

## **HOMOSEXUALITY IS NOT A DISORDER**

We are psychologists, psychiatrists, psychotherapists, psychoanalysts and researchers in the field of mental health and vocational training who, on the occasion of Joseph Nicolosi's presence in Italy at the convention titled "Identità di genere e libertà" (Gender Identity and Freedom), are joining forces now to condemn any attempt to pathologize homosexuality, which is defined by the American Psychological Association as "a natural, normal and positive variant of human sexuality" and by the World Health Organization as "a natural variant of human behavior."

Joseph Nicolosi, founder of NARTH (the National Association for Research and Therapy of Homosexuality), affirms --despite all the scientific evidence-- that homosexuality is a mental disorder which can be healed, that it represents a failure in gender identification, and that it is contrary to the true identity of the individual.

These theories and the reparative therapies based on them, as well as all philosophical and religious theories that claim to define homosexuality as intrinsically disordered and pathological, are known to trigger anti-homosexual prejudice and also serve to discredit our professions and de-legitimize our commitment to the development of a scientific view of homosexuality.

A therapist with anti-homosexual prejudices can reinforce the negative feelings of guilt, low self-esteem and shame felt by many homosexuals, and can foment internalized homophobia and minority stress, bringing harm (often irreparable) to the subject's mental health.

A homosexual person who asks to be "healed" (and his or her relatives, who are often involved) must be listened to and guided toward an understanding of the reasons for his/her difficulties in self-acceptance; he or she should never be misled with promises of magic therapies that lack any evidence-based proof of efficacy.

We wish to remind the community that Italian psychologists must respect Articles 3, 4 and 5 of their Ethical Code, which affirm that psychologists must work to promote psychological well-being, must abstain from imposing their own value systems, and must continually keep abreast of advances in scientific knowledge.

We also wish to remind the community that the leading international scientific and professional associations, such as the American Psychological Association and the American Psychiatric Association, caution against attempts to modify people's sexual orientation and (as recently reaffirmed by the Report of the Task Force on Appropriate Therapeutic Responses to Sexual Orientation of the American Psychological Association, Washington, D.C., 2009) declare that "conversion" or "reparative" therapies of homosexuality are based on theories that lack scientific validity and are not supported by reliable empirical research.

It is our duty to strongly declare that any treatment aimed at inducing a patient to change his or her sexual orientation is contrary to the ethical and scientific spirit that motivates our profession, and any professional engaging in such treatment should be reported to the board responsible for certifying that therapist's professional suitability.