



**November 20, 2009**

**AVP Joins in Transgender Day of Remembrance and New York City Vigil and Call for Action to Honor Jorge Steven López Mercado; AVP Mourns Victim in a Second Anti-LGBTQ Murder Reported this Week.**

[A statement from Sharon Stapel, Executive Director, New York City Anti-Violence Project](#)

Today the New York City Anti-Violence Project will observe the **11<sup>th</sup> Annual Transgender Day of Remembrance**, created to honor the memories of those killed because of anti-transgender bias and to raise awareness of the brutal violence that transgender people face every day. **Join us tonight from 6 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the LGBT Community Center, 208 West 13<sup>th</sup> Street (between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenues) in Manhattan** as we remember those we have lost and express our public commitment to ending anti-transgender violence.

Sunday night, the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP) will participate in a **vigil in memory of Jorge Steven López Mercado on Sunday, November 22, 2009, from 5- 8:30pm, to be held at Pier 45 at Christopher Street in Manhattan.** We ask our supporters to join us as we stand in solidarity with lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) Puerto Rican community members and anti-violence organizations, such as the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs, in expressing our outrage and grief at the brutal murder of 19-year-old aspiring fashion artist Jorge Steven López Mercado on November 14, 2009.

Jorge, a resident of Caguas, Puerto Rico, was brutally murdered and discovered on the side of a road in Cayey, Puerto Rico over this past weekend. He had been decapitated, dismembered, and partially burned. Juan Antonio Martinez Matos, 28, was arrested as a suspect on November 17, 2009 and has confessed to murdering Jorge. Matos has reportedly made a statement to law enforcement officials that he was cruising for women in the “red light” district of Caguas when he met Jorge. Jorge entered Matos’ car and went home with him. Matos has claimed that he thought Jorge was a woman and police in Puerto Rico state that Matos may use a “transgender panic” defense, arguing temporary insanity. AVP will honor Jorge’s memory at both events this weekend.

**AVP also mourns the loss of Jason “Jaysen” Mattison, Jr., victim of the second anti-LGBTQ murder this week.**

Anti-LGBTQ violence has not abated. In addition to Jorge's murder, this week we were saddened and angered to learn also of the murder of Jason "Jaysen" Mattison, Jr., an openly gay high school sophomore from Baltimore, Maryland, viciously killed on November 10, 2009. On November 13, Dante Parrish, 35, a "longtime friend of the family," confessed that he had raped and murdered Jaysen. AVP extends our deepest condolences to Jaysen's loved ones.

We at AVP know that this brutal violence against anti-LGBTQ people is all too common. In 2008, we saw the highest rates of anti-LGBTQ murders since 1999. This violence is unacceptable and must end now. The recently passed federal hate violence legislation, which now addresses anti-LGBTQ violence, creates responses to violence once it has occurred, but it does not end violence. To end violence, we must end the culture of hate and legalized discrimination against LGBTQ people in this country. We can do this through prevention and education initiatives, raising awareness about this violence and providing preventative services locally – something that local Anti-Violence Projects have been doing successfully throughout the country. But these local AVPs are severely under-funded and more than 50% of the country does not have a local AVP. The federal government must act to fully fund local AVPs in every state in this country and provide the resources necessary to not only respond to violence but to educate about and prevent this violence from occurring. AVP continues to work to achieve this goal and to raise awareness about this violence. Join us at tonight's Transgender Day of Remembrance and Sunday's vigil to help bring attention to and end this horrifying violence.

AVP knows that hate violence incidents such as this can affect any one of us—even if we are not the direct victims. We encourage anyone who has experienced or been affected by an assault or threats of violence to contact our 24-hour bilingual (English/Spanish) hotline at 212-714-1141 and speak with a trained counselor if you are seeking support. All services are free and confidential.

*\*\*\* The New York City Anti-Violence Project is dedicated to eliminating hate violence, sexual assault, stalking, and domestic violence in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and HIV-affected communities through counseling, advocacy, organizing, and public education.*