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Two Black Trans Women Were Killed in the U.S. in the Past Week as Trump Revokes Discrimination Protections for Trans People



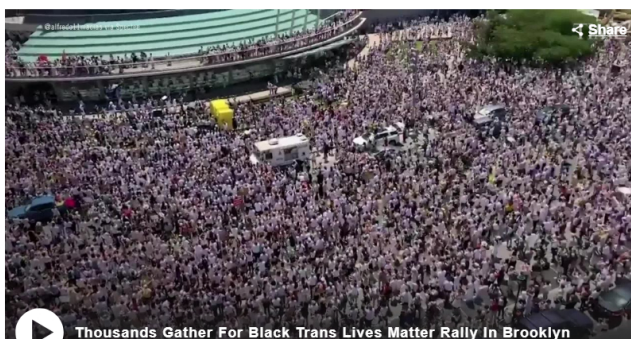
A Caucasian protester holds up their homemade sign on a box that says, "Black Trans Lives Matter No Justice No Peace" during a protest at Trump Tower in the Manhattan Borough of New York on June 12, 2020. Ira L. Black—Corbis via Getty Images

BY MADELEINE CARLISLE  JUNE 13, 2020 5:10 PM EDT

Two Black trans women — Riah Milton in Ohio and Dominique “Rem’Mie” Fells in Pennsylvania — were killed earlier this week, amid an increasing outcry from activists to protect Black trans people and as the Trump administration reversed protections for transgender people in the U.S. health care system.

According to local authorities, Milton was shot and killed during a robbery in Liberty Township, Ohio, on June 9. According to the LGBTQ+ advocacy group the Human Rights Campaign (HRC), 25-year-old Milton worked as a home health aide and attended the University of Cincinnati. Two people have been arrested and charged with her murder. A third man, Tyree Cross, has not been apprehended, according to local police.

Only a day earlier, on June 8, Dominique “Rem’Mie” Fells was found dead in Philadelphia, Penn., the Philadelphia Police Department confirmed to TIME. On Friday, her death was ruled a homicide and the investigation is still ongoing. “The pain of such a loss is always difficult, but it is especially deep as we are in the midst of Pride month—a season typically filled with joy and celebration for many in our community,” the city of Philadelphia’s office of LBTQ affairs said in a statement.



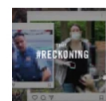
Thousands Gather For Black Trans Lives Matter Rally In Brooklyn

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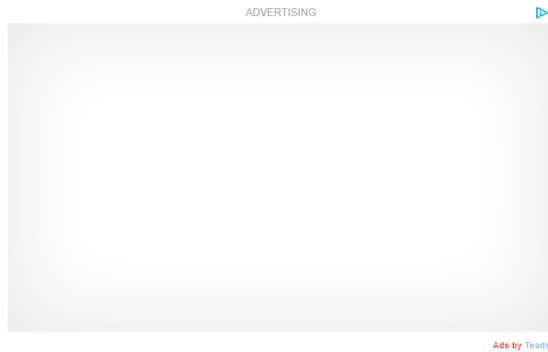


Milton and Fells' deaths come amidst **mass protests** in the U.S. — and the world — against systemic racism and police brutality, which demand systemic changes to address how people of color, specifically Black people, are treated.

“While we’re talking about racism, while we’re talking about the changes that need to be [done] in this country, we need to talk about the hate towards trans people... particularly towards Black trans women,” Deja Lynn Alvarez, a trans activist and advocate in Philadelphia, tells TIME.

When Alvarez, a 47-year-old Latina trans woman, learned of Fells’ death, one of her first thoughts was “no, not again,” she said. “Black trans women are being murdered at an incredibly high rate... being someone from the community, it feels like it’s almost every other day at this point.”

Transgender women of color — particularly Black transgender women — are **disproportionately affected by fatal violence**, impacted by the intersections of racism, sexism, homophobia, biphobia and transphobia, according to a **HRC report**.



Including Fells and Milton, at least 14 transgender or gender non-conforming people have been violently killed in 2020 alone, **per HRC**. In 2019, at least 26 transgender or gender non-conforming people were violently killed, the majority of whom were Black transgender women. Over 130 transgender or gender non-conforming people were killed between 2015 and 2018, **according to HRC**. The numbers may be even higher; the killing of transgender or gender non-conforming people often goes unreported or misreported, advocates say.

“As our country faces a long-overdue reckoning with the violence and indignities that Black people have dealt with for centuries, we must affirm that Black Trans Lives Matter,” HRC President Alphonso David said in a **statement** on Friday. “And we must do everything we can to ensure that we create policies and laws that lift up our transgender siblings, and communities where transgender people are not targeted for who they are.”

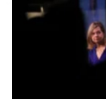
Over the past week, politicians, activists and advocacy groups have spoken out against the killings of Fells and Milton. “Heartbroken over our sisters. Rest in Power, Dominique ‘Rem’mie’ Fells and Riah Milton,” the official Black Lives Matter Twitter page wrote on Friday.



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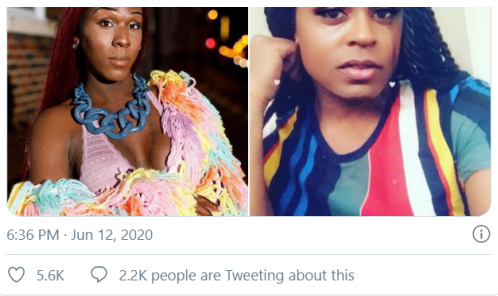


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“The murder of Black trans women is a crisis,” Massachusetts Sen. Elizabeth Warren also tweeted. Her fellow Massachusetts Sen. Ed Markey also wrote, “We are indebted to the Black trans activists who paved the way for today’s LGBTQ+ pride celebrations. But in the wake of two murders this week—of Riah Milton and Rem’mie Fells—we must recognize that we have not done enough to protect the trans community and Black trans women.”



Fells and Milton’s deaths come the same week that the Trump administration **finalized regulations** overturning Obama-era protections for LGBTQ+ people in the health care system. The new regulation defines gender as biological sex and would allow insurance companies to deny coverage for transition-related treatments. **HRC** and the American Civil Liberties Union have both said they will sue the administration to block the regulation. The regulatory change was announced on Friday, the fourth anniversary of the Pulse nightclub mass shooting, in which 49 people were killed in one of the worst acts of anti-LGBTQ violence in U.S. history.

On Monday, the **Supreme Court ruled** that a provision of 1964’s Civil Rights Act protects LGBTQ people from employment discrimination in a landmark 6-3 decision from a conservative-leaning court.

There are currently very few federal protections for transgender or gender non-

conforming people in the U.S., and the Trump administration has repeatedly pushed back against the little that do exist.

“When does this country live up to what it claims to be?” Alvarez tells TIME, explaining that she believes federal protections and adequate resources must be allocated to protect LGBTQ people in the U.S. “How is it the land of the free?”

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