

# Kort's Korner



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## Dr. Laura on Gays

**OPINIONATED TALK SHOW HOST TOUCHES OFF A HEATED CONTROVERSY.  
Parts of this article originally appeared in the *Detroit Free Press* in 1999.**

*Joe's practice specializes in sexual addiction, childhood sexual, physical and emotional abuse, depression and anxiety.*

*He offers workshops for couples and singles. He runs a gay men's group therapy and a men's sexuality group therapy for straight, bi and gay men who are struggling with specific sexual issues.*

*His therapy services are for gays and lesbians as well as heterosexuals.*

If my mother were to call into Dr. Laura Schlessinger's radio show, she would say: "Hello, Dr. Laura, I am my gay kid's mom." Dr. Laura first would tell my mother that her son's sexuality is a result of a "biological mistake." This is her belief and opinion, with no scientific evidence to support it. Then Dr. Laura would correct my mother by telling her that I am "homosexual, not gay." Dr. Laura has said that changing the term "changes how we perceive it, and how we can behave toward it." On that point, she's absolutely right. As a community, we do want to be called gay, not homosexual.

We want to remove "sex" from the discussion so that people can see who we really are-and no more sexual than our heterosexual counterparts. (I prefer to speak of "romantic orientation," whether gay or straight.) Dr. Laura would also inform my mother that "homosexuality is no more than a deviant sexual behavior and not normal, and thus should be called what it is,

sexual deviancy." She would make it clear to my mother that her son and other gays are not entitled to equal rights such as marriage or adopting newborns "because of their sexually deviant behavior, just like bestiality, pedophilia and sadomasochism." If my mother were to mention my relationship with my partner of six years, Dr. Laura would correct my mother and call him my "sex partner." As she has said before on her show and in her writings, Dr. Laura would tell my mother that it is a "sadness for men to have to have sex with men." She would tell my mother about

"therapies that help a reasonable number of people successfully become heterosexual."

The American Psychological Association has stated that to suppress one's sexual orientation contributes to depression. In 1973, the association removed homosexuality as a disorder from its diagnostic lists. Dr. Laura would tell my mother that decision was "about politics, not science." I don't think that physical love between two consenting adults is a "sadness." Media-driven ministries

such as Dr. Laura's radio show and others are stuck in old-school themes, which have been devalued and disproved by more recent research. People such as Dr. Laura are using shock value and exaggeration. She does not do her homework and feeds one-sided and erroneous information for her own agenda-and, of course, ratings. The Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD) sent an alert to members

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*"Media-driven ministries such as Dr. Laura's radio show are stuck in old-school themes, which have been devalued and disproved by more recent research."*

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about Dr. Laura's on-air remarks, out of concern that she is promoting intolerance and non-acceptance of gay Americans. When you view another person's sexuality as the result of "biological mistakes" and "developmental errors," you're less likely to treat that person with respect. That's why it's so gratifying to see positive gay role models on television. After years of being invisible, or the all-too-visible source of nightclub jokes, we are starting to be perceived as people. Better yet: as everyday people!

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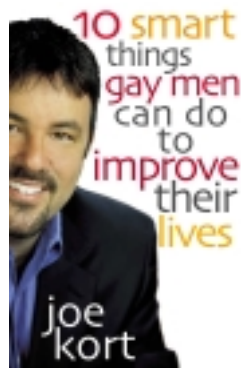
GLAAD pleaded with Paramount to control Schlessinger's on-air rhetoric, but their attempts to "out" Dr. Laura's homophobia weren't even slowing her down. Meanwhile, another gay group, the San-Francisco-based Horizons Foundation, launched a nationwide ad campaign to educate the public about the danger Schlessinger's anti-gay rhetoric poses to children. Finally, after seeing that Paramount was still moving forward with premiering her television show, a group of gay activists, public-relations executives, and media professionals teamed up to create "StopDrLaura.com"-both a web site and a coalition.

We stood up, said, "We are not going to take this," and were effective. Stopdrlaura.com received thousands of hits. The site became very well known and received lots of publicity. Stopdrlaura.com activists felt that since Paramount was going ahead, then the next step would be to target the advertisers of the show, pleading for people to ask them to withdraw their support. He posted companies' names, phone numbers, fax numbers and emails. Many advertisers were not prepared for the volume of complaints.

Major companies, starting with Proctor and Gamble, Sears, and Kraft, pulled their advertising. With less ad money to keep it running, Dr. Laura's was shunted from its original prime weekday-morning location to early-morning and middle-of-the-night time slots. Ultimately the show was cancelled. Proof that protests do not convince, but profits do!

Today, on her radio talk show, Dr. Laura says virtually nothing about gay people. She has, however, done a foreward on a reparative therapy book which explains how to become an ex-gay and talks about how homosexuality is the result of flawed sexuality and sickness. So she is still out there committing her acts of homophobia.

Happily, history does repeat itself. Back in the 1970s, Anita Bryant (who didn't even boast a Ph.D.) was a spokesperson for Florida Orange Juice. Gay groups protested her, for the same kind of ignorant rhetoric. Thanks to her unwanted, wholly self-generated controversy, Florida Orange Juice canceled her contract.



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