



By Navya Menon, Diversity Unit Intern

Transgender Day of Remembrance honors the memory of transgender individuals who lost their lives to anti-transgender violence. This day was inspired by the life and tragic death of Rita Hester, a Black transgender woman murdered in her Boston apartment in 1998, a case that remains unsolved. Rita was a well-known poet, singer, and dancer in the Boston transgender community. Sadly, her death was initially misrepresented by the media, who misgendered her and used her deadname—a term referring to the name a transgender person was given at birth but no longer uses. Additionally, the investigation into her case lacked urgency. Rita's story has become a symbol of the ongoing struggle for transgender rights and the need for greater awareness and respect for transgender individuals.

Gwendolyn Ann Smith, a transgender writer and activist, created one of the first online transgender safe spaces and a project to honor victims of anti-transgender violence. Her efforts to raise awareness eventually led to the creation of the Transgender Day of Remembrance in 1999. Every year, Transgender Day of Remembrance honors transgendered victims of transphobic violence with a vigil. This day raises awareness about hate crimes against the transgender community and provides families a space to publicly mourn and remember their loved ones. The day is marked with vigils, discussion forums, poetry, art, movie screenings, and other activities honoring transgender representation. Transgender people deserve to live authentically and free from fear of harm. Transgender Day of Remembrance is a step toward a future where the transgender community feels safe and respected.