

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**Jazmine Headley Files Civil Rights Lawsuit Against the City of New York,  
and its HRA and NYPD Officers, After Violent Arrest and  
Brutal Separation from Her Young Son**

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AUGUST 7, 2019 – Today, Jazmine Headley filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against the City of New York and its Human Resources Administration (“HRA”) peace officers and New York City Police Department (“NYPD”) officers who attacked and arrested her at the DeKalb Job Center in Brooklyn, New York on December 7, 2018. A then-23-year-old working mother, Ms. Headley went to the HRA office seeking assistance. HRA had abruptly cut off her child-care benefit; her one-year-old son could not go to daycare and Ms. Headley could not go to work. Exhausted from a three-hour wait, Ms. Headley sat on the floor next to her son’s stroller.

In response to Ms. Headley sitting on the floor of the waiting area, HRA officers became abusive, threatening her and summoning the NYPD. Ms. Headley and her son were assaulted. Ms. Headley’s son was violently yanked from her arms and taken from her. She was charged with several crimes and detained at Rikers Island for days. The criminal charges have since been dismissed. Ms. Headley and her son continue to experience the trauma of these events.

When video footage of Ms. Headley’s treatment went viral, public outrage was swift and widespread. New York City officials at the highest levels uniformly condemned the officers’ wildly disproportionate response that serve no legitimate public safety purpose.

As Ms. Headley has stated, her experience is unfortunately not unique. Too often, New Yorkers seeking help at HRA offices are harassed, harmed, and wrongfully arrested by HRA peace officers. HRA must reform its practices and the resulting culture of violence and fear. And the NYPD must implement basic protocols and training to protect children like D.B. from unnecessary trauma when a parent is arrested.

**Jazmine Headley** said: “My son and I were unreasonably assaulted by untrained and undertrained HRA security officers and police officers. I am taking action so this experience does not fester and infect our lives, work, relationships, and health. I look forward to re-directing the hurt and anger we feel into more positive outlets for change, such as this lawsuit, protest and community involvement, volunteering for an organization like the Brooklyn Defenders, and joining in a coordinated response to assist others who have experienced abuse.”

**Katie Rosenfeld, one of Ms. Headley’s attorneys and a partner at Emery Celli Brinckerhoff & Abady LLP**, said, “Ms. Headley refused to be demeaned by HRA officers just because she needed help. What followed was a shameful display of violence and punishment. But this incident caught the attention of millions because many of us recognized ourselves in Ms. Headley. Her deep love for her son, her struggles as her family’s breadwinner, and her dignity in the face of adversity resonate with New Yorkers and people around the world.”

“I applaud Ms. Headley for her bravery in speaking out against the injustices she faced and filing today’s lawsuit to say enough is enough,” said **New York City Council Member Stephen Levin**. “The abuse Jazmine experienced was abhorrent. She should never have had her child taken from her and she should never have been at Rikers Island. This disturbing incident did not take place in a vacuum, however, and brought to light serious gaps in our city’s social services system and the need for full scale improvement. I thank Ms. Headley for her leadership in fighting for HRA clients across New York and I will continue to stand with her until she gets the justice that is due.”

**Lisa Schreibersdorf, the Executive Director of Brooklyn Defender Services**, said: “Jazmine, like so many of the other people we serve, was mistreated by the very City agencies that were and are supposed to be helping her and her family. We applaud Jazmine for holding the City accountable for the violent, abusive, and uncalled for treatment that she suffered as she was trying to protect and care for her son.”

**Liz Gaynes, Osborne Association President and CEO**, said: “What happened to Jazmine Headley raises issues at the heart of how we as a society treat our children. All officers with the authority to make an arrest need training, compassion, and written protocols that reduce trauma and increase child safety. Children who witness their parent's arrest will live with this experience forever; how arresting authorities respond can make a world of difference to ensure that the memory is not a nightmare.”

A copy of the Complaint can be found [here](#).