AIDS United Honors Transgender Day of Remembrance

At least 36 transgender and gender-nonconforming people were lost to violence this year. We say their names.

November 20, 2020 By Trent Straube

Today marks Transgender Day of Remembrance, an international observance to honor the lives of transgender and gender-nonconforming people lost to violence. It is a day to ensure that their stories are not forgotten.

During #TransAwarenessWeek, we cannot forget the undue violence that transgender people face.

Hate crimes against trans people are at an all time high.https://t.co/ESTUO8p72Y

— AIDS United (@AIDS_United) November 20, 2020

On Transgender Day of Remembrance, we must all recommit to centering transgender justice and shining a light on the continued violence and injustice transgender and gender-nonconforming people face every day.

Rita Hester, a 34-year-old African American transgender woman, was murdered in her Boston, Massachusettes, apartment on Nov. 28, 1998. To this day, the crime remains unsolved.

Though Hester was not the first transgender person lost to transphobia and violence, her death sparked the launch of Transgender Day of Remembrance in San Francisco, California, on the anniversary of her death one year later.

Tragically, this year has seen the loss of at least 36 transgender and gender-nonconforming

people, the majority of whom were Black and Latina transgender women. It is the most lives lost since advocates began tracking this data.

Transgender and gender-nonconforming people — in particular, Black and Brown trans women — are disproportionately affected by intersecting epidemics from HIV to homelessness and fatal violence. Transphobia, stigma and systemic discrimination heighten this vulnerability. For Black and Brown transgender women, who are the majority of victims of fatal violence, these vulnerabilities are worsened by intersecting racism and sexism.

We cannot end the HIV epidemic without placing transgender justice and racial justice at the heart of our work.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reports that HIV prevalence is 14.1% for trans women, 3.2% for trans men and 9.2% for the trans community as a whole. For Black trans women, it is a startling 44.2%.

With prevalence among U.S. adults as a whole falling below 0.5%, there is no doubt that our trans and gender-nonconforming siblings need resources, access and advocacy to knock down barriers to prevention and care.

Today, we say the names of those 36 individuals we have lost this year, and we will keep their lives at the heart of all we do.

- Dustin Parker, 25
- Alexa Negrón Luciano, 27
- Yampi Méndez Arocho, 19
- Scottlynn Kelly DeVore, 51
- Monika Diamond, 34
- Lexi “Ebony” Sutton, 33
- Johanna Metzger, 25
- Serena Angelique Velázquez Ramos, 32
- Layla Pelaez Sánchez, 21
- Penélope Díaz Ramírez, 31
- Nina Pop, 28
- Helle Jae O’Regan, 20
- Tony McDade, 38

- Dominique “Rem’mie” Fells, 27
- Riah Milton, 25
- Jayne Thompson, 33
- Selena Reyes-Hernandez, 37
- Brian “Egypt’ Powers, 43
- Brayla Stone, 17
- Merci Mack, 22
- Shaki Peters, 32
- Bree Black, 27
- Summer Taylor, 24
- Marilyn Cazares, 22
- Tiffany Harris (“Dior H Ova”), 32
- Queasha D Hardy, 22
- Aja Raquell Rhone-Spears, 32
- Lea Rayshon Daye, 28
- Kee Sam, 24
- Aerrion Burnett, 37
- Mia Green, 29
- Michelle Michellyn Ramos Vargas, 33
- Felycya Harris, 33
- Brooklyn Deshuna, 20
- Sara Blackwood, 29
- Angel Unique, 25

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