TRANSADVOCATE

Minneapolis Star Tribune runs full-page advertisement for anti-LGBT hate group

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Abstract

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Article

Months after the Minneapolis Star Tribune was strongly criticized for their coverage of Cece McDonald's case, despite local trans activists' earnest attempts to work with the Star Tribune to better understand the paper's responsibility to use professional standards concerning respectful and accurate language, the Star Tribune continues to repeat many of the same mistakes. To add injury to insult, they recently ran a full-page advertisement for the anti-LGBT hate group The Minnesota Child Protection League.

The ad was placed to oppose a proposed policy giving guidance to schools to support the participation of trans student-athletes within the Minnesota State High School League. The right of participation of trans students in high school sports is protected under Title IX. The ad uses a similar framework as other similar advertisements targeting trans youth. They misgender trans girls as "male" and use concern over male violence to fuel fear in service to denying trans girls their right to fully participate in school activities. The bold-faced type of the ad reads as follows:

A male wants to shower beside your 14-year-old daughter. Are YOU okay with that?

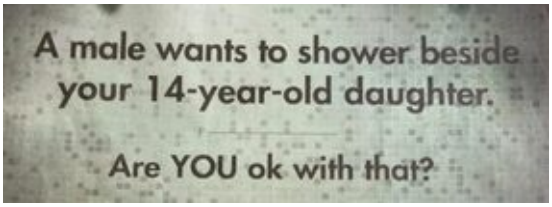

Figure 1. shower

The ad uses "a male" to describe a trans girl. The ad disallows the reader to think of a trans girl as a child. The hypothetical cis daughter is 14-years-old, but the trans girl of similar age is just "the male". What does the trans girl in high school sports want to do? Play baseball? Run track? Be on a volleyball team? No, according to the ad, her motivation is to "shower near your daughter". The ad does

nothing less than boldly state that trans girls that wish to participate in high school sports alongside their peers are motivated by sexual predation and are not girls at all.

When City Pages columnist Aaron Rupar asked the Star Tribune to justify their approval of such an ad, the Star Tribune responded by dodging the question and regurgitating marketing talking points.

If you were doing a story on how media of all kinds (broadcast, print, digital) handle campaign and advocacy advertising, I'd consider how we could contribute to the conversation. But I don't think that's what you're doing.

In Minnesota, organizations and individuals of all kinds -- left, right, other -- know that if you want to reach the largest audience and have the biggest impact with your message, the best way to do it is advertising in the Star Tribune.

The Star Tribune published an article reporting on the controversy that publishing the ad created as well as the proposed policy that the Minnesota Child Protection League was speaking against. Within their coverage, they used the same inaccurate phrase to describe transgender people that were highly criticized when referring to Cece McDonald. In the Star Tribune's coverage of Cece McDonald, they repeatedly referred to her as, "a person in transition from a man to a woman". Within the coverage concerning high school athletes, they referred to an unnamed high school student as "a student who was in transition from one gender to another during his tenure with the league." While telling the story of a young man who successfully navigating participating in youth sports before and after transition, the Star Tribune managed to use correct pronouns and avoid mentioning his former name. However, they used the term "female" to describe him previous to transition; not unlike the Minnesota Child Protection League who used "male" as a means of misgendering trans girls.

Local trans activist youth, who have reported being harassed and targeted by the group placing the ad, have created a petition demanding an apology from the Star Tribune. The petition reads, in part:

The group who paid for the ad has also personally attacked me as well as other students in fliers, printing our legal names next to our identities in red, and negatively describing our work for safer schools. The Star Tribune should not be affiliated with such harassment and a group promoting discrimination. The Star Tribune needs to discontinue the ad, issue an apology, and work on a story covering this topic from the perspective of trans* student athletes.

Unfortunately, actions against the participation of trans youth appear to be on the horizon even if the policy is enacted. Within the context of the Star Tribune profiting from a coordinated attack on the dignity and safety of trans youth, and their continued refusal to adopt minimum professional standards, they report:

...a big misconception is that private high schools will lose league membership for refusing to participate against any school with a transgender athlete. Schools can choose to forfeit a contest for a variety of reasons.

The controversial points concerning the policy appear to be rooted in all-to-common sexualized fear mongering against trans girls and the worry that the policy may interfere with some private school's plans to institutionally bully any trans youth attempting to play sports by black-listing teams that

include known trans athletes.

The policy will be reviewed on Oct. 1 and likely voted on Oct. 2. A letter-writing campaign has been initiated in support of the policy being approved.

Suggested citation

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