



Wynwood Police Shut Down Guerilla Theater Stage Play NO PICTURES PLEASE!

The controversial satire and guerilla theater stage play NO PICTURES PLEASE was shut down as the actors & crew attempted to erect a makeshift stage.

WYNWOOD, FLORIDA, USA, April 19, 2017 /EINPresswire.com/ -- After raising funds through an Indiegogo campaign, and finding four actors willing to take the risk, Doug Shear attempted to produce his controversial guerilla stage play No Pictures Please. He chose the popular tourist destination of Wynwood, Florida for the event, which took place on April 15, 2017.

As the team was in the process of erecting their makeshift stage, a Wynwood Police Officer shut down the production.

The play, which is ten minutes long, is a comedy that satirizes both Islam and the limits of free speech in America. As the Play progresses, a fake terrorist interrupts and threatens to trigger his bomb vest in retaliation. However, the Director informs him that since this is the first time the Play has ever been performed in front of an audience, and therefore the Terrorist should let them finish it. The terrorist agrees. If he finds the Play offensive, then and only then will he set off the bomb. The actors are forced to continue the Play under the threat of death.

According to Doug Sheer, the creator of No Pictures Please, "At no point in the play will the audience believe they are threatened. The actor playing the terrorist is wearing a bomb vest t-shirt and a pink, toy clock."

That was not the original intent, however, as the play was initially planned as an interactive experience in which the audience, having already been forced to walk through a metal detector to enter the theater, would believe the terrorist was real. That plan was eventually abandoned.

"I realized that what I wanted to do didn't just bump up against the limits of free speech, it crossed the line. I had even researched ways to suppress people's cellphone signals, to keep them from calling the police during the five or ten minutes they might actually believe they were under the threat of an explosion. But apparently that would be illegal."

Unable to find a willing venue, Doug tried to rent space at the Wynwood Farmer's Market and Wynwood Alley. They turned him down, based on the subject matter of the Play. That is when Doug decided his only choice was to produce the play using Guerilla Theater. Guerilla Theater is the dramatization of political and social issues, typically performed outdoors, as a means of protest or propaganda.

On Saturday, April 15, Doug, the four actors and the crew attempted to erect the makeshift stage in surprisingly strong winds. The stage consisted of a metal frame and tarps, meant to simulate a tent. The front consisted of Arabian style curtains and decorations. The wind made the task nearly impossible and everyone was concerned it might blow away and hurt people. The actors consisted of Diana Frederick as Malala, Isabel as Aisha, Tony Albanes as Muhammed, and Omar the Red as the Terrorist. The crew prefers to remain anonymous.

As this was occurring, a Wynwood Police officer drove up and demanded a film permit. He had received complaints. An argument ensued between Doug and the Police Officer regarding the need for a permit, and what constitutes blocking the streets.

Prior to attempting to perform No Pictures Please, Doug had contacted the City of Miami Neighborhood Enhancement Team, which is responsible for permits in Wynwood. After a discussion with an employee of that agency, Mr. Shear was led to believe that a permit would not be required. He presented the Police Officer with a laminated note that included the name of the individual with whom he spoke, and indicated that a permit was not required because the event would only take about twenty minutes, was a one-time event, and would not block the streets. He also stated that he did not require a film permit because he was producing a stage play, not a film.

The Officer pointed across the street to the farmer's market and indicated that people had paid money to rent space, and that the No Pictures Please group wanted to do the same thing for free. Doug pointed out that the theater group was not charging anything and wasn't even asking for donation, and that he had contacted the Farmer's Market and offered to rent a space but was refused.

The Police Officer insisted that the structure be taken down and that there was nowhere in Wynwood No Pictures Please could be performed without a permit.

The stage was then taken down and loaded into a car and the production was halted.

Doug was disappointed, but not surprised. "Us getting shut down is just another example of how folk are so terrified of the terrorists that they are willing to give up their first amendment right to free speech," he stated. "My best friends refused to support my project or be associated with it in any way. My family even staged an intervention."

Doug believes the concern is exaggerated. He points to numerous documentaries, films and individuals that are far more offensive to Islam. He believes his satire, while certainly offensive to some Muslims, just doesn't rise to the top of the list.

"My play isn't offensive enough to warrant the cost of bomb vest, let alone a small bullet," he said. "So why all the fuss"

Doug stated that he had reached out to Muslims regarding his project.

"Ironically," he said, "The only people who don't seem to give a rat's ass about my play are the Muslims. When I contacted several Islamic organizations and individuals and told them about No Pictures Please, and requested a Muslim actor willing to play the role of the Prophet Muhammad, the worst response I got was "This is not for us, thanks anyway."

Doug Shear is a writer, playwright & monologist whose books include Rhubarb Culture & American Karma - Twilight of the Marijuana Gods!

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No Pictures Please

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