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March 8, 2023

The Honorable Karen Bass
Mayor, City of Los Angeles
Room 303, City Hall

Honorable Members of the City Council
c/o City Clerk
Room 395, City Hall

RE: AN EQUITY ANALYSIS ON VIOLENCE AND CRIME FACING BLACK WOMEN AND GIRLS IN THE CITY OF LOS ANGELES.

SUMMARY

On May 24, 2022, the City Council instructed (CF:22-0102) the Civil, Human Rights, and Equity Department (LA Civil Rights) to [report back](#) with an equity analysis on the violence and crime that Black women and girls experience in the City of Los Angeles. The following report is a direct response to the instructions, and expounds on the topic through 1) an analysis of the rates at which homicides and violent crimes against them are solved, 2) an assessment of how cases of missing Black women and girls are managed, and 3) policy recommendations to improve equity and justice for victims and their families.

This report recognizes the growing epidemic of violence against women — specifically against women of color and Black women — and acknowledges that there is opportunity to bolster safety and stability measures for communities most impacted by violence. Therefore, this report is mapped through the following six action items:

- Provide a background of this work, including a brief note on the murder of Tioni Theus;
- An exploration of Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) data;
- A brief survey of positive and negative media impact and influence;
- Include salient notes from discussions with community-based organizations involved in this work;
- Identify challenges in writing this report; and
- Provide recommendations for solutions and next steps.

In summary, our statistical analysis found that:

- Although overall violent crime rates have decreased in the City of Los Angeles over a ten-year period, the number of Black women experiencing violence has remained at a steady high if not increased.

- Although Black women comprise approximately 4.3% of the City of Los Angeles population, they often make up approximately 25% to 33% of victims of violence.
- Black and Hispanic women saw a slight uptick in domestic violence (DV) from 2020 to 2021.
 - Between 2016-2021, Black women saw an average yearly increase of 4.09% DV aggravated assault reports. The LAPD 77th, Southeast, Southwest, Newton, and Central divisions were the most frequently listed in the data.
- From 2011-2022:
 - Black women accounted for approximately 32.85% (158) of female homicides and nearly one-third (28.5%) of all missing women in the City.
 - Hispanic women made up approximately 42.8% of female homicides and 36.7% of missing women from the last two years.
 - All non-Black and non-Hispanic women made up approximately 24.3% of female homicides.
 - White women made up approximately 18% of female homicides and 20.3% of all missing women.
 - 130 missing women were listed as an “Unknown” racial demographic.
- Data from LAPD divisions and the LA Civil Rights Department L.A. REPAIR Zones demonstrate that communities with the highest poverty, unemployment, and environmental hazards experience higher rates of violence against women.
- Gaps in data collection do not easily enable law enforcement to capture crime trends facing Angelenos with intersecting identities, such as Black women, potentially obscuring the local impact of what the United Nations has called a “shadow pandemic” of violence against women.
- Demonstrable disparities exist in media coverage and characterization of the murders of Black women, compared to their non-Black, non-Hispanic counterparts.
- Measuring one month from the date of her murder by setting database search parameters to “Location by Publication: California,” a search for “Tioni Theus” yielded just eight results (January 8, 2022 to February 8, 2022). The same parameters applied to a search for “Brianna Kupfer” yielded 25 results (January 13, 2022 to February 13, 2022).
- Community-based organizations consistently encounter funding barriers that present significant challenges to continuing long-term holistic services to survivors of violence and their families.
- Community programs must be undergirded by policy and legislative action at all levels of government.
- Prevention programs such as youth development training and leadership activities can be highly beneficial in decreasing rates of violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- Invest in prevention programming and support strategies to mitigate risk of violence and decrease incidents of violence against women of color
- Increase survivor-focused education and training to support the long-term health of survivors and decrease risk of violence for responders answering domestic violence calls

- Explore how funding is allocated to community organizations, where barriers to access such funding programs exist, and how such restrictions and barriers may be removed to ensure the longevity of life-saving programs and resources
- Upgrade data collection systems and methodologies for data classifications in order to increase the speed of analysis and support rapid response to families in crisis
- Determine avenues for accelerating City policy and campaigns to address additional components of violence mitigation and prevention, such as alternatives to police response to domestic violence calls, policies which support the economic stability of Black women and women of color, and educational campaigns with community partners to decrease stigma and increase awareness.

For a more thorough discussion of recommendations and proposed policy actions to mitigate violence against Black women and women of color in general, please see the “Recommendations” section at the end of this report.

BACKGROUND

On January 8, 2022, Tioni Theus, a 16-year-old Black girl, was found dead on a 110 Freeway on-ramp. Reporting by the *Los Angeles Times* indicates that almost two weeks passed before officials called for public assistance in finding her killer in hopes of bringing justice to Theus’s family. Recent [articles](#) share that more than a year later, there has been no progress in this case and her family continues their plea for support.¹

As addressed in the instructing City Council motion, this incident — while a deeply tragic act of violence — is not a unique story in the City of Los Angeles, or in the United States overall. Women of color experience increased risk of harm and violence as a result of systemic violence which offers them little to no support or room for upward mobility. Black women experience a unique position of precarity as a result of decades of discrimination, grounded both in racism and sexism. These factors of risk are compounded as women of color, and Black women in particular, navigate financial instability, income inequality, housing insecurity, and a myriad of other potential social safety risks.

These intersecting factors lead to repeated disproportionate trends of violence. Such trends were not only exposed, but exacerbated during the COVID-19 pandemic when rates of violence against women, especially in domestic and/or private spaces with intimate partners, went up substantially. This is what the United Nations has dubbed “The Shadow Pandemic.”² News outlets [found](#) that women’s advocacy groups and those supporting survivors of domestic violence received a significant increase in calls for assistance during the pandemic.³

¹ Pulliam, Tim. “1 Year after Teen Was Killed, Found Dead on Side of 110 FWY, Family Continues to Seek Justice.” ABC7 Los Angeles. KABC Television, January 8, 2023.
<https://abc7.com/tioni-theus-1-year-later-reward-2023-teen-girl/12673710/>.

² “The Shadow Pandemic: Violence against Women during Covid-19.” UN Women – Headquarters.
<https://www.unwomen.org/en/news/in-focus/in-focus-gender-equality-in-covid-19-response/violence-against-women-during-covid-19>.

³ Whitfield, Chandra Thomas. “The Pandemic Created a ‘Perfect Storm’ for Black Women at Risk of Domestic Violence.” MIT Technology Review. MIT Technology Review, September 29, 2022.

Furthermore, [research](#) suggests that issues such as housing instability, lack of digital and technological access, and a reliance on Black women to act as the primary economic provider created additional burdens and risks during the pandemic which in turn confounded and increased the likelihood of experiencing violence.⁴

Incidents, such as the murder of Tioni Theus, therefore, are part of a larger system of violence that Black women and women of color navigate daily. In this report, we first attempt to articulate what is meant by our use of the word “violence.”

ACTION PLAN DEVELOPMENT AND METHODOLOGY

Defining Violence

The term “violence” generally connotes an image of graphic brutality leading to injury and/or death. Useful as it may be for conjuring a similar understanding across audiences, “violence” is too broad of a word when attempting to analyze the different types of harm and risk to which women of color are exposed. Bearing this in mind, LA Civil Rights determined the following six types of violence are strong, salient starting points for this conversation: assaults (particularly as they relate to domestic violence and intimate partner violence), rape, acts of hate, homicide and aggravated assault, battery, and disappearances or instances in which women have gone missing.

These typologies are not meant to provide a complete picture of the many areas of violence that women of color experience throughout their lives. Instead, these categorizations serve as an opportunity to engage with data that captures acts of violence that are most likely to impact women as a direct result of underlying sexist and/or racist biases against women.

It is imperative to note that despite our best attempts to define a baseline for the most salient types of violence that women of color experience, there are two components to violence that are overshadowed by the apparent types of violence listed above. First, the psychological toll of violence must be addressed. It should be acknowledged and honored that women, particularly women of color, Indigenous women, and Black women have developed a set of personal and communal skills to not only limit their exposure to violent acts against their personhood, but to merely survive.

A 2016 Gallup [poll](#) found that one in three women “frequently or occasionally” worry about being sexually assaulted.⁵ In comparison, the poll found that only one in 20 men felt the same.

<https://www.technologyreview.com/2022/09/28/1060057/pandemic-black-women-domestic-violence/>.

⁴ Willie, Tiara C. Rep. Understanding and Addressing COVID’s Impact on Housing Among Black IPV Survivors. Ujima, Inc.: The National Center on Violence Against Women in the Black Community, 2020.

<https://americanhealth.jhu.edu/sites/default/files/website-media/resources/COVID%20Impact%20on%20Housing%20Report.pdf>.

⁵ Jones, Jeffrey M. “One in Three U.S. Women Worry about Being Sexually Assaulted.” Gallup.com. Gallup, March 1, 2022.

<https://news.gallup.com/poll/196487/one-three-women-worry-sexually-assaulted.aspx>.

Additionally, RAINN (the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network) reports that one in six American women will experience assault in her lifetime. For Black women, the likelihood increases to one in five. Indigenous women disproportionately face extremely high levels of violence. A 2013 fact sheet from the National Congress of American Indians Policy Research Center [stated](#) that roughly one in three American Indian and Alaska Native women will be raped.⁶

With a broadened scope of labeling the likelihood of violence against women, approximately one in three women will suffer some form of violence by an intimate partner. In the United States, this translates to approximately 61 million women [overall](#).⁷ In addition to the fear of violence looming large for many women as odds increase, there are a number of mental health impacts associated with experiencing some form of intimate partner violence. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) [reported](#) that:

“survivors can experience mental health problems such as depression and PTSD symptoms. They are at higher risk for engaging in behaviors such as smoking, binge drinking, and sexual risk activity. People from groups that have been marginalized, such as people from racial and ethnic minority groups, are at higher risk for worse consequences.”⁸

Furthermore, survivors can experience a number of physical health impacts including: “a range of conditions affecting the heart, muscles and bones, and digestive, reproductive, and nervous systems, many of which are chronic.”⁹ As such, it is evident that survivors of violence experience both physical and mental health impacts long-after they have escaped incidents of violence.

The second component of violence that is less apparent, but nevertheless significant, is the pernicious role of societal attitude and state institutions. In other words, women, with particular consideration for women of color, Indigenous women, Latina/x/e women, and Black women, have been historically limited in their ability to [create safety nets](#) for themselves as a result of racism and sexism.¹⁰

Underscoring these histories of economic inequality – which have continued up to the contemporary moment – can lead to potential explanations for why women have fewer

⁶ Rep. Policy Insights Brief Statistics on Violence Against Native Women. National Congressional American Indians , February 2013. https://www.ncai.org/attachments/PolicyPaper_tWAjznFslmhAffZgNGzHUqIWMPkCDjpFtxeKEUVKjubxfpGYK_Policy%20Insights%20Brief_VAWA_020613.pdf.

⁷ “Fast Facts: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, October 11, 2022. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/intimatepartnerviolence/fastfact.html>.

⁸ “Fast Facts: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

⁹ “Fast Facts: Preventing Intimate Partner Violence | Violence Prevention | Injury Center | CDC.” Centers for Disease Control and Prevention.

¹⁰ Davis, Angela. “The Color of Violence against Women.” The Color of Violence Against Women. ColorLines Magazine, September 29, 2000. <http://www.hartford-hwp.com/archives/45a/582.html>.

opportunities to safely thrive when leaving intimate partners who are violent, or to easily remove themselves from violent situations. Public LAPD [web pages](#) align with this explanation as well, as they write that the survivor “may be economically dependent on the batterer.”¹¹ Academic research also supports this assertion. A 2010 paper [reported](#) that “women with annual income below \$10,000 report rates of domestic violence five times greater than those with annual income above \$30,000 (Bureau of Justice Statistics 1994).”¹² Survivor-focused policy practices that aim to prevent, end, and/or limit exposure to violent situations must be linked to social and economic policies which support the long-term stability, independence, and upward mobility of marginalized communities.

[Violence against women](#), and thus the disproportionate rate of violence against women of color, is an issue that cannot be hidden or relegated to the domestic sphere. Sworn to establish justice, it is incumbent upon the state — at all levels of governance — to take measures which can reduce the rates of violence and provide justice, healing, and relief to survivors of violence and their loved ones as well as the families and communities of women who have been murdered or are missing.¹³

Research and Landscape Analysis

In order to address these issues and seek active solutions, LA Civil Rights developed a three-part review which addressed the original intent of this motion and used these findings to host conversations with community organizations playing a significant role in survivor care, community healing, and violence prevention.

LA Civil Rights first conducted extensive background research to determine what data sets already existed in academic journals, official publications, and governmental reports. Additionally, the Department examined local media publications to understand existing community discourse, particularly as it relates to the lived experiences, narratives, and anecdotes provided by women of color. Lastly, the Department met with three community based organizations that provide services and programs to women who experience violence to understand how their work can inform the City’s approach to address this crisis. These findings provided the foundation for analysis.

Internal and External Stakeholder Engagement:

After examining existing literature, LA Civil Rights coordinated with the Los Angeles Police Department (LAPD) to gather quantitative information and review salient trend lines.

¹¹ “Domestic Violence: Reasons Why Battered Victims Stay with the Batterers.” LAPD Online. Los Angeles Police Foundation , February 9, 2022. <https://www.lapdonline.org/domestic-violence/domestic-violence-reasons-why-battered-victims-stay-with-the-batterers/>.

¹² Aizer, Anna. “The Gender Wage Gap and Domestic Violence.” *The American Economic Review* 100, no. 4 (2010): 1847–59. <http://www.jstor.org/stable/27871277>.

¹³ Petrosky, E., Blair, J. M., Betz, C. J., Fowler, K. A., Jack, S. P. D., & Lyons, B. H. "Racial and Ethnic Differences in Homicides of Adult Women and the Role of Intimate Partner Violence - United States." July 21, 2017. 2003-2014. *MMWR. Morbidity and mortality weekly report*, 66(28), 741–746. <https://doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6628a1>

LA Civil Rights then sought to understand how media representation worked as a key variable in addressing violence and the disproportionate impacts that particular communities navigate. The Department utilized LexisNexis as well as Boolean searches to highlight the role of news outlets and media coverage of the crimes or pursuit of perpetrators of crimes against women in general, women of color, and more specifically, Black women.

Community conversations served as important additions to anecdotal evidence, and underscored the incalculable value of local organizations contributing to healing and survivor safety. Notes and recurrent themes in these conversations were used in conjunction with quantitative data to demonstrate the disproportionate impacts of violence against Black women and women of color, as well as to inform relevant recommendations at the end of this report.

Table 1: Internal and External Participants

Internal Accountability Partners	External Accountability Partners
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Los Angeles Police Department 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Peace Over Violence ● Women Against Gun Violence ● Jenesse Center

Collected Data

In order to address the broad and pervasive issue of violence against women, LA Civil Rights focused this report on six types of violence [defined by LAPD classification]:

- Domestic Violence (Aggravated and Simple Assaults)
- Rape I & II
- Hate Crimes
- Homicide and Aggravated Assault
- Battery
- Missing Persons

The following sections of this report are dedicated to highlighting important data points about rates of violence against women of color, with particular consideration for Black women given the specific nexus of intersecting risks that they face.

Domestic Violence (Aggravated and Simple Assaults)

This category of data captures assaults (aggravated and simple) which are classified as domestic violence incidents. [California law](#) requires that responses to domestic violence calls result in a mandatory arrest.¹⁴ As explained by the LAPD, survivors may attempt to recant a statement or ask officers to not make an arrest, but the law requires that an arrest be made.

Between January 2011 through August 2022, there were 175,624 total domestic violence (DV) victims in the City of Los Angeles, 79% (138,212) of which were female.

- Black women, although only accounting for roughly [4.3% of the City's population](#), were 23.12% of all DV victims (40,597 individuals) and 29.37% of female DV victims.¹⁵
- Hispanic women account for 24.2% of the City's population, but approximately 50.5% (69,836) of female DV victims.¹⁶
- In stark contrast, white non-Hispanic women, accounting for approximately 14.05% of the City, were only 12.7% of the female DV victim population.¹⁷

Even in disaggregating aggravated and simple assaults, Black women were still disproportionately overrepresented in the data. From January 2011 to August 2022, there were 27,357 total DV aggravated assault victims. Black women were 25.14% (6,878) of these victims. Similarly, there were 148,267 victims of simple assault. Black women were 22.74% (33,719) of these victims.

DV rates have declined in recent years, but Black and Hispanic women saw a slight uptick in violence from 2020 to 2021. Between 2016-2021, Black women saw an average yearly increase of 4.09% DV aggravated assault reports. In general, Hispanic women were the most common victims of domestic violence, while Black women were consistently the most overrepresented population as illustrated in Graph 1 below.

With regards to geographic distribution, the 77th, Central, Newton, Southeast, and Southwest divisions were the most frequently listed in the data. The 77th, Central, Southeast, and Southwest divisions correlate with the established Los Angeles Reforms for Equity and Public Acknowledgment of Institutional Racism (L.A. REPAIR) Zones.

For a more thorough discussion of the importance of the correlation between frequently listed LAPD divisions and L.A. REPAIR zones please see the "Overall" portion of the "Research and Landscape Analysis" section.

¹⁴ Rep. Domestic Violence Guidelines. California Commission on Peace Officer Standards and Training, February 2023. https://post.ca.gov/Portals/0/post_docs/publications/Domestic_Violence.pdf.

¹⁵ U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Los Angeles City, California." U.S. Census Bureau.

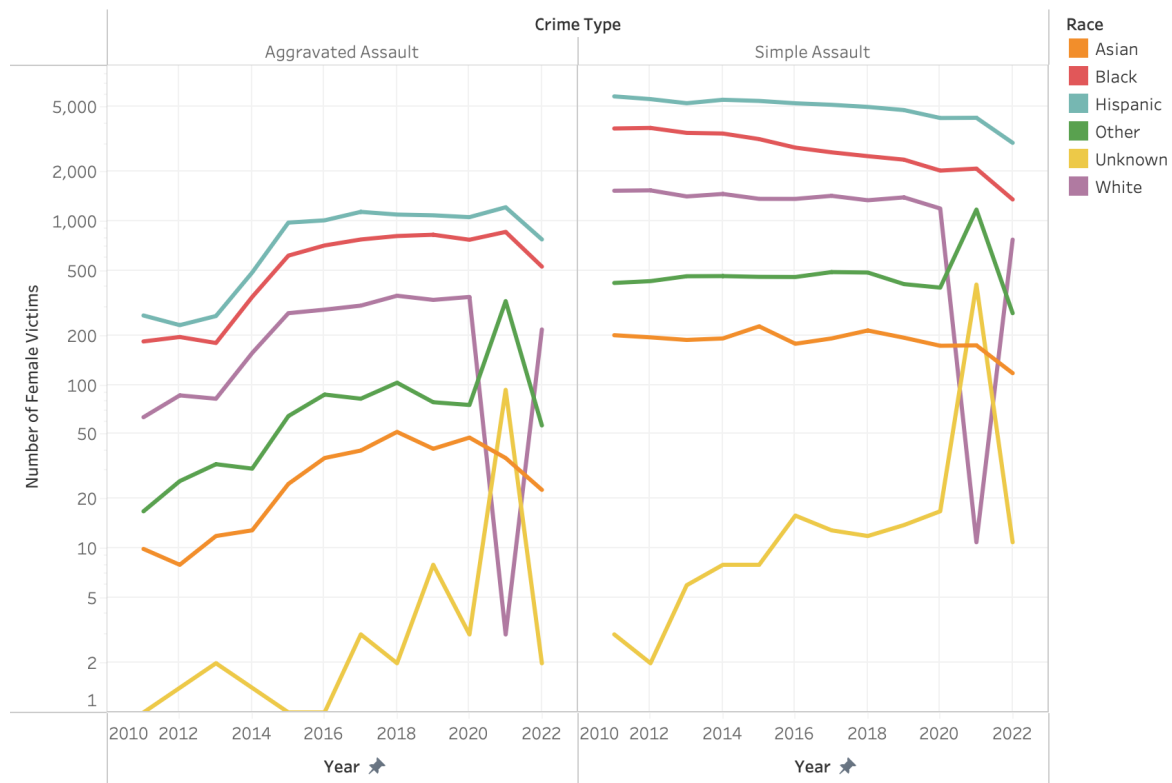
¹⁶ U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Los Angeles City, California." U.S. Census Bureau.

¹⁷ "U.S. Census Bureau Quickfacts: Los Angeles City, California." U.S. Census Bureau. <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/losangelescitycalifornia>.

Graph 1

Female Victims of Domestic Violence by Race

For Years: January 2011 - August 2022
 (Note: Axes are on logarithmic scale)



Rape I & II

In 2013, the Federal Bureau of Investigation rewrote the definition of rape - removing the use of the word “forcible” - to become the following: “The penetration, no matter how slight, of the vagina or anus with any body part or object, or oral penetration by a sex organ of another person, without the consent of the victim.”

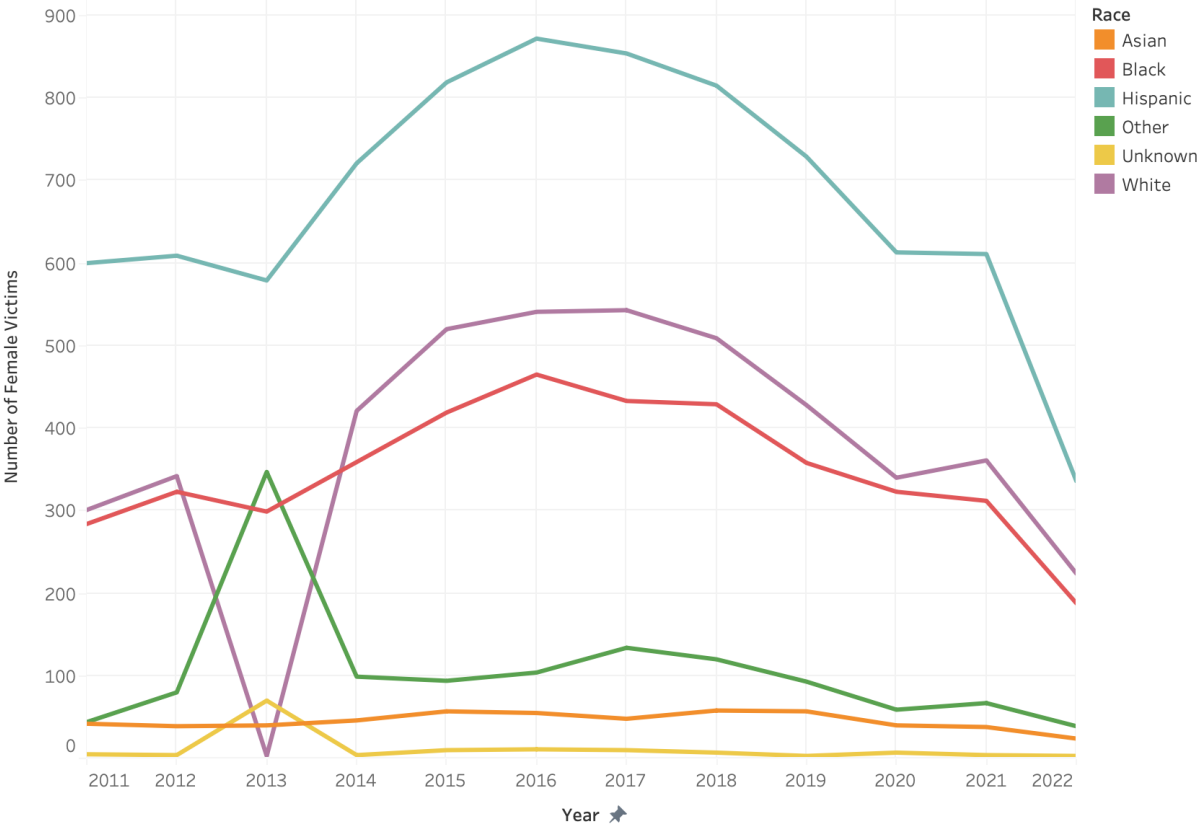
Using 2011 as a baseline, the number of Black women reporting rape from 2012 to 2022 has increased in the City of Los Angeles. In 2016, the number of incidents reported peaked at 465, averaging to approximately 1.3 women reporting an incident of rape every day.

Overall, there were 18,845 female rape victims from January 2011 to August 2022 in the City of Los Angeles. Black women accounted for 22.24% (4,192) of all female rape victims in the city. In the 77th Division alone, Black women accounted for 55% (815) of female rape victims. Similarly, Black women accounted for 51.3% in the Southeast Division and 44.4% in the Southwest Division.

Graph 2

Female Rape I & II Victims by Race

For Years: January 2011 - August 2022



Hate Crimes

The Los Angeles Police Department only recently began collecting data that specifically captures the number of hate crimes and hate incidents in the City of Los Angeles. As such, data only captures crimes from January 2018 to August 2022. This limited time frame means that findings and results are limited. However, it is notable that hate crimes committed with an anti-Black bias made up 23.13% of all hate crimes reported. Hate crimes committed with an anti-female bias made up 0.55%.

Hate crimes have consistently increased each year in the City of Los Angeles for at least the last seven years. This is due to a number of factors, including but not limited to, increased polarization in national politics, increasing online radicalization of people, furthered by false and misleading media, and internationally traumatizing events such as the COVID-19 pandemic.

Local increases may also be spurred by a recent increase in reporting following widespread efforts to promote hate crime and hate incident reporting, such as the [LA For All](#) campaign launched in 2021.

Similarly, the data does not account for hate crimes committed on multiple biases. For example, while the data can provide insight on anti-Black hate crimes or anti-female hate crimes, the intersection of race and gender is not accounted for. Therefore, as a result of methods for categorization and classification of hate crimes, there are gaps in the data that prevent clear analysis illustrating the rate that Black women experience hate-based violence.

Homicide and Aggravated Assault

As with data specific to domestic violence, the rates of homicide and aggravated assault revealed disproportionately high rates of violence against Black women. From January 2011 to August 2022, there were a total of 481 female homicides in the City of Los Angeles. Black women represented 32.85% (158) of female homicides as shown in Table 2.

Table 2

Homicides Among Women by Race														
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Grand Total	Avg/Yr
Black	16	10	8	12	12	11	8	19	11	15	20	16	158	13
Hispanic	13	12	12	15	16	19	19	20	14	22	26	18	206	17
Not Black or Hispanic	11	19	9	9	8	9	5	9	11	10	11	6	117	10

Although the number of Black female homicide victims in 2011 (16) is identical to the number in 2022 (also 16), the year over year fluctuation reveals drastic spikes and drops. For example, although the number of Black female homicide victims dropped from 2016 to 2017 (11 to eight), it sharply spiked in 2018, rising to 19 Black female homicide victims in the City of Los Angeles.

This number peaked in 2021 with 20 Black female homicide victims. The number of Hispanic female homicide victims peaked in 2021 as well, totaling 26 victims. Together, Black and Hispanic female homicide victims represented approximately 80% of all female homicide victims that year. Hispanic women saw the highest number of female homicide victims (except for 2011 and 2012) per year; however, Black women were statistically the most overrepresented demographic within the data set.

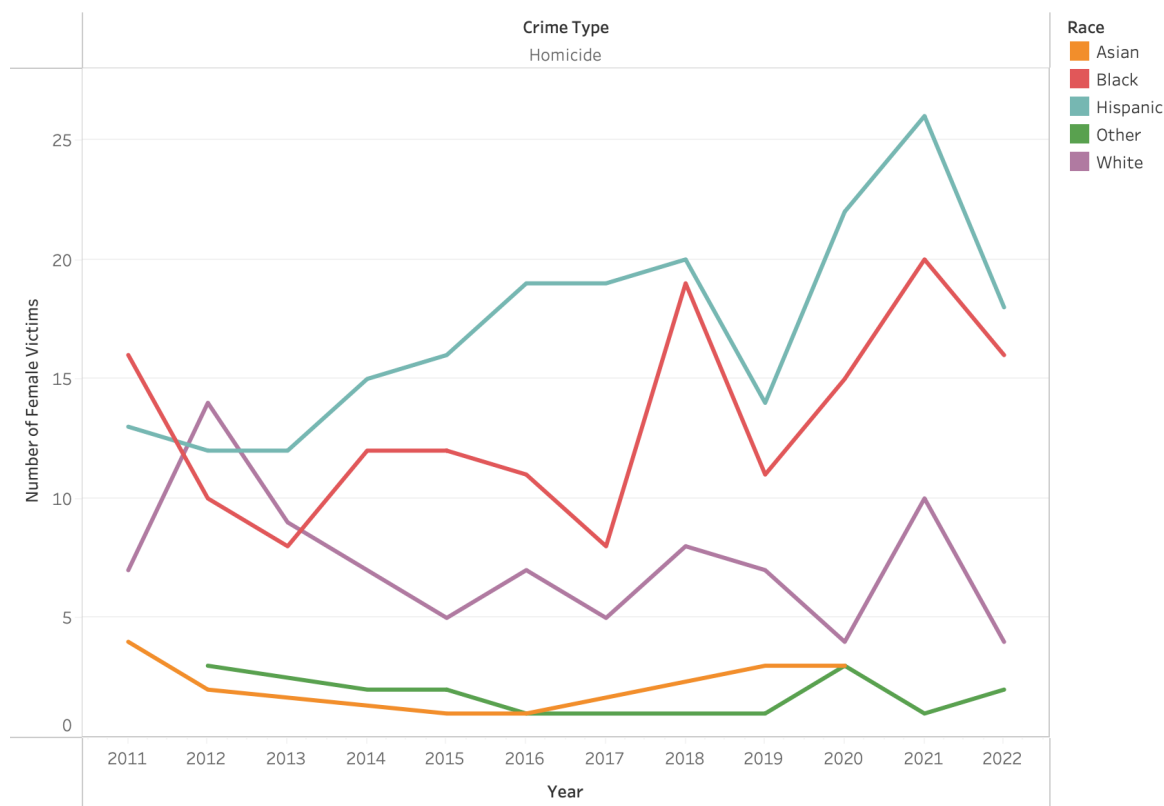
Table 3

Homicides Among Black Women													
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Grand Total
Black	16	10	8	12	12	11	8	19	11	15	20	16	158

Graph 3

Female Victims of Homicides by Race

For Years: January 2011 - November 2022



The University of Illinois Chicago [reported](#) that “murder by intimate partners is among the leading cause of death among” Black women ages 15 to 45 across the United States.¹⁸ Furthermore, compared to other women, Black women are [three times more likely](#) to be killed by a partner.¹⁹

From January 2011 to August 2022, there were 62,264 female victims of aggravated assault in the City of Los Angeles. The female aggravated assault rates increased at a rate of 9.21% annually. From January 2011 to August 2022, Black women were 35.76% (22,267) of the victims.

Black women comprised more than one third of all female aggravated assault victims over the last decade, while Hispanic women made up nearly half (January 2011 – August 2022).

¹⁸ “Women’s Leadership and Resource Center.” Domestic Violence against Black Women. Women’s Leadership and Resource Center | University of Illinois Chicago. <https://wlrc.uic.edu/bwdv/>.

¹⁹ Hampton, Dr. Robert, Joyce Thomas, Dr. Trisha Bent-Goodley, and Dr. Tameka Gillum Gillum. Rep. Facts about Domestic Violence & African American Women. St. Paul, MN: Institute on Domestic Violence in The African American Community, 2015. <http://idvaac.org/wp-content/uploads/Facts%20About%20DV.pdf>.

Specifically from 2016 to 2021, Black women saw an average annual increase of 3.44% in aggravated assaults. Hispanic women saw an average annual increase of 4.20%.

Table 4

Aggravated Assaults Among Women by Race														
	2011	2012	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022	Grand Total	Avg/Yr
Black	1065	1097	991	1274	1795	2121	2253	2340	2308	2330	2506	2187	22267	1856
Hispanic	1279	1133	1084	1528	2385	2716	2944	2896	2893	3033	3321	3156	28368	2364
Not Black or Hispanic	470	492	494	683	945	1097	1109	1272	1200	1276	1325	1266	11629	969

Battery

From January 2011 to November 2022, the number of Black female battery victims has decreased. However, cases of battery against Black female victims were most frequent in the following LAPD divisions: 77th, Southwest, Southeast, Central, and Newton.

In examining all reports of battery from January 2011 to November 2022, Black women represented 14.72% (32,179) of all victims in the City of Los Angeles. When filtering only for Black victims, Black women were approximately 62.44% of the population. Likewise, when filtering only for female victims (110,456), Black women represented 29.13% of the population.

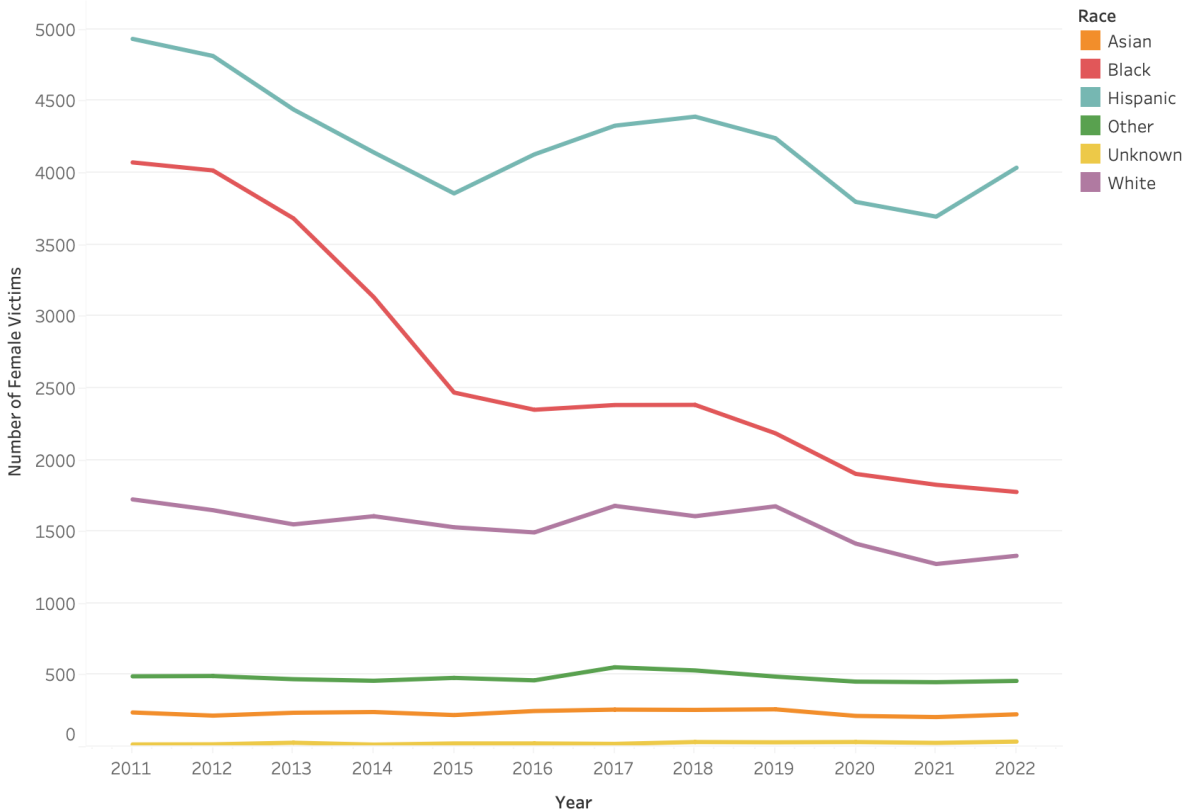
Overall, although Black women are disproportionately represented in the victim population, the proportion of Black female battery victims has decreased over time. From January 2011 to November 2022, Black women represented 29.13% of the female (110,456) population. In contrast, from 2016 to 2021, Black women averaged 25.39% of the female victim population as shown in Graph 4.

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Graph 4

Female Victims of Battery by Race

For Years: January 2011 - November 2022



Missing Persons

In the City of Los Angeles there remain 179 open and active missing persons cases from January 2010 through December 2019; 48 of the persons are female and 14 of them are Black women.

In the last two years (2021-2023), Black women accounted for nearly one-third (28.5%) of all missing women in the City of Los Angeles.

In 2021 specifically, there were 3,879 adults (1,552 women) reported missing in the City. Black women were 11.6% of all missing persons, and 28.9% of missing women. Similarly, in 2022, there were 907 missing persons. Black women (253 missing) made up 11.2% of all missing persons and 27.9% of missing women.

LA Civil Rights was not able to acquire data from cases prior to 2021. The LAPD reported that “prior to 2021, the Department did not collect data on the demographics of reported missing persons related to gender, age, ethnicity.” The Department used the Detective Tracking Case System (DCTS) which only captured the name, report date/time, and location. Therefore, the

LAPD reported that “a request for any data outside of what DCTS tracks would have to be done manually.”

Clearance Rates

Clearance rates in the City of Los Angeles as well as at the state and federal level are frequently organized by perpetrator demographics. In this sense, locating data on the clearance rates of crimes committed by a particular demographic is far easier than locating data on clearance rates of cases that are categorized by the demographic of the victim.

This perpetrator-focused method of data collection results in an unclear understanding of clearance rates of crimes committed against particular victim demographics, and therefore, community-specific solutions may remain elusive.

As such, publicly available data is limited. One five-year data set from 2016-2022 highlights that 77 out of 81 homicide cases with Black female victims were cleared.²⁰ The shortest time period between date occurred and date of clearance was one day (2022) while the longest was 222 days (2018-2019).

This data point, while useful for examining this particular snapshot of data, cannot accurately provide context for comparative analysis.

Overall

The data yielded indicates that Black women are consistently overrepresented in the victim population. Although Black women are only 4.3% of the population in Los Angeles, they often comprise a quarter to a third of victims. For example, when examining aggravated assault data, Black women represented 22,267 reports out of 62,264 total reports. Black women were 1.9 times as likely to be victims of aggravated assault compared to their non-Black, non-Hispanic counterparts. As such, although certain data sets may demonstrate a decrease in the number of victims over a ten-year period, the number of Black women experiencing violence has increased over time and at best, held at a steady high.

When speaking to how cases are organized and handled, the LAPD told LA Civil Rights that cases are not prioritized or handled differently as a result of the victim’s race, gender, or other personal identity. This is in line with the legal requirements of approved California Proposition 209 (November 1996). As such, the LAPD is not legally allowed to “grant preferential treatment on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, and public contracting.”²¹ Therefore, the LAPD cannot legally prioritize cases on the basis of a victim's personal identity.

²⁰ LAPD Public Records & Subpoena Response Section, CPRA Unit, "Request 22-8752: FEMALE BLACK HOMICIDE VICTIMS 2018-2022." Los Angeles, CA: City of Los Angeles Public Record Request, October 18-24, 2022

²¹ “California Proposition 209, Affirmative Action Initiative (1996).” Ballotpedia. Ballotpedia. [https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_209_Affirmative_Action_Initiative_\(1996\)](https://ballotpedia.org/California_Proposition_209_Affirmative_Action_Initiative_(1996)).

In summation, the data confirms what many already know to be true: Black women experience violence at disproportionately higher rates compared to their white female counterparts. Therefore, proper attention and vigilance must be dedicated to supporting and uplifting the stories of these survivors, victims, and their families.

Additionally, the overlay of violence in communities that are at increased risk of social and economic instability cannot be ignored. As previously articulated, four LAPD divisions overlap with five LA REPAIR Zones, which is illustrated in Table 5 and Map 1.

The L.A. REPAIR Zones represent nine communities across the City of Los Angeles highlighted as areas that are most impacted by institutional, systemic racism. These Zones were created as part of the L.A. REPAIR Innovation Fund, which allows community participants to take on an active role in the allocation of millions of City dollars to community organizations via direct grants and the participatory budgeting process. The L.A. REPAIR program represents the first participatory budgeting program in the history of the City of Los Angeles, and will allot \$8.5M across the nine Zones. Furthermore, LA Civil Rights has allocated \$2M from the fund to create nine Peace and Healing Centers, operated by community based organizations, in REPAIR Zones to address social, economic, and environmental healing.

These nine Zones were selected using Community Planning Areas (CPAs) that have a high percentage of people of color and a high share of the population who live below the poverty line. Selected indicators revealed that these nine communities sit at the intersection of race and poverty — where the legacy and consequences of structural and institutional racism are evident in the City of Los Angeles.

Explained earlier in this report, women of color face particular social and economic challenges. This is especially true for women of color who are also the financial head of household. There is a clear correlation between low annual income and higher rates of domestic violence. As such, it follows that L.A. REPAIR Zones — which see disproportionately high rates of poverty — would overlap with LAPD divisions which reported higher rates of violence, particularly against women of color and Black women. Seeing this correlation, the City of Los Angeles has an incentive to take action to support these communities by:

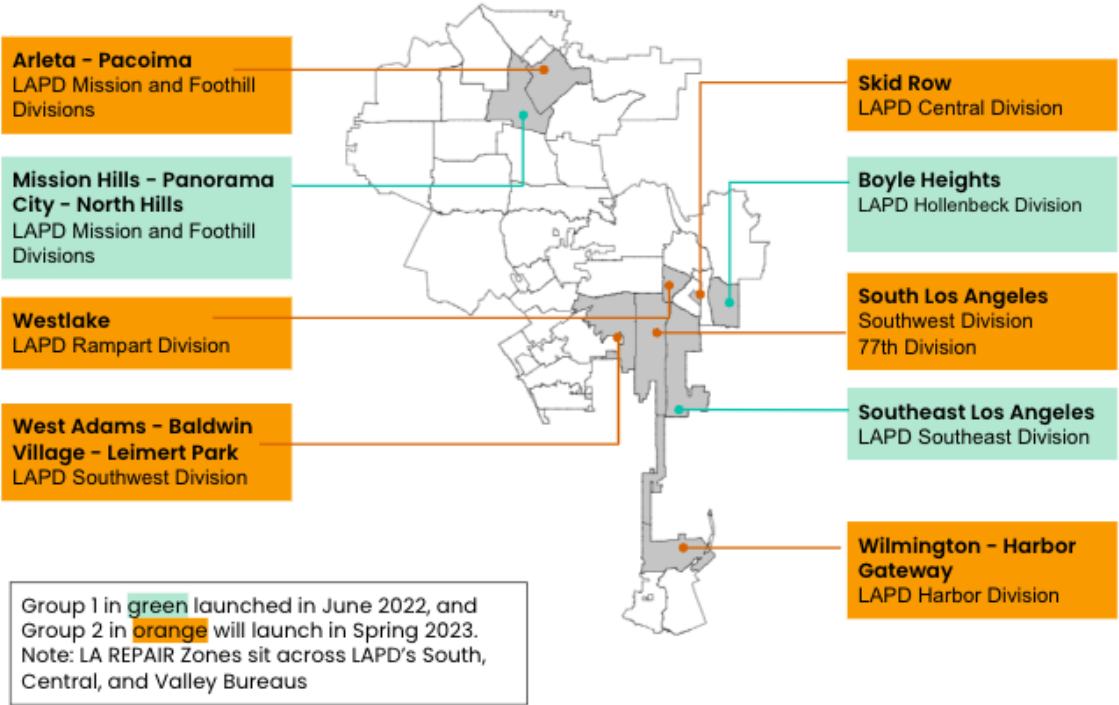
- Increasing upward mobility programming and economic opportunities;
- Investing in social safety net programs which can act as social and economic protection; and
- Leveling the socioeconomic playing field by requiring businesses to pay a living wage and support economic policies which allow for increased quality of life.

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Table 5: REPAIR Zone & LAPD Division Correlation

REPAIR Zone	LAPD Division
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Skid Row 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Central Division
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South L.A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 77th Division
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • South L.A. • West Adams - Baldwin Village - Leimert Park 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southwest Division
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southeast L.A. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southeast Division

Map 1: L.A. REPAIR Zones Across 4 LAPD Divisions



Confounding Factors and Challenges

As previously noted, there may be a number of confounding factors which distort and influence the LAPD data.

First, these figures (specifically those focusing on battery, rape, and domestic violence) do not likely represent all cases of violence against women, women of color, and Black women in the City of Los Angeles. Hesitation based on fear of retaliation, or lack of knowledge on rights or

how to report could likely translate to a far greater number of instances of violence. Similarly, a [distrust](#) in the government and/or law enforcement officers may mean that victims of violence are less likely to come forward and report abuse.²²

An important example can be found in examining the rates of reported incidents of rape. As previously articulated, in the City of Los Angeles there were 4,192 Black female rape victims, which represents approximately 22.24% of all female rape victims. On the national level, advocacy nonprofit organization Color of Change [reported](#) that approximately 20% of Black women will experience sexual violence.²³ Despite these already high rates of violence, Color of Change [reported](#) that for every Black woman who files a report with law enforcement, at least 15 incidents will go unreported.²⁴

Low reporting rates are a national issue. RAINN [reports](#) that an American is assaulted approximately every 68 seconds.²⁵ The national reporting averages do not match this. Similarly, the Brown Political Review [reported](#) that only 54% of domestic violence incidents will be reported to law enforcement.²⁶ On college campuses, estimates suggest that only 12% of incidents will be reported. While decreasing the stigma in sharing stories of survivorship can improve reporting rates, data collection will likely present a persistent challenge as not all survivors will feel comfortable or safe to report incidents of violence.

Secondly, as noted in the section on hate crime data, some sections of data may be skewed to show an increase over time due to increases in general education on reporting and the rights of victims. More research should be done to understand how educational community programs could affect data sets.

Thirdly, the 77th, Southeast, Southwest, Newton, and Central Divisions were reported to see disproportionately higher rates of violence as compared to other divisions. These numbers have been skewed as well since Domestic Abuse Response Teams (or [DART](#) programs) operate in all divisions, except for the Central Division.²⁷ Therefore, if the DART program were expanded to include more divisions then there may be a more equal distribution of incidents and cases.

In addition to potential confounding variables, there were a few challenges in the data collection process.

²² Hampton, Dr. Robert, Joyce Thomas, Dr. Trisha Bent-Goodley, and Dr. Tameka Gillum Gillum. Rep. Facts about Domestic Violence & African American Women.

²³ "Mass Media Is Complicit in Misogynoir and Rape Culture. Demand That Media Outlets #Protectblacksurvivors from Undue Harm and Commit to Better Reporting!" ColorOfChange.org. https://act.colorofchange.org/sign/protect-black-survivors?source=coc_main_website.

²⁴ "Mass Media Is Complicit in Misogynoir and Rape Culture. Demand That Media Outlets #Protectblacksurvivors from Undue Harm and Commit to Better Reporting!" ColorOfChange.org.

²⁵ "Scope of the Problem: Statistics." RAINN. <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/scope-problem>.

²⁶ Hodges, Claire. "From Abuse to Arrest: How America's Legal System Harms Victims of Domestic Violence." Brown Political Review, August 23, 2021. <https://brownpoliticalreview.org/2021/08/abuse-to-arrest/>.

²⁷ "Domestic Abuse Response Team (DART)." Safe LA, 2009. <https://www.safela.org/about/dart/>.

The LAPD reported to LA Civil Rights that the majority of these data sets had to be put together manually by officers; thus there was a significant time delay in reporting as officers did not have adequate and up-to-date tools at their disposal to pull these numbers quickly. This can result in a delay in reporting and analysis which could contribute to limited institutional and public awareness of this issue, keeping women of color suffering unseen.

Additionally, an intersectional lens was not easily employed. Data sets, such as the hate crime data, do not allow for intersectional analysis as cases are classified by one bias type. Therefore, hate crimes against an individual due to multiple biases are not accurately captured. In the case of this report, for example, capturing the number of hate crimes that were committed against Black women due to their racial and gender identity is not possible.

These data blindspots are not unique to the LAPD. This issue is seen in federal reports (both those developed through aggregation of local data and national surveys) as well, where identifying the number of victims (or survivors) by the intersection of identities such as race and gender identity is not available. This also puts women of color at risk as their stories are not captured in data sets and therefore the pervasive issue of violence against women of color, and particularly Black women, is obscured.

A focus on overall trends, while valuable for understanding community risk and the general rise and fall of violence rates, does not highlight the specific positions of violence that women of color navigate if it does not allow for the disaggregation of race or gender nor the incorporation of an intersectional analysis. Furthermore, without governmentally-sponsored research and literature to provide quantitative foundations for these stories, the narratives and lived experiences of Black women and women of color are left unjustified and often ignored.

Finally, it must be noted that the data provided by LAPD interchangeably uses the terms “female” and “woman” when discussing issues that disproportionately affect particular populations. For the purposes of this report, LA Civil Rights has chosen to use the words “woman” and “women” as it allows for more inclusive language. However, this discrepancy in terminology potentially obscures the violence that transgender women face if they are misgendered and/or incidents of violence against them are misclassified.

MEDIA ANALYSIS

Considering that this Council motion began as an attempt to answer a call for justice for Tioni Theus, it is relevant to consider how the media (both traditional news outlets and social media) play a role in this issue.

Traditional News Media

By conducting Boolean searches in the LexisNexis database, it became clear that a large number of [stories](#) on Tioni Theus focused on questions of her actions, insinuating that “theft and prostitution” could have played a role.²⁸ While her family came forward with stories saying that

²⁸ “‘We Have so Many Questions;’ Family of Tioni Theus, Teen Found Dead on Side of Freeway, Demands Answers.” CBS News. CBS Interactive, January 24, 2022.

they intended to “humanize her”, the media’s attention to such details led to connotations of victim-blaming. Similarly, on [January 13, 2022](#),²⁹ the tragic and brutal murder of UCLA student [Brianna Kupfer](#), a white woman, took place.³⁰ The news stories that focused on her addressed the incident and the violence that took place, but did not share personal background or assumptions about her state of mind in conjunction with her death.

This slanted narrative is all too common when it comes to the discussion of Black women, especially Black girls, in the media. Referred to as the “[adultification](#)” of young Black girls, this often means that the media and general public does not allow young Black girls to be seen as youthful, but instead treats them as if they are older, more mature, and capable of greater agency — and greater share of the blame.³¹ This causes three simultaneous issues:

- Desensitize viewers to violence against Black women and girls;
- Affect public perception of violent crime and its correlation to potential punishment; and
- Retraumatize Black communities and families who must repeatedly combat this narrative.

These imbalanced reporting mechanisms and the unconscious bias of the media is evident in the coverage of violence occurring in the City of Los Angeles. Basic Google searches yielded important differences.

As of January 30, 2023, a Google search for “Tioni Theus” resulted in 53,900 hits. In contrast, a Google search for “Brianna Kupfer” resulted in 480,000 hits. A LexisNexis search exploring this found similar results. Measuring one month from the date of their murders and limiting results to “Location by Publication: California,” a search for “Tioni Theus” yielded 8 results (January 8, 2022 to February 8, 2022). In contrast, the same parameters applied to a search for “Brianna Kupfer” yielded 25 results (January 13, 2022 to February 13, 2022). This indicates that in the first 30 days after their murders, news outlets reported on Kupfer three times more frequently than they reported on Theus.

The trend holds true statewide. A LexisNexis audit in February 2023 using the search string “Black Women AND Violence OR Murder OR Missing OR Death” and narrowing the results to “Location by Publication: California” from January 01, 2013 to January 01, 2023 yielded 1,166

<https://www.cbsnews.com/losangeles/news/we-have-so-many-questions-family-of-tioni-theus-teen-found-dead-on-side-of-freeway-demands-answers/>.

²⁹ Solis, Nathan. “Employee Stabbed to Death at Hancock Park Furniture Store.” Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, January 14, 2022. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-01-14/employee-stabbed-to-death-at-hancock-park-furniture-store>.

³⁰ Winton, Richard, and Nathan Solis. “UCLA Student Brianna Kupfer Stabbed 26 Times in Deadly Hancock Park Attack, Autopsy Shows.” Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, August 3, 2022. <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-08-02/ucla-student-brianna-kupfer-stabbed-26-times-autopsy-shows>.

³¹ Epstein, Rebecca, Jamilia J Blake, and Thalia González. Rep. Girlhood Interrupted: The Erasure of Black Girls’ Childhood. Washington D.C, D.C: Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, 2017.

results. The same parameters applied to the search string “White Women AND Violence OR Murder OR Missing OR Death” found 490 results.

When considering discussions of violence against women in general, research suggests that such incidents are reported as singular and/or random, episodic events, which ignores histories of rape culture, the normalization of violence against women, and the frequency that women, particularly women of color, experience gender-based violence. A UN Women [report](#) found that the “level of sensationalism or ‘shock value’ in the case determines its ‘newsworthiness’.”³² Furthermore, reports of such incidents largely focus on the victim’s behavior which “can function as a mechanism to portray adolescent girls as women” therefore ignoring the intersection of gender and age and thus obscuring the complex vulnerability that young girls, particularly young girls of color and young Black girls face.

Reward Money

Unbalanced coverage and stories which include “legally irrelevant” details can greatly [sway](#) public opinion and modify the reactions of the public to stories of violence.³³ In this sense, communities may be increasingly desensitized to violence, less inclined to believe victims, and/or experience apathy. Offering [cash rewards](#),³⁴ a practice drawing [criticism](#), has seen mixed success but holds the potential to increase awareness and motivate community members to provide information to law enforcement.³⁵

However, disparities exist on this front. This is once again visible in the story of Tioni Theus. Although Theus’s body was found on January 8, it was not until January 25 and 26 that a combined [\\$60,000 reward](#) was made available.³⁶ The award offer increased to \$110,000 on February 1 when LA City approved a \$50,000 [reward motion](#)³⁷; it increased to \$120,000 on April

³² Fuentes, Lorena, Abha Shri Saxena and Jennifer Bitterly. “Mapping the Nexus Between Media Reporting of Violence Against Girls: The Normalization of Violence, and the Perpetuation of Harmful Gender Norms and Stereotypes.” United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women. September 2022.

<https://www.unwomen.org/sites/default/files/2022-08/Evidence-review-Mapping-the-nexus-between-media-reporting-of-violence-against-girls-en.pdf>

³³ Schwarz, S., Baum, M.A. & Cohen, D.K. (Sex) Crime and Punishment in the #MeToo Era: How the Public Views Rape. *Polit Behav* 44, 75–104 (2022).

<https://doi-org.ezproxy.cul.columbia.edu/10.1007/s11109-020-09610-9>.

³⁴ Iboshi, Kyle. “Do Cash Rewards Help Solve Crimes?” [kgw.com](#). KGW, December 10, 2021.

<https://www.kgw.com/article/news/crime/gun-violence/do-cash-rewards-solve-crimes/283-c8397568-bc40-42e8-99cb-59ee86a25d14>.

³⁵ Hallett, Emma. “Do Cash Rewards Actually Help Catch Criminals?” BBC News. BBC, June 24, 2014.

<https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-england-27763842>.

³⁶ Salahieh, Nouran, and Kimberly Cheng. “Tioni Theus Case: \$60K Reward Available in Search for Killer of Teen Found on Side of South L.A. Freeway.” KTLA. KTLA, January 26, 2022.

<https://ktla.com/news/local-news/tioni-theus-case-60k-reward-available-in-search-for-killer-of-16-year-old-found-on-side-of-south-l-a-freeway/>.

³⁷ “City Council Approved Reward Motion,” CITY COUNCIL APPROVED REWARD MOTION | Council District 9, February 1, 2022,

<https://councildistrict9.lacity.gov/articles/city-council-approved-reward-motion>.

19 when LA County [approved](#) an additional \$10,000.³⁸ In all, the reward offer totalled \$120,000 after increases over a four-month period. In contrast, Brianna Kupfer was murdered on January 13 and on January 18 the West Bureau Homicide Detectives [announced](#) a \$50,000 reward.³⁹ Community contributions quickly [increased](#) the reward offer to \$250,000.⁴⁰ As of February 2023, no progress has been made in Tioni Theus's case while the man [accused](#) of killing Brianna Kupfer has been located, arrested and charged.⁴¹

Mitigation Tactics

It should be noted that in conversation with LA Civil Rights, LAPD informed LA Civil Rights that publicizing arrests is a strategic tactic aimed at mitigating incidents of violence. However, this tactic can have potentially unintended, damaging effects. Should news outlets not treat such stories with care through the lens of survivor-respect and dignity, publicized stories may perpetuate rape culture through victim-blaming, implying consent, and/or questioning victim's credibility. A [reported](#) analysis from the Harvard Kennedy School and University of Michigan found that "there were 93 percent more rape reports in counties where more than 3 percent of the coverage in a given year reflected rape culture, compared to counties where less than 3 percent of coverage reflected rape culture."⁴² In other words, in areas where news outlets used language which perpetuated rape culture and victim blaming, sexual violence was normalized, and thus, the number of rape reports increased.

A [study](#) from the CDC suggests that stories that focus on perpetrator consequences may be a contributing factor in increasing the number of rapes that occur annually.⁴³ Additionally, the same study suggests that media reports should be unbiased, grounded in facts, avoid victim-blaming, and include "prevention messages in stories about sexual violence."⁴⁴

³⁸ "Reward Increases to \$120K in Search for Killer of Tioni Theus, Teen Found Dead on Side of 110 FWY." ABC7 Los Angeles, April 20, 2022. <https://abc7.com/tioni-theus-reward-teen-girl/11769928/>.

³⁹ "West Bureau Homicide Detectives Seek the Public's Assistance in Identifying Murder Suspect NA22003RC," LAPD Online, January 18, 2022, <http://stglapdonline.lapdonline.org/newsroom/west-bureau-homicide-detectives-seek-the-publics-assistance-in-identifying-murder-suspect-na22003rc/>.

⁴⁰ Nathan Solis, "L.A. Police Identify Suspect, Offer \$250,000 Reward in Fatal Stabbing of Store Employee," Los Angeles Times (Los Angeles Times, January 19, 2022), <https://www.latimes.com/california/story/2022-01-18/reward-offered-in-killing-of-brianna-kupfer-in-hancock-park-store>.

⁴¹ "Brianna Kupfer's Accused Killer Appears in LA Court a Day after Refusing to Show Up." ABC7 Los Angeles, April 22, 2022. <https://abc7.com/brianna-kupfer-accused-killer-shawn-laval-smith-appears-in-la-court/11777393/>.

⁴² Ordway, Denise-Marie. "Where There Is More Rape Culture in the Press, There Is More Rape," The Journalist's Resource, September 7, 2018, <https://journalistsresource.org/politics-and-government/news-coverage-rape-research/>.

⁴³ Egen O, Mercer Kollar LM, Dills J, et al. "Sexual Violence in the Media: An Exploration of Traditional Print Media Reporting in the United States, 2014–2017". MMWR Morb Mortal Wkly Rep. November 27, 2020;69:1757–1761. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.15585/mmwr.mm6947a1external>

⁴⁴ Egen O, Mercer Kollar LM, Dills J, et al. "Sexual Violence in the Media: An Exploration of Traditional Print Media Reporting in the United States, 2014–2017".

Social Media

Despite the uneven perception often perpetuated in traditional news media, it is important to note the positive impact that social media has had in building community and solidarity amongst survivors.

Over the course of the pandemic, victim advocates recognized and harnessed the power of social media and smartphones to [reach](#) victims that were previously isolated.⁴⁵ The Massachusetts Institute of Technology's *Technology Review* named the Jenesse Center as a leader in this area by identifying their use of the Jenesse4Hope app to bring increased resource access directly to individuals most in need.

Likewise, models of solidarity which began pre-pandemic can be found in recognizing the impact of the [#SayHerName](#) campaign and media coverage of this movement.⁴⁶ [Digital activism](#) successfully employs the media cycle and news outlets to support the survivor and/or the loved ones of those who experience violence.⁴⁷ As scholars have previously noted, "mainstream news media has a complicated history when it comes to covering black women, from overlooking them completely to circulating stereotypical images of them in abundance."⁴⁸ However, social media provides a safe space for Black women to employ agency in telling their stories.

"#SayHerName reminds us that black, gender nonconforming women experience a complex and layered policing from authorities that affects the way they are perceived by both journalists and authorities as legitimate victims."⁴⁹ This model can be applied towards understanding how community organizations and survivor advocates utilize social media to empower Black women and other women of color who experience violence to regain control of their story, granting them a space to exercise autonomy, agency, and freedom which is not generally afforded to them.

Community-generated web pages such as [Our Black Girls](#) also serve as an important model for uplifting the stories of survivors and amplifying calls for justice from the families of victims across the nation.⁵⁰ When explaining who these women are, the *Our Black Girls* website [states](#):

"These are and were our sisters, many of whom endured deception and/or violence. We shouldn't sweep their stories under the rug and move on to the next hot topic. We need to remember what they went through in order to change patterns of behavior. We need to teach our children how to protect themselves from predators who seek to do them harm. We need to teach each other how to avoid those who whisper sweet nothings in our ears but also use emotional or physical abuse to control us. We need to recognize

⁴⁵ Whitfield, Chandra Thomas. "The Pandemic Created a 'Perfect Storm' for Black Women at Risk of Domestic Violence."

⁴⁶ "Say Her Name." AAPF, December 2014. <https://www.aapf.org/sayhername>.

⁴⁷ Williams, Sherri. "#SayHerName: using digital activism to document violence against black women." *Feminist Media Studies*, August 10, 2016. 16:5, 922-925, DOI: 10.1080/14680777.2016.1213574.

⁴⁸ Williams, Sherri. "#SayHerName: using digital activism to document violence against black women."

⁴⁹ Williams, Sherri. "#SayHerName: using digital activism to document violence against black women."

⁵⁰ Marie, Erika. "Home OBG • Our Black Girls." *Our Black Girls*, December 4, 2022. <https://ourblackgirls.com/>.

that all that glitters isn't gold. We need to highlight stories of our missing Black girls because their stories go under-reported in the media — if they're reported at all. We cannot control the actions of those who are set in their diabolical ways, but we can learn from one another's experiences."⁵¹

As a “grassroots website that is birthed out of a heartfelt desire to make sure that these women, who are underrepresented, aren't forgotten,” *Our Black Girls* is a reminder of the importance of grounding violence prevention and survivor support work in remembering that such incidents of violence are experienced by real people.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

While quantitative data and trend lines are significant in demonstrating a numerical basis for claims about disproportionate risk, these qualitative interviews (methodologically grounded in the Collective Impact Theory of Change) yielded a wealth of information regarding services which continually prove important in not only addressing harm and violence post-experience, but provide opportunities for community engagement and healing which can increase the potential for preventing violence in the first place.⁵²

In order to understand the scope of work that community-based organizations and external partners provide, LA Civil Rights first considered 14 organizations, looking at the focus on their work and communities with which they engage. Meeting requests were sent to six organizations; three responded.

In all, LA Civil Rights held conversations with three external partners: [Peace Over Violence](#)⁵³, [Women Against Gun Violence](#)⁵⁴, and the [Jenesse Center](#).⁵⁵ Table 6 below details the overall mission of each organization and the discussion focus points that were elevated during the conversation.

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⁵¹ Marie, Erika. “About OBG • Our Black Girls.” Our Black Girls, December 19, 2021. <https://ourblackgirls.com/about-our-black-girls/>.

⁵² Kania, John, and Mark Kramer. 2011. “Essentials of Social Innovation Collective Impact.” *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. Winter. https://ssir.org/articles/entry/collective_impact.

⁵³ “Peace over Violence.” Peace Over Violence. <https://www.peaceoverviewiolence.org/>.

⁵⁴ “Women against Gun Violence.” Women Against Gun Violence. Women Against Gun Violence, February 27, 2023. <https://wagv.org/>.

⁵⁵ “Jenesse Center Home Page.” Jenesse Center. Jenesse Center, Inc., 2021. <https://jenesse.org/>.

Table 6: External Engagement

Partner	Mission	Discussion Focus Points
Peace Over Violence	Building healthy relationships, families and communities free from sexual, domestic and interpersonal violence. ⁵⁶	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Strong policy must accompany good programming ● Funding challenges present significant barriers to programmatic efforts ● Education of law enforcement and engagement partners is critical ● Long-term services and wrap-around care present the most effective way to support survivors ● Prevention efforts are crucial to mitigating future violence
Women Against Gun Violence	WoMen Against Gun Violence was founded 30 years ago and, since that time, the men and women of WoMen Against Gun Violence have worked tirelessly and fearlessly to prevent gun violence in our communities, state, and nation through both impactful legislation like background checks for all gun and ammunition sales and through our cutting edge programs on safe gun storage, on voting, and on divestment.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Training survivors on legislative advocacy provides opportunities to share lived experiences ● Legislative effort to prevent problem exacerbation is paramount ● Partnership and building trust with families can prevent future violence
Jenesse Center	Jenesse’s mission is to restore families impacted by domestic and sexual violence through holistic, trauma informed, culturally responsive services, and advance prevention initiatives that foster and sustain healthy, violence free communities. ⁵⁷	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allies and engagement partners must support in word and deed ● Responses to survivors, families, and advocates must be grounded in the promotion of dignity and respect

⁵⁶ “About Us.” Peace Over Violence. <https://www.peaceoverviolence.org/about-us>.

⁵⁷ “Who We Are.” Jenesse Center. Jenesse Center, Inc., 2021. <https://jenesse.org/who-we-are/>.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Wrap-around care prevents future violence and saves lives ● Economic security and stability (particularly for women head of households) plays a key role in violence prevention ● Partnerships with health services have immense potential to recognize risk and mitigate violence ● Barriers to accessing and utilizing funding sources present a significant challenge ● Programs, education, and support must be culturally specific
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Throughout the discussions with community-based organizations, recurrent themes emerged including:

- Need for culturally-specific and culturally-competent programming, education, and discussion;
- Urgency of challenges in accessing and utilizing funding sources, both government provided and philanthropic;
- Importance of prevention programming, through collaboration with health partners, religious institutions, and youth development groups;
- Significance of survivor focused language and power in uplifting survivors narratives and lived experiences; and
- Importance of legislative support, particularly economic and social safety nets, which can support women and women head of households at disproportionate risk of experiencing gender-based violence.

RECOMMENDATIONS AND NEXT STEPS:

In totality, the synthesis of background research, quantitative data, and qualitative interviews with community based organizations results in recommendations that can be understood in four key areas: prevention, immediate response, wrap-around service delivery, and long-term logistics.

Prevention

Prior to examining potential areas of improvement and the next steps in responding directly to survivors and their families, it is important to note the significance of prevention work. Improving responses to survivors and their families does not mitigate the occurrence of violence in the first place. The goal of governmental agencies and community partners should be the realization of rendering gender-based violence support services useless. In other words, in an ideal world, incidents of violence against women would be rare because prevention services have performed their functions successfully.

Such prevention tactics include:

- Youth development programming and youth empowerment services;
- Family education and community safety programming; and
- Educating and partnering with healthcare providers to quickly identify individuals who may be experiencing violence (physical, emotional, mental, and financial) and provide support before such incidents become fatal.

All three external partners LA Civil Rights engaged with in this report provide examples of successful prevention programming.

With regards to youth development programming and youth empowerment services, both Peace Over Violence and the Jenesse Center engage with youth organizations to educate, empower, and assist in the prevention of gender-based violence and violence against women.

Peace Over Violence offers a summer youth camp to encourage leadership and education about violence prevention policy work. Likewise, Peace Over Violence assists students in organizing and running [STOP \(Students Together Organizing for Peace\) Clubs](#), where young people can become leaders and mentors in their communities. These programs are entirely youth-led and youth-run. Programs such as these can serve to harness restorative justice frameworks and break the school to prison pipeline by providing students with volunteer experience and leadership training which can support future college and career ambitions. Simultaneously, engagement with young leaders ensures that programming is community-specific and [culturally competent](#).⁵⁸ In this way, engaging with these lived experiences informs the community work that Peace Over Violence conducts.

Similarly, the Jenesse Center offers youth development programs through their [Raise Your Voice 4 Peace](#) competition and [Jeneration J](#) Youth Programs.⁵⁹ These programs work to educate young people about healthy relationships, better understand the different types of abuse, and break the stigma around survivorship. Work such as this is integral to breaking cycles of generational trauma and increasing conversation, which can help survivors feel safer coming forward with their story.

Family education and community safety programming plays a similar role. Although Women Against Gun Violence focuses mainly on legislative and legal channels of advocacy, there are

⁵⁸ Hampton, Dr. Robert, Joyce Thomas, Dr. Trisha Bent-Goodley, and Dr. Tameka Gillum Gillum. Rep. Facts about Domestic Violence & African American Women.

⁵⁹ "Raise Your Voice for Peace." JenerationJ, n.d. <https://www.jenerationj.org/>.

examples of successful programming and engagement that can be examined. One such instance is prevention programming which informs families about methods of safe gun storage as well as builds trust with families and communities to support mediation efforts, family safety, and suicide prevention.

Lastly, successful models of prevention can be located in engagement with healthcare providers. The Jenesse Center has worked with local hospitals to create a curriculum which trains trauma centers and practitioners on how to recognize domestic violence. Furthermore, the Jenesse Center created pamphlets and flyers, such as those seen in restrooms and on the backs of medical facility doors, and to support survivors with avenues to discreetly and safely disclose incidents of violence. Such programmatic efforts decrease the stigma, increases the education, and works to combat the fear of reporting repercussions.

Immediate Response

Despite such strong prevention work, the data demonstrates that violence against women, particularly women of color and Black women remains a pervasive, life-threatening issue in the City of Los Angeles and across the nation. Responses to calls of domestic violence incidents and intervention in incidents of violence are high-tension and must be handled with intense dedication to survivor-focused care.

As such, areas to improve response tactics and support include:

- Increasing training for those responding to such incidents and provide survivor-focused education;
- Working to develop responses that do not place blame on or retraumatize the survivor;
- Locating, examining, and implementing alternatives to police response; and
- Examining the LAPD's official policy on dual arrests during domestic violence calls as well as the potential benefits and/or drawbacks from implementing a dual arrest policy.

As previously articulated, California is a mandatory arrest state when officers respond to domestic violence calls. While this may serve to remove tension between two individuals in the short-term, there are external circumstances which can retraumatize and/or harm a survivor in this process.

Peace Over Violence explained that there is a negative feedback between how the media portrays Black women experiencing violence and how officers may interact with survivors. Additionally, instances which result in dual arrest - when officers believe both parties to be perpetrators of violence - may result in a retraumatizing of the survivor who acted out of self-defense. A [2008 study](#) found that "in situations with a female offender, officers are three times more likely to make a dual arrest."⁶⁰ Nationally, approximately 7% of domestic violence survivors experience an incident of [dual arrest](#).⁶¹

⁶⁰ Justice Programs, and J. David Hirschel, Domestic violence cases: What research shows about arrest and dual arrest rates § (2008).

⁶¹ Hodges, Claire, Julia Kostin, William Forsys, and Alexandra Mork. "From Abuse to Arrest: How America's Legal System Harms Victims of Domestic Violence." Brown Political Review, February 8, 2022. <https://brownpoliticalreview.org/2021/08/abuse-to-arrest/>.

Efforts to educate law enforcement and those who respond to domestic violence incidents can ensure that such individuals understand the rights of the victim, increase the likelihood that responders engage with compassion, respect, and dignity, and successfully connect survivors with community services and support systems.

Above all, respect for the survivor's wishes and efforts to avoid re-traumatizing survivors should be the most important component of interacting with survivors and their families. Trauma-informed work grounded in restorative justice practices can help support survivors in their healing journey.

Finally, the City should invest significant time and resources in locating, examining, and implementing alternatives to responses to incidents of domestic violence, which may circumvent the need for police response.

Current systems in place rely on police response to intervene and manage domestic violence issues. However, research suggests that many survivors who called the police during a DV incident later regretted the decision. "A [2015 survey](#)⁶² by the [National Domestic Violence Hotline](#) found that about 75 percent of survivors who called the police on their abusers later concluded that police involvement was unhelpful at best, and at worst made them feel less safe."⁶³

Additionally, a quarter of survivors reported that they were "arrested or threatened with arrest when reporting partner abuse or sexual assault to the police."⁶⁴ Similarly, as highlighted earlier in this report, survivors may not feel safe calling the police or might have secondary concerns such as "fear of discrimination by police, invasion of privacy, wanting to protect their children, not wanting their partner arrested, or concern that involving the authorities would exacerbate the violence."⁶⁵

Therefore, the City can invest in exploring alternative community responses to domestic violence that do not require calling the police. Such responses should be community-specific and culturally-competent, grounded in the needs and wants of the local community. The City can support such efforts through funding to community organizations already attempting to develop these alternatives as well as investing in supporting the development of community coalitions who can work within their networks to establish these alternatives.

Grounded in transformative justice principles, locating and implementing these alternatives can reduce the risk of violence during a response call, decrease pressures on LAPD to respond to calls where they may not be needed, and support communities in their efforts to care for and protect

⁶² Boyd-Barrett, Claudia. "Alternatives to Calling the Police for Domestic Violence Survivors." California Health Report: Solutions for Equity. California Health Report, December 1, 2020. <https://www.calhealthreport.org/2020/12/11/alternatives-to-calling-the-police-for-domestic-violence-survivors/>.

⁶³ National Domestic Violence Hotline, Who Will Help Me? Domestic Violence Survivors Speak Out About Law Enforcement Responses. Washington, DC (2015). <http://www.thehotline.org/resources/law-enforcement-responses>.

⁶⁴ Boyd-Barrett, Claudia. "Alternatives to Calling the Police for Domestic Violence Survivors."

⁶⁵ Boyd-Barrett, Claudia. "Alternatives to Calling the Police for Domestic Violence Survivors."

each other. Additionally, implementing alternatives will decrease the [criminalization](#) of the survivor.⁶⁶

However, when survivors feel that calling for police to respond to their incident is the best option, the City should ensure that appropriate safety plans are in place to protect the victims, their loved ones, and decrease the risk of further exacerbating violence via harm to the perpetrator. Transformative justice principles can be utilized through practices such as mediated discussions with all parties involved (such as families involved, the perpetrator, survivor, and involved children) and/or accountability and reparative plans.⁶⁷

Similarly, in efforts to [decrease](#)⁶⁸ the rate of dual arrests, the City of Los Angeles should examine the [potential benefit](#) of implementing a primary aggressor policy within LAPD.⁶⁹ The State of California [discourages](#) dual arrests, but does not limit an officer's ability to make such arrests.⁷⁰

Wrap-Around Service Delivery

In the aftermath of violence, survivors are often traumatized and at risk of further violence if they do not have proper support channels and/or social safety nets. As such, community-based organizations provide important services which can support the economic, social, and emotional stability of a survivor and their children. Intervention in crisis situations is not enough to support stability and decrease violence over time. Community based organizations such as Peace Over Violence and the Jenesse Center provide holistic wrap-around services, which support the survivor in developing long-term stability while healing from incidents of violence. In order to support the ongoing work of these organizations, as well as others across the City of Los Angeles, the City should:

- Explore opportunities for the City to increase funding for community organizations and remove restrictions/barriers to utilize these dollars;
- Increase City-provided training opportunities for community organizations to learn about applications and avenues to receive governmental and philanthropic financial support;
- Direct LAPD to initiate relationships with community based organizations to increase long-term education and develop support networks for survivors to turn to after experiencing violence; and
- Examine the benefit of an ad hoc committee to address the ongoing epidemic of violence against women, women of color, and Black women in particular.

⁶⁶ "Survived + Punished." Survived + Punished. Allied Media Projects, n.d. <https://survivedandpunished.org/>.

⁶⁷ Boyd-Barrett, Claudia. "Alternatives to Calling the Police for Domestic Violence Survivors."

⁶⁸ Justice Programs, and J. David Hirschel, Domestic violence cases: What research shows about arrest and dual arrest rates § (2008).

⁶⁹ Finn, M. A., Blackwell, B. S., Stalans, L. J., Studdard, S., & Dugan, L. "Dual Arrest Decisions in Domestic Violence Cases: The Influence of Departmental Policies. *Crime & Delinquency*." 50(4), 565–589. September 5, 2016. <https://doi.org/10.1177/0011128703261381>

⁷⁰ Rep. Domestic Violence Arrest Policies by State. American Bar Association Commissions on Domestic Violence , July 16, 2018. <https://leg.mt.gov/content/Committees/Interim/2017-2018/Law-and-Justice/Meetings/July-2018/Exhibits/LJIC-July16-2018-Ex30.pdf>.

As previously explored, women of color, particularly Black women and Black women head of households are at increased risk of economic instability and homelessness as a result of gender pay gaps, lack of access to upward mobility, and limited economic opportunities. The [Center for Law and Social Policy](#)⁷¹ found that 73.4% of female victims of intimate partner violence [reported](#) long-term impacts such as “PTSD symptoms, feeling fearful, being concerned for her safety, or missing days of school or work.”⁷² Survivor-focused services, such as those provided at the Jenesse Center, equip survivors with the necessary training and tactics to focus on emotional and mental wellness, stay in long-term housing, and find economic stability with increased career prospects.

Support for women of color, particularly Black women, who have survived incidents of violence requires programmatic efforts that are holistic and comprehensive.

In order to run such programs, community organizations require funding to continue these live-saving programs. The City of Los Angeles can better support the development, facilitation, and continuation of such programming by exploring how dollars are allocated to community organizations, where barriers to access such funding exist, and how such restrictions and barriers may be removed to make it easier for organizations to fund their programmatic efforts.

Similarly, the City can explore opportunities to train organizations on how to access governmental and philanthropic funding to reduce gaps in resource-sharing and increase collaboration between City partners and community organizations. Increasing the accessibility of training and pathways to receive funding can support the longevity of community programs which provide lifesaving support for survivors of violence and their families.

Finally, the City should direct LAPD to initiate relationships with community-based organizations who provide holistic support for survivors of domestic violence and/or gender-based violence. The forging of these relationships will serve the dual purpose of:

- Increasing the education and training of officers on culturally-competent, survivor-centered responses; and
- Creating a more robust support system to direct survivors to after they have experienced an incident of violence.

Lastly, the City should examine the benefit of establishing an ad hoc committee to address violence against women which can redirect their research and focus as needed to respond more specifically to demographics that are over-represented in the data.

⁷¹ “Center for Law and Social Policy.” CLASP, February 27, 2023. <https://www.clasp.org/>.

⁷² Mendoza, Marlén, Nia-West Bey, and Whitney Bunts. Rep. Young Women of Color and Exposure to Violence. CLASP The Center for Law and Social Policy, December 4, 2018. https://www.clasp.org/sites/default/files/publications/2018/12/2018_exposuretoviolence.pdf.

Long-Term Logistics

In addition to opening up funding avenues, there are remaining opportunities to make logistical adjustments which can better support data analysis and research which in turn enables a more accurate understanding of the state of violence against women of color, particularly Black women.

Such areas should include:

- Identification of areas of legislative change and policy which address secondary factors of violence;
- Instruction to the LAPD to explore and upgrade data collection systems to expedite data reports and intersectional analysis;
- Instruction to the LAPD to update language and classification systems to avoid conflation of sex and gender;
- Development of pathways to leveraging City, County, and State funding for rewards which are offered equitably and timely, with respect for the wishes of the victim's family; and
- Exploration of opportunities to support and/or facilitate educational campaigns on violence against women, domestic violence, and violence prevention.

The City should explore legislative changes which can address issues that are secondary factors in perpetuating violence against women, women of color, and Black women. One such area is the gender pay gap and opportunities for upward economic mobility. As previously articulated, women of color are grossly underpaid compared to their white male counterparts. Addressing and bolstering social and economic safety nets can increase the stability of women of color, especially Black women head of households.

Additionally, the City should direct the LAPD to explore opportunities to utilize their funding sources to invest in improved data collection and analysis systems. In order to compile data packages which address the question of this motion, the LAPD reported that they had to manually enter and calculate this data. Such processes are lengthy and highly time consuming, leaving the City unable to quickly analyze crime trends in this area. The City cannot work to rapidly address violence against women of color if the data is not readily available. Investing in systems that reflect intersecting identity can increase the speed of data calculation and support time-sensitive and community-specific work.

Likewise, the City should also direct the LAPD to update their language and classification systems to avoid the conflation of sex and gender. As previously noted, the data provided by the LAPD uses "female" and "woman" as interchangeable terms thereby conflating sex and gender. This poses significant risk to individuals who are transgender and/or gender non-conforming if reports misgender victims. Such individuals could have their incidents misclassified and therefore violence against these populations may be obscured from the narrative entirely. Therefore, in order to more accurately capture violence against all women, the City should direct the LAPD to update their language and provide training for officers to increase education and awareness about the differences between sex, gender, and gender presentation.

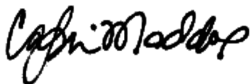
Additionally, the City should develop an efficient way of leveraging City, County, and State funding for rewards for information. As previously mentioned, there was a clear discrepancy between the funding amount and response time in establishing a reward for information for Tioni Theus in comparison to Brianna Kupfer. The total reward money offered for information for Tioni Theus reached \$120,000 over the course of four months, while the total reward money offered for Brianna Kupfer reached \$250,000 in less than one month. In addressing the discrepancies illuminated in a comparison of these two cases, the City should examine their current avenues for accessing funding for reward money via existing City, County⁷³, and State⁷⁴ channels as well as establish action plans to ensure that reward offers are made equitably.

Lastly, the City should explore opportunities to promote and facilitate educational programming about domestic violence, violence against women of color, and gender-based violence. Educational programming, such as the Jenesse Center’s collaboration with healthcare providers and Peace Over Violence’s support of youth development, serve as models for the types of programs that the City should support, fund, and amplify. Likewise, educational campaigns such as LA For All offer successful examples of campaigns that promote an anti-violence, anti-racist message which ultimately makes communities safer.

In the short term, educational campaigns may increase the number of cases reported. However, this [decreases stigma](#) and supports survivors coming forward with their stories.⁷⁵ Likewise, educational campaigns can work to inform communities about violence, violence prevention, and avenues to protect women at risk of experiencing violence, particularly women of color and Black women.

FISCAL IMPACT

There is no fiscal impact with the submission of this report.



CAPRI MADDOX, ESQ.
General Manager

CM:BH:dp:mp:rh
March 8, 2023

⁷³ “Rewards for Information on Crimes.” Board of Supervisors Executive Office. Los Angeles County Board of Supervisors. <https://bos.lacounty.gov/rewards/>.

⁷⁴ “Governor’s Rewards Program.” Office of Governor Gavin Newsom. California Web Publishing Service. <https://www.gov.ca.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/Governors-Reward-Program-Criteria-with-PC-1547-1.pdf>.

⁷⁵ Patrick, Wendy L. “How Social Stigma Silences Domestic Violence Victims.” Psychology Today. Sussex Publishers, April 9, 2018. <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/why-bad-looks-good/201804/how-social-stigma-silences-domestic-violence-victims>.