

## **WHO WAS JEFFREY MONTGOMERY ?**

***July 18, 2016, marked the day we lost our brother, friend, a leader, activist, and steadfast warrior for social justice and LGBTQ+ equality. In his life, he touched countless souls with his fierce intellect, and abundant sense of humor,***

***Jeffrey's story, the focus of the documentary "America You Kill Me" was a man of many facets.***



Although his awareness as a gay person began when he was very young it was a pivotal moment that changed him into a fierce warrior for LGBTQ+ civil rights and protections in America.

In 1984 his partner, Michael, was shot to death outside a Detroit gay bar, prompting Montgomery to engage in LGBTQ+ advocacy. He started work on LGBTQ+ anti-violence issues upon learning that the police were not spending many resources on solving the murder, "just another gay killing".

In 1991 Montgomery became the founding executive director of the Triangle Foundation and served until September 2007. Initially engaging in victim advocacy around LGBTQ+ violence and to improve the handling of LGBTQ+-related cases, the foundation's work expanded to LGBTQ+ civil rights and advocacy, with projects for anti-violence, media activism, and legislative education on LGBTQ+ civil rights.

Within the movement, he was a staunch advocate for inclusiveness knowing that to create progress for LGBTQ+ civil rights the fight would need to include *all* sexually discriminated groups such as transgender people as well as black and brown members of the LGBTQ+ community.

Montgomery was widely quoted in media outlets on LGBTQ+ issues and high-profile LGBTQ-related crimes, such as the murder of Scott Amedure in 1995, and the murder of Matthew Shepard. Montgomery to attend the trials of Shepard's killers. In 2001, Montgomery was a featured participant in an A&E Network documentary about the Matthew Shepard case.

According to Cathy Renna, a friend of Jeffrey's and communication director of the National LGBTQ+ Task Force in an ADVOCATE July 25th, 2016 article about Jeffrey's passing: "Without His (Jeffrey's) involvement helping to unravel the "gay panic defense" I do not think we would have seen the important progress we did in the years that followed if not for Jeffrey's hard work and dedication to the truth". "Jeffrey knew that our movement was one based on freedom and love, not fear and hate. He was a role model in his confidence and pride in who he was, in every way. He was fearless and honest about his own struggles with loss and addiction and quietly helped so many others deal with their struggles".

**Jeffrey Montgomery's activities and honors over the years always were intertwined in his unceasing effort for LGBTQ+ civil rights right up to his untimely passing from a heart attack on July 18th, 2016. He was 63. Here, in part, are a few key moments.**

- Montgomery was the co-chair of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP), for which he was also a national spokesperson.
- He was also a member of the Steering Committee of the Michigan Alliance Against Hate Crimes, the Bias Crime Response Task Force of the Michigan Commission on Civil Rights, and a board member of the ACLU of Michigan.
- He was one of the founding board members of the Woodhull Freedom Foundation (also known as the Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance) in 2003 and remained active with the organization until his death.

- He was also an inaugural member of the WikiQueer Global Advisory Board and served as Strategic Counsel to the wiki's parent organization, The Aequalitas Project.
- Montgomery was among a group of LGBTQ+ activists, representing NCAVP, invited to Washington, D.C. for meetings beginning in 1997 with senior policy officials at the White House.
- In 2000, he delivered the inaugural Matthew Shepard Memorial Lecture at Brown University. That address, "America... You Kill Me," was dedicated to Matthew Shepard.
- In 2002, Montgomery was invited, with other LGBTQ+ leaders from across the country, to meet with and inform United States Senators about the issues and challenges facing the LGBTQ+ community.
- In 2004, he helped organize opposition to Michigan's same-sex marriage constitutional amendment, passed later that year.

### **Honors for Montgomery include:**

- The Detroit City Council honored Montgomery with the "Spirit of Detroit" award three times.
- The Michigan Legislature twice commended Montgomery with special tributes.
- In 1997, he received a Golden Apple Award from the Roper School.
- In August 1999, Montgomery was named one of the "Best and Brightest" national LGBTQ+ activists by *The Advocate* magazine.
- Montgomery was named, along with twelve others, a "Michiganian of the Year" for 2002 by the Detroit News, stating "He turned personal tragedy into a fight for gay equality".
- In May 2003, Michigan Governor Jennifer M. Granholm honored his work with a special tribute, calling him a "hero and living legend". The governor also noted that he was "among the most visible and accomplished advocates for safety and equality of gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender people in Michigan history".
- He received the Liberty Bell Award from the State Bar of Michigan at their annual meeting in September 2006.
- Montgomery accepted the Lifetime Achievement Award at the Pride Banquet and Awards Ceremony in Warren, Michigan on June 25, 2010.
- In September 2012, the Woodhull Sexual Freedom Alliance honored Montgomery with its Vicki Sexual Freedom Award.
- In June 2019, Montgomery was one of the inaugural fifty American "pioneers, trailblazers, and heroes" inducted on the National LGBTQ Wall of Honor within the Stonewall National Monument (SNM) in New York City's Stonewall Inn. The SNM is the first U.S. national monument dedicated to LGBTQ rights and history, and the wall's unveiling was timed to take place during the 50th anniversary of the Stonewall riots.