

From: Kristy Lovich
Sent: Sunday, June 7, 2020 5:55 PM
To: kristy.lovich@gmail.com
Subject: FW: In order to demonstrate that Black life matters to LAHSA we must end its partnership with law enforcement

From: Kristy Lovich
Sent: Sunday, June 7, 2020 5:47 PM
To: Victor Hinderliter <vhinderliter@lahsa.org>
Cc: Equity Lahsa <equity@lahsa.org>; Heidi Marston <hmarston@lahsa.org>; Nathaniel VerGow <nvergow@lahsa.org>; Elizabeth Heger <eheger@lahsa.org>
Subject: RE: In order to demonstrate that Black life matters to LAHSA we must end its partnership with law enforcement

Hello Victor et all,

I have not heard a reply to my requests nor a confirmation of a time for our meeting. At this time I do not feel that I will be notified with enough time to prepare without a written agenda or confirmation of my ability to have members of management present.

I plan to take a sick day tomorrow and will not be available for this meeting. As well, last night I submitted my request to use the Emergency Paid Sick Leave/FMLA as I learned Friday that my child's school will not be opening for summer due to Covid-19 precautions and I need to be home to take care of him as I do not have alternate childcare options. I am waiting for my manager to sign this form and I plan to take all of my allotted time (12 weeks). This leave begins Tuesday, June 9, 2020.

I do not feel that I can trust you, Victor as my director at this time and I honestly do not know what would result from a meeting between us. To better illuminate my reasons for feeling this way I have included responses to your last email to me below. This is the only information I feel I need to share right now.

Sincerely,
Kristy Lovich

Victor: You are correct that we have had many long conversations on

these topics, and I have always been honest and transparent with you about the actions we can take, the changes we can implement, and the value that our partnerships bring, as well as the areas that we cannot change. I have always had an open door, as have Lindsay, Yesenia, Elizabeth and other leadership with whom you have wanted to address these concerns.î

We have had many long conversations. It is from those conversations with you, Victor that I gathered that you support my position and my pushing the conversation and so, I am frankly surprised at your sudden turn of opinion and behavior. I have been transparent with you since the lunch we shared during my first week working with this agency when I shared with you my active involvement with advocacy and organizing around homelessness and racial justice. Since that first conversation you consistently expressed support for advocates and activist projects that work explicitly to expose LAHSAís operations, their complicity with abusive sweeps of homeless encampments, and sometimes even sharing that you yourself take small clandestine actions to assist them.

Some of the most recent and memorable expressions of your solidarity with these effortsö

* When I told you that I planned to share documents related to the Care/Care+ program with media (to hold our harmful partners accountable) and you did not direct me against those actions but rather stated ìThe less I know the better.î

* On another occasion when I (again) sought to hold our harmful law enforcement partners accountable I informed you that I planned to speak to media under anonymity and shared the link to the resulting article with you. In that case, you did not advise against speaking with media but rather guided me on how to do so.

* Or the many times that I requested your feedback on framing internal information for use of advocates on social media (both verbal and text conversations)

* And most recently and relevant to this situation:

Thursday, June 4 at 11:05, on a phone call with you I followed up on questions regarding LAHSAís relationship with law enforcement that came up during the morning supervisor call the previous day. I asked you what conversations were already happening within leadership

as far as a response or revision to our ongoing collaborations with law enforcement considering the social and political context.

You replied that Heidi Marston, Interim Executive Director had a conversation with LAPD that was supposed to include Chief Moore. However, he stated that Chief Moore did not show up and instead an LAPD Sargent with no decision-making power was in his place.

I shared my thoughts and concerns with you about the harm that police cause to unhoused people and went into great detail about how problematic our relationship is with law enforcement, and how stressful and painful it is for staff to work alongside police or even within in an organization that collaborates with police when the reality is that our clients experience trauma from ongoing criminalization. You agreed but did not offer solutions or next steps.

I told you that I was in the process of writing a letter to the LAHSA community about this, calling for an end to partnerships with law enforcement and that I had endorsements from Black Lives Matter LA, Dignity & Power Now, Meztli Projects, and a member of LAHSA's Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness. I told you that I intended to send it to all staff at LAHSA via email.

You did not direct me to abstain from sending this letter via email. You suggested that my proposal would be more successful if I sought buy in from other supervisors, especially those that work on teams embedded with law enforcement. I told you that I did not want to do that for a few reasons:

* I felt strongly that I needed share these ideas with our whole community and that I felt that there were not spaces where these things are really heard and actually worked on. I expressed that I had hit my limit in terms of patience and that this moment requires urgency. I reminded him that I have been sharing these concerns for a long time and there has never been any action taken.

* I did not want to implicate anyone else and wanted to speak from my own point of view because I knew that taking on advocacy around this in a more assertive way could produce negative consequences. I would not ask others to do that but rather

wanted to present the ideas
and if they resonated people could opt in to support.

* As a white person doing work racial justice, I did not feel it was appropriate to ask extra labor of women of color in advocating for racial justice. I told him this is my work to do.

* I did not believe that my peers were interested in changing policy or changing relationships with LAHSA and law enforcement as indicated by their expressed support for law enforcement or ambivalence about participating in critical conversations about policy.

* I was ethically obligated to bring these issues to light at this time and felt deep conviction about this.

As we ended the conversation you said you were sorry you had to rush off to another call and "good luck."

Friday, June 5, 2020, 7:43 am, Very early in the morning I was sent images of the unhoused man ("Cincinnati") that was shot in the face by police with rubber bullets. I emailed these images to you (email below). He replied with commitments to advocate to the Commissioners later that day regarding my concerns with law enforcement and that you would seek out personal conversations with LAPD/LACS, and further that you relied on public opinion to help shape those talks and that I should work on the public opinion part.

Rather than reply to this via email I texted you on your personal cell. As is evident in the screen shot, I informed you once again that I planned to send this email to all staff. Again, you did not deliver a directive not to send this letter via email to all staff. Rather, you made another suggestion that I limit the addressees to leadership as a way to strengthen my initiative. There was ample notification of my plan, the content of my letter, and many opportunities for you to instruct me not to use LAHSA email to share this letter with staff.

During this entire period in which you knew my intention and concerns you had ample opportunities to say "Hey, that's against policy. Don't do it." "Kristy, that is inappropriate. Don't do it." And you did not.

Based on all of this, the nature of our ongoing communications, your

stated support of my activities, and the lack of explicit direction about sending this letter to all staff, the fact that in all of our supervisor meetings on multiple occasions you affirmed explicitly stated that this space (presumably our department) affirms and supports Black Lives Matter, that this is the most urgent need for justice that we need to uphold. Why would I glean anything except that you supported my position? That you support my pushing for action? In this case I was obviously (unfortunately) mistaken. It seems that we are both learning very difficult lessons about the boundaries of trust and loyalty right now.

[A note on the above: In the spirit of equity I do hope that whatever consequences may befall me as they did for my colleague, Ashley Bennet as a result of speech that in contradiction to LAHSA's policy are also applied to more senior staff at this organization.]

As I have stated in a previous email, I am interested in action, visible, concrete action. I know that you and many others have had an open door to hear my (and many, many others') concerns about the problematic and abusive actions taken out on our clients (and by LA Sanitation but that is another email). These open doors, space to share and process mean nothing if they are not followed up with concrete action. This organization has failed to hold partners accountable in their treatment of our clients. This failure amounts to complicity. The ongoing inaction on urgent and dangerous, traumatic conduct on this has caused my trust in leadership to erode. I am not the only one that feels this way. I know this is a fact. This needs to change.

Victor: This email has resulted in real pain, Kristy, for many of our Black and African American staff.

I am sorry that there are members of our staff that feel sad or hurt. Of course, I never want people to feel sad. However, this organization has on many, many occasions (Including the most recent all-staff town hall on race) illuminated the reality that tackling racism brings up discomfort, confusion, anger, among many other complicated feelings. Those feelings are not limited to only arising for white people. About the discomfort people feel when reading a suggestion that we end our relationships with law enforcement and especially among those that work directly with law

enforcement in their outreach assignments I ask ñ is the discomfort they are feeling because they are Black and the message targeted their Blackness? Or is the discomfort they are feeling because my suggestion challenges deeply held beliefs that the police can be reformed despite the racist and violent history of policing in this city/nation? My exposure to my peers' ideas and beliefs about police (Including the promotion of a phrase commonly understood as a synonym for anti-Black racism, "all lives matter" within professional settings, including its use by staff of Color) leads me to a conclusion that many people in this agency are invested on many levels in the idea that police are an inherent, "natural" part of any community, something that we simply need to accept. My letter to our agency denies that belief, asserts an abolitionist vision, and implores us to reimagine our agency and our community at large thriving without a dependence on or the existence of policing and criminalization. People of all races and ethnicities are going to find this idea uncomfortable, including Black people. I appeal to you and this agency from this abolitionist framework.

Additionally, to invoke a person's Blackness as central to their discomfort, the very reason they felt hurt is not only manipulative but actually quite racist as it situates the Black complainant as the suggested "unrepresentative" of Black thought in this agency. In contrast to the Black complainants you referenced, there are many Black staff at this agency that have expressed to me their thanks and appreciation for my letter. As I am sure there are white people in this agency that had similar feelings to the complainant you referenced. Had these white people shared how uncomfortable or pained they were about my letter, would you have written the sentence: "This email has resulted in real pain, Kristy, for many of our white staff." I do not believe you would because I do not believe you would promote a white staff person's ideas as representative of all white staff. Why have you done it here with regard to the ideas of your Black staff?

This kind of manipulation and reductionist thinking about this issue is a very common rhetorical tactic utilized historically to silence radical Black thought, womanist thought, and activism. It plays on the sensitivities of the person challenging the power structure by

implying that they (the person illuminating injustice) are actually the one causing harm to a vulnerable groupó not the power structure itself. In this case your accusation that my email has caused Black pain preys on a vulnerability of mine ñ that one of my greatest fears is to cause Black pain. It is a form of gas-lighting and I am not buying it.

ìThere are many platforms right now to demand change, and it is working! I am so excited to see our LAHSA staff marching and demanding justice. But the email you sent was not that platform.î

Your proclaimed celebration of the resistance that is happening on our streets right now and the assertion that this same spirit of resistance is not appropriate for a forum such as LAHSAís email system is akin to the same racist and classist rhetoric that demonizes and polices forms of public speech carried out by Black people and accomplices in the Movement for Black Lives, insisting that there are correct and acceptable times and places to challenge white supremacy and when resistant voices speak in unacceptable times and places they are subject to criminalization and police brutality. This is a strategy of containment that serves white supremacy. Furthermore, we have been asked by this Movement for Black Lives to take a resistance to racism and white supremacy directly to halls of institutional power in the streets, in our homes, and in our workplaces. LAHSA must come to terms with the fact that is a participant in and creation of this system of power, a reality that presents a fundamental challenge for an agency that would like to transform its image and infrastructure. For this reason, the virtual ìpublic spaceî that is LAHSAís email system is a perfect place to bring this resistance. This was an intentional choice aimed at creating a disruption in the dominant narrative and delivery of anti-racist speech. It achieved its intended goal and I do not apologize or regret it.

I find it enormously disappointing, confusing and inconsistent that in some settings (Like LAHSAís town hall on race) staff are explicitly told to use their voice, to stand up for justice, to honor the names of those Black people murdered by police and then when they do they are told that their speech is inappropriate. It was quite telling that Heidi Marstonís email to all staff in response to my letter effectively shutting down the speech of staff was sent out at the

literal moment that our Director of Equity and guest speaker were voicing this call to action. This was a powerful moment in which LAHSA's deepest internal conflict between what it wants to be and what it is was made wildly visible.

Sadly, I am not surprised by LAHSA's silencing and policing of speech. I learned very quickly that this organization defaults to a shameful practice of disappearing dissident voices when one of my Black colleagues was fired at the request of LA City Council member, Mitch O'Farrell (a figure that regularly deploys LAPD to abuse unhoused people) for her participation in advocacy on behalf of people experiencing homelessness outside of work hours. In that case, you did not stand up for your employee. Why would you do it now?

It behooves you to take it to heart that we are beneficiaries of the sacrifices that leaders in the fight for racial justice have made as they took their grievances to inappropriate places including those made by the beloved Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. that LAHSA so often enjoys quoting.

Some resources:

I suggest that that LAHSA reflect on its collaboration with law enforcement from an informed and educated place and invest in learning more about the history of policing in America. Perhaps then LAHSA's leadership might grasp more clearly why it is understood by unhoused people and their supporters that LAHSA's partnership with law enforcement is an expression of and support for white supremacy and an act against the defense of Black life.

I have included some helpful links below from media sources you are probably very familiar with as knowledgeable supporters of equity and diversity, highlighting relevant information to guide your exploration.

“The History of Police in Creating Social Order In The U.S.,” All Things Considered, NPR
<https://www.npr.org/2020/06/05/871083599/the-history-of-police-in-creating-social-order-in-the-u-s>

“the dominant history or the mainstream history is that the first modern police department in the

United States was in Boston in 1838. But, you know, there's kind of a problem with that, and the problem is that in places like Charleston and in the Carolinas, there were already organized forces of over 100 people – right? – who had to do with policing and things like slave patrols.

There were also laws going all the way back to the 17th century that empowered all white people to catch slaves. But I think it's too simple to say that policing only evolved from slave patrols. Police really evolved around a lot – what I would call labor control. And so in the South, that was controlling slaves. But in the North, that actually had to do with controlling any inconvenient population, especially labor. And so the institution of policing is very much connected to the enactment of violence against strikers and union-breaking.

How the U.S. Got Its Police Force, Time Magazine

<https://time.com/4779112/police-history-origins/>

In the South, however, the economics that drove the creation of police forces were centered not on the protection of shipping interests but on the preservation of the slavery system. Some of the primary policing institutions there were the slave patrols tasked with chasing down runaways and preventing slave revolts, Potter says; the first formal slave patrol had been created in the Carolina colonies in 1704. During the Civil War, the military became the primary form of law enforcement in the South, but during Reconstruction, many local sheriffs functioned in a way analogous to the earlier slave patrols, enforcing segregation and the disenfranchisement of freed slaves.

Policing Los Angeles: Race, Resistance, and the Rise of the LAPD, Max Felker-Kantor, Assistant professor of history at Ball State University. He received his PhD in history from the University of Southern California in 2014.
<https://uncpress.org/book/9781469646831/policing-los-angeles/>

When the Los Angeles neighborhood of Watts erupted in violent protest in August 1965, the uprising drew strength from decades of pent-up frustration with employment discrimination, residential segregation, and poverty. But the more immediate grievance was anger at the racist and abusive practices of the Los Angeles Police Department. Yet in the decades

after Watts, the LAPD resisted all but the most limited demands for reform made by activists and residents of color, instead intensifying its power.

In *Policing Los Angeles*, Max Felker-Kantor narrates the dynamic history of policing, anti-police abuse movements, race, and politics in Los Angeles from the 1965 Watts uprising to the 1992 Los Angeles rebellion. Using the explosions of two large-scale uprisings in Los Angeles as bookends, Felker-Kantor highlights the racism at the heart of the city's expansive police power through a range of previously unused and rare archival sources. His book is a gripping and timely account of the transformation in police power, the convergence of interests in support of law and order policies, and African American and Mexican American resistance to police violence after the Watts uprising.

From: Victor Hinderliter <vhinderliter@lahsa.org>
Sent: Saturday, June 6, 2020 8:03 AM
To: Kristy Lovich <klovich@lahsa.org>
Cc: Equity Lahsa <equity@lahsa.org>; Heidi Marston <hmarston@lahsa.org>; Nathaniel VerGow <nvergow@lahsa.org>; Elizabeth Heger <eheger@lahsa.org>
Subject: Re: In order to demonstrate that Black life matters to LAHSA we must end its partnership with law enforcement

Hi Kristy,

You are correct that we have had many long conversations on these topics, and I have always been honest and transparent with you about the actions we can take, the changes we can implement, and the value that our partnerships bring, as well as the areas that we cannot change. I have always had an open door, as have Lindsay, Yesenia, Elizabeth and other leadership with whom you have wanted to address these concerns.

Your email to all staff was not appropriate. I have heard from many of your peers and our homeless engagement team members that feel their work and experiences were erased by your implication that meaningful connections and relationships cannot be achieved by our teams who work with law enforcement. The hard work that they have put in to build trust and partnership, to truly move the

needle on systemic change to these departments by showing another way the work can be done, has been disparaged publicly on this all staff email.

There are many platforms right now to demand change, and it is working! I am so excited to see our LAHSA staff marching and demanding justice. But the email you sent was not that platform.

LAHSA has changed dramatically and is very open to hearing voices to shape how we can become better. Yours has been a strong voice in this process. I understand it may not seem fast enough or monumental enough, but again, this all staff email was not the way to go.

This email has resulted in real pain, Kristy, for many of our Black and African American staff.

Let's talk Monday. Let me and Elizabeth know when you are available.

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Sent from my iPhone

On Jun 6, 2020, at 7:31 AM, Kristy Lovich <klovich@lahsa.org> wrote:

Good morning,

I appreciate that there is a preference for this conversation not to occur via email to all staff so I am happy to engage directly with all that are included on this response.

However, I must share that I do not regret including all staff on my message. That

gesture provided exactly what was intended ñ to offer a my clear voice to these

concerns within our community so others might feel empowered to use theirs and to

inject the kind of urgency that is embedded in this collective moment into our decision

making and next steps.

I am going to be very honest with you.

I do not need space to process right now. Nor do I feel it is useful for anyone to go to

their supervisor with these concerns. I have been bringing up concerns about police

violence done to our clients to my supervisor and my associate director, and to you,

Heidi for the better part of a year. Many, many HET members have gone to their

supervisors, to Victor, to other leadership in our department sharing vividly the kind of

pain and trauma they experience as they are required by their employer to participate

in operations that cause harm and inflict trauma via police violence onto our clients,

onto our staff, many of whom have their own personal experiences of trauma related to

police violence. These vulnerable expressions of concern, pain, and sadness have been

heard ñ but the conditions which cause them have not changed despite using the

appropriate channels to alert leadership to their existence. We have learned that

sharing these concerns with our superiors does not work.

I am relieved and happy that LAHSA has released statements about its position on racial

justice and the killing of George Floyd at the hands of police.

However, in this moment,

the signatories on my letter, the many, many people that emailed and called me

yesterday to say thank you for my letter, our unsheltered clientsó 40% of whom are Black people do not want to know how LAHSA feels about racism and police violence. We want to know what LAHSA is going to do about racism and police violence.

What concrete and urgent action is LAHSA going to take to protect the people we are committed to serve from the police?

Thank you,
Kristy

<image006.jpg>

<image007.jpg>

<image008.png>

From: Equity Lahsa <equity@lahsa.org>
Sent: Friday, June 5, 2020 3:16 PM
To: Equity Lahsa <equity@lahsa.org>
Subject: RE: In order to demonstrate that Black life matters to LAHSA we must end its partnership with law enforcement

Thank you, @Amy and @Kristy, for your passion and commitment. The concerns you've raised matter, and we will internalize them and discuss the path forward among the leadership team.

For anyone else who has concerns or recommendations that you would like heard, please email them to me at equity@lahsa.org ñ which will come directly to my inbox. Right now, I'm collecting and summarizing the concerns other employees have forwarded to my attention, and they will help inform how we shape our equity, diversity and inclusion work. That email account will also serve as a safe space for you to share your concerns and candor with transparency. Feel free to send them anonymously if you want to protect your identity.

We want to hear from you and create a safe space for candor and transparencyóand in a way that honors others' voices. Again, email me directly at equity@lahsa.org. I assure you will be heard.

In service to advancing equity together,
Ryan

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From: Amy Whelan <awhelan@lahsa.org>
Sent: Friday, June 5, 2020 1:12 PM
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Subject: Re: In order to demonstrate that Black life matters to LAHSA we must end its partnership with law enforcement

I think this email thread is a perfect place to do what was just asked of us in the Eracism meeting: To have the courage of our convictions and stand up for Black Life!

I really hope this ongoing conversation does lead to LAHSA reevaluating its association with the police. When we try to do outreach with police involvement, our clients are scared, intimidated, threatened. The photos Kristy shared were so heartbreaking, but they needed to be seen. Our vulnerable clients are directly threatened by the LAPD. We

CANNOT provide meaningful outreach, especially in the wake of worldwide condemnation of police power, with cops at our side! Times are changing. Let's not pretend to do business as usual.

Thank you Kristy and Black Lives Matter LA for offering this revolutionary suggestion!
And thank you to Michelle and Ryan from our meeting this afternoon for providing context to the discussion.

Amy Whelan
Homeless Engagement Team, SPA 5
Los Angeles Homeless Service Authority (LAHSA)
Tel: 213-392-9688
Email: awhelan@lahsa.org
www.lahsa.org

On Jun 5, 2020, at 12:56 PM, Heidi Marston <hmarston@lahsa.org> wrote:

Good Afternoon, LAHSA Team:

We greatly appreciate the passion of everyone on our LAHSA Team, and recognize that everyone is dealing with these difficult times and is grieving, processing, and growing in their own way. As you know, LAHSA has issued our Organization's position (attached) both internally and externally, condemning the actions and individuals that led to the death of George Floyd and so many other Black Lives. We remain committed to our values and to providing the best care to those we serve.

Because we know that each one of us has different stories, feelings, perspectives, it's important that we maintain a safe and encouraging space for communication.

Additionally, we must strike a balance and acknowledge formal LAHSA communication channels, such as email. This allows us to ensure our messaging is consistent across our Agency and can create opportunity for advocacy, both in official and unofficial LAHSA capacities for employees.

This is not an attempt to stifle discussion or muffle the voices of our Team, rather, to clarify the appropriate communication channels for these discussions to take place. If you feel that you need additional space to process, discuss, and/or share, please work with your supervisor offline and we will help facilitate the appropriate forum for doing that.

Thank you for all you do to care for those we serve.

Heidi

From: Derrick Estifanos <destifanos@lahsa.org>
Sent: Friday, June 5, 2020 12:41 PM
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Subject: Re: In order to demonstrate that Black life matters to LAHSA
we must end its partnership with law enforcement

Thank you KrIsty, Iím very glad weíre starting this conversation.

Furthermore, the only contribution from any law enforcement agencies
to the un housed populations are trauma, anxiety, depression and set
back in life due to unnecessary avoidable legal issues observed under
CARE operations.

My experience during CARE operations have left me with frightening
thoughts about how police interact with clients when Iím not there.
Not
to mention how I was never treated with respect by the law
enforcement agencies during CARE. If they are our partners it sure
hasnít felt like it!!!

On Jun 5, 2020, at 10:43 AM, Kristy Lovich
<klovich@lahsa.org> wrote:

Before you continue reading, please know that this
letter was written in community and has been
endorsed by:

Black Lives Matter
Los Angeles Chapter
Rev. Edward L. Anderson M.A., M. Div
Senior Pastor, McCarty
Memorial Christian Church
Committee Member on the Ad
Hoc Committee on Black People
Experiencing Homelessness
Co-Chair, California Poor
People's Campaign: A National
Call for Moral Revival
Dignity & Power Now
A Los Angeles based grassroots
organization founded in 2012
that fights for the dignity and
power of all incarcerated
people, their families, and

communities. Our mission is to build a Black and Brown led abolitionist movement rooted in community power towards the goal of achieving transformative justice and healing justice for all incarcerated people, their families, and communities.

Meztli Projects

An Indigenous based arts & culture collaborative centering Indigeneity into the creative practice of Los Angeles by using arts-based strategies to support, advocate for, and organize to highlight Native/Indigenous Artists and systems-impacted youth.

You can become an endorser too.

Follow this link to sign your name:

End LAHSA's Partnership with
LAPD and LA County Sheriffs Today

Dearest LAHSA Community, Colleagues, Members of the Executive Leadership Team:

I write this letter to you from my home that sits atop unceded land of which the Tongva people are the original stewards. In my work as a homeless service provider with membership of many communities within what is now known as Los Angeles, it is with deep gratitude that I am committed to uplifting the name of this land ó Yaangnaó and the community members from this Nation who work and live alongside us. I am framing this communication with you with an acknowledgement of this and recognition that the displacement of Indigenous people from this land is in fact the first instance of ìhomelessnessî in Los Angeles.

I am a supervisor in the Access & Engagement Department with the Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority. I am responsible for leading teams in Service Planning Area 4, serving people experiencing homelessness in Hollywood, Midtown, Silverlake, Echo Park, Westlake, and Northeast LA. This work sits within my own practice as an anti-racist white person responsible for confronting and dismantling the legacies

of white supremacy in this country and beyond. This is my heart's greatest labor and most sacred commitment.

I offer the forthcoming words like opening a door, an invitation. Thank you for reading.

I would like to share about a conversation I had very recently with a client whom I will refer to as "Harriet" to protect her privacy. Harriet is a Black woman that has been surviving homelessness for the last several years in Hollywood, Downtown LA, and Skid Row. I received an email about Harriet from the Unified Homelessness Response Center requesting that I reach out to her after she had spent months attempting to access services by calling and emailing her Council District representatives. Harriet lives with several serious illnesses that put her at great risk generally and certainly at a time in which our unhoused neighbors are highly vulnerable to Covid-19. She felt desperate to get indoors so that she could manage her health and avoid contracting this virus. I spent about an hour speaking with Harriet to get to know her, her story, to understand what her goals are, and what she needed. We had a wonderful conversation! Harriet's fierce intellect and humor, her way with words was immediately apparent. She shared very candidly about her experiences being harassed and abused by police, having to move regularly to avoid citations or going back to jail. She offered her knowledge as to why homelessness happens and expressed a profound commitment to participating in action to end homelessness as soon as she is permanently housed. Becoming emotional, she questioned why the police and housed people hate her. And in a solemn moment she asked, "I am still a viable person, right?" Her question silenced me until I realized that she was not asking this rhetorically but that she sincerely wanted me to answer this question. "Yes. We need you, friend. We need you Harriet." I replied and thanked her for sharing such a vulnerable moment with me, a stranger. This exchange of vulnerability provided a space for us to become connected.

I am accountable to Harriet now.

I offer this story about Harriet to illuminate a few things. One, that Harriet's fear and anxiety about law enforcement, about being criminalized for being without a place to live is real, the danger she experiences is real, and that this sentiment is shared by the unsheltered friends and family that me and my

teams work with every day. Harriet understood the treatment she received from police as a message to her that her life is not viable.

Read that again: Harriet understood the treatment she received from police as a message to her that her life is not viable.

Second, that moments of authentic non-violent outreach guided by trauma informed principles are opportunities to build lasting connections that serve as immovable foundations for folks to recover from the trauma of homelessness. These moments are lifesaving ñ and not just for the clients we serve but for us, those that conduct outreach. Each connection brings us more deeply into being alive, to living a life in community.

It is not lost on me and should not be lost on you that it is critical that we pay attention to the fact that Harriet is a Black woman. Hers is just one story among Black people that make up 40% of Los Angeles' entire community of residents experiencing homelessness ñ while Black people make up just 9% of the total population. These figures come directly from LAHSA's own Greater Los Angeles Homeless Count conducted in 2017 and this stunning disparity led to the formation of the Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing Homelessness which issued a report in 2018 calling for ìthe elimination of racial disparities and systemic racism affecting Black peopleóindividuals and familiesó experiencing homelessness across Los Angeles County.î

Also in 2018, LAHSA participated in the Inaugural Community Forum on Native American Homelessness with partner agency, the Los Angeles City/County Native American Indian Commission. A progress report coming out of this forum states that there is ìan indelible connection between settler colonialism, subsequent policies of removal, termination, assimilation, relocation, and modern Indigenous homelessness.î Colleen Echohawk, Executive Director of the Chief Seattle Club goes on to say that, ìWhile the dominant narrative focuses on individual deficits as reasons for homelessness (e.g. alcoholism, mental illness, ãa cultural preferenceí for being homeless), we challenge these notions by outlining the ways in which modern Indigenous homelessness is a direct extension of colonialism and structural racism.î

As Black and Indigenous leaders have vocalized a

kinship between each of these communities suffering under white supremacy, I pull these two efforts taken on by LAHSA together to say that I see that this agency is making connections between structural racism and homelessness and to underscore boldly that the mortal entanglement of white supremacy and racism will continue to cause death if these racist structuresó the very architecture of our systems and communitiesó do not fundamentally change.

Your stated commitment to racial justice tells me that you too know this to be true. However, to activate that truth, to make good on a commitment to equity, to make good on an affirmation of a commitment to racial justice this agency must make difficult and courageous decisions about how its work is carried out and with whom. And these decisions must center the desires and needs of those most harmed by white supremacy.

LAHSA has taken enormous steps toward addressing the ways that structural racism causes and perpetuates homelessness and I applaud these efforts. The agency has hired a Director of Equity to spearhead its efforts to tackle structural racism within our organization and our Continuum of Care and includes equity as a core part of its mission. As the world has been swept into a swell of grief about the Black lives taken by police and ongoing racialized trauma, I have heard loving and powerful statements from LAHSAís leadership honoring and affirming the reality of these losses. Just this past Wednesday LAHSA published a touching declaration affirming the agencyís commitment to racial justice. [see attached document] Within this document the agency invokes the words of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr, ìIn the End, we will remember not the words of our enemies, but the silence of our friendsî and proceeds to state that ìLAHSA will not be silent. It is these types of social injustices that lead to the perpetuation of homelessness, and this is the reason our role in LA county to advance racial equity is so crucial. Racism is real. Hate is real. Fear is real. Our LAHSA values of accountability, collaboration, compassion, equity, and integrity will guide us on our path to ensure racial equity is at the forefront of housing opportunities across Los Angeles.î And on social media I have seen LAHSA participate in solidarity actions by adopting a black screen as a profile image to hold virtual space for this tragic loss of life.

All of these gestures are beautiful, and I believe they are sincere.

They land squarely in hearts of your staff and the communities we serve.

They answer a call.

But they are not enough.

Right now, Black people are demanding a divestment from policing and an investment in supportive services, education, housing and decarceration. Black Lives Matter, leaders in this Movement for Black Lives is demanding a divestment from policing and incarceration as a means to address homelessness not only among Black people but among ALL people ñ highlighting the urgent imperative to defend Black lives. Right. Now.

This agency must listen to this demand.

A defense of Black life is a guarantee of homes and safety.

A defense of Black life is a connection to services free from the harm of law enforcement.

Partnering with law enforcement contradicts our core values.

Partnering with law enforcement goes against evidence based best practices for working with people experiencing homelessness.

According to widely accepted guidance, creating community based, trauma informed outreach programs aligns with our values and proves to be most effective: ìDeveloping positive partnerships, not punitive ones, will be essential in ending homelessness; the entire community working together is a key ingredient to success. Criminalization, however, creates more conflict between local officials, the police, and homeless people. At worst, criminalization gives local politicians a way to try to dodge responsibility for homelessness by turning it over to the police. The police, who don't have tools to solve the problem, often end up shuffling homeless people from place to place: at great expense to local taxpayers, while causing even more trauma to people experiencing homelessness. Criminalization is not a homelessness strategy; it is a consequence of not having a strategy. It is a last-resort effort when local governments don't know what else to do when it comes to homelessness response.î [National Alliance to End Homelessness]

We can do better.

LAHSA must immediately dissolve its partnerships with all law enforcement agencies and redirect the funding and personnel within programs that include police officers like the HOPE, Care, and Care+ programs toward expanded outreach services operating without law enforcement partnersó as a principled demonstration of its commitment to racial justice. If this organization continues to operate ìbusiness as usualî regarding embedding law enforcement officers within outreach programming it has failed to embody and activate the commitments it has just 72 hours ago declared and it undermines the brilliant and necessary work it has undertaken to address structural racism over these last few years.

This week our friend Harriet has been on my mind and in my heart. Thankfully, she recently moved into interim housing and will continue to work with my team until she obtains permanent housing. I feel so grateful and relieved about her and other Black clients of mineó grateful and relieved that I received her call, their calls and a chance to offer care in time to avoid further harm. In another version of her story and the stories of many other Black clients I work with, had police been called instead of outreach, had an outreach team accompanied by police met her first it is not only possible but highly likely that she would have ended up further traumatized, ensnared in the grasp of incarceration or worse ó shared a fate with Mr. George Floyd, may he rest in power.

Instead of creating these horrifying outcomes we were able to connect and mutually affirm that her life is indeed viable, that her life absolutely matters. I would not have been able to make this kind of connection with police officers at my side. I have faith that Harriet would endorse this letter.

This moment is an invitation to all of us to end the brutality against and murder of Black people and all Indigenous People and People of Color at the hands of law enforcement. We are explicitly being asked to use any and every position we occupy to lift-up this call to action and move it forward toward justice through our platforms, agency, privilege, and power. Today I use the spaces I occupy as a white person with a small bit of institutional power and access to amplify this call and I

ask you and this agency to join me today in ending LAHSA's partnerships with the LAPD and LA County Sheriffs.

In writing this letter I have consulted with the individuals and organizations listed below to whom I am accountable in this work and humbly requested their co-signature on this initiative to end LAHSA's partnerships with law enforcement agencies, end LAHSA's compliance with the historic and ongoing violence from law enforcement onto our clients [see attached image], end this agency's participation in racialized violence onto Black people that is inevitable if outreach with law enforcement continues. I am in awe of their work and pray that the labor I take on will do it justice ñ and I hope yours does too.

With love and solidarity,
in defense of Black life,
in the promise of Black futures,

Kristy Lovich
Supervisor, Spa 4, Access & Engagement
The Los Angeles Homeless Services Authority

With guidance and endorsement from the following signatories:

Black Lives Matter
Los Angeles Chapter

Rev. Edward L. Anderson M.A., M.Div
Senior Pastor, McCarty Memorial Christian Church
Ad Hoc Committee on Black People Experiencing
Homelessness, Committee Member
California Poor People's Campaign: A National Call for
Moral Revival, Co-Chair

Meztli Projects
An Indigenous based arts & culture collaborative
centering Indigeneity into the creative practice of Los
Angeles by using arts-based strategies to support,
advocate for, and organize to highlight
Native/Indigenous Artists and systems-impacted youth.

Dignity & Power Now
A Los Angeles based grassroots organization founded in
2012 that fights for the dignity and power of all
incarcerated people, their families, and communities.
Our mission is to build a Black and Brown led abolitionist

movement rooted in community power towards the goal of achieving transformative justice and healing justice for all incarcerated people, their families, and communities.

<image002.jpg>

Rest in Power Mr. George Floyd

May peace come to you and to all those taken from us.
And may we work righteously so we do not lose one more.

Say their names:

Unarmed People of Color Killed by Police, 1999–2014
Mapping US Police Killings of Black Americans

Kristy Lovich

[she/her/hers]

Supervisor, Access & Engagement Department, Spa
4/Metro

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