

## **Transgender Day of Remembrance – Franco Martinez – November 17, 2021**

Shabbat shalom! Welcome everyone back. Back to 290 Dolores for those who can, but more importantly welcome back to community for everyone who is here with us.

I'd like to begin with a poem by [Dylan Mitchell](#):

On the occasion of my death  
Don't let them speak a stranger's name  
Or repeat stories I told myself to make myself palatable  
On the occasion of my death  
Lay me down in a suit  
And all the comforts I knew amongst friends  
And all the secrets we shared in hushed whispers  
In loud nights  
In love and in fear  
Make them mourn all of me  
Every part they love and hate  
Don't let them bury me a stranger

Growing up, I remember going to the cemetery in my parent's hometown in Mexico before Day of the Dead. Just a little hamlet, but with a memory going back generations. I remember the visits up to the cemetery in preparation. The cleaning of the graves. Sweeping the floor of the mausoleums. It was always slightly colder than I expected.

I was aware of what we were doing and what the rituals represented. They were meant to bring those who had passed, closer to us. To share with us. To be with us.

In the middle of preparing the ofrenda, the altar, and getting the flower petals ready, (what were the petals for?) we spoke about those who had passed, shared stories, laughed, passed pictures around, and let who they were envelope us; let them share the space with us.

What does it mean to preserve and continue the memory of our trans and gender non-conforming siblings?

It means remembering that the work of repairing the world must continue with us. It means ensuring that our spaces are inclusive.

On pg 19 of our Siddur, "On Holiness," Rabbi Lisa Edwards writes:

- | We are your trans, gay, bi, and lesbian siblings: You shall not hate your brother or sister in your heart (Lev 19:17)
- | We are lesbian, gay trans, and bi victims of gay-bashing and murder: You may not stand idly when your neighbor's blood is being shed. (Lev19:16)

We are here, as a community, remembering those friends, family members, and strangers among us who were "struck down, in [their] own cities, in [their] own times, and those who took their own lives, driven to despair by a world who hate them. Whose family may not have wanted to remember them.

What comes to mind you read their names?

Let us remember them as they should be remembered. Who they were. And let them share in this space we've created.

We read the story of Jacob wrestling the angel this week.

And much like Jacob, we have wrestled. With ourselves, our relatives; our relationship to the gender we were assigned at birth, with the unnamed people who wish to do us harm. Who make life difficult.

But unlike Jacob some of us were not blessed. So, it is up to us to bless their name. To call them up. To LIVE with them.

What lessons have we learned? Our work now is to continue to fight for us but also to help them. Create spaces where they are welcome, not just paying lip service to an idea of community, but putting in the effort required.

Let's think about how our rituals can become richer, more complex, and beautiful. Our siddur gives us some examples of the sorts of prayers we can say during moments of transition. When we are moved by interesting people. Reflections on how we are all made in the image of God.

Let's create more! (yes!! thanks for opening up this doorway to new liturgy!)

To quote our *Queer Amidah*, *how queer of you, God, to have created anything at all.*

Whenever I take my hormones, I say:

Blessed are you, *HaShem*, ruler of infinite space-time, who allows us to share in the work of creation.

Remembrance is not passive, or complacent.

It is active. Let's not passively perpetuate systems, or call down a judgment, but to continually work each day to better the world.

How are you speaking about us who are trans in your midst? How often do you misgender us? Are you working on repairing wrongs? Make this world better.

May the names of all of my trans siblings, be a prayer and a blessing. May the yahrzeit candles we light for them sit flickering on the altar, the ofrenda, of our collective heart.

Thank you, and shabbat shalom.