

# THE HUFFINGTON POST®

## No Need for Dancing Shoes Here...

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I am disappointed in the way many on the left are reacting to the death of Jerry Falwell. Do not get me wrong...I am not going to lose sleep over this. But I think the celebrations go over a line and will not serve us well.

Within hours of his death, folks were saying "this is god's punishment," asked me to help publicize an "anti-memorial," and one invited me to a "death celebration." Forgive me for not jumping on the bandwagon, but these things sound too similar to the late evangelist's tactics to be anything I care to be involved in.

*God's punishment?* Isn't that exactly the kind of posturing people slammed Falwell for?

*An anti-memorial?* That sounds more like a Phelps reaction to the death of Matthew Shepard than one from progressive people.

*A party to celebrate someone's death?*

I can't believe some of the things I'm reading.

The problem with the "let's dance on his grave" reaction is simply this: For many in the LGBT community, Falwell's views were not that far off from the words often heard from their own parents. I can't imagine partying over the death of a parent of a friend, even if that parent were virulently anti-gay.

At times like this, why do people turn to the very tactics they are so swift to condemn in others? Isn't this time to show how we are better than they are?

**The most appropriate statement I saw came from the national organization that hit Falwell the hardest when he was alive and the statement did not forget that Falwell was the founder and CEO of Hate, Inc.**

**From Matt Foreman, Executive Director of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force:**

**"The death of a family member or friend is always a sad occasion and we express our condolences to all those who were close to the Rev. Jerry Falwell."**

**Don't worry, Foreman appropriately remembered Falwell's legacy to gays too:**

**"Unfortunately, we will always remember him as a founder and leader of America's anti-gay industry, someone who exacerbated the nation's appalling response to the onslaught of the AIDS epidemic, someone who demonized and vilified us for political gain and someone who used religion to divide rather than unite our nation."**

There will be plenty of time to slam Falwell's beliefs and work... but right now I fear all of the celebrating will just be picked up by the wingnuts and tossed back at us. In light of our condemnation of Phelps's funeral protests, I think we can do better here than predictable gloating.

When you think about the hateful preacher, perhaps take a moment to also think about the late Falwell's gay cousin, Brett Beasley. In 1999, Brett rose to the challenge and came out against his cousin's hateful ways. I can't imagine what it would be like to have such hate come at you from within your own family, but if a gay man like Beasley can resist dancing on his cousin's grave, I bet the rest of us can too.