**On Transgender Day of Remembrance, recalling the trans woman whose brutal murder sparked first prosecution for hate crime**

Angie Zapata was aged 18 when she was beaten to death in Colorado

There were two things in particular, that struck [filmmaker](http://locolane1.wix.com/locolanefilmworks) Alan Dominguez about the murder of transgender woman Angie Zapata.

One was that the killing had taken place in the town of Greeley, an hour north of Denver and a place known for its conservatism. The second was that her family was Latino, the same as his, and not known as “a community where sexual orientation is part of the conversation”.

As the world on Friday marks [Transgender Day of Remembrance](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transgender_Day_of_Remembrance), Mr Dominguez’s 2010 documentary *Photos of Angie*, stands as a testament to the person considered the first transgender woman in the US officially recorded as having been killed in a hate crime.

“These were the two elements that really struck me about it,” Mr Dominguez told *The Independent.*

He said that in addition to being shown at festivals across the US, his hour-long documentary was frequently used in schools and universities. He said the feedback from people was invariably positive and he said he believed it was especially appreciated by people who were questioning their own sexuality or gender.

Though he did not know Ms Zapata’s family at the time of her killing, he said he became close to them during the course of the making of the film, about her life and the trial of her killer.

“The family has been very gracious. They are very forgiving,” he said.

“They are very determined that she should be remembered as someone who was comfortable in her skin, and they said the film does that well.”

Ms Zapata, 18, was beaten to death in the summer of 2008 after going on a date with then 31-year-old Allen Andrade. Evidence presented by the police said that he beat the teenager to death, using his fists and a fire extinguisher, after discovering she had male genitalia.

According to a document filed by police, over the course of three days she performed a sex act on Mr Andrade but would not let him touch her.

The next evening, after viewing photographs in her apartment, Mr Andrade confronted Ms Zapata over her sexual identity just before killing her. “I am all woman,” Ms Zapata told him, according to an affidavit.

Ms Zapata was accepted by her five siblings and her mother, but faced other bullying over her decision to live as woman. After her death, more than 200 people attended a vigil in the local church she had gone to.

“We loved to take her out, because she got so much attention,” her sister Monica, [told](http://www.nytimes.com/2008/08/02/us/02murder.html) the *New York Times* at the time of her death. “I couldn’t even take her to Wal-Mart because people would turn around. Everybody knew Angie.”

In April 2009, Andrade was sentenced to life imprisonment without the chance of parole after being convicted of murder and hate crimes.

District Judge Marcelo Kopcow told him: “Mr Andrade, I hope as you’re spending the remaining part of your natural life in the Department of Corrections that everyday you think of the violence and brutality that you caused on this fellow human being and the pain you have caused, not only on your family but the family of Angie Zapata,”

At the time of Ms Zapata’s death, activists both in Colorado and across the country said there were a a rising number of attacks on gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender people. In 2007, there were 121 such incidents in the state.

Since then, campaigners have said transgender people across the US are facing an “epidemic” of violence.

Beverly Tillery, Executive Director of the The Anti-Violence Project, said people such as Caitlyn Jenner had raised the visibility of transgender people. At the same time, the community was recording an increased number of attacks and assaults, many of them fatal. She said transgender women were the most vulnerable, particularly transgender women of colour.

She said the group had collated details of 22 killings in 2015, thought she said she suspected this was not the full total.

“Quite frequently these cases come to light after misreporting or misnaming by the police and the media,” she said.

She said more data was needed on the number of attacks and whether there was a direct correlation between the community’s increasing visibility and the increased number of assaults.

She added: “What we do know, is that for some people, when a certain community becomes more visible, the reaction is a backlash.”