

My response to Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole's Remarks

By Guest

Published March 31, 2014 | Updated March 31, 2026

https://www.transadvocate.com/my-response-to-deputy-attorney-general-james-m-coles-remarks_n_13225.htm

Abstract

[su_lbttop] On Thursday, March 27, 2014, the “Justice Department” launched a training program to supposedly improve relations with the trans community. Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole made remarks here on the issue and ill be copying some of them over to reply to them. His comments will be italicized and in quotations. “While it is difficult [...]

Article

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Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole made remarks here on the issue and ill be copying some of them over to reply to them. His comments will be italicized and in quotations.

“While it is difficult to find comprehensive data, a survey by the National Center for Transgender Equality found that discrimination against transgender individuals is pervasive: 63 percent of respondents reported they had experienced a serious act of discrimination that had a major impact on their quality of life and their ability to sustain themselves financially or emotionally.

Transgender people are reportedly four times more likely to live in extreme poverty than the general population. Too often, transgender people are the target of violent crime, including murder: 61 percent reported they were the victim of physical assault. Those who escape violence from others may still face self-inflicted harm: 41 percent of the population who responded reported having attempted suicide. - [Data from NCTE’s 2011 executive summary http://transequality.org/PDFs/Executive_Summary.pdf]

Did you also fail to mention that the majority of the violence faced targets trans women, and the majority of that targets trans women of color? Yes, you did. You also fail to mention the level of violence perpetrated against trans women by the police, for example, profiling black trans women who possess condoms as sex workers and arresting them for being trans and black in public. Are you going to put a stop to project rose? How about the profiling in New York City?

“But the Community Relations Service serves the critical function of allowing the Department to be proactive -- to improve understanding and improve relations before incidents occur. CRS also plays a critical role in the aftermath of unfortunate events, by working to prevent additional violence by training and educating those on the ground in communities affected by anti-transgender hate crimes.”

How about you stop arresting trans women, sex workers or not for trying to survive? How about you stop arresting black trans women for defending themselves from violent racist and transmisogynistic attacks by white supremacists? How about you prosecute Islan Nettles murderer? How about you stop persecuting trans sex workers? How about you stop persecuting trans drug users? Don't you have murderers and rapists to go after? You know the people killing and raping us? If you want to "improve relations" with us, the onus is completely on you to stop attacking our community and start acting against the people who want us dead. And you can start by cleaning house internally.

"Today you will see that CRS's new training helps ensure that we in law enforcement proactively protect the civil rights of all persons, including those who suffer from acts of hate violence or discrimination on the basis of his or her actual or perceived gender identity."

That is touching, it really is. But its just words. You have years and years and years of violence against trans women to make up for. The proof will be in your praxis. All too often police measures to end discriminatory practices often just cloak them and make them harder to see. How about you put visual and audio recording devices on every single cop on duty? And if its off during the line of duty, they get fired. Allow the recordings to be available to the public on a searchable website.

"What we are about to see is a cultural training program designed to educate law enforcement about the transgender communities they serve. It also is designed to foster mutual understanding between law enforcement and the communities they serve, and enhance law enforcement outreach capabilities to the transgender communities by addressing sensitivities, stereotypes, and expectations."

The onus is not on us to trust you. The onus is on you to earn our trust. Don't forget this. We don't owe you shit.

"At its most basic level, the new training will provide tools to enhance an officer's ability to build partnerships with community members and to work with fellow citizens, who share a commitment to public safety."

My red flag system is being tripped here. I bet the readers money that this translates to continue persecuting the most marginalized among us while ignoring those who participate in respectability politics.

"We understood when you shared the worst possible - and frankly unacceptable - outcome that the transgender community could face. Based on the community's fears about law enforcement's support and perceptions, too many of you in the transgender community simply didn't report incidents of crime brought to bear against you.

This is not a result that can or will be tolerated by the Justice Department, and it runs counter to the very role your community public safety officials want to promote."

But do you understand why so many of us refuse to go to the police? Do you realize you are a huge part of the problem? That when police show up they just make things worse? And now you say its unacceptable that we don't go to the police, instead of saying its unacceptable that the police have acted in a way that earned our distrust and disdain. No, your very words betray you, you appear to want to create a snitch culture within the trans community to divide us further. That's what it looks like to me. Perhaps

the praxis will show otherwise, but right now I'm suspicious as hell.

"Over the past several years, the Department of Justice has observed the Transgender Day of Remembrance in November, a day to honor the memory of victims of anti-transgender violence and discrimination.

The Transgender Day of Remembrance is a day to recommit ourselves to breaking the cycle of violence that affects far too many transgender Americans. "

You don't get to talk about the TDOR until the day you as law enforcement stop adding people to that list or ignore the cries for justice of the families of those on that list. Until every act of violence against transgender people is prosecuted under the fullest extent of the law regardless of who perpetrated it you do not get to use our suffering like this.

You again throughout this entire talk failed to mention the intersection of race and being transgender, the fact that trans women of color face the brunt of anti-transgender violence, that trans sex workers who are only trying to survive are targeted for arrest ahead of the people who murder and rape us.

If you really want to help, call a moratorium on the arrest of all suspected trans sex workers. Release and drop charges against all trans people charged with prostitution. Call a moratorium on the arrest of all trans people charged with drug possession. Release and drop charges against all trans people charged with drug possession. The system we live in has painted us into this corner where victimless illegal activity is often one of the only ways to survive and yet you still arrests, harass, prosecute and persecute us for simply trying to continue our own existence.

If you really want to help, leave us alone and focus on the people who do violence to us, work to dismantle the institutional violence you perpetrate not only against trans women, but all marginalized people. Work to dismantle the entire system of oppression we live in. You as human beings have a moral obligation to challenge evil that goes above and beyond your oaths to enforce the law. When the law is used for evil, you must resist. You must challenge. You must do the right thing. Historically you have not, however. Historically you have resisted nearly every effort of reform and nearly every effort to ensure inequity is ended when it comes to law enforcement.



Figure 1. HC60RYj

Until the day the lot of you clean up the house and become a real force for good, I'm going to suggest to the rest of my trans brothers and sisters to do what we have done before.

Don't talk to cops.

Suggested citation

Guest. "My response to Deputy Attorney General James M. Cole's Remarks." TransAdvocate, March 31, 2014. https://www.transadvocate.com/my-response-to-deputy-attorney-general-james-m-coles-remarks_n_13225.htm