

## Smoke gets in your eyes

By Sean McLennan

It is not uncommon for educated individuals—doctors or PhD's—to call on science and statistics to lend credence to what is fundamentally a religious stance. Doctor Laura Schlessinger ([www.drLaura.com](http://www.drLaura.com)) and Doctor Judith Reisman ([www.drJudithReisman.org](http://www.drJudithReisman.org)) are good examples. I am disturbed to see that one of these individuals could potentially become a leader of our country. Of course, I speak of Alliance member Grant Hill and his vociferous “medical” views on homosexuality.

As a PhD student at Indiana University I am no stranger to scientific argumentation and statistics; as a native of southern Alberta, Grant Hill is no stranger to me—I went to school with his kids and he was even my doctor in my early childhood. With that in mind, I would like to challenge the claims that he makes.

Grant Hill denounces homosexuality on the basis that “...it can be unhealthy in the same way smoking is.” This alludes to scientific studies that demonstrate that homosexuals—by which, he seems to mean only homosexual men—have increased incidents of all sorts of medical problems. Since he doesn't actually cite any of that research, it's impossible to address its validity explicitly so let's presume that it does indeed exist and that it does indicate what he says it does.

So what? Examine the statistics of race and health in the U.S. and you might find a strong correlation between African-Americans and poor health. That does not

imply a causal relationship between the two. In fact, if you did find such a correlation it would be mediated by the fact that lower socio-economic positions are biased toward racial minorities and lack access to quality education and health care because of extremely complex social reasons. Hill does not mention any research that deals with the complex social issues surrounding homosexuality, nor those that affect individuals growing up gay or lesbian. Like all health and social problems, the best way to minimize the risks is through education—something that cannot occur when our leaders persist in dealing in misinformation and obscuring personal opinion with “scientific argumentation”.

Grant Hill compares homosexuality to smoking and obesity since they are controllable “lifestyle” characteristics. Let's give him the benefit of the doubt and assume that he does not mean “being gay”—i.e. a feeling same-sex attraction—is a lifestyle choice, for there is certainly no conclusive scientific evidence to back up either side of that argument. Let's assume that he means the choice to actually have sex. In which case, I say, let's then treat homosexuals precisely the same way that smokers are treated. Smokers are permitted to marry whomever they like. They are not denied benefits or visitation rights. They can sponsor partners to enter Canada. They are allowed to adopt. Let's also pour funds into STD education warning the public (both gay and straight) of the risks of unprotected, casual sex. Let's also target teens and educate them about safe sex and homosexuality and in that way help them to grow up with balanced, informed, and

healthy attitudes towards sexuality. And in return, like smokers, I don't think it's unreasonable to ask gay people to only have sex in their own homes or in designated areas.

Let's presume that it is true that a “homosexual sex” (not just unsafe sex) is unhealthy—and opinion which is not, by the way, the prevailing attitude of those who actually study sexuality. Grant Hill is a general practitioner with no particular expertise in this area. I urge interested individuals to visit the Kinsey Institute online ([www.kinsey.org](http://www.kinsey.org)), the world's leading research institute for human sexuality. That issue is tangential to the issue of whether gay and lesbian people should be afforded the same rights as other Canadians (including smokers and obese people).

What the news coverage of Grant Hill's statements neglects to mention is that he is well known in our southern Albertan community (surrounding Okotoks) as a devout Mormon. It seems to me, at least, that Hill's stance on gay rights is founded in his particular religion, not in science. He has yet to forward a scientific argument for why homosexuals should not be allowed to marry or adopt or to participate in any of the fundamental rights that heterosexuals enjoy. At best, he has laid out some statistics that

select insurance companies might want to consider (rightly or wrongly) in determining premiums.

Although, it seems to never explicitly enter into their platforms, the Alliance Party is fundamentally based in so-called traditional Christian values which, given the diversity of the Canadian public, is inappropriate for any aspiring national (or provincial) leadership.



Photo by: Andy Short

Sean McLennan has a degree in Linguistics from the University of Calgary and he's currently working towards a PhD in Linguistics and Cognitive Science at Indiana University. In between research, classes, and teaching, he does Web design, writes for a Japanese English-learning magazine, and is active in a local GLBT education group.



## topdrawers.com™

Shop Online!

- bikinis
- thongs
- jockstraps
- briefs
- boxer briefs
- tanks
- bodysuits

**Canada's Largest Selection of Underwear Online.**

1030 Denman St  
604.684.4861

2970 W Broadway  
604.733.4861

Vancouver

www.empiresuites.com


### EMPIRE EXECUTIVE SUITES

*Alternative to a Hotel*

**Furnished Suites**

- Brand New Downtown Furnished Executive Suites
- Fireplace, Radiant In-Floor Heating & Balcony
- Big Kitchens, 6 Appliances
- Utilities, Cable & Local Calls Included
- Close To Trendy 17th Ave Restaurants & Mount Royal Shops

Call **510-4545**  
Toll Free **1-866-510-4545**  
CALGARY, ALBERTA



OFFICE HOURS

Monday to Thursday  
7:30 am to 9:00 pm

Friday to Saturday  
7:30 am to 6:00 pm

Sunday Closed

## Castleridge Veterinary Clinic

Small Animal Veterinary Clinic

**Dr. Brian Jesmer, DVM**

126 - 55 Castleridge Blvd NE  
Calgary, AB T3J 3J8  
ph: 403-280-1585  
fax: 403-280-1589

New Patients Welcome!