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LDF Responds to Tragic Killing of Jordan Neely

On May 1, a white former U.S. Marine killed Jordan Neely, an unhoused Black man, using a chokehold while in a New York City public transit car. Today, the city medical examiner [ruled](#) Neely's death a homicide. The Manhattan District Attorney is currently investigating the case. No arrests have been made.

In response to this incident, Janai S. Nelson, President and Director-Counsel of the Legal Defense Fund (LDF), issued the following statement:

“We extend our sincerest condolences to the family of Jordan Neely. He was in crisis – and the city and so many others failed him.

“We demand a full, transparent investigation into this incident, including the law enforcement response and any potential bias undergirding the decision to release a white man who publicly killed an unhoused Black man without charges. But there must be even more than that.

“This incident illuminates the deep, systemic failures that are built into New York City's response to those in crisis. Emboldening people to deputize themselves and engage in extended, fatal violence is not an answer to addressing a mental health crisis. We must have trained mental health professionals available, funded, and fully staffed to lead encounters with stigmatized individuals and populations in distress. That is only one piece of a larger investment that must be implemented, which needs to include housing as a structural solution. For people to be safe, there must also be concerted investments in mental health infrastructure that do more than deescalate – and that provide comprehensive long-term care and support to those in need. Anything less is resigning ourselves to tragedy.”

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Founded in 1940, the Legal Defense Fund (LDF) is the nation's first civil rights law organization. LDF's Thurgood Marshall Institute is a multi-disciplinary and collaborative hub within LDF that launches targeted campaigns and undertakes innovative research to shape the civil rights narrative. In media attributions, please refer to us as the Legal Defense Fund or LDF. Please note that LDF has been completely separate from the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (NAACP) since 1957—although LDF was originally founded by the NAACP and shares its commitment to equal rights.