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Statement from Little People of America in response to *The Wolf of Wall Street*

Little People of America (LPA) is angry, disappointed and concerned that *The Wolf of Wall Street*, which opened in theaters on December 25, includes dwarf tossing scenes. In early October, Little People of America sent a letter to Paramount Pictures and to the production companies of Martin Scorsese and Leonardo Dicaprio. The letter, co-signed by twenty disability, dwarfism, and civil rights organizations, asked that dwarf tossing be cut from the movie. The letter states that the dwarf tossing segments, during which characters suggest that being tossed is the gift of people of short stature, "reduces people of short stature to mere objects that exist solely for the entertainment of others."

Florida and New York have both passed laws that ban dwarf tossing. Two years ago, the dwarfism community rallied to stop an effort to overturn the dwarf tossing legislation in Florida. The community fought to protect the law because dwarf tossing threatens not only the individuals involved, but all members of the dwarfism community. In early 2012, a dwarf named Martin Henderson was "tossed" against his will in a pub and sustained a spinal cord injury. With this threat in mind, LPA knows that a film which glorifies dwarf tossing would contribute to cultural stigma and would hold "the potential to motivate serious bodily injury to members of the dwarfism community, (LPA Letter)."

Little People of America, and members of the dwarfism community, understand that *The Wolf of Wall Street* is based upon a memoir that includes a dwarf tossing segment. Though dwarf tossing may be relevant to the memoir, because of how the segment is portrayed, and because dwarf tossing poses a threat today, the scene is a significant misstep by all involved with the film.

We understand that the movie is intended to be an indictment of excessive, dangerous and illegal actions. We hope that audiences condemn not just dwarf tossing, but all of the destructive behavior portrayed in the movie. Yet, based upon reaction to the film, it is clear that not all audiences leave the theater with the same message. A film critic with a Chicago publication wrote, "Scorsese's helpless attraction to the very behavior he wants to indict becomes the movie's serrated edge, (*Chicago Reader*, JR Jones)." Film critic Oliver Gettell of the *Los Angeles Times* suggests that the lines between condemnation and celebration may be "distinctions without a meaningful difference between them, (*The Wolf of Wall Street* bares teeth, if not soul, critics say, *Los Angeles Times*, December 27, 2013)."

No matter the intent of *The Wolf of Wall Street*, any portrayal of dwarf tossing carries the risk of condoning the objectification of and abuse against people with dwarfism. As *The Wolf of Wall Street* continues to play in theaters, Little People of America hopes



that movie audiences, Martin Scorsese, and Leonardo Dicaprio join us in condemning dwarf tossing and the threatening behavior it promotes.

Little People of America (LPA) is a national support organization for people with dwarfism and their families. LPA provides peer, parent and medical support for the dwarfism community. For more information, contact Leah Smith at 806-239-5582, leah.smith@ttu.edu, or Joanna Campbell at 714-862-4247, joanna.lpa@earthlink.net.

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