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The purpose of Out In The Mountains [OITM] is to serve as a voice for lesbians, gay men, bisexuals, transgender people, and our supporters in Vermont. We wish the newspaper to be a source of information, insight, and affirmation. We also see OITM as a vehicle for the celebration of the culture and diversity of the lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities here in Vermont and elsewhere.

**Editorial Policy**

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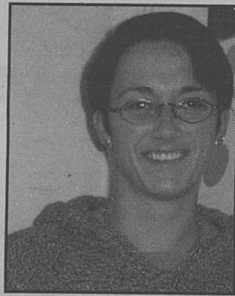
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# guest editorial

## Remembering the Dead, Informing the Living

**A**s I write this, Tameka McCloud, age 19, lies in serious condition at Hennepin County Medical Center in Minneapolis. She is recovering from several gunshots to her head and body fired at close range. Carlos M. Harris, age 16, has been charged with the shooting. Harris allegedly had a relationship with McCloud and shot her after learning that she was transgender. Sadly, what is most surprising about the case is not that Tameka was shot, but that she survived. Anti-transgender crimes are often marked by excessive violence and usually result in murder.

Transgendered people – those who do not conform to society's expectations of gender expression for men and women – face discrimination, hostility and violence. This year's Transgender Day of Remembrance memorializes 19 people who were killed by transphobic violence since the last Day of Remembrance. Nineteen people are dead for no other reason than someone disagreed with their right to express their gender differently. Every month, at least one person is murdered because they are – or are perceived to be – transgender. Since 1970, a total of 321 deaths have been recorded globally, and those are only the deaths known to the transgender community or reported by the media.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance (DOR) was set aside to memorialize those who were killed due to anti-transgender hatred or prejudice. The event is held in November to honor Rita Hester, whose murder on November 28, 1998 gave rise to the "Remembering Our Dead" web project (www.rememberingourdead.org) and a San Francisco candlelight vigil in 1999. Rita Hester's murder – like most anti-transgender murder cases – has yet to be solved.

Now in its third year, the Burlington DOR observance will be held on Friday November 19. Events include a candlelight vigil, visibility walk, and a memorial indoors at the Unitarian Universalist Church. For the first time ever, this year will also feature an art show and film screenings celebrating transgender lives at the Firehouse Gallery, Wednesday November 17.

The DOR raises public awareness

of hate crimes against transgendered people, an action that current media doesn't perform. DOR publicly mourns and honors the lives of those who might otherwise be forgotten. The event reminds non-transgendered people that trans people are their neighbors, children, parents, friends, and lovers. DOR gives our allies a chance to step forward with us and stand in vigil, memorializing the victims of anti-transgender violence.

A powerful element of the Burlington DOR is a wall of names created by the event organizers to personalize the people being remembered. Little to nothing is known about many of those who have died, but it is not difficult to see who the epidemic of violence hits hardest. Many of those named on the wall are people of color, many were poor, and most were women. The wall is a visible reminder of who remains most vulnerable in our society. The wall will be on display outside of the church and indoors during the memorial.

Because I do not self-identify as transgender, I do not worry daily that someday my name will appear on this wall, though there are names on the wall belonging to people killed because of their connections to trans people. In doing this work I have received threats, but my connection to the wall is more personal. I am young, 24 years old, and every year it seems that more young people's names are added to the wall. Many people being remembered could be my peers. I also work with young people everyday as Co-Director of Outright Vermont. I see firsthand the hatred and discrimination trans youth deal with everyday. I worry that something *<I>worse<I>* than verbal and physical harassment will happen to these youth.

Violent transphobic crime has yet to add the name of a Vermonter to the Remembering Our Dead Project, but who knows how many lives have been lost to suicide and other devastating results of transphobia. Among youth, those who dare to express their gender differently from their peers, who dare to be themselves, are at risk for physical, emotional, and social violence. Youth are physically beaten and taunted on the school bus by their peers, administrators punish gender variant stu-

dents for their attire even when they are not in violation of dress codes, bathrooms and locker rooms are a nightmare, and 'benign' harassment such as gender-segregated classroom assignments torment students daily.

For the many transgender and gender variant people in our lives, and for everyone who believes that the freedom to express our gender is a freedom we should all possess, we need to be actively seeking an end to transphobic violence in all of its forms.

In the words of Gwen Smith, the founder of the Remembering Our Dead Project, "We need to remember the one person we lose every month, but I challenge you to remember those who are living, and make a world where they are not the next on the list." ▼

Kate Jerman

*Transgender Day of Remembrance Memorial & Vigil will be held on Friday, November 19, at the Unitarian Church, Burlington, beginning with a candlelight vigil at 6 pm, followed by a short procession and a memorial and speakout inside the Unitarian Church from 7-9 pm. All interested people regardless of gender identity are welcome to participate. For more information, email Kate Jerman at Kate@outrightvt.org.*