



WHEN WE TELL OUR STORIES

How survivors of color are most harmed and
least helped by the public safety system

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A Note from the Steering Committee

Our first commitment to this process was to have it be guided by people from the communities whose stories it aspires to tell.

Engaged with survivors of color from the communities in which we live, we are community advocates who work within law enforcement, city- and county-level agencies, community-based reentry programs, and behavioral healthcare systems.

We collaborated on this project in which Partnership for Safety & Justice played a coordinating role. As directors of the project, we developed the questions and invited participants. We conducted the individual and group interviews, and we provided guidance to staff and interns on interpreting and contextualizing responses. And we also played a core role in determining the final recommendations that grew out of the dozens of interviews that were conducted.

Acknowledgements

We're deeply grateful to all those who were involved in and supported this project. Special thanks to our interns: Bianca Pak, Sophie Adler, Stephanie Grayce, and Roberta Munger whose compassion and dedication to equity and healing pave the way for change.

We're grateful to Anna Rockhill, M.A., M.P.P, Senior Research Associate, Portland State University, whose expertise helped guide this report. You were an indispensable gift to the process.

An extended thank you also to Roy Moore III, Trish Jordan, and Antoinette Edwards who became a dynamic trio of prophetic messengers, sometimes quiet, sometimes loud, always real, always guided by love. Thank you to Alejandra Galindo who provided Spanish translation and moreover ensured that the voices of Latinx survivors remain a strong and necessary voice in policy change.

To two of our Steering Committee partners who went above and beyond: Beezie Burton, who was our primary project intern while also completing her Masters Degree thesis on this project. You are magic, sister. This couldn't have happened without you.

And deep gratitude to Yolanda Gonzalez. You were a compass from the start. You saw us through every stage of this process, keeping us honest, and shining the light you always shine toward a better way. You held space for almost every individual who touched this. In tears and in laughter, thanks for all the heart and integrity and always believing in the power of this.

To all our friends and colleagues who got messages at unreasonable hours pleading for your expertise: You are all essential parts of a much larger movement that will lift up these stories and bring healing. Thank you for what you bring to the world.

And most importantly, to the survivors who participated in these conversations: Thank you for your stories. We're endlessly inspired by your hearts, your resilience, and your courage. Universally, you voiced a desire to make things better for others by sharing your story. We're so honored to have shared this experience with you.

Juntos avanzamos.

Project Team

COMMUNITY HEALING INITIATIVE PROGRAM, LATINO NETWORK

latnet.org/chi-overview

Latino Network, in partnership with the Multnomah County Department of Juvenile Justice, runs the Community Healing Initiative (CHI) and Early Intervention Community Healing Initiative (Early CHI) to prevent and reduce youth violence, decrease rates of juvenile justice involvement, and increase community safety. CHI engages our highest risk, adjudicated Latino youth on probation and parole to set and pursue positive life goals and to avoid future incarceration.



CRISIS RESPONSE TEAM, POLICE BUREAU CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON

portlandoregon.gov/police/72124

The Mission of the Portland Police Bureau's Crisis Response Team is to intervene in traumatic situations which impact individuals, families, and the community at large. The Crisis Response Team responds to incidents in an effort to enhance community livability and reduce the threat of violence and the fear of crime. This is achieved through crisis counseling, emotional and bereavement support, and improved communication among all groups who are affected by such incidents.

** While Police Bureau staff advised and was involved in many aspects of this project and research, the Bureau did not ultimately take a formal position in endorsing this report.*

Healing Hurt People, POIC

portlandoic.org/resources

The HHP program serves individuals of color, ages 10 to 35 years, who have experienced intentional trauma such as gunshot or stab wounds. HHP Portland employs a trauma-informed approach, which takes into account the adversity clients have experienced over their lives, and recognizes that addressing this trauma is critical to breaking the cycle of violence. The program was originally launched in 2013 through Cascadia Behavioral Healthcare, and it transitioned to POIC as a service partner with Legacy Emanuel Hospital in 2018.



OFFICE OF YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON

portlandonline.com/safeyouth



The Office of Youth Violence Prevention (OYVP) was created in 2006. It reflects priorities identified by City Council to build a more family-friendly city and increase public safety, and reflects the emphasis on attacking the root causes of problems in neighborhoods, rather than simply focusing on policing efforts. OYVP is staffed by a director and policy manager who coordinate resource services, administer grant funding to private non-profit organizations, and facilitate and join community problem-solving.

PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFETY & JUSTICE

safetyandjustice.org



**PARTNERSHIP FOR
SAFETY & JUSTICE**

Partnership for Safety & Justice is Oregon's leading public safety and criminal justice reform organization.

Our mission is to transform society's response to crime through innovative solutions that ensure accountability, equity, and healing. We advance reforms that promote social and racial equity; reduce levels of incarceration and criminalization; and better address the needs of crime survivors, people convicted of crime, and the families of both.

RED LODGE TRANSITION SERVICES

redlodgetransition.org



Red Lodge Transition Services is a non-profit grassroots organization supported by volunteers who have experience working with men and women in prison. Our primary objective is to assist Native men and women who are ready to transition from prison, jail, and treatment back to community. Creating a realistic plan for transition can be very stressful! There are many obstacles and barriers each person, family and community must navigate through in order to be successful. Red Lodge Transition Services is working to identify barriers and help prepare people for successful re-entry.

VICTIM'S ASSISTANCE PROGRAM MULTNOMAH COUNTY DISTRICT ATTORNEY

www.mcda.us/index.php/protecting-victims-families



The primary goal of the Victim's Assistance Program is to make the criminal justice system more responsive to individual citizens, particularly to victims of crime. A primary concern of the District Attorney's Office is to ensure crime victims a meaningful role in the criminal and juvenile justice system and to accord them due dignity and respect. To this end it is the philosophy of the office that every effort be made to maximize victim involvement at every possible stage of a criminal case. The office is committed to full implementation of Victims Rights as embodied in Oregon law.

Executive Summary

Most crime survivors want a public safety system that offers a pathway to accountability for harm, support for healing, and a process of restoration after experiencing violence.

While decades of research have informed programs and services that best meet crime survivors' needs, remarkably little attention has been paid to the experiences of survivors of color.

This report delves into one overarching question: What do survivors of color need in the aftermath of trauma?

The qualitative research collected here presents the lived experiences of 40 Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and multiracial survivors. While participants' experiences are as diverse as the people themselves, their voices converged over shared themes of invisibility, strength, distress, resilience, unhealed trauma, and determination.

The data pointed to four findings.

Finding #1: Most survivors of color do not report crimes.

The vast majority of survivors interviewed in our study did not report the crime or crimes they experienced, mostly out of fear that they'd be disbelieved, blamed, ignored, or harmed further by police. And while generations of survivors of color have turned within their close-in networks for safety and healing, broader community-based support is limited.

Consequently, crime survivors of color are less likely to experience healing and resolution that could come with survivor programs and services. to experience healing and resolution that could come with survivor programs and services.



Finding #2: Most survivors of color do not have access to opportunities to heal.

Few survivors of color felt supported by the public safety system in the aftermath of a violent incident.

Most received no information on how to navigate the criminal justice system or how to access trauma support; when help was offered to survivors, it was often culturally inaccessible.

Finding #3: The criminal justice system prioritizes prosecution and incarceration over the needs of survivors.

Survivors of color expressed that their needs were generally not met by the criminal justice system. Survivors wanted accountability, justice, and safety, but many felt that the criminal justice system's means of achieving these were inadequate, narrow, and sometimes even at odds with what they would have liked. With the system's strictly punitive focus on prosecution and incarceration, it offers no options for people to get on the path they need to heal.

Finding #4: Many survivors of color do not identify as victims.

Survivors of color, particularly men, found it difficult to acknowledge that they have been a victim and need help to heal. Survivors attributed this to a range of factors: racial bias in the criminal justice system that assumes men of color are potential perpetrators; the false binary that a person can either have committed a crime or been a victim, but not both; and a culture of masculinity that socializes men to think that being a victim or needing help is a sign of weakness.

This range of factors and traumas notwithstanding, crime survivors of color expressed what was missing from our current public safety approach and how we can improve services to achieve better outcomes.

Recommendation #1: Elevate restorative practices that are responsive to and driven by people impacted by harm.

City, county, and state governments and funding organizations need to invest in community-driven restorative processes. Survivors should have the option of choosing a restorative process, not just be given the false choice of incarceration or not accounting for harm at all.



Recommendation #2: Substantially increase funding for new and existing community-based and culturally specific healing services.

Criminal justice systems should shrink the use of prosecution and meaningfully invest in community-based and culturally specific services for people who have experienced harm and violence. These services should be readily available and not depend on a survivor's willingness to prosecute the harm or otherwise cooperate with law enforcement.

Recommendation #3: Identify and address historical trauma to Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people and communities as well as other people and communities of color in Oregon.

The state needs to conduct its own truth and reconciliation process to identify and address the harms of historical trauma to people and communities of color in Oregon. The process must be driven and informed by Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people, as well as other people of color.



Recommendation #4: Improve public safety and other agencies' capacity to serve people who have experienced trauma and survived violence.

The state should require training in culturally specific and healing centered approaches for law enforcement and other relevant agency staff who interact with people who have experienced trauma or been harmed by violence, and measured in changed outcomes for survivors.

Part Three of this report outlines different actions that all of us can take to advance the changes we need.

Whether as a community member, advocate, direct service provider, public safety professional, or elected official, we all have an important role in creating and supporting better outcomes for Black, Indigenous, Latinx, and other survivors of color in our communities.

Together we can use the resources and power we have to meaningfully transform our response to violence — one rooted in humanity, equity, accountability, and healing.

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Introduction

The year 2020 has brought unfathomable changes to our lives and communities, which were not initially accounted for in the creation of this report. From a global pandemic to the police murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, and far too many others, we have been called to reckon with the systemic racism and visceral inequality so deeply rooted in our country. But in the face of this stark reality, there is also a truth that shines so abundantly clear — that transformative change is possible. In a narrow window of time, we are already seeing these changes take form. New language is emerging, new leaders are developing alongside leaders who have been organizing for generations, and a new world is taking shape. It's these monumental shifts that shake us by the shoulders with a powerful reminder — that relationship, essential and inescapable, lives and breathes new life into all aspects of healing.

The power of relationship is woven into every aspect of this work. And while we anticipated releasing this report a year earlier, we are clear that it has never been more relevant or necessary than now.

As we reflect on this historical moment, we release this report in honor of the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color whose lives have been lost to systemic racism and violence. May the light of their truth and song of their story carry us to what is possible.

Decades into research, advocacy, and coordinated support for crime survivors, remarkably little attention has been paid to the experiences of survivors of color. As has come into sharper clarity during the Black Lives Matter movement, Black, Indigenous, and Latinx communities have not been historically centered in public safety systems' commitment to protection and service.

In the existing body of research on survivors, there is very little that disaggregates data on race and even less that delves into specific communities of color. With the hope of shifting focus toward the experiences of the people and communities most harmed and least helped by our criminal justice system, one question set this report into motion: What do survivors of color need after experiencing violence?

Partnership for Safety & Justice (PSJ) is a small nonprofit policy and advocacy organization that couldn't answer this question alone. What PSJ could do, however, is organize a team of incredible partners, build community, dive into the deep end, and find solutions.

As a committee with members from diverse organizations, we brought deep relationships and experiences to engaging survivors of color in conversation about their experiences. Through Red Lodge Transitions, we interviewed Native American women at the Coffee Creek Correctional Facility; Latino Network engaged Latina women survivors; with the City of Portland's Office of Violence Prevention, we talked with African American women survivors; and together we identified men of color who have survived violence and are now working to create solutions.

Between 2017 and 2018, we interviewed 40 Black, Indigenous, and Latinx survivors who have experienced serious crime or violence. The crimes included burglary, assault, attempted murder, sexual violence, murder of a family member or more than one of these experiences.

Participants ranged in age from 25 to 73 years old; 17 identified as male and 23 identified as female. No participants identified as transgender or nonbinary. All of the participants were residing in the greater Portland metropolitan region in Multnomah, Washington, and Clackamas Counties; however, some of the stories that were shared referred to events that happened outside of this region.

We used written questionnaires, individual interviews, and focus group sessions to gather qualitative data on a core set of questions:

- What do survivors of color need in the aftermath of trauma?
- What supports and/or prevents survivors of color from accessing the public safety and criminal justice systems?
- How does the criminal justice system interact with communities of color, and what are the impacts of those contacts?

Through these monthslong conversations, participants shared profound stories of pain and power, loss and growth, despair and healing. We talked with mothers who lost their children to violence; fathers who were conditioned to accept trauma as a common fact of life, much like their fathers; and people who had survived physical abuse at the hands of loved ones, law enforcement, or a nameless stranger who has never been held accountable.

We also heard stories of incredible compassion and healing and inspiring visions of what communities need to heal and thrive.

This report is not a comprehensive representation of all crime survivors of color; perspectives of survivors are as broad and diverse as the number of people harmed by crime. Rather, it presents a snapshot of the lived experiences of 40 Black, Native, Latinx, and multiracial survivors who were willing to share their stories. Their voices and experiences converged over shared themes of invisibility, strength, distress, resilience, unhealed trauma, and determination.

The voices in this report need to be heard now more than ever, and yet this study is only a starting point that barely scratches the surface. It reimagines a public safety system that heals rather than deepens the trauma of survivors with a vision for change and a call to action that's also being put forth by community leaders who are emerging from this moment.

Because by meeting the needs of survivors of color, we can build a system that ensures healing for all of Oregon's communities.

A Values-Based Approach

The development, delivery, and determinations of this study were guided by our commitment to a number of fundamental values: that our work be culturally specific; centered in healing; relational; and accessible, flexible, and adaptable.

Culturally specific. Focus groups and interviews were conducted in languages fluent to participants, delivered by facilitators from their community, and held within their community.

Centered in healing. A culturally specific licensed mental health provider or direct service provider was available to all participants before, during, and directly after each interview and focus group. Participants maintained control of their anonymity, their story, and whether their experiences would be shared.

Relational. Participants were identified by Advisory Committee members who were familiar with the community and who had knowledge of who might personally value participating in the study. Trust was built through multiple interactions prior to participation, through transparency and honoring the whole person.

Accessible, flexible, and adaptable. Project staff introduced community members to the goals and intentions of the study, giving potential participants an opportunity to fully understand the process and have all their questions answered.

Focus groups and interviews were held in locations that were chosen as places that would be familiar and accessible to participants. Culturally specific child care was available, and participants received compensation for their travel and time. Survivors participated in either a focus group or a one-on-one interview, depending on their unique circumstances. Facilitators sometimes rephrased questions so that everyone in the room could understand and contribute to the discussion.

For participants who were incarcerated, the process was adapted to ensure its integrity while also adhering to facility regulations and preserving participants' privacy, confidentiality, and protection.

A note on the use of survivor versus victim

Victim is the word most predominantly used within our criminal justice system, but service providers who work with people who've experienced violence have largely abandoned it. Victim positions people as essentially stuck in an event or events that hurt them, and it falsely suggests that the experience of being harmed is unchangeable.

But people who have experienced harm recognize that harm and healing happen on a continuum, and the word survivor better describes the complex experiences along that process. For these reasons, and to honor the wishes of those who shared their stories, we use the word survivor.



PART 1.

FINDINGS

How we fail to meet the needs of survivors of color

The public safety system is intended, in part, to offer crime survivors a pathway to accountability for harm, support for healing, and a process of restoration after surviving crime and violence. However, the current system's response to harm invests heavily in policing and incarceration. This approach has resulted in deep and profound racial disparities in the public safety and criminal justice systems and fails to adequately provide support services for crime survivors.

Crime survivors' experiences are as diverse as the people themselves. The survivors of color who participated in our study described situations that were complex and filled with nuanced feelings about law enforcement, the criminal justice process, and the public safety system as a whole. Reporting crimes to law enforcement and seemingly insurmountable barriers to healing were the two topics that generated the most discussion and exposed a collective sense of despair, disbelief, and distrust.

This section highlights and explores the barriers to reporting harm, the consequences to survivors and families of not reporting, and the roadblocks to healing.

FINDING #1

Most survivors of color do not report crimes.

In the immediate aftermath of crime or violence, the most urgent need generally centers around personal safety. This can include finding a safer place to stay, receiving physical or mental health care, or reaching out to trustworthy people to talk to for a sense of grounding. For some people, it's important to report the crime to law enforcement and engage a formal

response to the harm they've experienced. A survivor might report a violent incident to seek protection, to access services, to seek justice, to receive compensation, to ensure that others won't be harmed, or to find a sense of healing.

Yet many survivors of crime don't report to law enforcement. In fact, the majority of crimes are never reported to police. In 2017, the United States Bureau of Justice Statistics (BJS) found that 57% of violent crimes tracked by BJS were not reported to police.¹

Our interviews with survivors of color painted an even starker picture.

Among the 40 crime survivors interviewed in our study, 75% said they did not report the crime.

This gap prompted us to ask why. What are the barriers that prevent survivors of color in Oregon from reporting? Are there dynamics that need to be better understood so that we can begin to bridge the gaps in serving survivors of color? What are the impacts of not reporting?

While the reasons for not reporting to the public safety system are complex and varied, two predominant and distinct barriers emerged in our interviews: (1) racial bias and other negative past experiences with law enforcement and in the criminal justice system and (2) fear of family separation.

Racial bias and other negative past experiences with law enforcement and the criminal justice system

After surviving trauma, people often feel overwhelmingly vulnerable, and the majority of survivors we spoke with said that the public safety system often deepened this sense of powerlessness.

Survivors pointed to having personally experienced interactions with law enforcement that were rife with everything from ambivalence to hostility to racism and even violence. Set against a backdrop of personal trauma, as well as trauma experienced by generations of family members before them, these negative past experiences made our respondents doubtful that the police would be a source of safety.

A handful of stories did reflect positive and neutral experiences about police and criminal justice system responses. For the majority of survivors, however, the focus was on the risks, vulnerability, and harm that Black and brown survivors experience when calling the police after a violent incident.

“

It's like they don't see us. They don't believe you or give us help. You don't feel protected. You feel really horrible. You don't really feel like you can move ahead, because you don't even have the support of the police.

Feelings of invisibility and neglect were widespread in our interviews, which parallel national trends. In a recent national survey about trust in law enforcement, only 36% of Black Americans say they trust their local police very much compared to 77% of white Americans.²

Survivors also had a lot of mistrust of individual police officers as well as of the broader criminal justice system, including prosecutors, courts, and corrections. Among crime survivors of color in our study who did seek help and support from the public safety system, many spoke about how the justice system did not come through on their promises of a safer community.

“My only fear of calling the police is, Are you guys going to respond fast enough? Because let’s keep it real: We all know there are certain parts of town you can call the police 100 times, and they might not never show up. Call from another side of town, and they got half the damn squad there. So, it kind of makes me leery of calling them.”



There were several similar stories of people feeling betrayed by a system that never found the responsible person, never delivered on justice, or never appeared to care about the healing and recovery that the survivors sought and so desperately needed.

“It’s coming up on three years for me. I haven’t got no justice. I haven’t got nothing. About a year after my son was killed, I got a call from the police department to tell me that the detective who was working on my case was retiring, and pretty much said that I’m on my own. This will be my third year with no answers, and I still don’t have a son.”

Worse still, a number of crime survivors talked about experiencing violence at the hands of police. Many survivors of color pointed to police abuses that have reinforced the belief that, not only are police officers not to be trusted to help, but law enforcement might cause more harm.

“We been beat up several times by the police. So, the whole reporting thing is a no-no. We just kinda report to ourselves.”

This experience mirrors national data. According to a recent survey, 63% of African Americans and 51% of Latinx people responded that they were worried that they or a family member will be a victim of deadly police force, while only 21% of white people shared that fear.³

“THE REAL FEAR OF WHEN YOU HEAR SIRENS IS KNOWING WHERE MY KIDS ARE AT, BECAUSE I HAVE CONCERNS ABOUT LAW ENFORCEMENT. I GREW UP NOT HAVING TO LEARN WHERE TO PLACE MY HANDS WHEN I WAS LEARNING TO DRIVE, AND YET THAT’S WHAT I’VE HAD TO TEACH MY BOYS: YOU IMMEDIATELY PUT YOUR HANDS HERE. KNOW WHERE YOUR WALLET IS. HERE’S WHERE THE REGISTRATION IS. HERE’S WHERE THE INSURANCE IS. I DIDN’T HAVE THAT. AND SO SIRENS: I’M WONDERING WHERE [MY BOYS] ARE WHEN I HEAR SIRENS.”

None of this is news to Black and brown communities. When such incidents occur repeatedly to one’s friends, family, and community for generations, mistrust foment. This is particularly true when the harm is caused by people who are supposed to be supporting and protecting communities.

Police misconduct, brutality, and violence are generations-long experiences in many African American, Indigenous, and Latinx communities. And with the growth of the Black Lives Matter movement following the killings of George Floyd, Ahmaud Arbery, and Breonna Taylor, white communities are increasingly aware of how threatening to and neglectful of communities of color law enforcement can be.



Fear of family separation

Fear of family separation is generations long. America's horrors of genocide, slavery, forced relocation, and removal of children provide the historical context to which many people of color experience today's criminal justice system.

In our conversations with survivors of color, a number of people personally experienced forced family separation inflicted by the criminal justice system that caused deep, intergenerational wounds.

This consuming fear of family separation creates a potent reporting barrier for people of color, particularly among survivors who are immigrants without documentation and people who had previous involvement with the criminal justice system.

For survivors without documentation or citizenship, or who had family members without documents, reporting came with increased risks from Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE), including deportation, family separation, and other unknown potential consequences.⁴

For many, those fears eliminated the option of seeking safety from trauma or violence.



My stepfather — he was physically abusing my mother. She never once thought about calling the police. First of all, she didn't have the necessary paperwork, so we were always advised about immigration for myself and a lot of Latino families. That's always been the same thing: that immigration is going to separate your family, break off, and who knows where you are going to end up. At the time, I was like 10, 12 years old, so I could go to an orphanage or a foster home. I didn't know what a foster home was. So, my mom always said, "Don't call the cops. Don't call the police."

The choice to report a crime is complicated enough for an adult, but here a young boy is forced into a decision saddled by fear — balancing his mother’s personal safety, keeping his family together, and avoiding the foster care system — all without fully understanding the consequences of any of those choices.

Family separation is an acute threat for undocumented survivors, but it’s similarly experienced by other survivors as well. If a survivor has a previous conviction or record, a police interaction — even as a survivor — may result in being physically removed from the family or losing children to the foster care system.

“I didn’t call the police when my own domestic violence was happening because, if you are going through diversion and you have police contact, that can be considered a bench probation violation. If I called the police, instead of listening to me, I felt that the first thing that they would see is ‘Probation’, rather than what I was actually going through. I don’t want my family separated. I didn’t want my kids to be in the system. And I didn’t want to go to jail for reporting. I just felt like I wouldn’t be heard.”

Fearful that she “wouldn’t be heard” by law enforcement, this survivor determined that it was a better choice for herself and her children to stay in her abusive situation. The threat was true for children, too. Another woman, who was raised “in the system” and in and out of group homes, learned to keep secret any situation, no matter how threatening.

“

I KIND OF GREW UP NOT TALKING ABOUT THINGS THAT HAPPEN AT HOME. WHAT HAPPENS AT HOME STAYS AT HOME. YOU DON’T TALK ABOUT IT TO OTHER PEOPLE, BECAUSE WE CAN GET TAKEN AWAY. OR DAD OR MOM OR SOMEBODY COULD GO TO JAIL, AND JAIL’S NOT A GOOD THING. THAT WOULD LEAD US INTO GOING TO THE GROUP HOME OR SOMETHING LIKE THAT, AND WE DIDN’T WANT TO BE THERE REGARDLESS OF WHAT WE WERE GOING THROUGH.

“We need spaces like this to be heard. When somebody hears you, little by little, you begin to heal.”

Deep racial disparities exist at every stage of the criminal justice system. Black, Latinx, and Indigenous people are disproportionately policed, charged, convicted, and sentenced over whites both nationally⁵⁶⁷ and locally.⁸

Because of these racial inequities, survivors of color are more likely to be justice-involved than white survivors. Given the risks of getting cycled back into the criminal justice system, and especially when children are involved, survivors with a previous conviction can be reluctant to call the police.

Our criminal justice system isn't designed to support crime survivors when they have been justice-involved. Instead, Oregon Statute defines a false binary between "victims" and "criminal defendants" that makes it impossible for some survivors to find support in our criminal justice system. The law states:

**“In no event shall the criminal defendant be considered a victim.”
(ORS 131.007)**

Etched in law, this exclusionary language sets up a tenet that's rooted in the court system and permeates throughout our public safety system. The principle profoundly influences policing practices, giving law enforcement little room to recognize that someone who has been responsible for harm in the past can be vulnerable to harm, too — and that the person needs help.

Impacts of not reporting

Whether due to fear of family separation, negative past experiences with law enforcement, or racial bias in the criminal justice system, many survivors of color won't report a crime. They will instead choose to deal with personal harm and violence by themselves, within their family, or within community.

Emotional consequences of not reporting can be particularly deep for survivors and loved ones. In a number of accounts, survivors talked about

the personal toll that not reporting had on them individually.

One man talked about how confused he felt as a 16-year-old boy when he witnessed alarming behavior by his father and kept silent about it. He ended up feeling profound regret and anxiety about the decision to stay quiet.



MY DAD CALLED ME AND MY BROTHER LOOKING FOR THE GUN. AND I COME TO FIND OUT LATER, HE SEXUALLY ASSAULTED AND TRIED TO KILL HIS WIFE. AND ALL I FELT WAS THAT, IF I HAD REPORTED THAT OR MAYBE JUST TOLD MY GRANDMA OR MY MOM OR SOMEONE, MAYBE SOMETHING WOULD HAVE HAPPENED DIFFERENTLY.

Mistrust of law enforcement and lack of reporting can also complicate the cases of crime survivors who are seeking justice through the system. In the following story, a man feels a deep and ongoing impact after nearly a decade of surviving violence as a child without help.

“He was an abusive father. He used to beat the shit out of us — out of me and my mom — consistently for 9 years. And so she came all the way to Oregon just to get away from that cat. Something about the violence that happened in the household, something about that environment, helped me on the street when it came to surviving. That’s that dead feeling.”

“That dead feeling” is not uncommon for survivors who live through yearslong, chronic trauma that goes

unseen and unhealed, but it’s a consequence that can be prevented or lessened with timely support for survivors and families.

When people who witness violence don’t report, it can also prevent survivors’ healing and resolution through the justice system. While this mother is horrified by the frequency of officer-involved killings of Black people — sentiments expressed by most people in our interviews — there is also enormous frustration and anger at the community’s silence as she continues to grieve the loss of her son who has been dead for six years. choice of incarceration or not accounting for harm at all.

“Everybody wants to blame the police, but people saw it, and they won’t talk. The police can only do so much. I get it, I love this Black Lives Matter, and I hear you people talking about police killing our people, but I’m still mad about us killing our people. The Portland Police didn’t kill my child, you know. I think we as a community have gotten so relaxed about reporting.”

Irrespective of why people may not report a crime, the tolls of not reporting are complex and deep. Mistrust of police officers and the criminal justice system leaves many survivors of color feeling that the public safety system is unavailable to them and the consequences are borne personally, in families, and throughout communities.

Low reporting rates also come with adverse consequences on communities. Incomplete or less accurate data gets in the way of fully understanding dynamics related to crime and improving public safety outcomes.

On a more individual level, not reporting can also mean that crime survivors lose access to fundamental and basic services. Those include mental health care, individualized safety planning, financial reimbursement for medical expenses, and burial costs. In some cases, services can also include lifesaving help like emergency housing relocation and witness protection programs.

One exception is the relative prevalence of community-based programs that serve survivors of domestic or sexual violence, whether or not they report. Those services sometimes include mental health, emergency housing, and other basic resources. But such organizations are underfunded, scarce in many parts of the state, and rarely offer culturally specific services outside of urban areas.

Without reporting, survivors also can't receive systems support from system-based survivor advocates housed in district attorney's offices. This is a significant loss, since these system-based advocates are among the most knowledgeable about how the criminal justice system can support survivors.

When people can't report what happened to them, it affects them, their family, and their community in complex and overlapping ways. The result is that survivors and families of color have less access to the protections and services that would otherwise be available — a gap that causes more harm and distress to a community that's already deeply traumatized from acute or chronic violent incidents.



FINDING #2

Most survivors of color do not have access to opportunities to heal.

The need to heal — to restore one’s sense of safety and self — is critical to the person who has been harmed, and also to the health and strength of our families and communities. Without the opportunity to heal, survivors can continue to experience trauma personally, within families, and into future generations.

“When shit happens to you, it’s like normal. This is what happened to us. This is what happened to our parents. This is what happened to their parents. This is the way shit was set up for us.”

Survivors of color shared experiences of discrimination that included feeling invisible, lack of access to services, being disbelieved by law enforcement, or more commonly, being blamed for what happened to them. They described experiencing violence and racism at the hands of systems that are supposed to be supportive and protective.

When incidents like these happen repeatedly to one’s friends, family, and community across generations, there is increased mistrust, and survivors are less likely to seek critical help for trauma, crime, and violence.

Such unresolved trauma can lead to devastating outcomes.

The ability to access appropriate and relevant services and support after trauma is fundamental to most people’s healing process. The survivors we spoke with highlighted several key barriers to accessing healing through the system: (1) lack of information, help, and guidance and (2) lack of culturally appropriate resources.

Lack of information, help, and guidance

Following a violent incident, basic information is one of the most immediate and critical needs that a survivor has. They need information about trauma support services, information about the process, and information about what to expect from the criminal justice system.

These and other resources can provide enormous solace and comfort during tragedies, but participants largely indicated that they received shockingly minimal information of any sort.

Of the 35 people who responded to these questions in the written questionnaire,

86% reported that nobody informed them of help that was available to them at the time of the incident

80% reported that nobody informed them of help that was available to them after the incident

These numbers don't reflect the possibility that public safety officials gave some information or that district attorney advocates reached out immediately following a violent incident.

However, they do suggest that resources were not delivered in a way that survivors could understand and retain after a traumatic experience. During focus group discussions, too, participants shared how isolating it was to receive little information about what to expect emotionally and logistically.

“[When my daughter was attacked], it was very traumatic in the moment. I didn't know how or if she was going to pull through from this. And it sucks because it doesn't feel like people care about people of color.”

At this vulnerable time, a lack of access to information can be particularly distressing to crime survivors. A person's response to trauma often includes anxiety, confusion, and fear; basic information is vital in order to avoid exacerbating the harm, and language access is paramount. Even the perception that the people assigned to help you don't actually care about you just complicates what might be the worst moments of your life.

At the same time, people were hopeful. Survivors of color were often quite specific about what could have been helpful after the incident, particularly given how impactful it would have been on the path to recovery.

“

Hopefully in the future there can be more help for people who've been survivors of crime. We need information, somebody to come and talk to us, because in moments like that, we just don't know what to do.

Survivors of color talked frequently about this intersection of being both a survivor and a support person. For many survivors who have experienced trauma, people find that a part of recovery necessarily includes helping others.

“I WOULD LIKE TO KNOW MORE RIGHTS AS VICTIMS. IF THERE WAS A SPACE WE COULD GO TO LEARN [OR FOR] MORE SPECIFIC CLASSES TO GIVE MORE INFORMATION TO SURVIVORS, IT WOULD FEEL LIKE JUSTICE FOR EVERYBODY, BECAUSE IN THAT MOMENT, YOU'D BE ABLE TO HELP SOMEBODY ELSE.”

This was a theme that came up several times in our conversations, particularly among survivors who were further along in their process of healing. Survivors of color described a built-in network of potential resources within racial and cultural communities, and they wanted to be connected to them.

Such settings can also create an inherent opportunity to provide pathways for survivors to heal trauma while also appropriately responding to the stress of survivors in their most vulnerable moments.

Lack of culturally specific responses

Among the survivors we spoke with who did seek services, many were apprehensive about the programs and assistance that were available to them. Concerns ranged from how poorly they were served to how inaccessibly the system is structured, leaving many survivors doubting whether the public safety system would yield any positive outcomes.

“They’ll help the immediate family, will help you bury them, but as soon as you close that door and bury that person, all the services are gone.”

Perhaps the most shared belief among survivors in our study is that culturally specific approaches and services are the most effective way to respond to, understand, and meet people’s needs. When life is upended and unrecognizable, people need someone who looks like them, sounds like them, and understands their experience in ways they won’t need to explain.

Some strides are being made in systems offering culturally specific programs. More and more, agencies are examining how to evolve their programs in order to reduce disparities, increase access, and improve outcomes.

While the reasons for not reporting to the public safety system are complex and varied, two predominant and distinct barriers emerged in our

interviews: (1) racial bias and other negative past experiences with law enforcement and in the criminal justice system and (2) fear of family separation.

For example, within most local departments in the Portland Metro area, there exist equity recommendations⁹, commitments¹⁰, and committees¹¹ with culturally specific values that have begun to guide their services. Survivors of color have seen little impact so far, however. Past traumatic experiences continue to reverberate, and continued culturally insensitive responses compound the suffering.

“WHEN MY COUSIN GOT SHOT, I REMEMBER A WHITE WOMAN COMING TO THE DOOR AND WAS TRYING TO GIVE US SERVICES, BUT MY AUNT IMMEDIATELY SHOOED HER AWAY AND YELLED AT HER. I THINK IT WOULD HAVE BEEN MUCH SMOOTHER IF A BLACK WOMAN WOULD HAVE COME TO HER AND OFFERED THE SAME SERVICES. JUST GIVE [MY AUNT] SOMETHING TO RELATE TO. THERE WAS JUST SUCH RACIAL TENSION THAT IT WAS HARD FOR ANYBODY WHO WAS WHITE TO TRY AND SAVE A BLACK FAMILY.”

This sentiment was common. In our interviews, the vast majority of survivors longed for a service provider that reflected survivors’ culture, language, and identity. In this story above, a mother had lost her boy, and in the depth of her trauma and vulnerability, the public safety system failed to help get her and her family on a path toward healing.

For children who were experiencing long-term suffering, there was little culturally specific help for them either, as described by this survivor reflecting on his childhood.



Psychologists, most of them are white, so they're not going to understand you if you're saying stuff about your day-to-day nightmare. I remember one time in school, I was supposed to go to the counselor's [office] to tell her that everything was fine, because if I told her what really was going on, they'd put me on medication. That kind of stuff happens all the time if we don't have access to someone that really understands what's going on. There really isn't any access for Black and brown people out here.

In sharing this story, the survivor concludes that “there really isn't any access for Black and brown people,” referring to the disparity that continues today, with an ongoing, distressing need for culturally specific resources that are essential for survivors of color to recover and heal.

Language is another key barrier to accessing services and healing.

“You don't know what's going to happen, because I don't speak English. There are many barriers to living here, so I don't even know what I'm reading, and I feel like people don't see me because of it.”

After her child was violently attacked, this mother desperately tried to pursue all the options that were available to her family. But as a Spanish-speaker, she found herself without access to the information and materials that she and her daughter needed.

So much of the trauma of this moment could have been supported with some basic materials, particularly for native Spanish-language speakers who make up nearly 10% of Oregon's population.¹²

Information is a concrete resource that can be delivered, and such help can have an enormous impact immediately following trauma. Survivors' healing is complex, however, and after a violent incident, people also need time to restore physically, emotionally, psychologically, financially, socially, and spiritually.

“I feel like my spirituality — my native beliefs — when I'm at ceremonies, it's really a relief, because I experience a lot of different crazy emotions all day long. People spark things in you or trigger things, and so when I'm in ceremony, it's a relief.”

For these avenues to be available for survivors of color who seek this help, programs are most effective when they are local and delivered by someone of their own cultural origin.

“We have this little community. We get together, and maybe we’ll talk about me. And someone else is able to talk to me about them. We get to just sit there and talk back and forth and not compare, but support.”

And when people did receive the culturally specific, community-based services, those resources helped change lives.

“We need spaces like this to be heard. When somebody hears you, little by little, you begin to heal. This doesn’t hurt as much. Until recently, I would just sit around my house and cry and was afraid to talk about things. I was always crying. It feels good to be heard by somebody.”

This testimonial that “little by little, you begin to heal” points to a restoration process that is uniquely accessible in a culturally specific setting.

“I GOT A LOT OF HELP FROM PROGRAMA HISPANO. THAT PROGRAM HELPED ME A LOT. THEY GOT ME A LAWYER WITHOUT CHARGING ME, AND I GAINED CUSTODY OF MY KIDS. I OWE THEM MY LIFE FOR THAT.”

All these survivors’ experiences share the common theme of an already distressing moment that’s made worse by public safety responses that were entirely inappropriate, irrelevant, and/or inaccessible.

Culturally specific, financially accessible, and community-based services are critical for survivors of color to heal and rebuild lives after trauma.



FINDING #3

The criminal justice system prioritizes prosecution and incarceration over the needs of survivors.

Among survivors of color, there was a consistent and robust call for a public safety response that would direct services to help people heal. Assistance could include programs related to mental health resources, parenting classes, housing options, drug treatment access, and other public safety services.

When people do receive appropriate resources at the right time, the outcomes can be powerful and inspiring for survivors, their family, and the community.

“The classes help me parent, and I want to keep learning how to be a parent for my kids. How to raise them as young adults or adolescents. Why wait until we have problems or when something bad is going on for the family like verbal abuse, physical abuse, sexual abuse? We’ve all suffered a lot, and we don’t want to keep perpetrating the hurt that happened to us.”

This mom touted the value of how such services would allow her to raise her children with the tools they need to thrive and succeed as adults. And her insight points to a guiding principle that’s fundamental to public health and public safety approaches: Timely healing services work, and our public safety system should include greater investments in these survivor-centered responses.

For many survivors, there was a distinction between how they defined justice versus how the criminal justice system perceives justice.

“PART OF MY JUSTICE IS TO HAVE PEACE OF MIND. I KNOW WHERE MY SON IS. MY SON’S IN HEAVEN, AND I HAVE MADE PEACE WITH THAT. I KNOW WHERE HE IS, AND I CAN NEVER BRING HIM BACK HERE. THAT’S IT. THAT’S IT. THAT IS THE FINALITY, SO I HAVE BREATH IN MY BODY, AND I MUST LEARN HOW TO LIVE OUT EACH DAY WITH PURPOSE. I’M LOOKING AT THE WORD JUSTICE: AM I LOOKING FOR THE GAVEL TO COME DOWN? BECAUSE THEN WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THAT? MY SON IS STILL NOT HERE.”

This sense of futility was threaded throughout the experiences of many survivors of color. A few delved deeply into the harms caused by our culture’s over-emphasis on incarceration.

As a consequence of using prison as our default response to violence, another harm takes shape: Locking people away and discarding them in that way means that we abandon hope for that person's treatment and restoration. And that makes our communities less safe.

“I don't think jail has ever been the answer, because that's just lighting a fire under somebody's ass who is already angry, who is already dealing with issues. Jail isn't going to make it any better.”

According to the United States Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion¹³, analyses of justice involved communities suggest that approaches such as recidivism prevention services can be particularly impactful.

Prevention approaches include delivering services to people with mental health diagnoses, people who are addicted to drugs, people who have experienced sexual or physical abuse, and people who were raised by justice-involved parents, among other social and health factors.

“I JUST WISH THAT THE ABUSER IN MY CASE COULD'VE GOTTEN SOME HELP. THIS WAS OVER 20-SOMETHING YEARS AGO, AND I JUST WANTED TO CONFRONT HIM FOR WHAT HE DID. HE CHANGED MY LIFE. HE HURT ME, AND HE WAS LIKE, 'GIRL, I DIDN'T DO NOTHING TO YOU.' SO HE'S STILL IN DENIAL TO THIS DAY. I JUST WISH THAT HE COULD'VE BEEN CONFRONTED BACK THEN, AND HE COULD'VE GOT THE HELP HE NEEDED.”

Conversely, with such public safety services entirely unavailable, survivors of color felt it was futile to expect a positive outcome without the resources that can direct someone to succeed.



“How are you going to educate somebody? If you don’t have anger management [classes], if you don’t have domestic violence or behavioral issues or mental health services, if those aren’t available to the people who are doing the harm?”

Survivors talked at length about a desire to look more closely at the root causes of the harm. They felt that unless the responsible person got the help they needed, there would remain the possibility that the person could hurt someone else in the future.

“The guy that killed my son, immediately afterwards he regretted it. I have to live with the lifelong pain of my son being gone, and my grandkids have to live without having their father, but this boy, he regretted it. But I would love to sit down and talk to him, and ask, Why? Why do you guys keep doing this?”

Indeed, for many survivors of color, concepts of justice include early intervention and treatment strategies. These recommendations are logical when we look at the association between justice involvement and past trauma.

“That’s a part of our justice system that’s really fucked up, because when somebody commits a crime, they just want to give them time, and they talk about them being institutionalized. Then they want to throw them all in the halfway house and expect for them to be able to get normalized lives to come back into society. But then you have repeat offenders, because in the beginning, you guys never tried to figure out why he did it from the gate. You never gave them no help from the first time. Yes, you might have hurt some people’s family, but how can you move forward? How can you get past what you’ve done? They need to try to help.”

Studies have shown that most people who have been incarcerated also have a history of surviving victimization, including disproportionately high rates of abuse, neglect, and other adverse childhood experiences (ACEs).

56%

OF MEN WHO ARE INCARCERATED
REPORT EXPERIENCING CHILDHOOD
PHYSICAL TRAUMA.¹⁴

OF INCARCERATED WOMEN REPORT
BEING SURVIVORS OF PHYSICAL
VIOLENCE OR ABUSE.¹⁵

98%

ACEs
adverse childhood
experiences

AND A HISTORY OF TRAUMA AS YOUTH
ARE AMONG THE LEADING DETERMINANTS
OF ADULT INCARCERATION.^{16 17}

This is not to discount some survivors' calls for punitive approaches to violence as well, including prison, jail, and community supervision. Survivors' opinions about public safety responses are diverse. For some, the only thing that will help them feel safe after violence is knowing that the person who hurt them will be restrained or supervised in some way, ideally in a way that's survivor-centered.

Aside from other approaches to accountability, however, most survivors also talked about the need for a more comprehensive response to crime that would also keep communities safer in the future. By addressing the root causes of crime and a person's, or even a community's trauma history in this broader approach, our criminal justice response is more likely to prevent future harm to people, families, and communities.

Imagine a community where the people responsible for protecting and serving it aren't just police. They're also peer mentors, violence interrupters, and other helpers who are a product of the community — people who personally understand the impacts of gentrification, relocation, and other collective traumas that give rise to violence.



FINDING #4

Many survivors of color do not identify as victims.

Another risk, threat, and barrier for survivors of color in the public safety system is that many do not identify as a victim. This was particularly true for men.

“I didn’t know until I got into recovery and I saw a therapist that I realized I suffered from PTSD. As a Black man, that’s a weakness. Being a man in general, you don’t deal with that.”

During our interviews, a number of survivors pointed to the racial bias in our public safety system that casts people of color as perpetrators rather than survivors. As a result, there’s little room for survivors of color to feel the vulnerability of crime victimization, and therefore there’s also little room to heal from it.

“I remember my dad getting beat up, and we didn’t see it as him being a victim. We didn’t call the police. The only time I felt like a victim was at the hands of the police when they fuckin with you, and when they pull you over.”

When survivors of color are seen by police officers as a potential offender, it makes sense that people within the community wouldn’t call the police for help. And it’s an assumption that has devastating impacts on entire communities.

It’s another example of the dangerous and misguided “criminal defendant” versus “victim” binary that can lead law enforcement to assume that someone needs to be arrested. The precept creates a persistent threat among people who may or may not have previously been justice involved, and it leaves survivors of color and their children without critical access to the protections needed to be safe.

Women appeared somewhat more likely to want treatment and care, and they talked about seeking services, although it was largely in reference to young family members who were in their care. Among the mothers and grandmothers in the group, women frequently spoke about the barrier of their sons and grandsons rejecting support.



You have this panic all the time. It's post-traumatic stress syndrome, but we haven't dealt with being broken, and that's the part I need help with. My 20-year-old son, I can't even talk to him, and say, "Son, you need to talk to somebody." He's like, "No, mom. I'll be alright. I'm a man." But he's hurting all the while. He can't sleep.

This sentiment came up often: When there's a perceived social risk to acknowledging vulnerability, it can sometimes feel safer emotionally to defend against that sense of weakness.

"My 14-year grandson — I asked him yesterday, because we finally got a hold of a therapist — I said, 'I want you guys to go.' 'I don't need it, Grandma. I don't need it.' So, this man's mentality: 'I don't need it. I got it. I can handle it.' But they really can't. The little boy that was inside when it happened is still there."

From childhood into adulthood, many survivors of color don't identify as people who need support or treatment. After finally finding a therapist that is appropriate for the family, this boy was still reluctant to talk to anyone about his trauma.

For both women in the stories above, they struggled to find services that would help the young men in their families heal.



PART 2.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Recommendations for better outcomes for survivors of color

The 40 survivors of color who participated in this study shared their grief and vulnerability while also voicing optimism and vision.

Even in the depths of complex emotions, many survivors had the clarity to express what was missing from our current public safety approach and how to improve services that ensure better outcomes. From those conversations, which echoed the hundreds of other conversations we've had with clients over the years, the following recommendations emerged as priorities to achieve better outcomes for crime survivors of color:

1. Identify and address historical trauma to Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people as well as other communities of color in Oregon.
2. Substantially increase funding for new and existing community-based and culturally specific healing services.
3. Elevate restorative practices that are responsive to and driven by people impacted by harm.
4. Provide trauma education to public safety and other responders (such as hospitals and schools), and evaluate their engagement with survivors of violence.

These recommendations are vital and achievable. And while their implementation would be groundbreaking, the concepts are not new. These are models that communities of color have known about, have been advocating for, and in many cases have already implemented for generations.

Also embedded in this section are Community Spotlights — programs that reflect these recommendations. They are examples of how community-based organizations, local advocates, public safety professionals, lawmakers, and agencies can transform our response to crime locally, throughout Oregon, and across the nation.

RECOMMENDATION #1

Identify and address historical trauma to Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people as well as other communities of color.

Either through the Oregon Governor’s recently convened Racial Justice Council or another official entity, the state needs to conduct its own truth and reconciliation process to identify and address the harms of historical trauma to people and communities of color in Oregon. The process must be driven and informed by Black, Indigenous, and Latinx people, as well as other people of color.

Oregon’s original Constitution founded the state with a racist ban on free and enslaved African Americans, making Oregon the sole state in the nation to enter the union as a whites only state.^{18,19} Oregon’s history of systemic racism is further compounded by genocide, enslavement, lynching,^{20,21,22} and redlining.^{23,24}

This history of extreme racial injustice continues today with profound disparities seen at every stage of the criminal justice system.

Cycles of trauma affect survivors individually and as a family, leading to mistrust of the system and a belief that help and healing aren’t and never will be

available in communities of color. This belief leads many survivors to forgo seeking help when they need it most or to even identify as “victims” when they experience harm and violence.

Given Oregon’s history and the current climate of increased racial tension nationally,²⁵ it is time to identify and address the impacts of historical trauma in Oregon and to increase access to the healing that people of color need and deserve.

“When shit happens to you, it’s like normal. This is what happened to us. This is what happened to our parents. This is what happened to their parents. This is the way shit was set up for us.”



Red Lodge Transition Services





Culture is what drives every aspect of who we are: how we talk, how we dress, who we hang out with, the music we listen to, food, humor.

Culture is at the forefront of change.

Communities of color need autonomy and their own governance, because without community, you're not going to get people to buy into it. It creates more trauma to not have culturally responsive programming. At Red Lodge, we reduce and prevent incarceration among Native American people, primarily women. We do this by providing culturally specific care and focused programs led by Native Americans when women are released from jail, prison, or treatment.

We establish relationship and adult mentoring, community outreach, and public education. We have talking circles, sweat lodges, and other gatherings that connect people to their identity and their culture. We teach behavioral health and skills that they probably wouldn't be getting anywhere else. All the people we work with have PTSD. Most have been sexually assaulted and have experienced domestic violence. Then there's the trauma of assimilation that we had to evolve into.

No one from the outside is ever going to understand the trauma that this group has gone through. What that oppression was like. Those things are carried on, not only through the DNA but through oral history.

Being able to assist people with accessing resources is where we really shine with folks coming out of prison. Getting support in the first 72 hours is critical, because when people are coming out, helping to reassure them that they'll be okay, and reintroducing them to a Native community hugely reduces their likelihood of relapse. If we're able to work with someone and get them established in a job, maybe a trade union, we begin to raise people out of poverty. It makes a huge difference in their lives and the lives of their community, their children, and their elders. Then they become the mentors for their communities.

Doing this work is a personal and a spiritual commitment. There was a time in my life when I could have gone down the wrong road. But I had people in my life who never gave up on me. Compared to the physical abuse and neglect experienced by a lot of the women that we serve, I see myself as very fortunate and privileged to have a good, strong family.

Everybody needs to know who they are. Most people I meet in prison are searching for who they are. Once they figure that out, then you can start working on that trauma piece, but until then, you don't have a chance to move forward.

— TRISH JORDAN
CO-FOUNDER AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

RECOMMENDATION #2

Substantially increase funding for new and existing community-based and culturally specific healing services.

At the state and local level, the criminal justice system should end its overreliance on punishment as a response to crime, and it should instead meaningfully invest in community-based and culturally specific services for people who have experienced harm and violence. These services should be readily available and not depend on a survivor's willingness to participate in a prosecution or otherwise assist with law enforcement.

Existing services need additional support, and new programs must be created through substantial investments to create opportunities for survivors of color to heal. These services should be based in communities to create the greatest access to healing.

Our public safety system is currently structured so that the majority of crime survivor services are available only if survivors assist with criminal proceedings. For survivors who choose not to report a crime or comply with a prosecutor's demands, they are left without the benefit of basic resources the state affords to crime victims.

“It'd feel good to know that when you asked for help, that you wouldn't have to produce a police report. Many of us fear the police because they've harassed us. I didn't have a police report. I had a report from the hospital. I think that my voice should have value, maybe more than the police report, because sometimes you call, and they don't come instantly. I would like it if they didn't only ask for the police report. Our voice has the same value, if not more.”

Whether or not survivors choose to prosecute and report harm, community-based programs can offer a number of benefits including shared community, culture, and language. A culturally specific response is perhaps the most essential quality of an effective public safety response for crime survivors of color to ensure survivors receive information, support, and healing.

Trauma informed care or healing centered engagement

After experiencing violence, people want safety and healing services that are survivor-centered, community-based, culturally specific, adequately funded, and don't require police reporting or involvement.

Trauma informed care recognizes the impact of trauma and provides services that seek to create no additional harm.

Healing centered engagement is a strengths-based approach to care that seeks to identify what is “right” with a person in a way that gives them agency over their own healing process. It recognizes culture as central to a person's identity, and therefore also central to their healing.

It also acknowledges that trauma is more than an individual isolated experience. By identifying root causes and coexisting conditions that gave rise to the harm, it seeks to work from the place where trauma and healing are experienced collectively.





MOORE

Healing Hurt People

POIC IN PARTNERSHIP WITH LEGACY
EMANUEL MEDICAL CENTER



When those of us with lived experience can lead the way for those seeking help, it's a beautiful thing to watch fear and vulnerability turn into trust.

We're the messengers building that trust.

Healing Hurt People is a hospital-based violence intervention program that responds to the needs of Black and brown survivors who have been shot or stabbed or experienced some other community violence.

I was once there. I was that victim laying in that hospital bed reflecting on what happened to me. I know what it's like to be in that moment when you don't trust the staff or the hospital that displaced your community.

We bridge the gap between the hospital and the patient, and we provide support during that person's most vulnerable moments. A face that looks like them, that's bringing comfort and offering help for as long as they need it.

I go there and say, "How can I be here for you? What do you need in this moment?" That helps me feel like I can be part of the solution.

But we need more people involved. We have only two staff answering phones and going to the hospital 24/7. It can get pretty hectic, and it takes its toll on you.

We hit roadblocks because of lack of resources. When a person's house is the target of community violence, and they're afraid to go back home, we need resources to get them to a safe place. Otherwise people can lose faith or make choices out of fear, because their life is at stake.

I wish our state would invest in survivors. A lot of time, we treat the people I serve like they're the ones committing crimes, and we forget they're survivors. But they are survivors.

We need relationships with the city and with other hospitals. We need for officers and hospital staff to understand that these people are survivors. You have a job to do. But this is somebody's son, somebody's father, somebody's mother. And there are people out there who care about them, wondering what's going on with their family member. They're scared, and they're seeking help.

With more skin in the game, we can change the way we address trauma and do better by people who deserve healing.

— ROY MOORE
COORDINATOR AND OUTREACH WORKER

RECOMMENDATION #3

Elevate restorative practices that are responsive to and driven by people impacted by harm.

City, county, and state governments and funding organizations need to invest in community-driven restorative processes. There are as many definitions of justice and accountability as there are survivors of harm, and this requires a menu of options that's more expansive than prosecution or nothing at all. Survivors should have the option of choosing a restorative process. Choice itself marks the path toward healing when harm occurs.

While not everyone who participated in our focus groups was familiar with the idea of restorative justice, many of the participants described the need for restorative processes.

Restorative justice is a survivor-centered accountability process that is responsive to, and driven by, the needs of those impacted by harm and violence. It centers and prioritizes healing over prosecution.

Key components of restorative justice are:

- Survivors are supported and get their questions answered through truth-telling about the harm experienced and harm done.
- The person who has caused harm is allowed to take full responsibility for their actions with the support of community connections.
- Healing and reparations are available to the survivor, who shapes their own healing, and helps inform the accountability of the person who caused them harm.

Restorative justice is intended as a transformative experience that originated in communities and evolved into use within schools and criminal legal systems. These practices have value from the classroom to the parole board, but the true promise of restorative justice lies in the work done in community, outside of systems that have themselves caused historic trauma to communities of color.

“I want justice, but I really would like to hear those punks that killed my son tell me why. Just tell me why you shot him. I want to hear you say, ‘I’m sorry, Miss —. I’m so wrong.’ And I deserve that.”



LatinoNetwork



Community Healing Initiative

LATINO NETWORK



When it comes to dealing with trauma, it's everyone's responsibility to help heal each other.

Trauma is the root of everything that's going on. Families are coming here from other countries with trauma, and they're coming into an environment where they aren't accepted.

There's too little community infrastructure. Youth are going to jail, families are getting deported, and parents have to work all the time. Youth are struggling in the schools because of perceptions that the schools have of them. Our communities are disrupted before they can even get rooted.

So where do you start? We start by doing everything we can.

I work with youth and families who are referred to the program through the Department of Community Justice. The youth are usually gang-impacted. We see people who've been through a lot of stuff. They seem hardened by a lot of stuff, but they want you to know who they are as a person. In mentoring the youth, we work with them in a way that does not diminish their experience. And sometimes there are little changes, but for them, they're really big changes.

We provide different environments for them and put them in locations where they can expand their vision. They learn tools, so that when they go out and branch out into the world, if they stumble, they can always fall back on our help.

Having lived experience allows me to connect with the youth.

They can be telling me their story, and they don't have to tell me every detail because I've been through the stuff that they've been through. I can understand what they mean.

Our program is dependable, based in the community, and staffed by people from the community.

It's important not just to work with the youth, but we try to stabilize the whole family. If a youth wants to participate in a certain program, or if there's something going on with school, or if the parents are struggling to pay the rent, we help them.

For a person to heal, you have to be in a safe environment. Providing that is our mission.

— ARNOLDO RUIZ
ALBA COLLABORATIVE & PADRINOS MENTORSHIP PROGRAM MANAGER,
DEPARTMENT OF YOUTH EMPOWERMENT & VIOLENCE PREVENTION

RECOMMENDATION #4

Provide trauma education to public safety and other responders (such as hospitals and schools), and evaluate their engagement with survivors of violence.

Require training in culturally specific, trauma informed, and healing centered approaches on caring for and responding to survivors who have experienced trauma or violence. Training should be offered to law enforcement, prosecutors, teachers, hospital personnel, and other responders.

Success of the training must be measured in changed outcomes for survivors.

When people get hurt or experience trauma, survivors are very likely to come into contact with settings or agencies where responders are ill-equipped to care for people, families, and communities.

Survivors of color are too often presumed to have committed a crime during the incidents where they themselves were harmed. A comprehensive training would include how to provide useful information and support to survivors without blaming them for what happened, and it would dismantle the false binary that

a person is either a survivor or a person who caused harm, when the reality is that they can be both.

More skilled responders throughout our communities would give survivors of violence a greater range of options for where to seek appropriate care following trauma. Survivors would have more choices in where to turn, and they would be met with better care from people who have a better understanding of trauma and how it presents. Without training, professionals are likely to cause more harm, even while trying to deliver care.

“My brother got shot. He got rushed to the hospital, so it was already being recorded, but before they put him into surgery, the police hounded him. He actually shattered his elbow, fractured the funny bone, all of that was gone. He was in mad pain, and they were just sitting here talking about, Who did it? What did you do?”



Community Peace Collaborative

OFFICE OF YOUTH VIOLENCE PREVENTION,
CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON



When we're willing to be bold enough and brave enough to establish a space like the Community Peace Collaborative, we can create a culture of accountability.

It's achieved through connection and relationship, and Community Peace Collaborative delivers.

Community Peace Collaborative connects people, connects efforts, and connects the dots to be a bridge for community members who have an interest in and passion for eliminating the biggest public health crisis we know right now, which is violence.

It's a space that brings together the hearts and minds of public servants and the communities they serve. It's a space that's shared by faith leaders and service providers, by youth and elders, and by neighbors who know harm from every angle. It provides an opportunity for the community to hear from public safety professionals about the challenges they face.

By bringing all these people together, Community Peace Collaborative births these rare and striking moments where police chiefs and electeds are called to be accountable.

In this space, community violence is addressed as the intergenerational issue that communities of color know well.

I've been in the space where the police chief or an assistant chief, including myself, has been in the room and been asked very tough questions about incidents where officers used deadly force. The community had questions that were important and real, and we were there to respond.

We needed a transparent setting where elected, appointed, and hired public safety professionals can be vulnerable and offer an apology for poor policies that have impacted our community negatively.

Community Peace Collaborative offers that accountability, and it's a chance for the community to have voice to rebuild policy or practice. That doesn't occur anywhere else.

It's unfortunate that spaces like this are rare, because if we want to be closer to the community, we need to build a better relationship in the good times. Because if you're seeking relationship during the tough time, you won't be successful. The question will always be, "Where have you been?"

— KEVIN MODICA

RETIRED ASSISTANT POLICE CHIEF, CITY OF PORTLAND, OREGON,
AND COMMUNITY ADVOCATE

PART 3.

WHAT YOU CAN DO

How you can create and support a better public safety outcome

It's easy to point to what is not working. And without clear direction, we may not recognize opportunities for engagement that can change the lives of people and communities who have long been ignored.

Solutions exist.

Amazing work is already happening that addresses the wounds and the needs. From the wisdom and experiences of those involved in this study and leaders in culturally specific settings, the following is intended to offer guidance on a path forward.

Below are specific steps you can take to help center the needs and experiences of survivors of color in policy decisions, in community, and in the lives of people who are most harmed and least helped.

Community members and advocates

- Contact one of the partner or highlighted organizations in this report, and ask how you can support them.
- Email your city, county, and state elected officials with a copy of the executive summary and a link to the report, and share why you believe that our public safety system should better meet the needs of survivors of color.

Community-based direct service organizations

- Conduct an equity assessment of your organization, programs, and services, and track outcomes of all demographic groups to measure success.
- Expand programs to communities of color with culturally appropriate staffing, or regrant funds to partner organizations that are already providing culturally specific services.
- Advocate for local, state, or national grants and other funding streams to support culturally specific programs for survivors, families, and communities.

Public safety professionals

- Assess your program's effectiveness at supporting the healing of survivors of color. Based on your findings, realign your programs and services to be healing centered, culturally specific, and reflective of the communities you serve.
- Build relationships with survivors and survivor advocates, particularly survivors of color. Learn how your services impacted them and where your programs can be revised to better serve your communities.
- Build relationships and support community-based organizations in your area that are delivering culturally specific programs to survivors of color. Advocate for those ally organizations to receive public support, funding, and other resources they need in their work with survivors of color.
- If you're in or near the Portland Metro area, attend a Community Peace Collaborative meeting hosted by the City of Portland's Office of Youth Violence Prevention. Learn how this unique coalition develops solutions, interventions, and prevention strategies to reduce violence and crime in Multnomah County.

City, county, and state elected officials

- Contact the programs involved and highlighted in this report to learn more about their services, values, and vision for the public safety of the communities they serve.
- Allocate funding to support community-based organizations that are committed to serving crime survivors in your community regardless of whether they choose to report or engage with the criminal justice system.
- Advocate for more research. This qualitative report is a start, but we need to better understand the unmet needs of survivors so that we can more thoughtfully advance policy and fund changes that respond to these needs.
- Request racial equity impact statements for legislation. Without thoughtful analysis of statewide policies, racial disparities are inadvertently deepened, sometimes significantly. Thoughtful analyses of programs, services, and funding in our communities can mitigate and lessen these disparities, creating more equitable communities across the state.



Focus Group Questions

You are here because you or someone you care about experienced harm. When this happened, what did you worry about first? What was your biggest concern?

When you decided whether or not to report the harm, what were your considerations?

What did you need to help you or your family feel supported and safe? Did you get it? If not, what do you think were the reasons why? If you did get the help you needed, what was most helpful?

What would help you feel like the person who hurt you or your family was held accountable?

What did you need then/now to feel a sense of justice?

Individual Questionnaire

What is your age: _____ What is your race: _____

What is the zip code where you stay most of the time: _____

Gender: _____ Female _____ Male _____ Other

What is your approximate income? (Do NOT include public assistance)

_____ \$0- 10,000

_____ \$10,000-25,000

_____ \$25,000- 35,000

_____ \$35,000- 50,000

_____ \$50,000+

How many people live in your household? _____

When you or your family were harmed, did anyone inform you at the time of the incident of help that was available to you?

_____ YES _____ NO

Did anyone inform you after the incident of help that was available to you?

_____ YES _____ NO

If you can remember, who told you about services, money or help available to you/your family?

(Check any that apply)

_____ Police Officer _____ Doctor / Nurse / Paramedic / other medical

_____ Victim Advocate at DA's office _____ Victim Advocate at another agency

_____ DHS _____ Friend / Family _____ Other

If "other", who told you about help? _____

What type of help did you need when the incident happened? (check in order of importance

1= Most Important 2= next most important, etc.)

_____ Application assistance

_____ Assistance navigating the justice system

_____ Mental Health Assistance

_____ Accessing Compensation

_____ Other: (Please share here)

How long ago did the most recent crime(s) occur? (Check one)

_____ In the last year _____ Between 2-5 years ago _____ More than 5 years ago

What was your relationship to the person that caused harm? (check all that apply)

_____ I did not know the person that caused harm

_____ Intimate partner

_____ Other family member

_____ Co-worker

_____ Friend

_____ Just someone I knew, not someone close

Do you think you were targeted for a crime based on your skin color, the language you speak, religion or real/perceived sexual orientation or gender identity? (Was this a Hate Crime?)

What type of harm/ crime(s) have you experienced most recently / ever? (check all that apply)

	Most Recent	Ever / In the past
Assault (someone physically hurt me)		
Attempted Murder		
Burglary (someone broke into my home)		
Identity Theft		
Murder (of a family member)		
Sexual Violence (someone touched me sexually in a way that was unwanted and without my consent)		
Theft (someone stole my stuff from my personal space, my body, my car, etc.)		

Did you report the incident? _____ YES _____ NO

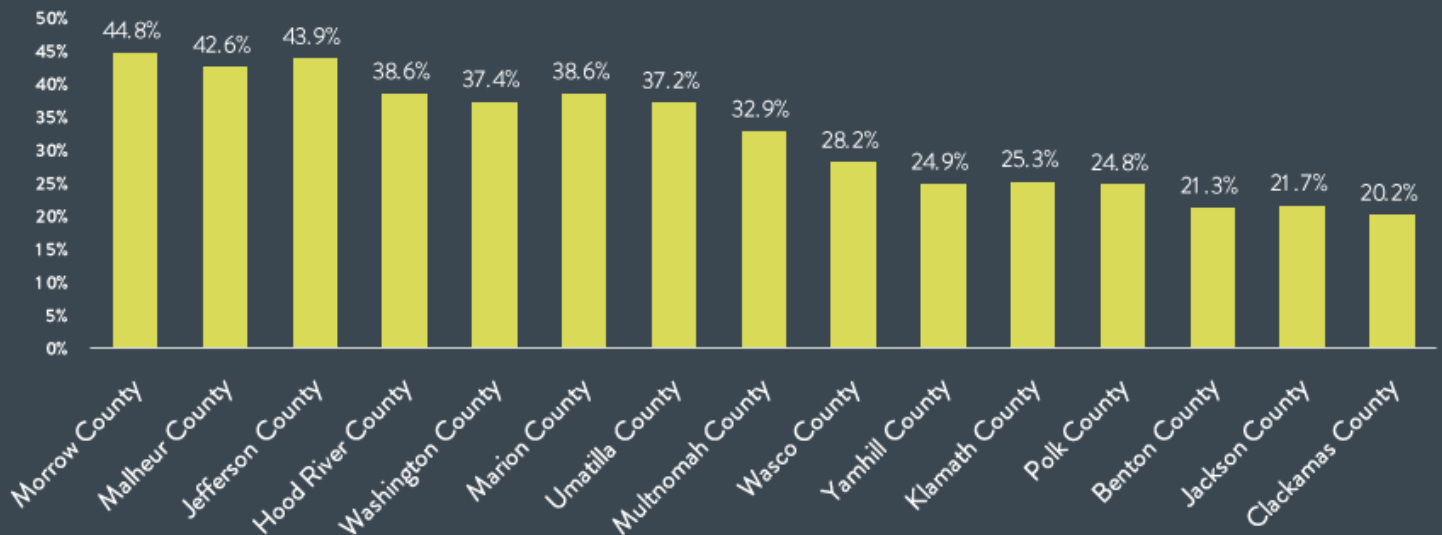
If no, why? (check all that apply)

- _____ Fear of retaliation by the person who hurt me
 _____ Fear/ distrust of the police (circle either or both)
 _____ I needed to focus on other things
 _____ Fear of ICE
 _____ Fear of negative consequences to my family
 _____ Other (Please share here)

How would you describe your experience with the following agencies?

	Got me on track toward healing	Helped me access resources I needed	Said they would help but didn't	Knowingly used intimidation on me/my family	Left me feeling worse than I felt before they spoke to me
Police					
DA's Office					
Court/Judge					
County Jail					
Other Agency (which agency?)					

Oregon Counties with the Largest Proportions of People of Color*



Source: Chart created by Ten02 Consulting and SeeChange using US Census FactFinder 2019 ACS Population Estimates.

*This category includes people who identify as Latino or Hispanic of any race (including White), and people who identify as Black, American Indian/Alaska Native, Asian, Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, and Multi-Racial.

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