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## The Breaking News Blog

All the latest news from the District, Maryland and Virginia

### Slain Marine's family gets donations for court costs

People from across the U.S. have launched a grass-roots fundraising campaign to help the [family of a slain Marine](#) pay court costs stemming from a lawsuit against a group that protested at the man's funeral, the **Baltimore Sun** reports.

**Albert Snyder** sued members of the Westboro Baptist Church because they waved signs saying "God hates the USA" and signs bearing anti-gay slurs at the 2006 funeral of his son, Lance Cpl. **Matthew Snyder**, who was killed in Iraq. A federal jury in Baltimore awarded Snyder \$11 million in damages in 2007, saying the group from Topeka, Kan., intentionally inflicted emotional distress on the family. The award was reduced to \$5 million and was overturned after an appeal by church group leader **Fred Phelps**.

The 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered Snyder to pay \$16,510.80 to Phelps. Snyder's story, which appeared in the Sun, has prompted an outpouring of support.

Phelps's group travels the country to protest at military funerals, saying service members' deaths are God's punishment for U.S. tolerance of homosexuality.

By **Lori Aratani** | **March 31, 2010; 12:08 PM ET**

Posted on Thu, Apr. 1, 2010

**Michael Smerconish: What we can all do for Al Snyder**

By Michael Smerconish - Daily News  
Philadelphia Daily News

Daily News Opinion Columnist

FIRST, Al Snyder lost his 20-year-old son, a Marine hero, in Iraq.

Then he had to endure a protest by homophobic religious fanatics who showed up at the funeral carrying signs with messages like "Semper Fi Fags" and "Thank God for Dead Soldiers."

Now, Snyder is personally responsible for \$16,500 in legal costs incurred by the protesters.

I'm asking *Daily News* readers to consider helping him pay that legal bill.

Here's the background on the case. Marine Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder died in combat in Iraq on March 3, 2006. His funeral, held one week later at St. John's Catholic Church in Westminster, Md., should have been a sacred farewell to a fallen American hero.

It was instead hijacked by Fred Phelps and the Westboro Baptist Church, who have taken to protesting at military funerals to publicize a perverse message: The death of American soldiers is God's punishment for America's tolerance of homosexuality.

THE PLACARDS they displayed at Lance Cpl. Snyder's funeral relayed that point using the following language: "God Hates the USA," "Fag Troops," "You're Going to Hell," and "God Hates You."

Snyder, Lance Cpl. Snyder's father, told me he was forced to reposition his two daughters as they rode in the funeral procession so they would not have to see such filth en route to their brother's funeral.

Snyder sued Phelps and Westboro Baptist, initially winning a \$10.9 million award from a jury that was later reduced by the court to \$5 million.

Westboro Baptist, of Topeka, Kansas, appealed, and the U.S. Court of Appeals for the Fourth Circuit reversed the trial court's verdict. Earlier this month, the Supreme Court agreed to hear the case.

My view is that while the First Amendment enumerates perhaps the most basic of American rights - freedom of speech, as well as the freedom to freely practice religion and to peaceably assemble - the courts have been amenable to restricting such freedoms in the past.

The First Amendment doesn't protect those found guilty of dispersing messages containing defamation, obscenity and fighting words (yelling "Fire!" in a theater, for example). It's my hope that the court carves out a similar limitation in the case of protests at military funerals.

But in the meantime, pursuant to the federal rules of civil procedure, Snyder, as the losing party in the federal appellate case, has been assessed with a legal bill. It holds him personally responsible for a significant portion of the litigation costs of his legal opponents, Phelps and Westboro Baptist. In this case, that includes docketing fees and printing charges totaling exactly \$16,510.80.

Snyder has set up a legal-defense fund, and I'm asking *Daily News* readers to join me in contributing anything they can to help the Snyder family pay these costs. You can make a donation online by visiting [MatthewSnyder.org](http://MatthewSnyder.org) and clicking "Donate" in the upper-left corner. Or you can send a check payable to "Al Snyder Fund" to:

Barley Snyder LLC

100 E. Market St.

York, Pa. 17401

Should he be relieved of this burden by the Supreme Court, Snyder says that 100 percent of the donated funds will be used to aid veterans of the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. So will any funds raised in excess of the court-ordered total.

Those who need additional motivation to rally to the Snyders' defense should consider the language posted on Westboro Baptist's Web site after the attacks of Sept. 11, 2001:

*"Thank God for September 11. Thank God for those planes. God ordained and decreed these acts. He determined in eternity to hurl those airplanes, like fiery darts out of the sky. He used the evil followers of Osama bin Laden to punish even more evil people."*

THE DISPARITY between those sentiments and the values embodied by the Snyder family could not be wider.

Lance Cpl. Matthew Snyder is a fallen American hero. His father, Al, is a decent man who deserves much more than the burden our judicial system has given him.

Please help correct this offense by visiting [MatthewSnyder.org](http://MatthewSnyder.org) and contributing to the Snyders' defense fund.

Listen to Michael Smerconish weekdays 5-9 a.m. on the Big Talker, 1210/AM. Read him Sundays in the Inquirer. Contact him via the Web at [www.smerconish.com](http://www.smerconish.com).

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<http://www.foxnews.com/story/0,2933,590202,00.html>

## Hating America

Wednesday, March 31, 2010

By Bill O'Reilly

**FOX NEWS**

When you do violent things, you hate your country. It doesn't matter why you do them. Violence in itself is destructive to society. And there's all kinds of violence: physical, mental and emotional.

The FBI has smashed a whacked-out militia group in Michigan, arresting nine people. Apparently these loons were plotting to kill a police officer and then bomb the funeral in the hope of touching off an uprising against the government.

Crazy? Off the chart. We congratulate the FBI for arresting these people, assuming of course the charges are proved.

In another insane situation, the Westboro Baptist Church, which hates gay people and believes God is punishing America, won a victory in court. These disturbed souls from Westboro disrupt military funerals, so Albert Snyder of York, Pennsylvania, the father of a Marine killed in Iraq, sued the church for intentional infliction of emotional distress and invasion of privacy. Mr. Snyder won in the beginning and then lost on appeal, and incredibly, the court has ordered him to pay more than \$16,000 in court costs to the Westboro people.

That is an outrage, and I will pay Mr. Snyder's obligation. I am not going to let this injustice stand.

It's obvious those cranks at Westboro were intentionally trying to hurt Mr. Snyder and his family. It's obvious they were disturbing the peace. They should have been arrested, but our system is so screwed up that loons are allowed to run wild.

Mr. Snyder is fighting a good fight, and he is taking his case to the Supreme Court. We are behind him 100 percent.

There is far too much hatred in America. That's obvious. It comes from both sides. The Michigan militia and the Westboro Baptist Church are far-right nuts, but there are just as many far-left idiots doing vile things.

Thirty-eight-year-old Norman Leboon has been charged with threatening to kill Republican Congressman Eric Cantor. Apparently Leboon wants to kill Cantor and his family and is now being held without bail. It looks like this guy is simply nuts. Ideology might not be in play.

However, a brick was thrown through the window of the Michigan Republican Party headquarters on Monday. Obviously that's political.

The point is that the situation in America is reaching critical mass. There is far too much hatred in the air.

The press is obviously pumping up inappropriate things that happen on the right and pretty much ignoring hateful things on the left. Bernie Goldberg and I established that on Monday.

But every member of the media should condemn all hate speech and violent activity. It is simply un-American.

And that's "The Memo."

### **Pinheads & Patriots**

Our auction for Operation Shoebox and USA Cares, two very worthy charities, is over.

The last autographed cover of my upcoming book "Pinheads and Patriots: Your Place in the Age of Obama" was won by Gerard Hall from Durham, North Carolina, who bid \$5,500. I will match that.

So all told, Shoebox and USA Cares will get \$57,000, and everyone who bid is a patriot.

On the pinhead front, things are not good for the Octomom. You'll remember, Nadya Suleman gave birth to eight babies last year, on top of the six kids that she already had.

Well now the mother of 14 is reportedly in danger of losing her home, apparently having trouble with mortgage payments. So the animal rights people at PETA are giving her \$5,000 and a month's supply of veggie burgers and veggie hot dogs in exchange for some free publicity. The PETA people have put a sign up on Ms. Suleman's lawn that says: "Don't let your dog or cat become an Octomom. Always spay or neuter."

Is she a pinhead for teaming up with PETA, or PETA for teaming up with her? You make the call.

**Correction:** Monday night the winning bid on the book cover was made by Cecilia Hilton, who lives in Gainesville, Virginia. I badly mispronounced Cecilia's name. So badly I called her Evelyn. Obviously, that's not good. Cecilia is a patriot and should never be confused with Evelyn, who we don't even know.

— *You can catch Bill O'Reilly's "Talking Points Memo" and "Pinheads & Patriots" weeknights at 8 and 11 p.m. ET on the FOX News Channel and any time on [foxnews.com/oreilly](http://foxnews.com/oreilly). Send your comments to: [oreilly@foxnews.com](mailto:oreilly@foxnews.com)*

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<http://www.foxnews.com/us/2010/04/01/donations-pour-father-fallen-marine/>

- AP

- April 01, 2010

## **Donations pour in to father of fallen Marine**

BALTIMORE

Donations are pouring in for a fallen Marine's father who was ordered to pay the court costs of an anti-gay church he's been battling.

Donations are pouring in for a fallen Marine's father who was ordered to pay the court costs of an anti-gay church he's been battling.

Albert Snyder of York, Pa., appeared Thursday on ABC's "Good Morning America." He says it was insulting that the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals ordered him to pay \$16,510 in court costs to Fred Phelps, pastor of Westboro Baptist Church.

Westboro members picketed the Maryland funeral of Snyder's son, Matthew. The church contends U.S. military deaths are God's punishment for tolerance of homosexuality. Albert Snyder sued the church, but the appeals court ruled against him. The U.S. Supreme Court has agreed to hear the case.

Fox News commentator Bill O'Reilly has pledged to pay the court costs. The American Legion is also soliciting donations for Snyder.

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