

# THE VIEW MAGAZINE

*for women with conviction*

PRESS RELEASE

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**'We are not black, we are invisible': Abused BAME women reveal their struggles with criminal justice system**

"I hid it because I was afraid of being blamed."

"My mum encouraged me not to tell the police."

"Friends helped me treat my injuries."

These are among the harrowing accounts of physical and sexual abuse that BAME women in the criminal justice system have shared with campaigners fighting to improve their treatment.

[The View](#), a magazine, campaigning platform and social enterprise which is by and for women in the criminal justice system, is seeking the views of incarcerated women and those on license in the community, particularly from minority ethnic backgrounds - who have experienced domestic or sexual abuse.

They are raising public awareness of the challenges BAME women face in the criminal justice system and how being a victim of abuse can exacerbate those challenges. They are also calling for better training for the College of Policing and the Judicial College, with full, binding pre-sentencing reports, where abuse has been a factor, as well as trauma-informed training for probation and other criminal justice staff. Echoing the Lammy Review, they are asking for colour-blind crime reports from the police to go to the CPS, with no names or details of race to remove possibilities of unconscious bias.

They wish to see an overhaul of the National Probation Service which will resume control of all people under license supervision from next year, so there is proper scrutiny and accountability in the actions of probation staff. Disproportionate numbers of BAME and foreign national women are being recalled because probation staff are not aware of the cultural issues that affect compliance while they are on license.

One woman who took The View's survey said her mother had encouraged her not to go to the police after she was abused. "I let myself get taken in by her words. I love my mum but she let

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me down and she was meant to encourage me...[The] biggest regret of my life is listening to her.”

Another said she reported her abuse to the police, who interviewed the alleged perpetrator. She said: “I had injuries that friends helped me treat. I got peer mental health support at a women’s centre to help me deal with the situation.”

The survey comes while the government’s Domestic Abuse Bill is in its final scrutiny stages in parliament - a piece of legislation which campaigners say does not pay enough heed to the experiences of incarcerated or BAME women.

As an ex-prisoner, Farah, founder and sub-editor of The View, is familiar with the challenges women of colour can face in the criminal justice system.

“The courts and police repeatedly targeted me for daring to be a brown woman who refused to be silenced, so I was further criminalised, stigmatised, traumatised,” she said.

The View’s operations manager Gail was a victim of domestic abuse and is also an ex-prisoner.

“The survey is important because women like me - black women - are harassed by the courts and social services instead of being helped,” she said.

“We are not black, we are invisible - to the courts, the police, the solicitors. They do not understand that we are not white women; we come from a different heritage and culture and there is no accounting for that.

“I hope hundreds of women respond so we can ask the government to change the way we women are treated, for judges and police officers to be trained about racial and generational trauma and to get an education about us.”

Jemima Lovatt, who is compiling a report from the survey’s responses, said: “It is essential that we listen to the voices of black and ethnic minority women, to understand and appreciate their lived experiences, as we draft the Domestic Abuse Bill. If we leave one woman unprotected, we have failed.”

The survey runs until Tuesday, 30 June and can be found on [The View’s website](#). Responses are anonymous and those who take part can claim a “thank you” gift from Lush or an online vocational course.

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