



# Reporting: on Violence Tip Sheet



The [torture-murder of Othel Moore Jr. by Missouri prison](#) guards serves as a case study in this tip sheet to illustrate the systemic brutality and why we focus on systems rather than isolated acts of violence.

Othel Moore Jr., a 38-year-old Black man, was killed after being restrained, hooded, and attacked with chemical weapons by a gang of cops in a Missouri prison facility. This incident highlights the need to connect individual acts of violence to broader patterns of state-sanctioned terror and racial violence.

By following these steps below, you can ensure that your coverage of violence is not only responsible and respectful but also contributes to systemic change and community empowerment.

## Purpose of Coverage

### ☐ Assess the Importance

What to Do	Determine why the story is significant beyond the immediate incident.
How to Do It	<p>Focus on systemic issues and injustices highlighted by the incident, ensuring that the coverage serves a transformative purpose.</p> <p>For example, rather than simply reporting on a shooting, explore the underlying factors such as poverty, systemic racism, and lack of mental health support that contribute to such violence. Contrast the lack of funding in those areas with the resources deployed to militarized police.</p>

## Community Impact

### ☐ Reflect on Benefits

What to Do	Consider how your coverage will benefit the community.
How to Do It	<p>Aim to inform Black people in ways that create positive community organization. Simply reporting a shooting, as if it occurred in a vacuum, is harmful framing. Many anti-Black, non Black-owned “rap” culture blogs like MyMixtapez, RapTV and others, utilize these racist framing tactics to “engagement farm” on digital platforms</p>

	<p>like X/Twitter. Instead, when we do report on violence, we ask how the community can support the victim's family, or in other instances, we've provided tools and resources for students seeking to organize or advocate for policy changes in their schools. In fact that is how our Black Student Solidarity Network came about. BSSN is a completely high-schooler-led organization formed by Black students across 5-10 districts in Missouri and Kansas. This network was ideated and created during a Defender Community Programs meeting in response to stories we'd broken on widespread anti-Black hate crimes and inadequate responses from schools and districts.</p>
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## Provide Context

### ☐ Link to Systemic Frameworks

What to Do	Contextualize incidents of violence within historical and systemic frameworks.
How to Do It	Avoid depicting incidents as isolated events. Link them to broader systems like capitalism, imperialism, policing, racism, sexism, etc. For example, in reporting Othel Moore Jr.'s story, connect it to the ongoing issues of the inherent violence of prisons themselves, even when prison cops may not be actively brutalizing them

## Center Victims and Families

### ☐ Respect Dignity

What to Do	Prioritize the voices and dignity of victims and their families.
How to Do It	Ensure your reporting respects their experiences. Include their perspectives, struggles, and demands for justice in your narrative. Share stories that humanize them and their fight for justice.

## Elevate Alternative Narratives

### ☐ Challenge Dominant Perceptions

What to Do	Amplify narratives that question dominant perceptions of policing and community safety.
How to Do It	Highlight community-led initiatives and successes that present alternatives to traditional policing. Report on local groups working on transformative justice and abolitionist strategies. Use stories like the community's response to Othel Moore Jr.'s death to showcase how communities are fighting back against systemic oppression.

## Understand the Impact of Coverage

### ☐ Be Conscious of Trauma

What to Do	Understand how continuous exposure to violence affects community perception and mental health.
How to Do It	Strive to report in ways that do not deepen community trauma. Balance stories of violence with those of resilience and community strength. Provide resources and support options in your coverage.

## Spotlight Community Solutions

### ☐ Showcase Grassroots Efforts

What to Do	Focus on how communities address violence and systemic issues independently of police intervention.
How to Do It	Report on effective grassroots solutions and community-led efforts. Highlight initiatives such as community mediation programs, local mental health support, and other forms of collective action. For example, cover how communities are organizing to support families affected by prison violence.

## Ensure Accountability

### ☐ Track Developments

What to Do	Keep track of developments following your reports.
How to Do It	Hold all stakeholders accountable for their actions and inactions. Follow up on stories to report on any changes or lack thereof in policy, community response, or institutional behavior. Ensure that your audience knows the ongoing efforts to seek justice, like the legal proceedings in Othel Moore Jr.'s case.

## Educational Value

### ☐ Advocate for Change

What to Do	Use your platform to educate about systemic injustices.
How to Do It	Advocate for policy changes and increase awareness about abolitionist movements. Include information on how individuals can get involved in advocacy and reform efforts. Use stories like Othel Moore Jr.'s to illustrate the need for systemic change and to promote educational content on the broader issues of prison reform and abolition.