February 20, 2015

NCAVP learns of the intimate partner violence homicide of Omar Mendez in Lawrence, Massachusetts

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP) has learned of the intimate partner violence homicide of Omar Mendez in Lawrence, Massachusetts. According to local media, Miguel Rivera, 50, is accused of fatally stabbing his boyfriend, Omar Mendez, 39, at their apartment. Rivera was also injured during the altercation.

This is the seventh intimate partner, family, or stalking related homicide of an LGBTQ person that NCAVP has responded to in 2015. NCAVP has responded to 13 LGBTQ homicides in 2015. To the best of our knowledge, seven of the incidents have been intimate partner, family or stalking violence-related and six have been hate violence-related. However, as with all incidents, as we get more information we may find that the homicides has different motivations than originally reported.

“In 2015 we are seeing an alarming number of intimate partner violence related homicides of LGBTQ people,” said Chai Jindasurat, Co-Director of Community Organizing and Public Advocacy at the New York City Anti Violence Project. “We need more education, services, and prevention programs that seek to end intimate partner violence in LGBTQ and HIV-affected communities.”

In NCAVP’s report Intimate Partner Violence in Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer, and HIV Affected Communities in 2013, released on October 15, 2014, there were 21 IPV homicides in 2012 and 2013. In 2013, 76% of victims were gay men. Both years represent the highest number of homicides ever recorded to NCAVP. This is up from 19 IPV homicides in 2011 and more than three times the 6 documented homicides in 2010. Additionally, according to the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, lesbians, gay men and bisexual people experience intimate partner violence at the same or higher rates as non-LGB people.

NCAVP is working with local member organizations The Network/La Red and Fenway Health’s Violence Recovery Program to support the local communities affected by this violence.

“Our hearts go out to the friends and families of the victim. It’s tragic to think that if additional support was available, this may have been prevented. Many LGBTQ people experiencing abuse do not know that resources are available to them and may struggle to access support,” said Hales Burton, a counselor at Fenway Health’s Violence Recovery Program.

“The Network/La Red is saddened to hear of the death of Omar Mendez, who was fatally stabbed by his boyfriend,” said Cassie Luna, Technical Assistance Coordinator at The Network/La Red. “While we do not yet have all the details of what happened, we can say for sure this is yet another disturbing instance of domestic violence. There is a myth that domestic violence doesn't happen in LGBT relationships, but the truth is domestic violence happens regardless of gender identity, sexuality, race, class, or socioeconomic status. We need to debunk this myth and bring light to domestic violence as an issue that matters to everyone, because it is happening in our own communities – it is happening in every community.”
NCAVP is a resource for anyone who experiences violence. For more information, or to locate an anti-violence program in your area, please contact us at info@ncavp.org or visit us online. Join NCAVP in our efforts to prevent and respond to LGBTQ and HIV-affected violence. To learn more about our national advocacy and receive technical assistance or support, contact us at info@ncavp.org.

If you are a member of the media, please contact:
Chai Jindasurat, New York City Anti-Violence Project: cjindasurat@avp.org or 212-714-1184
Cassie Luna, The Network/La Red: strategize@tnlr.org or 617-695-0877
Chris Viveiros, Fenway Health: CViveiros@fenwayhealth.org or 617-927-6342

NCAVP works to prevent, respond to, and end all forms of violence against and within lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer (LGBTQ) and HIV-affected communities. NCAVP is a national coalition of local member programs and affiliate organizations who create systemic and social change. NCAVP is a program of the New York City Anti-Violence Project.

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