

Interview with Michael Glatze

A former gay activist explains how he left homosexuality.

[Michael Glatze](#) (photo at right) decided at the age of 13 that he was gay and eventually founded Young Gay America, a non-profit media outreach project. Through a series of incidents, however, Glatze slowly began to realize that he was not gay at all but was dealing with fears about his own masculinity. He has since rejected his gay identity. His interview with Dr. Joseph Nicolosi describes his spiritual and emotional journey.



Dr. Joseph Nicolosi: Thank you, Michael, for your willingness to talk publicly about your life. You've discussed your religious transformation before, and we know that religious experiences can have a profound effect on one's sense of self. But I'd also like to discuss the psychological dimension. Particularly, what comes to your mind when you think back on transformative moments or insightful moments about yourself?

Michael Glatze: Well, I think maybe the first thing that comes to mind is just that I began noticing the nature of my desires, and the fact that I was able to change them.

J.N. That's an interesting phrase: "the nature of desire."

M.G. Although when I look back on my life in the gay community, there was always a sense that "You don't question your same-sex desires."

J.N. Yes. That's a very big rule in the gay community.

M.G. Right. In fact -- it's rule number one.

J.N. Rule number one: "Don't ask why." People "just are." No questions about why.

M.G. As soon as you join the club, that's the first rule. You can go ahead and examine any other thing's cause, except for homosexuality.

J.N. I can explore the foundations of my alcoholism, my overeating, my depression-- but not my homosexuality.

M.G. Right. And ironically, it's even OK for straights to question their heterosexuality.

J.N. (nods)

M.G. So I guess when I finally came to the realization that I *could* question my homosexuality, actually, it became very religious. When I started moving through the process of seeking God's will, and trying to understand what that meant, I was essentially gaining more and more knowledge, and was basically buying less into things I had long believed. I had believed in ideas that made no sense -- they held no weight. And I discovered that I didn't need to believe them anymore to have a sense of self.

J.N. OK...so you're saying, as you began to follow God's will, you began to dispense with some of the assumptions and beliefs that went along with the idea that homosexuality reflected "who you are," in the very deepest sense.

M.G. Yes—I looked at things like political ideas, social ideas, and also, more interpersonal things. For example, the nature of the power dynamic between two guys is something about which I just had been naïve. Whenever I had disagreed with the man who was my partner at that time--before I gained the sense of my own connection to God, or my connection to myself, autonomous from someone else--I would just be talked into submission.

J.N. So due to your deepening relationship to God, you began to develop a separate, autonomous identity....

M.G. Exactly. That was the first thing I definitely noticed.

J.N. So how did God come into your life? How did that happen for you?

M.G. Well, he [God] did it, really. My father had died of a sudden heart condition and I thought that I had developed what he had. I had a sort of panic – a hypochondriac reaction. For about a month while I waited for test results, I thought that I was about to die.

J.N. OK, so you had anxiety attacks. You thought you were going to have a heart attack like your father, and that put a fear into you.

M.G. It put total fear, because my dad died when he was just walking on the beach. And then I did a stupid thing and I looked on the internet and tried to diagnose myself on the internet.

J.N. Which was just increasing your anxiety, because now you find yourself having every possible symptom you've ever imagined...

M.G. Exactly. (Laughs) So I basically figured every step I take now is my last one, and I waited for the test, and finally found out that I didn't have it.

J.N. (nodding) It is often said that what really brings us to God, is fear about our mortality... having an experience when we find ourselves doubting our very survival.

M.G. There you go. So I found out I didn't have this heart condition, and I thanked God. This was the first moment in my entire life when literally *every concept* that my mind had ever entertained—*my whole existence*—was completely reevaluated.

J.N. So it was first fear, then gratitude, and then “metanoia”...an awakening to your true identity.

M.G. That was the moment. There was no more doubt. And on a fundamental level, it was the end of an intense war between myself and God.

J.N. You made peace?

M.G. It was instant peace.

J.N. Wonderful. Absolutely fantastic.

M.G. And in that experience, all of a sudden, I kind of rejoined all the other parts of humanity that I had been fighting with.

J.N. You rejoined the living.

M.G. Yes, but at that time, I didn't fully understand it as such. I just felt I had rejoined something so primal. This gave me a sense of autonomy, so that slowly, I grew to further understand what it all meant.

J.N. I jumped in and used the words “joined the living,” but what would be your own words? How would you describe the experience?

M.G. The first thing that came to me was that sense of freedom, of personal autonomy; then when I started to read the Gospels and specifically what Jesus wrote, that's when I started to gain an understanding of actually what was happening to me--the notion of a new life. In the Gospels, Jesus was giving up his life for my sake -- giving me a new life and all those concepts I had never been exposed to before.

J.N. You were not raised in a religious family?

M.G. Well, I was raised in a Christian family, but it was really all like a fairytale. My dad was not Christian; he undermined all of the more divine truths that they tried to teach us. He just kind of turned them into silly stories and nice things to celebrate at Christmas time.

J.N. Was your mother religious?

M.G. Yes. She was Christian, non-denominational. She took us to Unity churches where they had Father-God, Mother-God and like that. I think she was a good woman

who also had a need to please her husband--a man who was very agnostic and was a hippie from Berkeley in the '60's.

J.N. So tell me—what are your psychological understandings of your situation?

M.G. Well, as I said, the first thing that happened to me was that growing sense of autonomy. Then I began to notice how the power dynamics work within gay relationships.

J.N. Male-to-male.

M.G. Male-to-male – I saw that there always is a power difference, where two men actually can't come to some sort of mutual agreement without one side actually dominating the other. And that was when I started to recognize that. My relationship with my partner began to come to an end, because we would literally come to an impasse when we would not agree. He didn't know what to do when that happened, because he was used to me just backing down.

J.N. So you were changing now?

M.G. After we split, I was beginning to develop more autonomy. But it wasn't just about the relationship; there was still some very fundamental thing that was wrong. For quite awhile, I was willing to look at every possible thing it might be-- except for the homosexuality. I literally sat there, I was in tears and was praying, and then I said, "What is it? I can't understand -- what is it that's *still* wrong?" And it was almost like it was obvious. I just wrote this down on my computer screen -- "*I am straight.*" I wrote that down, and when I wrote that down, I just couldn't believe it. I felt like I was breaking the law, you know.

J.N. A breakthrough of understanding...

M.G. And yet it was so terrifying; I felt like millions of people were just laughing at me, condemning me, for writing those words.

J.N. It was like, "How dare you say you are straight!"

M.G. Yes. But from that point on, I realized that that was the truth. Then I had to work out why I had these desires and where they came from.

J.N. In other words, "If I am straight, then why do I have these attractions?"

M.G. Right.

J.N. That's exactly the first step of reorientation therapy, which is the conviction, "I am straight."

M.G. Right.

J.N. So what you are saying is, “You’re not a homosexual; you’re a heterosexual with a homosexual problem.”

M.G. Exactly. And it’s nice to hear that that’s the same approach you take, because obviously, that’s the truth. I mean, the whole gay identity is completely a fabrication.

J.N. A social construct. And when you see it that way, then you begin to ask, now, why do I have these same-sex attractions?

M.G. That’s right. For me, a lot of it actually was helped by meditation. I joined a community here-- it’s nonsectarian, but they have some ties with Buddhism.

J.N. What kind of meditation is that?

M.G. Simple; you’re in the upright position and you stay focused on your breath.

J.N. And then, whatever thought comes up, you look at it.

M.G. Exactly. And so each thing that comes up, you know, is not much more than a thought, and you get eventually deeper and deeper in your mind and you notice bigger thoughts and bigger constructs. Eventually, those slip away as well. This was neat, because the same thing began to happen with the same-sex desires. At the same time that that was happening, I was also reading your articles where you were talking about the False Self. That one really resonated with me, because it was right in line with what I had already begun to uncover in meditation -- that we have a True Self, and that, to me, was the Self that I had already recognized as being this authentic, autonomous Self-with-God.

J.N. The Self that was God-inspired, and that was realized through your meditation.

M.G. Exactly. I was holding on to that True Self, and then recognizing all the False Selves and seeing them just fall away.

J.N. Very interesting. So you started to look at all these Self-constructs from the perspective of the True Self.

M.G. When I read your piece on the False Self, and also when you were talking a lot about masculinity and the craving for masculinity, it was just so clear that that was exactly what had taken place with me. At that same time, I had already been doing a lot of reading and had tried to be more knowledgeable about all the issues which I *used* to believe in, which I no longer did believe in, politically. I was starting to understand the larger issue of how our culture dampened masculinity. I had already been examining these notions about masculinity from the perspective of liberalism, socialism and humanistic psychology. I understood that masculinity needed to be equal to femininity,

but I had adopted feminist ideas. So when I read your piece, it just made perfect sense about masculinity.

When I look back at my father, the way he was afraid of masculinity...he taught me to be afraid, too. As a result, when I was nine years old and my mom was crying about him, I became her protector against him, and against the “evil forces” of masculinity.

J.N. So it seems that this, for you, was the origin of the False Self—a refusal to claim the masculinity within you. This is a common pattern among the men I see. They have a negative image of what it means to be male, they ally themselves with their mothers against their dads, and in doing so, they never fully embrace their own masculine identity.

M.G. Absolutely. I didn’t want to associate with something that could hurt a woman like I thought it hurt my mom.

J.N. Because your mom was your secure attachment figure.

M.G. That’s right.

J.N. And without your mom, you were nothing.

M.G. That’s right.

J.N. And so in a sense, it’s not that you were just protecting Mom, but you were protecting yourself from annihilation, too.

M.G. Yes, exactly--like you put it in your essay. Exactly.

J.N. Um-hmm.

J.N. So yours was what we call the Classic Triadic family-- you say you had an over-involved mother and a distant, detached father.

M.G. Yes. And then of course, just as you described, as puberty takes place, the body is full of sexual energy, and already, I’m craving the masculinity, because I obviously need to have it in myself. But at the same time, I don’t want it, because I’m afraid of it. All that makes perfect sense-- and yet the real clincher there, when I look back on it, is this fabricated gay identity [offered by society]. I can remember very clearly when I was 14, a friend of mine coming to me and explaining to me that I was gay.

J.N. That label answers everything, doesn’t it?

M.G. Exactly. And that’s the problem, right there.

J.N. It’s a quick and easy answer to a very complicated problem.

M.G. That's right. If we continue to feed this identity to people, they'll never solve their problems.

J.N. Because the gay self-label is like putting a coating over a disordered aspect of your life.

M.G. Yes, it's like a sugar coating. And it's really insidious, when you realize that in my work as editor of a gay magazine for young people, I was doing this to teenagers! That's what made me eventually stop.

J.N. So you were editor of a gay magazine..

M.G. That's right. I had been slowly gaining an understanding about my gay identity, yet I just didn't want to say anything about that yet, at my job. But then, I would read stories about gay-affirming books going into *grade schools*, and that's when I realized that this had to stop. Obviously, I'm just one guy, but maybe by saying this now, I can help somebody.

When I think about my own life, if I had never been fed that gay identity, and if we had a clear moral approach to the issue in our society-- it [the attractions to males] would have been just something that I would have dealt with early on.

J.N. Right.

M.G. It's insane. I just don't understand it. I'll tell you that when I first looked at the NARTH site, I felt so guilty. Of course, I already knew about it-- I was an activist, and always just had catalogued you guys in with all the "right-wing hate groups." I knew who you were, because I had to keep abreast of all the "hateful people" out there. Honestly, when I got to the point of clicking on an article at the NARTH site, I felt like I was breaking the law; like I almost shouldn't even read it. I could only read a few words and then I would have to stop.

J.N. Reading NARTH materials was like a taboo to you.

M.G. It was so horrible. It was unbelievable-- and it makes me realize just how overpowered I was-- and how so many other people are, too.

J.N. Feeling that kind of social control is like being in a cult, isn't it?

M.G. It is like a cult. I mean, right now you see how they're talking about me like I actually died -- that's what they [gay activists] are saying. There was a headline in a gay newspaper, "The Life and Death of a Gay American" -- they're talking about me.

J.N. Yes, but what's ironic is that you've actually *come to life!*

M.G. Exactly!

J.N. When you read the writings of gay novelists, there's a theme of ultimate decay, where everything falls apart in the end--things just degrade, disappear and die. There's a pursuit of the beauty of youth, but with a real absence of transcendence. If you read about the life of Oscar Wilde, for example, you will see this same, pessimistic theme. There is a new book about Wilde written by a gay man, who you'd presume to be an ally of Wilde-- yet he talks about how bizarre and perverse Wilde's life was. I'm sure you've seen more of this than I have.

M.G. I've seen *so* much of that. The older guys are just drawn to the beauty of the younger guy and trying to capture it...whether it's just out of lusting, or actually physically trying to be youthful. It's just to gain that beauty and masculinity which they lack.

J.N. So do you have same-sex attractions now? What do you do when they come up?

M.G. They don't come up very often, actually. When I'd go through a meditation process, a thought would come to me, or a desire. Rather than grabbing onto it or craving it, I would just "let it be." My authentic self was growing and the False Self and the craving would then eventually just disappear.

J.N. So you see it as a battle between True and False Selves?

M.G. Yes.

J.N. So whenever the same-sex attraction of the False Self comes out.....?

M.G. Previously, I'd just grab it and want to call myself "gay" and all those other things, including all those other feelings, like putting oneself down.

J.N. So instead, you resist all that.

M.G. You don't actually fight it, because – again, maybe this comes from Buddhism – fighting it causes a battle.

J.N. Right. You don't fight it...you just sit with it, and you tolerate it.

M.G. You sit with it, and then you see it for what it is.

J.N. Right.

M.G. And when you do that, you go deeper into it.

J.N. Right.

M.G. Because a lot of this same-sex attraction is actually kind of knee-jerk. A lot of it is superficial, and it scares you into thinking this is *who you are*. I just noticed it again a couple of weeks ago. For a moment I could see my mind kind of panicking and saying “You must actually want this thing,” but really it just lasted for a split second. I didn’t freak out and grab it, but instead, just let it go.

J.N. Right. And you did this in a state of meditation?

M.G. No, just during the day. The meditation techniques get carried over into everyday life.

J.N. I see.

M.G. So when the same-sex attraction issue comes up again, I just let it be, and by doing so, I feel more like my authentic self.

J.N. How often do you mediate?

M.G. I kind of vary my schedule. Some days I’ll sit down and meditate for an hour, but usually, I do it once every three or four days. I’ve also gone through four or five weekend programs.

J.N. Do you think this will move you toward heterosexuality?

M.G. It already has.

J.N. So it is working your life.

M.G. You don’t just outgrow this False Self -- you have to build a New Self out of heterosexuality.

J.N. Exactly. You’re saying a lot of things that I teach in my workshop.

M.G. It’s true, because when you let the feelings go away, you gradually become stronger. And when that happens, you don’t even have to create the heterosexuality.

J.N. It’s spontaneous at that point, because it’s latent....

M.G. It’s already there.

J.N. It’s in your nature.

M.G. And it’s *so different* from the homosexuality.

J.N. Please explain how.

M.G. You described it best -- homosexuality puts you into a False Self. It's all in your mind -- and this is something obviously I've been very focused on -- it's *literally* all in your mind. The difference between it and heterosexuality is huge, but I don't think a lot of homosexual people recognize this, because they're so used to this life of sexuality created in the mind that they don't know the difference.

J.N. Now, when you say "in the mind," gay men will say "It's in my body. When I see a hot-looking guy, that's not my mind-- I feel that zap in the body."

M.G. Well, they'll say that. Yet, what that zap is, is a message from God that you want something outside you that you need to actually develop in yourself.

J.N. That's the "reparative" element. Homosexuality is an *effort to repair* an integral part of your nature by seeking something outside yourself that is missing within.

M.G. Exactly. If I would see some attribute of masculinity that initially drew me toward it, I would say, "Well, I have two choices here: my first choice is to go for it, clutch it and feel that masculinity. Or, the second choice, is: stop, pause, recognize it and say 'No, I don't need it. In fact, I already have it.'"

J.N. Right.

M.G. In fact, it's kind of enlightening because it's a clear message that there's something that you *can* develop in yourself. You develop it, and then you don't crave it any more.

J.N. And so much of this release from the continual craving comes from the meditation.

M.G. As a reference point, at least. And it's working, only because I'm able to know what the True Self is, and not to be frightened away from it.

J.N. That's very important. You first have to get a sense of the True Self before you do the meditation...

M.G. That's right.

J.N. How long have you been doing this? How long have you been undergoing this transformation?

M.G. Well, if you start with the first understanding of the authentic self-- I guess I didn't really know that's what it was at the time when I had the God experience about four years ago. I really started to work with all of these desires about a year-and-a-half ago.

J.N. Um-hmm.

M.G. And that was first time I actually went to the Buddhist place and started to meditate and learn a new language-- a whole new language of how to view my mind.

J.N. So basically, you go into a meditative state and you observe these thoughts as they come up.

M.G. Not even so much “go into” this state, because it’s not like it’s any different than my regular state of mind. There’s this perception that meditation is a state, but actually that’s a false duality, too. There’s really no difference between me now, and me sitting in meditation. It’s just that meditation allows me the space to calm my thoughts down and have a strong sense to return to, so that when I go back out into everyday life, I still have that reference point.

J.N. To return to what?

M.G. Just to return to myself.

J.N. I see.

M.G. Sometimes I don’t need it, because I feel like I’ve been pretty authentic or pretty solid.

J.N.: (nods)

M.G.: But how it interlaces with religion is also interesting, because I did have a lot of experiences which included trying to focus my confusion onto Jesus. This was a very visceral experience. It was like he was an actual being-- one who was able to take all of my confusion, or even all of my desires, and transmute them.

JN: Yes...

M.G.: And I turned them into something that actually was my True Self.

J.N. Absolutely. It is the power of the transcendent to transmute us.

M.G. Exactly. But I would never tell somebody, you can simply cure homosexuality by meditation, because that’s not true.

J.N. OK....

M.G. There are plenty of gay people who do meditation and who say that they’re still gay afterwards.

J.N. Yes. They’re not meditating on their homosexuality from the perspective that you are.

M.G. I'd say for me, meditation was a fortunate way to not have to go through therapy, which would have been next to impossible, because I didn't have any money. *Meditation gives you a language, but God gives you the direction and the motivation.* None of my change would have happened without God or Jesus. I know people who have been meditating for many, many years, and maybe they're in a much calmer and wiser place than I am-- but the direction they took is different, and they're still gay.

J.N. So in your situation, you're bringing that truth about the False Self and homosexuality into the meditation with you. And when you say meditation, this not a different, altered state -- it's just a "coming to the truth." Meditation is creating the occasion to stop the external distractions and just to "come to the truth," and that truth, for you, was God-inspired.

M.G. That's exactly right. But I have to say, the meditation organization annoyed me because they're anti-Christian. That was something I just had to deal with, and I prayed about it a lot. I sensed God was telling me: "No, don't stop this, this is good for you--just take from it what's good for you."

I don't want to make it sound like you can change without God, because I don't think you can. I don't know, maybe you guys have success with people who are without God....

J.N. Well, we do have success with people who are not religious, but as a Catholic, I believe the Holy Spirit is working in their lives, as well. Many men become more religious as they go through the therapy process. It's not my role as a psychologist to introduce religious ideas, but clients themselves will often gradually begin to seek out knowledge of a creator as they grow in humility and in transparency. In fact, receptivity to a relationship with God often seems to be part of the larger emotional maturation process.

Michael, thank you very much for your insights into the change process.

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