

LARGE PRINT TEXTS

SEAN FADER

Insufficient Memory, 2020

DIFFERENCE
//MACHINES

Unnamed Intersex Infant

Dallas, Texas, Murdered December 8, 1999

An unnamed intersex three-day-old infant was murdered. The body showed signs of blunt-force trauma to the head, as well as strangulation. The infant's parents reported the murder. Gangaudaya Kavali, the infant's father, claimed that when he was at the store his wife, Aruna, left their infant on the couch while she stepped into the bathroom. She claimed that while she was in the bathroom a stranger entered their apartment, stole the infant, and threw the infant outside.

A Collin County Medical Examiner found shards of glass in the baby's esophagus and small intestine, indicating that someone initially tried to kill the child by forcing them to eat glass, in an effort to cause internal bleeding. Aruna was eventually found guilty of murdering her three-day old child.

The murder was not tried as a hate crime. The media repeatedly identified the child as male and referred to the child's genitalia as being deformed.

When I arrived at the apartment complex that the Kavali family lived in when the murder took place, it was raining. Suddenly, the rain broke and a rainbow appeared in the sky over their building. I made this picture in front of the home where the infant was murdered.

JR Warren

Grant Town, West Virginia, Murdered, July 4, 2000

JR Warren grew up in Grant Town, West Virginia, a small rural town of just over 600 residents. He was described as a soft-spoken, mild-mannered, and generous young man by those who knew him. He had severe learning disabilities and was born with several fingers missing on one hand.

When JR was a teenager he came out to his mother, Brenda, and his reverend at Mount Beulah Baptist Church. With the help of Reverend Staples, his mother came to what she believed was a moral compromise with her son about his sexual orientation. She believed that “God never said we have the right to judge and punish one another about our personal lives. He said to leave the judging up to him. We are only required to love one another. If we don’t love one another like God loves us, we will never see heaven.

JR left his home for a late-night walk on July 3, 2000. He was 26. He dropped by a house that was being painted by some acquaintances: David Allen Parker, Jared Wilson, and Jason Shoemaker, all teenagers. David claimed that JR had spread rumors that they were having a sexual relationship, and he and Jared attacked JR, pummeling and kicking him to the floor while wearing steel-toed boots. Shoemaker witnessed the beating but didn’t try to stop it. The three teenagers then dragged JR, who was still conscious, into a car and drove him to a deserted stretch of road at the edge of town. They dumped him in the middle of the road and ran over him four times in an attempt to disguise his massive injuries as the result of a hit-and-run.

The Marion County Sheriff claimed he had no evidence that JR’s killing was a hate crime, primarily because West Virginia’s law didn’t cover it as such. A few weeks before JR was killed, West Virginia’s legislature failed to act on a bill that would have included sexual orientation in the state’s hate crimes statutes. If the bill had passed, it would have taken effect three days before JR’s murder.

It was a beautiful sunny summer day when I arrived in Grant Town. I made this photograph looking down the hill in front of the house JR was nearly beaten to death in. I watched two young boys, one on a bike and the other on foot, engaged in what appeared to be friendly banter as they went down the hill.

Sissy Bolden

Savannah, Georgia, Murdered November 20, 2000

Sissy Bolden's body was found dumped in the woods at the end of Pate Street in west Savannah in the Ogeecheeton neighborhood. Sissy was identified by police as a "man wearing women's clothing who had a past criminal history, which included charges of solicitation of sodomy." I wasn't able to find much about her life and the events that lead up to her murder.

Edward Charles Wilkins Jr was found guilty in 2007 for the murder of three individuals, including Sissy. The newspaper identified the victims as two women and a man dressed as a woman.

I made this image in the woods at the end of Pate Street where Sissy's body was found. It was a rainy day and the street was quiet. I remember waving to a woman sitting on her porch nearby.

Joe-Hal Faughn

Winter Park, Florida, Murdered, October 18, 2000

Joe-Hal Faughn was an interior designer who made chandeliers from gold, silver, bronze, and crystal. His artful designs could be found in museum exhibits and houses all across Florida. Joe-Hal hired Frank Knight, a stranger, to drive a few chandeliers to Chicago for a client. A few days later, Joe-Hal's body was found, choked to death and tied up. Nothing was stolen from his apartment, but his car was missing. It was found a few days later at a nearby church. Frank was a suspect from the beginning but took two years to locate. Investigators traced him to New Orleans and a tip led them to Frank, who was already in prison under an alias on a different attempted-murder charge.

I made this photograph outside Joe-Hal's home where he was found dead.

Brian David James Hyer

Kingman, Arizona, Suicide, March 3, 2000

Known as DJ, Hyer was a strong advocate for gay rights. He was proud to be gay and proud to be Mormon, connecting with his religion through Affirmation and Reconciliation, both groups for gay and lesbian Mormons. Years after coming out, he was still attending that ward and discussing gay issues with his bishop.

DJ lived in many places and tried very hard to find happiness. He loved French culture and once traveled to Paris as an artist's assistant. He loved movies, paintings, and art. He loved hiking, nature, and animals, especially cats. He loved to grow flowers and was a talented cook.

At 32 DJ committed suicide, upset with the Mormon church's involvement with California's Proposition 22, which recognized marriage only between a man and a woman, and by the suicide of Stuart Matis, another 32-year-old gay Mormon, who shot himself outside a Mormon temple and was conflicted about the church's official stand on homosexuality.

Affirmation held a memorial service for DJ and Stuart at St. Mark's Episcopal Cathedral in Salt Lake City. DJ had sent a suicide letter to his close friends and parts of it were read: "It is unfortunate that the lives of good people such as Stuart Matis, Matthew Shepherd, and many others go unnoticed. I see Proposition 22 as a last straw in my life-long battle to see peace in the world I live in."

I made this photograph in Salt Lake City. This is the mountain view across the street from his gravesite.

Billy Jack Gaither

Sylacauga, Alabama, Murdered, Feb 19, 1999

Billy Jack Gaither was a 39-year-old gay man who lived with his disabled parents in Sylacauga, Alabama. He cared for them and

worked at the nearby Russell Athletics apparel company. His body was found burned on top of a pile of tires on the side of a creek outside of town.

His throat was cut, and his body was savagely beaten before being set on fire. The two men who carried out the murder, Steven Mullins and Charles Monroe Butler, claimed that Billy Jack had come on to them and his sexuality was why they killed him. Witnesses came forward and testified that Steven had had sex with men before and that he may have had a relationship with Billy Jack prior to killing him. In June 1999 Steven Mullins pled guilty to capital murder; Charles Butler stood trial and was found guilty of the same charge by a jury. In August 1999 both men were sentenced to life in prison without parole. In March 2019 Steven was fatally stabbed in prison.

The Billy Jack Gaither Humanitarian Award recognizes “an individual or organization that has shown extraordinary courage in the struggle against hatred and contributed to the creation of a just society.”

The location where Billy Jack was murdered was difficult to find. It's deep in the Talladega National Forest. I read Steven's confessions over and over and jotted down his description of a small sign with a boat on it marking the gravel road into the forest. When I arrived in Sylacauga, I drove out on Millerville Highway, looking for a small sign with a boat on it. My phone overheated and shut off. After holding it over the AC vent for a while, the phone turned on, and I realized I had gone way beyond where I thought I should have. I looked for a place to turn around. I pulled into a gravel road to make a U-turn, looked up, and there was the small sign with the boat. I would have never seen it driving by. I drove into the forest, turning left and then right as Steven described in his confessional. When I arrived at the boat launch, the sky opened up and it began to pour.