



NATIONAL FORUM ON LATINAS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

AUGUST 2003 ■ ALBUQUERQUE, NEW MEXICO

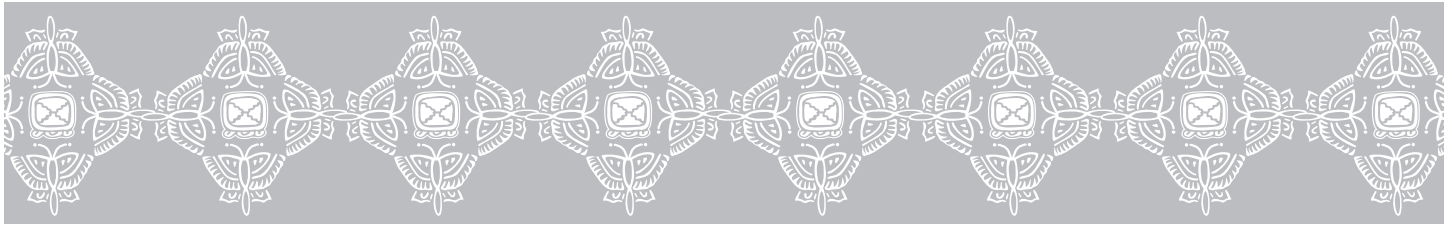


**EL PASADO,
EL PRESENTE
Y MIRANDO
HACIA
EL FUTURO**

**NATIONAL
LATINO
ALLIANCE
FOR THE ELIMINATION
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**



**ALIANZA
LATINA
NACIONAL
PARA ERADICAR LA
VIOLENCIA DOMESTICA**



NATIONAL FORUM ON LATINAS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: *EL PASADO, EL PRESENTE Y MIRANDO HACIA EL FUTURO*

AUGUST 14-15, 2003

Presented by:

THE NATIONAL LATINO ALLIANCE FOR THE
ELIMINATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In collaboration with

THE NATIONAL COMPADRES NETWORK

Author
ELSA RIOS

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Points of view expressed do not necessarily reflect the opinions of DHHS

N A T I O N A L
L A T I N O
A L L I A N C E
FOR THE ELIMINATION
OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE



MISSION

Alianza's mission is to promote understanding, initiate and sustain dialogue, and generate solutions that move toward the elimination of domestic violence affecting Latino communities, with an understanding of the sacredness of all relations and communities.

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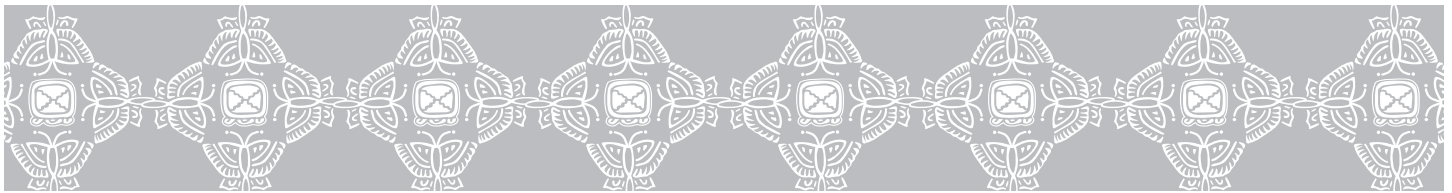


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The National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence (Alianza) would like to thank the members of the Forum Planning comité who gave so generously of their time.

We also want to thank the forum participants who traveled from various parts of the country, from Puerto Rico and from Guatemala to share their ideas and energy with us and their colleagues.

We also want to dedicate this report to the memory of Sandra Camacho, a member of the planning committee and a founding member of Alianza.

We are sorry that she was not able to see the forum become a reality; it had been one of her dreams for Alianza.

Sandra passed away on July 10, 2003.

PERMISSION TO REPRINT

The contents of this report may be reprinted with the following acknowledgement:

This material was reprinted from the National Latino Alliance
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FOREWORD

About six years ago, a small group of Latinas and Latinos from across the country came together to begin a dialogue about the impact that domestic violence was having on our families and communities and to begin to plan a coordinated response.

Among the first things this group — Alianza's first National Steering Committee — talked about was the need to organize a national forum that would address the violence that continues to threaten the safety and wellbeing of Latinas and their families.

In August of 2003, this idea became a reality. Latinas from diverse ethnicities, regions of the country, and representing a broad spectrum of organizations came together to share their experiences, hopes, and plans for building safe and healthy relationships, homes and communities.

While much work has been done during the last three decades to keep women and children safe, partner and family violence continues at epidemic proportions and much more remains to be done if we are to create strong and thriving Latino communities in which every person has an opportunity to live free from fear and with dignity.

Because domestic violence is such a massive problem, we need the support of advocates beyond the domestic violence movement. We must join hands across issue areas and make the connections between family violence and racial and ethnic discrimination, poverty, and gender inequality; between family violence prevention and wider social justice movements.

We need to work simultaneously at two levels: to make sure that the needs of victims/survivors are met and that there are services available for men who want to change, without losing sight of the broader goal of building a more equitable society that affords every person the same human, civil, and constitutional rights.

Building a strong Latina movement with representation from a broad sector of our communities can help articulate a broad policy agenda that addresses the intersectionality of oppressions and advocates for true systemic changes.

We hope this report will contribute to bringing some of these changes about.

Adelita M. Medina
Executive Director



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

FORUM ON LATINAS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: EL PASADO, EL PRESENTE, Y MIRANDO HACIA EL FUTURO

INTRODUCTION

On August 14 and 15, 2003, the National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence (Alianza) convened the Forum on Latinas and Domestic Violence: El Pasado, El Presente, y Mirando Hacia El Futuro. The forum, which brought together more than 150 advocates, researchers, service providers, and survivors from diverse cultures, regions, and organizations, had four major goals:

- recognize the many contributions Latinas have made to the domestic violence movement
- provide Latina practitioners and survivors with tools to help them respond more effectively to domestic violence in Latino communities;
- provide networking opportunities to help participants break the isolation felt by many Latina practitioners and survivors; and
- discuss the resources, policies, and action strategies needed to ensure that Latina families have adequate access to culturally competent domestic violence prevention and intervention services.

AUGUST 14, 2003: CONFERENCE DAY ONE UNDERSTANDING THE PAST, LOOKING AT THE PRESENT, AND CREATING A BETTER FUTURE

On the first day of the forum, a group of 40 women engaged in an intensive dialogue that set the tone for the forum. They began by acknowledging and celebrating the courageous and dedicated work of Latina anti-violence activists throughout the country. Patricia Castillo, an Alianza board member and executive director of the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative, made a presentation that helped guide the day's discussion. Basic themes of her presentation and ensuing dialogue included the following themes:

- Examining Attitudes About Domestic Violence (Social Tolerance, Dominant Societal Beliefs, Community Crimes, Culture of Sexism,)
- Reviewing What Has Been Done So Far in the Anti-Violence Movement (Residential/ Non-Residential Services, Public Policies, Children's Programs, Coordinated Community Response Systems, Batterer Intervention Programs, Latina Anti-Violence Activism)
- Barriers That Prevent Latino Families from Accessing Prevention and Intervention Services
- Where Do We Go From Here (Need for Self-Critique and Reflection, Broad-based Strategies, Changing Social Norms, Root-Cause Analysis of Violence, Get Up Close & Personal With Male Socialization Process, Changing Society and Culture)





Recognizing the importance of family and community in their lives, participants also acknowledged the many women and men who have inspired and supported them in their anti-violence work; they shared lessons learned and discussed the need to develop Latina centered strategies and action steps to advance their anti-violence work. They explored how Latino cultural norms and attitudes can be utilized to support anti-violence work and discussed approaches to addressing the institutional barriers to eradicating domestic violence in their communities and nationally.



Understanding the Past: The Role of Grassroots Activism

Seasoned advocates spoke about the powerful legacy of women's grassroots activism, recalling that the anti-domestic violence movement was born out of women's kitchens in the early 1980's in response to an urgent need. The achievements of this era, including public awareness, women's shelters, supportive service programs, and key public policies, serve as a very powerful example of activism, women's empowerment and self-determination.



Looking At the Present

Some participants noted that over time, in contrast to a grassroots movement where women identified problems and created collective solutions, the anti-violence movement has tended to become a service industry too often focused on college degrees, funder-driven mandates and is increasingly mired in paperwork and bureaucracy. A solution to countering this trend is to cultivate strong and visionary leadership among domestic violence survivors that can bring back some of the spirit of the early days of the movement. Such leadership will be able to engage in a more sophisticated yet grounded analysis about domestic violence and Latinas, and help guide advocates in demanding the systemic changes that are needed. Participants examined some of the prevailing beliefs and attitudes that allow and justify violence against women in our society and communities and identified barriers that prevent full access to services by Latinas and that get in the way of eradicating violence.



Some prevailing concerns were: distrust of the police and criminal justice and immigration systems; ignorance about and lack of programs that address same-sex battering, the lack of services for children, shelter restrictions, a scarcity of linguistically and culturally responsive domestic violence services, and a lack of prevention efforts.

Creating a Better Future

Participants acknowledged the intersectionality of oppressions faced by Latinas and the need to design programs and strategies to empower Latinas in all aspects of their lives. Domestic violence must be considered in the context of national trends affecting Latinas—such as the attacks on civil, reproductive, and immigrant rights; welfare reform, Latina health disparities, low wages and employment discrimination, sexual harassment, the criminalization of pregnant women with drug histories, and policies of neglect that have allowed HIV/AIDS and other diseases to rise unabated among Latinas and other women of color. Participants adamantly agreed that the current attacks against Latinas necessitate the creation of a strong social change movement led by Latinas that will press for programs and policies that are most responsive to Latinas' present realities. Additionally, advocates highlighted the need to focus on services for the LGBT community; integrate education, outreach and services at the local, state and national levels; strengthen the Latina presence in the policy arena; help develop a national Latina advocacy organization;



hold political leaders more accountable; and improve violence prevention programs in the schools and in other agencies and programs that serve youth.

AUGUST 15, 2003: CONFERENCE DAY TWO EMBRACING LATINA DIVERSITY - LOS CIRCULOS DE DIALOGO

The second day of the conference opened with a reminder of the purpose of the forum: to work on the ideas, strategies, and actions necessary to end domestic violence within Latino communities, as well as, to recognize and celebrate the many contributions Latinas have made to the domestic violence movement over the past decades.

The conference was dedicated to the memory of Sandra Camacho, a long time advocate, founding board member of Alianza, and a member of the conference planning committee, who died on July 10, 2003. The dedication ceremony included a power point presentation with photos of Sandra as a child, teenager, and adult, poems from her friends, her partner and excerpts from the eulogy that her oldest brother had written and delivered.

Forum participants represented traditional domestic violence service agencies, shelters, legal assistance and public education programs, immigration services, violence intervention support groups, farm workers, grassroots leadership training programs, rural programs, bilingual services agencies, and policy groups. Their reasons for participating were as diverse as the people themselves. Most expressed a desire to know more about the work of other colleagues throughout the country and ways to do the work more effectively. Others were interested in exploring global approaches to anti-violence advocacy. Still others were looking for ways to more effectively deal with the increasing numbers of undocumented women who need domestic violence services. Many expressed an interest in brainstorming about legislative changes, as well as ways to recommit to the struggle and increase and strengthen Latina leadership. An advocate from Texas summarized a common sentiment among the participants:

I need ideas on how to change our society, how we can have justice and more opportunities as other women do. I hope we can talk and discuss different things so that each of us leaves with information we can apply in our areas and in our communities so that we can, little by little, change our society.

After the opening plenary, attendees participated in ten concurrent breakout sessions or *circulos de dialogo* on topics related to Latinas and Domestic Violence. A summary of major insights of each dialogue circle follows.

The Globalization of Domestic Violence

Domestic violence is a universal problem for Latinas around the world. A similar set of factors and conditions reinforce violence against women whether it occurs domestically or abroad. These factors include: patriarchal systems; women's inferior economic status; and, gender-bias in societal institutions, such as the family, judicial systems, government, schools and religion. Global aspects of domestic violence affect the manner in which community-based organizations provide services. Using a "global lens" allows advocates to exchange information about successful strategies being utilized to eradicate violence against women and improve service delivery to Latinas who immigrate to the U.S.





Latinas and Domestic Violence: What the Research Doesn't Tell Us

Research on domestic violence and Latino communities is important to advance our understanding of domestic violence, address the practical needs of our communities, and to ascertain how laws, policies, programs and practices impact the lives of Latinas. Participants discussed concerns about both the scarcity and current state of existing research on Latino communities. These concerns included a disproportionate focus on negative trends in Latino communities, the misuse of research in Latino communities, and the lack of research on LGBT communities, among others.

Fostering collaborations between research institutions and community-based agencies was identified as one way to improve access to research by Latino programs and communities. Cultural-sensitivity training for researchers can help to increase the integration of race, class and gender theory into domestic violence theory and experiential research.

Additionally, participants noted that sufficient funding is needed to support large, long-term studies. Collaboration between researchers and anti-violence practitioners on research projects will be important to ensure that good research ideas from the field are pursued and that research is beneficial to both academic researchers, practitioners, advocates, survivors and other members of the community. Some of these ideas include:

- Qualitative data on ways that women and families resolve domestic violence situations within the community;
- Quantitative data on Latina immigrants, especially the undocumented, as well as studies on the role of acculturation among battered Latinas;
- Studies on the contexts of domestic violence in Latino communities and the effects of domestic violence on Latino children;
- An examination of best practices to address domestic violence among Latinos;
- Outcome data on batterer intervention programs and mixed group work with victims, survivors and offenders of the same gender; and,
- An assessment of the efficacy of domestic violence and related supportive services in Latino communities.

Latina-Centered Strategies for Working with Survivors

Participants in this dialogue circle asserted that programs for Latinas must be culturally responsive and appropriate, going beyond basic cultural knowledge and sensitivity to include the integration of cultural information in the design and delivery of programs and systems. Programs that serve Latinas must be holistic, providing and/or helping Latinas access a broad range of services to meet their life needs (e.g. employment, housing, immigration, education/ESL, etc.) in addition to the typical domestic violence services, such as orders of protection, emergency shelter, and support groups. Other key components of a Latina-centered program should include: Spanish-speaking staff; user-friendly materials and a welcoming environment; and a good understanding of immigration laws and policies. Participants also agreed that community education and outreach, women's empowerment, and authentic processes for community input are additional key components for reaching out and engaging Latinas.

Latinas Use of Violence

This session focused on the complex issue of Latinas' use of violence, exploring the circumstances and factors that may lead to women's use of violence (e.g., as a form of self defense or survival tactic); how violence by women in battering situations is viewed; how violence in families affects its members; the increasing number of dual arrests in domestic violence cases; and the various types of interventions that exist for battered Latinas and Latinas who use violence.

Participants noted that internalized oppression causes some battered Latinas to fight violence with violence. Helping Latinas who batter to deconstruct their experiences and gain a level of "critical consciousness" is an important domestic violence intervention. There is also a need for more interventions programs for women who batter, as well as advocacy with the courts and law enforcement to improve sensitivity to the issue of dual arrest and related issues. The advocacy community must openly confront the subject of Latina violence and continue to develop strategies to address the violence. Participants suggested the development of campaigns for use in the schools, a position statement on Latinas use of violence, and a quarterly roundtable of survivors as beginning steps to address this issue.

Working Through the Labyrinths of Keeping Our Children Safe

It is a well-known fact that Black and Latino children are disproportionately involved in the child welfare system. The work of child welfare agencies is often seen as a "hit or miss" situation when it comes to protecting Latino children. Participants discussed the conflicts that the "duty to report" tends to create for agencies that work with battered women. Participants also noted that in order to help Latino children in the child welfare system, the children must have a voice. We must hear from the children about the actions that are helpful and those that are detrimental to them. For example, former foster children who are now young adults should serve on advisory boards of child welfare institutions.

Participants identified a number of strategies for bringing about change in the child welfare system. These included forging partnerships with child welfare agencies; pressing for better training of child welfare workers and foster families; educating legislators and the community about the need for culturally-appropriate interventions; organizing at the community level, particularly among single mothers; and, helping Latino children in the child welfare system who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender or from migrant families. Creating a community wide accountability system of the child welfare system and strengthening support services for children when they are removed from the home are also critical components of improving services to children.

Latinas and Latinos: Working Together

Participants explored the different ways that women and men can work together to eradicate domestic violence. They noted that in order for collaborations to be successful, advocates must create the space to engage in pointed dialogue about the larger issues that impact domestic violence: male power, institutional racism, sexism, homophobia, the process of demanding and expecting behavior change, and the like. Advocates must find ways to promote community wide discussions about violence that will help communities understand that "domestic violence is not just a private family matter that should stay in the family," and recognize the damaging consequences that it has at the individual, family and community levels. It is essential for all anti-violence organizations to continually





bring new partners into the advocacy process to foster community buy-in and develop new strategies to end domestic violence.

Participants noted that the traditional approach of the woman leaving her home to a shelter may not work for some or even most Latinas and that there are various alternative ways to tailor domestic violence services to Latino families. Culturally competent batterers programs are needed and different program models should be encouraged since one size will not fit all. For example, programs that work with batterers and their battered partners together are also needed. Non residential, community based domestic violence programs that help battered women develop safety plans, develop life skills, empowerment and self efficacy (e.g. ESL, employment and training, citizenship classes, leadership development training, legal services, and immigrant services) are also needed.

Meeting the Needs of Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender (LGBT) Communities

Participants noted that in many cases, gay and lesbian concerns remain invisible within many Latino communities, and that LGBT individuals who are battered may feel alienated from both the broader Latino community and the LGBT community. For LGBT clients, the fear of gossip within the LGBT community can be a major barrier to seeking services. Participants also recognized that internalized homophobia affects how LGBTs react within their relationships (e.g. use of violence).

External homophobia from the community at large often results in the denial of basic services, such as law enforcement protection, legal services, even housing and other supportive services to LGBTs. Despite these challenges, important strides are being made to create safe spaces and provide targeted services to LGBTs. Improving LGBT domestic violence services must happen at multiple levels. Agency workers must be comfortable working with the LGBT community while focusing on the services people need, instead of on a client's identity. Agencies must have members of the LGBT community on staff and hold themselves and other community organizations accountable for providing inclusive services. While clandestine services can be provided and are an important source of support and protection for LGBTs, it is equally important to have identified, confidential services. Prevention education and know your rights materials must be accessible and inclusive. The LGBT community must also be actively engaged in shaping the services that are created.

Breaking the Cycle of Violence with Latino Youth

The lack of domestic violence programs targeting youth is a major problem all over the country. Young Latinas are experiencing violence within dating relationships and in their own homes. There is also an increase in violent behavior generally among youth, and increasingly between young women.

Adolescents tend to absorb familial views and behaviors related to gender roles and violence. Many of these views devalue the role of women and reinforce notions of male superiority and male entitlement. Youth in immigrant families experience "divided loyalties," employing one set of values and practices at home and another among their peers.

Larger societal issues—racism, discrimination, language barriers, classism, sexual identity and orientation—also affect youth. Advocates shared strategies for youth outreach including: utilizing interactive curricula; multidisciplinary community response teams; youth safe spaces and support groups; youth counseling, prevention outreach, youth-oriented supportive services, such as self-care, child care (for young parents) and educational support, as well as housing, benefits and health care.

Advocates must pressure private and public funding agencies to provide more resources to domestic violence service providers for youth violence prevention and intervention services. Participants also noted there must be a collective effort to connect domestic violence to larger social justice issues affecting the Latino community—poverty, lack of educational opportunities, jobs and employment training, safe and affordable housing, the need for legal services, immigration reform, and improved access to health care.

When Older Latinas Are Abused

While perpetrators of elder abuse are most often adult children, they can also be teen grandchildren, and spouses. The abuse may include physical, psychological, and economic coercion. Adult children often take control of money matters for their parents, grandparents, aunt and uncles, leaving them financially dependent. Many elderly Latina mothers will not report the abuse or put the children or grandchildren out of the home because of a sense of loyalty to the family. Solutions for improving the plight of older Latinas who are battered include: creating more service programs; increasing access to health care and supportive services; training seniors to serve as anti-domestic violence peer educators; user-friendly “know your rights” materials; increased training for service and health providers on elder abuse; and public awareness media campaigns and outreach.

Integration of Every Latina Voice: Migrant, Rural, Indigenous, of African Descent and More

Latinas are a diverse group that includes Afro-Latinas, differently-abled Latinas, migrant workers, lesbians, and many others. Given this diversity, it can be a challenge for domestic violence agencies to create programs that meet the needs of various battered Latina women while also fostering unity and solidarity among Latinas.

Participants discussed the tensions of acculturation and the experiences of Latina immigrants coming to U.S. and becoming accustomed to interacting in a more heterogeneous setting with individuals of many different races and ethnicities. For many Latinas and perhaps for the first time, they experience how racism can define a person in U.S. and limit her opportunities.

For these reasons, advocates must proactively integrate anti-oppression principles into domestic violence work and look at the issue of power among diverse groups of Latinas if there is to be a positive engagement of a diversity of Latina voices. There must be recognition of the ways that Latinas view their cultural histories and how it informs and influences relationships among different groups of Latinas. Other important issues are inclusive leadership and decision-making and eliminating a feeling among groups that there are limited resources for meeting diverse needs (a “deficit mentality”) -- thinking that is often fostered by internalized oppression. Critical self-reflection for both Latina advocates and clients must be a cornerstone strategy if domestic violence programs are to create meaningful access for all Latinas.





CONCLUSION: FORUM ON LATINAS & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

In addition to domestic violence, continuing racism, gender discrimination, low wages and employment discrimination, rising anti-immigrant sentiment, homophobia and reproductive rights assaults are some other challenges Latinas and other women of color must contend with. Consequently, there is a need for new advocacy strategies that are well organized, multi-dimensional, transformative and strategic.

Advocates must define a clear set of principles and strategies that shape their anti-violence work well into the future. Acknowledging, naming, analyzing, the intersectionality of oppressions that affect Latina's lives is the first step. A clear and resounding theme emerged, namely that there is a need for an authentic Latina movement that can articulate a cogent and powerful vision for the future and spearhead actions and strategies to achieve the vision and goals of Latina empowerment. This movement should not be limited to just delivering more domestic violence services to Latinas. Advocates must articulate a broad policy agenda that addresses the intersectionality of oppressions experienced by Latinas throughout this country. To this end, participants provided numerous action steps and strategies for building a transformative movement. A brief summary of these is provided below:

- Connecting domestic advocacy with the international struggle for human rights;
- Incorporating self care and self reflection to avoid advocate burn out;
- Addressing the multiple oppressions of the Latinas experience;
- Looking at broader social justice trends that impact Latinas;
- Developing anti-violence models for collaborative work between Latino women and men;
- Combating homophobia in the Latino community;
- Increasing Latina involvement in policy advocacy work at national level;
- Developing strategies to serve Latina immigrant women;
- Mentoring new Latina activists;
- Building a national network of Latina advocates; and,
- Creating a mechanism for coordinated national, state and local action.

In closing, participants agreed that Latinas must seize the moment and exercise their power. Latinas comprise 13 percent of women in the U.S. and will account for close to 25 percent of the U.S. female population by the year 2050. Latinas are also the youngest sector of the female population—40 percent of Latinas are under the age of 21. We stand at a unique historical juncture as a new wave of Latinas come of age and begin to change the political and social landscape of this country. Undoubtedly, Latina civic influence will grow exponentially over the next decade. Against this backdrop, participants affirmed that building a national Latina movement must become a top priority because it represents a cornerstone strategy for eradicating domestic violence in our communities and for improving opportunities and the quality of life for Latinas throughout this country.



RESUMEN EJECUTIVO

FORO SOBRE LA MUJER LATINA Y LA VIOLENCIA DOMÉSTICA: EL PASADO, EL PRESENTE Y MIRANDO HACIA EL FUTURO

INTRODUCCIÓN

El 14 y 15 de agosto de 2003, la Alianza Latina Nacional para Erradicar la Violencia Doméstica (Alianza) convocó el Foro sobre la mujer latina y la violencia doméstica: El pasado, el presente y mirando hacia el futuro. El foro, que reunió a más de 150 activistas, investigadoras, prestadoras de servicios, y sobrevivientes de diversas culturas, regiones, y organizaciones, tuvo cuatro objetivos principales:

- reconocer las numerosas contribuciones de la mujer latina al movimiento contra la violencia doméstica;
- proporcionar a las prestadoras de servicios y sobrevivientes latinas herramientas que les ayuden a responder más eficazmente a la violencia doméstica en comunidades latinas;
- brindar la oportunidad de establecer contactos personales para ayudar a las participantes a romper el aislamiento que sienten muchas prestadoras de servicios y sobrevivientes latinas; y
- analizar los recursos, políticas y estrategias de acción necesarias para asegurar que la familia latina tenga acceso adecuado a los servicios culturalmente apropiados de prevención e intervención para la violencia doméstica.

14 DE AGOSTO DE 2003: PRIMER DÍA DE LA CONFERENCIA

ENTENDER EL PASADO, MIRAR HACIA EL PRESENTE Y CREAR UN FUTURO MEJOR

Durante el primer día del foro, un grupo de 40 mujeres se concentró en un intenso diálogo que estableció el tono del foro. Ellas comenzaron reconociendo y celebrando el trabajo valiente y dedicado que realizan las activistas contra la violencia en todo el país. Patricia Castillo, miembro de la Junta Directiva de Alianza y Directora Ejecutiva de la Iniciativa P.E.A.C.E., hizo una ponencia que contribuyó a guiar el dialogo del día. Los puntos básicos de su ponencia y del diálogo subsiguiente incluyeron los siguientes temas:

- Análisis de las actitudes sociales de tolerancia de la violencia doméstica (creencias sociales predominantes, delitos en la comunidad, cultura sexista)
- Repaso de lo que ha hecho hasta ahora el movimiento contra la violencia (servicios residenciales/no-residenciales, políticas públicas, programas para niños, programas de intervención para agresores, activismo de la mujer latina contra la violencia)
- Barreras que impiden el acceso de familias latinas a los servicios de prevención e intervención



- Qué hacer a continuación (necesidad de autocrítica y reflexión, estrategias de base amplia, cambios en las normas sociales, análisis de las raíces de la violencia, participar personalmente y de cerca en el proceso de socialización de los hombres, cambiar la sociedad y la cultura).

Reconociendo la importancia que tiene la familia y la comunidad en sus vidas, las participantes también recordaron las numerosas mujeres y hombres que las inspiraron y las apoyaron en su labor contra la violencia; compartieron las lecciones aprendidas y debatieron la necesidad de elaborar estrategias centradas en la mujer latina y los pasos que se deben seguir para impulsar su labor contra la violencia. Ellas analizaron la manera en que las normas culturales y actitudes latinas pueden utilizarse para apoyar la labor contra la violencia y discutieron los enfoques para sortear las barreras institucionales a fin de erradicar la violencia doméstica en sus comunidades y en la nación.

Entender el pasado: El rol del activismo de base

Activistas con experiencia hablaron sobre el poderoso legado del activismo femenino de base, recordando que el movimiento contra la violencia doméstica nació de las mujeres “en las cocinas” de mujeres activistas a comienzos de la década de 1980, como respuesta a una urgente necesidad. Los logros de esta era – que comprenden la concientización del público, los refugios para mujeres, los programas de servicios de apoyo, y políticas públicas clave – son un importante ejemplo de activismo, de reivindicación de poder y de autodeterminación de las mujeres.

Mirando el presente

Algunas participantes señalaron que con el correr del tiempo, en contraste con el movimiento de base en el que la mujeres identificaban los problemas y creaban soluciones colectivas, el movimiento contra la violencia ha tendido a convertirse en una industria de servicios, a menudo centrada en los títulos universitarios, en los mandatos de los que aportan los fondos y crecientemente ahogada por la papelería y la burocracia. Una solución para contrarrestar esta tendencia es cultivar líderes fuertes y visionarias entre las sobrevivientes de la violencia doméstica que puedan recuperar algo del espíritu de los primeros tiempos del movimiento. Tales líderes podrán llevar a cabo un análisis más sofisticado, pero siempre basado en la realidad, sobre la violencia doméstica y las mujeres latinas y guiar a las activistas para que exijan los tan necesarios cambios del sistema. Las participantes examinaron algunas de las creencias y actitudes predominantes que permiten y justifican la violencia contra la mujer en nuestra sociedad y nuestra comunidad, e identificaron los obstáculos que impiden a las mujeres latinas el total acceso a los servicios y que se interponen en el camino de la erradicación de la violencia.

Algunas de las preocupaciones predominantes fueron: la falta de confianza en la policía y en los sistemas de justicia penal e inmigración; ignorancia y falta de programas dirigidos al maltrato de personas del mismo sexo, falta de servicios para los niños, restricciones respecto a los refugios, escasez de servicios contra la violencia doméstica lingüísticamente y culturalmente apropiados, y falta de programas preventivos.

Crear un Futuro Mejor

Las participantes reconocieron la interseccionalidad de las opresiones que enfrenta la mujer latina y la necesidad de diseñar programas y estrategias para fortalecer a la mujer latina en todos los aspectos de su vida. Se debe considerar la violencia doméstica dentro

del contexto de las tendencias nacionales que afectan a la mujer latina—tales como los ataques a los derechos civiles reproductivos e inmigratorios; la reforma de la asistencia social, las disparidades en cuanto a salud, bajos salarios y discriminación laboral, acoso sexual, la penalización de las mujeres embarazadas con historial de drogas, y las políticas de abandono que han permitido que el VIH-SIDA y otras enfermedades se extiendan descontroladamente entre la mujer latina y otras mujeres de color. Las participantes estuvieron firmemente de acuerdo en que los ataques actuales contra las mujeres latinas requieren la creación de un fuerte movimiento de cambio por parte de esas mismas mujeres para presionar a favor de programas y políticas que respondan mejor a la realidad presente que ellas enfrentan. Adicionalmente, las activistas señalaron la necesidad de concentrarse en los servicios para las comunidades gay, bisexuales, lesbianas o transgénicos (LGBT); integrar la educación, extensión y servicios a nivel local, estatal y nacional; fortalecer la presencia de la mujer latina en el ámbito referido a políticas; ayudar a la creación de una organización nacional de apoyo y defensa de la mujer latina; exigir mayor responsabilidad a los líderes políticos; y mejorar los programas de prevención de la violencia en las escuelas y en otros programas y agencias destinados a la juventud.

AGOSTO 15, 2003: SEGUNDO DÍA DE CONFERENCIA ACEPTAR LA DIVERSIDAD LATINA - LOS CÍRCULOS DE DIALOGO

El segundo día de conferencia se abrió con un recordatorio sobre el propósito del foro: trabajar sobre las ideas, estrategias, y acciones necesarias para eliminar la violencia doméstica en las comunidades latinas, así como reconocer y celebrar las numerosas contribuciones de la mujer latina al movimiento contra la violencia en las décadas pasadas.

La conferencia se dedicó a la memoria de Sandra Camacho, una activista de larga trayectoria, miembro fundadora de la Alianza, y miembro del comité de planificación de la conferencia, quien murió el 10 de julio de 2003. La ceremonia dedicatoria incluyó una presentación con fotos de Sandra de niña, adolescente y adulta, poemas de sus amigas, su pareja y extractos de la despedida fúnebre que su hermano mayor escribió y leyó.

Las participantes en el foro representaban a agencias tradicionales de servicios referidos a violencia doméstica, refugios, programas de asistencia legal y de educación pública, servicios de inmigración, grupos de intervención y apoyo para casos de violencia doméstica, trabajadores agrícolas, programas de capacitación de líderes de base, programas rurales, agencias de servicios bilingües, y grupos referidos a políticas. Las razones de su participación eran tan diversas como las propias personas. La mayoría expresó el deseo de aprender más sobre el trabajo de otras colegas en el resto del país y sobre la manera de realizar el trabajo de forma más eficaz. Otras estaban interesadas en explorar enfoques globales sobre activismo contra la violencia, y otras estaban buscando maneras de lidiar de manera más efectiva con el creciente grupo de mujeres indocumentadas que necesitan servicios referidos a violencia doméstica. Muchas expresaron interés en intercambiar ideas sobre cambios legislativos, así como también formas de volver a comprometerse en la lucha y aumentar y fortalecer el liderazgo de la mujer latina. Una activista de Texas resumió un sentimiento común entre las participantes:

«Necesito ideas sobre cómo cambiar nuestra sociedad, cómo tener justicia y más oportunidades como tienen otras mujeres. Espero que podamos hablar y debatir distintas cosas, para que cada una de nosotras se vaya con información que podamos usar en nuestras áreas y en nuestra comunidad a fin de que, poco a poco, podamos cambiar nuestra sociedad.»





Después del plenario de apertura, las asistentes participaron en diez sesiones de grupo o círculos de diálogo simultáneos sobre tópicos relativos a la mujer latina y la violencia doméstica. A continuación un resumen de las principales ideas surgidas de cada círculo de diálogo.

La globalización de la violencia doméstica

La violencia doméstica es un problema universal de la mujer latina en todo el mundo. Una serie similar de factores y condiciones refuerzan la violencia contra la mujer, ya sea dentro del país o en el extranjero. Estos factores incluyen: sistemas patriarcales; status económico inferior de las mujeres; y los prejuicios de género en las instituciones sociales, tales como la familia, el sistema judicial, el gobierno, las escuelas y la religión. Los aspectos globales de la violencia doméstica afectan la manera en que las organizaciones comunitarias prestan sus servicios. El uso de un «lente global» permite que los activistas intercambien información sobre las estrategias exitosas que se utilizan para erradicar la violencia contra la mujer y mejorar los servicios para las mujeres latinas que emigran a los Estados Unidos.

Las mujeres latinas y la violencia doméstica: Lo que no nos dicen las investigaciones

Los estudios sobre la violencia doméstica en comunidades latinas son importantes para mejorar nuestra comprensión de la violencia doméstica, satisfacer las necesidades prácticas de nuestras comunidades, y determinar la manera en que las leyes, las políticas, los programas y las prácticas afectan la vida de la mujer latina. Las participantes expresaron su preocupación acerca de la escasez y el estado actual de las investigaciones existentes sobre las comunidades latinas. Entre estas preocupaciones se cuentan, el enfoque desproporcionado sobre las tendencias negativas en las comunidades latinas, el mal uso de investigaciones en dichas comunidades y la falta de investigación respecto a las comunidades LGBT.

El fomentar la colaboración entre las instituciones de investigación y las agencias comunitarias se señaló como una manera de mejorar el acceso a la investigación por parte de los programas y comunidades latinas. Capacitar en sensibilidad cultural a los investigadores puede contribuir a aumentar la integración de la teoría de raza, clase y género dentro de la teoría de violencia doméstica e investigación experimental.

Además, las participantes señalaron que se necesitan fondos suficientes como para financiar estudios grandes a largo plazo. La colaboración entre investigadores y prestadoras de servicios contra la violencia en cuanto a proyectos de investigación es importante para asegurar que las buenas ideas surgidas de la investigación sobre el campo se apliquen y que la investigación otorgue beneficios tanto a académicos como a prestadoras de servicios, activistas, sobrevivientes y a otros miembros de la comunidad. Algunas de estas ideas son:

- Datos cualitativos sobre la manera en que las mujeres y las familias resuelven las situaciones de violencia doméstica dentro de la comunidad;
- Datos cuantitativos sobre mujeres latinas inmigrantes, especialmente indocumentadas, así como estudios sobre el rol de la asimilación a la cultura por parte de las mujeres latinas maltratadas;
- Estudios sobre el contexto de la violencia doméstica en las comunidades latinas y los efectos de la violencia doméstica en los niños latinos;
- Un examen de las mejores prácticas para resolver la violencia doméstica entre latinos;

- Datos resultantes de los programas de intervención para agresores y grupos de trabajo conjuntos para víctimas, sobrevivientes y agresores del mismo sexo; y,
- Una evaluación de la eficacia de los servicios relacionados con la violencia doméstica y otros servicios de apoyo para comunidades latinas.

ESTRATEGIAS ORIENTADAS HACIA LAS MUJERES LATINAS PARA TRABAJAR CON LAS SUPERVIVIENTES

Las participantes en este círculo de diálogo afirmaron que los programas para la mujer latina deben responder a sus necesidades y ser culturalmente apropiados, extendiéndose más allá de la sensibilidad y los conocimientos culturales básicos e incluir la integración de la información cultural en el diseño y la implementación de dichos programas y sistemas. Los programas dirigidos a las mujeres latinas deben ser integrales, deben otorgar y ayudar al acceso de la mujer latina a una amplia gama de servicios para satisfacer sus necesidades en la vida (por ej. empleo, vivienda, inmigración, educación, estudios ESL, etc.) además de los típicos servicios para los casos de violencia doméstica, tales como órdenes de protección, refugios de emergencia, y grupos de apoyo. Otros componentes clave de los programas dirigidos a la mujer latina deberían incluir: personal que hable español, materiales fáciles de utilizar, un ambiente acogedor y un buen conocimiento de las leyes y políticas de inmigración. Las participantes también estuvieron de acuerdo en que la educación y los programas de extensión en la comunidad, el fortalecimiento de la mujer y los procesos auténticos de recepción de opiniones de la comunidad son componentes adicionales clave para comunicarse con la mujer latina y para que participe.

Uso de la violencia por parte de la mujer latina

Esta sesión se concentró en el tema complejo del uso de la violencia por parte de la mujer latina, analizando las circunstancias y factores que pueden llevar a la mujer a usar la violencia (por ej., como forma de autodefensa o táctica de supervivencia); cómo se presenta la violencia por parte de las mujeres en situaciones de maltrato; cómo afecta la violencia familiar a sus miembros; el número cada vez mayor de arrestos duplos en casos de violencia doméstica; y los varios tipos de intervenciones que existen para la mujer latina maltratada y para la mujer latina que usa la violencia.

Las participantes señalaron que la opresión internalizada hace que algunas mujeres latinas maltratadas reaccionen con violencia a la violencia. Una importante intervención en casos de violencia doméstica es ayudar a la mujer latina que maltrata a dejar atrás sus experiencias y alcanzar un nivel de «conciencia crítica». Existe asimismo la necesidad de más programas de intervención para las mujeres que maltratan, así como también más activismo frente a los tribunales y la policía para mejorar la sensibilidad respecto al tema de arrestos dobles y otros temas relacionados. La comunidad activista debe enfrentar abiertamente el problema de la violencia entre la mujer latina y continuar elaborando estrategias para resolver la violencia. Las participantes sugirieron crear campañas que se usen en las escuelas, declarar una posición respecto al uso de la violencia por parte de la mujer latina, y convocar mesas redondas con las supervivientes trimestralmente como pasos iniciales para enfrentar este problema.

Sorteando el laberinto de la protección de nuestros niños

Es un hecho reconocido que los niños negros y latinos representan una desproporcionada mayoría dentro del sistema de asistencia social de menores. El trabajo de las agencias de asistencia social a los menores se considera a menudo un sistema de «acción rápida»





cuando se trata de proteger a los niños latinos. Las participantes analizaron los conflictos que el «deber de informar» crea para las agencias que trabajan con mujeres maltratadas. Las participantes también señalaron que para poder ayudar a los niños latinos que estén dentro del sistema de asistencia, ellos deben tener derecho de palabra. Debemos escuchar lo que nos dicen los niños sobre las acciones que les son útiles y aquellas que los perjudican. Por ejemplo, los niños que han estado en hogares sustitutos y que ahora son jóvenes adultos deben formar parte de las juntas asesoras de las instituciones de asistencia social para menores.



Las participantes señalaron una serie de estrategias para lograr cambios en el sistema de asistencia social a los menores. Estas incluían establecer relaciones con agencias de asistencia a los menores; presionar para una mejor capacitación de los trabajadores sociales y de las familias sustitutas; informar a los legisladores y a la comunidad sobre la necesidad de intervenciones culturalmente apropiadas; organizar a la comunidad, particularmente a las madres solteras; y ayudar a los niños latinos que están en el sistema de asistencia social y que son gay, bisexuales, lesbianas o transgénicos, o que son de familias de inmigrantes. Crear dentro de la comunidad un sistema de control de la gestión de las agencias de asistencia social de menores y fortalecer los servicios de apoyo a los niños cuando se les saca de su hogar, son también componentes críticos para mejorar los servicios para los menores.



Latinas y latinos: trabajar juntos



Las participantes analizaron las distintas maneras en que hombres y mujeres pueden trabajar juntos para erradicar la violencia doméstica. Señalaron que a fin de lograr éxito en la colaboración, las activistas deben crear el espacio para embarcarse en un diálogo incisivo sobre los problemas principales que tienen impacto sobre la violencia doméstica: el poder masculino, el racismo institucional, el sexismo, la homofobia, el proceso de exigir y esperar un cambio de comportamiento y otros. Las activistas deben encontrar la manera de promover amplios debates en la comunidad sobre la violencia, lo que ayudará a las comunidad a entender que «la violencia doméstica no es un asunto privado de la familia que deba quedarse en familia» y reconocer las consecuencias perjudiciales que tiene a nivel individual, familiar y comunitario. Es esencial que todas las organizaciones contra la violencia atraigan continuamente nuevos socios al proceso de activismo para seguir ganando a la comunidad y crear nuevas estrategias para erradicar la violencia doméstica.



Las participantes señalaron que el enfoque tradicional de la mujer que deja el hogar y se va a un refugio puede no funcionar para algunas o incluso para la mayoría de las mujeres latinas y que existen varias otras alternativas para adaptar los servicios contra la violencia a las familias latinas. Se necesitan programas culturalmente apropiados para agresores y deben promoverse distintos modelos de programas, dado que una sola medida no calza para todos. Por ejemplo, se necesitan también programas que trabajan al mismo tiempo con los agresores y sus parejas maltratadas, recordando que la seguridad de las mujeres es lo mas importante. Asimismo, también son necesarios los programas contra la violencia doméstica no residenciales, basados en la comunidad, que ayuden a las mujeres a elaborar planes de seguridad, las preparen para la vida cotidiana, las fortalezcan y les enseñen a ser autosuficientes (por ej. ESL, empleo y capacitación, clases de ciudadanía, desarrollo de la capacidad de liderazgo, servicios legales, y servicios de inmigración).



Satisfacer las necesidades de homosexuales, bisexuales, lesbianas, y transgénicos latinos

Las participantes señalaron que en muchos casos, los problemas de los homosexuales y las lesbianas permanecen invisibles dentro de muchas comunidades latinas y que las personas LGBT que son maltratadas pueden sentirse alejados tanto de la comunidad latina, en general, como de la comunidad LGBT. Para los clientes LGBT, el temor a los chismes dentro de la comunidad LGBT puede ser una importante barrera para procurar servicios. Las participantes también reconocieron que la homofobia internalizada afecta la manera en que los LGBT reaccionan dentro de sus propias relaciones (por ej. uso de la violencia).

La homofobia externa de la comunidad en general a menudo trae como consecuencia la negación de ciertos servicios básicos, tales como protección policial, servicios legales, incluso vivienda y otros servicios de apoyo para los LGBT. A pesar de estos desafíos se están dando importantes pasos para crear espacios seguros y prestar servicios dirigidos a los LGBT. La mejora de los servicios contra la violencia doméstica para los LGBT debe realizarse a múltiples niveles. El personal de las agencias debe sentirse cómodo al trabajar con la comunidad LGBT, concentrándose en los servicios que necesiten y no en la identidad de los clientes. Las agencias deben tener miembros de la comunidad LGBT como parte de su personal y deben hacerse responsables, al igual que otras organizaciones comunitarias, de prestar servicios incluyentes. Si bien se prestan servicios clandestinos, que son una importante fuente de apoyo y protección para los LGBT, es igualmente importante tener servicios identificados y confidenciales. La educación sobre prevención y materiales sobre conozca sus derechos debe ser accesible e incluyente. La comunidad LGBT debe también participar activamente en la formación de los servicios que se creen.

Romper el ciclo de violencia entre los jóvenes latinos

La falta de programas contra la violencia doméstica dirigidos a los jóvenes es un problema serio en todo el país. Las jóvenes latinas están siendo objeto de violencia dentro sus relaciones de pareja y en sus propios hogares. Hay también un aumento en los comportamientos violentos en la juventud en general, y de manera creciente entre las jóvenes.

Los adolescentes tienden a absorber los puntos de vista y los comportamientos relacionados con los roles de los sexos y la violencia en la propia familia. Muchos de estos puntos de vista devalúan el rol de la mujer y refuerzan la noción de la superioridad masculina y el derecho de los hombres. Los jóvenes de las familias de inmigrantes sienten una «lealtad dividida» y utilizan una serie de valores y prácticas en su hogar y otra serie de valores entre sus pares.

Los problemas sociales más amplios—racismo, discriminación, barreras del lenguaje, clasismo, identidad y orientación sexual—también afectan a la juventud. Las activistas compartieron estrategias para llegar a los jóvenes, tales como utilizar programas curriculares interactivos, equipos de acción comunitaria multidisciplinarios, espacios seguros para jóvenes y grupos de apoyo, terapia para jóvenes, acciones preventivas, servicios de apoyo orientados hacia jóvenes (como cuidarse a sí mismo), guarderías infantiles (para padres jóvenes) y apoyo escolar, así como vivienda, beneficios y atención médica.

Las activistas deben presionar a las agencias de financiamiento públicas y privadas para que otorguen más recursos a las prestadoras de servicios destinados a la prevención e intervención en los casos de violencia entre jóvenes. Las participantes, asimismo,





señalaron que debe hacerse un esfuerzo colectivo para conectar la violencia doméstica a los problemas de justicia social que afectan a comunidades latinas—pobreza, falta de oportunidades de educación, empleo y capacitación laboral, vivienda segura y costeable, necesidad de servicios legales, reforma migratoria, y mejor acceso a la atención médica.

Cuando las latinas mayores son maltratadas

Si bien los que abusan de los mayores son generalmente los hijos adultos, también pueden serlo los nietos adolescentes y los cónyuges. El abuso puede incluir la coerción física, psicológica y económica. Los hijos adultos a menudo asumen el control de las cuestiones de dinero de sus padres, abuelos, tías y tíos, dejándolos dependientes financieros. Muchas madres latinas mayores no denuncian el abuso o expulsan de la casa a los hijos o nietos por un sentido de lealtad hacia la familia. Las soluciones para mejorar la situación de las mujeres latinas mayores que son maltratadas incluyen: crear más programas de servicios; aumentar el acceso a la atención médica y a los servicios de apoyo; capacitar a las mayores para que sirvan como educadoras contra la violencia doméstica a sus pares; materiales fáciles de usar sobre «conozca sus derechos»; mayor capacitación a los prestadores de servicios y de servicios de salud sobre abuso de los mayores; y campañas de concientización pública y de extensión comunitaria.

Integración de todas las voces latinas: inmigrantes, rurales, indígenas, de ascendencia africana y más

La mujer latina constituye un grupo diverso que incluye afrolatinas, latinas con diferentes capacidades, trabajadoras inmigrantes, lesbianas, y muchas otras. Dada esta diversidad, puede representar un desafío para las agencias de servicios contra la violencia doméstica crear programas que satisfagan las necesidades de las distintas mujeres latinas maltratadas, al tiempo que se promueve la unidad y solidaridad entre la mujer latina.

Las participantes analizaron las tensiones de la adaptación cultural y la experiencia de las inmigrantes latinas que vienen a los Estados Unidos y se acostumbran a interactuar en un escenario más heterogéneo, con personas de muchas razas y etnias diferentes. Muchas mujeres latinas sienten, tal vez por primera vez, cómo el racismo puede definir a una persona y limitar sus oportunidades en los Estados Unidos.

Por estas razones, las activistas deben integrar proactivamente principios contra la opresión en el trabajo contra la violencia doméstica y contemplar la cuestión del poder entre los diversos grupos de mujeres latinas, si se desea lograr una participación positiva de las diversas voces latinas. Debe reconocerse cómo la mujer latina percibe su historia cultural y cómo ésta informa e incide en las relaciones con los diferentes grupos de mujeres latinas. Otros temas importantes son el liderazgo y la toma de decisiones incluyentes y eliminar el sentimiento que existe en los grupos sobre la cantidad limitada de recursos para satisfacer las diversas necesidades (una «mentalidad deficitaria») – un pensamiento fomentado, a menudo, por la opresión internalizada. Una autoreflexión crítica tanto en las activistas latinas como en las clientes debe ser la estrategia fundamental para asegurar que los programas contra la violencia doméstica creen un acceso adecuado para todas las mujeres latinas.

CONCLUSIÓN: FORO SOBRE LA MUJER LATINA Y LA VIOLENCIA DOMÉSTICA

Además de la violencia doméstica, el continuo racismo, la discriminación de género, los bajos salarios y la discriminación laboral, el creciente sentimiento anti-inmigrante, la homofobia y los ataques a los derechos reproductivos son algunos otros desafíos que la mujer latina y otras mujeres de color deben enfrentar. En consecuencia, se necesitan nuevas estrategias de activismo, bien organizadas, multidimensionales y transformadoras.

Las activistas deben definir una serie clara de principios y estrategias que configuren su labor en contra de la violencia a largo plazo. Reconocer, nombrar, analizar, la interseccionalidad de las opresiones que afectan la vida de la mujer latina es el primer paso. Un claro y resonante tema emergió, que es la necesidad de un auténtico movimiento de la mujer latina que pueda expresar una convincente y poderosa visión para el futuro y que sea la guía para las acciones y estrategias destinadas a lograr la visión y el objetivo de fortalecer a la mujer latina. Este movimiento no debe limitarse simplemente a prestar más servicios contra la violencia doméstica a la mujer latina. Las activistas deben conformar una agenda política más amplia que se ocupe de la interseccionalidad de las opresiones que siente la mujer latina en todo el país. Con este fin, las participantes propusieron numerosos pasos para la acción y estrategias para crear un movimiento transformador. Un breve resumen de estos puntos se presenta a continuación:

- Conectar el activismo contra la violencia con la lucha mundial por los derechos humanos;
- Incorporar el cuidado de sí mismo y la autoreflexión para evitar el agotamiento de las activistas;
- Tratar las múltiples opresiones que siente la mujer latina;
- Analizar las tendencias sociales más amplias que afectan a la mujer latina;
- Crear modelos contra la violencia para el trabajo en colaboración entre mujeres y hombres latinos;
- Combatir la homofobia en comunidades latinas;
- Aumentar la participación de la mujer latina en el activismo político a nivel nacional;
- Crear estrategias que sirvan a la mujer latina inmigrante;
- Orientar a las nuevas activistas latinas;
- Crear una red nacional de activistas latinas; y
- Crear un mecanismo de coordinación de acción nacional, estatal y local.

Como conclusión, las participantes estuvieron de acuerdo en que la mujer latina deben aprovechar el momento y ejercitar su poder. La mujer latina constituye el 13 por ciento de las mujeres en Estados Unidos y será cerca del 25 por ciento de población femenina de los Estados Unidos para el año 2050. La mujer latina es también el sector más joven de la población femenina—40 por ciento de las mujeres latinas tienen menos de 21 años de edad. Nos encontramos en una coyuntura histórica única en el momento en que una nueva ola de mujeres latinas alcanzan la mayoría de edad y comienzan a cambiar el panorama político y social de este país. Sin duda, la influencia cívica de la mujer latina se multiplicará en la próxima década. Con este telón de fondo, las participantes afirmaron que la creación de un movimiento nacional de mujeres latinas debe convertirse en urgente prioridad porque representa una estrategia fundamental para erradicar la violencia doméstica en nuestra comunidad y para mejorar las oportunidades y la calidad de vida de la mujer latina en todo el país.





INTRODUCTION

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST AND CREATING A BETTER FUTURE

From the Tao Te Ching

No Peace in the World without Peace in the Nations...

No Peace in the Nations without Peace in the Town...

No Peace in the Town without Peace in the Home...

No Peace in the Home without Peace in the Heart.

NATIONAL FORUM ON LATINAS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: *El Pasado, El Presente y Mirando Hacia El Futuro*

In August 2003, the National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence (Alianza) convened its ***Forum on Latinas and Domestic Violence: El Pasado, El Presente, Y Mirando Hacia El Futuro***. The forum, which brought together more than 150 advocates, researchers, service providers, and survivors from diverse cultures, regions, and organizations, had four major goals:

- recognize the many contributions Latinas have made to the anti-domestic violence movement
- provide Latina practitioners and survivors with tools to help them respond more effectively to domestic violence in Latino communities;
- provide networking opportunities to help participants break the isolation felt by many Latina practitioners and survivors; and
- discuss resources, policies, and actions needed to ensure that Latina families have adequate access to culturally appropriate prevention and intervention services.

Forum activities took place over two days, August 14 and 15.





AUGUST 14: CONFERENCE DAY ONE

UNDERSTANDING THE PAST AND CREATING A BETTER FUTURE

On the first day of the forum, a group of 40 women engaged in an intensive dialogue that set the tone for the forum. Patricia Castillo, an Alianza board member and executive director of the P.E.A.C.E. Initiative, made a presentation that helped guide the day's discussion. Basic themes of her presentation included the following:

- Examining Attitudes About Domestic Violence Social Tolerance/Dominant Societal Beliefs, Community Crimes, Culture of Sexism,)
- Reviewing What Has Been Done So Far in the Anti-Violence Movement (Residential/Non-Residential Services, Public Policies, Children's Programs, Coordinated Community Response Systems, Batterer Intervention Programs, Latina Anti-Violence Activism)
- Barriers That Prevent Latino Families from Accessing Prevention and Intervention Services
- Where Do We Go From Here (Need for Self-Critique and Reflection, Broad-based Strategies, Changing Social Norms, Root-Cause Analysis of Violence, Get Up Close & Personal With Male Socialization Process, Changing Society and Culture)

RECLAIMING THE PAST: THE ROLE OF GRASSROOTS ACTIVISM

In looking at the past, participants noted that Latinas live in communities that have suffered a long legacy of multiple oppressions, including racism, poverty, and colonization, both in the United States and, for many, in their countries of origin. Consequently, designing programs to address domestic violence in the lives of Latinas must address these issues as well.

A Grassroots Response

Participants recalled that the anti-domestic violence work was born out of women's kitchens in the early 1980s in response to a critical familial and communal need. Women opened their homes. They employed a diversity of skills and strategies so that other women could live their lives without violence. The achievements of this era resulted in efforts that helped to save lives and keep many women and children safe, including shelters and supportive service programs. These achievements served as a very powerful example of empowerment and self-determination in the anti-domestic violence movements, one that has to some extent been lost, as anti-violence advocacy and services have been affected by institutionalization.

ASSESSING THE PRESENT: WHAT WORKS AND WHAT NEEDS TO CHANGE

Combating the Service Industry Mentality

A number of seasoned advocates commented that anti-violence work has evolved from a grassroots movement where women identified problems and created collective solutions into a service industry too often focused on college degrees and professionalism. As programs for battered women received more government and private funding, these agencies began to influence how the work was to get done. They noted that what was lost in this process was the community's power and ability to decide how to do the work in a way that is most authentic and

responsive to Latino families and communities. A solution to countering this trend is cultivating strong and visionary leadership. Such leadership will be able to conduct a more sophisticated analysis of domestic violence and Latinas, and help guide advocates in demanding and helping to bring about the systemic changes that are needed. Actions could include establishing intervention programs, creating responsive public policies, and developing coordinated community response systems.

Addressing the Intersectionality of Oppressions

Participants discussed the importance of talking more concretely about sexism and the role of patriarchy, specifically, how it allows men privileges, benefits and a sense of entitlement that reinforces their sense of power. This dynamic is played out within the home, in Latino communities, and throughout our society.

It was also noted that adults in our communities must teach children more positive attitudes and values about gender and sexuality. There must be more open discussions of how children are socialized in order to eradicate violent behavior and counter-productive attitudes about violence. Participants expressed the need to address the imbalance of power between men and women/boys and girls and move away from socializing girls merely as caretakers and to promote healthier, non-violent images for males, with support from responsible and caring men in the community modeling these behaviors.

Participants also acknowledged that sometimes, a better understanding of one's personal experience with violence became clear through the work on behalf of battered women. This is especially true of advocates with domestic violence histories of their own. There must be awareness of how personal experiences affect the work. Advocates must work to heal negative memories to effectively advocate for others. One participant talked about representing a client who had fled her batterer without taking the children, something the advocate's own mother had done. She acknowledged that she had initially judged the client's behavior based on her own experience which required her to actively exercise a level of detachment in order to be the best advocate possible.

One participant recounted her experience as the sole Latina in a predominately white battered women's program and how her experience allowed her to educate others about the impact of domestic violence on Latinas. She also was able to see that there were many white women working in solidarity with Latino communities against racism and that confronting the system in this way had cost them dearly. It was agreed that advocates have to be the change agents in order to address these issues within the anti-domestic violence movement.

CREATING A BETTER FUTURE

The final part of the dialogue concerned the future. The current attacks against Latinas and other women of color necessitate the creation of a strong social change movement led by Latinas. Domestic violence must be considered in the context of other national trends affecting Latinas—like the attacks on civil, reproductive, and immigrant rights; welfare reform, racial disparities in the correctional system; the criminalization of pregnant women with drug histories, and rising rates among women of HIV/AIDS and other diseases. These attacks against women of color have emerged as Latinas are becoming more of a political force. Battered Latina women experience these multiple oppressions every day. Therefore, advocates must articulate the connections between anti-domestic violence work and other issues and help create a vibrant social justice movement on behalf of Latinas. It is important to recognize the intersectionality of oppressions in Latinas lives and not just address domestic violence in isolation. This can facilitate the development of programs and policies that are most responsive to the realities of Latinas.

STRATEGIES AND ACTIONS STEPS

One participant noted that a future goal must include a commitment to eradicating negative biases against lesbian, bisexual, gay and transgender communities (LGBTs) in order to reach every battered person that needs help. She noted that there is not enough discussion about how domestic violence affects the LGBT community. LGBT couples need to have places to go for counseling and other forms of assistance that they can trust and feel they are not being judged or discriminated against. She asserted that the principles of our practice must be clear and inclusive.

Another urged advocates to look at ways to make outreach and services more integrated at the various levels of government—city, state, national, and international—and to develop an action plan based in the reality of who Latinos are as community. She further noted that Latinas must redefine the way we do the work and not be satisfied with what we have already done.

A third participant discussed the need for a strong Latina advocacy organization at the national level to strengthen the Latina presence in the policy advocacy arena. Latinas continue to suffer from violence, various forms of cancer, and AIDS among many other health and safety concerns. In two decades, Latinas are going to comprise one quarter of the women in U.S. necessitating a demand for the level of investment in our communities that has been afforded other communities. This investment would be needed not just for services, but also for prevention efforts, and legal reform. Other related ideas for future work included: building a national movement of Latina and Latinos speaking with a collective voice; developing an institute or clearinghouse with information on the experiences of Latinas; and leadership mentoring for young Latinas in the anti-domestic violence movement.

Holding politicians accountable was identified as an important future goal. It was suggested that advocates work with elected officials, inviting them to meetings; keeping them apprised of advocacy efforts in the community; asking them what they are doing on behalf of Latinas; and, demanding they address domestic violence issues in their platforms and legislative agendas.

Also important is improving domestic violence prevention programs in the schools, starting at the pre-school and elementary school levels. Such programs should be inclusive of LGBT youth and address heterosexism and homophobia.

Participants acknowledged the need to stay hopeful and work toward positive change. The day ended with the placement of participant signatures on the forum poster as a symbolic commitment to a future world of peace for Latinas, their children, families and friends.





AUGUST 15: CONFERENCE DAY TWO

EMBRACING LATINA DIVERSITY: CÍRCULOS DE DIÁLOGO

The second day of the conference opened with a reminder of the purpose of the forum: to work on the strategies, ideas and actions necessary to end domestic violence within Latino communities, as well as, to celebrate the many contributions Latinas have made to the domestic violence movement over the past decades.

Forum participants represented traditional domestic violence service agencies, shelters, legal assistance and public education programs, immigration services, violence intervention support groups, farm workers, grassroots leadership training programs, rural programs, bilingual services agencies, and policy groups.

Participants' reasons for participating were as diverse as the people themselves. Most expressed a desire to know more about the work of other colleagues throughout the country and to learn new ways to do the work more effectively. Others were interested in exploring global approaches for anti-domestic violence advocacy. Still others were looking for ways to more effectively deal with the increasing numbers of undocumented women who need domestic violence services and discuss how advocates can learn to take better care of themselves as they help others. Finally, many expressed an interest in brainstorming about urgently needed, legislative and policy changes, as well as, ways to increase Latina leadership in the movement.

A special dedication was made to the memory of Sandra Camacho, a long time advocate, founding board member of Alianza, and a member of the conference planning committee, who died on July 10, 2003. The dedication ceremony included a power point presentation celebrating Sandra's life, poems from her friends, her partner and excerpts from the eulogy that her oldest brother had written and delivered.

BREAKOUT SESSIONS

Attendees participated in ten concurrent breakout sessions on topics related to Latinas and Domestic Violence:

- *The Globalization of Domestic Violence;*
- *Latinas and Domestic Violence: What the Research Doesn't Tell Us;*
- *Latina-Centered Strategies for Working with Survivors;*
- *Latinas Use of Violence;*
- *Working Through the Labyrinths of Keeping Our Children Safe;*
- *Latinas and Latinos: Working Together;*
- *Meeting the Needs of Latina/o Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Communities;*
- *Breaking the Cycle of Violence with Latino Youth;*
- *When Older Latinas Are Abused and*
- *Integration of Every Latina Voice—Migrant, Rural, Indigenous and of African Descent.*

Facilitators at each dialogue circle introduced the topic and posed a range of questions to guide the discussion. The participants in each group were a mix of grassroots advocates, service providers, government officials, lawyers, and researchers from various parts of the country.

THE GLOBALIZATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Participants examined domestic violence through a global lens, discussing the parallels and/or similarities that exist among racially and ethnically diverse Latino communities in the United States and abroad.

In defining “globalization of domestic violence” participants acknowledged that domestic violence is a universal problem for Latinas (and other women) around the world, and that a similar set of factors and conditions reinforce violence against women no matter where it occurs. These include: patriarchal systems; women’s inferior economic status; gender-bias in societal institutions, such as the family, judicial systems, the government, schools and religion. Moreover, the necessary prevention interventions for eradicating domestic violence are similar as well. Oppressive patriarchal traditions and models of masculinity and manhood are widespread, affecting women’s ability to negotiate relationships in the home and the community. Finally, there is a need in the U.S. and abroad for culturally and linguistically sensitive services that take into consideration the particular cultural norms of diverse Latina populations. Participants noted a universal need for education and training for church leaders and judges who can play important roles in preventing domestic violence.

The discussion then focused on how the global aspects of domestic violence affect the manner in which community-based organizations provide services. A general agreement was that using the “global lens” allows advocates to exchange information about unique strategies being utilized to eradicate violence against women. For example, sharing information and strategies cross-culturally can be of great benefit in raising awareness about domestic violence and addressing the entrenched silence about domestic violence which continues to be the norm. One participant from Guatemala noted that in her country there is great silence around domestic violence and that there are no shelters for women. This is also a reality for many Latinas in the United States, especially those in poor and rural communities. Other similarities at home and abroad include the lack of resources and infrastructure to protect women and to educate the community.

Participants expressed the need to understand what goes on in the countries of origin so that they can better serve women and families when they arrive in this country. Learning about the experiences of a cross-section of Latinas in the U.S. and Latin America allowed for information sharing on best practices and research on successful domestic violence interventions, particularly as they relate to emerging community needs.

A final question concerned whose responsibility is it to address issues of global domestic violence. It was agreed that addressing the global domestic violence pandemic is a collective responsibility because it is an issue that affects everyone. This includes all anti-violence advocates, not just Latinas. Everyone must work together in organizing

communities, providing trainings, developing and maintaining a cadre of culturally and linguistically competent specialists, counselors and outreach workers and collecting data in support of community and programmatic needs. Private and government funders must be willing to fund programs that address the true needs of communities. Elected officials also must be responsive to their constituencies, including undocumented Latinas. Advocates must come up with creative ways to assist undocumented Latinas to be able to protect themselves and impact the political process so they do not feel a need to remain silent because of their immigration status.

ADDRESSING
THE GLOBAL
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Participants also noted the need to remember the role and impact of repressive governments in creating, reinforcing and perpetuating violence in society. The global community has a responsibility to speak out against such repression in solidarity with women globally.

LATINAS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE: WHAT THE RESEARCH DOESN'T TELL US

Participants discussed the quality of existing research on Latinas and domestic violence, the need for culturally sensitive researchers and research methods, and how community-based research can assist advocates with anti-violence work.

Research on domestic violence and Latino communities is important not just to gather data, but also to ascertain how laws, policies, programs and practices impact the lives of Latinas. Participants expressed concern that current research on Latino communities tends to either focus on domestic violence survivor success stories (a trend especially common when looking at women of color) or negative trends in Latino communities.

More than one participant voiced concern about the misuse of research on Latino communities (for example, partial, incomplete or faulty research analysis), biases and assumptions about Latinas/os, and a reluctance on the part of mainstream researchers to acknowledge the assets of Latino culture. For example, positive factors, like the cohesiveness within Latino families, are often discussed in terms of pathology. Another advocate noted that she felt useful research on lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender communities is often used to denounce these communities.

A number of participants noted that they felt the content of training manuals, protocols, and other related material focusing on Latino communities is often not the most effective for the populations they serve. Sometimes otherwise good curricula go unused by Latinas because the content is not culturally relevant to their needs. Another advocate noted a dearth of knowledge about where to go for help on research needs and described her difficulty finding statistics on Latinas and domestic violence prevalence rates for a handbook she was preparing.

Self-determination with respect to defining community problems/issues and how they will be addressed in a research context was raised as another key concern. It was suggested that advocates and frontline workers could use expertise and guidance about research possibilities and the types of research they can do themselves, including data collection and analysis, and where to get research assistance, like graduate interns or software.

BETTER AND MORE ACCESSIBLE
ACCESS TO RESEARCH WOULD
BE COMMUNITY-ORIENTED
JOURNALS AND MAGAZINES,
INTERNET PUBLICATIONS, AND
LOCAL MEDIA OUTLETS.

Conducting Culturally Relevant Research

Fostering collaborations between research institutions and Latino organizations was identified as one way to improve access to research for Latino communities. Such collaborations can help local agencies and groups meet their research needs, especially given that within academia more value is placed on practical research and the application of theory. For example, one participant noted that she mentioned to a local researcher her need for documentation about Latinas who were being arrested for domestic violence to determine

the instances where this violence might be due to self-defense. At the researcher's suggestion, they worked together and formed a focus group to ask the women themselves. As a result, seven different groups of women from five states were interviewed and a qualitative analysis was done with the help of graduate students. While Latino researchers who are knowledgeable about the culture are preferable, although one participant noted, "I'm not offended when people do not understand where we're coming from, just when they don't want to learn."

Developing a Cadre of New Researchers

Universities are supposed to benefit the communities where they are located and as such need to make sure that the research they conduct benefits the community directly. For example, meaningful internships can serve academic institutions, students and community agencies alike. One participant noted that his agency, La Posada, had a University of Texas student who did her undergraduate honors thesis on the Violence Against Women Act and its effectiveness for women. She is now an activist with the agency. Another recounted a poignant example of a student intern able to overcome his struggle with a statistics course once his work involved the practical application of getting data for their program.

Research Needs of Latinas and Latino communities

Participants explored various areas where additional research could improve understanding of the impact of domestic violence on Latinas. These included:

- Qualitative data on ways that women and families resolve domestic violence situations within the community;
- Quantitative data on Latina immigrants, especially the undocumented, as well as studies on the role of acculturation among battered Latinas;
- Studies on the contexts of domestic violence in Latino communities and the effects of domestic violence on Latino children;
- An examination of the best practices to address domestic violence among Latinos;
- Outcome data on batterer intervention programs and mixed group work with victims, survivors and offenders of the same gender; and,
- An assessment of the efficacy of domestic violence and related supportive services in Latino communities.

In addition to research recommendations, participants noted the need for cultural-sensitivity training for researchers to ensure the integration of race, class and gender analysis. Participants also noted the need for more training for the legal community on the dynamics of domestic violence in family law cases, especially child custody. Finally, it was noted that increased funding was needed to support large, long-term studies.

Other Issues Requiring Further Research and Dialogue

The researcher-participants also outlined ideas for research. These included:

- An exploration of ways to integrate information on Latino culture into existing training models;
- The development of models for implementing statewide standards for law enforcement, (e.g., how to take a police report, how to interview a child, how to conduct victim interviews).
- An exploration of ways researchers and advocates can work together to access and use agency data on battered Latinas while maintaining client confidentiality.

Improving Community Access to Research Findings

Participants discussed the need to increase the community's access to research data. Researchers typically publish their findings in academic journals, publications to which most community-based organizations do not subscribe. Advocates noted that better and more accessible avenues would be community-oriented journals and magazines, internet publications and local media outlets.

Improving research on Latinas and domestic violence is a collective responsibility. There is a need for collaboration between researchers and anti-violence practitioners on research projects to ensure that good research ideas from the field are pursued. Advocates must explore ways to create a new “language” and empower the community to take ownership of research within the anti-violence movement to create a different paradigm that gives voice to what works for Latino communities. Advocates must persistently educate local programs and researchers about what they see on the frontlines and promote its work in mainstream outlets. This legitimizes the philosophies and approaches that are working within Latino communities.

The session ended with a discussion of suggested follow up actions, including: a media campaign strategy workshop to teach grassroots organizations how to develop media campaigns; a workshop or meeting to explore potential funding sources for research projects; and working with academic institutions to create meaningful internship opportunities for graduate students and other joint initiatives.

LATINA-CENTERED STRATEGIES FOR WORKING WITH SURVIVORS

In this dialogue, the central issue addressed by participants was, “What makes a domestic violence survivor service program Latina-focused?”

Latinas come from diverse communities and, therefore, have both common and culturally specific needs. Participants discussed how to best address the diverse needs of Latinas with respect to domestic violence and asserted that Latina-centered programs must be culturally responsive and go beyond basic cultural knowledge and sensitivity to include the integration of cultural information in their design and implementation.

This cultural knowledge should be authentic and multi-layered, including an understanding of the interplay of race/class/gender/economics, the impact of war, torture, disappearances, government oppression and other forms of political trauma suffered in their countries of origin. All of these factors impact the ability of Latina clients to access services, as well as the ability of community members to squarely address domestic violence within a larger context.

Holistic Programming

It was universally agreed that programs that serve Latinas must be holistic, providing and/or helping Latinas access a broad range of supportive services to meet their life needs (e.g. immigration and employment assistance, ESL and literacy classes, etc.) in addition to the typical domestic violence services, such as orders of protection, emergency shelter, and support groups. Battered women who are Latinas will be better served and become empowered to better deal with their situations when they receive broad-based assistance.

The Need for Spanish-Speaking Staff

Another key component of a Latina-centered program is having adequate numbers of Spanish-speaking staff and relevant materials. Participants reported that too many programs have only one Spanish-speaking staff person to assist all Spanish-speaking clients. In some instances, this person is not a full-time worker. Programs must also carefully consider the different dialects and colloquial Spanish spoken within various Latino communities. One participant recounted a Mexican client of indigenous background who was referred to a program for help but could not understand the Spanish spoken by the worker.

Programs often struggle to develop materials or to obtain Spanish translations of public education materials. Professional translators or Spanish-speaking staff members who are not familiar with the colloquial Spanish used by the local community often do not produce materials that are readable or culturally relevant to the communities being served.

Being Mindful of Diverse Literacy Levels

An additional issue related to program materials was client literacy. Participants noted that many Latino communities have low-literacy levels and require materials that they can understand. The terms used, even the size of the print and the type of font and graphics used can make a difference as to whether material is user-friendly. A participant from a California farm worker leadership program noted that they work very closely with their local Equal Employment Opportunity Commission office on worker rights materials. They have developed materials on labor and sexual harassment laws in the form of picture books, dramatizations for know-your-rights trainings, fotonovelas and the like. They have also asked California shelters to read the rights and expectations of the shelter to clients rather than post a sign or hand them a form, to be sure that clients who may be illiterate or have low levels of literacy can fully understand their rights

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Addressing Immigrants' Needs

Because of the large immigrant population within Latino communities, participants felt strongly that programs also need a good understanding of immigration laws and policies. They also must provide legal assistance for immigrants in the form of direct services or referrals.

Quality of Services

Some participants noted the need for “compassionate” services. One participant noted that there is now a corporate or institutional mentality at some programs where 9 to 5 service is all that is provided irrespective of when the person in crisis shows up: “It’s no longer the same type of people who would lose a night’s sleep to be supportive to someone.” The extent to which services are sensitive to clients’ needs or “client centered,” is in large measure due to the program’s ability to fully evaluate its staff and programs. Participants noted that there must be self-evaluation of the individual staff members, as well as continuous systematic evaluations of programs and services and their effectiveness in the community. A participant noted, “(I) it’s a big shortcoming.... (W)e don’t want to look at our own programs to see what’s working and what’s not and why it isn’t working, so we can know how to go forward.”

Paying attention to how a program is working to educate the community is also important. Community outreach, women’s empowerment, and authentic community input processes are additional key components for reaching and meeting the real needs of Latina survivors.

LATINAS USE OF VIOLENCE

This session focused on the complex issue of Latinas’ use of violence, exploring how violence by women in battering situations is viewed; how violence in families affects its members; the concept of self-defense; the increasing number of dual arrests in domestic violence cases, among other issues.

IT IS IMPORTANT
TO HELP LATINAS,
WHETHER THEY
BATTER OR NOT, TO
UNDERSTAND THAT
VIOLENCE CREATES
VIOLENCE.

A central part of the discussion of Latinas' use of violence is the context in which the violence occurs. A battered woman can be a victim as well as a perpetrator of violence. Participants noted the importance of making a distinction between violence used to exert power over another and violence for self-defense or the defense of children.

A number of participants noted that they are seeing increased use of violence by women (including Latinas) across the board, i.e., whether with their partners, children, or other people, especially involving young women against other young women. Several participants noted that there are recent studies that discuss the prevalence rates of violence among diverse populations of Latinas.

Internalized oppression was identified as one factor that causes some women to seek to control and fight against violence with violence. They may resort to violence as a form of defense or survival tactic, assuming an "it's either him or me" mentality. However negative, this action is sometimes seen as the only way a woman can claim a bit of control under bad circumstances. Battered females are likely to use violence out of fear, frustration, or wanting to get even. While the majority of men who batter do so primarily to exert power and control.

Participants reported that Latina clients recognize the need to develop positive skills for breaking violent cycles in the family. An advocate who runs a woman's court-ordered intervention group noted that once the women realize what they are doing, and especially how it affects their children, they feel badly about their violent behavior and want to change. This is an extreme source of pain for many women. They feel incredibly guilty and take on all of the responsibility for the violence. Battered women who use violence often do not call for help in domestic violence situations because they do not feel that they deserve it, and that they should be punished for their violent behavior. Helping women to deconstruct their experiences and gain a level of "critical consciousness" is an important domestic violence intervention.

Dual Arrests

There was significant discussion about dual arrests (where both the battered person and the principal aggressor are arrested). This situation arises largely because of police inability or unwillingness to determine who is the principal aggressor and then to arrest the appropriate person. Sometimes, the police are sympathetic toward the aggressor. A Colorado participant noted that after the passage of their state dual arrest law, 80% of women arrestees were part of a dual arrest. A Boston advocate noted that women in her city comprise about 7% of dual arrests, but 20% of the arraignments.¹ Women who return to court multiple times are getting less sympathy from judges. It was also noted that there are virtually no interventions programs for women or LGBTs.

It is important to look at the unintended consequences of how Latinas as perpetrators of violence are treated. Battered women defendants in domestic violence cases are reluctant to engage the legal system to help protect them from further violence. This is particularly true if there is mutual violence and the woman does not fare well in court. The view of women as perpetrators of violence also impacts the types of criminal charges brought against them and the sentencing

¹ Arraignment is a procedure where the accused is brought before the court to plead to a criminal charge. The charge is read and the defendant is asked to plead "guilty" or "not guilty." It follows an arrest, which is the taking of a person into custody for the purpose of holding or detaining the person to answer a criminal charge.

process. For example, if a woman has a gun under her pillow for protection and uses it against her batterer, will the court view this as premeditation? Will a battered woman defendant get a reduced sentence if she can show she was in a domestic violence situation?

Survivor-advocates expressed empathy for their battered women clients who resort to violence, as well as the multiple oppressions—racism, gender oppression, and poverty that clients deal with on a daily basis. Important questions were raised about how a worker best advises a client who needs to protect herself and her children from continual violence without taking on the role of an aggressor herself. Other concerns included how to help young people develop appropriate conflict resolution skills in neighborhoods or schools where street survival may dictate counter behaviors or skills to protect themselves.

Participants also discussed the various types of interventions for battered Latinas and Latinas who batter. They included an educational program in the schools for girls; a domestic violence advocacy response team where all program staff work with the local police and legal advocates involved; a transitional services and self-sufficiency training program; support groups; collaboration projects with the courts and in the community on the issue of dual arrest; and working with Latinas in prison.

It is important to help Latinas, whether they batter or not, understand that violence creates violence. Regardless of why women are being abused, the use of violence by women, even in self-defense, puts them at higher risk of victimization, serious injury or death.

The discussion concluded with the identification of possible ways to reduce Latina violence including a willingness to openly confront the subject of Latina violence and not shy away from it due to a fear of defunding or the loss of “victim credibility,” as well as the development of specific intervention programs for Latinas who batter. There were a number of suggestions as to the role that Alianza could play in looking at Latinas use of violence. They included developing a campaign for use in the schools that would teach children conflict resolution where parents could also participate; developing a position statement on Latinas use of violence, and hosting a quarterly roundtable of survivors.

KEEPING OUR CHILDREN SAFE

It is a well-known fact that Black and Latino children are disproportionately involved in the child welfare system. In this session, advocates discussed how to ensure that Latino children in the child welfare system are safe from violence and obtain access to violence intervention services.

Disproportionate numbers of Latino children are involved in the child welfare system and there is much work to be done to keep them safe. Removal of a child from the home is traumatic for the child, the family and the community. Removal without appropriate services in place often results in more damage. One advocate noted that if you ask children whether child welfare is helping them, they say no. Families are also treated poorly and disrespectfully by child welfare caseworkers.

It was noted that the work of child welfare agencies often feels like a hit or miss situation. There are times when the system and the interventions work and others when they fail miserably. Participants discussed the conflicts that the legal obligation or “duty to report” incidents of child abuse or neglect creates for some agencies that work with battered women. Agencies that are required to call and report suspicions of child abuse run the risk of losing the opportunity to

work with and help the family over the long term. However, if they do not call, children may remain in abusive situations. Still other times, agencies do call and report, and nothing is done.

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DONE TO KEEP THEM
SAFE.

Participants noted that in order to help Latino children in the child welfare system, advocates must listen to the children. We must hear from them about the actions that are truly helpful to them and those that are detrimental. In addition, there must be better training of child welfare workers and foster families. People in the system do not always understand children and the dynamics of abuse against children that occurs in the home. One participant cited an example of her agency receiving mail from a child about child sex abuse against her little sister. An agency worker went to the home and asked the child about the abuse allegation in front of her father. Nine months later, the child had not been removed from the home and the case was still being investigated. While removal of a child needs to be carefully considered, in the instance of child sex abuse, quick action is critical, including removal (and prosecution) of the perpetrator.

Creating Systems Change

In order to keep Latino children in the child welfare system safe, advocates must be involved with both the families and the system. Advocates can educate child welfare workers about interventions that may be misdirected or detrimental to Latino children and families. They can also help Latino families, especially those who are recent immigrants to the U.S., understand that what they may view as normal familial behavior (for example, forms of corporal punishment) is considered abusive and legally actionable in the U.S. Another participant, an African American, noted that there were similar views about physical discipline within the African American culture and that teaching parents new parenting techniques takes time. The lack of social capital—education, skills, access to services—may make it more challenging to assist Latino families to embrace behavioral change. Participants identified the following strategies to address the need for systems change:

- **Partnerships** - Forging partnerships with the child welfare agency can help. One participant noted that his agency receives referrals of child sexual abuse cases from child protective services and the courts. Another noted that his state has a multidisciplinary child protection review team that reviews the actions on all child welfare cases. Additionally, advocates must be willing to work with the trainers who have access to the child welfare workers and supervisors to educate them about the inappropriateness of threatening the removal of children if the mother fails to go to a domestic violence intervention program.
- **Caseworker Training** - Most participants agreed that caseworkers are given too much discretion to make decisions that adversely affect children and their families. There also needs to be better caseworker to client ratios and better supervision of workers. Workers need better compensation. Some workers try to do their job well but burn out is high. Also, training opportunities exist, but workers do not always get the opportunity to implement the new things they learn. This may be due to high caseloads, lack of time, funding, bureaucratic obstacles, as well as, lack of follow-up support and guidance to allow for the application of new skills.
- **Advocacy** - Participants noted that advocates must also create ways to help the voices of the people affected by the child welfare system be heard by legislators and the “powers that be.” Advocates must insist upon the creation and use of culturally appropriate interventions, as

well as children-oriented program models. Also, forging partnerships with domestic violence providers and the many different services available for children and their families (like public health, education, and child welfare) is essential. Litigation against the state agency is another alternative and is sometimes the only thing that will make governmental agencies change. A participant noted that there was a lawsuit against a child welfare agency for removing children from mothers who were victims of violence.

There are also reforms that child welfare agencies themselves can implement. In New York City, the child welfare agency created a central registry to collect its own complaints of inappropriate actions by the agency. The information from the registry was used to develop policy reports that were presented to the state council with recommendations for reform. One participant noted that this is an important strategy for affecting change at the agency level and breaking the culture of secrecy that has allowed past agency errors affecting many families to be buried and never rectified. Latino families and their advocates also need to engage in independent advocacy and community education to help people understand the intersection of domestic violence and child removal. In order to impact the system, families and the community must band together. Single mothers in particular, need to build and lead their own advocacy organizations.

- **LGBT and Migrant Children** - Helping Latino children in the child welfare system who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender or from migrant families poses separate and additional challenges. While advocates were hard-pressed to identify ways that the child welfare system works positively for Latino children generally, it was noted that LGBT children often have no support whatsoever. One advocate noted a situation where an attorney said to a child client “don’t let them know you are a lesbian or you’re not going to get what you want.” For migrant families, the system has never been welcoming. Migrant families are seen as transient so many state agencies will resort to very short-term solutions to violence situations and leave the rest to the “home” state.
- **Accountability** – Participants noted that in order to minimize the negative effects that the child welfare system can have on Latino children and families there needs to be more accountability. There also must be fairer assessments made of the barriers that hinder a family from keeping a child safe. Such barriers can be as simple as the lack of transportation. For example, a mother with six children who needs to get a child to various counseling appointments but has no transportation is often unfairly penalized by the system.
- **Post-removal Support** – Participants also observed that systems must be put in place to support a child that is removed from a home. Children in the child welfare system need access to appropriate services. Utilizing memoranda of understanding between community partners and state agencies is one important first step towards ensuring appropriate post-removal support. Participants also observed that there should also be mandatory training on domestic violence for all child welfare agency staff that teaches workers how to screen for domestic violence and what to do with the information obtained.



LATINAS AND LATINOS: TRABAJANDO JUNTOS

Participants in this dialogue circle explored ways that women and men can work collaboratively to eradicate domestic violence. They include the role and viability of batterers programs, mixed group sessions, and other models.

Sharing Strategies

Participants discussed the various ways in which their agencies are tailoring program services to Latino families. One agency created a program for Latinas, who often prefer short-term crisis interventions (like safety plans) with an option of long-term interventions. They have fostered community relationships with the churches that their clients attend, so the church leaders can help with domestic violence intervention. They also formed a Latino men's group. One male participant, who is a former batterer, facilitates groups for men. His program started as a voluntary group and now works with both voluntary and mandated clients in integrated groups, a model that has had much success. In the program, men are challenged about their views and use of violence, but in a more supportive context than a standard confrontation model. Self-disclosure on the part of the facilitator serves to create a more inclusive dynamic for the participants. Another batterer's program uses a woman as a co-facilitator with a male. While this dynamic is different and challenging, having the women's perspective included has led to the program's success.

Alternative Models for Dealing with Batterers

Participants noted that part of the discussion on working with male batterers must address how to effectively counter the prevailing "white, feminist paradigm," which does not support batterer intervention programs, because they believe that batterers can never change. This view is not universally accepted and must be examined. All or nothing rules (such as "no contact" rules) often are not acceptable to Latinas, who may want to talk to the batterer at court or meet as a couple with their pastor and still access services. Others have seen targeted interventions work with the men in their lives. One advocate noted that she had several men in her life — father, brothers — that she loved and would not believe that they could never change. She recounted a poignant story about her dad who, as a participant in Alcoholics Anonymous, had come to many realizations about his violence at the same time that she as a woman in her mid-twenties was working in the anti-violence movement. Through his personal work he was able to come to a place where he took responsibility for sexually abusing her and publicly expressed his pride for the work that she is doing. Participants agreed that men are often afraid of confronting their emotions because this is seen as a feminine quality or sign of weakness. In this respect, helping men deal with violence is just one part of a broader process. Men need general support on a host of issues that relate to the male role in the family and society, as well as the importance of counseling and support.

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Continuing the Dialogue and Collaboration

In order for collaborations to be successful, advocates must create the space to engage in pointed dialogue about the larger issues that impact domestic violence: power, sexism, homophobia, behavior change, white privilege, and the like. Helping men and women deal with homophobia is also a critical part of working together to eradicate violence. Also, advocates must be willing to look at their own views on violence, as well as their racial, gender-based, and cultural biases. This self-examination must be continuous and is an important part of the critical thinking that advocates must do. Advocates must broker the dialogue about domestic violence as it affects communities. One participant noted that as a society we do not talk about domestic violence and/or sexual assault unless we are victims. Advocates must find ways to mainstream discussions about violence and help the community see that “domestic violence is not just private family business that stays in the family.” Finally, advocates must continually bring partners into the advocacy process as this fosters community buy-in and fresh ideas and approaches.

MEETING THE NEEDS OF LATINA/O LESBIAN, GAY, BISEXUAL AND TRANSGENDER COMMUNITIES

In this dialogue circle, participants discussed a range of issues related to LGBT domestic violence.

Participants noted that LGBTs often are invisible within Latino communities. The prevailing domestic violence paradigm often does not address violence that occurs among lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender (LGBT) persons. One participant working in a national program to help young people in the shelter system noted the need to target services for the largely underserved gay communities.

Access to Services

An initial question for any program is determining what accessibility means for the LGBT community in need of domestic violence services. Gay communities can sometimes be insular, self protective and closed. A battered partner may feel that their batterer is the only source of emotional and financial support. The fear of gossip within the LGBT community can be a major barrier to seeking confidential services. The homophobia experienced by the LGBT community is another barrier. Internalized homophobia affects how LGBTs react within their relationships and serve as a deterrent to seeking domestic violence services. External homophobia from the community at large can often result in the denial of basic services, such as law enforcement protection, legal services, even housing and other supportive services to LGBTs. Moreover, the family rejection also diminishes the support system available to LGBTs. A worker at an LGBT program talked about the prejudice and homophobia that she experiences from her family (especially her father) just for working with the LGBT community. Even when battered partners have the support of family and friends, they may not want to access services, such as going to a hospital, because revealing the source of the violence will result in stigma from the community.

Despite these challenges, important strides are being made to create safe spaces and services targeted to LGBTs. One participant reported on a faith-based initiative that is putting together a study on what the Bible really says about homosexuality to help churches view this issue with a different lens and take a more critical look at the language of oppression and stereotyped roles. Another agency is focusing on capacity building, working with providers nationwide that run programs and shelters. Still another agency hires formerly incarcerated Lesbians to provide them with an alternative to low-wage work, as well as providing housing, counseling, and cultural outlets. One program runs a “peace making circle” where offenders and victims come together.

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Reaching the LGBT Community

There are many struggles faced by domestic violence programs seeking to engage the LGBT communities. One participant from Puerto Rico noted that they have women who have to hide the fact that they are Lesbians in order to avoid discrimination within the domestic violence shelters. Another agency had to deal with program staff that insisted that they were not getting calls from the LGBT community on their domestic violence hotline. After running some focus groups, the agency determined that Lesbians felt the agency's hotline services were not accessible.

Improving LGBT domestic violence services must happen at multiple levels. All agency workers must be comfortable dealing with the LGBT community while focusing on the services people need, not a client's identity. Agencies must have members of the LGBT community on staff and on their boards and hold themselves and other community organizations accountable for providing inclusive services. While clandestine services can be provided and are an important source of support and protection for LGBTs, it is equally important to have identified, confidential services.

Agencies can start by looking at the assumptions they make and creating safe spaces for LGBT clients. Intake staff should not assume that if a woman calls for help that the batterer is a male. One participant recounted an incident where a female victim of domestic violence who came to a Boston emergency room for services initially used masculine words to refer to the batterer, but later with a nurse, used feminine words. Agencies should change the language used in pamphlets and other outreach materials to make sure it is accessible and inclusive. In addition, domestic violence agencies should forge partnerships with other agencies that serve the LGBT community. No matter what the initiative, it is critical that the LGBT community help shape services.

BREAKING THE CYCLE OF VIOLENCE WITH LATINO YOUTH

The focus of this dialogue was doing prevention work with youth.

The lack of domestic violence programs targeting youth is a major problem all over the country. Young Latinas are experiencing violence within dating relationships and the family. One advocate noted that most of her young clients, female and male, were victims of incest. There is also an increase in violent behavior generally among youth, especially young woman to young woman violence. The involvement of youth in gang activities is prevalent in many communities. In some communities, gangs are a significant subculture.

The Role of the Family

Family dynamics affect Latino youth. Adolescents adopt familial views about gender roles and violence. Some of these views devalue the role of women and reinforce notions of male superiority. This in turn negatively affects the self-esteem of young Latinas. Participants noted that some Latinas learn early on how to be "good victims" and young Latino males act out negative masculine stereotypes.

A sense of hopelessness can foster frustration, anger and violence. Participants noted that many Latino youth feel they have no future, even when they are good students. Schools do not always encourage Latino youth to go onto college, steering them to trade schools instead. One participant noted that they are seeing more cases where youth will not turn in the form that indicates the kind of high school diploma they are seeking, so they get steered to the technical

track. One participant noted that the parents' educational level also plays a role; parents with little formal education may not be able to mentor and guide their children with respect to maximizing educational opportunities. Another who works in a rural area noted that the support a youth receives at home is important. Some parents expect youth to engage in work as soon as possible, decreasing the chances for Latino youth to pursue higher education.

Some youth feel their parents don't listen to them, don't give them space to be themselves. One participant said they are often told: "I'm the dad, do this, do that, I'm the director here." Youth don't feel valued. "We have ideas, we are capable, we are intelligent," asserted one youth.

They also talked about the trauma and abuse that many children suffer—incest by fathers, brothers, uncles, aunts—both boys and girls are molested. And they often have no one to talk to.

Youth in immigrant families have additional barriers to overcome. Often they can experience "divided loyalties," employing one set of values and practices at home and another among their peers. Immigrant parents often work seven days a week, 10-12 hours a day, trying to establish themselves and their status in the U.S. The rapid process of acculturation leave many immigrant parents completely shaken by their children's behavioral changes. These abrupt changes heighten family tensions and cause parental frustration and defensiveness at the inability to preserve cultural values and effectively communicate with and relate to their children.

Societal Issues

Larger societal issues—racism, discrimination, language barriers, classism, sexual identity and orientation—also affect youth. Participants reported incidents of teachers and students calling immigrant youth "mojados" (wetbacks). They get attacked and fight back. One participant felt that first and second generation Latino youth are most vulnerable because they have not been truly integrated into the U.S. culture.

One participant noted that it is important to look at the role of colonization as it influences the psyche, self-concept, one's relationships in the community and one's experience in a culture. Therefore, addressing the vestiges of colonialism and domination (rage, not feeling valued, feeling inferior, etc.,) must be a critical component of helping to eradicate violence among Latinos.

Youth lack information about domestic violence and often do not know where to turn for help. Youth also lack knowledge about their health and ways to protect against STD's, HIV and teen pregnancy. This dearth of information for Latino youth makes it more likely that they will give into peer pressure that takes them beyond their healthy personal boundaries. Latino gay youth face homophobia within the family and within their communities, only to go to school and deal with school counselors who also victimize them. It is against this backdrop that domestic violence advocates are working with young Latinas and Latinos.

Sharing Strategies for Youth Outreach

A number of participants reported going into local schools in both urban and rural areas to talk with youth and help them understand the roots of domestic violence. Presentations are often interactive and involve role-plays to help youth recognize and assess potentially

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violent situations. In particular, young Latinas are taught to recognize the warning signs of a potentially abusive relationship, like jealousy and controlling behavior. They are also shown examples of what a healthy relationship looks like.

Young Latinas often employ one set of behaviors at home and another outside of the home, often out of necessity. Advocates that work with young Latinas help them deal with the varying environments and pressure experience. Some agencies use peer educators, i.e., other young Latina survivors of domestic violence, to build trust and hope among the women. Through the use of presentations, support groups, peers and other outreach methods, youth advocates provide good opportunities for young Latinas to gain information and ask questions.

Participants agreed that domestic violence programs must work at creating an inviting and welcoming space for Latina youth. This is being done in many ways. One agency created a curriculum for grades 3-6 that addresses topics such as conflict resolution, safety, family violence and the dynamics of domestic violence. Another employs a multidisciplinary community response team. Many facilitate support groups where young women can discuss a range of issues affecting their lives. Other agencies work with psychologists to help them address the multiple issues that their young clients face.

On a related note, many participants noted the importance of having programs for young males not only to help them deal with violence, but to also help them transition into manhood. One participant suggested that such programs should be similar in format to Alcoholics Anonymous. Another noted a therapy group for young men facilitated by a psychologist worked well.

Program Models

While it often is a challenge to engage Latino youth, this is a critical objective of all domestic violence programs. Good domestic violence prevention must include outreach to youth that makes it clear to them that they can always get help—protective orders, counseling, and other support services—outside of the home. Counseling for youth is extremely important and should be available both in the community and in schools. Domestic violence program staff must be well trained to work with Latino youth and have healthy self-esteem themselves. Programs should also engage Latino youth, asking them about their needs, utilizing their ideas and cultivating youth leadership programs. Helping young Latinas/os meet their life needs—housing, benefits, health care—is an important component.

Moreover, providing incentives to encourage youth to participate in programs can help. One participant-agency provides internships for young fathers. Another offers part-time jobs. One participant reminded the group to help youth take on responsibilities step by step: care of self, care of child, and education. The pace is important. Youth are children and the burdens and responsibilities many of them bear are enormous, making it very easy for them to feel inadequate and overwhelmed. It is the responsibility of all in the community to help the youth gain a sense of belonging and self efficacy.

Addressing Youth Violence

There has to be a recognition and response to the violence and trauma in the family, such as incest, especially for youth who do not know where to turn, to help them deal with the depression and other psychological problems that ensue. Holistic solutions to break the cycle of violence in the home and the community are needed. As one advocate noted, violence is more than the act. It is also the way we “walk and talk.” Even minor violations can do a lot of damage.

Grassroots organizing is a key strategy. Community players need to be engaged—school teachers and school counselors have a big influence on youth, especially youth who cannot get support at home. Improving health education in the schools is a fundamental strategy. We need more sexual health education in the schools. Advocates and school officials must allow a fuller discussion about sexuality beyond abstinence. Advocates must press for the distribution of condoms in schools and health education about their use. One participant noted that the state of California refused to take federal money for abstinence only programs, thereby ensuring more options about what they can teach.

Participants agreed that youth are influenced heavily by media images and messages and that practitioners must help youth deconstruct negative images and messages. As noted by one participant, “We have to be very careful about the information and messages we are giving youth, especially when the information comes from a source outside of the community.” Our environment and the television are constantly bombarding youth with negative messages—especially the telenovelas. One participant asserted that, “We must educate girls that a punch does not have to follow a kiss.” Another recommends that young Latinas not rent video games because the images and messages are so negative.

Role of Law & Policy

Law enforcement and lawyers can play a critical role in educating youth about their rights and the protections available to them as victims of violence and programs should work to foster such collaborations. Furthermore, advocates must look at the role of law and public policy and insist on conscientious lawmaking. The state has a role in stemming violent behavior against children and youth. We need strong government support for good programs. Participants noted that we must also teach the community to engage in more self-advocacy and leadership in the policy arena. Advocates must be willing to provide education to judges and lawyers. Judges and prosecutors should be invited to grassroots forums to increase their awareness and understanding of how violence affects the community.

Funding programs for youth are needed to domestic violence agencies reach more young Latinas/os and educate them about domestic violence and dating violence. Latino organizations continue to be greatly under funded.² Advocates must pressure private and public (state and federal) funding sources to provide more resources.

Additional resources will allow programs to employ effective community wide strategies include training and education. Advocates must do more self-advocacy and work pressure private and public (state and federal) funding sources to provide more resources. We must also look at international models that may be models for improving domestic programs for youth.

Solving the larger social problems affecting Latinos is part of the strategy for eliminating the violence as well. Participants stressed that we must engage in a collective effort to connect domestic violence to larger social justice issues affecting Latino communities—poverty, the need for greater educational opportunities, jobs and employment training, the lack of safe and affordable housing, the need for legal services, immigration reform, improved access to health care, and the like.

² According to Hispanics in Philanthropy’s Collaborative Evaluation Snapshot, “most Latino nonprofits are small, young, isolated, and have extremely limited financial and organizational resources.” Although Latinos represent more than 13 percent of the US population, Latino nonprofits represent only 3 percent of all nonprofits, and receive less than 1.5 percent of all foundation grants.

WHEN OLDER LATINAS ARE ABUSED

In this session, participants discussed the unique experience of older Latinas facing domestic violence.

The abuse of older Latinas is too often overlooked. The perpetrators of elder abuse are most often adult children and sometimes teen grandchildren, although spouses are also perpetrators and some women have lived with abuse most of their married lives. The abuse by children is both physical and psychological, including economic coercion. Adult children often take control of money matters for their parents, grandparents, aunt and uncles, leaving them financially dependent. Many elderly Latina mothers will not report the abuse or put the children out of the home because of guilt and adherence to a sense of family loyalty. Advocates suggested a number of solutions for improving the plight of older Latinas who are battered:

- Create more service programs specifically for elderly Latinas;
- Increase access to health care and supportive services such as: housing, money management, and violence prevention education;
- Training seniors to serve as anti-domestic violence peer educators;
- Creating user-friendly “know your rights” materials;
- Training people in social and health services (such as visiting nurses, meals on wheels, home care providers, and the police) to recognize and the signs and screen for senior abuse; and,
- Air more public service announcements about elder abuse to increase awareness, community dialogue and vigilance.

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INTEGRATION OF EVERY LATINA VOICE

In this dialogue circle, participants discussed whether mainstream domestic violence programs are culturally competent; the elements of cultural sensitivity; the advancements that have been made in this area; the improvements that need to be made; and who must take responsibility for these improvements.

Latinas are a diverse group that includes Afro-Latinas, differently-abled Latinas, migrant workers, lesbians, English language dominant Latinas, and many others. Given this diversity, it can be a challenge for domestic violence agencies to create programs that meet the needs of various battered Latina women while also fostering unity and solidarity among Latinas. For battered Latinas, the common factor is that all of the women are survivors of domestic violence. Beyond this unifying point, not all in the community see or embrace the different experiences and needs of the various sub-groups of Latinas in need of domestic violence services.

The Intersection of Race, Gender and Class

Participants discussed how many Latinas have grown up in a culture where they only saw people who looked like them, only to come to the U.S. and experience a mix of races and ethnicities, and perhaps for the first time, experiencing how racism can define a person and limit her opportunities. Participants discussed some of the difficult personal experiences concerning

the issues of race and discrimination. Some participants noted that many Latinos did not call themselves “Afro-Latinos” until coming to the U.S. One participant recounted that a client who looks “black” and was applying for housing would not check the box marked “black” because she felt that she would not get housing. This is just one example as to why it is important for Latina advocates and clients to work at deconstructing barriers as a first step toward a more inclusive approach to services for battered Latinas.

A related issue is the complex intersection of racism, sexism, classism, homophobia and heterosexism in the Latino culture and the culture at large. Latinos that can present as more “mainstream” benefit from white privilege in ways that other Latinos cannot and this impacts relationships among Latinos, as well. Therefore, when looking for ways to ensure that all Latinas have a voice, it is important to consider this dynamic. The importance of recognizing differences is that it allows for us to create the necessary safe spaces—based on race, gender, gender identity, language and the like—and then use this information gained to create sensitive programs and services. This allows Latina advocates and clients alike to relate more affirmatively.

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The Need for Unifying Principles

One participant noted that programs must expressly integrate anti-oppression principles into their work and look at the issue of power among diverse groups of Latinas if we are to positively engage a diversity of Latina voices. We must also recognize the ways that Latinas view their cultural histories and how it informs and influences personal relationships among different groups of Latinas.

In order to integrate diverse Latina voices, advocates can start by asking what we individually can do within our own programs. One participant noted that at her agency the experience and needs of immigrant women can be different from indigenous women, so she separates them initially. We must also create and encourage leaders in our communities to take on the necessary battles against anti-oppression. One participant said, “We must understand that providing sensitive services does not always mean more money and that the community can come up with innovative ways to meet the varied needs of its diverse clients.”

We must also acknowledge that some of the ways we as advocates try to assist the community may not be what the community needs or wants. An advocate cited an example of women in a particular housing project who refused to access available local domestic violence services. Instead the women had an internal system of helping one another where a neighbor’s apartment served as a safe space.

Inclusive Leadership

Another important issue with respect to diversity is inclusive leadership and decision-making. One participant, an Afro-Latina, noted that she was the first Latina to be the director of her program, something that she sees often when she visits other Latina organizations. In addition, programs must look carefully at how they make decisions. Programs must work to make sure services are not delivered in a way that is patronizing to clients or imposes a way of thinking that does not consider the client and her perspective.

Another challenge is how not to perpetuate a feeling among groups that there are limited resources for meeting the various needs or perpetuation of a “deficit mentality” often fostered by internalized oppression. We should also guard against a competitive mentality against other “organizations of color” that can be fueled by this feeling of scarcity of resources. Sometimes this occurs among different sub-groups in Latino communities. Critical self-reflection is key for both Latina advocates and women who utilize the services, if domestic violence programs are to create meaningful access and sharing among all Latinas.





CONCLUSION

BUILDING A NATIONAL LATINA MOVEMENT

Latinos have now become the single, largest “minority group” at a time when civil rights and human rights protections are being eroded in the United States. Continuing racism, gender discrimination, low wages and employment discrimination, rising anti-immigrant sentiment, homophobia and reproductive rights assaults are just some of the challenges affecting Latino communities. There is an overrepresentation of Latinos/as (both adults and youth) in the criminal justice system. Plus they experience discrimination during arrest, prosecution, and sentencing, and are more likely to be incarcerated than Whites charged with the same offenses. Latino families are living with various forms of state sanctioned violence and malignant forms of negligence that threaten the future viability of our community.

Advocates must think critically about the future and what is happening and affecting our families, not only within the domestic violence movement, but in the broader political context as well. There are very dangerous trends which have been set in motion, and if the anti-violence movement within the Latina community is to be a vibrant movement, advocates must make the broader connections. As noted by numerous participants, battered Latinas experience multiple oppressions daily, yet programs are not necessarily designed to address these conditions, nor have ties been made with other community organizations that may provide support and resources. There is a need for strategies that are well organized, multi-dimensional, transformative and strategic.

Latinas wear many hats both positive and negative ones— mother, friend, advocate, worker, student, prisoner, parolee, and many more. Latina advocates must be mindful to engage in self-care in order to remain safe, healthy, and productive and to be able to support their clients and their overall work. Anti-violence advocacy is difficult and demanding work that challenges us on every level. At the personal level, participants agreed that advocates must work to heal themselves and claim their feelings and emotions; not ignore or be apologetic about them. Advocates must also remember that when they work with other people in pain, there may come a time when the worker’s personal pain interferes. It is at this point that advocates must let go in order or seek support and other interventions to ensure that a client receives the proper help. They must also claim their traditions, culture, and ceremonies, as these things represent powerful cultural strengths that can help us to heal and work to heal others. They are gifts from the ancestors that must be protected and carried on.

There are many bridges to be built. Therefore, advocates must be clear about the principles that shape the practice. LGBT issues are important. Homophobia within the Latino culture must be addressed. Acknowledging, naming, analyzing, processing the issues; this is what will enable Latinas to respond more effectively. Change will not happen in one big sweep. It is little movements—one relationship at a time, one conversation at a time, one family at a time, that eventually creates the sea change.

There is a need for a strong Latina movement that encompasses representation from a broad sector of our communities. There are Latino organizations, publications, associations and other entities, but not a national movement of Latinas. All of the work done on an individual and

programmatic level is critically important, however, Latinas continue to be absent at the decision-making level. In the meantime, Latina women are dying—from violence, breast cancer, AIDS, substance abuse, etc. Latinas need to come to acknowledge the need for a national movement and recognize that the capacity to build such a movement exists. Advocates must work to realize this vision and take action to convince advocates, funders, allies and stakeholders to support this vision. Moreover, this movement should not be limited to only delivering more domestic violence services to Latinas. Advocates must articulate a broad policy agenda that addresses the intersectionality of oppressions experienced by Latinas throughout this country and helps mobilize our communities to advocate for needed system reforms.

Toward this aim, the following recommendations were offered by participants throughout the course of the conference:

Major recommendations:

- Make the connections between what we do in the area of domestic violence and the struggles for peace and human rights throughout the world;
- Incorporate self care and self reflection in our work to avoid advocate burn out;
- Help build a strong, inclusive Latina movement across issues, that addresses the multiple oppressions of Latinas experiences;
- Look at the trends in welfare reform, xenophobia, immigration, reproductive justice, HIV/AIDS and health disparities that impact Latinas;
- Develop anti-violence models for joint work between Latino women and men;
- Recognize the importance of combating homophobia in Latino communities by developing more services for gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender Latinos
- Increase Latina involvement in policy advocacy work in order to influence policies and funding at all levels (local, state and national);
- Develop strategies to serve Latina immigrant women;
- Mentor and cultivate new Latina activists;
- Build a national network of Latina advocates; and
- Create a mechanism for collective action to influence policy and funding at national and state and local levels.

In closing, it is important to acknowledge that Latinas already comprise 13% of women in the U.S. and will account for close to 25% of the U.S. female population by the year 2050. Moreover, Latinas are the youngest sector of the female population, with 40% under the age of 21. As such, we stand at a unique historical juncture as a new wave of Latinas come of age and begin to change the political and social landscape of this country. Without question, Latina civic influence will grow exponentially over the next decade making their involvement and leadership in the domestic violence movement a prerequisite for greater change. For these reasons and many more, the building of a National Latina Movement is an essential strategy for improving opportunities and the quality of life for Latinas throughout this country.



APPENDIX A

OVERVIEW OF ALIANZA

MISSION

The National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence (Alianza) is part of a national effort to address the domestic violence needs and concerns of under-served populations. It represents a growing network of Latina and Latino advocates, practitioners, researchers, community activists, and survivors of domestic violence. Alianza's mission is to: promote understanding, initiate and sustain dialogue, and generate solutions that move toward the elimination of domestic violence affecting Latino communities, with an understanding of the sacredness of all relations and communities.

PROGRAMS AND PROJECTS

Alianza carries out work in four major areas:

Training and Technical Assistance

Alianza organizes conferences and other training forums that help Latino/a service providers and advocates enhance their knowledge and skills; develops and disseminates culturally and linguistically competent resource materials.

Community Education and Development

Alianza works to raise awareness about the devastating effect of domestic violence on Latino families and communities and provides information about existing laws, options, resources, and services. It does this through the placement of news articles, radio and television PSAs, radio and TV talk shows, and the hosting of community events. Alianza serves on the organizing committee of the annual NYC's Brides' March Against Domestic Violence.

Research

Alianza promotes culturally competent research that informs policies and helps develop culturally competent strategies and programs; conducts focus groups/community assessments with survivors and service providers; helps to develop and mentor students and other Latino/a researchers; maintains a repository of culturally competent literature regarding domestic violence in Latino/a communities that is available to the public; and promotes partnerships between academic researchers and community agencies. It also produces facts sheets on domestic violence in Latino communities and summaries of research articles for posting on our website.

Public Policy

Alianza advocates for and helps to formulate policies that will prevent and help end domestic violence in Latino communities; monitors and disseminates information about the impact of domestic violence policies and legislation on Latino communities; and advocates for the allocation of adequate resources to help prevent and end domestic violence in Latino communities.



GUIDING PRINCIPLES

- respect for the diversity of Latino communities
- recognition that domestic violence within Latino families occurs in the context of communities suffering from a legacy of multiple oppressions: colonization, discrimination, racism, and poverty
- commitment to work together as men and women, with the understanding that women remain the primary victims of domestic violence
- commitment to look for alternatives to the over-reliance on the criminal justice system
- commitment to develop partnerships with Latino-led institutions and organizations outside of the domestic violence arena
- recognition of the need to collaborate with other domestic violence organizations
- recognition of families in their various structures
- integration of culture and spirituality into our work

BACKGROUND AND HISTORY

Alianza evolved out of a partnership that began in January 1997, between the Office of Community Services (OCS)/Administration for Children and Families of the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) and a national Steering Committee composed of several Latinas and Latinos with a history of leadership in domestic violence work. DHHS acknowledged the fact that “one size” does not fit all communities and helped create “Cultural Institutes” in the African American, Asian/Pacific Islanders and Latino communities.

In November 1997, the Steering Committee and OCS organized the National Symposium on La Violencia Doméstica: An Emerging Dialogue Among Latinos, which was held in Washington, D.C. The Symposium brought together an interdisciplinary group of 40 Latinos and Latinas, including advocates, community activists, practitioners, lawyers, researchers, and domestic violence survivors to initiate a national dialogue about domestic violence in Latino communities—needs, concerns, assets and to begin to make recommendations for what actions needed to take place. The Symposium proceedings were published in August 1999.

One of the major recommendations that emerged from the Symposium was the creation of a national organization for ongoing dialogue, education, and advocacy. The Steering Committee adopted the current name for the organization in March 1999, and developed a mission, vision, and general goals.

In September 2000, the DHHS awarded a start-up grant to Alianza. Soon after, Alianza hired a core staff and set up an office in New York City, within the Violence Intervention Program, its host agency. In January 2002, Alianza moved into its own office space. We became incorporated in June 2003 and acquired tax-exempt status in June 2004.

Our funders and supporters include Agency for Children and Families/ DHHS, Office of Violence Against Women/Department of Justice, the Ford Foundation, the Tides Foundation, and Lifetime Television, as well as a small pool of individual donors.



ANEXO B

MISIÓN Y PROPÓSITO

La Alianza Latina Nacional para Erradicar La Violencia Doméstica, “Alianza” (National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence, en inglés) es la primera organización nacional dedicada a las necesidades y preocupaciones de la comunidad latina respecto a la violencia doméstica.

Su misión es promover el entendimiento, mantener el diálogo y generar soluciones para erradicar la violencia doméstica que afecta a la comunidad latina, entendiendo cuán sagradas son todas las relaciones y las comunidades.

Alianza surgió de una colaboración que comenzó en enero de 1997 entre la Oficina de Servicios Comunitarios de la Administración para el Niño y la Familia del Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos de los EE.UU. y un Comité Directivo formado por varias latinas y latinos con amplia trayectoria y liderazgo en el campo de la violencia doméstica. El Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos (DHHS) reconoció el hecho de que “tamaño único” no sirve para todas las comunidades y ayudó a crear los “Institutos Culturales” en las comunidades de afro americanos, de nativos de las islas de Asia y el Pacífico, y de latinos.

En septiembre de 2000 el Departamento de Salud y Servicios Humanos presentó una concesión a Alianza. Poco tiempo después, Alianza contrató personal y abrió sus oficinas en la ciudad de Nueva York, en el Programa de Intervención de la Violencia Doméstica, la agencia sede. En enero de 2002, Alianza se mudó a su propio local. En 2003, Alianza se constituyó en sociedad y en junio de 2004 se le concedió el estatus de exención impositiva.

PROGRAMAS Y PROYECTOS

Alianza trabaja en cuatro áreas principales:

Desarrollo y educación comunitaria

Los objetivos de Alianza en esta área son: aumentar los niveles de conciencia pública sobre violencia doméstica en la comunidad latina: su existencia, prevalencia, naturaleza y efectos nocivos; ofrecer información sobre los derechos, las opciones disponibles, los recursos y servicios; trabajar con organizaciones latinas en comunidades blanco, antes y después de las campañas de conciencia pública, para ayudar a desarrollar su capacidad para aumentar la conciencia y realizar programas de extensión de prevención e intervención de conducta entre los miembros de su público.

Política pública

Alianza promueve, defiende y ayuda a elaborar políticas que previenen y ayudan a dar fin a la violencia doméstica en la comunidad latina; monitorea y disemina información sobre el impacto de las políticas y leyes sobre violencia doméstica en la comunidad latina; y aboga para que se designen recursos que ayuden a prevenir y a dar fin a la violencia doméstica en la comunidad latina.

Investigación

Alianza promueve investigaciones competentes en cuanto a la cultura que informen las políticas y ayuden a elaborar estrategias y programas culturalmente competentes; ayuda a desarrollar y orientar a más investigadores latinos; crea un centro donde se congrega la información culturalmente competente sobre violencia doméstica en la comunidad latina y la pone a disposición del público; y establece sociedades entre investigadores teóricos y las agencias comunitarias.

Capacitación y asistencia técnica

Alianza organiza conferencias y otros foros de capacitación que ayudan a trabajadores/as que abogan por o proveen servicios a familias y comunidades latinas, perfeccionando sus conocimientos y capacidades. También elabora y disemina materiales y otros recursos en inglés y español.

Principios Orientadores

- Respeto a la diversidad en la comunidad latina
- Reconocimiento que la violencia doméstica en la familia latina sucede dentro de un contexto de una comunidad que sufre un legado de múltiples opresiones: colonización, discriminación, racismo y pobreza
- Compromiso de trabajo conjunto entre hombres y mujeres sabiendo que la mujer sigue siendo la principal víctima de la violencia doméstica
- Compromiso a buscar alternativas para la excesiva dependencia en el sistema jurídico
- Compromiso a forjar sociedades con instituciones y organizaciones lideradas por latinos fuera del campo de la violencia doméstica
- Reconocimiento de la necesidad de colaborar con otras organizaciones de violencia doméstica
- Reconocimiento de las varias estructuras de la familia
- Integración de la cultura y la espiritualidad en nuestra labor





APPENDIX C

FORUM PLANNING COMMITTEE MEMBERS

(Note: This list reflects the organizational affiliation of the participants at the time of the Forum)

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APPENDIX D

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APPENDIX E

RESOURCES FOR WORKING WITH LATINAS AND DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

A: THE GLOBALIZATION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

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ORGANIZATIONS/WEBSITES:

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- National Resource Center on Domestic Violence, <http://www.nrcdv.org>
- Urban Institute, www.urban.org
- Violence Against Women Resource Center, Johns Hopkins University, www.endvaw.org

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ORGANIZATIONS

- Battered Women's Justice Project, 1 (800) 903-0111, www.bwjf.org/

F: LATINAS AND LATINOS: TRABAJANDO JUNTOS

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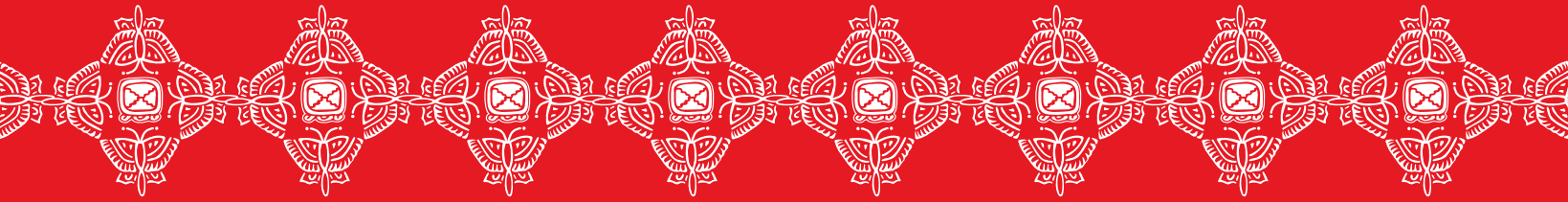
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