

Daniel K. Webb  
Special Prosecutor  
Cook County State's Attorney Office

Dear Mr. Webb,

We, the undersigned, write to urge you as the special prosecutor to drop the charges against Mr. Jussie Smollett.

While we do not condone the filing of any false claim, particularly of a hate crime, Mr. Smollett's ongoing prosecution raises serious concerns in the civil rights community.

Mr. Smollett's case fits an unfortunate pattern of anti-Black, anti-queer bias, in which Black queer people are disproportionate targets of unrelenting discrimination, policing, and state sanctioned violence. This pattern is clear when juxtaposed against the treatment of white people accused of similar crimes. For instance, Amy Cooper, a white woman who called 911 to lie that a Black man was threatening her (after he asked that she leash her dog) in New York City; Kristen Michelle Rimes, a white woman in South Carolina who was arrested after lying that a black man attacked her in a parking lot; and Holly Hylton, a white woman and Starbucks employee who became infamous for calling police on two Black customers as they awaited arrival of a colleague and for a significant increase in 911 calls from her particular storefront. In these three cases, white women lied to police, threatening the lives of Black people, and faced no meaningful consequences.

The damage done to Mr. Smollett is not just reputational. Over the past two years, he has suffered considerable hardship, with the loss of contracts, endorsements, and other professional opportunities; having to vacate his home; and continuous death threats against his family members. Here, the person most harmed—the victim of a hate crime—is the defendant.

When the Chicago Police Department released documents related to Mr. Smollett's case to the public, his private information, including his phone number and home address, became widely available. The personal information of others involved in the case, however, was redacted. Mr. Smollett was forced to immediately vacate his apartment to maintain his safety.

At a time when Chicagoans face local public health, safety, and housing crises, and ongoing work to heal the deep and systemic wounds that challenge the city, especially related to anti-LGBTQ+ violence, the prosecution of Jussie Smollett is a waste of finite resources. A number of special prosecutors turned this case down before, which leaves us wondering why you are pursuing charges now.

Mr. Smollett's March 5th trial follows the murder of at least 5 transgender Chicagoans. Most of these crimes remain unsolved. As hate crimes against the transgender community are still on the rise, it is our firm belief that the city should reallocate resources to expeditiously investigate and solve them, rather than prosecuting Jussie Smollett.

We respectfully ask that you encourage the city of Chicago to focus on its pervasive problems and drop the charges against Jussie Smollett.

Thank you,

David J. Johns, National Black Justice Coalition  
Raniyah Copeland, Black AIDS Institute  
Dominique Morgan, Black and Pink  
Guy Anthony, Black Gifted and Whole  
Rev. Jason Carson Wilson, Community Renewal Society  
DaShawn Usher, Mobilizing Our Brother's Initiative (MOBI)  
Imani Rupert, National Center for Lesbian Rights  
Kierra Johnson, National LGBTQ Task Force



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