



COVERING THE LGBT COMMUNITY SINCE 1969 |

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Smithsonian accepts 'conversion therapy' documents

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Mattachine President **Charles Francis** presented documents to museum officials at a luncheon last week. (Photo courtesy of Charles Francis)

The Mattachine Society of Washington, D.C. last week presented the Smithsonian Institution's National Museum of American History with two documents from the now defunct Love In Action organization that once served as the nation's largest residential facility seeking to change people from gay to straight through so-called conversion therapy.

Mattachine President Charles Francis said he presented the documents to museum officials at a luncheon attended by Garrard Conley, author of the recently published book "Boy Erased," which tells of Conley's experience as a "patient" at Love In Action's conversion therapy facility in 2004.

Conley describes in the book how he has fully accepted himself as a gay man after "surviving" his stay at the Love In Action facility, which was located in Memphis, Tenn.

"Many groups, people, and events have shaped LGBT history and it is part of our work as historians to document the influences," said Katherine Ott, Curator of the National Museum of American History in commenting on the conversion therapy documents. "The history of the United States is big and always changing and we do our best to capture that for the future," she said.

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One of the documents given to the museum is a handbook on how to overcome homosexuality that was given to Conley when he first checked into the Love In Action program in 2004 as a college freshman at the request of his parents.

The second document is a 325-page teaching manual that Mattachine Society of Washington obtained from the Love In Action archive of John J. Smid, the head of Love In Action who has since come out as gay after renouncing the work of his group. Joining Conley at the Smithsonian luncheon

was his mother, Martha Conley, who has since come to accept her son as a proud mother of a gay man, according to Francis.

At a reception following the luncheon hosted by Mattachine official Pate Felts, Martha Conley told of how far she and her family have come over the past 13 years in understanding LGBT issues and accepting her son. Garrard Conley's book tells of how his father, a minister, and mother pressured him to enter conversion therapy after he was outed as gay in 2003.

A movie based on Conley's book in which actors Nicole Kidman, Russell Crowe and other Hollywood stars will portray Conley and other people in the book was announced last month and was expected to begin production in the fall.



- BOY ERASED
- CHARLES FRANCIS
- CONVERSION THERAPY
- EX-GAY
- GARRARD CONLEY
- GAY
- JOHN J. SMID
- LOVE IN ACTION
- MARTHA CONLEY
- MATTACHINE SOCIETY OF WASHINGTON
- NATIONAL MUSEUM OF AMERICAN HISTORY
- PATE FELTS
- SMITHSONIAN INSTITUTION

Lou Chibbaro Jr.

Lou Chibbaro Jr. has reported on the LGBT civil rights movement and the LGBT community for more than 30 years, beginning as a freelance writer and later as a staff reporter and currently as Senior News Reporter for the Washington Blade. He has chronicled LGBT-related developments as they have touched on a wide range of social, religious, and governmental institutions, including the White House, Congress, the U.S. Supreme Court, the military, local and national law enforcement agencies and the Catholic Church. Chibbaro has reported on LGBT issues and LGBT participation in local and national elections since 1976. He has covered the AIDS epidemic since it first surfaced in the early 1980s. Follow Lou

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