



Xandir O'Cando at the Bawdy Storytelling event in San Francisco on Saturday

Credits:

Bawdy Storytelling,
ReidAboutSex

Xandir O'Cando recalls abuse at Cross Creek Program for LGBT & 'troubled teens'

By [Sarah Estrella](#), Sex & Relationships Examiner

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This week queer activist Xandir O'Cando has been making headlines with her decision to tell the story of the abuse and brainwashing she suffered as an unwilling "student" in the Cross Creek Program in La Verkin, Utah, first with a [full interview by Thomas Roche at TinyNibbles.com](#), then telling her story in person at the [Bawdy Storytelling](#) event in San Francisco on Saturday.

In a note I received yesterday introducing the video at left, filmed on Saturday at the Blue Macaw in San Francisco, Dixie De La Tour -- host and founder of the Bawdy Storytelling series -- writes:

We had a huge turnout last week for Xandir, a queer teen who was sent away for gay deprogramming at Cross Creek, a behavioral modification school in Utah. It was not our usual type of evening, but she got a standing ovation for her bravery.

In the video, O'Cando recalls (using some appropriately coarse language, given what she's been through) that when she was a teenager she awoke one night to two men abducting her from her bedroom. This practice of forcible abduction into the program for "troubled teens" is what the FAQ section at [CrossCreekProgram.com](#) euphemistically refers to as "a bit of persuasion."

Via [CrossCreekProgram.com](#):

Q. How do I get my child to agree to come there?

Each situation is different, Some students will come voluntarily others need a bit of persuasion. We will help you determine what is best for your child. (The decision is yours not theirs)

O'Cando later learned that her mother had her forcibly enrolled in the Cross Creek Program after she admitted, in a family therapy session, to being sexually attracted both to men and to other women, though she was unaware of this reason for much of her time in the program. During her time at Cross Creek, O'Cando reports both physical and psychological abuse.

Her story -- which, thankfully, is the story of a survivor who has been empowered to embrace her own sexuality, despite the Cross Creek Program's efforts to the contrary -- raises important questions about the Cross Creek Program and other schools for "troubled teens" and purporting to offer "ex-gay" therapies, and also about the parents who would voluntarily have their children abducted into these types of programs.

O'Cando's allegations of abuse are not unique: The Cross Creek Program was previously associated with the Worldwide Association of Specialty Programs and Schools (WWASPS) and, as O'Cando notes in her interview with Roche, the WWASPS organization and its alumni are currently embroiled in a class-action lawsuit alleging widespread and institutionalized child abuse and human rights violations at Cross Creek and dozens of other similar "re-education" programs in the U.S. and around the world.

Parents: No matter how frustrated you may be with your teenager and regardless of your opinions or personally-held convictions about homosexuality, bisexuality, transgender issues, or other complicated issues your teenager may be working through, can we at least agree that a program that sends its representatives to forcibly abduct teenage girls from their bedrooms may not have those teenagers' best interests in mind? For better resources, check out the [How to Be An Ally page at SexEtc.org](#) and [look up your local chapter of Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays \(PFLAG\)](#) -- and yes, there are even three chapters in Utah -- and be wary of any program that purports to "cure" homosexuality or "re-program" your teenager's behavior and attitude.

Here's hoping that O'Cando's story is heard far and wide, and that it may spare other teens this humiliation, degradation, and abuse.

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