

My deepest condolences to the family and friends of Kenneth Bostick¹ and many thanks to New York State Senator, Jesse Hamilton, for bringing us together today; to the LGBTQ+ friends, advocates, community organizations; and most importantly to a beloved friend and advocate to the LGBTQ+ community in Brooklyn and the Brooklyn Community Pride Center since its inception, I can think of no more tireless champion for the LGBTQ community in Brooklyn and otherwise than Carlos Menchaca, New York City Council Member, for joining us here today.

Kenneth Bostick was brutally attacked in broad daylight and is the latest in a growing string of violent attacks against the LGBT+ community of New York City. While we and our brothers, sisters, gender fluid and nonbinary extended family, friends, and allies mourn for Kenneth, we must convert our grief to action and call on everyone to stand against hate and violence. Be an ally and stand-up for our vulnerable, beautiful transgender people until the whole of the city is safe and crimes like this are eradicated.

I find it hard to believe that there was no one who could have helped Kenneth. Did anyone run to his aide? According to reports, the perpetrator stood over him for about five minutes while numerous pedestrians walked by. In this, of all cities, where we stand for each other...where we look out for each other. We failed Kenneth. And we failed our better selves.

¹ It was later learned that Mx. Bostick sometimes identified as Kenneth and at other times as Brenda depending on the context.

I am a cis gender gay white man and I recall a time when I was the one targeted. Not for my whiteness. But for my gayness. In some places, I still am. But it got better because allies stood up for me until I could stand up for myself. And today I pledge to be a better ally to transgender and gender nonconforming people. We must all act to resist these violent acts by keeping our eyes and ears open, assisting the most vulnerable among us, and taking legislative action.

Today, I call on the LGBTQ+ community and our elected officials in Albany to revisit the Gender Expression Non Discrimination Act, or GENDA as it is commonly known, and pass this important piece of legislation. GENDA is a proposed New York law that adds gender identity and expression as a protected class in the state's human rights and hate crimes laws, prohibiting discrimination in employment, housing, public accommodations and other areas, and providing enhanced penalties for bias-motivated crimes. I call on the New York State Assembly and Senate to revisit this and pass this law now.

Meantime, the Brooklyn Community Pride Center is here for you through our Tuesday night transgender and gender nonconforming support group; YouthPride for young people up to age 24 meets Tuesdays through Fridays; ElderPride for those 50 years of age and older meets Monday afternoons; numerous recovery groups; arts and culture programming including the LGBTQ New Americans Project; and an HIV prevention initiative for young men who have sex with other men and transgender women with a focus on communities of color in collaboration with CAMBA. Connect with your center at lgbtbrooklyn.org for more information.

Thank you and now I'd like to introduce Brandi Concepcion...