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No Cinderella Story: Friends Remember Ben Scott “Benderella” Rae

[Laura S. Hodgman](#)

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Abstract

“Benderella,” a.k.a. Ben Scott Rae, was a developmentally disabled transgender woman murdered in Tacoma, Washington, in 1977. This article

demonstrates how oral testimony can help to extend the efforts of Transgender Day of Remembrance by filling out—and thereby increasing possibilities for empathy with—the complex lives of transgender individuals. Oral accounts—primarily from friends who frequented DJ’s bar—augment and challenge existing narratives about Benderella appearing in the contemporary press and public documents. As the competing narratives surrounding Benderella’s life and death multiply, so too does the indeterminate story of dis/empowerment embedded in transgender life and history.

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