

Lesbian couple saves 40 teens from Norway massacre

Jamie Manson | Aug. 5, 2011 NCR Today

"If a Married Lesbian Couple Saves 40 Teens from the Norway Massacre and No One Writes About it, Did it Really Happen?"

So [asks one blogger](#) [1] who notes that no one in the U.S. mainstream press has picked up this story.

Campers Hege Dalen and Toril Hansen were eating supper across the lake from the ill-fated Norwegian campground. Suddenly they heard gunshots and screams. Without thinking twice, they headed into their boat and steered directly towards the gunfire.

Arriving at the shore, they began to pull youngsters into their boat. The boat could only fit 10 people at a time. So they make four round trips. Forty teenagers who otherwise might have been shot or drowned were saved because of their heroic efforts.

Why haven't we heard more about them? Roz Kaveney, a columnist for the *Guardian*, [suspects the obvious](#) [2]:

In the first place, Hege Dalen and Toril Hansen are women. A lot of the press like their tales of heroism to fit standard narratives, in which men protect and women nurture. ?

In the second place, Dalen and Hansen are lesbians. In television narratives, the few heroines we are allowed to see are always heterosexual; even when they are allowed to be competent, and wear sensible action-adventure outfits, they always end up melting into some man's arms in the end.

And, of course, perhaps the greatest impediment to the couple's path to media glorification: They're legally married. Kaveney continues:

. . . You can just imagine news editors in Washington worrying that, if they pushed the story, they would be accused of promoting "the gay agenda."

Toril and Hansen aren't the only gay heroes not to get the typical adoration from the press.

Daniel Hernandez, the 20-year-old intern for Gabrielle Giffords, is credited with saving the congresswoman's life. While gunfire continued to ring out around the Tuscon Safeway, Hernandez applied intense pressure to Giffords wounds while also checking her vital signs. Few, if any, major media stories mentioned Hernandez's sexual orientation. As with the Toril and Hansen story, that detail was mostly covered by small blogging outlets.

Some may argue that the sexual orientation of these heroes shouldn't matter. While I agree with that sentiment, I also realize that many people in our society -- particularly those segments with deep ties to their churches -- continue to demonize, degrade and disenfranchise LGBT people.

We aren't quite at the point of acceptance and integration to let details like this go unnoted. The fact that Toril and Hansen's story hasn't come to light demonstrates the power that homophobia continues to wield in our press and our culture.

Stories like these might help some folks recognize that LGBT people not only have ordinary lives beyond their sexual orientation, they are also capable of extraordinary acts of courage and even holiness. They can even risk laying down their own lives for their brothers and sisters. Last time I checked the Gospel of John, Jesus told the disciples that there was no greater love than that.

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Links:

- [1] <http://talkaboutequality.wordpress.com/2011/08/01/if-a-married-lesbian-couple-saves-40-teens-from-the-norway-massacre-and-no-one-writes-about-it-did-it-really-happen/>
- [2] <http://www.guardian.co.uk/commentisfree/2011/aug/03/lesbian-couple-norway-utoya-massacre>