

BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

The Quarterly Newsletter of the
Family Violence Law Center's Policy Department



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Welcome, from Katherine Chu

Welcome to our (FVLC's) second Policy Department Newsletter, and thank you for your continued support of our work! Society continues to minimize the impact of intimate partner violence in its many different forms. FVLC works to expand our prevention efforts, support survivors, and raise awareness of the interconnectedness of family violence and sex/gender, homelessness, race, and culture. FVLC's intersectional lens drives us to push for policies across a variety of fields that together create healthier and more equitable communities.

As a social justice attorney, having practiced as a criminal public defender, tenant attorney, CPS family defender, and juvenile probation commissioner, I see firsthand the limitations of

the law and I believe that policy changes effectuate the most powerful and meaningful impact. I was eager to work with FVLC, and specifically their policy team, because of FVLC's broader scope of work – not just **advocating for survivors but also advocating for anti-sexist and anti-racist societal changes**. Legal protections only have a real effect when policies are created and enforced, and succeed when a cultural acknowledgment and shift has occurred. I am inspired by the policy team's breadth of **interdisciplinary advocacy**, which not only supports survivors but also acknowledges the harm our criminal justice system does to persons and communities of color and how it perpetuates oppression and cycles of violence. In this issue, we'll be updating you on some of the legislation that we're supporting (such as creating a decertification process for law enforcement officers and requiring schools to provide free menstrual products in all restrooms) and we'll be celebrating and honoring Juneteenth throughout.

Juneteenth is the oldest nationally celebrated commemoration of the real ending of slavery in the United States – even though the Emancipation Proclamation legally ended slavery in 1863, it could not be enforced in many places until years later, after the end of the Civil War in 1865. The recent passing of the **Juneteenth National Independence Day Act**, which establishes **Juneteenth as a federal holiday**, is a historic cultural acknowledgement of this victory and celebration, and signals a nationwide shift towards anti-racism. Systemic racism has strong roots in the injustice of American slavery, and that racism is still active and felt today. Systemic racism drives the inaccurate narrative that family violence is concentrated in certain races, ages, or classes. Our intersectional and anti-racist work breaks down those racist, sexist, and classist ideas by **reimagining public safety, expanding restorative justice, dismantling racist and sexist sentencing guidelines which fail to consider trauma and abuse defendants have experienced, educating our youth, and addressing housing issues and financial abuse - especially for women, parents, and survivors**. FVLC's expansive policy work goes beyond the basics of domestic violence survivor advocacy and brings inclusive, empowering, supportive change to uplift women, LGBTQIA persons, young persons, and communities of color.

As you read, I encourage you to consider: **how does applying an intersectional and inclusive lens change the way family violence impacts you and your community?**

In solidarity and kindness,

Katherine Chu | Chair, FVLC Housing and Gender Justice Advisory Board



Title: "Love Letter To Oakland"

Artists: David Burke (@DavidBurke_Studio, @joevicyeban, @dorias_brannon, @blacksphinxofquartz)

Location: 4th and Oak

FVLC Policy Work

The California State legislative cycle is in the thick of its process and the FVLC Policy Department has been keeping a close eye on a number of bills, many of which we have submitted formal letters of support for. Bills that the FVLC has or will be submitting support letters for include:

- **SB 271 (Wiener)** on Sheriff Reform
- **AB 71 (Rivas)** on Youth Homelessness
- **AB 124 (Kamlager)** on Criminal Sentencing
- **SB 2 (Bradford)** on Police Decertification
- **SB 373 (Min)** on Financial Abuse
- **SB 65 (Skinner)** "Momnibus"
- **SB 493 (Bradford)** on Promoting Youth Success and Empowerment
- **AB 118 (Kamlager)** "CRISES Act"
- **AB 481 (Chiu)** on Police Demilitarization
- **AB 610 (Kalra)** on Eliminating Law Enforcement Mandates in Schools

The list of bills not mentioned here, but still under our Department's review, is extensive; however, we encourage our supporters to alert of us any California Senate or Assembly bills that we should be aware of! Please contact Policy and Advocacy Manager, Tunisia Owens (towens@fvlc.org) or Housing and Gender Justice Advocate, Nashi Gunasekara (ngunasekara@fvlc.org).

Moving on to the FVLC's participation in Alameda County's Continuum of Care (CoC) committees. Tunisia Owens participates in both the **Housing and Urban Development (HUD) CoC Committee** and the **Housing Management Information System (HMIS) Committee**, while Nashi Gunasekara participates in the **Systems Coordination** meetings.

The **HUD Continuum of Care (CoC)** has been fairly active in the 2nd Quarter of 2021. A new 92-unit Safer Ground site opened, Lake Merritt Lodges, for the literally homeless. The Housing Inventory Count (HIC) and Sheltered Point in Time (PIT) Count data reports were submitted May 14, 2021.

The CoC expects that a HUD Notice of Funding Availability (NoFA) will be released later this summer and is preparing for the process.

A non-conflicted NoFA committee will need to be seated that reflects the diversity and equity values of the Alameda County CoC. The CoC agreed to reach out to those who were to serve in 2020, but were not required to serve. Gender Based Violence providers are advocating for a set aside of the 864 HUD emergency housing vouchers (EHV) for survivors and others not well-served by Project Roomkey.

Regarding the **EveryoneHOME HMIS Committee**, there was a Coordinated Entry (CE) refresh with various training provided April 20- May 4, 2021. The former CE homeless assessment was retired on May 4, 2021 and the new assessment process began on May 5, 2021. The current 'By-Name-List' will be retired by the end of July 2021, our Community will begin using the queues in HMIS by August 1, 2021. There is a program called the Community Health Record and the Social Health Information Exchange that were heavily discussed. The pros of being able to locate homeless individuals, navigators can coordinate with health providers, and document readiness were positives. Concerns include articulating privacy and security limitations, and access to much more information than necessary for non-health care providers. FVLC will continue to follow this discussion.

Finally, the **EveryoneHOME Systems Coordination Committee** has been quite busy during this 2nd Quarter of 2021 as well. Monthly meetings have been heavily focused on: **1)** its Coordinated Entry (CE) Relaunch which will emphasize housing problem solving, a new workflow for CE (including a crisis and housing queue), and using HMIS to support the new workflow; **2)** EveryoneHOME's reformed governance structure which will require 1/3rd of the Leadership Board and all subcommittees to...

be held by people with lived experience. With the new governance structure, gender-based violence (GBV) providers are curious as to what this might mean for the GBV field in terms of representation and improved systems change for homeless survivors; finally, **3)** an important topic of discussion during Systems Coordination meetings has been the recent allocation of 70,000 Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV) by HUD to public housing authorities across the nation to help respond to and prevent COVID-19. Four of Alameda County's local Public Housing Authorities (PHA) received 864 vouchers total. Much of these vouchers will go towards continuing the housing of folks who were sheltered during the pandemic through various COVID-19 emergency response programs (i.e. Home Stretch). Recognizing that survivors were severely underserved by programs such as Home Stretch, the Alameda County GBV Survivor Provider Coalition initiated an advocacy effort to ensure that homeless/precariously housed survivors would be able to access these EHVs. More about this advocacy effort will be discussed later (page 5).

The FVLC Policy Department is currently working on submitting a **response to a performance audit of the City of Oakland's Homeless Encampment Management Intervention & Activities.**

The audit reviews: 1) the impact of encampments on Oakland residents, both housed and unhoused, as well as the City staff, City services, businesses, and the community, 2) the Police Department's and the Fire Department's response times to 911 emergency calls at encampment sites and the City's response to 311 calls at encampment sites, 3) estimated costs associated with the City's encampment activities, and 4) guidance for the City Administration to improve its implementation of the City's new encampment policy.

The lack of a gender-based analysis was stark as discussions of homelessness, methodology, and recommendations failed to account for the unique challenges that homeless women and GBV survivors face, therefore, resulting in population undercounts and some shortsighted recommendations.

The goal of our response is for the City Auditor to incorporate a gender-based and survivor lens when analyzing Oakland City's response to homelessness so that shortcomings and recommendations can be acknowledged and made with a more detailed and robust understanding of Oakland's diverse homeless population. This would not only help educate the public's understanding of our homelessness crisis, but also improve our approach to practically

and sustainably end homelessness.

On a similar topic of writing, the FVLC Policy Department is also working on a **blog post** for the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence's new blog series: **Alternatives to the Criminal Legal System.** The blog post will discuss creative approaches to breaking down systemic inequities and how organizations can drive decisions and advocacy that challenge the notion that mass incarceration keeps communities safe.

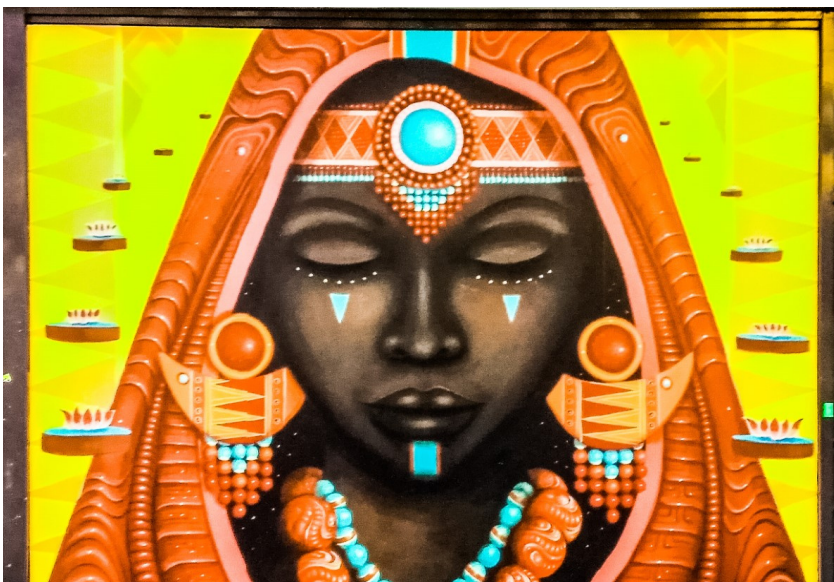


Photo Credit: Michael Taylor

Last, but not least, though this is not directly policy related, we wanted to wrap up this section by introducing our supporters to **a new member of our FVLC Policy Department team- Sharon Liu-Bettencourt!**

Here is a message from Sharon:

Hello everyone! My name is Sharon Liu-Bettencourt and I am a fellow for the policy team. I am here through the Legal Services Funders Network Public Service Post-Grad Fellowship and will be with the policy team for the remainder of the year. I graduated from UC Hastings this May where I was Editor in Chief of the Hastings Race and Poverty Journal. Prior to coming to FVLC, I worked at two legal aid organizations on housing and public policy work. I wanted to join FVLC because I have a strong dedication to public interest law, specifically in helping marginalized communities access the legal system and legal resources. I am also interested in policy work, especially as it relates to housing reform and the intersectionality of domestic violence and how that leads to increased levels of homelessness and how the legal system can better serve victims. I am looking forward to developing better advocacy skills and working on the long term and short term needs of domestic violence survivors.

Sincerely,

Sharon

Survivor Provider Community Organizing

The Alameda County Survivor Provider Coalition has been very active the past few months. Beyond responding to the urgent and immediate needs of gender-based violence survivors daily, we have also been advocating for survivors' needs at multiple levels of government, which has required extensive advocacy in light of COVID-19 relief measures.

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How does applying an intersectional and inclusive lens change the way family violence impacts you and your community?

Most notably, we have organized an **advocacy campaign around the incoming Emergency Housing Vouchers** aimed at the Alameda County Board of Supervisors and the Office of Homeless Care and Coordination. Our ask is to support a set aside of 10% of the 864 EHV's for survivors of gender-based violence. Our campaign consists of setting up meetings with each Board of Supervisors and the Office of Homeless Care and Coordination to discuss the immediate and long-term needs of survivors both as it pertains to EHV's and our larger homeless response system. **Fortunately, gender-based violence survivors, along with transitional-aged youth, will be prioritized in the EHV allocation process.** The exact amount of vouchers reserved for survivors is still to be determined; however, we look forward to working with various representatives and stakeholders of Alameda County to address the needs of survivors.

HOME Cohort

In our first issue, we mentioned that the Advocacy Working Group of the HOME Cohort had collaborated with the California Apartments Association to develop a webinar on domestic violence housing laws. This **webinar went live in February 2021 and we are proud to announce that we have since acquired a coupon code that fully subsidizes the webinar** for those interested.

- To access the webinar click [here](#).
- The coupon code is: CASurvivor21

We encourage you to circulate this webinar and coupon code to those who may find this information helpful.

Currently, the Advocacy Working Group is working on a **lease addendum initiative that aims to raise awareness around survivor housing rights by creating an addendum explicitly stating all California-specific survivor tenant protections.** The hope is that this can be a formal lease addendum that is folded into all standard lease agreements in California's non-public housing rental market.

The first phase of this initiative consisted of the Advocacy Group holding conversations with legal, survivor, and housing advocates across California to gauge interest, get feedback, and create partnership around this idea. We received overwhelmingly positive feedback and have gained the support of advocates up and down the state.

Now, we are **creating a template lease addendum** that is modeled after the HUD VAWA notice featuring a purpose statement, list of housing rights, and tenant/landlord signature lines. The Family Violence Appellate Project, National Housing Law Project, and National Alliance for Safe Housing have been especially helpful in providing feedback on our model template.

As it stands, we are still contemplating what implementation will look like and will likely circle back to the folks we connected with in "phase one" for input and feedback. If any of our newsletter readers have ideas around implementation, we would love to hear from you as well!

Photo Credit:
Michael Taylor

As for the Communications team, this subcommittee of the HOME Cohort **held a focus group with stakeholders** who bring years of expertise to the issue of GBV and homeless services. The focus group was intended to better understand the narrative gaps that exist in the messaging of domestic violence, homelessness, and the intersection of the two. With stakeholders who represented the geographic and thought diversity of California- larger cities and smaller locations, working in non-profit and public agencies spaces- the conversation was engaging, rich, and insightful. The feedback, ideas, and conversations among this group of advocates will provide the foundation for the **cohort's work to shift the narrative about domestic violence and homelessness.**

Juneteenth Reflections

This month, we recognize Juneteenth, a day that commemorates the real, legal ending of slavery in the United States. To honor Juneteenth, we invited members of the FVLC to share their reflections here. We hope that these shared thoughts resonate with you in some way or inspire new trains of thought as we continue the work of dismantling systemic racism, sexism, and oppression through our work, activism, and personal lives.



As the descendant of enslaved African people in the United States, Juneteenth holds a special place for me. My family has always acknowledged the holiday, but the celebration is often bittersweet. On one hand, Juneteenth signals freedom and all the potential for new beginnings, and on the other hand it also signals a massive and deep-seated desire to control and oppress because it took nearly two years for the last slaves to be notified of their freedom. There were probably many people who died during that 18-month period who had no idea that they were no longer enslaved. People who likely died without ever having the opportunity to make a choice for themselves without being under the watchful eye of an overseer or slave master.

As an advocate for women at the intersection of homelessness and domestic violence, when I reflect on the idea of Juneteenth and what it symbolizes, I choose to think about hope. Survivors who leave their abusers are also starting over and have many hoops to jump through as they wait for information about their circumstances. They wait for news about restraining orders, information about affordable housing opportunities, news about child custody, etc. Survivors are waiting for resources to help them begin anew, much like my foreparents who tilled the soil -for free- that built the wealth of this country.

- Tunisia Owens, FVLC Policy and Advocacy Manager

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I choose to think about hope.

On June 19, 1865, eighteen months after the Emancipation Proclamation took legal effect on January 1, 1863, about 250,000 enslaved African Americans in Galveston, Texas received word of their freedom. This came nearly six months after the 13th Amendment was signed into law. Juneteenth was not recognized as a holiday until 1980, with Texas as the first state to recognize the day's significance. On June 15 of this year, Democrats in the House and Senate introduced the Juneteenth National Independence Day Act, making Juneteenth a federal holiday.

When we think of that group of people who finally heard the news that they were free, we can't help but be reminded of the survivors we work with at FVLC. A lot of our clients have told us that they did not know that there were resources and support available to them during the tumultuous times brought on by COVID-19. With the economy now fully open, and even in the weeks leading up to it, we have seen a dramatic increase in calls for service. Knowing that Black women are disproportionately affected by domestic violence forces us to reflect not only on how far we've come but on how little some things have changed.

Alameda County and our cities have never adequately funded the effective gender-based violence strategies employed by FVLC and our partners. This choice on behalf of our local officials has impaired the ability of gender-based violence organizations to meet the needs of hundreds of Black women in crisis. Adequate funding is even more important now, as domestic violence rates have increased significantly during the pandemic, and this increase will exacerbate our communities' already crisis-level homelessness rates.

Increases in funding could alleviate immediate stress and help stabilize survivors and families of violence. For example, not only are survivors in danger, but their safety often is predicated on other overlapping concerns relating to mental or physical health, housing or shelter, employment, financial support for their families, debt relief, and immigration resources, among other services. Additionally, the demand for legal representation in family law matters vastly outweighs the availability of supply.

Inadequate housing, safety, and basic necessities, and a lack of needed services are not the only issues plaguing Black people in Alameda County. Although the county made efforts to prioritize racial minority groups for COVID-19 vaccinations, Black people still account for a disproportionate number of new cases and deaths, and have been vaccinated at lower rates than other racial groups. Nationwide, Black people have higher hospitalization and death rates as compared to some other racial and ethnic groups.

So, while there is an air of muted celebration in Alameda County now that we have survived a global pandemic, our individual experiences may look significantly different depending on our historical narratives. For example, the recent blossoming of unmasked barbecues, a traditional celebratory event on Juneteenth, reminds many of the infamous "Barbecue Becky," a white woman who called the police in 2018 on several black people who were legally barbecuing in an Oakland park.

And, in the wake of the George Floyd murder in 2020, which sparked a national racial justice protest and calls to "defund the police," as well as a redistribution of funding to much needed essential services, Derek Chauvin was brought to "justice," in that he was found guilty of murder for Floyd's death. But "justice" never can bring Floyd back to life. And there has been an uphill battle for "justice" to redistribute funding to serve the communities that have been hardest hit by this pandemic, and those that continue to be historically marginalized.

Increasing gender-based violence funding to organizations like FVLC and others that disproportionately serve Black women is a step in the right direction. We need to find ways to celebrate our victories for our clients, the survivors of violence who have found resourceful ways to feed their families, stay housed, and stay alive in a desperate time. And we need to be reminded that survival is a form of celebration. But it is not enough to survive, if you cannot thrive. Our communities deserve to truly live. They deserve to celebrate.

- Chantel Everett, FVLC Crisis Intervention Specialist and Laura Maclinnis, FVLC Senior Staff Attorney

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But it is not enough to survive, if you cannot thrive.



Artist: Rachel Wolfe-Goldsmith
Photo Credit: Michael Taylor



Founded in 1978, Family Violence Law Center (FVLC) helps diverse communities in Alameda County heal from domestic violence and sexual assault, advocating for justice and healthy relationships. We provide survivor-centered legal and crisis intervention services, offer prevention education for youth and other community members, and engage in policy work to create systemic change.

In court and in our community, every day.

<http://fvlc.org/> * info@fvlc.org * 1.800.947.8301 (24 hrs./day)