

## Challenging the Narrative of a "Hot Summer"

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Are those fireworks or gunshots?

As Independence Day approaches, the nights are filled with noises that leave the city on edge. For me and many survivors of homicide victims, those sounds retraumatize us.

Last week, while discussing the narrative that there is an uptick in violence during the summer, I thought about the years that I've heard the phrase "Watch out! It's going to be a *hot summer*" as an implication that violence and homicide spike dramatically during those months, with no prescription for peace.

This narrative saddens and angers me and retriggers many of us in the survivor community. From January to May 2022, the [Louis D. Brown Peace Institute's](#) Survivor Outreach Services (SOS) assisted [11](#) families in the City of Boston. During the summer months (June - August 2022), the SOS team assisted 10 families. Yet, during the post-summer months (September - December 2022), we assisted 21 families. Where were the headlines about the resources and support for families in the winter, which were statistically more violent in the City of Boston?

We are a culture that responds crisis by crisis, not by what people actually need. Violence must be addressed all year long, not just during the summer. Every single life taken by violence is a major loss, and with every homicide, there are at least 10 people directly impacted. Survivorship is ongoing and grows exponentially, and survivors' needs for support change year-round. It's important we face this issue even when rates seem "down" - by instilling the value of peace and investing in the tools and responses that we know [work](#).

**To survivors of homicide victims and their families:** during the upcoming holiday and summer months, remember that healing is a journey, not a destination. At the Louis D. Brown Peace Institute, we encourage mindfulness practices and [Peace Play In Urban Settings](#) to take care of yourselves. Understand your triggers and tap into the tools you have to help you regain control. Some things we recommend:

- Write your feelings in a journal every day. Writing about your experiences allows you to release some of your emotions.
- Give your mind a break and release from thoughts and emotions through stillness. At night, when those fireworks cause me to swell with rage and fear, I've learned to turn on the sounds of rain and breathe slowly and deeply. I meditate on the Principles of Peace until I fall asleep.
- Stay connected to the people and communities that keep you grounded and calm, and remember that you're the architect of your own inner healing.