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## **Resistance from Within: Domestic violence and rape crisis centers that serve Black/African American populations**

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Resistance from Within:  
Domestic violence and rape crisis centers that serve Black/African American populations

by

Jessica M. Pinto

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
Master of Arts  
Department of Women's and Gender Studies  
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## **DEDICATION**

To the staff at domestic violence and rape crisis centers who work tirelessly to eliminate violence and create hope with survivors.

## **ACKNOWLEDGMENTS**

This project would not have been possible without the endless advice and encouragement of my thesis chair, Dr. Michelle Hughes Miller. Thank you for your commitment to my research and all the times you reminded what it was about when I had lost sight. Thank you to my committee, Dr. Kim Golombisky and Dr. David A. Rubin, for your enthusiastic guidance and support.

Thank you to my family and friends for your affection and patience. Thank you for still being my family and friends after all those times I read feminist literature instead of talking to you.

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## **ABSTRACT**

This thesis uses feminist critical discourse analysis to find and understand the discourses embedded in the mission statements and program documents of three domestic violence and/or rape crisis centers that primarily serve Black/African American populations in three distinct geographic locations in the United States. Existing literature addresses the discourses present in domestic violence and sexual assault service provision, but no literature addresses the discourses present in the mission statements of domestic violence and rape crisis centers, leaving a considerable gap in the literature. This project uses frameworks of feminist understandings of Foucauldian discursive patriarchal power, intersectionality and material feminism to analyze the mission statements and put them in conversation with each other. The three organizations chosen, Our House, Jenesse Center and Black Women's Blueprint, each are 2015 award grantees of one of two federal Office of Violence Against Women's grants to provide services to culturally specific populations. I argue the mission statements of Our House, Jenesse Center, and Black Women's Blueprint have a discourse of resistance articulated through embedded discourses of Black feminism, neoliberalism, community and cultural competency, and storytelling. This larger discourse of resistance draws on Black/African American historical structures of resistance. Understanding Black/African American serving domestic violence and rape crisis centers as sites of resistance allows for a deeper understanding of Black/African American women's unique expression of power and domination.



## INTRODUCTION

The mission statements of domestic violence and rape crisis centers (DV/RCC) that serve Black<sup>i</sup>/African American populations are a particularly relevant location of feminist research as they represent a substantial structure of resistance to white patriarchy and gendered violence<sup>ii</sup>. I argue the mission statements of Our House, Jenesse Center, and Black Women's Blueprint have a discourse of resistance articulated through embedded discourses of Black feminism, neoliberalism, community and cultural competency, and storytelling. In turn these discourses of resistance shape philosophies and work practices of DV/RCC<sup>iii</sup>s that serve Black/African American populations. The discourse of resistance leads to conclusions about the multilayered practices of resistance within these agencies, including Black/African American women in leadership challenging dominant notions of power and a Black feminist revisioning of domestic violence and sexual assault service provision work.

In this research I use feminist critical discourse analysis to situate and analyze the discourses present in mission statements of three DV/RCC that serve primarily Black/African American populations in three cities in the United States, politicize those discourses, and put them in conversation with each other (Lazar, 2007). I use a Foucauldian feminist perspective to understand how discourses of discursive patriarchal power are embedded within the mission statements of these agencies, intersectionality theory to understand the unique ways Black/African American women experience intimate partner violence, and (new) material feminism to understand how discourses impact the body, while honoring the framework of *Black Feminist*

*Thought* to consider the lived experiences and subjectivities of survivors of violence who are Black/African American women (Collins, 1990). The three DV/RCC I have included in this project have each been awarded a 2015 Office of Violence Against Women federal grant to provide culturally specific services to domestic violence and/or sexual assault survivors that are Black/African American. My specific focus on centers that provide services to Black/African American populations via the culturally specific populations grant contributes to feminist criminology, research on Black feminisms, intersectionality studies and resistance discourses.<sup>iv</sup>

### **What This Project Contributes**

Feminist activists responded to the growing demand for safe shelter from domestic violence and crisis intervention for sexual assault by developing DV/RCC throughout the 1970s and 1980s. This demand for services was a result of new knowledge and awareness of intimate partner violence sparked by consciousness raising groups, a hallmark of the feminist movement. DV/RCC were founded on radical feminist philosophies born from grassroots activism of the feminist movement. Most centers now include some combination of the following services: 24-hour crisis hotline, emergency shelter, individual counseling, group counseling, 24-hour rape crisis response and community education. Many centers are dual DV/RCC because while domestic violence and sexual assault have separate funding streams, many survivors experience both forms of violence in the context of an abusive relationship. Although intimate partner violence prevention work has been a standard practice at DV/RCC for decades, it has had limited impact in reducing the actual numbers of people who experience abuse, making intimate partner violence a topic of particular urgency as people of all backgrounds in all communities experience violence against women at alarming rates (Black et al, 2011; Jindasurat & Waters, 2015). I find that this urgency calls for more nuanced and complex research to explore the discourses present in the work at

DV/RCC to offer a better understanding of what is happening at the structural level for these agencies.

Through the decades, that radical feminist tradition has shifted as the domestic violence and sexual assault services field has professionalized and become more bureaucratic (Ferraro, 1996; Richie, 2012). Locating the discourses articulated in the mission statements of American domestic violence centers and rape crisis centers will create a richer understanding of how the violence against women prevention and intervention field today articulates concepts of resistance and feminism, concepts vital to the feminist movement since the 1970s. This research also contributes to the larger knowledge project about domestic violence and sexual assault intervention, service provision, and prevention. A more nuanced understanding of agencies' mission statements can further provide information on the structures that shape the discourse around domestic violence and sexual assault. Most important, this project offers a unique perspective as it is specific to agencies that serve culturally specific populations, in this case, Black/African American populations.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

### What Does Resistance Mean?

I use the word resistance intentionally and inclusively. DV/RCC function as institutions, embedded within power structures (the federal government) but offer an internal critique of those power structures. As Andrea Westlund explains in “Pre-Modern and Modern Power: Foucault and the case of Domestic Violence,”

Our modern institutions are capable of facilitating resistance - resistance understood not just in the abstract but in specific relation to allegedly antiquated, but still thriving ‘pre-modern’ bastions of terror and violence (Westlund, 1999, p. 1055).

As Westlund describes institutions, DV/RCC fit this model serving as sites of resistance to physical violence, (pre-modern disciplinary violence in Foucauldian terms), oppressive discourses, and modern disciplinary power as they directly resist intimate partner violence through the provision of intervention services and they resist the dominant cultural structures that allow intimate partner violence to continue through violence prevention education. The simultaneity of pre-modern disciplinary violence and modern disciplinary power result in a complex and multilayered discourse of resistance within the mission statements of DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations. I find that this discourse of resistance draws on black feminisms and intersectionality.

Throughout this research project I use Patricia Hill Collin’s concept of resistance as articulated in *Black Feminist Thought* to provide an understanding of the structure of resistance I

find in the mission statements and other program documents of DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations.

A culture of resistance that is simultaneously Afrocentric and feminist is essential because the Black feminist consciousness nurtured and articulated in this safe space may be all that stands between many Black women and the internalized oppression fostered by our status of the other. ... The presence of a culture of resistance allows Black women to live with the contradictions inherent in being valued individuals in a devalued occupation (Collins, 1990, p. 144).

In this passage Collins is referring specifically to Black women who work as domestic workers in white households and the “independent consciousness” (Collins, 1990, p. 143) they develop to “undermine oppressive institutions” (Collins, 1990, p. 144) in their day to day duties. I find these concepts of resistance applicable to Black/African American serving DV/RCC because they are reflective of a consciousness of resistance that is based on lived experience and practiced with the intention of bringing change to the self and the community (Collins, 1990, p. 111). These ideas of resistance acknowledge the contradictions individuals in marginalized communities live within and the ways the “interlocking nature of oppression” is enacted in the lives and on the bodies of women of color (Collins, 1990). This kind of resistance is specifically relevant to the discourses of the selected DV/RCC’s mission statements because it directly addresses the lived experience of women of color in the United States.

I further call on Kimberle Crenshaw’s notion that “identity continues to be a site of resistance for members of subordinated groups” (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1297) to argue that DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations are themselves sites of resistance which challenge hegemonic notions of masculinity and white supremacy. Within the mission statements and other program documents of these centers I find discourses articulating a culture of resistance specific to Black/African American women that challenges the racism and sexism Black/African American experience and a Black women’s blues tradition. Embedded within the mission statements and

program philosophies of agencies that serve Black/African American populations I find a “positive discourse of self-identification” which resists not only the matrix of domination but also the embedded structural violence of racism, intimate partner violence, and sexism (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1297). Here Crenshaw’s (1991) work connects with Collin’s (1990) work as they both find resistance and empowerment in self-definition. Black/African American serving DV/RCC can actively create space for various Black/African American women’s agentic subjectivities because they value self-definition and lived experiences as a ground of subjugated knowledge and social change. These self-defined subjectivities resist dominant notions of white masculinity while operating within a system of dominant white masculinity, the federal grant program, as they receive federal funds to sustain their agencies.

DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations are an important site of resistance because they represent resistance inside the cultural community and resistance outside the community. For these centers resistance within means resisting discourses of violence against women and the silence around violence against women within Black/African American communities. These centers resist inside by encouraging speaking out about intimate partner violence which pushes back against the culture of silence in Black/African American communities around taboo topics (Collins, 1990; Richie, 2012). This culture of silence prevents individuals from speaking out about violence that happens in the home, or issues of oppression within that group more generally (Collins, 1990; Richie, 2012). Resistance outside means resisting the hegemonic structures of white normativity by privileging, valuing, and taking seriously the lived experiences of Black/African American women. This resists structures of domination embedded within predominantly white institutions, including the federal government. For these centers, resistance

within and resistance outside result in a complex and multilayered discourse of resistance embedded within all their program documents.

### **1970s Radical Feminist Perspective on DV/SA**

Domestic violence and sexual assault intervention and prevention work is a project born of the feminist movement of the late 1960s and 1970s (Ferraro, 1996; Chasteen, 2001; Richie, 2012).<sup>v</sup> As such, the discourse of early domestic violence and sexual assault intervention and prevention work was built on radical feminist ideals and the rhetoric used at the time, making it reflective of that moment in American history. Although it has been criticized for its limitations, Susan Brownmiller's book *Against our Will: Men, Women and Rape* is an excellent example of that radical feminist discourse on intimate partner violence that now exemplifies popular ideas of the 1970s feminist movement (Brownmiller, 1975; Chasteen, 2001). For example, Brownmiller writes in *Against our Will*, "It [rape] is nothing more or less than a conscious process of intimidation by which *all* men keep *all* women in a state of fear" (Brownmiller, 1975, p. 15). Or, "[Rape is] a crime which might be viewed as the ultimate expression of negative attitudes toward, and contempt for, women of all ages" (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 1976, p. 155). Feminist organizing in the 1960s and 1970s and works like Brownmiller's created the domestic violence and sexual assault field along with the new vocabulary of words and phrases that brought many women's experiences with violence into existence and out of silence (Chasteen, 2001; Ferraro, 1996). This creation of the discourse around domestic violence and sexual assault literally gave words to and created knowledge of many women's lived experiences. Although flawed for its lack of inclusion of transwomen and disabled women, a tenet of radical feminism at that time was the intention to naturalize, normalize and validate the embodied experiences of women. *Our Bodies, Ourselves* serves as a hallmark of this philosophy through the essentializing notion that to be a

woman meant having certain bodily, and therefore lived experiences (Boston Women's Health Book Collective, 2011).

Significantly, feminist organizing around domestic violence and sexual assault identified these violences as a social change issue that demanded a broad range of responses. There was little focus on police intervention and criminalization and a considerable focus on peer support and social transformation (Ferraro, 1996). Domestic violence and sexual assault were not individual or family issues but large-scale social problems that reflect social inequities. As the field grew and professionalized, feminist goals and strategies were abandoned for crime prevention strategies and mental health interventions (Chasteen, 2001; Ferraro, 1996; Richie, 2012).

### **How DV/SA Discourse Evolved**

The early discourse of radical feminism in the domestic violence and sexual assault prevention and intervention field has since been co-opted and morphed into a discourse of conservative ideals of crime prevention and strong family values language through mechanisms of governmentality (Ferraro, 1996; Chasteen, 2001). Through Foucault's conceptualization of governmentality—the state exercise of control of the population through regulation—we can see the oppressive impact co-opting the discourse of feminist activism has had on violence against women prevention and intervention work (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984). Throughout the 1980s the discourse and rhetoric of the movement began to reflect governmental regulation and neoliberal ideals of self-sufficiency, thereby manipulating and distorting the feminist focus of the work (Ferraro, 1996). Feminist goals of social change were manipulated into law enforcement arrest and policing strategies. This co-optation of feminist goals, “carried with them the traces of racism and classism permeating the desire to discipline those who transgressed Anglo-Saxon definitions of the family” (Ferraro, 1996, p. 87), further marginalizing women of color and families of color (Richie, 2012).



This evolution moves in conjunction with the professionalization of the field via the implementation of the 1984 Family Violence Prevention and Services Act and later the 1994 Violence Against Women Act. This change in discourse translates into erasing the feminist goals of working towards changing the culture that allows violence to happen while developing feminist resources for people who experience violence (Davis, 2000). Instead, neoliberal discourse constructs domestic violence and sexual assault as personal, intimate family problems that happen on the individual and relationship levels, which in turn diminishes the urgency needed to address the violence. Violence is then established as a problem between an individual abuser and an individual victim/survivor instead of the large-scale social problem it is in actuality (Ferraro, 1996). Feminist scholar, Angela Davis explains,

As the anti-violence movement has been institutionalized and professionalized, the state plays an increasingly dominant role in how we conceptualize and create strategies to minimize violence against women (Davis, 2000, p. 1).

This rhetorical shift further employs mechanisms of neoliberalism and ideologies of sexism -- domestic violence and sexual assault are personal problems and you as an individual survivor of violence must take the responsibility to get yourself out of the abusive situation.

### **Research on Mission Statements**

There is a fair amount of research available on various topics related to the discourse of domestic violence and sexual assault intervention and prevention work but this existing research comes from a broader perspective than the discourse I have researched. This body of literature includes analysis of victim/survivor rhetoric (one must transition from a passive victim to an active survivor), the gendering of domestic violence and sexual assault (it only happens to women), lack of intersectional perspectives in domestic violence law (the law is constructed with the assumption of a white domestic violence survivor) and the field generally (discourse in church settings, offender typologies) (Alcoff & Gray, 1993; Anderson & Umberson, 2001; Berns, 2001; Chasteen,

2001; Morrison, 2006). However, the specific discourse employed by DV/RCC has been minimally researched and never researched in isolation (Ferraro, 1996).

I have found some relevant research in the field of organizational development. Margaret Wheatley draws on scientific chaos theory in her book, *Leadership and the New Science: Discovering Order in a Chaotic World*, using it as a metaphor which she applies to organizations. Using chaos theory she understands organizations as swinging between chaos and order, falling into a pattern of chaotic order. Fairhurst (1993) and Fairhurst, Jordan and Neuwirth (1997) discuss mission or vision statements at corporate organizations as providing the framing for the organization's work. Fairhurst and colleagues (1997) reference Wheatley's chaos theory as applied to organizational development to understand mission statements as providing stability to a tumultuous organization, particularly in chaotic circumstances. Further, the literature finds that mission statements offer organizations a way to manage meaning and create shared language (Fairhurst, 1993; Fairhurst, Jordan & Neuwirth, 1997). McDonald (2007) discusses mission statements specific to non-profit organizations finding that non-profits exist to fill a need that the private sector has not met or cannot meet, therefore they exist to pursue the mission of the organization, and that mission statements help sustain employee commitment. While these are not specific to DV/RCC, I argue they are relevant for this project because DV/RCC typically function in an atmosphere of chaos and must take on some of the bureaucratic characteristics of corporations to meet the demands of federal grant programs.

There is no available research on the specific discourse created through the mission statements and other program documents of DV/RCC. Moreover, there is no available research on the discourses or practices of DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations, or any other specific cultural group. Therefore, this leaves a significant gap in the available literature that

this project seeks to address. The mission statements and program documents of DV/RCC are an important location of analysis as they articulate discourses of feminism and resistance to dominance alongside neoliberal discourses of governmentality and self-sufficiency which reinforce dominant structures of patriarchy and capitalism. Further, the mission statements and program documents of centers that serve Black/African American populations have latent meanings that reflect the specific complex perspectives of Black women working for and with government-funded agencies. I find that the mission statements and other program documents of DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations serve a unique and specific purpose for their organizations. They articulate a nuanced and complex perspective that speaks to the specific needs and positionalities of Black/African American women who have experienced intimate partner violence and anchor the organization, its staff and clients to a larger analysis of how domestic violence and sexual assault impacts Black/African American people and a specific resistance to that violence.

## **POSITIONALITY STATEMENT**

I come into this research from the positionality of being a former staff person at a DV/RCC. In my work I have been in numerous staff positions that have given me the privilege to see the work practices of the agency, and therefore the practical impact of program philosophies, from various perspectives. I come into this research with insider knowledge of the everyday practice and function of DV/RCC and how that is regularly informed by the agency's mission statement and program philosophy. This is a significant part of why I find mission statements and program philosophies a site of particular meaning and relevance. In my work, and in the work of many staff people at DV/RCC, the agency's mission statement and program philosophy serve as the bedrock for decision-making, policy development and organization steering. Staff people should refer to the mission statement and program philosophies for grounding in their individual work and when communicating information about the agency to community members, agency partners and program participants. In this way I bring an insider and outsider perspective to this research. I am an insider as a former DV/RCC staff person, but an outsider as I am not Black/African American. I also bring a feminist perspective to this research topic, just as I brought to my former work at the DV/RCC.

As I have moved forward with this research I have struggled with how to navigate my whiteness through the work. While researching DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations I have been keenly aware of my white privilege and how that connects to the larger matrix of domination. As a white person researching Black/African American community

organizations, I acknowledge that I am interpreting the mission statements and program documents of centers from an outsider perspective and work with the intention of being mindful of my own positionality. My intention is to be reflexive of the imposition of the white gaze as I have made an effort to be anti-racist while implementing an intersectional feminist perspective into this research. I further acknowledge that my whiteness may not allow me to see all the nuance and complexities present in these mission statements and program documents. I have intentionally rooted this work in Black feminisms to maintain an appropriate contextual analysis.

Additionally, I do find tension in this research as the organizations I examined have all been awarded grants by the federal Office of Violence Against Women, a bureaucratic governmental department, which functions within the dominant mechanisms of power - white masculine patriarchal power. My aim is not to take credit for the discourses created by Black/African American women activists who created the mission statements and program which I am examining, but instead to give them a context, situate them in relation to larger discourses, and to engage them in a conversation with each other.

## **THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

My goal has been to put this feminist critical discourse analysis of DV/RCC who serve primarily Black/African American populations mission statements into a theoretical context of intersectionality and Foucauldian understandings of discursive power and material feminisms (Bartky, 1997; Crenshaw, 1989; 1991; Foucault & Rabinow, 1984). I argue that the mission statements and program philosophies of DV/RCC have a direct impact on the bodies and lived experiences of survivors of violence. These program documents shape the philosophy that drives the shelter and counseling programs and in turn the way these programs are structured. Consequently, this shapes the embodied experiences of survivors of violence who are seeking services from those programs. Discursive regimes of power speak through and are made material through the actions of abusers, survivors of violence, and staff of shelters and counseling programs.

### **Discursive Patriarchal Power**

In Sandra Bartky's influential piece "Foucault, Femininity, and the Modernization of Patriarchal Power" (1997), she offers a theorization of the material effects of the Foucauldian concepts of discursive patriarchal power on female bodies. Similar to the effects of discursive patriarchal power which coerce women to adhere to oppressive norms of femininity, domestic violence and sexual assault have material effects on women's bodies which coerce women to surveil and therefore modify their behavior (Bartky, 1997). The body then becomes a site of struggle, and often resistance, for both femininity and intimate partner violence. Just as femininity impacts feminine people and non-feminine people, the material effects of discursive patriarchal

power are experienced by both intimate partner violence survivors and those who have never experienced violence. The threat of domestic violence and sexual assault is always present and impacts the way women navigate the world.

Andrea Cahill extends Bartky's theory of discursive patriarchal power to include rape, and the threat of rape, as an (oppressive) element of femininity and therefore discursive patriarchal power that regulates women's subjectivities and bodies.

The threat of rape, then, is a constitutive and sustained moment in the production of the feminine body. It is the pervasive danger which renders so much public space off-limits, a danger so omnipresent, in fact, that the 'safety zone' which women attempt to create rarely exceeds the limits of their own limbs, and quite often falls far short of that radius (Cahill, 2000, p. 56).

Cahill offers the perspective that as a result of discursive patriarchal power women are rarely safe in their own bodies, which in turn coerces women to alter their behavior in effort to reduce the potentiality of violence on their bodies. Women therefore become responsible for preventing violence on their bodies. This large-scale threat of rape and personal responsibility to prevent your own rape produces docile bodies and therefore depoliticizes violence against women (Foucault & Rabinow, 1984).

Westlund (1999) theorizes a new understanding of intimate partner violence that incorporates Foucault's conceptualization of power as discursive. To describe this individual dynamic of power Jana Sawicki (1999) states, "Individuals and groups do not possess power but rather occupy various and shifting positions in this network of relations," (Sawicki, 1999, p. 191). Westlund finds common ground between the Foucauldian understanding of power and the grassroots feminist understanding of individual power by legitimizing elements of each epistemological approach to argue that domestic violence and sexual assault materialize as both pre-modern power and modern power. Domestic violence and sexual assault constitute pre-modern

power in terms of regulation and punishment enforced through violence, understood as the right to take life, and of modern power in terms of regulation enforced through dominant discourses.

The battered and tortured body of the conquered subject evidence the power of the monarch and the batterer alike, and it is used by both in an ‘exercise of terror’ that makes clear the asymmetrical relation of power between ‘sovereign’ and ‘subject’ (Westlund, 1999, p. 1048).

This asymmetrical relation of power is present in individual abusive relationships and the larger culture that naturalizes gender-based violence. Therefore, the pre-modern and modern power of domestic violence and sexual assault are experienced simultaneously. This concept of Foucauldian discursive patriarchal power is useful for this research to understand the discourses of power embedded within mission statements and within discourses about domestic violence and sexual assault. Often discourses of patriarchal power are not overt; thus, agency mission statements may represent an awareness of the responsibility to patriarchal power, both pre-modern and modern, without explicitly exposing that power. A latent analysis of the discourse can be used to identify these structures of power, such as I have done here (see methodology, below).

### **Material Feminism**

For this work I draw on Stacy Alaimo and Susan Hekman’s theory of (new) material feminism discussed in “Emerging Models of Materiality in Feminist Theory” as a way to understand the “relationship between discourse and matter” (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008, p. 6). This concept is significant to this project as it combines the Foucauldian concept of discourse as power and individual lived/bodily experience. Alaimo and Hekman go on to describe material feminism as incorporating a political perspective by analyzing how “political decisions are scripted onto material bodies” (Alaimo & Hekman, 2008, p. 8). A longstanding feminist structural insight holds that it is important to understand domestic violence and sexual assault as political issues to avoid morphing the violence into an individual or personal problem. Domestic violence and sexual



assault are issues of material feminism as they have actualized material consequences in the lives and on the bodies of those who experience violence, on an individual level and at the community or population level. Literal wounds on the bodies of violence survivors signify their perceived failures to meet the idealized norms of femininity which have been surveilled by their abusers using mechanisms of discursive patriarchal power. While this research project does not study the individual people who experience violence against women, it does take into account cultural discourses—as contained within the mission statements—that articulate understandings of the effects of intimate partner violence. This cultural discourse impacts the ways individual survivors experience intimate partner violence and the provision of social services in response to that violence. Additionally, I argue that the mission statements and other program documents I have included in this research explicitly take into account the lived experiences of survivors of violence.

### **Intersectionality**

Intersectionality theory is also an appropriate theoretical framework for this research project because it makes visible the ways racialized and gendered bodies experience forms of violence and oppression that are made invisible by hegemonic mechanisms of systemic oppression and structural violence (Crenshaw, 1989; 1991). Intimate partner violence is a form of structural and systemic violence that women of color disproportionately experience (Black et al, 2010; Jindasurat & Waters, 2015). Crenshaw's groundbreaking work, "Mapping the Margins: Intersectionality, Identity Politics and Violence Against Women of Color," clearly points to the theoretical reasons why and how women of color disproportionately experience intimate partner violence including systemic racism and sexism. DV/RCC that primarily serve Black/African American populations are intersectional in their practice and philosophy. They take seriously what has systematically been made invisible: violence against Black women. Additionally,

intersectionality offers us an explanation why gender and race cannot be separated in discourses about women of color—their experiences of racism and sexism look different than white women’s experiences of sexism or men of color’s experiences with racism. Importantly, in comparison to white women, women of color disproportionately live in poverty, women living in poverty disproportionality experience domestic violence and sexual assault, and both women of color and women living in poverty are more likely to seek out services from DV/RCC (Black et al, 2011; US Census Bureau, 2016). Meaning, violence against women has a more acute impact and vulnerability for women of color at the structural and systemic level, imparting DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations with particular importance and meaning. Additionally, I want to frame Crenshaw’s intersectionality theory as a material feminism. Considering that identity markers are often visible on the body, including, but not limited to, race, sex/gender, class, and disability, identity is often material and the consequences of identity can be material. Intersectionality accounts for and is theorized around the material and claims the body as a site of struggle and resistance.

Discursive patriarchal power, intersectionality and material feminisms are relevant to this research project as each framework addresses and values the lived experience of individuals, and each politicizes violence against women, understanding it as an oppressive and dominant cultural discourse. These three theoretical frameworks have allowed me to understand the perspectives of, and to locate and frame the discourses of DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations. The discourses found within the agencies’ mission statements represent a conversation between dominant oppressive discourses and discourses of resistance that draw on Black/African American historical resistance.

## METHODOLOGY

To choose which center's mission statements and program documents to include in this analysis I looked to the U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Violence Against Women's 2015 award grantees for the Sexual Assault Services Culturally Specific Grant and the Grant to Enhance Culturally Specific Services for Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Stalking and I chose the agencies whose culturally specific group is identified as Black/African American populations, resulting in a total of three agencies (Grant Programs, 2015). These three agencies, Our House, Jenesse Center, and Black Women's Blueprint, are listed in the table below along with their location, founding year, and identification as a domestic violence and/or rape crisis center (FY 2015 OVW Grant Awards by Program, 2015). While these are the only three Black/African American serving agencies that received one of the two culturally specific grants, these centers are representative of a broad range of geographic locations throughout the United States, type of center, and have a diversity within their program documents giving these centers unique structural similarities and differences.

**Table 1. Black/African American serving DV/RCC.**

Organization Name	Location	Year Founded	DV/RCC
Our House, Inc	Greenville, Mississippi	1995	DV/RCC
Jenesse Center, Inc	Los Angeles, California	1980	DV
Black Women's Blueprint	Brooklyn, New York	2008	RCC

Upon selection of the DV/RCC to include in this analysis I gathered their mission statements and other supporting program documents from their individual websites. To be eligible for a federal grant through the Office of Violence Against Women an organization must be certified as a 501(c)3 charitable organization through the Internal Revenue Services and submit documentation of an established board of directors that reflects the specific cultural community they serve and an established commitment to providing domestic violence and/or sexual assault intervention and prevention services. Interestingly the grant application does not require an agency to submit their mission statement (Grant Programs, 2015). Non-profit agencies typically have a mission statement to provide a philosophical anchor to the organization as it exists to fulfill that mission (McDonald, 2007). The agencies I have chosen to include all have mission statements that are easy to find on their websites and therefore easily accessible to the public. I also include other relevant documents that guide the organization and reflect its philosophy and goals. I broadly call these additional supporting documents “program documents” to create consistency as they all generally function in the same or similar capacities, but they may include an agency’s philosophy, vision statement, guiding values, motto, organization promise, or annual report.

### **Research Question**

Through this project I pose these questions: What is the discourse produced by the mission statements of DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations in the United States? Is a discourse of resistance articulated in these mission statements? How is that discourse articulated? What is the meaning of resistance to DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations?

Using Michelle Lazar’s (2007) theorization of a feminist critical discourse analysis I used guiding and sensitizing questions to code and open-code the various program documents I have collected from agency websites. I used Atlas.ti to code electronically searching for patterns in

language, communication and message which articulate a larger latent discourse. I searched for common language including the words Black/African American, feminism, empowerment, cultural competency, healing, safety, victim/survivor, and community, along with common discourses that include specific cultural references, reference to larger systems of oppression/structural violence, and resistance narratives. I then connected these discourses to relevant feminist theoretical frameworks and concepts to analyze their meaning by using thematic coding and theoretical coding. To practice feminist and critical research I paid particular attention to ideologies of gender and dynamics of social hierarchies within the discourses (Lazar, 2007).

### **Strengths-Based Approach**

Finally, I have chosen to pivot away from a deficit model and instead use a strengths-based approach through this research project. Much of feminist research, particularly research on intimate partner violence, is structured around theorizing and deconstructing problems, failures or generally negative aspects of the topic and related work. While there is a multitude of deficiencies around intimate partner violence, including social service provision and violence prevention strategies that do need to be researched, I do not mean to delegitimize that work. However, for this project I instead choose to problematize that approach by addressing strengths, accomplishments and resistance embedded in the discourse of the organizations I have researched. Then, I discuss how those aspects of resistance are intertwined with recognitions of hegemonic patriarchal power. I find this embedded resistance to be a positive asset that reflects a long tradition of speaking truth to power.

Shelters and advocacy programs that are responsive to the many different voices and needs of battered women are well equipped to support and advance an array of oppositional strategies that resist and destabilize the norms that pathologize and revictimize survivors of domestic violence (Westlund, 1999, p. 1065).

This approach allows us to learn more about what these organizations have done and are capable of, understanding the complexities of their perspective. Lastly, a strengths-based model reflects the style of service provision implemented by DV/RCC staff, and exemplifies the goals of DV/RCC.

## **ABOUT THE GRANTS**

The federal Office of Violence Against Women provides the Sexual Assault Services Culturally Specific grant and the Grant to Enhance Culturally Specific Services for Victims of Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Stalking, their program solicitations each state:

This program creates an opportunity for culturally specific community-based organizations to address the critical needs of sexual assault, domestic violence, dating violence, and stalking victims in a manner that affirms a victim's culture and effectively addresses language and communication barriers. Advocates report that survivors are more inclined to seek services from organizations that are familiar with their culture, language and background and that there is no 'one size fits all' approach to adequately address these critical needs. Culturally specific community-based organizations are more likely to understand the complex, multi-layered challenges and obstacles that victims from their communities face when attempting to access services. Culturally specific community-based organizations are also better equipped to form essential relationships and engage their communities in the creation and implementation of services relevant to the diverse and unique needs of the victims (US DOJ OVW, 2015a, p. 1).

This purpose statement for the grants reveals that the federal government is aware of and responsive to the disproportionate number of women of color who experience and seek services for intimate partner violence. These grants are an institutionalized response to that systemic racial disparity. Importantly, the Office of Violence Against Women has identified that Black/African American communities as a "priority area" as they are an underserved population. However, these two federal grant programs each provide less than \$300,000 annually in funding to awarded organizations, which is a relatively small funding source compared to other federal and state level grant programs. While these grants may seem like a significant example of violence against women

being acknowledged and taken seriously it is also a way the bodies of women of color are highly regulated and undervalued. For better or worse, the grants represent the system of dominant governmentality that shape the way agencies are structured and how they function.



## **FINDINGS**

In this section I describe my research findings for each of the selected agencies. I begin with Our House, Inc, a domestic violence and rape crisis located in Greenville, Mississippi. Next, I describe the findings from Jenesse Center, a domestic violence and rape crisis center located in Los Angeles, California. Then, I describe my findings from Black Women's Blueprint, a racial justice organization that provides rape crisis services in Brooklyn, New York. Finally, I discuss the connections and common themes I found that the three agencies share that more directly address my research questions.

### **Our House**

Our House, Inc, is a domestic violence and rape crisis center located in Greenville, Mississippi. Greenville is a rural community with a population of about 34,000 people, according to the 2010 U.S. Census, and is located along the Mississippi River and Arkansas border, a particularly impoverished region of the south. Although located in Greenville, Our House provides services in 9 other rural counties in Mississippi, a huge geographic region. The services Our House provides are typical of most DV/RCC in the United States and include emergency shelter, counseling, support groups, community education and training, sexual assault response services, legal advocacy and 24-hour crisis hotline (Our House, 2016).

I coded Our House's mission statement, vision statement, fiscal year 2014/2015 annual report and a digital photo album of Our House's history. Interestingly, none of these program documents specifically identify which culturally specific population Our House provides services

to, or how those services are administered in a way that makes them culturally relevant/specific. However, we know Our House's culturally specific population is Black/African American for a variety of reasons. Black/African American populations are identified as an underserved population in the culturally specific grant guidelines; Our House reports that 95% of the clients they provide services to are African American, around 6,000 individuals, (Our House, 2016), and the images throughout Our House's program documents appear to be primarily of Black individuals based on phenotypical traits typically ascribed to African Americans, including stock images and photos posted by Our House. Additionally, the U.S. Census reports that 78% of the residents in Greenville, Mississippi are Black/African American, clearly identifying the location to be a rural Black community.

Most noticeably Our House's mission statement and vision statements are short and seemingly vague. Our House's mission statement,

To eliminate domestic violence and sexual violence through intervention, prevention, prosecution, victim protection and sustainable restoration,

invokes Reagan era tough on crime rhetoric by articulating their goals through the use of the language "prosecution" and "victim protection" (Our House, 2016). I find that this discourse has latent meanings of reproducing norms of whiteness and ideologies of neoliberalism through the use of crime rhetoric, which will be further discussed in the following section. None of Our House's program documents specifically mention feminism(s) or feminist perspectives, something I expected to find present because Our House was founded in 1980, placing its origins in the historical era of the feminist and battered women's movements. Additionally, Our House's annual report is incredibly transparent, with the bulk of pages being scans of financial documents, including annual audits, which speaks to the small amount of funding they receive, less than \$1,000,000 a year, to provide services to residents of a 10 county region.

## **Jenesse Center**

Jenesse Center is a domestic violence center located in Los Angeles, California and provides services typical of most domestic violence centers in the country, including emergency shelter, 24-hour crisis hotline, counseling, support groups, legal advocacy, children's programs and community education (Jenesse Center, 2013). My analysis of Jenesse Center included their mission statement, program philosophy, agency history, annual report for fiscal year 2012/2013, and fundraising briefing. Similar to Our House, Jenesse Center surprisingly has no overt mention of Black/African American populations in their program documents. However, we know their culturally specific population is Black/African American because in Jenesse Center's 2012/2013 annual report they report their client population is 65% Black/African American (and 30% Latina). However, Jenesse Center's mission statement does identify that they provide "culturally responsive" services to survivors of domestic violence,

Jenesse's mission is to provide victims of domestic violence and their children with a comprehensive centralized base of support that is culturally responsive, and ensures their transition from immediate crisis to stability and self-sufficiency. Jenesse seeks to prevent and end the cycle of domestic violence through youth programming, education, public awareness and outreach initiatives, public policy and advocacy strategies and collaboration with key partners (Jenesse Center, 2013).

Jenesse Center also mentions that the organization was founded by "five African American women who were survivors of domestic violence" in their fundraising briefing. Additionally, like Our House, the images on Jenesse Center's website are largely of Black women and families, and throughout their program documents terms like "community" and "culturally sensitive" appear to be codes for race. This coding of language will be further discussed in the next section.

## **Black Women's Blueprint**

The discourses and structure of Black Women's Blueprint (BWB) are significantly different from Our House and Jenesse Center. BWB is a feminist racial justice advocacy

organization that provides sexual assault crisis response services in Brooklyn, New York. BWB is not a typical DV/RCC in that they do not provide some of the hallmark services of DV/RCC like emergency shelter or counseling. However, similar to most DV/RCC they do provide extensive community education, although with a different perspective than typical DV/RCC. BWB's community education work addresses the unique and complex positionalities of Black women by framing violence against women as within the matrix of domination. BWB's mission statement and additional program documents are the most complex and theoretical of the three agencies included in this research. They specifically claim a feminist philosophy and transnational feminist influence, and call on well-known Black feminist theorists including Kimberlé Crenshaw and bell hooks (Black Women's Blueprint, 2015). BWB additionally specifically identifies as building resistance to the racialized and gendered violence Black women experience.

## DISCUSSION OF THEMES

### Black Feminism

Most compellingly, what we know these three agencies all have in common is valuing Black/African American women, their voices, their perspectives and taking seriously the violence that happens to Black/African American women. This valuation and prioritization of Black/African American women reflects a Black feminist discourse. I understand Black feminism based on Patricia Hill Collins' (1990) conceptualization,

Black feminist thought consists of specialized knowledge created by African-American women which clarifies a standpoint of and for Black women. In other words, Black feminist thought encompasses theoretical interpretations of Black women's reality *by those who live it*, (Collins, 1990, p. 22).

Here Collin's articulates that Black feminism is grounded in Black women's unique and specific standpoint. This means Black feminism values Black/African American women's lived experiences, considers Black/African American women the experts in their own lives, and locates the lived experience as a site of knowledge creation. Collins goes on to describe Black feminist as reflecting "the thematic content of African-American women's experience," (Collins, 1990, p. 201), and as "best viewed as a subjugated knowledge," (Collins, 1990, p. 202), because it has been suppressed by traditional sites of knowledge which are typically dominated by white men. I infer that the DV/RCC included in this research engage in Black feminism because they are rooted in the standpoints of Black/African American women. Indeed it is this emphasis on Black/African

American women's standpoint epistemology that I have used to search for Black feminist discourse.

Yet, the expression, or inference, of this Black feminist discourse is different for each of the three agencies. Unlike predominantly white social services agencies, Our House, Jenesse Center, and Black Women's Blueprint appear to prioritize Black/African American women and acknowledge the racialized gendered violence Black/African American women uniquely experience. Black Women's Blueprint is the most clear and forthright in this prioritization as "Black women" is in the title of the organization, and in statements like the one below,

We work to develop a culture where women of African descent are fully empowered and where gender, race and other disparities are erased. We engage in progressive research, historical documentation, support movement building and organize on social justice issues steeped in the struggles of Black women within their communities and within dominant culture (Black Women's Blueprint, 2015).

Our House and Jenesse Center do not plainly state their prioritization of Black/African American women but each have unique subtleties that allow us to infer this prioritization. For example, we can interpret a value of Black/African American women through the images on their agency websites and program documents. An image of a Black/African American woman on the beach looking at the ocean is used as the cover photo on Jenesse Center's annual report, and is used multiple times throughout the annual report, fundraising briefing and agency website as a visual theme. Jenesse Center's annual report, fundraising briefing and website also prominently feature images of Black/African American women and children to represent clients, staff, and donors. While Our House's annual report does not include many images, the images included in the annual report and on the agency's website are largely of Black/African American women and children. Though Black/African American women are not explicitly prioritized in Our House and Jenesse Center's program documents, the agencies' visual discourse communicates that prioritization.

I find a latent feminist discourse among the three agencies researched, although, Black Women's Blueprint is the only agency of the three that does specifically identify as a feminist organization and its philosophy as rooted in feminist theories. BWB's Framework for Liberation statement offers a rich explanation of their Black feminist philosophy,

Black Women's Blueprint is a transnational Black feminist organization which celebrates and seizes the opportunities of the African diaspora, all while mourning of the violent conditions that created it. Initially borne of the slave trade and the Middle Passage, and expanded by contemporary crisis on, and migration from, the African continent, the diaspora contains multitudes of individual testimonies which, when united, derive our true power as Black women. Black Women's Blueprint recognizes that uneven power relationships often exist between and among the many nations from which Black women come. We especially know how cross-border flows of ideologies, capital, politics, and power link Black women in varying ways. These flows define the choices Black women have on how and when to speak truth to power and fight back against what bell hooks calls 'neo-colonial white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.' Black women often lead complicated and contradictory lives and there is no one-size-fits-all solution for the challenges we face. Our work merges transnational feminisms of the global South with an American Black feminist ethos of intersectionality knowing that, at different turns, each of us may rise and fall with great (un)privilege. In some moments, something about us might give us greater access than our sister. In those same moments, we remember how important it is to be our sister's keeper - across borders, across difference, across generations (Black Women's Blueprint, 2015).

Here we can see BWB specifically frames itself as a Black feminist organization and connects their work and perspective to Black/African American historical oppression. Although Our House and Jenesse Center do not have philosophy statements as complex and as clearly rooted in theoretical frameworks like BWB, I argue that all three organizations have feminist discourses and a feminist praxis because they each name violence against Black women as domestic violence or sexual assault, therefore bringing it into public domain (Davis, 1998, p. 28). For example, from Jenesse Center's mission statement,

Jenesse's mission is to provide victims of domestic violence and their children with a comprehensive centralized base of support that is culturally responsive (Jenesse Center, 2013).

Here, Jenesse Center has put intimate partner violence into the public domain, making it visible and available for critique, therefore pushing back against the culture of silence around intimate partner violence and silence around “personal” problems in the Black/African American communities (Collins, 1990; Ritchie, 2012). In this way these DV/RCC exemplify the feminist philosophy that the personal is political and an intersectional philosophy as they politicize the violence Black/African American women experience. While Our House and Jenesse Center do not claim a feminist philosophy, I argue that valuing Black/African American women’s unique standpoint and understanding them within the complex structure of racism and sexism, including their experience with domestic violence and sexual assault, engages these organizations with a Black feminist discourse.

These agencies deploy an intersectional praxis because they make visible what is typically invisible—the specific way *Black/African American women* experience racialized violence against women. Throughout the program documents of BWB and Jenesse Center each agency clearly states that providing culturally sensitive or culturally competent services to survivors of violence will lead to more success and healing for clients in their programs. When we read culture as being coded for race, Black/African American in the case of these centers, we can see that they value an intersectional praxis. From Jenesse Center’s program philosophy, “Clients should receive culturally sensitive and culturally competent services” (Jenessee Center, 2016). This is the same rhetoric seen in the solicitations for the grants, which is noteworthy as it potentially means that the experience of advocates influenced the shape of the federal grants. This is especially possible given that in the grant solicitation advocates’ experiences with clients are mentioned to establish legitimacy for the specificity of the grant (hence the excerpt quoted above). At the same time, none of the three agencies mention provision of services to LGBTQ<sup>vi</sup> populations, marking a distinct



limitation to their intersectional analysis. However, BWB does include sexual orientation as one of the multiple determinants that shape Black/African American women's identities, and therefore shape Black/African American women's specific experiences of oppressive gendered violence in their statement on the History of the Organization (Black Women's Blueprint, 2015). This general omission of queer identities overall is interestingly reflective of the taboo and consequential silence around LGBTQ issues in Black/African American communities (Collins, 1990; Ritchie, 2012).

### **Neoliberalism**

All three agencies studied also use neoliberal discourses to articulate their vision of success and healing for their clients. For instance, success for clients is understood as financial independence or economic self-sufficiency, independent housing and employment. In this statement from Jenesse Center's fundraising briefing we can see the connection clearly stated,

Employment and education are two very important allies in breaking the cycle of violence. Women who feel empowered through employment and education are more likely to become self-sufficient and successful once they leave. This is why Jenesse Center has created its own Economic Freedom Vocational Education curriculum that is geared towards our clients' unique economic, social and cultural needs (Jenesse Center, 2013).

It is implied that with financial independence or economic self-sufficiency a client will be healed from their traumatic experience of intimate partner violence and blatantly stated that they will be more self-sufficient and therefore successful. This defines success and healing for clients in a framework of neoliberalism.

To understand neoliberalism I use Lisa Duggan's theorization of the concept from her book *The Twilight of Equality?: Neoliberalism, cultural politics and the attack on democracy* (Duggan, 2012). I understand neoliberalism as a system of depoliticized economic and law enforcement policies and practices which ignore the social disparities they create and exacerbate. Neoliberal ideals, embedded within the system of policies and practices, are oppressive, particularly for

individuals in the most vulnerable positions in society, like Black/African American women who have experienced domestic violence and/or sexual assault, because,

Class and racial hierarchies, gender and sexual institutions, religious and ethnic boundaries are the channels through which money, political power, cultural resources and social organization flow. The *economy* cannot be transparently abstracted from the *state* or the *family* (Duggan, 2012, p. xiv).

Meaning, while neoliberal systems of policies and practices are thought of as economic and safety drivers, and therefore separate from “identity and cultural politics,” they never actually are because one’s identity, and therefore position in the social hierarchy, is shaped by one’s economic situation (Duggan, 2012, p. xii). For Black/African American women seeking services at DV/RCC, and other marginalized populations, neoliberalism results in a stronger emphasis on personal/individual responsibility within a structure of deeper inequality, specifically including deep economic disparity.

Self-sufficiency, financial freedom, employment, and permanent housing are some of the words that articulate the discourse of neoliberal ideals found in this research. Within the documents of all three agencies success and healing (becoming a survivor as opposed to a victim) were defined by ideals of neoliberalism. For example, from Jenesse Center, Executive Director, Karen Earl’s statement in their annual report,

The journey [of understanding Jenesse Center is more than a shelter], included understanding that many women stayed in violent homes because they did not have job skills. Others stayed because there were so few options available to them. A pathway to self-sufficiency is an essential component of our program (Jenesse Center, 2013, p. 3).

Here we can see the failure to meet the requirement of individual personal responsibility, a primary tenet of neoliberal ideals, is understood to be a significant factor that keeps an individual in an abusive relationship. Meeting that requirement of personal responsibility is a substantial component of the agency’s definition of healing and success. While any one or more of these neoliberal ideals is not oppressive in itself, this is a narrow definition of success which is often

challenging to attain for many survivors of violence, particularly those who live in poverty and therefore have had fewer education or job opportunities.

Here we can link the feminist Foucauldian understanding of discursive patriarchal power, as a regime of power embedded into discourses which impact lived experiences of women of color, to neoliberalism. In Lila Abu-Lughod's 1990 article, "The romance of resistance: tracing transformations of power through Bedouin women," she discusses the paradox of resistance. As Ali Bedouin women find themselves in, Abu-Lughod describes instances of Bedouin women resisting the patriarchal structure of their community in a variety of ways, including rejecting arranged marriages, reciting songs and poetry that "make fun of men and manhood," and purchasing nightgowns and nail polish (as opposed to wearing traditional Bedouin garb) (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 50). While these acts all push back against patriarchal power in the Bedouin community, wearing nightgowns and nail polish are "neither outside of nor independent from the systems of power," and domination (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 50). Reciting songs and poetry that make fun of men, on the other hand, offer an "oppositional discourse within their original [Bedouin] social context" (Abu-Lughod, 1990, p. 50). According to Abu-Lughod, this means wearing nightgowns and nail polish, while a form of resistance within the community, coalesce with Western patriarchal norms of femininity and therefore with norms of Western patriarchal power. Each approach exemplifies embedded discourses of hegemonic power that further marginalize both people who coalesce with the dominant discourse and those who do not.

The impact of these oppressive discourses is further deepened for women who have survived intimate partner violence and are seeking services from a social service agency. I aim to use this paradox of resistance to further understand the discourse of neoliberalism within these agencies' discourses and illustrate the nuanced resistance that shapes their structure. These

neoliberal ideals like, economic self-sufficiency and permanent housing, are easily identified as forms of resistance for survivors of intimate partner violence as they imply separation from the abusive partner, stability and a life without violence. However, these ideals are sometimes unattainable for survivors of violence, and when they are achieved they are often precarious. These neoliberal ideals also reinforce and reify oppressive regimes of power, including norms of whiteness and capitalism. Becoming economically self-sufficient does not look the same for all people and all locations, but the phrase invokes an idealized white person or family residing in an idealized white suburban community. Additionally, this discourse narrows our understanding of a survivor's healing or success to their ability to achieve a proscribed personal financial situation that is complicit with the system of capitalism.

### **Community and Cultural Competency**

Discourses of community were invoked many times in the program documents of each organization included in this research project, although community was never defined or specifically described by any of the three agencies (nor in either grant solicitation). Community can be understood in these documents in multiple ways: as a community of survivors of violence against women, survivors and their loved ones, as the larger Black/African American population, as Black survivors of violence against women, as the residents of that locality/city/region, as the group of individuals who have received services from the agency or as any mix of these examples. For example, from Jenesse Center Executive Director Karen Earl's statement in the annual report,

If we are to achieve our mission to end domestic violence, we know that the entire community must be involved in the discussion and solutions to address the violence in our homes (Jenesse Center, 2013).

We can see here that community can have a variety of different meanings, but most likely we are meant to read this as a reference to Black/African American communities. I read the documents to use the language of community in a vague and ambiguous way on purpose, so the reader can apply

their own understanding of community. This could likely be a practical tactic to appeal to potential donors and clients. However these agencies define community, Patricia Hill Collins informs us that Black/African American communities “stand in opposition” to dominant white hegemonic notions of community and that Black/African American women have used Afrocentric ideals to create community that empowers its members (Collins, 1990, p. 223).

Connected to this ambiguous discourse of community, I did find cultural competency or cultural sensitivity to be a significant and also ambiguous discourse present in the program documents. Throughout all of Jenesse Center’s program documents the language “culturally sensitive,” “culturally responsive,” or “culturally competent” is used to describe the agency’s unique provision of services, which can also be read as providing services specific to Black/African American populations. However, how or what makes those services culturally specific is not included. This statement from Jenesse Center’s annual report under the heading “Experts in Cultural Competency” exemplifies this finding,

Jenesse Center was founded on the premise that you must understand the culture of the women, men, and children that you serve. Jenesse was one of the first organizations to begin a national discussion on the importance of culturally competent domestic violence services. Jenesse is also one of the pioneers in the implementation of programs and services that are designed to meet our clients where they are, and encompass their social, economic, and cultural background (Jenesse Center, 2013).

Here we see that indeed, the notion of “culture” appears to substitute for “race” in the documents in ways that potentially homogenize both. I want to specifically link these ambiguous discourses of community and culture here as they appear to both represent Black/African American. Whether community and culture represent Black/African American or not, they are concepts that at least overlap or interlock with each other as communities are typically formed around some kind of a shared culture and/or cultural element.

Further, community discourse and cultural competency can be linked to Crenshaw's intersectionality and notion that identity is a site of resistance. These two discourses both invoke latent understandings of strength and comfort in being part of something that is bigger than yourself and finding pride in an identity marker that is marginalized within dominant society; in this case, specifically a community of Black/African American women who have experienced intimate partner violence. Crenshaw notes,

The intersectional experience is greater than the sum of racism and sexism, any analysis that does not take intersectionality into account cannot sufficiently address the particular manner in which Black women are subordinated (Crenshaw, 1989, p. 140).

This means that for women seeking services at a Black/African American serving DV/RCC, identity is already always marked as marginalized by race, gender and victimization and that community and cultural competency discourses must have an intersectional framework to adequately provide services to Black/African American women. Embracing these marginalized identities acknowledges the greater sum of Black/African American women's experience of racism and sexism and is therefore an act of self-definition rooted in the lived experience of Black/African American women. This embracing of identity for Black/African American women is an act of resistance as it pushes back against the dominant white patriarchy.

It is also important to avoid homogenizing Black/African American populations and note that there is not a monolithic Black/African American community, but in fact there is a diversity of Black communities. Often, there are diverse Black communities within one city or region. It is also important to acknowledge that Black/African American women are not a monolith. While many Black/African American women share similar lived experiences based on the racialized way they are gendered, those experiences are not all the same. The myth of a monolithic Black community is an easily made assumption based on dominant discourses (when they do include communities of color). Moreover, this is the rhetoric seen in in OVW grant and other federal

documents. This assumption of a monolithic Black/African American community works to erase the complex agentic subjectivities of Black/African American women. As quoted above from BWB's Framework for Liberation statement, "Black women often lead complicated and contradictory lives and there is no one-size-fits-all solution for the challenges we face," Black Women's Blueprint, 2016). This is an important statement as it subtly acknowledges that dominant domestic violence and sexual assault intervention and prevention work has not been developed from an intersectional perspective and that Black/African American women face unique challenges and their perspectives should be included in the development of domestic violence and sexual assault program structure.

### **Storytelling and Black Women's Blues**

Significantly, all three agencies describe healing and therefore closure in the tradition of speaking out about the violence their clients have experienced. Domestic violence and sexual assault speak-outs have long been a tradition of the battered women's movement, and for these Black/African American serving agencies speaking out draws on this history and an even longer history of Afrocentric communication and the oral tradition of storytelling (Collins; 1990; Davis; 1998). Here we can contextualize speaking out about intimate partner violence in terms of material feminism and discursive patriarchal power. Material feminism allows us to understand how discourses speak through actions and are materialized on the body. When a survivor tells the story of the abuse she has experienced she is telling the story of how regimes of discursive patriarchal power have materialized on her body. Importantly, these stories consistently are about how one has survived the violence she experienced, which adds an important nuance of resistance in the context of victimization. In this act of storytelling she is practicing Afrocentric communication by self-defining and speaking truth about power, specifically about regimes of patriarchal power.

Storytelling was the most significant and most surprising finding of this research. Discourses of storytelling were prominent in each of Our House, Jenesse Center, and Black Women's Blueprint's program documents, both in that the program documents included stories and encouraged the act of storytelling. All agencies included stories from the individual perspectives of survivors about their experiences with intimate partner violence or seeking services for violence and finding hope and/or healing from those services. Furthermore, many stories were from the perspectives of staff people or board of directors members discussing seeing survivors of violence come to the agency for services or of their experiences providing services. All three agencies included their agency's history, which I read as stories of how the grassroots battered women's movement got started and why the founders are passionate about the work the agency does. I find this discourse of storytelling about intimate partner violence and DV/RCC work to be an act of speaking truth to power and therefore an act of resistance. For example,

There is unity in the core team at Our House. They have a special connection. They laugh, pray and tell spiritually uplifting stories while they work. They have many stories about their organizing and the creative ways in which they have accomplished certain tasks. The staff are linked by a common goal that helps them work tirelessly to bring the same unity and joy to the individuals and families in their community (Our House, 2016, p. 2).

This statement from Our House's history photo album explains specifically that storytelling helps create connection, motivate, inspire and shares a common truth about domestic violence and sexual assault intervention and prevention work. Here we see that storytelling is a way to create community and camaraderie among the staff. Considering the adverse emotional impact working with survivors of intimate partner violence can have, creating community, camaraderie and maintaining motivation for the work can be challenging, but is necessary. Our House's annual report includes this message from executive director and co-founder, Dr. Patricia Ann Davenport,

We are not ashamed to speak out against violence against women, children and men. We empower our survivors by letting know they are not alone. It takes prevention and



intervention services to end the cycle of violence. We believe that our voices will bring a healing to the hurting. It is time for peace (Our House, 2016).

Here we can see speaking out, or storytelling, is encouraged as an act of resistance that will create healing for individuals and the community. Speaking out is seen as a form of violence prevention and intervention work that directly pushes back on the dominant oppressive culture. I find that this statement, and statements like this, resist regimes of discursive patriarchal power by offering a counter narrative that encourages survivors of violence to assert their own individual agency instead of conforming to the norms of oppressive femininity, specifically, feeling at risk of violence in one's own body (Cahill, 2000).

Black Women's Blueprint has the most unique and specific storytelling discourse. Storytelling discourse is embedded within BWB's program documents and is a foundational to BWB's hallmark activity, a program called the Black Women's Truth and Reconciliation Commission (BWTRC). The goal of the BWTRC is to create a space for Black women to tell their story of experiencing sexual violence with the intention of sharing truth to work towards individual and community healing. The intention of this process of storytelling, or truth telling, is to work towards developing a framework for reconciliation and justice for Black women survivors of violence against women. Here BWB's statement on Cultural Preservation of Indigenous Knowledges shapes how we can understand storytelling as an act of resistance and healing that draws on Black community practices and Black/African American historical forms of resistance.

We center spirituality in all of our work and emphasize traditional and communal ways of being, knowing, healing, learning and loving that sustained our ancestors as they were forced across the Atlantic. We make, perform, practice, move, create, and story-tell in our own past and present image(s) to resist the erasure and ongoing colonization of our cultural practices (Black Women's Blueprint, 2015).

Women are invited to share their stories by submitting them in writing on the agency's website or sharing them in person at a Black Women's Truth and Reconciliation Commission Tribunal.

Interestingly, BWB does not define what reconciliation or justice means for Black women in regards to sexual assault, but they do acknowledge that they have no definition and are working on developing that through the process of sharing and collecting Black women's stories of violence.

I find that this discourse of storytelling connects to the African American oral tradition and to Black women's blues. Patricia Hill Collins discusses Black women's blues as African American oral tradition, which is a type of Afrocentric communication, because the blues are used to express and define Black women's unique standpoints and positionality through storytelling and emotionality in song (Collins, 1990, p. 100).

Blues was not just entertainment - it was a way of solidifying community and commenting on the social fabric of Black life in America (Collins, 1990, p. 99).

In *Blues Legacies and Black Feminism* Angela Y. Davis argues Black women's blues, particularly that of Gertrude Ma Rainey, Bessie Smith and Billie Holiday, are prefeminist as they name and articulate Black women's lived experiences from the perspective of Black women through song before feminism and feminist theories were articulated (Davis, 1998, p. 24). Both Collins and Davis argue that Black women naming and articulating their experiences and standpoint in the blues are examples of Black women defining themselves and contextualizing their own experiences. This relates to Crenshaw's argument that identity is a site of resistance because in this tradition of Black women's blues songs are typically sung in a way that emphasizes the singer's identity as a Black woman, while highlighting the tension the narrator of the song is experiencing (Davis, 1998). This typically includes a performance of the song that is sarcastic, angry, sad, or revengeful. These songs importantly speak truth to power, a form of resistance particularly relevant to blues song which discuss domestic violence.

The notion of community as it relates to storytelling can be troubled by incorporating Beth Richie's conceptualization of the trap of loyalty, from her book *Arrested Justice: Black women, violence, and America's prison nation*. The trap of loyalty is a useful tool to understand the nuanced dynamics of Black women's resistance to male violence in these DV/RCC. Richie describes the trap of loyalty as a "racialized and gendered loyalty - a set of cultural mandates that exploit women's commitment to their intimate relationships and to members of their households" (Richie, 2012, p. 36). In this way the trap of loyalty, endorsed by the community, is used as a way to manipulate Black women into remaining silent about the intimate partner violence they have experienced from Black men to maintain the myth that Black men are in a more vulnerable position than Black women, therefore, remaining loyal to their abusive partners (Ritchie, 2012, p. 44). The trap of loyalty functions as an apparatus that silences women in the "Black community in an effort to create the illusion of racial solidarity" (Ritchie, 2012, p. 152). This dynamic holds Black women accountable for racial uplift at the expense of themselves. In this way we can use the framework of the trap of loyalty to better understand how the storytelling discourse of Our House, Jenesse Center and BWB are resistant within Black/African American communities because. In the act of storytelling the silence about intimate partner violence that the trap of loyalty requires for Black/African American women is rejected. Considering the historical tradition of storytelling and Black women's blues, the trap of loyalty is flipped by making speaking out about violence a celebrated act of Afrocentric communication, a way to create solidarity among Black/African American survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault.

## CONCLUSION

My intention for this research has been to put DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations in conversation with each other and to politicize their discourses. My primary research question through this project has been: What is the discourse produced by the mission statements of domestic violence and rape crisis centers that serve Black/African American populations? I chose to include additional supporting documents including vision statements and annual reports to supplement the mission statements and add more context to the discourses. Through this thesis I have argued that Our House, Jenesse Center and Black Women's Blueprint are engaging in feminist work and have discourses of resistance embedded in their program documents. This larger discourse of resistance manifests through latent discourses of Black feminism, neoliberalism, community and cultural competency and storytelling. A discourse of Black feminism emerged through valuing Black/African American women and by naming domestic violence and sexual assault, therefore bringing it into public discourse. Identifying intimate partner violence against Black/African American women as such speaks back to discursive patriarchal power which encourages women to maintain silence. Discourses of neoliberalism manifested through agencies' definition of success for clients framed as economic self-sufficiency and employment. While this discourse hinges on regimes of discursive power it also advocates for women to leave their abusive relationship and seek safety, therefore resisting the ongoing abuse they have experienced. Discourses of community and cultural competency incorporate an intersectional theoretical standpoint by finding community as a location of resistance for Black/African American women

and considering the unique way Black/African American women experience domestic violence and/or sexual assault. A discourse of storytelling was found through an emphasis on speaking out about the violence one has experienced. This act of storytelling speaks truth to power by resisting oppressive norms of femininity, such as the trap of loyalty, that encourage women to remain silent. Storytelling is also linked to material feminism as narratives about experiences of intimate partner violence are stories of how discursive patriarchal power has impacted the body and shaped the lived experience.

While no discourse of resistance is perfect, including the one found in this research project, this one does assert that Black/African American women survivors of domestic violence and rape have agentic positionalities, which is an important step in making DV/RCC intersectional and anti-racist. Collins' description of levels of resistance and oppression are relevant to this discourse of resistance:

People experience and resist oppression on three levels: the level of personal biography; the group or community level of the cultural context created by race, class, and gender; and the systemic level of social institutions. Black feminist thought emphasizes all three levels as sites of dominance and each as potential sites of resistance (Collins, 1990, p. 227).

This is important as it allows us to contextualize the multilayered discourses of resistance found in the mission statements and other program documents of Our House, Jenesse Center and Black Women's Blueprint. These tiers of resistance include resistance to patriarchal structures within Black/African American communities and culture, resistance within, and resistance to white patriarchy, resistance outside.

Various implications can be drawn from this research and its conclusions. Most importantly is that these centers represent sites where Black/African American women are encouraged to be in a position of power and leadership. Our House, Jenesse Center and Black Women's Blueprint were

each founded by Black/African American women and have Black/African American women in executive leadership positions. According to Collins,

African American women have overtly rejected theories of power based on domination in order to embrace an alternative vision of power based on a humanist vision of self-actualization, self-definition, and self-determination (Collins, 1990, p. 224).

This means that these centers and the women managing them challenge existing structures of power domination in ways that work towards diminishing and eliminating the structural oppression Black/African American women experience. This helps us understand the underlying structure of resistance built into the philosophies of these organizations. Additionally, we can understand the discourses of resistance embedded within the mission statements and program documents of Black/African American serving DV/RCC reflect Black/African American women's history of resistance to racism and sexism. Black/African American women have been systematically marginalized in the Americas for centuries; as a result, practices of resistance have often been survival tactics. These survival tactics include the development of Afrocentric communication, the oral tradition and later Black women's blues, communal structures, and self-determination. This implication gives broader historical context to the discourse of resistance found in the mission statements and program documents studied which can potentially lead to new research questions. Further research could be completed on how DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations provide culturally relevant services to their clients; on the discourses of other DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations; on differences between Black/African American serving social services agencies in rural versus urban areas; and on social service agencies that provide services to other cultural and/or ethnic groups, to name a few.

A second, but important, implication of this research is that DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations are examples of the future of Black/African American feminist activism and Black/African American feminist responses to violence against women. In

Richie's (2012) chapter, "Feminist Response to Male Violence" she describes a "Black feminist anti-violence praxis" as responding to Black women "being silenced by mainstream organizations" in the battered women's movement (Richie, 2012, p. 143). I find that the organizations included in this research enact Richie's concept of a "Black feminist anti-violence praxis" by engaging with feminism, Black feminist theory, and a Black feminist resistance. Richie later describes multiple suggestions for a Black feminist response to violence against women; one of those suggestions is the implementation of culturally competent services. She suggests culturally competent services would ensure,

that the interventionists are trained to read and respond to nonverbal cues, that different patterns of social interaction and interpretations of social reality are understood and legitimized in the healing process, and that external macro forces that contribute to micro experiences are factored into the analysis and response,

to violence against women (Richie, 2012, p. 164). This gives us a better idea of what culturally competent services look like for these Black/African American serving centers and how culturally competent services would better serve Black/African American clients. As a result of the marginalization that makes Black/African American women particularly vulnerable to violence, particularly, intimate partner violence, survival is an act of resistance. These organizations cultivate survival for Black/African American women as they cultivate resistance among Black/African American women.

I was surprised not to find a specific discourse of feminism articulated in the mission statements and other program documents I researched as DV/RCC were born of the feminist movement (particularly, Our House, as it was founded during the battered women's movement). However, this omission may be reflective of the battered women's movement's lack of inclusion of Black/African American women, or women of color generally. Also, I was surprised to find that

all agencies use both the terms victim and survivor throughout all of their program documents, reflecting the trope that one is a victim who must become a survivor.

There were a number of limitations to this research including scope, and my assumptions and positionality. While this project does offer an in-depth analysis on the three agencies chosen, with more time and funding the research could be expanded to include all DV/RCC that serve Black/African American populations or agencies that have been awarded one of the two OVW grants to provide services to culturally specific communities. My primary assumption in this research has been that these agencies have genuine benevolent intent to fulfill their mission statement and provide quality domestic violence and sexual assault services to a predominantly Black/African American women population. Lastly, my location as a white academic researching Black/African American communities is a potential limitation, as it is possible I was unaware of some embedded discourses or latent meanings because I am not a member of that community.

By discussing the unique ways Black/African American DV/RCC have organized a response to violence against women, this research contributes broadly to feminist criminology, intersectional research and resistance discourses. More specifically, the analysis of mission statements and other supporting program documents I have provided here adds a more complex and intersectional perspective to research on the discourses within domestic violence and sexual assault service provision work and feminist non-profit systems of response. Future research could be completed on the provision of feminist culturally competent social services work in general, or on DV/RCC specifically, to develop best practices within various communities of color. Congruently, other research could be completed on discourses embedded within the mission statements of other racial or cultural groups DV/RCC in the United States (for example, Native



American or Asian American) or in other countries with the incorporation of a transnational feminist perspective.

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**APPENDIX A:**  
**OUR HOUSE, INC**

Agency Website: <http://www.ourhousevoices.com/vision-mission>

Vision Statement

A world free of interpersonal violence

Mission Statement

To eliminate domestic violence and sexual violence through intervention, prevention, prosecution, victim protection and sustainable restoration.

Annual report --- [http://media.wix.com/ugd/a1b95e\\_143f8766c5f3444f953b03854270b6e5.pdf](http://media.wix.com/ugd/a1b95e_143f8766c5f3444f953b03854270b6e5.pdf)

## **APPENDIX B:**

### **BLACK WOMEN'S BLUEPRINT**

Agency Website: <http://www.blackwomensblueprint.org/mission.html>

#### **Vision Statement and Mission Statement**

Black Women's Blueprint envisions a world where women and girls of African descent are fully empowered and where gender, race and other disparities are erased.

We work to place Black women and girls' lives as well as their particular struggles squarely within the context of the larger racial justice concerns of Black communities and are committed to building movements where gender matters in broader social justice organizing so that all members of our communities gain social, political and economic equity. We engage in progressive research, historical documentation, policy advocacy and organizing steeped in the struggles of Black women within their diverse communities and within dominant culture.

#### **History of the Organization**

We began meeting in sister circles in 2008 in living rooms, backyards and around kitchen tables, where we grappled with the state of Black women in the U.S. across ethnicity/nationality, class, sexual orientation, identity, etc. Our main focus was the 2008 Democratic Primaries. While we developed our personal, critical consciousness, parallel to this process was the political and public debate around the Obama/Clinton primary elections where Black women were being asked whether we were voting our race or our gender. Both democratic candidates presented their "blueprints" for change but neither took full stock of the particular problems Black women are facing within their communities and in greater society (gender-violence, poverty, the over-criminalization of black women and girls among others). What was manifesting itself was the cultural tendency to erase Black women by conceptualizing white women as speaking on behalf of the rights of the sex and Black men as speaking on behalf of the race. Something had to be done to unearth the intersections of race and gender in our own lives as Black women. Black women needed to offer their own voice, their own "blueprint" for change that equally reflected and benefitted us, thus Black Women's Blueprint was formed. What makes BWB unique is our specific focus on Black women and our departure from the rubric of "women of color" which we find also often supports racial hierarchies and doesn't fully allow for Black women to deal with the ever-present history and legacy of slavery, sexual and reproductive exploitation, and subsequent periods of holocaust.

#### **STRATEGY**

##### **A Framework for Liberation**

Black Women's Blueprint is a transnational Black feminist organization which celebrates and seizes the opportunities of the African diaspora, all while mourning of the violent conditions that created it. Initially borne of the slave trade and the Middle Passage, and expanded by contemporary crisis on, and migration from, the African continent, the diaspora contains multitudes of individual testimonies which, when united, derive our true power as Black women. Black Women's Blueprint recognizes that uneven power relationships often exist between and



among the many nations from which Black women come. We especially know how cross-border flows of ideologies, capital, politics, and power link Black women in varying ways. These flows define the choices Black women have on how and when to speak truth to power and fight back against what bell hooks calls “neo-colonial white supremacist capitalist patriarchy.” Black women often lead complicated and contradictory lives and there is no one-size-fits-all solution for the challenges we face. Our work merges transnational feminisms of the global South with an American Black feminist ethos of intersectionality knowing that, at different turns, each of us may rise and fall with great (un)privilege. In some moments, something about us might give us greater access than our sister. In those same moments, we remember how important it is to be our sister’s keeper - across borders, across difference, across generations.

Black Women’s Blueprint tells the world: Black women are not a monolith, but we are a movement.

#### The BWB Strategy

Our success and sustainability as a movement depends on four core strategies:

##### Human Rights Advocacy

We use community development and asset-based community organizing to protect the human rights of all Black women and girls and to ensure lasting social and economic equity. We oppose the ongoing violation of these human rights and all forms of discrimination, including racism, sexism, and heterosexism. We mobilize to demand that all levels of domestic governance, from the federal United States government to governing bodies within every single state, city, and town, uphold international legal obligations set forth by the United Nations.

##### Transformative Justice

We know that there will be no justice for survivors of sexual violence so long as there is no accountability and no meaningful spaces for survivor leadership. We work tirelessly towards reconciliation by paving alternative pathways for long-term harm-doer and oppressor reflection and redemption that fall outside the oppressive state-sponsored criminal justice and legal systems that daily threaten our very survival.

##### Critical Participatory Action Research

We believe that Black women are the experts on their own lives. We identify problems in our communities and find innovative solutions to solve them by equipping impacted communities to source and share their own stories. We encourage communities to collect and evaluate their own data and to use this information to synthesize new languages of violence and resistance that can be harnessed to build collective power and shift policy.

##### Cultural Preservation of Indigenous Knowledges

We center spirituality in all of our work and emphasize traditional and communal ways of being, knowing, healing, learning and loving that sustained our ancestors as they were forced across the Atlantic. We make, perform, practice, move, create, and story-tell in our own past and present image(s) to resist the erasure and ongoing colonization of our cultural practices.

##### Tell Us Your Needs

Let us craft a custom learning experience to meet your needs. Contact Sylvia Hooper, Communications and Campus Programs Coordinator, [shooper@blueprintny.org](mailto:shooper@blueprintny.org), to discuss.

Black Women's Blueprint, Inc. is a civil and human rights organization of women and men. Our purpose is to take action to secure social, political and economic equality in American society now. We work to develop a culture where women of African descent are fully empowered and where gender, race and other disparities are erased. We engage in progressive research, historical documentation, support movement building and organize on social justice issues steeped in the struggles of Black women within their communities and within dominant culture.

## **APPENDIX C:**

### **JENESSE CENTER, INC**

Agency Website: <http://jenesse.org/>

#### **Mission Statement and Program Philosophy**

Jenesse's mission is to provide victims of domestic violence and their children with a comprehensive centralized base of support that is culturally responsive, and ensures their transition from immediate crisis to stability and self-sufficiency. Jenesse seeks to prevent and end the cycle of domestic violence through youth programming, education, public awareness and outreach initiatives, public policy and advocacy strategies and collaboration with key partners.

Our program philosophy is based on the following principles:

- Domestic Violence is a societal issue; it affects the lives of all people in society
- Women and children are our primary clients
- Children are equal victims of domestic violence
- Clients should receive culturally sensitive and culturally competent services
- Shelter is only the beginning of intervention
- Clients must receive more than shelter – they must receive life skills
- Services must transform victims into survivors
- Men have to be a part of the conversation
- Services must be provided to populations that are generally turned away elsewhere
- Public opinion and public policy must be impacted to combat domestic violence

#### **About Jenesse Center**

Offering 35 years of life-saving services, Jenesse Center Inc. is a nationally recognized non-profit domestic violence prevention and intervention organization. Jenesse works locally, nationally and globally to shine a light on violence against women, girls, men and boys and advocates the basic human right for all people to have peace in their homes and relationships. Jenesse's culturally sensitive programs and services not only transition families from crisis to self-sufficiency, but transforms the lives of its clients and the community at large by offering education, referrals and resources that go beyond shelter. Housing women and children from 30 days up to two years through our emergency and transitional shelters, Jenesse also provides a variety of support services, including mental health counseling, independent life skills classes, computer training, job referrals, after school programs for children, field trips, tutoring and comprehensive, direct legal services. Jenesse takes a proactive stance in educating young people to learn what healthy relationships look like and works to break the generational cycle of violence.

Annual Report: [https://jenesse.org/\\_PDFs/Jenesse2014YearinReview.pdf](https://jenesse.org/_PDFs/Jenesse2014YearinReview.pdf)

Fundraising Briefing: [https://www.jenesse.org/\\_PDFs/IKnewItWasTime\\_eBook.pdf](https://www.jenesse.org/_PDFs/IKnewItWasTime_eBook.pdf)

## Endnotes

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<sup>i</sup> Drawing from Hillary Potter's analysis in *Intersectionality and Criminology: Disrupting and revolutionizing crime studies* I choose to use Black instead of black, "because race is a strong social determinant and a matter of identity, and other race labels are capitalized, such as Asian and Latina" (Potter, 2015, p. 18). I also use the phrase Black/African American to be as inclusive as possible.

<sup>ii</sup> Through this research project I have used various terms to identify intimate partner violence including the former, domestic violence, sexual assault, rape, abuse, and abusive relationship. These are all meant to identify the same type of abusive relationship patterns. Some service providers and some survivors prefer different terms. I use variety to acknowledge and include multiple perspectives.

<sup>iii</sup> I specifically use the term domestic violence center to refer to certified non-profit domestic violence emergency shelter, long-term housing and/or counseling programs. I specifically use the term rape crisis center to refer to certified non-profit emergency crisis response and/or counseling programs.

<sup>iv</sup> Throughout this research project I focus on women and often use the term woman/women in reference to individuals who have experienced domestic violence or sexual assault. I do recognize that people in same sex relationships, transgender people and men all do experience these types of violences. I do not mean to minimize those experiences. My research is focused on women, as a discursive term, because women disproportionately experience these types of violences. Additionally, the battered women's movement and the anti-rape movement were part of the larger women's liberation movement and women were largely the founders of domestic violence and rape crisis centers.

<sup>v</sup> At the time domestic violence and sexual assault were referred to as battering and rape. Hence, the battered woman's movement and the anti-rape movement. I use the terms domestic violence and sexual assault to maintain consistency of language throughout this paper and ensure that these are understood as the same field.

<sup>vi</sup> Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer.