

MEL WHITE

b. July 26, 1940

MINISTER/ACTIVIST

“I’m perfectly happy going on TV now and saying I’m a gay man. I’m happy and proud to say that.”

In 1998, Mel White and his partner of more than 25 years, Gary Nixon, founded Soulforce, an organization whose mission is to “seek freedom from religious and political oppression” for GLBT people.

Mel White is an ordained minister who left his career as an adviser to prominent Christian evangelists when he came out in the mid 1990’s. White has dedicated his life to gaining acceptance for GLBT Christians.

In 1962, White graduated from Warner Pacific College. He received a master’s degree in communications from the University of Portland and a Doctorate of Ministry from Fuller Theological Seminary in Pasadena, California, where he also was a professor.

Early in his career, White served as a speechwriter for evangelical leaders Jerry Fallwell and Pat Robertson. He married a woman with whom he had one son. When he realized he was attracted to men, he tried to “cure” his homosexuality

with therapy and exorcism. Acknowledging that nothing could alter his sexual orientation, White attempted suicide.

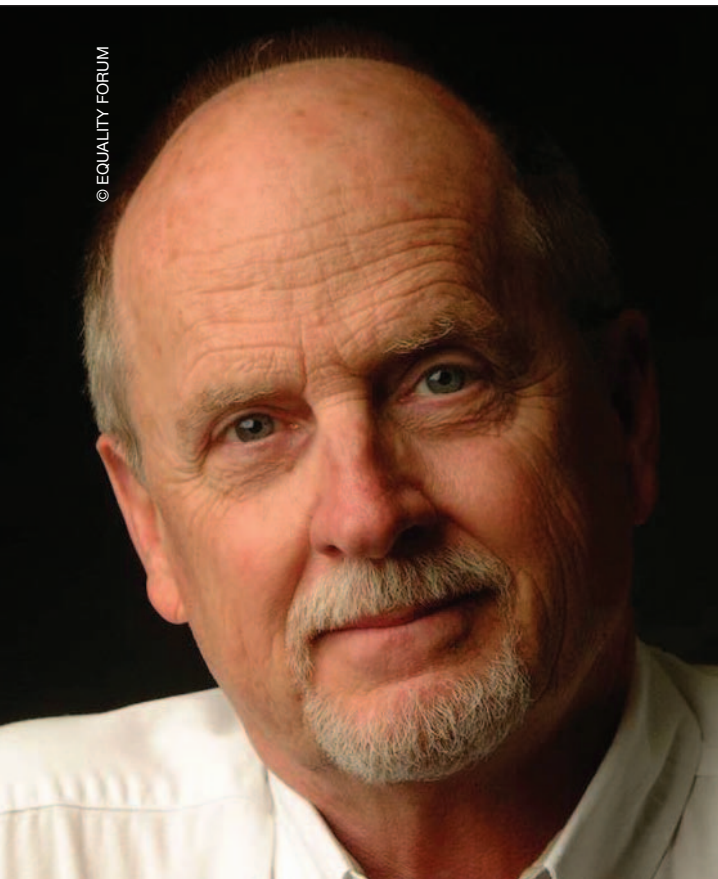
White ultimately accepted his sexuality and amicably divorced his wife. In 1993, he publicly acknowledged that he was gay when he was named dean of the Dallas Cathedral of Hope of the Universal Fellowship at Metropolitan Community Churches. Two years later, he published “Stranger at the Gate,” a book that chronicles his struggles as a gay Christian.

In the early 1990’s, White shifted his focus to GLBT advocacy, both within and outside of the church. In 1996, White led a two-week fast on the steps of Congress as the Senate considered and ultimately passed the Defense of Marriage Act. He moved the fast to the White House, where he was arrested. “How can we stand by in silent acceptance while the president and the Congress sacrifice lesbian and gay Americans for some ‘greater political good’?” he asked.

In 1998, White and his partner of more than 25 years, Gary Nixon, founded Soulforce, an organization whose mission is to “seek freedom from religious and political oppression” for GLBT people. Its name comes from “satyagraha,” a term meaning “soul force,” used by Gandhi to describe his civil rights struggle.

White is the author of nearly 20 books, including “Religion Gone Bad: Hidden Dangers from the Christian Right” (2009). His story is featured in “Friends of God” (2007), a documentary film about evangelical Christians.

In 2008, White and Nixon were legally married in California. In 2009, White and his son, Mike, were a team on the 14th season of “The Amazing Race.”



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