

BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

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



Artist: Sara Rahmani
Instagram: @Sara_Official_Artgallery

"I just started this painting of (a) beautiful girl as usual, because I love to show the beautiful sides of my people, my culture and our beautiful kids over there," **Rahmani** said. "This is the portrait of the girl that I started, and it really turned sad," she said. "You see the good side, when she has a splinter of light -- it's all about the good side of my Afghanistan before the Taliban took over our country... ([source](#))."

A Word, from Erin Scott

The morning of 9/11, I was on a plane, returning home from my honeymoon. After the first tower was hit, the pilot announced that there had been a terrorist attack and we would be landing in ten minutes. Instead of San Francisco, we landed in El Paso, entering the terminal to join others gathered around a television, watching the second plane hit the towers.

There is so much damage that resulted from 9/11. From the death and destruction that occurred on the day itself to the racial hatred generated in its aftermath to the 20-year war that has left another nation's citizens, particularly women and girls, vulnerable to wide-scale systematic denials of their human rights. **On that day we changed as a nation, feeling for the first time in modern history the threat of war on our lands**, the same violence that we have inflicted on so many others. In spite of this, **we responded as we usually do**, digging our heels into American exceptionalism and **adding new communities to the list of "others" we blame for our own failures.**

During that extraordinary day 20 years ago, **I also witnessed many acts of grace and kindness.** Countless people rose to the occasion and acted in ways that helped us all get through the day: the pilot, who spoke to us calmly and landed us safely, the woman who calmed the man screaming at an airline employee to release our luggage, and my new husband who quickly problem solved with me to figure out how to get home. I am reminded, as we approach the 20th anniversary of 9/11, of these individual acts of heroism, however small, and **peoples' capacity for good** and their interest in helping others.

This way of being – this orientation toward the greater good – is what FVLC staff demonstrates every day. Our small but mighty policy team wades through government procedures and policies so they can translate technocratic information into solutions for survivors. They tirelessly knock on the virtual doors of public officials so the needs of survivors are included in annual budgets. And they listen closely to FVLC's direct services staff describe the issues their clients face so that survivors' needs drive their strategic choices.

On 9/11, many of us saw everyday heroes step up and make a difference in others' lives. These heroes are with us every day, at FVLC and at all of our sister organizations. Please join me in celebrating the amazing work accomplished by all of FVLC's staff and volunteers at our virtual annual event on October 7th. Tickets and sponsorships can be purchased [here](#).

Erin Scott | Executive Director, FVLC

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FVLC Policy Work

The California State Legislative cycle is nearing the end of session. The FVLC Policy Department has kept a close eye on a number of bills and engaged in the process through support letters. Since our last newsletter, the FVLC has submitted one additional support letter for **AB 262 (Patterson)**, which improves the record clearing process for human trafficking survivors.

The FVLC Policy Department has had a great third quarter of 2021, with a number of wins and exciting ongoing projects. To start off, the FVLC Policy Department has launched **skillshare workshops** within the FVLC. The aim is to democratize knowledge around policy and advocacy world and engage those who may not have the time, but are interested in learning more! Our first workshop focused on **power mapping**.

Sticking within the context of the organization, the FVLC Policy Department holds monthly meetings for non-policy FVLC staff looking to be more engaged in FVLC Policy work. During these meetings, we share policy updates, get feedback on ongoing initiatives, discuss

organizational stances on various issue areas, and collaborate on projects. Most recently, our **Policy Team submitted a workshop proposal to the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence's (CPEDV) 2021 Shifting the Lens Conference**. The workshop is titled, *Values & Cross-Movement Advocacy: A Case Study on Reimagining Public Safety*. Using the FVLC's participation in Oakland's Reimagining Public Safety Task Force as context, we will discuss how organizational values are critical to cross-movement advocacy, particularly for survivor providers. A discussion of values is fundamental to advancing systems change work and aim to facilitate honest conversations around the operation of values in advocacy. Fortunately, our **workshop proposal was approved** and we will be presenting at the conference on November 3rd, 2021! To register for the conference, please click [here](#).

Staying on the topic of the CPEDV, the **FVLC Policy Department was invited to write for the CPEDV's new blog series, Alternatives to the Criminal Legal System**. This blog series "seeks to highlight creative approaches that address systemic inequities and challenge the notion that mass incarceration keeps communities

safe." Our submitted blog post took a historical and intersectional approach to the connection between domestic violence and our criminal legal system. This approach laid the groundwork for a discussion around the FVLC's engagement with Reimagining Public Safety as it relates to challenging the notion that "mass incarceration keeps communities safe." We end our piece by complicating the often dichotomous movement for criminal legal reform from a survivor perspective, one that recognizes transformative justice and our current system as is, but hardly anything in between. We argue that **the diversity of needs among survivors warrant more nuanced alternatives**.

Moving to advocacy at the City of Oakland level, the Policy Department has increased their involvement with **Oakland's Violence Prevention Coalition (VPC)**.



Social Media: @Mantistic

Operating within the **Gender-Based Violence subcommittee**, the Policy Department has helped redefine and relaunch the mission and goals of this subcommittee to address and reduce gender-based violence in Oakland. **Here is our mission statement:** "We value safety and are committed to all Oakland residents thriving. We advocate and intervene for those directly impacted by Gender Based Violence. We provide prevention education and support for those at risk for Gender Based Violence and community awareness, empowering all to safely engage." **Our goals are:**

1. Outreach and Community Engagement (one to many)
2. Adult Engagement & prevention (1 to 1)
3. Youth Engagement & prevention (1 to 1)
4. Resourcing agencies working with victims of GBV
5. Systematic changes/issues that impact victims of GBV

The FVLC Policy Department has taken lead on goal #5 and co-leads on goal #4. We look forward to updating you all on our progress as a subcommittee!

Continuing with City level advocacy, **the FVLC Policy Department has been working closely with the Oakland City Auditor's office on implementing a**

gender-analysis into future assessments of housing and homelessness. In April 2021, the Oakland City Auditor published a performance audit on Oakland's Encampment Activities and Policies. While thorough in some respects, **the audit failed to mention the impacts of Oakland's encampments and policies on women and transgender, gender-nonconforming, intersex (TGI) people.** Understanding that the public and stakeholders rely on these audits to portray a comprehensive picture of any issue, FVLC was deeply concerned with how these audits could perpetuate a skewed and incomplete narrative of homelessness in Oakland. The **FVLC Policy Department responded to this audit** with a 5-page gaps analysis, list of recommendations, and invitation to collaborate on future assessments to address this issue through implementation of a gender-analysis. The **Oakland City Auditor, Courtney Ruby, and her team were eager to work together** to achieve this goal and we have since been in communication as to how we can actualize this for their very next follow-up audit on homelessness in Oakland.

At the Alameda County level, **FVLC has been able to secure seats on the County's strategic planning committee to support its 5-year plan to end**



Artist: Nina Wright
Location: 23rd Street in Oakland

homelessness, Home Together 2026. This committee is a space for those with lived experience, those representing vulnerable populations, and stakeholders to discuss the logistics, priorities, and strategy behind implementing Alameda County's 5-year plan to end homelessness. Advocating on behalf of survivors. the FVLC Policy Department is looking forward to raising the needs of survivors every step of this planning process.

Last, but not least, in regards to FVLC Policy work, the **Policy Department was fortunate to have two high school interns work with us** this past summer on advancing our policy communications goals. Get to know them:

*Alishba is a high school student who pursued an internship at FVLC, driven by her interest in the field of law and public health. Through her participation in the **Center for Youth Development through Law's summer (CDYL)** program, she was matched with an internship at FVLC. The CDYL summer programs provide high school students with knowledge about law, leadership skills, and guidance on career pathways. At FVLC, she split her time (6 weeks) between the policy department and the youth department. Her work for the policy department included designing slide deck presentations, creating a social media post about the intersection between domestic violence and homelessness, and writing a blog*

*post about economic abuse. Her work for the youth department included creating a presentation about teen dating violence, designing an online application for the Relationship Abuse Prevention Program (RAPP), and creating social media outreach for RAPP. **Alishba became interested in working in policy and law through her environmentalism.** She believes that to have a healthy planet, and healthy communities, strong policy is required. After graduating high school, she plans on attending a liberal arts 4-year college to study environmental policy and public health. **Her ultimate goal is to contribute to a healthier world, both for the planet and the people.***

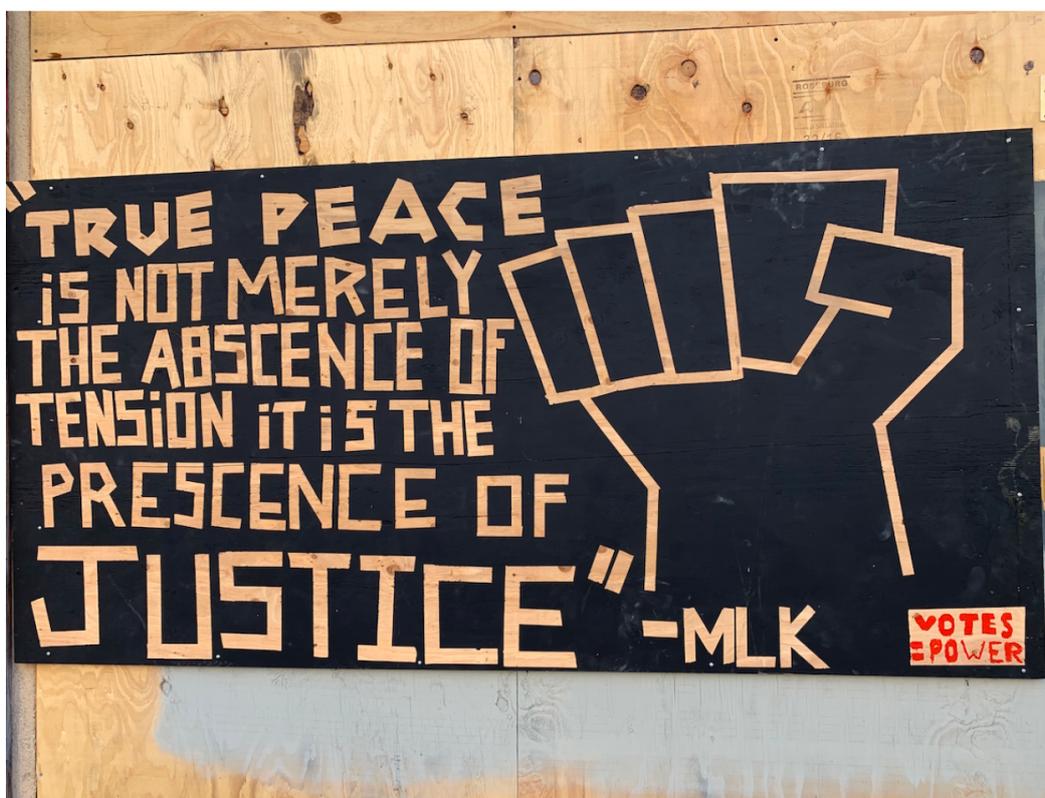
-Alishba



*TK is a high school student who also pursued a summer internship at FVLC through the CDYL program. She worked closely with Alishba to develop policy communications tools for violence prevention work. TK similarly split her time between the FVLC Youth Program and Policy Department. **She is passionate about law and hopes to pursue a career around criminal legal reform.** Her immediate goals are to*

attend a 4-year college and get a good education.

- TK



Artist Unknown.

Housing & Gender Justice Project

The Notice Of Funding Availability (NOFA, now changed to Notice Of Funding Opportunity (NOFO)) was released in August. Fortunately, the **funding afforded to HUD DV Bonus has been doubled, from \$50 million available for national competition last year to \$102 million this year.** This is an astounding increase in funds and might indicate either a general increase in available funds or an increase in attention paid to the issue of domestic violence, particularly as it has been highlighted due to COVID-19.

We have created a **strong partnership with advocates in Los Angeles** who have been providing us technical assistance in the build out of our project and vision. This partnership has proved invaluable beyond just our HUD DV Bonus project, but also with our Alameda County Emergency Housing Voucher process and systems' improvement.

Alameda County Survivor Provider Coalition

The Alameda County Survivor Provider Coalition has been working tirelessly with the County to formalize a streamlined and accessible process for gender-based violence survivors to access Emergency Housing Vouchers (EHV). In our last newsletter, we announced that we successfully

advocated for a 10% set aside of the 864 EHVs for survivors. Since then, we have been coordinating with survivor providers to ensure that our needs and concerns regarding eligibility, referral processes, technical assistance, and prioritization are heard at the County level.

HOME Cohort

Berkeley Media Studies Group (BMSG) held a stakeholder focus group where statewide survivor providers and advocates engaged in a robust discussion around what it would take to shift the public narrative around domestic violence and homelessness. Since then, BMSG and the HOME Cohort Communications team have convened a few times to debrief and further extrapolate data from the focus group discussion. These internal meetings have informed an **initial round of sample messages**, put together by BMSG, **that could be implemented to help shift the narrative around domestic violence and homelessness.** After some initial input from the larger HOME Cohort group, the BMSG and Communications Team went back to discuss how these sample messages can be further improved. **A potential second stakeholder focus group to review sample messaging tools is now in discussion.**

Another pressing issue being addressed through the HOME Cohort's work is **data.** Specifically, how can we, as survivor providers and advocates, be responsive to the homeless system's need for data, while maintaining survivor privacy? **One of the biggest issues surrounding survivors of gender-based violence is the dearth in data and the requirements to keep**



survivor's information confidential.

Resources and funds are often data-dependant and require frequent updates to justify current resource levels or funding increases. Survivor-providers are then challenged to balance the need for unduplicated data with the requirement to maintain confidentiality. **FVLC is working with HOME Cohort and Alameda County survivor providers to research best practices and identify solutions to this.**

The Advocacy Team's **Survivor Housing Rights Lease Addendum initiative** is still underway and at its final stage of implementation. The addendum itself is in its final form, having integrated feedback from advocates at the local, regional, and national levels. **We are working with our HOME Cohort partners and tapping into FVLC's support network to brainstorm feasible and viable implementation models.**

Upcoming Work

1. FVLC Policy Priorities

- The FVLC Policy Department is in the process of **identifying its policy priorities for the upcoming legislative and budget year.** A survey was administered in August to FVLC staff to gather feedback on where our advocacy might be most

needed and effective. From that survey, the Policy Department **extrapolated four main priorities.** The **next steps** will include a more in-depth conversation within the Policy Department to flesh out these priorities for clarity **and ultimately, vote on these priorities as an organization.** The Policy Department is also working on developing a revised **metrics system** to ensure that our work aligns with our stated policy goals and priorities.

2. Presenting to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors Health Committee

- Family Violence Law Center was invited by Supervisor Chan's office to **present at the Alameda County Board of Supervisors Health Committee on the impacts of COVID-19 on gender-based violence survivors.** We hope to use this opportunity to not only **share how COVID-19 has disproportionately impacted survivors** of gender-based violence, but also **how the County's service model for survivors can be improved.** This presentation will take place on **October 25, 2021.** We will be working in coordination with Director Kerry Abbott, head of Alameda County's Office of Homeless Care and Coordination.

3. Domestic Violence Awareness Month

- Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) is in **October** and the FVLC Policy Department is planning an **exciting media campaign roll-out.** The media campaign will feature youth voices, collaborative messages from City and County stakeholders, live conversations, blog pieces, etc. **We hope to fold in more voices from our supporters and partners** over the course of October to highlight overlooked issues in the domestic violence and survivor advocacy space.



Artist: Amanda Bliss

Location: Tribune Tavern Franklin Street

Since 9/11

This past weekend we honored the **20th anniversary of the September 11, 2001 attacks**. The effects of that day are undoubtedly still felt on our nation's soil and abroad. In many respects, time has not healed the wounds cast, but aggravated a series of social and political tensions. In reflection and memory of 9/11, we share, here, the voices of Sharon Liu-Bettencourt and Tunisia Owens.

On August 30th, **the last United States military plane left Afghanistan, marking the end of 20 years of U.S. military presence in Afghanistan**. In the days leading, the U.S. executed the largest airlift in U.S. history and evacuated over 120,000 US citizens and allies. Meanwhile, the Taliban took over the capital of Nimroz Province, a mere 9 days later the Taliban entered Kabul.

Despite promises from the Taliban's spokesperson, Zabihullah Mujahid, that the Taliban will honor women's rights if it's within Islamic norms, **the story residents of Afghanistan tell is bleaker**. Kabul residents said that groups of armed men were seen going door-to-door seeking out individuals who worked for the U.S. Women who were previously employed and attending schools, now report being afraid to leave their homes. **Shopkeepers are being advised to not sell to unaccompanied women**, women are no longer allowed to leave the house uncovered. In early September, the Taliban released the Afghan government. The Taliban had promised, this time, women were encouraged to take part in government. The list of officials included no women.

In the 2019 United Nations (UN) Human Development Report's Gender Inequality Index, Afghanistan ranked 157 out of 162 countries. About 87% of women and girls in Afghanistan experience gender-based violence in their lifetimes. **In 2018, the UN published a report regarding how violence against women is largely ignored by the Afghanistan criminal justice system, a system which, at the time, was not run by the Taliban**. This included studies into the murder of women, honor killings, and how survivors of gender-based violence often refused to seek remediation or complain due to fear of economic and social repercussion in their life. In addition, most women in Afghanistan are illiterate and face forced marriage, many before even turning 16.

Over the course of the past couple of weeks, I have worked with women in Afghanistan on humanitarian parole applications. I find that these **young women want to come to the U.S. because they have the exact same dreams that I do**, that the young women I interact with here have. They want to learn, they want the freedom to pursue an education, to pursue a career, to pursue personal interests. What does that mean for the future? To me, these numbers **signal our reasonability as global citizens and advocates, to find ways to help other women whose futures, hopes, dreams and interests are all of a sudden plagued with uncertainty**.

- Sharon Liu-Bettencourt | Policy and Legal Fellow, FVLC



Artist: Pancho Pescador
Location: 900 Franklin Street in Downtown Oakland

I lived on the East Coast, in New Jersey when the September 11th terrorist attacks happened. I was a fresh-faced graduate student, not the world-weary seasoned woman that I am today. I can still remember being completely captivated by the news coverage and receiving calls from my west coast family. My best friend worked on Wall Street at an investment bank and I was worried about her. It all felt surreal at the time, like a scene from a movie. We were all a little bit kinder to each other and rallied around our identity as Americans.

*At least, that is the way it seemed to start. What began as being proud Americans who faced an 'evil threat' turned into terrible bigotry and hatred of 'the other'. I remember reading about Sikhs being targeted because they wear turbans and **bigotry does not always involve deep research and distinction between cultures or religion.** I also remember the **Patriot Act passing and Congresswoman Barbara Lee experiencing bullying at the highest levels for her 'no' vote** on the legislation. A 'no' vote she was later praised for after reports of torture and thousands of persons held without Due Process for 'national security' began to surface. **How soon we forgot the love and compassion for the lives of those lost and replaced it with a need for revenge in their names.***

*It is with mixed emotions and a heavy heart that I reflect on 9/11 after 20 years because I look at the devastation in Afghanistan and worry about the safety of women there with a Taliban-led government. **I wonder if those women and girls see nearly two decades of US occupation/military assistance as golden years or as a waste of time?** I worked in Kuwait from 2006-2008 under the Bush Administration and witnessed women's leadership and youth civic engagement grow. Women in Kuwait had only recently received the right to vote in Kuwait.*

Meanwhile, other countries in the region continued to prevent women from participating in public life in the same ways that a man could. *In Bahrain, women ate in the family section of the restaurant, behind cover. In Saudi Arabia, women were not permitted to drive and they were covered in a burqa and hijab. In Yemen and Oman, women wore the nikab, which covers the entire face except the eyes. **To my western eyes these things initially felt like an assault, but then I saw the flashes of freedom and defiance.** The women who accessorized so beautifully, with jewels, beads, and textures. The eye makeup that made you jealous and envy the expressiveness. I also began to appreciate true democratic ideals of self-determination, agency, and choice. **How could I, an outsider, come to someone else's culture and overlay my idea of freedom onto them?** I began to recognize the hypocrisy in that and I believe that was the foundation of my belief in women's agency within this domestic violence movement. **Survivors must have agency and choose their own path to healing,** just like the women I met and worked with from Kuwait, United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Bahrain, Jordan, Iraq, Yemen, Oman, and Saudi Arabia.*

- Tunisia Owens | Policy and Advocacy Manager, FVLC

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*Survivors
must have
agency and
choose their
own path to
healing.*



Artist: Ernest Doty
Location: West Oakland

Word Find

1. SEPTEMBER 11th
2. War on **TERROR**
3. **AFGHANISTAN**
4. **IRAQ**
5. **HIJAB**
6. **EQUITY**
7. Domestic **VIOLENCE**
8. Emergency housing **VOUCHER**
9. **REIMAGINE** Public Safety
10. **SURVIVOR**

A	F	k	N	O	X	W	U	Q	L	I	E	C	A	Q
B	G	I	E	T	N	A	V	E	P	S	X	Y	Z	P
C	H	O	N	A	T	S	I	N	A	H	G	F	A	R
D	I	C	I	D	F	J	L	O	P	U	T	S	R	D
R	J	W	G	X	D	Q	C	A	B	E	Q	I	T	Y
E	Z	L	A	K	A	S	U	R	V	I	V	O	R	U
B	M	K	M	R	J	I	H	G	F	E	D	C	B	A
M	O	A	I	L	C	E	T	R	U	T	S	Q	P	R
E	C	N	E	L	O	I	V	E	W	M	N	O	E	O
T	F	L	R	G	Z	Y	X	B	A	J	I	H	R	R
P	G	K	U	K	S	C	A	C	L	W	C	A	P	R
E	H	J	I	A	L	G	R	U	P	U	F	M	O	E
S	G	B	D	R	F	W	M	O	O	D	R	N	V	T
E	E	Q	U	I	T	Y	I	V	U	S	X	Z	B	A

**Answer key is on the next page!*



Artist: Natty Rebel
Location: 3000 San Pablo Avenue in Hoover - Foster



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)