

Opening Remarks for a Transgender Day of Remembrance Vigil

Most trace the beginning of the Transgender Day of Remembrance back to a night in late November, 1998. The murder of Rita Hester on November 28th of that year in Boston shook the local community. The resulting walk through the streets and candlelight vigil outside her apartment are often considered the inspiration for what has become an international act of remembrance for those who were killed in acts of anti-transgender violence. The following year, a candlelight vigil was held in San Francisco, and each year the remembrance has grown, from very local beginnings to an international audience. In some places, the week leading up to or following the Day of Remembrance has been a time of extensive awareness building and advocacy.

It is important to know that not everyone remembered self-identified as transgender, though each was a victim of violence based on bias against transgender and gender variant people. Some are friends, lovers and allies, who were killed while they were with someone who was transgender. Others may not have identified as such, but were perceived to be somehow gender variant by their attackers.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is more than just a memorial. It raises public awareness of the hatred and violence against those in our transgender community which often, the media suppresses. It publicly mourns and honors the lives of those who might otherwise be forgotten, giving their silenced lives new voice. It is an opportunity to meet hatred and indifference with love and respect. Day of Remembrance does just that. It remembers the forgotten. The forgotten who were also children, parents, lovers and friends. Who were part of all of our communities. Day of Remembrance offers us all an opportunity to stand together and say no more.