

March 9, 2009

Dear Alan Chambers and the Exodus International Board of Directors,

I am writing in regards to the recent *Awareness and Training Seminar on How to Handle Homosexuality Issues* that took place in Kampala, Uganda this past weekend, March 5-8th. In particular, I am concerned that an Exodus Board Member participated as a speaker in a conference that supports the criminalization of homosexuality. This is particularly chilling in a country where constitutional law allows life imprisonment for those convicted of homosexuality.

Per the conference invitation, the event was hosted to address “the well-funded and well organized homosexual machinery [that] is taking one country after another by decriminalizing homosexual practices . . . Uganda is now under extreme pressure from the same group to decriminalize homosexuality.” Exodus Board Member, Don Schmierer, was one of three keynote speakers alongside Scott Lively and Lee Brundidge.

According to *Uganda People News*, Lively of Defend the Family International told the audience that “it is good for the government of Uganda to criminalize homosexuality, but the government should subject the criminals of homosexuality to therapy rather than imprisoning them.” In other words: forced therapy.

The third speaker was Lee Brundidge of International Healing Ministries, a ministry founded by Richard Cohen. Exodus International has publicly disavowed International Healing Ministries stating:

Exodus International does not endorse the work of Richard Cohen or the methods utilized in his practice. Some of the techniques Mr. Cohen employs could be detrimental to an individual's understanding of healthy relational boundaries and disruptive to the psychological and emotional development of men and women seeking clinical counsel and aid.

By speaking at this conference Schmierer lent credibility to the philosophy of International Healing Ministries as well as Lively’s suggestion of forced therapy for gays. Additionally, Schmierer’s involvement indicates he supports the criminalization of homosexuality since the conference was established specifically to address “pressure” to decriminalize homosexuality.

As an Exodus Board Member, Schmierer’s participation affects the image, integrity and mission of Exodus International. Exodus is an organization that has been close to my heart for many years. I respect so many of my colleagues who are a part of this ministry, which makes this turn of events all the more upsetting. In the mid-1990s I received help in my own life from an Exodus affiliate ministry; I have also attended three Exodus International conferences, including serving as a volunteer last year; and, I am currently the Women’s Ministry Assistant at an Exodus affiliate ministry. Clearly, I am supportive of Exodus. Yet, I do not see how I can continue to stand behind an organization that lends credibility to harmful ideology.

This conference took place in a country where Christians in Kampala, led by Pastor Martin Ssempe, posted names, photos and addresses of gay people on a website, exposing these

individuals to potential violence. Certainly, the churches of Uganda need education on how to best respond to the issue of homosexuality. Unfortunately, this conference did not provide the training needed to equip the church.

There have been several calls for Exodus to make a public statement regarding this conference, including by Christian psychologist Dr. Warren Throckmorton of Grove City College. These pleas have thus far not elicited any response. I am asking Mr. Chambers and the Exodus Board of Directors to make a clear public statement **against**:

1. The criminalization of gay people (in the U.S. *AND* outside the U.S.)
2. Forced therapy for those who struggle with homosexuality
3. The myth that *all* gays can be cured of their same-sex attractions

If a clear statement is not made regarding this conference, I fear Exodus has severely damaged its reputation, and with it, the ability to effectively do ministry here and abroad.

I write this letter as a sister in Christ who wants to see Exodus International succeed. Please seriously consider my concerns. Thank you for listening.

Sincerely,
Karen Keen