



**HATE CRIMES:** *A Report Documenting Violence Against Men and Women Homeless in the U.S.*

January 1, 2000

Prepared by the National Coalition for the Homeless  
and the National Homeless Civil Rights Organizing Project

# **Hate Crimes Against Homeless People in 1999:**

**Total Number of Violent Acts in 1999:** 60

**Total Number of Deaths in 1999:** 48

**Total Number of Non-Lethal Attacks:** 12

**No. of Cities Where Murders Occurred:** 26 Anchorage (AK), Burton (MI), Charlotte Co. (FL), Chicago (IL), Dallas (TX), Denver (CO), Eureka (CA), Hartford (CT), Inglewood (CA), Jeffersonville (IN), Kent (WA) Los Angeles (CA), Memphis (TN), Miami (FL), Monticello (AR), New Britain (CT), New York (NY), Pittsburgh (PA), Portland (OR), Rapid City (SD), Richmond (VA) San Francisco (CA), Santa Cruz (CA), Seattle (WA), Suffolk Co. (NY), and Toledo (OH).

**Age Range of Accused/Convicted:** 14 (two), 15 (two), 16 (three), 17 (three), 18 (four) 19 (seven), 20 (three), 21 (two), 22, 24, 27, 28, 29, 30, 32, 34, 38, 39, 48

**Age Range of Victims:** 4 months old, 17, 23, 26, 28, 30, 32, 39 (two), 34 (two) 40 (two), 42, 43 (three), 44, 45, 46 (two), 50, 51, 52, 54, 55, 62, 69

**Sex of Victims: Male:** 43

**Female:** 16

---

## **The National Coalition for the Homeless recommends the following Action Steps be taken:**

- 1) An acknowledgement from public officials that hate crimes and/or violence against people who become homeless is a serious national trend. We ask that the U.S. Dept. of Justice issue a public statement on this matter.**
- 2) That the U.S. Dept. of Justice, in cooperation with the National Coalition for the Homeless, begin to track hate crimes and/or violence against people who become homeless.**
- 3) That homelessness be added as a category to pending federal hate crimes legislation (Hate Crime Prevention Act of 1999--S. 622, HR 1082)**
- 4) That police departments nationwide, in cooperation with the NCH, begin “sensitivity training” for both trainees and police officers on how to deal humanely, effectively and legally with people who become homeless in their communities.**

5) That the U.S. Dept. of Justice sponsor and/or fund a research study in which those convicted of hate crimes and/or violence against people who become homeless are interviewed. The proposed study will seek answers to the following questions:

- a) Causes of hate crimes and/or violence against people who become homeless.
- b) The circumstances (e.g. prejudice, peer pressure, substance abuse, possessing weapons) that contributed to or were responsible for their conduct.
- c) Beliefs held by perpetrators of hate crimes and/or violence against people who become homeless; have their beliefs changed after being convicted?
- d) Advice that perpetrators of hate crimes and/or violence against people who would become homeless would give to other people who talk about or commit similar actions.

---

## **Rapid City, (SD) (All of 1999)**

### **Homeless Men's Death a Mystery. Corpses of Native Americans Tossed in Creek**

Eight homeless men in 16 months have been found drowned in a stream near Downtown Rapid City. In typical years, only about one homeless turns up drowned along the creek.

"There's just too many of them to say it's coincidence. But it could be," said Police Chief Tom Hennies.

Six of the eight homeless men were Native Americans.

The homeless people who live under the bridges along the creek say they believe someone is pushing unconscious or helpless drinkers in the water

Chief Standing Elk believes the killers to be racist skinheads. He says the creek people have banded together to chase some of them away.

Homeless people and others complain that the police are doing little to investigate the deaths because most of the victims are Native Americans.

The two men who lead the task force investigating the deaths say they have asked themselves whether they would do anything differently if the dead men had been affluent whites. Chief Sheriff's Deputy De Glassgow says he believes the investigation is being conducted the same as if all the victims had been white. A \$4,000 reward has been offered.

A man convicted of strangling a homeless person was sentenced to die Friday. A Daniel Conahan, 45, was sentenced for the murder of 21-year-old Richard Montgomery. Conahan was convicted of first-degree murder in August of 1999 for the 1996 death.

Conahan is suspected in the deaths of four other homeless men found in the woods of northern Charlotte County in the mid-1990's. Those cases remain under investigation.

Conahan repeatedly denied killing anyone and his defense attorney said a bad back made him incapable of committing the crime.

## **Chicago (IL) (December)**

### **Three Men are Charged in Homeless Woman's Slaying**

Three men have been charged in the death of an unidentified homeless woman whose battered body was found this month along a road near North Chicago.

Investigators followed more than 230 leads since the woman's body was found by forest rangers on Dec. 9.

The suspects were identified as Jason Strong, 24, Jason Johnson, 27, and Jeremy Tweedy, 21, all of whom lived at the Motor Inn Motel.

They were charged with concealment of a homicidal death after they allegedly confessed to participating in the crime. Strong was also charged with first-degree murder.

According to police, Strong said that he met the apparently homeless woman walking along U.S. 41 and took her back to his motel room.

Strong allegedly became enraged when the woman explained that she hadn't eaten in several days and started to microwave a burrito that belonged to him, officials said. He allegedly beat the woman and continued to do so throughout the night.

Strong allegedly enlisted Johnson and Tweedy to carry the woman to his van when she became incoherent. The men drove south on U.S. 41, apparently looking for a place to drop her off.

The men did not say whether the woman was still alive when they dumped her in the forest preserve.

Strong was being held on a \$2 million bond. Johnson and Tweedy were being held on \$1 million bonds each.

Police say the suspects were caught after allegedly bragging about the crime.

## **Santa Cruz (CA) (All of 1999)**

### **“Troll Busting” of Homeless by “Skinheads”**

Homeless activists and the police department in Santa Cruz report 51 assaults (sometimes called “troll busting”) on homeless people since January. Recent reports described groups that attacked homeless people as Nazi skinheads.

In June of 1999, a man reported that while he camped near Highway 9, a car drove by and sprayed the area with gunfire. Three different groups of homeless campers were sleeping in that area.

A homeless Latino man had his arm broken by a group of young men. Due to his lack of proper immigration papers, he would not report the crime.

A man sleeping on the sidewalk late at night along Pacific Ave. was kicked by a group of young men.

The only known conviction for assaults on homeless people was that of Aaron Bertsch. He was convicted of breaking into an abandoned building where three homeless people slept. One homeless man was able to get away without injury. But Joe Parker, as he lay on the floor, was brutally beaten with a chain, a bottle, and a planter box. He suffered broken ribs and was hospitalized. The police told reporters they didn’t consider the assault to be a hate crime. Bertsch was sentenced to four months in jail.

An official police report on the number of reported assaults against homeless people in Santa Cruz found: 51 assaults in 1999 in which the victim was identified as homeless, transient or having a shelter address out of a total of 452 assaults for the entire city. Santa Cruz has a homeless population estimated as being between 500 and 1500.

A local homeless advocate crunched the numbers compared to the city’s population (52,000): “If you live in a house, your chance of being assaulted is 1 in 1000, If you’re homeless, you have a 4--8 % chance of becoming an assault victim. It’s dangerous out there.

Homeless individuals report being afraid to sleep in groups or in well-lit areas, and afraid to report assaults to the police because of “sleeping ban” tickets and warrants.

## **Charlotte County (FL) (December)**

### **Man Convicted of Strangling Homeless Person Sentenced to Death**

The unidentified woman was white, 25 to 35 years old, 4 feet 9 inches, and weighing 90 pounds.

## **Hartford, (CT) (December)**

### **Two Teens Charged in Homeless Murder**

Two teens were charged with murder and assault in the shooting death of a homeless man, Anthony Oleski, inside a vacant home in December of 1999.

Suspects in the case were Peter Gilhooly, 18, and Irving Ortiz, 15.

## **Inglewood (CA) (December)**

### **Homeless Man Fatally Beaten**

Authorities were trying to determine why a group of men beat a homeless man and left him to die in a pizza restaurant parking lot.

James Brown, 32, was found dead early Tuesday morning by firefighters, who pronounced him dead at the scene. No suspects were in custody.

Witnesses told police that six men in a Ford Bronco got out and began beating Brown in a Pizza Hut parking lot when another Bronco with several men pulled up, the Police Department said in a statement. Men from the second Bronco also began beating Brown and then all the suspects fled.

A motive for the beating was not known.

## **New Britain (CT) (December)**

### **Two Arrested in Fatal Shooting of a Homeless Man**

Two suspects, ages 15 and 18, have been arrested in the fatal shooting of a homeless man. Both were being held in lieu of a \$1 million bond.

Both are charged with murder, conspiracy to commit murder, criminal attempt to commit murder, and first degree assault.

Police say one or both of the suspects fired at two homeless men inside an abandoned home late Friday night, killing Antonio Olesky, 45, and wounding Wesley Monko. Monko is recovering from a gunshot wound to the side of his head.

## **New York (NY) (December)**

## **Homeless Woman Set on Fire on a Subway Car**

According to subway police, a homeless woman was in very serious condition at the beginning of this month. She suffered from third degree burns after she was set on fire while aboard a city subway car.

As Corona Thomas burned in flames, a subway worker helped put out the flames as she stepped off a southbound train at a Bronx subway station.

Emergency workers took Ms. Thomas to a Bronx hospital. She suffered with burns over 60% of her body.

The police are still trying to put together a case.

## **Denver (CO) (Fall)**

### **Seven Homeless Men Killed. Two Were Beheaded.**

Seven homeless men have been found dead in Denver in the trendy Lower Downtown district. Two were beheaded. All of the men were beaten to death, one so savagely that his skull was in pieces. And at least two others were severely beaten.

The discovery of the battered bodies of seven homeless men has Denver police investigating whether the rash of slayings is the work of a serial killer preying on homeless people. Police said that the circumstances “certainly appear to be similar” in the fatal beatings.

Police have blamed some of the violence on “mall rats,” groups of young men and women who gather near the trendy downtown shopping district known as the 16th Street Mall. Many, like the victims, are homeless.

A new wave of fear is passing through Denver’s homeless community with the discovery of these two additional homeless men who were beheaded. Homeless people armed themselves with knives, pipes and railroad spikes after hearing the news of the two latest deaths.

“You can tell there’s a lot of concern now,” said Del Maxfield of the Denver Rescue Mission. “First there were three bodies, then four, then five, and now there are two more. So it’s a pretty shocking thing for everybody.”

In early November, police arrested seven young men, all between the ages of 16 and 21, and charged them with assault and robbery in attacks on a street musician and homeless man. Two are also suspected in one of the murders. Two men, ages 18 and 20, and a 16-year-old boy have been charged with first-degree murder in one of the fatal beatings. The

defendants are part of a clique police call "mall rats," who hang out around Denver's busy 16th Street Pedestrian Mall. Five others have been charged on assault charges for nonfatal beatings.

Shortly after their arrest, two more men were found dead and beheaded.

The most persistent street rumor is that a pack of young men is picking on homeless people for sick thrills. In the only case so far with a witness, someone told the police that several juvenile male suspects were seen beating a homeless man in a downtown alley in early September.

They "may get a sort of high or thrill by beating up people, and homeless are such an easy target," said Police Lt. Judith Will. "It's sad and tragic."

One of the victims, she said, compared a recent beating to "being attacked by a pack of hyenas."

"Don't they know we are real people?" asked Bill Dennis, a 59-year-old Navy veteran who has been homeless for four years.

Jeff Chase of the Denver Voice, a street newspaper, wrote: "Jon Benet is not the only unsolved killing on the Front Range. Unlike the death of the blond little girl, though, there will be no secret grand jury, national media circus or finger-pointing Governor for these five. Only the drawers of the morgue, and then a quiet burial."

John Parvensky, director of the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless, said, "It is just as important to find and bring the killers to justice as it is to find the murderer of Jon-Benet Ramsey."

An anonymous donor has offered a \$100,000 reward for information leading to the capture and conviction of the killer or killers.

"In Denver, whether one is living in a shelter or one is living in a palatial home, life is important. It is critical that we find out who murdered these individuals," said Denver Mayor Wellington Webb.

"The deaths of seven homeless men have left our community in a state of disbelief. We were really taken aback when the two other bodies were found," said Mayor Webb who has asked U.S. Attorney Janet Reno to provide FBI resources for the investigation.

In March of 2000, Thomas Holden, 19, pleaded guilty to reduced charges in the attack on a homeless man that occurred on September 8. Christopher Ball, 16, was found guilty of manslaughter. Melvin Washington, 47, was sleeping on a steam grate when he was attacked. He died on September 15, one of seven homeless men murdered in Denver in 1999 in a series of vicious attacks.



Holden was charged with first-degree murder, but under a plea agreement, plead guilty to second-degree murder in Washington's death and second-degree assault in the September 25 attack on street musician George Burdge, 39. Prosecutors agreed to a maximum 30-year sentence.

Holden also testified at the trials of Ball and Nathan Harrison, 20, both charged with Washington's murder.

Detectives said the teens first argued with Washington at a downtown 7-Eleven over spare change and later saw him sleeping in a park.

Holden told police Ball spotted Washington sleeping on the grate and said, "There's that b----. We have to get him."

Holden said Ball hit Washington in the head with a bottle and then began kicking him while Harrison kicked his head. Holden said they stopped kicking him "because his ribs had turned to mush."

Harrison claimed Holden stomped on Washington's head. Holden told police he thought he "stepped" on his head accidentally and may have knocked out one of Washington's teeth.

Prosecutors said Holden also participated in the September 25 attack on Burge, who was beaten and robbed after a group of teenagers lured him to the Cherry Creek bike path.

A jury found Ball guilty of manslaughter, but rejected the more serious charges of first- or second-degree murder. Ball faces two to twelve years in prison.

## **Dallas, (TX) (November)**

### **Anger at Homeless Turns Deadly, Police Say. Resident Is Accused of Firing at Man Who Was Sifting Household Garbage**

A homeowner often annoyed by homeless people roaming his neighborhood shot one to death early Monday as the man rummaged through trash outside his house, Dallas police said.

Robert Sanchez, 38, opened fire with a 12-gauge shotgun from his second-story bedroom window. Sanchez admitted to firing the shots.

The 50-year-old victim, whom police did not identify but was well known on the streets as "New York," died about 3:30 a.m., about an hour after he was shot.

“He (Robert Sanchez) asked them to stay away nicely, but they don’t care,” said Robert Brewer, who rents a room from Sanchez. “It’s sad that something like this had to happen. Now, maybe they’ll stay away.”

The wounded homeless man was found near a rusted refrigerator and other trash that Mr. Sanchez had left on the curb beside his home for pickup.

Mr. Sanchez told police the homeless man was trying to carry away the refrigerator and was making a lot of noise. Mr. Sanchez warned the man to leave; when the homeless man refused, they argued before Mr. Sanchez started shooting.

The homeless man was outside a wooden picket fence on Mr. Sanchez’s property line when he was shot, police said.

“We’re trying to find out how threatened Mr. Sanchez felt,” Police Sgt. Kirkpatrick said

In June of 2000, a jury sentenced Sanchez to a 3-1/2 year sentence for the November killing, but asked the judge to probate the sentence. Mr. Sanchez, who faced a maximum sentence of 10 years and a \$10,000 fine, was given two years’ community supervision instead.

## **Eureka, (CA) (November)**

### **Teens Admit to Killing of Homeless Man**

James Marshall McMahon, 19, and Shawn Ray LaCount, 18, pleaded guilty in June of 2000 to the killing of a homeless man who was found beaten to death in his sleeping bag outside a post office on Thanksgiving morning in 1999.

Christopher Bainter, 34, died from head injuries inflicted by the two teenagers. Both were apparently intoxicated at the time of the killing, and had just left a party when they encountered Bainter. The teens kicked and beat him about the face and head.

According to the District Attorney, “There was no indication the victim provoked this. He was basically trapped in his sleeping bag.”

## **Memphis, (TN) (November)**

### **Man Charged with Setting Fire to Homeless Man**

On January 11, 2000, Brian Eugene Harrell, 19, was charged with attempted murder for beating and setting fire to a homeless man in South Memphis in November of 1999.

Johnny Dates, 44, was doused with alcohol, set afire, and beaten with metal pipes.

Following the attack, Dates stumbled to the steps of the Memphis Police Department, which was about a block from where he was attacked.

In January of 2000, Dates remained in the hospital being treated for second- and third-degree burns over 50 to 60 percent of his body.

Two other suspects had been identified but were still at large.

## **Toledo (OH) (November '99)**

### **Six Older Homeless People Killed**

The City of Toledo has seen six older homeless people killed since Thanksgiving 1999. Over the last three months, six people who had some experience or relationship with the prostitution trade in Toledo and spent time on the streets were bludgeoned to death. Five were women, and one man. One of the women was set on fire. All six homeless people had slept under the bridges and had a history of alcohol abuse and prostitution. All were clients of the same homeless social service organization in Toledo. The police did arrest an individual late in January who is a suspect in two of the murders. Police suspect that this might be a fundamentalist serial killer attempting to clean up the city. At of February, 2000, the police have not tied all the murders together. Newspaper accounts in Toledo have focused on the prostitution aspect of the murders while only two individuals were identified as being homeless.

## **Jeffersonville, (IN) (September)**

### **Torching of Apartment Building Causes Death of Homeless Family**

An incendiary device was thrown through the window of an apartment building housing homeless families causing the deaths of three homeless people, ages, 40, 23 and 4 months old. Three other families (15 people in all) were made homeless again. Three youth (ages 14--19) are prime suspects in this triple murder.

## **New York, (NY) (September)**

### **Manhattan Man Arrested for Homeless Murder**

Greg Yancey, 48, was charged with second-degree murder in the death of Charles Hadden, 54, who was homeless. The murder occurred on September 24, 1999.

## **Anchorage (AK) (Summer)**

### **Two Homeless People Killed**

Police are investigating two deaths of homeless people this summer as homicides, including that of a woman, Annie Mann, age 45, found dead behind an abandoned warehouse.

Homeless outreach teams have reported breaking up “numerous fights between street people and teens.”

## **Miami, (FL) (August)**

### **Homeless Man Shot by Six Policemen**

A homeless man, armed with a toy cap gun, died on August 31, 1999 in a hail of gunfire from six Miami police officers outside a restaurant in Little Havana. The incident began when the victim waved the gun and hid behind a concrete wall in the restaurant’s parking lot.

## **Portland, (OR) (August)**

### **Three Youths Plead Guilty to Manslaughter, Face Prison in Brutal Beating Death**

Three teens who beat to death a North Portland homeless man pleaded guilty to second-degree manslaughter in exchange for 10-year prison sentences. Prosecutors agreed to the manslaughter charges because the three did not intend to kill the homeless man and he was alive when they left him. In addition, the teens did not use weapons, and the attack was not prolonged although they severely punched and kicked him. The man died of internal injuries, including a lacerated liver and kidney, caused by blunt force trauma to his stomach.

## **Seattle, (WA) (August)**

### **Teens Stab Homeless Man 18 Times**

Three teens stabbed a homeless man 18 times in August of 1999, leading to his death. The teens then left the body of David Ballenger on a heap of refuse under Interstate 5.

A 46-year homeless man was fatally stabbed 18 times as he tried to sleep beneath an interstate overpass in North Seattle. Three teenagers have been arrested and charged with the murder. Prosecutors say that one teen bragged about the killing, telling friends, “Let’s just say there’s one less bum on the face of the Earth.”

Ballenger, 46, was remembered by his family as a gentle, loving man who chose to live on the street.

## **Suffolk County (NY) (August)**

## **Arrest Made in Homeless Murder**

Suffolk County police have arrested a Brentwood man on charges he murdered a homeless man.

30-year-old Sanjay Tyagi was charged with second degree murder in the Aug. 9th shooting death of Olegario Sanchez.

Police allege Tyagi shot Sanchez because he suspected him of twice burglarizing his home.

## **Burton, (MI) (July)**

### **Teens Convicted in Murder of Homeless Man**

Five teens admitted to some involvement in the assault on a homeless man that resulted in his death. On July 20, 1999, Mark A. Harris, 34, was beaten to death by the teenagers after he bought them some beer.

The teens, who apparently became angry that Harris short-changed them after purchasing the beer, began to beat him with wooden boards, pieces of brick, and other objects. A pathologist reported that Harris was bruised or cut over 85 percent of his body and compared his injuries to those of a high-speed accident victim. Some of the injuries were inflicted after Harris had already died, she said.

In June of 2000, separate juries convicted Mark A. Gonzalez, 16, and Ryan A. Kendrick, 17, of first-degree murder, assault with intent to do great bodily harm, and conspiracy to commit assault with intent to do great bodily harm. Another jury convicted Michael D. Worden, 16, of second-degree murder and the two assault charges.

Two other teens involved in the assault entered plea bargains and testified in the trial. Ricky Beggs Jr., 17, pleaded guilty to second-degree murder and two assault counts. Christopher R. Crandell, 18, who drove the others to the trailer but did not participate in the beatings, pleaded guilty to attempted felonious assault.

According to his family, Harris struggled with bouts of alcoholism, but was not violent and had tried to stop drinking. He was a father of three.

## **Chicago (IL) (July)**

### **Homeless Man Doused with Flammable Chemical**

On July 14, Cleotha Mitchell fell asleep on a park bench. While he slept, someone doused him with a flammable chemical and set him on fire. If a jogger had not seen him

and put out the fire, Cleotha would have surely burned to death. Instead, he will live with scars from third degree burns over 20% of his body and an emotional scar the rest of his life. His only offense was being homeless.

Police claim this was an isolated incident, but homeless people say otherwise. They cite numerous incidents of assault and murder of homeless people as they slept.

Cleotha Mitchell continues to have nightmares about waking up on fire. He is afraid to go back to that neighborhood even though his family and support systems are there.

The police have visited him once, but he has no idea what is happening with his case.

## **Los Angeles, (CA) (May)**

### **A Police Shooting Death, A Study in Contrasts**

Margaret Mitchell, 55, a 5-foot-1-inch, 102 pound widow, was shot to death by a Los Angeles police officer who had approached her with his partner on bicycle patrol to ask if the shopping cart she was pushing was stolen.

Los Angeles police had recently begun cracking down on homeless people and confiscating their shopping carts.

The police say Mrs. Mitchell brandished a foot-long screwdriver and threatened to kill the officers, until one of them, stumbling as he ducked to avoid her, feared for his safety and fired.

But at least two witnesses who dispute the police account, saying that they saw nothing in Mrs. Mitchell's hand and that she never threatened the officers.

Many activists are asking why two police officers couldn't have found a less lethal way to subdue a 55-year-old woman who was only 5 feet, 1 inches tall and weighed 102 pounds.

Police Chief Bernard Parks said it did not appear that his officers had "done anything wrong." He questioned why Mrs. Mitchell's family had not done more to help her and complained that critics of his department were seeking to exploit the incident for their own ends.

In October of 1999, Chief Parks has determined that the officer who shot Mrs. Mitchell used faulty tactics, but did not violate department policy. If Parks' views are adopted, the two officers would have to receive training to improve their tactics.

In response to the Chief Parks' decision, the Los Angeles Coalition to End Hunger & Homelessness has called on the Civilian Police Commission to conduct an independent investigation.

“We really found it to be a paradox. How can you have a faulty tactic and still have it within policy. It doesn’t make sense,” said Bob Erlenbusch, director of the Los Angeles Coalition.

The Los Angeles Coalition also presented the Civilian Police Commission with 10 recommendations to improve police training, including more time in learning how to recognize mental illnesses, and how to handle mentally ill homeless people.

According to a 2/12/00 Associated Press story, the police officer who killed a mentally ill homeless woman violated policy by using faulty tactics to confront her. This is according to a civilian police Commission investigator.

A report by the Inspector General has found that witnesses did not see the 54-year-old woman lunge at Officer Larrigan.

The Inspector General’s report said Larrigan made such serious mistakes when confronting Mitchell that he may have improperly contributed to the shooting by putting himself at risk, the LA Times reported.

But Police Chief Parks has said Mitchell pushed the cart toward Larrigan, who blocked it with his foot. A civilian distracted Larrigan and Mitchell pulled the screwdriver from the cart. When she refused to drop it, Larrigan shot her once in the chest, according to the department.

On 2/18/00 the Los Angeles Police Commission ruled that an officer’s shooting of a mentally ill homeless woman last year violated department policy.

By a vote of 3 to 2, the Commission concluded that the woman, Margaret Mitchell, had not posed an imminent danger and that alternatives had not been exhausted before she was killed. In doing so, the Commission accepted the recommendation of its civilian inspector general over that of Police Chief Parks. Parks had argued that the shooting should have been found within the department’s policy guidelines even if the tactics leading to it were faulty.

## **Portland (OR) (May)**

### **Three Homeless Women Murdered**

On July 14, the City of Portland provided \$125,000 to provide 30 more temporary beds as the results of the killings of three women in May.

The shelter needs of homeless women have received greater attention since May, when three women were found strangled in Forest Park. That a serial killer could be responsible prompted 11 social service agencies and religious groups to demand more

emergency shelter, and has heightened awareness of the dangers and difficulties of those living on the streets.

On July 20, a Todd Reed, 32, was arraigned in connection with the strangulations of the three women found in Forest Park. He was charged with three counts of aggravated murder.

Reed apparently made contact with the victims, Lilla Moler, 28, Stephanie Russell, 26, and Alexandria Ison, 17, along West Burnside St.--an area where prostitution is out in the open. All three victims were heroin addicts, and two were involved in prostitution.

"They were connected by a lifestyle he preyed upon," said Detective Sgt. Kris Ferrell.

Police said they received about 600 tips as they investigated the killings--some from prostitutes, the victims' friends and others.

The arrest brought slight relief at Rose Haven, a center for homeless women in the Old Town/Skid Road area of Downtown Portland. Homeless advocates expressed relief, gratitude for tenacious police work, renewed sadness for the deaths of the women, cautious optimism that the right man had been caught, and extreme frustration that Portland's streets still are dangerous.

## **Kent, (WA) (March)**

### **Man Given 36 Years in Brutal Homeless Murder**

Anthony Waller, 22, was sentenced to 36 years in prison in April of 2000 for brutally stabbing a homeless man more than 50 times with a screwdriver in 1999.

The victim, Thomas Moore, 43, apparently witnessed Waller breaking into a car. After the killing, Waller showed his friends the body and told them that was what happened to people who messed with him.

Moore's body was so bloody and mangled when it was found that the police detective who found him thought the man had been hit by a train.

Waller was convicted of first-degree murder in December of 1999.

Police detective Kathy Holt said Moore lived quietly in a teepee-shaped shelter that included a bed, a coffeemaker, shaving gear and a stack of resumes. He worked as a laborer and for various temporary employment agencies.

## **Monticello, (AR) (March)**

### **Man Convicted of Rape and Murder of Homeless Man**



On the strength of DNA evidence, Melvin Washington, 34, was convicted in June of the rape and manslaughter of a 69-year-old homeless man, Ervin Meadows.

Meadows was beaten to death on either March 15 or 16, 1999. Police had no leads in the case until semen was found on his body during an autopsy.

A saliva sample from Washington matched the DNA of the semen found on Meadows.

Washington was charged with rape and capital murder, though a jury found him guilty only of rape and manslaughter. He will serve 40 years for the rape and 10 for the manslaughter. The sentences will run concurrently.

## **Pittsburgh, (PA) (March)**

### **Man Found Guilty in Homeless Murder**

Jason Hutchinson, 20, was found guilty of first-degree murder in the robbery and slaying of a 40-year-old homeless man. Donald Bartol was stabbed to death in an alley on March 23, 1999.

Hutchinson was also convicted of robbery and criminal conspiracy. A co-defendant, Darrell Bivens, will face a separate trial on homicide charges.

Hutchinson claimed that he went along with a plan to rob the victim because he was afraid of Bivens. He contended that Bivens threatened to harm Hutchinson's family if he didn't stay and participate in the robbery. Hutchinson admitted to punching and kicking Bartol and knocking him to the ground after the victim ran as Bivens allegedly stabbed him.

Though Hutchinson claimed that he split up with Bivens after the attack and went to play video games for several hours at two friends' homes, two witnesses testified to seeing Hutchinson standing on a corner and laughing with Bivens shortly after the stabbing.

## **Richmond (VA) (March)**

### **Homeless Man Beheaded**

In the month before his slaying and beheading on March 1, Henry Northington, 39, found a measure of peace and grace among Richmond's homeless population.

Police still have no motive or suspect in the slaying which apparently occurred near a cemetery. The killer or killers then carried his head nearly a mile, carefully placing it on the footbridge, apparently as some sort of message, police believe.

While the ghastly nature of Northington's death has some in the gay community fearing that this was a hate crime, many in the homeless community are also wondering if he was killed and beheaded because he was a street person.

## **San Francisco, (CA) (March)**

### **Police Officer Charged in Beating of Homeless Man**

A 20-year veteran of the San Francisco Police Department was charged with beating a homeless man and then threatening witnesses.

The civilian Office of Citizen Complaints brought the charges against Officer Nikolaus Borthne. Officer Borthne was accused of striking a homeless man and then slamming him against his police car for no apparent reason and then threatening concerned bystanders in March of 1999.

According to the complaint, five bystanders saw Borthne approach "an apparently homeless" man pushing a shopping cart and start shouting at him.

The complaint stated that "The complainants watched as the accused officer used his baton to repeatedly strike the man." The witnesses then saw the officer "grab the man by his hair and throw him to the ground. While the man was on the ground, the accused officer punched the man with his fist."

The complaint went on to say that Borthne then "picked the man up and threw him against the patrol car, pinning him there. While the man was pinned against the patrol car, the accused officer then slammed the man against the side of the car."

The man then managed to wiggle free and run away.

According to Borthne's attorney, the man was brandishing a brick at passers-by.

According to the complaint filed by witnesses, however, "none of the complainants saw any conduct on the part of the man that would have justified the magnitude of physical force used by the accused officer."

After the incident, Borthne reportedly approached the alarmed onlookers and "told them to keep out of it, and that it was not their business," according to the complaint. "Moreover, the accused officer stated that the complainant who called 911 was a 'little child' and should 'stay out of (the officer's) way.'"

## **Seattle, (WA) (March)**

### **Teen Kills Homeless Man**

In March, a 14-year old was tried and convicted of first-degree murder in the death of a 50- year-old homeless man. After eating and drinking with the man, the youth slammed him, and repeatedly struck him with a skateboard, robbed him, and then stabbed him to death with a pocket knife. The homeless man was found dead in a park with a dozen lacerations to his head, and many stab wounds to his chest, neck, eyelid and leg.

Seven days after the killing, Seattle police got a report that the teen was bragging to his friends that he had beaten and killed a bum.

The youth was sentenced to juvenile detention until age 21.

## **San Francisco (CA) (February)**

### **Beatings of Three Homeless People Under a Freeway**

On Feb. 12, three homeless people living under a freeway overpass were beaten.

A homeless couple said the incident began early in the morning when he and his wife were awakened to calls for help from a homeless woman friend who was being attacked by three assailants armed with nunchucks and steel rods. He and his wife responded immediately.

Nearby campers identified the attackers for police, who arrested two men, 18 and 20 years old, and a 28-year-old woman.

“We got beat up pretty good.... My wife’s forehead and back of her head are busted open,” said the husband. She also fractured both of her hands.

The husband suffered a broken arm in the attack in addition to the gash on his head.

“They didn’t attack us for money,” he said. “They didn’t try to rob us. It was a hate crime.”