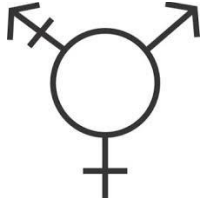




STATEMENT IN OBSERVANCE & SOLIDARITY



Lamia Beard, “...never feared living in her truth and standing up for herself.”

<http://www.alternet.org/news-amp-politics/murdered-trans-womans-family-celebrates-her-life.>”

It is disheartening that we start 2015 with the loss of yet another life to violence for “living in their truth”. What is known is that Lamia Beard, a Norfolk, VA resident died because she lived in a world where violence is often the first and only response to transgender and gender non-conforming people. Like our fallen sister we must begin to embrace and live in our truth. Only in living in our truth will we overcome this brand of violence which kills people because they are feared for being “different.”

The majority of us live our lives in a cocoon of collective and comfortable numbness. Numb to the everyday, systematic and sometimes arbitrary violence which continues to take the lives of people in our communities deemed “different” and who collectively possess the least power and influence in our society: black men and women; people of color; people who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer; women; people living with HIV; and so forth.

Those of us in the HIV community have borne witness to the brutal acts of violence against black men from and on behalf of the state because of the color of their skin (Mike Brown and Eric Garner to name a few); we have borne witness to the countless deaths of gay men to a so-called preventable disease - HIV; we have borne witness to women living with HIV lose their children in custody battles and then the right to have children in the future as a result of forced sterilization; we have borne witness to the loss of freedom of many men and women who were prosecuted and incarcerated because of their HIV diagnosis; and we have borne witness to violence leading to the death of women living with HIV because of their HIV diagnosis or just because of their gender (Cicely Bolden and other sisters).

Lamia Beard’s death is a reminder that “silence equals death.” The HIV community must continue to find ways of developing relationships with organizations such as the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs’ (NCAVP) and the Virginia Anti-Violence Project (VAVP) who strive to protect our human rights. Many of the 30 for 30 Campaign sister organizations who serve on its Steering Committee are doing just that - African Services Center; AIDS Alabama; AIDS Alliance for Children, Youth and Families; AIDS United; Bailey House, Christie’s Place; National Black Leadership Commission on AIDS; Positive Women’s Network - USA, SisterLove; The Women’s Collective; and WORLD – standing and acting in solidarity for Lamia Beard and all of those who stand a greater chance of losing their human rights, especially the “right to live” because they are deemed “different.” Join us.

30 for 30 Campaign is a coordinating body of HIV and reproductive health organizations from every region of the country working to ensure that the unique needs of women living with and affected by HIV, including transgender women, are addressed in all relevant HIV funding, programs, and policies. For more information on the 30 for 30 Campaign, visit www.facebook.com/30for30 or email us at 30for30Campaign@gmail.com.