

Review

# Necropolitics and Trans Identities: Language Use as Structural Violence

Kinsey B. Stewart <sup>1,\*</sup> and Thomas A. Delgado <sup>2,\*</sup> 

<sup>1</sup> Department of Anthropology, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, 1621 Cumberland Ave, Knoxville, TN 37996, USA

<sup>2</sup> Department of Anthropology, California State University, Chico, 400 West First Street, Chico, CA 95926, USA

\* Correspondence: kstewa18@alum.utk.edu (K.B.S.); tadelgado@csuchico.edu (T.A.D.)

**Abstract:** Despite the increasing visibility of transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people in U.S. society, current linguistic practices within forensic anthropology and death investigation in general are not TGD-inclusive. This lack of consideration for TGD decedents can cause unnecessary delays in the identification and disposition of their remains; moreover, failing to recognize their true identities is a form of forced post-mortem detransition. Using De León's concept of necroviolence as a framework, we argue that language can also harm the dead and that the (mis)use of language within medicolegal death investigation reflects and reinforces structural violence against TGD people. Examples drawn from a qualitative review of public details for 87 cases are used to demonstrate how language and language-enforced bureaucratic structures can harm TGD decedents, their loved ones, the broader TGD community, and the process of medicolegal death resolution itself. We then suggest steps that anthropologists, death investigators, and their affiliated partners can take to reduce the systemic necropolitical violence faced by the TGD community. While TGD-inclusive methods will take time to implement at the institutional level, individual practitioners can enact significant change within the system by upholding core standards that recognize and respect the personhood and lived experiences of TGD decedents.

**Keywords:** transgender; LGBTQIA+; necropolitics; necroviolence; queer necropolitics; structural violence; gender; language; linguistic violence



**Citation:** Stewart, K.B.; Delgado, T.A. Necropolitics and Trans Identities: Language Use as Structural Violence. *Humans* **2023**, *3*, 106–125. <https://doi.org/10.3390/humans3020010>

Academic Editors: Jesse R. Goliath, An-Di Yim and Jessica K. Juarez

Received: 23 March 2023

Revised: 14 May 2023

Accepted: 22 May 2023

Published: 24 May 2023



**Copyright:** © 2023 by the authors. Licensee MDPI, Basel, Switzerland. This article is an open access article distributed under the terms and conditions of the Creative Commons Attribution (CC BY) license (<https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/>).

## 1. Introduction

Inclusive language is an essential standard in the creation of representative and ethical systems of death investigation and deathcare. However, despite the increasing visibility of transgender and gender diverse (TGD) people in the United States, current linguistic practices within medicolegal death investigation, forensic anthropology, and deathcare as a whole advances a cisnormative conflation of sex and gender and values “legal” identity over lived identity. When the resulting system fails to recognize (initially or when reporting the death) that an individual is transgender, this can lead to unnecessary delays in the identification and disposition of the remains of TGD people, as seen most famously in the case of “Julie Doe” (NamUs #UP6030), a transgender woman whose mummified remains were found in 1988 and who was reported to be a cisgender woman who had given birth to one or more children until DNA testing in 2015 indicated otherwise [1,2]. Moreover, referring to these decedents using names, pronouns, and other terms of address that do not respect their true, self-stated identities is tantamount to a non-consensual, post-mortem de-transition.

The lack of TGD-inclusive linguistic practices in medicolegal death investigation manifests and perpetuates structural violence against transgender and gender diverse people. While De León has demonstrated how physical postmortem violence extends the sovereign's necropolitical authority past the moment of death [3], we maintain that

language can also be used to harm the dead and enforce the State's social management of the living. To illustrate the form and impact of this violence, we present a selection of cases drawn from a qualitative review of publicized TGD deaths in the United States. Given the seriousness and pervasiveness of the problem, we also recommend steps that individual practitioners, state institutions, and affiliated fields can take to reduce the systematic (necro)violence faced by the TGD community.

### *1.1. The Necropolitical Impact of Post-Mortem Violence*

To understand how language use can become a manifestation of structural violence, the relationship between the individual and the State must first be explored. While structural violence was first introduced by Galtung [4] and then operationalized within anthropology by Farmer [5], the interaction between people and power is best elucidated through the theories of biopower, necropolitics, and necroviolence. Biopower—the mechanism by which the State exercises its authority to either “take life or let live” or “make live and let die”—is a central component of the sovereign's exercise of authority as conceived by Foucault [6] (p. 241). Life and living are provisions granted by the State to the individual so long as the State maintains its decision not to kill; however, this alone fails to describe the extent of power the State has in contemporary and globalized societies. The bodies of subjects must be—and have been—systemized and structured in an efficient manner suitable for State control. In this more contemporary framework of society—one that has been organized, structured, and “deducted”—the State's power “fosters life or disallows it to the point of death” [7] (p. 261).

It is this act of disallowing life—which can be equated to a disallowance of identity—that manifests itself in violent death practices. Through the structuring of society and the continual Othering of people, the status quo is maintained and exclusion becomes the norm. In this way, by disallowing TGD and other queer identities, the State upholds hetero- and cisnormative sex and gender binaries. As a result, TGD existence is continuously threatened by the State's maintained (bio)power to strip the individual of their identity, a power that extends through life and into death. As will be shown in the case of Christopher Lee (Section 3.3), this power even circumvents the State's own established legal procedures for recognizing changes to a person's officially recorded name and sex.

Expanding from Foucault, Mbembe shows how this biopower is further operationalized within State and legal structures. The State's necropolitical power to “subject life to the power of death” is premised on its ability to define the disposability of particular lives [8] (p. 39). The State is able to do this by “waging war” against its perceived enemies (the “Other”) and suspending their legal (i.e., human) rights. While the United States serves as the focus for this paper, the necropolitical management of the transgender body—be it through physical or bureaucratic violence—has been used to advance the interests of the State in nations the world over [9–14].

Importantly, the State's ability to use the dead and the process of death to govern extends past the moment of death itself. Verdery describes the dead body as a political body whose highly symbolic nature can be molded to make meanings out of kinship, history, authority, national identity, and morality, as well as time and space itself. This concentrated symbolic power makes the politicized corpse (both physical and immaterial) the central means by which social structures and processes are legitimized following a major social or political upheaval [15]. It is no surprise, then, that the symbolic power of the corpse would be used to push back against recent gains in social visibility and recognition across the LGBTQIA+ community, the Othering of the dead reflecting and reinforcing the Othering of the Queer in living society. The dead bodies of TGD people—particularly femme TGD people of color—also embody larger social tensions surrounding policing and communities of color. Policed as criminal through life [9], TGD bodies often appear to garner more voyeuristic than investigative interest from law enforcement after death, as seen in the murder of Sasha Garden (Section 3.4).

The specific corporeality of the dead body and its ability to be transformed through physical manipulation only further enables the State's ability to govern through the dead beyond the moment of death itself. This power is most clearly and viscerally manifested when the dead body is physically harmed by means such as mutilation, dismemberment, or grotesque display. Through this necroviolence—first defined by De León as “violence performed and produced through the specific treatment of corpses that is perceived to be offensive, sacrilegious, or inhuman by the perpetrator, the victim (and [their] cultural group), or both” [3] (p. 69)—the dead become agents that carry messages about their position within the State structure. Specifically, the level at which an individual is disposable to the State—or, broadly, to society—becomes articulable through the way in which the deceased are treated. Cases such as Sage Smith (Section 3.1) highlight how the socially disenfranchised—particularly poor and queer people of color—are often allotted fewer tangible and emotional State resources.

De León describes two forms of necroviolence: the desecration of the deceased body via physical manipulation and the complete destruction or disappearance of the body by means outside of culturally-appropriate funerary practices [3]. The former can be accomplished by post-mortem mutilation of the body and/or through the disrespectful treatment and display of remains. If not performed publicly, knowledge of the act is almost always recorded or otherwise allowed to become known to the decedent's family and community. When bodies are destroyed or disappeared, however, there is typically little to no acknowledgment by the perpetrators, and the fact that a death occurred may not be recorded or officially acknowledged. This formal erasure of an individual's identity and history is among the most harmful acts to those survived by the deceased as there is no recompense for the death, only uncertainty and fear.

De León also highlights how each form of necroviolence can serve one or more highly varied functions beyond merely extending the physical experience of violence past the moment of death. If violence prevents or delays culturally appropriate funerary practices, both the dead and the living are harmed. Many contemporary and historical cultural systems see postmortem violence as harming not only the body but the decedent's spirit, soul, or afterlife. The complete absence of a corpse additionally strips the dead of the voice and agency they had in life. If all knowledge of a death is effectively erased, mourners unsure of whether their loved one is missing or dead can become trapped in a traumatic state of “ambiguous loss” that makes closure impossible.

Necroviolence also serves as a vector to transmit violent messages to the living. “Excessive” violence also serves to elevate violence to “glorious” acts that unify perpetrators and their supporters against their perceived enemies and reinforce feelings of moral superiority [16] (p. 34). The terror of bodily mistreatment conversely discourages challenges to perpetrators' claims to political or social power by implicitly threatening the living with additional violence, a process that serves as one of the primary means by which the necropolitical state constructs its authority and sovereignty [3]. This process is easily hidden, however, because when bodies are completely destroyed or disappeared, perpetrators can plausibly deny that any violence has taken place, let alone at their hands.

### *1.2. Language as a Necessary Expansion to Transphobic (Necro) Violence*

While De León focuses specifically on the physical mistreatment of the dead, violence—especially structural violence—is not limited to physical acts. Linguistic violence is a manifestation of the type of “symbolic” violence that works to ensure the status quo [17]. Verbal violence is not limited to specific hateful or abusive terms; it can also include implication, inference, and the context in which language is used [18]. As in physical violence, the injury can be immediate [19] and can affect a person's sense of the bodied self [20]. However, language's link with maintaining social systems means that disempowered and marginalized groups bear the greatest burden of linguistic harm [19].

Given language's demonstrated generative capacity for violence, we argue that the linguistic mistreatment of the dead—particularly by those in positions of power—can have

the same functional result as corporeal necroviolence and must therefore be considered a necessary expansion to the theory. Linguistic necroviolence should then be understood as the act of causing harm to a decedent and/or their cultural group by means of improper or offensive language, intentional or otherwise. This emphasis on intent here reiterates that necroviolence exists in the perception of the victims, and so persists regardless of the intention of the perpetrators. That is not to say that necroviolence is simply a matter of individual perception, especially when it is a function of systemic structural violence. Instead, necroviolence highlights when these instances of State violence occur where they might have been invisible otherwise as, by nature, the direct victims of necroviolence are not capable of describing their own perceptions and emotions due to being deceased. Emphasizing perceptions of harm over intentions of harm also enables more immediate and practical acts of remediation (such as the recommendations for individual and institutional action offered in Sections 4.1 and 4.2) by sidestepping easily politicized debates about the existence or extent of structural violence within a given State system.

Transgender and gender diverse people regularly face linguistic violence in the form of verbal harassment (including slurs and threats), misnaming or “deadnaming” (when a person who has legally or socially changed their name as part of their transition is referred to using the name given to them at birth), misgendering language (incorrect pronouns, gendered terminology), and dehumanizing or pathologizing descriptions of the transgender body [21–23]. Though the use of “she” to refer to a TGD person who knows themselves to be “he” or “they” may appear innocuous when set against more graphic and degrading slurs, this type of misgendering is perceived as harmful because it evokes and perpetuates the trauma of forced detransition from an individual’s lived identity (e.g., transgender male) to one specified by Western heteronormativity (e.g., cisgender female). The TGD-specific violence of this type of language is intensified by the echoed threat of physical violence anticipated by TGD people as they navigate certain spheres of public space (e.g., restrooms) [24].

The dead are not spared this and other types of linguistic (necro)violence. As a result, TGD people are advised to prepare end-of-life documents with specific directions on how they are to be addressed (and literally dressed) in death and granting a trusted advocate the authority to make their final arrangements [25]. Without such precautions, family members and deathcare providers have unfortunately been known to “detransition” TGD decedents, treating their corpse according to the gender they were assigned at birth [24]. Such directives hold little legal sway over those empowered by the State to investigate and legally resolve death, however. When medical examiners/coroners, pathologists/physicians of record, death investigators, law enforcement officers, forensic anthropologists, and funeral directors misgender, misname, or otherwise disparage TGD decedents in official death records, press releases, informant interviews, or even when communicating with other professionals, they are perpetuating what Aizura [26] (p. 129) describes as the “institutional process of deliberate neglect and disposability” that treats the TGD body as invisible and ungrievable. Regardless of whether this type of dehumanization is intended by the individual actor, such acts invariably uphold necropolitical power structures built on violence perpetrated against the bodies and spirits of the dead.

## 2. Materials and Methods

The pervasive nature of linguistic violence and physical necroviolence against transgender and gender-diverse people are well documented within the literature [21–26]. In addition to erasing TGD expression and identity, professional language standards that exclude TGD people or cast them as “Other” ultimately reinforce political and societal expectations of how people “should” be.

Due to necroviolence being deeply rooted in victim perception, the only way to clearly demonstrate that linguistic necroviolence is a valid expansion of De León’s theory is to examine the impact specific instances of linguistic violence have had on the decedents’ loved ones, broader community, and the official resolution of their deaths. In recent years,

multiple LGBTQIA+ advocacy groups have published lists of TGD people who have disappeared, been murdered, or have otherwise been victims of suspicious circumstances, often criticizing the actions of law enforcement, medical examiners/coroners, district attorneys, and other officials involved in each case. Many of the families and friends of these decedents have also chosen to speak publicly in order to bring attention to their loved one's case and push back against official and media portrayals that invalidate their lived identities. Although additional studies will be needed to provide a more nuanced understanding of the full extent of the problem, these publicly-voiced testimonies provide an expedient means of exploring TGD-directed linguistic necroviolence in medicolegal death investigation.

Our qualitative study briefly reviewed the publicly available details of approximately 250 cases involving transgender and gender-diverse decedents and identified documented instances of apparent linguistic violence. A total of 87 cases were determined to be potentially illustrative of linguistic necroviolence and were subjected to a second, closer reading; they were then categorized according to the specific necroviolence impacts described by De León. Cases where the decedent's loved ones had publicly spoken about the investigation were particularly valuable to our analysis. All cases that were selected for review were found using publicly-available online sources, including lists of transgender victims of fatal violence maintained by the Human Rights Campaign (HRC) and the Trans Doe Task Force (TDTF), active missing and unidentified persons cases from the National Association of Missing and Unidentified Persons (NamUs) databases, and various new articles.

This review is limited to the United States and its formal medicolegal death systems. To that end, our analysis does not include instances of linguistic necroviolence that fell outside of the bounds of medicolegal death resolution (e.g., deadnaming a decedent in an obituary or eulogy). Otherwise, no formal restrictions on the types of cases eligible for inclusion and analysis were set. Due to the nature of our data sources, however, the cases reviewed consisted primarily of homicides or suspected homicides from 2015–2021 (81), still-unsolved cases of unidentified or missing persons (3), and deaths that had otherwise drawn public commentary (including challenges to state laws) within the last decade (3).

Since 2015, the HRC has published an annual report listing all known instances of fatal violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people in the United States [27–33]. While reporting is restricted to cases of homicide or unresolved suspicious circumstances, as a general rule, the HRC notes whenever a decedent has been publicly misgendered or otherwise mistreated by officials, making these annual reports a valuable tool for observing TGD-directed necroviolence at a national scale. The case summaries collected in these reports and the associated “memorial” articles further detailing each decedent's life and death were particularly valuable to this study because the HRC regularly includes if a decedent has been “miskgendered” or “misknamed” by police, officials, and/or media in their reporting. Of the 232 cases summarized in the HRC's reports for the years 2015–2021, 81 reports indicated that the decedent had been misgendered, misnamed, and/or included other indications that the decedent may have been the subject of linguistic necroviolence (e.g., reports of officials using transphobic language, delays in identification due to decedent's transgender identity, delays in notifying loved ones of death).

A direct search of the NamUs missing and unidentified persons databases using variations of “transgender” did not yield any cases. The TDTF's LGBT+ Accountability for Missing and Murdered Persons (LAAMP) database was used to identify potential cases of interest, which were then cross-referenced within NamUs. This search yielded three cases not previously identified in the HRC data.

Many of the HRC case summaries included direct links to initial news reports, police statements, and secondary coverage of the case. These articles and others identified through an independent internet search were reviewed in order to find additional details on the nature and impact of the reported linguistic violence. Similar articles were also reviewed for cases from the NamUs data set. A separate internet search in conjunction with a literature search identified an additional three cases not included in the HRC or NamUs data sets. In

addition to specific instances of linguistic violence, we noted evidence of the decedent's self-stated identity and statements given by decedents' loved ones, other members of the LGBTQIA+ community, and officials involved in the case. The number of articles reviewed per case varied depending on the depth of detail available per source. As our review was relatively limited and focused on confirming and characterizing at least one instance of linguistic necroviolence per case, the final data set is not presumed to represent all instances of necroviolence that may have occurred within the sample.

Our findings were first reported as part of the "Queered Science" symposium at the American Academy of Forensic Sciences 2022 meeting [34]. While preparing this publication, we conducted a follow-up review of the unresolved cases reported here to ensure that our analysis still reflected the current state of affairs. To better contextualize our findings, we also used the advanced search tools available in the public-facing NamUs interface to search for other NamUs cases that used specific terms and descriptions identified in our analysis. Finally, since first presenting our findings, the HRC 2021 report of fatal violence against transgender and gender non-conforming people was amended to include eight additional deaths. These additional cases—four of which were reported to have been misgendered or misnamed—were briefly reviewed while preparing this publication and are included in the totals reported above.

### 3. Results

Although the public details for many cases were relatively limited, our review found that—when viewed as a system—linguistic mistreatment of TGD decedents by medicolegal death investigation officials meets one or more of the established functions of necroviolence. While each of the cases reviewed offers a uniquely tragic perspective, we present here four particularly illustrative cases that demonstrate the specifics of TGD susceptibility to linguistic necroviolence in death investigation. In addition to encompassing a range of cases that require medicolegal investigation (missing persons, unidentified remains, suicides, and homicides), nearly all of the functional impacts of necroviolence as described by De León are concisely and poignantly demonstrated within these four cases. Furthermore, they exemplify many of the key themes identified by this study, including linguistic vanishing, the prioritization of cisnormative medicolegal understandings of sex and gender even when presented with evidence that a decedent was transgender or gender diverse, and the lasting, visceral harm linguistic necroviolence causes the living.

With the exception of direct quotes from the analyzed material, decedents are referred to here using their chosen names, pronouns, and other terms of address when known, regardless of legal identity. When this information is not known, gender-neutral language is used. Where applicable, NamUs missing and unidentified persons ID numbers have been included in the hopes that this publication can bring attention and eventual resolution to these cases.

#### 3.1. Sage Smith

Sage Smith is a transgender woman who was last seen alive near an Amtrak station in Charlottesville, VA, USA, on 20 November 2012, one day after her 19th birthday (NamUs case #MP18608) [35]. Although her body has never been found, in 2016 her case was reclassified as a homicide [36]. Her case remains unsolved.

Smith was known for her compelling presence and manner of dress, which included both masculine and feminine-presenting clothing; family and friends recount stories of Smith posing for fashion photos on a local bus and a time she helped an old man carry groceries while wearing a mini-skirt and three-inch heels [37]. At the time of her disappearance, her father described her to the media as "a transgender homosexual," while her mother stated that she identified as both a woman and a man, using "she/her" pronouns within the gay community and "he/his" pronouns among family [38,39]. In the two weeks preceding her disappearance, Smith changed her gender on Facebook to "female," adding the addendum: "I am a girl now #Respect it" [37].

Nevertheless, her publicly viewable NamUs profile continues to prioritize a masculine reading of Smith's identity. Although a photo of Smith wearing a long red wig styled in a side-part, a full face of makeup, multiple facial piercings, and layered pink and purple scoop-necked shirts was uploaded to NamUs when her file was created in January of 2013, the tightly cropped photo selected for her case header presents a masculinized image that is not reflective of her more typical daily appearance. Smith is shown without makeup, her chin, hairline, and the top of her head hidden behind thick white borders. In the uncropped version of the photo featured in some news reports, Smith's hair appears to be several inches long and loosely swept back [40]; in contrast, the NamUs header image shows very little of her hair, giving the impression that it is much shorter, barely grazing the top of her ear. In the Demographics section of her file, her first name is given as "Dashad" (her birth and legal name at the time of her disappearance) and her sex as "male"; her chosen name of "Sage" is listed only as a "Nickname/ Alias," and she is referred to using "he/him" pronouns. Her transgender identity is at best implicitly acknowledged in descriptions of her manner of dress ("He may dress as a female"; "May wear a red wig"; "Clothing: Normally dresses as a female") [35].

Smith's chosen name and womanhood are isolated to NamUs case fields that are not only variably used, but are also only accessible using the site's less-prominent "Advanced Search" options. The result is that those who associate her first and foremost as a woman named "Sage" will not be able to readily search for or identify her within the database, as that information is hidden through these less defined fields. The profile also makes no mention of the fact that in addition to a long red wig, Smith wore her own hair in long, black braids [41]. This specific omission of an identifying feature, the tight cropping of the "maled up" image chosen to head Smith's file (the only image visible when searching NamUs in gallery mode), and the inclusion of a third identifying photograph depicting Smith without makeup and sporting closely cropped hair further emphasizes an investigative reading of Smith that erases her feminine identity.

The absence of a body to mourn and the resulting suspended grief of ambiguous loss felt by Smith's loved ones is a classic example of physical necroviolence as described by De León. In a 2019 interview with a local news agency, Latasha Davis—Smith's mother—voiced this pain explicitly:

The fact remains that my child is missing and that to me is all that matters. I am in a situation where I cannot grieve and I just need closure. The only thing that remains in my mind is who did something to him? How did it happen? [36]

Though Davis expressed in this same interview that Smith's gender identity should not be the focus of the story, the linguistic necroviolence levied against her memory by investigators is part of a pattern of behavior that has led her family and even members of law enforcement closely involved in her case to believe that police have been disinclined to give her case the necessary attention and resources. Smith had been missing for eight days when city police held their first local press conference about her case, during which the public information officer denied that there was any indication of criminal involvement in her disappearance despite the fact that officers were investigating several tips, including a named person of interest who was also yet to be located [36,37].

For nearly four years, the Charlottesville Police Department (CPD) officially maintained that no foul play was suspected, only changing Smith's case to a homicide several months after the newly-elected police chief (the first Black man to hold the position) met with Smith's family [37]. In bitter contrast, the disappearance of 18-year-old Hannah Graham from a downtown mall in 2014 prompted multiple tearful CPD press conferences and the deployment of city, county, and state police as well as the FBI and other emergency services and search groups from across the state. Graham's murdered body was found in a little over a month, and her killer was apprehended after a 3-day nation-wide manhunt.

There are undeniable racial and socioeconomic components that partly explain the difference in treatment between the two cases. Graham was White and a sophomore at the University of Virginia; Lieutenant James Mooney—the CPD detective who has worked the

longest on Smith's case—has blamed the community's lack of interest and the department's sluggish response on Smith being Black, trans, and poor. Mooney has also stated that arguments about "gender issues and things like that" have brought more attention than actual help to Smith's case [37].

Nevertheless, we posit that Smith's case is an example of a more subtle but no less devastating form of linguistic violence that wields silence and emotional distance as weapons. Not only did the delay in labeling Smith a victim of violence allow a key person of interest to plausibly deny their involvement in Smith's disappearance, by continuing to publicly downplay Smith's case, the CPD extended the violence of her disappearance and presumed murder, linguistically vanishing her bit by bit over days, weeks, and eventually years.

### 3.2. "Unknown 94-247"

On 25 December 1994, the body of a still-unidentified individual was found in a parking lot in Baltimore, MD (NamUs case #UP1423) [42]. They are reported to be a 35–45-year-old male of uncertain race/ethnicity with brown eyes and fine, straight brown hair. Their remains are described as having "recognizable" facial features at the time of their discovery as well as "likely [demonstrating] signs of chronic illness."

Although this decedent's lived gender identity remains unknown, there is evidence that they likely would have identified or been identified by others as falling within the TGD spectrum. The NamUs case file notes that "lipstick marks" were found on both of the decedent's cheeks, and lists long, painted fingernails and pierced ears as some of the decedent's "Distinctive Physical Features." A pair of low-heeled, "feminine-looking" brown shoes are also included in a list of the decedent's clothing.

Regardless of these indicators, this decedent (recorded as a "non-white [sic]" male with the first name "Unknown 94-247" and no last name on Baltimore's 1994 index of deaths) is consistently referred to using "he/his" pronouns:

Subject was found lying on a parking lot. His fingernails were long and painted. He had lipstick marks on both cheeks. He likely demonstrated signs of chronic illness. [43]

The decedent's male sex is further emphasized by the inclusion of a short, stubbly beard and mustache in the artist's rendering of their face (even though the "Facial Hair Description" field is left blank in the file itself) and a note under "Other distinctive physical characteristics" that the decedent is "not circumcised."

This explicit acknowledgement of the decedent's genitals is unusual across NamUs as a whole. While it is common practice during postmortem examinations to note whether male decedents are observably circumcised or uncircumcised, this trait is far less commonly remarked upon within NamUs reports. As of 1 January 2023, among the 10,668 unidentified persons listed as "male" in the NamUs database (a majority of which are admittedly cases with little to no soft tissue present), only 105 (0.98%) are described as "circumcised", "uncircumcised", or "not circumcised". Notably, 44 of these cases originate from Maryland, suggesting a specific reporting practice or policy unique to the state. A search of the remainder of the database yielded one additional case that specifically referenced the length of a decedent's foreskin, but the other 22 cases in which male genitalia are specifically described are provided in the context of tattoos, piercings, scars, or other potentially identifying colorations observed on the penis or scrotum, none of which are noted in this decedent's case file.

The use of the impersonal and objectifying term "subject" to refer to this decedent is also notable. Although it may be a common linguistic practice among law enforcement to refer to various individuals as "subjects," less than 4% of unidentified persons within NamUs are described as "subject" in their case circumstances (523 of 14,330; 205 of these cases also originated from Maryland, again suggesting a state-specific practice or policy). A search of various terms used in the circumstances description of all NamUs Unidentified Persons cases found that death-emphasizing terms were the most frequently used descriptors for unidentified persons ("remains" 3579 uses; "decedent" 2745 uses; "body"

1442 uses; “deceased” 622 uses). Other commonly used terms emphasized the decedent’s personhood (“person” 626 uses; “individual” 611 uses), sex (“male” 2598 uses; “female” 608 uses), and/or gender (“man” 1739 uses; “woman” 102 uses). It should be noted that due to overlap in usage (e.g., “body of deceased female infant”), usage counts do not necessarily reflect completely separate cases. This search found no uses of “transgender” or “trans”; “likely assigned female at birth” and “sex assigned at birth” are each used once in two different cases where individuals were listed as having “unsure” sex (#UP5639 and #UP6262).

While including this decedent’s genitals and referring to them as “subject” may both be in line with how other non-TGD unidentified decedents (from Maryland and elsewhere) are reported within NamUs, it must be remembered that practices take on different meanings when applied to different populations. Their uncritical usage in the case of this unidentified decedent perpetuates a system in which the validity of a person’s gender identity and expression are limited according to a strictly-prescribed reading of anatomy. While it remains possible that this individual would have used masculine pronouns in life, whether in keeping with a cisgender identity or as part of a more fluid gendered sense of self, the enforcement of “sex-correct” pronouns and genitalia evokes the same State policing of body and identity seen in so-called “bathroom bills” governing the use of public restrooms by TGD people [44].

Regretfully, attempts to find additional information on this unnamed individual using means that would be available to the general public yielded no additional news articles, police briefings, or other indications of an ongoing official search to identify #UP1423/“Unknown 94-247”. While there are obviously limits on the efforts that can be dedicated to a cold case, the lack of additional information or evidence of a search further contributes to the erasure of not only this individual’s death, but their life, identity, and personhood.

### 3.3. Christopher “Christoph” Lee

Christopher “Christoph” Lee was a transgender man who died by suicide in 2012 at the age of 48. An influential filmmaker and political activist, Lee began his social transition in his mid-20s, legally changing his name and sex, obtaining a California driver’s license that listed his sex as “M,” and undergoing testosterone hormone therapy that he continued up to the time of his death [45,46].

Estranged from his birth family, Lee’s chosen family made his final arrangements. They informed the Alameda County coroner that Lee “identified as a ‘Female to Male transgender man’ and provided the coroner with supporting documentation that included Lee’s driver’s license [45]. During Lee’s autopsy, multiple physical signs of his transition were also noted by the medical examiner, who described Lee’s body as having a short mustache and beard, receding hairline consistent with male pattern balding, and female genitalia [46]. To the shock of Lee’s friends and chosen family, however, the coroner who ultimately completed his death certificate used Lee’s birth name/deadname instead of his legally changed name and listed his sex as “female.”

When pressed on the issue, the coroner’s office justified their actions by noting that the death certificate’s sex field was typically completed based on the presence of male or female genitalia [45]. Lee’s California driver’s license was seen as insufficient documentation when countered by his “anatomy” and birth certificate, which had not been updated. Yet the death certificate standards published by the Center for Disease Control (CDC) make no mention of genitalia, instead broadly directing medical examiners and coroners to “enter male or female based on observation” [47]. Due to the cost, surgical complexity, and potential impact on reproductive capability, genitourinary reconstructive surgery (“bottom” surgery) is also far less common than gender-confirming chest surgeries (“top” surgery) among transgender and gender non-binary people, and less than 5% of transgender men have undergone phallus-constructing procedures such as phalloplasty or metoidioplasty [48]. Regardless, at the time of his death, Lee’s genitals would have had no bearing on his ability

to legally change the sex on his vital documents under California law, which as of 2011 no longer required genital surgery prior to changing the sex listed on a birth certificate [49].

Upon closer interrogation, it appears that the coroner's decision was largely driven by fear of the legal consequences associated with providing "false information" on a vital record (a misdemeanor in California, but a felony in other states) [50,51]. In a later interview with the NPR and PBS member station for Northern California, the executive director of the California Funeral Directors Association stated that funeral directors—who also regularly complete death certificates—could be exposed to liability if they stepped between two informing parties who disagreed on what should be included in the death certificate [46]. Yet this fear of liability does not appear to have extended to the act of misrepresenting Lee's legal name and sex, a forceful, post-mortem detransitioning that had a profound impact on not just Lee's friends and chosen family, but the broader LGBTQIA+ community. Testimony from Lee's close friend and chosen brother Chino Scott-Chung highlights the ways in which this action caused harm to both the living and to Lee's spirit:

It felt like spitting on his grave. When they put RIP on people's tombstones, it's rest in peace. And I just felt like Christopher's spirit will not rest in peace with a death certificate that says female . . . Christopher lived his life in all ways as a man. Listing him as female on his death certificate is disrespectful to his memory and his legacy. It is deeply painful to me, to his chosen family, and to the community that he was so much a part of. [46]

With the assistance of the Transgender Law Center, Lee's chosen family attempted to have his death certificate amended only to learn that, as his death certificate was considered properly prepared under the law, any corrections would be stapled to the original document [52]. The death certificate misgendering and deadnaming of Lee would remain part of the public record. In response, Lee's chosen family and other advocates in California successfully lobbied for a change to California law. The 2014 Respect After Death Act expanded the sex options that could be listed on death certificates, provided guidelines on the supportive documentation that could stand as evidence of a TGD person's name and gender and how individuals with sepulcher rights could petition the court to challenge how a decedent's identity was recorded, and shielded the person completing the death certificate from the associated damages or costs [50,51].

#### 3.4. *Sasha Garden*

Sasha Garden was a transgender woman with aspirations of being a hairstylist. Friend and transgender advocate Montrese Williams remembers her as a "firecracker" who "didn't hold anything back" [53,54]. In the pre-dawn hours of 19 July 2018, she was found murdered outside of an apartment building in Orlando, FL. She was 27 years old. To date, no arrests have been made in her murder.

At around seven in the morning, law enforcement sought out Williams—who lived nearby and serves as the outreach coordinator for the HIV/AIDS organization Miracle of Love—and asked for her help identifying Garden's remains [54]. "[The deputies] were very uneducated," Williams recalled in a later interview. "As soon as I opened the door, I get, 'I hear a bunch of transvestites stay here.' I had to let them know, I'm a transgender woman and I'm the only one that stays here" [54]. The officers then showed Williams a photo of Garden as she was found. "The picture was very disturbing because, unfortunately, it was the picture of her deceased on the ground. I'm still dealing with that" [55]. Though public details of Garden's death are limited, officials have stated that her body bore signs of blunt force trauma.

In seeking out Williams' expertise as a transgender woman who worked with transgender women, the investigating officers demonstrated that they understood it was likely that Garden was herself also transgender. Nevertheless, in the first official reports released to news media, the Orange County Sheriff's Office (OCSO) called Garden by her birth name, referred to her using masculine pronouns, and described her as a man who was "wearing a wig and was dressed as a female," language that multiple local news networks echoed on

air [54,56]. It took several hours and multiple distressed phone calls from Garden's loved ones before news agencies corrected their initial reporting and referred to Garden by her correct name and gender.

Williams—a former sex worker who had been called on before to identify a trans woman killed while doing sex work—was not necessarily surprised by her encounter with law enforcement or the nature of their press release:

I know how it is. You know when something happens, we don't call police. We don't want to be judged by the police. We don't want to be misgendered by officers—they still tell us, 'We have to call you by your government name, what's on your ID'. [54]

Indeed, when the OCSO did eventually release a public apology “for any misgivings our communications may have caused,” Sheriff Jerry Demings justified misgendering Garden in the initial press release by claiming that the office did not know she was transgender at the time and noting that the OCSO was required by state statute to release the victim's legal name alongside other details that might help detectives solve the case [55]. Demings insisted that OCSO detectives and public information officers “did not intend to be insensitive,” had not known that Garden was transgender, and had transitioned to using her appropriate gender and recognized name as soon as they were informed.

This official proclamation of no ill intent runs counter to Williams' report of deputies referring to her using an archaic term that has a history of being used as a slur, an act of linguistic violence made necroviolent given the context of Garden's murder and the presentation of a photograph of her traumatized body. Given that Garden presented as a woman in her daily life, it is unclear how useful information about her murder would be solicited by emphasizing a name and gender that she did not go by and framing her hair and clothing in a sensationalizing manner.

Regardless of intent, the actions of law enforcement must be analyzed based on their ultimate impact on the community. Garden's murder and the OCSO's investigation did not occur in a social vacuum. Twelve hours after Garden's body was discovered, Jessie Sumla—a 30-year-old hairstylist and drag performer—was found murdered inside his Jacksonville, FL, USA, home, the fourth Black TGD person to have been murdered in the city in as many months [56,57]. Jacksonville and Orlando are approximately two hours apart by interstate, and this close cluster of deaths lead many in the community to fear that there was a serial killer in Florida targeting Black transgender women. Law enforcement's repeated misgendering and misnaming of the victims combined with an apparent lack of urgency to solve their murders only heightened the community's perception that Florida officials were biased against TGD people of color.

### 3.5. *The Systemic Reality of TGD-Directed (Necro) Violence*

It is important to note that these are not one-off cases. Although our analysis is limited to cases with published instances of linguistic necroviolence, by the HRC's own analysis, 74–78% of the 202 violent deaths tracked across the United States from 2013 to 2020 were initially misgendered in police statements and other public death investigation reporting [32]. This type of linguistic erasure—which typically consisted of using the wrong pronouns, gendered name, gender identity, and/or emphasizing the decedent's sex in a manner that invalidated their lived gender—was the most pervasive form of linguistic necroviolence seen in our sample. Although reports of outright slurs are rare in our dataset, law enforcement was found to frequently use disparaging and sensationalist language when describing deceased transgender women to the press (e.g., “man in a dress,” “man dressed as a woman”).

While public outcry and appeals from decedents' loved ones typically resulted in the eventual amendment of media reporting, they were not always sufficient to force a public correction and/or official apology from law enforcement. Additionally, multiple decedents within our sample were described as either local public figures or prominent members

of their respective communities, demonstrating that antemortem social status and public recognition are not enough to prevent misgendering by officials.

Our review also found that there were frequent delays in reporting the violent death of a TGD person to the decedent's chosen family, local LGBTQIA+ community, and advocacy groups collecting TGD mortality data. The process of death notification was often reversed in these cases, with friends and family who had reported a TGD person missing using their chosen name later having to reach out to law enforcement to confirm if the deceased individual described in press releases was indeed their loved one. Even when decedents had legally changed their name and/or sex and were presenting as their chosen gender at the time of their death, it still fell to their family, friends, or local LGBTQIA+ advocates to inform law enforcement of their transgender identity.

Similarly, though the HRC data did include a few instances where decedents were not initially included in the HRC's annual tally as officials reported them by their correct name and gender without indicating that they were transgender, far more commonly decedents were misgendered and misnamed even if they had legally changed their sex and name. In one notable instance, law enforcement publicly misgendered and misnamed a decedent despite the fact that: (a) the decedent had legally changed her name; (b) the local medical examiner correctly reported her identity even though an out-of-date passport with the wrong name and sex was found on her person; and (c) the police-provided photo in the press release showed the decedent presenting as a woman [58]. In this manner, instances of good TGD-specific practice by one individual or institution could easily be superseded by the actions of others.

Such failings of the medicolegal system are not lost upon those who have no choice but to entrust their bodies and deaths to the same system that has repeatedly failed them. Another recurrent theme seen in the reviewed homicide cases was a sentiment among TGD people and their loved ones that anti-trans bias in law enforcement meant that less effort and resources were put into investigating their deaths. This distrust of the medicolegal death investigation process—particularly the sense that, through inaction, officials were allowing perpetrators of violence to escape justice and/or continue to victimize TGD people—intensifies the sense of fear and anxiety caused by the perpetual social threat of TGD-directed violence as well as instances of police violence or physical necroviolence.

Feelings of vulnerability and anger are particularly strong among Black transgender women, who make up a disproportionate majority of violent TGD deaths (66% of cases tracked by the HRC from 2013–2020 [32]; with the possible exception of #UP1423/"Unknown 94-247", all cases discussed here as examples of linguistic necroviolence involve people of color). After the murder of 31-year-old Dana Martin—a Black transgender woman and the first transgender homicide victim reported for 2019—Transgender Advocates Knowledgeable Empowering (TAKE) founder Daroneshia Duncan-Boyd gave this statement after local police and media reported Martin as male:

It's clear that she was a woman. She was a person that was loved by many . . . That's a sister, even though she's not here to defend herself. We still have a community in loss that is willing to defend her...the justice system doesn't know how to handle situations where trans folks are murdered. They always misgender, and when they misgender, it knocks the data off. [59]

In response to a media inquiry about the investigation and the department's actions, a public information officer for the Montgomery Police Department noted that "[how] a homicide victim identifies is a personal matter that becomes relevant to the investigation only if it is determined that it was a reason the victim was killed" [59]. Given that Alabama is among the 24 states with hate crime laws that do not offer protections for gender identity [60], this reductive and simplistic stance serves only to further obfuscate TGD vulnerability to fatal violence.

One of the greatest factors driving the linguistic invalidation of TGD decedents is the conflation of sex and gender in the medicolegal system—namely, that our working definitions fail to break the binary. The Academy Standards Board of the American Academy

of Forensic Sciences defines sex as “the biological differences between males and females” and gender as “an individual’s culturally mediated social expression along the feminine-masculine continuum” [61]. Although this distinction is a welcome step in the right direction after decades of confluence [62], the standard appears to be limited to sex estimation in forensic anthropology. The standards for forensic autopsy set by the National Association of Medical Examiners state only that the forensic pathologist shall “establish sex” [63]. As seen in the case of Christopher Lee, the CDC’s guidelines for death certificates are similarly vague; if sex cannot be “[verified] with medical records, inspection of the body, or other sources,” practitioners are instructed to record it as “Unknown” [47] (p. 45). No acknowledgement is made of transgender, gender diverse, or intersex people.

The standards, terminology, and language of medicolegal death investigation as a whole appear to be rooted in a perspective of Western heteronormativity that is biologically and culturally false. The establishment of “male” and “female” as manifest categories with little to no consideration for gender as a distinct concept and experience can only result in the systemic exclusion of those that do not meet that expectation. Even when presented with clear evidence and testimony, death officials seem unable to consider or publicly acknowledge that a decedent is or could be transgender or gender diverse. As a result, TGD people are not only underrepresented in mortality data, but actively rendered invisible and “uncheckable” by the system and its methods. While the problem appears pervasive, as a profession, we are “knocking off” the very data we need to fully quantify the full extent of our own linguistic necroviolence towards TGD decedents.

#### 4. Discussion: Challenging TGD-Directed Linguistic Necroviolence

Systemic problems necessitate systemic solutions. Fortunately, our review has identified several actions that anthropologists, pathologists, death investigators, law enforcement offices, and their various affiliated partners and agencies can take—both individually and institutionally—to reduce the linguistic necropolitical violence faced by the transgender and gender diverse community.

These recommendations were assembled after completing our qualitative analysis and noting the problems and conflicts observed across the reviewed cases. We then reviewed previously published resources addressing the general linguistic treatment of TGD people as well as more specific issues related to tracking mortality and bereavement [64–66]. Among these publications, the HRC Foundation’s *HRC’s Brief Guide to Getting Transgender Coverage Right* [64] and the National Health Service’s (NHS) *Bereavement: A Guide for Transsexual, Transgender People and Their Loved Ones* [65] deserve particular recognition and should be consulted in full by any practitioner or office seeking guidance on this issue. The HRC’s annual reports of fatal transgender violence are another excellent, up-to-date resource that follows each year’s accounting with an overview of the social structures and trends contributing to TGD-directed violence and other mortality trends observed within the community [27–33]. Recommendations were also drawn from various TGD-inclusive vital records standards, including proposed and enacted state and national laws that address how TGD people are to be reported on birth and death certificates, driver’s licenses, and other forms of government identification [46,49,67–70].

This collection of published recommendations and standards was supplemented and refined using our personal and professional experiences as queer, non-binary anthropologists engaged in forensic work. Both authors are committed to conducting research that is both ethical and socially responsible, especially when concerning members of marginalized communities. Delgado has worked alongside other anthropologists for the creation of better practices when conducting forensic casework on suspected TGD decedents (unpublished) and has assisted with forensic casework in both the Southeast and Northwest United States. They have also served as a member on several sub-committees within the Anthropology Section of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences focusing on diversity and inclusion, harassment, and student representation. Their research is concerned with structural violence, humanitarian action, and advocating for spaces where anthropologists can also serve

as activists. Stewart has previously worked as an autopsy technician in a large regional forensic center in the Southeast United States and has assisted in the medicolegal death investigation of several individuals known or suspected to be TGD. Stewart's dissertation research also investigates how medical examiner and coroner offices determine and utilize sex and gender, with a specific focus on how the deaths of transgender individuals are investigated [71]. Stewart's research includes a pilot study wherein she interviewed medicolegal death investigation professionals and representatives from transgender advocacy organizations whose work specifically addressed various TGD-specific mortality issues. Data from these interviews was particularly useful in identifying the practical and social needs of both death investigation practitioners and the TGD community.

#### *4.1. Recommendations for Individual Action*

There are many things that individual practitioners can do to foster an anti-necroviolent and empathetic death investigation culture. Most importantly, we must recognize the power and privilege afforded to professional voices within the system, voices that also manifest a form of biopower. As practitioners, we have the capability to shape not only our individual casework and workplaces, but also broader professional standards. Through our own use and recognition of language, we can set expectations for those that work with us directly and present positive examples for those who do not.

The first and broadest linguistic step practitioners can take towards dismantling systemic necroviolence is to ensure that the decedent is always treated as a person first and foremost, not a set of remains. While a degree of professional distance and compartmentalization is necessary within death-related work, this should never extend to the level of segregating the humanity of the living from that of the deceased. All cases were once living people. The dead must be afforded the same respect and linguistic treatment granted to the living. Language that would cause objection when used to refer to a living individual or group remains inappropriate even if there is no one to raise their voice in response to the injury.

Efforts should therefore be taken to consistently use a person's preferred name, pronouns, and other identity terms they would have used in life. This simple step alone—particularly in reports released to other agencies and news media—would have prevented many of the instances of misgendering reviewed in this study. If there is conflict between a person's "legal" identity or available documentation and it is necessary to include the person's legal name or sex, their preferred name and gender identity should be explicitly recognized and used for the remainder of the report.

To that end, practitioners must familiarize themselves with gender identity terms and concepts, even if just at a personal level. This can be completed through personal engagement with freely accessible virtual resources if dedicated LGBTQIA+ sensitivity training is not available through a practitioner's institution [64,72–74]. Care must be taken when seeking these resources to ensure that the promoting organization: (a) prioritizes the voices and experiences of TGD people; (b) differentiates between current and historical understanding and usage of various terminologies; and (c) is from the same culture as the practitioner's community of service. In addition to the variations seen across different cultures (and subcultures), many TGD-related terms and their correct usage have changed significantly over time and are likely to continue to evolve.

Practitioners should not despair at navigating this shifting lexicon so long as a good-faith effort is made to honor the dignity and self-identity of the deceased. We should never contrast TGD people with "real" or "biological" men and women, as this invalidates TGD identities and presents an essentialist, uncritical understanding of both trans and cis experiences of gender and sex. Whenever known, always adhere to the language used by the decedent themselves and remember that the most accurate testimony may be provided by persons other than the decedent's legal next of kin and/or closest biological relatives.

It should be remembered that the level of respect afforded to the dead ultimately impacts the living; therefore, work that misgenders and misnames the dead tells the living

that their own identities are not worthy of respect (i.e., the symbolic power of the corpse). Indeed, though the dead are the immediate focus of much of our work, our ability to shape larger social discourses of gender and identity—let alone individual experiences of death—should not be underestimated. To fully dismantle the system of necroviolence, death investigation must be conducted in service to the greater community and the dead entrusted to our care, not broader necropolitical systems of power. For these reasons, practitioners must put in the work to (re)connect with the living communities we serve. This outreach may be met with well-deserved caution from disenfranchised minority groups whose experiences with law enforcement are rife with abuse and ridicule. Even in jurisdictions with fully independent medical examiner systems, LGBTQIA+ communities can come to fear and distrust the process and rulings of medicolegal death investigation. This dynamic quickly results in a two-way barrier of communication that hampers investigations and further perpetuates the systemic harm faced by LGBTQIA+ people.

By creating and maintaining connections to the communities we serve, however, we help ensure that we as practitioners remain as informed as possible about individual cases and build trust within the community based on our response to the community's broader needs and concerns. Many law enforcement offices have an LGBTQIA+ liaison officer whose job is to facilitate connections with the local LGBTQIA+ community. In the absence of such an officer, practitioners may reach out to representatives from local advocacy groups. While practitioners may come to these discussions with specific questions, TGD voices and concerns should be given final precedent.

Finally, we must always acknowledge when there are instances of uncertainty, as is the case for #UP1423/"Unknown 94-247". Just as we should not assume that a decedent is cisgender and gender conforming, we should not assign a TGD label to those who are not. Often in our work, a complete picture of the decedent's identity—be it their legal identity, gender identity, social presentation, or other aspects (e.g., race) of their personhood—is either unconfirmed or unknown. We can only speak to our findings, and bones alone cannot tell us a person's pronouns or name. In these instances, gender neutral pronouns (they/them) and other terms of address (avoiding any language that casts the individual as "Other" or otherwise de-emphasizes their humanity) are preferred until identity is known. This ensures that every potential identity can be included regardless of the decedent's anatomy and the practitioner's familiarity with appropriate terms.

#### *4.2. Recommendations for Institutional Action*

In addition to the widespread adoption of the above-described practices, institutions and broader fields of study associated with death investigation must: (1) support TGD-inclusive death certificate practices; (2) advocate for TGD-inclusive options in decedent databases and other forensic record-keeping systems; (3) distinguish between sex and gender and include both in reports and case documents; and (4) utilize all possible avenues to monitor TGD deaths as a routine part of public health surveillance.

Although CDC-promoted changes to the standardized design of death certificates have proven slow to implement at a nation-wide scale [75], methods of completing the already-in-use death certificates according to TGD-inclusive practices are already in place in California (Assembly Bills 1577 [chapter 631] and 439), New Jersey (Bill S493 Sa (1R)), and the District of Columbia (Bill 21-0444). Using these enacted bills as models, decedent sex should be recorded in a manner that reflects the decedent's gender identity as reported by the informant. If the person completing the death certificate is presented with documentation demonstrating that the decedent's gender identity differs from what is reported by the informant, then sex should be reported in accordance with the documented gender identity. This measure would prevent the testimony of an unsupportive family member from being given precedence over government identification and medical records that clearly demonstrate a transgender identity.

Per the California law, sex can be recorded as female, male, or nonbinary (indicated as "X"), and supportive documentation can include a birth certificate, driver's license,

social security record, court order approving a name or gender change, passport, advanced healthcare directive, or proof of clinical treatment for gender transition. The New Jersey law also allows for written instructions from the decedent. If documentation is not available, then state law governing who has the right to challenge information reported on the death certificate should be consulted. Nevertheless, in the event that a decedent has not legally changed their name, their chosen name should also be reported in any appropriate fields.

Decedent databases and other forensic record-keeping systems—in particular those that are public-facing—should have easily-accessible means of searching for individuals by chosen name and gender identity even when individuals have not legally changed their name or sex. The inability to search for an individual using two of the key components of their public identity increases the chance that they will go unidentified. Significant others, family, friends, and acquaintances searching for missing loved ones in databases of unidentified or unclaimed decedents may be unable to locate them because they are: (a) unfamiliar with the parameters used to distinguish a person’s “legal” sex and/or name; or (b) unaware that their loved one was TGD and thus may be listed under a different name and sex.

This is especially true if these aspects of the decedent’s identity are not merely omitted from search fields (as is the case with systems that do not also search listed aliases when a name is entered) but are excluded from the report altogether. The ability to search for names and keywords, such as “trans” or “transgender”, regardless of where they appear in the case file/report would increase the visibility of TGD individuals in search results, as would a field that allowed for “gender” (man, woman, non-binary/other, unknown) separate from “sex” (male, female, intersex, unknown). Systems should also set and enforce well-defined reporting standards for both known TGD individuals and persons of unknown sex or gender.

In general, the inclusion of both sex and gender in reporting and case documents ensures that as much material is being analyzed as possible while conducting case work. This is consistent with a biocultural approach to death investigation. Similar recommendations have been made by others [76–79], and we join our colleagues in supporting this approach. If there is contextual information that could indicate an individual is TGD, this information should be reported and remains should be (re)analyzed under that framework. Importantly, this is not a call to cease the practice of conducting casework in a masked—or otherwise blind—state. Instead, we suggest first analyzing the case in a masked state, reviewing contextual material, and then reanalyzing the case with that knowledge in mind.

While each of the above-described recommendations is a step towards the routine monitoring of TGD mortality trends, we recognize that this change will be bureaucratically complex due to the number of forms, systems, and agencies involved in public health surveillance. Nevertheless, all possible avenues should be used to indicate if a decedent is known to be TGD when reporting deaths through official surveillance channels. This should be completed regardless of the manner and circumstances of death but is particularly important in cases of violent or otherwise unnatural death. Similarly, cases of known or suspected anti-TGD violence should always be reported to the appropriate agencies even if gender identity is not recognized as protected under a state’s hate crime laws. Without these efforts, the system cannot escape its current self-perpetuating cycle wherein TGD people—a growing but vulnerable population—are largely excluded from public health surveillance reporting and monitoring standards on the presumption that they are demographically insignificant.

## 5. Conclusions

We have demonstrated how De León’s concept of necroviolence—which encompasses the treatment of corpses in a manner perceived as “offensive, sacrilegious, or inhumane by the perpetrator, the victim (and [their] cultural group), or both” [3] (p. 69)—predisposes violence as a solely physical occurrence. Drawing from necropolitical, linguistic, and queer

theories of violence, we suggest an expansion to necroviolence that incorporates the use of language as a form of violence, i.e., linguistic necroviolence.

Using this theoretical framework, we reviewed instances of apparent linguistic necroviolence as reported in the public details of 87 cases involving transgender and gender-diverse decedents from the United States. These examples were drawn from a pool of approximately 250 cases identified using the HRC's annual reports of fatal violence against transgender people, databases of missing and unidentified persons, and news articles. Despite the non-comprehensive nature of our qualitative review, it quickly became apparent that TGD-directed linguistic necroviolence is a pervasive problem within official systems of medicolegal death investigation and reporting. Nearly all of the decedents in our sample were misgendered and/or deadnamed by officials. When not described using degrading, sensationalist language (i.e., "man in a wig"), decedents' gendered clothing, hair, and makeup was commonly obfuscated or devalued, resulting in a post-mortem "de-transitioning" in which genitalia-determined sex was given precedence over lived identity.

Here, four cases were presented in detail as a means to illustrate linguistic necroviolence's varied forms and the impact it has on decedents, their loved ones, the greater TGD community, and the forensic resolution of these cases. Given that the management of the politicized dead body is the central means by which the State uses death to maintain social order and govern the living, we hold that TGD-directed linguistic necroviolence by officials tasked with the resolution of death reinforces a Western cisnormative view of sex as binary and congruent with gender. As a result, TGD decedents are rendered invisible and ungrievable by the very institutions tasked with certifying their identities and cause and manner of death. Such acts, even if unintended by the individual actor, constitute a form of violence upon a decedent's body and spirit that must be mitigated if an ethical, empathetic, and inclusive deathcare is to be achieved.

In order to enact systematic change at the individual and institutional level, death professionals must make a good-faith effort to familiarize themselves with gender identity terms and concepts and utilize gender-affirming language in their casework. Referring to decedents by their preferred name, pronouns, and other gendered terms is a fundamental demonstration of respect for TGD and cisgender decedents alike. We will not be able to alleviate the systemic necroviolence faced by TGD people, however, if we do not re-examine the current definitions of sex and gender used within forensic professions. Only through a critical interrogation of our relationship with the State's heteronormative binary can we advance forensic practice and ensure that, in our role as community servants, we do not act in ways that further the marginalization of transgender and gender diverse people.

**Author Contributions:** Conceptualization, T.A.D. and K.B.S.; methodology, K.B.S.; validation, K.B.S. and T.A.D.; formal analysis, K.B.S.; investigation, T.A.D. and K.B.S.; data curation, K.B.S.; writing—original draft preparation, T.A.D.; writing—revised draft preparation, K.B.S.; review and editing, T.A.D. and K.B.S. All authors have read and agreed to the published version of the manuscript.

**Funding:** This research received no external funding.

**Institutional Review Board Statement:** Not applicable.

**Informed Consent Statement:** Not applicable.

**Data Availability Statement:** All data presented here either are or have been part of public record and sources where data originates are provided. No new data or datasets have been created as part of this project.

**Acknowledgments:** The authors would like to acknowledge the lives lost to systemic violence. We would also like to thank the editors of this special issue for highlighting realities that forensic anthropologists must face.

**Conflicts of Interest:** The authors declare no conflict of interest.

## References

1. National Unidentified Persons Data System. Available online: <https://www.namus.gov/UnidentifiedPersons/Case#/6030> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
2. Hyman, J. New DNA Tests Show Woman's Body Found in Lake County Was Transgender. Watermark Online. Available online: <https://watermarkonline.com/2015/11/17/new-dna-tests-show-womans-body-found-in-lake-county-was-transgender/> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
3. De León, J. *The Land of Open Graves: Living and Dying on the Migrant Trail*; University of California Press: Oakland, CA, USA, 2015.
4. Galtung, J. Violence, Peace, and Peace Research. *J. Peace Res.* **1969**, *6*, 167–191. [CrossRef]
5. Farmer, P. An Anthropology of Structural Violence. *Curr. Anthropol.* **2004**, *45*, 305–325. [CrossRef]
6. Foucault, M. "Society Must Be Defended": *Lectures at the Collège de France 1975–1976*; Bertani, M., Fontana, A., Eds.; Macey, D., Translator; 17 March 1967; Picador: New York, NY, USA, 2003; pp. 239–263.
7. Foucault, M. Right of Death and Power Over Life. In *The History of Sexuality*; Random House Inc.: New York, NY, USA, 1985; pp. 258–265.
8. Mbembe, A. Necropolitics. *Public Cult.* **2003**, *15*, 11–40. [CrossRef]
9. Edelman, E.A. "Walking While Transgender": Necropolitical Regulation of Trans Feminine Bodies of Colour in the US Nation's Capital. In *Queer Necropolitics*; Haritaworn, J., Posocoo, S., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2014; pp. 172–190.
10. Ritchie, J. Black Skin Splits: The Birth (and Death) of the Queer Palestinian. In *Queer Necropolitics*; Haritaworn, J., Kuntsman, A., Posocco, S., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2014; pp. 111–128.
11. Shakhari, S. Killing Me Softly with Your Rights: Queer Death and the Politics of Rightful Killing. In *Queer Necropolitics*; Haritaworn, J., Kuntsman, A., Posocoo, S., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2014; pp. 93–110.
12. Snorton, R.C.; Haritaworn, J. Trans Necropolitics: A Transnational Reflection on Violence, Death and the Trans of Color Afterlife. In *The Transgender Studies Reader*; Stryker, S., Aizura, A., Eds.; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2013; pp. 66–76.
13. de Souza, M.H.T.; Miskolci, R.; Signorelli, M.C.; Balieiro, F.d.F.; Pereira, P.P.G. Post-Mortem Violence against Travestis in Santa Maria, Rio Grande Do Sul, Brazil. *Cad. Saúde Pública* **2021**, *37*, 1–11. [CrossRef]
14. Valencia, S. Necropolitics, Postmortem/Transmortem Politics, and Transfeminisms in the Sexual Economies of Death. *Transgender Stud. Q.* **2019**, *6*, 180–193. [CrossRef]
15. Verdery, K. Dead Bodies Animate the Study of Politics. In *The Political Lives of Dead Bodies: Reburial and Postsocialist Change*; Columbia University Press: New York, NY, USA, 1999; pp. 23–53.
16. Foucault, M. *Discipline and Punish: The Birth of the Prison*, 2nd ed.; Vintage Books: New York, NY, USA, 1995.
17. Bourdieu, P.; Wacquant, L.J. *An Invitation to Reflexive Sociology*; University of Chicago Press: Chicago, IL, USA, 1992.
18. Silva, D. The Circulation of Violence in Discourse. In *Language and Violence: Pragmatic Perspectives*; Silva, D., Ed.; John Benjamins Publishing Company: Philadelphia, PA, USA, 2017; pp. 107–124. [CrossRef]
19. Lawrence, C.R. If He Hollers Let Him Go: Regulating Racist Speech on Campus. *Duke Law J.* **1990**, *1990*, 431–483. [CrossRef]
20. Butler, J. *Excitable Speech: A Politics of the Performative*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 1997.
21. James, S.E.; Herman, J.L.; Rankin, S.; Keisling, M.; Mottet, L.; Anafi, M. *The Report of the 2015 U.S. Transgender Survey*; National Center for Transgender Equality: Washington, DC, USA, 2016.
22. Ram, A.; Kronk, C.A.; Eleazer, J.R.; Goulet, J.L.; Brandt, C.A.; Wang, K.H. Transphobia, Encoded: An Examination of Trans-Specific Terminology in SNOMED CT and ICD-10-CM. *J. Am. Med. Inform. Assoc.* **2022**, *29*, 404–410. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
23. Turton, S. Deadnaming as Disformative Utterance: The Redefinition of Trans Womanhood on Urban Dictionary. *GENL* **2021**, *15*, 42–64. [CrossRef]
24. Weaver, K.K. Paying Your Respects: Transgender Women and Detransitioning after Death. *Death Stud.* **2020**, *44*, 58–64. [CrossRef]
25. Prachniak, C. Creating End-of-Life Documents for Trans Individuals: An Advocate's Guide. 2014. Available online: <https://www.lgbtagingcenter.org/resources/pdfs/End-of-Life%20PlanningArticle.pdf> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
26. Aizura, A.Z. Trans Feminine Value, Racialized Others and the Limits of Necropolitics. In *Queer Necropolitics*; Routledge: New York, NY, USA, 2014; pp. 129–148.
27. Addressing Anti-Transgender Violence: Exploring Realities, Challenges and Solutions for Policymakers and Community Advocates; Human Rights Campaign and Trans People of Color Coalition. 2015. Available online: [https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC-AntiTransgenderViolence-0519.pdf?\\_ga=2.28387967.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/HRC-AntiTransgenderViolence-0519.pdf?_ga=2.28387967.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634) (accessed on 17 March 2023).
28. A Matter of Life and Death: Fatal Violence against Transgender People in 2016; Human Rights Campaign Foundation and Trans People of Color Coalition. 2016. Available online: [https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/A-Matter-of-Life-and-Death-2016.pdf?\\_ga=2.87238235.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/A-Matter-of-Life-and-Death-2016.pdf?_ga=2.87238235.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634) (accessed on 17 March 2023).
29. Lee, M. A Time to Act: Fatal Violence against Transgender People in America 2017; Human Rights Campaign Foundation and Trans People of Color Coalition. Available online: [http://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/A\\_Time\\_To\\_Act\\_2017\\_REV3.pdf?\\_ga=2.32132605.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634](http://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/A_Time_To_Act_2017_REV3.pdf?_ga=2.32132605.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634) (accessed on 17 March 2023).
30. Lee, M. A National Epidemic: Fatal Anti-Transgender Violence in America in 2018; Human Rights Campaign Foundation. 2018. Available online: [https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/AntiTransViolence-2018Report-Final.pdf?\\_ga=2.32073469.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/AntiTransViolence-2018Report-Final.pdf?_ga=2.32073469.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634) (accessed on 17 March 2023).

31. A National Epidemic: Fatal Anti-Transgender Violence in the United States in 2019; Human Rights Campaign Foundation. 2019. Available online: [https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Anti-TransViolenceReport2019.pdf?\\_ga=2.60919151.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634](https://assets2.hrc.org/files/assets/resources/Anti-TransViolenceReport2019.pdf?_ga=2.60919151.218307534.1674765360-1483854690.1671124634) (accessed on 17 March 2023).
32. An Epidemic of Violence: Fatal Violence against Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming People in the United States in 2020; Human Rights Campaign Foundation. 2020. Available online: <https://hrc-prod-requests.s3-us-west-2.amazonaws.com/FatalViolence-2020Report-Final.pdf?mtime=20201119101455&focal=none> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
33. HRC Foundation. Fatal Violence Against the Transgender and Gender Non-Conforming Community in 2021. Human Rights Campaign. Available online: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/fatal-violence-against-the-transgender-and-gender-non-conforming-community-in-2021> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
34. Delgado, T.; Stewart, K. Necropolitics and Trans Identities: Language Use as Structural Violence. In Proceedings of the American Academy of Forensic Sciences 2022 Annual Scientific Conference, Seattle, WA, USA, 24 February 2022.
35. National Unidentified Persons Data System. Available online: <https://www.namus.gov/MissingPersons/Case#/18608> (accessed on 17 March 2022).
36. WRIC Newsroom. Missing Man Sought in Connection with Transgender Teen’s Unsolved Homicide. WRIC ABC 8News. Available online: <https://www.wric.com/news/virginia-news/watch-live-charlottesville-authorities-provide-update-on-sage-smith-cold-case/> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
37. Eisenberg, E. “I Am a Girl Now”, Sage Smith Wrote. Then She Went Missing. *Splinter*, 24 July 2017. Available online: <https://splinternews.com/i-am-a-girl-now-sage-smith-wrote-then-she-went-missin-1797178002> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
38. Ingles, L. The Search for Dashad “Sage” Smith Continues. *C-VILLE Weekly*, 10 December 2012. Available online: <https://www.c-ville.com/the-search-for-dashad-sage-smith-continues/> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
39. Lohr, D. Dashad “Sage” Smith Missing: Virginia Police Searching for Transgender Teen. *HuffPost*, 29 November 2012. Available online: [https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dashad-smith-missing\\_n\\_2205836](https://www.huffpost.com/entry/dashad-smith-missing_n_2205836) (accessed on 17 March 2023).
40. NewsRadio WINA. Another Plea for Information on Dashad Smith. *NewsRadio WINA*. 2014. Available online: <https://wina.com/news/064460-another-plea-for-information-on-dashad-smith/> (accessed on 5 May 2023).
41. Dashad Laquinn Smith—The Charley Project. The Charley Project. Available online: <https://charleyproject.org/case/dashad-laquinn-smith> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
42. National Unidentified Persons Data System. Available online: <https://www.namus.gov/UnidentifiedPersons/Case#/1423> (accessed on 17 March 2022).
43. Maryland Department of Health and Mental Hygiene Division of Vital Records. SE151-22. 1994. Available online: [https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/stagsere/se100/se151/000000/000022/pdf/mdsa\\_se151\\_22.pdf](https://msa.maryland.gov/megafile/msa/stagsere/se100/se151/000000/000022/pdf/mdsa_se151_22.pdf) (accessed on 17 March 2022).
44. Armstrong, A. Certificates of Live Birth and Dead Names: On the Subject of Recent Anti-Trans Legislation. *South Atl. Q.* **2017**, *116*, 621–631. [CrossRef]
45. Levin, M. Male in Life, Female in Death: The Story of Christopher Lee’s Death Certificate. *KQED*, 18 April 2014. Available online: <https://www.kqed.org/stateofhealth/18741/male-in-life-female-in-death-the-story-of-christopher-lees-death-certificate> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
46. Dembosky, A. Making the Law Respect Gender Identity After Death. *NPR.org*, 30 June 2015. Available online: <https://www.npr.org/sections/codeswitch/2015/06/30/418770266/making-the-law-respect-gender-identity-after-death> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
47. Medical Examiners’ and Coroners’ Handbook on Death Registration and Fetal Death Reporting. 2003. Available online: [https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/misc/hb\\_me.pdf](https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/data/misc/hb_me.pdf) (accessed on 17 March 2023).
48. Nolan, I.T.; Kuhner, C.J.; Dy, G.W. Demographic and Temporal Trends in Transgender Identities and Gender Confirming Surgery. *Transl. Androl. Urol.* **2019**, *8*, 184–190. [CrossRef]
49. Mottet, L. Modernizing State Vital Statistics Statutes and Policies to Ensure Accurate Gender Markers on Birth Certificates: A Good Government Approach to Recognizing the Lives of Transgender People. *Mich. J. Gender L.* **2013**, *19*, 373–470.
50. Hopkins-Maxwell, M. *Statement on behalf of the American Civil Liberties Union of the Nation’s Capital Before the Committee on Judiciary of the Council of the District of Columbia, Bill 21-0444, the “Death Certificate Gender Identity Recognition Amendment Act of 2015.”*; ACLU of DC: Washington, DC, USA, 2015; Available online: <https://www.acludc.org/en/legislation/bill-21-0444-death-certificate-gender-identity-recognition-amendment-act-2015> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
51. Bill Text—AB-439 Certificates of Death: Gender Identity. Available online: [https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill\\_id=202120220AB439](https://leginfo.legislature.ca.gov/faces/billNavClient.xhtml?bill_id=202120220AB439) (accessed on 17 March 2023).
52. Pham, X. *Remembering Christopher Lee as Respect after Death Act Takes Effect*; Transgender Law Center: Oakland, CA, USA, 2015. Available online: <https://transgenderlawcenter.org/remembering-christopher-lee-as-respect-after-death-act-takes-effect/> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
53. Williams, K.; Russell, T.; Kelly. Deputies Confirm Transgender Woman Found Dead behind Orange County Apartment Building. *WFTV*. 23 July 2018. Available online: <https://www.wftv.com/news/local/body-found-outside-apartment-complex-near-orange-blossom-trail-deputies-say/793299212/> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
54. Wolf, C.; Cordeiro, M. A Transgender Woman Died in Orlando Today, and How It Was Reported Was Awful | Blogs. *Orlando Weekly*. 19 July 2018. Available online: <https://www.orlandoweekly.com/news/a-transgender-woman-died-in-orlando-today-and-how-it-was-reported-was-awful-16224871> (accessed on 17 March 2023).

55. Transgender Woman Found Dead at Orange County Apartment Complex, Deputies Say. *WESH 2 News*, 21 July 2018. Available online: <https://www.wesh.com/article/transgender-woman-found-dead/22437693> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
56. Waldron, L.; Schwencke, K. *Deadnamed*; ProPublica: New York, NY, USA, 2018; Available online: <https://www.propublica.org/article/deadnamed-transgender-black-women-murders-jacksonville-police-investigation> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
57. Nast, C. LGBTQIA+ Advocates Worry a Serial Killer Is Targeting Black Trans Women in Florida. *Them*, 25 July 2018. Available online: <https://www.them.us/story/black-trans-women-florida-homicides> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
58. Rothaus, S. Royal Poetical Starz, a Trans Woman of Color, Gunned Down in Miami Gardens. *South Florida Gay News*, 13 October 2021. Available online: <https://southfloridagaynews.com/Local/royal-poetical-starz-a-trans-woman-of-color-gunned-down-in-miami-gardens.html> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
59. Sosin, K. First Transgender Homicide of 2019 Reported in Alabama. *INTO*, 9 January 2019. Available online: <https://www.intomore.com/impact/first-transgender-homicide-of-2019-reported-in-alabama/> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
60. Hate Crime Laws. Movement Advancement Project. Available online: [https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/hate\\_crime\\_laws](https://www.lgbtmap.org/equality-maps/hate_crime_laws) (accessed on 17 March 2023).
61. ANSI/ASB Standard 090: Standard for Sex Estimation in Forensic Anthropology; American Academy of Forensic Sciences Standards Board. 2019. Available online: [https://www.aafs.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/090\\_Std\\_e1.pdf](https://www.aafs.org/sites/default/files/media/documents/090_Std_e1.pdf) (accessed on 17 March 2023).
62. Walker, P.L.; Cook, D.C. Brief Communication: Gender and Sex: Vive La Difference. *Am. J. Phys. Anthropol.* **1998**, *106*, 255–259. [CrossRef]
63. Peterson, G.F.; Clark, S.C. Forensic Autopsy Performance Standards. *Am. J. Forensic Med. Pathol.* **2006**, *27*, 200–225. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
64. HRC Foundation. *HRC's Brief Guide to Getting Transgender Coverage Right*; Human Rights Campaign: Washington, DC, USA; Available online: <https://www.hrc.org/resources/reporting-about-transgender-people-read-this> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
65. Whittle, S.; Turner, L. *Bereavement: A Guide for Transsexual, Transgender People and Their Loved Ones*; Department of Health: Dublin, OH, USA, 2007.
66. Whitestone, S.B.; Giles, H.; Linz, D. Overcoming Ungrievability: Transgender Expectations for Identity after Death. *Sociol. Inq.* **2020**, *90*, 316–338. [CrossRef]
67. Allen, S. This Arizona Bill Ensures the Correct Gender Is Listed on Transgender Death Certificates. *The Daily Beast*, 4 February 2019. Available online: <https://www.thedailybeast.com/this-arizona-bill-ensures-the-correct-gender-is-listed-on-transgender-death-certificates> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
68. Haas, A.P.; Lane, A. Collecting Sexual Orientation and Gender Identity Data in Suicide and Other Violent Deaths: A Step Towards Identifying and Addressing LGBT Mortality Disparities. *LGBT Health* **2015**, *2*, 84–87. [CrossRef] [PubMed]
69. *Health Department Will Add Third, Non-binary Gender Category to New York City Death Certificates*; NYC Health: New York, NY, USA, 2019. Available online: <https://www1.nyc.gov/site/doh/about/press/pr2019/non-binary-gender-category-to-nyc-death-certificates.page> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
70. Matambanadzo, S.M. Engendering Sex: Birth Certificates, Biology and the Body in Anglo American Law. *Cardozo Women's Law J.* **2013**, *13*, 101–133.
71. Stewart, K. (Trans) Gendering the Dead: How Medical Examiners and Coroners Determine and Utilize Sex and Gender. Ph.D. Thesis, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, TN, USA, 2023.
72. U.S. Department of Justice. Improving Law Enforcement Response to Sexual Assault and Domestic Violence by Identifying and Preventing Gender Bias. 2012. Available online: <https://www.justice.gov/ovw/page/file/1509451/download> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
73. U.S. Department of Health & Human Services. *LGBTQI+ Resources*; HHS.gov: Washington, DC, USA, 2022. Available online: <https://www.hhs.gov/programs/topic-sites/lgbtqi/resources/index.html> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
74. Glossary of Terms & Definitions. Trans Lifeline. Available online: <https://translifeline.org/resource/glossary-of-terms-definitions/> (accessed on 17 March 2023).
75. Horon, I.L.; Cheng, D. Effectiveness of Pregnancy Check Boxes on Death Certificates in Identifying Pregnancy-Associated Mortality. *Public Health Rep.* **2011**, *126*, 195–200. [CrossRef]
76. Birkby, W.H.; Fenton, T.W.; Anderson, B.E. Identifying Southwest Hispanics Using Nonmetric Traits and the Cultural Profile. *J. Forensic Sci.* **2008**, *53*, 29–33. [CrossRef]
77. Tallman, S.D.; Kincer, C.D.; Plemons, E.D. Centering Transgender Individuals in Forensic Anthropology and Expanding Binary Sex Estimation in Casework and Research. *Forensic Anthropol.* **2021**, *5*, 161–180. [CrossRef]
78. Winburn, A.P.; Schoff, S.K.; Warren, M.W. Assemblages of the Dead: Interpreting the Biocultural and Taphonomic Signature of Afro-Cuban Palo Practice in Florida. *J. Afr. Diaspora Archaeol. Herit.* **2016**, *5*, 1–37. [CrossRef]
79. Winburn, A.P. Subjective with a Capital S? Issues of Objectivity in Forensic Anthropology. In *Forensic Anthropology*; Boyd, C.C., Boyd, D.C., Eds.; John Wiley & Sons, Ltd.: Chichester, UK, 2017; pp. 19–37. [CrossRef]

**Disclaimer/Publisher's Note:** The statements, opinions and data contained in all publications are solely those of the individual author(s) and contributor(s) and not of MDPI and/or the editor(s). MDPI and/or the editor(s) disclaim responsibility for any injury to people or property resulting from any ideas, methods, instructions or products referred to in the content.