Call for Volunteers for the Stolen Lives Project

The mission of the **Stolen Lives Project** is to assemble national documentation of people killed by U.S. law enforcement agents from 1990 to the present. Due to the fact that there had not been any federal accounting of police killings made available to the public, those who worked with the national grassroots organization October 22 Coalition to Stop Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation decided in 1996 to conduct our own documentation. Through grassroots efforts, the second edition of the book *Stolen Lives: Killed by Law Enforcement* was published by Seven Stories Press in 1999, which documented over 2,000 cases in the 1990s nationally. The pages of this book are available as PDFs on the Stolen Lives website (stolenlives.org).

Since the publication of the book, local and national documentation has been unevenly updated and produced in different read-only forms across the country. Plans are currently underway to bring the Stolen Lives Project online as a searchable database, which would include for each record (for an individual case): demographic and incident information, links to and/or downloadable content of all available and relevant sources, and a narrative that often counters constructed "official" stories. Because the real circumstances surrounding the deaths of victims of police violence are rarely adequately investigated or made known, and the constructed narrative to justify the homicide often highlights characteristics intended to tarnish the victim's life, the Stolen Lives Project aims to provide a more complete truth for each individual life taken, and attempts to restore some dignity to the life lost.

As with past attempts to gather national documentation, the most enormous hurdle is consistent data-gathering across the country. Anyone who can help with the research and documentation will contribute greatly to realizing the goal of bringing the Stolen Lives Project online in a more useable and accessible form. If you would like to help in any way, please contact stolenlivesprojectonline@gmail.com. Possible ways that one can help are outlined on the right. For more information, visit the website at **stolenlives.org** or **www.facebook.com/StolenLivesProject**.

Below are some explanations and ideas for what needs to and could be done to move ahead in updating the national documentation for the Stolen Lives Project and getting an accessible database online.

- Conduct research. Most volunteers prefer to research local cases, but you can also help to provide a more complete national picture by focusing your research on one of the states for which no one is currently documenting incidents of police killings or for which there is obvious missing data. There are different parts or steps to the documentation process, so taking up any one of the parts is a step forward:
  - Search for articles and other sources and forward the links and texts for someone else to enter the data. There are also existing sources with data that can be mined (e.g.: *Wikipedia* entry on police killings in the U.S., "Killed by Police" page on *Facebook*, etc.).
  - Enter existing accumulated data without having to have to read articles or write up descriptions.
  - Fact-check data already entered.
  - If you work in academia or in the research field, create or coordinate a project for students or researchers to conduct the research and data-gathering.

- Write the stories. There is a growing collection of sources for Stolen Lives cases without a summary. Read through all the articles, posts, testimonies, etc. about the circumstances in which the individual was killed and compose a short narrative to represent the Stolen Life. You can also help review and edit stories that have been written to ensure accuracy and consistency.

- Code the website and/or consult on database engineering, web accessibility for people with disabilities, interface design, etc.

- Contribute financially. Fund an internship or a research project through which someone could be compensated for committing hours a week to data entry or editing. If you cannot offer funding yourself, organize a fundraiser or assist in grant-writing. Once the online database is ready to launch, it will need dedicated funding to maintain.

- Get the word out. Organize an event at which attendees can be introduced to the Stolen Lives Project and what it entails. Make copies of this Call for Volunteers and distribute it to friends, colleagues, neighbors.

- Attend and document vigils for Stolen Lives and the annual October 22nd National Day of Protest to Stop Police Brutality, Repression and the Criminalization of a Generation. Support families destroyed by police violence and stand with them in the fight for justice.

For any questions or to ensure there isn't redundancy in working on any of the above, please contact stolenlivesprojectonline@gmail.com