

CUAV NEWSLETTER

community united against violence

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Surviving and Thriving: Transgender Communities Say “We Are Not Disposable!”

It is well known to many that transgender people, particularly low-income transgender people of color, face multiple forms of violence in their daily lives. From family members and loved ones, to teachers and classmates, to service providers and police officers, to prison guards and border patrols, to strangers on the street, it is not easy transgressing social rules around gender — sadly, it is often fatal. Less well known are the ways in which transgender and gender non-conforming people resist these multiple forms of violence, heal from them, and create powerful ways to stay safe and whole.

On Friday, March 21, San Francisco’s diverse transgender, gender non-conforming and allied communities gathered to demand an end to the violence, discrimination, and abuse that trans communities face during a public action at 24th Street Mission BART Plaza. Over 200 people came out to honor the memory of Ruby Ordeñana, a Nicaraguan-born transgender woman who was found murdered in the Mission one year prior. The powerful presence of so many community members gave voice to the rage, the hurt, and the survival that is everyday living in the face of so many obstacles.

We heard from local advocates, friends and family members of murdered transgender people as well as survivors of violence, and activists. All urged us to address the root causes of violence that transgender communities, particularly low-income transgender women of color, face. Representatives of Senator Carole Migden and Assemblymember Mark Leno also spoke out to pledge their support. A blessing, dance, and poetry helped to pay homage to lives lost and dreams cut short.



“We came together to create awareness, mourn, demand justice, and never forget Ruby Ordeñana or any of our sisters and brothers who we have lost!” says Alexandra Byerly, Program Coordinator for the El/La Transgender Latina HIV Prevention Program, an organization where Ruby accessed support and community.

The action was sponsored by a coalition of local organizations and individuals that have worked together since Ruby’s tragic death last March, including CUAV, El/La, Hermanos de Luna y Sol, MASA, the SF LGBT Center, and the Transgender, Gender Variant, and Intersex Justice Project (TGJJP), as well as family members and friends of Ruby and service providers who worked with her.

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Photo: Tamara Costa

The ACCESS Project: Empowering a New Generation of Queer Leaders

By Stacy Umezu, ACCESS Project Coordinator

Walk into CUAV on any given Wednesday or Thursday night and you’re apt to hear a chorus of young voices yelling out words like “cunt”, “dyke”, “faggot”, “chink”, “sissy”, and “white trash.”

If you’re worried that CUAV’s abandoned its mission statement, don’t panic just yet.

The voices you’re hearing are the sounds of a new generation of queer youth working to increase the safety of youth spaces in San Francisco for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) youth. They are the ACCESS Project leaders, role playing one of their many training activities that strives to address the prevalence of hate speech in youth spaces.

As one of CUAV’s newest endeavors, the ACCESS project is a collaboration of CUAV, Lavender Youth Recreation & Information Center (LYRIC) and Youth in Focus (YIF). With generous funding from the Department of Children, Youth, and their Families (DCYF), the ACCESS Project is a two-year pilot project intended to increase the capacity of 6 SF community-based organizations to better serve LGBTQQ youth.



ACCESS youth leaders and staff enjoy the sun.
Photo: Joseph Peralta

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Letter from the Executive Director

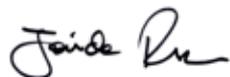
Dear Friends,

How can we sustain our collective hope and resilience when our world threatens and dismisses LGBTQ people on a daily basis? It becomes even more challenging when everyday traumas turn fatal, as happened earlier this year to Larry King in Oxnard, CA and Sanesha Stewart in the Bronx, NY. We know its possible because our communities find ways to do it everyday.

Studies of healing with trauma survivors teach us that individuals and communities facing violence, oppression, and other traumas can find healing in *creative expression, community connection, collective action, and in finding a greater meaning in their lives.* I am constantly inspired by how CUAV community members tap into these four paths to resilience—through public memorials for those we have lost to violence and actions to demand increased safety nets; partnerships with other community-based social justice organizations and gatherings; leadership development efforts to increase LGBTQ youth access to vital social services; and embodied healing practices to build racial justice within our communities, among others. As you will read about in this issue of our newsletter, CUAV's ongoing services and programs are helping to restore connection and resilience where they have been diminished by the devastating cycles of violence in our communities.

As we enter our 30th year of this work, our determination to build safe, healing, resilient communities free from all forms of violence grows. At our 29th anniversary celebration this past March, a captivated audience of 225 people heard from Martha Arredondo about her daughter Daxi. Daxi's tragic death in November 2006 sent shockwaves into the community. As the crowd fell silent, Martha shared her feeling that CUAV offered her a "sacred partnership," and an enduring bond. Her powerful words continue to resonate: our work is to build healing in the wake of loss, and resilience in the face of despair. I am grateful to be in this movement alongside each of you.

Thank you for your incredible support,



Jovida Ross, Executive Director



Jovida Ross addresses the crowd at *Champions for Change* 2008.
Photo: Randal Alan Smith

A 29th Anniversary to Remember!



CUAV staff, board, and friends.
Photo: Randal Alan Smith.

On March 20, 2008, CUAV celebrated 29 years of groundbreaking community work at *Champions for Change*. The evening was a huge success, drawing over 225 CUAV supporters to Mighty on Utah St. at 15th St. in Potrero Hill. We were proud to honor the incredible contributions of three inspiring local anti-violence

heroes—gay men's health advocate and writer Michael Scarce, long-time community activist Miss Major, and our community partner the El/La Latina Transgender HIV Prevention Program. The evening also featured stellar entertainment from some of the Bay Area's favorite queer performers—comedienne Marga Gomez, burlesque sensations the Diamond Daggers and SF Boylesque, drumming troupe Taiko Ren, and DJ Olga T.

Our heroic event captains included Daniel Bao, Tara Flanagan, Johnathan Gaffney, Kevin Goebel, Nick Hodges & Russ Brent, Don St. Louis, Mary Morgan & Ari Wohlfeiler, Carter Serrett, Christopher Stoll, John Warner, Andy Wong, and Terry Wright. Our Honorary Host



CUAV staff with this year's honorees.
Photo: Randal Alan Smith.

Committee included San Francisco Supervisor Tom Ammiano, Supervisor Bevan Dufty, Assemblymember Mark Leno, Senator Carole Migden, and Mayor Gavin

Newsom. We would like to thank all of our generous sponsors, dedicated event captains, committed volunteers, and fabulous attendees who made this event such an overwhelming success—we look forward to celebrating our 30th anniversary with you next March!



Drumming troupe Taiko Ren.
Photo: Randal Alan Smith.

THANK YOU!

CUAV would like to thank the many **public and private agencies** that continue to generously support our work: Bay Area Physicians for Human Rights, Blue Shield Foundation, Bothin Foundation, California Department of Public Health - Domestic Violence Program, California Office of Emergency Services, California Partnership to End Domestic Violence, Castro Lions Club, Castro Street Fair, Evelyn and Walter Haas, Jr. Fund, Folsom Street Events, Horizons Foundation, Kaiser Permanente, San Francisco Department of Children, Youth and Families, San Francisco Department on the Status of Women, San Francisco District Attorney's Office, San Francisco Foundation, San Francisco Mayor's Office of Community Development, Silva Watson Moonwalk Fund, Tides Foundation, van Löben Sels/ Rembe Rock Foundation, and Verizon Foundation.

Generous sponsors for our 29th anniversary celebration *Champions for Change*, included: AAA of Northern California, Nevada, and Utah, AARP, Betty's List, Bingham McCutchen LLP, California Teachers Association, Center for Stress Reduction, Curve Magazine, Dolores Park Cafe, Driscoll's Valencia Street Mortuary, Energy 92.7, Fabulous Auto-No-Miss-Bicyclists, Gargaliana & Graceffa LLP, Gay.com Local Scene, John Lum Architecture, Lil Somthin Somthin Catering, Martha Arredondo, Michael Bassichis & Sylvia Freed, Rainbow Grocery, SEIU United Healthcare Workers West, Steamworks, and Whole Foods Market.

We would also like to thank those **local businesses** that have contributed to CUAV's trainings, events, and support services: American Conservatory Theatre, Babeland, Beach Blanket Babylon, Buffalo Whole Foods, Cala Foods, Capay Organic, Close du Val Winery, Dalano IGA, diPietro Todd Salon, El Rio, Frameline, Goat Hill Pizza, Gold's Gym, Good Vibrations, Kabuki Springs and Spa, Kimpton Hotels & Restaurants, La Mediterranee, Medjool Restaurant, Moki's Sushi and Pacific Grill, Outsider Enterprises/Marc Huestis, Papatote, Paragon Real Estate Group, Paragon Restaurant & Bar, Paramount Pictures, PAVE Fine Jewelry Design, Rainforest Cafe, Regalito Rosticeria, Renoir Hotel, Spike's Coffees and Tea, Superstar Satellite, Tangerine Restaurant, TLA Entertainment Group, Trader Joe's SOMA, and Weird Fish.

Our **individual donors** provide invaluable support throughout the year, ensuring that CUAV will be here until our work is done. Lastly, we would like to thank all of our **volunteers**—over 100 in the past year!—for your priceless hard work and dedication. You play a vital role in keeping CUAV running and in helping build safe, powerful communities!

Donor Profile: Don St. Louis

CUAV relies on the grassroots financial support of individuals in our communities to remain a sustainable and effective organization. In this section we will profile a current CUAV donor to represent the diverse reasons why people give. We invite all of our community members to support CUAV with a financial gift today, and join our collective efforts to build more healing and just communities.

When did you first hear about CUAV?

As a therapist, I've known about CUAV for 10 years as a resource, but I didn't think I would ever need it for myself. This changed in August 2005, when I was gay-bashed in Hawaii. I came back to San Francisco with a broken jaw and in need of healing. I called CUAV and began working with an incredible advocate, and felt safer than I ever had before, being among gay people helping gay people who were hurt because they were gay. It was such a cathartic experience, telling my story, feeling heard, getting support. It was a very critical piece in my own healing process, dealing with the trauma and the aftermath, and it was an opportunity for me to reclaim my identity as a gay man.



Why did you become a CUAV donor?

I became a CUAV donor because I was so appreciative of the support CUAV gave to me, and I wanted so much for that to be available to other people. There is so much violence in our culture and there are not a lot of resources out there. By contributing financially, I am making sure this resource will be available for our communities, and I'm helping to tell other survivors that they are not alone. CUAV is helping to create a community of healing, and I am so proud to be a part of that.

Why should other people become CUAV donors?

The more people who give to CUAV, the more resources and support will be available for our communities. I really want so many more people to know about and support CUAV so that this precious resource will continue to exist. I also think people should consider putting CUAV in their wills, which is not something people often think about—it is a great way to leave a lasting legacy that will impact generations to come.

How do you define community?

Community is about people coming together with some level of intentionality to create something that's much bigger than the sum of its parts. It's about the ability to listen and speak up. Community is a place where people find support and get their needs met, and can find healing. Community is not about fear or divisiveness, but about celebration and life—and that is what CUAV is about. That is CUAV's work.



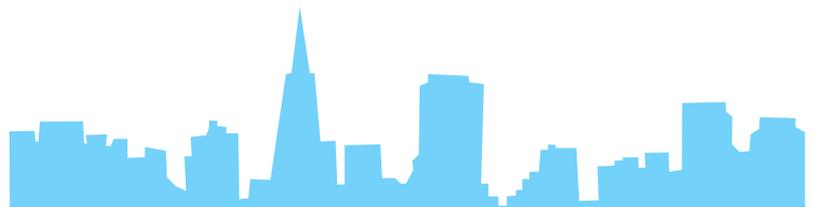
Photo: Joseph Peralta

Central to the ACCESS Project's mission is creating and modeling youth-adult partnerships that "empower LGBTQQ youth to take a leadership role in eliminating barriers to full participation and representation in their communities." With this goal in mind, the youth leaders formed three site teams with staff leaders from the participating organizations to work together in administering a needs assessment survey and developing youth-led trainings, with a plan for implementation of institutional changes as the final phase.

Joseph Peralta, one of the LGBTQ youth leaders working most closely with CUAV, explained why the ACCESS Project is so important: "As youth, our voices have not been prioritized and are left out of decisions that affect us directly. As queer youth researchers and community leaders, we have a keen awareness that youth are often told what to think, not asked what they think. But with the opportunity and resources that we have (through this project), we hope to model to other youth what we as a community are capable of."

Other youth interns expressed a similar sentiment. Elizabeth Labeledz, another youth working closely with the CUAV team, stated, "As queer youth, we ourselves have been immersed in a society that is at best negligent in giving us the resources that make us feel welcomed and valuable as human beings. As queer youth researchers, we are now in a time and a place where we have an opportunity to change San Francisco, and society as a whole, for future queer youth. And hopefully we'll be able to prevent negative lived experiences."

This hopeful outlook for the future motivates all of CUAV's work developing youth leadership and addressing violence in our lives. Our Love + Justice Program uses arts activism to raise awareness about dating violence among LGBTQQ youth, and build healthy relationship skills. Our LGBTQQ Speakers Bureau provides thousands of SFUSD students the opportunity to learn more about LGBTQQ lives and issues every year. These programs along with ACCESS comprise our Youth Safety Project, which envisions safe and healthy communities where there are no barriers to LGBTQQ youth leadership and participation. We are looking forward to a busy summer of continuing this exciting journey and collaboration.



**You're Queer, We're Here. 24/7.
415.333.HELP (4357)**

CUAV's 24-hr domestic violence and hate violence survivor crisis line.

LGBTQ Domestic Violence Technical Assistance and Training Project Enters Its Third Year!

By Pablo Espinoza, Domestic Violence Education and Outreach Director

Along with the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (CPEDV) and the Los Angeles Gay & Lesbian Center (LAGLC), CUAV is proud to be entering its third year of participation in the statewide LGBTQ Domestic Violence Technical Assistance and Training Project (DV TAT). Funded by the Office of Family Planning branch of the California Department of Health, Maternal, Child and Adolescent Health Program, the LGBTQ DV TAT Project conducts ongoing training with each of the 94 state-funded domestic violence programs and shelters by experts from CPEDV, CUAV, and LAGLC. An assessment of organizational policies and practices related to LGBTQ inclusion and service accessibility in California's 94 shelter agencies was conducted in April 2007. Technical assistance and training (TAT) curricula was developed based on the findings of the assessment, and is provided through in-person trainings plus phone and email consultation and support. The curricula provide valuable opportunities to assess the strengths and areas of growth for domestic violence services that can effectively and appropriately serve LGBTQ survivors of violence.

Since July 2007, over 150 technical assistance and training (TAT) sessions have been delivered to more than 800 staff and volunteers at the 94 agencies. TAT topics include: basic LGBTQ cultural competency, fostering an LGBTQ welcoming environment, conducting intake interviews with LGBTQ clients, effective case management practices with LGBTQ clients, addressing "everyday bias" from clients and others, and a range of other topics. Each TAT session includes specific recommendations for changes to organizational policies and practices to improve accessibility of services to LGBTQ DV victims and survivors. A follow-up assessment is being conducted to determine changes in organizational policies and practices made since April 2007 and to identify additional TAT needs.



We at CUAV are pleased to have made great connections and friendships with service providers not just in the Bay Area, but in places such as Lake Tahoe, Crescent City (by the Oregon border), Humboldt, Chico, Redding, Woodland, and many more. These fantastic, committed allies in the movement to end domestic violence have embraced our projects' objectives and information with enthusiasm and passion. We are grateful to their commitment to creating services and spaces that are fully accessible to all LGBTQ people. We are very happy to be entering our third and final year with this project, and hope that the LGBTQ DV TAT Project helps to spark creative opportunities and collaborations in our collective efforts to expand supportive safety nets for everyone impacted by domestic violence.

Photo courtesy of the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence (CPEDV).

Surviving and Thriving *continued from page 1*

"Ruby's death was just one example of the many ways our community is under attack," said Alex Lee, Director of TGJJP. "Every day, countless members of our community are killed by poverty, the lack of health care, profound job discrimination, and by law enforcement violence. In order to save our community from murder, either by other people or by our governments who ignore our needs, we need to prioritize health care and economic services for everyone, not law enforcement budgets and property interests." With this in mind, attendees brought "MISSING" signs that displayed the various "missing" resources and qualities that we need to be truly safe, including secure jobs, accessible healthcare, stable housing, and quality education.

The coalition that organized the action publicly demanded that Mayor Newsom and the San Francisco Board of Supervisors reject all budget cuts to programs and services promoting transgender mental, physical, and social wellbeing, a demand which many of the speakers enthusiastically supported. In particular, the coalition asked that funding be restored and increased to the gender program at the Center for Special Problems (CSP), a long-time mental health resource for low-income transgender people in the Bay Area. Advocacy postcards were collected, and ongoing efforts will be made to advocate for the full funding of CSP and all other transgender programs.

In a time of budget cuts and backlash, it is more important than ever to maintain and expand safety nets and support systems for our most vulnerable community members. Despite ongoing interpersonal and institutional violence that seeks to destroy our collective vitality and health, our communities continue to both survive and thrive in our pursuit of justice. As this action powerfully demonstrated, we most certainly are not disposable, and we will not be moved.



An altar set up at 24th and Mission BART. Photo: Tamara Costa

The CUAV Dish: Updates from Our Work

Raising Awareness, Supporting Survivors: Men Are Raped



In June 2007, CUAV teamed up with the San Francisco District Attorney's Office and Supervisor Bevan Dufty to create a ground-breaking poster campaign to raise public awareness about sexual violence among gay, bisexual, and queer men. The campaign appeared on MUNI buses in Cantonese, English, and Spanish and included four advertisements that each feature an African American, Asian American, Latino, or white man with the captions, "I thought he was a great guy—until he raped me" and "You are not alone. There are many ways we can help." The project was largely in response to a spike in reported sexual assaults in the Castro District. The posters also featured CUAV's 24-hour crisis line number to emphasize that there are multiple resources to support male

survivors of sexual violence. The campaign was followed by a community discussion in October 2007 facilitated by representatives from CUAV, SFWAR, and STOP AIDS Project. Over 25 gay, bisexual, queer, and transgender men gathered at the SF LGBT Center to learn more about male sexual assault, share experiences, and collectively develop strategies for safety and healing.

Ending Sexual Violence against Imprisoned Transgender People: Justice for Alexis!

In July 2007, CUAV collaborated with the Transgender, Gender Variant, and Intersex Justice Project (TGIJP) and the Trans/Gender Variant in Prison (TIP) Committee to support Alexis Giraldo in her courageous lawsuit against the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR). Ms. Giraldo, a young Latina transgender woman, repeatedly sought protection from prison staff after her cellmate threatened and proceeded to rape her in early 2006. She bravely sued the state of California for failing to protect her, and asked that the court mandate procedures to better protect transgender people in prison from violence. CUAV helped to organize consistent court-watch to support Alexis in the face of bullying and transphobic courtroom tactics, and collaborated with TGIJP & TIP to raise awareness in the press and in the community about this important case. Although the verdict was a mistrial, her case helped to build broad awareness of the egregious and systemic violence that imprisoned transgender people face. We honor Alexis, and all other survivors of state violence and sexual violence, for her fierce determination and perseverance.



A Groundbreaking Gathering: Transforming Justice 2007



On October 13 and 14, 2007, CUAV joined dozens of LGBTQQ, anti-prison, prisoner rights, and social justice organizations from around the country to develop creative solutions to end the cycles of poverty, criminalization, and imprisonment in transgender and gender non-conforming communities. Over 250 formerly imprisoned people, activists, and attorneys gathered at City College of San Francisco to build a shared understanding of the prison industrial complex and its impacts on transgender communities—both inside and outside of prison walls—and envision ways to address the systemic discrimination and violence that leads to so many transgender and gender non-conforming people being poor, without housing or healthcare, and imprisoned. Local and national sponsor organizations included AFSC, ACLU, Critical Resistance, Human Rights Watch, Justice Now, Lambda Legal, NCLR, the Sylvia Rivera Law Project, the TGI Justice Project, and TIP Committee, and more. CUAV is a proud member of the Transforming Justice Coalition, and looks forward to continue building safe, whole communities alongside other member organizations.

Visit Our New Home on the Web!

CUAV is proud to announce the launch of our redesigned website at www.cuav.org! We have spent the past several months collaborating with TUMIS, an Oakland-based social justice design firm, on our exciting new site. We wanted a website that would be a dynamic extension of the living, breathing CUAV and a substantive tool for all those working to support LGBTQQ survivors of violence and end the cycles of violence in our communities. The site includes extensive resources for survivors, educators, activists, and services providers; a blog for CUAV and community events and happenings; an archive of photographs from past events; and multiple ways to get involved, take action, and become a supporter. Set against the backdrop of our home city, San Francisco, with roots to anchor us in our communities and visions for liberation, we are excited to launch our new website as a reflection of our desires for safe, healing, resilient queer communities free from all forms of violence. We'll see you online!



Safe by Lex (www.myspace.com/lexisword)

You're going to be safe
That's what I say to my kids
As I tuck their resting bodies under blankets
Soothe them to sleep
With the dreams that come from make believe
I lay my head to my pillow
Beg for salvation

Tonight please keep me safe
Let make believe dreams come to me in my sleep
Rather than resting my head
Swollen and aching against a battered pillow
Tortured by my nightmares as I thrash in my sleep
I day dream about my mom kissing me to dream
Closing the door saying you're going to be safe
My eye lids close on my reverends words

You're going to be safe
Rolling over into my partners resting arms
I say to myself tonight you can be safe
Dig for all of the parts of me that have been hurt
Beaten, forgotten, seized, abused, teased, and abandoned

Tonight you can be safe
Rocking my self to sleep with my own affirmation
Resting upon the rock of faith that I can be safe
For all the ways I have known nothing of safety
The ways my body has learned anger and violence
I can be safe
Eyes close on the image of me as new
I slip into sleep to reintroduce myself
Hugging the pieces of me I know to be whole
I spread like healing

You are going to be safe
At 8, at 13, at 15, at 18, at 21, at 24

You are going to be safe
I slip into sleep
Dream about a day
When all of me is safe to say
I am going to be safe
Knowing there is nothing of me that needs
to be saved
I was made perfectly this day

Upcoming Events

Modern Times Bookstore

Community Investment Recipient
10% of event proceeds to CUAV in May & June
888 Valencia Street, SF
moderntimesbookstore.com

4th Annual Queer Women of Color Film Festival
Co-Presenting Opening Screening: "Kindred Queers"
Friday, June 13, 7:30pm, FREE
Brava Theatre, 2781 24th Street, SF

An Evening of Performance and Community
A Benefit for CUAV and Trans March
Wednesday, June 18, 7pm
Dolores Park Cafe, 501 Dolores Street, SF

7th Annual Fresh Meat Performance Festival
Community Sponsor
June 19-21, 8pm, June 22, 7pm
Project Artaud Theatre, 450 Florida Street, SF
Tickets \$15, visit www.brownpapertickets.com

"Another Gay Sequel" Benefit for CUAV

Produced by Big Gay Frathouse, featuring cast!
Thursday, June 26
The LookOut, 3600 16th St, SF

Summer House Party, Hosted by Don St. Louis
Friday, July 25
Call 415.777.5500 ext.318 to RSVP

Up Your Alley, Supporting Beneficiary
Sunday, July 27
Volunteer with us! Call 415.777.5500 ext.318

Folsom Street Fair, Supporting Beneficiary
Sunday, September 28
Volunteer with us! Call 415.777.5500 ext.318

Queer People of Color Embodied Healing Summit
CUAV's Healing Oppression Project and Paths to Change Institute
October TBA, Oakland Location TBA
Call 415.777.5500 ext.323 if you are interested

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

MISSION

Founded in 1979, Community United Against Violence (CUAV) is a multicultural, anti-oppression organization working to end violence against and within our diverse lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, queer, and questioning (LGBTQQ) communities. We believe that in order to end homophobia and heterosexism, we must confront all forms of oppression, including racism, sexism, ageism, classism, and ableism.

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