

“A Place for Conscience”, Kevin D. Williamson, *National Review*, April 20, 2015; “A Buckley Comes Out”, Sean Buckley, *The Daily Beast*, April 26, 2015; “Reparative Therapy: Is It Harmful?” by Nick Pitts, *Denison Forum*, April 16, 2015; “How Christians Turned Against Gay Conversion Therapy” by Jonathan Merritt, *The Atlantic*, April 15, 2015; “Sabrina’s Fable”, Mindy Belz; “Evangelical Shell Shock”, Marvin Olasky, *World*, May 2, 2015.

Williamson wasn’t yet two years old when, in 1974, *NR* published a gay rights cover story by David Brudnoy and Ernest van den Haag. These two conservatives and Barry Farber, ‘77 Conservative/Republican mayoral candidate in New York, were Board members of our gay-affirming Homosexual Community Counseling Center.

Brudnoy noted Bill Buckley’s view that women’s liberation and the women’s liberation *movement* are not synonymous. “So too”, said Brudnoy, “with homosexual liberation and its apparatus. *NR*’s response to various liberation causes in flower over the past few years has been one of initial hostility, tempered later by a mellowing, a more sober consideration of the group’s aspiration, and then (at least with the Negro and female causes) refined into intelligent, forthright acceptance of the legitimacy of certain aspects of those thrusts for legal and societal equality.” This was true, too, of other conservative media, including evangelical. Said Brudnoy: “The time when *NR*’s hostility to all but ‘discreet’ [closeted] homosexuals should be customary in these pages has passed.” That was over 40 years ago.

Today, Williamson conflates a publicity stunt with serious efforts for “the moral status of homosexuality or the social desirability of gay marriage”. He claims black civil rights shouldn’t be a “template” for the same-sex struggle, but ignores similarities, e.g., white citizens’ hostility to the *moral* status of *integration* and the social undesirability of “*mixed race*” marriage. He says it’s “question-begging” to align the two struggles, but it’s *his* circularity that begs the question. Yes, gays weren’t brought here as slaves and, if closeted, weren’t “segregated”. But blacks grew up around other black folk; gays grew up in isolation, thinking no one else was so “perverted” and “damned”. Black parents loved their kids – but selfish slaveholders separated kids from their parents; parents of gay kids separate themselves from their kids. It used to be a felony for blacks to marry whites and same-sex marriage is still against the law in many states.

Williamson rightly notes that it’s “the fundamental American premise ... that there be no separate people within the republic held subject as effectively a hereditary condition”. Yet he refuses to see that, *in effect*, same-sex attraction is experienced *as though* it’s from birth. For all *practical* purposes, it’s one’s sexual orientation and it’s immutable. So, how can one live it responsibly, lovingly and how can society facilitate or frustrate that.

He grants: “Equal treatment – not only under the law, but socially as well – is, as a matter of principle good”, but he ends in diatribe: “The state is being used by gay-rights activists to enforce ruthless social conformity, even though gay people themselves were not so long ago on the receiving end of the same sort of bullying. But that is the Left’s general model of progress: The opening gambit is a plea for tolerance, and the end game is a bayonet.” In his day, George Wallace never put it so eloquently – but this is the gist of what he meant.

Bill Buckley’s great-nephew and Jim Buckley’s grandson is a student at Georgetown and he’s come out as gay – as have loved ones in many other families. Sean Buckley says family and Catholic influence kept him from accepting this part of him but that he can no longer be in denial. He supports same-sex marriage,

which he sees as consistent with conservatism: “Individuals have the power and ability to make decisions for themselves better than any government can [and] marriage built on love [is] for the best.”

Pitts refuses to give a straight answer to his own question about the harm of “reparative therapy”. Citing the Surgeon General that it’s “not sound medical practice” and the view of the American Psychiatric Association that there’s “no scientific validation” for it and there’s evidence of “all sorts of harm”, Pitts fails to note confessions of “ex-gay” leaders on four decades of failure and harm. Yet, he’s aware of ever-changing “ex-gay” claims: “The very concept is vague at best.” So Pitts changes the subject: “The root of all our issues cannot be solved by some sage advice or medical diagnosis. ... God can do more than we can ask or imagine”. That’s the “ex-gay” claim that led to tragedies. But *ex-“ex-gays”* find that God’s grace does what they never found in the “reparative therapy” hoax.

Merritt, an evangelical, cites Alan Chambers, Exodus “ex-gay” network’s final leader: “Sexual orientation doesn’t change”. Reporting evangelical rejection of “ex-gay” claims due to the “accrual of evidence and experience”, Merritt notes that years of “ex-gay” therapy left people “drowning in a sea of shame.” He says: “It’s a sad story, but one that grows gloomier when you consider that ... countless LGBT youths have been subjected to much worse, not just in Christian ministries, but also at the hands of licensed counselors ... of ‘reparative’ or ‘conversion therapy’.” He reports that the efforts were not only “ineffective” but drove seekers “to depression, anxiety, drug use, or suicide.”

Son of a popular Southern Baptist preacher, Merritt notes that Russell Moore, another major SBC leader, publicly repudiates “ex-gay” claims, as has a recent Liberty University editorial and a growing number of wounded, but wiser, evangelicals.

Yet the Religious Right’s *World* still pushes the “ex-gay” hoax. Editor Belz rightly faults *Rolling Stone*’s pushing a discredited “college rape crisis” and asserts: “Sticking to a narrative even when your facts fall apart takes hubris [and] media’s ability to craft a distorted narrative – no matter who gets hurt – has lessons for us all.” She sees that this is “more about self-protection ... it’s close-minded”, and concludes: “Listening overmuch to your own crowd and your own wisdom is one way to get in trouble as a journalist. And that’s a reminder for us all.” But the *World* staff, itself, fails to apply this wisdom.

In the same issue, editor-in-chief Olasky starts his editorial with antigay pot shots: “Bam. Therapist-in-chief Barack Obama wants state laws to ban attempts to help homosexuals who want to change their inclinations.” He attacks Alan Chambers, *World*’s 2011 “Daniel of the Year”, for having “abandoned [*World*’s] biblical concept, closed Exodus and reaped joy of approval” from gays. Were Olasky to face the truth of the “ex-gay” hoax and confess it, as Chambers does, *he’d* reap no joy of approval from his Right-wing readers whom he happily tells of ongoing “ex-gay” groups.

