

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

---

 [hrc.org/resources/violence-against-the-trans-and-gender-non-conforming-community-in-2020](https://hrc.org/resources/violence-against-the-trans-and-gender-non-conforming-community-in-2020)

In 2019, advocates tracked at least 27 deaths of at least transgender or gender non-conforming people in the U.S. due to fatal violence, the majority of whom were Black transgender women.

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

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.

**Sadly, 2020 has already seen at least 22 transgender or gender non-conforming people fatally shot or killed by other violent means. We say at least because too often these stories go unreported -- or misreported.**

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

- **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."
- **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 Tallahassee, 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, Pennsylvania, 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.
- **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.

- **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.”