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Dr. Robert Spitzer recants study on 'curing' gays

New York Times

Saturday, May 19, 2012

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Alex di Suvero / New York Times

Dr. Robert Spitzer once supported reparative therapy to "cure" homosexuals motivated to change.

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Princeton, N.J. -- The simple fact was that he had done something wrong, and at the end of a long and revolutionary career it didn't matter how often he'd been right, how powerful he once was, or what it would mean for his legacy.

Dr. Robert Spitzer, 79, considered by some to be the father of modern psychiatry, lay awake on a recent

morning knowing he had to do the one thing that comes least naturally to him.

Spitzer suffers from Parkinson's disease and has trouble walking, sitting, even holding his head upright.

Now here he was at his computer, ready to recant a study he had done, a poorly conceived 2003 investigation that supported the use of reparative therapy to "cure" homosexuality for people strongly motivated to change.

"I believe," he states in a letter to be published this month, in the same journal where the original study appeared, "I owe the gay community an apology."

It took nine years for him to admit it.

At first he clung to the idea that the study was exploratory, an attempt to prompt scientists to think twice about dismissing the therapy outright. Then he took refuge in the position that the study was focused less on the effectiveness of the therapy and more on how people engaging in it described changes in sexual orientation.

"Not a very interesting question," he said. "But for a long time I thought maybe I wouldn't have to face the bigger problem, about measuring change."

And one day in March, Spitzer entertained a visitor - Gabriel Arana, a journalist at the magazine the American Prospect who went through reparative therapy as a teenager.

Arana said the therapy delayed his self-acceptance and induced thoughts of suicide.

That did it. The study needed a proper ending - a strong correction, directly from its author.

*This article appeared on page **A - 9** of the San Francisco Chronicle*

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Gabarus 6:46 AM on May 19, 2012

..Is it just me, or does this article seem like it ends very prematurely? It sounds like there should be at least another paragraph or two.

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williamsb7373 8:16 AM on May 20, 2012

Read the article in it's entirety at New York Times. This Dr. is fortunate that he lived long enough to recognize his evil contribution to the hysteria and hatred aimed at Gays, and admit that he was completely and utterly wrong.

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ChristineBeatty 9:50 AM on May 20, 2012

Given how insidious is the lie that sexual orientation (or gender identity) can be "cured" or changed is one of the main linchpins of the organized bigotry against LGBT people, this news can not be told enough times in enough sources all around the world.

Hopefully then reasonable people everywhere will start waking up to the fact that *acceptance* is the only answer, and there is no good reason to keep rejecting and hurting people who are different from the mainstream concept of "normal."

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