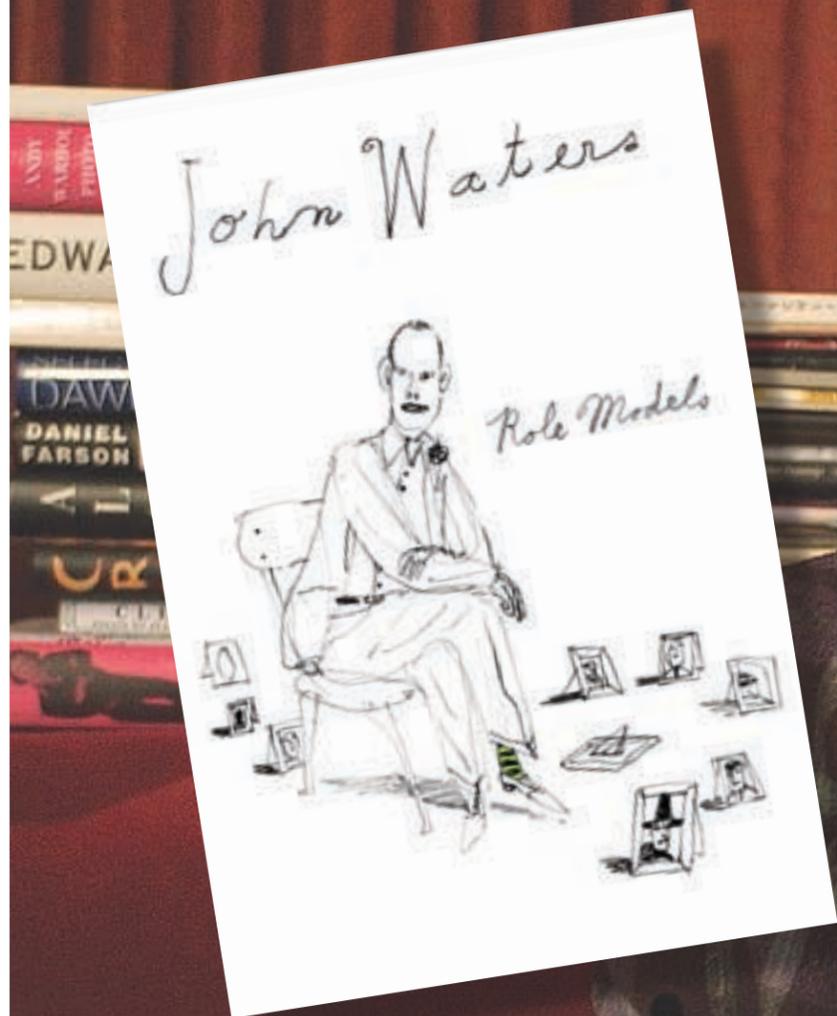


SECTION 4 BOOKS

EMBROIDERING EXTREMES

John Waters celebrates outsiders
with his new book *Role Models*



by Gary M. Kramer
SGN Contributing Writer

John Waters may be seen as a role model to his fans, but whom does he admire? In his terrific new book, entitled *Role Models*, Waters writes about “the amazing people who inspire” him. The choices are, as his fans might expect, an eclectic collection of outsiders, ranging from fashion designer Rei Kawakubo and artist Cy Twombly to the singer Little Richard. But

the one quality they all share is that they have lived, what Waters says, is “an extreme life.”

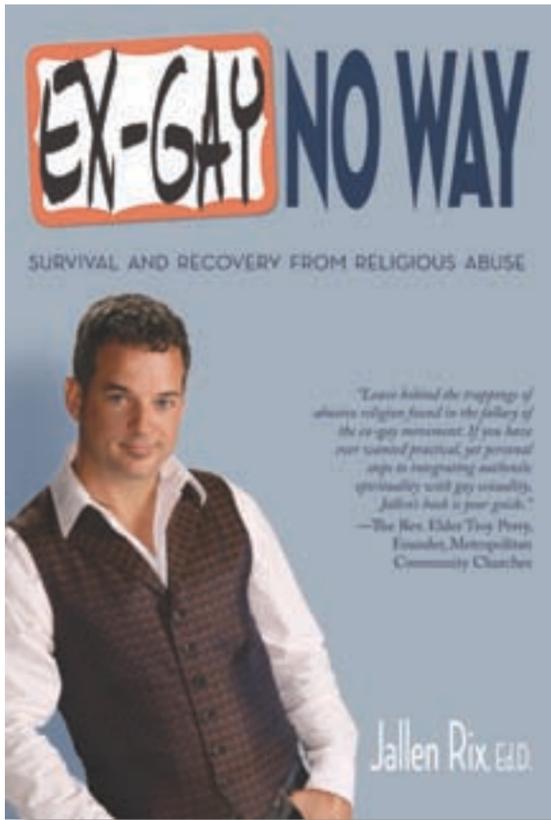
Sitting in the living room of his Baltimore home, surrounded by books and copious amounts of fake food – from a plastic hamburger on the windowsill to a tempting box of chocolates on the table – the filmmaker explains what it takes to be one of his role models. “They are certainly people who have survived something – whether it’s great success, or

great horror. They have had to be braver [than me]. They can inspire me through patience like Leslie Van Houten, who has been in jail for 40 years for something terrible she did, or being the opposite of me, like Johnny Mathis. Or they can inspire me as a kid, as Madalyn Murray O’Hair did, even though she turned out to be kind of a horrible person. Sometimes we

see JOHN WATERS page 22

Trying to fix what isn't broken

An interview with Dr. Jallen Rix, author of *Ex-Gay No Way*



the Gay?" In his new book, *Ex-Gay No Way*, Dr. Jallen Rix tells of his journey through the ex-Gay movement and how he ultimately left that world behind to become an out and proud Gay man and sexologist.

Seattle Gay News caught up with Dr. Rix to talk about the book, the ex-Gay movement, and his advice for LGBT people struggling with the issue of religious abuse.

"It took about three years to write the book, but it reviews my life over the past two decades," Dr. Rix told *SGN*. "I dug through piles of journals and letters. To try and write from the heart of what I was feeling, it was like I relived the whole arduous experience again. Coming to grips with my sexuality, letting go of all the pain and hurt, coming out to my conservative family and friends, letting go of a ministry I had developed – it was hell! But the outcome of the book is that it appears a lot of people can relate to what I went through, and therefore I hope what I did to recover will be helpful to them as well."

Dr. Rix says the ex-Gay movement is a cult-like organization of extreme religious people who, for 35 years, have believed that not only is homosexuality a sickness and a sin, but that they have its cure. "Over the past couple of decades, they have gotten a lot of attention because right wing fundamentalists and political groups have

by Shaun Knittel
SGN Staff Writer

The bizarre world of the ex-Gay movement can be difficult to understand. Even now, there are members of our community that are struggling to escape the religious abuse they suffer under. For those of us on the outside looking in, the whole concept is difficult to grasp. Can you really "pray away

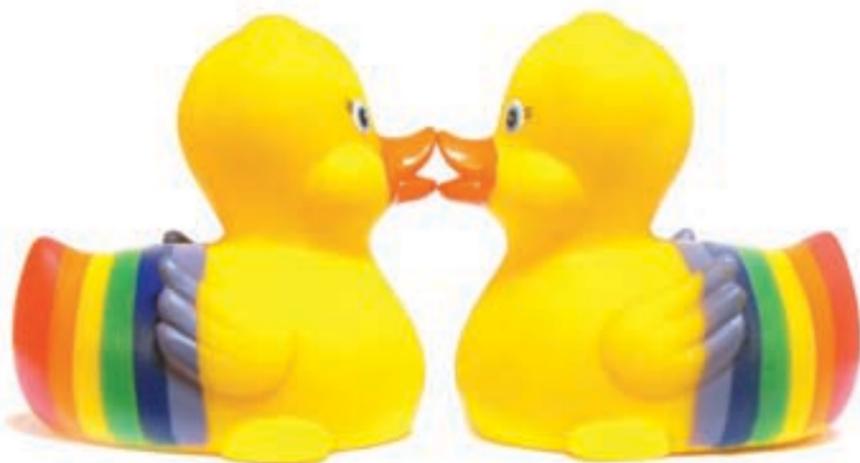


Author Dr. Jallen Rix

FILE PHOTO

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used the ex-Gay movement as leverage to not grant equality to LGBT people, saying, 'Why give LGBT people civil rights when they can choose to be straight?'" Dr. Rix explained. "Over the years, when 'praying the Gay away' failed to work, they took one a more pseudo-psychological persona. Yet dozens of medical, educational, and psychological organizations have come out with warnings against the harm 'reparative therapies' cause."

"I will admit, though, even with the title of the book, I am amazed at how many people will ask, 'Well, did it work? Are you straight?'" he said, adding, "Duh? Shall I don my favorite skirt, bend my wrists, and call you 'girlfriend?' Of course it didn't work! Now, with my life so rich and interesting, I'm glad it didn't."

Dr. Rix says that over the years he's had a lot of ex-Gay survivors ask what he did to recover from the abuse.

"Initially, I wrote the book for those who have gone through the same abusive experiences I have," he told *SGN*. "Although it was important to get as much information out there about my recovery process, it was just as important to write it as accessibly as possible. Ultimately, I just write as authentically as I can and I hope people are moved by it."

Even though the book has just come out, Dr. Rix told *SGN* that people have already contacted him to share their own similar stories. "In researching for the book, I was able to make a clear comparison between the ex-Gay movement and a phenomenon called 'religious abuse.' This is not to say all religion is abusive, but there are many ministries that use religion abusively," he said. "Something that has surprised me is that a number of straight people have contacted me as well, basically saying, 'I'm neither Gay nor ex-Gay, but I sure can relate to all the religious abuse stuff.'"

Dr. Rix says that although the book follows his journey through and out of the ex-Gay environment, any LGBT person can relate to it because "we all have felt a certain amount of corrosion to assimilate into a white, straight, male (mainly Christian) society."

These days, Dr. Rix says that all the aspects of his life – spiritual, emotional, mental, and sexual – feel integrated into a balanced whole. "My self-esteem is strong, and life is engaging and happy – I feel like a kid in a candy store," he said.

Dr. Rix told *SGN* he has some very sound advice for anyone struggling as an ex-Gay.

"Wherever you are in the process, whatever you decide to do with your life, I will unconditionally accept and support you because I firmly believe that each of us is fully capable of managing and finding what's best for our own lives," he said. "This is something that ex-Gay leadership cannot do. They will kick you out the first sign of you attempting to love yourself as you are."

"I would suggest that, possibly, the reason you are struggling and the reason reparative therapy at large is such a failure is that what they are trying to 'fix' isn't broken in the first place," said Dr. Rix. "Your sexuality is exactly what it should be just as it is, and you are not rejected by God for it. I believe we live in an incredibly amazing and multifaceted world, and our sexuality is just one aspect of our colorful lives that reflects beautiful diversity. It's not something to be squelched and squeezed into a tiny, narrow box. It's a gift, like any blessing that can be celebrated and responsibly enjoyed."

For more information about Dr. Jallen Rix or to order a copy of *Ex-Gay No Way*, visit www.exgaynoway.com.

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