

letters

Anything But ...

Wayne Besen's (*Anything But Straight*) determination to expose the fraud, ineffectiveness, and political agendas of the "ex-gay" movement is certainly a boon to our communities, as writer Bob Wolff attests (February *OITM*, "Troubled Souls, Fooled Again").

However, Besen uses some of the same techniques he decries in the ex-gay movement. In his zeal to kill the ex-gay movement, or at least to inoculate the rest of us against its allure, he uses a machine-gun approach that does not serve Besen or the community well.

As Wolff mentions, Besen uses gay stereotypes (speakers "prance," an ex-lesbian greeter is "linebacker-sized," several men are "strikingly effeminate") to gratuitously trash the appearance and personalities of the troubled souls who attend ex-gay meetings.

He also does to the ex-gay

testifiers exactly what he says the ex-gays do to recruits: he takes one idea – not even a "fact" – i.e., that ex-gay testifiers were "abnormally suicidal" (compared to what?), constructs a theory around it (their "normal" coming out processes were interrupted at adolescence; if they had/would just come out, all their problems would be solved) and uses it to explain everything.

And although Besen rightly critiques the bogus "research" cited in much of the ex-gay and Christian right rhetoric, he cites equally bogus authorities: the so-called "False Memory Syndrome Foundation," founded in their own self-interest by accused parents supporting a concept never accepted by the American Psychological Association or given credibility by widely accepted, peer-reviewed researchers.

It's great that someone had the stomach to examine all this material, but we should not overlook

in our own authors the egregious errors we criticize in our opponents. Just because Mr. Besen is "our" zealot doesn't mean his methods are above reproach. *OITM* and reviewer Bob Wolff should have taken a more critical look.

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Marriage Minefield

As a lifelong "confirmed bachelor," I have never been a big fan of the institution of marriage and have no plans whatsoever to get married now or at any time in the future.

Having said that, I am nonetheless compelled to warn opponents of same-gender marriage that they are walking into a dangerous constitutional minefield with their campaign to ban it.

Their argument that marriage can be only between a man

and a woman is clearly and undeniably grounded in a religious doctrine. The opponents of same-gender marriage are under the mistaken belief that the institution of civil marriage and the religious sacrament of holy matrimony are one and the same.

Nothing could be farther from the truth. They are, in fact, two totally separate entities. Indeed, civil marriage was established in the early 19th century to get around religious prohibitions against awarding the sacrament of holy matrimony to couples of different faiths.

With the U.S. Supreme Court having already removed the last legal justifications for *de jure* discrimination against gay and lesbian Americans (*Romer v. Evans*, 1996 and *Lawrence v. Texas*, 2003), it is impossible for statutory and state-constitutional bans on same-gender marriage to pass First and Fourteenth Amendment muster.

It is obvious that they are

every bit as illegal under the 14th Amendment as the old racist Jim Crow laws that banned interracial marriage – which the high court struck down way back in 1967 (*Loving v. Virginia*).

More importantly, they also constitute a government endorsement of an anti-gay religious doctrine that clearly violates the establishment-of-religion clause of the First Amendment.

Neither Congress nor the states have any constitutional authority to enshrine into law an exclusionary religious doctrine that violates constitutional rights. They are denied that authority by First Amendment, the Full Faith and Credit Clause (Article IV) and by the Supremacy Clause (Article VI), which binds all elected officeholders by oath to support, uphold – and obey – the Constitution.

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