

“Sometimes, We Just Have to Pay Full Price.”

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Abstract

My partner is a nut about sales. If it isn't on sale, it doesn't get purchased. So sometimes, when we run out of a breakfast staple and such, I have to remind her of that basic fact of life: "sometimes, we just have to pay full price." And then, the phrase comes back to haunt [...]

Article

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And then, the phrase comes back to haunt me. This usually happens around the evenings, these days. She's been talking about returning to work in a capacity which would take her out to job sites with contractors and crew, some of whom could know from her previous 20 years of work in that trade that she is trans. And I've been having troubling dreams about both that and my own job, where I've been back for several months with no trouble beyond the occasional rude exchange, and now all of a sudden I'm dreaming repetitively about getting shot in the head. The latter is not something I'm actually afraid of during the light of day, so I'm wondering what is bringing this all on. Am I sensing something nasty coming, or am I just reading the trans-related news way too much? And that's when that dirty little voice says to me, "sometimes, we just have to pay full price."

And that's when I start thinking about how far we've come... or haven't as the case may be. The first GRS surgeries were performed in the 1940s, and with the rise of Nazi Germany and its pogroms, the invention of "stealth" soon followed. We've been in hiding ever since. Don't get me wrong -- I'm on record as defending a woman's and man's right to go stealth if they feel it's best for them. We earn that. But the wholesale movement toward stealth -- the lack of barely anybody to stay behind and educate the masses -- has meant that we've only made small strides during that time. The first known piece of trans-inclusive legislation didn't happen until 1993, and most of those strides have been since then. And without adult transfolk there to lay that groundwork, a crisis has developed. Because now it is children on the front lines.

I apologize for wandering, but I think this is what has been bringing me to tears, the fact that the battles that transfolk largely hid from are now being fought by Lawrence King and the girl in Denver who has fortunately as yet not been outed by the media. Maybe this is what's been causing the dreams -- guilt for not taking the bullet, in hopes that in some way, they might not have to.

Of course, there's no guarantee that would work. There's no reason to believe that any awareness

generated from a transwoman's death in Calgary, Alberta would change the mind of the people who helped load Brandon McInerney's bigotry gun in Oxnard, California. It's the unfairness of the situation that bothers me.

And I am not misplacing my anger. I'm still outraged at the shooter, at the climate that made King's murder possible, at the religious right which is doing everything it can to make things treacherous for the student in Denver and others, at the lack of protections for kids and transfolk, at the lack of parents who'll teach their kids that shooting someone for no good reason is a bad idea. And the whole concept of hate-killing itself is indefensible -- the risk of peril, violence and death should not be the "price" for anything. But it is 2008, the Jerry Springer Show was cancelled how many years ago, and we still haven't given the world a more realistic face? People can jump up and down and border on co-opting King's death all they want, but sooner or later, someone will have to realize that our community shares some of the blame.

And I don't mean to paint all the community with the same brush -- there are definitely some soldiers out there with hearts on their sleeves... usually fighting alone, or close to it. And as a baby activist myself, I'm still learning how easy it is to become painted as "fringe," be alienated for a myriad of reasons, and be hamstrung by lack of funding and support. Often by our own.

Many medical professionals and even many parents have come to understanding the transgender experience enough that kids no longer have to hide until they're forty, before starting to living their lives. There will be more youth and children transitioning in the face of society.

Like the middle-class families looking at the national debt and thinking, "let the next generation take care of it," many of the community would rather just let the conflicts fall to someone else.

"Sometimes, we just have to pay full price." But paying it should never have fallen to the kids.

(Crossposted to Dented Blue Mercedes -- some of the above may be borne of the state of the community in Canada)

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