

CPAC Response to Kirk Torgensen Presentation on August 24, 2010
at NOVA Conference

This is a statement from the Centennial Park Action Committee. Any comments or questions can be forwarded to cpac@cpaz.net.

Last week there was a conference in Salt Lake City put on by NOVA- the National Organization of Victim Assistance. Kirk Torgensen, Chief Deputy, Mark Shurtleff's right hand man in the Utah AGs office, was the lead speaker for a presentation on "Polygamy Victimization."

Mr Torgensen's presentation was very disappointing, filled as it was with a rhetoric and bias that seemed more fitting of a time BEFORE the thousands of hours spent building bridges by the Attorney General's office, Safety Net, and countless organizations and individual people. So many people have made a concerted effort to reach out to allay the mistrust and fear that comes from misunderstanding one another. We are surprised, considering Mr. Torgensen's position as a public servant, by his willingness to jeopardize this work and to further marginalize people who were not there to speak for themselves.

Mr. Torgensen talked about "by their fruits you will know them." We have hoped that our fruits have shown us to be sincere and willing to engage in this bridge-building dialogue. We have worked to open our lives that we might replace the stereotypes with truth, the suspicion with cooperation. We readily acknowledge that we started this project with doubts and a measure of our own bias. We have appreciated getting to know the many people who have worked on our behalf to bring services to our community, who have put aside their uncertainties to truly listen to us, and who have had a genuine interest in our wellbeing. If we have not said it clearly enough before, "Thank you." We value these blessings.

Frankly, we feel that Mr. Torgensen's presentation highlights a lack in our efforts to reach out and educate individuals and officials on the nature of our lives and culture. When we hear elected officials continue to encourage others to participate in the prejudice, we struggle to not slide back into the cautions and concerns of yesteryears. Openness begins to feel like exposure and vulnerability. So we invite Mr. Torgensen to let us know what we can do to alleviate his concerns and hope that in the future he will use a more even-handed approach to discussions he holds under the auspice of his public duties.