

PRESS RELEASE: FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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QPH STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH TRANSGENDER ORGANIZATION OVER BEATING OF TRANSGENDER WOMAN IN QUEENS

(Jackson Heights, NY – Jun 30, 2009) – Queens Pride House (QPH) stands in solidarity with the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund (TLDEF) in demanding that the Queens District Attorney prosecute the perpetrators of this brutal assault on Leslie Mora, a transgender woman and Queens resident.

On June 19, 2009, around 2:30 am, Mora was walking home along Roosevelt Avenue in Queens when she was assaulted by two men who began brutally beating her with a belt. Throughout the attack, Mora's assailants shouted "maricon" at her in Spanish, which translates to mean "faggot." Mora sustained multiple injuries, including bruises all over her body and stitches in her scalp. When the police responded they found Mora bleeding from her injuries, her clothes ripped from her body, and almost naked on the sidewalk. The police recovered a belt buckle that the assailants used, which was covered in her blood.

Mora's assailants, identified as Trinidad Tapia, 19, and Gilberto Ortiz, 32, fled the scene but were arrested by police soon after the attack. Both are charged with assault with intent to cause physical injury with a weapon, a felony, and released on their own recognizance. The Queens District Attorney declined to investigate and prosecute the attack as a hate crime. QPH stands with the TLDEF in demanding that the District Attorney revisit this decision and in so doing, not only grant justice to Mora, but establish a precedent of protection for all Queens LGBT residents.

The Board of Directors is deeply saddened by this act of violence in the community and urges community members to contact the Queens District Attorney and urge them to prosecute the assault as a hate crime. The Board calls on the District Attorney to upgrade the assault to a hate crime, the absence of which classification only serves to perpetuate these attacks which violate the human rights of members of the LGBT community to live with dignity in this city and everywhere. Mora, as many transgendered women are on the fringe of those in the community who are already marginalized, is part of a group that is vulnerable to hate crimes and often lack police protection. Naming the assault as a hate crime would clearly send a message of intolerance and convey a message of the law protecting all people.

"We stand in solidarity with Leslie Mora and the Transgender Legal Defense and Education Fund. We demand that justice be served and call on the District Attorney to prosecute her attackers for the vicious hate crime that it was," said Board President, Mark Ahumada.

QPH is a LGBT center in Queens, which was founded in 1996 as a response to the 1990 brutal murder of Julio Rivera in Jackson Heights. Since its formation, QPH has provided Queens LGBT residents with a safe place to gather and organize. ###