

Comment on the NCLR submission to the 53rd Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment

Geneva, Switzerland, 11-13 November Nov 2014

A Californian based law firm, the National Centre for Lesbian Rights (NCLR) has submitted [documentary information](#)¹ to the United Nations treaty Committee Against Torture, claiming that by failing to outlaw the practice of 'Conversion Therapy,' America violates its compliance with the Convention Against Torture to which it is a signatory. The submission will receive attention at an event in Geneva on 11 - 13 November 2014. The NCLR wants the committee to address the practice, since the US government did not advance the issue in 2005, 2009 or 2013. It wishes to see the disciplining of state licensed professionals, pejoratively labelled 'conversion' or 'reparative' therapists. For minors subjected to such therapy "(who) consequently experience homelessness, resort to prostitution, become addicted to alcohol or drugs, or suffer depression or other mental health issues", and for "families of minors who have died from suicide", the NCLR inquires of government efforts to offer resources, support and legal recourse. It also inquires of measures taken to study the "continued incidence" of conversion therapy on minors and adults.

Between 2004 and 2007, **Dr Mike Davidson** received professional psychotherapeutic and counselling support for his unwanted homosexual and romantic feelings. Three UK registered professionals, none of them 'Conversion' or 'Reparative' therapists over a period of 3 years - each using a range of different but standard, mainstream modalities- helped him achieve his goal of keeping his marriage and family together. He asks "How can we ban such help for those who want it, let alone attempt to label this torture"?



He understands the homosexual inclinations he has experienced as rooted in attachment issues he experienced in his family, and supports choice for change, after advanced informed consent.

Mike Davidson now leads Core Issues Trust and will be present at this Geneva event

But the practice of "Conversion Therapy", implying an 'on/off' approach to human sexuality and a 'pray away the gay' perspective on counselling, is rooted in aversion techniques associated with behavioural psychology which used to be undertaken by mainstream professionals for a variety of conditions using electro-shock, chemical intervention and castration methods. However, such techniques have been discontinued, discredited and abandoned for decades. Gay Rights groups like the NCLR have, by association, linked all psychoanalytic, psychodynamic, talking therapies and group therapeutic approaches, with these abusive techniques. In so doing they fail to distinguish between discredited approaches and the rights of autonomous individuals, including minors, to determine personal goals, with the help of non-drug-prescribing widely available therapeutic models. The goal here is to discredit the right of choice to receive or offer this help. This has been done by citing professional bodies which – though they acknowledge a degree of sexual fluidity - claim that change efforts are harmful, though they have not been able to substantiate this by methodologically sound peer-reviewed research studies. This is not about 'disease' but rather 'dis-ease' – the right of clients to address issues which cause them discomfort.

This is yet another ideological attempt to close down the right of families and individuals to determine their own destinies and identities, by claiming that all therapeutic initiatives to change sexual patterning are harmful. Other attempts claim an 'equivalence argument' with government control of parents who allow their children access to alcohol and tobacco, the harmful effects of which are well researched. This obscures the lack of empirical evidence that sexual orientation change efforts (SOCE) are on average, harmful, as admitted by the American Psychological Association: "None of the recent research ... meets methodological standards that permit conclusions regarding efficacy or safety" (APA: 2009)². Furthermore, claims that therapeutic support to reduce, manage or eliminate unwanted feelings is *ipso facto* harmful are made in isolation from the broader context of rates of harm in psychotherapy in general (Lambert 2013³).

The NCLR intervention implies rates of harm higher than for any other therapeutic category, but they have presented no evidence from any representative samples of SOCE consumers. In foregrounding highly controversial testimonies of abuse, as the NCLR does in the case of Samuel Brinton who claims sustained but unsubstantiated abuse, the ideological nature of their argument is apparent. He claims to have undergone conversion therapy but has not identified exactly when and where this was done and he has raised no complaint against the alleged perpetrator. Further, no prosecution against this father is recorded.

In 2013 the NCLR used the same UN forum in Geneva to claim that the Holy See was similarly guilty of colluding with torture by not allowing Catholic women the right to decide to terminate a pregnancy. The group fails to acknowledge the fundamental rights, including religious rights of individuals and families, to pursue therapeutic and medical goals consistent with their own values, revealing themselves to be profoundly disrespectful of individuals' rights, - and ignorant of the fact of sexual fluidity.

Core Issues Trust links individuals with therapists internationally, using a range of standard therapeutic modalities to focus on unwanted homosexual romantic and sexual feelings for those wanting to diminish, and where possible, eliminate these.

Dr Mike Davidson, Director: Core Issues Trust

4th November, 2014

¹ Also cf: http://tbinternet.ohchr.org/_layouts/treatybodyexternal/Download.aspx?symbolno=INT%2fCAT%2fCSS%2fUSA%2f18540&Lang=en

² Report of the American Psychological Association Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation, p.2

³ Lambert, M. J. (2013). The efficacy and effectiveness of psychotherapy. In Michael J. Lambert (Ed.), Bergin and Garfield's Handbook of Psychotherapy and Behavior Change (6th Edition), (pp. 169-218). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.