

Judge: Claiming to cure homosexuality is consumer fraud

By Samantha Michaels, Mother Jones

In a blow to the controversial practice of gay conversion therapy, a New Jersey judge has ruled that therapists who claim that homosexuality is a curable mental disorder are committing consumer fraud.

The ruling, issued on Tuesday by Superior Court Judge Peter F. Bariso Jr., is part of an ongoing lawsuit filed on behalf of four men who say they were subjected to humiliating treatments by therapists affiliated with Jews Offering New Alternatives for Healing (JONAH), a gay conversion therapy referral service based in Jersey City. Bariso said it violates the state's Consumer Fraud Act to advertise conversion therapy services by describing homosexuality as a mental illness, disease, or disorder.

"This ruling makes clear that when conversion therapists lie about the nature of homosexuality in order to lure these vulnerable clients into their services and their programs, they're committing fraud," says David Dinielli, deputy legal director of the Southern Poverty Law Center, which filed the lawsuit for the plaintiffs. According to the SPLC, this marks the first time a US court has found that homosexuality is not a mental disease.

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