

Straight Talk About Gay Conversion

Sheldon W. Helms



As our country tackles the subjects of marriage equality, gays in the military, and other issues of inclusion of gays and lesbians into mainstream society, fringe religious and therapeutic organizations operate mostly in the shadows, attempting to convert their homosexual clients to heterosexuality through a mixture of prayer and pseudoscience.

In this talk, Sheldon W. Helms describes the history of attempts to approach homosexuality as an illness, and efforts by some to help gays go straight. The techniques they use are not only ineffective, but often leave victims susceptible to shame, depression, and even increased risk of suicide.

Some forms of gay conversion therapy have been outlawed in a few U.S. states, and one of the primary institutions that promoted it has announced its closure, but what are the real stories behind these developments, and do they go far enough?

Past Venues for “Straight Talk About Gay Conversion”

- LogiCal-LA Skeptic Conference
- CSiCon - Center for Inquiry
- Ohlone College Science Seminar
- The Commonwealth Club of SF
- SkeptiCal Conference
- Atheist Community of San Jose
- SF Atheists & Agnostics
- Bay Area Skeptics SkepTalk

Sheldon W. Helms is a professor of psychology at Ohlone College in Fremont, CA who speaks out regularly on issues of interest to scientists and skeptics. He is the former VP of the Bay Area Skeptics, co-chair of the psychology forum at the Commonwealth Club of SF, and hosts the weekly science and skepticism podcast, ShelShocked.

Endorsements for “Straight Talk About Gay Conversion”

Sheldon Helms provides a stirring and deeply frightening account of the ravages of conversion therapy. Sheldon most capably alerts us to the sheer evil of those religious fundamentalists who try to destroy a person's natural born biological orientation. Everyone who cares about individual freedom should see and hear Sheldon's presentation.

Eddie Tabash
Chair, Board of Directors
Center for Inquiry



“Gay conversion therapy” is a terrible idea. It's cruel, ignorant, and it doesn't work. We should hear more about the history and unfortunate passages, as well as its results. Sheldon Helms does just that. He is a passionate educator and a committed researcher to this issue. Not much is being said about this “therapy” anywhere, but Sheldon is trying to change that. With impeccable research and mordant wit, Sheldon brings to light the pitfalls and nonsense of this woo-woo branch of medical practice. Don't miss his talk. You'll be a better informed person. As a gay man myself, I'm appalled that this kind of therapy still goes on, unchallenged. I'm glad Sheldon is steering the boat.

James “The Amazing” Randi
James Randi Education Foundation

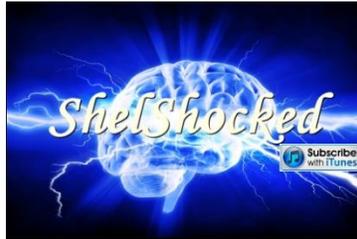
Conversion therapy is one of those insidious beliefs that creeps into our consciousness because we've heard of it and it sounds sciencey enough. Sheldon Helms pulls back the curtain and reveals it to be a shocking psychological torture with no plausible beneficial outcome, serving nobody's purpose but that of the religious zealot administering it. This is not merely a good presentation; it's an important one.

Brian Dunning
Host of Skeptoid Podcast



Sheldon is a fantastic speaker. You could listen to him for days. He has a pervasive sense of humour, and he ingeniously makes use of it even when dealing with dramatic topics such as so-called “gay conversion therapy”. You begin by smiling, but soon he has you thinking about the deep consequences of this irrational and magical thinking. Sheldon Helms' talk cannot be missed!

Massimo Polidoro
Executive Director, Italian Committee for the Investigation of Claims of the Pseudoscience



ShelShocked is a weekly science and skepticism podcast hosted by Sheldon W. Helms, and Marilyn Colón. Each week, we bring you another one-hour program covering a topic in science, skepticism, atheism, or a related area. Subscribe on iTunes or Stitcher. Click images below for a few highlights.

ShelShocked #19 - Prosocial Behavior w/ Belinda Carlisle

December 05, 2015

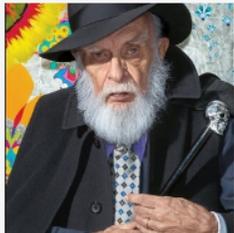


Introduction with Sheldon and Marilyn discussing the psychology of Prosocial Behavior. **Interview** with rock star and philanthropist Belinda Carlisle. **Science Report** about Sempo Sugihara, the "Japanese Schindler." **Good News** report from Marilyn about the shared kindness between a waitress and her firefighter customers.

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ShelShocked #18 - James "The Amazing" Randi

September 27, 2015



Introduction with Marilyn talking about her first awareness of James Randi and his work. **Interview** with James "The Amazing" Randi. A **Science Report** from Sheldon on the "unsinkable rubber duckie" Peter Popoff. A **Good News Report** from Marilyn about a skeptical examination of a claim of telekinesis in Russia. A reminder by skeptic Tucker Hiatt about "The Official Houdini Seance" in San Francisco.

ShelShocked #08 - The Science of Memory

May 10, 2015



Introduction in which Sheldon and Marilyn discuss some surprising research results on memory production and failure. **Interview** with famed psychologist and memory expert Dr. Elizabeth Loftus about her research on Implanted Memories. The **Science Report** details cases of false memory and accusations of child molestation that led to long prison terms for innocent people. **Good News** report from Marilyn about a case of mistaken identity that eventually had positive outcomes.