



# Dallin Oaks says shock therapy of gays didn't happen at BYU while he was president. Records show otherwise.

Researchers say the treatments took place well into the Latter-day Saint apostle's tenure as head of the church-owned school.



(The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints) President Dallin H. Oaks of the First Presidency delivers the 2021 Joseph Smith Lecture in the Dome Room of the Rotunda at the University of Virginia on Friday, Nov. 12, 2021.

By Peggy Fletcher Stack | Nov. 16, 2021, 1:00 p.m. | Updated: 2:34 p.m.

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In a [landmark speech Friday](#) at the University of Virginia, Latter-day Saint apostle [Dallin H. Oaks](#) said he had recently “come to understand better the distress of persons” — including LGBTQ individuals — who feel that some religious believers invoke the U.S. Constitution to deny rights to others.

The address was hailed by some as a step toward empathy by Oaks, a top leader in The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, [a former Utah Supreme Court justice and a former Brigham Young University president.](#)

Yet, during a question-and-answer session earlier that day at the law school — [a video of which has been circulating on social media](#) — the first counselor in the faith’s governing First Presidency refused to discuss the impact of the church’s past mistreatment of its LGBTQ members.

Oaks categorically denied that BYU had used electroshock therapies on gay students during his [tenure from 1971 to 1980.](#)

“When I became president of BYU, that had been discontinued earlier,” Oaks said in answer to a question about those treatments, “and it never went on under my administration.”

According to researcher Gregory Prince and others, that statement is demonstrably false.

In his 2019 book, [“Gay Rights and the Mormon Church: Intended Actions, Unintended Consequences,”](#) Prince cites “university-approved” research in 1976 by then-BYU graduate student Max McBride with 14 gay subjects. The male subjects were hooked up to monitors that measured their arousal when shown photos of nude men or women.

Dallin H. Oaks | University of Virginia Q&A Session **\*\*FULL VERSION\*\*** (electroshock therapy ...



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If the subject “experienced sexual arousal from a photograph of a nude male, he would receive a shock in the bicep,” Prince reported about the McBride research. “A gradual increase of voltage upon repeated arousals was to serve as a negative feedback stimulus that would, according to the hypothesis, ‘reorient’ him from homosexual to heterosexual, whereupon photographs of nude females were supposed to elicit sexual arousal.”

Two weeks after these “treatments,” subjects offered their self-evaluations and said they were “significantly less homosexual than heterosexual,” McBride concluded. “This finding suggests that the type of behavior therapy used in the present study was highly effective in changing subjective evaluation of sexual orientation.”

One of the subjects, John Cameron, wrote a “harrowing, powerful play” titled “14,” [The Salt Lake Tribune reported in 2008](#). “The title refers to the number of men included in the three-month study.”

At the time, Cameron hoped it would alter his same-sex attraction, the newspaper said. “Instead, the psychological and emotional wounds nearly crippled him.”

The Utah-based faith has since [backed away from such therapies](#) and other attempts to change a person’s sexual orientation.

Oaks declined to comment on the discrepancy between his memory and the research, church spokesperson Doug Andersen said Monday. The church representative then pointed to the faith’s [2016 public statement](#) — reinforced several years later — about so-called conversion therapy.

“The church denounces any therapy, including conversion and reparative therapies,” it stated, “that subjects an individual to abusive practices, not only in Utah, but throughout the world.”

There are two ways to think about Oaks’ answer last week, said Chloe Fife, a third-year law student at Virginia who is from St. George and was present at the Q&A session.

“Either he didn’t know it was happening, which is disappointing,” Fife said Monday, “or what he said was untrue.”

She prefers to believe the former.

“My hope is that he didn’t know,” Fife said, “especially for the folks who were impacted by BYU’s history of conversion therapy.”

Still, she is skeptical about Oaks’ wider proposed balancing of LGBTQ rights and religious freedom.

If the Latter-day Saint leader “isn’t willing to consider past harms he has done to the LGBTQ community in the church and in Utah,” she said, “I don’t know how he can engage in conversations about compromise in the future.”

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- 
- **sugarhoser** 9 minutes ago  
His pants must be blazin , if the rhyme holds true !
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- 
- **Reader Since 1955** 50 minutes ago  
Come now, responders.  
There is a difference between a standard therapy procedure in a clinic and an academic research study. Peggy Fletcher Stack certainly knows the difference, so she is being disingenuous in this article.  
No university president knows all the research projects that are taking place on campus, and besides, in 1976 it was probably considered a legitimate avenue of research. It obviously doesn't work and is degrading, but science is the discipline of testing things.
- 👍 Respect 1 ↩ Reply ↩ Share 🚩 Report
- 
- **ChairmanMauzer** 47 minutes ago  
↩ In reply to **Reader Since 1955**  
This practice is indefensible regardless of whether it was a standard therapy procedure or a research study. In that sense the difference is irrelevant.
- "No university president knows all the research projects that are taking place on campus"
- So the buck doesn't stop at the top?
- "in 1976 it was probably considered a legitimate avenue of research"

LOL

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– **Mark Beesley** 14 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **ChairmanMauzer**

Thankfully for science, this attitude is not widespread. Do a quick Google search of archaic medical practices, and then argue against research to determine whether any of those practices were effective.

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– **ChairmanMauzer** 5 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

You need a study to know that torturing people with electricity to try and change an inborn trait that doesn't need changing is wrong?

I guess that's religion for you. You can justify anything as long as its your church doing it.

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– **Cameron Swinton** 39 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Reader Since 1955**

Then why didn't he just say he wasn't aware of any research like that? He was quite clear: "When I became president of BYU, that had been discontinued earlier, and it never went on under my administration." Peggy Fletcher Stack is taking him at his word and showing why that statement may not be true.

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– **Mark Beesley** 34 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Reader Since 1955**

Thank you.

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– **Reader Since 1955** 24 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Reader Since 1955**

I knew a guy who was in that study, and he explained to me how it worked, basically as described in the article above. He entered it because he wanted to be "cured" of his homosexuality. I had never heard of the notion of aversion therapy before my conversation with him. It didn't work on him, and I suspect it never worked on anyone, and he was disgusted with the whole process.

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– **Guest Unknown** 19 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Reader Since 1955**

Nice try. Lying for the Lord is a fixture of the church. Oaks used to proudly speak of these things, now that public opinion recognizes this as torture, he's attempting to change the past.

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– **bee wink** 58 minutes ago

More of the Mormons trying to whitewash history. How could the president of the university not know?? I believe that as much as I believe the church is no longer racist.

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– **Abequoi le Bon** 1 hour ago

He is lying. I know whereof I speak. I was one of the ones who went through that at BYU when he was president. I had to do so in order to be allowed to graduate. And that was the only reason I put up with that bullsh\*t.

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– **Kitty Q** 2 hours ago

The old prune has selective memory loss.

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– **So I Said** 2 hours ago

Oh, by the way, they were electroshocking underage teenage boys. I think the youngest was 15. Any notion that these people volunteered is BS. Doesn't matter. They were brain washed and indoctrinated in what is normally called a cult. The seriousness of this is apparent by Oaks willingness to lie about it.

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– **Full MT** 2 hours ago

What a surprise! Lies roll off the tongue of these profits without the slightest hint of compunction. Hinckley had the unmitigated audacity to deny one of Mormonism's core tenets on national television when he told Larry King the church didn't teach that "as man is God once was . . . etc.". Lie, deny and obfuscate as practiced by Joseph Smith remain as cornerstones of the Mormonism's so called "restored gospel". Oaks' motto of 'never apologize or take responsibility' is deeply woven throughout the fabric of the Mormon ethos.

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– **Robert S** 2 hours ago

Ah, the power of selective memories! Perhaps Oaks needs... a wake-up shock?

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– **Guy Incognito** 2 hours ago

This is the LDS equivalent of "I hardly knew the guy, he might have brought me coffee once."

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– **So I Said** 2 hours ago

"No Apology" Oaks is flat out lying! It was his job to know! He was probably getting updates on how the program was doing... Oaks showed his racism, homophobia, sexism and all around bigotry in public speech's many times and especially at that time! He supported and maintained institutionalised racist segregation at the school and in his religion. If discovered, he kicked any "homosexuals" out of BYU! He has repeatedly, to this day, spoken derogative of the LGBTQ community. And he was much worse back in the 70s. Oaks, by any standard of morality, is a dispicable man. And he's up to be the next prophet! Unreal! In the normal private business world, this guy would be fired or never hired.

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– **John Darlington** 2 hours ago

Once again we see the Mormon lies living on and on and on-----But it must be O.K. for the Mormon leadership to lie on this and many other lies because the members turn a blind eye to this lie and many these liars in leadership positions are elected to public office year after tear as well...But it matters not as the Mormon Church was born from a lie...

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– **Kay Shean** 2 hours ago

Is Oaks' statement a "white lie" a "black lie" or a "damn lie?" Whatever the adjective before the word, it is clearly a lie.

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– **Guest Unknown** 28 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Kay Shean**

Lying for the Lord doesn't count in Oaks world view.



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– **Lisa Martinez** 2 hours ago

Another so-called Mormon apostle tries to whitewash and rewrite Mormon history, yet again. And they don't even need the convert tithing money anymore. Haven't needed it for a long time.

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– **Seldom Seen Dave** 2 hours ago

If the church actually wants to denounce electroshock torture of gay kids, it needs to start with an unequivocal apology for its past behavior.

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– **Don Nash** 3 hours ago

Dallin Oaks maintains "there was absolutely NO torture while I was president of BYU." Gay/lesbian students attending BYU held their sexual orientation as closely guarded secrets. Now the world can know the REAL effects of 'shock therapy'. Dallin Oaks wouldn't lie about that...would he?

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– **John Darlington** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Don Nash**

Dallin Oakes like all past leaders will LIE about anything at any time to keep the dues money coming from its brainwashed members.

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– **Steve Warren** 3 hours ago

*Oaks categorically denied that BYU had used electroshock therapies on gay students during his tenure from 1971 to 1980.*

I do think there's a big difference between requiring students engaging in gay behavior to submit to electroshock therapy or be kicked out of the university vs. enlisting gay students to voluntarily participate in research on electroshock aversion therapy.

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– **John Darlington** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Steve Warren**

Which do we have we may NEVER know because the lies from Mormon Leadership like Oakes moves forward faster and faster everyday...

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– **Guy Incognito** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Steve Warren**

There is a difference, but the difference would be between "had used" or "had required." Oaks said the former, so the distinction is without difference.

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– **Henry Drummond** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Steve Warren**

They may have been volunteers, but this type of "research" was out and out quackery. Nothing of the sort should have been happening under the guise of scientific research.

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– **Mark Beesley** 3 hours ago (Edited)

There is a difference between using shock therapy treat someone, and researching to see if shock therapy is effective to treat someone. The 1975 study of the 14 students was research in which the students volunteered. Was it wrong to conduct such research by 1975 standards? Perhaps it wasn't so clear in 1975. But to suggest Oaks lied because he does not agree that research is the same thing as therapy, well, that is just small-minded.

Peggy Fletcher-Stack should have known better. But her editors are anxious for every opportunity to cast the leadership of the Church in a bad light. That is unfortunate because the intelligence of the average SLT reader is such that they lack the ability of critical analysis.

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– **Seldom Seen Dave** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

This behavior is not limited to the events at BYU. The church condoned and materially supported the involuntary electroshock torture of minors, at the direction of parents and ecclesiastical leaders, over a long period of time.

The LDS church committed nothing less than crimes against humanity, over a long period of time, and should be held to account. Period.

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– **Mark Beesley** 39 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Seldom Seen Dave**

Wow!!! You should write a letter to someone.

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– **ChairmanMauzer** 31 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

Are you one of those guys Dubya hired to try and defend waterboarding?

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– **Gene Fitzgerald** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

What a condescending post. I suppose since you are a chosen one that only you and your ilk have the ability to think critically. Typical of the super religious.

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– **Lisa Martinez** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

Uh huh. Blame the media. That's always been a popular go-to tactic to utilize by god's only true church leaders and members.

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– **Kay Shean** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

Whether or not it was wrong to conduct electroshock treatment for sexual orientation, or to do research on said procedure has nothing to do with Oaks' claiming it was not done during his tenure as President of BYU. The truthful response is, "If it was happening, I didn't know. If I had known I would have investigated to see what was happening. If it was harmful, I would have stopped it." See how easy that critically analysis is?

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– **Mark Beesley** 40 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Kay Shean**

I love it when my wife tell me what I should have said instead of what I said. I bet President Oaks has the same reaction.

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– **Guest Unknown** 31 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Kay Shean**

The problem is that a) as President it was Oaks job to know and b) it was NOT considered harmful a long as it produced the desired result.

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– **Keith Breitenstein** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

“Small-minded” also describes being narrow-minded and only seeing one side. That it apparently bothers some when flaws and hypocrisy of the LDS church are brought to light demonstrates a failure to look behind the curtain. From a “believer’s” point of view it is very difficult to acknowledge that “God’s church” can be anything but perfect. The reality is that the LDS church, like any other organization, is far from perfect. Acknowledging the errors, omissions and spin is critical for improvement. That anyone was guilted or otherwise coerced into subjecting themselves to shock therapy at BYU is sad and speaks of the general homophobia and bias against anyone not fitting neatly into a binary definition of human sexuality at BYU.

If it’s upsetting for you to read differing opinions you may want to stay in your bubble by only viewing the Deseret News. After all, that is where only really smart, broadly educated and never biased or bigoted people hang out, right?

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– **Mark Beesley** 42 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Keith Breitenstein**

I didn't think my comment was indicative of someone who is upset. But if it is upsetting for you to read that there are people who do not simply accept the SLT editors judgment about what constitutes a lie, perhaps you should not read the comments.

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– **Guy Incognito** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

Again, there is a distinction between the two, yes, but the distinction does not lie in what Oaks actually said, and he made no effort to establish such a distinction. Regardless of whether it was "so clear" by 1975 standards. I can't explain why Oaks lied, but the explanation does not appear to fit within your apologetics. Which puts you in no position to criticize the critical analysis of intelligence of any other reader.

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– **Mark Beesley** 47 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Guy Incognito**

Did you watch the Q&A? Did it look or sound like a forum where Oaks could be expected to give an expansive answer about the history of EST at BYU? It appears you want to be fair-minded. If so, view the video again with the goal of understanding rather than confrontation.

I am quite comfortable assessing the critical analysis of other readers, and they are free make judgments about me as well. I've been around the block more than once. Nothing surprises me anymore . . . not since the Country elected the anti-Christ to be President with the support of way too many Latter-day Saints.

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– **Mark Smith** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

Critical analysis? Fascinating! Be sure to employ those same skills next time you research your next Sunday School lesson - might not like what you find.

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– **Mark Beesley** 45 minutes ago (Edited)

↩ In reply to **Mark Smith**

Any particular lesson you have in mind? I have taught Gospel Doctrine, at least when I wasn't living Babylon. Been there. Done that.

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– **Mark Smith** 13 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

What lesson don't I have in mind. Oh, my bad - you taught gospel doctrine. Nevermind, you know everything. Glad you changed your sinning ways and stopped wearing your blue shirt to sacrament meeting.

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– **Packers 123** 2 hours ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

Mark, "ability of critical analysis". Coming from an LDS follower, isn't that what they call a "oxymoron", I mean I read the Trib so I'm not really sure...

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– **Guest Unknown** 52 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

Oaks lied. Period. Playing word games for the masses doesn't change the FACTS. I agree though the intelligence and lack of education of the average mormon lets him get away with it. Any other octogenarian would be assumed to be just "slipping" and losing their mental faculties if they so blatantly lied about past events that are so well documented as to not be in dispute.

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– **ChairmanMauzer** 32 minutes ago (Edited)

↩ In reply to **Mark Beesley**

"There is a difference between using shock therapy treat someone, and researching to see if shock therapy is effective to treat someone."

No there isn't. Ultimately you're still torturing people with electricity to try and force a change in their innate nature that doesn't need changing. Oaks claimed it wasn't happened when, in fact, it was. He either lied or was incompetently ignorant in his post.

"But her editors are anxious for every opportunity to cast the leadership of the Church in a bad light."

One need not wait long for that. The church does it all on its own every time it gets caught in yet another lie.

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– **wasatchcascade** 3 hours ago

I'm guessing that when the treatment was administered, Oaks may not have known about it then; but later, he certainly would or should have. And then days ago, he conveniently says it didn't happen during his decade long term. University presidents are insulated from most of what goes on at a university. The academic side with departments, professors, assistants & students. And then the facilities, housing, food, building maintenance, construction, fund raising. There are eyes and ears on a campus like BYU, if the honor code is broken, the malcontent(s) is brought in, except the standard normally doesn't apply to staff or professors. If a stray or controversial visitor or speaker were to arrive on campus, someone like Oaks would likely have to approve it.

And then the task and act of "jerking around electrically" with male youth in an academic setting. Oaks may have been out of town, in Salt Lake Lake with the First Presidency, or traveling. But when he returned, the echoes & eyes and ears would have whispered and called out. Maybe Oaks has a classic "false memory" & with a stern face & rigid lines "escapes" by saying, not on my watch. But then up and down the line of Catholic leadership, so many said, not on my watch and they were found to be wrong, and some criminally charged. And in the political and corporate world. deception a "necessity" to smooth out otherwise contours in the road. Couples and adults

do it too when bad habits or breach of trust occurs. Oaks, just part of that overall mix, I suppose.

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– **noosa beach** 3 hours ago

This is a lie and Oaks knows it. The topic has been too well covered and discussed over *decades* for him to pretend he wasn't aware of it happening during his tenure.

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– **Guest Unknown** 58 minutes ago

↩ In reply to **noosa beach**

And yet, he lies and the flock accepts his new reality as fact.

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– **Tom Nedreberg** 3 hours ago

Another example of science vs. religion. Studies are done, timelines are known, empirical evidence is revealed and religion denies it. Another LDS lie, coverup, misinterpretation, or denial. No matter what it is, it's little wonder so many are leaving the flock.

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