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PRESS RELEASE

NEW YORK CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS AND COMMUNITY LEADERS CALL ATTENTION TO THE ANTI-LGBT VIOLENCE IN PUERTO RICO WITH REPORT AND PROCLAMATION

NEW YORK CITY, NY, July 13, 2010 — A coalition of New York City elected officials, national and local community leaders today releases [a report that documents the hate-motivated violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender \(LGBT\) people in Puerto Rico](#). This report comes out just a week after the most recent transgender victim (a 25 year old woman) was found shot to death in Loiza, Puerto Rico. In the past eight months, seven LGBT individuals have been killed on the island.

The coalition, *New York City Stands in Solidarity with the Puerto Rican Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community* which includes elected officials and social service agencies organized in the spring of 2010 to monitor, respond to, and end hate violence affecting the Puerto Rican LGBT community. The report is based on the anti-LGBT hate violence documented by Puerto Rico Para Tod@s, a social justice organization fighting for the equal rights and inclusion of the LGBT community in Puerto Rico.

"New York has always shared a special bond with Puerto Rico, and so, too, have our LGBT communities. When we said we would do everything within our power to raise awareness of and put an end to anti-LGBT hate and violence in Puerto Rico, we meant it," says New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn. "As this senseless and tragic violence continues, we must double up on our commitment and efforts."

Today the Council of the City of New York reaffirmed its shared commitment to equal rights for LGBT individuals and to ending homophobia and injustice wherever it exists; by proclaiming this 13th day of July 2010: A Day of Solidarity with Puerto Rico's LGBT Community in New York City.

"Time and again, there has been an unacceptable, deafening silence from Puerto Rican authorities in response to the brutal violence and murders," says New York City Councilmember Melissa Mark-Viverito. "Most egregious and irresponsible has been the lack of response from Puerto Rico Gov. Luis Fortuño who has been absent in the dialogue, media response and community building which has taken place after each and every violent act."

Since 2002, Puerto Rico enacted a hate crimes prevention law, giving protections to all members of the LGBT community, but even with all the recent attacks and murders on the island, not a single crime has been processed under the Puerto Rican hate crime law since it was approved.

Of the more than 20 LGBT victims of possible hate violence in the last eight years, the following have been identified thanks in large part to Puerto Rico Para Tod@s: Lonrry Lemus Pérez, Humberto Bonilla Rodríguez, Fernando López de Victoria, Michell Galindo, Sandro Díaz Maysonet, Víctor Rodríguez, Jammal Torres, Ramses Flores, Leonardo Gamallo, Elías Algarín, Jorge Santos, Luis Rodriguez, Angie González, Ashley Santiago, Jorge Steven López and as yet an unnamed 25-year-old transgender woman killed on July 7, 2010.

The most well-known example of how hatred can destroy lives is the case of Jorge Steven López Mercado, who in November 2009 was stabbed, decapitated, disemboweled and burned. López Mercado's violent death at 19 years of age, sparked nationwide vigils and protests, including in New York City, Washinton D.C. and Chicago. Juan Martínez Matos, the confessed killer, has now been sentenced to 99 years in prison, but because of the limitations

of the local hate crimes law, this violent act was not classified as a hate crime, even though Martínez Matos admitted to as much in his confession.

“This is about members of the Puerto Rican lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender community feeling safe in their communities and being able to take care of the ones they love,” says Pedro Julio Serrano, Communications Manager of the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force. “New York City’s LGBT community stands with the Puerto Rican community in response to this rash of murders and demands that they receive proper investigations by the local authorities.”

“This report is about the concrete harms that members of our community still face even with inclusive hate crime protections. Everyday across the country LGBT people face, harassment, violence and even murder simply for being who they are,” says Guillermo Chacón, President of the Latino Commission on AIDS. “The City of New York stands in solidarity with the Puerto Rican LGBT community and joins in mourning the deaths of so many of our LGBT brothers and sisters.”

Today’s report about Puerto Rico is being released in conjunction with [*Hate Violence Against the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Communities in the United States in 2009*](#), a report which documents hate-motivated violence against lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) people as reported to member organizations of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs (NCAVP). The NCAVP report captures in great detail the challenges faced by LGBTQ people in the United States while working to end hate and domestic violence, HIV-related violence, pick-up crimes, rape, sexual assault and other forms of violence affecting LGBTQ communities.

“While the NCAVP report documents the 2009 violence in Puerto Rico, it does not reflect the 2010 violence and murders that need to be addressed immediately,” says Sharon Stapel, Executive Director of the New York City Anti-Violence Project. “We humbly offer our assistance to the Puerto Rican LGBT community and the local authorities in dealing with the anti-LGBT hate violence.”

The report by *New York City Stands in Solidarity with the Puerto Rican Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities* complements the NCAVP report but in greater detail brings attention to the more than 20 LGBT individuals murdered in the last eight years including the seven men and women murdered in the last eight months. It also brings attention to institutionalized homophobia and transphobia that has contributed to the attacks against innocent people and the lack of response from Puerto Rican authorities.

The network is comprised of the following officials and organizations: New York State Senator Thomas K. Duane, New York City Council Speaker Christine C. Quinn, New York City Council Members Rosie Mendez, Melissa Mark-Viverito, Daniel Dromm, Jimmy Van Bramer, Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation, Gay Men’s Health Crisis, Latino Commission on AIDS, National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, New York City Anti-Violence Project, The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center, The Puerto Rican Initiative to Develop Empowerment and Transgender Legal Defense & Education Fund.