

In writing this, I spoke with Lisa Levsen and Carol Scherer, two eyewitnesses that serve with Neighbors Feeding Neighbors (a group that serves meals at WJ park four days a week), and a handful of people who regularly receive hot food at their serves, all of whom will remain anonymous for their own safety.

On Thursday, November 27th, Eugene police officers made an appearance at Washington Jefferson (WJ) Park during the hot meal serve by local group, Neighbors Feeding Neighbors. While people were waiting in line for their meals, officers issued a number of citations to people in the park for "leaving property unattended."

According to Levsen, Eugene Police officers Matthew Pizzolla, Jackson Stramler, and Lane Doggett* all arrived at WJ park, and posted up near the basketball courts with a direct line of sight to the area where volunteers were setting up to serve turkey, mashed potatoes, and other fixin's. As people lined up to get food, EPD moved in to take the belongings of people who had stepped away for food.

"They waited for people to get in line, and then they confiscated their property." – Levsen

One person (who received the ticket pictured) began running to where officers had seized his wagon full of personal belongings. They succeeded in getting the wagon back, but received a \$200 citation for "Violation of Park Rules – Unattended Property".

"They told me 'we're showing you compassion by not throwing your ass in jail'," said M., one of the recipients of a citation on 11/27.

It's impossible to separate this individual incident from the constant harassment, lack of access to survival needs, and dehumanization that people living outside experience on a daily basis. When asked about this incident, a number of folks who regularly come to the park for meals remarked on the ordinariness of it; they had many stories of the same and worse targeted harassment from police officers occurring. I spoke with K, A, and S about their respective experiences.

K. spoke about being on constant high alert against the police and others who would take advantage of her vulnerability. She

shared that every woman she knows has a story about being assaulted while resting or sleeping. **"I'm not allowed to have a tent, I'm not allowed to have privacy, I'm not allowed to be safe. I can't stop moving, I can't sit down. They're like sharks, circling."** She wants to know – Why? Why is it wrong not to have a house?

In speaking with A., the perceptions of housed people toward people living outside were emphasized. **"This is our community and our home too, but people forget that because they don't see us as real people. The perception people have is that there's housing available. There's not. I've been on a list for years, I've done everything."**

S. talked about being forced to leave home as a child, being trafficked by their parents, and never having a real chance to "fail" and therefore "deserve" being on the streets. They stressed the bonds they made with other people they met since living outside: **"I've made a family out here that is stronger and more loving than anyone in my bloodline."**

This is one story, and a few small glimpses into the experience of the resilient people surviving on the streets and without traditional housing. There are countless more. Got one? Reach out to us.

Other news stories on EPD harassment at WJ:

- Double-Sided media and Tim Lewis confrontation at WJ
- OPB on EPD harassing NFN
- KVAL on the city attempting to stop park feedings
- * *we can confirm Doggett and Pizzolla's presence from the citation*
- *citation pictured came from NFN*
- *photos of officers taken from Barefoot Defenders Instagram*



Matthew Pizzola



left: Lane Doggett, right:
Jackson Stramler