

LUIS V. GUTIÉRREZ

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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 10, 2018

The Honorable John M. Gore
Acting Assistant Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
Civil Rights Division
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20530

Dear Acting Assistant Attorney General Gore:

I watched video footage of a woman being harassed by an intoxicated male at a forest preserve in Cook County and I write to express my outrage and demand that the Civil Rights Division does all it can to investigate this incident.

This past June, Mia Irizzary recorded her unfortunate encounter with an intoxicated male while at a Forest Preserve of Cook County park outside Chicago. An officer with the Forest Preserve looked on, avoided responding to the man and ignored the pleas for help from the woman who was being harassed. It is clear from the video that she was accosted by the man because of her ethnicity and wearing a Puerto Rican flag T-shirt. The man makes reference to his fear that Hispanics are coming to the United States to change him.

What is even more unacceptable than the man's behavior is the unwillingness of a uniformed officer to intervene when the woman's civil rights were being challenged and the man used physical and verbal intimidation. I have learned that the man was eventually arrested by a different uniformed officer and the initial officer has been consigned to "desk duty" pending an investigation.

Because of the seriousness of the encounter, the fact that it targeted the Puerto Rican community in and around my District, and growing number of anti-Latino and anti-immigrant hate crimes being reported, I demand the Civil Rights Division investigate to see if federal civil rights charges are warranted.

I would like to remind you of your division's responsibilities which are to enforce federal statutes prohibiting discrimination on the basis of race, color, sex, disability, religion, familial status and national origin.

I understand this incident on a gut level because almost exactly the same thing happened to me when I was a freshman in Congress. I was denied entry into the Capitol complex by U.S. Capitol Police despite being a Congressman with identification, because my daughter was carrying a Puerto Rican flag and the officer doubted that I could possibly be a Member of Congress. So this kind of incident is unfortunately not unusual and though we did not have viral videos 25 years ago, I wish I had done more then to stop the kind of behavior on display in Ms. Irizarry's video, so that we can prevent the cycles of hatred and bigotry that often repeat themselves today.

Thank you and I look forward to your response. If you have any questions please contact me or Rafael Hurtado of my staff at (202) 225-8203.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Luis V. Gutiérrez", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Luis V Gutiérrez
Member of Congress