

# Murders That Matter

A FILM BY MARCO WILLIAMS



POV

DISCUSSION GUIDE







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AL. Community



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# Film Summary



How would you handle the trauma of losing a loved one? Set in Philadelphia, *Murders That Matter* documents African American, Muslim mother Movita Johnson-Harrell over five years as she transforms from a victim of violent trauma into a fierce advocate against gun violence in Black communities. Her relentless activism exposes the emotional and psychological toll the killings take on those left behind.

# Using This Guide

This guide is an invitation to dialogue. It is based on a belief in the power of human connection and designed for people who want to use *Murders That Matter* to engage family, friends, classmates, colleagues, and communities. In contrast to initiatives that foster debates in which participants try to convince others that they are right, this document envisions conversations undertaken in a spirit of openness in which people try to understand one another and expand their thinking by sharing viewpoints and listening actively.

The discussion prompts are intentionally crafted to help a wide range of audiences think more deeply about the issues in the film. Rather than attempting to address them all, choose one or two that best meet your needs and interests. And be sure to leave time to consider taking action. Planning next steps can help people leave the room feeling energized and optimistic, even in instances when conversations have been difficult.

For more detailed event planning and facilitation tips, visit <https://communitynetwork.amdoc.org/>.

## A NOTE TO FACILITATORS

# Dear POV Community,

We are so glad you have chosen to facilitate a discussion inspired by the film *Murders That Matter*. Before you facilitate, please prepare yourself for the conversation, as this film invites you and your community to discuss experiences of gun violence, trauma, community violence, mental health, and social action. These conversations require learning truths about society, culture, and political motivations that typically have not been taught in schools. We urge you, as a facilitator, to take the necessary steps to ensure that you are prepared to guide a conversation that prioritizes the wellbeing and safety of Black and Indigenous people of color, Muslims, gun violence survivors, co-victims, and youth in your community. We hope this guide will aid you in conversations that expand understanding while maximizing care, critical curiosity, transformation, and connection.

### **Tips and Tools for Facilitators**

Here are some supports to help you prepare for facilitating a conversation that inspires curiosity, connection, critical questions, recognition of difference, power, and possibility.

## **Share Community Agreements**

### **Community Agreements: What Are They? Why Are They Useful?**

Community agreements help provide a framework for engaging in dialogue that establishes a shared sense of intention ahead of participating in discussion. Community agreements can be co-constructed and created as an opening activity that your group completes collectively and collaboratively. [Here is a model](#) of community agreements you can review. As the facilitator, you can gauge how long your group should take to form these agreements or whether participants would be amenable to using pre-established community agreements.

### **Opening Activity (Optional): Establishing Community Agreements for Discussion**

Whether you are a group of people coming together once for this screening and discussion or a group whose members know each other well, creating a set of community agreements helps foster clear discussion in a manner that draws in and respects all participants, especially when tackling intimate or complex conversations around identity. These steps will help provide guidelines for the process:

- **Pass around** sample community agreements and take time to read aloud as a group to make sure all participants can both hear and read the text.
- **Allow time** for clarifying questions, make sure all participants understand the necessity for the agreements, and allow time to make sure everyone understands the agreements themselves.
- **Go around in a circle** and have every participant name an agreement they would like to include. Chart this in front of the room where all can see.
- **Go around two to three times** to give participants multiple chances to contribute and also to give a conclusive end to the process.
- **Read the list aloud.**
- **Invite** questions or revisions.
- **Ask** if all are satisfied with the list.



# COMMON CONCEPTS & LANGUAGE

## Community Trauma

Symptoms of illness that extend beyond individuals who directly witness violence in communities characterized by high levels of violence. Community trauma affects social groups that have been long subjected to historic and ongoing social inequities, such as racism and oppression.

## Homicide Co-Victims

People who have lost loved ones to homicide.

## Institutional Racism

The ways in which institutional policies and practices create different outcomes for different racial groups. Institutional policies may never mention any specific racial group, but their effect is to create advantages for Whites and oppression and disadvantage for people from groups classified as people of color.

## Islamophobia

Unfounded hostility toward Islam and, therefore, unfounded fear or dislike of Muslim people; a form of governmentality or an ideology that reduces Muslims to “others” who jeopardize Western values. The hostility generated through islamophobic ideas, policies, and practices is often directed at Muslim communities and individuals.

## Marginalization

A social process by which individuals or groups are (intentionally or unintentionally) distanced from access to power and resources and constructed as insignificant, peripheral, or less valuable/privileged to a community or “mainstream” society. Marginalized groups or people are those excluded from mainstream social, economic,

cultural, or political life. Examples of marginalized groups include, but are by no means limited to, groups excluded due to race, religion, political or cultural identity, age, gender, or financial status.

## Mass Shooting

An incident in which four or more victims are shot.

## Racial Inequity

Racial inequity exists when two or more racial groups are not standing on approximately equal footing, such as when the percentage of each ethnic group in terms of dropout rates, home ownership, access to healthcare, and other issues varies widely.

## Social Determinants

Factors that increase and perpetuate cycles of violence, also referred to as the “root causes” of gun violence. Some examples of social determinants are poverty, gentrification, homelessness, lack of access to mental health and drug and alcohol resources, disinvestment in education, lack of access to jobs, and neglected communities.

## Systemic Racism

This is an interlocking and reciprocal relationship between the individual, institutional, and structural levels that function as a system of racism. These various levels of racism operate together in lockstep and function together as a system. These levels are

- Individual (within interactions between people)
- Institutional (within institutions and systems of power)
- Structural or societal (among institutions and across society)

## Trauma

Trauma is a response to a distressing, stressful, or disturbing event. Trauma can affect a person’s functioning and mental, physical, social, emotional, and/or spiritual wellbeing. Trauma can include an emotional shock after experiencing a stressful event.

## Trauma-Informed Care

An organizational structure and treatment framework that involves understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma and seeking to employ practices that do not traumatize or re-traumatize. Trauma-informed care emphasizes physical, psychological, and emotional safety; trustworthiness and transparency; collaboration and mutuality; empowerment; and cultural sensitivity and responsiveness.

## Underserved Communities

Groups that do not have adequate access to, or encounter barriers to, affordable housing, educational opportunities, jobs, food, and other quality-of-life factors.

## Violence Intervention Programs

Initiatives implemented by community-based organizations that offer alternative, community-led initiatives to reduce gun violence. They include street outreach, group violence intervention, crime prevention through environmental design, and cognitive behavioral therapy. Community-based initiatives help to repair community cohesion, capacity, bonds, and belonging that are often broken down in places that experience high levels of violence.

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## LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKER

I started working on *Murders That Matter* in 2014. My aim was to highlight murders of Black people that did not receive the attention that murders of unarmed Black people by law enforcement were receiving and continue to receive (with justification). Where is the equivalent outrage over the murders of Black people by other Black people?

I elected to focus on the city of Philadelphia. At the time, Philadelphia had some of the highest unsolved murder statistics for Black people by Black people of any city in the United States. I was also drawn to Philadelphia because two of my family members had been murdered in Philadelphia. No resolution to their murders has occurred. Why? The perpetrators were Black. The victims were Black.

From 2014 to 2016 I researched a film about murder in the African American community. I spoke with many critical people—doctors, counselors, public defenders, district attorneys, academics, doctors, people working with youth, and victims and co-victims of gun violence. What my research revealed to me was my determination to make a film about the people directly impacted by the issue, those on the ground, not the people examining the issue.

In March of 2016 I met Movita Johnson-Harrell, an African American Muslim mother whose life embodied the narrative of murder and the attending trauma in the Black community. At the age of 9, she witnessed her father's murder. Her cousin and brother are murder victims. In 2011 her youngest son was murdered.

The murder of her son set her on a public journey to call attention to the murders and trauma in the Black community. In 2016, I started filming her as she ran for state office on a platform against guns and the murder of Black and Brown people. She lost the race. I kept filming—2018, 2019, 2020, 2021.

Filming her has taken me on an uncharted journey: running for state office and losing, working for the progressive district attorney, creating a program within that office to help victims of homicide, quitting, and running for state office again, this time winning. Eight months after winning, Movita was indicted, arrested, and sentenced to 11 months in jail for fraud, corruption, and theft. She was released early due to the COVID-19 pandemic. Shortly afterward, her eldest son was murdered.

What began as a film to call attention to the murders of Black people in the Black community evolved. What I learned over the course of five years of filming one person is that these murders highlight trauma.

Trauma in the African American community is rarely presented in American media. The impact and effect of violence is a story told through the lens of Black people as perpetrators. *Murders That Matter* features a Black Muslim woman—a “type,” if seen in the media at all, is usually shown in a negative light. Movita challenges the stereotype. I believe that audiences will be drawn to her; she is open, honest, vulnerable, and dogged in her efforts.

Trauma and gun violence in the African American community demand diligent effort toward audience engagement and social impact. Guns proliferate in the Black community. Stricter gun laws would have some mitigating impact. I am confident that *Murders That Matter* will increase social understanding and awareness, generate public activism, and contribute to related public policy change.

*Murders That Matter* is a portrait; however, Movita's story transcends borders. The question of what one would do if confronted by the murder of a loved one translates and resonates.



# Participants

## **Movita Johnson-Harrell**

A mother, co-victim, and fierce advocate.



# Key Issues

*Murders That Matter* is an excellent tool for outreach and will be of particular interest to people who want to explore the following topics:

- Gun violence prevention
- Trauma
- Grief and healing
- Mental health in Black and Brown communities
- Family storytelling
- Activism
- Solutions to community violence



# Background Information

*Murders That Matter* asks audiences to consider what they would do if confronted with a life-altering incident of gun violence. Gun violence is a pervasive epidemic that plagues and irrevocably alters the lives of victims and co-victims across the United States. Legislators have not been successful in creating meaningful gun legislation to prevent gun violence or to slow down the proliferation of illegal guns in communities most impacted. The people elected to keep communities safe have fallen short of their duties. Despite the widespread outcry for systems of power to reckon with their complacency in America's ongoing gun violence epidemic, the work often falls on the shoulders of the victims and co-victims of gun violence, who bear the mental and emotional toll of these occurrences. *Murders That Matter* sheds light on Black and Brown victims, co-victims, and activists who fiercely fight the systems of power that perpetuate gun violence in their communities while also supporting and caring for those in their communities directly impacted by ongoing cycles of violence. Movita Johnson-Harrell's transformation from a co-victim of gun violence to a fierce advocate exemplifies how emotion can be motivation for change and a source of power.



*Murders That Matter* asks us to consider the lasting emotional, psychological, physical, legal, and financial impact that gun violence has on individuals, families, and communities. While the scope of the gun violence crisis in the United States is varied and nuanced, Black and Brown communities are disproportionately impacted by gun homicide. The majority of gun homicide victims are Black Americans, who are 10 times more likely than White Americans to die by gun homicide. Following Michael Brown's death in 2014, the chances of media reporting on Black victims at the hands of White perpetrators, including police officers and White supremacists, increased by 25%; however, homicides in predominantly Black neighborhoods continue to receive less coverage and stir less public outrage. If this coverage is aired it is likely to use inflammatory language, reinforce presumptions of guilt, and use imagery that dehumanizes Black pain and suffering. It is less likely that this media coverage will represent victims as the complex human beings they are, not only reinforcing the idea that predominantly Black neighborhoods are inherently dangerous, but enacting another form of violence that these individuals, families, and communities must resist. Individual and community suffering is further compounded by systemic and structural violence, such as underinvestment in social services, housing, and education. In environments where violence has become normalized, barriers to accessing mental health resources are also normalized. Moreover, communities that face economic discrimination and lack of access to healthcare and social services struggle to receive the care they need to begin the healing process. These circumstances and emotions can culminate in low levels of community capacity and cohesion. However, communities have also established initiatives that work to create safer communities.

Emotions have long been a foundation for political movement-building. In *Murders That Matter*, the anger and grief related to gun violence are harnessed as a source of power. Audre Lorde, a prominent Black writer

and civil rights activist, emphasized that when emotions are expressed and translated into action, they become “a liberating and strengthening act of clarification.” Movita describes the agony she experienced after losing her son Charles and identifies the retaliatory steps she took following his death. In the midst of her grief, anger, and agony, Movita poignantly says, “But I had to live.” She begins to take other steps: starting the CHARLES Foundation, running for political office, working with the Philadelphia district attorney’s office, and leading Philadelphia’s office of victim services. As Movita channels her emotions into actionable steps to reduce gun violence, she lays the foundation for a network of community care, empowering other community members to join the cause and support one another in the fight to reduce gun violence in Philadelphia.

## **Violence in Underserved Communities**

Sandy Hook Elementary School. Marjory Stoneman Douglas High School. Pulse nightclub. Atlanta spa shootings. Regardless of direct connections or experiences, gun violence is a part of Americans’ consciousness. Frequent incidents of gun violence in the United States damage a collective feeling of safety in our communities and increasingly normalize tragedy. While gun violence permeates the lives of Americans in a variety of ways, Black and Brown communities bear a disproportionate burden of gun violence homicides due to historically rooted structural inequalities these communities are made to survive.

Although mass shootings dominate media coverage, such coverage often overlooks and ignores Black homicide victims and fails to report on the frequency of mass shootings in Black and Brown neighborhoods. A new study has found that the higher a city’s Black population, the more likely it is to experience mass shootings because of increased levels of income inequality and segregation. These findings disrupt the idea that White

victims are at the center of mass shootings and redirect attention to shooting incidents that do not garner equal media attention or public outrage. For generations, Black and Brown communities have been subjected to discriminatory policies and barriers. Underserved communities exist as a result of decades of policies and practices that result in limited access to health care, underfunded schools, neighborhood segregation, and crime. As a result, these communities have experienced violence on various levels: interpersonal violence, structural violence, and historical and intergenerational violence, which has contributed to disproportionate and ongoing incidents of community violence. We see how these forms of systemic violence have shaped Movita's life when she describes coming from five generations of poverty, her family's history of drug addiction and alcoholism, and witnessing the murders of her father, brother, and sons. Generations of systemic violence, coupled with ongoing interpersonal violence, continue to deepen the wounds of ongoing gun violence and community trauma in Black and Brown neighborhoods.

## **Gun Violence and Community Trauma**

Community trauma is the culmination of the pain individuals in a community suffer, but also the collective trauma that a community experiences with elevated levels of violence. High levels of trauma across a population break down social networks, relationships, and community trust. Community trauma dampens community members' capacity and willingness to work together, intervene when conflicts arise, and stand in solidarity to address the causes of their shared trauma.

Trauma from gun violence is unique. Victimization with a firearm is more distressing than victimization with any other weapon. The violent and unanticipated nature of gun violence means that there is no true end to the healing process. Coping with this kind of trauma is a lifelong process that ebbs and flows based on the individual and their unique circumstances



and experiences. Research shows that some gun violence survivors experience post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and substance use disorders (SUDs) simultaneously in an effort to escape or numb the lasting effects of gun violence. Researchers have also developed the term “anticipatory trauma” to describe the anxiety, stress, depression, and consistent negative thinking among survivors who are impacted by the fear of future harm.

Access to mental health resources varies, and relying on these types of resources can be stigmatized in some communities. For example, Black and Latinx survivors are less likely to have access to both short- and long-term mental health services following an incident of violence. The structures that perpetuate ongoing gun violence in Black and Brown communities (redlining, segregation, underinvestment) are the same systems that keep victims of violence from receiving the help that they need to begin the healing process. Socioeconomic disparities may prevent Black victims who live in underserved communities from accessing health care altogether. When Black victims do have access to health care, provider bias, both conscious and unconscious, and a lack of cultural competency can result in misdiagnosis and inadequate treatment. These barriers and the withholding of mental health resources by structures of power impose another layer of violence upon these communities.

## **Individual and Community Healing Initiatives**

Policymakers, public health officials, social services providers, and community organizers report that trauma undermines efforts to promote health, safety, and wellbeing. They recognize that the symptoms of community trauma are present in the socio-cultural environment (people), the physical and built environment (place), and the economic/educational environment (opportunity). Individual and community

approaches to healing from trauma become fertile ground for implementing change with sustained impact in communities over time. Individual approaches to healing from trauma include trauma-informed care and individual mental health services; effective community approaches to healing draw expertise and experience from within communities. In the film, several of the women who attend the women's survivor network that Movita hosts at the CHARLES Foundation go on to support her efforts in running for political office and contribute to her work in the office of victim services.

Various methods have been implemented to heal communities and reduce violence. Community-driven crime prevention through environmental design (CPTED) is a long-term gun violence initiative that centers urban architectural design and management of built and natural environments. CPTED research suggests that this strategy results in localized reductions in gun violence. For example, after clearing vacant lots, neighborhoods below the poverty line saw dramatic reductions in crime and gun violence (down by 13% and 29.1%, respectively).

Street outreach programs seek to shift norms around conflict resolution and employ a public health approach to violence intervention. Street outreach programs deploy violence interrupters, who help prevent shootings by identifying and mediating conflicts and working with at-risk individuals. Violence interrupters are often former members of street groups who have credibility when speaking with at-risk individuals. Street outreach programs have mixed impact on gun violence, with some communities showing significant improvement.

When individuals and communities have access to resources that help them to initiate the healing process, they regain the capacity for reigniting interpersonal and community connections. Movita and her networks of supporters show that survivors of gun violence are often at the forefront of gun violence prevention movements, advocating for policy changes and educating others about gun violence issues.

## The Role of Emotion in Activism

Emotions are central to the experiences of many activist practices and networks and are a powerful source of information and energy that can serve progress and change. Engagement in political action, such as voting, protesting, and campaigning, can be an intensely emotional experience. The interior emotional lives of activists are rich, complex, and nuanced. Grassroots organizations come together through collective identity. Positive affect toward other group members is built on the grounds of that shared membership, identity, and goal. Activism is not just a way to say something about oneself, but also a way to find joy and pride in how and what you are saying, and an activist community can offer a political home for emotional recognition and shared experiences to be honored. Political action reflects the agency that people have when they mobilize to change the social circumstances in which they are embedded.

Feeling angry about injustice is a common experience and is often rooted in a sense of powerlessness to enact systemic change that will have impacts on individuals' lives. Feeling anger, anxiety, or fear signals that something is wrong and requires further attention, and it is important to remember that anger's object is change. When we turn from anger, we turn from insight; anger signals that we do not accept the social and political conditions in which we live and can be a generative tool for social change. Failure to engage with the source of our anger means that we turn away from the possibility of change. Anger is thought to have adaptive, short-term benefits, and though it is useful, it has limitations. Anger is reactive to situations that threaten survival and can lead to emotional burnout, which is why working in community, and with support, to turn legitimate feelings of anger into action is essential

There are substantial emotional costs to activism, particularly when opposing the dominant beliefs of a society, or working against robust

systems of power. To build sustainable networks of change, activists should be paying attention to individual and collective emotions of their networks. Activists are in a unique position to cultivate meaning and foster emotional bonds that inspire sustained activism. Networks that foster collective emotions, such as gratitude, interest, inspiration, and love, have adaptive, long-term benefits in terms of building resources, facilitating optimal functioning, and increasing the scope of thought and action. Emotions are a legitimate form of knowledge and communities, activists, and organizers can learn and source energy from emotions. The ways in which emotions guide us to take action are multifaceted and ever-evolving and attention and care for emotions are at the center of building longstanding change.



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# DISCUSSION PROMPTS

## Starting The Conversation

Immediately after the film, you may want to give people a few quiet moments to reflect on what they have seen. You could pose a general question (examples below) and give people some time to themselves to jot down or think about their answers before opening the discussion. Alternatively, you could ask participants to share their thoughts with a partner before starting a group discussion. *Note to Facilitators:* Please remind your community that if, at any point, they need to excuse themselves from the conversation they are invited to do so, and that their wellbeing is of the utmost importance.

- What feelings did *Murders That Matter* evoke?
- Were you able to relate to some participants in the film more closely than others? If so, who and why?
- What did you learn from the film, the people, and the experiences presented on screen?
- How did you see emotions driving people to action in this film?
- What actions struck you as requiring courage and bravery? What do you admire about those people who took action?



# GUN VIOLENCE AND COMMUNITY IMPACT

- What were the various ways that gun violence affected individuals and communities in this film?
- What aspects of peoples' lives were impacted by gun violence?
- What systemic factors contributed to cycles of violence in the underserved communities reflected in this film?
- In what ways has gun violence affected you and/or your community? Consider the indirect impact of gun violence if you have not been affected directly.
- What elements contribute to mothers and families taking on the responsibility of reducing gun violence in their communities?
  - Should this be their burden to carry?
  - Whose responsibility is it to reduce gun violence?
- At a rally in Philadelphia, Movita says, "We stand here in the gap for all of those lost to gun violence. We stand here in the gap for the ignorant who don't know any better. We stand here in the gap for all of those who don't have a voice."
  - What do you think she means by "the gap"?
  - Who is in the gap?
  - How do we begin to address the gap in ways that may ease the burden on victims and co-victims?

- What types of gun violence incidents do you see reported in the media? What types of gun violence incidents do you pay the most attention to?
- Are there ways the media frames gun violence that work to serve certain communities instead of others?
- Which communities do you see being served in these types of reporting?
- How did this film educate you about gun violence that is less represented in media?

## TRAUMATIC EXPERIENCES AND MENTAL HEALTH

- Movita and her son Donte both say that they “literally lost their minds” after Charles’s death. How have you/would you cope with the grief of losing a loved one to gun violence or sudden death?
- What did you learn from the film about individual versus community trauma? How do they inform one another?
- How did you see trauma from violence ripple across generational lines? In what ways can trauma be passed through generations if left unattended?
- What are some resources that are in place to support the physical and mental health of victims and co-victims of gun violence? Are these resources equitable across racial lines?
- How does Movita care for people throughout the film? How do people care for Movita? What did you learn about the possibilities and promises of community care from this film?

- Does anything in this film leave you feeling inspired or hopeful about intervening in communities directly impacted by gun violence?
- What is the role of those who have not been directly impacted by gun violence in the fight to end gun violence?

## TRANSFORMING EMOTION INTO ACTION

- Which scenes will stay with you after the screening? How do they reflect your own lived experiences, identity, or community?
- What are some gun violence prevention initiatives that you believe in? How can you learn more about and/or support these initiatives?
- How did you see emotion and initiative working together throughout the film? How can emotions guide people toward action?
- There is a solid sense of camaraderie, eagerness, and joy in the grassroots and political teams Movita leads throughout the film. Why is it important to find joy in activism? How do organizers cultivate joy while fighting against issues and systems that cause harm?

# CLOSING ACTIVITY

## OPTIONAL

At the end of your discussion, to help people synthesize what they've experienced and move the focus from dialogue to action steps, you may want to choose one of these questions

### **Guided Body Scan (7–10 minutes)**

The goal of this guided body scan is to encourage participants to connect with their emotional responses to the film. Through this guided body scan, participants are invited to reflect on the emotional impact issues such as gun violence, trauma, and grief have on their own lives. By acknowledging these emotions, participants gain insights into how these emotions may guide them toward taking meaningful action within their own communities. This exercise promotes self-awareness and reflection with the goal of empowering participants to channel their emotions into positive and constructive steps toward social change and community engagement.

Participants sit or lie down in a comfortable spot. Ensure that there is enough room for participants to relax without feeling crowded.

The facilitator explains that the purpose of a body scan is to practice mindfulness, increase emotional awareness, and tap into the relationship between emotions and bodily sensations. The facilitator invites participants to take a few deep, intentional breaths, focusing on their breathing to become present.

The facilitator guides participants' attention to physical sensations and emotions, reminding participants to observe and acknowledge their emotions without judgment. Facilitators can pose questions throughout the body scan for participants to reflect upon, such as "What emotions are you aware of right now?" Allow time for silent pauses.



## **Journal (5–7 minutes)**

After the body scan, allow 5 to 10 minutes for participants to journal about their emotions, specifically asking them to reflect upon how they can transform their emotions into actionable steps.

## **Share (x minutes)**

When participants are finished journaling, they gather in a circle and each shares one actionable step they will take after leaving the screening. Participants are also encouraged to share emotions that guided them to the steps they chose.

## **TAKING ACTION**

If the group is having trouble generating their own ideas for next steps, these suggestions can help get things started:

- Join a local and/or national gun violence prevention group.
- Donate to an organization that combats gun violence.
- Volunteer, educate, or mentor at a youth organization.
- Research your local community and movements against gun violence.

# Resources

## **Black Mental Health Alliance (BMHA)**

Black Mental Health Alliance (BMHA) is a community-based membership organization that has a successful history of direct service provision, including school-based mental health services, fatherhood initiatives, after-school programs, and HIV/AIDS prevention initiatives. BMHA programming and trainings have primarily encompassed historical and race-based trauma, structural racism, cultural competence, mental health stigma, social determinants of health, and mental health in the Black community.

## **Crime Victims' Compensation Program**

The Crime Victims' Compensation (CVC) Program helps crime victims and their immediate families with the financial costs of crime. CVC covers crime-related costs such as counseling, medical treatment, funerals, and loss of income not paid by other sources. You can find a list of state crime victim compensation agencies [here](#). If you do not have a victim assistance program near you, you can also contact the [National Association of Crime Victim Compensation Boards](#) for more information. The rules of the CVC Program vary from state to state. All victims of gun violence are encouraged to apply. Neither an arrest nor a conviction is required to submit an application.

## **Every Murder Is Real (EMIR) Healing Center**

Every Murder Is Real (EMIR) Healing Center is a nonprofit organization that services and supports family members and friends who have been affected by homicide. EMIR guides survivors through the many feelings they will experience and the legal ramifications that are inevitable. EMIR offers concrete, practical, and compassionate steps toward healing.

## **National Organization of Parents of Murdered Children (POMC)**

Parents of Murdered Children (POMC) provides ongoing emotional support to help parents and other survivors facilitate the reconstruction of "new lives" and to promote healthy resolution. Not only does POMC help survivors deal with their acute grief, but it also helps them navigate the criminal justice system. The staff of the POMC will assist any survivor and, if possible, link that survivor with others in the same vicinity who have survived a loved one's murder. In addition, the staff is available to provide individual assistance, support, and advocacy. The staff helps interested parents and immediate family members form chapters of POMC in their communities.

## **Prevention Institute**

Prevention Institute champions prevention and health equity by innovating prevention and equity solutions, building capacity for effective prevention and health equity, advocating for policy and systems change, and generating momentum for policymakers, decision-makers, professionals, and the general public to understand and fight for health equity.

## **Violence Policy Center (VPC)**

The Violence Policy Center (VPC) works to stop gun death and injury through research, education, advocacy, and collaboration. Founded in 1988 by executive director Josh Sugarmann, a native of Newtown, Connecticut, the VPC informs the public about the impact of gun violence on daily lives, exposes the profit-driven marketing and lobbying activities of the firearms industry and gun lobby, offers unique technical expertise to policymakers, organizations, and advocates on the federal, state, and local levels, and works for policy changes that save lives.

# Credits & Acknowledgments



## Co-Author, Maya Wanner

Maya Wanner is an award-winning documentary filmmaker based in Chicago, where she focuses on uplifting underrepresented stories. Her primary interests include immigrant family narratives, intergenerational trauma and healing, multiracial identity, personal storytelling, and Asian American stories. Her body of work is predominantly personal. She draws inspiration from her own family history, her experiences as an Asian American, the transmission of memory within immigrant families, and the complexities of racial identity. Her short film *The Things I Haven't Told You Yet* was called "a beautiful personal exorcism of familial relationships that playfully toggles a full breadth of what's possible in the cinematic language."

Maya has a range of experience in film, including teaching, directing, and freelancing for a range of production companies. She is currently working on a number of projects as a freelance researcher, cinematographer, sound recordist, and editor. She is the outreach and impact coordinator for *Murders That Matter*.

Maya holds an MFA in documentary media from Northwestern University, and a degree in English, religion, and film from Kalamazoo College.



## Co-Author, Marco Williams

Marco Williams is a filmmaker whose films unmask the complexities of the human condition. A reviewer of his films opined: "you make films about the stories we prefer to keep hidden." Williams' uses the documentary media as a way of understanding and addressing the extraordinary traumas that we face in this country due to race, ethnicity, gender, class, and injustice. His films have been inspired by painful social and historical disjunctures and reveal the healing power of the form. They demonstrate the possibility of documentary to encourage empathy and ultimately help with a correction of past wrongs, empowering audiences to action. He has been nominated three times for the Sundance Film Festival documentary grand jury prize, and is the recipient of a Guggenheim Fellowship, a George Foster Peabody Award, the Alfred I duPont Silver Baton, the Beacon Award, the Pan African Film Festival Outstanding Documentary Award, the Full Frame Documentary Festival Spectrum Award, and the National Association of Black Journalists First Place Salute to Excellence Award.

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