

# BLACK FEMICIDE



## Introduction:

In the United States, Black women are disproportionately at risk of homicide than any group and are four times more likely to be killed than white or Hispanic women.<sup>1</sup> In fact, in 2020, at least 5 Black women and girls were killed daily, a 33% increase from 2019.<sup>2</sup> Of these, 30% of the murders of Black women are committed by intimate partners or family members,<sup>3</sup> and 9 out of 10 murdered Black women know their killers.<sup>4</sup> Black trans-women are also at high risk – of the total recorded murders of trans-people in 2020, nearly half were Black trans-women, although the number may be higher, as “[n]ational homicide statistics do not identify whether victims are trans or gender non-conforming, and law enforcement agencies frequently misgender trans homicide victims.”<sup>5</sup>

There have also been discrepancies in how the COVID-19 pandemic has affected Black women. Black women have been hospitalized at 2.3x more than white women and have a 1.7x higher chance of death from COVID-19.<sup>6</sup> Through the course of the pandemic, healthcare has increasingly been using AI to determine which patients need more care and support, but unconscious biases built into the technology “[threaten] to exacerbate the disparate effect of [C]ovid-19 on [marginalized], under-represented, and vulnerable groups, particularly [B]lack...people.”<sup>7</sup>

## Heightened Vulnerabilities and Nuances:

In addition to deaths from violence aimed at Black women, they are also disproportionately victims of healthcare negligence, especially maternal mortality, they face structural discrimination both from police as well as in the

## AN INTERSECTIONAL APPROACH TO FEMICIDE

In 2021, the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL) marked the 30th anniversary of the [Global 16 Days Campaign](#), with a special anniversary theme of [Ending Femicide](#), which is recognized under international law as the gender-related killing of women and girls. This year, the Campaign, along with its allies, is [continuing](#) its advocacy to end Femicide. Vulnerable women and girls face a heightened risk of Femicide that is associated with multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination. This fact sheet spotlights Femicide of Black women and recommends certain actions.

prison system, and there is internalized hatred and misogyny within the Black community and Black men that contribute to Femicide.

Three out of four Black Femicides in 2020 happened via firearm.<sup>8</sup> Even popstar Megan Thee Stallion was shot in the feet by an intimate partner; she survived but is still living with physical and emotional trauma from the event. Although this case made headlines, there are many more that don't, and can have more fatal consequences for the victims.<sup>9</sup> With polarizing views in the United States on the right to bear arms and a conservative Supreme Court relaxing gun laws in 2022,<sup>10</sup> many states in the US will have allowances for more firearms in homes, hands, and in the streets. If the majority of Black women are killed by guns, more guns in circulation will increase the risk of death for them. This will also impact Black trans-women; "[i]n 2021, at least 45 transgender or gender-nonconforming people—most of whom were Black or transgender women of color."<sup>11</sup>

Healthcare in the United States is full of systemic barriers and implicit bias that negatively affects Black women. For example, when diagnosing diseases, "diagnostics [are usually] grounded in white skin,"<sup>12</sup> which makes it harder to see the necessary coloration on skin that has higher levels of melanin. Additionally, algorithms used to diagnose patients often correct outputs based on race, which often "guide decisions in ways that may direct more attention or resources to white patients than to members of racial and ethnic minorities"<sup>13</sup> which can lead to deadly consequences if non-white patients are not given the care they need. Some of these biases contribute to the high maternal mortality rate among Black women, as non-Hispanic Black

women have a 2.9x higher rate of maternal mortality than non-Hispanic white women,<sup>14</sup> which many Black mothers report are results of "their providers (MDs and nurses) [not listening] to them when they [try] repeatedly to tell them something [is] wrong."<sup>15</sup>

Black women also face systemic barriers in the United States criminal justice system that harm them. Black women make up 20% of all women shot and killed by police<sup>16</sup> and are 1.7x as likely to be imprisoned than white women,<sup>17</sup> and the mortality rate of women in jail due to inadequate healthcare, drug or alcohol intoxication, or suicide "disproportionately affect women of color — particularly Black women."<sup>18</sup>

Although racial inequality contributes heavily to Black Femicides in the United States, there is also a lot of internalized hatred within the Black community that is sexist and disproportionately impacts Black women. With ideas like "misogynoir,"<sup>19</sup> which is the intersection of racism and sexism, and the "Black manosphere,"<sup>20</sup> which is an "online, anti-feminist community that operates off the template of the (White) Manosphere [and f]ocuses strictly on heterosexual black men,"<sup>21</sup> perpetuating violence against Black women at the hands of Black men, violence and against Black women is not only exacerbated, but also encouraged.

## **Case Studies:**

### *The case of Joyce Quaweay*

Joyce Quaweay, who shared a home with her boyfriend Aaron Wright, his friend Marquis Robinson, Robinson's girlfriend, and children, was stripped naked and cuffed to a bench in her kitchen, where she was beaten for hours by Wright and Robinson, even after her heart gave

out. Robinson's daughter (age 10), who witnessed the event, later testified that she and the other women in the house were often victims of domestic violence, even in front of the younger children.

Both Wright and Robinson were found guilty in Quaweay's murder.<sup>22</sup>

#### *The case of Toyin Salau*

Oluwatoyin "Toyin" Salau, a teenage Black Lives Matter activist, was found dead nearly a week after she was reported missing. On the last day she was seen, she had tweeted about being sexually assaulted. Her body was found alongside the body of 75-year-old Victoria Sims, who was also active in local politics and the community.<sup>23</sup>

Salau's death comes at the intersection of her race and gender and is also an example of pushback that activists get when protesting the murders of people in their community. Her killer, Aaron Glee, later confessed to the murders of both women, whose bodies were found near his home.<sup>24</sup>

#### **Promising Practices:**

In December 2021, the United States House of Representatives reintroduced the [Protect Black Women and Girls Act](#), which if signed into law will lay the groundwork to keep Black women and girls safe in the US. Not only does the bill include provisions for collecting data on Black Femicides as a result of excessive police force<sup>25</sup> or maternal<sup>26</sup> and infant mortality for girls,<sup>27</sup> but it also seeks to establish an interagency task force that will focus part of its efforts on "identify[ing] and recommend[ing] programs, policies, and incentives for adoption"<sup>28</sup> to improve healthcare and justice and civil rights for Black women.

Rosa Page, a nurse from Arkansas, is the founder of [Black Femicide US](#). Page gathers data on Black Femicides in the United States, which she then reports via [social media pages](#). Her work aims to create a repository of data and case studies which do not receive much mainstream media coverage.<sup>29</sup> Page also tries to help families who have lost loved ones get justice by drawing attention to the government to have national reforms enacted and is hoping to partner with Black Femicide organizations worldwide to create a global coalition.<sup>30</sup>

#### **International Standards:**

Most of the systemic issues that lead to Femicide of Black women in the United States stem from underlying racial biases against Black people that are not only found in the US but also around the world. To combat this, the UN has put forth multiple mechanisms, such as the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination](#) and the [Declaration on Race and Racial Prejudice](#), both of which condemn any forms of discrimination on the basis of "race, colour, descent, or national or ethnic origin"<sup>31</sup> and give States the responsibility of eradicating any racial discrimination.

The UN has also declared 2015-2024 the [International Decade for People of African Descent](#), with aims to recognize each person's right to equality and non-discrimination,<sup>32</sup> provide access to justice,<sup>33</sup> and ensure that everyone has opportunities for development and can fight poverty.<sup>34</sup> By proclaiming this decade, the UN is committed to ensuring that Black women not only in the US but also around the world have the basic human rights of safety and access to justice they deserve.

## Action Menu:



### Governments:

- Ensure the passage of the Protect Black Women and Girls Act to combat systemic barriers that are in place so that Black women around the country are given better access to healthcare and justice that caters to them. The passage of this act will also contribute to data collection on Black Femicides due to police brutality, which will raise awareness of the impact that excessive force has on Black women.



### Healthcare Institutions:

- Create more equitable healthcare for Black women by participating in advocacy like [Black Maternal Health Week](#) and incorporating resources like [Mind the Gap](#), a handbook that raises awareness and gives guidelines on how certain diseases show up in darker skin, into teaching to ensure that any biases in healthcare are addressed.



### Civil Society Organizations:

- Participate in the [#SayHerName](#) campaign in order to bring awareness to the "often invisible names and stories of Black women and girls"<sup>35</sup> who have been killed. When the names and stories of victims of Black Femicide are brought to light, the issue will gain traction and attention from people in power to bring about change and keep Black women safe.



### Media:

- Include a gender-sensitive and intersectional lens while reporting on GBV and Femicides, to bring to light the lived experiences of Black women and girls. Be sure to take a survivor centric approach to produce more insightful, impactful coverage.



### Individuals and communities:

- Join or initiate Twitter chats, Tweetathons, Facebook/Instagram live conversations, or other social media calls to action and engage @16DaysCampaign accounts on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram, using hashtags #LetsEndFemicide, #RatifyILO190 and #16DaysCampaign.
- Sign and disseminate the Global 16 Days Campaign petition calling on the United

Nations (UN) to declare December 6 as the International Day to End Femicide. Petition link [here](#).

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This Fact Sheet is dedicated to the Black women who have been victims of Femicide as well as their families, friends, and communities who continue to fight for justice and demand action and accountability to make a world without violence possible.



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