

Marilyn Washington Harris

Marilyn Washington Harris is a long-time resident of the Acorn community in West Oakland who is a leading activist in the effort to eradicate and prevent violence against youth.

On August 4, 2000, Mrs. Harris' son, Khadafy Washington, was shot and killed while riding his bicycle. He was only 18 years old. Khadafy had graduated two months earlier from McClymonds High School in West Oakland and was a well-known, much loved football player. "I was devastated. He was a good kid. He did all the things a parent would want a child to do", Marilyn recalls.

Mrs. Harris turned her shock and grief into determination to call a halt to the cycle of violence. She sparked a citywide movement and a shift in consciousness by posting over 20 billboards and 500 printed tee-shirts emblazoned with a photo of Khadafy and a simple slogan - "Do you know who killed me?". Her effort to find her son's killer and stop the violence in Oakland evolved into the Khadafy Washington Foundation for Non-violence, Inc., which was incorporated as a non-profit organization in March of 2002. Today, the Foundation supports many efforts throughout the year designed to prevent violence and support Oakland families who have lost a loved one to homicide. The Foundation hosts grief support groups; an annual Mothers and Families luncheon; Shoot Hoops Not Guns; A Day of Peace, Celebration of Life; and other events to support survivors and to raise funds to help those in immediate need after a homicide. The Foundation also advocates for the rights of victims and their families.

Since April 2007, as part of the Khadafy Washington Project at Youth ALIVE! and in partnership with Catholic Charities of the East Bay, Mrs. Harris is a first responder to scenes of homicides and in the homes of families and friends who have lost loved ones to violence. She has assisted hundreds of families with grief counseling, memorial planning and preparation, and referrals to needed services including food, clothing, child care, government assistance.

Mrs. Harris has inspired many over the years with her story of perseverance, redemption and love. She has experience speaking to many types of audiences. This includes church congregations, teachers, school staff, parents, youth, street outreach workers, youth case managers and elected officials, among many others. Mrs. Harris also provides trainings on healing, grief counseling and the effects of victimization for professionals, volunteers and others who may work with people exposed to or who are victims of violence. Mrs. Harris also speaks to those experiencing grief and loss on how to get through their pain in a healthy way. She is a practical trainer who leaves her audiences with tools to move forward but also the inspiration to begin their transformation.

Mrs. Harris has been recognized on numerous occasions for her work:

- The Bay Area CBS 5 - Eyewitness News Jefferson Award in Community and Public Service , August 15, 2012
- 2011 Oaklandish Oakland Innovators Award, January, 2011
- 2008 City of Oakland Citizen Humanitarian Award , January 20, 2008

Accolades for Marilyn:

“Marilyn’s dedication, passion, abilities and the performance of those duties are priceless. All who, through unfortunate incidents, are blessed to meet her will always know that they have been completely embraced by a courageous, empathetic and truly wonderful person.” - *Kevin Grant, Violence Prevention Coordinator, City of Oakland*

“She could tell me what this step’s going to be, what that step’s going be. You can’t get that from family and friends. You have to get it from someone that’s been through it.” - *R. Douglas, mother of a homicide victim and client of Marilyn’s*

“Marilyn Harris is a source of light for grieving families during their darkest hour. In addition to her work with families and friends of homicide victims, Marilyn also reaches out to young people to motivate them to solve their differences without violence. Her efforts and commitment toward ending violence in Oakland are exceptional.” - *Pat Kernighan, Oakland City Councilmember, District 2*

"There are few people who can provide the type of insight that Marilyn Harris can on how best to work with grieving families. Her experience and compassion are invaluable. My organization and I have learned so much from her. Marilyn trained our staff and trains our graduate students for their clinical internships." – *Anne Marks, Executive Director, Youth ALIVE!*

"Marilyn Harris is an expert at working with families going through the grief process. Her knowledge and experience in this field is invaluable. As someone who has lost a child to violence, she can not only guide families through the grieving process, but also serve as an inspiration because she has walked in their shoes." - *Reygan Harmon, Public Safety Director, Office of Oakland Mayor Jean Quan*