

BE BRAVE, SPEAK UP

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



Artist credits: Amanda Lynn
Location: San Francisco

Contents

Welcome Message- page 2

FVLC Policy Work - page 4

Campaigns - page 6

Advocacy Efforts - page 7

CoC & HUD- Page 9

Supreme Court Decision - page 12

“I tire so of hearing people
say, let things take their
course. Tomorrow is another
day. I do not need my freedom
when I'm dead. I cannot live
on tomorrow's bread.” –

Langston Hughes

Welcome Message

"It is ironic that I learned about Juneteenth and its significance as an adult, given that I am an African-American, Caribbean American woman. However, this is not surprising since aspects of American history, particularly the experiences of Black and Indigenous People Of Color (BIPOC) are not centralized within curricula at many schools. As a child from elementary through high school, I was taught that slavery ended with the Emancipation Proclamation in 1863 and the subsequent ratification of the 13th Amendment abolishing slavery in 1865. However, Juneteenth originates from the moment federal troops arrived in Galveston, Texas on June 19, 1865 to issue an order freeing more than 250,000 enslaved Black people in the state of Texas. This group was one of the last groups of slaves to be freed in the United States, two years after the Emancipation Proclamation was issued to ensure slavery was no longer practiced in southern states. In Texas, slavery was largely unchanged on the proclamation. I now recognize the significance of Juneteenth, the symbolic liberation of Black Americans from slavery.

As an African-American, Caribbean American woman, a mother and a lawyer, I am my ancestors' dream. I have been able to live a life of autonomy. I have been afforded educational, professional and personal opportunities because of the sacrifices and courage of my ancestors. Yet there is a juxtaposition because the obvious truth is that our country has a long way to go and that liberation may be an ideal but it is certainly not a true reality for all in this country. Inherit racism, sexism, classism, homophobia, transphobia and other forms of oppression still permeate the fabric of our country.

There is still work to be done to ensure true freedom and liberation. While I celebrate the significance of Juneteenth, I cannot dismiss forms of oppression that still exist affecting Black people including but not limited to: the rate of missing Black girls and women and their dismissal on news outlets compared to coverage of missing white girls and women;

The killing of Black transgender women; the disproportionately higher rates of Black and Brown individuals killed by law enforcement; racial disparities within our prison system and legal system as a whole; Black voter suppression; Black maternal mortality rates and restrictions on reproductive freedoms for black women; the impact of gun violence in the black community; and the non-existence of affordable

Welcome Message Cont.

housing and disparate living wages earned by Black people. Forms of ongoing gender-based violence towards Black women persist, including domestic violence, intimate partner violence, and sexual harassment and assault, and human trafficking.

When I think about Juneteenth, what comes to my mind is resilience, and recognizing the strides my people have made even with all of the trauma we have endured, even while acknowledging that the fight for freedom and liberation continues.

Nicole Britton Snyder, Esq.
Managing Attorney, Family Violence Law Center



Picture Credit: Tunisia Owens

Policy Work: The department joined the California Partnership to End Domestic Violence and took to the State Capital to advocate for a number of policy initiatives, including comprehensive statewide funding of **\$44 million for a preventative, innovative, holistic approach to ending domestic and sexual violence in California.** Should state leaders fail to make these investments, California's only funding stream dedicated to preventing domestic and sexual violence will end next year, jeopardizing programs that serve thousands of Californians.

FVLC Policy Work

FVLC also advocated for **SB 36 (Skinner): Reproductive Justice**, which will strengthen California's safe haven protections by making it illegal for bail agents or bounty hunters to apprehend people in California who are there to avoid criminal prosecution or imprisonment related to another state's criminalization of abortion, reproductive care, or gender-affirming care. According to the Turnaway study found that people who are denied needed reproductive healthcare, such as abortions and/or contraception, are more likely to stay in violent relationships. SB 36 will strengthen survivors' ability to retain agency over their own bodies, especially for survivors who may travel to California to seek necessary medical care which may be outlawed in their home state.

Additionally, we had the opportunity to advocate for **AB 1497 (Haney): Justice for Survivors Act** which ensures survivors of domestic violence, human trafficking and other forms of violence can share their victimization stories in court and allows judges to consider these stories when making sentencing decisions. Too often, a survivor's trauma is used against them, ignored, or discounted during legal proceedings. Consequently, judges and juries are left with insufficient information when making life-changing decisions on criminal charges and sentencing.



Artist: Amanda Phingbodnipakkiya
@alonglastname

Policy Campaigns: Family Violence Law Center policy campaigns include Pathways to Safety and Right to Exist, both seek to educate survivors on their rights and help survivors find the necessary resources to safely exit harmful settings.

Pathways to Safety: Over the past few months, the Pathways to Safety campaign recorded its first podcast episode that will launch in Fall 2023. Additionally, our virtual educational campaign has drawn the attention of state representatives as we call for an end to senseless gun violence

FVLC Campaigns

and emphasize its impacts on survivors of domestic violence. We also had the pleasure of joining the Alameda County District Attorney in cohosting a Wear Orange event, dedicated to raising awareness of gun violence and its intersection with domestic violence, how to seek support, and more. As we dive into July, we will be launching our summer webinar series leading into National Night Out in August.

Right to Exit: FVLC Policy team is excited to participate in the Violence Prevention Coalition's Peace summit taking place on June 24th at Laney College. We will be facilitating a conversation about gender-based violence with the community. We will also be launching our summer webinar series in July. Keep an eye out for this exciting series!

Bills we are following related to DV and resources: Over the last few months the FVLC Policy team has been working tirelessly to bring survivors' voices to the forefront in issues relating to violence prevention in Oakland, medical support for survivors, housing, and legal support. Our advocacy continues at the local, state and federal level including for bills like: **AB 28:** Firearms and ammunition: excise tax; **AB 1028:** Reporting of crimes: mandated reporters; **SB 545:** Juveniles: transfer to court of criminal jurisdiction;



Wear Orange Event at Family Justice Center, DA Pamela Price speaks to the importance of gun violence prevention.

and **HR 1087** (Congresswoman Lee): Deposits Act.

Oakland Budget Advocacy Efforts: The City of Oakland faces the uniquely difficult task of balancing a budget deficit larger than any in the city's history. In the Mayor's budget, we saw a 26% budget cut to the Department of Violence Prevention, a \$7 million dollar reduction which would astronomically, detrimentally impact the number of survivors we serve. We have met with numerous city council members and staff, attended every budget hearing and attended city council meetings and hearings to advocate for more equalized

FVLC Advocacy Efforts



CA State Capital, picture taken during CAPEDV Lobby Day

cuts across the board. **It is imperative that we maintain our current level of funding for violence prevention in order to maintain our high level of service provision to the community in the time of great need.** Read our full letter to the Mayor on her proposed budget [here](#).

Liberation and the fight for Justice: The FVLC Policy team had the honor of standing in solidarity with Rep. Jones, on May 15, 2023, at the state capital as the assembly adopted AJR 5 to denounce the expulsion of Rep. Jones and Rep. Pearson, and to honor Rep. Jones, an Oakland raised activist for standing firm in his values. On March 30, 2023, three Democratic members – Gloria Johnson, Justin Jones, and Justin Pearson, now known as the Tennessee Three – stood up to protest senseless gun violence

in the state of Tennessee following the Nashville massacre. On April 6, Representatives Jones and Pearson were expelled from the House of Reps, but Rep Johnson was not. When asked why Johnson was not expelled she stated “It might have to do with the color of our skin.” As we celebrate Juneteenth and the fight for liberation, it is important to reflect on how far we have come AND on the ways in which people of color are still being held back. The actions taken to dispel the two Black voices from the Tennessee house is yet another display of how easily our voices can be silenced.

Alameda County Continuum of Care/DV Bonus: The Racial Equity Committee (REC) has been establishing a process to embed an equity component in the CoC by having an equity liaison from each



Rep. Jones on the Assembly Floor being honored by Asm. Bonta

CoC & HUD DV Bonus

committee work with the REC during training and orientation. REC is reviewing the scoring tool to be utilized by the NOFO Committee (the committee that scores projects delivering homeless services in Alameda County to make recommendations on which projects should receive HUD funding) in order to ensure that projects are evaluated with racial equity as a component of the scoring process.

REC has been in conversation with homeless services providers, BACS and Abode to discuss Landlord Engagement as a racial equity issue. Positive landlord engagement could be a long-term investment of the CoC in order to have better housing placement outcomes. The project and desirable outcomes are bigger than the REC and there is discussion about how to transition this work to another entity. Homebase invited us to create a memo summarizing our thoughts and concerns around this project.

The Point-in-Time (PIT) count is a count of sheltered and unsheltered people experiencing homelessness on a single night in January. HUD requires that Continuums of Care conduct an annual count of people experiencing homelessness who are sheltered in emergency shelter, transitional housing,



Picture Credit: Tunisia Owens

and Safe Havens on a single night. FVLC has joined the PIT Count Team for the Alameda County Continuum of Care in order to support the process with a racial and gender equity lens.

Gender-Based Violence Prevention Coalition: The GBV GBVP Coalition: The GBV Provider Coalition is a collective of agencies and organizations working in collaboration to provide women and other communities with the tools they need in order to fight against abuse, sexual assault, exploitation and homelessness throughout Alameda County, and we have been working diligently to maintain citywide support and resources for survivors of gender-based violence. Recently, we were asked to bring recommendations to the

Home Cohort, Research & Supreme Court Decision

Berkeley Commission on the Status of Women, whereby we requested an increase in funding to preexisting county-wide programs that help survivors access long-term housing while fleeing abuse.

HOME Cohort: The Housing Opportunities Mean Everything (HOME) cohort is a group of California organizations that work at the intersection of domestic violence and homelessness. This collaboration has expanded this year to include organizations whose values align with the work of the HOME cohort. The HOME cohort advocacy committee is excited to explore policy initiatives including creating a more accessible process for survivors who are renters. The committee is working to find partners and lawmakers who will help champion creating an exception to

to renters fees (application and credit check fees) for survivors. The data committee will be working to develop a toolkit to support smaller domestic violence agencies to begin collecting data to support their participation in the Continuum of Care. The HOME cohort communications committee will be developing messaging and communications tools for the HOME cohort and testing messages with survivors in focus groups across the state.

Beyond Bars: Expanding the Narrative of Mothers in Prisons: Survivors of domestic violence are frequently criminalized for fighting back against their abusers. The leading causes of female imprisonment are drug abuse violations and property crimes, both of which are common responses to domestic violence.

Further, evidence suggests that most incarcerated women who are victims



Artist credits: Amanda Lynn

Research & Supreme Court Decision

of domestic violence were arrested for self-defense responses. A Connecticut study of family violence criminal cases found that 33% of adult intimate arrests were dual arrests, of both the survivor and abuser. Many incarcerated females are also victims of domestic violence. In 2020, at least half of women reported experiencing physical abuse prior to being incarcerated. Survivors of intimate partner violence often have complex trauma and it is therefore necessary to correctly identify survivors in criminal procedures and help them heal their trauma. **Read the full article on our website.**

Supreme Court Decision: Last week's voting rights decision in *Allen v. Milligan* was *surprisingly good news*: rather than hobble or destroy the existing protections for minority voters to elect their candidates of choice in congressional, state, and local elections under Section 2 of the Voting Rights Act, the Supreme Court essentially left existing law intact. The majority opinion effectively maintained the status quo around how courts should approach Voting Rights Act lawsuits that allege a legislative map discriminates by race. By letting precedent stand, the Supreme Court has emboldened voting rights advocates to bring cases. Several election law attorneys and voting



attorneys and voting rights advocates have suggested the decision could have a ripple effect across the South, in states like Louisiana, Georgia, Mississippi and Texas where cases claiming Section 2 violations are already working through the courts.

Keep an eye out: our summer webinar series!

Our summer webinar series will explore the various tools a survivor can utilize to protect themselves and their loved ones, tackling topics such as digital safety, to commercial sexual exploitation, and the legal avenues that can be taken by survivors of domestic violence. Join us for a weekly conversation each Thursday during the month of July to learn more about how we can protect and serve our community better.

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)