

STATE OF NEW YORK
DIVISION OF HUMAN RIGHTS
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**Statement by Division of Human Rights Commissioner Galen D.
Kirkland on the Sentencing of Dwight DeLee**

“First, let me again convey our condolences to the family of Lateisha Green who was brutally murdered Nov. 14, 2008. While today’s court action cannot reverse this tragic loss it serves as a reminder that we in New York State will not tolerate the kind of violence and mindless bigotry that led to the slaying of an innocent person.

Since 1945, New York has been at the forefront of the civil rights movement becoming the first state to enact an anti-discrimination statute. Our Human Rights law continues to be updated and refined to keep pace with ongoing changes in society. In 2002 the Sexual Orientation Non-Discrimination Act—SONDA-- was signed into law, adding sexual orientation to the list of protected classes in the Human Rights law.

The law clearly spells out that people cannot be discriminated against because of their gender, race, national origin, religious belief, disability or sexual orientation, among other protected classes. Just yesterday, Gov. David Paterson released the recommendations of the Hate Crime Task Force that he initiated in response to this and other hate crimes throughout the state, to discuss the need for education and other outreach efforts to protect the vulnerable members of society from bias-motivated violence. It was a specific message that the State of New York will not tolerate discrimination of any sort and we will respond forcefully to hate crimes.

The death of Lateisha Green was a hate crime of the highest magnitude. We join with all of New York and the family in hopes that together we can prevent an event like this from happening again.”

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New York has the proud distinction of being the first state in the nation to enact a Human Rights Law, which affords every citizen “an equal opportunity to enjoy a full and productive life.” The New York State Division of Human Rights was created to enforce this important law and does so through, among other things, the vigorous prosecution of unlawful discriminatory practices and the receipt, investigation, and resolution of complaints of discrimination. Please visit the Division’s website at www.dhr.state.ny.us for additional information about the agency and its work.