

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2017

The Honorable Jefferson Sessions
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530-0001

Dear Attorney General Sessions:

We write to urge you to investigate the recent murders of multiple African-American transgender women around the United States. Transgender women are over four times more likely to be murdered than the general population of all women, and 2017 is on track to be the most deadly year for transgender women, particularly those who are African-American. Your investigation of these murders under federal hate crime laws would help ensure that “the Blessings of Liberty” are secured for all Americans as guaranteed in the U.S. Constitution.

Over the last few years, transgender Americans and the contributions that they make to our communities have become more visible than ever before. However, it is clear that this increased representation has not made our country safer for the transgender community. In the last three years, reported murders of transgender women have grown from 16 in 2014, to 21 in 2015, to 27 in 2016. Only two months into 2017, at least seven transgender women have been murdered. Furthermore, of all of the murders of transgender people between 2013 and 2015, not a single one was prosecuted or reported as a hate crime, despite evidence in multiple cases that assailants were motivated by the victim’s gender identity. It is incumbent upon the Department of Justice to enforce the federal laws that govern such clear examples of anti-transgender violence, especially because most states lack similar hate crime protections for transgender people.

Transgender Americans face innumerable barriers due to discrimination in education, housing, and employment. No person, regardless of race, sex, gender identity, or religious affiliation should worry if they will be shot outside their home or stabbed while going to work, but for many transgender people in the United States fears of violence are a constant presence in their lives. Additionally, transgender women are often targeted by law enforcement for a variety of reasons, and as a result are deterred from seeking help when they are targets of violence or harassment. Transgender Americans deserve to have these attacks investigated as hate crimes.

For your reference, we have included the names and locations of the seven women who have been murdered this year:

- Ciara McElveen, New Orleans, Louisiana
- Chyna Gibson, New Orleans, Louisiana
- Jaquarrius Holland, Monroe, Louisiana
- Keke Collier (Tiara Richmond), Chicago, Illinois
- Mesha Caldwell, Canton, Mississippi
- Jamie Lee Wounded Arrow, Sioux Falls, South Dakota
- Jojo Striker, Toledo, Ohio

Thank you for your time and attention to this matter, and we look forward to hearing back from you.

Sincerely,



Keith Ellison
Member of Congress



Raúl Grijalva
Member of Congress



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Barbara Lee
Member of Congress



Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier
Member of Congress