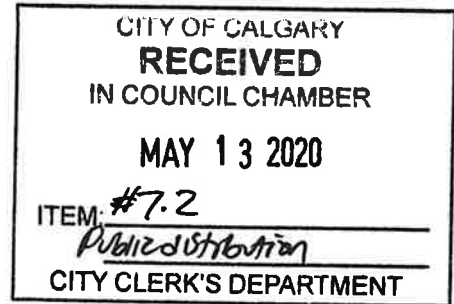


Palaschuk, Jordan

From: Salima Stanley-Bhanji <salima@humainologie.com>
Sent: Wednesday, May 13, 2020 2:35 PM
To: Public Submissions
Subject: [EXT] Conversion Therapy Bylaw Matter

Follow Up Flag: Follow up
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Hello,

As requested by Councilor Woolley, please see below the text of my submission made today to City Council on the conversion therapy Bylaw matter:

Hello - I will get to my formal introduction in a moment, but first - I want to share something very private with you:

I am straight. I don't know why. Something is obviously broken in me and I'm trying to change it. Maybe it was because I was exposed to an abusive situation when I was just three years old and as a result of the trauma and abuse, I became straight. A counsellor told me I am not straight but have become "infatuated with strong male influences" and sexualized them because I had a weak relationship with my father.

Obviously, my sexuality is something I have chosen and can control - just like the colour of my skin - brown. Go outside in the sunshine and my skin gets even darker. Pray, do my devotions, remain disciplined and do not look at men, do not think about men, do not desire men, and I will erase all the straight right out of me - I'll be cured - and that will make me a better person. A person who is normal, who does not sin, who is accepted, a person who belongs. And more than anything, **I want to belong.**

I am Salima Stanley-Bhanji (she/her). I am a lawyer, a storyteller who has produced and directed many short documentary films, including a number of films about transgender Calgarians, and I am also the CEO of Humainologie.

Humainologie is a Calgary based charity and not for profit whose mission is spread empathy, increase inclusion, reduce discrimination.

I am speaking to you today to unequivocally support the proposed bylaw.

I submit that the City has addressed any jurisdictional issues via the preamble of the bylaw. Further, I submit that the proposed bylaw does not infringe on parental rights, freedom of expression, or freedom of religion. My submissions which have been jointly prepared are as follows in brief:

Parental Rights.

All children have an inalienable right to identity and the right not to be deprived of life, liberty, and security of person. Conversion interventions are a form of psychological abuse not dissimilar to any other forms of child abuse, as well as neglect, and as such, just as parents do not have legal rights to abuse or neglect their children, nor should they have rights to subject their children to conversion based interventions.

Freedom of expression.

No individual has the right to demand services known to be fraudulent or harmful. Provision of conversion interventions is considered a fraudulent business practice and a type of consumer fraud, because it promotes a service that has been widely discredited and rejected by every mainstream medical and mental health authority.

These interventions - primarily offered by individuals who are not qualified to provide professional therapy - aim to erase, change, deny, or suppress who a person is or whom they love.

Underlying conversion interventions is the belief that LGBTQ2S+ people are broken, pathological, or sinful.

Apart from lacking any demonstrable effectiveness, conversion interventions are discriminatory, lack any objective validity, and are incredibly harmful to an already vulnerable community.

Freedom of religion.

The proposed bylaw does not prevent or restrict religious thoughts or beliefs about LGBTQ2S+ people, nor does it criminalize prayer or the right to worship. Further, prayer and other forms of spiritual support can actually be encouraged when they focus on supporting and affirming a person's sexual orientation, gender identity, or expression.

What the proposed bylaw does do is it places a reasonable and justifiable limit on the right to use religious beliefs in an attempt to change, harm, or psychologically torture LGBTQ2S+ people.

I urge religious institutions to become able to adapt teachings and find scriptural interpretations that are inclusive and uplift humanitarian values rather than thwart them.

When a group of trans youth were asked what they wanted their doctors to know, they said 'if I am depressed or anxious, it's likely not because I have issues with my gender identity, but because everyone else does.'

When we promote hatred, it is labelled a crime.

When we promote self-hatred it is labelled a therapy.

Promoting self-hatred is not therapy. It is simply promotion of hatred.

Only a city that is inclusive and embraces diversity can truly be great.

I applaud our city council for bringing this legislation forward and for taking important steps in making our city great. Thank you for this and thank you for your time today.

Salima Stanley-Bhanji, CEO (she/her)
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