

Latino AIDS Activist Dies in Plane Crash

February 18, 2009 By [Oriol R. Gutierrez Jr.](#)

✘ Ronald Gonzalez--the former executive director of [Alianza Latina](#), an AIDS service organization for Latinos in Western New York--was one of the passengers who died in the plane crash of Continental Flight 3407 near Buffalo, NY, on February 12, which killed 50 people, [The Star-Ledger reports](#). Gonzalez, 44, was planning to visit his relatives in Buffalo.

Most recently, Gonzalez was director of a New Jersey-based youth services program, [New Brunswick Tomorrow](#). [Outcome Buffalo reports](#) that Gonzalez also was an openly gay man who worked to educate LGBT youth through his AIDS advocacy work and in collaborative programs with [Gay and Lesbian Youth Services of Western New York](#).

Gonzalez told The Star-Ledger in a 2007 interview about his work at New Brunswick Tomorrow:

“I know it’s part of my mission in life to help people like that because I was that person. I’m here to tell people:
Don’t throw your stereotypes at people.”

This plane crash has taken the lives of many [extraordinary individuals](#), including a 9/11 widow, a human rights activist and many others. Sadly, Gonzalez also is on that list. I did not know him, but Gonzalez was clearly the kind of person that we cannot afford to lose in the fight against HIV/AIDS.

Many thanks to Barry Walston of New York State’s [AIDS Institute](#) for contacting me about the death of Gonzalez, who was both his friend and colleague.
