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Transgender Day of Remembrance

What is the Transgender Day of Remembrance?

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is held in November each year to memorialize those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. Although not every person represented during the Day of Remembrance self-identified as transgender, each was a victim of violence based on bias against transgender people. The list of deaths available here, [1] only contains those deaths known to the transgender community or that have been reported to the media. The Day of Remembrance is held in November to honor Rita Hester, whose murder kicked off the "Remembering Our Dead" web project and a San Francisco candlelight vigil in 1999. Rita Hester's murder — like most anti-transgender murder cases — has yet to be solved.

What is the purpose of the Day of Remembrance?

The Transgender Day of Remembrance serves several purposes. It raises public awareness of hate crimes against transgender people, an action that current media doesn't perform. Day of Remembrance publicly mourns and honors the lives of transgender people who might otherwise be forgotten. Through the vigil, we express love and respect in the face of national indifference and hatred. Day of Remembrance gives transgender people and their allies a chance to step forward and stand in vigil, memorializing those who've died by anti-transgender violence. Putting on the Day of Remembrance in schools can also be used as a way to educate students, teachers, and administrators about transgender issues, so we can try to prevent anti-transgender hatred and violence from continuing.

What are the guiding principles of the Day of Remembrance?

These are the guiding principles developed by the organizers of the Day of Remembrance. You can use these words to help frame your message and tone for the day.

- "Those who cannot remember the past are doomed to repeat it." (Santayana)
- All who die due to anti-transgender violence are to be remembered.
- It is up to us to remember these people, since their killers, law enforcement, and the media

often seek to erase their existence.
- Transgender lives are affirmed as valuable.
- We can make a difference by being visible, speaking out, educating and organizing around anti-transgender violence, which can
- effect change.
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What can be done for the Day of Remembrance?

- Candlelight Vigils / Marches
- Discussion forums with local activists, politicians, or school officials
- Performance Actions
- Poetry or spoken word art readings
- Visual representation of the number of deaths with:
    - Cardboard Tomb Stones of Remembered People
    - Paper Cutouts of Remembered People
    - Body Outline Chalkings of Remembered People
- Teach-Ins and Speakers Bureaus
- Art / Photography Displays
- Movie screenings (such as “Boys Don’t Cry”)
- Trans 101 trainings for staff or any interested people
- Anything else that reflects the grounding principles of the day that you can imagine

Tips for Planning & Having a Successful Day of Remembrance

Before:
Make a Plan: Your GSA should prepare for how exactly you want to approach the project and what you want the day to consist of.

Create a Timeline: After deciding what it is your club would like to do, you should make a timeline so that everyone knows what needs to be done. Be sure to include who is in charge of each item and when it needs to be finished.

Get More Peeps Involved: You should try to get as many people as possible aware of the event and involved in participating. You
could do that by sending out e-mail announcements, advertising in the school newspaper, putting up flyers and posters, and of course
by word of mouth.

Build Coalitions/Build Bridges: Consider including other school clubs that may be interested in collaborating on the event. There might be a need for education on how violence affects different groups, as well as how anti-transgender violence is increasingly affecting low income youth of color. It is important for other groups to know how violence based on gender affects all communities.

Issue a Press Release: Let the local media know about what you are doing to honor the Transgender Day of Remembrance. Describe the events at your school, history of the event, and use some quotes from GSA members about why you are doing the event. Be sure to include a phone number for how a reporter can reach your group to follow-up for interviews.

Get Teachers/Administrators/Staff Involved: Find out if staff are interested in participating.

Let your Principal Know: Schedule a meeting with your principal to explain your plans for the Day of Remembrance.

Be Prepared! Have a pre-Transgender Day of Remembrance meeting to discuss positive ways to handle harassment from non-participants. Be prepared to have spokespersons from your group who can speak about the event. This is an emotionally charged subject, and can end up being a very “down” event. Provide remembrance of those we’ve lost, but also provide reassurance and healing for those in attendance.

During...
Announce the Event: Post an announcement in the daily bulletin explaining the event and requesting that all staff and students be respectful of the students participating in the project.

Coordinate Volunteers: Ask people to help setup your event. Make sure that you have enough people for setup, monitoring the
event, and cleanup.

Provide Resources: Have a resource spot or staffed table where people can find info about your GSA or other LGBTQ groups and
resources.

Organize Visual Displays: Organize some sort of visible display such as having your participants wear a sticker or T-shirt that commemorates
a victim of anti-transgender violence.

During the event, be sure to: let people know what the purpose of the event is, have speakers discussing transgender issues, read the names of people victimized by anti-transgender violence, describe the meaning of the visual art you have used on campus (e.g. cardboard cutouts, chalkings, etc.), close the event, and thank everyone for coming.

Create a Safe Space: Due to the intensity of the event — you should think of creative ways to create a safe space, such as a safe room where people can go if they need to reflect or talk about their feelings.

After...
Continue the Education: Host a discussion about how to raise awareness of transgender people everyday as opposed to one day out of the year.

Evaluate the Day: Evaluate the successes of the day and discuss what improvements could be made for next year.

Plan for Next Year: Lay groundwork for the next Transgender Day of Remembrance.

The Day of Remembrance can be a perfect opportunity to raise people's awareness of and interest in transgender issues. Some ideas for addressing larger issues within the school or community include:

- Adding "gender identity and gender expression" to the school's handbook
- Having a Trans 101 training for faculty and staff
- Having some restrooms be gender neutral and available to people of all genders to use
- Educating the school's GSA or diversity group on trans issues and how to be better trans allies

This resource sheet was adapted from materials published by the Transgender Day of Remembrance, a project of Gender Education and Advocacy. For more information, check out the website: http://www.gender.org/remember/day/what.html [2].

Who is being honored by the Transgender Day of Remembrance?

Over the past year, over 30 transgender people have lost their lives due to hate crimes, but this is unfortunately just the tip of the iceberg of people killed worldwide due to bias and hatred based on gender identity and expression. Most of the victims were people of color who came from working class backgrounds. Among the fallen are transgender and gender non-conforming youth of color whose lives were cut short unnecessarily.

Gwen Araujo, 17, (Newark, California) chose the name, Gwen, after her favorite star, Gwen Stefani, from the group No Doubt. Before her untimely death, her skirt was lifted up for people to see that she was born biologically male before she was beaten and buried in a shallow grave.

Alina Marie Barragan, 19, (San Jose, California) was strangled to death and her body was stuffed in the trunk of a car after a man named Kozi Santino Scott became enraged after discovering that Alina Marie, who he originally thought was a woman, was biologically male.

Sakia Gunn, 15, (Newark, New Jersey) was a gender non-conforming lesbian who was targeted because of her gender presentation. Sakia Gunn was not like most girls in her neighborhood. She refused to wear pink even as a young child. Her mother laughs when asked if Sakia played with dolls. When they were given to her as toys, she immediately cut off their hair, she says. For as long as anyone can remember, Sakia preferred baggy jeans and a T-shirt over dresses and skirts. On a hot night in June, Sakia and her friends were returning from the Chelsea Piers in downtown Manhattan, a hangout for mostly queer youth of color, to Newark, New Jersey. When Sakia and her friends, refused the advances of a couple of men, Sakia was subsequently stabbed and passed away on the way to the hospital.

Nireah Johnson, 17, (Indianapolis, Indiana) was murdered by a man who became enraged when he discovered that Nireah, the young woman he was attracted to, was transgender. Nireah

and a friend, 18-year-old Brandie Coleman, were shot in the head while sitting in a SUV.

Freddie Martinez, 16, (Cortez, Colorado) was a very striking Navajo teen who presented as female and was often harassed at school. Freddie was murdered in Cortez, Colorado.

Nikki Nicholas, 19, (Detroit, Michigan) was an African-American transwoman making her living as a performer in clubs where she often danced and lip-synched to Beyonce songs. The youngster preferred playing with Barbie dolls rather than G.I. Joes, Nicholas' mother said, and by age 11 began experimenting with girls' clothing and makeup. Her body was discovered during a routine property check of an abandoned farmhouse.

Stephanie Thomas, 19, and **Ukea Davis**, 18, (Washington, DC) were friends found shot to death together. They were a part of SMYL (Sexual Minority Youth Liaison) and were often teased for being feminine. Stephanie started wearing dresses and makeup at the age of 14. Her mother commented that "on the school bus kids tormented her, so she would get off and walk a couple miles to the school." Through a transgender health group, Stephanie met Ukea Davis, another transgender woman. They supported one another, especially when classmates--and even teachers--harassed them about their gender identity.

Sadly, these numbers are continuing to grow. With TV shows like Jerry Springer, gender identity is trivialized as transgender and gender non-conforming people are brought on the show and bashed verbally and sometimes physically. When people watch shows like this or when we reduce people's experiences to phrases like "he was dressed as a woman," we trivialize gender and people's identities.

For Gwen, Stephanie, Nikki, and other transgender teenagers, public school is usually not a safe place for them to express their gender. In addition, if they come from school districts that are underfunded, there will not be any funds to have teacher trainings and programs that address diversity, especially gender identity. Very few states have laws that protect transgender and gender non-conforming students' rights.

Download the pdf version [3]

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Source URL: http://www.gsanetwork.org/resources/gsa-actions-events/transgender-day-remembrance

Links:
[1] http://www.rememberingourdead.org
[2] http://www.gender.org/remember/day/what.html
[3] http://www.gsanetwork.org/files/resources/DayofRemembrance2.pdf