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Interview with a Former Gay Activist: Two-Year Follow-up

In 2007, I first interviewed Michael Glatze for an article posted on the NARTH (www.narth.com) website. A leader in the gay-activist movement, Michael had just gone public about leaving his lifestyle and rejecting the gay movement. Homosexuality is not life-giving, he said, and "I choose life."

Michael credited his gradual change to many things; a transformation in his understanding of the meaning of his same-sex attractions, a strong spiritual life, the centering power of meditation, and the conviction that fulfillment would come through living a life congruent with his biological design.

In this latest October 2009 interview, Michael offers an update on his life.



JN: Michael, it's been more than two years now since we did our first interview. Tell us what has happened in your life since that time.

MG: Well, right after that whole time, when I had been doing a lot of interviews and sharing a lot of what I was going through, I started to get exhausted by all of the media attention.

JN: Did you get any negative attention?

MG: (Laughs) Well, of course I did. It's funny, because later, I really sympathized with Sarah Palin when she got attacked during the election because the same thing had happened to me. Constantly getting beaten up and having all these people go on public forums saying things about you, even though they don't really know you. I consider myself relatively resilient, but it was exhausting.

I decided that I had been moving too fast. I had been answering a lot of questions, with people wanting me to give speeches or represent their organization or talk more authoritatively. I was just overwhelmed, so I took a break and told these folks that I thought that I just needed to step back. There was that whole frustrating "media spin" part of everything, and then, there was the stress of standing up for a viewpoint that was in opposition to my earlier, also very public, political viewpoint. There were the real emotional and psychological issues that I was going through at the same time, too. Since that time, I've tried to relax and just be healthy.

JN: What's your life like now?

MG: My life is fantastic right now. I'm living up in the Rocky Mountains and working for a retreat center. It's very beautiful. It almost seemed too good to be true when the opportunity came a year ago for me to come here. Over these last couple of years, I've been fortunate to have my life move forward in areas that have made it increasingly spacious and that have been increasingly conducive to health.

JN: Are you going to write?

MG: Maybe. I still feel kind of cautious, but at the same time, I'm a lot more solid in the way that I now understand everything, including all of the things I was talking about two years ago.

JN: So what is your understanding now of your sexuality?

MG: Everything that I said before reflects exactly how I think and feel today. I still believe that we have a fundamental human sexuality which is heterosexual. Because it reflects the way we are designed, same-sex interactions on a physical or sexual level are extremely problematic.

JN: How were they problematic for you?

MG: Going back to what I said two years ago, for those who may or may not remember, I talked a lot about the problem of lust. I think I can add to that and say it's like a very slippery slope. It's the beginning of what is essentially a chain reaction--as soon as you give in to a same-sex temptation that arises, it evokes a desire for fulfillment that can never actually be fulfilled.

JN: ... in same-sex activity?

MG: That's right.

JN: I want to reiterate the point you said a few minutes ago-that natural sexuality is heterosexual... that to deny this, is to deny reality.

MG: That's right. Heterosexuality is what's natural, human, normal, and real. Same-sex activity isn't good for either person involved. On the part of gay activists and even the culture at large, there's been a "waving of the magic wand" - that is, a using of all kinds of wonderful words which blind people from seeing what is actually going on in gay sex.

JN: What kind of "wonderful words" are being used in the culture?

MG: You know, in recent months, I've tried to pay attention to things that are healthy and not focus on that aspect. As somebody told me, "where the attention goes, the energy flows." When I focus on all this negativity, I just get really frustrated.

JN: That happens to all of us who are in this culture war. It's really toxic.

MG: It is-it's very toxic. Sometimes I'll engage and debate on Facebook, but very soon I have to stop and take a step back. I can see that I'm back on their playing field and I'm entering into their false reality.

JN: Are you still doing your meditation?

MG: Not much now, but that was a helpful tool for a time.

JN: Even though you aren't practicing it much any more, perhaps you internalized the attitude of clearing your mind and consciously moving away from negative thoughts.

MG: Yes. Maybe you're right.

JN: And once you train yourself to get into that awareness, you can go back there again and more easily clear your brain of "noise."

MG: Maybe it's true, maybe there's some sense of having made the meditative state a part of my normal state, but to me it's more a matter of my having learned, through meditation, to look at reality more clearly.

JN: People that might be reading this article are saying, "What can I learn for myself by looking at what Michael has been able to accomplish?"

MG: Back in 2007 when I rejected the gay lifestyle I had been living, to me, it was such a "big deal." Ironically, the reality of it is, it should not be a big deal.

JN: You mean the coming out of homosexuality?

MG: Yes. One of my friends said, "You think too much, just stop thinking."

JN: So, where would you say you are now regarding homosexual attractions or temptations? Do they still come up, or is it no longer an issue?

MG: It's not an issue. I've gotten to the point now where I really don't even think that way. I still live in the same body and the same world, but I understand things differently. I don't call things what I might have called them three or four years ago. For me, their meaning has been transformed.

JN: Can you give me an example.

MG: Let's say I was at a party, and there was this guy sitting there and I noticed that he works out, and I've been working out too. Let's say it was kind of a rowdy party and so I said, "Let's arm wrestle," and we did, and I won, and some other people got involved, and there wasn't anything sexual about it at all. Three or four years ago if we arm-wrestled, I would have thought, "Does that mean something sexual...?" or else "Does this mean I'm jealous of this guy?" Back then, jealousy couldn't be satisfied by anything other than same-sex activity. I was convinced I could never break down the barriers--the feeling of uncomfortableness I had about a guy like that-- without sex. I would think, "This guy's impossible to know." His masculinity would have scared or challenged me; actually "scared" is more appropriate. This feeling would stir up these kinds of carnal needs.

JN: At an emotional level, this stirred up fear.

MG: And then I probably would have gotten my mind into the whole desire part--the whole kind of push and pull around the issue of domination.

JN: So would you say that the difference now is that such a guy in such a situation would not prompt the fear?

MG: Yes. It doesn't prompt the fear. I'm not threatened by guys in a way I used to be.

JN: So does that seem to "unhook" the homosexuality?

MG: Absolutely -- because then there's no need, nothing that you need to do. Otherwise, why would I want to do that-have sex with a guy? It doesn't make sense.

JN: So it's really the fear of men that prompts the homosexual activity.

MG: Yes. As I'm thinking about it and trying to be completely honest here, it's really not fear, but terror. "I can't do this. Mommy come help me-- I can't do what this guy is doing and I can't be what he is."

JN: So there's a panic element?

MG: It's as if I were saying, "Please help me -- I'm confused and therefore I need you to overtake me. Overtake me, because I can't take care of myself."

JN: Absolutely. "I can't handle this, there's too much going on here that I'm threatened by." So if fear is the foundation, how did you get over it? By the way, I have seen this in so many other men.

MG: I got over the fear by working at it, and through prayer. I think a spiritual foundation was absolutely critical. I can't speak for people of other traditions-I am a Christian--but for me, it meant recognizing that I don't need anybody to define me or to accept me.

A few years back, I finally recognized that there actually is a God, and through that knowledge, I was liberated from needing to have other people include and accept me. This gave me the sense of my own autonomy, and that led me on to everything else. It was a process-- it wasn't something that happened instantly. There were various tools and techniques that I ended up finding, and one of them was meditation. Meditation involves a lot of practices that specifically address fear-- looking squarely at your fear and going through the fear. You can't actually get anywhere without going through it, and various truisms from various traditions all speak to the same idea-being a warrior, being bold and having inner integrity...knowing what integrity is. You look squarely at the fear and learn to go through it.

JN: "Staying in your truth and staying in your integrity."

MG: Yes.

JN: So basically the challenge is not to become a slave to your fear. There is a technique that I've been using with my clients where if the person says to me, "I had a homosexual temptation," or "I saw this guy..." or "I looked at a gay porn picture." I'll say, "OK, hold onto the picture, go to the picture...stay with your body, stay connected to me, know that I'm with you... and tell me exactly how you're feeling as you hold onto that gay image." My experience has been that the client is going to be very shy about the challenge...they get self-conscious and embarrassed...but then, they get past it. They will actually feel a sexual arousal as they bring back the image in the moment, but when they can stay connected to me and know I feel completely empathic and I'm with them on this, then the sexual feeling diminishes and another, deeper feeling emerges that lies beneath it.

MG: Absolutely, I think that's brilliant. In the meditative technique, it's the same idea where you literally sit there in the experience of something really painful. It's going to take a long time, but if you hold that feeling, then it's eventually going to reveal itself for something different. It's like where they say that anger comes from sadness, because if someone is angry, they're not just angry-- there's something else underneath it. Anything that's going to take us out of our clear, calm and measured state of mind, something that's passionate--there's inevitably something behind it that's driving it.

JN: Now let's get back to that thing that you said before - that what's behind that homosexual attraction is fear: "I can't do what this guy doing, I can't be like him." Doesn't that take one back to the idea of something that's missing inside?

MG: Yes. Homosexual desires and heterosexual desires- they're completely different. Homosexual desires are based primarily in lust.

With heterosexuality, you experience your own existence, including your physical existence, with a sense of integrity and liberty. There's a freedom to be oneself--to be normal, not to have to fight against a deficit that you're constantly trying to patch up--not to experience these negative emotions that you're constantly having to make excuses for. You're inhabiting and owning your own body -- your whole wonderful, God-given and God-created human body, and there's nothing wrong with it that you have to compensate for through another man. But when you're engaging in same-sex activities, you're going to have to start to create all kinds of justifications...little stories that you start telling yourself to make it feel right and normal. You share these stories with others to strengthen their foundation, to get group justification for them. That's the whole process right there that creates gay culture.

JN: So part of you is saying right now, "I don't want to go back into thinking about this subject--it's such a negative place for me," but part of you also seems to be saying, "I'd love to share with others about this, especially young people, because I've learned a lot."

MG: I would...I would love to be able to help. I think I'm almost at a point now where I have gotten rid of my defensiveness around this issue. I used to get really hurt and defensive when people would challenge me. I would get almost childish about it, I would think, "Why don't they understand, dammit??" you know, and that wouldn't get me anywhere. Just today somebody said, "Hey, I happened to Google your name." I used to be a little bit afraid of what someone would say; this girl, in fact, was a lesbian and even though she didn't agree with me on this issue, she said, "Well, I've known you now for such-and-such an amount of time, and you still seem like the same person I've known," so there was this sort of human connection we made that allowed us both to transcend our differences on the issues.

JN: Do you think you could be of help to young people who are struggling?

MG: ...Do you think I could?

JN: I think so.

MG: I would love to help and I think it would be a challenge, because telling the truth is not that hard.

JN: No, it's really not.

MG: Being confident enough to tell the truth is one thing, but you also have to be patient enough not to get caught up into all of these other deceptive paths; you can't be insistent on having to prove a point, or wonder if people are going to "get it" or not.

JN: And you can't be too invested in their "getting it," either.

MG: And that part can be kind of hard. And you also know it could hurt you in your livelihood in the current political climate. You could pay a price.

JN: Michael, do you think you will ever get married?

MG: Yes, I would like to get married. I feel like this could in fact happen within the next couple of years. But because of everything I've learned firsthand about the power of sexuality, and all that I've lived through when I was living a gay lifestyle, I've become a lot more conservative. I am a Christian, and I would definitely like to get married, settle down and start a family.

JN: Going back to what brought about your change...can you pinpoint how you started this shift?

MG: It was at some point about four or five years ago, that I made a conscious shift. I wrote these words on the computer screen: "Homosexuality is death. I choose life." It was like I was literally coming out into the world for the first time....being born, cracking out of an eggshell. There were still temptations and all kinds of things that happened afterward, but the shift had already been made, to the point where there was now new ground laid.

JN: You had seen the truth....the "new ground laid" was your grounding in the truth.

MG: Yes. It was.

JN: So even though you were still tempted and perhaps sometimes engaged in same-sex activity, you did it from the perspective of that new awareness, and that changed everything.

MG: It did, and you can't just "not look at the truth" once you've seen it face-to-face.

JN: Right. You can try to forget it, but not for long.

MG: You can relapse, just like anybody coming out of any other addiction. There are always ebbs and flows and such, but I can say from my experience that once you've seen the truth, you'll inevitably be moving forward into a more and more confident, more and more healthy person, healing yourself gradually from a life lived under the influence of very bad and very destructive ideas.

JN: That kind of summarizes it, doesn't it?

MG: Yes.

JN: Because once you see the truth, you have a framework from which you can rid yourself of a lot of bad ideas.

MG: It's like someone has given you a vision of where you could be. So even though you're still stuck in your tumultuous existence and the past still comes up, painful emotions come up, old fears and inadequacies still come up, someone has shown you where you could be, and so you've got that now... and you just go toward it, and slowly, you move farther and farther forward in the healing process.

JN: It's amazing isn't it?

MG: It is amazing.

JN: What's also amazing is that everyone doesn't see the truth, but our culture is so blinded that when somebody like you sees the truth, we say, "Wow!"

MG: Yes. And even though you try to speak the truth in a calm and measured voice, you will still attract a lot of anger.

That's where my faith really helps, because there is a feeling of knowing that I'm looked after by my Creator, no matter what else happens to me. I know that in the end, "Blessed are the persecuted." That gives me the sense that no matter what happens to me, I can still feel joy in being myself...in just being alive to experience the day.