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Strange bedfellows

Minister, adult film star to debate pornography at UW-Stout event

By Troy Espe

Leader-Telegram staff

The Rev. Craig Gross hates the sin but not the sinner.

For the past two years, he and adult film star Ron Jeremy have debated pornography at college campuses across the nation.

"We're good friends," Gross, 32, said during a telephone interview. "We can disagree on the topic, but we can put that aside and be friends. As a Christian, it's more important to show that, hey, we get along. For kids to be able to see that, I think it's huge."

Gross and Jeremy will square off in "The Great Porn Debate" on Monday at UW-Stout in Menomonie. The men will speak for 20 minutes each and then field questions from the audience.

Through his agent, Jeremy declined an advance interview.

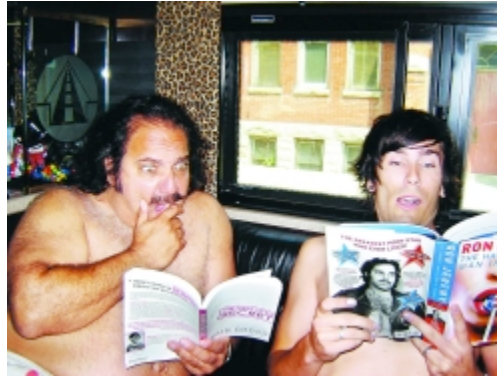
Jeremy, 55, is perhaps the world's most famous porn star. He has appeared in more than 1,900 adult films, earning a listing in the Guinness Book of World Records.

"The Great Porn Debate" allows both men to reach new audiences, Gross said.

"It works well for both of us," he said. "We both enjoy it. It's entertaining. It's informative. Hopefully people leave thinking about these things."

Gross launched the Christian anti-porn Web site XXXchurch.com in 2002. It offers anti-porn software and sells "Jesus Loves Porn Stars" shirts. The site receives between 600,000 to 1 million visits per month.

"This is something so needed to be talked about," said Gross, who lives in Grand Rapids, Mich., with his wife and two children. "We can't keep quiet on this issue anymore."



Adult film star Ron Jeremy, left, and anti-porn Christian crusader Craig Gross will participate in "The Great Porn Debate" on Monday at UW-Stout in Menomonie. Contributed photo

If You Go

What: "The Great Porn Debate" with Ron Jeremy and the Rev. Craig Gross.

When: 7:30 p.m. Monday.

Where: Great Hall, Memorial Student Center, UW-Stout, Menomonie.

Tickets: \$5 and \$8 for adults; \$3 for UW-Stout students.

Phone: 715-232-1122.

Web: tickets.uwstout.edu.

Sex Talk

Campus Crusade will present the multimedia production "Porn Nation - The Naked Truth" at 8 p.m. today in Schofield Auditorium at UW-Eau Claire.

Recovering sex addict Michael Leahy, who founded

Church members distribute Bibles at porn shows and offer counseling to sex industry workers.

"The media just wants you to see that (pornography) is glamorous, that this is great," Gross said. "It isn't real. This is fantasy. It's not reality. This has become sex education. We want to tell people that this looks nothing like the sex that God created to be between a man and a wife."

Pornography degrades women and often is viewed by children, Gross added.

"The Internet is to blame for the rise of the industry. I mean, they survived the dot-com crash," he said. "It's way too accessible. If the industry has figured a way to get this in every home in America, they could probably do a better job at keeping this away from kids."

Touring since 2006, "The Great Porn Debate" has visited private colleges and state universities. TV news show "Nightline" aired a debate from Yale University in February.

"It's probably the biggest problem on college campuses," Gross said. "You got kids away from home for the first time. They finally got a computer in their room. Everybody's got wi-fi. You got no one talking about this issue. You got kids thinking it's OK. This exposure is where a lot of addictions start. Kids are viewing this more than they ever have."

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Atlanta-based Bravehearts in 2001, will speak. The 90-minute presentation will incorporate music, movies, advertising, interviews and personal stories about the impact of pornography on campus.

Admission is free. For information, call 577-4555.