International Transgender Day of Visibility 2020

Jevon Martin, CEO of Princess Janae Place, addresses the challenges facing trans people—including COVID-19.

March 31, 2020 By Trent Straube

Tuesday, March 31, marks International Transgender Day of Visibility (TDoV) 2020. It's a time not only to celebrate transgender, gender-nonconforming and nonbinary (TGNCNB) people but also to raise awareness of the challenges they face, including discrimination, homelessness and heightened risk of contracting HIV.



View this post on Instagram

Today, @princessjanaeplace took over our account to talk about their work to eradicate homelessness and building community for trans people in NYC to help everyone celebrate #TransDayofVisibility.

#TransDayofVisibility was founded in 2009 by trans activist Rachel Crandall to recognize the successes and lives of trans people, and celebrate the progress we've made to helping everyone be true to their authentic selves. Part of that progress is making sure people of trans experience, especially trans people and people of color, have safe housing since they are 120% more likely to experience homelessness. The coronavirus hits this community hard, as trans people are more likely to experience transphobia and be at risk in homeless shelters. Trans, gender non-conforming, and non-binary (TGNCNBI) people are much likelier to face discrimination than other members of the LGBTQ+ community. @princessjanaeplace is working to eradicate ALL homelessness by helping TGNCNBI people find permanent housing – in the last two years alone, they've helped 90 people of trans experience people find homes ???????????? and thanks to Gilead Sciences' #TRANScend program, they'll be able to help even more find homes in 2020! Follow the link in their highlight on our page to learn more about and support their important work ????????

A post shared by GLAAD (@glaad) on Mar 30, 2020 at 12:36pm PDT

To increase trans visibility, LGBTQ media advocacy group GLAAD has handed over its Instagram account to Jevon Martin, Mr. Trans USA New York 2020 and the CEO of Princess Janae Place in New York City, which advocates for housing for transgender people.

As Martin explains through Instagram Stories, "#TransDayofVisibility was founded in 2009 by trans activist Rachel Crandall to recognize the successes and lives of trans people, since the only well-known trans-centered day of recognition was the Transgender Day of Remembrance, which mourns trans people we've lost. Today, we celebrate the lives and achievement of our trans loved ones, and the progress we've made helping everyone be their authentic selves."



View this post on Instagram

For #TransDayOfVisibility, @instagram and GLAAD are launching #TransLoveStories IGTV and portrait

series which will air through April, spotlighting trans peoples' lives and their experiences of love.

A post shared by GLAAD (@glaad) on Mar 31, 2020 at 6:00am PDT

Martin took the time to answer a couple of questions from POZ.

> How has the COVID-19 pandemic affected the trans community you serve?

> Princess Janae Place is New York state's first and only community-based housing organization led by, and for, trans people. We are working to eradicate homelessness by helping young LGBTQ+ people—particularly trans people and people of color—find permanent housing, and we provide medical, legal, housing, mental health and social services to anyone that needs them.

> The coronavirus outbreak and the resulting orders to shelter in place have had a great impact on the community we serve and the work we do. LGBTQ+ people experiencing homelessness are increasingly vulnerable due to the pressures that coronavirus creates. Shelters and drop-in centers, places trans folks often avoid because of stigma, have stopped taking people in because they are crowded, which makes them dangerous places to go in a moment when we need to isolate from one another. Finding permanent housing for our clients, where they can live independently and safely, is crucial not only for themselves but for society as a whole. We have stepped up by placing transgender homeless people in motels but at a cost of $100 a day per person, which quickly adds up and adds enormous pressure on small organizations like ours.

> What are the main challenges facing the trans community today that you'd like to raise awareness of?
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> Housing is a major issue for the trans community. One in five transgender people in the United States face discrimination when seeking a home, and more than 1 in 10 have been evicted from their homes because of their gender identity. One of Princess Janae Place's most impactful programs is our HART program, which helps young people find homes. Because of the stigma and transphobia that often follow LGBTQ+ youth, it's particularly challenging for them to find permanent housing. In the last two years alone, we've helped 90 young LGBTQ+ people find permanent housing through the HART program. We've also partnered with Gilead Sciences [a manufacturer of many HIV meds] through their TRANScend Community Impact Fund, which will allow us to grow the HART program, help even more people find homes and provide additional resources to those transitioning from homelessness to independent living.
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> Another major issue is getting proper mental health treatment for those in the trans community. Issues of isolation, depression, anxiety and other mental health concerns are high in the trans community. We need the resources to properly diagnose and treat those in the trans community and not just pass people from one agency to another. We must treat these underlying mental health issues to help our community thrive.
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> Taking over GLAAD's Instagram provided a huge opportunity to shine a light on the wonderful people and important work happening every day to serve and improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of the transgender community. The further we are able to share the challenges that our clients face on a daily basis, the better we will be able to serve them and solve the many challenges our community is up against.

To learn more about Gilead's TRANScend Community Impact Fund, see "$4.5M in Grants Goes to These 15 Groups Focused on Transgender Health."

For an HIV-related article from this week, see "New Research Sheds Light on HIV Among Transgender Men and Women."

And in related but sad news, the trans and immigrant communities just lost a beloved advocate. For details, and to watch an inspiring video profile of her, see "R.I.P. Lorena Borjas, a Transgender Latinx Activist Lost to COVID-19."

The special fold-out cover of POZ, December 2019

In other transgender-related news, the 2019 POZ 100 honored TGNCNB advocates making a difference in the fight against HIV/AIDS. Be sure to check out the complete contents of that December issue, which includes a look at the first National Trans Visibility March.

Mykki Blanco on the January 2020 POZ cover

And earlier this year, POZ profiled trans rapper, poet and activist Mykki Blanco, who is thriving with HIV. To read the inspiring cover story, see “Mykki Blanco Finds Power in Transparency.”

Go to poz.com/tag/coronavirus for our continuing coverage of COVID-19.

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