

LIBELING RELIGION FOR GAY SUICIDES

Catholic League president Bill Donohue takes on those who are blaming churches for five recent gay suicides:

On his CNN show last night, Larry King opened a segment with Wanda Sykes, Kathy Griffin, Tim Gunn, Lance Bass and others on five recent suicides committed by young gay men. Throughout the hour, the guests blamed the suicides on religion, Christianity receiving the bulk of the blame. No one was more explicit than Kathy Griffin. Saying, "we really want people to connect the dots," she confidently asserted "that's why I believe there's a connection between Prop 8, 'Don't Ask, Don't Tell', and now the string of teen suicides." She added that "a lot of the so-called religious leaders play into it."

These people need a reality check. First, in most of the suicides it is far from clear that anti-gay bullying was the cause. Though it appears that Seth Walsh hung himself after being bullied, the reason the police did not press criminal charges is because the boys never "expected an outcome such as this." According to several reports, the Rutgers student who jumped off a bridge was non-plussed after he learned that his gay tryst was surreptitiously taped by his roommate and shown online; not long before he killed himself, he even wrote on a gay chat site that his roommate was "a pretty decent" guy. Reportedly, Asher Brown's family says their boy was "picked on because of his size, his religion [he was a Buddhist who recently converted to Christianity] and because he did not wear designer clothes and shoes." Raymond Chase's brother told ABC News that his suicide "was not brought on by bullying." In the case of Indiana's Billy Lucas, both the coroner and the school district said there "is no evidence bullying led up to the suicide."

All of these deaths are tragic, but it is factually wrong to say that all were the result of anti-gay bullying. Worse, it is libelous to suggest that because Christianity (and Judaism and Islam) is opposed to homosexuality that somehow it should be held responsible for whatever bullying did go on. Indeed, to suggest culpability is nothing more than a thinly veiled attempt to stifle religious speech.