

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE  
Monday, December 16, 2024

## **TRIPLE-X COMMEMORATES 21ST INTERNATIONAL DAY TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST SEX WORKERS**

**6 p.m., Tuesday, December 17, 2024  
The West End Sex Workers Memorial  
1130 Jervis St., Vancouver, BC**

Triple-X Workers' Solidarity Association of British Columbia commemorates the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers at The West End Sex Workers Memorial at Jervis and Pendrell Streets, in front of St Paul's Anglican Church (1130 Jervis St.). The intimate ceremony includes laying a wreath and a candlelight vigil to honour sex workers in Canada who faced violence or whose lives were taken in 2024. The City of Vancouver granted Triple-X's request to light up City Hall and the Burrard Bridge in red to support this event. Triple-X will also distribute its newest publication: a brochure about the history and legacy of The West End Sex Workers Memorial that will be available for free to attendees. Learn more: <https://triple-x.org/pdf/SWMemorialBrochure-2024.pdf>

2024 marks the twenty-first observance of December 17 as the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers. We commemorate this day not only to remember those whose lives have been taken, but also those who have suffered violence in or out of the workplace, as a consequence of selling sex.

### **Reports of violence and murders in Canada in 2024**

- September 8, Westlock (Slave Lake), AB – A woman who was not named was beaten and stabbed and left in a ditch in rural area. She survived the attack and flagged down a man driving a quad.
- July 29, Vernon, BC – A woman's body was found in Polson Park identified as 40-year-old Christina (Tina) Louise Mackenzie. RCMP is treating it as a suspicious death. It was not clear whether or not she was a sex worker.
- July 6, Edmonton, AB – A man violently attacked three sex workers leaving them unconscious after booking appointments in three separate incidents. The women's wallets, identification, cash and cell phones were stolen, police said.

- June 8, Niagara, ON – Jessica St. Jules, 28, was found dead in a ditch in a rural area. She was last seen entering a grey Dodge Grand Caravan on Barton St. in Hamilton.
- June 13, Vancouver, BC – A sex worker who was picked up on East Hastings St. near Campbell Ave. was violently sexually assaulted and assaulted with a weapon then pushed out of a car near Oppenheimer Park. Two passers-by came to the woman's aid and called police. She has recovered from her injuries.
- June 13, Montreal, QC – Martin Pillay, 43, was arrested after filming encounters with at least 34 sex workers without their knowledge or consent and later extorting them.
- May 21, North Vancouver, BC – Area residents called police about an injured woman in distress. Police found a suspect with a large knife in a high-priced short-term rental home. Tyrell Evans, 36, was charged with assault causing bodily harm, assault by choking and possessing a weapon for a dangerous purpose. It was not clear whether or not the woman was a sex worker.
- April 19, Montreal, QC – A 39-year-old woman was stabbed in a West End motel room and sent to hospital with serious injuries that were not life-threatening. Media reports indicated she was a sex worker.
- April 3, Vancouver, BC – A 49-year-old woman was discovered unresponsive just after 6 a.m. on the roadside near Fraserview Golf Course. An arrest was made for the murder described by police as a targeted killing. It was not clear whether or not the woman was a sex worker.
- February 17, Calgary, AB – Chelsea Davidenas, 29, last seen on this day, was reported missing ten days later. On April 2, Calgary police arrested two men, both known to Davidenas. Steven Aaron Zwick, 26, and Paul Joseph Rushton, 52, have been charged with first-degree murder. It is believed that Davidenas was targeted because of her history as a sex worker.

Andrew Sorfleet, president of Triple-X Workers' Solidarity Association of B.C., said, "Prevention of many assaults and abuses can be achieved with workplace safety protocols and resources, but also through solidarity. Ending violence is a common goal that triple-x workers can pursue collectively. We are stronger together. Freedom to associate is our fundamental right under Canada's Charter of Rights and Freedoms."

### **History of the International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers**

On November 5, 2003, Gary Leon Ridgway, 54, entered a guilty plea in King County, Washington State, for 48 murders of women stemming back to 1982, although the true number of murders could total 71. Many of his victims were runaway youth and other vulnerable women.

Ridgway's written plea statement of guilt was cold and shocking. "I wanted to kill as many women I thought were prostitutes as I possibly could," he said. "I picked prostitutes as my victims because I hate most prostitutes and I did not want to pay them for sex. I also picked prostitutes as victims because they were easy to pick up without being noticed. I knew they would not be reported missing right away and might never be reported missing."

Ridgway had strangled his victims then disposed of their bodies in inconspicuous sites around the Green River area near Seattle. A large number of those murders were carried out in the two-year period between 1982 and 1983. Before he was discovered, he was dubbed, "The Green River Killer." A police taskforce was set up to catch him.

Ridgway was first considered as a suspect in the killings in 1983, but he wasn't arrested until November 30, 2001, when he was definitively linked to one of the victims using DNA profiling. He had provided police with a saliva sample in 1987, after victims' boyfriends had identified him as the last person seen with two of the victims.

Ridgway signed a plea agreement on June 23, 2003; in exchange for showing police where the bodies were located, he would not face the death penalty. This finally brought a resolution to dozens of unsolved cases.

On December 17, 2003—the evening before Gary Ridgway's sentencing hearing—the first International Day to End Violence Against Sex Workers was organized. It included public events around the United States and the world: in New York State, Arizona, California, North Carolina, Washington D.C., and Maine; as well as Belgium, the United Kingdom, Canada, Germany, and Taiwan.

Annie Sprinkle from Prostitutes of New York (PONY) was moved to organize the event as a response to Ridgway's claims that no one cared about prostitutes. In her words, "As the names of the victims were disclosed, I felt a need to remember and honour them. I cared, and I knew other people cared, too." Annie Sprinkle contacted Robyn Few in San Francisco. Robyn had just founded the advocacy group SWOP-USA, a chapter of the Sex Workers Outreach Project based in Australia.

Robyn Few and SWOP-USA colleagues organized a large, well-attended vigil on the lawn of San Francisco City Hall, with an open-mic facilitated by Annie Sprinkle. In New York City,

PONY along with the Sex Workers Project of the Urban Justice Center, organized a large, well-attended candlelight vigil at Judson Memorial Church.

"Sex workers are hesitant to report physical and sexual violence to the police because police do not always take their complaints seriously and investigate the crimes committed against sex workers. The assault, battery, rape and murder of sex workers has got to end. This is allowing violent criminals to prowl our streets with impunity."

~ Robyn Few (October 7, 1958 – September 13, 2012)

On December 18, 2003, Gary Ridgway was sentenced to 48 life sentences.

In 2011, Ridgway pleaded guilty to a 49th murder. Investigations are still ongoing. On December 19, 2023, police identified another one of Ridgway's victims whose remains were found in 1985: Lori Anne Razpotnik, who ran away from her home in nearby Lewis County at age 15 in 1982, and was never seen again.

"Since 2003, each year hundreds of people in dozens of cities around the world have participated in this day to end violence—from Montreal (they marched with red umbrellas), to Hong Kong (they protested police brutality), to Vancouver (they did a candlelight vigil), to Sydney (they held a memorial ritual), to East Godavery, India (a dance was organized to overcome pain and trauma), to London (where they distributed sex worker rights information while Christmas carolling)."

~ Annie Sprinkle (Remembering Our Dead and Wounded, 2010)

### **The West End Sex Workers Memorial**

The City of Vancouver unveiled The West End Sex Workers Memorial at a ceremony on September 16, 2016. The memorial is dedicated to a diverse community of sex workers in memory of their ongoing struggle for equality. Vancouver activist, Jamie Lee Hamilton (September 20, 1955 – December 23, 2019) initiated the sex worker memorial project in 2008.

Learn more: [triple-x.org/about/westendmemorial.html](http://triple-x.org/about/westendmemorial.html)

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### **Media inquiries**

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### **Social media**

Event hashtags: #IDEVASW #DEC17 #Vancouver #IDEVASW2024

X/@xxxworkers

Instagram.com/triplexworkers

Facebook.com/triplexworkers

### **About Triple-X**

Triple-X Workers' Solidarity Association of B.C. is a registered non-profit association in British Columbia since February 2012.

Persons can become members of the Triple-X Workers' Solidarity Association of B.C. if they have agreed to the direct exchange of sexual stimulation for financial compensation within the last six months and they intend to continue to work in the Triple-X industry. The full list of Triple-X membership criteria as defined in our Constitution, Bylaws & Policies are available on our bylaws webpage: <https://triple-x.org/about/bylaws.html>.