

Texas transgender woman's killing highlights disturbing trend

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A transgender woman who was brutally attacked in Texas last month was found shot and killed over the weekend. Muhlaysia Booker is the fifth transgender person killed in 2019, according to the Human Rights Campaign.

Booker spoke out about last month's attack saying, "this time it was me, the next time it could be someone else close to you." Booker's cousin, Quanjasmie Baccus, told CBS News she was often targeted for being transgender.

"Everywhere we go she was picked, she was picked on because she is transgender," Baccus said.

Democratic presidential contenders Kamala Harris, Elizabeth Warren and Pete Buttigieg are calling for action, while Beto O'Rourke tweeted that transgender women of color across America "deserve better."

Booker's previous assault in April was captured on cell phone video. The 23-year-old told authorities she was beaten following a minor traffic accident and said her attackers used homophobic slurs. Video shows several men beating her.

The man accused of beating Booker last month, Edward Thomas, is out of jail but police say there's nothing to connect him to Booker's death. Authorities charged Thomas with aggravated assault. Although it was flagged as a hate crime, gender identity is not listed under Texas' hate crime statute.

At this point, police have not connected that attack to Booker's murder. Her father hopes it wasn't a targeted killing.

"I pray it wasn't. I don't want to see nobody's child go through this. Nobody's family," Booker's father said.

Advocacy groups say attacks on transgender people in the U.S. are on the rise. Last year, the Human Rights Campaign tracked at least 26 deaths due to fatal violence. The majority of victims were black transgender women. Experts say as shocking as the numbers are, the number of victims could be even higher.

"So often they will remain silent and the data we have is based on the folks who have reported," said Charlotte Clymer of the Human Rights Campaign. "We don't know about the folks who suffer in silence."