

Sex-based bias target of gathering

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The author of best-selling books on investing and delivered a message Tuesday night on the importance of recognizing and accepting diversity in sexual orientation.

"For most people [being gay] is not a choice," said Andrew Tobias, who is also treasurer of the Democratic National Committee. "Although now you have the option of electroshock treatment, you don't choose who you are attracted to."

Tobias spoke briefly at the Wyndham Hotel in downtown Miami during an event organized by SAVE Dade in an attempt to raise awareness about discrimination based on sexual orientation.

"This is a collection of business leaders in Miami-Dade who are here because they understand the importance of diversity," said Jorge Mursuli, SAVE Dade's chairman.

The group was founded to protect gay rights, and Mursuli said it wants to stop organizations like the Christian Coalition and Take Back Miami Dade from repealing the county human rights ordinance that bans discrimination based on sexual orientation.

While eating chicken shish-kebabs and drinking rum and Cokes, young working people and experienced entrepreneurs discussed issues dealing with discrimination

and the labor force.

“There are so many cases of discrimination,” said Elizabeth Schwartz, a private practice attorney. “And the worst part is that so few people are forward in letting people know. We need a great deal of support.”

They got support from Tobias.

He discussed his experiences growing up gay, the need to re-interpret some passages of the Bible, the role of mass media and the reasons to applaud diversity.

“You celebrate it,” Tobias said, pointing to the audience, “because if we get along look at the strength that it brings.”

In the audience, people from many ethnic backgrounds cheered loudly.