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Veteran trial lawyer Amy Solomon has enlisted to help Inner City Law Center and homeless female Vets

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Amy Fisch Solomon is a veteran of the Los Angeles trial bar. She has spent 27 years in the heart of downtown L.A., trying dozens of the toughest cases involving heartbreaking injuries and deaths caused by unsafe equipment and products.

So it's perhaps no surprise to find her standing on Skid Row, where she has enlisted with the Inner City Law Center to help one of the fastest-growing populations of homeless people in the U.S.: female veterans.

"I was shocked when I found out what happens to these wonderful women who proudly serve our country when they come home," says Solomon. "Returning servicewomen are now the fastest-growing segment of the homeless population."

In Los Angeles, it's estimated that 1,000 of the 8,131 veterans who are homeless each night are women. Of 141,000 veterans nationwide who are estimated to have spent at least one night in a shelter in recent years, nearly 10 percent were women, according to the Department of Housing and Urban Development. That's an increase from 7.5 percent in 2009.

In addition, as the documentary, "The Invisible War," revealed, many female veterans have suffered sexual trauma during their lives, either while in the military or before they enlisted. One study found that 53 percent of homeless

female veterans had experienced sexual trauma while enlisted.

Solomon became aware of the problems faced by female veterans through Melissa Tyner, the senior staff director of the homeless veterans project at Inner City Law Center. "She told me about what was happening, and I said I had to be involved," says Solomon, who joined the Board of Directors two years ago and has harnessed her passion for helping those in need to raise money and awareness about homeless female veterans.

"It's an honor to support the Inner City Law Center staff who are on the front lines fighting for our female veterans," says Solomon. "They represent women Veterans who return from combat only to find themselves homeless, jobless and in need of medical attention for post-traumatic stress disorder due to sexual abuse while in the military."

Tyner joined the Homeless Veterans project as senior staff attorney in 2009 to advocate for the rights of homeless veterans to receive the benefits and care they are wrongly denied. She started the first clinic for female veterans in the country for Inner City Law Center.

"Women are 13 percent of service members," she said. "And the number of homeless female veterans increased 140 percent from 2006 to 2010, compared to a 45 percent increase in homeless male veterans."

"Thirty percent of women who have

served since 9/11 report they have been raped during active duty," says Tyner, whose own legal career was launched winning a mock trial competition sponsored by veterans. "These veterans desperately need support from the VA in order to heal and recover."

Tyner and Inner City help veterans by establishing the VA's responsibility to provide financial assistance and increased access to healthcare and therapy.

"Doing this work allows me to pay back all of the people who believed in me and supported me," says Tyner.



Amy Solomon and Melissa Tyner. Photo by Amy Cantrell. (May 7, 2013)