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## TLDEF Statement On Verdict In Lateisha Green Court Trial

New York, NY, July 17, 2009 -- The Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund (TLDEF) today hailed the verdict in the court trial of Lateisha Green, a 22-year-old African American transgender woman who was shot and killed on November 14, 2008 in Syracuse, NY. A 12-member jury found 20-year-old Dwight DeLee guilty of manslaughter in the first degree as a hate crime and criminal possession of a weapon.

"Today, justice has been delivered for Lateisha Green with DeLee's conviction for committing a hateful act of violence," said TLDEF Executive Director and attorney Michael Silverman. "The jury's verdict provides Teish's family with the closure that they deserve and need, and sends a clear message that hate violence targeted at transgender people will not be tolerated."

Today's verdict is the first hate crime conviction for the slaying of a transgender person in New York State. It is only the second such conviction in the United States.

TLDEF Executive Director Michael Silverman has been working with the family since Lateisha's death in November. Silverman was on the ground in Syracuse, NY throughout this week's court trial working closely with the family. TLDEF collaborated with its sister organizations including the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), the Empire State Pride Agenda and the Rainbow Alliance of Central New York.

"Despite this legal victory, transgender New Yorkers still face a serious risk of violence and discrimination," added Silverman. "New York State law does not include gender identity or expression in its hate crime law and that sends a dangerous message that it is acceptable to leave part of our community vulnerable to hateful acts of violence simply because of who they are. We call upon the New York State Senate and the United States Senate to pass transgender-inclusive legislation that will protect everyone regardless of gender identity and gender expression."

TLDEF will also be attending DeLee's sentencing on August 18th at the Onondaga County Courthouse in Syracuse, NY.

Following the verdict, Lateisha Green's family released this statement:

"Teish, a beautiful girl. A wonderful daughter. A brave soul. Teish was all of these things despite the adversity that regularly tried to weigh her down and overshadow her love of life. She was taken away from us too soon. All it took was one bullet.

"A bullet from a rifle that pierced her lungs and heart. And it took this one mere bullet to end Teish's life because she happened to be a transgender woman. We have spent months waiting for this day to come.

"8 long months that have kept our family captive to our fears, sadness and anger. Afraid to leave our homes, sad to have lost Teish and angry that we couldn't prevent this from happening to our little girl. But today, the jury delivered a verdict that will end most of the horrors experienced by our family and friends.

"The jury convicted Dwight DeLee of killing Teish in cold blood. They found him guilty of targeting Teish simply because of her difference. And the jury has made it clear that any loss of life in our city and county because of anti-gay and anti-transgender bias is unacceptable and wrong. Justice has been done.

"But we will never get to see Teish ever again. She will forever live in our hearts and minds. And it is our duty to share her story so that Teish's memory will be kept alive. We do this so this series of painful events will never happen again to any other person because they are different.

"Our family and friends will continue to talk about Teish so others may know the love and support that every child deserves regardless of their differences. We want to thank everyone who stood behind us and gave our family strength during such difficult times. The overwhelming amount of support has meant so much to us. We want to close by saying life is precious. Teish knew that and that's why she would tell everyone here to be brave. To be authentic and true to yourself. And Teish would give a beautiful and bright smile to everyone here. Thank you."

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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.