



VICTORY!

On December 17, the Police Department and Medical Examiner rescinded their odious and groundless ruling that the July death of Marsha P. Johnson was a suicide.

That suicide ruling -- made within 24 hours of finding Marsha's body floating in the Hudson River off Christopher Street on July 6 -- was based on no hard evidence and was an insensitive and stereotypic response to the death of a black male transvestite. The cause of death is now officially listed as "drowning of an undetermined nature."

This rare about-face is the result of months of pressure by members of the gay and lesbian community. The campaign culminated in a December 8 meeting during which the "facts" used to make the suicide ruling were refuted and new facts about Marsha's life were brought out. Marsha's brother and sisters, his roommate Randy Wicker, and City Councilmember Tom Duane deserve special credit.

Marsha, a survivor of the Stonewall riots, was a much beloved member of our community. She led an eclectic life, from touring Europe with the Hot Peaches Review and being a Warhol model to being a fixture (as a panhandler and prostitute) on Christopher Street.

The Police Department considers Marsha's death an "open" case. AVP's offer of a \$5,000 reward for information leading to the arrest and prosecution of any person in connection with Marsha's death still stands. Please call us if you have any information.

This is not a happy ending, but it is some measure of justice and some tribute to Marsha's memory.

Unfortunately and tragically, two transvestites have been slain on the West Side in the last two weeks. One, like Marsha, was found floating in the Hudson river; the other had her throat slit.

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