

Transsexual's killing seen as wakeup Call

By Susan E. Neff
Globe Correspondent

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Editor: Comments: *The article you are about to read reminds me of a few phone calls I received over the information line.*

For the one's that must go out at night day as your female self, try to keep life in perspective at all times, especially when we are dressed as our female self. The life you save may be your own. You know: it could happen here..... at home.

More than 100 people gathered at the Arlington Street Church in Boston last night to remember a slain friend and to rally together for Boston's Transsexual community.

The memorial service was held in honor of Roman (Chanell) Pickett, a 23-year-old transsexual who was allegedly strangled by William Palmer, 34 in Palmer's Watertown home.

Palmer, who was charged with Pickett's murder Nov. 21, allegedly met Pickett Nov. 19, at the Playland Cafe near Boston's Combat Zone. The two left the bar together and ended up at Palmer's home, said Middlesex First Assistant District Attorney Martin Murphy.

Palmer allegedly killed Pickett some five hours later. At Palmer's arraignment, prosecutors said the slaying occurred after Palmer realized that Pickett, who was awaiting sex-change surgery, was still a male.

Pickett's identical twin, Gabrielle Pickett, has disputed that motive, saying that Palmer had frequented the Playland and knew that Chanelle Pickett was a transsexual.

Last night's ceremony was a memorial for Pickett, but it was also a statement from the transsexual community against gender-related hate crimes.

"We came together because we felt there had to be some response from the community and for the community," said Mike Mammone, a member of the Remember Chanelle Committee. "It's to remember Chanelle first and foremost, but it is also political."

Mammone said, Pickett's murder should serve as a reminder and a call to action to Boston's gay, lesbian and transsexual community that the lack of legislation for gender-based hate crimes puts everyone in the community at risk.

About the altar of the church hung a wreath bearing Chanelle Pickett's name. Below the wreath was a photograph of Pickett, surrounded by candles.

"We were 19 when that picture was taken," said Gabrielle Pickett, who is also a transsexual. "She was as high-spirited and confident now as she was then. All we can do for Chanelle now is to stick together and see this thing to the end."

At last night's service, family and friends lit candles on Pickett's honor and were invited to address the audience.

Many of the people who spoke - including transsexuals, homosexuals and heterosexuals, said they didn't know Pickett personally, but each of them shared the belief that gender related hate crimes have no place in the world.

"I am here because we have to draw the line on transsexual murders," said Nancy Nangeroni, a local transsexual activist. "Our culture divides gender into artificial boundaries and when someone doesn't fit one of those genders they are not a person and it is easier for them to be murdered."

Former Boston City Councilor David Scodras said: "I came because Chanelle could have been any one of my friends."

The memorial service was followed by a candlelight procession from the Church to the State House, where the wreath bearing Pickett's name was put on display.

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