

Soft-Focus Amnesia

Since former President Reagan's death, I've felt frustrated by the amnesia affecting the mainstream media. News stories have portrayed a mythic American hero and have completely avoided a balanced perspective on the former President. Along side somber elegies, news reports haven't contained any historical analysis or insight. Even NPR offered little besides lengthy interviews with mourners, who were so moved by Reagan's passing that they made pilgrimage to his funeral. Few, if any, news reports have referenced Nicaragua or El Salvador, "Trickle Down Economics" or his lack of support for social services and fair housing. At some point, will the media remember the introduction of AIDS in our modern world and Reagan's utter lack of response? I've waited for more variety in the mainstream news coverage, to no avail.

At a restaurant this week, a big-screen TV loomed above me. Other customers watched the news with pensive, mournful looks on their faces. I sat eating, feeling suddenly less hungry. I felt disconnected from the other patrons – I didn't feel what their faces seemed to show. I started to wonder if I had amnesia. Was "Star Wars," that shield that was going to protect us from the "evil" Russians,

something Ronald Reagan invented – or a product of my own imagination? Did the Iran-Contra hearings really happen? If these things did happen, why was no one remembering them? By not remembering the past, would we, as the plaque at Jonestown read, be destined to repeat it?

I'm frustrated now, as I was after Nixon's death, at the mass amnesia we are forced to suffer, as media gazes through a nostalgic lens. AIDS has affected our planet in a devastating way and countless people have died. Their deaths resulted from an epidemic that our 40th president pretended didn't even exist, in the hope that it, like us, would simply disappear. I think of Audre Lorde's words from *Sister Outsider*, "Your silence will not protect you." Lorde wrote of the devastating effects of silence, something AIDS activists know all too well. To my relief, gay press and forwarded email chains showed me I'm not alone in my anger; others share my feelings and they are not remaining silent. *Silence Equals Death* is a painful lesson we learned from Reagan's administration. We aren't remaining silent now, because we know it still means death.

Some remember Reagan as a leader with vision and integrity. I will remember him as a warmonger and a bigot.

Reagan was a president who had no regard for women, the poor, people of color, or the LGBTQA community. I remember a man whose silence did not protect us, while we were dying in droves. At least his final years were spent with dignity and quality health care, a luxury denied to many AIDS patients during his eight years in office.

The sad irony about all of this is that I suspect Ronnie will get a postage stamp, too.

Joshua Keels
Worcester, VT

No Communication

Ronald Regan – the great communicator?! Bullpucky!

He couldn't even utter the word AIDS.

He created the largest divide between the "haves" and the "have-nots" in this country. He also put California's incompetents on the streets, where many and their successors remain today, by closing the state's mental health facilities.

He created the largest deficit in U.S. history with his military budget and flawed "Star Wars" strategic defense initiative, which cost the taxpayers billions of dollars and never got off the ground.

He was more Hitler than hero, and certainly not a champion of the average American.

Too bad Reagan didn't maintain his mental faculties so he could experience and realize what a screw-up his vice president would be as president and Bush's son after him, how AIDS now ravages the entire planet, and how a left-leaning liberal with a libido for fat chicks balanced their 12-year, right-wing budget and brought some semblance of peace and normalcy to America in eight short years in office.

Lee A. Schoenbart
La Jolla, CA

Corrections

Several errors, primarily from source material, were perpetuated in our story in the May issue on Tony Barreto-Neto's settlement with the Hardwick Town Select Board over his anti-trans harassment and dismissal. Barreto-Neto's birth name was Maycelle Louise, not Sheila Maycell. The county where Barreto-Neto was employed in the Sheriff's office was Hillsborough, not Hillsboro. I misinterpreted the relationship between anti-trans harassment in Florida and Barreto-Neto's move to Vermont: "The move was not motivated by harassment," Barreto-Neto said in a phone call. "The harassment was over by the time of my retirement from the Sheriff's office." Barreto-Neto did not quit the Hardwick Police Department, but was "constructively discharged," according to the former officer. Finally, the Attorney General's finding was of "probable cause that the Town of Hardwick illegally fired Barreto-Neto after it learned that he is transgender," quoting from the GLAD press release. In his phone call, Barreto-Neto made a distinction between that legal language and our more general description that the Attorney General's office found credible his complaint of discrimination. We regret the errors. ▼

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