years.” He adds, “Recently though, this ministry work has been under attack across the country and in some states Republican legislators and Governors have been silent or complicit in passing these laws.” Schwab wrote a plank for the Texas GOP platform in 2014 to condemn the banning of conversion therapy which had an accompanying bill, saying, “We recognize the legitimacy and value of counseling which offers reparative therapy and treatment to patients who are seeking escape from the homosexual lifestyle. No laws or executive orders shall be imposed to limit or restrict access to this type of therapy.” The bill passed and Schwab later said that he never meant that anyone should be forced into counseling. In a 2014 blog post, Schwab wrote, “I personally have a LOT of experience with Reparative Therapy (sic) have benefited directly from therapy with Dr. Joseph Nicolosi Jr.,” who sent him to a Journey into Manhood retreat which Schwab says reduced his same-sex attraction by 50 percent in one weekend. The Joel 2:25 website publishes a chapter on how reparative therapy works from Joseph Nicolosi, Sr.’s book entitled Healing Homosexuality. Joel 2:25 “provides ongoing video-conference and in-person support groups for Men who are recovering from Same-Sex Attraction (SSA) as well as referrals to Reparative Therapists, counselors, and local resources across the United States and in 104 countries.” It provides the same services for young adults, but for women, no in-person support groups are provided. For “self-motivated teens,” it makes the caveat that the teens must have decided of their own free will to participate. Joel 2:25 also offers several experiential weekends, including the Journey into Manhood. Daily chapel services via Zoom are also offered as are sample prayers for the “conversion of the soul.” The groups that it recommends to its site visitors include Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity, Brothers on a Road Less Traveled, Exodus Global Alliance, and Living Hope Ministries.
Living Hope Ministries

ARLINGTON, TEXAS (SATELLITES IN DENTON AND HOUSTON)

https://www.livehope.org
Amazon Smile Eligible

Founded in 1989 by Ricky Chelette, who claims he was cured of homosexuality, married for 30 years, and is a pastor at First Baptist Church in Arlington, Texas. Living Hope Ministries (LHM), a 501(c)3 nonprofit with seven staff members and a six-member board, is advertised by the Exodus Global Alliance as a referral ministry for those seeking help with their sexuality. LHM claims to have the largest online support network in the world. Chelette believes that men “become” gay due to their need for affirmation, attention, and affection and that this is caused either by a tumultuous relationship with their father or past trauma. He has similarly arcane ideas about lesbianism, arguing that it is related to concerns with one’s mother. Julie Rodgers, who went through “therapy” with Chelette, wrote extensively about the bizarre theories he holds about the origins of sexuality in her 2021 memoir, Outlove. Chelette considers his ministry as helping with “recovery” from living a sinful lifestyle and points to himself and others as examples that it does work if the goal is to live as a heterosexual. On its website, Living Hope Ministries describes itself as proclaiming “a Christ-centered, Biblical world-view of sexual expression rooted in one man and one woman in a committed, monogamous, heterosexual marriage for life.” Due to its relationship with Exodus Global Alliance and its affiliates, Living Hope Ministries (LHM) has a massive reach worldwide. Its support groups are logged onto by people as far away as Australia, as documented in a 2018 Fairfax Media report that revealed how the online support networks work to push inaccurate ideas about the LGBTQ+ community. LHM has a series of programs, including a year-long, live-in program called Hope House for men that addresses “sexual brokenness.” Chelette also has a discipleship house that offers what he describes as a “change of venue for men seeking help on the journey.” Rejecting the image of coercion in the film “Boy Erased,” Chelette insists that no one is brought to his facility against their will, especially people under the age of 18. In 2018, Apple removed from its online store an LHM app that was accused of falsely portraying being gay as an “addiction,” “sickness,” and “sin,” after Truth Wins Out lobbied to have it pulled. A Google spokesman said the company made the move “after consulting with outside advocacy groups, reviewing our policies, and making sure we had a thorough understanding of the app and its relation to conversion therapy.” Living Hope Ministries is affiliated with several other churches and ministries, including the Antioch International Movement of Churches, which is rabidly anti-LGBTQ+ and believes gay marriage is a sign of a “world gone astray,” as well as Probe Ministries, which is listed as an anti-LGBTQ+ hate group by the Southern Poverty Law Center. When LHM came under attack in 2021 in a Netflix documentary, Exodus Latino America posted Chelette’s complaints that, “These accusations are blatantly false and represent a reinterpretation of reality in the hope of outlawing LHM’s work,” going on to blame the criticisms on “rulers of darkness.”
Living Stones Ministries/Help 4 Families
ASHLAND, KENTUCKY AND GLENDORA, CALIFORNIA

Founded in 1997 by Carol Wagstaff, a pastor, Living Stones Ministries is a 501c(3) nonprofit that describes its work as “upholding heterosexuality as God’s creative intent for humanity...” [It] cites homosexual tendencies as one of many disorders that beset fallen humanity. Choosing to resolve these tendencies through homosexual behavior, taking on a homosexual identity, and involvement in the homosexual lifestyle is considered destructive ...and sinful. [It] upholds redemption for the homosexual person as the process whereby sin’s power is overcome... and that process entails the freedom to grow into heterosexuality.165 Living Stones Ministries is part of the Restored Hope Network, with ministries around the world, “Proclaiming, educating, and impacting the world with the Biblical truth that freedom from homosexuality is possible when Jesus is Lord of one’s life.”166 It offers prayer support, family support groups, some lasting as long as 10 weeks, and webinars across the country to individuals and “families impacted by homosexuality.” Additionally, they offer “safe places for individuals and families to openly share their grief and pain about homosexuality,” spiritual counseling, referrals for psychological counseling, and the annual Hope Gathering. It also hosts written and video testimony from members of X-OUT-LOUD. Living Stone Ministries is the parent organization of Help 4 Families founded in 2004167 by Denise Shick who is the current Executive Director of Living Stones Ministries. When Shick was nine years old, her father told her that he believed he was meant to be a woman, eventually transitioning, and living as a woman. Help 4 Families was launched for families dealing with “transgenderism.”168 It offers support through email, skype, phone, and in person meetings across the country. One of the resources offered is an article titled, “Accepting homosexuality led to accepting transgenderism and will likely lead to accepting pedophilia,” published in LifeSite News.169 Also on the Living Stones Ministries website is the offering of the Child and Parental Rights Campaign170 created in 2018. The official connection between the two is unclear as the Child and Parental Rights Campaign is a separate 501c(3) nonprofit. Its stated mission is to “expose the fact that children are being led to believe a powerful untruth about their bodies – that they could be ‘born in the wrong body.’”171 Its IRS form 990 declares its primary purpose is “a non-partisan, non-profit public interest law firm whose mission is to defend the civil rights of children and of parents against harms caused by the sexualization of children and gender identity ideology and to educate school systems and the public regarding such harms.”172 Its president and general counsel is Vernadette Broyles who has featured prominently in the effort to introduce and pass anti-transgender legislation173 as well as filing complaints and lawsuits to stop transgender children from using the appropriate bathroom174 and from receiving counseling and support at schools affirming their gender identity.175
Anti-LGBTQ+ group, Mastering Life Ministries, spreads ‘ex-gay’ disinformation through its Pure Passion TV, which is offered as an app on Apple and Google Play.

Mastering Life Ministries/Pure Passion TV

MOUNT JULIET, TENNESSEE

https://www.masteringlife.org
https://www.facebook.com/purepassiontv
https://www.youtube.com/user/davidkylefoster
@purepassiontv https://twitter.com/purepassiontv
  thechurchapp.purepassion&hl=en_us&gl=us
  thechurchapp.purepassion&hl=en_us&gl=us
https://open.spotify.com/show/1rzom0wtlnfxxvhcppx7v
PayPal https://www.paypal.com/
Donate/?cmd=_s-xclick&hosted_button_id=PPZBG9WSRRKJN
Amazon Smile eligible

Founded in 1987 and run by David Kyle Foster, Mastering Life Ministries (MLM) is a 501(c)3 nonprofit that describes its mission as “sensitively deal[ing] with the issues of modern life that result in emotional and sexual sin and brokenness of all kinds.” Foster uses his personal story to draw people in, speaking in his autobiography of how he came to abandon “sexual immorality” and became “ex-gay.” He claims that his father never gave him “love and acceptance,” and his anger towards his parents led to drugs and other vices after he moved to Los Angeles, where he was a bit actor and a prostitute. He claims his return to the church saved him from homosexuality. Foster uses this personal narrative as a basis for much of the work MLM engages in, including “redemptively minister[ing] to sexually broken people” with teaching materials, classes, seminars, conferences, and their TV productions at Pure Passion TV. MLM’s TV program, Pure Passion, which is offered as an app on both Apple’s App store and Google Play, is “designed to equip people to redemptively minister to sexually bound and broken people.” Pure Passion hosts hundreds of videos showing the testimonies of self-proclaimed ex-gay or ex-transgender people who were “healed” through Christ. Their programming is in more than a dozen languages. Its YouTube channel has more than 40,000 subscribers and covers issues including “TranZformed: Finding Peace with Your God-Given Gender,” “Potential Causes of Homosexual Confusion,” and “Freedom from Lesbianism.” Foster also has a podcast on Spotify. When Frank Worthen, who founded the first “ex-gay ministry” in the U.S. died in 2017, Foster said, “a great man has gone to God’s great reward. Frank Worthen, who is considered to be the father of the ex-gay movement, went to be with his greatest love, Jesus, this morning.” In 2017, Vimeo removed all of MLM’s then-850 videos from their site. The company said, “To put it plainly, we don’t believe that homosexuality requires a cure, and we don’t allow videos on our platform that espouse this point of view. Please remove any and all videos that discuss homosexuality as a condition requiring healing.” MLM’s board includes promoters and leaders of conversion therapy, including Anne Paulk of Restored Hope Network.

MLM’s work is promoted by Desert Stream Ministries, Restored Hope Network, and the Changed Movement, an advocacy group for “ex-LGBT people.”
Joseph Nicolosi, Jr., son of Joseph Nicolosi, Sr., who is often called the father of conversion therapy, launched his own trademarked therapy, Reintegrative Therapy, and founded the Reintegrative Therapy Association which received its IRS nonprofit status in 2018. Its stated mission as seen on its IRS form 990 is “To provide community advancement in the fields of education, therapeutic practice and science of reintegration therapy to assist those who are conflicted with their sexuality.” Like his father’s Reparative Therapy, Nicolosi, Jr. claims that his therapy is scientifically-driven and evidence-based. Unlike his father, Nicolosi, Jr. claims that the purpose of Reintegrative Therapy is not to change sexuality or orientation, instead that change is a happy byproduct of Reintegrative Therapy trauma treatment, saying that Reintegrative Therapy is broader and can benefit straight women with trauma and behavioral addictions, like binge eating, as much as it can help men with same-sex attractions. He also takes exception to Reintegrative Therapy being called conversion therapy, reparative therapy, or included as a SOGIE method as he claims that his treatment is not coercive. His website has a chart explaining the differences. Nicolosi, Jr. has described Reintegrative Therapy as “helping the client to ‘reintegrate’ the split-off parts of himself that were created due to childhood trauma” in a prior iteration of the website. There is also a chart depicting how the brain can be rewired to achieve a change in male sexuality under the heading of The Science. On his website, Nicolosi states that only licensed therapists who have been through his training and agreed to abide by his code of ethics may administer Reintegrative Therapy. It is impossible to know how many therapists have completed the training. One such therapist, Tim Long, who runs Kainos Christian Therapy in California, gave a much-anticipated training to representatives from 22 countries on Reintegrative Therapy at the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counselling Choice (IFTCC) conference in Budapest, Hungary in November 2019. The presentation was entitled “The Practical Work of Re-integrative (i.e. Reparative) Therapy for men struggling with SSA.” Reintegrative therapist Michael Gasparo serves on the board of Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity and claims to currently work at the Breakthrough Clinic, Nicolosi Jr.’s clinical practice. And another therapist, José Alberto Garza, of Mexico City is featured in a cringe-worthy video on the Reintegrative Therapy Association’s YouTube channel, taking a man through his homoerotic fantasy and the trauma of a childhood dog bite, resulting in his decreased desire for homosexual acts. An October 2021 press release on Reintegrative Therapy Association’s website touts a study supposedly proving that these therapies work: “Landmark Study Shows Trauma Treatment Significantly Alters Sexual Attractions: Surprising results challenge our assumptions about how fluid sexual attractions are.” The study was published in the Journal of Human Sexuality, the official publication of the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity (formerly NARTH, founded by Nicolosi Sr.). “Most therapists will not offer clients sexual attraction fluidity exploration because they’ve been told there is not enough research into its safety or efficacy. Now we know, thanks to this new research, that such an approach is both safe and effective,” Nicolosi Jr. said of the study. When landing on Nicolosi Sr.’s webpage, which is still active after his 2017 death, a pop-up with “facts” about changes in sexual orientation redirects visitors to the Reintegrative Therapy Association website.
Founded in 2012, Restored Hope Network (RHN), a 501(c)3 nonprofit, has been described as the new Exodus International, as many of those affiliated with Exodus joined this effort after Exodus was shut down in 2013 by its head Alan Chambers. This schism came in response to Chambers announcing that there is no “cure” for homosexuality and denouncing “conversion” therapy. Exodus International also came out against the criminalization of gay sex, but RHN remained agnostic on the issue, writing in a Facebook post, “I don’t believe we will have a stance on this topic. We are concerned for those involved in sexual sin to hear the good news of freedom from slavery to sin (Romans 6-8), thus our goal is to help those who are interested in leaving such behind in obedience to the good news of Jesus Christ.” The break was led by Exodus founder Frank Worthen of New Hope Ministries; Andrew and Annette Comiskey of Desert Stream Ministries; Anne Paulk, former manager of the Homosexuality and Gender Department at Focus on the Family, the founder of that organization’s Love Won Out conference; Stephen Black of First Stones Ministries; and others. Run by longtime ex-gay advocate Anne Paulk, a former lesbian whose former ex-gay husband reverted to being gay, RHN continues to push ex-gay therapy and the idea that gay sex is a sin and that “sexual purity is a life-and-death matter.” The group has several prominent Christian Right leaders on its Board of Reference, including Jim Daly, president of Focus on the Family, and James Dobson, founder of Focus. It also has more than three dozen ministries and “therapeutic affiliates” in its network. After protests at the group’s 2017 conference in San Diego, Paulk told a local TV station that the group only helps those who come to them for advice and doesn’t work with children. Paulk says they do see homosexuality as a sin, but she strongly rejects any idea that they are forcing people to change their sexuality. She also has some unorthodox views. In 2014, Paulk claimed that the HIV and AIDS epidemic was directly linked to “any government (state or federal) that encourages men to have sex with other men and does not allow those with unwanted same-sex attraction to receive talk therapy,” adding that this government would be “a willing partner to their death.” By 2019, the group had claimed that more than 4,000 people had gone through its online programs. The network holds a conference in a different location in the United States each year that offers counseling and conversion therapy, has speakers that offer advice for families with LGBTQ+ relatives, and outreach to churches. The group has plans for another conference in North Carolina in 2022. In 2020, Facebook shut down RHN’s page, but the group now sends supporters to Anne Paulk’s personal Facebook page.
Sex Change Regret

Sex Change Regret (SCR) is run by Walt Heyer, who is a former transgender woman now living as a man. On his website’s front page, Heyer says that he had gender reassignment surgery in 1983. At first happy about the change, he later came to believe that “hormones and sex change genital surgery couldn’t solve the underlying issues driving my gender dysphoria” and detransitioned in 1991. According to Heyer, he “learned the truth: Hormones and surgery may alter appearances, but nothing changes the immutable fact of your sex.” He later married a woman and decided to “help others whose lives have been derailed by sex change.”

In a 2020 video, Heyer described the source of his gender confusion as “being cross-dressed, being disciplined with a hardwood floor plank, and being sexually molested.” SCR hosts materials claiming that gender transition therapy is not safe and that gender ideology has “run amok.” SCR is part of the wider conversion therapy world, hosting links and information on its site to the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity, and to pieces written by staffers at anti-LGBTQ+ groups that promote conversion therapy, including the Family Research Council and Family Watch International. Heyer is a prolific author, having penned six books, but also is a contributor to far-right publishers such as The Federalist and Daily Signal. Heyer was described by Media Matters for America as a “a pseudo-celebrity in anti-LGBTQ circles” and “a source of extreme transphobic commentary.” His views about transition regret have been debunked by major professional medical bodies. They are also sometimes extreme or degrading. In now-deleted posts captured by Media Matters, he called gender reassignment surgery a “modern day frontal lobotomy,” said that parents who help their children transition should serve “at least 20 years in prison,” and called Chaz Bono a “poser transgender” because “she has resisted having a ‘Snoopy’ attached.” In June 2020, YouTube removed a video of a Heritage Foundation panel including Heyer, citing its hate speech guidelines. The move was forcefully denounced by The Heritage Foundation, which appealed the decision and wrote, “Suppressing valid medical information is not only anti-science, this is part of an alarming trend of YouTube removing or blocking content that it doesn’t like.”
Til Helhet (To Wholeness)

ARNEBERG, NORWAY

HTTP://TILHELHET.NO

Til Helhet (TH) is a self-described Christian conversion therapy provider in Norway. TH says on its website that its purpose is to help LGBTQ+ individuals to change their sexual orientation. They “want to assist those...who experience unwanted sexual orientation or unwanted emotions (lesbian/gay/bisexual feelings/transsexuality), and who need help in the process of finding a different path.” TH is adamant that change is possible, advocates that people can live a meaningful life by abstaining from sex, and tries to serve as a consultative body on issues concerning sexuality in the church and society. TH organizes conferences and seminars on these issues. In 2018, TH helped start the International Federation for Therapeutic and Counseling Choice. TH has been controversial in Norway. In 2019, the country’s Minister for Children and Family, Kjell Ingolf Ropstad, and other members of the cabinet, were found to be attending a church that was part of TH’s network, which led to a series of critical press stories. Ropstad disassociated himself from conversion therapy as a result. TH also lost some members including the Free Church, the Team, the Pentecostal Movement, and the Missionary Association. Today’s members of Til Helhet are NLM, Normisjon, Indremisjonforbundet, and Ungdom i Oppdrag. After an investigation into the practice in 2020, Norway started considering a bill to ban conversion therapy for children and in some cases adults. Also in 2020, the longtime leader of TH, prison chaplain Jens Fredrik Brenne, said that the network also consisted of non-Christians. “We usually think that there are conservative church people who think it is wrong to live out their gay feelings, but in our networks, you will also find people who do not consider themselves Christians. Some have also lived as homosexuals but want to get away from that lifestyle.” The disclosures in the press and talk of a conversion therapy ban led to change in the organization. In November 2020, Ole Gramstad Jensen, a lawyer with close ties to the youth mission, Ungdom i Oppdrag, was elected chairman of the board of TH. The board of TH consists of five other members, among them former board chairman Brenne. Jensen made a statement at the time that he “accepted the challenge of being chairman of the board of Til Helhet because I believe the organization does a very important job, and we are facing a phase where it may be appropriate [to have] legal expertise in the management.” If the conversion therapy bill passes in Norway, TH may not continue its work. Jensen wrote in an email to the media outlet NRK about the proposed legislation, “Should that happen, we at Til Helhet will have three choices: Go to prison, close down the business, or sue the state with a view to a clarification in Strasbourg...If someone wants help to deal with their sexual feelings, why should they not be able to get it.”
True Freedom Trust

WIRRAL, UNITED KINGDOM

HTTPS://TRUEFREEDOMTRUST.CO.UK
HTTPS://WWW.FACEBOOK.COM/TRUEFREEDOMTRUST/
HTTPS://WWW.YOUTUBE.COM/USER/TRUEFREEDOMTRUST
@TRUEFREETRUST HTTPS://TWITTER.COM/TRUEFREETRUST
HTTPS://SOUNDCLOUD.COM/TRUE-FREEDOM-TRUST

True Freedom Trust (TFT) claims it is not a conversion therapy organization, and only preaches celibacy for the LGBTQ+ community, but there is considerable evidence to the contrary. Founded in 1977 by an Anglican clergyman, who died in 2004, and Martin Hallett, who had been a gay man for nine years and ran TFT until 2009, TFT was a founding member of Exodus International, but resigned its membership in 2000 because TFT came to see Exodus’s rhetoric promising change to be problematic. TFT says it is a “teaching and pastoral support ministry that holds to the orthodox biblical view of sex, gender and relationships.” It takes the view that homosexual activity is sinful, but being gay is not sinful in and of itself and, therefore, advocates celibacy for those of its gay and lesbian members who do not consider marriage to someone of the opposite sex to be a viable option. In 2004, True Freedom Trust supposedly had 1,200 members and 13 local support groups for men, women, and their families in the UK and Ireland. By 2021, their website listed nearly 1,800 members and 123 partnership churches. A 2012 report in The Guardian revealed some of the group’s techniques, including that it pushed the idea that LGBTQ+ people are driven by loneliness and anger and suffering from a “twisted addiction.”

Even so, TFT has taken a hard line on gay sex. In 2001, when UK ex-gay ministry Courage UK announced it was now gay-affirming, Hallett told supporters that TFT would not be following suit, and that it retained the belief that homosexual “genital activity” was always wrong. In January 2018, Stuart Parker was appointed as the new director. TFT holds events across the UK for those experiencing “same-sex temptations.” It has several other partner organizations including Living Out, Liberty Christian Ministries, and Onderweg-NL. Since the COVID-19 pandemic, TFT has moved to Zoom meetings, including one in November 2021 on “Caring for Same-Sex Attracted Christians.”

With nearly 1,800 members and 123 partners, True Freedom Trust asserts that LGBTQ+ people are driven by loneliness and a ‘twisted addiction.’
Voices of Change (VOC) provides therapists to those who want to undertake conversion therapy. It's run by Robert Vazzo, who lives in Las Vegas and was mentored by Joseph Nicolosi, Sr., and David Pickup, who has an office in Houston, is a certified reintegrative therapist and is a board member of the Alliance for Therapeutic Choice and Scientific Integrity. Pickup attributes the American Psychological Association's (APA) position that conversion therapy can “harm the patient’s mental health” up to a “gay caucus” inside the APA. Both are licensed family and marriage therapists and both have been involved in legal efforts to overturn bans on conversion therapy for minors. Their website claims that “sound, effective therapeutic interventions for men and women who are experiencing real change in their sexualities are beginning to increase the world over…. it is possible to maximize one’s heterosexual potential by resolving the deep causes of homosexuality, which are primarily severe gender identity inferiority, unmet emotional same-sex needs during a child’s formative years, and sometimes same-sex sexual abuse. The men and women on this site, (who have experienced change through some very tough issues), all report new and profound happiness” Vazzo, licensed in Florida, practices conversion therapy on minors, claiming that his treatment may help minors “reduce or eliminate same-sex sexual attractions, behaviors or identity,” and claiming that he uses talk therapy. He also claimed that all clients initiate their counseling by giving informed consent, which normally involves parents who want to “cure” their children from being gay or transgender giving consent to a practitioner on their children's behalf. Vazzo has previously denied that conversion therapy is harmful, and in an interview in Voices of the Silenced, he said: “I view homosexuality as a type of fetish where the object happens to be human...The client himself might not be able to identify the trauma because it is buried and it’s unconscious, but we have many tools to bring those traumas to the surface.” Pickup’s views are similar, “Homosexuals are made, not born. That simple statement is the foundation of truth that will affect every LGBT issue in the minds of anyone who is considering the changing views of sexuality and gender. For most people of faith, biblical scripture has been settled on sexuality and gender issues for at least the last 2000 years.

Yet over the last 150 years, a growing number of people have gradually come to believe that homosexuality and transgenderism are innate, genetic, inborn in some way, or created by God. Pickup relocated to Texas in 2019 because his business in California was suffering due to the ban on offering his services to minors, but in Texas, conversion therapy is legal for minors and, according to Pickup, “business is booming.” Pickup was a lead plaintiff in a case that attempted to overturn California’s ban on conversion therapy for minors. In April 2017, Tampa’s City Council passed an ordinance prohibiting licensed therapists from engaging in the dangerous and discredited practice of conversion therapy with patients under 18 years old. The anti-LGBTQ+ Liberty Counsel challenged the law on behalf of Vazzo and Pickup. In October 2019, a U.S. District Court ruled that the ordinance was invalid because, under Florida law, only the state legislature, not cities, have the authority to regulate licensed mental health professionals. Vazzo’s services are advertised on other conversion therapy sites including that of the Restored Hope Network and Pickup has been featured at International Federation for Therapeutic and Counseling Choice conferences.
Run by self-described “ex-gay” Rolf Reitmann, Wuestenstrom Switzerland was founded in 2004 and openly declares its support for conversion therapy, saying on the front page of its website, “Conversion Therapy, Shaping Sexuality, Making Decisions!” In a profile by the Swiss Life Channel, Reitmann said he felt different as a child, preferring to “play with dolls, was very sensitive, could talk to girls better than to boys.” He hid the fact he was gay for years, became a pastor, and then came out to his congregation. With the help of Markus Hoffman, who founded the now defunct German branch of Wuestenstrom, Reitman apparently was able to become “ex-gay,” give up a gay porn addiction, and marry a woman, later joining Wuestenstrom to help others do the same. The German branch was launched with the help of Andrew Comiskey’s Desert Stream Ministries, but that relationship ended in 2006. In 2009, Wuestenstrom affiliated with Exodus International. In 2010, they registered with the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE) and attended the first of at least five meetings of OSCE subgroups. They describe their work as “an organization that is open to people who have questions and problems in their being a woman or man, who are affected by abuse, who are sex addicts and who have questions about their sexuality.” They continue, “We know that there are many affected people who have no place to talk openly. Because anyone who thinks differently than the mainstream will be silenced. With me, YOU should feel what your inner conflict is and how you want to deal with it.” In 2019, a bill was proposed in the Swiss parliament to ban conversion therapy for minors. The suggested bill specifically referred to a speech given by Reitman in Austria and said, “Let’s stop closing our eyes, let’s finally intervene and finally put an end to the suffering of children and adolescents affected by these ‘therapies.’” The bill failed.

Wuestenstrom Switzerland openly declares its support of conversion therapy on its website. A speech by its leader was used as an example for the need for a Swiss conversion therapy ban.
A project of the **Core Issues Trust (CIT)**, X-OUT-LOUD (XOL) is a Christian organization directed by Matthew Grech, a Maltese reality TV star, and CIT head Mike Davidson, who is the creator of a handful of other ex-gay groups. The group markets itself as a hip, young, diverse European organization that represents those who have “voluntarily” chosen to leave “unwanted same-sex or gender identities.” Its main activity is popularizing positive stories of those who have “left” the LGBTQ+ community because of conversion therapy. XOL co-opts and warps the language of the LGBTQ+ rights movement for its own ends, claiming its goal is “the coming out of a thriving X-LGBT community that is making history.” It portrays itself as a project of liberation that celebrates “the identity of those who have found, or are finding, freedom from unwanted Same-Sex feelings and gender confusion & behaviours.”

XOL is emblematic of a new generation of conversion therapy supporters who position themselves as victims of the LGBTQ+ community. They argue that supporting bans on conversion therapy is actually subjecting others to torture. An interview with an XOL hero, Rebekah Moffet of Christian Concern, makes exactly this point: “To put it back to the LGBT lobby, if we ban counseling and therapy for unwanted sexual attractions, isn’t that akin to subjecting them to torture, forcing them to live with undesired attractions?”

The group makes clear that it believes “past traumas” are at the root of homosexuality and that LGBTQ+ identification is ideological, not scientific. They refer to themselves and their supporters as “X-LGBT Voices.” Featured on the site are “X-LGBT” activists posing on colorful backgrounds from multiple countries: several in Europe, but also the U.S., Chile, and Ghana. XOL aggressively markets the stories of its supporters on its YouTube channel, in campaigns against conversion therapy bans, and through what it calls “The Book,” a slickly designed large format paperback that compiles individual stories of X-LGBT individuals which creates, “a joyful and hopeful narrative that as men and women identify with their biological sex and are set free from hurtful experiences.” XOL presents its community as victimized by conversion therapy bans, which it claims target, “hundreds and thousands of people who refuse to be forced into gay or transgender culture.”
ENDNOTES

1. The terms used in this report to surface conversion therapy providers can be found in Conversion Therapy Online: The Ecosystem.

2. This definition is derived from a 2019 report by OutRight Action International, https://outrightinternational.org/sites/default/files/ConversionFINAL_Web_0.pdf


7. The Independent Forensic Expert Group is a group of preeminent independent health specialists who provide technical advice and expertise in cases where allegations of torture are made. The Group conducts evaluation missions, produces medico-legal reports, as well as serves as a global reference point on the issue. It advocates for the increased use of medical evidence and continues to build a body of knowledge on the subject of forensic documentation. The Group is the only existing forensic expert group in the area of human rights. https://irct.org/media-and-resources/latest-news/article/826


17. https://www.epfweb.org/sites/default/files/202106/Tip%20of%20the%20Coberg%20June%202021%20Final.pdf


29. https://www.therapeuticchoice.org/board


31. https://www.therapeuticchoice.org/board

32. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vdII0tdRI&amp;feature=youtu.be

33. https://www.sltrib.com/news/politics/2019/03/05/amendments-drastically/

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CONVERSION THERAPY ONLINE THE PLAYERS

242  https://www.artleonardobservations.com/tag/robert-i-vazzo/
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245  https://www.dallasnews.com/news/2019/05/02/we-don-t-need-fixing-texas-debates-ban-on-gay-conversion-therapy-for-kids/
247  https://www.ncrights.org/our-work/cases/vazzo-v-city-of-tampa/
249  https://www.wuestenstrom.ch/styled-2/
250  https://lifechannel.ch/radio/portraet-rolf-rietmann-einpfarer-outet-sich/
251  https://lifechannel.ch/radio/portraet-rolf-rietmann-einpfarer-outet-sich/
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259  https://www.parlament.ch/de/ratsbetrieb/suche-curia-vista/geschaeft?AffairId=20193840
260  https://www.instagram.com/xoutloudeuropeofficial/ (page removed November 2021);