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**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

## **Federal Police Use Violent Force Against Family Living in Park – Pattern of Violence Continues**

### *Forest Service Police Injured Disabled Family Members*

Washington, D.C. | August 23, 2023 - The [National Coalition for Housing Justice](#) (NCHJ) calls on the Biden-Harris administration to stop using federal police to respond to homelessness.

In May of this year, undercover U.S. Forest Service and Bureau of Land Management police officers violently arrested Judy, Timber, and Brooks Roberts for living in a camper in the Payette National Forest north of Boise, Idaho. They were forced to live in the park after their landlord evicted them and they couldn't find available space in shelters.

[Shocking body-cam video](#) shared in a [court filing](#) today shows agents making false claims to lure the family outside, firing multiple gunshots at Brooks Roberts while he was in a wheelchair, hitting him in the back and continuing to shoot at him while he lay on the ground. Judy and Brooks are disabled and their disabilities were visible to agents. Due to the [gunshot injuries](#), Brooks has been hospitalized for more than two months, and faces a lifetime of paralysis from the chest down and limited use of his right arm. The agents involved remain on duty.

This case is just one example of an ongoing pattern of increasing violence against unhoused people at the hands of federal agents. In February, [NCHJ called on](#) U.S. Park Service police to halt the forcible removal and arrest of unhoused people from McPherson Square in Washington, D.C. before the people in the encampment could be placed in housing. The federal government failed to put policies in place to stop encampment raids, and as a result, [residents in McPherson Square were arrested, displaced, and disconnected](#) from service providers who could help connect them to safe and secure homes.

Federal police also set the tone for local law enforcement and vigilantes. And when [criminalization of homelessness](#) combines with race, the results can be deadly, more so for Black people experiencing homelessness. In 2020, Orange County sheriff's deputies supposedly trained for "homeless outreach" shot and killed [Kurt Andras Reinhold](#) during a stop for jaywalking. And earlier this year a white former U.S. Marine sergeant strangled [Jordan Neely](#) – a young Black man – on a subway car. Neely was a well-known entertainer in New York City who was homeless and expressing need for help when he was murdered.



As communities face rapidly rising rents and a severe shortage of housing, many like the Roberts family, Jordan Neely, and Kurt Andras Reinhold have nowhere to go. At the same time, new laws that criminalize homelessness have increased police interactions with vulnerable people, including arresting them for the basic survival activities such as sitting in public and sleeping in cars and tents. Criminalizing people who are unhoused and using police in response to homelessness opens the door to more brutality and discrimination, particularly in Black and Brown communities. Data clearly show that a police approach is expensive, diverts community resources that could be used for housing, disproportionately harms Black people and other people of color and is overall ineffective at solving homelessness. The only way to end homelessness is to stop the police contact in the first place.

We call on the Biden-Harris administration to issue an [executive order](#) eliminating all federal police activities in their response to homelessness, and instead to mandate a housing- and services-only approach that is rooted in choice, healing, and racial justice. Connecting individuals and families to housing and optional supportive services is the only effective way to solve homelessness.

The Roberts family continues to face homelessness as well as increased medical costs; donations for the family can be made at <https://gofund.me/e56466c5>.

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### **About the National Coalition for Housing Justice**

The National Coalition for Housing Justice's ([NCHJ](#)) vision of housing justice guarantees opportunities for everyone in our country to have affordable, safe, accessible, stable housing. We take an approach grounded in racial justice, economic justice, and equity for all who have been marginalized or minoritized.

NCHJ members include national organizations and experts on affordable housing and homelessness, including Center on Budget and Policy Priorities, Corporation for Supportive Housing, Funders Together to End Homelessness, Housing Justice Collective, National Alliance to End Homelessness, National Coalition for Homeless Veterans, National Coalition for the Homeless, National Homelessness Law Center, National Low Income Housing Coalition, National Health Care for the Homeless Council, True Colors United, and Youth Collaboratory.