

**An Insider's Perspective from Two 2005 National Conventions:
PTA (Columbus, Ohio) & NEA (Los Angeles, California)**

By Sissy Jochmann

Member of the NEA Ex-Gay Educators Caucus at www.nea-exgay.org

After attending a workshop at the recent PTA convention in Columbus, Ohio, and the NEA convention in Los Angeles, California, it became very clear both organizations, that are suppose to have our public school children's best interests in mind, are purposefully withholding information from our children regarding sexual orientation.

At the National PTA meeting, PFOX representatives and Dr. Warren Throckmorton, a clinical psychologist from Grove City College, planned on renting exhibit booth space to distribute educational publications promoting inclusive and safe school environments for all children, gay and ex-gay students, and educators. They had planned to deliver, into the hands of the delegates, information that presented a balanced approach to understanding sexual orientation and safe schools. Their well-intentioned efforts were halted when PTA rejected PFOX's application but accepted the application of PFLAG, Parents and Friends of Lesbian's and Gays, a gay advocacy group.

As a silent protest, PFOX rented a room to hold a "Teach In" workshop describing and distributing the materials that they would have made available to the delegates if permitted. When I personally spoke with a PTA representative and asked why they rejected PFOX's application, the spokesperson replied, "Their material did not meet the criteria for distribution at the exhibit". When I asked what PTA found so objectionable about PFOX's materials, he stated that he did not want to get into a long debate but would file my complaint with the Executive Director, Warlene Gray. End of discussion.

The NEA convention was three days after my PTA experience. One of the most controversial New Business Items presented on the floor of the Representative Assembly dealt with these so called "extremists groups".

New Business Item 82 was presented by the Chair of the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, and Transgender Caucus. He asked that the "NEA would develop a comprehensive strategy to deal with the new and more sophisticated attacks on curricula, policies, and practices that support GLBT students, families, and staff members in public schools." He went on to say, "Extremist groups are using increasingly sophisticated and aggressive tactics to attack school districts with affirming GLBT policies, curriculum, and practices. These tactics include litigation, so called "Days of Truth" and attacks on the rights of gay students to form clubs. These groups are making schools less safe and are infringing on our members' academic freedom" He included Focus on the Family as being one of these "extreme groups."

I was able to speak in opposition to this NBI but was once again booed when ex-gay was mentioned. The following are my comments: "We wouldn't have "sophisticated and aggressive attack" from these "extremist groups" if you would simply admit that some people who have same-sex attractions have chosen not to adopt a gay identity and instead have successfully actualized their heterosexual potential and are now ex-gay. (BOOs here) As long as there are people who leave homosexuality and no longer experience same-sex attraction, you will have opposition. Youth with unwanted same sex attraction have a right to hear the stories of former homosexuals and be exposed to the research that validates them in order to help them make an informed and personal decision. So may I call a truce on this most controversial issue and let's

allow everyone the right to choose their own path in pursuit of happiness. In order for our kids to be presented with ALL the information regarding GLBT issues, please vote NO to NBI. “

Attempting to ignore the facts and research that shows homosexuality is a changeable trait was ever so apparent at both conventions. We have quite a battle in front of us. We're losing kids everyday to this type of ideology. Homosexual advocacy groups are actively trying to recruit our kids and have them adopt a gay identity as young as 9 years old.

As I was returning home from LA, I sat next to a young adolescent boy named Alex. He was very nervous flying because this was the first time he had flown without his mother. I talked him through the take-off and comforted him until he felt more relaxed. As we became acquainted I learned he was abandoned as a baby in Peru and later adopted by an American couple, who no longer are living together. I asked him to where he was traveling and he excitedly said he was going to an all expense paid training workshop in Atlanta, Georgia. Of course, I asked him, “What kind of training?”

He stated that he was the leader of the Gay Straight Alliance in his high school and GLSEN, Gay, Lesbian, Straight Education Network, was sponsoring this event. I proceeded to ask him about the age range that GLSEN was targeting for this training. He informed me that the ages ranged from 13 – 19. Alex was 15 years old. At that point I became a little agitated and expressed my opposition to GLSEN recruiting our kids and encouraging them to adopt a gay identity so young. He said he was really bisexual. I “gently” responded, “Honey, you're confused! You are going through a very confusing time in your life where so many changes are going on, physiologically, physically and psychologically.” We spent the next hour talking about the different perspectives on homosexuality.

I was able to supply him with booklets and information that GLSEN calls hate speech. I told him GLSEN will refer to people like me as “Religious Right Fundamentalist who are dangerous and intolerant and should be silenced. We ended this part of a two hour conversation when I told him he is now one of the very few gay identified people who have all the facts about sexual orientation in his possession. I urged him not to let GLSEN indoctrinate him but to read all the literature I gave him to make an informed decision.

We ended our flight having another passenger take a picture of the two of us. He promised to send me a copy. After we exchanged kind words and a hug, I waved good bye as he headed out to a five day indoctrinating workshop. My heart was sick as he left but knowing God had that meeting planned from the beginning gave me comfort. I had an opportunity to share my testimony and the gospel with Alex. He listened intently. I hope everyone puts Alex on their prayer list. He's on mine!