

Structural Violence, Gun Violence, and Health Equity

Webinar Summary and Call to Action



Webinar Focus

The Partners for Advancing Health Equity Collaborative hosted the webinar, *Structural Violence, Gun Violence, and Health Equity* on August 16, 2022.

Panelists engaged in discussions about the root causes of violence. Panelists highlighted the issues, policies, and practices around gun violence. This report provides a synthesis of key takeaways, solutions, and action steps identified from the webinar.

Webinar Voices

- › **Katherine P. Theall**, Senior Director, [Violence Prevention Institute Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine](#)
- › **Julia Fleckman**, PhD, MPH, Associate Director, [Violence Prevention Institute](#), Co-Director, [Center for Youth Equity](#)
- › **Tio Hardiman**, Executive Director, [Violence Interrupters Inc.](#)
- › **Tamera Jackson**, LCSW, Executive Director, [Silence Is Violence](#)
- › **Sharven Taghavi**, MD MPH MS, Director, [Acute Care Surgery at Tulane Medical Center](#), Assistant Professor, [Tulane University School of Medicine](#)

Key Resources

- [End the Violence Epidemic](#)
- [Elected Officials](#)
- [Trauma Informed Practice](#)

Your Voice

P4HE values collaboration. If there is a resource on this topic that you would like to share with us, provide it [here](#).

Key Takeaways

The root causes of gun violence in the United States are complex, deep, and far-reaching. They are embedded in our social structures, systems, and institutions that build barriers for people to meet their basic needs. This harm inevitably begets more harm. As such, gun violence is a consequence of ongoing structural violence. Addressing it requires an understanding of the ways the roots connect and overlap on multiple levels. Gun violence traverses all types of communities and is now [the leading cause of death among children aged one to 18](#).

Call To Action



"...Violence is a major public health issue and a key driver of health inequities. It is quite possibly our greatest and most longstanding pandemic and must be treated like the public health emergency it is." Katherine Theall, Senior Director, Violence Prevention Institute Tulane University School of Public Health & Tropical Medicine

Below we've summarized immediate steps to be taken to address the violence and gun violence epidemic.

› Address violence and gun violence as a health crisis.

Viewing violence, and specifically, gun violence, as its own [health crisis](#), and not only in conjunction with mental health, impacts the way we intervene. This includes funding research to assess the quality of, and improve, violence interventions and trauma

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informed approaches. This view also provides a space to address violence and gun violence more head-on within health care systems. Tio Hardiman reflected on “The Golden Hour” as a key opportunity to intervene on the cycle of violence (see box to right).



“I do not have the skills to give them all the support they need... no one person has all the tools,” Sharven Taghavi, MD, Acute Care Surgery at Tulane Medical Center, Assistant Professor for Tulane University School of Medicine

Golden Hour:

The period following an act of violence or gun violence when the family of the victim is at the hospital talking about retaliation. This is a critical opportunity to use collaborative approaches to intervene in the hospital setting before the violence cycle continues.

> Develop partnerships across disciplines to systematically integrate wraparound services for victims of gun violence.

To address violence, we must look at the root causes, and value people as resources in building the solution. Well-built partnerships acknowledge the limitations of support professionals and caregivers and understand when and where collaboration is needed. No one person can solve the violence epidemic. Asking too much of one resource can lead to burn out; *“you’re no good to nobody if you’re burned out,”* Tamera Jackson, LCSW, Executive Director, Silence is Violence

Solutions for Addressing Violence and Gun Violence



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> Broaden the lens for implementing violence prevention incorporating trauma informed and strength-based approaches.



"... there is a huge mental health impact [that results from violence]. There is a quite a bit of research that is important for us to look at look at around caregiver trauma as an issue." Julia Fleckman, PhD, MPH, Director of the Violence Prevention Institute, Co-Director of the Center for Youth Equity

Trauma informed approaches include broader supports to communities impacted by violence and violent acts; this includes community level anger management and the provision of holistic supports. Holistic supports provide resources for those who have been traumatized by witnessing violence as well as proactive support for caregivers, social workers, victims, and people in communities that regularly face violence. **"Trauma-informed school systems are a really big piece of this... .. and how we can really think about things like conflict resolution and violence interruption,"** Julia Fleckman, PhD, MPH, Director of the Violence Prevention Institute, Co-Director of the Center for Youth Equity

Tamera Jackson, LCSW, advocates for the need to understand generational trauma to understand why violence is the chosen conflict resolution technique for individuals. Tamera noted that identifying the person (with)in the environment (PIE) can assist support professionals in understanding the structure that influences individual lived experiences that lead to violence. This allows us to tailor supports and work from a strengths-based model.



"Support providers should work with individuals in a space where they feel the strongest. Support should not focus on the areas where trauma survivors feel weak but help them to hone into their strengths and recognize who they are as individuals, and how they can work from a space of healing. Individuals with traumatic experiences can work to change what the norm is for them." Tamera Jackson, LCSW, Executive Director, Silence is Violence

Viewing family and community members, faith bases leaders, law enforcement, and medical professionals as resources allows for the leveraging of community connections to engage politicians, communities, and violent thinkers. Buy-in from everyone is critical to the success of any Intervention. Policy makers hold structural tools to address gun violence such as [firearm purchaser licensing](#) and [firearm removal laws](#) backed by evidenced-based considerations.

> Shift norms through media messaging to inform policy change.

Shifting the norms and the way we talk about, and view violence can be addressed through consistent messaging in all forums including politics, social media campaigns, celebrity messaging,

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and messaging at the community level. Panelists acknowledged that media messaging, such as violence prevention commercials, would not directly address the social determinants and racial inequities that are contributors to the violence and gun violence epidemic, but could support shaping culture. One widespread unified message could go a long way in changing the social norms around how violence and gun violence are viewed on a wider scale.



"...from the President all the way down to the young brother on the streets, just imagine a big public service announcement, like those that have been done to address cancer, with all key people speaking on behalf of violence being treated as a public health issue," Tio Hardiman, Executive Director, Violence Interrupters, Inc.

On the policy side, Julia Fleckman, noted that this should include policies around gun safety rather than only focus on gun control. *"I think if we can normalize gun safety we might make some headway here, particularly amongst folks that are really adamant about having weapons."* Safety-focused policies could include broad gun safety education, providing lock boxes, use of biometric lock boxes, and other safety measures that have been shown to significantly reduce other rates of unintentional injuries from guns.

> **Build safety networks and provide hope.**

Safety networks include both immediate intervention and prevention services to victims and their families, such as intensive therapeutic and support services, crisis intervention, therapy, and other social service needs; as well as structural systems of prevention that may impact the likelihood of violence, such as employment, housing, education, trauma informed practices, and other social and community determinants.

We can improve safety by building up communities and addressing the underlying historical structural violence and social determinants that contribute to continued cycles of violence, particularly in communities that are disproportionately affected by this epidemic. Black and Brown communities have limited resources and limited access to care; justice system punishments are not equal. Panelists agreed that this contributes to the feeling that there is no hope for members of communities stuck in a cycle of violence.



"Young people... they need to be able to see something that is tangible, that they can hold on to that gives them some hope. Because there is a lot of despair in some of these communities." Tio Hardiman, Executive Director, Violence Interrupters, Inc.

State of the Science

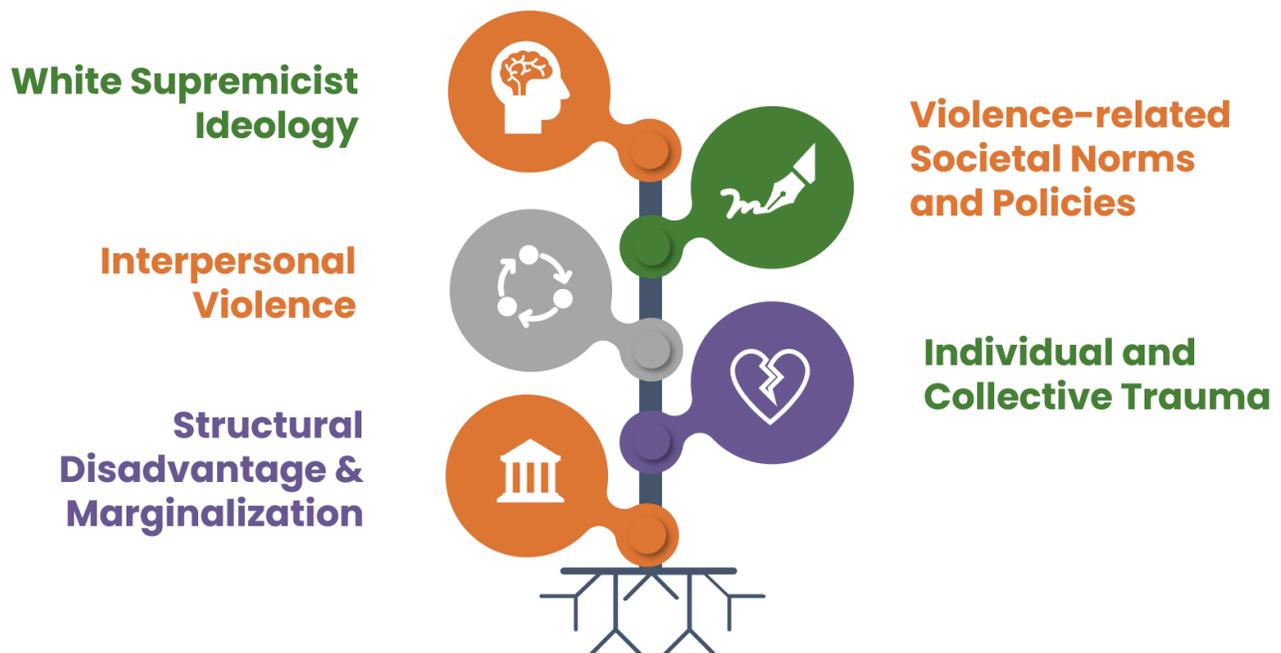
Restorative Justice Framework.

Restorative justice focuses on repairing harm rather than just punishing it. The framework “seeks to address the root causes of [violence], even to the point of transforming unjust systems and structures¹.” Restorative Justice programs focused on healing and accountability are being implemented broadly through programs like Violence Interrupters, more locally through neighborhood safety organizations like The Office of Neighborhood Safety and Engagement in Washington, DC, and even in school systems.

Gun violence is a consequence of ongoing historical and structural violence.

This is evident in the racial inequities we see in gun violence in the U.S. For example, Black Americans are 10 times more likely than White Americans to die from gun homicide. And Black youth fare even worse, with Black children and teens 14 times more likely to die from gun homicide than their White counterparts.

Root Causes of Violence and Gun Violence



¹ <https://restorativejustice.org/what-is-restorative-justice/three-core-elements-of-restorative-justice/>

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Increase screening of children and youth.

Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE) scores can be used to tailor supports through a trauma informed lens. This can help focus often limited supports on how to help families and communities dealing with violence and gun violence on a regular basis.

Advanced high-quality research is needed.

Research is needed to evaluate the effectiveness and implementation of violence and gun violence interventions. This includes all types of studies from implementation-based research to qualitative focus groups and interviews that seek to understand the mindset of violent thinkers as well as having pointed conversations about how to deal with violence. *“We need to be asking, how do we keep the attention of violent thinkers?”* Tio Hardiman, Executive Director, Violence Interrupters, Inc.

Next Steps for Addressing Violence and Gun Violence



About P4HE

The P4HE Collaborative harmonizes goals, advances learning, and facilitates collaboration to improve health equity. It is led by the Tulane University School of Public Health and Tropical Medicine and is part of the Tulane Institute for Innovations in Health Equity. Support for this program is provided by ICF. Funding is provided by a grant from the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation.



Foster

the co-creation and spread of knowledge.



Sharpen

our research tools to focus on solutions; facts and stories.



Disrupt

traditional research approaches.



Harmonize

our voices.



Challenge

the status quo.



Shine

light on practices that are indefensible, irrational and inconsistent.

To learn more about these issues, or Partners for Health Equity's calls to action, a resource library including a full recording of this, and all previous P4HE Webinars, can be found on the P4HE [website](#).