

Former APA President Condemns APA for Barring Research

"The APA is too goddamn politically correct...and too goddamn obeisant to special interests!" said **Robert Perloff**, 1985 President of the American Psychological Association.

Dr. Perloff delivered those uncensored remarks during a rousing speech to psychologists at the 2001 APA Annual Convention.

In an expression of open anger and frustration, Dr. Perloff condemned the APA's one-sided political activism. Of reorientation therapy with homosexuals, he said: "It is considered unethical...*That's all wrong*. First, the data are not fully in yet. Second, if the client wants a change, listen to the client. Third, you're barring research."¹

Dr. Perloff is a recipient of the American Psychological Foundation's Gold Medal Award for Lifetime Achievement in Psychology in the Public Interest. In bestowing the award, the Psychological Foundation recognized Perloff for his love of social justice and his career-long struggle to champion "the rights and dignity of women, minorities, and homosexuals."

But, Perloff asked, "How can you do research on change if therapists involved in this work are threatened with being branded as unethical?" Contacted by NARTH, Dr. Perloff added the following comment in an interview:

*"I believe that APA is flat out wrong, undemocratic, and shamefully unprofessional in denying NARTH the opportunity to express its views and programs in the APA Monitor and otherwise under APA's purview."*²

Other Professionals who Support Client Autonomy

Robert Spitzer, M.D., the psychiatrist who is called the "architect of the 1973 diagnostic manual" that normalized homosexuality, expressed a similar concern two years ago. Describing his own study, Dr. Spitzer said:

"I'm convinced from people I have interviewed... many of them... have made substantial changes toward becoming heterosexual. I came to this study skeptical. I now claim that these changes can be sustained."

About exclusive homosexuality, he conceded, "I think, implicitly, there is something not working."³



Dr. Robert Perloff

Dr. Raymond Fowler, CEO of the American Psychological Association, says that his interpretation of the APA's position on reparative therapy is that those who wish to explore developing heterosexual feelings or behavior have a right to do so *as part of every client's right to self-determination*.⁴

Dr. Brent Scharman, former president of the Utah Psychological Association, considers himself a "typical" psychologist—not an activist on either side of the homosexual issue. It is *the client*, he says, who should determine the direction of the treatment.⁵

Dr. Warren Throckmorton, immediate past president of the American Mental Health Counselors Association, studied a broad cross-section of research on sexual-orientation change. He says such treatment has been effective, can be conducted in an ethical manner, and *should be available* to those clients requesting such assistance.⁶

Dr. Martin Seligman, 1998 President of the American Psychological Association, cites research in his book *What You Can Change and What You Can't* that is optimistic about change for those who have had fewer homosexual experiences and/or some bisexual feelings.⁷

In a recent paper in the premiere academic journal *Psychotherapy*, and again in the *American Journal of Family Therapy*, **Dr. Mark Yarhouse of Regent University** made a powerful case for such therapy:

"Psychologists have an ethical responsibility to allow individuals to pursue treatment aimed at curbing experiences of same-sex attraction...not only because it affirms the clients' right to dignity, autonomy and agency...but also because it demonstrates regard for diversity."⁸

Endnotes

- (1) "Same Office, Different Aspirations," *Monitor on Psychology*, Dec. '01, p. 20.
- (2) Dr. Robert Perloff, correspondence to NARTH, February 15, 2002.
- (3) Quoted by Dr. Laura Schlessinger on her radio show, Jan. 21, 2000.
- (4) Reported in "1999 NARTH Conference, Speech by Brent Scharman," the NARTH Bulletin, December 1999.
- (5) Ibid.
- (6) Throckmorton, Warren, "Attempts to Modify Sexual Orientation: A Review of Outcome Literature and Ethical Issues," *Journal of Mental Health Counseling* October 1998, vol. 20, pp. 283-304.
- (7) Brent Scharman, Ibid.
- (8) Yarhouse, Mark, "When Clients Seek Treatment for Same-Sex Attraction: Ethical Issues in the 'Right to Choose' Debate." *Psychotherapy* vol. 35, Summer 1998, no. 2, pp. 234-259. ■