

**Hartford Courant, Letter to the Editor**  
**May 15, 2003**

**Death Brings Transgender Issues to Forefront**

Dear Editor,

The death of Jessica, a self-identified male to female transsexual in New Haven, highlights the ignorance in our society surrounding issues of gender identity and expression. Her death sends shock waves of fear throughout the transgender community, and confirms the message that transgender people are not safe.

People who identify as transgender often times have a gender identity, an inherent sense of being male or female, that is opposite of their birth assigned sex. However, newspaper accounts consistently referred to Jessica as “he” though she clearly expressed and identified her gender as female. Her tragic death highlights the need for education about transgender individuals.

Unfortunately, transgender people are treated as second class citizens and are not afforded the same protections as other members in society. This is why laws need to be put in place to protect transgender people.

This year, Connecticut legislators had the opportunity to add gender identity and expression to our Hate Crimes Statute. Passage of this legislation would have recognized the rights of transgender people and would have placed stiffer penalties on those who commit crimes against people due to their gender identity or expression.

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