



## **CALL TO ACTION: Join National Vigil to Honor the Memories of Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Murder Victims and Prevent Anti-Trans Violence**

**April 23, 2010**

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) is angered and saddened by a wave of horrific violence perpetrated against transgender and gender non-conforming people over the past several weeks. NCAVP's coalition of thirty-nine lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) anti-violence programs calls on our allies to honor the memories of those lost by joining our call to action to bear witness to, prevent, and ultimately, end this violence.

On March 30<sup>th</sup>, Amanda González-Andújar's body was found after she was murdered in her Queens, New York apartment. On April 3<sup>rd</sup>, Toni Alston was shot and killed outside their Charlotte, North Carolina as they tried to reach safety. On April 20<sup>th</sup>, Ashley Santiago's body was discovered in Corozal, Puerto Rico – she had been stabbed fourteen times. Each person was transgender or gender non-conforming.

Every person has the right to safety and dignity, inclusive of their gender identity or expression, but these rights are regularly and brutally denied to transgender and gender non-conforming people, particularly people of color. Whether or not these identities were a motivation for the murderers of Amanda, Toni, and Ashley, our society's prejudices make transgender people more vulnerable to these kinds of violence – and to having their murders mischaracterized both by law enforcement and the media.

In addition to the recent murders, on April 19, 2010, the judge declared a mistrial in the case brought against a former Memphis police officer for the 2008 beating of Duanna Johnson, a transgender woman, despite strong video evidence of the officer in question brutalizing her while she was in custody. In the end of 2008, Duanna was shot and murdered, and no leads have been made in this case. Further, in much of the media coverage of this case and others – particularly in the Puerto Rican and North Carolina press – journalists have added to the violence by using incorrect or unconfirmed pronouns for the victims.

Transgender and gender non-conforming victims and survivors of violence have difficulty accessing justice or safety in the criminal legal system or in society at large. Some regions of the country have strong LGBTQ anti-violence programs that provide education, prevention, and survivor support services despite limited resources. However, most areas of the United States do not have these resources, and mainstream service providers often lack the competency and understanding needed to prevent and respond to anti-LGBTQ violence.

We call on organizations, political leaders, and communities to join us in the work of creating a culture that celebrates individuals of all gender identities, where gender non-conforming and transgender individuals can live their lives and dreams to the fullest without fear of violence, murder and harassment. Join the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs in its call to respect the lives of transgender and gender-nonconforming people by taking some of the below action steps, or creating your own.

#### **ACTION STEPS:**

1. **Join the national online vigil on Saturday, April 24, 2010:** Show your solidarity with transgender and gender non-conforming survivors and victims of violence by **posting this message as your status message** on social media sites:

“NCAVP’s National Online Vigil Against Anti-Trans Violence: Today we honor the memories of three transgender and gender non-conforming people murdered in the last month: Amanda González-Andújar (New York), Toni Alston (North Carolina), and Ashley Santiago (Puerto Rico). All people have the right to safety inclusive of gender identity and expression! For more information on how to take action, visit ([facebook note link](#)).”

In New York, community members will participate in a [memorial and vigil for Amanda González-Andújar](#).

2. **Demand accuracy in reporting:** If you see news items that use the wrong pronouns or identities to refer to transgender and gender non-conforming people, write letters to the editor and make their bias known.
3. **Come together:** If an incident of hate violence happens in your community, **use the [Community Rapid Incident Response Manual](#)** to plan actions and make change.
4. **Support your local anti-violence program:** Reach out to an anti-violence program in your area, or start your own! Write to [info@ncavp.org](mailto:info@ncavp.org) for a list of LGBTQ anti-violence programs across the US and Canada.
5. **Make it known:** NCAVP’s members are here to support LGBTQ survivors and victims of violence in all of its forms. **If you have experienced, or learn of incidents of anti-LGBTQ violence, please let NCAVP know about it by writing to [info@ncavp.org](mailto:info@ncavp.org).** All reports are confidential.

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***The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) addresses the pervasive problem of violence committed against and within the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) and HIV-affected communities. NCAVP is a coalition of programs that document and advocate for victims and survivors of anti-LGBTQ and anti-HIV/AIDS violence/harassment, domestic violence, sexual assault, police misconduct and other forms of victimization. Further, NCAVP supports existing anti-violence organizations and emerging local programs in their efforts to document and prevent such violence. NCAVP is a program of the New York City Anti-Violence Project.***