TRANSADVOCATE

Right-wing gets it wrong. Again.

By Cristan Williams

Published November 9, 2013 | Updated March 31, 2026
https://www.transadvocate.com/right-wing-media-gets-it-wrong-again_n_10673.htm

Abstract

Some of you may be shocked to learn that staff at Heritage Middle School in St. Leonard, MD are forcing school children to crossdress in order to make them understand the hardship trans and gay people are facing. It must be true because here's a photo of the school children: Horrifying, isn't it? Right wing activist groups [...]

Article

Some of you may be shocked to learn that staff at Heritage Middle School in St. Leonard, MD are forcing school children to crossdress in order to make them understand the hardship trans and gay people are facing. It must be true because here's a photo of the school children:

Maryland Middle School Requires Children To Cross Dress For "LGBTQ Appreciation Day"

Posted about 3 days ago | 302 comments

These Two Children Were Paired As A Post-Op And Pre-Op Transsexual Couple

Parents in the town of St. Leonard, MD were aghast after learning what the staff at Heritage Middle School required children to do for a passing grade. The outrage stems from an event held this past Monday, a day which the school had dubbed "LGBTQ Appreciation Day" instructing children to experience the homosexual lifestyle for a single school day or receive a failing grade.

Students were assigned the different roles throughout LGBTQ culture. Boys were given the task of being masculine homosexuals, feminine homosexuals, cross dressers and a wide variety of other gay archetypes. The young ladies were selected to be lip stick lesbians, or butch lesbians.

The students were partnered with members of the same sex and they were then made to role-played a day in the life of a gay couple. Holding hands, hugging and other innocent displays of affection were both encouraged and rewarded as extra credit by school officials.

This controversial event was the brainchild of school principle Caren Shandel. Caren is a longtime activist for gay rights and also holds the title of first openly transgendered school principle in the Nation. I spoke with Caren about her decision to hold LGBTQ Appreciation Day and she told me the following.

"I won't rest until there's an out-of-the-closet homosexual in every family!" Caren Shandel-

Figure 1. "These Two Children Were Paired As A Post-Op And Pre-Op Transsexual Couple"

Horrifying, isn't it?

Right wing activist groups thought so:

Figure 2. PFOX

Who's PFOX you ask? Well, PFOX is an ex-gay/ex-trans group and since this story fit their pre-existing narrative, I guess they felt they should pass it on without conducting any fact checking. The same thing happened with a group that tried to stop a trans-inclusive non-discrimination ordinance from taking effect in San Antonio, Texas:

Figure 3. SA1

The story even made it to conservative AM radio:

Figure 4. KLIF

In fact, the story is a HOAX.

There is no Heritage Middle School and the story went viral after it was posted on the fake news site, the National Report on November 7th. The photo featured in this article is from what appears to be a powder puff event in a school gym. The photo was taken Thursday, December 1, 2005 around 2:30 in the afternoon:

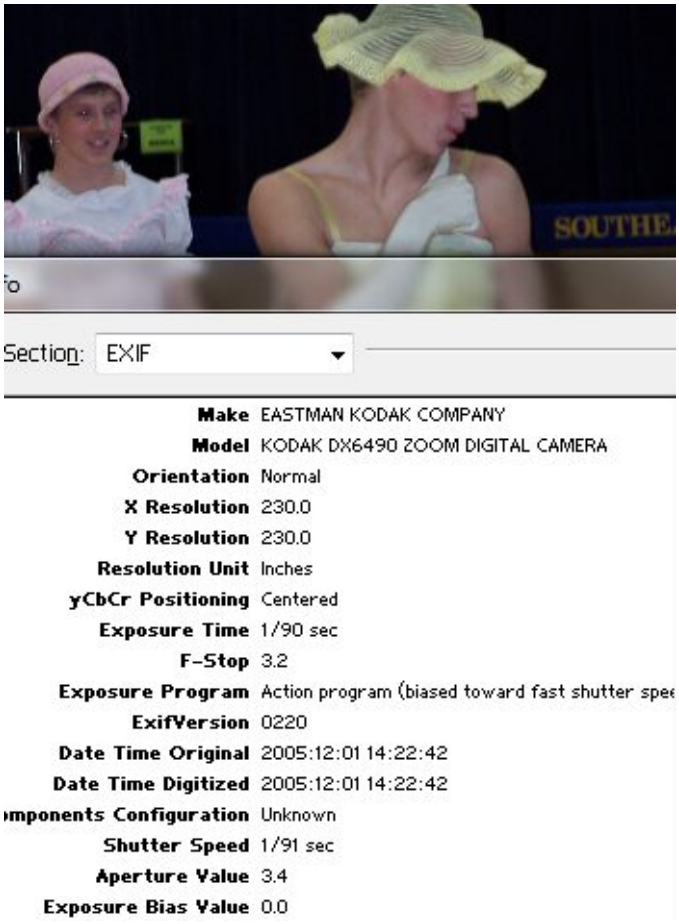

Figure 5. exif

Numerous right-winger sites, blogs, and armchair pundits bemoaned the sad state of American public schools as they blamed the Obama-socialist-communist-Hitler-Nazi system that is sure the be the downfall of us all.

The willingness to unquestioningly believe practically anything - no matter how ridiculous - if it seems somehow trans is remarkable:

> *Tammy Prescott, a mother of one of the male students who was allegedly required to dress as a female and act submissively to the boy he had been partnered with claims Mrs. Shandel told her child that he would be a "CD (cross dressing) bottom, which is apparently a respected subculture amongst homosexual population. - National Report*

When it comes to anything to do with schools and queer (especially trans) students, the credulity of certain circles seems to know no bounds. While it's fun to snicker at these buffoons for being suckered, it's a symptom of a very real and very dangerous problem.

Recently, the Pacific Justice Institute (PJI), an ex-gay/ex-trans group, issued a press release which claimed that a trans kid (who I refer to as Jane Doe) was harassing cisgender girls in the restroom. The news immediately spread throughout right-wing circles and shortly thereafter, became international news. The hate generated by the coverage lead numerous individuals to call for the

mutilation and death of this trans girl:

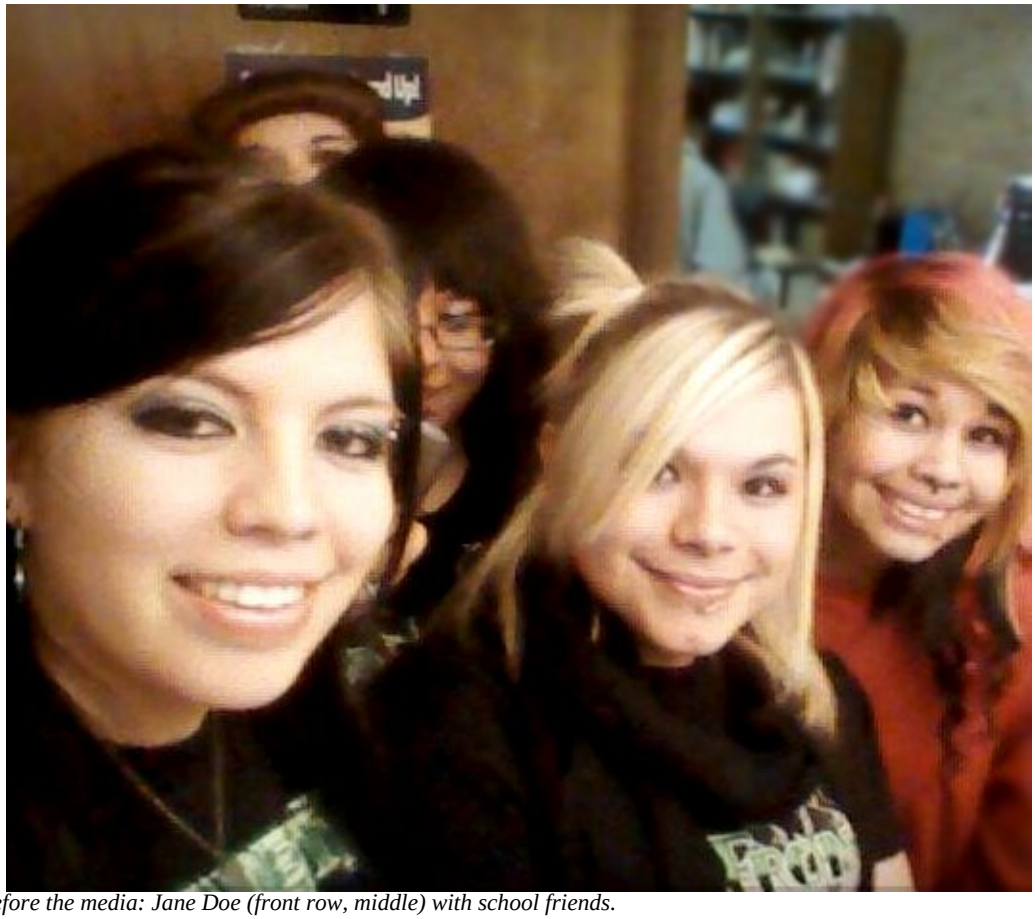

Figure 6. Before the media: Jane Doe (front row, middle) with school friends.

Unfortunately, no news agency fact checked PJI's claims before running the story. PJI, riding a tied of undeserved publicity, turned up the heat, whipping a credulous media into a fevered pitch. Fox News and Bill O'Reilly covered the story without fact checking PJI's claims:

> *O'Reilly: All right, the second one is in Colorado, and we predicted this would happen here and of course the left wing press went wild, but more and more school districts are saying that if you are a transgender person - that's all subjective, you don't have to prove that - you can go and use any bathroom that you want, any locker room you want.*

As it turned out, the claim was a hoax. Fox News failed to do what I did: simply call the school and do some fact checking. Instead, Fox only spoke with PJI.

Though the harassment never happened, the hate inspired by a willfully obtuse press hit its mark and the trans kid became so suicidal, immediate professional intervention had to be obtained and the Jane was put on a suicide watch.

After the harassment hoax was exposed, PJI changed its story and claimed to the press that the Jane's mere existence was intimidating and harassing to cisgender kids and again, the press reported it without fact checking the claim. As it turned out, the Jane is well-liked at the school and the town is

resentful that this group is targeting one of their own.

The TransAdvocate worked tirelessly to fact check the seemingly never-ending stream of falsehoods flooding from PJI. Even so, folks seem eager to hear and believe that trans children are bad. Nobody questioned PJI when they asserted that the town police were investigating Jane Doe for criminal behavior. That also turned out to be false.* In fact, I interviewed the anti-queer group and debunked numerous talking points that they continue to successfully use - without challenge - in the press. For example, the AP unquestioningly dedicated 1/4 of its piece to PJI talking points, failing to note that PJI is an ex-gay organization or that PJI's claims of harassment were proven false. This, days after GLAAD posted an alert to the media warning them to not be duped by PJI's talking points. Even when a cursory google search would turn up numerous sources contradicting PJI's talking points, the AP ran PJI's rhetoric without challenge and it became syndicated throughout the nation. The same willingness to unquestioningly believe the worst about trans people showed up on an ABC news report and that bias is currently being used to overturn protections for trans children in California.

PJI just released a fundraising video on YouTube featuring people who were subject to police investigation due to their cyber bullying of Jane Doe. When the video received more than 1000 downvotes with only around 50 upvotes, the ability to rate the video was removed. After removing the ability to rate the video, PJI posted the following to their FaceBook:

Figure 7. Everyone totally loves what doing to Jane Doe!!!11

Countdown to the news regurgitating all of PJI's talking points and then validating them by claiming that their video has gone viral in 3... 2... 1...

*Some right-wing news sources are now trying to cover for PJI's lie by saying that the sequence of

events are as follows:

- Cis kids complained to the school that they were being harassed by Jane Doe.

- In response, the school called police so that the girls could make a report.

- The girls failed to make a report because the school told them that doing so might be a hate crime.

- Since there was no report made, the school chose to pretend that this constituted and "investigation"

- Media was then involved because the school was threatening the harassed cis girls with a hate crime charge.

- I called the school and they told me than an "investigation" (ie, a failure to file a report) was conducted and that there was no harassment.

- I talk to the left wing media and they run with the story that the harassment was a hoax.

That's the lie being pushed by LifeSiteNews - a right wing news blog. Here's what actually happened:

- News crews showed up at the school, demanding to do a news report on why Jane Doe uses the female restroom when a student claims that she was harassed. Until that point, no mention of any harassment was made to the school teachers, admin, board, Jane Doe or her family.

- After the news breaks, the school begins an investigation. They speak with students, Jane Doe and her family. After the investigation, the school finds nothing to support the claim that Jane Doe harassed any student. The school notifies the parents that if they feel unsatisfied with the results of their investigation and want to speak with the police, they may do so. The police are contacted.

- PJI goes public claiming that Jane Doe sexually harassed cisgender girls in the bathroom. They do not pick up the phone to learn what happened with the investigation. Simultaneously, PJI issues a list of demands to the school.

- I hear about this case after it becomes international news and pick up the phone, call the school and fact check the claims. I publish the results of the investigation.

- The police continue to try to speak with the cis girls who are claiming to be victims of harassment, but are told that, on advice from PJI, they cannot speak with the police.

- PJI uses the notion that there is an active police investigation as proof that harassment happened saying:
"If there were nothing to this, I don't think the school district would be currently conducting a law enforcement investigation, which is what they're doing. Beyond that, you've got to ask yourself, when you have somebody who is acting very peculiarly to say the least, sometimes dressing as a girl and sometimes dressing as a boy, why are we indulging that and making everybody else pretend like that is normal, when clearly it's not?"- PJI, 10/19/13

- I learn that PJI is using this as a talking point and debunk it.

- PJI says that they aren't interested in a criminal investigation.

Suggested citation

Cristan Williams. "Right-wing gets it wrong. Again.." TransAdvocate, November 9, 2013.
https://www.transadvocate.com/right-wing-media-gets-it-wrong-again_n_10673.htm