

Richard A. Cohen

From Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia

Richard A. Cohen (born 1952) is an unlicensed psychotherapist,^[1] author, and promoter of conversion therapy.^{[2][3][4]} Cohen founded Parents and Friends of Ex-Gays and was its president, and founded the International Healing Foundation and promotes his theories on sexual orientation change efforts for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) people. Cohen, who lived with a gay identity in his youth, allegedly underwent years of psychotherapy to heal childhood issues which—he claims—had led to his homosexual feelings. He says that his therapy and personal growth helped him to understand his same-sex attractions, and to eventually transition to heterosexuality.

Cohen lives in Washington, D.C. with his wife and has three adult children.^[2] His foundation, the International Healing Foundation, offers psychotherapy, coaching, teleconferencing classes, and healing seminars for members of the LGBT community and those with unwanted same-sex attraction.

Contents

- 1 Biography
- 2 Education
- 3 Career
 - 3.1 International Healing Foundation
 - 3.2 Expulsion from the ACA
 - 3.3 Controversy
 - 3.4 Media appearances
- 4 Ideas regarding sexual orientation
- 5 Books written
- 6 References
- 7 External links

Biography

Cohen has described a troubled childhood that regards as the causes of his homosexuality later in life.

While attending Boston University, he became an evangelical Christian, and he later joined the Unification Church (which rejects homosexual behavior),^[5] where he says he remained celibate for long periods.^[2] In 1982, Cohen married Jae Sook, a South Korean woman suggested to him by church leader Sun Myung Moon. Cohen says that, during the first three years of his marriage, he underwent psychotherapy but was unable to find the help he needed, and therefore he found some healing with a boyfriend in New York.^{[2][6]} Cohen describes this time as a period of turmoil that led him to pursue healing from his past.^[7]

Education

Cohen received a counseling psychology master's degree from Antioch University.^[2]

Career

International Healing Foundation

Cohen founded the International Healing Foundation in 1990, a nonprofit and tax-exempt organization that promotes conversion therapy.^[2]

He is not licensed as a therapist. In order to get around the licensing requirement, he asks for donations to his foundation instead of requiring payment. He has said: "I am not doing therapy per se. I'm coaching." Today, he trains therapists and clergy worldwide how to assist members of the LGBT community and those who experience unwanted same-sex attraction.^[2]

Expulsion from the ACA

In 2002, Cohen was permanently expelled from the American Counseling Association (ACA), after it accused him of six violations of its ethics code, which bars members from actions which "seek to meet their personal needs at the expense of clients, those that exploit the trust and dependency of clients, and for soliciting testimonials or promoting products in a deceptive manner."^{[2][8]}

Cohen stated that the expulsion was for his efforts in the ex-gay movement, specifically for the book *Coming Out Straight*, and for one complaint. He did not appeal, and called the ACA "a biased organization"^[9] and "a totally gay-affirming club".^[2]

The ACA is the world's largest professional organization representing the counseling profession. None of the major mental health or medical professional organizations, including the American Counseling Association, the American Psychiatric Association, the American Psychological Association, the National Association of Social Workers, the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American Medical Association, the National Association of School Psychologists, or the American Association for Marriage and Family Therapy believe reparative therapy is effective and/or necessary and they caution that it can be very harmful resulting in an increased instance of depression and/or suicide. After his expulsion, Cohen did not seek licensure as he was transitioning into full-time teaching.^[10]

Controversy

According to the American Psychological Association (APA) and numerous other professional health organizations,^{[11][12]} there is no conclusive evidence that sexual orientation can be changed through counseling or other means. According to a statement by the APA, they are "concerned about ongoing efforts to mischaracterize homosexuality and promote the notion that sexual orientation can be changed, and about the resurgence of sexual orientation change efforts." Their official statement goes on to state that clinicians should approach clients who express a desire to change their sexual orientation by "affirmative multiculturally competent and client-centered approaches that recognize the negative impact of social stigma on sexual minorities, and balance ethical principles of beneficence and nonmaleficence, justice, and respect for people's rights and dignity."^[11]

In May 2015, Oregon became the third state in the U.S. to prohibit the practice of gay conversion therapy, following California, Massachusetts, and New Jersey.^[13] These laws apply only to licensed therapists working with clients under age 18 years, however, a 2015 article in *The Atlantic* reports that the practice is quickly losing its support, even among Christians in the U.S.^[14]

Also in 2015, Barack Obama came out against the practice, calling for its end in the United States.^[15]

Media appearances

Cohen has given numerous interviews in newspapers, on radio shows, and on television shows, including

20/20, *Larry King Live*, *The O'Reilly Factor*, *Jimmy Kimmel Live*, *Ricki Lake*, and *Paula Zahn Now*.^[16]

Cohen was also featured in an episode of *Penn & Teller: Bullshit!*^[17] In 2014, Cohen appeared in a documentary by Blackstone Films^[18] entitled "The Third Way: Homosexuality and the Catholic Church."^[19]

Cohen was interviewed by Jason Jones on the March 19, 2007 episode of *The Daily Show*.^[20] Cohen was on *Jimmy Kimmel Live!* on June 28, 2006,^[21] was interviewed on *The Rachel Maddow Show* on December 8, 2009,^[22] and was on *The Michelangelo Signorile Show* on the Sirius radio network on April 17, 2010.

Ideas regarding sexual orientation

Cohen claims there were multiple causes of his same-sex attraction, such as abuse by his uncle, over-attachment with his mother, and lack of sufficient father-son bonding. He mentioned that repeated molestation by a male relative was just one factor that caused him to develop same-sex attraction. He says that dealing with the psychological damage that resulted from the abuse and from other factors allowed him to revert to his "natural heterosexuality". He believes that all homosexuals are actually heterosexuals who can find peace and self-esteem through healing and restoration of their natural heterosexuality.

In Cohen's 2001 book *Coming Out Straight*, he calls homosexuality a "same-sex attachment disorder", and details his methods of sexual reorientation therapy. He outlines his theory of the causes of same-sex attraction (among them are lack of bonding between father-son and mother-daughter, over attachment with the opposite-sex parent, lack of same-gender peer bonding, hypersensitive temperament, potential sex abuse, and other factors)^[23] and his methods of changing sexual orientation, and relays stories of people who have undergone his therapies.

Cohen describes the "hidden meanings" of same-sex attraction as:

1. need for same-sex parent's love
2. need for gender identification
3. fear of intimacy with the opposite sex^[24]

Cohen believes that there are temperamental, familial, and environmental causes for same-sex attraction in men and women. Cohen uses a variety of therapeutic techniques, including: behavior therapy, cognitive therapy, psychodynamic modalities and bioenergetics.^[2]

Cohen also uses holding therapy, which involves using physical touch and repeating affirming words to attempt to establish healthy, non-sexual bonding that may have been absent during childhood.^[25] In Cohen's counselor-training program manual, he states that only opposite-sex attracted mentors or same-gender parents should give holding therapy, and he quotes from his own 2000 book *Coming Out Straight* that the mentor should not be the same person as the therapist.^[26] However, in a televised interview with Paula Zahn on CNN, he is shown hugging a patient who is lying in his lap, and explaining that the patient didn't experience proper nurturing growing up.^[27]

Cohen has said, "If someone wants to live a gay life, that needs to be respected. If someone wants to change and come out straight, that too needs to be respected. Let us practice true tolerance, real diversity, and equality for all."^[3]

Books written

- Cohen, Richard A; Elizabeth Sherman. *Alfie's Home* (1993) ISBN 0-9637058-0-6, self-published.^[28]
- Cohen, Richard A; Laura Schlessinger. *Coming Out Straight* (2000) ISBN 1-886939-41-1, Oakhill

Press, equity publisher.^[29]

- Cohen, Richard. *Gay Children, Straight Parents: A Plan for Family Healing* (2007) ISBN 978-0-8308-3437-2, Inter-Varsity Press.^[30]
- Cohen, Richard. "Straight Talk About Homosexuality" (2010) International Healing Foundation {www.comingoutloved.com}

References

1. See International Healing Foundation below - "I am not doing therapy per se" <http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/15/AR2005081501063.html>
2. Boodman, Sandra G. (2005-08-16). "A conversion therapist's unusual odyssey" (<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/08/15/AR2005081501063.html>). *Washington Post* From a page on the IHF website: *My heritage is Jewish. I grew up in the Jewish faith and was bar mitzvahed and confirmed in a Reform synagogue. While attending Boston University, I was introduced to Christianity and read the New Testament for the first time. I accepted Jesus Christ as my personal Savior in October 1972. A few years later, I met the Unification Church and felt called to join in 1974. From 1983, when I began psychotherapy and my healing journey, my relationship with the Unification Church began to wane. In 1988, my family and I lived with the Wesleyan Christian Community, outside of Seattle, Washington. We attended fellowship services with them for two and a half years. Our ties to the Unification Church weakened until we finally left altogether in 1995. For the next few years we attended many Christian churches. In the fall of 1997, we met a local evangelical church in our community and joined in 1998. We have been members ever since.* pp. HE04. Retrieved 2007-08-30.
3. Cohen, Richard (2007-07-20). "Born gay? No way!" (<http://www.newstatesman.com/200707200001>). *New Statesman*. Retrieved 2007-08-27.
4. Mark Simkin (August 22, 2006). "USA - Gay Conversion" (<http://www.abc.net.au/foreign/content/2006/s1732241.htm>). ABC TV. Retrieved February 13, 2007.
5. THE UNIFICATION CHURCH AND HOMOSEXUALITY (http://www.religioustolerance.org/hom_uni.htm) B.A. Robinson, Ontario Consultants on Religious Tolerance 2005
6. Richard Cohen (<http://ex-gaytruth.com/wp-content/uploads/2010/02/richard-cohen.pdf>), ex-gaytruth
7. Cohen, R. Coming Out Straight (http://www.peoplecanchange.com/About_Us_Cohen.htm). Retrieved on 04-07-2007.
8. Notification of Results Letter (https://web.archive.org/web/20070103080104/http://www.rawprint.com/besen/012504_aca_letter.php) at the Wayback Machine (archived January 3, 2007), American Counseling Association. Retrieved 04-07-2007.
9. Najafi, Yusef (2005-03-04). "Activist calls ex-gay leader "dishonest". Besen criticizes PFOX president for not disclosing past" (<http://web.archive.org/web/20070930185138/http://www.washblade.com/2005/3-4/news/localnews/activist.cfm>). *Washington Blade*. Window Media. Archived from the original (<http://www.washblade.com/2005/3-4/news/localnews/activist.cfm>) on 2007-09-30. Retrieved 2007-08-30.
10. "Debunking a "cure" for homosexuality" (<http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26315908/vp/34337416#34337416>). Retrieved 2011-03-14.
11. "Resolution on Appropriate Affirmative Responses to Sexual Orientation Distress and Change Efforts" (<http://www.apa.org/about/policy/sexual-orientation.aspx>). *American Psychological Association*. American Psychological Association. Retrieved 7 July 2015.
12. "The Lies and Dangers of Efforts to Change Sexual Orientation or Gender Identity" (<http://www.hrc.org/resources/entry/the-lies-and-dangers-of-reparative-therapy>). *Human Rights Campaign*. The Human Rights Campaign. Retrieved 7 July 2015.
13. Fang, Marina (July 7, 2015). "The Country's First Openly Bisexual Governor Bans Gay Conversion Therapy In Her State" (http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2015/05/19/oregon-gay-conversion-therapy-ban_n_7337350.html). *The Huffington Post*. Retrieved 7 July 2015.
14. Merritt, Jonathan (April 15, 2015). "How Christians Turned Against Gay Conversion Therapy" (<http://www.theatlantic.com/politics/archive/2015/04/how-christians-turned-against-gay-conversion-therapy/390570/>). *The Atlantic* (The Atlantic Monthly Group). Retrieved 7 July 2015.
15. "Obama calls for end to 'gay conversion therapies'" (<http://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-32227353>). *BBC News*. April 9, 2015. Retrieved 7 July 2015.

16. *New Therapy Claims to "Cure" Homosexuality* (<http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0605/23/pzn.01.htm>), Paula Zahn Now, May 23, 2006, CNN.
17. Showtime: Penn & Teller: Bullshit! Season 3 Episode 2: "Family Values" (<http://www.sho.com/site/ptbs/episodes.do?episodeid=123917&ep=302>). Retrieved on February 13, 2011.
18. <http://www.blackstonefilms.org>
19. <https://vimeo.com/93079367>
20. <http://www.thedailyshow.com/watch/mon-march-19-2007/diagnosis--mystery-pt--2>
21. <http://www.imdb.com/title/tt0837645/>
22. <http://www.msnbc.msn.com/id/26315908/#34337416> Rachel Maddow: Debunking a 'cure' for homosexuality
23. Quote from book (link to Maddow interview in which he defends quote) (http://www.salon.com/news/opinion/glenn_greenwald/2009/12/09/maddow). Retrieved on 12-10-2009.
24. Audio Tapes and CDs (order page from Richard Cohen's website) (<http://www.gaytostraight.org/resources.htm>). Retrieved on 04-07-2007.
25. Brown, J. Experts Split Over 'Bizarre' Sexual Orientation Therapy Techniques (<http://headlines.agapepress.org/archive/6/202006a.asp>), Agape Press, 06-20-2006. Retrieved on 04-07-2007.
26. Cohen, Richard (2008). "Healthy touch in the healing process, part I. Counselor training program manual" (http://www.gaytostraight.org/Change_Is_Possible_Winter_2008.pdf) (PDF). *Change is possible. Newsletter winter 2008*. International healing foundation. pp. 5, 7–8. Retrieved 2009-02-24. "only the OSA (Opposite-Sex Attracted) mentors or one's same-gender parent (if s/he is capable, willing and available), should be the bearers of the gift of healthy touch for those with unwanted SSA. [...] "The therapist or counselor should not be the mentor. The therapist may help train mentors; however, it is ill advised for him to stand in as the mentor" (p. 203)."
27. "Rachel Maddow: Richard Cohen Cures Homosexuality by Cuddling the Gay Away" (May 23, 2006) CNN
28. Alfie's home by Richard A Cohen; Elizabeth Sherman (<http://www.worldcat.org/search?q=isbn%3A0963705806>) WorldCat
29. Coming out straight: understanding and healing homosexuality by Richard A Cohen; Laura Schlessinger (<http://www.worldcat.org/search?q=isbn%3A1886939411>) WorldCat
30. Gay children, straight parents : a plan for family healing by Richard Cohen (<http://www.worldcat.org/search?q=isbn%3A0963705806>) WorldCat

External links

- International Healing Foundation (<http://www.comingoutloved.com/>) - An organization Richard Cohen founded



Wikiquote has quotations related to: ***Richard A. Cohen***

Retrieved from "https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Richard_A._Cohen&oldid=670478960"

Categories: 1952 births | Living people | Ex-gay movement | People self-identified as ex-gay | Boston University alumni | Conversion therapy

-
- This page was last modified on 8 July 2015, at 06:16.
 - Text is available under the Creative Commons Attribution-ShareAlike License; additional terms may apply. By using this site, you agree to the Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Wikipedia® is a registered trademark of the Wikimedia Foundation, Inc., a non-profit organization.