



## **NEWS RELEASE**

*for immediate release*

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## **NBC, CBS AD BAN STRIKES FAMILIAR CHORD**

Olivia recalls ABC's refusal to air lesbian travel ad during "Ellen"

SAN FRANCISCO, CA, Dec. 7, 2004 — Olivia, the premier travel company serving the lesbian community, finds the NBC and CBS ban of an ad welcoming a diverse group of people to its church, including gays and lesbians, all too familiar. In 1997, ABC refused to air an Olivia commercial promoting its lesbian travel services during the coming out episode of "Ellen."

NBC and CBS refused to air an ad from the United Church of Christ, promoting its welcoming of all people, regardless of ability, age, race, economic circumstance or sexual orientation. NBC spokesman Alan Wurtzel said the ad violated the company's policy of not accepting ads that deal with "issues of public controversy." Similarly, CBS said it won't accept advocacy ads and said gay relationships remain a subject of public debate.

"It's disappointing that seven years after ABC rejected our commercial that major television networks are still operating out of an irrational fear of public controversy," Judy Dlugacz, Olivia's founder and president, said. "With lesbian and gay characters on scores of hit TV shows, it's distressing that CBS and NBC would reject the United Church of Christ's commercial. Clearly, their viewers, including those in the red states, don't have a problem with lesbian and gay content."

In fact, notes Olivia CEO Amy Errett, "the commercial's inclusive, loving message is hardly controversial. Acceptance of out gay men and women has improved dramatically since we attempted to place our ad on Ellen over seven years ago. While some post-election pundits are trying to convince us that the country has moved to the right on social issues, polls suggest this is not true. Most voters remain in the middle on social issues and as Americans get to know us, their attitudes are shifting. While the country may not yet be ready for gay marriage, 60 percent approve of official recognition of gay unions. That is an enormous shift in support for gay men and women since 1997."

While other big name advertisers were withdrawing from the coming out episode of "Ellen," ABC rejected Olivia's commercial. "It is our position that discussion about same-sex lifestyles is more appropriate in programming," an ABC spokesperson said at the time.

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Dlugacz said, "As a country, we've made so many positive strides in welcoming diversity and protecting lesbian and gay rights since Ellen came out. It's hardly a climate where major networks should fear public outcry from this kind of content. At the same time, it's encouraging to see so many stations, like ABC Family, AMC, BET, Discovery, Fox, Nick@Nite and more, running the commercial."

After Olivia's ad was rejected, Olivia approached ABC's affiliate stations. Nine ABC affiliates ended up running Olivia's commercial, including KABC/Los Angeles, KGO/San Francisco, WABC/New York, WFTS/Tampa, WJLA/Washington, D.C., and WPLG/Miami.

## **ABOUT OLIVIA**

Founded in San Francisco in 1973, Olivia, the premier travel company serving the lesbian and gay community, reaches more than 50 million people internationally. Over 75,000 people have traveled with Olivia in the last 10 years. Olivia charts entire ships or resorts to create one-of-a-kind vacations for lesbians, gay men and their family and friends, delivering world-class entertainment like Melissa Etheridge, Indigo Girls, k.d. lang, Shawn Colvin, Mary Chapin Carpenter, Kathleen Madigan and the cast of Showtime's "The L Word" along the way. Additionally, Olivia offers a robust and enriching line up of activities, including women's leaderships summits, author's expos and film festivals. Recently, Showtime's "The L Word" filmed part of an episode for season two on board an Olivia cruise. Olivia travels to a wide array of destinations, including Antarctica, Galapagos, Tahiti, Greek Isles, Caribbean, Mexico, Alaska, Bahamas, Canada, Italy, Scandinavia and more.

Visit [www.olivia.com](http://www.olivia.com) for the latest information about Olivia cruise and resort vacations.

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