



instinct

10 years

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including
ARMISTEAD MAUPIN
JOHN AMAECHI
ALEC MAPA
MARC SHAIMAN & more!

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Ya gotta love a 23-year old seminarian who, in the middle of a phone interview about God and Jesus and all that says, “Can I put you on hold? My boyfriend keeps trying to call.” But then, Justin Cannon is not your grandfather’s Episcopalian. He began his personal journey out of the lies and self-loathing not by fleeing the church, but by delving deeper into the Bible. In doing that he found—surprise!—it doesn’t condemn faithful same-sex relationships after all. So he got busy and wrote a book about it called *The Bible, Christianity, & Homosexuality*.

Cannon then launched a website called Inclusive Orthodoxy (truthsetsfree.net). “That’s tailored to the GLBT Christian struggling with being gay, with being closeted,” he explains. “It affirms the idea that in coming out and accepting ourselves, we don’t have to abandon the rest of the faith.”

And then he started up an online service called rainbowchristians.com. Justin, who currently resides in the San Francisco area, says this site’s not so much about holy homos hooking up as it is about helping queer Christians meet and develop friendships.

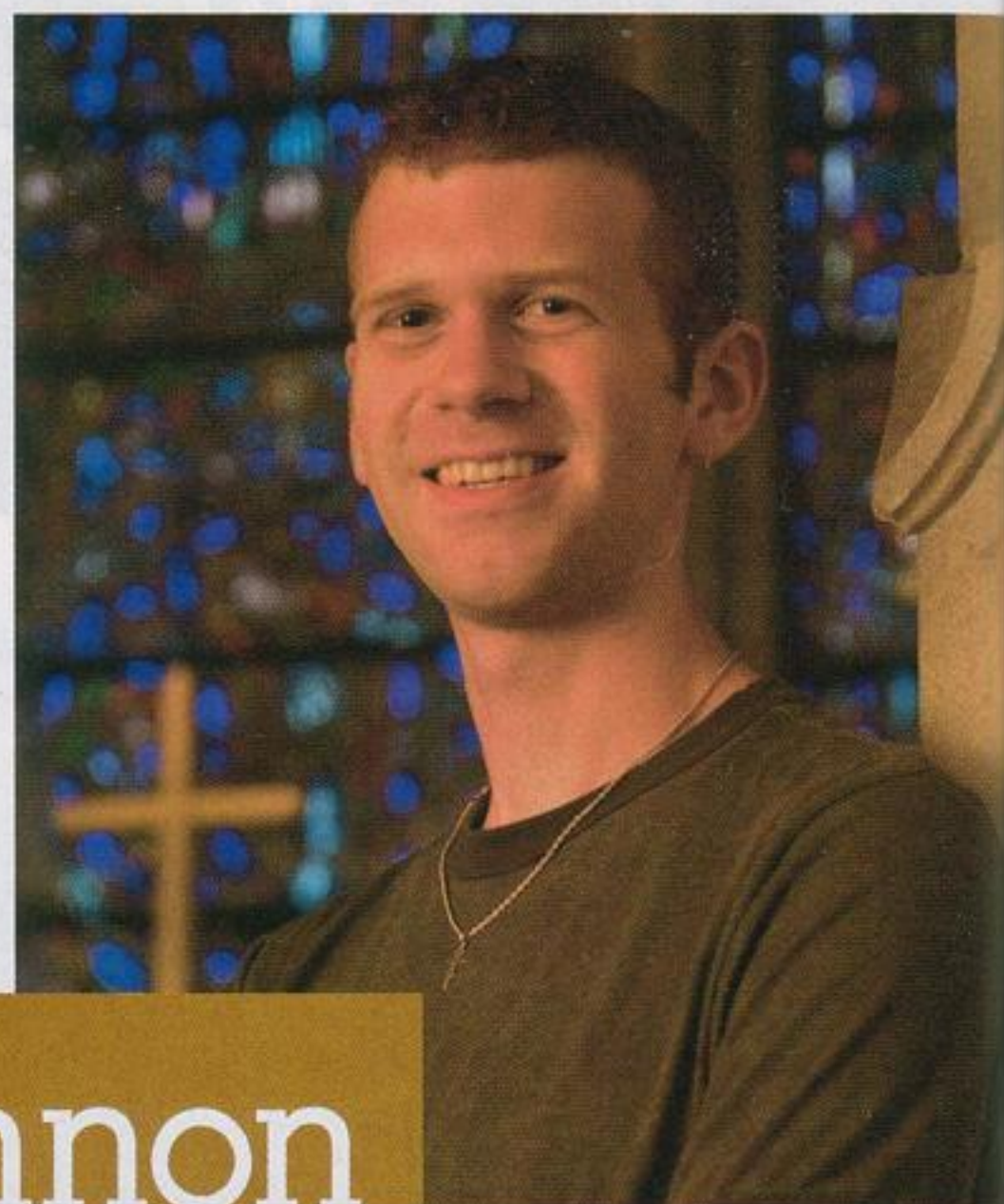
You can see from his website that Justin’s ministry is deeply based in scripture and he embraces an ecumenical view of unity that transcends denominations. “I don’t think one [denomination] has a monopoly,” Justin says. “They each bring gifts to the larger church, the larger body of believers.”

He acknowledges the pain of gays who have suffered such spiritual violence that they want nothing to do with religion. “I think we need to honor that and recognize this is a part of their journey,” Justin explains. “People within the church have abused the Gospels, but if you look at Christ... you find him condemning the hypocrites. You find him saying ‘blessed are you who are persecuted.’”

Justin also understands the person deeply and painfully closeted within their own church. “Some people are called to really be out there and say ‘I have a place here, too.’ And I think we need more people to step forward and claim that ground, that holy land that we also have a rightful place

on. But some people just aren’t called to that, and I don’t feel that I can say to everyone that you need to be right here where I am, because it’s taken me years to get where I am. It’s the journey.”

And it’s Justin’s journey that is making the way easier for other gay Christians. —**JOEL PERRY**



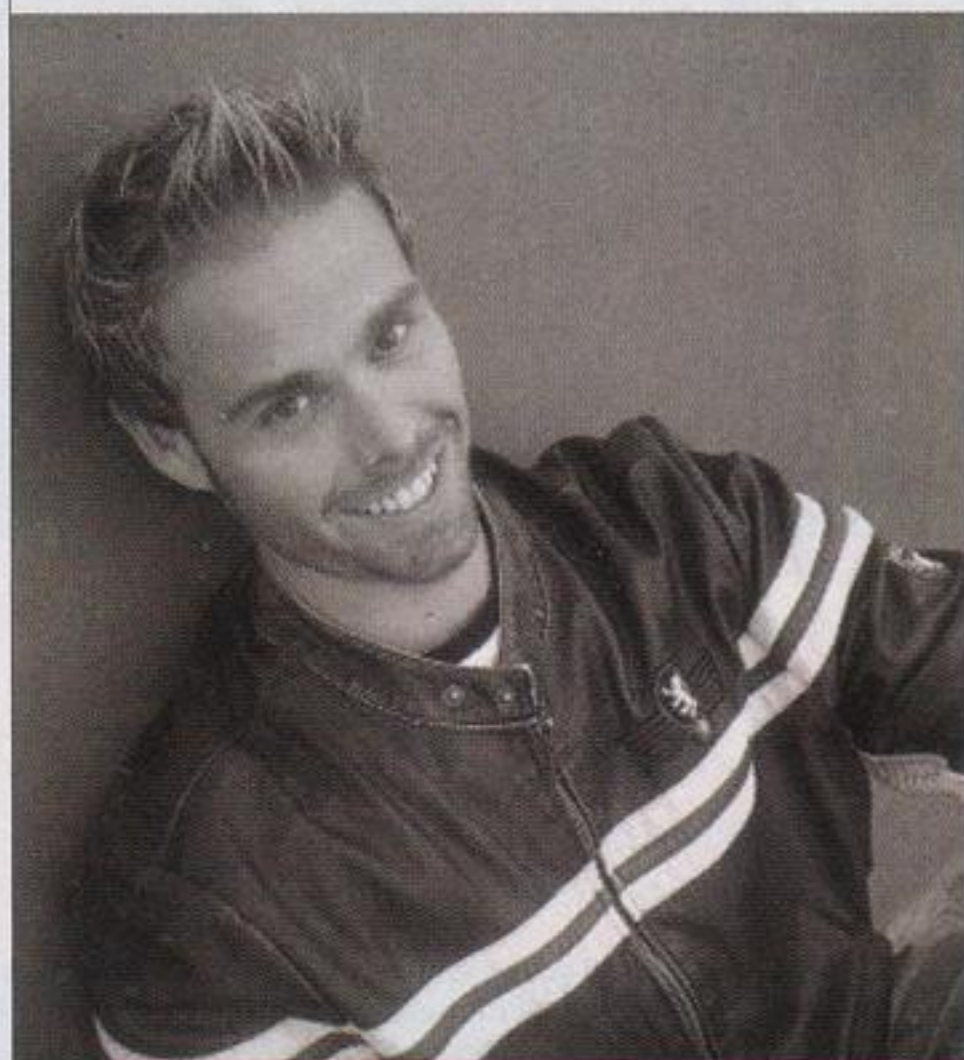
Justin Cannon

the young man of God

THIS YOUNG CHRISTIAN SET OUT ON HIS OWN SPIRITUAL PATH TO HELP GAYS WHO ARE STRUGGLING WITH RELIGION

His students know him as Mr. Storsley, their out-and-proud gay French and physical education teacher. To the rest of us, he is Mr. Canada.

When Darren Storsley won Mr. Canada Manhunt a few years back, he had no idea that his acceptance speech would cause such controversy.



Darren Storsley

the role model

THIS FORMER MR. CANADA MANHUNT IS A TRUE CHAMPION FOR THE GAY CAUSE

“My victory tonight isn’t just for me,” he said to the audience. “It’s for anyone who’s been laughed at for how you look or because of your gender or your sexual orientation. Winning this represents all of you, because I’ve been in your place.”

Growing up, Darren was overweight and bullied by others for being gay. In addition, he had a strict religious upbringing, with a Baptist minister for a grandfather, and was sent to psychotherapy in an attempt to make him straight. He was constantly told that being gay was wrong, and he suffered from low self-esteem, never dreaming that one day he would be Mr. Canada—but even that came with its own challenges.

“Being the first openly gay Mr. Canada was an uphill struggle,” he says. He received a call from an organizer telling him that had they known he was gay, the outcome may have been different. But Darren persevered and found himself walking onto that stage draped in a Canadian flag.

Just last spring, Darren took his title to the Mr. World contest in China, competing against

56 other countries. In the end, he took home a gold medal for winning the physically and mentally grueling “survival” challenges. He cites the support of his family, friends and students for helping him get to that point. “My students were very proud of me,” he beams.

But being an out gay teacher was not easy, especially teaching in a Bible Belt community just outside Vancouver, British Columbia. As host of Canada’s first gay and lesbian news program, *Out On TV* and local entertainment show *The Express*, he was outed for all to see. When he received death threats at work, school officials ignored him. So he took matters to the police, started up a gay-straight alliance and has since used his Mr. Canada title to appear in a cross-country anti-bullying campaign. “That campaign, out of everything I’ve done as Mr. Canada, is one of my favorite things because it hits close to home and it’s an issue I feel passionate about.”

Oh, and yes, guys, Mr. Canada is currently single. But it’s going to take a very special man who can keep up with his passion, his positivity and with the fact that he wants to make a difference. “I want to find a guy who is proud of his answer when, at the end of the day, he can look in the mirror and ask himself what he has done to make our world a little brighter for someone else.” —**ALAN WOO**