

Exploiting The Transgender Dead: The Irresistible Temptation Part II

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Abstract

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Each year as another Transgender Day of Remembrance comes near, it seems as if another group or organization tries to remake the TDOR in their own image (examples: 2007, 2008). Recently Katherine V London commented on the post The Irresistible Temptation:Exploiting Our Dead:

Hello.

I understand this is a year old article. However, I came across this as a link from another article. Anyway.

I am a member of the Orlando Youth Alliance (OYA). As well I am a 17 year old transgender person. I attended the Trans Day of Remembrance last year. We raised money but that was not our sole reason of being there. I actually attended independently to go there, and many friends of mine were helping to raise money. I had also helped the group to do fund raisers. We have used the money for good purposes.

I thought I should clear this up, considering you make us sound like loan sharks, and money beggars, but justify it by pointing at the terminology on the website.

As well, yes it is true that many, "LGBTQ" organizations and groups seem to talk about homosexual issues and say LGBTQ, simply to sound inclusive. If you found it incorrect, then perhaps you should have respectfully sent the head facilitator of OYA an E-mail and told him politely that the terminology offends you, and give him ideas for a more respectable and inclusive statement.

Now HRC, they threw us under the bus, so while they say they are doing things to help the Transgender community, that is fine, but I do not completely trust the organization.

As I mentioned in the previous post, the intention behind the TDOR is best summed up by its founder, Gwen Smith:

"The Transgender Day of Remembrance serves several purposes. It raises public awareness of hate crimes against transgendered people, an action that current media doesn't perform. Day of Remembrance publicly mourns and honors the lives of our brothers and sisters who might otherwise be forgotten. Through the vigil, we express love and respect for our people in the face of national

indifference and hatred. Day of Remembrance reminds non-transgender people that we are their sons, daughters, parents, friends and lovers. Day of Remembrance gives our allies a chance to step forward with us and stand in vigil, memorializing those of us who've died by anti-transgender violence."

Having a "good purpose" for raising money isn't enough of a reason for doing so. Would you have a fundraiser at:

- a loved one's funeral?
- at a Holocaust memorial?
- at Fort Hood where people were recently gunned down?
- at 9-11's ground zero?

Ethan St. Pierre, nephew of hate crime victim Deborah Forte and webmaster for TransgenderDOR , said it this way:

How would you feel about a couple of people from the local high school attending your grandmother's wake wielding a coffee can to raise money for their baseball team?

In a 2007 he wrote "An Open Letter to the Transgender Community" he said:

The attempted manipulations and attempts to capitalize on the Transgender Day of Remembrance by some of our national organizations and so called leaders is nothing less than appalling and downright sickening.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is not a place to put on your party hat, it is not a celebration of life, nor is it an opportunity for your organization to fund-raise, it should not be an event where the keynote speaker gets paid a lot of money to come and sell the latest autobiography and should not be a political event where people schmooze with their donors from a past political campaign and it most certainly should not be sponsored nor cosponsored by The Human Right's Campaign, an organization who can't even support us in a Federal Hate crimes bill!

This hits close to home for me. The TDOR event here in Madison, Wisconsin:

Trans Monologues and Vigil (Co-sponsored by Ten Percent Society)

Friday, Nov 20, 6 pm, A Room of One's Own, 307 W Johnson St

The Trans Monologues are a night of theater, poems, songs, monologues, and all other creative expressions of transgender identities. Join the LGBT Campus Center and Ten Percent Society for a powerful evening of performance. Following the Monologues, we will be holding a vigil to remember and honor members of the community who have lost their lives. (Ryka Aoki de la Cruz will be speaking at the monologues and the vigil.)

The Transgender Week of Remembrance is a great idea. Many of the offerings through the week offer an interesting look into the lives of transgender people. But November 20th is the Transgender Day of Remembrance and mourning our dead should be enough. It should be enough to mourn the loss of Wisconsinite, Felicia Melton-Smyth

and the hundreds of other transgender people that have fallen due to anti-transgender violence.

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