



YWCA Olympia is deeply saddened and disturbed by the death of Vaneesa L. Hopson after being “chemically restrained” by Olympia paramedics in the early morning of February 7, 2018. Vaneesa’s tragic death highlights the intersections of gendered violence, class, policing, and the use of excessive force against individuals with substance use and/or mental health challenges. While this incident did not involve a shooting, it is important to note that one third of people shot by the police were experiencing a mental health crisis.

Today at YWCA, we wondered how different this situation would have been if we had systems and first responders trained to respond in a survivor centered, trauma-informed manner. We thought about how differently this could have turned out if our first responders were trained in methods and approaches that prioritize human rights. Unfortunately, Vaneesa was faced with a system that is outright hostile by design in the way it responds by harming individuals who are vulnerable, traumatized, and experience mental illness. Vaneesa has become another victim of a system unwilling to change, with no mechanisms for true accountability.

YWCA Olympia has concerns about an investigation into Vaneesa’s death that does not prioritize independence from our local policing agencies. We call on the Olympia community to continue to advocate for an independent citizen review committee to oversee law enforcement / first responders and push for transparency and accountability. We also continue to advocate for increased police training for de-escalation, mental health, and first aid. These measures are imperative to decrease the likelihood of another incident of state-sanctioned violence in our community.

These escalated situations are mitigated primarily through building supportive relationships and trust in the communities we live in and serve. We encourage law enforcement and first responders to meet the organizations and individuals listed below, hear about what we are doing, why it works, and draw on community leaders to support you through this investigation process and planning to ensure this never happens again.

*YWCA Olympia*

Malika Lamont, *Full Circle United*

Heather Penny, *Full Circle United*

Naima Lowe, *Full Circle United*

Crystal Chaplin,

*Justice for André & Bryson*

Jasmine Thompson,

*Justice for André & Bryson*

Richard Chippo,

*Justice for André & Bryson*

André Thompson,

*Justice for André & Bryson*

Bryson Chaplin,

*Justice for André & Bryson*

Lisa Ganser, *Idriss Stelley Foundation, POOR Magazine,*

*Olympia Copwatch*

Nomy Lamm, *Sins Invalid*

Meg Martin, MSW

Sarah Stockholm, *Olympia SURJ*

Christa Lenssen, *Olympia SURJ*

Kayla Mahnke, *Olympia SURJ*

Madeline Weltcheck, *Olympia SURJ*

Emily Pieper, *Olympia SURJ*

Mara Brennan-Magidson, *Olympia SURJ*

*Parents Organizing For Welfare & Economic Rights (POWER)*

Quinn Russell, MS, LMHCA

Sfirah Madrone, MA, LMHCA

Marin Fahey, MA, LMFTA

Katie Kemp, MA, CMHC

Elizabeth Winter Forsyth, CCMA

Sofi Harnish, CCMA

Lindsay Solise, CCMA

Marian Gonzales, MA, LMHC

Patrick Barmes, MA, CMHC

Keylee Marineau, MA

Leslie Cushman, JD,

*Olympia Coalition to Reform Deadly Force Laws*

Lisa Brodoff,

*Olympia Coalition to Reform Deadly Force Laws*

Jim Bamberger,

*Olympia Coalition to Reform Deadly Force Laws*

Caroline Lacey,

*Olympia Coalition to Reform Deadly Force Laws*

Lynn Grotzky, LICSW,

*Olympia Coalition to Reform Deadly Force Laws*