

Welcome to TRANSGENDER DAY OF REMEMBRANCE

Greetings and welcome to the 10th Annual Transgender Day of Remembrance and the third to be held in Oakland, CA. We are honored by your presence and thank you for taking time to be with us today as we remember our transgender brother and sisters who have lost their voices due to anti-transgender hatred as well as the HIV/AIDS epidemic.

This year Oakland joins more than 200 national and international TDOR events, a list that grows each year.

This is the 10th Anniversary of the Transgender Day of Remembrance!

But this is not your typical anniversary celebration. Death is the elephant in the room. But that is ok. We are her to honor and memorialize. I look at it as more of a somber wakeup call that we need to continue to do more to educate, and protect our brothers and sisters from increasing violence and HIV infection. If one name is read off next year, it is one name too many.

10 years! We have been the reading names of our fallen for 10 years now. 10 years since Rita Hester and Matthew Sheppard. 10 years and 241 names read that we know about. And 10 years of speeches, vigils, and activism.

Much has changed since that first candlelight vigil in San Francisco in November 1998, and much as not. We still read names that should never have to be read and struggle and fight daily for our rights to be, to live the lives that we envision and dream.

I wish we were all gathered here celebrating the opening of a new Trans Health Clinic, or a new comprehensive Trans Resource Center here in Oakland.

But the reality is that we are not. Death and violence has gathered us today so we can take care of our own. Bring some closure for them, and us.

This year we read off 28 names: 25 killed, 2 from AIDS, 1 suicide.

From locales as diverse as the Trans people that died there, Santiago, Puerto Vallarta, Lisbon, Milan, and Baltimore, Charleston, Honolulu, and Sacramento.

This year July proved to be particularly deadly, with 6 murders, including an 18 year old Latina and a 35 year old Mahu, both of whom were taken miles apart on July 17.

Hate was in the air that day.

February was also not a great month to be transgender, with 4 murders and a suicide. Cameron, Lawrence and Simmie were 10, 15, and 17 years old. They were just babies.

Duanna was taken from us week ago today in Memphis

Many more than we know have been assaulted, beaten, and harassed in cities and towns all over the world including right here in Oakland, Hayward, and San Francisco by boyfriends, dates, family, and police.

We also have learned that California leads the way with 55 transgender killings known since 1970, with 10 in San Francisco and 5 rights here in Oakland.

So how do we deal or cope with this kind of reality, especially if you are transgender.

For me, I am inspired by the fact that we have kept Transgender Day of Remembrance going for 10 years now, growing each year with more cities and people participating.

I am inspired by the each of you hear who came to memorialize those you have never met.

I am inspired by those who we remember today, for their courage and strength in who they were, in the face of overwhelming circumstances.

And I am inspired by my kids, who will grow up knowing that transgender people are part of the fabric of society.

We have much to be angry of and mournful of, and we have much to be grateful and thankful for.