

December 27, 2024

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

***Statement in Response to Video Footage Showing NYS Department of
Corrections and Community Supervision Officers at Marcy C.F. Beat, Choke, and
Kill Robert L. Brooks***

(NEW YORK, NY) - Tina Luongo, Chief Attorney of the Criminal Defense Practice at The Legal Aid Society, issued the following statement in response to video footage released by the New York State Attorney General's office showing correction officers in Marcy Correctional Facility beat, stomp, choke, and kill Robert L. Brooks, an incarcerated person in their custody.

“Like everyone who has seen this video, we are horrified, angered, and deeply saddened by the killing of Robert L. Brooks by correctional officers at Marcy Correctional Facility. What Mr. Brooks endured — while several officers and even two nurses stood by, watching, smiling, and laughing — can only be described as a grotesque display of inhumanity that is utterly appalling.

“However, we are encouraged that authorities are investigating the brutal end of Mr. Brooks' life while he was in state custody and look forward to a full accounting of this tragedy. Too often, the violence that occurs behind prison walls remains hidden or becomes normalized in the public eye once the headlines fade.

“Mr. Brooks should be alive today. To prevent similar deaths in the prison system, we demand complete transparency regarding the use of force by corrections staff across the entire DOCCS prison system. From our clients incarcerated in state prisons, we know firsthand that correction officers far too often assault individuals in custody. Without system-wide accountability, we fear that others in custody will continue to suffer assaults at the hands of corrections staff, inevitably leading to more tragedies.

“But New York's prison system is inherently brutal and racist, and prosecutors and judges should remember what happened to Mr. Brooks and consider the environment they are condemning a human being to when seeking to impose a prison sentence.

“This moment demands the decarceration of our prison system through pending legislation, such as the [Communities Not Cages](#) platform. Key bills — including the Marvin Mayfield Act, the Second Look Act, and the Earned Time Act — aim to reduce prison populations, invest in communities, and move New York away from its decades-long reliance on the punitive carceral system as a one-size-fits-all solution.”

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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 nearly 150 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.

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