

The Sensible Jew

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Winning Friends and Influencing People 3: Anti-Semitism, The Hiatus, and Secret GLBT Business.

I've written before about the story of my paternal grandmother's Holocaust survival. In short, her father, a religious Jew, made friends with the local priest long before the catastrophic events that wiped out Polish Jewry.

As Jews from my family's village were packed off to the concentration camps, this priest managed to forge papers for my grandmother – then a young teen – and find her a family of righteous Gentiles who risked their lives and the lives of their own families to pretend my grandmother was one of them.

In Melbourne, we Jews are overwhelmingly descended from Holocaust survivors. Outside of Israel, we have the highest number, per-capita, of Holocaust survivors anywhere in the world. And every so often, astonishing tales of survival are punctuated by the memories of righteous Gentiles who, in the face of genocidal Nazism and paroxysms of pan-European hatred, risked everything for us.

Even in those blighted countries that we fled, in which we describe the generalised hatred of us as being imbibed in "mothers' milk," there were still people whose extraordinary courage, compassion, and sheer goodness still remind us that we are not alone – that as much as we might try to close ourselves off and turn our backs on the difficulties of living amongst Others – that for both good AND bad, we are inexorably linked with our non-Jewish neighbours and friends.

Of course, Australia at the close of 2009 is not war-time Europe.

As I wrote in the previous post, we use the term anti-Semitism often **without distinguishing between the horrors of genocide, and the trivialities of foolish art.**

The long time reader and commenter, Sadducee, points out that we must be able to differentiate between the soft anti-Semitism that annoys or offends, and the hard-anti-Semitism that seeks to strip us of our humanity, through denying our ethnogenesis, our right to a homeland, or through characterisations of us that paint us all as inhuman persecutors.

The latter is what leads to the darker times.

Our inability to distinguish between the two is what robs us of the good-will of the majority that we need in order to function within the broader framework of Australian society.

Yelling and chest-thumping at every small soft-anti-Semitic infraction does not create the atmosphere its practitioners might hope for.

People do not see us as strong and forthright in such circumstances: **they see us as people who encroach on others' freedom of expression.**

How do I know this?

I have also written earlier about the problematic situation in which most of our leaders and many others in the community **could not name five non-Jewish people with whom they enjoy a close, personal friendship.**

This is different from a professional or communal association in which people are less likely to speak their minds. Close personal friendships with non-Jews allow for an exchange of ideas and a bi-directional flow of information about perceptions of Jews in Australia.

That so many of us do not have access to this, renders any opinions we might have on how we are perceived as a community, utterly irrelevant because they are baseless guesses.

Precisely this situations robs us of our agency: we have no way of knowing whether we, as a community are in a good or bad position. **By closing ourselves off, we render ourselves powerless.**

There are, however, those Jews who do enjoy friendships with non-Jews.

Almost every one of them that I have spoken to shares my feeling that by being out and about in broader society, we often find ourselves explaining things about Judaism to interested non-Jews, **combatting false beliefs about Jews or Israel** (in a non-adversarial way that actually has a serious, positive impact on the way Israel or Jews are viewed), and generally forming connections with other human beings that **bind**


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- Winning Friends and Influencing People 3: Anti-Semitism, The Hiatus, and Secret GLBT Business.
- How to Lose Friends and Alienate People 2: Tackling anti-Semitism in the Short Term
- How to Stop Losing Friends and Alienating People – Part One
- Our Leaders/Institutions Decide Jews are not Disliked Enough – Action Taken
- Analysing What Went Right: Liam Getreu in The Australian

Recent Comments

- Michael Barnett on Winning Friends and Influencing People 3: Anti-Semitism, The Hiatus, and Secret GLBT Business.
- TheSadducee on How to Stop Losing Friends and Alienating People – Part One
- Arty Morty on How to Stop Losing Friends and Alienating People – Part One

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our fates together.

The efficacy of one patient, informed Jew of good faith in a room full of non-Jews, in debunking myths about our people is enormous.

It has an **exponential effect** as the original non-Jewish audience become ambassadors on our behalf. No decent non-Jew who has a close Jewish friend will tolerate anti-Semitic remarks in a social or even work environment.

The efficacy, on the other hand, of one of our untrained, unelected leaders, completely divorced from the sensibilities of wider Australia, raining fury on the opinion pages is absolutely nil.

The only possible justification for such actions is to **scare people who don't like us into public silence, temporarily**. And it is always temporary.

If it is self evident that Jews out in the world do a lot of good for the community as a whole, it is less clear **how Jewish continuity might be maintained under such circumstances**.

At the moment, a common refrain heard from recent graduates of Jewish schools is that if they never had any communal involvement again, they'd be happy.

They're put off the religion, they despise the way things are done generally, and they're off travelling to find some meaning or joy in life.

The irony is: Judaism itself offers so much joy and meaning – escape from a Jewish community shouldn't be a necessary path to finding these things.

Since this blog began, the countless numbers of people I've spoken to say the same thing: joy and meaning have almost no expression in the community.

There are of course exceptions, such as the shtiebls (small congregations) and other small organisations. There are also the youth movements, which provide one of the very few institutionalised means to finding joy and meaning in Judaism. But youth movement people graduate at 21 and find themselves bereft of meaningful communal structures.

On quite a number of occasions, young and youngish religious Zionists have told me that the **"best and brightest" of their lot make Aliya** (emigrate to Israel), and those that are left in Australia are not necessarily motivated to enter the communal fray.

Indeed, how many of our young people are prepared to enter this "fray" – the existing institutions?

The institutional leaders themselves admit to a degree of panic at the absence of young blood.

The simple answer is that there is little these larger organisations (except the youth movements) can do to attract young people, simply because official culture is completely at odds with the realities of young Jewish life in Australia.

The levels of outright cynicism or complete apathy among Gen X/Y about anything institutional have surprised me over the past few months.

They are extreme.

And when I talk about institutions, **I not only refer to the roof bodies – which most young Jews could not care less about**, if they're even aware of their existence.

I refer particularly to the schools.

The level of animosity the Jewish schools generate among Gen X/Y is an indication that something isn't working.

Small groups, however, are springing up to fill the gaps in young people's Jewish lives. I have written about some of them.

Should such groups reach a critical mass, that they offer a viable alternative network of Jewish living, we may find ourselves with new generations that do not resent the religion, but love it, and do not approach their identity with apathetic resignation, but embrace it.

There is a fire in the belly of most young Jews. Many just don't have the tools or structures yet, to stoke it.

I am not advocating that we as a community become religious – apart from the undesirability of homogeneity, it is just untenable, considering at least 75% of us are not practising.

But for most of us, gaining more knowledge, peering into the depths of **one of the most complex belief systems on earth**, and having our history illuminated, is enough to cement our identity, if it's done well.

If we bring our kids up to love where they come from, to desire more knowledge about our history and beliefs, and do not alienate them completely, they will be able to go into the wider world, forging friendships and networks with non-Jewish Australia, while their Jewish core not only remains strong, but is

ABC adversarial anti-Semite anti-Semitism

Australia Australian change

Chrapot communal Community Danny Lamm

dissent freedom of speech Gentile ginette searle

israel jccv Jew jewish jews John

Searle koutsoukis leadership left left wing

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Age The Australian y ZCV Zionism zionists

regularly strengthened.

In essence, to be more Australian, first we need to learn how to be more Jewish.

We need more than just the companionship of people who share our genetic heritage. And we need the companionship of those who are different from us.

When we do eventually find this balance, so much soft anti-Semitism will disappear, and so will much of the threat of assimilation.

A beautiful irony indeed.

Off-blog projects demand I take a hiatus from the blog for a while. Comments will still be welcome.

Meanwhile keep your eyes open for the **latest emerging scandal** that may or may not have some serious implications for the community – particularly the Orthodox.

It all started with the JCCV reaching out to the GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender) community in the spirit of inclusion.

Of course, the **recent expose on ABC Radio National** about the JCCV's previous bad behaviour, and a nasty Jewish homophobic web site may have inspired this spirit of good will – and sudden reversal of a decade-long policy of pretending that Jewish GLBT don't exist.

That sort of good faith was ably matched by GLBT representative, Michael Barnett, who systematically alienated the JCCV, the mainstream media, government agencies, and finally, other Jewish GLBT.

Ultimately, the only people wanting to receive Barnett's missives were non-Jewish **GLBT activists**, some of whom may or may not traverse the permeable border with the **extreme left**.

Particularly delightful in all of this was Michael's **identification of Orthodox Jews and Orthodoxy as massively homophobic** across the board.

As far as I'm concerned, this is **libel**. And unfortunately, many of the groups still listening to Barnett are predisposed to animus towards all organised religion and are happy to propagate the libel.

Meanwhile, President of the JCCV, **John Searle, decided he couldn't work with Barnett.**

Fair enough.

But Searle's idea was to hold a super "secret" meeting with **more amenable GLBT Jews.**

The only problem is that "secret" in the Jewish community is like "free media" in Russia – a nice idea, but something that's never actually been experienced.

So of course I heard about it. You may have as well.

The secretiveness was *ostensibly* designed to sideline Barnett, but I wonder how much of it was an attempt to act without folk from the **Council of Orthodox Synagogues Victoria** (COSV) – particularly their most vocal member, Mr. Romy Leibler – who were so vehemently opposed to any GLBT affiliation with the JCCV in 1999.

Of course, John Searle hasn't, to my knowledge, mentioned this as a reason for the secrecy, **but it's hard to know...**

The people who attended the super "secret" GLBT/JCCV meeting on Wednesday night were **"encouraged" to swear complete confidentiality** regarding anything that took place at the meeting.

A couple of people involved in the previous meeting wanted me to go along to the "secret" one on Wednesday night.

I had some concerns about the way Jews and particularly **Orthodox Jews might be portrayed unfairly as homophobes** in the wider GLBT media, and how that might spill over as a **tool for the extreme left to use against us.**

I was particularly concerned that the JCCV might see fit to speak once again on all our behalves, rather than step back and allow GLBT Jews to handle things.

John Searle was adamant, however, that I not attend.

Fair enough. I'm not GLBT (though I am a supporter).

But I thought I'd give him a call and let him know of some of my concerns.

I was pretty sure he had no idea how Jews and Orthodoxy were beginning to be portrayed in the GLBT media.

On the phone, Searle alternated between outright vehemence (YOU WILL NOT ATTEND THIS MEETING), and sweet offers, (I'm happy to meet with you).

He seemed far less interested in a possible public relations disaster.

When I asked how he might handle the community being painted as homophobic, he spoke about how that was for the JCCV to handle.

When I mentioned that this might be counter-productive, **Searle referred to an interview he had done on the GLBT radio station, JOY.fm.**

I was forced to alert him to the **negative response to his interview by the interviewer himself.**

There was a bit of backpedaling, and then Searle decided that indeed it **was** for Jewish GLBTs to handle these sorts of situations...

But...

Only those Jewish GLBTs that he himself had chosen.

Earlier in the conversation, Searle had explained to me that he had, **"hand picked" the people attending.**

Others have told me this was not true, so who knows.

Searle's vision seems to be to form a very low profile GLBT "sub-committee."

I assume this does not mean that these GLBT will be actual member of the JCCV, because there is no escaping a repeat of the COSV threats of pulling out of the JCCV.

Searle also made it clear that he wants this **"sub-committee" to be the official voice of Jewish GLBT, even if they don't enjoy the same rights and access as other Jewish groups.**

When I asked from where such people would derive their mandate to speak on behalf of all Jewish GLBT, Searle seemed confused.

He spoke about how they were leaders of their own organisations, and he could not address the simple question of what happens to the GLBT Jews who are not members of Searle's handpicked people's organisations.

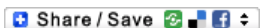
It's all very murky.

It's all so clandestine!

Michael Barnett's reaction to being so thoroughly sidelined from the process may or may not put us all in a difficult position.

My only hope, going into this hiatus, is that Jewish officialdom will not mismanage this extraordinarily delicate and potentially inflammatory situation.

Good luck!



No related posts.

Posted December 17, 2009 by [Alex Fein](#). Comments and [trackbacks](#) are open. Follow the [comments feed](#).

Filed under: [Life](#)

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34 Responses to "Winning Friends and Influencing People 3: Anti-Semitism, The Hiatus, and Secret GLBT Business."

December 20, 2009 at 11:07 pm

Doug Pollard says:

Alex – it would be helpful if you would please cross-link to sources you refer to, e.g., the 'extreme left' you claim are supporting Michael, the 'expose' on Radio National and the 'negative response' by the Joy 94.9 interviewer. The latter, by the way, would be me. Otherwise none of your assertions can be verified.

Well-supported. Support or Dislike: 7

[Reply](#)

December 21, 2009 at 12:48 am

Alex Fein says:

Doug, the information on your unflattering comments about John Searle was circulated in one of Michael Barnett's group emails.

Regarding verification, you may like to Google, "Queers for Palestine" as a starting point in your investigation of the permeable border I refer to.


And verifying the goings on of a clandestine meeting in which one party agreed to swear themselves to secrecy? Besides processing the various leaks, summarising the contents of the multitudinous group emails over the past fortnight, I also reported on a conversation with the President of the JCCV himself.

Perhaps you might like to re-read the post in question.


 December 21, 2009 at 12:03 am

Michael Barnett says:

What a joke.

Well-supported. Support or Dislike:  6

[Reply](#)


 December 21, 2009 at 2:03 am

Gregory Storer says:

"Ultimately, the only people wanting to receive Barnett's missives were non-Jewish GLBT activists, some of whom may or may not traverse the permeable border with the extreme left"

This is a rather baseless assumption on your part, perhaps you're not as connected as your imagination would have you believe.

John Searle had made it perfectly clear he didn't want to work with Michael anymore – he can't take the criticism. It was always going to happen, that he would approach those more 'aligned' to his way of thinking. It hasn't resolved any of the issues that Michael has been raising for many years, a fact that you have not addressed.

Well-supported. Support or Dislike:  6

[Reply](#)

 December 21, 2009 at 3:36 am

Alex Fein says:

Gregory, as I advised Doug – read the post again.


You will see that I made clear the very secret nature of whatever was discussed at the meeting. It is, as you might imagine, quite difficult to address whether Searle did or didn't address Michael's primary concerns.

As for how connected I am, I have no idea. There may be an even more secret group of pro-Barnett supporters who don't write to me, and who did not make their positions abundantly clear in the group emails.

All that I – and anyone else on the lists – saw was people from myriad different positions asking to be taken off the lists.


If I were a different kind of blogger, I would have posted the barrage of requests to be taken off the lists. You saw them, I saw them, everyone on the lists saw them.

As Michael's partner, I know you care for Michael and want to support him, but you might want to direct your efforts to something more constructive, rather than writing angry messages to and about me here, in emails, or on Facebook.


 December 21, 2009 at 5:37 am

Michael Barnett says:

None of these distractions are nearly as important as addressing the harm being perpetrated on the community's youth by the intolerant attitudes of orthodox Jewish dogma.

Well-supported. Support or Dislike:  6

[Reply](#)

 December 21, 2009 at 6:21 am

Gregory Storer says:

Alex,


That's rather unfair, my messages are not angry. I'm surprised you would perceive them as such and it's even worse that you make mention of other forums when people are not privy to those communications. Did you deliberately attempt to paint me in a bad light? I have not and do not write angry messages to you or about you, in emails or on Facebook.

The email you speak of from Michael went to about 60 people, maybe 6 asked not to receive further communication. In any case you did not address my point, your claim that only non-Jewish GLBT activist want to receive Michael's emails – or missives as you call them – is baseless, you then go on to suggest that only left-wing extremist groups are interested in what he has to say, and I'm not sure who those groups are or even if you have had any communication with them or Michael to verify that assertion. You then suggest in response to Doug that he should Google Queers for Palestine – why? How did you make a connection there?

Finally, yes, you are right, Michael is my partner and I care for him. He has my support, but because he's right. I can no more direct his actions than he directs mine. We are our own people.

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[Reply](#)

 December 21, 2009 at 6:36 am

Alex Fein says:

Gregory, you are taking advantage of my good nature here.

You correctly assume I will not publish those private emails, primarily because I would be violating the privacy of numerous individuals other than you and Barnett who participated. You are using this opportunity to be quite disingenuous, if not outright dishonest.

Think really hard for a moment: what matters in all of this? Who has behaved with bad faith?

That you waste time arguing with me, the person who brought the JCCV's poor treatment of GLBT to the fore earlier in the year, demonstrates your priorities are perhaps not as well ordered as they might be.

You and Michael have both had your say on this forum.

The GLBT Jews deserve better than the emphasis on personalities that has so far characterised this debate.

Please direct any further comments elsewhere.



December 21, 2009 at 6:57 am

Alan Hughes says:

Michael and Gregory


Could you please try to keep your thoughts to yourselves, since every time you open your mouths it would seem my estimation of you drops to levels I previously thought unimaginable.

While initially you were merely two angry people with a vaguely logical argument, you have descended into a one message rant with no real connection to reality. The impression I am getting is that you would not be happy until all the straight children are educated in the proper manner to realise their inner homosexual, and became gay themselves.

I myself am a religious Jew and as such pure evil down to the black venomous ooze running through my veins, and the sympathy I may have had for your cause has evaporated. The chief reason behind this is you.

If you would learn to be more rational and to avoid demonizing many potential supporters simply because they believed in religion you may have had a chance to succeed.

As it turns out you have done your cause irreparable damage and one can only hope that this meeting is a praiseworthy beginnings to pushing you into obscurity.

Support this comment  1[Reply](#)

December 21, 2009 at 4:38 pm

TheSadducee says:

Alan

To be fair to Michael I don't believe I have ever seen him suggest that "all the straight children should be educated in the proper manner to realise their inner homosexual, and became gay themselves" or anything even remotely similar.

It is a silly comment and isn't really useful here.

Everyone,

Michael is certainly strident in his views and outspoken and this can be quite troubling for a lot of people. Sometime he goes too far and this can damage his cause in my opinion.

Nonetheless he does have a valid concern – Orthodox Judaism as interpreted by the rabbis today, does, at a fundamental level, have an intolerance towards homosexuality (and other issues as well).

I'm not certain he argues that all or even the majority of Orthodox Jews are homophobic (can you back that assertion up SJ?) or implies that they are evil (more useless hyperbole).

He does have a valid right to ask the question as to why people would voluntarily adhere to a belief system that does have this problem? But this is because I suspect that he doesn't appreciate the belief in Hashem and His restrictions that religious Jews take for granted. Michael probably doesn't believe in Hashem, and if he does, probably does in a "lite" style.

The real problem here is that Orthodox Judaism isn't going to change anytime soon, if at all (much like most of the major religions today they are by nature conservative) and calling for reform of it, though laudable, isn't going to succeed. Its a social reality that is unfortunate and its not unique to Judaism – in fact, Judaism is a minor offender in terms of scale.

Nonetheless, I think Michael is correct to rail against what he perceives as an injustice and he is right to be angry. The conflict is ideological – he perceives the world differently from religious people and expects their reform while they expect his reform – not a recipe for great success.

He also does have a valid concern about the JCCV and its dealings – it shouldn't be excluding a roof body of GBLT/queer Jews because of one section's objections – especially as it is a representative group. Where do the Orthodox get off threatening to walk out of the group because they don't like the views of another group? I say let them walk and highlight their bigotry for everyone to see. They don't have to agree with Aleph's views but they should respect them as fellow Jews. But similarly, Aleph needs to note that they can't expect the Orthodox to instantly change and accommodate their positions either – they need to demonstrate a respect for their differences while holding contempt for their particular positions if they so wish.

As to the "secret meetings" – this is lamentable and strikes me as not the best way forward for resolving these sorts of issues. Transparency is important because it leads to accountability and honesty – I would politely call on those involved to dissociate themselves from the meetings – if they are unhappy with Michael's leadership and/or Aleph they can take appropriate action to replace him and/or set up their own roof body and replace it. But do it openly and honestly – not in this manner.

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December 21, 2009 at 7:56 am

Michael Barnett says:

Alex fein writes: I have allowed this comment through in the interests of fairness: it is a reply to Alan Hughes.

Alan,

The "Sensible Jew" has completely misrepresented my views and thus your comments on her take of reality are misguided.

If you really knew my "cause" you would take a genuine interest in it rather than feigning offence.

Michael.

Well-supported. Support or Dislike:  6

[Reply](#)



December 21, 2009 at 9:01 am

Daniel says:

You write that 'It all started with the JCCV reaching out to the GLBT (Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender) community in the spirit of inclusion.' As I noted in a letter which was read at the meeting between the JCCV and Michael Barnett, Mr Zygier's remarks were hardly made 'in the spirit of inclusion'. His deeply offensive wording and his indication that GLBT Jews might be entitled to some lesser form of inclusion than any other Jewish group suggests that, though the invitation might have been politically expedient for the JCCV, the organization is not in any way invested in the enfranchisement of gay and lesbian Jews. If, for example, the Muslim Council had sent a letter in similar terms to the JCCV, no doubt it (and you?) would be up in arms, railing against anti-Semitism. That such terms when addressed to queers are not only acceptable but adulatory says something serious and disturbing about the lower social position which queer Jews occupy in the minds even of ostensibly progressive types like yourself.

In regards to John Searle's 'secret meeting', one wonders whether the real issue here is homosexuality at all, or Zionism? One can imagine the 'community groups' from which his elect few were chosen: Zionist youth movements and the like. I wonder if Searle would be more supportive of Michael Barnett if he openly declared complete and unthinking allegiance to the State of Israel and vocal support for its 'right' to commit war crimes?

Finally, I question your supposition that those who requested the leave the Aleph mailing lists did so because they were/are angry at Michael Barnett. None of them gave reasons: it is likely that they simply did not want to receive the emails which were flying back and forth and filling up their inboxes. Yes, some were from Michael Barnett, but many were not – you yourself contributed a fairly lengthy contribution, in fact. I have never met Michael Barnett, so you cannot accuse me (as you do Gregory) of supporting him for merely personal reasons. But, as a young gay Jew, I can tell you that I regard Barnett's efforts for GLBT Jews as nothing less than heroic. Like Larry Kramer, what Barnett says is so true and so painful that many, yourself included, would prefer to dismiss him as a raving loon than consider seriously what he has to say. History will show him to have been right in standing up for his community and refusing to accept the half-hearted, politically correct rhetoric of our right-wing 'community leaders' which leaves the social order unchanged and queer Jews as disenfranchised as ever. If Barnett makes Searle uncomfortable, surely that is a good thing – those who hold themselves out as leaders should be held to account for their acts (and for their failures to act). Searle, the JCCV, and our community at large should be uncomfortable – discomfort is one of those affects which can lead to genuine political change. Notwithstanding your own rhetoric, which seems entirely in line with that of the JCCV, it seems to me that Barnett is the only reasonable voice in this debate.

So Searle can have his Zionist cronies, and they can remain in their glass closets: those who demand real and meaningful change should stand by Barnett at this time.

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[Reply](#)



December 21, 2009 at 10:14 am

Alex Fein says:

Daniel, firstly, "the spirit of inclusion" that supposedly describes the JCCV's motives is clearly intended as an ironic statement. The sentences following the phrase, not to mention the rest of the description of the JCCV's shennanigans, make that abundantly clear.

That you devote so much space to attacking a sentiment that was never actually articulated in any seriousness leads me to recommend exactly what I recommended to Gregory and to doug: reread thepost. It's just not that complicated.

Your giant leap into anti-Zionist rhetoric is, however, too bizarre for reasoned response.

What on earth does Zionism have to do with any of this?

There is something piquantly repugnant about the anti-Zionists who insist on flogging their dead hobby-horses regardless of the actual topic of the post.

Daniel, again: I will not be publishing the multitudes of emails that flew around the past fortnight because that would be a serious breach of ethics on my part. Unfortunately, this enables you to interpret the many demands to be taken off the mailing lists in ways that are flattering to Michael.

However, please Google "Occam's Razor" for the most logical way to interpret such a groundswell of desire not to be a party to Michael's activities.

If Michael has helped you, I am very, very glad. Nowhere have I questioned his motives or his dedication to his particular cause.

That you have had a positive experience, however, should not blind you to what has happened, and why it has happened.

If all you learn from Michael is the adversarial approach, that has him libeling all Orthodox Jews and their beliefs, and alienating his erstwhile supporters, neither you nor he will ever achieve anything.

Orthodox Jews, like everyone else (including Zionists), will not be convinced of anything when they are being screamed at.

Indeed, it strikes me as unlikely that you or Michael know any Orthodox Jews. You may need to meet some first before you can begin preaching to them.



December 21, 2009 at 4:08 pm

TheSadducee says:

Daniel

Its a surprise that for someone who states that they are a proud, progressive, young, gay Jew and is concerned for their queer brothers and sisters in the GBLT community that you take a cheap shot at those same brothers and sisters who choose to be in their "glass closets"...

And you profess concern for the lower social position of queer Jews yet you draw your own lines and create an artificial border between out and closeted. Risible.

Support this comment  1



December 21, 2009 at 12:29 pm

Doug Pollard says:

Alex Fein writes: This comment is full of misinformation, invective and half-truths. But because it also contains many arguments (also propounded by Michael Barnett) which are trotted out regularly that seek to characterise an entire sub-community as homophobic, there is some value in response. I am therefore letting this through with my response embedded in the text.

Doug's words are in italic, mine are in plain text.

Doug: Hi Alex,

I read your post several times and it still appears to be full of unverifiable assertions and gossip, which is hardly helpful to resolving the situation, which I assume is your desire.

Alex: Your "assumption" may be bolstered by actually reading the blog. Where possible, this blog has offered my community information to which they may not otherwise have had access. Ironically, this has only been characterised as "unverifiable assertions and gossip," by those who do not agree with the a particular opinion I hold. I doubt you would characterise my bringing to light the "super secret" JCCV/GLBT meeting in such a way. Surely you would agree that such shenanigans are best exposed.

Doug: And since presumably you would like to convince with your arguments, it is you who should provide links and references and not arrogantly tell people to run away and Google.

Alex: Once again, it seems you have not been a regular blog reader. My posts are peppered with links. On the other hand, not everything exists in the public domain online – Barnett's email lists, for example. Were I devoid of scruples, I could bolster my arguments much more easily by publishing these missives.

As for a connection between "arrogance" and directing people to use the world's most popular search-engine -you are welcome to make it. But it does smack of personal invective where there is a dearth of real argument.

Doug: Re my own email, calling John Searle a 'slick operator' (I presume that's what you took exception to) was by way of a compliment – his performance on my show was a very polished PR performance which completely sidestepped the issues. He had the politicians knack of answering the questions he wished to be asked, rather than the ones he was actually asked. You can listen to the podcast on the Joy website, if you like (I'll let you hunt that down yourself, shall I?).

Alex: Doug, perhaps you may be one of the very few people who finds politicians' methods admirable and a sign of good character. If you are, you are certainly an original thinker, because for most people, "slick operator," and comparisons with political machinations do not connote anything positive.

Doug: It appeared to me – and your gossip appears to confirm it – that his principal aim was to avoid discussing Jewish gay issues in public, and his principal objection to dealing with Michael was that Michael prefers to confront the issue in public.

Alex: You might enjoy playing the John-Searle's-True-Motives guessing game (flying off the shelves this Christmas/Channuka), but I'm not sure you – or I for that matter – are in any position to do so. Indeed, such games are far more akin to "gossip" than anything I have written.

Doug: He made a big thing of the fact that some of the anti-gay vilification that had been published was only in a very obscure place that very few would even have been aware of if Michael hadn't dragged it into the light.

Alex: I'm not sure how familiar you are with the minutiae of Melbourne's Jewish communal politics, Doug. Searle's description of the hate-site Michael Barnett brought to public attention is perfectly accurate. The site was utterly obscure before its exposure. I personally think exposing it was a good thing. Searle may not agree, but that is irrelevant to your point above.

Doug: As a good friend of mine is wont to say, 'sunlight is a great antiseptic' – when people want something kept quiet it is generally for selfish motives, i.e., because exposure would reflect badly on them. And evil left to fester in dark places is apt to grow.

Your friend makes a profound statement. And it's somewhat ironic, considering what has raised your ire on this blog. You seem to be a sunlight-advocate when it suits your own political goals, but perhaps prefer things more shadowy when they are less convenient.

Doug:Searles key point was that Orthodox Jewish teaching condemns homosexuality, and there's nothing he can do about that – which mirrors the Christian fundamentalist position.

Alex: I'm sorry, Doug: I have to call it as I see it. From what you've written, it does not seem you have the requisite experience or knowledge of the complex web of Jewish sub-communities, their beliefs or their practices. To compare such a diverse group with a broad-brush characterisation as, "Christian fundamentalist" is to betray an unwillingness to learn about this diversity.

Some Orthodox groups (and there are multitudes of them, each with different beliefs and practices) are vehemently homophobic, while other are not. And even within each group, there are those who are homophobes and those who are not. It's both very simple and very complex.

But to paint all Orthodox Jews as essentially homophobic is a libel and I will not allow any more such accusations on this blog.

Doug: And there is no getting round the fact that fundamentalist Christian teaching on homosexuality is virulently anti-gay. They are free to express that view in private and amongst themselves, but not in any public area (when it clearly becomes vilification), nor to attempt to impose that viewpoint or any sanctions that may flow from it on anyone other than their own membership.

Alex: You cannot transpose your understanding of Christian homophobia to the Jewish experience. There are too many differences, and it can only be attempted by someone without knowledge of either one or both camps.

And what exactly is this "Christian fundamentalism" you speak of? Does it cover every denomination? Is it appropriate for every congregation? Is Ugandan Christian homophobia that convinced the Ugandan government to execute homosexuals that same as Anglican homophobia that is a verbal argument between two camps that may simply result in a split into two separate denominations?

We Jews have nothing like this. We are anarchic in our structures in ways that many Christian denominations are not. Catholic style, top-down institutional edicts simply do not exist for us.

Doug: Just because a point of view is based on a religious teaching many thousands of years old does

not make it right, or immune to criticism, or unamenable to challenge and change. And indeed if it is mandated by God (whoever She may be), then challenge and criticism is nothing to fear – indeed, it may expose error.

Alex: Who ever argued anything different? This straw man you have constructed is epic enough for a Wizard of Oz production.

Doug: Michaels underlying point is, if I understand him correctly, that not all Jews are Orthodox, not all Orthodox Jews agree with this teaching, that other branches of Judaism are accepting of homosexuals to a greater or lesser degree, and therefore a body like the JCCV ought to represent all these strands of thought and not just grant the Orthodox a blanket veto on something they disagree with. They are only ONE voice, not THE voice, of Judaism, however much they might like to think otherwise.

Alex: He is right in all of this. Had you read any of this blog before the latest post, you would have seen me arguing many of the same things.

Michael Barnett's argumentative methods, his abrasive style, his search for offense even where none was intended, however, diminished his message. His posturing, as well, contributed to the feeling that he was becoming as guilty as the folk at the JCCV of falsely claiming to represent a particular group: in his case Jewish GLBT. This was a particularly unfortunate irony.

Doug: There seems to be an unconscious assumption operating here that Orthodox Jews are somehow better than other Jews, and therefore their views ought to carry more weight. But even if that were true – you can argue that one amongst yourselves – within Orthodox ranks it appears to me, as an outsider, that opinions differ.

Alex: There are "outsiders" – I prefer the term, non-Jews, myself – who regularly read and comment on this blog. I imagine that they would find your statement absolutely bizarre.

Where is this "assumption" of Orthodox superiority you write about? Certainly nowhere here. Or do you mean among Jews in general? If so, how would you begin to support such a statement?

Doug: For example, when I was in the US some years ago, I saw a fascinating TV program about an observant Orthodox Jewish gay man who travelled to Israel and sought out senior Orthodox rabbis there for guidance on his situation.

Alex: A TV show you saw a few years ago is the basis for your assertions? Call me a stickler, but you might like to begin with a perusal of Wikipedia to pad out your knowledge.

Doug: He was told in no uncertain terms that anal sex between men was forbidden, but if he wanted to put another mans penis in his mouth, then although they found the idea amusing and could not understand why he would want to do it, that was not an issue. Others would doubtless disagree.

Alex: Doug, It was a TV show. You saw it years ago.

But even if we treat it as though it were real research or evidence, who cares?

One Rabbi is a same-sex, oral sex advocate but prefers his flock not to engage in anal sex?

If this is the stuff that strikes you as serious in the fight for GLBT rights, I am terribly worried.

Perhaps you require a little perspective. Forgive the arrogance, but Googling "Uganda, homosexual, execution," might help.

There's serious stuff to be done for GLBT and you waste your time here remembering old TV shows?

Doug: One last point – yes, I do know some Orthodox Jews – in my time I have also known Reform Jews, Progressive Jews, Catholics, Exclusive Brethren, Methodists, Born Again Evangelicals, atheists, agnostics, there may even be a closet Buddhist or two in there, there's a Theosophist, too, now I think of it (which I don't, much), some Wiccans, Communists (who are after all a de-Godded Christian schism

– the Schism of Mark, as one wit once put it).


Alex: Some of my best friends are...? Again, had your read the blog before Michael contacted you for back-up (he has been posting and Facebooking all day demanding to know why I haven't yet posted your comment, among other vitriolic communications), you would have read my regular exhortations to fellow Jews to form genuine, close friendships with non-Jews.

In fact, the section directly above the one you have been commenting on – in the very same post – describes the difference between knowing people in passing, and actually forging real friendships in which people speak honestly and openly with each other.

From everything you have said, it is clear that while you may have known an Orthodox Jew in passing, there is simply no way you have ever had access to the many that are kind and decent and do not hate homosexuals.

Support this comment  1

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 December 21, 2009 at 3:44 pm
Sisu says:

How quickly we jump all over Alex when all she is doing is the raison d'être of her blog – to expose the lack of transparency (“secret” GLBT meetings???) and lack of transparency (“...where such people would derive their mandate to speak on behalf of all Jewish GLBT..”) within her community.

The other aspect of this situation – and the one that seems to have Michael’s supporters so up in arms – is Alex’s highlighting the confrontational method of “debate” as being harmful in the long run. Just as grouping all Jewish activity as being “anti-Palestinian” and engaging in in-your-face activism is insulting to the audience and preaching only to the converted, so too it seems in this case.


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Bruce Llama » How sensible! says:
December 21, 2009 at 3:47 pm[...] December 22, 2009 at 9:44 am Over at the Sensible Jew blog1 there's a bit of a conversation going on about the JCCV (That's the Jewish Community [...])

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 December 21, 2009 at 4:43 pm
Alan Hughes says:

Michael,

Alex may or may not have misrepresented you in her posts but I also have the ability to read your comments. Those comments have been irrational and filled with pure venom for seemingly everyone who is not gay.

I am surprised that Alex would let some of your tirades through her moderation. The only reason I can think of is that she has had enough of you and will therefore let your arguments through so that everyone can clearly see your true nature and sideline you. It would seem that it has worked.

As I said above, I am religious and have my views on the GBLT, however I would welcome a group representative of GBLT into the JCCV. After having read your comments I would welcome anyone but Aleph. You are at fault for that.

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December 21, 2009 at 9:19 pm

Michael Barnett says:

Kindly justify your claim of "irrational" Alan.

The issue is about suicide prevention, not membership of an unrepresentative roof body.

Michael.

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December 21, 2009 at 8:59 pm


Daniel says:

Sadducee,

It is precisely because I am a proud, progressive queer Jew that I feel it essential to openly deride the glass closets which keep 'my brothers and sisters' (in your words) from living openly. I do not and will never accept that the closet, with all the repression and untruthfulness it entails, is an acceptable place for gay people to live their lives. The suppression of one's self in exchange for social inclusion should surely be derided by all who love freedom and equality.

Alex, as I made clear in my post, I have never met Michael. He has not helped me in any way. I am not a member of Aleph. My defence of him is not motivated by any personal feelings, though you seem incapable of understanding that any one might respect Michael by virtue of his actions. It is easy for you to counsel against fighting, what with your enviable place as a leading commentator of the Jewish community, with widespread respect and clout. Gay Jews are not so lucky – fighting is all we have. You seem to suggest that we should lie back and wait for oppression to go away. As someone who has lived my whole life in the face of homophobia from teachers, community leaders and even friends, this is a completely intolerable position.

My turn to Zionism was not at all unreasonable. I encourage you to re-read my post. My point is that Barnett, from what I gather, is not an active Zionist, and I wonder how much the JCCV's refusal to deal with him stems from this. When the list of the attendees of the secret meeting is revealed, no doubt my point will be confirmed: all invitees are likely to have connections to Zionist youth and other movements. I wonder how much Michael's exclusion has to do with his not willing to worship the JCCV's idol. This, and not his outspokenness, seems to me to be the dealbreaker.

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[Reply](#)



December 21, 2009 at 11:42 pm

Alex Fein says:

Daniel, your previous comment did not make it clear at all that your contact with Michael was so limited.

And while your description of my position is flattering, it is not accurate.

Go through the previous posts: I never advocate against, "fighting" something unjust.

In fact, I've been fighting here since May!

One of the things I have been fighting for – and what actually preceipitated Michael's reentry into communal public debate – was a reversal of the shameful treatment meted out to GLBT Jews by the JCCV.

And we could get into an argument about who does it tougher, but that isn't productive. All that matters, is I came out of nowhere and had to look for ways to make my message heard.

What upsets me so much about what Michael has done, is that he has squandered what was potentially a very powerful position that could have done GLBT Jews a lot of good. He'd managed to get a spot on ABC Radio National, on their flagship, PM programme. The JCCV was forced to acknowledge the GLBT issue.

Michael could have decided either to ignore the JCCV's subsequent overtures and to do his own thing or he could have decided to work with them.

He did neither and the whole focus shifted from the rights and needs of the GLBT community to his personal beef with Searle and the rest of the JCCV.

In short, with a bit less messianic zeal, and a bit more forethought, none of this idiotic secrecy would have been able to happen.

And when you suggest that I advocate "lying back" and allowing horrible things to continue/happen, you unintentionally mimic the hardliners on this blog who are so obsessed with their methods of Zionist advocacy, that they wind up doing their cause damage.

When I suggest they stop screaming and chest-thumping at non-Jews, they too tell me I advocate a lie-down-and-die approach.

They're wrong too.

I advocate keeping the goal in mind and not letting personal feelings interfere with rational decision making.

And Daniel – really! From the bottom of my heart! Zionism and Michael's feelings about Israel had nothing to do with anything. There was plenty else for people to get angry about on this occasion.

For once, I think we can safely leave Israel/Palestine out of this argument.



December 22, 2009 at 3:55 pm

TheSadducee says:

Daniel

They are my brothers and sisters too.

However, who are you to determine what is best for queer Jews i.e. whether they should be in the closet or not? That is their choice, not yours.

I will agree that if queers are forced into the closet then this is injustice and should be fought against. If they choose to be in there, then you must respect their freedom of choice.

It is interesting that you suggest that people in the closet must necessarily be there for the purposes of social inclusion/acceptance and that this is again necessarily repressing and/or untruthful.


That is your assumption, not a fact.

There are a multiplicity of reasons that queer Jews may be in the closet and none of them may reflect your assumptions.

We live in a post modern society that doesn't require people to identify by their sexuality – or at least I hope so and I know its low on my interest level concerning my friends/associates. Perhaps you are inclined to judge people by those sort of things – I'm not and I would prefer that people didn't.

Come to think of it I'm also not sure how you can make such sweeping assertions based on the real life experiences and choices of others (yourself not having lived in their shoes) and assume that this is negative and you know what is best for them? Seems very paternalistic and hubristic.

I think you should have a long hard think about some of your assumptions concerning queer identity and realise that you yourself may be contributing to harm to queers – i.e. by setting up a model that you think should fit all and expecting others to conform to it.

Support this comment  1



December 22, 2009 at 3:01 am

Alan Hughes says:

Michael,

I could simply bring out the line "I don't speak to him about Aleph because for those reasons (irrationality)". This line comes from one of your very close friends and supporters when your name came up in conversation. I will not disclose the name since he would like to remain friends and it is not for me to release such information on a public forum.

That is not however enough, you seem like you want hard evidence of this claim.

The truth is you should not make my job so easy, you ask me to justify the claim of irrationality and then give me fodder in your very next line.

Let us then examine the end of your comment. You say:


"The issue is about suicide prevention, not membership of an unrepresentative roof body."

a) Who is committing suicide here? That we should start focusing on an issue with a statistic of zero incidence could be defined as 'irrational' I should think, especially when there are issue of far greater importance.

b) The issue you keep complaining about is the 'representatives' of the community. You seem to spend a lot of time on people who are not the issue.

Just accept that most people have had a gutfull of you Michael, no one of any note wants to deal with you and you are causing irreparable damage to your cause with every statement.

Do us all a favour, next time you think to say something, count to five million before opening your mouth. It may not stop you talking, but it will at least give us a few years respite before having to listen to you again.

Support this comment  2


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December 22, 2009 at 7:52 am

Michael Barnett says:

Alan, any friend of mine that can't talk to me about any topic freely is not really a friend of mine. I am not in this for popularity. I don't care if I end up being hated by the entire Jewish community. I really don't give a shit about making friends out of this. If you don't understand what this is about by now then you never will.

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December 22, 2009 at 9:06 am


Alan Hughes says:

Well good luck guessing which friend of yours is no longer your friend. Maybe you could turn it into a party game you could play Sherlock Holmes and try and find out who it is because he really did say it and he is a friend of yours.

The truth is Michael I have no idea what you are about. Is it preventing suicides where none have happened or is it bringing down communal organisations that you do not care about?

It would seem that even you have lost sight of your message, so for the sake of this discussion please briefly (in about 100-200 words) outline what you are about.

And for the record you are not hated, you are ignored.

Support this comment  0



December 22, 2009 at 7:50 pm


Michael Barnett says:

Anyone who wants a first-hand understanding of the issues can call me on 0417 595 541 and I'll gladly make the time to explain them to you.

Alternatively you can go to <http://aleph.org.au> and review the material listed on the front page. If after then you still need further clarification, come back to me and ask me.

If you prefer to make your judgements on second-hand information then you are likely to not have a clear understanding of the real issues.

Michael.

Support this comment  2




December 22, 2009 at 3:22 am

materialgirl says:

Oh my God!!! What is wrong with you people? I have been reading this blog before I ever heard of Alex Fein. From the start she defended gay rights. But now because she thinks you handled a situation badly you jump on her and accuse her of not caring about gays.

Your all so self obsessed that you make this about you. No one cares about Michael or his friends. And also where are the gay women? I don't hear any lesbians coming out and criticising Alex. Actually, I don't see any gay men either besides Michael's friends.

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December 22, 2009 at 8:45 am

Michael Barnett says:

September 21st 2009


In the context of the most recent claims of ingrained homophobic intolerance in sections of the Jewish Community in Australia I'm writing to share the findings of Australian research about homophobia and young people.

I have been involved in research with marginalised young people over the last 15 years and over this time have learned much about the lives of young people who are sexually attracted to those of the same sex. We know from many national studies with thousands of young people that around one in ten young Australians is same sex attracted. We know that the majority of them are subjected to discrimination, harassment and abuse because of their sexuality. We also know that there is a significant positive relationship between these young people having been abused and negative health outcomes such as drug abuse, self harm, depression and suicide.

Homophobic abuse is insidious for a number of reasons. First, many of the beliefs that fuel it have a long history in powerful institutions such as psychiatry, psychology, the law and religion. Though most of these institutions have now recanted those beliefs and homosexuality is no longer regarded as a mental illness or a crime, the beliefs remain pervasive in the community. Second, it is harder for young people to access support because they need to 'come out' to do so. Third, workers and teachers with young people are often afraid to address homophobia because they don't know if they will receive support from their employers or communities. Finally, homophobic abuse is particularly alienating because unlike other minorities, these young people are unlikely to gain support from their parents who are overwhelmingly likely to be heterosexual.

In Australia, same sex love is legal and relationships are protected in law. It is also regarded as a natural part of the diversity of human sexuality by the Australian and American psychiatric and psychological associations. Some churches now embrace same sex love as part of God's creation. We, as a society have a responsibility to our young people to protect them from all bigotry, particularly homophobic abuse and the terrible damage it wreaks.

Dr Lynne Hillier
Senior Research Fellow
Australia Research Centre in Sex Health and Society
La Trobe University Melbourne.

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December 22, 2009 at 9:11 am

Michael Barnett says:

http://aleph.org.au/docs/20090903%20My_comment_on_Suicide_Prevention_Australia_Position_Statement.

"On September 1 2009 Suicide Prevention Australia released their position statement on "Suicide and self-harm among Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Communities".

Quoting from the media release for the launch of this position statement:

The Honourable Michael Kirby, AC CMG said, "There is no excuse, whether heterosexual or gay, to avoid our obligation to try to eradicate this discrimination and injustice". He added, "Heterosexuals and GLBT individuals and communities must work together to build strategies that actively address heterosexism, and promote inclusive, safe and supportive environments are therefore critical to suicide and self-harm prevention for GLBT communities."

Quoting a particularly pertinent section of the position statement:

Similarly, those belonging to religious faiths that promulgate negative discourses about homosexuality are particularly vulnerable to suicide and self-harm. Conflicts between spiritual or religious beliefs and sexuality can result in significant psychological dissonance as well as division and exclusion from family, friends and community.

For many, these experiences manifest in deep feelings of self-loathing and hatred that, in turn, severely elevate the risk of suicide and self-harm (Hillier et al., 2008). As one young SSA woman


describes:

Knowing what was facing me religion-wise and with my family I was pretty suicidal between the ages of about 16 and 19...not so much because of people's homophobia but because of feeling totally trapped between a religion/family that didn't accept homosexuality and being who I was. ('Peggy', aged 20, in Hillier et al., 2008)

The Jewish community leadership and in fact anyone who disapproves of homosexuality needs to understand that intolerance of homosexuality directly impacts on people who are not heterosexual. This position statement shows there is strong evidence that gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people are up to 14 times more likely to attempt suicide than heterosexuals. [See also coverage in the Sydney Star Observer]

This is an extremely serious and urgent problem and the community needs to treat it with appropriate gravity. Continuing to stand behind outdated biblical prohibitions is quite simply unacceptable.

Michael."

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 December 22, 2009 at 7:12 pm


Daniel says:

Sadducee,

I never said that people should be identified solely or even primarily according their sexuality. My point is simply that I do not believe the closet is a happy place to be. Having lived there for many years, my personal experience is that it amounts to living a lie. I am certainly not telling queer Jews who have chosen to remain in the closet that they must come out; nor do I mean to suggest that they are less validly part of the queer community. But I do feel very sad for those people who, for whatever reason, feel constrained to keep secret what is undoubtedly an important part of individual identity. The shame and isolation engendered by the closet is brutal. I do not know if you are in the closet, or whether you even identify as GLBT; but please understand that while I do not judge those who, because of social injustice, feel compelled to repress a part of themselves, I do feel very, very sad for them, and angry that society demands such an unreasonable and terrible sacrifice from them. You may call this paternalistic; I see it rather as compassion for my brothers and sisters who are denied the joy of living honestly and openly.

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 December 22, 2009 at 8:33 pm

TheSadducee says:

Daniel


I'm not sure that we are in that much disagreement then – if people feel constrained to be in the closet for whatever reason, or are forced by society, then this is unfortunate, unjust and unpleasant and I would be the first to rail with you against these types of oppression.

However, there are people who voluntarily choose to be there and are quite happy with their identity and lifestyle – they don't feel that they are living dishonestly or not openly. They can participate in queer life despite the ambiguity the stance implies, maintain relationships etc – some people prefer this type of discretion.


Perhaps its just me but I don't assume that people are necessarily heterosexual if I don't know their sexuality so I don't see the same level of subterfuge and/or negativity attached to choice. I'm not sure but perhaps you buy into that idea – that if a person hasn't revealed their sexual preference then you assume that they are necessarily heterosexual? (Isn't that a heterosexist social construct anyway – just assuming that heterosexuality is the usual position?)

Anyways, I don't want to derail the topic – I apologise if we have been talking at cross purposes and/or I've misunderstood your perspective.


An important point here for me concerns the secret meetings – these should be deplored and the people involved should think long and hard about the circumstances they are helping to create – potentially a forced closet situation for GLBT Jews in the community so satisfy what is essentially bigotry.

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 December 22, 2009 at 11:24 pm
Michael Brull says:

I just wanted to say that I'm pleased and flattered Michael Barnett has posted my brief blog comments on his Aleph website. I fully endorse and support the struggle against homophobia.

Support this comment  3

[Reply](#)

 December 23, 2009 at 12:24 am
Sisu says:

Goodness, I am embarrassed to be gay and seeing all this carry on.

Nowhere has Alex showed any degree of homophobia yet so many are carrying on as if she is Fred Phelps.

In her post, she states:

- 1) That John Searle / JCCV are organising "secret" meetings to discuss GLBT issues. This is what the SJ has been highlighting to her community since she started blogging.
- 2) That Michael Barnett has alienated many in the Jewish community.

Now, you may have your opinions on (2) but to make this some sort of epic struggle against homophobia is ludicrous.

Get some perspective. Yes, highlighting the need (in this case) of supporting non-heterosexual Jewish youth is important...but entering into a screaming match with the Jewish community isn't going to do this. And accusing Alex of ...what? ...being in cahoots with the Powers That Be in the Jewish Community? Perpetuating the disregard of GLBT issues by the JCCV? Organising some sort of anti-gay witch hunt? Please... perspective.

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 January 11, 2010 at 7:23 pm
Michael Barnett says:


Alex, you said "He spoke about how they were leaders of their own organisations". To date the two of GLBT people who told me they attended the December 16 meeting are, to the best of my knowledge, not leaders of any organisation relevant to their involvement with the JCCV GLBT reference group. In fact one of the two people is to the best of my knowledge not involved with any GLBT group other than Aleph Melbourne and Young Aleph, and that involvement is only minor. The other person is on the committee of Transgender Victoria, but is not currently a leader of that organisation.

In my experience in dealing with John Searle since mid-2009, I have found that he that he has a

problem with the truth. He seems to think things up in his head and then speak them as authority. He told me and other people he initiated two of the meetings that I actually initiated with him. He also told me the JCCV has spoken to numerous "groups" in relation to understanding GLBT issues, however what that statement really means is that Geoffrey Zygier met on one occasion with Liam Leonard of Gay & Lesbian Health Victoria to discuss the issue at a fairly superficial level. I know this because I have spoken to Liam about it. There have been no other meetings to date since December 3 2009 that have occurred that I am aware of.

Be careful what you believe from the mouth of John Searle.

Michael.

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