

THE LEGAL AID SOCIETY

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*****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE*****

Statement on the Passing of Ricky Howell, the Fifth New Yorker to Die in NYC Department of Correction Custody in 2023

(NEW YORK, NY) – The Legal Aid Society released the following statement on the passing of [Ricky Howell](#), a former Legal Aid client and the fifth New Yorker to die in New York City Department of Correction custody in 2023:

“Last night, we learned that Ricky Howell, our former client, passed away from a terminal illness at Bellevue Hospital in the custody of the New York City Department of Correction. Mr. Howell was known for his kindness and charisma, and we are both saddened by his loss and angered by the collective indifference from the individuals who condemned Mr. Howell to live out his final days incarcerated rather than in the community.

“While we are heartened that Mr. Howell had a devoted care team at Bellevue Hospital who treated him with dignity and respect, the judges and prosecutors on Staten Island who vigorously fought to keep him jailed despite knowing full well his medical condition and imminent death, and that he posed no threat to public safety, is truly disgraceful, callous, and devoid of any human decency. The Richmond County District Attorney’s Office’s insistence of a prison sentence is equally disturbing, despite numerous letters documenting Mr. Howell’s deteriorative state from his doctors and other medical professionals.

“This stunning lack of compassion and empathy brandished by Staten Island judges and prosecutors throughout this case is an all too common punitive quality of the criminal legal system that refuses to recognize our clients as human beings.

“Our hearts ache for Mr. Howell’s friends, family and community during this extraordinarily tragic time.”

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The Legal Aid Society exists for one simple yet powerful reason: to ensure that New Yorkers are not denied their right to equal justice because of poverty. For over 145 years, we have protected, defended, and advocated for those who have struggled in silence for far too long. Every day, in every borough, The Legal Aid Society changes the lives of our clients and helps improve our communities. www.legalaidnyc.org