



Appendix D

Preparatory Reading for Trainers

Outreach to Underserved Communities, by Sujata Warriar

A WORKING DISCUSSION PAPER

**Achieving Effective Domestic Violence Public
Education In A Diverse Society:
A Solution-Oriented Approach**

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A project of

**The National Domestic Violence Awareness Month
Advisory Committee**

Supported by

The National Domestic Violence Awareness Month Project

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Acknowledgments

With grateful appreciation to the following individuals for their time and assistance with research, scenarios, editorial reviews and other valuable contributions to the development of this working discussion paper: Beatris Burgos, Anna Belle Burleson, Ridgely duPont, Donna Edwards, Marion Houston, Mimi Kim, Sue Julian, Lisa Lederer, Anne Menard, Kelly Mitchell-Clark, Alva Moreno, Amazonas Olivella, Cindy Newcomer, Kim Riordan, Judy Routh, Pam Shea, Rita Smith, Carole Warshaw, Oliver Williams and Sue Wolf.

A very special thanks to the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence for supporting this project as envisioned by the National Domestic Violence Awareness Month Advisory Committee and for their untiring commitment to upholding and honoring diversity, and especially the Public Education Technical Assistance Project for helping us to realize our goal.

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***“Rather than difference itself,
it is the response to difference that is the problem.***

***Rather than culture itself,
it is the attitudes about culture that are the problem.***

***Rather than diversity itself,
it is the ways in which major institutions of this country have responded to
culturally, racially and ethnically diverse people that is the major source of
our condition of ...inequality.”¹***

Introduction

Within the past few decades, the battered women’s movement has brought to light the issue of domestic violence and its long-term effects on women. Public education² through community events, media presentations and trainings has raised awareness of the tremendous cost of domestic violence to society. The movement has effectively documented that domestic violence cuts across race, ethnicity, sexual identity, class, age, and ability. Across the spectrum, women from every culture and community seek support from the movement to live free from intimate violence. Policies of Zero Tolerance³ for domestic violence exist in many communities. Tremendous changes in public policy and attitudes towards domestic violence have been achieved through public education and activism by battered women’s advocates. Organizing and mobilizing communities to take responsibility and ownership of the issue of domestic violence has been a key component in public education campaigns.

While great strides have been made, all policies, practices, services and community organizing have not been equally successful in addressing the multiple needs of all communities within our society. It is becoming increasingly clear that the ‘one size fits all’ approach does not work. Changes in the composition of the population, new research about the disparity in accessing services and supports for victims of domestic violence, and increased advocacy and activism by disadvantaged groups have led to an acknowledgment of, and an increased interest in addressing the issue of diversity.

This paper was conceived to help remedy the lack of information on how to address the issue of diversity in public education, at a time when funders are increasingly seeking more responsible work in diverse communities. The objective is to provide hands-on information and techniques that will help battered women’s advocates and others working to end domestic violence better address diversity in their public and community education campaigns.

The diversity of the United States is its definite strength. Informally, diversity has meant race/ethnicity. In this document diversity is defined more broadly to include sexual

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identity, age, class, ability, religion, socioeconomic status, immigration status, and location (i.e. urban/rural). It is not enough to acknowledge that differences exist. Our attitudes and responses to differences have a significant impact on our ability to address existing inequalities for women in many communities. Confronting the issue of diversity in the domestic violence movement is a tremendous, on-going challenge.

Our response and work must arise from an understanding that many women experience abuse in intimate relations, simultaneously with other forms of personal, environmental and social violations. Most women do not experience these as separate and competing claims.⁴ For example, a poor, 55 year old Asian battered woman not only has to negotiate the intimate violence in her life, she must also navigate complex relations based on age, race, identity, culture and other dimensions. In fact, keeping issues separate has often worsened divisions among women.

I. Violence Against Women as a Human Rights Issue

Historically, we are at the right juncture to include diversity in public education on domestic violence. Alliance building with other groups is critical when we consider the larger global political climate. The globalization of the economy, the decline in power for many groups of people who had made gains in the 1960's and the current climate of intolerance make building alliances with diverse groups more urgent than ever. Building alliances has been helpful across diverse societies of the world. Therefore, taking this stance can help domestic violence advocates do our work in our own smaller but diverse localities. The time is also right to reframe the issue of domestic violence as an abuse of human rights because advocates in the United States are: a) increasingly coming into contact with diverse people from different parts of the globe in their own communities; b) through their journeys outside the U.S., getting to know diverse groups of people; and c) beginning to hear about the issues confronting groups who are different from the mainstream.

Overall, domestic violence in its many and varied forms is only one part of the larger spectrum of violence against women. These range from female foeticide⁵ at one end to woman murder at the other. In between, violence takes the form of female infanticide,⁶ neglect of female children, rape/sexual assault, battering, female genital mutilation,⁷ discrimination, domestic violence in all its forms, harassment, and economic coercion. Numbers and statistics abound on the pervasive nature of violence against women and girls. This brutality is neither inevitable nor natural, but rather an unacceptable means of maintaining power and control that should be dismantled.⁸

Advocates in the battered women's movement understand that power and control are at the heart of domestic violence and to end domestic violence social power must be more equitably distributed. But the imbalance in power can be dismantled only when we work together on the intersection of issues such as economic justice, racism, heterosexism, class and imperialism⁹ to name a few. Given different cultural, social, economic and political contexts, all women are not subject to or at risk of becoming direct victims of gender-based violence. Sometimes women belonging to a particular class, race or sexual identity can

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contribute to the oppression of other women by not understanding that violence may be expressed differently, although it arises out of the same structure. This oppression is apparent in comments such as:

- “The men in your culture are horrible to women...How can they burn their women?” in reference to dowry deaths.
- A look of total disgust passes over the faces in the audience as someone begins talking about female genital mutilation. “How can they be so barbaric?”
- “How can a lesbian abuse her partner? It has to be mutual.”
- “ In that culture, the men are so brutal that they will kill the woman, even if she looks at another man. Imagine, it is called the honor defense.”

The above statements are dismissive of the subjugation of other women and of other cultures as a whole. Although the forms of abuse might be different, the bottomline remains that one half of humanity is at risk of being brutalized from cradle to the grave solely on the basis of gender. This is what we need to remember in our work. While acknowledging differences, we must also accept similarities.

Alliance building is key to bridging cultural differences. Public education in its many forms is already in place within the battered women’s movement as one of the primary mechanisms to bring about social change. It also allows us to build alliances with diverse groups. One model that might work for educators and outreach staff is the interactive model developed by Alper.¹⁰ This model emphasizes the interaction between various forms of oppression. It recognizes that the structure of our society imposes unfair privileges and burdens upon a number of social groups and that there are many different forms of oppression, which interact with each other in complex ways. Further, since no one form of domination should be considered the driving force in all contexts, eliminating a single form will not get rid of all the others. In this model, public education and consciousness raising are an integral part of broadening everyone’s understanding of their own issues, of the issues of others and the links between them all.

As advocates and community educators, educating ourselves and others about issues of diversity is an integral part of ending the oppression which leads to domestic violence and all other forms of violence against women.

At this point, you might very well say: “Why should I bother with all of this?” or “Of what use is my knowing that women across the world are victimized in a number of ways?” or “This only makes my work in this small area of my world so much harder.”

The above are all very legitimate questions, but miss two important points. First is that understanding that domestic violence is a human rights issue allows advocates across the globe to have a collective, common ground. Second, it makes our work easier because it allows for the inclusion of diversity. Remember, understanding and embracing diversity is a journey.

The reasons for including diversity in our work are many and range from simple to complex. As battered women’s advocates become more successful in our public education efforts, more groups are claiming ownership over the issue of domestic violence and more

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survivors are seeking our assistance. Changes in immigration laws in the 1960's opened the doors to the United States to people from many countries. In order to help battered victims from diverse groups, we have to understand how their hopes and fears, norms about privacy and dignity are defined by their cultural frame of reference. The more open and respectful we are, the quicker they may accept new ways of pursuing and achieving safety. Battered women's advocates must continue to address the issue of domestic violence and respect the differences among women working toward a common goal by:

- finding out what are the issues in the communities that make up our service regions;
- asking how we can build a link between domestic violence and other issues such as poverty, homelessness and immigration which are of importance to those communities;
- being creative and open to non-traditional strategies to end domestic violence, understanding that a 'traditional/standard' approach may not work in every situation; and
- linking all the related issues through the prism and philosophy that: One half of humanity, i.e. ALL WOMEN, should be able to live dignified lives free from violence and domination.

II. Framing the Discussion: Concepts and Definitions

The previous section described the challenges battered women's advocates face in understanding and appropriately responding to broadly diverse groups who are seeking domestic violence supports and services. As such, our discussion of diversity must start at a place that is broadly defining and encompasses varying viewpoints. Language or words frequently have more than one meaning and are subject to a variety of interpretations influenced by our individual and collective experiences.

The purpose here is to frame the context and meaning of diversity in relation to other frequently used concepts and definitions which attempt to describe people's values, beliefs, assumptions and behaviors. The intent of this section is to establish mutual terminology which will enhance our discussion about domestic violence outreach, public education and prevention in diverse communities.

The following list of definitions are provided as a frame of reference and as a source for connecting the concepts discussed in this document. They have been adapted and/or reprinted here from the works of various authors who are listed and acknowledged in the reference section.¹¹

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Culture. Culture is a stable pattern of beliefs, attitudes and behaviors, transmitted from generation to generation for the purpose of successfully adapting to other group members and to their environment.

Cultural Awareness. Cultural awareness occurs when people develop sensitivity and understanding of another cultural group. It usually involves individual, personal, internal changes in terms of attitudes and values. Awareness and sensitivity also refer to the qualities of openness and flexibility that people develop in relation to others.

Cultural Competence. Cultural or ethnic competence refers to the development of skills that help people behave in a culturally appropriate way with a given group, demonstrating both sensitivity to cultural differences and the use of appropriate cultural symbols when interacting and communicating with members of diverse populations. It involves the acceptance of ethnic differences in a open, genuine manner, without condescension and without patronizing gestures.

Cross Cultural Attitudes. Cross cultural attitudes are perceptions individuals hold about other cultural groups. They can be categorized as:

- **Superiority.** The provider considers the client's culture inferior or worthless and actively tries to impose his/her values and world-view.
- **Incapacity.** The provider acknowledges differences, but has no skills or tools to address them effectively.
- **Universality.** The provider considers that all humans share basic values and therefore treats all people alike, regardless of their differences.

Discrimination. This involves unfavorable treatment or action against an individual or group on the basis of ethnic background, race, gender, age, physical ability and other characteristics.

Diversity. Diversity as a concept acknowledges that we live in a society that consists of multiple groups, with each group having its own culture; it holds that there may be more differences among ourselves than there are similarities. In its broadest form, diversity encompasses differences in culture, national origin, gender, sexual identity, socioeconomic/ educational status, physical or mental capacity, age, language, beliefs, values, behavior patterns or customs among the various groups within a community, organization, or nation.

Ethnicity and Ethnic Groups. Ethnic groups are those that can be distinguished by socially selected cultural characteristics, such as names, language, accents, religion, and various behavioral characteristics. Examples of ethnic groups include: Korean, Jewish, African, etc.

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Empowerment. Empowerment is a process of increasing personal, interpersonal and/or political power so that individuals take action to improve their life situations.

Heterosexism. Heterosexism is the institutional response which assumes that all people are heterosexual and therefore excludes the needs, concerns and life experiences of lesbians and gay men. Heterosexism extends beyond homophobia. A person without any homophobic attitude can still be heterosexist by not working to challenge and change those policies and practices within her/his institution that have heterosexist results.

Homophobia. Homophobia, which has its roots in sexism, is the irrational fear of lesbians and gay men and the hatred, disgust and prejudice that fear brings.

Imperialism. Imperialism is a system which includes the policies and practices by which a nation extends its authority over another. This can be achieved by acquiring rights over another nation's territory by force (e.g. how the British acquired many countries by force and then extended their authority over conquered nations). The modern form of conquest is more subtle. Territories are acquired today by economic and political control. Social control is then extended through economic policies that are enforced through giving or withholding money and sometimes through the practices of corporations.

Minorities. This is a sociological term that refers to a culturally, racially or physically distinctive social group whose members experience various disadvantages at the hands of other more powerful social groups. These disadvantages include prejudice, discrimination, segregation, or persecution (or a combination of these). Despite its literal meaning, a minority is not a statistical category, although minority groups are generally of smaller size than the dominant group.

Multicultural. The term multicultural usually refers to groups comprised of people of different races or ethnicities. It is in common usage today and means that members of different racial/ethnic groups live together in *harmony* with some understanding, tolerance and valuing of differences.

Prejudice. Prejudice commonly means a *prejudgement* about a person or group and may involve the harmful application of incorrect stereotypes. It involves attitudes and feelings resulting in the tendency to engage in a negative action against the person or group about which these attitudes and feelings have developed.

Public Education. Public or community education is one of the primary social change mechanisms in place within the battered women's movement. It includes many activities such as: community presentations, media advocacy, school prevention programs, development and distribution of outreach/awareness materials, provision of training to other professionals, implementation of awareness campaigns and organizing public events. The goals of

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public education include increasing public awareness and social action related to domestic violence, outreach to survivors and their children, primary prevention, and increasing responsiveness of service providers and community systems to battered women.

Race and Racial Group. Race has been given a biological and social meaning. It means a distinct category of human beings with physical characteristics transmitted by descent. Caucasian and Asian are examples of racial groups.

Racism. Racism is racial prejudice plus power. Racism is the intentional or unintentional use of power to isolate, separate and exploit others. This use of power is based on a belief in superior racial origin, identity or supposed racial characteristics. Racism confers certain privileges on and defends the dominant group, which in turn sustains and perpetuates racism. Both consciously and unconsciously, racism is enforced and maintained by the legal, cultural, religious, educational, economic, political, environmental and military institutions of society. Racism is more than just a personal attitude; it is the institutionalized form of that attitude.

III. Making a Case for Effective Domestic Violence Public Education and Outreach: Common Errors in Cross-Cultural Interactions and Communications

Effective domestic violence public education must include diverse groups. Most advocates know how to do public education on domestic violence. The challenge is how to create and make public education campaigns more appealing in a diverse society. As such, we must advance our goal of culturally competent work and collaboration with broad communities in a manner which is culturally sensitive and appropriate.

This section has been developed to illustrate common errors in the way advocates and others approach working with diverse populations. It was designed with the input of domestic violence advocates willing to share their experiences, successes and failures, to help others improve their responsiveness to battered women from diverse communities. The following scenarios illustrate ineffective response, as well as considerations for effective response.

Illustration A: A Case of Omission

Over the past year, a local jurisdiction developed a statewide program to help improve the health care response to domestic violence, based on a national training model. The project consists of 13 statewide hospitals in partnership with local domestic violence programs. Each facility is unique in terms of size, staffing, patient population, geographic location (i.e. rural vs. urban), as well as organizational structure and culture. Participating hospitals are charged with developing model response/interventions and providing staff and public education to patients presenting with domestic violence injuries in their emergency rooms. All facilities have assigned multi-disciplinary teams to the project, many of which are

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comprised of racially homogenous groups. Because of the lack of diversity among team membership, most have cited great difficulty in reaching and servicing diverse population groups. During a recent technical assistance site visit the following scenario took place.

The hospital team, which is based in an area that is predominantly white, reported considerable challenges to developing and implementing their program. Their list included difficulties in getting hospital administrative support for the program, challenges in training and engaging hospital staff, patient denial and reluctance to disclose or utilize the new services offered, and budget constraints restricting the development and distribution of public education materials. When asked if they had any difficulties with outreach and service to diverse populations, one member of the team enthusiastically replied, “that’s one problem we don’t have here!”

Ineffective Response

The scenario above illustrates a frequent error of omission. The problem was reducing diversity to only one component – race. The majority of the hospital’s patient population and staff were white; however they do serve a diverse patient population including elderly, physically challenged, gay and lesbian individuals. Individuals are complex, with multiple needs, ideas and responses. Communities are also complex. As advocates we must resist the temptation to reduce complex issues and to simplify needs in order to make our work easier, which is truly a disservice to battered women and our programs. Effective response requires us to have a greater understanding of the elements of diversity so that battered women frame the issue of domestic violence based on: 1) their specific experiences, 2) the sensitivity of community supports offered and 3) their confidence that they are not alone.

Effective Response

The following points illustrate some ways in which the mistake of omission could have been avoided in the above scenarios:

- Remember, even a single community is comprised of diverse individuals with diverse understandings of complex issues.
- Learn about the needs of the community and the particular issues confronting that community. Work collaboratively with the community. Community education is a two way street.
- Conduct a self assessment of the program. Ask the following questions: a) Is the program meeting the needs of all the community members that it claims to be serving?, b) If not, why?, c) If yes, but limited to some areas - assess what those areas are and what needs to be done, and d) Do program staff reflect the community you are serving?
- Review and evaluate program materials and resources on hand. Do your materials exclude certain groups of women because of language or inappropriate design such as graphics or symbols that do not fit with how their community wants to be identified? Does the program have access to and use appropriate interpreters and translators when needed?

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- Have a distribution plan - make sure that you have different approaches for distribution. What works for one group might not work for another. Be sure to re-evaluate your plan to ensure that it reaches various segments of the population.

Illustration B: A Case of Tokenism

Recently, the head of one of the nation's largest and most progressive social service agencies announced a strategic process to improve existing agency-wide domestic violence policies and procedures. The primary strategy was to create a safe, supportive, accepting and resourceful workplace environment for gay men and lesbian women who were victims of domestic violence. Education and outreach was to target well-over 5,000 agency employees and hundreds of agency contractors and vendors. The effort was applauded as a major step toward undoing workplace homophobia and discrimination and as an innovation for other institutions to model their commitment to social change. The method for achieving the objective was the development of an internal agency advisory committee that would review existing policy and procedures on domestic violence and recommend necessary revisions.

The first meeting was called and as introductions were made it was acknowledged that *one member* of the task force, who was also an employee of the agency, was there representing 'the gay community.'

Ineffective Response

The error most apparent in this scenario is tokenism. Within gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered communities, culture is not one-dimensional. Cultural groups have many and varied subcultures within cultures such that one person's identity, values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, life experience and social environment are not representative of all others in that group. The struggles within gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered communities are the same struggles experienced within the larger society such as, classism, racism, sexism, ageism and ableism. All of which add to and interact with the oppression of homophobia. Another important consideration is that the term 'gay' is frequently used to refer to gay men rather than being inclusive of lesbian, bisexual and transgendered individuals.

The organization's reliance on one person to describe an entire segment of the population was nothing more than tokenism. Developing broad-based rules and procedures based on one person's reality can only lead to promoting myths and misunderstandings about gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered individuals and their communities.

Effective Response

It is important to recognize the good intentions of organizations struggling with the complexities of workplace homophobia and discrimination against members of the gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered community. The issue in the previous scenario was not the organization's commitment to institutional and social change, rather the *process* selected to achieve change. An effective response would:

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Avoid tokenism. Workplace groups and advisory bodies committed to undoing homophobia and discrimination must include a diverse group of employees who are gay/lesbian/bisexual/transgendered, as well as heterosexual men and women who are community allies in this work.

- Frame any discussion with input from a wide variety of individuals; and
- Engage with many different individuals from within the community on a wide variety of topics. Let them set the pace and agenda for activities.

Educate players. Start with and build upon a framework for communication and planning. It is important to avoid the pitfalls of communication and language barriers common in cross-cultural interactions. Don't assume that words mean the same thing to everyone. Develop a process or tool for bridging possible communication gaps. This can be accomplished by distributing articles and information about the target group and through educational in-service presentations and workshops for all employees. Most importantly, consensus on appropriate language, terms and references can be gained by engaging in open, sensitive and respectful dialogue.

- Establish common ground in definitions using diverse ideas and beliefs;
- Acknowledge differences and similarities; and
- Use the expertise of representatives of the community to help dispel myths and promote reality and fact.

Illustration C: A Case of Exclusion

A few years ago, a group of campus and community organizations came together for the purpose of organizing an annual healing service for survivors of abuse. First year event organizers included community and campus clergy, college students, women's advocates and service providers. Promotional flyers were developed and distributed to invite survivors of emotional, physical and sexual abuse who were interested in exploring the spiritual dimensions of their healing. The service was hosted on a local college campus. In anticipation of plans to annualize the event, program organizers distributed survey evaluations for feedback. Event participants responded that the event needed to be more accessible and inclusive of people with disabilities. The following year organizers chose a location that was more accessible and hired sign language interpreters. On the day of the event no one with disabilities seemed to be in attendance.

Ineffective Response

The error in this scenario is unintentional exclusion. It is clear that the organizers of the event were trying to be responsive. Overall, their problem was a lack of knowledge about the disability community and their inability to link and communicate effectively with persons from within the community. Errors that were made included: 1) the assumption that events are made accessible by just attending to location, 2) the fact that promotional outreach and

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materials were not made culturally sensitive or inviting to the target community (e.g. advertising in community newsletters and papers, brochures in large print or braille for visually impaired persons, information on accessible supports offered at the event, etc.) and 3) that critical linkages were missed because members of the disability community were not included in the planning of the event or represented as members of the organizing group.

Effective Response

A great many of us make sense of the world by generalizing about a particular group with very little information about that group. Some information comes from personal contact with a few members of that group, some from information from other persons, books and educational materials, and the rest from accounts in the media. Often the potential for thinking through collaborative work and outreach is compromised in the interest of expediency and good intention. Examples of ways to increase the accessibility of events are: 1) to develop materials accessible in braille or large print, 2) to place refreshments and signs low enough to be accessible to people in wheelchairs, and 3) to hire sign language interpreters as support people. To be inclusive it is important to:

- Obtain as much information as possible about your target community. Establish a mutual ground for respect;
- Do not make assumptions, based on limited information. Elicit a community world view;
- Incorporate and maintain the values of that community in designing public education campaigns; and
- Plan every detail/aspect of events using the filter: *“Is this accessible and respectful of all members of the audience?”*

Illustration D: A Case of Achieving Board Diversity For All The Wrong Reasons

Many domestic violence programs serve very diverse populations and frequently direct service staff to match the composition of clients served. For most agencies, however, the real challenge is in diversifying the ranks of organizational leadership, (i.e. management staff, board membership, etc.). In some cases, funders have been the driving force to change leadership. Unfortunately, funder-driven motivations for recruitment of and outreach to staff and program participants cannot and should not substitute for agency investment and commitment to diversity.

Some time ago, as part of an annual funding review, a domestic violence shelter program received a request from one of its funders to conduct an agency-wide diversity assessment of staff, board, clients and volunteers. The purpose of the analysis was to demonstrate agency compliance with affirmative action/equal employment opportunity goals. As such, the agency ranked excellent in every area, except Board of Director membership. A meeting was called to develop a plan to address the existing problem. Some members of the Board resisted the idea of complying with the funder’s request, because they felt that the organization was already diverse enough. They were also uncomfortable with the notion that

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the funder's request was setting organizational policy. However, at issue was more than \$100,000 in agency funding if the agency failed to comply, so majority consensus was to demonstrate efforts toward compliance.

The outcome of the meeting included a commitment to three specific, proactive measures: 1) development of a recruitment committee, 2) development and implementation of advertising and marketing strategies for outreach, and 3) development of a list of specific skill requirements needed to complement the existing board membership. Several errors were made in the process. First the recruitment committee was comprised of a basically homogenous group of board members (i.e. same race, class, sexual identity, physical capacity, etc.). Second, advertisement was purchased in two of the mainstream, major daily newspapers rather than those primarily reaching members of minority groups. Third, recruitment letters were sent to the human resource divisions of major corporations instead of community businesses, organizations and meeting places of the targeted groups. And last, skill criteria developed to determine candidate eligibility was formulated to target only upper and middle class professional women with graduate degrees.

For months the committee searched for just the right candidates, but not one person came forward. Finally, frustrated by the unsuccessful outcome of the search, the chair of the committee gave her report at the board meeting. She reported that committee efforts had been stalled, because recruitment of 'qualified minorities' was just too competitive and that all the good candidates were already committed to other organizations!

Ineffective Response

Unfortunately, the scenario above is a classic and often re-occurring pattern of seeking to achieve diversity for all the wrong reasons. In this case, errors occurred in two primary areas: *people and process*. The people selected to move the process were lacking in resource skills and motivation to do so. From the very beginning, planning and recruitment efforts were not inclusive of and/or balanced with a recruitment committee comprised of a diverse group of invested individuals. Although the goal of achieving diversity is altruistic, the organizational motivation to act in this case was not. Promotional efforts were limited and restricted by focusing advertising and recruitment efforts only on mainstream channels and resources which is often the case when people are not familiar with alternative resources and lack the motivation to seek them out.

Effective Response

Achieving and maintaining diversity requires organizational commitment from the top and the deliberate implementation of strategies to recruit and to retain members of diverse groups of people. It also requires understanding diversity within a population and developing ways to identify and nurture relationships with other organizations and networks that can be a rich source for recruitment. Some general points to remember are:

- Conduct a critical assessment of organizational short and long range goals to provide clear insight on why it is important to diversify leadership. Be sure to review challenges and benefits to doing so and inform key players of the findings;

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- Be flexible and creative; don't wait for the community to come to your Board; go on a fact finding mission and gather information about the people and communities you want to reach. Attend and support target community events, meet informally with members of the community and invite members of the community to informally meet with the Board; and
- Develop a supportive environment. Select recruitment committee members who are a part of the communities you are reaching out to and are sensitive and aware of the cultures of others. Most importantly, be sure that committee members are personally invested in the process and the goal of organizational diversity.

*“There never was in the world two opinions alike,
no more than two hairs or two grains;
the most universal quality is diversity.”¹²*

Moving Toward Solutions and Social Change

Practical Guidelines

Effective outreach and public education in diverse communities is not an easy task. The sheer multiplicity of cultures and ethnic subgroups within today's society underscores the challenge faced by any individual or organization attempting to understand diversity and do domestic violence intervention and prevention work. Planning, preparation and patience are key. The prerequisite is to create open, sensitive and flexible cross-cultural dialogue which is essential to achieving collective progress in our work to end domestic violence. Approaching discussions and collaborations in a manner that establishes mutual ground and respect for community partners will lead to reciprocal opportunities for growth and learning. Taking risks and using non traditional networks for doing the work are vital and require methods that engage a broad range of knowledgeable, diverse individuals. In this way we effectively use collective, creative energy and insight, and we greatly enhance our ability to connect abstractions with reality and fact.

Understanding that we are moving along a continuum which enhances our skills and ability to bridge differences and cultivate self-awareness is critical. Remember that, even if we plan thoroughly, things do go wrong. This does not mean that work on the issue of diversity should be abandoned; rather, it should push us towards re-evaluation. The following are some guiding principles on how to incorporate diversity in your outreach, public education and prevention campaigns.

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1. Approaching the Community

Familiarize. Get to know the community that you want to reach. Attend and support community-based events BEFORE you ask the community to work with you or your group. Become familiar with community meeting places, leadership, issues, needs and opportunities for joint work.

Be clear about what you are asking from the community. Know the difference between cooperation, coordination and collaboration. *Collaboration* means being inclusive from beginning to end and sharing planning duties with representatives from the community at the table as decision-makers. *Coordination* often does not include the upfront inclusion in planning programs and events, but rather joining in decisions that are already made and partially implemented. An example is asking a community group to join a rally or march after all the event planning is completed. *Cooperation* can mean little more than giving consent or endorsement to the requesting organization. An example is asking for a letter of support for funding or as endorsement for an event. Collaboration that is respectful and focused on clear goals yields the best long term results.

Eliminate barriers to communication. Hire and involve staff and volunteers who are reflective and representative of the community you target for outreach. Eliminate language barriers and avoid situations of language discrimination which preclude participation of the entire community and reduce the accessibility of your event or program. Develop and use interpreting and translation resources. Develop and disseminate culturally sensitive and appropriate educational materials.

Conduct a critical analysis. Seek feedback from the community about your staff and agency, strengths and weaknesses. This can be accomplished through conducting informal/formal surveys and by talking to people one on one. Listen to what the community has to say and act on the information in a respectful and thoughtful way. Remember that community members who take the time and interest to provide this important information to your organization are allies and friends. Their support is invaluable.

2. Planning A Public Education Activity

Build Partnerships. Recruiting help, setting goals and defining objectives are the first steps to planning and implementing a successful event. Establishing a diverse planning group comprised of dedicated, committed cross-cultural community representatives and staff is equally imperative. Define roles and establish shared leadership. Give everyone present an equal opportunity to share their knowledge and expertise. Sometimes as professionals it is very difficult for us to let go of our own desires to lead and control situations and events. Draw upon everyone's skills and be careful not to disqualify the resourcefulness of community members. Consistently seek feedback from as many people as you can and be sure to leave time to debrief after the event.

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There are a number of compelling reasons to enlist the help of others in your community in planning and carrying out community events:¹³

- it will increase the inclusiveness of the event;
- it can help you define issues, content, and format of your event in a way that is most relevant to your audience;
- it will increase the number of individuals and organizations taking responsibility for ending domestic violence;
- it may increase the publicity and visibility of the event; and
- it broadens the base of resources you have to draw from for planning and carrying out the event. It is also important to remember that, while events have multiple purposes and effects, you will not be able to achieve everything with one event. By choosing a few achievable goals you will be more likely to succeed in meeting them.¹⁴

Content, format and logistics. Advocates use a variety of public education event strategies including community rallies, vigils, media campaigns, distribution of educational materials, workshops and trainings to name a few. Familiarity with the specifics of the community in which you are planning outreach will help tailor your event and deliver your message in a way that is understood and accepted by the whole community. Public speeches should be delivered in languages familiar to the community, utilizing appropriate interpreters. Planning events in spaces and places that are environmentally friendly to diverse groups is another important logistical component. Locations which are familiar to members of the community and which are known to promote and value diversity are recommended. Spaces which display cultural artifacts, fabrics, furnishings, books, and photographs are inviting and enhance opportunities for broader community participation.

Getting the word out. The best method to get information to the specific community you are trying to reach is to develop a comprehensive community /public relations and media plan as a part of annual agency planning and goal setting. The plan should incorporate traditional and non traditional media to reach communities that are diverse, such as using creative slogans and images familiar to the community; planning and implementing special events; utilizing distribution networks such as, ethnic newspapers, magazines and newsletters; and advertising information on grocery bags and milk cartons. For example, in some past African traditions, announcements of special events and holidays were carried by a *Griot* selected from the community. The *Griot* was customarily the King's fastest messenger who traveled on foot, from tribe to tribe to deliver important news verbally. Although the use of Griots in today's society is outdated, an important lesson is conveyed: that is, *word of mouth* to this date is still regarded as an important element of culture and communication in African and African American communities.

Models for Community Organizing

Our work and philosophy compel us to infuse diversity into all aspects of community education, outreach and organizing rather than compartmentalizing diversity as a separate

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issue in our events and services. Thus far, our discussion has centered on how we can move toward and adopt model practices which promote collaboration with diverse communities. A number of programs have exemplified these practices and serve as good models to follow. In a previous section, programs were highlighted for their inability to comprehensively address the issue of diversity. This discussion would be incomplete without sharing the valuable lessons learned from model programs and events. Two such projects are the ***Lotus Project***, a family violence prevention project in Asian communities in San Francisco, California and ***Silent Too Long, Silent No More***, an inter-cultural march and rally in Chicago, Illinois.

1. The Lotus Project

From 1989 to 1992, the Asian Women's Shelter (AWS) conducted a three year pilot program to develop family violence prevention strategies in Asian and Pacific Islander (API) communities. It is often assumed that there can be one strategy for approaching API communities. However, API communities include an array of ethnic cultures from China, Japan, Vietnam, Cambodia, India, and Pakistan, to name a few. It was clear to AWS that one strategy could not and would not work, and that they were targeting many different cultural and ethnic groups. Work with each group raised considerations such as generational issues, language barriers and varying community needs.

In response, AWS conducted a thorough and comprehensive community and organizational assessment to determine: 1) where the communities were, 2) how communities were organized, 3) what would be the role of AWS in relationships with communities, 4) how well AWS was organized to meet the community needs, and 4) what were the best ways to identify community-based and community-centered strategies to approach and engage the various groups. Throughout the process of development and implementation of the project, AWS was careful to ensure that appropriate levels of representation and participation from every community group were cultivated, nurtured and maintained. Outreach was very inclusive, encompassing many women from very diverse cultures and with varying points of view. Broad-based representation was sought at each step of the process and community members were recruited and trained as staff, board and volunteers. The result was a long-term vision of where to go, how to get there, and the delivery of appropriate messages and materials to each community throughout the process.

The essence of the Lotus Project is summarized in the words of its founding staff, *this program...is unique in that it incorporates the acknowledged differences between communities and fosters community-specific responses while at the same time bringing communities together under the larger category of 'Asian' and under the common goal of family violence prevention. The circular style and lotus-like growth in which the participants, components, and years of the project interweave reflect Asian traditional views of organization and form.*¹⁵

Valuable lessons learned and shared by the Lotus group are:

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- **There is no such thing as a “one size fits all” strategy. Diverse communities require diverse strategies.**
- **An open attitude is critical since community education is a two way street. We have as much to learn from a particular community as they have to learn about domestic violence.**
- **Recognize, acknowledge and respect the strengths of the community. We are not here to deliver the truth; rather we are here to work together.**
- **Patience is a must. Addressing diversity takes time and needs long term vision.**
- **Addressing diversity is all our responsibility.**
- **Commitment to diversity and an ability to examine ones’ prejudices, biases and stereotypes is essential to building bridges.¹⁶**

2. Silence Too Long, Silence No More

In 1995, a very diverse group of domestic violence activists, formerly battered women and women’s organizations¹⁷ came together to plan a multi-ethnic, multi-cultural anti-violence march and rally. They were motivated by the fact that for too long their communities had suffered in silence, distanced from the realm of mainstream domestic violence work. Conditions such as the lack of accessible, community-centered and located services, the lack of language appropriate services, the lack of community knowledge about and exposure to services and supports stimulated the group’s action. They also wanted to bring attention to the fact that their communities were invisible in messages and symbols delivered in broad-based domestic violence public education, outreach and prevention campaigns. And more importantly, they wanted to give their communities voice and presence in the work to end woman abuse.

The first decision made by the group was to address all forms of violence against women. This came from an intrinsic understanding that communities of color endure and experience simultaneous, multiple forms of oppression and violence across a broad spectrum of community cultures, social and political contexts. The rally addressed domestic violence, incest, mutilation, pornography, rape, prostitution, poverty, infanticide, femicide, racism, sexual harassment and all other forms of woman abuse as intertwining and intersecting entities.

Event planning took on several important dimensions. The event was designed as an outdoor rally and march, and organizers were charged with the task of finding a suitable community location. The place selected had been traditionally overlooked as a suitable site, because of its location in an urban poor neighborhood. Organizers recognized and understood the advantages of hosting a community rally and march in their community. This approach maximized opportunities for community participation, because it was easily accessible, called direct attention to a community which was sorely underserved, and challenged stereotypic attitudes which cause people to resist going to places where poor people live.

Community outreach promoted inclusiveness across gender, age, class and culture. Central to organizing efforts was the recruitment and presence of men, women and children

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at the rally. The event featured entertaining and educational presentations by poets, singers, speakers and musicians. Each participating community group sent a representative to speak on issues central to their community—in the language of their community. Translation and interpreting services were critical elements of the event and greatly contributed to the event's success. Each presentation was delivered in two languages - the language of the community represented and the English translation. The community was very receptive and more than 100 members joined the march and rally the first year. In the following year, 200 community members joined the rally and a solid collaboration with the local YWCA's Week Without Violence was established. Also on the increase is the participation of other community groups, along with the support of community print, radio and television networks.

IV. SUMMARY

We began this discussion by stating that achieving diversity in domestic violence outreach, public education, and prevention efforts is a reciprocal learning process. It is important to reiterate the fact that it is not easy work. It takes time, patience, and perseverance. We have also stated that it is important for domestic violence advocates, educators and outreach workers to link domestic violence to human rights issues in the local work that they do. While the impact may not be visible immediately, all local work has an international effect. The very fact that the United Nations now accepts violence against women as a human rights issue was achieved through extensive grass roots activism.

In addition, we have presented general guidelines which can be applied toward your individual and organizational efforts. However, it is important to note that we must continue to improve and learn from each other. The examples and guidelines presented here are not to be considered conclusive or exhaustive, but rather a starting point and basis for continued exploration. From inception, we have considered this document a working draft warranting your suggestions and shared experiences. We conclude by eliciting your continued support and commitment to this work. We would like to hear back from you. Tell us about what suggestions worked and what didn't work, so that we can share your insight and advance our collective efforts to end violence against women in every community and culture. Please use the enclosed feedback form to let us know your thoughts. Your ideas will be used to develop a second edition of this paper for distribution next year from the Domestic Violence Awareness Month Project.

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ENDNOTES

¹ Author unknown.

² For fuller explanation of public education see section II, definitions and concepts.

³ Zero Tolerance is a campaign that was launched in London, England in 1994. It is based on the premise that men have to accept responsibility for the abuse of power and it consists of public education, criminalization of battering and community coordination to end abuse of women. Many cities in the U.S. and Canada have similar campaigns (e.g. New York, San Diego, Quincy, MA to name a few).

⁴ Carrillo, R. "Women's Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights." - Rest of cite to be located.

⁵ Foeticide is the termination of a pregnancy because the foetus is female. This is a variant of violence against women and girls and appears in cultures where girls are unwanted. Newly available sex-determination tests, such as sonograms and amniocentesis are used to determine the sex of foetus.

⁶ Infanticide is the killing of infants because they are unwanted for a variety of reasons. Girls are murdered in overwhelming numbers although occasionally boys are also killed.

⁷ Female genital mutilation or FGM encompasses a wide range of practices and occurs within a complex framework. Simply, it is practiced to control female sexuality and sexual pleasure. FGM cannot be compared to male circumcision. It involves the removal of the clitoris (known as clitoridectomy) at one extreme to the complete removal of the clitoris, the labia and sewing up with only an opening left for the passage of urine and menstrual blood (known as infibulation) at the other. FGM can result in serious health problems for women throughout their lives and possibly in death.

⁸ Bunch, C. 1997. "The Intolerable Status Quo: Violence against women and girls." Women Commentary. UNICEF, Washington D.C.

⁹ For fuller explanation of imperialism see definition, page 18.

¹⁰ This model was developed from the writings of Audre Lorde, Charlotte Bunch and Bernice Reagon by David J. Alper in the article: Alper, D.J. 1990. "Social Diversity and the Necessity of Alliances: A Developing Feminist Perspective." In L. Albrecht and R.M. Brewer (Eds.) "Bridges of Power: Women's Multicultural Alliances." Philadelphia, PA: New Society Publishers.

¹¹ Citations listed are incomplete; reference section to be developed. Authors/publications from which definitions were excerpted and adapted include: A. Giachello, M. Paternoster, L. Gutierrez, J. Vander Zanden, J.R. Feagin, National Council of Churches of the U.S.A. - Racial Justice Working Group and the Live and Learn Training Model.

¹² Author Michael de Montaigne. Citation is incomplete. Quote was excerpted from cultural sensitivity training materials of the Illinois Collaboration on Youth, 1996.

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¹³ Excerpted from National Resource Center, Community Education Project. Domestic Violence Awareness Month Kit, 1997. *Planning A Community-Wide Event: Some Basics*. National Domestic Violence Awareness Month Project, 1997.

¹⁴ Excerpted from National Resource Center, Community Education Project. Domestic Violence Awareness Month Kit, 1997. *Planning A Community-Wide Event: Some Basics*. National Domestic Violence Awareness Month Project, 1997.

¹⁵ The Asian Women's Shelter, The Lotus Project: Family Violence Prevention in the Asian Communities, August, 1992.

¹⁶ The Asian Women's Shelter, The Lotus Project: Family Violence Prevention in the Asian Communities, August, 1992.

¹⁷ Founding organizations included: Chicago Abused Women Coalition, Korean Women in Need, Travelers and Immigrants Aide, Mujeres Latinas en Accion, Gabriela, Palestinian Women's Association, and Mujeres for Guatemala.

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