March 4th, 2015

**AVP responds to the indictment in the homicide of Islan Nettles**

*AVP learned late yesterday of the indictment of James Dixon in the homicide of Islan Nettles. AVP is closed this week for an All Staff Retreat and is not engaging in any external communications. However, we feel it is necessary to make an exception and send this community alert because of the impact that Islan Nettles’ death has had within New York City’s LGBTQ communities, and particularly for transgender women of color.*

Yesterday the Manhattan District Attorney's Office indicted James Dixon, age 24, in the homicide of Islan Nettles, who died from injuries sustained on August 17, 2013 after being punched and shoved by men shouting transphobic slurs. According to the District Attorney’s Office, Dixon was indicted by a Grand Jury on charges of Manslaughter in the First Degree, Manslaughter in the Second Degree and Assault in the First Degree. At this time, the District Attorney’s Office has not charged these crimes as hate crimes. According to a New York Times article, investigators were not able to determine what was said before Ms. Nettles was attacked, which may make it difficult to prove the anti-transgender motive necessary for a hate crime charge.

We at AVP know that community members, friends and family of Islan Nettles believe that her homicide was hate and bias motivated. We also know that, for too long, transgender women of color have felt, at best, invisible to and, at worst, targeted and victimized by law enforcement and leaders in New York City. We know that when crimes are charged as a hate crime, this designation can help to acknowledge the specific impact that violence has on communities and send a message that the violence will not be tolerated.

However, AVP also knows that increased penalties in hate crimes laws often harms those most likely to be criminalized, such as LGBTQ people, people of color and LGBTQ people of color. Criminal sanctions alone will not prevent anti-transgender violence from occurring. We can -- and we must -- act to address all of the inequalities and barriers that transgender women of color face in New York City. We cannot afford to lose another person to this senseless violence.

We must all do more to make sure that transgender lives are valued and transgender people are safe in New York City. AVP calls on all public officials and community leaders in New York City to acknowledge and denounce the epidemic rates of violence that transgender women of color face and to understand and respond to the daily acts of transphobic violence that transgender women of color experience. Beyond criminal remedies, we must address all of the impacts that violence and discrimination have on transgender women of color and invest in their lives and their leadership. This means increasing employment opportunities, increasing safe
and stable housing and decreasing profiling, targeting and victimization by law enforcement and other systems designed to help survivors of violence.

Violence against transgender people, and particularly transgender women of color, occurs at epidemic levels. In 2015, six transgender women of color have been killed in the first six weeks of the year. In NCAVP’s 2013 National Hate Violence Report, the coalition documented 18 anti-LGBTQ homicides in 2013. Of those homicide victims, almost 90% were people of color. Almost three-quarters (72%) of homicide victims were transgender women, and more than two-thirds (67%) were transgender women of color. In NCAVP’s 2013 National Intimate Partner Violence Report, NCAVP found that transgender survivors were more likely to experience physical violence, discrimination, and intimate partner violence in public spaces.

It is time to recognize the severity of this violence and its impact on those still living. It’s time to act on behalf of transgender women of color in New York City. It’s time to listen to their voices, respect their leadership and value their lives.

**AVP will resume community organizing and public response, in collaboration with our community partners, on Monday March 9th, following this week’s All Staff Retreat. AVP’s 24 hour, bilingual (English/Spanish) hotline - 212.714.1141 - and online reporting form are always available to anyone who has witnessed or experience violence or who need to speak to a counselor.**