

Demanding True Justice in the Face of Violence: Remembering Ruby Ordeñana



Hundreds gathered at 24th and Mission on March 23 for a community vigil for Ruby Ordeñana. Photo: Rick Gerharter ©

It is unfortunate that it often takes a tragic event to bring communities closer together. That has been the case for LGBTQ communities in San Francisco after learning of Ruby Ordeñana's murder this past March. Ruby was a twenty-seven-year-old Nicaraguan transgender woman whose body was found strangled and lacerated on March 16, 2007 on the corner of Cesar Chavez and Indiana Streets in the Mission District.

Ruby left her native Nicaragua in search of a place she could call home. She wanted to be able to live a life free of violence and stigma where she could express herself without fear for her safety. At twenty-seven-years-old, she had created her own family from various communities in the Bay Area. At a memorial on Friday, May 11, those who knew her best spoke of her open spirit, vibrant energy, and desire to improve her life against many odds.

Sadly, Ruby's premature death is not unique. Ruby was the fourth transgender woman of color murdered that Community United Against Violence (CUAV) had documented in the eight months leading up to her murder. The other victims include Alfred/Ariana Dibble, Daxi Arredondo, and Thalia Sandoval. We know that there are more, here and in other communities. Most recently, we learned of the murder of twenty-year-old, African American transgender woman, Erica Keel, from North Philadelphia and the struggles around her case with the criminal (in)justice system there.

Because of systemic discrimination in their daily attempts to access safe housing, health care, employment, and education, transgender women of color—as well as transgender and queer people of color, immigrants, and low-income people more broadly—are disproportionately poor, homeless, criminalized and imprisoned. As we have seen in our twenty eight years of challenging hate violence and domestic violence, these communities are the targets of widespread institutional and interpersonal abuse at the hands of police officers, prison guards,

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Speaking Out About Queer Lives: Volunteer Spotlight on Carolina Morales and Steve Ibarra

As CUAV's longest-standing program, the Speakers Bureau was founded in the late 1970s to provide young people with an opportunity to learn about the diversity of queer lives; now, over three decades later, members of the Bureau speak to over 3,500 students, young people, and service providers every year! Our speakers are LGBTIQQ people who volunteer their time to raise awareness about issues our communities face in an effort to challenge the deep heterosexism and transphobia in our culture.

Two of our busiest volunteers are Carolina Morales and Steve Ibarra. Carolina has been a speaker since January 2005, and Steve completed the Speakers Bureau training in January 2007. They actually met before they became speakers for CUAV, at City College of San Francisco where they both helped to found CCSF's first Queer Resources Center.



Born and raised in Caracas, Venezuela, Carolina has lived in San Francisco for six years. She served as president of CCSF's Queer Alliance, during which time she participated on a panel on heterosexism with other volunteer speakers from CUAV. Carolina thought the speakers were great and decided to become a volunteer at CUAV as well. "Speaking for students is very rewarding," Carolina says.

She has done over thirty presentations since she began speaking three years ago and has had quite a few memorable experiences talking with students: "Recently, a young woman asked me, 'so it's normal to be bisexual?' I said 'yes,' and she looked very relieved!" she laughed. "I thought it was sweet that she saw me as the 'authority' on normality!"

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Letter from the Executive Director

Dear Friends,

What would it take to create true safety and justice for all of us? This may seem like an “unanswerable” question, but it is the central question underlying CUAV’s work. As I near my one-year anniversary with this organization, I am thrilled to be a part of exploring this question together.

CUAV is truly a community-based organization. It is a vehicle for us to take care of ourselves, to support those of us who need it, and to collectively work towards the vision of a better world, to create the communities and relationships that we need to thrive.

The importance of this affirmative vision is especially clear when we respond to crisis, as CUAV so often does. Violence erupts and we work to support the survivors and re-establish safety. This work is essential and profound, and it also raises many difficult questions: how can we prevent this from happening again and again? How can we end the cycles of discrimination, isolation, and pain that lead to this violence?

There is no simple answer to these questions. Yet, I believe it is possible. It will take creativity and love, strength and courage, and a shared dedication to heal the conditions in our communities that give rise to violence of all kinds.

CUAV’s very existence expresses this hope for our lives, our communities, and our relationships. Over the last 28 years, thousands of people have been a part of CUAV and helped us take tremendous steps towards safety for all of us. When we take the time to heal, as CUAV helps us to do, we are claiming the power to redefine what safety and justice mean. And when we insist that creating true safety is important for all of us, we are claiming the power to create real connection through the pain and trauma that separate us and pit us against one another.

In the face of immense odds, LGBTQ communities have developed vibrant ways to heal from violence and change the world around us. We make change when we share our struggles and joys with others, as CUAV Speaker’s Bureau volunteers do with thousands of students every year. We make change when we prioritize healing in our lives, and ask for help when we need it. Change can come when we lobby policy makers, as CUAV community members did last year to help pass the Gwen Araujo Justice for Victims Act in California and prohibit the use of “panic” defenses to justify violence. We make change when we contribute our resources towards a hopeful vision: time, personal networks, skills, financial support, and most importantly, passion and dedication to care for our communities.

Please consider CUAV one of your vehicles for creating change, and support real healing for our communities. The actions we take now will ripple beyond our own lives. Together we can create the world we long for.

Thank you for being a part of this vision,



Jovida Guevara-Ross



Assemblymember Mark Leno presents CUAV Executive Director, Jovida Guevara-Ross, with a state proclamation.

THANK YOU!

CUAV would like to thank the following foundations who continue to generously support our work: Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights, Blue Shield Foundation, Bothin Foundation, Castro Lions Club, Castro Street Fair, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Horizons Foundation, San Francisco Foundation, Silva Watson Moonwalk Fund, Tides Foundation, and the van Löben Sels/Rembe Rock Foundation.

We would also like to thank those local businesses that have contributed to CUAV’s trainings and support services: Buffalo Whole Foods, Cala Foods, Capay Organic, Dalano IGA, Goat Hill Pizza, Kabuki Springs and Spa, La Mediterranee, Moki’s Sushi and Pacific Grill, Papalote, Regalito Rosticeria, Spike’s Coffees and Teas, and Weird Fish.

Lastly, we would like to thank all of our volunteers—108 in the past year!—for your invaluable hard work and dedication. You play a vital role in keeping CUAV running and in helping to end violence in our communities!

CUAV’s 28th anniversary celebration, **Champions for Change**, was held on March 22 and was a huge success! We honored our allies in the movement against violence, including Asian Women’s Shelter; Beverly Upton, Executive Director of the San Francisco Domestic Violence Consortium; and SF District Attorney, Kamala Harris. The night’s fabulous entertainers included the del Castro ensemble of the SF Gay Men’s Chorus; singer/songwriter Levi Kreis; and renowned comedian Marga Gomez. It was a wonderful evening to connect with friends, old and new.



Champions for Change attendees enjoy a fabulous evening.
Photos: Randal Alan Smith.

Sponsors for our annual celebration included: AAA of Northern California, Nevada, and Utah; AARP; Betty’s List; Curve Magazine; Gay.com Local Scene; Lil Somthin Somthin Catering; Out & Equal Workplace Advocates; Partners Ending Domestic Abuse; Queers Mobilized Against Tobacco Sponsorship; Rainbow Grocery; Steamworks; and Whole Foods. Individual sponsors included Assemblymember Mark Leno, Alvin Baum, Carmela & John D’Elia, and Marta Drury & Kerry Lobel.

Building Healthy Relationships: Meet the Love and Justice Interns

The Love and Justice Program is a relationship violence and abuse outreach and education project by and for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning youth of color 25 and under, and their allies.

In Love and Justice's 2005 Relationship Violence needs assessment survey, 46% of youth reported feeling abused in their relationship. Our interns work to empower youth to become leaders and build healthy relationships in their lives and communities.



Hi :) My name is **Aya Hashimoto**, I am twenty-four-years-old. I was born and raised in Japan 'til I was 18, and I have been in SF since 2002. I studied Biology at SFSU, and I have been involved with many community based organizations to promote public health, social justice, and equality in society, especially for youth. Working with people to assist them to have a safer, healthier and happier life has always been my passion, and I am very happy to be a CUAV team member!

Hello everyone, my name is **Nicholas** (Greek for victory of people) **Vontex** (some random German textile company) **Chin** (Chinese for elegant, or money, or ferry. I like elegant.) I was born in Stuttgart, Germany on August 30th of 1988. I currently call Richmond my home, sadly so does the Chevron oil refinery (Booooooo.) I identify as a Socialist Feminist Queer Multi-ethnic (Arawak, Chinese, French, Polish, African via Jamaica.) School is awesome at San Francisco State University. I am majoring in Speech and Communication Studies with an emphasis in political rhetoric and a minor in Human Sexuality. I'm overwhelmed with joy that I am able to be apart of L+J at CUAV!



An altar set up at CUAV's annual event on March 22 to remember transgender women who have been murdered over the past year. Photo: Randal Alan Smith

employers, service providers, partners and community members. Facing racism, misogyny, transphobia, and xenophobia all at once, transgender women of color are vulnerable to some of the most intense forms of brutality our society has to offer.

Since Ruby's death, CUAV has worked in partnership with Amor Sin Fronteras, Bay Positives, EL-LA, Hermanos de Luna y Sol, Instituto Familiar de la Raza, Latino Pride, Mission Neighborhood Health Center, SF LGBT Center, Transgender Law Center, friends of Ruby's, and community members to honor her through a vigil on March 23, 2007 and a community memorial. In an overwhelming response, transgender communities, immigrant communities, and communities of color came together to send a clear message that the violence must stop, and that every one of us is valuable. We must continue to send this message.

Ruby is not forgotten, nor are any of the transgender people we have lost. We know that this violence is not about one individual "victim" or "perpetrator," but about a whole society that says certain people are valuable, and that others are disposable. In our struggles to heal from violence and prevent it in the future, we must demand that more resources be allocated towards programs and resources that help our communities to survive and thrive. We are all responsible for violence, and must work to change society as a whole.

In the wake of this tragedy, we are asking for real justice for our communities. Not the kind of "justice" that is about retribution or punishment, but the kind of justice in which every human being can live a whole and healthy life without fear for their safety or wellbeing. Real justice demands that we look to the core of our culture and begin the long process of healing and transforming. In these trying times, real justice means imagining and building a better world together.

NAME OUR NEWSLETTER!

Do you have the perfect name that represents CUAV's work and the movement to build safe, healthy, and compassionate communities free from violence?

Email tamara@cuav.org with your ideas!

Supporting LGBTQ Survivors of Domestic Violence: Reflections from Shawna Virago

Since the early 1980s, CUAV has been working with LGBTQ survivors of domestic and intimate partner violence in their struggles to find safety and healing. I have worked in our Domestic Violence Survivors Program since 1997 and have been its director since 2001. During that time, we have met with hundreds of survivors and seen the devastating effects that intimate partner violence has on so many queer people's lives. We have also seen how the lack of LGBTQ-specific domestic violence services negatively impacts our communities; without counselors who can understand how transphobic and homophobic stigma, violence, and bias shape our lives, it can be incredibly difficult to get the services we need to respond to and heal from abusive relationships.

CUAV is one of the few organizations in the country working specifically with LGBTQ domestic violence survivors. Each year our two advocates assist anywhere between fifty to seventy-five in-person clients per year, and our 24-hour crisis line fields approximately four hundred domestic violence-related calls. We provide clients with emergency shelter through hotel vouchers, restraining order assistance, safety planning, and emotional support.

Although many clients come here seeking immediate strategies for dealing with abusive partners and relationships, the majority of our work is centered around longer-term emotional support and healing. At its most basic level, this includes validating the complexity of people's lives: their relationships, their gender identity, sexual orientation, and other identities, and the struggles they face. We work with them to develop their own safety plan, to articulate and tap into their support network (i.e. friends, family, community, etc.) and to figure out the safest and most useful way for them to work with CUAV.

In recent years, we have increasingly emphasized this aspect of our work, exploring strategies for building safer relationships and looking more holistically at people's lives and patterns of relationship formation, from family of origin to current romantic and sexual relationships. Drawing on a significant body of research that examines the impact of early child-parent attachment on the brain, we have seen that when dealing with an abusive relationship, it can be vital for all parties to look more broadly at patterns of violence and relationship formation that are replicated throughout our lives. This knowledge can be helpful as we strive to be more conscious about how we choose partners and form intimate relationships.

As we have seen, domestic violence does not happen in a vacuum, but rather in the context of a range of emotional, psychological, and cultural factors. At CUAV, we strive to support clients in a holistic fashion that recognizes and celebrates their strength and complexity. Along with our Domestic Violence Outreach and Education Program, we are working to bring our strategies for supporting LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner violence to the broader anti-domestic violence movement. This is difficult and long-term work, but also incredibly inspiring, as we work to heal ourselves and our communities, and form healthy, nurturing relationships.

The most recent class of crisis line training graduates celebrate their hard work and plan to begin staffing the line. CUAV receives over 1,200 calls per year, many of which pertain to domestic violence issues. Photo: Liu Hoi-Man



Speaking Out About Queer Lives *continued from page 1*

Also a former president of CCSF's Queer Alliance, Steve loves speaking in classrooms as well. A native San Franciscan, he attended school at Sanchez Elementary, Everett Middle School, and both Mission and Woodrow Wilson High Schools. Like many of us, Steve experienced a lot of fear of being outed when he was growing up, he says, "Because it wasn't safe to be gay at school." Steve enjoys taking challenging questions from students. "They really respond to your coming-out story," he says. He recounts his frustration about when his mom outed him to his family. "She actually did me a huge favor!" he smiles. Steve recently helped fellow CUAV speaker Omar Morales form a softball team with the SF Gay Softball League. Sponsored by local bar Jet, the "Jetsetters" play most every Sunday. "It's so much fun—and we're great!"

Both Carolina and Steve volunteer for a variety of groups, in addition to CUAV. Steve volunteers for Adult AIDS Clinical Trials and Project SAFE at CCSF, where he also works as a Program Administrator. Carolina makes time for California AIDS Hotline and SF AIDS Foundation, and has recently been hired at CUAV as a Bilingual Domestic Violence Advocate. She will also be helping out with the Love & Justice Project, CUAV's youth program. "Giving time to folks in the community is important," Carolina says, "and participating with CUAV is a great way to be part of the community and show that you care."

Our volunteers—whether on the Speakers Bureau, our 24-hour crisis line, or helping out around the office—play a vital role in CUAV's work and in helping to end violence against and within LGBTIQ communities in San Francisco. Thank you Carolina, Steve, and all of our volunteers for your fierce commitment and inspiring energy!

Spotlight on CUAV

CUAV and NCAVP Release 2006 Hate Violence Report

CUAV released our local report of anti-LGBTQQ incidents in 2006 on May 22nd, following the release of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs' (NCAVP) national report on May 7th. CUAV documented 285 incidents in the San Francisco Bay Area in 2006, marking an 11% decrease from 322 incidents in 2005. Despite this decrease, we also documented dramatic increases in incidents involving transgender bias, HIV/AIDS related bias, victims who received hospitalization or in-patient care, and the number of incidents that resulted in death.

The most alarming increase is the number of murders and/or violent deaths of transgender women of color. Documented murders of LGBTQQ people doubled from two cases in 2005 to four cases in 2006 from two to four cases. Three of the five violent deaths documented in 2006 were people who identified as people of color within the transgender/gender variant spectrum, with two who identified as Latina and a third who identified as Latina and African American. In the wake of the brutal murder of a twenty-seven-year-old Nicaraguan transgender woman, Ruby Ordeñana, this March, it is clear that violence against LGBTQQ people, and particularly transgender women of color, is a daily and fatal reality for many members of our communities.



New Statewide Partnership to Improve Services for LGBTQ Domestic Violence Survivors

There is growing momentum nationally to address violence that occurs in lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer relationships. After years of advocacy by organizations like CUAV, an increasing number of domestic violence agencies are grappling with the question, "How can we meet the needs of LGBTQ domestic violence survivors?" To help California's 94 state-funded domestic violence agencies and shelters answer this question, the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (CPEDV) in partnership with CUAV and the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center, has implemented the LGBTQ Domestic Violence Training and Technical Assistance Project.

With funding from the California Department of Health Services, we are taking our expertise in this issue statewide. This three year training project represents an unprecedented opportunity to address the needs of LGBTQ victims and survivors of domestic violence throughout our state. After the initial phase of pilot trainings, we will be providing in-depth assessments and technical assistance to agencies looking to provide culturally competent violence response and prevention services. Our Domestic Violence Outreach and Education Director, Pablo Espinoza, is spearheading CUAV's involvement with this exciting project.

Looking Ahead: Report Back from Strategic Planning



Staff and board members gather outside of the Women's Building during our strategic planning retreat. Photo: Leigh Crow

On May 4-5, CUAV staff and board—both new and veteran—came together at the Women's Building for our annual strategic planning retreat. Under the expert facilitation of noted leader and consultant Akaya Winwood, we engaged in an exciting two days of visioning, dreaming, and strategizing. One highlight was collectively developing a timeline of CUAV's twenty eight years of activity alongside our own personal histories and landmark events in the world.

After gaining a sense of our history, we created a vision together of the world we are trying to build—a world based on mutuality, compassion, and abundance, in which healing and collectivity are nourished. Then we considered how we might structure the next three years of our work to help us begin realizing this vision. It was also a great opportunity to welcome our newest board members—Fresh! White and Liz Haas—who, along with the rest of the board, bring a wealth of expertise and passion to CUAV's work.

Recent Achievements

- * Helped pass **AB2051** in 2006, which created a fund for same-sex domestic violence education and services in California
- * Helped pass the **Gwen Araujo Justice for Victims Act** in 2006, which will instruct jurors to discount gay or trans "panic" defenses
- * Served on the leadership council and planning workgroup for **The City of San Francisco's Comprehensive Violence Prevention Plan**; the plan will be the first city sponsored violence-prevention plan in

- the country to explicitly incorporate LGBTQ safety concerns.
- * Served on the **SFUSD Family Diversity Task Force** to recommend appropriate LGBTQ family diversity curriculum to the school district
- * Collaborated with the San Francisco Police Department to ensure **ongoing training and oversight** around anti-LGBT misconduct and abuse

Upcoming Events

CUAV & Chinese for Affirmative Action Present a Screening of

"In God's House: Asian American Lesbian and Gay Families in the Church"
Friday, June 1, 6:30-8:30pm
Chinese for Affirmative Action,
17 Walter U. Lum Place, SF
FREE, RSVP to eleung@clgs.org

3rd Annual Queer Women of Color Film Festival

Co-Presenting *"Compassionate Outbursts:
Documentary Showcase"*
Sunday, June 10, 3pm
Brava Theatre, 2781 24th Street, SF
FREE

Fresh Meat Productions

CUAV Co-Sponsoring 6th Annual Transgender & Queer Performance Festival
June 14-15, 8pm, June 16th, 7pm
ODC Theater, 3153 17th Street, SF
Tickets \$15, <http://www.ticketweb.com>
or by calling (415) 863-9834

Frameline 31: San Francisco International LGBT Film Festival

Co-Presenting *"Trained in the Ways of Men"*
Saturday, June 16, 4:15pm
Castro Theatre, 429 Castro Street, SF
Tickets \$7 members, \$8 general,
<http://www.frameline.org>

LGBTQ Pride Festival

Come visit CUAV's wine booth!
Saturday, June 23 and Sunday, June 24
Golden Gate Ave. Between Larkin and Hyde

Fabulous Fashion in Film Opening Night Event

Bad Boys of Runway: An Evening of High Junks & High Fashion Benefiting CUAV
Friday July 27th, 7:30pm
Castro Theatre, 429 Castro Street, SF
Tickets: (415) 863-0611/hostess2@earthlink.net

Big Gay Frat House Presents "Girl Drink Drunk"

A Summer Party Benefiting CUAV
630 Castro Street, SF
Saturday, August 4th, doors at 7pm (21+)
Tickets \$20 advance, \$25 door,
<http://www.frantix.net>

For more information please visit our website, www.cuav.org, or email info@cuav.org

Founded in 1979, CUAV is the nation's first LGBTQ anti-violence organization. Our mission is to prevent and respond to violence against and within our diverse LGBTQ communities. We accomplish this through peer-based counseling, direct assistance, education and outreach, grassroots organizing, and policy advocacy.

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Help Us Meet the Hormel Challenge: Support CUAV Today!

Ambassador James Hormel has issued CUAV a challenge: Jim will donate \$5,000 if we can raise \$10,000 in increased donations of \$100. This means that if you donate \$100 or more than you have in prior years (including if you have never donated), Jim will match your gift by half! Help us meet this exciting challenge, and sustain CUAV's critical community services!

DONATE ONLINE at www.cuav.org or **mail us a donation** in the envelope included: your contribution will help to end violence against and within LGBTQ communities!



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