

Robert Posner Scholarship Ceremony

It's my honor to tell you about the Robert Posner Scholarship.

There are so many here tonight who knew and loved Robert and I thank you with all my heart for being here to help me celebrate.

And, yet, there are many here who have never had that privilege.

So, as Robert's partner, it's my privilege to briefly tell you about him and how this scholarship came to be.

Robert Posner was a generous man.

Robert was so generous when it came to his money, but even more so when it came to "himself" -- and his "time."

While the generosity from his wallet was notable, it was not readily known by many -- nor fully known by me.

After he died, in the very short time before his family felt the dishonoring need to have his mail forwarded away from our home -- from his home -- I was amazed at how many charities would write to him with their spring appeal and thank him for his gift last year of "*this-amount-and-that-amount.*"

While we used to talk about charities that mattered to us and which ones we would support with our collective money, little did I know how much he used to give to so many others with his own money.

But, to so many -- and so many of us in this very room -- the generosity that came from his heart is the generosity that was so very evident.

Robert was a self-less man.

Don't get me wrong ... he was far from perfect. But he was the closest thing to perfect in my book.

I loved the way he cared for others, and most notable to me, the way he cared for strangers.

I wonder if it had to do with always feeling like a stranger himself:

- Growing up gay in the machismo Latin culture of South America
- Being Jewish in Catholic Colombia
- Having an accent here in the States
- And being an artist in a time when hit movies and new cars are prized more than treasures in galleries or museums.

He believed in giving back to society. He talked about that often. He knew he was blessed, and he very much believed in helping others. And that he did. He knew we were blessed

And, lastly, Robert was an artist.

It was his desire to be known as an artist that I hold so close to my heart and my mission in honoring him.

Robert brought beautiful artistry to this world not merely with brush to canvas or his stained glass or clothing designs, but through the very way in which he lived his life, and the way he shared his heart with others.

A heart, we later learned, that was just too big for the body in which it was placed.

A heart that, perhaps loved too much and loved too many to last any longer than its 42 years.

It is said that, "*A heart is not measured by how much you love, but by how much you are loved by others.*"

Robert's was a life measured in love, not in years.

It is in tribute to this man, that those who were touched by *that* heart, repay his generosity and selflessness with the establishment of the Robert Posner Artists' Fund and its two Awards.

I'd like to thank the Selection Committee for their work in reviewing all of the applicants:

- My dear brother, Bruce Beyerle
- My loving aunt, Barbara Kirby
- The woman who cared for me at my many, many hours of need - Goldie Brown
- and Robert's best friend and dear confidant, and my friend, Beatriz Adrianzen

I'd also like to thank, and share with you all tonight, the recent news of a donor who has offered a 10 thousand dollar match to select size donations received or pledged by September 27th of this year (what would have been Robert's 47th birthday).

So, I invite all of you tonight to please consider a donation in these next 4 months so that we may fully realize this challenge grant.

With your help, we can continue to reward deserving LGBT students with scholarships in honor of the exemplary life and legacy Robert left and support bringing artistic beauty to our world in his absence.

A donation of 100 dollars, like the check that was just handed to me tonight by my dear friend will be turned into 150 dollars with this match.

Or, better yet, please consider a donation or pledge (a pledge payable over 3 years) of 500 dollars or more and have your gift or pledge doubled with this match.

Please help me to not let a penny of this match be missed in the next 4 months*.

[***Editors Note:** this challenge has subsequently been extended beyond this date]

I'd like to close by reading 3 sentences from the winner's Scholarship-Application-Essay on the topic:
Why I Want to be a Visual Artist

The drawings and paintings I create are a reflection of everything I am -- and everything I want to be.

I can never run away from being a gay black man coming from a religious background but I CAN change how people look at me.

The very air I breathe and ground I step on All is because of my pursuit of happiness.

THIS is what makes me whole and THAT is why I wish to be a visual artist.

After we leave this ceremony, samples of his talented work will be on display in our reception.

So, tonight, it is my immeasurable privilege, and my indescribable honor, to present the 2009 winner of the Robert Posner Scholarship to a man – much like Robert – who graces the world through his artistry: Darren Toliver

Mark Beyerle
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May 18, 2009