NYC 9/11 Public Portal Document

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When Charities Do Wrong

It's no surprise that some would try to profit from the 9/11 terror strikes.

But who'da thunk that the profiteers would be *charity* groups, such as the Red Cross and the Sept. 11th Fund?

Indeed, who'd have thought that some of the money donated for terror's victims might be used to help terrorism *suspects*?

Which, in effect, is what's happened.

The Red Cross launched a loud campaign to solicit post-9/11 donations — and raked in $564 million. But few donors had any idea that much of the money would be used to shore up the *charity's* coffers. And to fund dubious endeavors like a "humanitarian education fund."

When news of the bait-and-switch hit, many furiously demanded their money back. President Bernadine Healy had to quit.

Meanwhile, the Sept. 11th Fund vowed to help "victims" of the attack, but its chairman, Franklin Thomas, says the public sees victims as "broader than may have been assumed."

He believes people want funds to go to rescue workers, people who lost wages, survivors or children who witnessed the disaster, people who suffered from hate crimes, businesses that were crippled and even those "afraid to work at jobs."

Which sure is a liberal (in all senses of the word) definition of "victim."

The fund has even given the Legal Aid Society a $171,000 grant to "provide emergency civil legal assistance to low-income attack victims." Now, given that money is fungible and that the society is representing suspects detained after 9/11, it's fair to say that the fund essentially is raising money in the name of those who perished — and distributing it to potential culprits in the attacks.

Could anything be more obscene?

Celebrities who solicited donations vowed "100 percent of contributions" would go to "families of victims."

New York State Attorney General Eliot Spitzer had it right: "Donations made specifically in response to the Sept. 11 attacks must be used exclusively for the benefit of those who have suffered as a result of those attacks."

In fairness, both the Red Cross and the Sept. 11th Fund are admirable. The Red Cross holds a time-honored position in the charity world. And both have done much good in addressing post-9/11 needs.

Which is why their behavior of late will stand out all the more.

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