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Sydney Bauer

# In the Southeast, heightened danger and few protections for trans people

*Half of the 28 known transgender victims of fatal violence this year have been killed in the South, according to the Human Rights Campaign.*



Jaida Peterson, a transgender woman, was found dead in a hotel room in Charlotte, N.C.<sup>1</sup>, on April 4, 2021

Before the coronavirus pandemic tore through the U.S., resulting in nearly 600,000 deaths and a slew of collateral damage<sup>2</sup>, transgender people across the Southeast<sup>3</sup> were participating in self-defense classes catered specifically to them. The courses, organized by LGBTQ advocacy group<sup>4</sup> *Campaign for Southern Equality*, had one goal: to teach trans people to protect themselves should they be the target of an attack.

The campaign saw the classes as a necessity, with trans Americans facing disproportionate levels of violence [...].

“When folks are being attacked and murdered, helping with a name change doesn’t really do much good if we can’t keep our people alive,” Ivy Hill, the community health program<sup>5</sup> director for the *Campaign for Southern Equality*, told *NBC News*. [...]

While the damage spawned by Covid-19 is slowing down, the violence faced by transgender Americans – particularly trans women of color in the South – appears to be accelerating.

<sup>1</sup> North Carolina

<sup>2</sup> a slew of collateral damage: (her) en masse følgeskadevirkninger

<sup>3</sup> the Southeast: de sydøstlige stater i USA

<sup>4</sup> advocacy group: interessegruppe

<sup>5</sup> community health program: lokalt folkesundhedsprojekt

15 This year is on track<sup>6</sup> to be the deadliest on record for transgender Americans, with at least 28 trans and gender-nonconforming<sup>7</sup> people fatally shot or violently killed so far, according to the *Human Rights Campaign*, which has been tracking trans deaths since 2013. [...]

20 The Southeast in general is a hostile region for the transgender community [...], according to Austin Johnson, an assistant professor of sociology at Ohio's Kenyon College, who studies the trans community. Trans people face high barriers to health care and housing in the region, and state legislatures<sup>8</sup> in recent years have put forward "persistent<sup>9</sup> attacks" against the community with bills<sup>10</sup> that seek to limit the everyday rights of trans people, he explained.

Add in the high rates of poverty in the region, along with religiosity that promotes a very conservative view of gender roles and sexuality, he said, and there is a combination of factors that contribute to the violence.

25 "I think those kinds of norms, all of those intersect with<sup>11</sup> the kind of economic deprivation<sup>12</sup>, educational deprivation, we have in the South, and so when you have all of this deprivation, in terms of the different institutions, it's going to affect every group," Johnson said. "When there are some groups that are more disadvantaged, it's going to affect them. So I think that's why we're seeing these really drastic rates of negative outcomes for LGBTQ people and trans people in particular in the South." [...]

30 Alabama, Louisiana and Mississippi – three Southeastern states – are also home to the highest homicide<sup>13</sup> rates in the country, further adding to the climate of violence that trans people face in everyday life. [...]

35 "I think for a lot of us, what people kind of miss is just how dangerous or scary it can be just to move through public space, which is something that other folks who are cisgender<sup>14</sup> generally don't even have to think about," Hill, who lives in South Carolina, said of being trans in the South. [...]

### House of Tulip

House of Tulip in New Orleans is renovating a multifamily home in hopes of creating a pilot program to house 10 transgender people facing housing insecurity. The group, according to its website, also plans to establish a "separate space that can serve as a community center" where transgender people have a safe space to visit, access resources<sup>15</sup> and get a hot meal or shower.

40 House of Tulip said 1 of every 3 trans people in Louisiana faces homelessness, emphasizing the need for immediate housing as well as investment to help trans people find long-term housing arrangements.

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<sup>6</sup> *on track*: på vej til

<sup>7</sup> som ikke vedkender sig et køn

<sup>8</sup> lovgivende forsamlinger

<sup>9</sup> gentagne

<sup>10</sup> lovforslag

<sup>11</sup> *intersect with*: (her) har indflydelse på

<sup>12</sup> (her) afsavn

<sup>13</sup> mord

<sup>14</sup> betegnelse for personer, hvis kønsidentitet matcher deres biologiske køn

<sup>15</sup> *access resources*: (her) har adgang til at tale med folk, der kan hjælpe dem



*Trans United Leading Intersectional Progress, or TULIP, is a nonprofit collective creating housing solutions for trans and gender-nonconforming people in Louisiana.*

Johnson said local grassroots<sup>16</sup> groups in the Southeast have come to realize in the absence of institutional help, they have to rely on each other for survival.

- 45 “When you have that kind of community building, it’s empowering<sup>17</sup>, and people are not going to just roll over and expect this treatment that they’re getting,” Johnson said. “Also, they’re going to honor those who they’ve lost in their community, because they have people to rely on.”

(2021)

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<sup>16</sup> politiske aktivister

<sup>17</sup> giver styrke