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“Stop this Bullshit”

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“Stop this Bullshit”

RIKU MATSUDA

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Deshawnda! Deshawnda! Justice for Deshawnda! Bamby Salcedo yelled into a megaphone as she kicked off a march on Vermont Avenue in South Los Angeles in honor of 21-year-old Deshawnda Sánchez. In late 2014, Deshawnda was shot and killed while pounding on a door for help. Bamby knew Deshawnda, whose loss sent a powerful ripple throughout Los Angeles’ transgender community. Deshawnda’s name will be added to a long list of beautiful, fierce, amazing, powerful, gifted, loving transgender people of color, mostly women, who are no longer with us as a result of transphobia and systemic violence: Victoria Arellano, Alexis Rivera, Gwen Araujo, and others.

In 2002, shortly after 17-year-old Gwen Araujo was murdered in Newark, California, activist María Román organized a march down Santa Monica Boulevard and carried a banner that read, “HOW MANY TRANSGENDERS NEED TO DIE BEFORE YOU DO SOMETHING ABOUT IT?”

For me, this question raises more questions:

- What if all social justice and immigration movements in the U.S. recognized, accepted, and celebrated differences?
- What if we were taught from a young age that transgender people deserve to live with love, respect, and dignity?
- What would that look like in everyday practice?
- What if we acknowledged that all of our identities have connections to power and privilege?
- What if our work to get free centered those most marginalized and directly affected by oppression?

Trans Latinas are building grassroots power collectively. The daily struggle to survive presents the need to create informal networks of care and support. For example, the Trans Latina Coalition is an emerging organization

mobilizing transgender Latinas throughout the United States, founded by Bamby Salcedo. By networking and building power by and for trans Latinas, the coalition is affecting both trans and immigrant rights movements.

Recently, I was in line at King Taco with Bamby when she answered her phone and a call by a reporter from a popular news station. Bamby declined the interview, then put the reporter on speaker to explain how asking a trans person about sex reassignment surgery perpetuates the very violence she is working to stop. Before ending the call, Bamby calmly suggested to the reporter a focus on transphobic hate violence, the treatment of trans people in ICE detention, or other more relevant human rights issues.

Over lunch, we talked about the urgency to radicalize the trans community in Los Angeles. We debriefed recent direct actions and began brainstorming a list of allies and next steps. I was taking notes when mid-sentence Bamby lost her breath and choked back hot tears of rage as she said:

They keep killing us and nobody fucking cares.

I am tired.

I am tired of this.

We gotta stop this bullshit.