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CONTACT: Michael Silverman  
t: 646.862.9396 | c: 917.292.1495  
msilverman@transgenderlegal.org

## **Transgender Woman Brutally Beaten in Queens Bias Attack**

### **Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund Demands Full Investigation Into Hate Crime**

NEW YORK – In response to the savage beating of 30-year-old transgender woman Leslie Mora, Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF) demands that Queens County District Attorney Richard Brown fully investigate the attack as a hate crime. TLDEF also calls upon New York State Senators to return to work and immediately pass pending transgender-inclusive hate crimes legislation.

On June 19, 2009, at 2:30 am, during the height of LGBT Pride month, Leslie Mora was walking home from a nightclub on Roosevelt Avenue in Queens when she was accosted by two men who brutally beat her with a belt, stopping only when a passing motorist threatened to call the police. Throughout the attack, Mora's assailants called her a "faggot" in Spanish. The attack left Mora with multiple injuries, including bruises all over her body, and stitches in her scalp. Police called to the scene found Mora nearly naked and bleeding on the sidewalk. They also recovered a belt buckle from the assailants that was covered in blood.

"The Queens County District Attorney must fully investigate this brutal attack as a hate crime," said TLDEF executive director Michael Silverman. "Leslie Mora was beaten with a belt while her assailants called her a 'faggot.' While Leslie is a transgender woman, it's obvious that her attackers perceived her to be gay. This is as clear a case for prosecution as a hate crime as any I have ever seen." State law currently classifies it as a hate crime for an individual to target and attack a victim because of the victim's actual or perceived sexual orientation. Ms. Mora's assault is a hate crime because her attackers perceived her to be gay and targeted her for violence because of that perception.

"I was attacked because I am transgender," said Leslie Mora. "I want to make sure that this does not happen to other transgender people and I want to see the people who did this to me brought to justice."

Mora's assailants, Trinidad Tapia, 19, and Gilberto Ortiz, 32, fled the scene but were arrested by police soon after the attack. Both were charged with assault with intent to cause physical injury with a weapon, a felony, and released on their own recognizance. The Queens County District Attorney has declined to investigate the attack as a hate crime.

"Transgender people face tremendous amounts of violence in their daily lives. Every month in the United States, a transgender person is murdered. Our state Senators must immediately return to work and pass the

transgender hate crimes legislation pending in the Senate," Silverman added. The Gender Expression Non-Discrimination Act (S.2406), which has passed the State Assembly and is awaiting Senate action, would make it a hate crime for an individual to attack another because of the victim's gender identity or expression. Current state law already protects New Yorkers from hate-motivated violence based upon race, religion, age, disability, sexual orientation and other factors. "It is unconscionable that transgender New Yorkers are being attacked on the streets where they live while our state's Senators shirk their responsibility to take action to end the violence," he added.

Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund is committed to ending discrimination based upon gender identity and expression, and to achieving equality for transgender people through public education, test-case litigation, direct legal services, community organizing and public policy efforts.

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