

BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

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



Artists: @ernestdoty, @lorddotycbs
Location: Center St. at Third St., West Oakland.

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We are carving out the pathways to more fulfilling futures, sustainable ways of living, inclusive cultures, and functioning governments. This collective leadership has its beginnings in our local cities and counties— right here in our homes and backyards.

As I write on this September 5, 2022, two years since our beloved Bay Area found itself enveloped in smoke as 4 million acres of the Golden State burned over the remainder of the year, still reeling from orange sky apocalypse days and pandemic lockdowns, it is 96 degrees outside. Inside my quaint 1930s-era Oakland apartment with no air conditioning, **it feels like the temperature has surpassed triple digits.**

While I sit uncomfortably sweating on my couch thinking about the upcoming midterm election in 64 days, I cannot ignore that today is also Labor Day. **Thanks to the persistence and resilience of labor movements, unions, and everyday American workers** who were angry and tired of being exploited by an oppressive capitalist system backed by powerful industries, quality of life has improved significantly since the Industrial Revolution of the 19th Century. While I sit, sweat, reflect, and appreciate the many achievements and progresses that have been made thus far, and that I have had the privilege to benefit from, **I am also holding space for the myriad improvements yet to be made in our society.**

Thanks in part to the COVID-19 pandemic and an attempted coup by far-right conservative extremists, the cracks in our institutional systems, previously apparent to those who are not afforded with all its benefits and privileges, were made glaringly obvious; so much so, that even those at the very top of the hierarchy with the luxury of being able to live comfortably within the system **could no longer turn a blind eye to the many injustices that permeate our everyday lives.**

Many of us, without a doubt myself included, have left 2020—the beginning of a new decade— with a plethora of not-so-new-but-more-mainstream language to better define our surroundings that we can deliver with emphatic resonance: white supremacy, patriarchy, misogyny, ableism, systemic racism, environmental racism, and ecological breakdown. In addition, many of us have not only expanded our vocabulary, but **we have also learned a great deal more about important concepts that will be integral to our futures: decolonization, intersectionality, critical race theory, gender inclusivity, generational trauma, and sustainability.**

I believe our systems are not inherently broken; I think **they are functioning as they were intended to function**, cracks and all. The American culture and political systems provide life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness to a select powerful few— namely, cis heterosexual white males, billionaire CEOs, corporations, elected officials, and a small group of high wage earners.

How can the Trump presidency, the COVID-19 pandemic, today's Labor Day, and this one unprecedented hot day in a long list of unprecedented hot days that have since passed and more to come enlighten us about the 2022 midterm election? What it illuminates for me is very basic on its face, but more complex in practice: **vote with action.** Vote— yes, please vote in this election, and in the

next one, and the one after that. Never stop voting. **But also, at the same time, be active.** Participate in social justice movements in any way, shape, or form— movements don't only take place protesting in the streets; they sustain themselves through everyday actions like reading, active listening, education, volunteering, philanthropic donations, and consciousness raising efforts. **Voting makes change, and movements make change.** We can utilize both simultaneously to work within the system we have now,

Artists: @aerosoul_ig & @madowfutur
Location: Telegraph Ave. at 15th St.



and challenge that same system through our activism. We can follow the frameworks of those who have fought similar battles before us, with the technologies we have now. **We can vote and push for foundational system changes at the same time to shape our government and culture into something better that actually delivers life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness for everyone.**

Midterm elections may seem as if they are less important- they don't garner as much attention or pomp and circumstance as major presidential elections. They appear to not make much of a difference other than to sway the balance of power within a gridlocked and ineffectual Congress for a couple of years, **but I believe that the smaller local elections are the ones that matter the most because they give us great opportunities to make huge impacts in our local communities.**

The San Francisco Bay Area is a special community of diverse individuals that also includes a legacy of change making activism. **We live in progressive communities and our communities are often on the forefront of many new and forward thinking changes.** The State of California is the fifth largest economy on Earth. The changes we make in our state set the pace and tone for the rest of the county, and the globe. We are **carving out the pathways** to more fulfilling futures, sustainable ways of living, inclusive cultures, and functioning governments. This **collective leadership has its beginnings** in our local cities and counties- **right here in our homes and backyards.**

When we step back and look at our elections from this perspective, **we can use this to empower our voices and actions.** With this understanding, we can push for more progressive changes in our future local and state elections. This year alone, we will have the opportunity to vote to: amend public documents in the City of Oakland with gender inclusive language (Ballot Measure 7), allow non-citizen parents of school-aged children of Oakland to vote for Oakland School Board Director (Ballot Measure 5), **amend the California constitution to protect the right to an abortion and reproductive freedom in the State of California (Proposition 1)**, and invest in clean air, infrastructure for electric vehicles, wildfire prevention, and climate change mitigation efforts by taxing personal incomes of those earning over \$2 million a year (Proposition 30).

Five days ago, President Biden delivered an address to the nation in which he asserted that "Donald Trump and the MAGA Republicans represent an extremism that threatens the very foundations of our republic." I do believe this to be a true statement, albeit an over-simplified one describing a symptom of the much larger problem of various interlocking systems of oppression impeding the ability of democracy to function well for everyone.

On a daily basis, many of us are reminded in our news headlines and social media feeds of all the forces pushing back against progressive reform. These forces can make our individual votes appear less powerful than they really are. **To prevent feelings of despair and hopelessness when presented with such seemingly large and powerful forces, I remind myself of the words of feminist thinkers and change makers to provide me with the motivation and inspiration to continue voting and working with others toward a more just and equal society.** Today, on Labor Day and in the sweltering heat on this warming Earth, three months before an important midterm election, I chose to re-read the words of Audre Lorde:

"Unity implies the coming together of elements which are, to begin with, varied and diverse in their particular natures. Our persistence in examining the tensions within diversity encourages growth toward our common goal. So often we either ignore the past or romanticize it, render the reason for unity useless or mythic. We forget that the necessary ingredient needed to make the past work for the future is our energy in the present, metabolizing one into the other. Continuity does not happen automatically, nor is it a passive process."

FVLC Policy Work

Policy Priorities

As we near the end of the year, we thought we'd reshare our Policy Priorities for 2022. These priorities were crafted and ranked with FVLC staff input via surveys, draft edits, and live discussions. These priorities continue to guide our State, County, and City legislative and resource advocacy:

- **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)

Here are a few notable wins that FVLC's Policy Department has achieved so far:

- **Advocate for increased resources for survivor providers:** While the surges in demand for legal and crisis support services have unfortunately not let up, it is important to find ways to support staff wellness amidst the emotional and mental wear of this work. FVLC's Policy Department reached out to

Cami Laren, a certified life coach based in Sacramento, about **partnering with FVLC to provide wellness and life coaching workshops for our staff.** Fortunately, she agreed and we even worked out an agreement to provide **pro-bono life coaching services for interested staff!** Our first group session was hosted on Wednesday, May 11, 2022 and focused on integrating wellness into our everyday lives. The session was attended by 11 staff members and was well received by many. Our second group workshop was hosted on May, 25, 2022, which continued the conversation around wellness but, this time, with a focus on skills building. Since then, we have partnered with Cami Laren's life coaching academy to provide **all interested FVLC staff with at least 12 free life coaching sessions!**

- **Systemic Economic Advancement and Resource Allocation:** in April 2022, **FVLC**, with the support of the Gender-Based Violence Coalition (GBV) of Alameda County, **led two countywide budget requests for GBV intervention and prevention.** Each request was \$8M, **totaling \$16M-** increasing the County's current investment in GBV from 0.001% to 0.004%. We **presented these requests to the Alameda County Board of Supervisors** Public Protection Committee on April 28, 2022. After months of continued advocacy and organizing, **Alameda County recently approved \$4M in violence prevention funding-** *the County's first investment in violence prevention!*



Artist: Unknown
Location: Shattuck Ave. at 46th St.

- Advance system-level training:** FVLC's Policy Department was **asked to join in on the Family Violence Council's training on "Working with Adolescents and Teens to Forge a Future Free from Domestic Violence."** Knowing that the impacts of trauma and violence often manifest generationally, it is especially important for coordinated efforts by all systems to support the healing and growth of teens and young adults. FVLC's Policy and Advocacy Manager, **Tunisia Owens**, also co-manages FVLC's Youth Department, so she was **well-positioned to speak on the intersection of necessary systems change and youth.** The training was held on October 20, 2022 and proved to be very fruitful and engaging. The issue areas and questions explored included: physical manifestations of prolonged exposure to trauma, intergenerational cycles of trauma, takeaways for lawyers working with families impacted by DV, resources available in schools, resources available to offender parents.
- Engage in cross-collaborative violence prevention/intervention advocacy:** FVLC's Policy Department has collaborated with a number of incredible advocacy organizations in Oakland. From budget advocacy with the Alliance for Girls, to hosting the Oakland

Mayoral Candidate Forum on Gender-Based Violence with the Oakland Violence Prevention Coalition, to partnering with different advocates for our recent Domestic Violence Awareness Month campaign, "Inform Your Vote!," FVLC's Policy Department has felt thoroughly enriched and energized by the collective brainpower!

The Solís Policy Institute

In September 2022, **Nashi Gunasekara, Senior Policy Advocate at Family Violence Law Center, graduated from the Women's Foundation of California Solis Policy Institute-State.** A Reproductive Health, Rights, and Justice (RHRJ) Fellow, Nashi and her RHRJ team **sponsored AB 2320, a reproductive health pilot program** aimed at supporting a critical pillar of California's reproductive health network for vulnerable patients: community health clinics, otherwise known as primary care clinics. **AB 2320 would have put clinicians and client-facing staff in the driver's seat of change** to: improve spoken language translation services for state non-threshold languages, invest in reproductive justice-centered staff trainings, and provide wraparound care services to clients by developing referral networks to local service agencies. AB 2320 asked for a one-time \$12



Artists: @timothyb_art
Location: Webster St. at 48th St.

million investment from California to pilot this program in hopes of closing persistent health equity gaps. This bill was a **legislative priority for both the California Legislative Women's Caucus and the FAB Council**. AB 2320 made it all the way to the Governor's desk, but was **unfortunately vetoed**. The reason stated was that AB 2320 was not included in the 2022-2023 State Budget. The RHRJ team is considering pushing for this much-needed bill again.

While the RHRJ team did not see the win it hoped for, the **Solis Policy Institute-State Class of 2022 did see a number of other legislative wins!**

- **Community Justice Reform team:** AB 2761 requires greater transparency in the reporting of inmate deaths by requiring jails and state prisons to post information on their websites within ten days after a person dies in custody
- **Community Health team:** AB 2159 supports alternatives to criminalization for drug users
- **Trauma Services and Prevention team:** SB 1017 advances housing protections for domestic violence survivors
- **Economic Security team:** AB 2300 provides critical protections for workers that ensure CalWorks and CalFresh recipients maintain their benefits when facing workers' rights violations

FVLC x Berkeley Path to Care

UC Berkeley Path to Care Center leads the efforts **to transform the UC Berkeley campus into a community that is free of sexual violence, sexual harassment, intimate partner violence, and stalking** through prevention, advocacy, training, and healing. The PATH to Care Center collaborates with the campus community to make social change with the goals of preventing, intervening in, and responding to harassment and violence, eliminating oppression, and creating the culture and environment where the UC community can thrive. **The Family Violence Intervention Unit and Policy Department co-presented to Center staff** about opportunities for greater collaboration around violence intervention and prevention as well as ways to respond and provide wraparound support to survivors.

FVLC x the Alameda County Social Services Agency (SSA)

In July 2022, the Alameda County Social Services Agency (SSA) hosted its annual Legislative Convening where experts in the field of human services, engage with leaders from SSA's community partners and propose policy solutions to support Alameda County's diverse communities. This year the convening focused on improving the County's ongoing response to

COVID-19, what is needed from a post-pandemic recovery, and how to center racial equity in policy formation and resource distribution. FVLC's Policy Department was in attendance and engaged meaningfully with participants, raising the needs and concerns of GBV survivors.



Artist: a young artist with @graffiticampforgirls
Location: San Pablo Ave. at 17th St.

Following the Legislative Convening, FVLC's Policy Department was inspired to keep the conversation going with SSA to improve the County's care and service of GBV survivors. FVLC sat down with Lynn Peralta, SSA *Policy Director*, and Sabrina Jean, SSA *Management Analyst* to discuss how tangible changes could be made to address the needs of GBV survivors through policy. After fruitful discussion about the distinct challenges faced by survivors when accessing public benefits, SSA invited FVLC to inform Alameda County's 2022-2023 Legislative Platform (read Alameda County's 2021-2022 Legislative Platform [here](#)). The Policy Department spent the next few weeks analyzing the County's current Legislative Platform, identifying where survivors were overlooked and a greater gender-analysis is missing. Ultimately, the Policy Department made 20 comments and 45 recommendations regarding improvements to addressing the needs of GBV survivors and gender-expansive people in Alameda County. This feedback was supplemented by a cover letter outlining FVLC Policy Department's intentions and expectations and was submitted in October.

Domestic Violence Awareness Month

In honor of Domestic Violence Awareness Month and the upcoming midterm elections, FVLC's Policy Department launched "Inform Your Vote!" a virtual brown bag lunch series focused on engaging and educating California voters on what to expect this November.

- Webinar #1 - **Voting: Where to Start?** Featuring Vincent Steele, Policy Analyst for Alameda County's District 5! Watch it [here](#)



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

- Webinar #2 - **Who's Who? State and Local Elections.** Featuring Eric Morrison-Smith, Executive Director of the Alliance for Boys and Men of Color! Watch it [here](#)
- Webinar #3 - **What to Expect: Ballot Measures** Watch it [here](#)

In addition to Inform Your Vote, **FVLC co-hosted The Oakland Mayoral Candidate Forum on Gender-Based Violence** where candidates for Oakland Mayor were given the opportunity to expand and define their stances on and plans to address GBV intervention and prevention in Oakland. Missed it? Watch it [here](#).

Alameda County's Continuum of Care (CoC) Racial Equity Group

FVLC has now joined the Racial Equity Workgroup of the Continuum of Care for Oakland, Berkeley, and Alameda County. The purpose of this Workgroup is to:

1. **Develop and implement** a racial equity action plan to guide the entire homeless system's work on racial inequity
2. **Facilitate** an understanding of the connection between structural racism and racial disparities in homelessness
3. **Assist** other committees in setting racial equity metrics and monitoring progress.
4. **Set** a racial diversity representation metric for all boards, committees, and workgroups, based on the annual Point-In-Time (PIT) count.

5. **Monitor** whether the Leadership Board and all other committees and workgroups are achieving and maintaining the racial diversity metric set each year.

6. **Report** progress towards achieving goals outlined in the racial equity action plan to the Leadership Board and the wider CoC membership

Look Out For:

In the coming weeks, FVLC's Policy Department webpage will be updated with **recordings** from our Domestic Violence Awareness Month campaign AND some **exciting new written pieces** on economic abuse, budget advocacy, and more. Keep an eye out and feel free to share your feedback with us!

Have you seen these recent statements from FVLC?

What Will it Take for Our Lives to Be Valued?

By Erin Scott (read [here](#))

Join us in the Fight for Reproductive Justice

(read [here](#))

HUD DV Bonus

FVLC's Policy Department will be **developing an emergency transfer plan to submit to the Alameda County CoC for review** after conducting best practices research and meeting with other Continuums of Care across the country.

FVLC also plans to develop a **set of recommendations related to the new governance** structure of the CoC in Alameda County.

Gender-Based Violence Coalition of Alameda County

Given the **increase in countywide advocacy driven by Alameda County's community of GBV service providers**, the group figured it was time to develop an **official name and logo** to launch and unify its presence in the County!

With that said, introducing...



Artist: J@teamfitagents, @endeavors_oakland, & @goodmothergallery

Location: Chester St. at 7th St.



GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE COALITION OF ALAMEDA COUNTY

Domestic Violence Report

FVLC's Policy Department has been **developing a report outlining the ways in which the County is currently investing in gender-based violence and where improvements can be made.** This report is intended to be an advocacy tool for providers and the public to support the need for increased GBV intervention and prevention funding and resources.

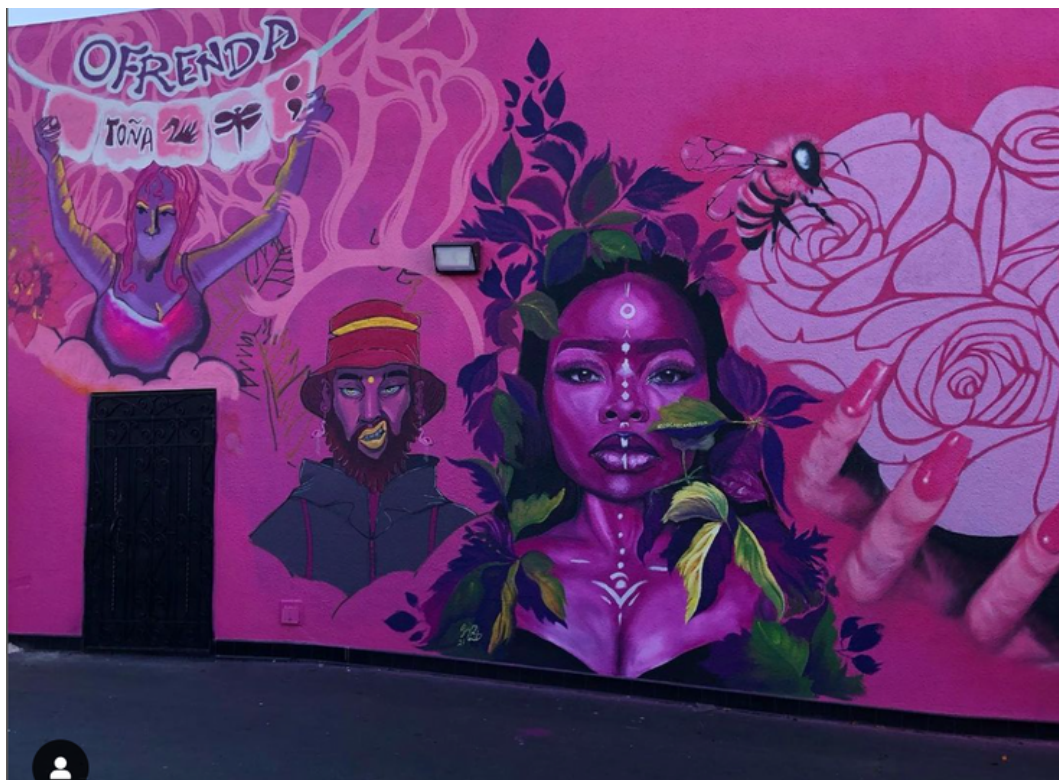
Recently, FVLC convened a **focus group** with the Gender-Based Violence Coalition of Alameda County to collectively discuss what our community's concerns, needs, and dreams are. The feedback from this focus group will critically inform the report's purpose, direction, and message.

Panel Discussion on Human Trafficking (HT) and the Commercial Sexual Exploitation of Children (CSEC)

In response to the increase in HT and CSEC in Oakland, and the Bay Area, the GBV Coalition of Alameda County hosted a panel discussion in October 2022 on these forms of gender-based violence to share how they are impacting Alameda County communities, the overlaps between HT/CSEC and domestic violence/sexual assault, and what signs to look out for. This panel discussion was particularly useful for providers who do not explicitly focus on these forms of violence, but may nevertheless encounter survivors of HT/CSEC. Providers and their staff were invited to attend.

HOME Cohort

The HOME Cohort was renewed for additional funding and we are officially planning for future projects. While the Communications team is still brainstorming, the Advocacy team has focused in on targeting prohibitively high rent-to-income ratios. We are considering HUD definitions, market research, and inflation costs as we start to define what our specific advocacy campaign will be.



Artist: @zoeadahboston & @hellafutures
Location: 7th St. and Clay St.

Highlighting FVLC's Youth Department!

Family Violence Law Center's Youth Program was tasked with developing projects around community safety. Take a look at what one of the Youth Program participants produced:

RICHMOND/SAN PABLO
an analysis on safety

FAMILY VIOLENCE LAW CENTER
FVLC.ORG

@BEBRAVESPEAKUP

A survey of 11 questions was sent out to a small group of people who live in the San Pablo/Richmond area.

Questions focused around safety in their community and how it can be improved.

Swipe for the responses and evaluations →

1. How long have you lived in Richmond/San Pablo?

83% of surveyed people have lived in richmond/san pablo for a minimum of 6 years. 74% residing there for 10+ years.

2. What is the first word or words that come to mind when you think of your community?

Majority of negative responses included words like "ghetto" and "lazy"

Majority of positive responses referenced common community feelings such as "friendliness"

Neutral - 5
Negative - 8
Positive - 10

3. RATE ON A SCALE OF 1-5 HOW SAFE YOU FEEL ON A DAY-TO-DAY BASIS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD.

52% OF PEOPLE PUT A 3 ON THE SAFETY QUESTION, DIRECTLY IN THE MIDDLE BETWEEN NOT SAFE AND VERY SAFE.

4. DO YOU TALK TO YOUR NEIGHBORS REGULARLY?

11 - Yes, but..
10 - No
2 - Yes

5. Would you consider your neighbors friends?

11 - no
4 - yes
2 - situational

6. Does your community have a neighborhood watch system?

14 - I do not know
7 - No
2 - Yes

7. How willing would you be to participate in neighborhood watch?

A high positive skew, signifying a majority do not feel very compelled to join a neighborhood watch.

8. Do you feel the community has changed positively since you first lived there?

17 - Yes
6 - No

9. Do you feel your community has changed negatively since when you first moved there?

2 - Yes
21 - No

10. Do you see yourself continuing to live here?

Yes, temp
Yes long term
No, if it stays the same
No, no matter what

Want to help us continue making an impact for survivors in Alameda County?

Please consider donating to Family Violence Law Center!

To donate, click HERE



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)