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Prop. 8 fight returns to Utah

Sundance » Pain moves ex-KTVX reporter who is gay to make film.

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THE SALT LAKE TRIBUNE

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The debate over gay marriage -- and The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints' role in passing California's anti-gay Proposition 8 -- is coming back to Utah.

"We're bringing the pain of this home," said Reed Cowan, who directed "8: The Mormon Proposition," which will have its world premiere next month in Park City at the Sundance Film Festival.

Cowan's documentary is one of more than 50 titles announced Dec. 3 in the festival's non-competitive slate.

"It's really well done, and it's really thorough," festival director John Cooper said. "[Cowan] goes very deep, into the Mormon Church and its relationship to the anti-gay-marriage movement, all the way back almost before it really started, all the way back to the '90s."

The movie chronicles the 2008 campaign for Prop. 8, which overturned a court decision to allow same-sex marriage in California. In the film, Cowan tracks the LDS Church's involvement with the Yes on 8 forces -- and reveals what the film's producer/editor Steven Greenstreet calls "an orchestrated strategic campaign" by the church to pass similar ballot measures in other states over the past two decades.

The LDS Church had no comment on the film, a spokesman said Thursday.

"I saw the pain in my own family, relative to the subject of Proposition 8 -- and whether or not they'd go with what the prophet said," said Cowan, who is gay and was born in Roosevelt, Utah. His personal experience prompted Cowan, who worked as a TV reporter and anchor for seven years in Utah, to make the movie.

The documentary traces the politics behind "quashing the civil rights of a marginalized group," Cowan said, and profiles gays and lesbians who "not only felt the sting of Proposition 8, but the other measures like it all over the country."

One politician featured prominently in "8: The Mormon Proposition" is Utah state Sen. Chris Butters, R-West Jordan.

Cowan's interview with Butters in January -- in which the lawmaker mentioned "pig sex," compared gay activists to Muslim radicals and called the gay-rights movement "probably the greatest threat to America" -- was broadcast on Cowan's former station, KTVX, Ch. 4, in February.

The resulting uproar included calls for Butters' resignation. Republican leadership stripped Butters of the chairmanship of two Senate committees.

"He's a piece of work," Sundance's Cooper said of Butters.

Cowan predicted the international media will latch onto Butters. "We smoked a bully out of his hole, and we've got him on the run," Cowan said. "Butters is the

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new Anita Bryant, and the world press will see that, crystal clear."

Buttars did not respond to calls seeking comment Thursday.

8: The Mormon Proposition

A trailer for Reed Cowan's "8: The Mormon Proposition" can be found on the movie's Web site, <http://www.mormonproposition.com>

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