

## Ten things every ally should know about Transgender Day of Remembrance

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR) is a very unusual "holiday." The tone and intention of the day can easily be misunderstood, especially by those who may be well-meaning, but new to transgender communities. Here are ten things every ally and TDOR planner should know about Transgender Day of Remembrance.

Transgender Day of Remembrance (TDOR)...

- is commemorated on November 20 each year. However, observances may take place on the days or weekend before and/or after November 20, depending on the day of the week on which November 20 occurs.
- is the single most significant observance on the calendar for transgender communities. TDOR is generally much more significant by far for transgender communities than other LGBT observances such as Pride Month or Coming Out Day.
- is more like a memorial or funeral than any other kind of observance. The tone of TDOR observances reflect the impact that murder has on the tapestry of the transgender community and the very real lives represented by the names of those who have been lost. The first response when loved ones are lost is grief and TDOR creates a space to acknowledge that grief publicly, in a way that is similar to a funeral, memorial service, or wake.
- is also an act of resistance and a way to restore dignity. Too often, the murders of transgender people (especially of transgender women of color and those perceived as such) have included extreme violence, such as disfiguring and/or dismembering the victim. The rage apparent in such murders often embodies a hateful, terroristic impact that reverberates beyond the particular victim to humiliate and degrade the entire community. This is the definition of a "hate crime." TDOR services are a place to acknowledge both the individual and collective impact of such extreme and humiliating violence -- as well as to build resistance and restore dignity.
- is a protest or vigil for justice. When transgender people are murdered, public outcry is often lacking. The cases all too often go unsolved. Even when the perpetrator is known, the criminal justice system may mark our lives as disposable by blaming the victim (e.g. allowing the "trans-panic defense"). TDOR services are opportunities to respond collectively to the neglect and uncaring attitudes of both the culture at large as well as authorities such as police and judicial systems. TDOR services offer a place for outrage. They demand accountability from authorities who have too often failed to protect our communities.
- provides a way to become aware of who is most vulnerable in our communities. In more than a decade of compiling names for TDOR, the annual lists of those who have been murdered have overwhelmingly shown that transgender women of color bear the particular brunt of anti-transgender violence. TDOR is an opportunity to repent of our own racism and sexism and think again about how we might break out of singular ways of thinking.
- is an opportunity to rise up out of our isolation for support. Those among us who have lost loved ones or survived assault themselves are especially traumatized by these events. Those of us who have not

been directly impacted by these murders still often live in fear, suffer secondary trauma, and are in need of support as we process the too familiar narrative of lives lost. TDOR is an opportunity to come together and support one another as we face the challenges of ignorance, bigotry, and hatred aimed at people of transgender experience. It is important to recognize that the content of TDOR services may be triggering, so sensitive emotional support should be a part of what is offered to those present.

- is an opportunity to recommit our lives to live with defiance, determination, and hope, despite the trauma we may have experienced and the fear that may haunt us. To say that TDOR may be inspiring is to first acknowledge the deep impact that violence has had on us and our communities. At TDOR, we reconnect with a warrior spirit that draws on courage from the ancestors to carry on for the children.
- is not a fundraiser or an outreach opportunity. As the most significant transgender observance of the year, it may be tempting to infuse all of one's hopes and dreams for connecting with the transgender community into this one day. Yet, TDOR is laced with a potent mix of grief and anger, fear and determination that ought not be conflated with other goals, no matter how noble or relevant. The vulnerability of TDOR should be acknowledged with sensitive support, not exploited for other ends.
- is an opportunity to connect with others who we might not otherwise get to know. For those of us who live in relative security and privilege, it is an opportunity to reach out to those who are most impacted by transphobia (and racism, sexism, etc), nurturing authentic relationship, solidarity, and understanding. The connections made in or around TDOR services are beginnings that invite us to reinforce our connections throughout the rest of the year.