



Written by [R. Cort Kirkwood](#) on May 16, 2012

## Catholic Bishop to Permit Homosexual Scholarship at Iowa H.S.

The Catholic bishop of Davenport, Iowa, has decided to [allow](#) a homosexual group to present a hefty scholarship to a homosexual student at a Catholic high school.

After first [refusing to permit](#) the [Eychaner Foundation](#) to present the scholarship at [Prince of Peace High](#), [Bishop Martin Amos](#) (back row, center, in photo) reached an agreement with the group. Amos and the foundation jointly approved a script that will be read at an awards ceremony where Keaton Fuller will receive a \$40,000 scholarship.



Fuller is something of a celebrity at the school because he “came out of the closet,” as the homosexual argot puts it. He won the scholarship, [foundation officials say](#), because he’s one tough cookie in the fight against “homophobia.” And he’s tough enough to escort his beau to the high school prom.

### Denial

The diocese had initially refused to permit the Eychaner Foundation to present the scholarship, [named for](#) homosexual [Matthew Shepard](#), who was beaten to death in what was widely — but likely falsely — believed to have been an anti-homosexual “hate crime.”

As [the Associated Press reported](#), the rejection of the request was straight from Catholic doctrine: “We cannot allow any one or any organization which promotes a position that is contrary to the teachings of the Catholic Church to present at a diocesan institution.”

The bishop was not going to prohibit the school from announcing that Fuller won the scholarship; he would only have barred a representative from the Eychaner Foundation from presenting it.

[According to](#) the AP, “[i]n an open letter released Monday, Fuller said he’s never felt so ‘invalidated and unaccepted’ as he did when he heard that news last week.”

He said he and his family were asking the school to reverse its decision, and he launched an online petition Monday that was signed by hundreds of supporters within its first hours.

“This whole ordeal has been incredibly hurtful, and I am even sadder that this will be one of my last experiences to remember my high school years by,” Fuller wrote.

The Eychaner Foundation was disappointed as well. After all, as [the AP reported](#), “Fuller is believed to be the first gay student at a Catholic high school to attend multiple school dances with a partner of the same sex, said foundation executive director Michael Bowser. ‘We were very proud of him for that,’ he said.”

The AP also reported:

School Board President Edward O’Neill said he was disappointed by the bishop’s decision. He said



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Fuller was a talented student who was accepted by his peers after coming out years ago. He said Fuller had taken his boyfriend to prom over the weekend and other school dances without controversy.

[According to](#) the *Des Moines Register*, "The diocesan superintendent of schools will read the script but a representative of the Eychaner Foundation's scholarship committee will be there to physically present a statue to Fuller."

"Presenting" the scholarship was never the problem, a [diocesan spokesman told](#) the newspaper. Rather, the problem was "speaking" at the ceremony. The policy of the diocese did not change, the spokesman said.

The diocesan announcement of the "agreement" [reminded everyone](#) of the diocesan role in fighting bullying, harassment, and discrimination.

Said the bishop, "Principles of mutual respect and careful listening exhibited by all parties allowed a solution to emerge. We have many things we agree upon, and have also agreed to accept the fact that we also have some things we disagree about. But that shouldn't prevent all of us from celebrating Keaton Fuller's success."

## Statement Not Quite Correct

Some analysts have pointed out that in signing an agreement with the foundation about the speech, the bishop has agreed to a statement that is false. The joint statement [reads thusly](#): "In October 1998, the world was stunned by the brutal murder of a 21-year-old college student at the University of Wyoming in Laramie. Matthew Shepard was kidnapped, savagely beaten and left to die tied to a fence, because he was gay."

In fact, as [ABC News' 20-20 reported](#) in 2004, Aaron McKinney and Russell Henderson targeted Shepard on Oct. 12, 1998, because he looked like an "easy mark" for robbery. McKinney had wanted to rob a methamphetamine dealer of \$10,000 in drugs, but that plan fell through. Shepard was the next best thing, because, McKinney told ABC's Elizabeth Vargas of *20-20*, the victim "was well-dressed and [McKinney] assumed he had a lot of cash."

The theory that McKinney killed Shepard because the latter was homosexual came from McKinney's friends and girlfriend, the [program reported](#). She recanted. And police did not believe McKinney killed Shepard because he was gay, [20-20 reported](#): "Former Laramie Police Detective Ben Fritzen, one of the lead investigators in the case, also believed robbery was the primary motive. 'Matthew Shepard's sexual preference or sexual orientation certainly wasn't the motive in the homicide,' he said."

McKinney's attorneys concocted the "gay panic" defense, "claiming homosexual abuse McKinney suffered as a child caused him to overreact to a sexual advance by Shepard and triggered the violent attack. Hoping a Wyoming jury would be sympathetic to gay panic did not pay off. McKinney was found guilty and wound up with two life sentences."

Asked directly whether he targeted and attacked Shepard because he was gay, McKinney told Vargas, "No. I did not. ... I would say it wasn't a hate crime. All I wanted to do was beat him up and rob him."

But if the attackers were just trying to rob someone to get a drug fix, why did they beat Shepard so savagely?

[Prosecutor Cal] Rerucha attributes McKinney's rage and his savage beating of Shepard to his drug



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abuse. “The methamphetamine just fueled to this point where there was no control. It was a horrible, horrible, horrible murder. It was a murder that was once again driven by drugs,” Rerucha said.

Dr. Rick Rawson, a professor at UCLA who has studied the link between methamphetamine and violence, tells *20/20* the drug can trigger episodes of violent behavior.

“In the first weeks after you’ve stopped using it, the kinds of triggers that can set off an episode are completely unpredictable. It can be: you say a word with the wrong inflection, you touch someone on the shoulder. It’s completely unpredictable as to what will set somebody off,” Rawson said.

“If Aaron McKinney had not become involved with methamphetamine, Matthew Shepard would be alive today,” Rerucha said.

Others, of course, disagree, and still view Shepard’s murder as a “hate crime.”

Whatever it was, observers have noted that the agreement on presenting the scholarship still leaves the diocese in the position of granting a platform to homosexuality, along with one big question: Will the bishop continue to permit homosexual “partners” [to attend](#) proms at Catholic high schools under his diocesan jurisdiction?



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