

BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

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



Artists: Her Resilience, Mamacita's Cafe, Nicole Gervacio, @worthyfoe
Location: Park Community Gardens , 2805 Park Blvd.

This image is part of a larger mural project entitled ***"Her Resilience: A Mural for Women Affected by Violence."*** In a statement provided by the project's lead artist, Nicole Gervacio, a goal for this project was "to create an image to remember and respect the women the community has lost to urban violence — and to provide and portray the female body in a respectful and beautiful way."

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Title: Respect Me | Artist: Favianna Rodriguez
Medium: Collages 2021

The Stakes are High in the Fight for the Right to Bodily Autonomy

It's been six months since the Supreme Court turned its back on Texans by refusing to block the state's extreme abortion ban, three months since the Court signaled in hearing arguments on Mississippi's blatantly unconstitutional 15-week ban that they were **poised to overturn nearly 50 years of precedent guaranteeing the right to abortion access**, and just this week anti-abortion senators blocked the passage of the Women's Health Protection Act, historic legislation that would have ensured the right for people to get the abortion care they need across the country. In the months since the Texas ruling and in anticipation of Roe's demise, several states have proceeded to pass more oppressive restrictions barring access to comprehensive reproductive health care, while others wait in the wings to enact so called "trigger laws" that would immediately ban abortion should Roe fall.

Make no mistake **these decisions and bills are a direct attack** on the health, futures, and bodily autonomy of BIPOC and low-income women and pregnant people and **should be viewed as a form of violence**, not in isolation from, but **inextricably linked to the proliferation of state legislatures who are simultaneously erecting barriers to transgender youth for seeking lifesaving and gender-affirming care**. Situated in the socio-political context of people's lives, reproductive justice is the human right to maintain personal bodily autonomy, have children, not have children and to parent the children we have in safe and sustainable communities. With the Texas Governor recently announcing plans to weaponize the family regulation system to target parents of transgender youth with allegations of abuse, illustrates just how fraught and fragile the ability to actualize and sustain those rights can be.

Indeed, the burden of pushing abortion out of reach falls hardest on people who already face systemic racism and discrimination: BIPOC, people who are undocumented, people with disabilities, and LGBTQ+ people, as well as people who are young, have low-incomes, or live in rural areas. Thus, **fighting these laws is essential to the fight for racial, economic, and gender justice and cannot be siloed from other movements**. Residents in Texas and in other states where access has become obsolete, must travel unreasonably long distances, miss work, and secure childcare to access care.

As more restrictions are enacted, the criminalization of reproductive decision-making for individuals who chose to manage their own abortions will undoubtedly escalate.

Fortunately, having always been grounded in an intersectional frame, **reproductive justice advocates have long viewed Roe as the floor and not the ceiling for what self-determined reproductive decision-making should be.** Even in California, where laws protecting reproductive rights are strong, safe, affirming, and timely access to care has eluded too many. To confront the challenges presented by the looming historic retraction of reproductive rights, reproductive justice advocates, care providers and legislators throughout the state have also been emboldened to **advance policies to expand access and raise the ceiling towards reproductive freedom for Californians and for the millions of individuals that are anticipated to seek care** from states where access is prohibited. In this dire political moment and beyond, integrated efforts to advance racial and economic justice paired with investments to increase services and to dramatically scale up resources for abortion funds that provide critical and practical forms of support for individuals traveling to and throughout the state for care, will be vital to ensuring that and the right to bodily autonomy is **equitably accessible** to all.

Arneta Rogers | Gender, Sexuality and Reproductive Justice Director at the ACLU of Northern California



Artist: Favianna Rodriguez
Medium: Digital Art, 2012

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FVLC Policy Work

Policy Priorities

As we mentioned in our December 2021 newsletter, FVLC has established its Policy Priorities for 2022. These priorities were crafted and ranked with FVLC staff input via surveys, draft edits, and live discussions.

- **Advocate for increased resources for survivor providers** to enhance and expand services while also leveraging the leadership of survivors (therapy services, life coaching, funding, spokesperson training and advocacy etc.)
- **Systemic Economic Advancement and Resource Allocation** to support survivors (system and policy changes to impact housing, employment, childcare, etc.)
- **Advance system-level training** for public, human service, legal agencies. Develop and implement training with survivor-serving agencies and systems (CPS, the family court system, judges, law enforcement, etc.)
- **Engage in cross-collaborative violence prevention/intervention advocacy** with a focus on racial equity (i.e. reimagining public safety movement, VPC)

Our number one policy priority for the year is to bring more support resources to our staff. The ongoing surge of crisis calls has stretched providers' capacities thin and with the difficult nature of this work, it is imperative that adequate wellness resources are made available to staff. Unfortunately, there are hardly, if any, grants that support staff capacity and wellness. So, the Policy Department is getting creative.

Reaching out to a life coach in Sacramento who is leading her own life coaching academy, the Policy

Department was able to bring pro bono life coaching services to FVLC!

While logistics to ensure these sessions are accessible to all staff are being worked out, we are excited to bring a series of group and individual life coaching sessions to our staff.

The group life coaching sessions will focus on working from home, being purposeful in planning one's workday, and how to identify and prevent burnout and stress.

State Advocacy

The California legislature is bustling with a number of critical bills that promise increased protections and support for survivors. One of the bills the Policy Department is looking into is SB 863. Domestic violence death review teams are a collaborative effort between legal, health, service, advocacy, and judicial groups to provide a confidential forum to systematically review domestic violence-related deaths. The goal of these teams is to develop strategies, policies, and procedures to improve our communities' responses to domestic violence and to reduce and prevent future incidents of domestic violence related homicides, homicide/suicides, and injuries. Many domestic violence survivors experience serious life-threatening injuries. Fate or circumstances often determine if these victims become the fortunate survivors or the tragic deceased. These incidents of survival are



Artist: Yong Nim

Medium: Digital Art, 2012

referred to as near-deaths. Specifically, a near-death is an event where a victim suffers a substantial risk of serious physical injury or death as a result of domestic violence, or the circumstances of the domestic violence event indicate the perpetrator more likely than not intended to kill or seriously injure the victim. Reviewing near-deaths, in addition to reviewing actual deaths, helps create improved domestic violence policies by drawing on and learning from the firsthand experiences of domestic violence survivors. Near-death reviews also provide further opportunities to identify and satisfy the needs of domestic violence survivors and their families.

In addition to legislation, FVLC is supporting the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence's state budget ask of \$15 million to fund gender-based violence prevention efforts.

Local Advocacy

Point-in-Time (PIT) Count 2022

The Planning Team is unanimously recommending rescheduling EveryOne Counts to February 24, 2022 to provide some time for the surge to potentially lessen and protect the accuracy and completeness of the Count

The Omicron COVID surge is once again putting exceptional constraints on the staff of outreach programs, shelters, and jurisdictions as well as people experiencing homelessness who are all essential to both the staffing and accuracy of the unsheltered Point In Time Count. The surge is causing many of these staff to be out of office because of COVID infection or quarantining due to exposure while many others are being redeployed to help cover other essential services within their organization that are strained due to the surge. The County's quantity of Isolation and Quarantine units for people experiencing homelessness is currently insufficient compared to the need for these units. Conducting an unsheltered enumeration without this array of subject matter experts who are essential to staffing the Count jeopardizes the accuracy and reliability of the Count data. Other communities across California and in the Bay Area, also concerned about the impact of the surge on their planned staffing for the Count, began clarifying with the US Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) that an exception to the requirement for conducting the Count in January could be granted based on criteria acceptable to HUD which includes "Other reasons HUD deems would have a negative impact on the accuracy and completeness of a CoC's count."¹ HUD provided



Artists: @aerosoul_ig, @refa1love, @aeosone, @treatunice, @malibyrs, @madzootrk
Location: Oakland, CA

The CoC expects that a HUD Notice of Funding additional clarification that it is encouraging CoCs to consider whether counting in February is feasible and that COVID implications are grounds for the “good cause” cited in its regulations. As of today, Marin and Santa Clara County have rescheduled their Counts to February; other Bay Area Counties (including San Francisco) are considering rescheduling.

Home Together 2026

In February 2022, Alameda County concluded its strategic planning sessions for its Home Together 2026 initiative. FVLC regularly attended and participated in these meetings to ensure that the immediate and long-term housing needs of gender-based violence survivors were factored in to the County's plan to end homelessness by 2026.

The County recently published a first draft of its [Implementation Plan](#), which integrates feedback from: 1) these strategic planning sessions and 2) a [2020 racial equity analysis](#), which FVLC also participated in.

This community-wide plan lays out the goals, strategies and investments needed to dramatically reduce homelessness by 2026 and reverse racial disparities in homelessness through fully centering equity.

EveryoneHOME

- **Systems Coordination**
 - The latest Systems Coordination

- meetings have focused on the 864 Emergency Housing Vouchers that were administered by HUD late 2021. Promising numbers on turnaround times, lease ups, and usage were shared with a number of noted challenges.
- **HUD CoC**
 - EveryOne Home is launching the Emerging Leaders Program. It will be seeking 13 individuals to join the first cohort and learn about the CoC. The goal is to train three cohorts before the transition to the new governance structure.
 - The Notice of Funding Opportunity (NOFO) process for HUD funding had a total of 42 projects submitted from 14 agencies within the Alameda County Continuum of Care (CoC). This included 38 renewal projects and 4 new projects. The CoC has been focused on racial equity because of the huge disparity in the homeless population, and added in a specific question about racial equity for scoring projects. Responses included eliminating barriers to housing based on credit score, criminal conviction history, and financial assistance

Alameda County Survivor Provider Coalition



Artist: @chrisgranilloart
Location: Oakland, CA

Emergency Housing Vouchers

The update on Emergency Housing Voucher issuance and utilization rate is that the total number of vouchers is 875. There have now been 950 people matched and 579 applications submitted to Public Housing Authorities (PHAs). The total number of vouchers issued is 315, and 43 have leased up. A lot of work is being done to close the gap in the voucher issue-to-lease rate. Out of the 10% set-aside for the gender-based violence community, 63 applications have been submitted to PHAs. Out of the Transition Age Youth (TAY) set-aside, 23 applications have been submitted to PHAs, and 54 TAY are assigned to PHAs and working on applications. Information was requested about the average length of time between stages of the process. The average length of time for applications to be reviewed by PHAs is 8.7 days. The average number of days-to-voucher-issue is 29.08. It's estimated that 402 people who have been matched may be able to choose to lease-up where they currently reside.

County Budget Advocacy

FVLC's Policy Department is moving forward with **two County budget requests** for the 2022-2023 fiscal year. One will emphasize funding gender-based violence (GBV) **intervention** efforts and the second will uplift funding **prevention** efforts. The aim is to present both requests to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors (BoS) by the end of March 2022.

The intervention budget request will be FVLC-led with the coordination and input of our Alameda County Survivor Provider collaborative. In a recent meeting with the Collaborative, we discussed programmatic and staffing needs as demand for services continues to outpace provider capacity.



Artist: Joaquin Alejandro Newman, Eduardo Pineda
Location: Oakland, CA

Urgent needs included housing/shelter options, legal services, and food assistance. Inflation and the rising cost of living has eroded available funds more quickly- a reality that will be underscored in our budget letter. Further, the needs of survivors who exceed General Assistance (CalFresh, CalWorks, etc.) income cut-offs, but are still financially insecure are persistent and growing- highlighting the need for flexible funds.

The prevention budget request will be coordinated in partnership with Alliance for Girls. A listening session will be scheduled in March with a number of survivor providers and advocates who engage in GBV prevention efforts to identify programmatic and staffing needs. FVLC and Alliance for Girls will be collaborating on strategy and BoS outreach.

HOME Cohort

The HOME Cohort launched its inaugural Lunch & Learn Series earlier this year and FVLC is represented in a number of the workshops! Each session will feature a different HOME Cohort initiative with the hopes of sharing useful insights and resources for survivor providers and other advocates to strengthen their practices around and capacity in meeting survivor housing needs.

The final workshop of the series is: *Use Your Data to Access More Funding for Your Housing Programs* - March 29, 12:00-1:15pm (Register [here](#)).



Artists: @ladimeuna, @cececarpio, @ewfrank, @eightbirdz, @Bali
Location: Oakland, CA



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)