

Mubarak S. Dahir



Hear Me Out

Conflicted Feelings About A Horrible Gay Murder

Most Americans still have probably never heard the name Jesse Dirkhising.

And in the darkest place in my heart, I must admit I am glad, or at least relieved, they have not.

On September 26, 1999, Jesse was invited over for the afternoon into the home of two gay men, 23-year-old Joshua Brown and his lover, 39-year-old David Carpenter. But as it turns out, the afternoon was not one of innocent friendship. In the end, it turned into an afternoon of abuse and death. Jesse's death.

According to police, the two men sedated Jesse, tied him to a bed and gagged him with his own underwear. Over a period of several hours, Brown raped Jesse, and sodomized him with objects and food. During this time, Carpenter stood in the doorway and beat off. When the two men got tired and hungry, they took a break and ate sandwiches, leaving Jesse bound to the bed where he slowly suffocated.

In March, a jury in Bentonville, Arkansas, found Brown guilty of raping and murdering Jesse Dirkhising. As of the writing of this column, Brown had not yet been sentenced. Carpenter's trial starts May 7.

But throughout the agonizing discovery of Jesse's death, and the little-noticed trial in Arkansas of his tormentors, there has been precious little national media coverage. Gay and lesbian rights groups and leaders have said hardly a peep.

And we all know why: fear and politics.

On the most gut level, we are frightened to death at the explosive potential this case has to wreak a public relations disaster of enormous magnitude on the gay and lesbian

community. There has been a long and unjust history of linking gay men to molesting little boys, and too many ignorant Americans continue to make that connection in their minds-and in their arguments to deprive us of equal rights.

We all know this. We all hate it. And we all fear it.

We also know, of course, that pedophilia and homosexuality are not cousins. Research has shown, over and over again, that more than 95 percent of pedophilia is acted out by straight men. And little girls are just as often their pry as are little boys.

But throughout the agonizing discovery of Jesse's death, and the little-noticed trial in Arkansas of his tormentors, there has been precious little national media coverage.

Intellectually, we know this. Yet instinctively, we know that in much of the public's mind, that distinction will get lost. If they ever heard the details of Jesse Dirkhising's killing, most of Middle America wouldn't give a damn about the important differences that separate gay men and pedophiles. Even if responsible journalists reported the statistics about child molesters being overwhelming straight men, most of the public wouldn't care and wouldn't pay attention. What they would remember would be a horrific tale of two gay men in a gut-

wrenching tale of sexual perversion and murder.

The right wing would use the case, and indeed is trying to do so, to paint all gay men as villainous perverts. If Jesse had been a little girl, and a straight couple had molested and murdered her, no straight person would have to be afraid that all heterosexual married couples would be painted as monsters. No fundamentalists or extremists would use the case to deny heterosexuals the right to marry, or raise kids, or keep their jobs.

But we know that, unfair as it is, that just isn't the case for gay people. Maybe that's why part of me sighs secret relief at the relatively little coverage Jesse's death has garnered.

And there is, in fact, solid reasoning behind many of the arguments that gay rights organizations have made in keeping a low profile on the issue. When asked about the case by the press, they have first cautioned against using it to buttress the right-wing political agenda to promote discrimination and hatred against gays. They have repeated the statistics about how most child molesters are straight men. David Smith, a spokesperson for the Human Rights Campaign, even told one journalist, "This has nothing to do with gay people."

Perhaps he's right. You and I and the millions of other gay men and lesbians across the country who lead upstanding, honorable lives had nothing at all to do with Jesse's death. We didn't even know him. How could there be any connection?

There can't be. So maybe the Practicalists leading our movement are right to take the strategic approach they have, to



Joshua Macabe Brown (pictured) and David Don Carpenter face capital murder charges in the rape and murder of a 13-year-old Arkansas boy.

avoid the issue unless asked point blank, and to stress the clinical research aspects of the case that separate the rest of us from monsters like Joshua Brown and David Carpenter.

Still, I can't get David Smith's words out of my mind. "This has nothing to do with gay people."

Nothing?

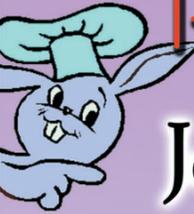
I always thought part of the gift of being gay was a certain sensitivity to injustice and horror, a sense of responsibility and boldness for speaking out and standing up and reaching out to the underdog.

Jesse Dirkhising was an underdog if ever there was one.

I hate to think that we as a movement-and that I, personally-may have come to the point where we are more concerned about the politics of damage control than the horrific loss of a young boy's life.

The Deck

Restaurant



Join Us On The Lawn!

"Easter Bonnet Brunch" and Dinner at The Deck

Sunday, April 15th, 2001



Easter Basket Give-aways all day long

The BAHAMA

954-467-7315

The Bahama Hotel
401 N. Ft. Lauderdale Beach Blvd.(A1A) Ft. Lauderdale, FL 33304



common sense

sense is not common with many mortgage lenders

The professionals at Pride Mortgage bring experience, comfort, savings, service and common sense to each transaction.

Each buyer has their own unique set of needs that require careful attention and a broad range of products to accommodate those needs.

Today, the mortgage marketplace provides more financing choices to home buyers than ever before. Brian Farley and the team of professionals at Pride Mortgage have the knowledge and experience to customize a program that is right for you.

Rates are on the way down! Refinance now and receive a \$500 credit toward your closing costs*. Call Brian Farley details.

1.800.725.6002
www.pridemortgage.com



* Certain restrictions apply. Current and previous clients eligible, present this card at time of application. Offer expires March 31, 2001.

FLORIDA CORRESPONDENT LENDER: CL 0100585