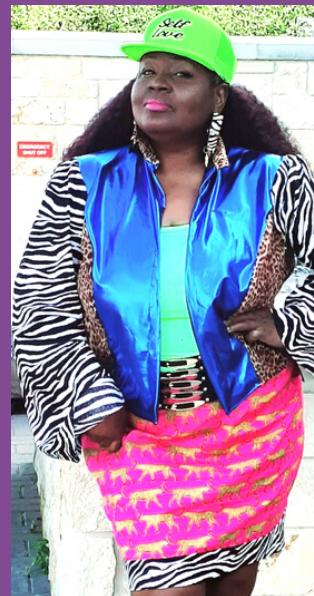




# Black Trailblazers and Visionaries of NRCDV

 National Resource Center  
on Domestic Violence



# **Patty Branco** **she/her/hers** **Senior Technical Assistance and** **Resource Specialist**

Patty brings over 20 years of work experience in the gender-based violence movement. Drawing upon her lived experiences as a Black mixed-race woman, Brazilian immigrant, advocate and survivor, her work is guided by an anti-oppression, intersectional, and trauma-informed lens. Patty loves the sun and never met a cake she didn't like. Her favorite role is that of Tia and Godmother.



## **How have you survived in the movement to end gender-based violence?**

I have survived and thrived in the gender-based violence movement because my path in life and in this work has been paved by Black wisdom, grit, and love. My mother and grandmother taught me about resilience and defiant joy, in more ways than they can ever imagine. From my sisters in the movement, I learn – every day and by example – how to show up in the world and operate outside whiteness. And the many Black feminist writers that I love and revere from afar – they keep me lit with their revolutionary zest. They inspire me to dive deep and tap into the gifts and resources that I carry within myself. As Audre Lorde has said, the “place of power within each of us is neither white nor surface; it is dark, it is ancient, and it is deep.”

## **S/hero or ancestor**

Marielle Franco (July 27, 1979–March 14, 2018) was an Afro-Brazilian politician, human rights defender, and sociologist born in the Maré favela of Rio de Janeiro. A proud Black bisexual feminist and activist, she was known for her unabashed commitment and advocacy for and to Brazil's most marginalized communities – including LGBTQ+ persons, the Black community, indigenous persons, and religious minorities. Franco was elected City Councilor of Rio, as a member of The Socialism and Liberty Party (PSOL), with 46,502 votes. Moreover, she was a candid critic of state-sanctioned violence, which disproportionately impacts Brazil's Black and poor communities, which she so diligently worked for. After losing a friend to a stray bullet from a shoot-out between police officers and drug traffickers in Maré, Franco sought to challenge and dismantle state violence. Her master's thesis in public administration at the Fluminense Federal University (UFF) was about the punitive atrocities committed by the state and the militarization of its agents and was titled, “UPP, the Reduction of the Favela to Three Letters: An Analysis of Public Security Policy in the State of Rio de Janeiro.” Prior to her death, she took to social media to speak out against police violence that resulted in the deaths of three young Black men in Rio, who too, like Marielle were from the favelas. On March 14, 2018, after speaking on a panel called “Jovens Negras Movendo as Estruturas” (Young Black Women Moving Structures), Franco was assassinated while sitting in the back of a car, with four bullets to her head. Her driver, Anderson Pedro Gomes, was also murdered. Her execution sparked international global solidarity under the social media hashtag, #MariellePresente. Her life and legacy inspired countless Black Brazilian women to run for political office during Brazil's national elections in 2018. (Source: Black Women Radicals Database: <https://www.blackwomenradicals.com/database>)



# ***Sharita Lewis***

***she/her/hers***

***Events & Administrative***

***Specialist***

***Strong Black Woman.***

I am a domestic violence survivor and a strong black woman. I am blessed to be alive and part of such an amazing organization.



"If I knew then what I know now,  
things would be much better."

–Sharita Lewis

How have you survived  
in the movement to end  
gender-based violence?

"I stay encouraged,  
positive and  
hopeful."

***Who is  
your  
S/hero?***

***Harriet  
Tubman***

# SHENNA MORRIS

## SHE/HER/HERS

### DIRECTOR OF POLICY, REALTOR, CREATIVE HUSTLER

Shenna Morris is a social justice advocate and Realtor with a creative hustler twist. As the Director of Policy at NRCDV she provides policy vision and expertise across NRCDV areas of focus and social justice issues impacting survivors of domestic violence.



When she's not being a policy geek, you can find her disseminating information and helping her community understand the issue of real estate or giving new life to an accent furniture piece.

Since her early adolescent years, Shenna has been about social justice advocacy. Her passion has specifically been focused on the issue of domestic violence. She uses her lived experience as a child witness survivor of domestic violence and 15 years of professional experience, to lead efforts that engage and mobilize communities, stakeholders, and lawmakers in addressing the intersecting issues of domestic violence, homelessness, racism, and oppression. Shenna's advocacy journey has included being a Program Manager at Collaborative Solutions Inc, where she provided HUD technical assistance to communities across the country and time as the Director of Policy and Community Engagement at the Georgia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (GCADAV), where she led capacity-building technical assistance efforts to culturally specific community-based organizations, strengthened collaborations between community-based and mainstream dv programs, and provided training and support to systems on addressing systemic racism and building equitable response systems.

Not only is she known for her movement leadership and credit for increasing the capacity and approaches of organizations in their effort to serve and advocate beside Black, Indigenous, and People of Color survivors and communities, but she's also well known for a mean sand and paint finish on her furniture flips.

Shenna holds a M.A. in Criminal Justice Administration from Clark Atlanta University and a B.A. in Political Science from the University of West Georgia.

**"Sometimes you have to  
put fear in your pocket and  
walk with it."**

**- Shenna Morris**

**Shenna Morris | Better Homes  
and Gardens Real Estate Metro...**

[metrobrokers.com](http://metrobrokers.com)



**Marlena came to NRCDV in 2022 after years working at the state level. They are committed to making sure those underrepresented and underserved within this movement get their voices heard.**

How have you survived in the movement to end gender-based violence?

Being able to build community with people of similar identity and goals within the movement has been absolutely needed. I also found a really good therapist.

# **MARLENA MOORE**

**THEY/THEM/THEIR  
SENIOR PROGRAM SPECIALIST**

**"INDIVIDUALISM IS COLLECTIVELY  
KILLING US. STAYING AGGRESSIVELY  
IGNORANT TO HOW WE ARE ALL  
INTERCONNECTED AND IMPACTED BY  
HISTORY WILL DESTROY US ALL."**

**-MARLENA MOORE**



# LAVON MORRIS-GRANT

## DIRECTOR OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Lavon joined NRCDV as the Director of Community Engagement in 2021. Working in close collaboration with the Vice-President of Strategic Partnerships and Systems Change, Vice President of Programs, Prevention and Social Change, the Director of Policy, she is a bridge to people with lived experience in communities most impacted by housing insecurity to guide and inform the work of NRCDV's housing capacity center and across all initiatives. Lavon has been a social justice advocate for over 25 years, where she founded and was the Executive Director of MACOSH Healing Network from 2013 – 2021. She is also an entrepreneur and author of two great books.



**"Don't allow your circumstances to define who you are."**



### HOW HAVE YOU SURVIVED IN THE MOVEMENT TO END GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE?

Connecting my lived experiences with the analysis/dynamics of social justice and marrying them together to create a fuller, realistic understanding of how racism and other ism's impact policies and the culture of organizations and this tool allows my voice to influence positive outcomes for survivors, Black women and builds upon my leadership.

**S/hero: Ida B. Wells**

**Whom Shall I Fear: A Spiritual Journey of a Battered Woman**  
**Who Will Speak For My Children: Healing Through the Trauma**

Contact via email to purchase books or for professional or personal life coaching sessions @ [ismgrant@gmail.com](mailto:ismgrant@gmail.com)

Facebook: Von Author Instagram: @lifecoach\_von



**SHOP NOW**

## ➔ How have you survived in the movement to end gender-based violence?

Faith. Gratitude. Resilience. Humbleness. Hope. I listened, observed, and learned from the best. Many phenomenal Black women. The Black women whose shoulders I stand on. The Black women who believed in me, before I believed in myself, and paved the way for my almost three decades of service to the gender-based violence movement. The women who always made/make time to pour into me, while I pour into others. I carry their tenacity, boldness, grace, words of wisdom and invaluable teachings with me along the journey. Because of them I continue to survive and thrive in the movement.

## ➔ Shero/hero

Today, as I reflect on the power of words, I would like to honor and celebrate Maya Angelou. I admire her extraordinary gift of language/words.

"Do the best you can until you know better. Then when you know better, do better." – Maya Angelou



Arlene is a proud immigrant, born in Jamaica; a mother, a daughter, a mentor, an Auntie, an entrepreneur, a published author, a storyteller, a thought-leader, a joy-seeker, and a hope dealer.

Arlene has decades of multi-faceted experience within the movement to end gender-based violence. Her formal advocacy work began in Virginia "in a cold basement" as an overnight Hotline staff at the YWCA Women's Advocacy Program. Much gratitude to DB who took a chance and hired her with zero "formal experience" in the movement. Arlene later worked in various leadership roles at the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance and the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Arlene current serves as the Vice President of Programs, Prevention & Social Change at NRCDV. She joined NRCDV as staff in 2015. Prior to joining staff, she served for several years as Vice-Chair of NRCDV's Board of Directors. Arlene provides leadership to NRCDV's Programs & Prevention Team and oversees several key initiatives and special projects. Her passion project, co-led with Dr. Nkiru Nnawulezi, birthed in 2019 and officially launched in 2022, is the Transforming the GBV movement... project. Learn more about the project @ <https://www.transformgbv.org/>

"HEALING, HURTING AND THRIVING CAN ALL HAPPEN SIMULTANEOUSLY." - ARLENE  
#MYLIFE #MYSTORY #MYTESTIMONY  
LEARN MORE ABOUT ARLENE'S PASSION AND PURPOSE @ [WWW.ARLENECVASSELL.COM](http://WWW.ARLENECVASSELL.COM)



# LYNNE E. DILLARD

SHE/HER/HERS

EXECUTIVE ADMINISTRATIVE SPECIALIST

Lynne E Dillard born and raised in Harrisburg, PA by a great single black mother. Graduated from Harrisburg High and Kutztown University. I have worked for a community college for many years and also worked most recently with the Girl Scouts. I have also been involved in non-profit work through my many volunteer activities. Black leadership, black joy and black voices have directed many of the activities throughout my life.



"BE KIND"

SHERO?  
MY MOTHER  
HELEN A. MOORE





**JACQUELINE MILLER**

**PRONOUNS- WETTAM  
(SISTER)**

**DIRECTOR OF RACIAL EQUITY  
& SOCIAL CHANGE**

**"It's time that we get it right.  
Black women are one of the  
Creator's sacred beings."  
Jacqueline Miller**

**Ne halo O mpelo bohula (I am here to bless). Jacqueline has worked within the Domestic Violence Movement for 36 years and within The Transforming the Gender-Based Violence Movement for one year. Jacqueline is an artist, fashion designer, a vocalist, a songwriter, an author, a film actress, a playwright, a designer of earrings that reflects nature, a budding photographer, a loving daughter, a loving mother, a loving grandmother and a loved one of many. Jacqueline loves reading, designing curriculum, being a PowerPoint Queen, conducting research and lighting her paths of self-exploration and ongoing inner evolving spiced up with joy!**



**My Shero is my Mom**