

San Francisco, Nov. 13, 2009: As Rabbi Elliot Kukla and Reuben Zellman often teach¹, the broad terms of "transgender" and "trans" can include anyone who knows themselves to be a gender that is different than the gender they were assigned at birth. They also teach us that transphobia affects all parts of life including our Jewish community life². Many trans and gender-nonconforming individuals feel unwelcome in synagogues and other Jewish institutions, and cannot access spiritual care, social support, and Jewish community life.

Kol Tzedek, a San Francisco Bay Area coalition of Jewish organizations working as a catalyst for justice and LGBT rights, is committed to transforming our Bay Area Jewish community into one that is fully inclusive and affirming of all people.

The 11th Annual Transgender Day of Remembrance is Friday, November 20, 2009. Kol Tzedek suggests that we honor this somber day as a Jewish community in an outreach effort to combat transphobia. Our goal is to create an affirming Jewish community that respects and genuinely welcomes trans and gender non-conforming individuals.

Transgender Day of Remembrance began in 1999 as a San Francisco candlelight vigil in response to the 1998 murder of Rita Hester and to memorialize those who were killed due to transphobia, anti-transgender hatred or prejudice, and is now honored each November 20th throughout the world. An average of 19 reported murders based on transgender or gender variant identity occurred across North America each month in 2009³. Whether you are an ally, lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, intersex, questioning your gender identity or gender expression or not, this is a day we need to honor as a Jewish community. Transgender Day of Remembrance provides our Jewish community a chance to step forward and memorialize those that are not with us because of violence that exists.

Whether at Shabbat services in congregations, in local non-religious gatherings and at family Shabbat tables across the Bay Area, this Day of Remembrance gives everyone a chance to step forward as an advocate. Transgender Day of Remembrance gives everyone a chance to mourn, honor and raise public awareness of hate crimes against transgender people.

*The Torah states in Genesis 1:27 that we are all created in B'tzelem Elohim or in the image of G~d or the divine. This is a simple and profound idea that should guide our interactions with all people. We do not know the image of the divine except as it is reflected in the different types of people we encounter in the world and in our community. If we can remember that each of us, no matter how different, is created in B'tzelem Elohim, this idea can lead us to find the connection we have with one another and help create truly inclusive communities...**

¹ Adapted from Rabbi Elliot Kukla & Reuben Zellman's 2007 publication, *Making Your Community More Transgender-Friendly: Guidelines for Individuals & Congregations*

http://www.jewishmosaic.org/resources/show_resource/168?resource_order=keyword

* * Adapted from Dr. Andrea Jacobs writing for Keshet, a national grassroots organization out of Boston working for the full inclusion of GLBT Jews in Jewish life www.keshetonline.org

² http://www.advocate.com/Society/Transgendered/Trans_Jews_A_Transgender_Professor_Takes_on_Yeshiva/

³ According to the Remembering Our Dead Project http://www.transgenderdor.org/?page_id=192

Committed to continuing the lifelong core Jewish value and work of *tikkun olam* or repairing the world, Kol Tzedek members suggest that Bay Area Jewish leaders, educators, families and congregations incorporate the following resources to honor the 11th Annual day of Transgender Day of Remembrance on Friday, November 20, 2009:

- **Download**⁴ tips on how to honor Transgender Day of Remembrance with your congregation, family and friends
- **Add**⁵ a memorial reading into your Shabbat service
- **Incorporate**⁶ a prayer written by Reuben Zellman for Transgender Day of Remembrance into your Shabbat Service
- **Distribute**⁷ the brochure written by Rabbi Elliot Kukla & Reuben Zellman, *Making Your Community More Transgender-Friendly*
- **Read**⁸ the names out loud with Congregation Sha'ar Zahav's Annual Transgender Remembrance Shabbat
- **Feel**⁹ inspired by reading a D'rash honoring Transgender Day of Remembrance
- **Attend**¹⁰ the Tri-City Health Center's Annual gathering in Oakland at Preservation Park
- **Involve**¹¹ yourself in the Trans Inclusion Project, a one-year volunteer leadership commitment led by Kol Tzedek.

Kol Tzedek¹² has two specific focus areas that drive our agenda: marriage¹³ equality & inclusion of trans & gender nonconforming people in the Jewish community. The following leaders, affiliated with four San Francisco Bay Area Jewish organizations focused on LGBT rights, are the members of Kol Tzedek:

- **Rachel Biale**, Progressive Jewish Alliance
- **Noach Dzmura**, Jewish Mosaic: The National Center for Sexual & Gender Diversity
- **Karen Erlichman**, Jewish Mosaic: The National Center for Sexual & Gender Diversity
- **Lisa Finkelstein**, LGBT Alliance of the Jewish Community Federation
- **Rebecca Weiner**, Congregation Sha'ar Zahav

⁴ <http://www.transgenderdor.org/wp-content/uploads/2008/08/tips-on-how-to-hold-a-successful-tdor.pdf>

⁵ http://www.transgenderdor.org/?page_id=555

⁶ http://www.jewishmosaic.org/resources/show_resource/167?resource_order=keyword

⁷ http://www.jewishmosaic.org/resources/show_resource/168?resource_order=keyword

⁸ <http://www.shaarzahav.org/node/1852>

⁹ http://www.jewishmosaic.org/resources/show_resource/232?resource_order=keyword

¹⁰ <http://www.transgenderdor.org>

¹¹ lgbt@sfjcf.org

¹² If you are interested learning about our marriage equality work or our 2008 Transgender Inclusion Report, please visit <http://www.koltzedek.info>

¹³ To join the fight for full equal rights for all of us, sign up with our Marriage Equality partner, California Faith for Equality <http://cafaithforequality.org/>.