



HUMAN
RIGHTS
CAMPAIGN®



ADDRESSING ANTI- TRANSGENDER VIOLENCE

EXPLORING REALITIES,
CHALLENGES AND
SOLUTIONS FOR
POLICYMAKERS AND
COMMUNITY ADVOCATES

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FRIENDS AND SUPPORTERS,



THERE ARE NOW MORE TRANSGENDER HOMICIDE VICTIMS IN 2015 THAN IN ANY OTHER YEAR THAT ADVOCATES HAVE RECORDED. AT LEAST 21 PEOPLE – NEARLY ALL OF THEM TRANSGENDER WOMEN OF COLOR – HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES TO VIOLENCE IN THE FIRST TEN MONTHS OF THIS YEAR.

This kind of violence is often motivated by anti-transgender bias; but that is rarely the only factor. At a time when transgender people are finally gaining visibility and advocates are forcing our country to confront systemic violence against people of color, transgender women of color are facing an epidemic of violence that occurs at the intersections of racism, sexism and transphobia – issues that advocates can no longer afford to address separately. This is one of the many reasons we are proud to partner with the Trans People of Color Coalition (TPOCC) and other advocates and community members on this work.

While there is not one simple answer to stemming the violence, there are many answers that can help the fight for the lives of transgender people – from demanding the passage of explicit non-discrimination protections at the state and federal level to fighting for life-saving and medically necessary healthcare. We must continue working with educators and administrators to help make schools safer for transgender students, and work with law enforcement to improve training and responses to crimes committed against transgender people. And we must continue to do more to change hearts and minds.

There is no time to waste. We must find solutions that work, and we must take meaningful action. This is our community, and this is our fight.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Chad Griffin". The signature is fluid and cursive.

Chad Griffin
President
Human Rights Campaign

FRIENDS AND COMMUNITY MEMBERS,



THE LGBT COMMUNITY HAS LONG COUNTED ON OUR NON-LGBT ALLIES TO STAND BESIDE US IN THE FIGHT FOR EQUALITY; AND RIGHT NOW, THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY NEEDS ALLIES MORE THAN EVER AS WE FIGHT FOR OUR VERY SURVIVAL.

We are proud to partner with HRC on this work, and we ask all of our cisgender lesbian, gay, bisexual and straight friends, loved ones and supporters to stand up against the continuing stigma and discrimination that is killing transgender people of color at alarming rates.

Taja Gabrielle DeJesus was active in her church and enjoyed volunteering at the local food pantry. Mercedes Williamson was only 17 and had become estranged from her family when she was murdered and buried in a field in rural Alabama. Keyshia Blige had only recently begun living openly, and her best friend told a reporter, “She was the happiest I had ever seen her once she started transitioning.” These women had friends, families and communities who loved them — and their futures were cut short by violence.

The problems run deep — media, police and even family members sometime misgender victims, making it even more difficult for advocates to collect reliable data. Discrimination and stigma mean that transgender people not only face violence from partners, but we are also more likely to experience harassment and violence from police officers, in homeless shelters or when seeking emergency care.

Simply put, transgender people — particularly transgender women of color — are at increased risk for violence, and too often we have nowhere to go for help.

While there are numerous policy solutions to address some of these issues, we also need allies to help us change hearts and minds. We need you to listen to our voices, hear us when we talk about our experiences and make spaces for

us to lead on issues that affect us. We need you to challenge transphobia wherever you see it — even seemingly harmless jokes serve to devalue transgender people’s lives and trivialize our identities.

If you’re reading this report, you’ve already taken an important step. I implore you to continue to support and invest in our fight to stop anti-transgender violence before it starts.

Best,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kylar W. Broadus'.

Kylar W. Broadus
Executive Director
Trans People of Color Coalition
(TPOCC)



IN 2015, AT LEAST 21 TRANSGENDER PEOPLE HAVE BEEN VICTIMS OF FATAL VIOLENCE IN THE UNITED STATES, MORE KILLINGS OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE THAN ANY OTHER YEAR ON RECORD.

MORE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE WERE KILLED IN THE FIRST SIX MONTHS OF THIS YEAR THAN IN ALL OF 2014. WHILE WE DON'T KNOW MANY DETAILS ABOUT THESE VICTIMS' EXPERIENCES, RESEARCH SHOWS THAT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE FACE HARASSMENT AND DISCRIMINATION IN NUMEROUS CONTEXTS THROUGHOUT THEIR LIVES. MOREOVER, WE KNOW THAT THE CHANCES OF FACING DISCRIMINATION, HARASSMENT AND VIOLENCE INCREASE EXPONENTIALLY FOR TRANSGENDER WOMEN OF COLOR, WHO ALSO FACE RACISM AND SEXISM. FOR MANY TRANSGENDER WOMEN OF COLOR, THE THREAT OF VIOLENCE IS CONSTANT, AND THERE ARE FEW IF ANY PLACES THEY FEEL SAFE.

THE VICTIMS WHOSE STORIES FOLLOW ARE MORE THAN ALARMING STATISTICS. THEY WERE HUMAN BEINGS WITH FRIENDS AND LOVED ONES. THEY WERE SISTERS, DAUGHTERS, ADVOCATES, PEOPLE OF FAITH, STUDENTS AND FRIENDS, WHO HAD HOPES AND DREAMS, AND WHO IN TOO MANY CASES SUFFERED MORE THAN THEIR SHARE OF CHALLENGES. MAY THEIR TRAGIC DEATHS INSPIRE US ALL TO JOIN IN THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE AND EQUALITY FOR TRANSGENDER PEOPLE EVERYWHERE.



PAPI EDWARDS, 20, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM LOUISVILLE, KY., WAS FATALLY SHOT JANUARY 9.

Two days later, 20-year-old Henry Richard Gleaves was arrested and has since been charged with murder. Edwards' friends say that Gleaves became angry when Edwards told him she was transgender, and he shot her. Authorities in Louisville have consistently misgendered Edwards, which led to initial confusion about her gender identity. Kentucky's hate crime law does not include gender identity.

PAPI EDWARDS

LAMIA BEARD



**LAMIA BEARD, 30, A BLACK
TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM NORFOLK,
VA., WAS FATALLY SHOT JANUARY 17.**

Authorities have not arrested any suspects in this case, but they have suggested that it may be connected with another nearby shooting that same morning. Local news reports misgendered Beard and focused on her previous arrest for prostitution. Virginia does not have any hate crime laws covering sexual orientation or gender identity.



TY UNDERWOOD, 24, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM TYLER, TEXAS, WAS FATALLY SHOT JANUARY 26.

Carlton Ray Champion Jr., 21, with whom Underwood reportedly had a brief relationship, was charged with her murder. Police have suggested that Underwood was shot while trying to drive away from her assailant, and her car then struck a telephone pole. At the time of her death, Underwood worked in a nursing home and had recently been accepted to nursing school. Texas' hate crime laws does not include gender identity.

TY UNDER- WOOD

YAZMIN VASH PAYNE



YAZMIN VASH PAYNE, 33, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM LOS ANGELES, WAS FATALLY STABBED JANUARY 31.

When firefighters responded to a fire in Payne's apartment, they found her body. Payne and her boyfriend, Ezekiel Dear, had recently moved into the apartment together. They were apparently arguing the night before he stabbed her and set the apartment on fire. Three days after the murder, Dear turned himself into police and confessed to the crime. Dear is not being charged with a hate crime under state or federal law. California does have a hate crime law inclusive of gender identity.



TAJA GABRIELLE DEJESUS, 33, A LATINA TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM SAN FRANCISCO, WAS FATALLY STABBED FEBRUARY 1.

Her body was found in a stairwell. Several days later, police announced that her suspected killer, James Hayes, had apparently committed suicide. DeJesus was active in her church, volunteered at a local food pantry and was engaged with the local transgender community.

TAJA
GABRIELLE
DEJESUS

PENNY PROUD



PENNY PROUD, 21, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM NEW ORLEANS, WAS FATALLY SHOT FEBRUARY 10.

Local news reports have repeatedly misgendered Proud, despite protests from local advocates who organized vigils in Proud's memory. Authorities have not arrested anyone for Proud's murder, which they maintain was a robbery. Louisiana's hate crime law does not include gender identity.



KRISTINA GOMEZ REINWALD (AKA KRISTINA GRANT INFINITI), 46, A LATINA TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM MIAMI, WAS FATALLY STABBED FEBRUARY 15.

Initially, police ruled her death a suicide, but police later reopened the investigation and ruled her death a homicide. No one has been arrested; however, Reinwald's friends contend that she was killed by her ex-boyfriend. Reinwald was a well-known transgender artist and performer in her community. Florida's hate crime law does not protect individuals on the basis of gender identity.

KRISTINA
GOMEZ
REINWALD

KEYSHIA BLIGE



KEYSHIA BLIGE, 33, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM AURORA, ILL., WAS FATALLY SHOT IN MARCH WHILE DRIVING A CAR.

Her death was unknown to LGBT advocates until August because local police and press reports misgendered Blige and used her birth name. Blige's mother told the Chicago Tribune that two months before her death, Blige had begun living openly as a woman, but the newspaper still identified her by her birth name and used male pronouns. Police have not charged anyone in her death and the motive is unclear. It is not being investigated as a hate crime under state or federal law. Illinois does have a gender identity-inclusive hate crimes law.



LONDON KIKI CHANEL, 21, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM PHILADELPHIA, WAS FATALLY STABBED MAY 18.

Her body was found in front of an abandoned house, with multiple stab wounds. Raheem Felton, the boyfriend of one of Chanel's roommates, allegedly stabbed her following an argument. He has confessed to the crime and been charged with murder. Pennsylvania does not have a hate crime law that includes sexual orientation or gender identity, and police are considering this a domestic incident.

A large, semi-transparent blue-tinted background image of London Kiki Chanel, showing her face and upper body. The text 'LONDON KIKI CHANEL' is overlaid in large white capital letters on the right side of the image.

LONDON KIKI CHANEL



MERCEDES WILLIAMSON



MERCEDES WILLIAMSON, 17, A WHITE TRANSGENDER WOMAN, WAS FOUND DEAD JUNE 2 IN GEORGE COUNTY, ALA., AFTER HAVING BEEN FATALLY STABBED.

Williamson was estranged from her family and had been living with a friend for several months when she went missing on May 30. Two days later, her body was found in a shallow grave in a field behind the house of Bobby Vallum. The day after Williamson was murdered, Bobby Vallum's son, 28-year-old Josh Brandon Vallum, confessed to his father that he had killed someone and buried the body behind the house. Josh Vallum has been charged with Williamson's murder but no hate crime charges have been brought. Alabama does not have a hate crime law that includes sexual orientation or gender identity.



JASMINE COLLINS, 32, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM KANSAS CITY, MO., WAS FATALLY STABBED JUNE 23.

She was initially misgendered when police identified her by her birth name, but local advocates and friends who knew Collins was missing pressed local authorities until they found that it was their friend who had been killed. Police arrested and charged Tia Townsel with second-degree murder. Missouri does have a hate crime law that includes sexual orientation and gender identity. Authorities are not pursuing hate crime charges.

JASMINE COLLINS

ASHTON O'HARA



ASHTON O'HARA, 25, A BLACK TRANSGENDER AND GENDERFLUID PERSON FROM DETROIT, WAS STABBED TO DEATH AND RUN OVER BY A CAR JULY 14.

O'Hara's body was found in Detroit's Palmer Park, an area that is said to be frequented by sex workers and has seen numerous instances of anti-LGBT violence in recent years, including the more recent murder of Amber Monroe. Larry B. Gaulding has been charged with first-degree murder. Michigan does not have a hate crime law that includes sexual orientation or gender identity.



INDIA CLARKE, 25, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM TAMPA, FLA., WAS FATALLY BEATEN AND SHOT JULY 21.

Her alleged assailant, Keith Gaillard, reportedly killed a gay man a week later. Gaillard was arrested for both murders. Gaillard had what investigators called a “personal relationship” with Clarke, who was studying to become a cosmetologist at the time of her death. Florida’s hate crime law does not include gender identity.

INDIA CLARKE

K.C. HAGGARD



K.C. HAGGARD, 66, A WHITE TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM FRESNO, CALIF., WAS FATALLY STABBED JULY 23.

Haggard was walking down the street when an SUV pulled up to the curb and a passenger called her over. The attack was caught on a nearby security camera and showed the passenger speaking to Haggard for a moment and then stabbing her in the throat, before the car sped away. The video shows multiple people walking by Haggard as she bled to death on the sidewalk, but no one stopped to help. When someone finally called the paramedics, it was too late, and Haggard was pronounced dead at the hospital. Authorities have not arrested anyone for the murder. And although California has a hate crime law that includes gender identity, police have not identified a motive. Local trans advocates have argued that the case should be investigated as a hate crime since it appears not to have been a robbery.



SHADE SCHULER, 22, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM DALLAS, WAS FOUND DEAD FROM A GUNSHOT WOUND JULY 29.

Her body was so badly decomposed that it took investigators more than two weeks to identify her. The police initially misgendered her and continue to do so on their website, but local trans advocates were able to confirm that she was a transgender woman. No one has been arrested for Schuler's murder. Texas' hate crime law does not include gender identity.

SHADE SCHULER

AMBER MONROE



AMBER MONROE, 20, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM DETROIT, WAS FATALLY SHOT AUGUST 8.

The area where she was found is near the Palmer Park neighborhood, where Ashton O'Hara was found murdered just a few weeks before. Police say that Monroe was engaging in survival sex work when she was killed. There have been several other instances of anti-LGBT violence in the area in recent years, including at least one transgender woman murdered in 2014. Monroe was injured in a shooting there last year, which she did not report to police for fear of being arrested. Michigan's hate crime law does not include sexual orientation or gender identity.

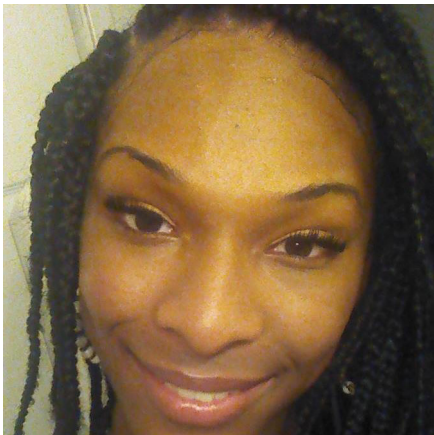


KANDIS CAPRI, 35, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM PHOENIX, WAS FATALLY SHOT AUGUST 11, IN FRONT OF AN APARTMENT COMPLEX.

The investigation has thus far yielded no suspects. Capri's purse and phone were missing, leading authorities to suspect a robbery; but Capri's mother — who initially struggled to accept her daughter's identity but came to embrace her — has publicly called on the Department of Justice to investigate her daughter's murder as a hate crime. Arizona's hate crime law does not include gender identity.

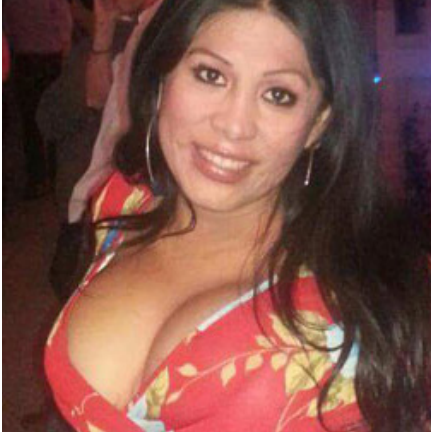
KANDIS CAPRI

ELISHA WALKER



ELISHA WALKER, 20, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM SALISBURY, N.C., WAS FOUND DEAD FROM BLUNT FORCE TRAUMA AUGUST 13.

Walker's family reported her missing last November. Police found her car burned and abandoned a few weeks after her disappearance, but did not discover her badly decomposed remains until August 13, in a "crude grave" behind a house several counties away. The date of her death is unknown. Angel Arias, whom, according to Walker's mother, had been dating Walker for several months before her disappearance, was identified as a suspect following the discovery of the car. Arias has been charged with murder and felony vehicle theft. North Carolina does not have a hate crime law that covers gender identity or sexual orientation.



TAMARA DOMINGUEZ, 36, A LATINA TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM KANSAS CITY, MO., WAS KILLED WHEN SHE WAS HIT BY A CAR AND RUN OVER REPEATEDLY AUGUST 15.

Police have not identified a suspect or labeled this case a hate crime, but Dominguez's friends suspect that her death was bias-motivated. While her partner and friends sought to honor her identity as they prepared for funeral services, her family members consistently referred to her as a male and dishonored her even in death by burying her in male attire. Missouri does have a hate crime law that includes both sexual orientation and gender identity.

TAMARA DOMINGUEZ

KEISHA JENKINS



KEISHA JENKINS, 22, A BLACK TRANSGENDER WOMAN FROM PHILADELPHIA, WAS FATALLY SHOT ON OCTOBER 6.

Jenkins was beaten by a group of young men and shot twice in the back. The investigation is ongoing, but police have arrested Pedro Redding and charged him with murder. Redding confessed to planning the robbery and may have targeted Jenkins because she was known to be engaged in sex work and would likely have cash in her possession. Pennsylvania does not have a hate crimes law that includes sexual orientation or gender identity.



ZELLA ZIONA, 21, A TRANSGENDER WOMAN OF COLOR FROM GAITHERSBURG, MD., WAS FATALLY SHOT OCTOBER 15.

Ziona was killed during an argument near a shopping center. Police and local press initially misgendered her and referred to her by her birth name. Following discussions with friends and family, she was correctly identified. Police believe she was targeted and have charged Rico Hector LeBlond, 20 of Germantown, Md., with first-degree murder. According to police, Ziona was carrying flowers to lay on her grandmother's grave, honoring the anniversary of her death. Maryland does have a hate crime law that includes gender identity, and police have not ruled out charging LeBlond with a hate crime.

ZELLA ZIONA

DATA CHALLENGES AND HIGHLIGHTS

In 2014, at least 13 transgender people were murdered in the United States, and at least 19 were murdered in 2013. Their deaths were gruesome — involving gunshots, burning, strangulation and beating — and many have gone unsolved. These totals represent only the known victims; there may very well be countless other victims of fatal anti-transgender violence whose deaths we will never know about because police, the press or family members have consistently misidentified them based on their assigned sex and name at birth. Even in many of the known cases, local media reports misgendered the victims and used their birth names. The local media also further stigmatized some of these women by highlighting arrest records and using mugshots instead of personal photos.

While awareness about violence against the transgender community

is improving, there are still major barriers to data collection and reporting. Following the passage of the Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr. Hate Crimes Prevention Act in 2009, the FBI began tracking bias-motivated crimes based on the victim's actual or perceived gender identity. While this data is incredibly valuable, it does not paint a complete picture of hate crimes against LGBT Americans because the vast majority of jurisdictions either fail to report their data or inaccurately report that they have had no hate crimes in their jurisdiction.

An analysis of the FBI's [Hate Crime Statistics](#), 2013 report, the most recent data available, showed that at least three killings — Islan Nettles in New York, Cece Dove in Ohio and Diamond Williams in Philadelphia — went unreported despite evidence that the perpetrators were clearly motivated

by the victim's gender identity. Nettles' assailants were shouting homophobic and transphobic slurs while they attacked her; and both Dove's and Williams' assailants admitted to killing them specifically because they were transgender. But not one of these incidents was reported to the FBI as a bias-motivated crime. In fact, in the FBI's 2013 report, only 33 crimes motivated by gender identity were reported nationwide, and none of those were murder or non-negligent manslaughter.

Hate crime laws, accurate reporting of bias-motivated incidents, and proper characterization of a crime as one based on gender identity are essential tools that can be used to address anti-transgender violence. However, the lack of accurate and reliable data collection makes it impossible for advocates to know how widespread this violence really is.

THE LACK OF ACCURATE AND RELIABLE DATA COLLECTION MAKES IT IMPOSSIBLE FOR ADVOCATES TO KNOW HOW WIDESPREAD THIS VIOLENCE REALLY IS.

Among the 53 known transgender victims from 2013-2015:

- At least 46, or 87 percent, were transgender people of color. Among those, at least 39 were African American and 6 were Latino/a.
- At least 46 were transgender women, one was a transgender man, and the identities of other victims were gender non-conforming or unclear.
- 39, or 74 percent, were under the age of 35 at the time of their deaths, and the average age of all the victims was less than 31 years old.
- At least 8, or 15 percent, were killed by intimate partners.
- At least 18, or 34 percent, were or likely may have been engaged in survival sex work at the time of their deaths.
- 18, or 34 percent, were killed in the Southeast, more than twice that of any other region in the country.
- Only 16, or 30 percent, were killed in states that have hate crime laws that account for crimes motivated by the victim's gender identity; but despite these provisions and a federal hate crime law, not a single one of these murders was prosecuted or reported to the FBI as a hate crime.

The patterns found in these crimes are indicative of the widespread violence and harassment the transgender community faces every

day in the United States — particularly transgender women of color who disproportionately live in poverty.

In addition to the data and reporting challenges highlighted in this report, the existing data on the size of the transgender population in the United States is limited, complicating further analysis of this data. A conservative estimate, based on the information we do have, however, shows that transgender women face 4.3 times the risk of becoming homicide victims than the general population of all women.¹

According to the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) 2013 report on hate violence against lesbian, bisexual, transgender, queer and HIV-affected communities, 72 percent of the victims of LGBTQ or HIV-motivated hate violence homicides in 2013 were transgender women, and 67 percent were transgender women of color. When compared to their non-transgender LGBTQ and HIV-affected peers, the report found that transgender people of color were 6 times more likely to experience physical violence from the police, 1.5 times more likely to experience discrimination, 1.5 times more likely to face sexual violence and 1.8 times more likely to experience bias-based violence in shelters.

46 WERE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE OF COLOR

46 WERE TRANSGENDER WOMEN

39 WERE UNDER THE AGE OF 35

8 WERE KILLED BY INTIMATE PARTNERS

18 WERE KILLED IN THE SOUTHEAST

16 WERE KILLED IN STATES THAT HAVE HATE CRIMES LAWS

¹ This calculation is based on a comparison of the known year-to-date homicides against transgender women in the United States to the estimated year-to-date homicide rate for cisgender women. Typically, we would use year-to-date homicides of all U.S. women, but that information is not available, so we used homicides of all women from 2014, multiplied it by the proportion of this year that has already taken place, for an estimate of 2,262 year-to-date homicides of women; when this is compared to the total U.S. population from 2014, that translates into an estimated year-to-date homicide rate of 1.40 homicide deaths per 100,000 U.S. women. For transgender women, we used the Williams Institute estimate that there are 700,000 transgender people in the United States. This data is not broken down by gender and there aren't any great sources for that proportion, so we estimated half of that population is female. Dividing year-to-date homicides (21) by 350,000, there is an estimated homicide rate of 6.00 per 100,000 U.S. trans women, which means that trans women have 4.3 times the risk of dying by homicide relative to all women.

CRITICAL COMMUNITY CONCERNS

According to the groundbreaking [2011 National Transgender Discrimination Survey \(NTDS\)](#), conducted by the National Center for Transgender Equality and the National LGBTQ Task Force, 34 percent of black and 28 percent of Latina/o transgender and gender non-conforming respondents had a household income of less than \$10,000 a year. Forty-one percent of black and 27 percent of Latina/o transgender and gender non-conforming respondents had experienced homelessness at some point in their lives. When they attempted to access shelters, 40 percent of black respondents and 45 percent of Latina/o respondents were denied access altogether. Numbers like this give transgender people of color few places to turn for help or protection, making them particularly vulnerable to violence.

Early Disadvantages

The discrimination faced by transgender and gender-non-conforming youth can create barriers to education and family support that put them at a disadvantage in

comparison to their cisgender (or non-transgender) peers.

In the Human Rights Campaign Foundation's 2014 [report on gender-expansive youth](#), for example, 40 percent of gender-expansive youth said that they were excluded by their peers "frequently or often," and only 43 percent reported having a supportive family member to whom they could turn for support. The 2011 NTDS showed 78 percent of those who

expressed a transgender identity or gender non-conformity while in grades K-12 reported harassment. And for 15 percent of those surveyed, the harassment was so severe that it led them to leave school.

Poverty and Marginalization

The 2011 NTDS report found that transgender people in the United States are nearly four times as likely to be living in extreme poverty. The issue of poverty is compounded by racial injustice and discrimination. Black transgender people, for example, are more than eight times as likely than the general U.S. population, and more than four times as likely as the general black population, to live in extreme poverty. Similarly, transgender Latina/os are seven times more likely than the general U.S. population, and more than five times more likely than the general Latina/o population to live in extreme poverty.

For transgender people, poverty translates not only into a higher risk for violence, but it also means that some transgender people are forced into underground economies for

40%

OF GENDER-EXPANSIVE
YOUTH SAID THAT THEY WERE
EXCLUDED BY THEIR PEERS
"FREQUENTLY OR OFTEN."

survival, including sex work and drug sales, which place them at heightened risk for violence and sexual assault.

Intimate Partner Violence² and Stigma

While there are certainly instances where transgender people have been attacked in bias-motivated attacks by strangers, many victims of fatal violence die at the hands of those closest to them, often because they have little access to safety nets when relationships become volatile or abusive. At least 5 – or 23 percent – of the transgender people murdered in 2015 were killed by intimate partners. Several others appear to have been killed by friends. According to Catherine Shugrue dos Santos, an expert on intimate partner violence (IPV):

“Transgender people are at much higher risk for IPV and sexual violence (SV) than non-transgender people and that they face pervasive institutionalized discrimination when seeking services at support from health care, law enforcement, and shelter, the very places that IPV survivors usually turn for safety. This discrimination is much higher for transgender people of color, who battle not only transphobia, but racism and high rates of poverty. Transgender people and people of color also experience high rates of often lethal identity-based violence,

but may be less likely to seek services.”³

Violence against an intimate partner who is transgender may or may not be motivated by bias against transgender people in general; but the lack of social and economic resources that transgender people face are [risk factors](#) for intimate partner abuse and other types of violence. Many transgender people have been refused help, harassed or even assaulted by law enforcement or at service providers like a domestic violence shelter. Others avoid these institutions because they fear maltreatment, which leaves them with few resources for escaping abuse. In this way, anti-transgender stigma makes transgender people much more likely to be victims of violence, even when it is not the direct motivation for the violent act.

Sexual Assault

Research suggests that half of all transgender people will be sexually assaulted at some point during their life. According to Rebecca Stotzer, a leading scholar and expert on bias-motivated violence, “Violence against transgender people starts early in life, that transgender people are at risk for multiple types and incidences of violence, and that this threat lasts throughout their lives. [...] There is a high prevalence of sexual assault and rape starting at a young age.” One report found that young gender non-

conforming people were “particularly vulnerable to sexual violence, with the majority of incidents occurring before the age of 12.”⁴

While these numbers alone are startling, the trauma of sexual assault is often exacerbated for transgender survivors because they are denied or pushed away from services available to cisgender survivors, such as testing and medical care for sexually transmitted infections (STIs), including Post-Exposure Prophylaxis (PEP) to prevent HIV infection, crisis intervention, sexual trauma counseling or assistance from law enforcement. In one survey, 85 percent of victim advocates surveyed reported working with an LGBTQ survivor who was denied services because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.⁵ Sexual trauma can lead not only to injuries and health problems, but also to depression and other mental health issues that can make survivors vulnerable to revictimization.

Unemployment and Survival Sex Work

The NTDS found that transgender people surveyed had double the national unemployment rate, with transgender people of color facing unemployment rates up to four times higher than the general population. When they were employed, 90 percent of transgender people had experienced harassment in the

²In describing events as intimate partner violence (IPV), HRC relies on media reports about the relationship between victim and perpetrator, and on the [CDC's definition](#) of intimate partner violence. This definition includes “sexual violence, physical violence, stalking, and psychological aggression” perpetrated by “current or former spouses...boyfriends/girlfriends, dating partners, and ongoing sexual partners.” HRC does not use the term “intimate partner violence” in cases where a perpetrator and victim may have had sexual contact, but where it is not clear that the two had an ongoing intimate relationship.

³Shugrue dos Santos, C. (2012). “A Community-Based Approach to LGBTQ IPV: One Size Does Not Fit All.” *Domestic Violence Report*, 18(1), 1-14.

⁴Stotzer, R. L. (2009). “Violence against transgender people: A review of United States data.” *Aggression & Violent Behavior*, 14(3), 170-179.

⁵Jindasurat, C. (2013). “LGBTQ Sexual Violence.” *Sexual Assault Report*, 16(4), 49-61.

90%

OF TRANSGENDER PEOPLE HAD EXPERIENCED HARASSMENT IN THE WORKPLACE

workplace and more than one in four (26 percent) reported having lost a job because they were transgender or gender non-conforming.

In the face of unemployment, extreme poverty and barriers to healthcare — including medically-necessary transition-related care — transgender people are often compelled to engage in underground economies simply to survive. Eleven percent of NTDS respondents reported engaging in survival sex work, and those who had suffered job loss or unemployment due to bias were much more likely to have done sex work for income. Being compelled to engage in survival sex work or other underground economies can put transgender people at heightened risk for harassment and violence, including sexual assault and police harassment, and leave them few places to turn if they are in a dangerous situation.⁶ At least 18—or 34 percent—of the transgender people

killed in 2015 were or likely may have been engaged in survival sex work at the time of their deaths, which suggests this heightened vulnerability to violence.

Law Enforcement Barriers

One of the most significant barriers to ending anti-transgender violence in the United States is the justice system. Transgender people, even those who are not engaged in survival behaviors that are criminalized, may avoid interaction with law enforcement because they fear being harassed, intimidated or charged with an offense — even if they are the victims of physical or sexual assault.

The 2011 NTDS found that of transgender people who had interacted with police, 22 percent reported bias-based harassment from police — with transgender people of color reporting much higher rates of bias-based harassment; 6

percent reported physical assault; 2 percent reported sexual assault by police; and 20 percent reported having been denied equal service by law enforcement. Nearly half of transgender people surveyed said that they were uncomfortable turning to police for help.

Access to Healthcare

In a 2012 [needs assessment](#) by the Washington D.C. Trans Coalition, of those who identified health as one of their top priorities, 44 percent said that access to transgender-sensitive healthcare was their most significant need. The 2011 NTDS found that 21 percent of transgender black respondents and 23 percent of transgender Latina/o respondents had been refused medical care because of bias, and a [Lambda Legal study](#) found that 70 percent of transgender and gender non-conforming respondents had experienced discrimination by medical providers.

⁶ Stotzer, R. L. (2009). "Violence against transgender people: A review of United States data." *Aggression & Violent Behavior*, 14(3), 170-179.

THE WIDESPREAD LACK OF ACCURATE IDENTITY DOCUMENTS AMONG TRANSGENDER PEOPLE CAN HAVE AN IMPACT ON EVERY AREA OF THEIR LIVES.

In addition to those refused care, half of NTDS respondents reported facing medical providers who were not sufficiently knowledgeable in transgender healthcare, and 22 percent of transgender women reported having no insurance coverage at all. Even for those who are covered by insurance, exclusions on transgender-related healthcare are widespread. Facing these barriers and fearing discrimination, 34 percent of black respondents and 36 percent of Latina/o respondents reported having delayed seeking necessary medical care. These numbers are particularly alarming given the disproportionate rates of attempted suicide and HIV incidence among transgender people.

Identity Documents

The widespread lack of accurate identity documents among transgender people can have an impact on every area of their lives, including access to employment, healthcare, emergency housing or public services that can provide safety from violence. Moreover, without identification, travel, registering

for school or accessing many essential services remain out of reach for many transgender people. Many states require evidence of medical transition — which can be prohibitively expensive and is not something that all transgender people want — as well as fees for processing new identity documents, which may make them unaffordable for some members of the transgender community.

The 2011 NTDS found that among those respondents who have already transitioned, 33 percent had not been able to update any of their identity documents to match their affirmed gender. Of those who reported having to present identity documents that did not match their gender identity, 44 percent experienced harassment, were asked to leave or were assaulted. Whether a person had transition-related surgery was a major factor in whether they had been able to update their documents.

Denied Safety Nets

Service providers like emergency shelter and rape crisis counselors,

hospital personnel and social workers are often the only people to whom transgender people can turn when faced with domestic or sexual violence — which so often precede incidents of fatal violence. But the 2011 NTDS found that among those who had tried to access homeless shelters, 29 percent were completely refused services. An additional 25 percent were evicted after revealing their transgender status and 47 percent were pushed out as a result of poor treatment. According to another report, 85 percent of victim advocates reported working with an LGBTQ survivor who was denied services because of their sexual orientation or gender identity.⁷

⁷ Jindasurat, C. (2013). "LGBTQ Sexual Violence." *Sexual Assault Report*, 16(4), 49-61.

CALLS TO ACTION

Many advocates are already hard at work advancing policies and programs that aim to prevent anti-transgender violence and the conditions that often lead to it. While we must not pretend to have all the answers, there are meaningful and effective actions that public and private entities can take today to reduce risk for violence against transgender people.

The following actions can help combat this national crisis:

Pass the Equality Act

- The Equality Act, which was introduced by Senator Jeff Merkley (D-OR) and Representative David Cicilline (D-RI), establishes explicit, permanent protections against discrimination based on an individual's sexual orientation or gender identity in matters of employment, housing, public spaces and services, federally funded programs, credit, education and jury service. In addition, it would prohibit discrimination on the basis of sex in federal funding and public spaces and services.
- The Equality Act would give transgender people recourse

against discrimination that can lead them to experience homelessness or be refused services from shelters or healthcare providers, which can leave them vulnerable to fatal violence.

Support Emergency Housing Initiatives

- Federal agencies like the Department of Housing and Urban Development and the Department of Justice should enforce existing rules that prohibit discrimination against transgender people for all direct service providers, drop-in centers and shelters they fund. These rules must be paired with a broad training program on transgender cultural competency for direct service providers, drop-in centers and shelters.
- Foundations, state and municipal governments, corporations and leading philanthropists should support local LGBT community centers, drop-in centers and shelters that are already providing critical direct service to the transgender community, such as Casa Ruby in Washington, D.C., or Time Out Youth in Charlotte, N.C.

- The Department of Justice should ensure that programs and services that receive federal funding under the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) are equally available to individuals regardless of gender identity. In exceptional cases where a sex-segregated program or sex-segregated facility is essential to the operation of the program, the Department should provide meaningful notice to grantees to ensure that they know that they are required to provide comparable services. These rules should be paired with a broad training program on transgender cultural competency for direct service providers, drop-in centers and shelters.

Expand Healthcare Coverage for Transgender People

- States should prohibit transgender-related exclusions in insurance and Medicaid and ensure that public employees can receive transgender-inclusive healthcare.
- The country's leading insurance companies should build on the progress of corporate America by ending all exclusions on medically

necessary transition-related care. They should also ensure that their medical provider networks are sufficiently broad and have the medical expertise and cultural competency to care for transgender clients.

- Physicians and other healthcare providers must increase their cultural competency and ability to provide welcoming and sensitive care for transgender patients through trainings and continuing education.
- Academic medical centers should implement the Association of American Medical Colleges' (AAMC) curricular and climate change recommendations to address healthcare disparities facing transgender people.

Address Unemployment through Public-Private Partnerships and Non-Discrimination Protections

- Municipalities and corporations should create public-private job training programs specifically aimed at facilitating stable employment opportunities for transgender people. Workplaces should market directly to prospective transgender employees with outreach at conferences and events across the nation.
- State and municipal governments must pass non-discrimination protections in employment that include both sexual orientation and gender identity.

Improve Educational Environments for Transgender Students

- The Department of Education should release explicit non-discrimination guidance that Title IX, the federal law that prohibits

discrimination in education based on sex, protects transgender and gender-nonconforming students.

- School district leaders, educators and other youth-serving professionals should create welcoming classrooms for transgender and gender-expansive students and implement training programs that give teachers the tools they need to do so.

Improve Law Enforcement Training, Response and Hate Crime Reporting

- Law enforcement agencies should adopt policies that govern interactions with transgender and gender non-conforming individuals, similar to the District of Columbia's Metropolitan Police Department's General Order on Handling Interactions with Transgender Individuals. Law enforcement agencies can also work with advocates through programs like the Department of Justice's Community Relations Service to institute trainings to ensure compliance.
- Law enforcement agencies should also educate their police officers on the importance of correctly identifying a bias-motivated crime as one based either on sexual orientation or gender identity, or ones that contain overlapping bias motivations.
- State attorneys general should ensure the full and swift investigation of all open cases of homicides against transgender victims.
- The FBI has taken important steps toward improving data collection for bias-motivated crimes based on gender identity and expression, but the most

recent data reported (2013) suggests that local jurisdictions fail to report many of these crimes, including homicides, as bias-motivated. Of the 19 murders of transgender people in 2013, not a single one was reported as a hate crime, even though several clearly fall within the federal government's parameters. Local law enforcement agencies can train officers to thoroughly and consistently report bias-motivated crimes through the FBI's Uniform Crime Reporter system. City and county residents can call on local elected officials to ensure that law enforcement prioritizes reporting. Data that better reflects the true scope of anti-transgender violence will help make the case for funding and expanding programs that can prevent violence against transgender people.

- Law enforcement agencies should redouble their efforts to ensure that all crimes where there is evidence of prejudice are reported to the FBI.

Become Allies to Transgender People

- Advocates, organizations and individual members of the LGBT community can educate themselves about the violence and discrimination that transgender people face and commit to becoming better allies to transgender people in addressing these issues.
- Lesbian, gay, bisexual and non-LGBT people can use that self-education to call out transphobia when they see it both within and outside of the LGBT community, support transgender leadership and create spaces for transgender voices to be heard and followed.

CONCLUSION

THESE CALLS TO ACTION ARE STARTING POINTS IN THE FIGHT TO END THE VIOLENCE THAT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE — PARTICULARLY TRANSGENDER WOMEN OF COLOR — FACE. BUT THERE IS NO SIMPLE ANSWER AND OUR WORK IS NOWHERE CLOSE TO FINISHED. THE VICTIMS WHOSE STORIES ARE FEATURED IN THIS REPORT ARE ONLY A FRACTION OF THE TRANSGENDER PEOPLE WHO HAVE LOST THEIR LIVES TO VIOLENCE, NEGLECT AND SUICIDE.

AS MEMBERS OF AND ALLIES TO THE LGBT COMMUNITY, WE MUST WORK EVERY DAY TO CHANGE HEARTS AND MINDS AND TO CHALLENGE TRANSPHOBIA WHEREVER WE SEE IT — EVEN WHEN IT MAY APPEAR TO SOME A HARMLESS JOKE. WHEN WE ALLOW THOSE AROUND US TO TREAT TRANSGENDER PEOPLE IN WAYS THAT SUGGEST THEY ARE LESS WORTHY OF LOVE, ACCEPTANCE AND SUPPORT, WE ARE COMPLICIT IN A SYSTEM THAT CONTINUES TO PUNISH AND DEVALUE PEOPLE SIMPLY FOR BEING DIFFERENT; AND AS THIS REPORT SHOWS, THE CONSEQUENCES OF THAT KIND OF MARGINALIZATION CAN BE DEVASTATING.

THERE IS NO SIMPLE ANSWER TO STOPPING VIOLENCE AGAINST TRANSGENDER PEOPLE AND THERE ARE MANY BARRIERS TO OVERCOME. BUT THAT CANNOT — AND MUST NOT — BE AN EXCUSE FOR INACTION. THE HUMAN RIGHTS CAMPAIGN AND TRANS PEOPLE OF COLOR COALITION ARE COMMITTED TO RAISING AWARENESS AND EDUCATING THE PUBLIC ABOUT THE VIOLENCE FACING TRANSGENDER PEOPLE; WORKING WITH THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY, ITS ALLIES AND OTHER SOCIAL JUSTICE ORGANIZATIONS TO FIND MORE SOLUTIONS TO THIS DEVASTATING PROBLEM; AND LOBBYING PRIVATE ORGANIZATIONS AND PUBLIC AGENCIES TO TAKE ACTION. OUR WORK WILL NOT END UNTIL ALL MEMBERS OF THE LGBT COMMUNITY ARE TREATED WITH FAIRNESS, DIGNITY AND RESPECT.

CASE STUDIES: WASHINGTON, D.C.

THE CASE STUDIES THAT FOLLOW HIGHLIGHT TWO AGENCIES IN THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA THAT HAVE TAKEN STEPS TO ADDRESS SOME OF THE CRITICAL COMMUNITY CONCERNS DETAILED IN THIS BRIEF. WHILE THESE CASE STUDIES ARE NOT COMPLETE SOLUTIONS, THEY REPRESENT IMPORTANT MODELS THAT LOCAL GOVERNMENTS CAN TAKE.

Metropolitan Police Department

In 2011, the Washington, D.C. Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) assembled a Hate Crimes Assessment (HCA) Task Force, comprised of representatives from HRC and other national advocacy organizations, to evaluate its existing programs and relationship with the local LGBT community. The HCA Task Force issued a [report](#) in 2014 that highlighted that the “mistreatment of transgender individuals – and particularly transgender women of color – by police officers is among the most frequently cited and egregious examples of bias and misconduct.”

In a series of community meetings, the HCA Task Force reported that nearly every transgender person

who spoke about interacting with law enforcement had experienced harassment or mistreatment because of their gender identity or expression. These interactions ranged from intentional use of incorrect pronouns or names, to physical mistreatment and profiling of transgender women as sex workers, to the placement of transgender people in holding cells with people of a different gender. In response to these and other similar findings, the Task Force recommended six areas of improvement, including increasing awareness of the Gay and Lesbian Liaison Unit (GLLU) within the Metropolitan Police Department and a review of the GLLU Structure.

MPD Chief Cathy Lanier said that the

Task Force's report points out that there is much work left to be done to improve the department's treatment of LGBT cases and that the department has “fallen short in our goal to foster strong relationships with our great and diverse communities that enable us to jointly combat the scourge of crimes motivated by hate or bias.”

Office of Human Rights

DC's Office of Human Rights (OHR) has distinguished itself as a leader in supporting the local transgender community. In 2012, OHR launched the Transgender and Gender Identity Respect Campaign, which placed a series of posters around the city telling the stories of transgender residents, aimed at “challenging stereotypes and improving quality

of life for transgender and gender non-conforming people.” They also started a social media campaign, with the hashtag #SafeBathroomsDC, to encourage residents to report public restrooms that were not in compliance with the city-wide requirement that all single-stall bathrooms be gender neutral.

In 2015, the DC OHR commissioned a [report](#) to evaluate employment discrimination against transgender people in the district, citing the issue as a “top concern for the community.” As the report explained, “Employment discrimination can cause high rates of unemployment or underemployment, which can lead to homelessness and prevent individuals from accessing necessary healthcare. This discrimination can also force individuals into criminalized activities or criminalized economies for survival, which often leads to incarceration and criminal records that compound the challenges they face in finding employment.”

In addition to providing data for advocacy around these issues, the report served as a test of the district’s existing non-discrimination

protections, which prohibit employers from discriminating on the basis of gender identity. Among their [key findings](#) were:

- 48 percent of employers appeared to prefer at least one less-qualified applicant perceived as cisgender over a more-qualified applicant perceived as transgender.
- 33 percent of employers offered interviews to one or more less-qualified applicant(s) perceived as cisgender while not offering an interview to at least one of the more-qualified applicant(s) perceived as transgender.
- The applicant perceived as a transgender man with work experience at a transgender advocacy organization experienced the highest individual rate of discrimination.
- The restaurant industry had the highest percentage of responses perceived as discriminatory among the employment sectors tested, although the sample numbers are low and therefore not conclusive.

In light of these findings, OHR

Director Mónica Palacio explained, “Statistical and anecdotal evidence tells us transgender and gender non-conforming people are experiencing employment discrimination at very high rates, and this testing project confirms that unfortunate truth. It’s vital that government, the business community and advocates work together to end this chronic injustice.”

CASE STUDY: SAN FRANCISCO

THE CITY OF SAN FRANCISCO HAS DISTINGUISHED ITSELF AS A NATIONAL LEADER WHEN IT COMES TO ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY. UNDER THE LEADERSHIP OF EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR THERESA SPARKS, WHO IS ALSO TRANSGENDER, THE SAN FRANCISCO HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION HAS LED ON A VARIETY OF GROUNDBREAKING EFFORTS AIMED AT PREVENTING ANTI-TRANSGENDER VIOLENCE AND REDUCING THE VAST DISPARITIES FACED BY MEMBERS OF THE TRANSGENDER COMMUNITY.

One of the city's flagship initiatives has been trans-inclusive universal healthcare for all residents of San Francisco, which includes all medically necessary transition-related care free of cost to transgender people, care that has limited-to-no impact on the city's budget but would be prohibitively expensive for many individuals.

In the last year alone, San Francisco has also allocated \$2 million in funding to local service providers for programs working specifically with transgender residents. These programs include an employment program that has provided trainings and job placement for 200 transgender people in the last couple

of years, the creation of a Trans Advisory Council for the city, and an HIV prevention program aimed at eliminating HIV transmission in the transgender community by the year 2020.

The city also has programs to support transgender women of color in prison and help facilitate their reentry into society following incarceration, which, according to Sparks, has cut the recidivism rate among those who have participated in the program to about 20 percent, compared to a statewide average of more than 50 percent. San Francisco is also taking direct aim at the issues of anti-transgender street violence and domestic violence. Earlier this year, the Human Rights

Commission published an LGBTQI Community Violence Assessment [report](#) along with 15 other community organizations, and has allocated funding for the implementation and tracking of the report's recommendations. The city has also started a violence prevention program for transgender Latinas, one of the city's most marginalized groups.

Note: We will continue to highlight case studies of other cities and agencies that are providing leadership meeting the needs of the transgender community – and we welcome submissions of possible stories to highlight. Please contact Beth Sherouse at beth.sherouse@hrc.org with any suggestions.



ADDRESSING ANTI-TRANSGENDER VIOLENCE

EXPLORING REALITIES, CHALLENGES AND
SOLUTIONS FOR POLICYMAKERS AND
COMMUNITY ADVOCATES