# International Transgender Day of Remembrance Service For a Sunday Close to November 20

*First presented by Jordan Sullivan, General Council Office Chapel, November 20, 2013*

**Preparation**

The Trans Murder Monitoring (TMM) project reports each November on the occurrence of homicides of trans people worldwide. Check <http://tgeu.org/tdor> for current stats and names to include in the spoken and silent reflection.

**Opening Prayer**

There are many prayers available at <https://thoughtsonblank.wordpress.com/we-pray-prayers-to-and-for-the-transgender-community/>. We recommend the prayer byJoanna Fontaine-Crawford that begins:

Our God whom we call by many names…

**Hymn: “**Spirit, Open My Heart” (*More Voices 79*)

**Scripture Reading:** Genesis 1:26, 27

Then God said, “Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created humankind in God’s image.

**Spoken Reflection**

November 20 is International Transgender Day of Remembrance. It began in the late 1990s to commemorate the life of an African-American trans woman named Rita Hester who was brutally murdered in Boston in 1998. Her death came just weeks after the murder of Matthew Shepard in Wyoming had roused a huge discussion on hate crimes against gay people, yet Rita's murder garnered no such response. Her murder and the lack of media attention to her death drove a candlelight vigil to begin in San Francisco the next year.

While we acknowledge that violence happens for many unjust reasons, today we honour the lives of those who were victims of violence because of their gender identity and gender expression. Due to the widespread ignorance and erasure of the experiences of trans people, this day is an important opportunity for us to intentionally bear witness to the hardships of the trans community.

Today on this International Transgender Day of Remembrance we gather together to

* remember and mourn all those trans people who have been victims of homicide
* honour the lives of those who might otherwise be forgotten
* restore dignity to those who have suffered extreme and humiliating violence
* become more aware of who is most vulnerable in our communities

We recognize that there are many diverse people gathered in this space. Some of us may just be beginning to learn and understand the reality of violence against trans people. We pray for courage, open minds and hearts, and persistence as we continue our journey.

Some of us may be gathered here full of pain and anger, knowing the reality of violence against trans people deeply in our hearts. We pray for love, healing, and justice in the face of oppression.

Inspired by the movement that grew out of Rita Hester’s death, a web project titled “Remembering Our Dead” was created; it shares the story of transgender people from around the globe who have been murdered out of prejudice and hate. The site’s list goes back to the 1970s and documents the losses the trans community has felt over many years of mistreatment and marginalization.

Although the data is limited at best, there has been some effort in the last few years to record and analyze transphobic violence across the globe. One group that is leading this charge is the “Trans Murder Monitoring Project.” **Sadly, this year, there have been a total of xxx <insert current figure> cases of reported killings of trans people.** The most terrifying part of this figure is that, by their own admission, the project “can only provide a glimpse into a reality which is undoubtedly much worse than the numbers suggest.”

In addition, those numbers do not include those trans people who ended their own lives. A 2011 American survey, *Injustice at Every Turn*[[1]](#footnote-1), showed that 41 percent of trans people have attempted suicide, compared to 1.6 percent of the general population.

A 2011 Canadian survey *Every Class in Every School*[[2]](#footnote-2), revealed that

* 90 percent of trans youth reported hearing transphobic comments daily or weekly from other students, and 23 percent reported hearing teachers use transphobic language daily or weekly
* 74 percent of trans students reported being verbally harassed about their gender expression
* 25 percent reported being physically harassed or having had property stolen or damaged
* when all identity-related grounds for feeling unsafe are taken into account, including ethnicity and religion, more than three-quarters (78 percent) of trans students indicated feeling unsafe in some way at school

It is also important to note that in more than a decade of compiling names for the International Transgender Day of Remembrance, the annual lists of those who have been murdered have overwhelmingly shown that transgender women of colour bear the particular brunt of anti-transgender violence.

In the *Injustice at Every Turn* survey, 59 percent of African-American transgender respondents reported having attempted suicide.ManyBlack transgender people live in extreme poverty with 34 percent reporting a household income of less than $10,000/year. This is more than twice the rate for transgender people of all races, four times the general Black population rate, and over eight times the general US population.

It is difficult to determine the best way to present the stories of the people we honour today.As I read through the list of people murdered this past year, I noticed first that the vast majority are trans women and many are young people—the youngest being Alex Medeiros from Brazil—whose fathers beat them to death for refusing to cut their hair, liking women’s clothes, and dancing.

In the upcoming silent reflection we will see all of their names (if known), country, and age. We have intentionally not included the manner of their death, but let me just say this…All too often, when a trans person is murdered, the way they are murdered starkly reveals the hatred of the killers. They are so often dehumanized in ways too grotesque to share here today.

Over the past year, the following recorded murders of trans people have occurred:

<current year breakdown by country>

**There have been a total of xxx reported killings of tans people in xx countries worldwide from January 1, 2008 to <this year’s date>**.

Keeping in mind that we are each created in the image of God, I would invite us for the next few minutes to sit in thoughtful reflection as we read aloud (*or* as we each read in silence) the names of the xxx people killed this past year—acknowledging there are far more than listed here. As you hear (*or* read) their names and ages, I invite you to honour their humanity with your love and prayers and acknowledge the gift of the lives that were ended too soon because of hate, fear, and ignorance.

**Silent Reflection**

(*Names are read or screened using the current Trans Murder Monitoring list.*)

**Readings**

(*End the reflection with two suggested readings from* A Jewish Guide for Marking Trans Day of Remembrance *found at* [*www.keshetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/TDOR-guide-2013.pdf*](http://www.keshetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/06/TDOR-guide-2013.pdf) *:”Twilight People” by Rabbi Reuben Zellman, page 4* (*non-binary specific*) *and*

*“Reading” by Dr. Jill Weiss, page 5.*)

**Hymn: “**My Love Colours Outside the Lines” (*More Voices* 138)

**Prayer for International Transgender Day of Remembrance**

See Prayer by Reuben Zellman at <http://www.keshetonline.org/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/Prayer-for-Transgender-Day-of-Remembrance.pdf>

**Closing Hymn: “**Let Us Build a House” (*More Voices* 1)

**Poem**

**“**The boxes, they’re everywhere!” by itsa-wallaby at [www.fictionpress.com/s/2760171/1/The-boxes-they-re-everywhere](http://www.fictionpress.com/s/2760171/1/The-boxes-they-re-everywhere)

1. Grant, Jaime M., Lisa A. Mottet, Justin Tanis, Jack Harrison, Jody L. Herman, and Mara Keisling*. Injustice at Every Turn: A Report of the National Transgender Discrimination Survey*. Washington: National Center for Transgender Equality and National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, 2011. [www.thetaskforce.org/static\_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds\_full.pdf](http://www.thetaskforce.org/static_html/downloads/reports/reports/ntds_full.pdf) [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. Taylor, C. & Peter, T., with McMinn, T.L., Elliott, T., Beldom, S., Ferry, A., Gross, Z., Paquin, S., & Schachter, K. *Every Class in Every School: The first national climate survey on homophobia, biphobia, and transphobia in Canadian schools* Final report. (Toronto, ON: Egale Canada Human Rights Trust 2011). <http://egale.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/EgaleFinalReport-web.pdf> [↑](#footnote-ref-2)