

## Until the Murders End

**Kerima Çevik**

This is the last article I'll be posting for awhile. I've tried for over a year to write about this topic, but each time I've broken down. I decided to fight the sadness because I just don't have the time to continue to be silent on this. Tragedies keep happening.

Time to explain the scrolling names at the top of my blog, and why I am listing murder victims and how they died.

Someone commented recently that they didn't want to participate in the annual day of mourning for disabled murder victims (<http://autisticadvocacy.org/2013/02/asan-day-of-mourning-on-march-1st/>). "I prefer to focus on happier, positive things", they said. Don't we all? But when we turn a blind eye to injustice it does not go away. It worsens, escalates. When people who consider themselves "good people" ignore injustice they enable it. Sometimes, you have to stand up for what is just, by reminding people infamy exists, and its victims are waiting to rest in peace.

The murder of Autistic children by anyone has always upset me. I don't want to hear any excuses made for anyone who has committed such an act because my job as a special needs parent is not easy either. My son has a great degree of impairment and historically, little or no supports. He is, "like your child" if people must have that trope. I have enough respect for him as a person not to spend my life complaining about being his mom because I am one of the reasons he was born. I own my part in his coming into my life. He was, and is, a wanted and welcomed child. It is no fault of his own he nearly died on his first birthday from a deadly flu despite being vaccinated. His great challenges are not his fault. He is a heroic person. I could not be as patient, loving, or understanding as he continues to be despite the abuse he has suffered in two school placements by people who presume he is not human and is not worth their trouble. His daily perseverance in the face of overwhelming challenges to be independent is staggering. I am not half the person my son is. I am over 50 years old, and I have yet to meet someone like my son.

So when someone takes someone like my son, a human being fighting for their own place in society, for the right to be counted as human, to be independent, to overcome their impairments, and snuffs out that light, it is as if I've been stabbed. It kills something in me. The grief is personal.

I want this to end. All of us want that. I think that it can only end if we do the following:

1. **Remember and honor the victims;** thus the scrolling marquee atop this blog. I don't want to forget them. Ever. I'll update this post to add other sites and pages open for people to discuss and post on this topic, made to honor the dead and fight for the living.

2. **Educate ourselves, and then spread the word. Silence kills.** It is not ok to call murdering a person a "mercy" because they are disabled. No one has the right to take a life that is not their own. How sad that people have done murder in the name of fighting for the unborn, but when those same people see that these babies are born disabled, they somehow feel it is fine to even consider dispatching them from the world. Disabled people have apparent challenges that are many times visible. Typical people can hide challenges. That doesn't make typical people superior. It just makes them different.

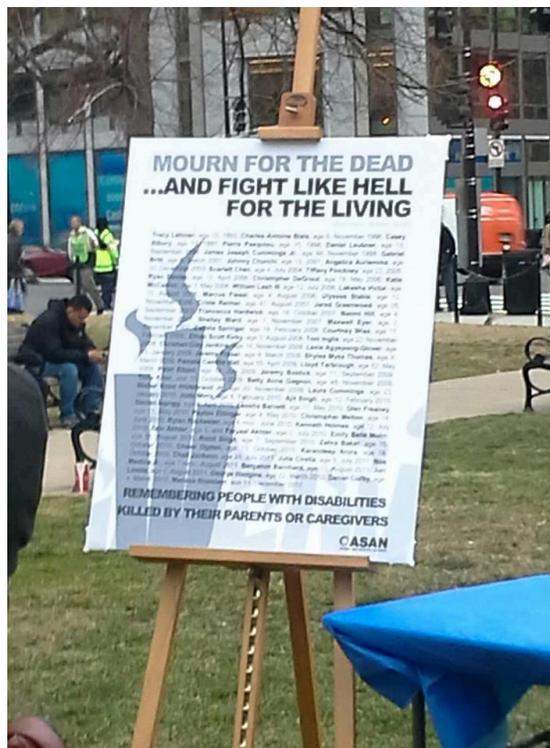
3. **Remind every care provider, professional, and parent that the murdering a disabled person is a hate crime.** Some parents hesitate. They are afraid of scenarios where they might be the parent in trouble. Wow. Stop that. If your mind is going there, if you are that stressed, depressed, overwhelmed, run and get help. But don't support murder because you are afraid you might be the next parent locked up for harming your child. There is a qualitative difference between needing respite from care providing and committing murder.

4. I understand some families have aggressive adults, or children or adults needing intensive supports and round the clock care in their families. **If you cannot manage your child, continually seek professional help.** Please do not listen to any employee of the system who tells you the short cut to group home placement is calling the police and using domestic disturbance calls to document your loved one is aggressive. Or that euthanasia is what your loved one would want if they could tell you. Probably the largest numbers of deaths from catastrophic encounters with law enforcement occur because families are told to do this to get their adult placed in a residential setting. And the right to take a life in your care is not yours.

5. Save lives. Be an active neighbor, a mindful witness, a concerned friend. **If a parent, care provider, educator, or staff member confesses they are depressed, suicidal, overwhelmed, help them get help.** Help them by making phone calls,

bringing meals, raising money for respite, or positive behavioral supports that can help the whole family cope. If nothing else, advise they consider a compassionate removal of their loved ones into the system. But please, please, do not ignore cries for help. And respite works two ways. There is the concept that care providers need respite. But more often than not, disabled loved ones welcome regular respite activities as well.

So this Autism Acceptance Month, disabled murder victims will be remembered on this site, maybe longer, because new murders keep happening. And they won't stop if we avoid speaking of it for more pleasant things.



***In Memory of Robert "Ethan" Saylor, 26, Steven Simpson, 18, and all those who came before them.***

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