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## News :: Local

### Man Slashes Secret Lover in Rising Wave of NYS Bias Attacks

by Daniel Scheffler

EDGE Contributor

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A recent "homophobic panic attack" slashing of an Ulster, New York artist by his alleged secret paramour is the latest example of the 13 percent increase in homophobic and transphobic violence in New York State over the past year perpetrated not by strangers, but by partners or coworkers, as reported in statistics by the New York City Anti-Violence Project (AVP).

"I hope it's not going to make things worse," said Richard Treitner, the victim. "I fear living in my own home," the Pine Hill artist and pagan minister told various media outlets after being attacked with a knife by his drunken neighbor and alleged former lover, Kenneth J. Fazzina.

Treitner managed to restrain the attacker and made the 911 call for help. According to a police report, Fazzina entered the house without permission and attacked Treitner in what he called a "homophobic panic attack."

He described the sexual nature of his relationship with Fazzina and then the apparent consequent threats about revealing their relationship to anyone. Treitner now fears further attacks from Fazzina, who is currently on a \$25,000 bail at the Ulster County Jail.



Richard Treitner



Treitner, who was the victim of an unsolved arson attack two years ago, described the way he has lived for the past few years as a victim of "homosexual hate crimes."

"This recent incident in Pine Hill highlights the specific needs that hate violence survivors in the Catskills and other close-knit, smaller communities face," said AVP MPA Deputy Director in charge of Community Organizing and Public Advocacy, Ejeris Dixon. The project's mission, according to Dixon, is working to ensure that LGBT survivors receive the support that they need to heal from the violence that they experience, to increase their options and to change the culture that contributes to and sanctions violence.

According to the Criminal Justice Research Report, a July 2011 annual report by the Division of Criminal Justice Services' Office of Justice Research & Performance, the most frequently reported bias motivations for hate crimes in 2010 were anti-Jewish (31 percent), anti-black (20 percent), anti-male homosexual (16 percent), and anti-Hispanic (8 percent) for New York State.



A vigil in East Harlem for slain transwoman Camila Guzman; her then-boyfriend Equan Southall later turned himself in for the crime (Source: Winnie McCroy)

### From Harassment to Murder, Hate Crimes Rise in New York

Even as the LGBT community gains civil rights, anti-gay harassment and violence remain on the rise in New York State. Disturbingly, these attacks are increasingly coming from the partners or coworkers of the victim.

In an incident in Long Island, a Starbucks employee Jeffery (full name not disclosed) was bullied by homophobic fellow employees, driving him to resign. Within a week, Jeffery's case went viral on multiple social media networks, prompting criticism against Starbucks.

"I came to this company because I thought it was supposed to be better. I thought that it was a positive and tolerant work place to work. I was passed over for promotions, they hired from the outside, and I fought against their vendetta. I couldn't take it anymore. I didn't have a chance here," said Jeffrey.

Starbucks immediately responded, first via social media channels, and emphasized their stand against any form of discrimination.

On the other end of the scale was the murder of a transgender woman in August 2011 in East Harlem. Camilla Guzman was stabbed to death by then-boyfriend Equan Southall. The Spanish-language daily in New York, "El Diario La Prensa", reported that Southall walked into the 23rd precinct in East Harlem a week later to confess to the murder.

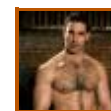
Although police would not comment on a motive for the crime, according to Facebook comments and blogs of friends and family of Guzman, the murder was driven by sexuality bias. Southall has consequently been charged with second-degree murder with a maximum of 25 years in prison.



Flanked by domestic-violence survivors, lawmakers, law enforcement officers and tribal leaders, Obama was signing the extension to the Violence Against Women Act in a ceremony Thursday at the Interior Department, which oversees programs for Native Americans.



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"We worked with Camilla Guzman's friends and family to organize a vigil to celebrate her life and to advocate against transphobic media bias that occurred in articles about her murder," said AVP's Dixon.

In response to the disproportionate and severe violence that transgender people experience, the AVP worked over the past two years to develop specific strategies and initiatives to address intimate partner violence, hate violence, and sexual violence within and against transgender communities. Dixon highlighted the need to increase services and violence prevention programs for transgender communities.

The support for victims does exist; one example is In Our Own Voices, a community-based organization in Albany that coordinates the Capital Region LGBT Anti-Violence Project. They offer a support line for victims, community education, and training for domestic violence programs and social service agencies. In Our Own Voices and the AVP collaborate to address hate violence, sexual violence and intimate partner violence within New York State.

Dixon believes that the LGBTQ people who live within smaller, close-knit communities, compared to the metropolitan areas of New York State, are more likely to know and have community ties to their offenders.

"The strategies to support LGBTQ survivors and end homophobic and transphobic violence must incorporate specific safety planning to address known offenders, community organizing strategies to highlight the community's role in preventing, intervening, and addressing violence, and programs to educate and hold law enforcement accountable to ensure that survivors have access to the support they need," said Dixon.

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Daniel Scheffler is a writer who spends his time in New York, Cape Town and India. Follow him on Twitter @danielscheffler



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