COVID-19 National Week of Mourning Starts Sunday

Virtual vigils will take place daily from October 4 to 11, starting with a National Day of Remembrance.

October 4, 2020 By Liz Highleyman

AIDS Memorial Quilt cofounder Cleve Jones and Kristin Urquiza, who spoke about losing her father to COVID-19 at the Democratic National Convention in August, are helping spearhead a week of mourning to remember those who have died in the pandemic. As of early October, COVID-19 has claimed more than 200,000 lives in the United States and more than 1 million worldwide.

Jones contacted Urquiza after hearing her speech, and they met at the National AIDS Memorial Grove in San Francisco's Golden Gate Park, according to the Bay Area Reporter. The two wanted to organize a time for people to mourn those lost to the coronavirus, especially since social distancing requirements have prevented people from gathering in person to share their grief. This grew into a National Week of Mourning when they connected with others who were planning similar events for early October.

From October 4 to 11, daily virtual vigils will take place at 12:00 P.M. Eastern Time/9:00 A.M. Pacific Time to honor those lost to COVID-19 in the United States.

- Sunday, October 4: National Day of Remembrance
- Monday, October 5: COVID in Schools
- Tuesday, October 6: Essential Workers
- Wednesday, October 7: Healthcare
- Thursday, October 8: Justice System and Detention Centers
- Friday, October 9: Hardest Hit Communities
- Saturday, October 10: Grief, Loss and Mental Health Consequences of COVID
- Sunday, October 11: Faith and the Arts

Sunday's National Day of Remembrance, hosted by Grammy award-winning singer Dionne Warwick, will be live streamed from the Ellipse in Washington, D.C. Warwick was among the first

artists to raise public awareness about AIDS, and she went on to serve as a global health ambassador under three presidents.

Organizers have called for a moment of silence at noon Eastern Time and have asked faith leaders to remember people lost to COVID-19 and their loved ones with a moment of silence during their services.

“There will be 20,000 empty chairs on the Ellipse on October 4. These chairs will be a visually stunning art installation representing a fraction of the heartbreaking and unimaginable loss of 200,000 lives to COVID-19 in six just months,” Warwick said in a press release. “It’s time to stand with all the survivors and Americans who have been devastatingly impacted.”

Watch the live stream here.

The National Day of Remembrance is a collaborative effort led by Covid Survivors for Change, a new grassroots organization connecting survivors, and endorsed by groups including the NAACP, the Human Rights Campaign, #TheFridayMinute, the COVID Memorial, Marked by COVID, COVID-19 Loss Support for Family & Friends, Pandemic of Love, Survivor Corps, the COVID-19 Long Haulers Discussion Group and Tribute to Humanity.

During the remainder of the week, each daily vigil will feature guest speakers and a reading of a selection of names of those who have been lost to COVID-19.

Click here to register for the virtual events on Zoom.

In addition to the virtual events, several communities will be holding socially distanced in-person vigils. In San Francisco, the week will end with a funeral procession and vigil on October 11 at 5:00 P.M. Pacific Time at Ocean Beach.

Search for local events by zip code here.

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