

Vera Institute of Justice

Criminal Justice Issues and Prisoners' Rights

<https://www.vera.org/blog/beyond-innocence/trans-and-gender-non-conforming-people-of-color-need-us-to-do-more-1>

Public Facing Advocacy Writing

K.C. Haggard, a transgender woman, was [stabbed to death](#) in Fresno, California in late July in front of multiple people who did nothing to help her. K.C.'s was the eleventh homicide of a transgender or gender non-confirming (TGNC) person reported in 2015 by the [National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs \(NCAVP\)](#). As of mid-September, that count has already reached 19 up 58 percent from the 12 reported in all of 2014.

In 2014, 80 percent of these victims were people of color, and 55 percent were transgender women of color. Too often, these homicides go unnoticed or misreported when the media mis-genders victims or does not use their preferred name. TGNC people like K.C. Haggard are being murdered in the streets, and not enough is being done to help them.

We at the New York City Anti-Violence Project hear stories from TGNC people of color every day about the transphobic and racial bias, discrimination, and violence they face from intimate partners, family, neighbors, and strangers. NCAVP found that transgender survivors were [twice as likely](#) as non-transgender people to experience physical intimate partner violence, [1.6 times as likely](#) to experience physical hate violence, and [more than six times as likely](#) to experience police violence. Almost half of TGNC people of color have been incarcerated and, while in prison, they face [severe physical and sexual violence](#).

In addition, TGNC people of color experience disproportionate rates of [poverty and homelessness](#) and discrimination in housing and employment that [remains legal in many states](#). Because of this, TGNC people need comprehensive services to support their emotional, physical, and financial health and safety in the aftermath of that violence. Yet we are not doing enough to provide this safety.

Most mainstream victim services agencies do not have TGNC-specific programming or culturally competent staff and most domestic violence shelters refuse to shelter trans women who are fleeing abusive partners. Many first responders, police, hospital workers, crisis interveners, profile, mis-gender, ignore, disrespect and, in some cases, abuse TGNC people, especially people of color. And because of past or present criminal legal system engagement, often due to mis-arrest as perpetrators in intimate partner violence incidents, identity-based police profiling, and being forced to turn to underground economies to survive, TGNC people often do not meet the criteria of the so-called innocent victim that [are required to access crime victim compensation benefits](#). This forces them to bear the costs of the violence they experience without support.

More can and must be done, from ensuring that all victims programs and compensation benefits are open to and affirming of TGNC people of color, ending [law enforcement profiling](#) of trans women as sex workers, and treating all people equally and with respect. Every one of us needs to call people by the names and pronouns they choose, stop using slurs, and stop asking intrusive and offensive questions. It's not enough to end violence against TGNC people, but it's a start. And it's what K.C. deserved and didn't get. It is time for everyone to step up and stand up for trans and gender non-conforming communities of color. What will you do?

The [Beyond Innocence](#) blog series explores the limitations posed by existing frameworks and points to ways forward that better uphold the values of equity, public safety, and human dignity.

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