‹ RESOURCES

Fatal Violence Against the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Community in 2020

SHARE

Sadly, 2020 has already seen at least 44 transgender or gender non-conforming people fatally shot or killed by other violent means, the majority of which were Black and Latinx transgender women. We say at least because too often these stories go unreported -- or misreported. Since HRC began tracking this data in 2013, advocates have never seen such a high number at this point in the year.

These victims, like all of us, are loving partners, parents, family members, friends and community members. They worked, went to school and attended houses of worship. They were real people -- people who did not deserve to have their lives taken from them.

As HRC continues to work toward justice and equality for transgender and gender non-conforming people, we mourn those we have lost in 2020:

- **Dustin Parker**, 25, was fatally shot in McAlester, Oklahoma, early on New Year's Day. His employers released a statement shortly after his death, remembering Parker as "a steadfast friend, an amazing husband and father and generous to a fault. He loved fiercely, worked tirelessly and took on life with so much hope and enthusiasm that his presence brightened all of our lives."

- **Neulisa Luciano Ruiz**, was fatally shot in Toa Baja, Puerto Rico on February 24. According to *Metro Puerto Rico*, members of her community knew her as "humble" and "noble."

- **Yampi Méndez Arocho**, 19, was killed in Moca, Puerto Rico, on March 5. Arocho, a transgender man, shared his love for basketball and the NBA -- donning Miami Heat apparel on social media. The biography line on his Facebook reads simply, "Humility Prevails."

- **Scott/ Scottlynn Devore**, a 51-year old gender non-conforming person, was killed in Augusta, Georgia. Friends remembered Devore as "sweet" and "beautiful" on Facebook.

- **Monika Diamond**, 34, a Black transgender woman, was killed in Charlotte, North Carolina on March 18. Diamond was active in the Charlotte LGBTQ and nightlife community and was the co-owner of an event promotion company. She also was the co-CEO of the International Mother of the Year Pageantry System -- a pageant that honors LGBTQ mothers.

- **Lexi**, 33, a transgender woman, was killed in Harlem, New York on March 28. According to reports, Lexi was fatally stabbed in Harlem River Park. "I really looked up to her because of her tolerance and respect," said Lavonia Brooks, a friend of Lexi. "Lexi had a

beautiful heart, she was very gifted." Brooks also noted that Lexi loved poetry, makeup and fashion.

- **Johanna Metzger**, a transgender woman, was killed in Baltimore, Maryland on April 11. According to reports, she was visiting a Baltimore recovery center from Pennsylvania at the time. Johanna was known for her love of music and taught herself to play multiple instruments.

- **Serena Angelique Velázquez Ramos**, 32, was killed in Puerto Rico on April 21. Ramos was killed alongside Layla Pelaez Sánchez, 21. According to reports, Ramos was visiting the island on vacation, and was set to return to her home in Queens, New York, at the end of the month. Loved ones are mourning her death, calling her "full of life," a "happy person," and a "sincere friend." On May 1, two men were charged under federal hate crimes law for Ramos's death.

- **Layla Pelaez Sánchez**, 21, was killed in Puerto Rico on April 21. Sánchez was killed alongside Serena Angelique Velázquez Ramos. According to reports, Sánchez had recently moved to the island, and was living in the Tejas neighborhood in Las Piedras. On May 1, two Puerto Rican men were charged under federal hate crimes law for Sánchez's death.

- **Penélope Díaz Ramírez**, a transgender woman, was killed in Puerto Rico on April 13. "Penélope did not deserve to die. Transgender people do not deserve to die. Every single advocate, ally, elected official and community member must stand up in light of this horrific news and say 'No more.' What we are doing is not enough," said Tori Cooper, HRC Director of Community Engagement for the Transgender Justice Initiative.

- **Nina Pop**, a Black transgender woman, was killed in Sikeston, Missouri, on May 3. She was deeply loved by her family, friends and community, according to her Facebook page.

- **Helle Jae O'Regan**, 20, a transgender woman, was killed in San Antonio, Texas, on May 6. O'Regan was proud of her trans identity and on Twitter, she often spoke out against injustice, including the LGBTQ inequality, the prison industrial complex and the

need to decriminalize sex work. Damion Terrell Campbell, 42, has been charged with O'Regan's murder.

- **Tony McDade**, a Black transgender man, was killed in Tallhassee, Florida, on May 27. His friends and family shared how he was an energetic, giving person with a big heart.

- **Dominique "Rem'mie" Fells**, a Black transgender woman was killed in Philadelphia, Pennsyania, on June 9. One personal friend posted online, "Dom was a unique and beautiful soul who I am lucky to have known personally. I am beside myself right now. We need to fight!! We need to do more!!!! We will get justice."

- **Riah Milton**, a 25-year-old Black transgender woman, was killed in Liberty Township, Ohio on June 9. In March, she posted the status "Never been scared to struggle. Imma get it eventually" -- a comment highlighting her resilience and optimism as a person facing a transphobic, misogynist and racist society.

- **Jayne Thompson**, a 33-year old white transgender woman, was killed in Mesa County, Colorado, on May 9. She was killed by a Colorado State Patrol trooper and misgendered in initial news reports.

- **Selena Reyes-Hernandez**, a 37-year old transgender woman, was killed in Chicago on May 31. "We have lost a beloved member of our trans family because of hate -- hate that has corrupted our country's soul and that shatters lives and futures every day," said Tori Cooper, HRC director of community engagement for the Transgender Justice Initiative.

- **Brian "Egypt' Powers**, a 43-year old Black transgender person, was killed in Akron, Ohio, on June 13. Powers worked at a local catering company and is remembered for wearing long, colorful braids -- "unicorn braids," as Powers called them.

- **Brayla Stone**, a 17-year old Black transgender girl, was found killed in Little Rock, Arkansas, on June 25. "Brayla Stone was a child. A child, just beginning to live her life. A child of trans experience. A Black girl. A person who had hopes and dreams, plans and community," said Tori Cooper, HRC director of community engagement for the Transgender Justice Initiative. On September 4, a man was arrested on a murder charge in connection to her death.

- **Merci Mack**, a 22-year old Black transgender woman, was killed in Dallas, Texas, on June 30. Her loved ones shared how beautiful of a friend she was. On her social media, she had recently posted that she enjoyed baking and that she was looking forward to returning to work. On July 8, a man was arrested on a murder charge in connection to her death.

- **Shaki Peters**, a 32-year old Black transgender woman, was killed in Amite CIty, Louisiana, on July 1. "In just four days, we have seen the deaths of at least three transgender and gender non-conforming people, including Shaki Peters. This horrific spike in violence against our community must be an urgent call to action for every single person in this nation," said Tori Cooper, Director of Community Engagement for HRC's Trans Justice Initiative.

- **Bree Black**, a 27-year-old Black transgender woman, was killed in Pompano Beach, Florida, on July 3. "These killings are being fueled by the deadly combination of racism and transphobia, and they must cease. We must come together as a community and demand justice for those who were taken from us," said Tori Cooper, Director of Community Engagement for HRC's Trans Justice Initiative.

- **Summer Taylor**, a white non-binary person, was in Seattle, Washington, on July 4. Taylor was participating in the Black Femme March in solidarity with Black Lives Matter and against police brutality. Taylor worked full time at Urban Animal veterinary hospital.

- **Marilyn Cazares** was a transgender Latina killed in Brawley, California. Mindy Garcia, an aunt of Cazares, said she "loved to sing and dance" and "never bothered anyone."

- **Dior H Ova**, who some reports identify as Tiffany Harris, a Black transgender woman, was killed in the Bronx, New York. According to her Facebook, Ova loved fashion -- listing her career as a personal shopper and posting photos with luxury fashion brands that she loved. On August 13, a man was arrested on a murder charge in connection to her death.

- **Queasha D Hardy**, a 22-year old Black transgender woman, was killed in Baton Rouge, Louisiana, on July 27. Hardy, a hairstylist, was extremely loved by her community. Friends and loved ones describe her as loyal, loving, "always smiling," "the life of all parties" and "truly one of a kind."

- **Aja Raquell Rhone-Spears**, who sometimes used the name Rocky Rhone, a Black transgender woman, was killed in Portland, Oregon, on July 28. According to Facebook, she studied at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas, and was the owner and founder of International Barbie, a Portland-based clothing brand.

- **Lea Rayshon Daye**, a 28-year old Black transgender woman, died in Cuyahoga County Jail in Cleveland, Ohio on August 30. "Lea's death is unacceptable. Increased risk factors such as homelessness, combined with racism, sexism and transphobia, conspired to lead to a death that never should have happened," said Tori Cooper, HRC Director of Community Engagement for the Transgender Justice Initiative.

- **Kee Sam**, a Black transgender woman, was killed in Lafeyette, Louisiana, on August 12. "We must all speak up in support of trans and gender non-conforming people and affirm that Black Trans Lives Matter," said HRC's Tori Cooper, Director of Community Engagement for the Transgender Justice Initiative.

- **Aerrion Burnett**, a Black transgender woman, was killed in Indepedence, Missouri, on September 19. Her friends and family shared "if you wanted to have a good day, you need to smile, Aerrion was the person you wanted by your side."

- **Mia Green**, a 29-year old Black transgender woman, was killed in Philadelphia on September 28. Her friends and family shared how "her smile was so perfect and so contagious. She made me laugh."

- **Michelle Michellyn Ramos Vargas**, a transgender woman from Puerto Rico in her mid-30s, was killed in San Germán, Puerto Rico on September 30. "This level of violence— any level of violence — is unacceptable. We are not doing enough to protect transgender and gender non-conforming people, especially trans women," said HRC's Tori Cooper, Director of Community Engagement for the Transgender Justice Initiative.

- **Felycya Harris**, a 33-year old transgender woman, was killed in Augusta, Georgia in October. Felycya was an interior decorator who ran her own company where she enjoyed lending her eye to improve the surroundings of others, and made others feel comfortable in their own space.

- **Brooklyn Deshuna**, 20, a Black transgender woman, was killed in Shreveport, Louisiana, on October 7. Brooklyn attended Bossier Parish Community College and

studied cosmetology.

- **Sara Blackwood,** a transgender woman, was killed in Indianapolis, Indiana on October 11, recognized as National Coming Out Day. She enjoyed playing video games and was a fan of the show "My Little Pony."

- **Angel Unique**, a 25-year old Black transgender woman, was killed in Memphis, Tennessee, on October 25. A licensed cosmetologist, friends and family of Angel remembered her for being "very funny, very nice to everybody she met" and "such a bright person [with] a positive spirit."

- **Skylar Heath**, a 20-year-old Black trans woman killed on Nov. 4 in Miami, Fl., was described as a "kind and gentle soul" who "had such a love for family and close friends." Skylar had a "warm personality" and a "friendly spirit," and brought people who knew her "so much joy."

- **Yunieski Carey Herrera**, also known as Yuni Carey, a 39-year old Latina transgender woman was killed in Miami, Fl. on Nov. 17. Herrera was a well-known model, performer, dancer and activist loved by the LGBTQ community in Miami. A friend of Herrera described her as "besides being strikingly beautiful, she was kind and she was good."

- **Asia Jynae Foster**, a 22-year-old Black transgender woman, was killed on Nov. 20 in Houston, Texas. Her death occurred on Trans Day of Remembrance, a day created to honor those in our community taken by violence. Asia was remembered during a candlelight vigil where family and friends described her as "a beacon of light in their community."

- **Chae'Meshia Simms**, a Black transgender woman in her 30s, was killed on Nov. 23 in Richmond, Virginia. Simms, who sometimes used the nickname "ChaeChae," was close with her family and friends. They remembered her on social media as "good," "kind" and "caring."

- **Kimberly Fial**, a 55-year-old white transgender woman, was killed on Nov. 22 in San Jose, California, at a homeless shelter where she volunteered. She is remembered by friends and loved ones as "a kind & loving person" and someone with "a twinkle in her eye."

- **Jaheim Pugh Jaheim Barbie**, who might have also used the name Bella, was killed on December 13 in Prichard, Ala. On December 18, Jaheim's family held a celebration of life, including a motorcade and gathering. On social media, friends and family remembered Jaheim as "the life of the party," "such a bright light" and "so loving."

- **Courtney "Eshay" Key**, a 25-year-old Black transgender woman, was killed in Chicago, Ill., on December 25. Loved ones described her as "a vibrant and beautiful woman who had a big heart and big dreams."

- **Alexandria Winchester**, a 24-year-old Latina trans woman, was killed on Dec. 26 in the Bronx, New York. Sadly, not many details are known about Alexandria's life. She was a client at the Ali Forney Center, who is working with community leaders to host a vigil in memory of Winchester. "Alexandria mattered to her community and to the world. The loss of another transgender person in 2020 is devastating," said HRC Associate Director of the Transgender Justice Initiative Lindsey Clark.

These victims were killed by acquaintances, partners or strangers, some of whom have been arrested and charged, while others have yet to be identified. Some of these cases involve clear anti-transgender bias. In others, the victim's transgender status may have put them at risk in other ways, such as forcing them into unemployment, poverty, homelessness and/or survival sex work.

While the details of these cases differ, it is clear that fatal violence disproportionately affects transgender women of color -- particularly Black transgender women -- and that the intersections of racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia, transphobia and unchecked access to guns conspire to deprive them of employment, housing, healthcare and other necessities.

HRC Foundation's "Dismantling a Culture of Violence" report demonstrates how anti-transgender stigma, denial of opportunity and increased risk factors compound to create a culture of violence -- and provides clear ways that each of us can directly make an

impact to make our society a safer place for transgender and gender non-conforming people.

As is too often the case in the reporting of anti-transgender violence, many of these victims are misgendered in local police statements and media reports, which can delay our awareness of deadly incidents. In the pursuit of greater accuracy and respect for transgender and gender non-conforming people in both life and death, HRC offers guidelines for journalists and others who report on these communities.

HRC has been tracking reports of fatal anti-transgender violence for the past several years. Previous reports can be found: 2019, 2018, 2017, 2016, 2015.

TOPICS:

Transgender

Hate Crimes

Communities of Color

RELATED RESOURCES **View All ›**