

### **MOMENT: REBECCA HILLIKER**

I must tell you that when I first heard that you were thinking of coming here, when you first called me, I wanted to say you've just kicked me in the stomach. Why are you doing this to me?

But then I thought, that's stupid, you're not doing this to me. And more importantly, I thought about it and decided that we've had so much negative closure on this whole thing. And the students really need to talk. When this happened they started talking about it, and then the media descended and all dialogue stopped.

You know, I really love my students because they are free thinkers—and you may not like what they have to say, and you may not like their opinions, because they can be very redneck, but they are honest and they're truthful—so there's an excitement here, there's a dynamic here with my students that I never had when I was in the Midwest or in North Dakota, because there, there was so much Puritanism that dictated how people looked at the world that a lot of times they didn't have an opinion, you couldn't get them to express an opinion. And quite honestly, I'd rather have opinions that I don't like—and have that dynamic in education.

There's a student I think you should talk to. His name is Jedediah Schultz.

### **MOMENT: ANGELS IN AMERICA (Jedediah Schultz)**

I've lived in Wyoming my whole life. The family has been in Wyoming well...for generations. Now when it came time to go to college, my parents can't—couldn't afford to send me to college. And I knew that if I was going to go to college I was going to have to get on a scholarship—and so uh they have this competition each year, this Wyoming state high-school competition. And I knew that if I didn't take first place in uh duets that I wasn't gonna get a scholarship. So I went to the theater department of the university looking for good scenes and I asked one of the professors, I was like "I need—I need a killer scene," and he was like "Here you go, this is it." And it was from Angels in America.

So I read it and I knew that I could win best scene if I did a good enough job.

And when the time came I told my mom and dad so that they would come to the competition. Now you have to understand, my parents go to everything—every ballgame, every hockey game, everything I've ever done.

And they brought me into their room and told me that if I did that scene, that they would not come to see me in the competition. Because they believed that it is wrong—that homosexuality is wrong. They felt that strongly about it that they didn't want to come see their son do probably the most important thing he'd done to that point in his life. And I didn't know what to do.

I had never, ever gone against my parents' wishes. So I was kind of worried about it. But I decided to do it. And all I can remember about the competition is that when we were done, me and my scene partner, we came up to each other and we shook hands and there was a standing ovation.

Oh, man it was amazing! And we took first place and we won. And that's how come I can afford to be here at the University, because of that scene. It was one of the best moments of my life. And my parents weren't there. And to this day, that was the one thing my parents didn't see me do.

And thinking back on it, I think, why did I do it? Why did I oppose my parents? 'Cause I'm not gay. So why did I do it? And I guess the only honest answer I can give is that well, I wanted to win. It was such a good scene, it was like the best scene!

### **MOMENT: IT HAPPENED HERE (Zubaida Ula)**

We went to the candle vigil.

And it was so good to be with people who felt like shit. I kept feeling like I don't deserve to feel this bad, you know? And someone got up there and said uh—he said um, blah blah blah blah and then he said, I'm saying it wrong, but basically he said c'mon guys, let's show the world that Laramie is not this kind of a town. But it is that kind of a town. If it wasn't this kind of a town, why did this happen here? I mean, you know what I mean, like—that's a lie. Because it happened here. So how could it not be a town where this kind of thing happens? Like, that's just totally—like, looking at an Escher painting and getting all confused like, it's just totally like circular logic, like how can you even say that? And we have to mourn this and we have to be sad that we live in a town, a state, a country where shit like this happens. I mean, these are people trying to distance themselves from this crime. And we need to own this crime, I feel. Everyone needs to own it. We are like this. We ARE like this. WE are LIKE this.

### **MOMENT: ONE OF OURS (Sherry Johnson)**

I haven't really been all that involved, per se. My husband's a highway patrolman, so that's really the only way that I've known about it.

Now when I first found out, I just thought it was horrible. I just, I can't . . . Nobody deserves that! I don't care who ya are.

But, the other thing that was not brought out—at the same time that happened, that patrolman was killed. And there was nothing. Nothing. They didn't say anything about the old man that killed him. He was driving down the road and he shouldn't have been driving and killed him. It was just a little piece in the paper. And we lost one of our guys.

You know, my husband worked with him. This man was brand new on the force. But I mean, here's one of ours, and it was just a little piece in the paper.

And a lot of it is my feeling that the media is portraying Matthew Shepard as a saint. And making him as a martyr. And I don't think he was. I don't think he was that pure.

Now, I didn't know him but . . . there's just so many things about him that I found out that I just, it's scary. You know about his character and spreading AIDS and a few other things. You know, being the kind of person that he was, he was just a barfly, you know. And I think he pushed himself around. I think he flaunted it.

Everybody's got problems. But why they exemplified him I don't know. What's the difference if you're gay? A hate crime is a hate crime. If you murder somebody you hate 'em. It has nothing to do with if you're gay or whatever.

I don't understand. I don't understand.

### **MOMENT: CHRISTMAS (Andrew Gomez)**

I was in there. I was in jail with Aaron in December. I got thrown in over Christmas. Assault and battery, two counts. I don't wanna talk about it. But we were sittin' there eatin' our Christmas dinner, tryin' to eat my stuffing, my motherfucking bread, my little roll and what not, and I asked him, I was like "Hey homie, tell me something, tell me something, please, why did you—" Okay, I'm thinking how I worded this, I was like "Why did you KILL a faggot if you're gonna be destined to BE a faggot later?" You know? I mean, think about it. He's either gonna get humped a lot or he's gonna die. So why would you do that? Think about that. I don't understand that.

And you know what he told me? Honest to God, this is what he said, he goes "He tried to grab my dick." That's what he said, man! He's dumb, dog, he don't even act like it was nothin'.

Now I heard they was auctioning those boys off. Up there in the max ward, you know, where the killers go. I heard that when they found Aaron was coming to prison, they were auctioning those boys off. "I want him. I'll put aside five, six, seven cartons of cigarettes." Auction his ass off. I'd be scared to go to prison if I was those two boys.

### **MOMENT: MEDICAL UPDATE/MAGNITUDE (Rulon Stacey)**

At twelve midnight on Monday, October twelfth, Matthew Shepard's blood pressure began to drop. We immediately notified his family who were already at the hospital.

At twelve fifty-three A.M., Matthew Shepard died. His family was at his bedside.

The family did release the following statement: The family again asked me to express their sincerest gratitude to the entire world for the overwhelming response for their son. The family was grateful that they did not have to make a decision regarding whether or not to continue life support for their son. Like a good son, he was caring to the end and removed guilt or stress from the family.

He came into this world prematurely and left the world prematurely.

Matthew's mother said, "Go home, give your kids a hug and don't let a day go by without telling them that you love them."

And—I don't know how I let that happen—I lost it on national television, but, you know, we had been up for like seventy-two hours straight and gone home and gone to sleep for half an hour and had to get up and come in—and maybe I was just way—I don't know—but in a moment of complete brain-deadness, while I was out there reading that statement I thought about my own four daughters—and go home hug your kids—and oh, she doesn't have her kid anymore.

And there I am and I'm thinking "This is so lame."

Um, and then we started to get people sending us emails and letters. And most of them were just generally very kind. But I did get this one. This guy wrote me and said, "Do you cry like a baby on TV for all of your patients or just the faggots?" And as I told you before, homosexuality is not a lifestyle with which I agree. Um, but having been thrown into this, I guess I didn't understand the magnitude with which some people hate. And all of the letters we got, there were maybe two or three that were like that. Most of them were, thank you for your caring and compassion and Matthew had caring and compassion from the moment he got here.

### **MOMENT: DENNIS SHEPARD'S STATEMENT**

My son Matthew did not look like a winner. He was rather uncoordinated and wore braces from the age of thirteen until the day he died. However, in his all too brief life he proved that he was a winner. On October sixth, 1998, my son tried to show the world that he could win again. On October twelfth, 1998, my first born son and my hero, lost. On October twelfth, 1998, my first born son and my hero, died, fifty days before his twenty-second birthday.

I keep wondering the same thing that I did when I first saw him in the hospital. What would he have become? How could he have changed his piece of the world to make it better?

Matt officially died in a hospital in Ft. Collins, Colorado. He actually died on the outskirts of Laramie, tied to a fence. You Mr. McKinney with your friend Mr. Henderson left him out there by himself, but he wasn't alone. There were his lifelong friends with him, friends that he had grown up with. You're probably wondering who these friends were. First he had the beautiful night sky and the same stars and moon that we used to see through a telescope. Then he had the daylight and the sun to shine on him. And through it all he was breathing in the scent of the pine trees from the snowy range. He heard the wind, the ever-present Wyoming wind, for the last time. He had one more friend with him. He had God. And I feel better knowing he wasn't alone.

Matt's beating, hospitalization and funeral focused worldwide attention on hate. Good is coming out of evil. People have said enough is enough. I miss my son, but I am proud to be able to say that he was my son.

### **MOMENT: SNOW (Romaine Patterson)**

After seeing Fred Phelps protesting at Matthew's funeral and finding out he was coming to Laramie for the trial of Russell Henderson I decided that someone needed to stand toe to toe with this guy and show the differences. And I think at times like this when we're talking about hatred as much as the nation is right now, that someone needs to show, that there is a better way of dealing with that kind of hatred.

So our idea is to dress up like angels. And so we have designed an angel outfit—for our wings are HUGE—they're like big ass wings—and there'll be ten to twenty of us that are angels—and what we're gonna do is encircle Phelps, and because of our big wings—we are gonna COM-LETE-LY block him.

So this big ass band of angels comes. We don't say a fuckin' word. We just turn our backs to him and we stand there . . . And we are a group of people bringing forth a message of peace and love and compassion. And we're calling it "Angel Action."

Yeah, this twenty-one-year-old little lesbian is ready to walk the line with him.

And I knew that my angels were gonna be taking the brunt of everything he had to yell and say. I mean, we were gonna be blocking his view and he was gonna be like pissed off to all hell . . . So I went and bought all my angels ear plugs.



**FRED PHELPS**

Do you believe the Bible? Do you believe you're supposed to separate the precious from the vile? You don't believe that part of the Bible? You stand over there ignorant of the fact that the Bible—two times for every verse it talks about God's love it talks about God's hate.

We wouldn't be here if this was just another murder the state was gonna deal with. The state deals with hundreds of murders every single day. But this murder is different, because the fags are bringing us out here trying to make Matthew Shepard into a poster boy for the gay lifestyle. And we're gonna answer it. It's just that simple.

You don't like that attribute of God. That perfect attribute of God. Well, we love that attribute of God and we're going to preach it. Because God's hatred is pure. It's a determination—it's a determination that he's gonna send some people to hell. That's God's hatred. We're standing here with God's message. Is homosexuality—is being a fag okay? What do you mean it's not for you to judge? If God doesn't hate fags, why does he put 'em in hell? You see the barrenness and sterility of your silly arguments when set over against some solid gospel truth? Barren and sterile. Like your lifestyle. Your silly arguments.