

FEBRUARY IS BLACK HISTORY MONTH and MARCH IS WOMEN'S HISTORY MONTH!

(More on theme month blues and Black Feminists inside!)

Covid-19 and Domestic Violence: An Update Almost One Year into the Pandemic

By Caroline Stahl

When a new strain of coronavirus began rapidly spreading throughout the United States in March of 2020, we collectively moved into an unprecedented period of modern history. With stay at home orders, business closures, and a shift to online schooling, women found themselves shouldering more caretaking and homemaking responsibilities as daily life was conducted entirely at home for those who were not deemed essential workers. In the early pandemic, speculations arose around how these actions would affect women. Alarm bells sounded in particular for victims of domestic abuse who were being forced to spend an increased amount of time in unsafe home environments. Additionally, nurses and other medical caregivers, a field of 85% women, faced the daunting task of caring for patients as they fought COVID-19.

Now that the Pandemic has extended for more than 11 months, we can begin to grasp how and if these speculations came to fruition. An article from the New England Journal of Medicine published in December 2020 shows the difficulty in tracking domestic violence rates and their correlation with rapidly rising COVID-19 rates. When states began stay at home mandates, domestic violence hotlines prepared for an increase in calls. However, calls dropped in some regions by up to 50%. While this may look like a positive statistic, experts acknowledge that this likely means that rates of domestic violence have not decreased, but rather the ability to safely connect to domestic violence resources has. While many states have lifted stay at home mandates, reducing physical proximity between abuser and victim, economic strife caused by the pandemic has exacerbated financial entanglement that makes leaving abusive situations difficult. If the pandemic takes financial independence from one or both partners, victims of intimate partner violence often stay with their partner out of financial necessity. Public health and social distancing requirements put in place because of the pandemic have led to a decrease in available alternative housing for victims of domestic abuse, as shelters decrease their availability to accommodate government mandates.

As the time scale of the pandemic becomes clear, communities have begun to consider options for promoting services during COVID-19. More channels for reporting abuse online have become available, and certain areas are considering distributing access to broadband internet as a way to ensure equitable access to domestic abuse resources and other necessary online pandemic-related



resources. Additionally, healthcare providers are educating themselves on identifying domestic abuse during online health consultations. The use of hand signals has arisen as a way for victims to safely identify a need for help without alerting their abuser.

Here in Bozeman, Haven, a non-profit organization that serves survivors of domestic violence, has reported an increase of usage of its online support services. Prior to the stay at home order in March 2020, Haven reported an average of three online chats a week, while during the stay at home order that number rose to 12. After the stay at home order was lifted in June, Haven reported that use of its emergency shelter rose by *one thousand percent* as victims were able to leave the space shared with their abuser for the first time in a month. Haven has reported a total 10% increase overall in survivors they have served this year through all services including the shelter and online chats compared to last year. Despite this unprecedented level of demand, Haven was forced to cut their capacity by 50% in order to comply with COVID-19 safety measures. This reveals the difficult balance domestic violence programs around the world have had to strike between providing safe spaces away from abusers and ensuring safety for staff and residents from COVID-19. In October of 2020, Haven began a fundraising campaign focused on increasing its capacity through the construction of a new shelter. This campaign responds to COVID-19 capacity guidelines and also strives to adapt to Bozeman's growing population in order to quadruple current shelter capacity.

As the availability of vaccines begins to bring the end of the pandemic into view, we can begin to acknowledge the ways the pandemic has effected rates of domestic violence and interpersonal violence against women. As we begin to rebuild from the devastating effects of COVID 19 on the past year, these impacts can help us usher in expanded resources in order to support survivors of domestic violence that has existed long before the pandemic and will persist long after.

The word "haven" is written in a large, teal, cursive font. The letters are thick and have a hand-drawn, organic feel. The 'h' is particularly tall and loops around. The 'a' is a simple oval. The 'v' has a sharp peak. The 'e' is a simple oval. The 'n' has a long, sweeping tail that curves upwards.



The Legacy of Black and African American Feminists

By Betsy Danforth

Doesn't saying "both as women and women of color" promote the false separation of race and gender that Kimberle Crenshaw (and many others) talk about? Implying that being a woman is separate from being a woman of color makes White women the default "woman." (National Organization for Women blog)

Black History Month is upon us, and as denigrating, aggravating and trivializing as theme months can be and often are (i. e. just watch corporate America take advantage) – we *still* wanted to highlight Black Feminists who are currently writing, teaching and leading critical activist movements. We so rarely learn about Black Feminist historical figures –you know, the ones who struggled against and survived slavery, segregation, and Jim Crow, or those who were activists during the Civil Rights Movement. But, I believe, it seems even rarer to learn about current Black Feminists, who are influencing the race dialogue right now—in real time! After

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watching a clip of *Eloquent Rage: A Black Feminist Discovers Her Superpower* author, cultural theorist and professor, Dr. Brittney Cooper, speak (thanks to my older and wiser sister, Jill), I realized I have not worked to familiarize myself with new Black Feminist voices, which are apparently and thankfully, numerous! Check out Dr. Cooper's piece on PBS's *Brief but Spectacular*: [Black Feminist, Dr. Brittney Cooper](#). And here, an interview with Rebecca Traister on *Good and Mad*: [Brittney Cooper on Good and Mad](#)

There can be no denying that this nation is built upon the graves of Indigenous people and on the backs of African American and Black people. The lessons to be learned from our Black, Indigenous and People of Color (BIPOC) citizens are many and should be considered and treated as invaluable. It is clear that the Eurocentric focus of this country has long ignored and denied BIPOC voices, and that this severely limited perspective has come at a great cost to us all. Yet, many still fail to see the intrinsic value of the inclusion of these voices-- to take the histories of oppressed peoples as both cautionary tales and enlightened learning opportunities. Considering that the very recent storming of the Nation's Capital was inspired largely by racist rhetoric and conspiracy theories (note the numerous confederate flags, "6,000,000 dead Jews is not enough" T-Shirts, and the constant racial slurs hurled at Black Police officers by rioters during the attack), it is impossible to deny that we live in a culture which still suffers from extreme racism, misogyny, and ignorance. A recent news story about a Utah charter school allowing parents to opt out of having their children learn lessons during Black History Month is an example of White entitlement gone very wrong: [New York Times, "Opting out" of Black History Month](#)

Social movements in this country have far too long ignored women's voices and ideas. Likewise, the women's movement was guilty of excluding BIPOC voices as well. One would expect there to be extreme value in listening to and actually hearing these voices, and in highlighting and valuing these unique opinions.

James Baldwin wrote: "The History of the American Negro is the History of America. It is not a pretty history." So let us acknowledge, read and listen to the voices of author Brittney Cooper; author, educator, activist and co-creator of the Black Lives Matter movement, **Patrisse Cullors**; author and activist **Roxanne Gay**; author **Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie**; poet **Amanda Gorman**; author and Tulane Professor **Jesmyn Ward**; Rutgers professor and author, **Naomi Jackson**; author **Yaa Gyasi**; or actor, director, producer **Issa Rae**. Let us take Baldwin's message to heart—there would indeed be no "History of America" without Black and African American sacrifices, voices, contributions and existence. There are thousands of amazing young Black Feminist voices rising up in a time when we need them most. Open your ears and hearts, and check them out--we need to listen to these very wise women who will help guide us out of the pits of racism and misogyny.

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HEART PRESENTS:

HUMAN TRAFFICKING: A SURVIVOR'S SUCCESS STORY WITH THERESA FLORES

Theresa Flores, a human trafficking survivor, best-selling author, victim advocate and founder of Save Our Adolescents from Prostitution (SOAP), will discuss her experience and path of survival. Discover how prevalent human trafficking is in the US; leave with helpful information on how to prevent trafficking as well as red flags of a person being trafficked, the emotional implications this has on victims, and how to help them heal.

**TUESDAY,
MARCH 2
5:00 P.M.
VIA WEBEX**

**REGISTER HERE:
[HTTPS://MONTANASTATE.
CAMPUSLABS.COM/ENGA
GE/EVENT/6898501](https://montanastate.campuslabs.com/engage/event/6898501)**



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March is Women's History Month! Contact Betsy at danforth@montana.edu to register

MARCH 3, 2021 • Noon-1 PM The Lives and Landscape of Working-Class Women in the West

Join Crystal Alegria, Director of The Extreme History Project, as she examines working women's lives in 19th Century West.

MARCH 10, 2021 • Noon-1 PM MentHERship, Women in STEM: The Postdoc/Mentor Relationship One vital component to women's success in STEM is mentorship. Presenters Dr. Agnieszka Rynda-Apple, Assistant Professor, and Research Scientist Dr. Kelly Shepardson, are both in Microbiology and Immunology. Rynda-Apple served as Shepardson's mentor while attaining her postdoc.

MARCH 24, 2021 • Noon -1 PM Knowledge, Bodies, and Power

This talk offered by Dr. Natalie Scheidler, professor of Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies at MSU, will discuss the ways in which scientific and medical communities have historically constructed the corporal body.

MARCH 31, 2021 • Noon-1 PM Alice Morris: Yellowstone Trailblazer

This presentation will be offered by Emma Navone, a junior at MSU and will focus on Alice Morris, a Connecticut native, who embarked on a 1500 mile trailblazing campaign during the summer of 1917 to ensure horseback rider's access in Yellowstone National Park.

Return Service Requested

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Bozeman, MT 59717-2100

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