From a Spiral of Violence to a Whirlwind of Healing

Strengthening Advocacy for API LGBTQ Survivors of Gender-Based Violence

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Facilitated by Nathan Naik Shara

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Welcome & Accessibility

- Tech overview
- Accessibility
- Interpretation & Language Access
- Questions and Support

Image by Favianna Rodriguez
About API-GBV

The Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence is a national resource center on domestic violence, sexual violence, trafficking, and other forms of gender-based violence in Asian and Pacific Islander communities.

The Institute serves a national network of advocates, community-based service programs, federal agencies, national and state organizations, legal, health, and mental health professionals, researchers, policy advocates, and activists from social justice organizations working to eliminate gender-based violence.

- Resource Center on Gender Based Violence in API Communities
- Advocacy for Immigrant Survivors
- Language Access: Interpretation Technical Assistance
- Domestic Violence Homicide Prevention
- Movement Network Building
Nathan Naik Shara

Nathan is a queer, South Asian social justice therapist and community educator whose work focuses on healing trauma, cultivating accountability skills, and developing effective community-based responses to harm and violence.

He has spent over 15 years engaged in grassroots anti-violence organizing and education, particularly within API immigrant and refugee communities and LGBTQ communities.

He is also a lead teacher and practitioner with the Bay-Area based organization generative somatics.
Agenda

- Welcome, Agenda, Goals
- Framing, Definitions & Context
- Barriers for LGBTQ Survivors
- Lessons from the Roundtable
- Recommendations for Advocates
- Q&A

Image by Samya Arif, from *The Bystander Anthology*
Goals for this Webinar

- Offer basic terminology to understand who “LGBTQ communities” are and include
- Provide a framework for understanding how gender-based violence impacts LGBTQ people
- Identify barriers that Asian & Pacific Islander LGBTQ people experience when trying to access culturally specific services and supports
- Highlight the need for GBV advocates and culturally-specific organizations to proactively serve LGBTQ members of your community
- Offer recommendations for integrating an LGBTQ lens into survivor advocacy
Defining Asian & Pacific Islander Communities

API-GBV uses the term “Asian and Pacific Islander” to include all people of Asian, Asian American or Pacific Islander ancestry who trace their origins to the countries, states, jurisdictions and/or the diasporic communities of these geographic regions.

- Central Asia
- East Asia
- Hawai‘i and Pacific Islands
- Southeast Asia
- South Asia
- West Asia

API experiences overlap and intersect with other social group memberships, including class, migration status, gender, disability, and age.
Defining LGBTQ Communities

LGBTQ is an acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer. These terms are used to describe a person’s sexual orientation or gender identity.

“LGBTQ” is an umbrella term-- much like “API”-- that includes multiple communities, histories and cultures. “LGBTQ” has been used as a political identity to build power among these groups around shared experiences of oppression based on gender and sexual orientation.

LGBTQ experience intersects and overlaps with other social group memberships.
Early Learnings Self-Reflection:

When is the **first time** you remember knowing that there was a sexual orientation other than heterosexual?

What do you remember learning about LGBTQ people and from what source(s) did you learn this information?

How did you learn that you were expected to be heterosexual?
The United Nations defines gender-based violence as any act that “results in, or is likely to result in, physical, sexual or psychological harm or suffering to women, including threats of such acts, coercion or arbitrary deprivations of liberty, whether occurring in public or in private life.”

Gender-based violence is largely male-patterned violence and can include the victimization of women, girls, men, boys, adolescents, and lesbian, gay, transgender, and gender non-conforming people.
Unpacking the “Gender” in Gender-Based Violence

Patriarchy is a structure of beliefs and practices (institutional, cultural, and individual) which establishes the binary gender system of two distinct genders (“men” and “women”), within which men are given power and privilege at the expense of women, transgender and gender-variant people.
Patriarchy and Gender Norms

**“Woman”**

- **Body type**
  - Cultural standards of “beauty” and “femininity”
- **Areas of competence**
  - Emotional expression
- **Reproductive expectations**
  - Assumptions of caregiving
  - Sexual roles & expectations

**What are girls and women called when they step outside of this “box”?**

**What is done to girls and women when they step outside this “box”?**

**“Man”**

- **Body type**
  - Cultural norms and standards of “masculinity” & “manhood”
- **Areas of competence**
  - Emotional range
  - Expectations of providing materially
  - Assumptions about relationality
  - Sexual roles & expectations

**What are boys and men called when they step outside of this “box”?**

**What is done to boys and men when they step outside of this “box”?**
Differing Experiences, Shared Struggles

While the definition and rigidity of these “boxes” can impact all people negatively, the consequences land disproportionately upon women, transgender and gender non-conforming people.

And while gender-based violence is largely male-patterned violence, anyone--regardless of gender-- can participate in enforcing the boundaries of each “box.”

Sexism, homophobia and transphobia are terms used to describe different patterns of patriarchal enforcement.
Homophobia

The irrational fear of love, affection, and erotic behavior between people of the same gender. Expressed as negative feelings, attitudes, actions, and institutional discrimination against those perceived as non-heterosexual, often on the basis of gender expression or presentation.

Image from 2018 gay pride parade in Taipei, Taiwan
Transphobia

The irrational fear of those who are perceived to break or blur stereotypical gender roles.

Expressed as negative feelings, attitudes, actions and institutional discrimination.

Often directed at those perceived as expressing or presenting their gender in a transgressive way.
Surviving Violence at the Intersections of Multiple Oppressions
Racism
Xenophobia
Immigration status
Language Access
Traditional gender roles
Lack of economic opportunities
Islamophobia
Traumas of war, escape, refugee settlement

Asian & Pacific Islander communities

Homophobia
Transphobia
Lack of economic & employment opportunities
Familial rejection & abuse
Religious ostracization
Few legal protections for partners, parents
Limited access to healthcare

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer communities

Lack of economic & employment opportunities
Familial rejection & abuse
Religious ostracization
Few legal protections for partners, parents
Limited access to healthcare

API LGBTQ Survivors of Gender Based Violence

Limited access to resources
Economic insecurity
Shame, confusion, fear of rejection
Displacement

Survivors of Gender Based Violence

Trauma-blaming
Isolation
Stigma of disclosing abuse
Loss of family or community
Traumatic impacts of violence

Limited access to resources
Economic insecurity
Shame, confusion, fear of rejection
Displacement
Many advocates addressing gender-based violence-- even ones with feminist values-- can fall into homophobic assumptions that family violence against LGBTQ people is "inevitable" or justifiable as the actions of "worried" parents and extended family members.

As a result, when violence is committed against LGBTQ people by family members, it is often not considered violence. There is reluctance to classify harm or violence perpetrated by family members as abuse.

For many LGBTQ people, the impacts of familial violence-- including rejection, condemnation, eviction from the family home, physical violence, and forced marriage, among others-- constitute the most painful or traumatizing experiences of gender-based violence during the lifecourse.
Patriarchal community norms and leaders can prevent change and condone abuse instead of preventing gender violence. Many API survivors (regardless of sexual orientation) contend with community-generated barriers, such as victim-blaming, silencing, shaming, and rejecting survivors who speak up or seek help.

For LGBTQ survivors in API communities, homophobic community norms can contribute to the fear and isolation of surviving. Culturally-specific community organizations may be seen as unsafe or inaccessible if there is not an explicitly stated and practiced commitment to including LGBTQ survivors.

Ultimately, these barriers can exacerbate the trauma and abuse that LGBTQ survivors withstand.
Barriers that API LGBTQ Survivors Face

- Lack of language with which to self-identify
- LGBTQ identity being seen as “Western” or a rejection of culture
- Feeling caught between cultures: seeking acceptance of LGBTQ identity outside of community, facing loss of cultural connections, relationships & identity
- Isolation
- Lack of legal status and/or protections (immigration, parenthood, partner rights)
- Fear of “outing”
- Limited access to employment, housing, healthcare
- Lack of positive representations of LGBTQ relationships and families
- Encountering racism, mistreatment and misunderstanding in seeking mainstream or LGBTQ-specific supports
Lessons from the API LGBTQ Roundtable
Shifting Paradigms, Shifting Practices

**Old Paradigm**

- Why are people gay, lesbian, bisexual or transgender?
- What are queer and trans people’s lives like?
- How do LGBTQ people feel about themselves? How do their families feel about them?

**New Paradigm**

- What are the obstacles to gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer people’s safety and survival? What limits their dignity and equality in our community and society?
- What does discrimination look like for queer and trans people in our community?
- How do we remove the barriers that prevent LGBTQ survivors from accessing support? How do we dismantle the systems of oppression that target women and LGBTQ people?
Questions & Recommendations for Culturally-Specific Organizations Addressing GBV

Does our organization have an explicit commitment to serving LGBTQ survivors in our community?

If not, why not?

Review all of the places where your organization’s presence is visible or felt: your physical space, your online presence, printed outreach materials, hotline scripts, your HR and personnel policies. **What are the spoken and unspoken messages to LGBTQ people in your community?**

**Are you prepared** to meet the needs of a community member who is surviving same-sex intimate partner violence? **If not**, what would you need in order to become prepared?

**By when** can you complete an audit of your organization’s accessibility to LGBTQ survivors?

Image by Marcos Chin
What reflections and questions do you have, based on the content we have covered today?
Healing and Cultivating Resilience at the Intersections of Multiple Oppressions
Lineage & cultural practices
Intergenerational families
Community & faith institutions
Linguistic diversity
Community resilience

Asian & Pacific Islander communities

Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer communities

API LGBTQ Survivors of Gender Based Violence

Survivors of Gender Based Violence

Collective pride & resilience
Dense networks of support, relationship & mutual aid
Models for equitable divisions of labor between partners & parents
Transgression of patriarchal gender roles and norms
Rich tradition of social activism

Rich tradition of community service and social action
Commitments to ending cycles of violence and injustice
Dignified resistance to oppressive gender roles & norms

Resilience & resourcefulness
Compassion for other survivors
Post-traumatic growth
Meaning & self-understanding
Resources for Working with LGBTQ Survivors
(hyperlinks embedded in text below)

How accessible is your organization to LGBTQ community members?
Organizational Audit on Accessibility to LGBTQ Community Members

Improve Privacy to Increase LGBTQ Access to Shelter

National Queer Asian and Pacific Islander Association (NQAPIA) “Family is Still Family” Campaign
Posters available in Arabic, Bengali, Chamorro, Simplified Chinese, Traditional Chinese, English, Farsi, Gujarati, Japanese, Korean, Hindi, Hmong, Ilocano (Filipino), Indonesian, Khmer, Lao, Malay, Malayalam, Marathi, Samoan, Tagalog (Filipino), Thai, Punjabi, Tamil, Urdu, and Vietnamese.

Advocacy with Friends and Family to Support LGBTQ Survivors of Abuse

Creating the Conditions for Change: A Blueprint for Increasing LGBTQ Access to DV Advocacy

Creative Interventions Toolkit on Community Based Responses to Violence

Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence resource library on LGBTQ GBV
Questions? Resources? Technical Assistance?

Please feel free to reach out: nathan.naik.shara@gmail.com

Illustration: Aishwarya Srivastava