

National Prevention Town Hall
Opening Panel
Monday, September 14, 2020

Speaker: Hello! On behalf of the NRCDV, I welcome you to the national prevention town hall. We're joining together as storytellers and activists as we pivot our work in response to the racial inequity COVID19 has made plain. We're gathered to bring voice, visibility and value.

I'm Kalimah Johnson and my role is to serve as a reminder to us to take care of ourselves and honor each other and we address, learn and listen and hold space and carry forth the principles taught today to make positive changes.

We encourage you to use this time and space to advance your knowledge, open your heart, learn new skills and develop a deeper appreciation for our colleagues.

Poetry was one of my first tools I used to teach prevention. Because this is in the Midwest, I was asked to open with a poem. May it energize you and help you understand the place I love and I come from and a space in time as I was growing up here in Detroit.

[Poem: I am Detroit]

Welcome to our Midwest Town Hall. Thank you.

Speaker: Yes! Yes! Thank you so much for that. Thank you for welcoming us. Thank you everyone for joining us today for our first ever national prevention town hall. I'm Arlene Vassell vice president. This town hall is a collaborative effort. In partnership with the Indiana Coalition, the Michigan coalition, Ohio domestic violence network and the advices from the east north central region.

If you're not familiar with the national resource counter, we are celebrating our 25th anniversary. Our mission is to strengthen efforts to end domestic violence. We offer free training and technical assistance and access to a host of free educational materials. We are led by an amazing and decrease board and a team of 20 individuals with various professional backgrounds.

We stand in solidarity with individuals who have been targeted, degraded or marginalized because they are Native Americans, people of color, women, LGBTQ and people with disabilities. We stand against racism, white supremacy, homophobia, xenophobia and structural oppression. We stand together in celebration of the rich diversity of people in this country.

We stand in solidarity with those that embrace self care and community connection. We stand in solidarity with other activists and organizations who work passionately for social justice for all. We believe prevention is social change work.

We offer an extensive library of resources and tools to support your prevent efforts. Now, I'll turn it over to my co-host Casey.

Speaker: Hi. I'm director of programs and prevention. We are here because we recognize the importance of reexamining our work today at this intersection of pandemics and time of collective trauma. We are here to explore how our prevention work must look different to center those most impacted by IPV, COVID19 and anti-Blackness.

We know our communities are connected and we cannot do this work in isolation and we must follow the lead of people of color. Community care is a pathway to collective liberation and activism to

dismantle power-based violence is IPV prevention. Prevention work is not separate from movement work and we must lead with our hearts in order to build our community.

We're here because despite the pain and despair, we are holding hope for a vision of a world that we will build together. Let's move from conversation to action. Let's make plans and dream big and be bold. Let's be accountable to each other and move our movement. Let's leave here with at least one thing that we will put into action tomorrow.

I'll pass it over to Joe and then we'll dive into our panel.

Speaker: Hi everybody. I'm Joe Ostrander and I'm the Communications manager. Thank you for joining us. I get the important part to talk about right now. I'll go over a couple of technical things so we can have the best experience.

You've noticed that we have a chat room and we would like you to utilize that throughout the day. One of our colleagues is monitoring that and she will be posting links in there. Remember the chat is not private so think about when you post there so security reasons.

We are recording this event today and the breakout rooms. We are streaming on Facebook live so hi everybody!

We ask that you keep your cameras off and your microphones muted throughout the event. We sold out this event so we're expecting 500 people to attend. We already have about half and people will continue to join throughout the day. You can imagine what that will do filling up your screens. Our presenters and speakers will come on and off and their schedule allows.

At the bottom of the screen, there are buttons and there's a reactions button. That's a way for you to give a thumbs up and clap. You can give us some non written feedback throughout the event. For closed captioning, we're offering that today.

There's links in the chat room to the side. You will click on the link if you desire captioning and it'll open up a different window. That will be the same process in the break rooms.

When we go to breaks today, we ask you do not log off. We know you might do that, but you will be able to get in. You just have to use the same Join link in the beginning. If you don't log off, make sure you have your camera off and then we don't have to worry about going through the whole process again. We don't want you in the waiting room and missing anything.

We'll be utilizing a whiteboard today. There'll be more information and instructions about that when we get closer, but it'll be a chance for everybody to do some sharing.

Casey, did I miss anything?

Speaker: That's great. Thank you. I'll pass it back to Arlene.

Speaker: Alright. I want to officially welcome Kalimah to this space. As you can tell, it's a gift! We are humbled and honored to have Kalimah join us today. She will be our weaver and I'm so looking forward to hearing your voice at every moment that you will offer our gift. Kalimah is the founder and the director of Sasha Center. Kalimah has 20 years of advocacy experience and created the Sasha model. Thank you for your expertise, knowledge and energy.

Speaker: I'm so excited!

Speaker: We're looking forward to hearing more. Right now, we'll start our opening panel. Let's take a moment to get to know our panelists. I would invite our panelists to share your video as we introduce you. We'll go through your bios.

I'll start with Tamika. Pronouns she/her/hers. She's program specialist at the Indiana coalition and the rape prevention education coordinator for the organization. Tamika recognizes the importance of recognizing marginalized communities and developing strategies that develop nurturing relationships. Tamika is the co-chair of the Indiana disproportionality committee. She held various positions within state government including child abuse prevention and reentry programs. She earned her masters of science and bachelors of science in criminology. Welcome.

Next, I'd like to welcome Colleen. She has served as an advocate for over 20 years. She works with partners to develop, implement and evaluate new strategies for preventing IPV.

Next, I'll introduce Cheree - the associate director of the Michigan coalition. She engages in prevent, intervention and creative environments for survivors, advocates and the community as a whole. She brings direct service and nonprofit management experience. She has a masters in liberal studies. Her desire to create equity extends into her work as a doula where she assist BIPOC birthgivers to minimize trauma. She's a practitioner. In 2011, she authored a book entitled See Me For Who I Am addressing sexual assault issues by African American women. She was featured at an exhibit called Voices for Social Justice.

Speaker: Let me introduce Leila. She's the program specialist and has been in the movement with a focus in the Arab and Muslim community.

I'll introduce Glen. He's the coordinator responsible for support to create communities where all people can live free from violence. Glen's primary role is engage men and boys into violence prevention with Ohio Men's Action Network. Glen cofacilitates conversations with stakeholders across Ohio. Prior, Glenn's background working in responsible fatherhood, reentry and youth mentoring. Glen has been with the Network since August 2019.

Kalitha is a Director of asset building. She began her career as a fellow and has a background in advocacy, policy and leadership. She serves on the board the Consumer Federation of America and the Ohio Women's Policy Network. She has a masters in public administration.

What a panel! I'm so excited. Casey, you can start us off.

Speaker: Thanks to everybody who took the time to submit thoughtful questions. We will respond to those and then we will be following up to those responses.

First, about pivoting our work. We envision this as how to pivot our prevention work in bold directions. We received many questions about moving power and resources to center community leadership and building an investment to outside the box approaches.

Our first question is for Cheree. How can we decolonize the domestic violence movement?

Speaker: That was a thoughtful question. I'll respond to it, but typically that would take a whole workshop or two. Maybe a couple of weeks. That's a lot of work to do so. Initially, to reignite efforts outside of federal funding, we have to acknowledge oppression is within our movement. Survivors have not always been valued or given proper space.

When the DV movement moved away from being community led, the only voices heard were white cisgender women with privilege. To decolonize the movement, we have to equip ourselves for resistance. Allies will need to understand their privilege, but leverage it. We're required to be communal and we have to start speaking as a collective. When we're seeking funding outside of federal dollars, we can work to have our funders address in ending oppression. We believe survivors which means dismantling oppressive systems.

Accountability and philanthropy should be the norm. Fundraising and grantmaking has to become anti racist.

Speaker: Thank you. I'll pass it to Arlene.

Speaker: We're focused on centering survivors of color. We want to leverage this moment together to center the voices and leadership of BIPOC in our IPV prevention work. Several of you asked for guidance. Brandy, are you available?

Speaker: My question is how can we address the intersection of race and gender identity for serving transgender survivors who are Black and other people of color?

Speaker: When I read this question, it made me think of a bigger question: how can we create a safe world for everybody. I think intersectionality to better understand the aspects of multiple identities. We have to look at both of those sides of the coin: power and privilege has created practices that are intentionally excluding voices of communities that aren't white, wealthy and English speaking.

We have to think of what we've already done which has been to align ourselves with structures that have wealth and power. We've been excluding so many groups of people especially people of color and people who are trans and people with disabilities and Black people. We have to prioritize differently. We have an overreliance on the criminal justice system and policing and we have to consider ways to do our work without that. We have to create shelters that welcoming and accommodating for people of multiple identities and be mindful is not recruiting people's trauma and make sure our leadership and staffing are people that identify with multiple identities that have been marginalized and we have to be intentional to listen and value the voices and experiences as much as we value education.

We have to be diverse and inclusive in who we partner with and what organizations we listen to and make strategies that actually move power and not just information. Engage in non traditional partnerships that uses intersectionality to create structural change.

Speaker: Thank you. Move power and not just information. Thank you so much. Casey.

Speaker: Our next question is around policy change. Many of you wondered about impacting systemic change at different levels. We'd like to invite Caitlin Douglas to unmute yourself and share your question.

I've got the question here. Delaware is striving for equality. What can individuals do to impact this change?

Speaker: Thank you for this question. I think so many are looking to respond to this moment. This is the time that collectively we focus on recentering policy making back to the public and take it beyond the realm of our traditional elected officials and special interests.

This moment has held policymakers accountable to make sure our systems -- healthcare, justice and education --- are equitable in how they serve us in our local communities at the local, state and national level.

As they work on making our systems equitable, we have to make sure they aren't doing it without us. Quite a bit here happens behind the scenes, but as Congresswoman Chisholm often said, if they won't give you a seat at the table pull up a lawn chair. This has shown us what our individual voices can do when we organize and come together.

As we individually raise our voices together to recenter policymaking for us and not for others.

Speaker: Thank you. I can't agree with you more. We'll pass it to you Arlene.

Speaker: Yes! Thank you for that. I want to go back. Brandi is joining us from Jacksonville, Florida. I want to acknowledge you.

We received several questions about decarcerating our work and we have a question for Layla from Lydia Watts. Are you available?

Speaker: I am! I have to refresh my memory of my question. Sorry. If you wouldn't mind, that'd be great!

Speaker: We'll show your face and my voice. Can you talk about the intersections of intimate partner and state violence?

Speaker: Thank you.

Speaker: Thank you, Lydia. From what I'm getting, your question is how to address IPV and state violence? I'm assuming you're referring to the violence we see in Black and Brown communities. Am I correct?

Speaker: The violence of white supremacy.

Speaker: Along with my colleagues, we believe you can't do this work without doing work around anti-oppression and anti-racism and talking about white supremacy culture and how it shows up in our systems.

Even within our movement, how white supremacy culture shows up within our gender based violence prevention movement. You have to do that work first or in tangent with DV work. It's complicated no matter how you look at it, but I think when you're looking at your own agency and partners with your community and how their policies and their systems are aligned with white supremacy culture. Calling it out and seeing the ways we can shift those things.

I want to give space for my colleague to step in if she has any more to add to that.

Speaker: Do we have time? When we're thinking about state sanctioned violence, it's important to recognize when we look at gender based violence, they all have been state sanctioned. The benefits we're receiving are based off systemic oppression that were faced by communities including indigenous, Black people brought here and immigrants met with violence and oppression.

In order for us to deal with those, we have to acknowledge they exist and not try to paint a broad approach to dealing with them. We have to address all of these things as a collective and with individualized attention.

Speaker: Wonderful. All violence is state sanctioned is powerful. We received lots of questions around the theme of transforming our agencies including decolonizing, reigniting grassroots efforts and practical ways to impact change in our practices.

Our next question is from Jeff who is the sexual assault therapist in Pennsylvania. This is for Colleen. How do we change and correct the oppressive actions that have occurred within our movement?

Speaker: Thank you for that question. I want to acknowledge I don't have the right answers to that, but I want to talk about what we're trying to do in Indiana.

As we think about this problem, it feels important to start with an acknowledgment of the agency's participation in the systems that have supported white supremacy and excluding marginalized communities and are reliant on law enforcement that leads to deportation, poverty and community disruption.

We have to start with that of our legacy and the harms of that. After that, the next question is what do you do about it? How do we head towards better? For us, the next step is centering and listening and for us that had two parts: to do our homework.

We know organizations led by BIPOC . . . about ourselves for a long time. We've allowed ourselves to engage in selective listening, but now we have to listen differently: to hear, feel and own impacts of our legacy and to be led. We started by doing our homework. Part two was listening to communities that have been marginalized here in Indiana to ask what you need. Both our intervention and prevention programs have been driven by the community answers to those questions.

We use that data and stories from marginalized communities to build our organizational inclusion plan. To make that matter, we try to construct it comprehensively.

Speaker: Oh dear. We've lost Colleen momentarily. Hopefully she'll be back with us. I love the idea of listening to be led and some other great tips.

Let me pass it back to you Arlene.

Speaker: The fact that like Colleen was saying, the information they were gathering is informing intervention and prevention efforts. Colleen will present in a breakout session.

Again, we received several questions about engaging men in our work. Exploring things like performative allyship and accountability. This question is for Glen and it's from Kira-Lynn.

I will ask the question. Knowing how important it is to engage men, how do we deal with men who do this work, but are predators?

Speaker: Great question. I will answer this as all inclusive. Being new to this field, one of the first things I noticed is this culture called "call out" culture. I was disturbed by it initially. As we talk about how we handle these situations, I think it's good to have, but we need to be mindful of how we call out. When it's done to the point where it's done to publicly shame someone or vilify someone, I don't think you're solving the situation. You're putting a person on a defensive.

When we talk about engaging these individuals, it's important to call out in a healthy way so the person has the opportunity to acknowledge and allow them space to grow. Often, individuals are called out and you'll see people held accountable for mistakes from 1993. Another big piece is some of the national policing we're seeing with the movement.

These individuals have shared their personal thoughts and the public is holding them accountable. These individuals have been terminated if they're not able to get on a corrective path and we have to use the options available to us. I love the approach of talking to employers and saying this may not be the space for this individual.

Speaker: We will clarify the response for you Kira-Lynn. We will build out on the response for you and Rus Funk offered some insight as well. Thank you so much to the panel. I'm excited to hear more from everyone during the breakout sessions.

We'll take a break now. Casey, anything you want to offer?

Speaker: I'm happy to. I know we lost Colleen as she was giving her response. Can we check in with her?

Speaker: Thank you! I'm sorry everyone. Real cliffhanger there. I was just saying we're listening to our community and national activists and learning about the mistakes of our legacy and planning for the future and we've created an organizational inclusion action plan to keep on track and all staff share responsibilities on that. This includes who we are, who we partner with and how we create an infrastructure of trust to enable the partnerships we've been missing. We think about investment. Thinking about paying people for their time, childcare, food and internet access and translation. Also, thinking about how we're spending our money and working with organizations led by people of color that have been marginalized. So, investing our money to back up that commitment.

We're thinking about centering our systems like our support survives and relationship with law enforcement. We're focusing on equity through data collection and being transparent about all of this. As soon as we have our finalized plan, we'll publish it online so our stakeholders can keep us honest.

Speaker: Thanks, Colleen. There's lots of questions happening in the chat box. As we transition to a virtual space, I was told the action happens in the chat box. There's a lot happening and we will follow up with responses and resources for questions that we're not able to respond to. You'll have access to the presenters to the break out sessions as well. We'll respond to everyone because there are great questions.

Our final document we'll talk more about will include responses plus resources to respond to questions we receive before the town hall and in the chat box. Thank you for your great questions and the awesome engagement happening right now.

Speaker: Let's go ahead and move to our 10 minute break. Let's share our white board and during the breaks today we are inviting you to share your thoughts on our white board. If you go to the top of your screen and click on View Options there's an annotate option there. Tools will come up that will enable you to post to the whiteboard. We're inviting you to respond to the question: what is giving you joy right now?

When we come back, we'll be heading into our first breakout sessions. Thanks everybody.

Speaker: Do not log off! Thanks.