

# Gun Violence Affects all in Black Communities

## Black men are murder victims more than any other group

By BEVERLY CORBELL

More Black men die from homicide in Portland more than any other group. But it's not just here; it's nationwide.

Twenty-four Black men died violent deaths through July of this year, compared to 18 during the same time last year, states a recent article in the Oregonian.

The latest numbers weren't immediately available, said Portland Police spokesman Officer David Baer on Friday, because homicide detectives were busy working on another investigation.

But Police Bureau records show that three more Black men, and one woman, were violently killed by gunfire in August:

Clarence Edward Smith, 70, was shot to death August 26 at NW 6th Avenue and NW Glisan Street. About the same time, Dejohtae Campbell, 40, was gunned down a block away at NW 6th Avenue and Flanders Street. And on August 10, Dante Emanuel Hall, 34, and Victoria Brown, 24 were shot to death in the 13400 block of SE Bush Street.

According to the Centers for Disease Control, for Black males up to 44 years of age, homicide is the leading cause of death, and most are killed with guns.

But it's not just Black men who are being murdered; it's all genders and ages. According to a 2019 study by the Violence Policy Center in Washington, D.C., "Black men, women, boys and girls are the most impacted victims of homicide in our nation, yet year after year this shocking and unacceptable toll



Teresa Raiford, founder and president of Don't Shoot Portland is allowed to continue."

So what's the cause? In a recent report, experts with the U.S. Department of Justice lists the following root causes of violence in Black communities: Income inequality, poverty, lack of public housing, underperforming schools, lack of opportunity and feelings of hopelessness, and easy access to firearms by high-risk people.

The report goes on to blame racist policies that target communities of color that create underinvested neighborhoods, and "these inequalities fuel gun violence."

None of this is news to Teresa Raiford, founder and president of Don't Shoot Portland, but she digs even deeper and says the effects of racism and the neglect of Black neighborhoods goes all the way back to the enslavement of Blacks.

"When you talk about BIPOC or Black

communities and gun violence, it's poverty related," she said. "There is a mental toll and a physical toll, and with poverty it's an unhealthy mix."

When communities don't have mental health resources, families don't recover as quickly from violence, she said, and it's intergenerational, going back to Emancipation, when there were no mental health resources for people leaving the plantations after having endured years of enslavement.

Raiford said the lack of investment in communities affected by violence shows the effects with inadequate health care, housing and education.

"It's not about hiring more police," she said. "I'm talking about health care access, housing access, family planning and resources. There are lots of people dealing with disabilities, and more are affected by violence."

A number of people have buried their children in the past few weeks, she said, and the violence continues.

"When I go to advocate for families that lose children, there is so much trauma in that space, so much confusion and chaos," she said. "We can't continue to bury children and continue going forward."

Hiring more police won't stop the violence, she said, and the money invested in incarceration would be better put into preventive care and resources for Black communities.

"Their coordinated efforts are to tell families they are looking for bigger fish," she said. "They say we are not cooperating, but people say they are not even being interviewed. The shootings are going to continue if no one cares."

Being exposed to gun violence changes the chemistry in the brain, according to the Educational Fund to Stop Gun Violence in a 2020 report. It states, in part, that exposure to gun violence is associated with post traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), antisocial behavior, depression, stunted mental and emotional development, risky alcohol

and substance abuse, and increased likelihood to engage in violence.

"Black Americans are more likely to live in hyper-segregated poor communities with underfunded public services, poor housing, less economic opportunities and limited healthcare access that white Americans," the report states.

Other experts agree. In a recent article in the Guardian, Erika McCoy, associate professor at the Jane Addams College of Social Work, said that racist stereotypes contribute to the idea that Black homicide victims, especially if they're young and male, don't merit the same level of compassion as white victims, and are seen as expendable.

"This country was founded on expending Black bodies to the benefit of forwarding a country," McCoy said. "So, from the beginning, our losses of life haven't held the same weight... People assume that we must have done something for harm to happen to us, even though we know that predominantly that is not true."

McCoy said every time a young Black person is killed through violence, it's the world's loss. "This person could have been a brilliant student or a talented musician or a neighborhood volunteer."

Violence in Black communities throws many lives off course, and violence leads to more violence, she said, and can even turn victims into perpetrators.

"We can ask ourselves what we could have changed in the life of the person who shot them?" she said. "Did the suspect in a drive-by whose sibling was killed and they were angry but never received the therapeutic services they needed, so they took out a gun?"

Raiford said it's past time for a change in addressing gun violence in Black communities.

"We realized so many inequities during 2020 about racism," she said. "Everyone acknowledged it, but here it is 2022 and they're still making us jump through hoops. So why are we still having that conversation? Nothing has changed."

# Educative Meeting on New Measure



## League of Women Voters Educate on the Charter Reform Measure

The League of Women Voters of Portland is having an event regarding the Charter Reform Measure on Wednesday, September 7, 7 - 8:30 pm via zoom. The ballot measure will appear on the November 8 ballot. The expert panelists will explain the Portland Charter Commission's recommended changes to Portland's government structure and process for electing city officials. The webinar will be an opportunity to hear how and why the Commission decided to recommend these reforms for Portland's government and elections.

Attendees will also be able to ask

questions via the Chat feature on Zoom. Members of the public who want to attend the live Zoom webinar can reach out to [communityed@lwvpx.org](mailto:communityed@lwvpx.org) with any questions. Registration is recommended before September 6.

The Zoom link will be sent a few days before the event to all those who have registered by that time. It will be sent again on September 7 to everyone who registers by 8 pm on September 7.

In addition, this program will be recorded for future viewing and listening.

In addition, this program will be recorded for future viewing and listening. Those who would prefer to view the video or listen to the podcast of this presentation will be able to stream it on demand from the LWVPDX.org website after September 9. Metro East Community Media records Portland League programs for rebroadcast and online streaming from our website, [lwvpx.org](http://lwvpx.org). Funding is provided by the Carol & Velma Saling Foundation.