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FRIDAY, JULY 29, 2005

Kudos To "Paula Zahn Now" For Second "Conversion" Story

by Michael in New York on [7/29/2005 12:37:00 AM](#)

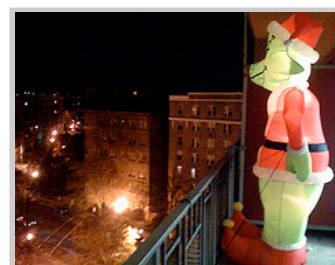
Okay, so Thursday night "Paula Zahn Now" did another story on the snake oil scam of "conversion therapy." (If you're interested, the show is rerun at 2 a.m.) Suddenly Zahn was touting Part Two of their special report -- though I rechecked part "one" and there's no hint they planned a followup. Either the story generated so much attention they decided to squeeze another segment out of the footage or -- best case scenario -- they were as unhappy with the first one as we were. Certainly they improved a good deal. It's late and I lambasted them the first time around, so forgive this lengthy analysis.

Reporters have to be instant experts on every issue they deal with and the show clearly came up short on night one. Either internally or based on feedback from viewers and the web (which Zahn even referenced), they listened and responded to some of the factual complaints. Yes, it could have been even better -- but their response was certainly far more admirable than simply ignoring the criticism or defending the original piece. Though of course I assume mainly they did another piece because the first one generated talk.

Among the improvements: they made clear that Love in Action Refuge (yes, as numerous threaders pointed out, this makes them LIARs) is NOT a registered mental health clinic -- only one counselor is licensed. (And I assume that counselor could be reprimanded or lose their license for engaging in therapy that the APA has condemned. Perhaps they're only licensed by the state?) Since it ISN'T a mental health clinic, I still take issue with CNN describing chat sessions as "group therapy." Shouldn't group therapy be reserved only for sessions led by a professional? Is the only licensed therapist always present at every session? If not, it doesn't deserve this patina of professional respectability -- especially since what they practice has been condemned by every reputable medical and mental health organization in the country as dangerous, wrong, and potentially extremely damaging.

They still incorrectly describe the leader Rev. Smid [what a name!] as "rejecting homosexuality," a claim these fringe groups know they can no longer pretend to make -- even Rev. Smid doesn't claim he's now straight, just that he won't act on those desires. Again, it's important to note that just a few years ago they lied and said people could choose to be straight and that being gay was merely a choice. Society is so far beyond such idiocy, today even the far right doesn't trot that lie out anymore. Even the IDs of the people who went through the program are poorly thought out: two young men interviewed are labeled "graduate," which again gives this sketchy organization that is seriously condemned by the entire medical

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