PRAY THE GAY AWAY:

The Extraordinary Lives of Bible Belt Gays

by Dr. Bernadette Barton

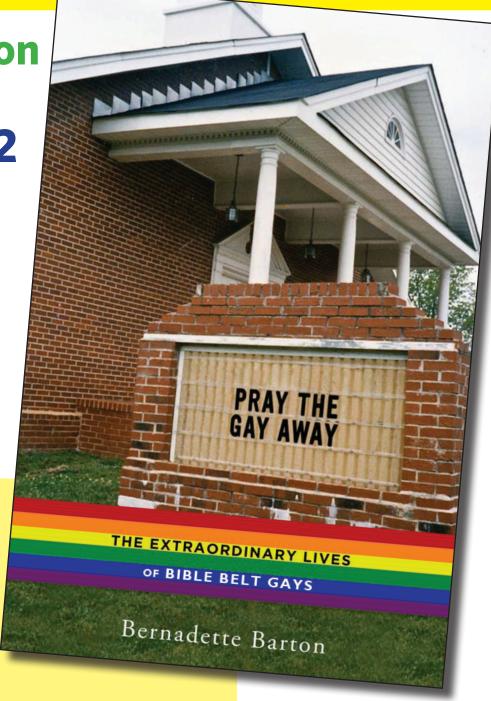
Thursday, Nov. 1, 2012 7 p.m.

Mason Hall Auditorium

Free admission Open to everyone

Dr. Bernadette Barton, a professor of sociology and women's studies at Morehead State University, explores the toll of homophobia on the lives of Bible Belt gays, and the ways in which they respond to that adversity. Describing the Bible Belt as a region of "compulsory Christianity," Barton (*Stripped: Inside the Lives of Exotic Dancers*) argues

that the influence of Christian institutions on secular life creates "a foundation for passive and active homophobia." Barton draws on a trove of ethnographic data, including in-depth interviews with Bible Belt gays, visits to the Creation Museum and a megachurch, attendance at an Exodus International conference for ex-gays, and her own experiences as an openly lesbian professor. Interview subjects share wrenching stories of being disowned by their families, and the immeasurable harm caused by attempts to reconcile identities as good, moral Christians with the unchangeable fact of their sexuality. As Barton notes, gay youth are overrepresented among homeless youth and at high risk of suicide. Though Barton documents numerous cases of religious-based abuse, she is tolerant of conservative Christians — "mostly nice people intent on doing good even if our definition of what that meant differed." Although many of her subjects felt abandoned by their religion, others discovered that adversity strengthened their understanding of faith, God and spirituality.



The University Store will sell copies of **Pray the Gay Away** at a book signing to follow the presentation.

Questions? Contact Jody Cofer, Murray State LGBT program coordinator 270.809.5040

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