

Remembering Our Dead, Echos From Our Fallen Sisters

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Abstract

I was looking at videos for my YouTube post and found this video titled “Twin Boys Living As Girls”. It was taped in the early nineties, and is from the Jenny Jones Show. I sat there thinking this was just another trans segment on talk TV. It is not. When I realized who these two [...]

Article

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It is not. When I realized who these two girls were, I sat here trembling, on the verge of tears.

If you are not aware after watching the video, of just who these young women are, I'll let the Remembering Our Dead site explain it for you:

Chanelle Pickett, a young (23) black “pre-operative” transsexual woman, was found dead in the apartment of William Palmer, 35, a computer programmer, on November 20, 1995. According to the report of the police-appointed medical examiner, Chanelle had died of strangulation. She also suffered bruises about the face consistent with having received a severe beating. Palmer denied having murdered her, claiming that she died while he slept.

Chanelle met Palmer at Playland, Boston's oldest gay bar and a downtown Boston hangout popular with trans girls. According to Chanelle's twin sister Gabrielle, Chanelle thought Palmer was genuinely interested in having a relationship with her. On Sunday evening, November 19, the three of them indulged in some crack cocaine together. When Palmer was unable to convince Gabrielle to join them in a threesome, he took Chanelle to his apartment. Later that night Palmer's roommates heard loud noises coming from his room and knocked on the door to ask if everything was OK, but he said he had the situation under control. The next day, at the advice of his lawyer, Palmer reported Chanelle's death to the police, and was eventually charged with first-degree murder.

On December 10, about 250 people attended a memorial service followed by a candlelight vigil in memory of Chanelle. Many of those in attendance did not know Chanelle, but appreciated the ongoing struggle of all transgender people represented by her murder.

In the ensuing murder trial, judge William Barton did not allow the jury to see photographs of Chanelle's bruised and bloodied face. The medical examiner testified to death by strangulation, but the jury believed the medical witnesses for the defense. Palmer's lawyer incited the prejudices of the jury, repeatedly referred to Chanelle's “bizarre” transformation that took place as she

struggled for her life, her voice and manner becoming more masculine. The jury found Palmer guilty only of assault and battery. At the sentencing, judge Barton admonished Palmer, telling his attorney “quite frankly, the defendant should kiss the ground you walk on,” before sentencing Palmer to two years in prison. Such a sentence for assault and battery with no priors sent a clear message that the judge believed Palmer to be guilty of at least manslaughter.

In the words of the headline to the Boston Phoenix article about the murder, “When is a murder not a murder? When the victim is a transsexual.”

-- Nancy Nangeroni

That’s right, those sisters on Jenny Jones are Chanelle and Gabrielle Pickett. No one knows what happened to Gabrielle, although I’ve heard some really bad rumors. Even if you’re an atheist like me, say a tiny prayer... if just to yourself, that Gabrielle is ok. I hope against hope that she simply woodworked after Chanelle’s death.

If this isn’t a reason to help support TransYouth Family Advocates, I don’t know what is. If this isn’t a reason to support gender identity in ENDA, I don’t know what is. They were kicked out of their own home for being transgender. They were fired from their jobs, for being transgender. Chanelle was murdered for being transgender. I just want to take these girls in and love and support them, but it’s too late for that now... but it’s not for others.

Please, do whatever you can to help pass ENDA, The Matthew Shepard Act, and support Trans Youth Family Advocates. Our youth are worth it.

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