



PARTNERSHIP FOR SAFETY & JUSTICE

**Submitted to House and Senate Judiciary Committees
Promising Practices That Meet the Needs of Survivors of Color
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Good afternoon, Chair Williamson, Chair Prozanski and members of the committee.

For the record, my name is Amy Davidson. I'm the Crime Survivor Program Director at Partnership for Safety and Justice. PSJ advocates for policy solutions that meet the needs of people harmed by crime, people convicted of crime and the families of both.

In 2017, PSJ made an organizational decision to work to better understand the experiences of people most harmed and least helped in Oregon. We realized that while we have a long history of advocating for services for victims and survivors, we needed to work more intentionally to understand the experiences of survivors of color. Calling upon existing relationships and seeking to build new ones, we created a committee made up of seven organizations committed to elevating the stories of people whose lives are most impacted by violence so we could learn from them directly regarding what was working and what was failing them in criminal justice and public safety. We did this through focus groups, one on one interviews and written surveys.

I'm pleased to get to introduce my fellow panelists today, and to give thanks to those who contributed directly to this project by courageously opening up and sharing their experiences and the experience of their communities. In addition to the amazing partners beside me today, I do want to name the other community partners who brought strong leadership and guidance to this work. Yolanda Gonzales with Latino Network, Chanel Thomas with Multnomah County District Attorney's Office, Cyn Connais with Healing Hurt People and Rashida Saunders with the Portland Police Bureau all were core to this effort.

Today I'm here to offer a window into what we learned from the survivors who bravely and graciously shared their stories. I'll share with you information related to **reporting rates of harm and the barriers in doing so for victims of color**. We'll explain to you why the findings point to solutions that require **investment in culturally specific services and programs**, and also to **future research** that seeks to understand the experiences of Black, Indigenous and people of color in Oregon.

Here's some of what we learned.

Reporting

- We learned that 3 out of 4 participants did not report the crimes.
- In all of the groups we met with, there was a universal theme around **fear of family separation**. Contact with any part of the system has often led to people being separated from their children. This is a barrier to reporting harm.

Many participants described the importance of keeping family together and how that rose above the need for individual safety. This fear of separation led many survivors to not report victimization because for them it's too closely linked with our history of separation during slavery and by today's measures, it conjures fears of foster care and separation at our borders.

Another part of what our work illuminated is how much more we need to know. We want to emphasize the need for **investment in research that seeks to understand the experiences of Black, Indigenous and people of color in Oregon** and how that impacts the services that survivors of color need.

Oregon has a history of institutional harm to communities of color that gave birth to Japanese Internment camps and Black Exclusion Laws among other harms. Most of Oregon still doesn't know this history. This paints a bleak landscape of unhealed pain. For a long, long time it will be our work to *undo* all the systematic denial of access to services, information and money, and to learn to recognize where that exists and how that shows up; then work to repair that harm.

The good news is this doesn't just reflect a crisis, it also reflects opportunity to...

- learn in new ways
- partner with new leaders
- nurture community-led strategies that foster healing for people most harmed and least helped.

There are programs doing amazing work already that deliver meaningful and often life-saving outcomes to people in Oregon. There are small and mighty programs across Oregon doing vital work, known to few. Some of them are sitting beside me today here to share with you the promise of their work, what it means in our communities and what it meant to this project.

I want to thank you, sincerely, for hearing us today.