

Organizing with Passion

Domestic Violence Organizing Strategies

BUILDING
RELATIONSHIPS
OF TRUST WITH
COMPASSION,
HONESTY &
CREATIVITY

Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center

Produced for Praxis International
Rural Technical Assistance on Violence Against Women
November 2001



Written for recipients of grants from the Rural Domestic Violence and Child Victimization Enforcement Grant Program.
This project was supported by Grant No. 98-WR-VX-K001, awarded by the Violence Against Women Office,
Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.

Points of view in this document are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the official position or policies of the U.S. Department of Justice.

The photographs in this handbook are from the display “Building Relationships of Trust with Compassion,” a part of the Praxis Community Organizing Exhibit documenting grassroots efforts to challenge violence, poverty and other forms of oppression. These efforts include community organizing projects in rural areas and small communities, including several by rural grantees. The exhibit is on display at the Center for Nonviolence in Duluth.

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Preface

This handbook was written by the Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center for Praxis International to be distributed to rural grantees receiving funding from the Violence Against Women Office (Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice).

The authors are community organizers who have gained expertise organizing in many Asian Pacific Island communities within a large urban setting (Seattle, Washington). While not currently organizing in rural areas, they have been engaged for several years in organizing within smaller, isolated communities that have recently emigrated from rural areas in other countries and from small islands. Thus, many of the strategies discussed in this handbook are immediately relevant to the rural organizing experience. In addition, many of the organizers themselves come from rural communities in other countries or have family still living in rural areas.

We believe their experience organizing on domestic violence in these communities is easily applied to organizing in the many different rural areas throughout the U.S. We trust that readers will be able to extract from their experience the general principles of community organizing that work in smaller, isolated areas. And we hope that readers will be creative in using this handbook, building on and adapting principles of community organizing, ideas and courses of action in ways that will work in your own communities. We've also included in the handbook a case study written by a rural grantee project. This section highlights a domestic violence organizing project in rural Florida and shows how many of the same community organizing principles and methods are applied to that rural setting.

The central concern in this handbook is the challenge of changing our society's established ideas and practices regarding violence against women in their homes. This kind of social change organizing challenges the existing order and organizers will meet some resistance. We hope, and trust, that the organizing strategies presented here will aid you in responding to such resistance and to meeting your local rural organizing goals of increased safety for women and their children and improved accountability for batterers. We can change the climate of tolerance for violence against women that exists in our towns, pueblos, villages, and colonies and on our reservations, farms, rancherias and ranches if all of us work to strengthen grassroots organizing. It is this organizing that has the greatest chance of changing longstanding social and institutional practices that tolerate and support violence against women and that dehumanize women, children and men.

We wish to thank the women and men of the Safety Center, authors and contributors Emma Catague, Judy Chen, Norma Timbang, Kim Baker, Alice Ito, Therese Topansa and Robert Shimabukuro, for their hard work and diligence in producing this handbook while continuing their organizing in communities in Seattle. Emma and Judy faithfully hung in there when this writing project, like many, took on a *long* life of its own. We also wish to thank Leslye Orloff, Ayuda, Inc.; Debra Mosley, Rural Diversity Program Manager, Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence; and Natividad E. Lamug for generously making contributions.

Finally, a warm thank you to our faithful editor and friend, Kate Regan, who always makes the difficult task of completing a writing project an enjoyable and fruitful experience.

Praxis International

Chapter 1

What Is Community Organizing?

Community organizing is the process of building power through:
Involving a constituency in identifying the problems they share and the solutions they desire;
Identifying the people and the structures that can make those solutions possible;
Enlisting targets in the effort through negotiation, and through confrontation and pressure when needed;
Building an organization that is democratically controlled by its constituency...that can develop the capacity to take on further problems...and that embodies the will and power of its constituency.¹

—Dave Beckwith, University of Toledo

Compassion, Honesty and Creativity

Emma Catague, a community organizer with the Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center, says that anyone can be a community organizer: “All you need to be is compassionate, honest and creative.” This sounds deceptively simple, but these qualities are essential for an organizer who must also be passionately committed. Community organizing for social change is



March to INS Building With Banners

a long-term project. Unless we are passionate, it is difficult to continue working without seeing substantial progress. Understanding community needs and building community trust depends heavily on compassion, honesty and creativity.

In order to be compassionate, we must be understanding, observant and able to feel empathy. Honesty encompasses more than just telling the truth; it means being honest with ourselves also. Much creativity is born from experience. The more we know and the more experience we have, the easier it is to find creative solutions to problems.

But lack of education and expertise should not stop us. Emma’s characterization of a good organizer tells us the basics.

¹Quoted in *Community Action Training*, Center for Third World Organizing, Oakland, 1999.

All we need is to be honest with ourselves and committed to the change we are trying to make, because the most important factor in community organizing is gaining the community's trust and respect. And it must work both ways. The organizer must respect the community and trust it to tell her what is needed, what the problems are and what resources already exist. The community has to trust the organizer if any positive result is to come from the relationship. In both directions, respect and trust must be earned.

The first question in community organizing is this: How does an organizer gain a community's trust and respect?

The general answer is straightforward: She delivers the ways and means that enable the community to acquire what it needs and wants. In the process, the community will deliver what the organizer wants, because the organizer's goal is for the community members to empower themselves to solve their own problems, in a manner consistent with their values, traditions and customs. So the goals of the organizer and the community are the same.

A requirement for gaining a community's trust and respect is to honor the collective resources and assets of community members: their beliefs, intelligence, experience and knowledge. We can't ignore the community's financial assets. Sometimes they are minimal, and we should be even more conscious of this.

Often external or "outside" community organizers move into poverty-stricken communities intending to "better the lives" of the members. But they approach the communities with an arrogance born of assumed privileges. They set up power dynamics that can ruin any organizing attempt. In too many instances, "outside" organizers assume that financial poverty is a sign of poverty of intelligence, skill or ability. No attempt is made to hire organizers from within the community. An "outside" paid organizer is told to find "inside" community volunteers to act as bridges or community informants, translators or intermediaries. This immediately sets up a power dynamic that blatantly says that the "outsider" is more important (or worth more) than the community members. The "insider" is not respected as an important primary member of the team, but only as a messenger. This situation often leads to the "outsider" losing an early round in the quest for the community's trust.

Compassion and empathy are important because they help us understand community needs and wants. Honesty is essential because honesty is what gains trust. Creativity is necessary because that allows us to think of ways to deliver on our promises.

If we feel that we lack compassion and creativity, but are honest (with ourselves and others), we still may be the person to do the job. Honesty, especially when coupled with a passionate resolve, will get us far, because if we are honest with ourselves, we will see if a community is not

responding to us. And if the community is not responding to us, that is probably a sign that we need to find out what the community really needs. That is the core of community organizing: finding out from community members precisely what the community needs, and collectively mapping out a process enabling them to get it.

Defining the Problem

The community organizing issue we are concerned about is violence against women, specifically domestic violence. It is a reality that injures us all. Most acts of domestic violence against a woman (physical and sexual) occur within the context of battering—a pattern of controlling behaviors used by an abusive person to control his partner, such as isolation, intimidation, coercion, and psychological, emotional, and economic abuse along with using children and privilege.²

Domestic violence is devastating and widespread. Ninety-five percent of victims of battering in a relationship are women abused by men, and it is the number-one cause of injury to women in the United States. When a woman is killed by her husband, it is most likely to happen when she is taking steps to leave him; when a man is killed by a woman, it's usually within hours of his beating or sexually assaulting her.

Organizing around an issue as volatile as domestic violence is not easy. The staggering facts tell us that, in addition to meeting the needs of abused individuals, there is also a need to change societal attitudes and institutions that condone the abusive behavior. Too many myths about domestic violence are accepted without challenge.

Myth: Domestic violence is about couples getting into a brawl on Saturday night, beating each other up, and totally disrupting the neighborhood.

Reality: In most cases one partner is beating, intimidating, and terrorizing the other. It is not mutual combat. It is one person using battering to dominate and control the other.

Myth: Domestic violence is an isolated, one-time event.

Reality: Acts of domestic violence are usually part of an ongoing pattern of controlling behavior that has been learned. Battering often gets worse and more frequent over a period of time.

²Appendix 1, the Power and Control Wheel, illustrates the way physical and sexual violence reinforce these tactics. Appendix 2, the Equality Wheel, illustrates the values central to an egalitarian relationship. Appendix 3 illustrates tactics often used against immigrant women.

Myth: Domestic violence is a private matter between consenting adults.

Reality: Domestic violence is not consensual. It is about maintaining power and control.

Myth: When there is violence in the family, all members of the family participate in the dynamic and, therefore, all must change for violence to stop.

Reality: Abuse is a behavioral choice of an individual. Only the batterer has the ability to stop the violence.

Myth: Only children who are physically abused themselves are harmed by living in an abusive household.

Reality: Most children are harmed by witnessing violence in the home, though the extent of the harm to each child varies by age, exposure and many other factors. Children who witness abuse often display the same emotional responses as children who have been directly physically abused.³

These myths die hard, and changing the existing social and political institutions and their methods of dealing with domestic violence is difficult.

Changing Institutions

In our society, social, legal and political institutions have been created not only to serve the needs of citizens, but also to maintain control of them. These institutions are powerful forces in framing problems and solutions, and often succeed in framing issues to their advantage. With a problem as great (and as life threatening) as domestic violence, we are taught to let institutions handle the problem, that it is too hard for us to solve. Or perhaps we leave domestic violence for public institutions to deal with because we feel that it is a private, family matter. We think that if large public institutions, which are relatively anonymous, intervene in these situations, this preserves in some way the privacy of the family. But when communities turn away from the issue and let large-scale institutions intervene, we do not preserve the privacy of the family. We instead end up complicit in actions that often destroy families and leave spouses and children emotionally and physically harmed.

³*Domestic & Dating Violence: An information and resource handbook*, Metropolitan King County Council, Seattle, Washington, October 1996.

However, communities have the power to make changes, if we organize a committed, passionate, well thought out response to violence against women and children in their homes. Our main job is to reframe the picture. We need a solution that is community based, not individually based. While helping women and children escape from dangers, advocating for their legal rights, or removing batterers on a case-by-case basis may address immediate individual needs, they do little to solve the larger long-term problems of safety, justice, accountability, economic support and opportunity. We need to change policies, attitudes and institutions based in religious, moral, and cultural belief systems which sanction violent solutions to problems.

We also want the solution to be rooted in the community's culture, history and worldview. The solution must be long term, built on trust, respect and relationships. We endure setbacks and celebrate small successes, realizing that creating social change requires a leap of faith, a faith in the community to make the change. In this sense, community organizers are inherently optimistic.

Summary

To be effective, a community organizer must be compassionate, honest, and creative. She must honor the collective resources of community members and deliver the means for them to reach community goals.

Related Appendix Items

Power and Control Wheel (Appendix 1)

Equality Wheel (Appendix 2)

Power and Control Tactics Used Against Immigrant Women (Appendix 3)

Exercise

Sit comfortably and relax. Close your eyes. Let worries, things to do and other thoughts leave your mind. Take three slow, deep breaths. Now remember the compelling reason or incident that made you decide to get involved. Stay with your feelings from that time. Regain the passion you felt then. When you're ready, take a couple of deep breaths, return to the present and open your eyes.

Organizing with Passion



Rally in Front of INS Building

Chapter 2

Building Trust: Outreach, Assistance and Respect

In order to achieve “a solution rooted in the community’s culture” and to build a trusting relationship, we need to work closely with that community. How do we make contact? Where do we start?

The most obvious answer is with ourselves. Who do we know in the community who would be interested in our issue? In a geographically defined community, perhaps we could just go knocking on doors. But it is always better (and safer) to start with people we know or people who have been referred by people we know and trust.

If we don’t find any answers among our acquaintances, or we need other references or information, we can start with our domestic violence program’s women’s support group, if there is one. At the very least we would share common goals. If there isn’t a support group, we can check out places where people gather, or gossip, such as beauty/nail salons, local grocery stores, laundrettes, places of worship and religious study groups, community libraries and schools.

Focal points for finding activists who are also people rooted in their communities include social service agencies based in the community and led by community members, social (and public service) organizations and community meetings on neighborhood housing, civil rights, workers' rights, alcohol and drug abuse and youth activities. We should read community newspapers and organizational newsletters, and visit community libraries. In general, we need to get a feeling for what is important to community members.

Potential allies (and referrals) can also be found at places which are often intimidating to community members, but may be accessible to us if we are affiliated with a domestic violence program: courthouse, police department, politicians' offices, policy makers, mainstream media, mainstream social service agencies, health clinics and funders.

We must also talk to elders in the community, people who are deeply rooted in their community and those who know its history. Domestic violence is not a new problem. There are probably people in the community who have thought about or worked on the issue before. They may have a lot to offer. They may be able to point out pitfalls, or they may be able to tell us who could be very helpful.

We should keep our eyes and ears open. If we are observant, we will learn who the community leaders and activists are who make things happen.

Some of the questions we might consider before getting started:

- Can we find community members already knowledgeable about domestic violence?
- Can we find community members who feel passionately about domestic violence?
- Are we willing to work with people new to domestic violence?
- What programs and educational opportunities can we introduce for the community?
What kind of training would they willingly participate in? What resources do we have to start with?
- How can we make the program accessible (free childcare, gas money, interpretation, location)?
- How can we make it culturally relevant?
- How can we make it fun (food, prizes, recognition)?
- Have we consulted with community members, people who have the best interests of the community at heart?

(Appendix 4 is a worksheet summarizing initial planning steps for community organizing.)

Example A: Organizing in the Samoan Community

Emma did not know people in the Samoan community who could work with her specifically on domestic violence:

First, I contacted people I knew in the Samoan community for help. I met with them. I went through with them talking about what we would like to do and how we could work together and find out who they felt would be able to work on this issue. I shared with them the concept of reaching community members and educating them on domestic violence and what we want to do.

All of them mentioned that domestic violence existed in the community but they didn't know how to deal with it. Most of them also recognized that the community's cultural values and belief system played an important part in the problem and their inability to deal with it. They knew that domestic violence was a serious issue in the community. They just didn't know what to do about it.

I was referred to well-respected community leaders. One of the persons, a respected reverend's wife, was very interested in knowing more about our program and how we could assist her community, not only with domestic violence but also with other pressing community problems. Their main concern was violence and the inability of the parents to communicate with their children. So we met again to brainstorm about creative ways to educate the community about violence.

We have to understand that we need to support them in their needs first, before our needs. And at the time they were not interested in domestic violence as a priority. They needed something that would help the parents communicate with their children.⁴

To Emma, who had organized youth programs working at another agency earlier, parenting classes were a perfect fit. And education about domestic violence could easily be incorporated into parenting classes, especially classes about violence.

Together with the reverend's wife, Emma worked out a proposal for the classes. She also contacted her associates and community members with expertise on families and parenting and obtained funding to train bilingual community members to teach the classes. It also paid for physical space, food, on-site childcare and class materials.

In this setting, it is important to realize that attention to detail is important to the success of such a program. The program hired the reverend's wife to recruit people for the class, rather than asking her to do it as a volunteer. Budgets for many community events should include recruitment and food costs. (Even if a potluck is being planned, community members should be reimbursed for their food costs. Or, as in the case with this group, a stipend was paid to a community member who bought the food and cooked the meal for the classes.) The families, particularly the mothers, are



Mrs. Pusi Sa'au, Samoan
Community Outreach
Worker,
and Emma Catague, API
Community Organizer

⁴Quotations from Emma Catague are from an interview with the author, March 31, 2000.

more likely to attend an evening class if they are relieved of some of the family chores at home. It



Youth and Facilitators Celebrate after Graduation Ceremonies for the Samoan Anti-Violence Parenting Class

is unrealistic (not to mention disrespectful) to expect families to rush home after work to eat their meal, then go to evening classes, only to go home and deal with the cleanup afterwards. Again, the

classes are much less stressful (and perhaps more enjoyable and successful) if someone takes care of the younger children.

Emma is a long-time labor and community organizer and volunteer in her own Filipino community. She has a lot of contacts who help her because of the trust that she has built up over the years working on labor, political, social, and health issues. She has instigated many positive changes. People trust her. It makes it easier for her to contact or find people who will help her. Others may not have such an easy time meeting people. But by working within the community, we can create our own opportunities.

Emma works with another organizer, Therese, who is younger than Emma. Therese nevertheless attended weekly senior ballroom dance classes, not only to learn ballroom dancing, but also to hear what people are talking about, what they are interested in and, at appropriate times, offer information about domestic violence to the community.

Example B: Organizing in the Cambodian Community

After contacting many people in the Cambodian community, Emma found it difficult to find enough interest in domestic violence. Based on initial community assessments, incidence of



Although domestic violence is the main topic of discussion, other topics include dilemmas of newly arrived immigrants.

domestic violence seemed high. However, few of her contacts had time to deal with domestic violence because they had other priorities. She approached a Cambodian women's group that met regularly to talk socially and discuss various issues. Emma asked if they would be interested in hearing a presentation about domestic violence.

Emma's presentation sparked the interest of the group, especially in learning what they could do. The group is now organizing a Cambodian focus group on domestic violence and finding people will-

ing to volunteer for the project. They are very excited about it.

Example C: Organizing in the Latino Community

The Desarrollo de la Familia (DIF), a Latino family violence and substance abuse prevention project, also offers a broad range of programs to the Latino community in Oregon. The programs are family based and workshops are open to the community, not just the survivors of domestic violence. In addition to domestic violence classes, the workshops include topics ranging from sewing and cooking to understanding the school system. The education program includes learning to read and write in Spanish. Most of the clients are indigenous people, with Spanish being their second or third language. English as a third or fourth language classes are held for the more advanced students.

Example D: Organizing on the Northern Cheyenne Reservation

Sometimes, getting referrals to respected community members is not enough. In some communities where trust and traditions run over many generations, it is imperative that organizers come from within the community. In such a case, alliances need to be made.

Gail Small, a Northern Cheyenne organizer who directs Native Action in Lame Deer, Montana, commented on her work:

Because we are working on the reservation, people [from the outside] have many misconceptions about the work. They keep asking me how many members we have and how much dues we collect. People in my tribe

are born into membership—it can't be bought. On the other hand, people say you are all so close knit, organizing must be easy. That's also not true. Indians are real territorial. Our reservation has five villages. People have lived in their villages for four generations. One organizer can't just organize the reservation. You have to make alliances with people from other villages. Preferably those people are well respected and they come from large extended families. Those organizers then call a meeting and I come as their guest. I have to be respectful of the boundaries. You have to eat. You sit, and you listen, you don't interrupt. We never make motions, but decisions are made. We make the decisions and we leave.⁵

Summary

Establish contact, study and learn the community's values, needs and strengths. Build trust. Respect community priorities and boundaries.

Related Appendix Items

Community Organizing and Linkages Worksheet (Appendix 4)

⁵Small, quoted in *Beyond the Politics of Place: New Directions in Community Organizing in the 1990s*, Gary Delgado, p. 52-53. Applied Research Center, Oakland, CA.

Chapter 3

Relationships: Cooperation, Inclusion and Leadership Development

It is important to build strong relationships and to develop leaders within the community, people who will carry on the work. The first step in leadership development is to inspire confidence.

As previously described, when Emma learned that the Samoan community had many problems with their youth, she saw a good opportunity—include domestic violence as part of the parenting classes:

I didn't go in there saying, "I want you to do this," but more like, "How do we want to do this?" I gave them the curriculum, then worked together on the best way to convey the materials. We gain trust, and at the same time I'm organizing them, to draw them in, train them and provide them the skills (and resources) that they need. So after the parenting classes (which were successful and which they really liked), we did what we call the "natural helper" program—which is to train the volunteer.

The Natural Helper Volunteers Project was started by APIWFSC to develop bilingual outreach volunteers who help link people experiencing dating or domestic violence to services. The volunteers are trained to recognize the dynamics and warning signs of domestic violence, they understand the barriers to obtaining services in API communities and they seek out assistance for families and individuals in need.

The volunteers are people who are "natural helpers" in the community. They may be hair stylists, café owners, day care providers, bartenders, teachers—they are the ones other people talk



Trained Bilingual and Bicultural Outreach Volunteers

to, the ones who are always helping others. Emma remembers the beginning of the project:

[When APIWFSC] started the natural helper concept, our organization was new, we were starting with a few allies within the community and we didn't have the capacity yet to deliver services. We had a very small staff. We depended on volunteers. So

we trained all the volunteers: basic information about domestic violence, what resources were available, who in the community we could rely on and draw in. We were fortunate that a lot of our natural helpers are community leaders. The natural helpers learned the basic information, they shared it with others and they also became our connections, the eyes and ears of the Safety Center.

The Natural Helper Volunteers Project is especially valuable because it also works as a leadership development program. Community organizing is not only trust building, it is a nurturing process. We need to invite people to solve problems cooperatively. It might work out in the following manner: “Outside” organizer (OO) finds “inside” organizer (IO). OO must nurture IO if IO does not feel confident talking with others she doesn’t know. But IO is very important since she has a lot of friends, and knows the community because of her long-term participation within it.

OO finds training money for her to attend workshops on community organizing on issues of importance to her community. Specialized domestic violence training may come later, but at this point it is important for IO to gain confidence in what she is doing. She has the “raw materials,” namely, contacts and the community’s respect and trust.

OO also notices that others take the initiative on providing food for meetings, or regularly provide transportation to those who have no transportation, or attend meetings regularly. Perhaps others often give important input on ideas and strategies during meetings. OO should encourage IO to share responsibilities with these others. OO should always look out for possible leaders, and encourage IO to do the same. Every person’s importance and talents should be recognized. Involving people in activities and making decisions is an important step in leadership development. (OO must also find funds to pay IO for her organizing work. This is very important and should be included in any organizing budget.) Movements die without leadership development. Movements evolve and progress when community leaders are developed.

Parenting was the primary concern of the Samoan community in Seattle. In other communities elsewhere, we may find that housing, immigration, residence and citizenship status, drug and alcohol abuse or poverty and nutrition are more pressing. We need to help members find a way to address these problems first. Domestic violence can be easily related to these issues also.

Summary

It’s important that we provide concrete, real help to community members on their priorities. If we demonstrate our care about their issues, they will care about ours. We need to do three things:

- Relate domestic violence to community priorities.
- Deliver on our promises.
- Avoid making promises we can’t keep.

Chapter 4

Community Attitudes: Identification, Education and Evolution

The barriers and obstacles to organizing around domestic violence issues can sometimes be overwhelming. Even the term “organizing” has negative connotations to many. Whether it is community, labor or political organizing, many people feel it is about confrontation and strife. But community organizing is really about organizing people to achieve a goal. Although it may involve confrontation, especially when the goal includes changes in attitude and public policy, domestic violence organizing mostly involves outreach, education (and training) and advocacy. (Sometimes, well-planned confrontation can be a valuable tool in raising the community consciousness about the prevalence of the problem.)

If possible, a good place to start is with a community assessment project. In it we try to find out what the community knows about domestic violence in their own community. The assessment questions may be general and short, designed more to elicit comments from focus groups, or they may be long and detailed so replies can be tallied in a statistical report. At this stage we need to know if domestic violence is recognized as a problem, if its occurrences are common knowledge or family secrets, if there are attitudes that create barriers to organizing on the issue and if there is interest in working on it. We also need to know about possible internal community conflicts that could hinder any organizing.

APIWFSC conducted a community assessment in 1998, focusing on lesbians and bisexual women within the Chinese, Cambodian, Samoan, Vietnamese, Hawaiian, Korean, Southeast Asian, and Asian communities. (Appendix 5 lists the questions on the assessment form.)

The type of information we may find from such an assessment is valuable, because it tells us who we need to direct information to and what kind of information is needed. The APIWFSC’s questionnaire identified some of the barriers common to the different API groups and some which were barriers to single communities. Refugees reported that they have a high incidence of “flash-backs” (which was translated as post-traumatic stress syndrome), lack an understanding of the political process and legal rights in the United States, suffer isolation and loneliness, and are uncertain of their immigration status. As do other immigrants, they have the problems of American racism and of language and cultural barriers as obstacles to obtaining social services. This is but a fraction of the information needed to formulate a successful organizing program. (Appendices 6 through 11 relate to issues of culturally sensitive community organizing and service delivery.)

What we learn from a community assessment is often daunting. When confronted by community attitudes and beliefs, we may feel that the situation is hopeless, a challenge too big to tackle alone. Remember, we are not alone. We are working with the community. What we need to do is refocus, change our perspective and turn problems into opportunities.

A. Problem: Internal community politics have taken over my working group. Why can't we all get along and focus on domestic violence?

Opportunity: Find support from more than one community faction to address domestic violence. Often, the factions are jealous of each other's apparent power. An "outside" organizer coming into a situation will be suspect if she gives the appearance of siding with one faction or another. Lots of leaders recognize that domestic violence is an issue their constituents care about. Work with the ones who feel that this issue is important to their constituents. Success in obtaining funds and starting effective programs will draw others in. They cannot afford to let other factions have a positive effect without their own faction being a part of that success. Remember the number-one rule: Get involved in their issues. Listen to what is important to their community. You are working for their trust, not working to browbeat them about domestic violence. They are asking you, "What can you do for us?" As serious as it is, domestic violence may be low on their order of priorities. Find out their priorities and work on the connections between their priorities and domestic violence.

B. Problem: Community cultural/religious values are, in our view, degrading to women.

Opportunity: All of us have heard degrading comments about women, from snide remarks about body parts to statements about women deserving the treatment they received. Most men don't believe they have the right to kill their wives or partners, but we live in a culture that socializes them to think and believe that they have certain rights and privileges in relationships with women. Often men resist any shifts in these ingrained notions about the roles of women and of men in relationships. "What about us?" they will ask. "If I (or you) tell her all this about her rights, when I come home and there's no dinner, what can I do?" They feel threatened. It is important that men be included in the education. They need to know the legal and ethical differences between arguing about parenting and household chores on the one hand and abuse on the other.

While few cultures without gender bias exist, organizers can emphasize the positive values and traditions of a culture, such as sanctity of the family, peace, harmony, fairness and community. Point out that a man who abuses his wife also destroys the family and hurts their children's future; it is not the culture but the abuser who perpetrates abuse.

The situation may also be framed in terms of fairness. Is it fair for a man to take out his frustrations on his wife? To break up a family by abusing the mother? To beat or murder his wife?

C. Problem: There is a taboo on openly discussing domestic violence.

Opportunity: Taboo subjects, such as AIDS, drug abuse and domestic violence, are not really taboo. People talk about them all the time. They just don't like to talk about them in public. Instead, it is often brought up in gossip about other families. It is also brought up as a joke or as a common (and therefore not really serious) occurrence. A man brags to his friend, "Yeah, I got drunk last night, but my wife just kept nagging me, so I shut her up good." These attitudes make it difficult to have a public discussion about domestic violence.

There will be times during our workshops and forums when a participant might become enlightened enough or feel comfortable enough to disclose that she has been victimized. Although disclosure is one of our goals, it is not always safe for someone to share this within a group that has not had substantial experience in domestic violence. Our obligation to victims in the audience is to ensure as much as possible that the person who publicly discloses is supported.

One of the ways to do this is to catch other opportunities for informal sharing. One group chose to share during routine activities such as cooking. It is so much easier to share our feelings while working in the kitchen with other women. It is also an acceptable way of getting to know the people we partner with in our community organizing work. Other possible opportunities include women's parenting groups, church committees, workshops on women's health, etc. It is also a good idea to create a comfortable way to approach the facilitators of any group privately, after everyone has begun to disperse: "If anyone wants clarification, or needs more information on anything we have covered today, please feel free to see me afterwards."

Find other opportunities to discuss the topic in semi-private settings or privately (for example, a newspaper opinion piece by an anonymous survivor). Almost every community church has a "social responsibility" or "current issues" committee. Perhaps a presentation on domestic violence could be made at a church committee meeting.

In the early 1990s, AIDS organizers in Seattle held regular tea parties for immigrant Asian women. AIDS was one of the topics discussed on a regular basis. The Southeast Asian women thought so highly of the program, they demanded that their husbands attend. It became a very popular method of educating immigrant Asians about AIDS.

Unlike the SE Asian program, Samoan males and females had separate gatherings on AIDS education, because the program included sex education, which necessitated that the genders be separated. Perhaps in some communities, domestic violence education would be more accepted in classes separated by gender.

Find social occasions common in the community—tea parties, church events, parenting groups, ballroom, two-step and square dance classes, 4-H meetings, community center gatherings, spontaneous discussions in nail and hair salons, or school and after-school get-togethers. Take your organizing to wherever people come together and talk in small groups.

D. Problem: I can't get enough funds.

Opportunity: Seek small or progressive private and public funders, especially funders who understand community organizing.

Opportunity: Fund raising in the community is another way of educating the community about domestic violence. A bake sale, raffle, car wash or community dinner is a way to get uninterested persons aware of what your group has to say and to offer. You are doing a service for the community. Often you will find out that many are happy that some group is doing the work.

This is also a way to recruit and utilize volunteers. Good broad-based lists of volunteers and community donors also make a good impression on funders, who need to know that what you are doing is important to your community.

E. Problem: They will not accept me. I don't speak the language, practice the faith, have a husband, or know anyone in the community.

Opportunity: Being outside the community can sometimes make it easier for others to work with us since we don't have a history of siding with one side or another in the community politics.

Opportunity: Find others working on taboo/progressive issues in the community (such as HIV/AIDS workers, union organizers, welfare rights, or domestic violence advocates) and ask for help. Coalitions are important in any community organizing. You need to draw strength from others trying to change the status quo. Learn from them where help and support is likely available. You will also learn about services that may help you make and deliver on promises.

F. Problem: My agency does not support the community organizing approach and/or lacks cultural competency.

Opportunity: Social services agency personnel may not want to deal with "community organizing." It may sound threatening to them, carrying notions of controversy, confrontation and conspiracy. Actually, community organizing is at the root of the battered women's movement. It is also the basis of human events. Events such as a child's birthday party, the election of a grassroots candidate, the passage of a citizen's initiative, a mass labor movement and the revamping of a public school system are all examples of community organizing. Some projects are organized poorly. Some work out fine without any structure or any conflicts. Though most large-scale projects involving changes in attitude will meet resistance, we can make our jobs a lot easier if we concentrate on educating the community first.

Check your terms. "Education," "volunteer recruitment," "leadership development," "community involvement" and "outreach" are all non-threatening terms for what we do. Use them. Find supportive allies.

Another social service agency attitude an organizer might find detrimental is neutrality. Agencies will look upon community organizers as “biased” or “having an agenda.” As community organizers, we are advocates. We must legitimize organizational advocacy to end domestic violence also. Too often agencies get caught up with dealing with an individual’s particular problem. As a result, community and agency education and awareness on domestic violence is overlooked. Bring the matter to their attention.

Other times, the agency we work with may not like community organizing projects because they require (a lot of) time, energy and patience. Funders worry about missed deadlines and little visible progress. If this is the situation, then the organizer and her agency must also organize the funders. “Educate the funders,” advises Emma.

Sometimes, they don’t understand the way business goes on in local [especially “non-mainstream”] communities. Funds are needed for translators, food for gatherings, transportation, babysitting costs. If you want people to get together, you have to provide a good reason for them to be there, and to eliminate obstacles that prevent community people from attending. Funders need to know that.

As you get into the issue more deeply, translators and interpreters have to be trained also. The legal, medical and social service professionals all have their own language, and unless the interpreters are up to date with the vocabulary, mistakes in translation can ruin a project. When you use educational strategies and materials that require translations, the time involved in completing a project triples or quadruples whatever you estimated before you started. This is a long-term investment. It needs to be. These are things funders need to know. Develop relationships with funders. Educate them.

As for cultural competency, if the agency is not culturally competent to deal with your community, try working with another agency that is, or arrange to subcontract the project to that organization. The project will be much more successful.

Don’t underestimate the importance of cultural competence. Lack of cultural competence is one of the main causes of failure.

The following example is unfortunately common:

An organizer comes to a workshop and says, “I don’t understand what I’m doing wrong. I’m working with a community of Hmong people. I can’t get them to do anything. I can’t even get them to come to a meeting to discuss what their needs are.

“Do you speak their language?” the organizer is asked.

“No, but I’ve passed out all these translated notices of the meetings.”

“Did you find out if it’s an English literate group?”

“Uh, no. I didn’t even think of that. Nobody told me.”

“Well, they couldn’t understand you and you don’t know if they read or not. How do you know if they even knew there was a meeting?”

“Well, they took the notices, smiled, even said, ‘Thank you.’ I just assumed they would read it.”

Needless to say, this effort never got off the ground.

But cultural incompetence covers a multitude of issues, not always as obvious as that shown in the example above. Often, we are too arrogant in our strategies and expect that simply planning something will cause it to happen. This occurs when we as organizers have very little knowledge of, compassion for or empathy with the community we want to engage. The following example is drawn from an experience with naval base officers, but could easily happen in civilian organizing also.

An officer, feeling that there may be a problem with domestic violence at a naval base with a high number of Asian immigrant wives of servicemen, invited APIWFSC to make a presentation on domestic violence. He predicted “about 600 people” would attend the two workshop sessions, given that a “lot of fliers” had been sent out and posted. The first session drew about fifteen; the second session drew under ten, all of whom had attended the earlier session. What went wrong?

Outreach: Except for professionals and a few interested observers, the only people who would be interested in a presentation on domestic violence would be those who had experienced or seen domestic abuse and violence, as a perpetrator, survivor, accomplice or bystander. Of those, few would feel comfortable or “safe” attending such a workshop. Outreach is absolutely essential before such a presentation. Prospective participants need to be personally contacted and assured of a safe environment.

Environment: Would the workshop, in fact, be “safe” for people to attend? Or would attendees be in danger of immediately becoming targets of gossip? Would others assume that those who attended are either victims or abusers? Careful planning and action must take place to prevent this from happening. Otherwise, future organizing and education is almost doomed to fail.

Language: Prospective participants need to be contacted in their native languages. In this case, the targeted group was the immigrant population. All fliers were in English. The officer, aware that the workshops were targeting the Asian immigrant wives, still did not have the foresight to have bilingual fliers.

Arrogance: The officer simply overestimated his own ability to “order” attendance. This should not have been intended to be a “gigantic turnout” affair. Even if the best outreach had been done, 600 attendees would be highly unlikely. The officer in charge demonstrated his arrogance when he chastised the attendees for the poor attendance. As Emma puts it, “Why was he scolding the audience? They were the ones that came.”

How should the workshop have been handled? Emma offered the following advice.

Prior to the event:

1. Find people in the community with whom the women have a good relationship—for example, pastors, priests, chaplains, family service providers and health care workers. Explain what the issues are and ask if they can help you talk to the women or help spread the word about the forum.
2. If they agree, ask if they would be willing to be a part of the planning committee.
3. Find others who speak the languages and work with them, involving them in planning and giving them small tasks.
4. Find a smaller space, which could be in a church or community center, but definitely not an auditorium.
5. Don't use "domestic violence" on the flyer. It has a negative impact. Use "supportive families forum," "healthy families workshop," "family communication," "healthy communications in families," or other more positive descriptions instead.
6. Don't let the high-ranking officer handle the event.

At the event:

1. Have the pastor give the invocation.
2. Have other community people, perhaps a social worker who the women are in contact with regularly, run the program (emcee).
3. Include a domestic violence survivor or someone very knowledgeable about survivor issues as a panel speaker or workshop leader. Don't use academics without direct experience in domestic violence. Too often professors, psychologists, therapists, doctors, and lawyers speak in ways that turn off people who need help.
4. Plan for a question-and-answer period and stay around after the program. There may be people who might want to ask questions privately! Also leave contact numbers and addresses so someone can reach you later.

G. Problem: There is a lack of culturally relevant services to complement community organizing work.

Opportunity: There is a huge potential collaborative opportunity to work with existing domestic violence and ethnic/tribal/religious specialized services groups. For example, APIWFSC is part of a network of social service providers who offer specialized culturally competent social services to Asians and Pacific Islanders. This network encompasses medical and mental health, counseling, information and referral, and domestic violence services (Refugee Women’s Alliance, Chinese Information & Service Center, Korean Community Counseling Center, Asian Counseling & Referral Service, International Community Health Services, and CHAYA, a community-based organization serving South Asian women).

While rural areas often do not have this extent of services available, look for specialized Latino and Asian programs and for local community centers that offer specialized services. You could also contact urban programs, as many have outreach programming or can offer helpful suggestions.

In rural communities, religious-based organizations and clergy are often the only service providers. Sometimes, officials of religious organizations place a higher priority on the sanctity of the family than on the safety of women. But even this can be seen as an opportunity. Educate the clergy and other religious officials. Training for them is available through national organizations such as the Seattle-based Center for the Prevention of Sexual and Domestic Violence.

Summary

Changing community attitudes is never easy. It is a long-term project, requiring patience and compassion. Funders also need to learn about community concerns and cultural concerns.

Exercise

Review “Sensitive and Insensitive Cultural Values” (Appendix 6)

Related Appendix Items

Community Assessment Form (Appendix 5)

Sensitive and Insensitive Cultural Values (Appendix 6)

Overcoming Cultural Barriers in Working with Battered Women (Appendix 7)

Improving Accessibility of Your Program’s Services to Battered Immigrant Women (Appendix 8)

Social, Historical and Political Frameworks (Appendix 9)

Domestic Violence: Asian Pacific Islander Values and Belief System (Appendix 10)

Effective Service Delivery for API Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence (Appendix 11)

Chapter 5

Organizer Strategies: Participation, Communication and Enjoyment

Throughout this handbook, we have been emphasizing creative ways of dealing with problems arising from the organizer's misconceptions and lack of understanding of community realities. Also important are the obstacles which the organizer faces arising from the stress and isolation of the job itself. Personnel and programmatic deficiencies can also lead the organizer astray. We will examine some of these issues in this chapter.

"I can do it myself." First of all, you cannot. Any organizer who feels that she cannot trust anyone else to do the work correctly is a prime candidate for burnout and failure.

The whole point of community organizing is to create a cohesive structure of people to accomplish a task that an individual could not do alone. While there may be some frustration at not being able to act without countless hours of preparation, the organizer must recognize that other people have to be involved. Organizers are successful when they find the right people from whom to learn about the community. While doing so is not easy, it doesn't have to be painful. In fact, it can be fun, especially if you like to search for information. Instead of arrogantly thinking, "I can do it myself," we as organizers should be asking, "How can I learn the community's thoughts and priorities and how can I find people who will be of help in stopping domestic violence?"

As we said earlier, the prime goal of early organizing is gaining the trust and respect of the community. Trust and respect work both ways. The organizer must also trust and respect the instincts of those recruited to be the "eyes and ears of the community." Whether these are "inside organizers" (IO), a community focus group or a community organizing committee, it is important that we recruit the right people—people who are respected, can be trusted, and have the passion.

Often judgments about the community are made by outside observers (for example, law enforcement officers, newspaper beat reporters and agency staff who know the community only as consumers of their services) who really have no idea what is going on in a community. Assessments of community needs by outsiders are often based on stereotypes or information from one or two persons and frequently misrepresent the priorities of the community.

For instance, a law enforcement officer in a rural community, based on his own experience, may say that domestic violence is not a problem in a community because "I just don't get that many calls on it, and my contacts in the community say it's not a problem." The same may be true for a reporter who is not personally active in the community she is covering. Good organizers check on their contacts, if possible.

Social workers, depending on their participation in a community, may be a better source, but, depending on the number and diversity of community consumers they have served, may also have limited perspective and limited understanding. (A word of caution: Even though we may think their assessments are limited, we should not dismiss these potential organizing committee members. They have valuable skills and services to offer. These are very important contacts.)

What the outside organizer needs first is one or more inside organizers who understand how information gets distributed in the community. Earlier, we mentioned places like hair and nail salons. In rural areas, the community meeting places may instead be the corner café, the town diner or the local VFW (Veterans of Foreign Wars) post. Increasingly, small communities are gaining access to electronic communication, so this may be a viable alternative, especially in a computer literate community. In rural areas, a phone (perhaps a wireless) is extremely important. Find out if there are any existing phone trees or electronic bulletin boards.

Radio is also a key method of communicating in rural communities because this medium is relatively inexpensive to operate. It is especially important to illiterate, preliterate and/or specific-language communities. For example, Spanish language radio stations, such as KDNA in central/eastern Washington, air music, community information and opinion in many rural communities.

The nuts and bolts of community life—daily routines, weddings, funeral services and baptisms—also provide opportunities for information to be exchanged. In many areas, these occur at churches or at community centers. We can look for other gatherings, from rodeos to livestock exhibitions, concerts to fairs. Wherever people gather, there will be people passing out flyers, gossiping, exchanging information about something. We might find that the mail carrier or other service/maintenance personnel, who make routine visits to homes, could be valuable contacts in isolated areas. By observing, listening and participating, we can get a sense of what is going on and how people are dealing with issues. We can also have a lot of fun while we're doing it.

If we don't feel comfortable doing this alone, we can ask the IO to accompany us. This will help our credibility and may help hers. Remember, the task here is to generate good feelings, build mutual trust and respect and learn about the way the community gets along, who the real movers and shakers are, what their needs are. Sometimes, if we're diplomatic, persistent and lucky, we can figure out how the community is informally organized and how tasks get done. The information we gather will help us formulate a strategy to introduce the topic of domestic violence in a community.

“That’s just part of our culture. You can’t change culture. It’s been going on a long time.” This attitude can be particularly damaging to an organizer’s morale. On the one hand, we must value the community’s culture, including its religious beliefs. On the other, some community members are telling us that domestic abuse is part of their culture and possibly sanctioned by their church.

It is clear that many batterers use cultural beliefs as an excuse to batter, but it is not clear how we can challenge those beliefs within the larger community. The community does not literally give batterers license to harm another human being, but demonstrates its acceptance of the behavior by blaming the victim or making clear to her that this is the “cross she must bear.” She is given the message that she must fulfill her duties to her husband above all and that this is an obligation to her family as well as to her community. The community’s acceptance of the violence is also demonstrated by its failure to hold the batterer accountable and the assumption that the violence is only a family matter—“We cannot interfere.”

Does the responsibility of ending the violence belong only to the victim? If the victim believes, for instance, in karmic fate (that is, whatever good or bad you have done in your life, you will in turn be rewarded or punished by some other future fate), then she might believe she is obligated to endure the victimization. Additionally, she might believe that she will be rewarded in the future for her suffering.

We must engage community members in conversation in order to facilitate critical thinking about what part culture plays in violence: Does the community place more value on its cultural beliefs than it does on the safety and well-being of the victim? Is culture a matter of interpretation? Are we defined only by our culture, or do other factors influence who we are and what we believe in?

Our cultural beliefs are constantly evolving. They do not always remain the same over time. It is often a desire for justice and equality that fuels these changes. For example, there was a time when men and women believed that women should not have the right to vote here in the United States. The cultural belief was that a woman’s place was in the home and not in the voting booth. Fortunately, communities of women believed differently; they began a movement to educate others on the rights of women as voters and were able to change a cultural view of women in society. Women changed the cultural tradition and belief that woman’s value is only in the home and they facilitated change with the belief that human rights and equality overshadow the traditional view of women.

It is always difficult for us to challenge a community’s culture, especially in the face of racism and the value that we as individuals place upon our own ethnic heritage. Often it feels as though our culture is being devalued by the dominant culture or that our culture is being disrespected. In truth, as organizers, we should not approach organizing with a desire to change or challenge culture itself, but to share the importance of culture in facilitating safe and healthy relationships with community members. It is up to the community to decide what cultural change means to them.

In order for the community to reach this decision, members must have the opportunity to discuss the relationship between culture and violence against women. Cultural values might change over time (some more rapidly than others), but change must come through the belief that we value human life and respect human rights, which include the rights to safety and well-being.

Domestic violence organizing is about changing attitudes, beliefs and practices. In some cases, it is about changing those aspects of culture that are harmful, violent and damaging to families. It is important that men and women learn that we can create and interpret our cultural beliefs in many ways. The one belief that should not change is that culture should not be used to harm others.

Culture is not unalterable: it is created by people and can be changed by people. For immigrant communities, minority groups and communities of color, holding on to culture becomes especially important when confronting racism and when the dominant culture is constantly undermining the cultural values of the community. Community members who are willing to challenge cultural values may be perceived as working against their people and colluding with the dominant culture. It's more difficult to challenge cultural beliefs when facing cultural annihilation.

Focus on the supportive aspect of the culture's values (respect, fairness, helping each other, family, children, etc.). Make discussion of cultural values a group project. Look for people within the community who do not agree with the sexist interpretation of values, and have lots of discussion about culture and cultural values.

“Nobody cares. Group energy has dissipated. This is taking too long.” Often we are stumped by the appearance that nobody cares. Sometimes we are held back because we go over the same issues. Some people are burned out. They leave the group to do something else. New people come in, and they need to be educated about domestic violence issues. We're stumped. Our core group has worked hard with little to show for it. There is a lack of trust and leadership within the group. This is taking too long. These are statements of a worn-out group. It happens often.

Perhaps the project is just too ambitious for the resources available, the project was ill conceived to begin with, or perhaps it just didn't start off well. It is always best to start with small, specific tasks. Some of these could be holding an informal gathering to hear community concerns; holding a house meeting with the host's friends; scheduling a meeting with an elected official, a judicial officer or a law enforcement officer partial to our concerns; addressing our issues with a local politician. If we feel a little more confident, maybe we could produce an educational poster or hold an informational picket line. Assign specific tasks. Before and after the event, ask community members for feedback and advice.

With these actions, we accomplish a number of things. We involve community members again. The small, specific tasks help us distribute the work and enable us to gauge who the potential leaders might be. We need to cultivate the emerging leadership. If it sounds like reinventing the wheel, it is. But perhaps with the experience, we can do it a little better this time. We can keep people involved in the decision making and we can re-energize the project. Perhaps this time we can ensure that people don't feel left out of the loop. This time we can include some cultural activities to make the gathering more enjoyable, involving artists in the project.

Groups plagued with dissension because of racial issues must make the time to discuss these issues rather than avoid them. These simmering disputes will ruin a program. We, as organizers, must find a way to deal with these issues, even if it means we need to ask for some help. Sometimes, that help can be found in the communities we work in. Other times we may need to find organizational consultants specializing in race issues to help us find a way to work together.

Often, we just need to relax a bit. Sometimes, multicultural art presentations (including performing arts) help in easing the tensions of a particularly stressful meeting. Potlucks and food exchanges, breaking bread (or sharing rice dishes) and social talk are important also. In many cultures business and exchanges of ideas are carried out while sharing food or after eating together. Don't overlook cultural traditions of food. It signifies sustenance.

That people enjoy the organizing is important, because there is less burnout when we enjoy what we are doing, and when we organize, we try to create a community that we can enjoy. If the organizing effort is not enjoyable, how can the community that we create be? People need to feel that what they are doing is not a waste of their precious time.

Above all, we should not beat a dead horse. Often, when a project fails to engender enthusiasm, creativity and success, it may be the time to evaluate what we have accomplished and learned and let it go. We should be willing to let the project, the group and the current effort end. There's always another time, another place, another strategy and more energy. We can satisfy ourselves that at the very least, we increased awareness of domestic violence.

Summary

Community organizers face a number of obstacles, in addition to the stress and isolation of the job itself. By observing and participating, we can figure out how the community is organized and how tasks get done. We can also figure out how best to introduce the topic of domestic violence and how to facilitate critical thinking about what part culture plays in violence. Domestic violence organizing is about changing attitudes, beliefs and practices. Cultural values can change, but change must come through belief in the value of human life and respect for human rights.

Exercise

Sit comfortably and relax. Close your eyes. Let worries, things to do and other thoughts leave your mind. Take three slow, deep breaths. Now remember the compelling reason or incident that made you decide to get involved. Stay with your feelings from that time. Regain the passion you felt then. When you're ready, take a couple of deep breaths, return to the present, and open your eyes.

Chapter 6

Community Organizing Case Studies

Case Study 1:

Filipino Education Committee/APIWFSC

A domestic murder can devastate a community, especially a community as close knit as Seattle's Filipino community. It can also pull the community together against family violence, as was the case in the 1992 death of a long-time community leader named Tessie. (She is not further identified out of respect for her family's privacy.) A woman who had volunteered many hours for countless community events, Tessie was a highly visible and active community member. There were some who had overheard through *tsismis* (gossip) that she was having some problems in her marriage. But no one knew, or no one talked about, the extent of the "marital problems" until the day the news hit the media that Tessie's husband had shot her and her daughter, and then shot himself.

In the following days, leadership from the community met in a series of meetings to strategize about how to respond. Loan Nguyen and Josie Corsilles, with the support of the Washington State Commission on Asian American Affairs, played a key role in organizing these meetings. Over time, the discussions moved from the idea of developing more conferences and informational materials to recognizing the need for specific services and organizing for API women and the API community. From these meetings, an organizing group formed, meeting monthly to develop an organization and a program to meet these needs.

The founding organizers recruited an ethnically diverse group of women with expertise and experience in API-targeted community organizing, immigrant services (including medical, mental health and shelter services), and board and fund development for API communities. In 1993, the group formally became the Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center.

At the same time, concerned Filipino individuals (including Filipinas on the Family Safety Center board) formed an ad hoc group, the Filipino Domestic Violence Education Committee (FDVEC, also known as the Filipino Education Committee). It was a given that the Safety Center would provide resources and expertise to help organize educational workshops. Alice Ito, one of the early organizers of the Safety Center, says that the group recognized that the diverse FDVEC would be the most effective group to organize and educate in the diverse Filipino community. Besides the Safety Center board members, the committee included immigrants and people who were American-born, people whose only language was English and people who were multilingual; people deeply involved in the Church and people who weren't; professionals; people who owned

businesses; anti-Marcos activists; and labor organizers with an international network and a long history of community organizing.

Organizing the Filipino community is no easy task. The Filipino community is the largest and one of the oldest Asian Pacific populations in Seattle/King County and in Washington State. It is a diverse community with six major language groups (Tagalog, Ilocano, Cebuano, Pangasinan, Bicol and Visayan), numerous additional dialects, and many cultural differences. There are currently over 120 Filipino community organizations in the state.

Collectively, the Safety Center and the Filipino Education Committee on Domestic Violence began efforts to educate each other about domestic violence, from forums with expert panelists and survivors to meetings of grassroots organizers.



Filipino Education Committee Founders

At one of these forums, a male elder who had been invited by members of the Filipino Education Committee questioned a Safety Center representative about the incidence of domestic violence among Filipinos, believing it to be rare. This belief was

one of the many obstacles the Safety Center and the Filipino Education Committee faced. It was the hope of these two groups that through education and organizing, denial of the problem would no longer be a barrier to services for women in the API community. The Safety Center, whose membership overlapped the membership of the Filipino Education Committee, began to plan a series of workshops and conferences specifically for the Filipino community.

Then in 1994, Susana Blackwell, a Filipina woman enticed to the United States by the promise of a happy, loving relationship with an American man, was murdered by her husband, Timothy Blackwell. The “happy, loving relationship” had become a nightmare of extreme physical abuse. As two of her friends sat with her at the King County courthouse, giving her moral support while she waited for divorce proceedings to begin, Timothy walked up and shot them. He was immediately wrestled to the ground, but he had already accomplished what he had set out to do. It was later found that Susana was carrying an unborn child at her death.

The Filipino Education Committee and Safety Center mobilized the API community in response to these murders. The elder who had previously questioned the incidence of violence agreed to provide his organization’s support for a vigil and a memorial service through co-sponsor-

ship and in-kind services. The organization sent members to both events, printed a banner with the organization's name and the vigil's theme, "Justice, hope and safety for all abused women," and participated in a press conference. This leader has become a clear and outspoken advocate for community responsibility to end domestic violence. The organization he belongs to continues to participate in the Filipino Education Committee's projects.

The FDVEC organized and educated the Filipino community during the months following the highly publicized courthouse murders and the murder trial of Timothy Blackwell. The murders raised awareness about domestic violence beyond what any volunteer group could have accomplished, forcing community members and leaders to speak to the issue of domestic violence and its dynamics. But the courthouse murders, in particular, also struck a nerve in the Filipino community on issues of immigration, cultural values, interracial marriage, mail-order brides, spirituality, and the cultural value of helping strangers from the same province.

It is important to note that key individuals in the Filipino community, as well as supportive organizations such as the Safety Center, were prepared to address issues of domestic violence prior to these murders. By being prepared, FEC (FDVEC became the Filipino Education Committee, an



Judy, Carmen and Therese Under The Banner

arm of the Safety Center, in 1995) was able to successfully move to the next step of outreach and education. Individuals worked hard to keep the focus on domestic violence, rather than, for example, on courthouse security improvements or the appropriate sentence for Timothy Blackwell.

FEC sponsored workshops on domestic violence to help people

understand the tragedies and deal with their grief and anger. It organized community education, co-sponsored events such as a memorial service and began a continuing tradition of annual vigils for those slain by their partners. Several workshops organized by the Safety Center and the FEC pro-



Coming Together To End Domestic Violence

vided a means for discussing domestic violence within a cultural context. These workshops allowed men and elders to discuss the topic in a nonjudgmental environment and created an opportunity for a few community leaders to publicly disclose their own experiences in surviving domestic violence and abuse.

As a result of the 1997 Statewide Filipino Leadership Conference on Domestic Violence organized by the FEC/Safety Center, Filipino groups and individuals from as far away as San Francisco became aware of the magnitude of the problem. They asked the Safety Center for assistance in organizing in these areas.

Just before the 1997 conference, the Safety Center hired a full-time domestic violence community organizer to work with the FEC. As an outsider (and a very youthful-looking one at that), Therese Topasna could have run into a lot of resistance. However, she had the support of long-time Safety Center board members and staff organizers. Therese points out that Filipina board members Naty Lamug and Viqui Claravall and staff member Emma Catague were extremely helpful in co-chairing meetings, accompanying her to community events and meetings and introducing her to key people in the community. That helped her a lot, Therese says.

I look much younger than I am, and I'm not from Seattle and I'm not Filipino. Both my parents are from Guam but because they [Filipino community members] thought I was Filipino, that worked out okay. When they found out I wasn't, they already knew me so it wasn't that bad. When I helped Emma with the Samoan community and we were working with their youth, the fact that Emma was so well respected and the fact that they thought I was young helped out a lot.

Two questions that repeatedly came up were "Why don't we talk about men?" and "What is your experience?" What they were really asking, Therese says, is "What's your motive, what's your background that makes your voice important?" and adds:

We don't want to exploit battered women. But the feedback we get from the community is that it makes it more real if we know real stories.

I was working for the center for quite a long time before I told anyone outside of the staff that I had grown up in a family where there was domestic violence. I didn't say that so that they would let me in. But Emma had been working with a workshop and she needed a speaker who could speak from the child's point of view. So she asked me to speak. I did. It clicked for those people and they thought, "Okay, she does know something about it."

It was very important to me that the community members didn't think that I was some college graduate coming to tell them what was wrong with their community and they needed to fix it. I wanted them to see my role as wanting to help educate them on the issue and if I could help in whatever way that they thought was best for their community, I was there to help them. I wasn't there to tell them that they were wrong.⁶

In addressing the first question, "Why don't we talk about men?" Therese answers, "What I'm sharing with you is based on the information we have on domestic violence and my experience working on domestic violence." She continues,

I raised the question with the youth that maybe gender roles in our society have dictated that men are supposed to act one way and women another way. I like to raise the question with the teens, "Does society make it acceptable for a man being abused by his intimate partner to share that with anyone, to go get help?" Society says that they're weak. Maybe the reason we don't have any information is because no one wants to talk about it. But based on the information we have and the experiences we've encountered, the organization is there to talk about violence against women and children in the API communities. [Men's concerns] may be a valid issue but our area of expertise is working with women.

The Filipino Education Committee is by any measure an organizing success story. It has raised initial awareness of the problem and provided culturally competent education and outreach, which in turn has mobilized the community into action resulting in memorials, vigils, coalition building and a statewide conference. The events have also provided a forum for public commitments and provided leadership opportunities for survivors of domestic violence. Its educational activities and community actions provided community leaders, from progressive to conservative, the opportunity to publicly state their concern about the problem and support for victims of domestic violence.

⁶Quotations by Therese Topasna are from personal interview with the author, May 24, 2000.

Community Results

- Organizations, leaders and individuals became the driving force in awareness and education. They informed other organizations and individuals about the issue and encouraged involvement from all community members. The increasing interest and action on domestic violence created a ripple effect in the community and prevention efforts became community driven. A measure of community ownership of the education is the greatly increased participation of men and elders in FEC activities. In 2000, the API Men United Against Domestic violence created a “Men Against Domestic Violence” poster to be displayed on Seattle Metro’s bus system.
- A successful result of heightened awareness was leaders publicly speaking out against violence. Some Filipino community organizations made commitments to end domestic violence by including education in their work plans or creating their own task force to address the issue.
- The community’s attitude in support of confronting domestic violence created a safer environment for victims to come forward to seek assistance. Leaders, individuals, and Natural Helper volunteers created a more complete safety net for battered women and their children.
- There is continued interest in domestic violence and ongoing demand for education, prevention and action. The community has successfully networked to expand efforts, and vigilance on domestic violence continues.

The Future

With the success of the partnership between the Asian & Pacific Islander Safety Center and the Filipino Education Committee, the Filipino community has begun its own exploration of what it could do to support victims. With knowledge about domestic violence has come a sense of ownership and a feeling of power. In particular, the FEC has decided that it wants to develop a hotline for victims and a support group for survivors. They have also been discussing the possibility of breaking off from the Safety Center and creating their own independent services.

The Filipino community has had phenomenal success in developing its community center. In doing so, it has gained access in the political arena (the governor’s granting funding for a community building plan) and grown in volunteerism, leadership development, activism in social justice (labor, immigration, discrimination) and support of the elderly and youth. A community that has been oppressed for years by colonization, marginalization, racism and disenfranchisement and has come together like this to make a difference would of course want to own its problems and the solutions they generate. The community members’ desire to build their own services for victims of domestic violence marks truly successful organizing.

The Filipino community's activism and desire to do more was greater than the Safety Center had expected. The Center began facilitating discussions regarding what fundamental issues the FEC might consider before embarking on this path (e.g., liability, scarce resources, competition with another agency already funded for domestic violence advocacy to the Filipino community, safety issues, space concerns, training needs). And truthfully, the Safety Center initially made some mistakes by not promptly addressing the community's desire for independence. There needed to be a plan for how to talk about this issue without creating divisiveness among the already underfunded API agencies.

So before any of the agencies move forward to develop services in the Filipino communities, what is the real question that we need to address? Why are we all having such a difficult time accepting our "success" in organizing the Filipino community? What is the essential common threat against all the agencies?

An opportunity has actually arisen from all of this. As marginalized communities, we fear each other moving into our respective territories. We fear losing ground and funding to a possible "upstart" agency. Yet, in our work against oppression of our communities, sometimes we lose sight of the need to "fight the good fight." We should not direct energy against each other but towards coalition building, developing relationships with each other so that we can strategize to access the resources to meet our collective needs. In doing so we can confront the institutional racism and oppression that perpetuates divisiveness—the same forces that create the foundation for violence in our communities.

Exercise

Complete the exercise "Community Organizing Case Study - 5:00 News" (Appendix 12).

Case Study 2:

Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence Rural Diversity Initiative

The following case study of the Florida Coalition Against Domestic Violence (FCADV) Rural Diversity Initiative is included to demonstrate that the methods and ideas discussed in this manual are applicable in rural populations also. Many of the strategies we have described were employed by Debra Mosely, an African-American woman hired by the coalition as to coordinate and oversee the project.

In organizing in Florida's rural communities, FCADV discovered that overt racism still existed in these very isolated areas. The racial climates of northern and southern Florida are very different. While southern Florida communities practice subtle racist tactics, northern Florida rural communities demonstrate blatant racism. The African-American community is by far the most underserved population in north Florida rural counties.

When rural battered women of color seek assistance, the likelihood of being served by a person of color is slim. They usually are assisted by white caseworkers, attorneys, law enforcement officers, judges, therapists and volunteers. Racism compounds their difficulties. With heightened awareness of cultural issues, rural battered women of color stand a greater chance of receiving appropriate services.

In an effort to address the unique needs of the underserved rural African-American communities, FCADV established an anti-racism committee to guide the development of a statewide rural diversity initiative. The first phase of the initiative was to conduct a community assessment, which confirmed that 1) overt racism still exists in northern Florida; 2) the African-American community was undeniably the most underserved population; and 3) a diversity training curriculum was needed for the FCADV organization.

The overall goal of the initiative was to foster an environment where battered women of color would access domestic/sexual violence services.

Challenges

Discouraged by slow progress toward increasing the number of victims seeking services, Debra created and implemented a strategic plan for recruiting women of color victims. She built rapport with the rural African-American women and established successful collaborative relationships. She canvassed the neighborhoods and conversed with community members of diverse ages, socioeconomic levels, educational backgrounds and professions.

Some of the most significant collaborative relationships she formed were with beauticians. They had valuable knowledge: specifically, they knew who the victims were and which people in the community were respected and trusted. Debra learned that the community members were the real experts on their community, and that in order for the program to be successful, the community had to be involved in the planning and implementation of the project.

Another significant collaborative relationship was formed with the community churches. The church is a central part of the African-American community and many churches, along with African-American civic groups, worked collaboratively with Debra and the organizers to ensure successful implementation of the project.

Debra also hired women of color organizers for each of the four targeted communities. It was important that the organizer be from the same culture as the targeted community, be one of its long-term residents (a minimum of 20 years), and be respected and trusted. These organizers received 40 hours of domestic violence training from a shelter, and partnered with the white organizer staff of FCADV for on-the-job training for a minimum of two weeks. It was more important for the organizer to have the trust of the community than to have domestic violence experience. The organizers heightened domestic violence awareness in the community by 1) making presentations at African-American churches and civic groups, economic services, health agencies, community events and other community organizations; 2) canvassing door to door; and 3) disseminating brochures, posters and other domestic violence literature.

Barriers/Solutions

Barrier: The African-American community has a deep distrust of the local police and law enforcement agencies.

Solution: The organizers continue to educate the community and law enforcement agencies on domestic/sexual violence issues and to establish better rapport with law enforcement. They persevere.

Barrier: African-American victims are unwilling to report domestic violence due to the fear of neighbors or extended family members becoming aware of their intimate/personal business.

Solution: The organizers continue to make concerted efforts to reduce such barriers through increased education and awareness.

Barrier: The organizers encountered difficulties in scheduling presentations for churches.

Solution: The organizers met with numerous pastors and the ministerial alliance. They created schedules together with the ministers and thus increased the domestic violence presentations at African-American churches. Some ministers from the alliances have joined the task force.

Barrier: One organizer had low turnout for presentations.

Solution: The organizer took the initiative to canvass the African-American community door to door to increase public awareness of domestic/sexual violence issues. This not only heightened public awareness, the turnout for presentations increased as well.

Barrier: Although the organizing effort's main focus is on the African-American community, one of the organizers has Hispanic clients. They feel more comfortable with her than with the white organizer. The organizer doesn't speak Spanish and thus faced a language barrier.

Solution: The organizer partnered with a social worker from the Hispanic community to assist her with Hispanic clients and to educate the Hispanic community about domestic violence.

Barrier: Transportation and relocation assistance for clients was difficult to obtain.

Solution: The organizer worked with other community service agencies to assist with these issues. One agency offered transportation to the clients at a minimal cost, and community civic organizations donated funds to help a client relocate.

Successes

Because the overall goal of the Rural Diversity Initiative was to foster an environment where battered women of color would access domestic/sexual violence services, its effectiveness can be easily determined by the increased number of victims accessing services.

NUMBERS OF VICTIMS ACCESSING DOMESTIC/SEXUAL VIOLENCE SERVICES

Rural Diversity Initiative (RDI) services provided	Prior to RDI	During RDI
Victims provided outreach services	6	277
Victims provided injunction assistance	0	92
Domestic/sexual violence trainings - professional agencies	26	48
Domestic/sexual violence trainings - African-American churches	0	62
African-American Task Force members recruited	0	18

Summary

Organizing strategies based on gaining the community's trust are essential in both the rural and urban settings. Without that trust, there is no effective organizing. We need to demonstrate integrity, promote ethical behavior and ensure that planning is solidly grounded in the community, keeping all parties tuned in to what, why and when things are planned. If we keep our goal in focus, we can regain the passion.

Organizing with Passion

About the Contributors

Writer Robert Shimabukuro is currently a father, writer, community activist, editor and woodworker, in that order (based on time allocation). He has also been a restaurateur (in the early 1980s) and community organizer. His community organizing experience dates back to the 1970s in the anti-Kruggerand and divestiture campaigns to end apartheid in South Africa (in Portland) and spans the 1980s and 1990s in API communities (in Portland, Los Angeles and Seattle). In 1989, he helped organize the Asian Pacific AIDS Council, an education and outreach organization, to promote AIDS awareness in the API communities in the Puget Sound area and was its first executive director.

Personal Statement: While my scattered focus (jack-of-all-trades, master-of-none) in life may or may not be a result of my father's devastating anger (which drove me to constantly seek safe havens like the roof of our house), this writing project has made me painfully aware of that possibility. It has also reinforced my belief that a safe environment to grow and develop is the greatest gift we can give to our children.

Emma Catague, one of the founding mothers of the Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center (APIWFSC) and former board co-chair, is now the Senior Domestic Violence Community Organizer for the APIWFSC. Ms. Catague implements educational programs in Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities on domestic violence. She also conducts outreach in underserved communities to organize against domestic violence with an emphasis on culturally and linguistically appropriate education methods. As a domestic violence survivor, she is a dedicated advocate for ending violence against women. She has twenty years experience in labor organizing, advocating for human rights, and working for social change, as well as being the former executive director of the International District Housing Alliance.

Judy Chen was a co-founder of the APIWFSC in 1993, former board co-chair, and recently completed her tenure as director. She has more than ten years of experience working with small non-profits, community groups and local government to build capacity and raise funds for grass-roots initiatives. She is a former policy analyst at the City of Seattle Office for Women's Rights and staffed the Seattle Commission for Lesbians and Gays and the Seattle Women's Commission. She is now a program coordinator at the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence. She also serves on the new Non-Profit Assistance Center (Seattle) steering committee.

Organizing with Passion

Norma Timbang is one of the founding mothers and the current executive director of APIWFSC. She has 25 years of community organizing, activist and work experience in housing, health care, gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgender issues, HIV/AIDS and family violence services. Her first paid job in the field of domestic violence was in teen dating violence prevention and direct services. She has attended the University of Washington's undergraduate program in sociology and graduate program of public health, and is the former executive director of Asian Pacific AIDS Council of Seattle. Ms. Timbang is Filipina American, the mother of two teenage daughters and a survivor of domestic violence.

Kim Baker is a 1999 graduate of the University of Washington and is a Justserve Americorps volunteer, serving as a volunteer coordinator at the APIWFSC.

Alice Ito was a co-founder of APIWFSC, the Asian Women's Shelter in San Francisco, and California Women of Color Against Domestic Violence. She was the first volunteer coordinator and trainer for a 24-hour hotline and for emergency safe homes for the Mid-Peninsula Support Network for Battered Women in northern California. She was also active with the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence and California Alliance Against Domestic Violence during the 1970s and 1980s, including organizing among women of color workers and volunteers within the domestic violence movement. Issues of equity, cultural competence and justice are her continuing concern. She has a son who is the source of her inspiration to work on these issues.

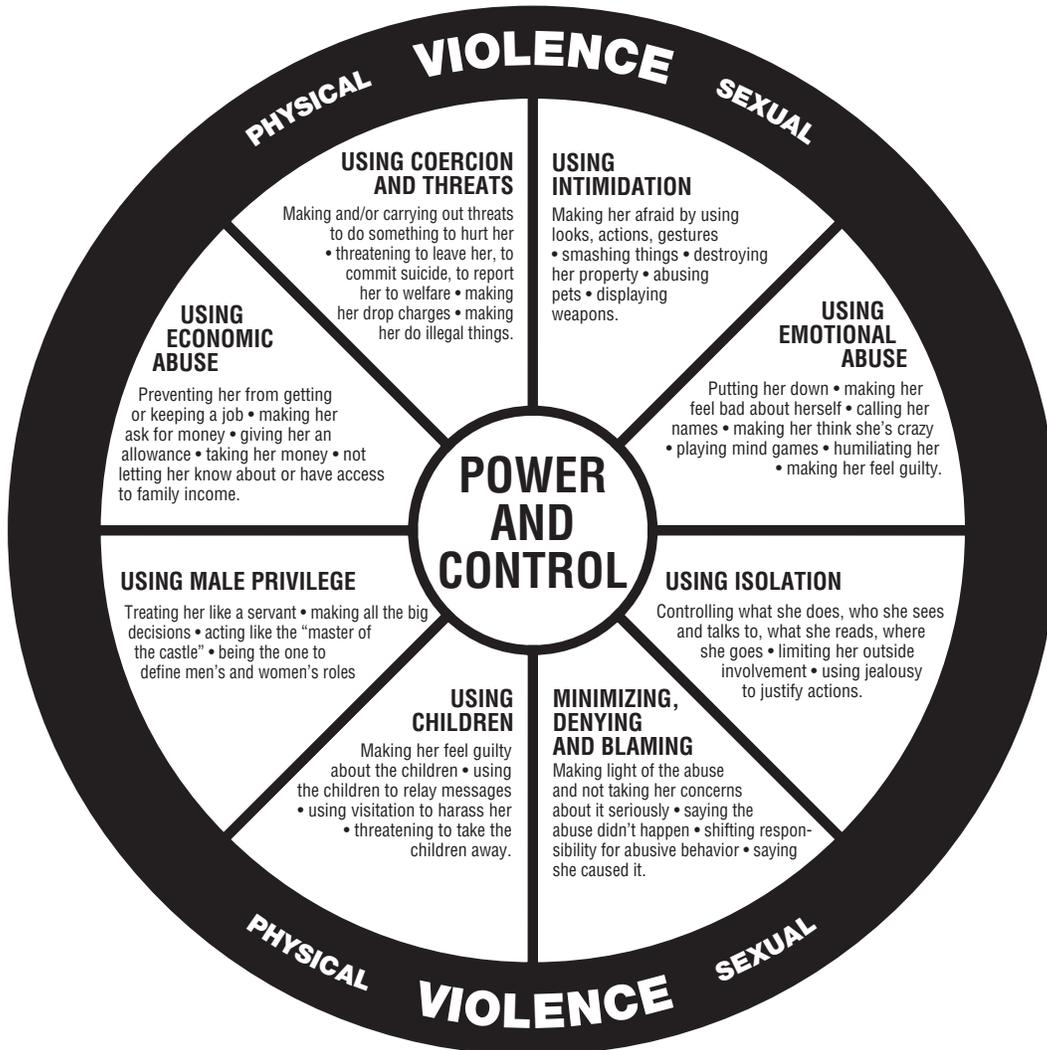
Therese Topasna is a former APIWFSC Domestic Violence Community Organizer. She organized and conducted outreach and education in the Asian and Pacific Islander communities on dating and domestic violence. She also developed and implemented community awareness workshops, events and education materials on API issues in domestic violence. She is a member of the King County Coalition Against Domestic Violence Education Committee and the Washington State Coalition Against Domestic Violence Women of Color Network. She received her BA in American cultural studies with a concentration in multicultural education from Western Washington University. Ms. Topasna is an elementary school teacher in the Seattle Public School system.

Appendix

- Appendix 1: Power and Control Wheel**
- Appendix 2: Equality Wheel**
- Appendix 3: Power and Control Tactics Used Against Immigrant Women**
- Appendix 4: Community Organizing and Linkages Worksheet**
- Appendix 5: Community Assessment Form**
- Appendix 6: Sensitive and Insensitive Cultural Values**
- Appendix 7: Overcoming Cultural Barriers in Working with Battered Women**
- Appendix 8: Improving Accessibility of Your Program's Services to Battered Immigrant Women**
- Appendix 9: Social, Historical and Political Frameworks**
- Appendix 10: Domestic Violence: Asian Pacific Islander Values and Belief System**
- Appendix 11: Effective Service Delivery for API Victims and Survivors of Domestic Violence**
- Appendix 12: Community Organizing Exercise: Case Scenario - 5:00 News**

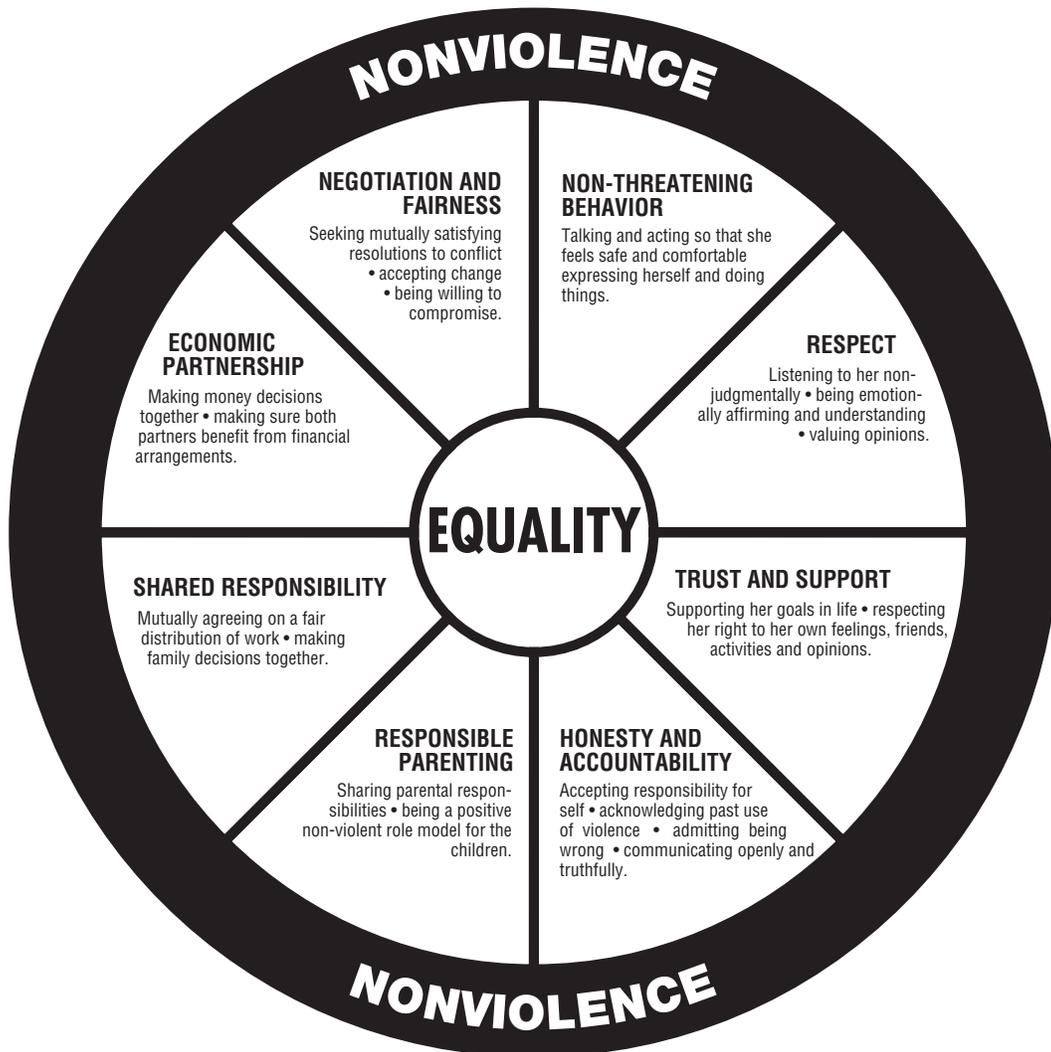
Appendix 1

Power and Control Wheel



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
 202 East Superior Street
 Duluth, Minnesota 55802
 218-722-2781

Appendix 2 Equality Wheel



DOMESTIC ABUSE INTERVENTION PROJECT
202 East Superior Street
Duluth, Minnesota 55802
218-722-2781

Appendix 3

Power and Control Tactics Used Against Immigrant Women

This chart supplements and is to be read in conjunction with the Power and Control Wheel Domestic Abuse Intervention Project in Duluth, Minnesota. The following describes some of the ways in which immigrant women are abused, although the experiences of individual victims will vary from case to case.

EMOTIONAL ABUSE:

- ◆ Lying about her immigration status.
- ◆ Telling her family lies about her.
- ◆ Calling her racist names.
- ◆ Belittling and embarrassing her in front of family and friends.
- ◆ Causing her to lose face.
- ◆ Telling her that he has abandoned her culture and become “white,” or “American.”
- ◆ Preventing her from visiting sick or dying relatives.
- ◆ Lying about his ability to have the immigration status of his lawful permanent resident abuse victims changed.

ECONOMIC ABUSE:

- ◆ Forcing her to work “illegally” when she does not have a work permit.
- ◆ Threatening to report her to INS if she works “under the table.”
- ◆ Not letting her get job training or schooling.
- ◆ Taking the money her family back home were depending upon her to send them.
- ◆ Forcing her to sign papers in English that she does not understand — court papers, IRS forms, immigration papers.
- ◆ Harassing her at the only job she can work at legally in the U.S., so that she loses that job and is forced to work “illegally.”

SEXUAL ABUSE:

- ◆ Calling her a prostitute or a “mail order bride.”
- ◆ Accusing her of trying to attract other men when she puts on make-up to go to work.
- ◆ Accusing her of sleeping with other men.
- ◆ Alleging that she has a history of prostitution on legal papers.
- ◆ Telling her that “as a matter of law” in the United States that she must continue to have sex with him whenever he wants until they are divorced.

USING COERCION AND THREATS:

- ◆ Threatening to report her to the INS and get her deported.
- ◆ Threatening that he will not file immigration papers to legalize her immigration status.
- ◆ Threatening to withdraw the petition he filed to legalize her immigration status.
- ◆ Telling her that he will harm someone in her family.
- ◆ Telling her that he will have someone harm her family members
- ◆ Threatening to harm or harass her employer or co-workers.

USING CHILDREN:

- ◆ Threatening to remove her children from the United States.
- ◆ Threatening to report her children to the INS.
- ◆ Taking the money she was to send to support her children in her home country.
- ◆ Telling her he will have her deported and he will keep the children with him in the U.S.
- ◆ Convincing her that if she seeks help from the courts or the police the U.S. legal system will give him custody of the children. (In many countries men are given legal control over the children and he convinces her that the same thing will occur here.)

USING CITIZENSHIP OR RESIDENCY PRIVILEGE:

- ◆ Failing to file papers to legalize her immigration status.
- ◆ Withdrawing or threatening to withdraw immigration papers filed for her residency.
- ◆ Controlling her ability to work.
- ◆ Using the fact of her undocumented immigration status to keep her from reporting abuse or leaving with the children.
- ◆ Telling her that the police will arrest her for being undocumented if she calls the police for help because of the abuse.

INTIMIDATION:

- ◆ Hiding or destroying important papers (i.e. her passport, her children's passports, ID cards, health care cards, etc.)
- ◆ Destroying the only property that she brought with her from her home country.
- ◆ Destroying photographs of her family members.
- ◆ Threatening persons who serve as a source of support for her.
- ◆ Threatening to do or say something that will shame her family or cause them to lose face.
- ◆ Threatening to divulge family secrets.

ISOLATION:

- ◆ Isolating her from friends, or family members.
- ◆ Isolating her from persons who speak her language.
- ◆ Not allowing her to learn English or not allowing her to communicate in a language she is fluent in.
- ◆ Being the only person through whom she can communicate in English.
- ◆ Reading her mail and not allowing her to use the telephone.
- ◆ Strictly timing all her grocery trips and other travel times.
- ◆ Not allowing her to continue to meet with social workers and other support persons.
- ◆ Cutting off her subscriptions to or destroying newspapers and other support magazines.
- ◆ Not allowing her to meet with people who speak her language or who are from her community, culture, or country.

MINIMIZING, DENYING, BLAMING:

- ◆ Convincing her that his violent actions are not criminal unless they occur in public.
- ◆ Telling her that he is allowed to physically punish her because he is the "man."
- ◆ Blaming her for the breakup of the family, if she leaves him because of the violence.
- ◆ Telling her that she is responsible for the violence because she did not do as he wished.

Family Violence Prevention Fund, adapted with permission by the Domestic Abuse Intervention Project, Duluth, Minnesota.

Appendix 4

Community Organizing and Linkages Worksheet

Identify the issues

- What do you and your co-workers complain about?
- What do the women you work with complain about?
- What is your dream or vision?

Identify the stakeholders

- Who do you think could help address this issue?
- Who do the women you work with believe could help?
- Who else cares about this issue at your agency?
- Who else cares about this issue at other agencies, groups, institutions?
- Who are the individuals (for example, a certain teacher) who care about this?
- What are the groups, agencies and institutions that are stakeholders (for example, the community health clinic, Spanish radio program)?

Identify the help needed

- What resources are needed to address this issue (besides money)?
- Who has these resources?

Understand potential allies

- What are their mission and goals?
- How do your agency and issue relate to their mission/goals? (Be very specific.)
- How would helping you help them? (Be very specific.)
- Do you understand how they operate and make decisions?
- Do you understand what they are afraid of?

Develop a plan

- What steps can be taken to build relationships and trust (at least one year)?
- Who else can help you do this?
- What specific actions can you take for the biggest impact, given the resources?
- How will your approach be culturally appropriate, accessible and flexible?
- How will you prevent burnout?
- Is this project be repeatable (annual march, vigil, religious service, etc.)?

Appendix 5

Community Assessment Form

Target communities: Chinese, Cambodian and Samoan (priority)

Others: Vietnamese, Hawaiian, Korean, and Southeast Asian (if time permits)

Questions:

- 1) Do you think there is a domestic violence problem in your community?
- 2) Are you aware of the problem? How much knowledge do you have of domestic violence?
- 3) Would you be willing to help and learn more about it?
- 4) Can you give me the names of some people in your community that I can talk to about this issue?
- 5) In the near future we will be looking at creating a committee or group within your community that could start an education program on domestic violence, and provide support to the victims.
 - < What do you think about the idea?
 - < Do you have any other suggestion?
 - < Would you be willing to help us put it together?

Community Assessment Project - 1998

Asian & Pacific Islander Women & Family Safety Center, P.O. Box 14047, Seattle WA 98114 (206) 467-9976

Appendix 6

Sensitive and Insensitive Cultural Values

Insensitive

Do for

Lead

Control

Advise

Determine

Impose additional resources

Mandate

Condescend

Display paternalism

Demonstrate sympathy

Sensitive

Do with

Work alongside

Assist

Provide input

Facilitate

Provide additional requirements

Encourage

Respect

Display concern

Demonstrate empathy

Courtesy of “Beyond the Mask of Denial: A Focus on Alcohol and Other Drug Concerns and Related Prevention Issues that Face Asians and Pacific Islanders” Conference, Seattle, September 1993.

Appendix 7

Overcoming Cultural Barriers in Working with Battered Women

Family violence crosses all race, class and cultural lines. Historically, many cultures have failed to take action to stop violence that occurs within the home. Now, most cultures no longer condone such violence. Many have values that oppose this violence and lead them to offer help to victims. Yet in thinking about the role of culture in domestic violence, the following must be considered:

- Culture poses barriers that abuse victims must overcome to escape or end abuse.
- Culture affects the relief an abuse victim will need to successfully flee violence.
- Culture influences an abuser's justification for his use of violence.

Although domestic violence victims may share common experiences with violence, their psychological, emotional, religious, spiritual, economic, legal and social service needs vary from culture to culture. We can offer effective assistance to an abuse victim only if we address her needs within the context of her own culture.

Most battered women:

- believe promises that the abuser will reform;
- suffer from damaged self-esteem;
- bear physical and psychological scars from abuse; and
- fear retaliation or stalking if they leave.

In addition, battered immigrant women need help surmounting the barriers posed by culture, language, isolation, and immigration status.

Part 1. Barriers that battered immigrant women must overcome in seeking help

Power and Control Factor

The following factors inhibit the immigrant woman's ability to successfully flee or end her abuser's violence. Many battered immigrant women:

- do not know that domestic violence is a crime.
- lack access to information about laws that can protect them as often their knowledge about what the legal system can do for them usually comes from their abuser.
- do not know that the legal, medical and social service system will help them even if they are undocumented and even if they continue to live with their abuser.
- are not allowed to learn English or work two jobs and do not have time to learn English even if their abuser allows them to do so.

- are isolated from friends and social service providers who speak their language and understand their culture.
- believe that they cannot receive help from police, because in their home country, the police are an arm of a repressive government
- believe that they cannot receive help from the court, because in their home country, testimony is not valid evidence, the word of a man is legally worth more than the testimony of a woman, and the person with the most money and the strongest political connections—usually the man—wins.

Religion and Culture

Religious beliefs and cultural expectations about the roles of men and women in society pose significant barriers to a battered immigrant woman's ability to flee the violence.

- Leaving home and living as a single woman or single mother may be counter to her belief systems about women's roles and obligations in the community.
- She believes her that if she leaves she will be failing in her role as a woman is that of wife, mother and homemaker.
- Women are responsible for keeping the family unit intact and if she leaves or has her abuser removed from the home she will be held responsible by family and/or community for the disintegration of her family.
- If she talks about the abuse and seeks help, she risks being shunned and made to feel ashamed by friends and family members.

Fear of Deportation

Both documented and undocumented immigrant women fear deportation. A women who is a legal immigrants may:

- believe that if her spouse helped her get a green card, he can take it away, which is untrue.
- fear seeking help because her abuser may be jailed, lose his job, and stop supporting the family.
- fear calling the police for help because it might cause her abuser's deportation, or cause harm to herself or her family or lead to her deportation.
- be afraid that friends and family members will accuse her of seeking to have her abuser deported because she sought help to stop the violence, his deportation might further her safety or that of her children.

An undocumented battered immigrant woman may additionally:

- fear that calling the police for help, going to a hospital or seeking a protection order will lead to her deportation because agency personnel might call the INS to report her.
- fear that if she seeks help or tries to escape, she will lose custody of the children to her abuser or her abuser will have her deported.

It is important that the professionals helping battered immigrant women not succumb to myths that in certain cultures abuse is acceptable because women are docile/passive or that some cultures have more domestic violence than others. Domestic violence in the dominant U.S. culture is quite prevalent and the same notion that battering results from passivity in women is quite common in the U.S. Further, it is important that professionals offer assistance to all battered women and battered immigrant women without regard to whether or not she and her abuser are separated. It takes battered women in the U.S. two to seven attempts to leave an abusive relationship. The barriers to leaving for battered immigrants are even more difficult to overcome. Leaving can enhance danger to battered women and their children. Thus, professionals working with battered immigrants must make it clear that they can help with protection orders, immigration relief, counseling and many other forms of assistance for all battered immigrants whether or not they are continuing to reside with their abusers.

Part 2. Demonstrating cultural sensitivity through using open-ended questions and good listening skills

Most battered women need a safe place in which to tell their story and articulate their needs, fears and concerns. In order to work effectively with any battered woman, we must ask open-ended questions rather than read her a list of things we can do for her. Such a list is limiting. Many women minimize abuse as a survival mechanism and may volunteer more information if they receive culturally sensitive encouragement. When asked broad questions, women most often describe what they need and fear from their own cultural perspective. Ask:

- What do you want?
- What are you afraid of?
- What are your concerns about your partner's reaction?
- If you contemplate separating from your abuser would you prefer to remove him from the home you share together or would you prefer to leave?
- Under what conditions do you think it will be safest remove him or to leave?
- What are your safety needs, fears and concerns while you continue to live with your partner?
- Do you have a safety plan?

- What are your safety needs if you plan to remove him or leave your partner?
- Can you safely remain in the family home or will you have to leave to ensure your safety?
- What are the methods your partner might use to get you to return to him?
- What are the means your partner might use to continue controlling your life?

Do not use labels: “spouse abuse,” “domestic violence,” “battered woman,” “emotional abuse.” Instead, ask about specific actions:

- Did your partner ever tell you that you were stupid or that no one else would have you?
- Did your partner ever destroy things or harm pets?
- Did your partner ever show you, use or threaten to use a weapon?
- Did your partner ever threaten to have you deported?
- Did your partner ever hit you, hurt you or pull your hair?
- Did your partner force you to have sex when you did not want to?
- Are you afraid of your partner?

Careful Listening and Involving Battered Women in Developing Solutions

- Listen carefully to the abused woman’s answers.
- As you listen, make a list of problems she identifies and thoughts on potential remedies.
- After listening to her story, issues and concerns, discuss with the battered immigrant potential remedies that may be helpful.

Explain all legal options, civil and criminal.

Identify which solutions can be achieved by

- safety planning
- self-help
- support persons in the battered immigrants community
- support services available in the community or through ecumenical organizations
- legal remedies.

Work through with battered immigrant women which solutions she thinks would be best for her.

In most cases battered women will first develop self-help and safety planning solutions and later seek legal and social services.

When women will be seeking legal relief, it is particularly important that you ask broad, open questions to determine what they truly need and fear. You should think creatively about remedies that you can help the battered immigrant ask for in her protection order case that in-

clude asking the court for relief designed to address the concerns the battered immigrant raised in the interview. In this way you can help her ask the court for specific relief that will address her needs and will avoid potential areas of continuing conflict with her abuser. Courts in almost every state have the ability to order whatever relief is needed to stop the violence. Too often, incomplete relief is granted because the victim fails to ask for the creative culturally sensitive remedies she needs to make the protection order work effectively.

Supporting battered immigrant women attempting to leave their abusers

It is important that all persons who offer assistance to battered women be supportive and gentle in affirming her decision to seek help. Many health professionals, social workers, friends and co-workers have an opportunity to support a battered woman as she attempts to seek help to break free of the violence in her life. Some of them will see her encounter problems in receiving services and legal relief and return to her abuser. Battered women who return to their abusers often do so to survive, seeing no other option. Support persons she continues to see even after she returns to her abuser have a special duty to continue providing support, encouragement and assistance. You can be helped in this role by learning about:

- the legal and social services available in your community to assist battered women
- the community-based organizations that serve culturally diverse populations in your community
- the obstacles battered women encounter in seeking social services and shelter:
 - living in a shelter where no one speaks her language or is familiar with her culture
 - programs that unlawfully turn battered immigrants away based on immigration status
 - not being able to cook familiar foods in the shelter
 - lack of interpreter services that allow her to participate in counseling sessions.
- frustrations battered women face when seeking help from the legal system
 - waiting hours for interpreters
 - abusers appearing with lawyers when the immigrant victim is unrepresented
 - many delays in hearing dates and in obtaining relief
- laws and practices that affect immigrants in your community
- the legal implications that certain actions can have for immigrant women
 - divorce
 - receipt of public assistance
 - criminal convictions

- the immigration experts and other advocates in your community or your state who have expertise serving battered immigrants and who can collaborate with you to help the battered immigrant women you see.

Summary: Cultural checklist

- Be sensitive to the barriers battered immigrant women have already overcome and must continue to face.
- Encourage battered women of all races, language backgrounds, and immigration status to seek help whether or not they are ready to leave their abusers.
- Help all battered women obtain protection orders whether or not they plan to separate from their abusers.
- Be familiar with the laws that affect the populations you serve.
- Develop multicultural, multilingual staff.
- Develop multicultural, multilingual contacts in the community.
- Ask specific questions to identify abuse.
- Ask open-ended questions to identify all appropriate remedies.

For further information contact the Immigrant Women Program of NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, 202-326-0040.

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Appendix 8

Improving Accessibility of Your Program's Services to Battered Immigrant Women

Lack of information about and access to services to assist battered women is one of the major obstacles battered immigrant women encounter when they consider fleeing a violent relationship. For immigrant women who do not speak English, communities without bilingual services are communities without any services to assist them. This paper is designed to help programs ensure that they help all members of their community who need assistance to end domestic violence without regard to the victim's ability to speak English or immigration status.

Step 1: Examine the demographics of your community. Determine what cultural and language populations reside there. If you work with low-income populations, what are its specific demographics? Compare the demographics of the community as a whole with those of the population you serve. If there is a difference, it is likely that your services are not accessible to a portion of the population in your area.

Step 2: Change the way you work to make your services more accessible. Build relationship with service providers working with cultural and language minority communities in your area.

- Make a list of organizations that work with specific-language, racial and cultural minority populations.
- Add to the list bilingual/bicultural professionals who work with organizations and government agencies.
- Invite these individuals and organizational representatives to a meeting to help you develop a plan for expanding your services to diverse communities.
- Develop a plan for how your agency can work together with the groups that work with battered immigrants and/or immigrant communities to help you identify and serve battered women who are immigrants and/or from diverse cultures.
- Train staff of other agencies and professionals in the community on domestic violence.
- Have your staff participate in training conducted by organizations working with diverse populations on specific issues that affect those populations.
- Identify a contact person who will facilitate communication between your organization and other agencies and professionals so that you will be able to coordinate services to victims in the future.
- Work out the procedures agencies will use to contact each other to help serve domestic violence victims.

- Work together as a team on domestic violence cases so that women from diverse cultures will have an advocate who is an expert on domestic violence and an advocate who has a thorough understanding of their cultural needs.
- Invite staff members from organizations serving diverse cultural communities who work with you on domestic violence cases to join your local domestic violence coordinating council.

Develop a core of qualified interpreters trained on domestic violence.

The best approach is hire bilingual bicultural staff from the significant language minority communities in your community. Until bilingual staff can be hired, interpretation needs should be met through hiring contract interpreters. Having a core of interpreters who can provide services in languages spoken by significant language minority populations in your community is necessary to provide a full range of services to battered immigrant women. These interpreters should be required to complete domestic violence training so that they will be sensitive to domestic violence issues, understand the importance of confidentiality and will be familiar with the vocabulary they will need to translate.

Additionally, some battered immigrant women who need services may be isolated from others who speak their language. There may be no one in the community who speaks her language and all of her communication to the outside world may be through her abuser. This is particularly true in rural communities, in communities with universities or military bases and in communities where veterans live. To address language needs of battered immigrants who speak languages other than those spoken by bilingual staff or by contract interpreters, agencies should set up accounts with the AT&T language line. To make services language accessible, agencies should:

- Hire bilingual/bicultural staff.
- Include a line item in your budget to address interpretation needs.
- Hire your own core of interpreters to avoid conflicts that arise in small ethnic communities where the interpreter may be a friend of the abuser or the abuser's family and may not respect confidentiality.
- To identify interpreters whom you can hire you should contact bilingual staff at other agencies who can assist offering both interpretation services and support for battered immigrant women.
- You might also recruit a group of volunteer interpreters, although they may be less available at the times you need them than contract interpreters.

Be aware that it is dangerous to use the battered immigrant woman's companions or children as interpreters.

- The victim may edit the conversation or be inhibited from speaking because she is concerned about gossip, fears that what she says will be repeated to her abuser, or wants to protect her children.

- Knowledge of the details of abuse may traumatize or endanger the children

Recruit bilingual/bicultural volunteers for your agency.

- Community-based organizations that serve immigrant communities can help you recruit volunteers.
- Place ads in local non-English newspaper and newsletters. Although you are seeking bilingual staff, these persons often read newspaper both in English and in their other language.
- Create an internship program for bilingual/bicultural students. Upon graduation, these students often continue to work with battered women or immigrants and become a group of trained persons from whom you can recruit future staff.

Develop your staff members' basic language skills.

- Pay for language training classes for your current staff members.
- Bring a language instructor to your office to provide classes during work hours.
- Provide staff with paid leave time to take language classes.

Step 3: Hire multilingual/multicultural staff. This should be the ultimate goal. From this day forward, you should place a priority on hiring bilingual/bicultural staff each time you have an opening in your office in the future. The goal should be to attain as much cultural diversity as possible so that you can better serve all members of your community.

- Bilingual/bicultural staff supplement the work of contract employees and volunteers and offer continuity.
- Having a multilingual staff offers much more than interpretation. Some clients will be more able to talk easily with someone who is more like them, from their own culture
- Some immigrant women fear interacting with members of the majority culture, expecting them to be unfriendly or impatient. They don't want to be treated as they have been by others in the community at large.
- If interpretation is to be part of the job for bilingual/bicultural employees, their job responsibilities must allow time within the normal working day for this task, so that they are not penalized for not completing as many of their other job responsibilities as do the rest of the employees.
- Bilingual staff must have the same promotional possibilities as other staff members. Your agency must be willing to replace bilingual staff who are promoted with new bilingual/bicultural staff members.

Develop a pool of bilingual/bicultural applicants.

- Change the way you recruit staff members the next time an opening becomes available.
- Mail job announcements to organizations and professionals who serve diverse communities.
- Develop a list of ethnic language minority newspapers and newsletters where you can advertise jobs.
- Mail job announcements to language departments and Latin, Asian, and African-American studies departments and diverse student associations at local universities.
- Increase the hiring time frame so that you will have an applicant pool that will contain significant numbers of diverse candidates.
- Remember in making hiring decisions that cultural competency and language proficiency are job skills that should be measured for each candidate who applies for a job.

Step 4: Develop a community education and outreach campaign on domestic violence.

In addition to improving your ability to serve immigrant and culturally diverse communities, it is essential that you develop a plan to educate members of the diverse communities in your area. These outreach and educational efforts should include involvement of women who are members of your local immigrant communities. The immigrant community, battered immigrants, their support persons and those professionals from whom battered immigrants may seek help need community education emphasizing that:

- domestic violence is a crime;
- shelters and domestic violence programs offer assistance to battered immigrants with out regard to immigration status;
- many professional are willing to help abused women and children—doctors, nurses, police, judges, attorneys, shelter workers, social workers;
- abuse victims can safely seek help without risking deportation;
- abuse victims can get help even if they plan to continue living with their abusers;
- abuse victims can receive custody of their children and child support, and
- you and others will listen to them and support them though the process of ending domestic violence in their lives.

For further information contact: The Immigrant Women Program, NOW Legal Defense and Education Fund, 202-326-0040.

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Appendix 9

Social, Historical and Political Frameworks

All APIs are not the same, nor do we identify the same

- Historic conflict, hostility and oppression between nations and ethnic groups (example: Japan vs. Korea)
- National or cultural identity, not “Asian-American” identity

Becoming a “refugee” or “immigrant” is usually a group vs. individual experience

- Historic conflict, civil unrest, war; seeking a better life; political exile; refugee camp; movement within U.S., etc.

Post-traumatic stress syndrome (PTSD) – passed down to next generation

- Colonization and imperialism
- Internment camps & refugee camps
- Genocide
- Civil war
- Death of extended family members
- Military dictatorships

Legal rights seldom understood, or dependent upon status

- Practice of law is unique to each country (example: child abuse vs. discipline)
- Lack of political process and legal rights in home countries (and as refugees)

Barriers for immigrants, refugees and their children

- Language barrier
- Cultural barrier
- Anti-immigrant bias, racism
- Lack of many legal rights and denial of public benefits if not citizen
- Lack of knowledge of “the system” and the law
- Isolation and loneliness
- Problems with school system
- Poverty, under-employment

Typical reactions to these cultural and historical experiences

- Negative
 - Substance abuse
 - Depression
 - PTSD, mental illness
 - Intergenerational conflict
 - Silencing of the past
 - Extreme drive to assimilate
 - Extreme aversion to dissent or to confrontations with authority
 - Unwillingness to speak out against one's own for any reason

- Positive
 - Bicultural or multicultural worldview
 - Strong values
 - Awareness of history
 - Sense of community and belief in helping others
 - Drive to succeed and make a better life
 - Ability to see how one's actions affect others, especially future generations

Appendix 10
Domestic Violence : Asian Pacific Islander
Values and Belief System

Workshop Presentation by Natividad E. Lamug, MA, CMFT

Diversity is all of us – May 26, 1998

Glossary

Filial piety: The one single organizing principle of this notion of family is the concept of *filial piety*. It is a fundamental concept that any provider working with Asian clients needs to understand. There is no western parallel to this concept; however, broadly defined, it means honor, reverence, obedience, loyalty and love owed to those who are hierarchically above the individual. This means, for example, honoring or obeying the wishes of ancestors or parents long since gone and perceiving one's existence and identify as linked to one's historical past and to one's family lineage. Within this context, systems of authority, reciprocity, duty and interdependence have been developed. At the root of all Asian values such as shame, honor, respect and loss of face is *filial piety*.

Reciprocal obligation: The most emphasized form of reciprocity, translated as a debt of prime obligation or debt of gratitude. Through *reciprocal obligation*, binding relationships are created in which moral principle dictates that when a favor has been done for someone it must be returned.

Shame: A painful emotion, experienced when the individual has failed at an expected goal and performed some behavior that results in disapproval from the family or others.

Self-esteem: A personality value that refers to a keen sense of personal dignity or sensitivity to personal affront. It involves honor, self-respect, and pride.

Smooth interpersonal relationship/getting along with others: A mode of social interaction which means getting or going along with others, even if one must contradict their own desires. *Pakikisama* (means try to get along) assures that good feelings are maintained and cooperation practiced.

Fellowship: Accepting and dealing with others as equals, treating them as fellow human beings and having regard for their dignity. It subsumes all levels of interaction.

Come what may (*Bahala na*): An attitude interpreted in one sense as optimistic fatalism or determinism. It is essentially a locus-of-control concept presupposing risk taking in the face of the proverbial cloud of uncertainty and the possibility of failure.

Inner strength: A key ingredient in the realization of enabling one to face difficulty, even death, to vindicate the dignity/honor/good, in one's being.

Cooperative resistance (*Pakikibaka*): A worldview that includes not only *pakikisama* but also sees in the unity of man and nature a common struggle in the face of injustice and exploitation.

Interdependence: A kinship network through religious rites of passage, baptism, confirmation, and marriage. This system is characterized by reciprocal obligations that extend and bind familial ties, loyalties and interdependence among people in the community.

Appendix 11
Effective Service Delivery for API Victims
and Survivors of Domestic Violence

Workshop presentation by Natividad E. Lamug
May 26, 1998

1. *API values tend to socialize women into patterns of behavior characterized by deference to authority and family responsibilities.* Assertive behaviors for women may seem threatening if presented in opposition to traditional responses.
2. *A deep-rooted sense of family loyalty and honor and an abhorrence of “losing face” are cultural deterrents to reporting abuse.* An API woman may feel disloyal in reporting her spouse to authorities as she may feel that she has dishonored her family by being a victim or that she has made the family look bad by reporting an incident.
3. *Taking responsibility and blame for problems and a fatalistic resignation to adverse conditions are traditionally valued virtues.* Self-blame in this context is culturally determined rather than psychological in origin (as is the low self-esteem often exhibited by other battered women). “Come what may” is perseverance in the face of adversity, a quality of forbearance. While admirable and appropriate in some situations, such fatalism is detrimental in circumstances of abuse/violence.
4. *The lack of cultural acceptance and openness in discussing sexuality makes it difficult to even begin to discuss what constitutes abuse or violence.* Depending on their level of acculturation, API women may lack the technical language to talk about sexuality. Beyond language, there are the traditional views that sex is a highly private, personal matter, it is mainly for conception and it is a taboo topic.
5. We do not have accurate figures for the incidence of domestic violence in the API community. We hear about it at crisis points in emergency rooms or in the media. *API generally underutilize social services, which are often culturally insensitive and lack bilingual/ bicultural outreach and service providers.* In addition, API often attach a stigma to using such services and may fear repercussions, either from government agencies (e.g., INS) or within the community (e.g., shame, criticism or ostracism).

6. API is one of the fastest growing ethnic community populations in the US. Besides the cultural issues there are special circumstances particularly in the acculturation process. *There are serious adjustment problems such as language barriers, cultural shock or conflict, financial instability, unfamiliarity with the societal system, discrimination, etc.* Although domestic violence cuts across all economic, cultural and ethnic lines, API women's lack of access to information, services and legal protection makes them particularly vulnerable to spousal abuse. First, an orientation to basic rights is essential. Many immigrant API women avoid the authorities because they believe that any trouble with the law, even as a victim, may lead to deportation.
6. Immigrant API women are often unaware of what services are available and whom to contact for them. Language and the availability of confidential interpreters are of great concern. Because of the high value placed on family and community preservation, API are reluctant to work with interpreters who may breach confidence or may be relatives of either the victim or the assailant.
7. Fears and concerns about the possibility of deportation, divorce, custody and financial support may keep the API women in the abusive relationship. A divorced woman will lose her status as she loses her role as a wife and a mother in a traditional API culture. Traditionally, believing that custody will be granted to the father, a mother will sacrifice and remain in the relationship.

Appendix 12
Community Organizing Exercise
Case Scenario (5:00 News)

Instructions: Read the following scenario. Discuss the questions that follow as a group, and appoint a recorder to record the answers. Choose a reporter, too, as we will discuss the answers.

Scenario: A prominent activist in your community is killed by her husband in a murder-suicide. You learn about this on the 5:00 news.

The local daily press and television stations cover the deaths as a top story until the burials. It is reported that the activist's husband was jealous of her work for local progressive political candidates and that she hid his ongoing physical and emotional abuse. They focus on the victim's work and on her husband's jealousy as an explanation for the murder.

You hear through community grapevine that several friends of the victim express shock and despair at their friend's death, but the general internal community reaction is one of silence. Some of her friends say that they knew about the abuse but never expected it to result in death.

Small group discussion:

- 1) If a similar tragedy were to occur right now in your community (geographic or of people with similar cultural values, religious beliefs, practices, what would you do?
- 2) With your group, plan either a short-term or long-term strategy. Specify what you want to accomplish, people and resources involved and how you would work within the community's cultural values/religions context.