



HONOR THE MEMORIES OF JORGE AND JAYSEN: END THE CULTURE OF VIOLENCE

NATIONAL COALITION OF ANTI-VIOLENCE PROGRAMS STATEMENT ON THE MURDERS OF JASON “JAYSEN” MATTISON, JR. & JORGE STEVEN LÓPEZ MERCADO

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The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) joins the national and international LGBTQ and anti-violence communities and allies as we mourn the loss of two youth to hate violence within the last ten days. We extend our deepest condolences to Jaysen and Jorge’s friends and family members. These brutal murders remind us of the scope and severity of anti-LGBTQ bias and reinforce NCAVP members’ commitment to ending a culture of violence.

Jason “Jaysen” Mattison, Jr., 15, Baltimore, Maryland

Jason “Jaysen” Mattison, Jr. was a sophomore in high school at the time of his vicious murder on November 10, 2009. Jaysen was an openly gay youth who was out to his family, friends and community, despite significant risks posed by anti-gay bias. On November 13th, Dante Parrish, 35, a “longtime friend of the family,” confessed that he had raped and murdered Jaysen.

Baltimore police report that Jaysen was staying at his aunt’s house when he met Parrish, and give some indication that the sexual abuse may have been ongoing. Jaysen’s family members, classmates, and communities are struggling to bear the tragic impact of flawed efforts to systemically prevent and respond to violence and anti-LGBTQ bias.

Jorge Steven López Mercado, 19, Cayey, Puerto Rico

Jorge López Mercado was brutally murdered on November 14, 2009. His body was found in Cayey, Puerto Rico. Reports indicate that Jorge’s murder was motivated by bias against gay, transgender, and gender non-conforming people and may have been compounded by possible anti-sex worker discrimination.

The suspect in Jorge's murder has been arrested and we support the call for this case to be recognized as anti-LGBTQ hate violence. NCAVP members are also very concerned by reports that a police investigator on the case in Puerto Rico made public transphobic and homophobic statements. NCAVP demands that local and federal law enforcement refrain from perpetrating hate violence, treat Jorge's murder as bias-motivated and support efforts to prevent future bias violence from occurring.

Systemic Change to End a Culture of Violence

Sadly, the deaths of Jaysen and Jorge are not isolated incidents: NCAVP member organizations have reported widespread hate violence against LGBTQ and gender non-conforming people, particularly low-income LGBTQ people of color, and sex workers across the United States and Puerto Rico. These incidents include the murders of Angie Zapata in Greeley, Colorado, Lateisha Green in Syracuse, New York and Na Na Boo Mack in Washington, D.C. NCAVP's 2008 Hate Violence Report documented the highest rates of anti-LGBTQ murders since 1999, with 29 reported cases. We also documented an increase in the severity of violence and brutality to which victims were subjected. We are horrified by the viciousness of the attacks that Jaysen and Jorge suffered. Across the world, people will gather to observe Transgender Day of Remembrance on Nov. 20th, and the International Day to End Violence against Sex Workers on Dec. 17th in response to these patterns of hate-motivated incidents.

NCAVP affirms every person's unconditional right to live free from violence, regardless of LGBTQ identity or sex work involvement. Along with more widely acknowledged trends of anti-LGBTQ hate violence, our member organizations know that sex workers experience elevated rates of violence at the hands of individual attackers and also from the police. This violence is not inherent to sex work involvement; rather, it occurs because social stigma and state discrimination render sex workers vulnerable to assault and abuse. The prevalence of violence against LGBTQ people and people in the sex trade illustrates the urgent need for prevention initiatives to end hate violence. In addition to crisis response, we must move toward broad proactive education and outreach to the public. In these efforts, NCAVP members and our allies struggle to build a world in which people like Jorge and Jaysen can live without fear of bias violence and assert and access their rights to safety and respect.

While NCAVP mourns the deaths of Jason "Jaysen" Mattison Jr. and Jorge Steven López Mercado we honor their lives and renew our commitment to ending hate-motivated violence.

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) supports local LGBTQ organizations in their work to end violence in all its forms against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer people and communities. www.ncavp.org.