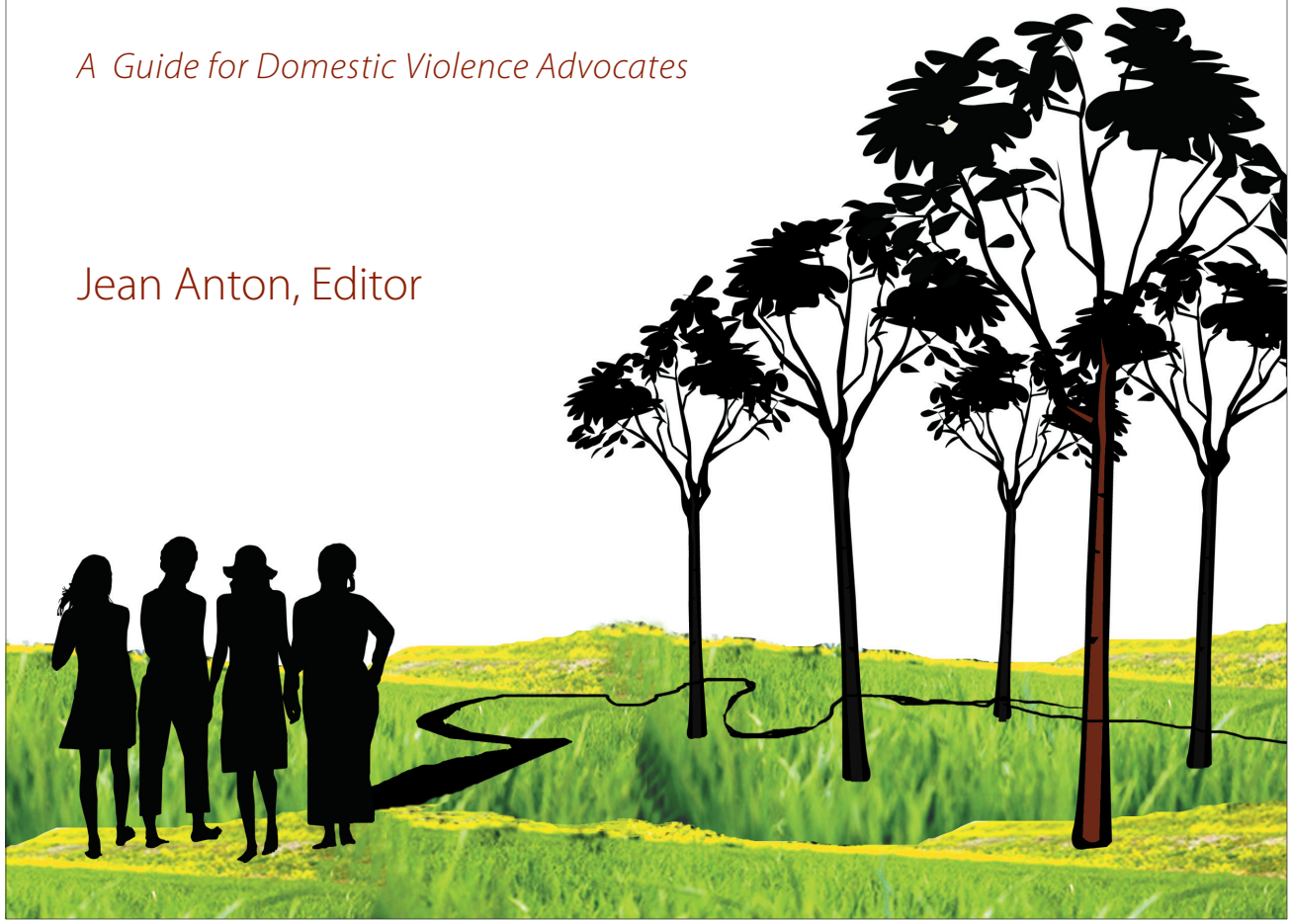
Walking Together:

Working with Women from Diverse Religious and Spiritual Traditions

A Guide for Domestic Violence Advocates

Jean Anton, Editor



"This is truly an amazing resource….beautiful, well-written, a long time coming. It encompasses a wide breadth of knowledge in a concise, manageable tool. *Walking Together* is a vital guide for all domestic violence advocates in both shelters and community-based programs."

Linda Olsen, Executive Director
Eastside Domestic Violence Program
Bellevue, WA

"*Walking Together* is an outstanding tool for advocates -- informative, supportive and helpful. This is a much-needed resource to enable domestic violence programs to work sensitively and effectively with women from a variety of religious and racial/ethnic backgrounds."

Deadria Boyland, Shelter Program Manager
New Beginnings for Battered Women and Their Children
Seattle, WA

"A solid resource to assist in building collaborative relationships."

Michelle Lifton, Domestic Violence Program Coord.
Project DVORA: Domestic Violence Outreach
Response and Advocacy
Jewish Family Service, Seattle, WA

"*Walking Together* has deepened my understanding about the intersections between cultural context, spiritual beliefs and domestic violence advocacy work. As such, it is a must-read for all of us who are committed to providing supportive, safe and culturally competent responses to women and children who have been victimized by domestic violence."

Donna Garske, Executive Director
Marin Abused Women's Services and Transforming Commmunities
Technical Assistance, Training and Resource Center
San Rafael, California

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"None of us, as helpers, should ever put a battered woman in the position of having to choose between safety and the support of her faith community. She needs both, and it's up to us to provide that."

Rev. Dr. Marie M. Fortune

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Acknowledgments

This anthology would not have been possible without the vision and dedication of many people along the way. To Rev. Marie Fortune, I am grateful for your clarity in recognizing the intersection between religion and abuse, your foresight in imagining the possibilities, and your courage and determination in founding FaithTrust Institute. Working jointly with colleagues Rev. Thelma Burgonio-Watson, Rabbi Cindy Enger and Rev. Marie Fortune in envisioning this project and shaping its direction and form has been an effort of collaboration in the best sense of the term. A true debt of gratitude is owed to the entire staff of FaithTrust Institute: Sandra Barone, Lisa Bunts, Catherine Endicott, Wayne Glenn, Kathryn Jans, Ellen Johanson, Karen Kaushansky, and Ko-Eun Kim. The development of new resources, along with the rest of our work, would quite simply not take place without your consistent support, hard work, and unfailing commitment to ending sexual and domestic violence. Thank you for all you do, day after day, to promote healing and justice and to make the world a safer place.

My sincere thanks to the contributors whose articles appear in this book for your willingness to share your knowledge and expertise, your patience in reviewing revision after revision, your steadfastness and your good humor.

I am grateful to those who generously shared their time and knowledge in reviewing this anthology – providing feedback, important insights and guidance as we worked to make it stronger and more effective: Deadria Boyland, Rabbi Mark Dratch, Donna Garske, Leigh Nachman Hofheimer, Michelle Lifton, Linda Olsen, Rabbi Drorah Setel, and Naomi Tucker.

This anthology would also not have been possible without the courage, determination, wisdom and grace of the many survivors of domestic violence

whose journeys continue to inspire our work. Thank you for sharing your stories with us.

And, most of all, my deepest gratitude to the multitude of domestic violence advocates – each and every one of you, around the world – for devoting your time and energy, your skills and talents, your faith and love, to doing the challenging and often insufficiently rewarded work of walking together with victims and survivors. Thank you. May your efforts be acknowledged and may you receive the support and recognition you so richly deserve.

Jean Anton

PART I: **Introduction**

How To Use this Book

There are a variety of ways to make use of this book.

- It can be read individually by advocates to learn how to work effectively with women who have religious or spiritual issues relating to domestic violence.
- It can serve as reference material for advocates working with an individual from a particular religious background.
- It can serve as the basis for an in-service training for staff on how to make your program sensitive and welcoming to women from various religious backgrounds.
- It can be used as the foundation for a project of outreach to and collaboration with religious groups in your local community.

> *"Good counselors know how to allow your faith to be part of your strength and your healing process. They are not afraid of your faith."*
>
> **JoAnn, *Broken Vows* video**

An Invitation to Advocates

Jean Anton

JEAN ANTON has been working in the movement to end violence against women and children for over 25 years. She holds a B.A. in Psychology from the University of Chicago and an M.B.A. from the University of Washington. Jean has been on the staff of FaithTrust Institute for 20 years and has served as executive producer of more than 10 award-winning videos, including *Not In My Church, Broken Vows, To Save a Life, Love—All That and More,* and *A Sacred Trust*. Currently Jean is the Resource Director at FaithTrust Institute. She is a practicing Theravadan Buddhist and is deeply committed to integrating spiritual practice with social change work.

Miriam's Story

It was the scariest time of my life. I had just left my husband of 12 years. Someone had given me the phone number of a shelter for battered women. I went there with my three children. I felt disoriented, overwhelmed, frightened, confused. They had told me when I called that I would be safe there, that we could stay for a few weeks and they would help us figure out what to do next.

But when we arrived, I felt completely out of place. I don't think there was another Jewish family in the whole place. No one seemed to understand how important it was that we have Kosher food; I was told it was just too expensive and time-consuming to deal with special dietary "preferences" for any one particular family. When I talked in support group about how much my Jewish traditions meant to me, the other women didn't seem to relate to what I was talking about. Some of the children made fun of my son because he was wearing a yarmulke, and when I asked a staff member to intervene, she dismissed it, saying I was overreacting.

It wasn't safe for me to go to my synagogue since my husband might be there, but the advocates at the shelter didn't know if there was a synagogue in their neighborhood.

It wasn't safe for me to go to my synagogue since my husband might be there, but the advocates at the shelter didn't know if there was a synagogue in their neighborhood. Being away from home, away from my neighborhood and community and the children's school and the friends and activities I was used to, was hard enough. To be isolated from my Jewish community when I most needed it was almost unbearable. I didn't want to stay at the shelter, but I didn't know where else to go. I really didn't know if I would make it.

To be isolated from my Jewish community when I most needed it was almost unbearable.

Mary's Story

This time, when my husband started throwing things at me and my son, I knew I had to leave. It only gets worse. So I came here.

I live on the north side of town. But this shelter is on the south side; I never go here. I don't know this area at all. Coming here meant that I had to leave my parish and my priest. I would like to tell him that I am here and what has happened. But I think it is a long distance call. And I don't know what he will say when I tell him I'm here.

I said something to the advocate about needing to talk to my priest. She said, "We don't discuss religion here." But I need to go to Mass on Sunday.

I said something to the advocate about needing to talk to my priest. She said, "We don't discuss religion here." But I need to go to Mass on Sunday. I don't know where to go or how I can get there.

Nafeesa's Story

I was terrified. After 20 years of marriage, I knew I had to leave. But where could I go? I had four children, ages 6 to 10. My husband, Yazeed, had been beating me since I was pregnant with my oldest son. But every time I threatened to leave, he said that leaving him would publicly disgrace the whole family. When he started beating the children and I became scared for their safety, I got up my courage and left. A neighbor had given me a phone number for a shelter for abused women, and I called.

When I arrived at the shelter, it was really hard. There we were, me and the children, in a strange place, with nothing but a few suitcases of our own. None of the other women there were Muslims. The advocates seemed to think it was really odd that my daughters and I wore a scarf on our heads. There was no place quiet where I could go to pray. The staff responsible for buying food was irritated when I tried to tell her that there were certain foods my family couldn't eat because of our religious beliefs. When I looked at the labels of the packaged food to make sure there was no lard or pork gelatin, she said I was being "too picky." I had gone to the shelter to find safety, but instead I felt criticized and misunderstood. I didn't know where to turn.

None of the other women there were Muslims.

There was no place quiet where I could go to pray.

I had gone to the shelter to find safety, but instead I felt criticized and misunderstood.

These are three common stories of battered women seeking help from a domestic violence agency or shelter. Their stories are not unique. Staff in agencies serving abused women work long, hard hours. Much of your time is spent responding to immediate crisis situations. Due to insufficient time and/or agency policies about the importance of addressing faith traditions, you are often not trained to understand or respond to the special needs of clients from particular religious communities. Lacking training that would prepare you to take an active role in helping these women feel comfortable, you may unwittingly end up creating an environment where some women are unable to access the critical services you offer because they feel unwelcome or because their religious/spiritual needs cannot be accommodated.

…you are often not trained to understand or respond to the special needs of clients from particular religious communities.

How can this change? How can we equip advocates and staff of domestic violence agencies to respond sensitively and appropriately to the religious needs of women seeking your services? The most direct way to do this is to provide you with education and resources to increase your knowledge and understanding of particular communities— and the beliefs, customs, and traditions that are central to each group.

This manual represents an important step in this direction. We have included voices from diverse religious and racial/ethnic communities. Each article addresses common themes within that community: the role of religious leaders, culture, text, food, holiday, worship, family, communal connections, and how the beliefs of each religion address issues related to domestic violence. This is

Each article addresses common themes within that community…and how the beliefs of each religion address issues related to domestic violence.

a beginning. We do not expect that this manual will make anyone an expert in any given religious tradition. We have attempted to pull out some of the more basic elements that can help you do your job better and serve your clients more effectively. It is our hope that, with the help of this manual, the stories at the beginning of this introduction can be transformed into those recounted below. Thank you for sharing this journey with us.

Rachel's Story

One of the advocates gave me the name of a rabbi who volunteered his services and who had been trained in domestic violence issues.

It was the scariest time of my life. I had just left my husband of 12 years. Someone had given me the phone number of a shelter for battered women. I went there with my three children. I felt disoriented, overwhelmed, frightened, confused. They had told me when I called that I would be safe there, that we could stay for a few weeks and they would help us figure out what to do next.

It was hard being away from home, in a place where everything was unfamiliar. But the people who worked at the shelter really went out of their way to make me comfortable. When I explained that we were Jewish and needed Kosher food, they arranged to get separate dishes and cooking utensils for me and the children, asked me what specific food we would need, and made sure we had everything we required.

When I mentioned in support group how hard it was for me to be away from my synagogue, the group leader spent some time with me after group helping me find a synagogue nearby where I could attend services. She gave me a video to watch which showed other Jewish women who had been abused telling their stories.

One of the advocates gave me the name of a rabbi who volunteered his services and who had been trained in domestic violence issues. I called him and set up an appointment. He actually came over to the shelter to meet with me! He told me that there is nothing in Jewish teachings that justifies abuse, that it is not my fault, and that there are other Jewish women who are victims of domestic violence. It made such a difference to know that others have been through this… and have survived. He helped me see that I have a right to seek safety for myself and the children.

I will never forget the woman at the counseling agency who gave me the phone number for that shelter. And I will never forget the women who worked there and who helped me feel at home, in even the strangest and most unfamiliar of circumstances.

Rose's Story

This time, when my husband started throwing things at me and my son, I knew I had to leave. It only gets worse. So I came here.

I live on the north side of town. But this shelter is on the south side; I never go here. I don't know this area at all. Coming here meant that I had to leave my parish and my priest. I would like to tell him that I am here and what has happened. But I think it is a long distance call. And I don't know what he will say when I tell him I'm here.

The advocate asked if I practiced a religion. I said something to her about needing to talk to my priest. She said, "I'll make arrangements for you to call him or go see him. I'll go with you if you like." But I need to go to Mass on Sunday. I don't know where to go or how I can get there. She said she has a list of Catholic churches in this area where the priests and parish workers have been trained to understand what I'm going through. She will make arrangements for me to go to one of them and even to talk with the priest or pastoral associate. That's what I'll do. She also gave me this little book, "Keeping the Faith." I hope I'll have time to read it after Patrick goes to sleep tonight.

The advocate…said she has a list of Catholic churches in this area where the priests and parish workers have been trained to understand what I'm going through. She will make arrangements for me to go to one of them.

Leena's Story

I was terrified. After 20 years of marriage, I knew I had to leave. But where could I go? I had four children, ages 6 to 10. My husband, Yazeed, had been beating me since I was pregnant with my oldest son. But every time I threatened to leave, he said that leaving him would publicly disgrace the whole family.

She told me that the women at the shelter were from many different religious and cultural communities, and that they wanted everyone to feel welcome.

When I explained about some of the dietary restrictions we follow, she made an appointment for me to meet with the Shelter Manager the very next day so that our needs could be accommodated.

When he started beating the children and I became scared for their safety, I got up my courage and left. A neighbor had given me a phone number for a shelter for abused women, and I called.

We arrived at the shelter, disoriented and exhausted. It felt unfamiliar, foreign. I could tell that there weren't any other Muslim families there. But the person who I saw first, who asked me a lot of questions and filled out the paperwork, was so nice, so supportive. She told me that the women at the shelter were from many different religious and cultural communities, and that they wanted everyone to feel welcome. She apologized to me for her ignorance of Muslim customs and traditions, and asked me what they could do to help me and my family feel comfortable there. When I explained about some of the dietary restrictions we follow, she made an appointment for me to meet with the Shelter Manager the very next day so that our needs could be accommodated. And she helped me figure out where I could go to find a quiet place for my prayers throughout the day. Later, one of the advocates told me she had read an article about Muslim battered women; she said she would find it and make a copy for me. I couldn't believe it, because I thought I must be the only woman in my community to experience such abuse. None of my friends or family members had ever mentioned it.

I can't pretend it wasn't hard—being away from home, in a strange place, with people who weren't from my community. Sometimes I felt alone, and often I felt scared, wondering what was going to become of me and the children. But it really made a difference to be someplace where I felt accepted, respected for who I was. I knew that we were welcome there…and I knew that somehow or other, we would survive.

The Importance of Religion and Faith

Marie M. Fortune

REV. DR. MARIE M. FORTUNE is the Founder and Senior Analyst at FaithTrust Institute. She received her seminary training at Yale Divinity School and was ordained a minister in the United Church of Christ in 1976. She has written numerous books including *Keeping the Faith: Guidance for Christian Women Facing Abuse, Is Nothing Sacred?, Violence Against Women and Children: A Christian Theological Sourcebook* edited with Carol Adams, and *Sexual Violence: The Sin Revisited.* A graduate of Yale Divinity School, she is a pastor, educator, and author as well as a practicing ethicist and theologian. She is editor of *The Journal of Religion and Abuse* and served on the National Advisory Council on Violence Against Women for the U.S. Department of Justice and the Defense Task Force on Domestic Violence for the U.S. Department of Defense.

The experience of domestic violence affects people physically, psychologically, and spiritually. Each of these dimensions must be addressed, both for victims and for those in the family who abuse them. Approached from either a secular or religious perspective alone, certain needs and issues tend to be disregarded. This reflects a serious lack of understanding of the nature of domestic violence and its impact on people's lives. Response to persons experiencing violence and abuse requires integrating the needs of the whole person. Thus, the importance of developing a shared understanding and cooperation between secular and religious helpers to deal with domestic violence cannot be emphasized too strongly.

Occasionally, an advocate or someone working with a domestic violence victim/survivor will wonder, "Why bother with religious concerns at all?" The answer is a very practical one: religious issues or concerns which surface for people in the midst of crisis are primary issues. If not addressed in some way, at some point they will inevitably become roadblocks to the client's efforts to resolve the

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crisis and move on with her/his life. In addition, a person's religious beliefs and community of faith can provide a primary support system for an individual and her/his family in the midst of an experience of domestic violence.

For a pastor, priest, rabbi, imam, lay counselor or other person approaching domestic violence from a religious perspective, there is little question about the relevance of religious concerns: these are primary for any religious person. Rather, they may doubt the importance of dealing with concerns for shelter, safety, intervention and accountability. "These people just need to get right with God and everything will be fine." This perspective overlooks the fact that these other issues are practical and important as well. Domestic violence is complex and potentially lethal; these seemingly mundane concerns represent immediate and critical needs.

Religious concerns can become roadblocks or resources for those dealing with experiences of domestic violence…The outcome depends on how they are handled.

When confronted with a personal experience of domestic violence, like any other crisis whether chronic or sudden, most people also experience a crisis of meaning in their lives. Very basic life questions arise and are usually expressed in religious and/or philosophical terms. Questions like, "Why is this happening to me and my family?" or "Why did God let this happen?" or "What meaning does this have for my life?" or "What should I do?" are all indications of people's efforts to understand, to make sense out of experiences of suffering and to place the experiences in a context of meaning for their lives. These questions are to be seen as a healthy sign because they represent an effort to comprehend and contextualize the experience of domestic violence and thereby regain some control over their lives in the midst of crisis.

Thus for many individuals and families in crisis, the questions of meaning will be expressed in religious terms. Religious concerns can become roadblocks or resources for those dealing with experiences of domestic violence because these concerns are central to many people's lives. The outcome depends on how they are handled.

The misinterpretation and misuse of various religious traditions have often had a detrimental effect on families, particularly those dealing with domestic violence. Misinterpretation of the traditions can contribute substantially to the guilt, self-blame, and suffering which victims experience and to the rationalizations often used by those who abuse. "But the Bible says…" or "In the Qu'ran…" or

"The rabbis taught…" is frequently used to explain, excuse, or justify abuse within the family. This need not be the case. Re-examining and analyzing those references which have been misused can lead to reclaiming the traditions in a way which supports victims and holds those who abuse accountable while clearly confronting and challenging abuse in the family.

It is certainly possible and not unusual to misuse sacred texts and other traditional religious teaching to justify the abuse of a partner or child in the family. Attempting to teach that there are simple answers to the very complex issues which people face in their lives is another potential roadblock within contemporary teachings of some groups. Thus, religious groups have often not adequately prepared people for the traumas which they will face at some point in their lives: illness, death, abuse, divorce, and so forth.

- "Keep the commandments and everything will be fine."
- "Keep praying."
- "Follow the teaching of the Qu'ran."
- "Just accept Jesus Christ as your Lord and Savior and you will be healthy, prosperous, popular, and happy."
- "Go to services each week."
- "Pray and fast."

While these teachings may be fundamental teachings of different religions, alone they are inadequate to deal with the complexity of most experiences of human suffering like domestic violence. When offered as simple and complete answers to life's questions, they create an illusion of simplicity which leaves the hearer vulnerable to becoming overwhelmed by an experience of suffering. In addition, the teachings set up a dynamic which blames the victims for their suffering.

If one accepts this simple formula (which makes a theological assumption that God's love is conditional), then when one experiences any form of suffering, one feels punished or abandoned by God. The simple answer alone cannot hold up in the face of personal or familial suffering. When people attempt to utilize the simple answer and it is insufficient, they feel that their faith has failed them or

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that God has abandoned them. In fact, it may be the teachings or actions of their particular congregation or denomination/movement which have been inadequate to their needs. Thus they may feel abandoned.

The religious teachings of many traditions are adequate to address the experiences of contemporary persons when the traditions acknowledge the complexity, the paradox, and the sometimes incomprehensible nature of those experiences. The most important resource that religious communities can provide is to be available to support those who are suffering, to be a sign of God's presence, and to be willing to struggle with the questions which the experiences may raise. Offering sweet words of advice to "solve" life's problems reduces the experience of the one who suffers to a mere slogan and denies both the depth of the pain and the potential for healing and new life.

We intend this resource to address the reality of religious belief and practice in the lives of the majority of persons living in the United States at this time. But this reality of religious affiliation and practice is complex and is situated within family, culture, and community. The particularities of each person's religion and practice are significant. While we cannot be comprehensive in this publication, we do intend to offer an overview of the faith traditions most common in the United States: Judaism, Islam, Buddhism, Hinduism, American Indian spiritualities, and Christianity (Roman Catholicism, Mainline Protestantism, Evangelical Protestantism, Historic Black Churches, and Roman Catholicism in Latino communities). We have chosen these religious groupings because, together, they represent the vast majority of the U.S. population and they also represent the frequent intersection of religion, culture, race and ethnicity. Christianity is the dominant religious culture in the U.S. today, reflecting the traditions of 75% of the population and the majority of battered women you serve. Within this large group is a huge diversity of custom and practice, so we have broken down this section into subsections to try to address some of the important particularities of this group. In the next edition of this publication, we intend to also develop some of the subsections of other groups.

We must also take account of the other social reality in which we live, which is the dominant culture. In the U.S., at the beginning of the 21st century, this means Anglo-Christian. The dominant culture, commanding both a majority of numbers and control of resources, tends to shape the primary discourse, values,

and beliefs of the society. The problem is that the dominant culture serves to surround non-dominant groups and individuals, often with negative results: racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Muslim actions, etc. abound. In the midst of extreme pluralism in the U.S., those who are not part of the dominant culture cannot be assured of safety and support. This is why we must take extra steps to respond with cultural competency and respect to all who seek our help, especially non-Christians and/or people of color. (See "Honoring Our Diversity: A Checklist for Shelters," page 25.)

The problem is that the dominant culture serves to surround non-dominant groups and individuals, often with negative results…

To complicate matters even further, within the movement to end domestic violence there remains a greater or lesser degree of resistance towards religion in general and towards "religious" people in particular. This resistance sometimes arises from negative personal experiences in religious groups and it can lead to the misperception that religion requires the subordination of women and thus serves as the ideological foundation of domestic violence. With this publication, we seek to challenge that assumption and to offer resources to expand awareness and sensitivity to the common reality of religion in the lives of women and men. By learning more about the core values of various traditions, the possibility exists for advocates to be more effective in working with victim/survivors on their healing and more effective in challenging the misuse of scriptures or doctrines. We invite you to join us on this path.

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Working as Allies

Thelma B. Burgonio-Watson

REV. THELMA B. BURGONIO-WATSON is Program Director at FaithTrust Institute and coordinates the Asian and Pacific Islander Program. She grew up in the Philippines, where she received her undergraduate degree from the University of the Philippines. In 1984 she completed her seminary education at Dubuque Theological Seminary and was the first Filipina to be ordained as a minister in the Presbyterian Church (USA).

Rev. Burgonio-Watson is active in the governance of the Presbyterian Church (USA) and has served on numerous committees at all levels of the Church. She has been honored with many awards for her work, including the *Women of Faith Award* from the Presbyterian Church (USA) for her work on violence against women and racism, in 1998.

Appropriate collaboration between secular advocates and religious leaders can play an essential part in developing a competent response to victims, survivors and their families, and in ensuring that their faith beliefs serve as resources rather than roadblocks.

> *"We need…to begin articulating a faith that will provide women with resources for strength rather than resources for endurance. We must articulate a theology of empowerment rather than a theology of passive endurance."*
>
> Rev. Joy Bussert
> *Battered Women: From a Theology of Suffering to an Ethic of Empowerment*, 1986

Cultural and Religious Issues

The publication of this manual reflects not only how far our response to domestic violence has brought us but more importantly an acknowledgment of how much more we need to do in order to adequately and competently address the needs

This diversity of religious and cultural backgrounds among victims and survivors poses a challenge to advocates.

This manual will provide you, the advocate, with a basic understanding of the particular religious and cultural issues which may arise for victims and survivors in our increasingly religiously pluralistic and culturally diverse community.

of victims and survivors. The role of advocates is critical in the delivery of this response. Appropriate collaboration between secular advocates and religious leaders can play an essential part in developing a competent response to victims, survivors and their families, and in ensuring that their faith beliefs serve as resources rather than roadblocks.

This is also to acknowledge domestic violence advocates, with much gratitude, for your courage, commitment, and tenacity, without which there would exist no adequate response to victims and survivors.

The focus of this manual is the role of religion in addressing domestic violence. It is crucial that advocates and others who work with victims and survivors have a clear understanding of the role of religion and that you be able to articulate it in a way that is helpful to victims and survivors.

The religious diversity of the United States embraces many cultures. This diversity of religious and cultural backgrounds among victims and survivors poses a challenge to advocates. A general lack of knowledge and awareness of different cultural and religious traditions and practices will create a stumbling block to the delivery of culturally competent and religiously-sensitive services. In some instances, religion and culture are one and the same, while in others they are distinct and separate. In other words, religious and cultural issues are never simple. There are no easy answers. A victim or a survivor is unique and any helpful response will necessarily be unique to that particular individual.

An informed, compassionate advocate and a knowledgeable religious leader can make all the difference for a victim/survivor who is experiencing domestic violence. An adequate advocate's response that includes competent and sensitive religious and cultural concerns, combined with the resources of the wider community, can save lives and bring healing where there has been woundedness.

This manual will provide you, the advocate, with a basic understanding of the particular religious and cultural issues which may arise for victims and survivors in our increasingly religiously pluralistic and culturally diverse community. Although we may not be able to cover every possible scenario or issue, we will provide you with some important information and basic guidelines which you can use as a starting point for further research and learning.

You may encounter a scenario such as this where culture and religion are one and the same or where the lines may not be clearly delineated:

A Filipina immigrant to the United States, who was raised as Roman Catholic in the Philippines (a predominantly Roman Catholic country), married her high school sweetheart who had petitioned her as a fiancée. In their first year of marriage, she suddenly finds herself being abused by her husband, who starts controlling how often she goes to church. In fact, after they got married she became Presbyterian while he remained Roman Catholic.

He accuses her of abandoning her faith and tells her she should stop going to "that Protestant church." He is the head of the household, he asserts; that was how he was raised as a Roman Catholic and as a Filipino and she, as his wife, is supposed to obey him. Their religious and cultural conflict has become the focus of his controlling behavior. In order to make her obey, he started hitting her. Her new faith affiliation has not changed her belief about the permanence of the marriage vows, nor has it changed her religious belief and cultural upbringing about family unity and solidarity. To her, these values are not in conflict at all with her faith as a Protestant in her newly adopted country. Her husband, however, is threatened that she might divorce him because he realizes that her Presbyterian beliefs may give her permission to do so.

As an advocate, one needs to understand that for the woman, even though she has become Protestant, the thought of leaving her husband to seek safety is inconceivable in light of her Filipino tradition that the family "stays together through thick and thin" and the woman is the peacemaker in the home. Divorce would be too radical to consider. On the other hand, exposure to Bible studies, women's conferences and book clubs at her church and women's fellowships have taught her that she is not obligated to obey an abusive husband. Her husband has also threatened to have her deported if she does not "behave" as a Christian Filipina woman, meaning if she refuses to obey him. He hides her passports and legal documents; she is not fully aware of her rights as an immigrant in this country.

For some victims/ survivors, their particular communities of faith may have ostracized or abandoned them in this journey, but that does not mean that they do not wish to connect with their faith, with God or their Source of spiritual nurture and well-being. It is your job to be able to walk with them as they choose to connect or not to connect with their faith.

An advocate must have sufficient understanding of the issues that battered immigrant women face, in addition to the faith issues present in this case, and should be able to refer to immigration lawyers if necessary. An immigrant woman with legal status or a woman with no legal papers may fear deportation if she does not comply with her husband's wishes. She may stay in an abusive situation longer while she waits for her "green card." As an advocate, it is important to become familiar with the Federal Violence Against Women Act and the woman's right to self-petition in case of domestic violence. These issues are also dealt with in specific ways in the different communities represented in this manual.

The Role of Advocates: Religious and Spiritual Concerns

Let us begin with a shared definition of an advocate:

> "Advocacy-based counseling" means the involvement of a client with an advocate counselor in an individual, family, or group session with the primary focus on safety planning and on empowerment of the client through reinforcing the client's autonomy and self-determination.
>
> Advocacy-based counseling uses problem-solving methods and includes identifying the barriers to safety; developing safety checking and planning skills; clarifying issues; solving problems; increasing self-esteem and self-awareness; and improving and implementing skills in decision making, parenting, self-help, and self-care.[1]

If you are currently working as an advocate, you already know your role in terms of the needs of the battered woman—that her needs come first and foremost. Among these needs, especially for the religious or spiritual woman, is that she be able to continue to connect with her faith and her faith community if she chooses to do so. For some victims/survivors, their particular communities of faith may have ostracized or abandoned them in this journey, but that does not mean that they do not wish to connect with their faith, with God or their Source of spiritual nurture and well-being. It is your job to be able to walk with them as they choose to connect or not to connect with their faith.

When you know that you are working with a religious or spiritual woman, it is likely that she will have religious or spiritual concerns related to her situation of abuse. It might not be readily apparent that she is religious or spiritual—but domestic violence is a physical, emotional and spiritual crisis. If the victim does not raise any religious concerns, feel free to ask if she would like to be connected to a religious leader or if she has any religious concerns she would like to discuss.

…in no way can religious beliefs properly be used to justify or allow abuse or violence to continue.

When the victim raises religious or spiritual concerns, the following guidelines are helpful:

- Pay attention to the religious questions/comments or references.
- Affirm these concerns as appropriate and check out their importance for the victim/survivor.
- Having identified and affirmed this area of concern, if you are uncomfortable with it or feel you are unqualified to pursue it, admit this to the client and ask permission to refer to a faith leader whom you know and trust and who is trained to help.
- If you are comfortable and would like to pursue the concern, do so, emphasizing the ways in which the client's religious tradition can be a resource to her/him and stressing that in no way can religious beliefs properly be used to justify or allow abuse or violence to continue.

Working as Allies: Advocates and Religious Leaders

We can do what is best and right when we work in partnership. The often quoted African proverb, "It takes a village to raise a child," is a reminder in our work to end domestic violence. No one individual or congregation or group can end domestic violence alone. Domestic violence is an institutional and societal problem, and it will take groups of institutions and the whole of society, including advocates and religious leaders, to end it.

No one group can address all the issues that surround victimization and abuse, hence the need for collaboration and building alliances for a coordinated community response. As advocates, you are part of a collaborative effort to address the multifaceted issues facing a victim/survivor. You will at times put victims in touch with trained therapists and other professionals and volunteers who can help, including faith leaders when that is what is called for.

It is our goal to support you as advocates in forming and advancing strategic alliances with faith community leaders.

Offer to do presentations for individual faith communities and/or in interfaith gatherings…

A coordinated community response is the most effective way to serve victims/survivors, through:

- Building cooperative relationships that offer opportunities for dual or multiple advocacy
- Eliminating duplication of resources
- Creating a broader base of support for battered women and their children.

As advocates, you work as allies with existing domestic violence agencies both within and outside the communities of your clients—by connecting victims with emergency and confidential services such as shelter, transitional housing, legal advocacy, and advocacy in other systems. In some rural areas, the faith community may provide most if not all of these services.

It is our goal to support you as advocates in forming and advancing strategic alliances with faith community leaders. Here are some suggestions for developing such alliances:

- Seek common ground and shared goals, such as equality, justice, peace, compassion, love, violence-free families and relationships, ending domestic violence, etc.
- Initiate contacts to get to know possible allies. Meet and welcome new clergy in your community; offer them available resources that they may need in their new position and ministry.
- Get to know the faith leaders in the community through your own faith leaders if you are part of a faith community; if not, get to know them by networking with those who are part of faith communities. (Many communities have an organized group of local clergy that meets regularly. Ask to be invited to one of their meetings.)
- Attend and participate in interfaith events.
- Offer to do presentations for individual faith communities and/or in interfaith gatherings, addressing:
  - the safety of survivors
  - accountability of batterers
  - creating referral systems
  - helping address community accountability on behalf of victims/survivors

- Ask faith leaders to include your work in their prayers and in their newsletters.

Seek information in your community through the relationships and alliances that you continue to form and nurture, about which faith leaders have had training in domestic violence. These people can form your core group of helpful contacts. If there are none, then your work in forming alliances with faith communities has taken on even greater importance.

Denominational and organizational local and regional offices may also know who among their leaders are trustworthy and trained in domestic violence issues. Other community organizations may already have a trustworthy referral list. Additional resources include FaithTrust Institute (www.faithtrustinstitute.org)and Safe Havens Interfaith Partnership Against Domestic Violence (www.interfaithpartners.org).

Self-Care for Advocates

Walking with victims for the long haul is both a rewarding and challenging calling. As advocates, working with victims and survivors requires not only a wide variety of advocacy skills but also attention to oneself. Like other helping professionals, advocates need reminders to keep themselves healthy, not only to prevent burn-out but also to avoid vicarious traumatization.

Advocates can take care of themselves in the following ways (among others): get clarity on one's job description; maintain clear boundaries by taking time for family and personal relationships; maintain regular discipline that is nourishing physically, emotionally and spiritually; create opportunities for genuine support outside the job; have regular supervision; and keep a sense of humor. You can expand this list by finding out what other advocates do for self-care. The maintenance of well-being for the advocate is as important as the healing of the survivor. These are lifelong processes.

Clients are as empowered as their advocates are empowered in their journey together towards seeking justice and healing. This may mean that advocates need self-care to continue the journey so that client and advocate can "begin to

The advocate may be… present as the victim/ survivor is able to tap her own source of power and strength, which may include the power and strength she finds in her faith tradition.

articulate a faith that will provide women with resources for strength rather than resources for endurance."

Now is the season to claim "a theology of empowerment rather than a theology of endurance." The advocate may be that kind of a companion in this journey, one who is present as the victim/survivor is able to tap her own source of power and strength, which may include the power and strength she finds in her faith tradition.

"Never doubt that a small group of committed individuals can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has."

Margaret Mead

Honoring Our Diversity – Welcoming Survivors of Domestic Violence

A Checklist for Shelters

Spiritual Practice

- When possible, provide separate space for individual and/or group meditations, rituals, prayers and worship.
- Provide ritual items such as candles, copies of Bibles (both Christian and Jewish), Qur'an, prayer books, and other relevant items for worship and holy day observance.
- Be sensitive, especially during December, to the reality that not all residents are Christian; high visibility of the "Christmas season" can feel very isolating to women and children of other faiths and traditions.

Dietary Practice

- When possible, provide cooking equipment (e.g., pots and pans), utensils, and space for food preparation and eating in accordance with particular religious traditions (Kosher, Halal, etc.).
- Maintain supply of paper plates, utensils, cups, etc.
- Provide vegetarian meal option at every meal.
- Explore possibility of providing women with Kosher, Halal, etc., packaged meals.
- Provide or make accessible cooking ingredients for meals from various religious, cultural, and ethnic traditions.

Modesty

- Be aware that, for some women, modesty is of religious significance.
- Provide space where individual privacy is secured—for bathing, dressing, and use of the toilet.
- Be understanding and accountable to women who have been sexually assaulted or battered.

Honor

- Do not let cultural biases, myths, or stereotypes get in the way of validating the individual, her experiences and decisions.

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Part II: Working With Women of Many Religious and Spiritual Traditions

Working with American Indian/Alaska Native Survivors of Domestic Violence

Elena Giacci (Diné)

ELENA GIACCI (DINÉ) is the Executive Director of the State Coalition to Stop Violence Against Native Women. She serves as chair for the Domestic Violence Learning Collaborative, Executive member of the Coalition to Stop Violence Against Women and Children, co-chair of the Albuquerque Mayor's Sexual Assault Task Force and member of the New Mexico Intimate Partner Death Review Team. Elena has 16 years experience in the field of Violence Against Women. Elena dedicates her time to the subject of oppression and violence against women. She worked to develop and implement a statewide project which includes domestic violence services. She attributes her knowledge in the area of advocacy to the numerous women who have honored her with their stories and friendship. She has made a commitment to address social issues that affect the health and well being of Indian people and barriers that oppress Indian women and children. As a national trainer, she has also provided statewide, county, and local training, as well as training in tribal communities. Elena is also a trainer in working with media and developing media relations; for over 6 years, she has produced and directed a "Stop the Violence" television show in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

Culture

American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN, Native) culture is specific to each nation (also known as tribe), but varies even among clans or families. Perspectives differ on creation, history, traits, food, beliefs, institutions, ceremonies, and text. No one person or source can ever speak for an entire group of Native cultures. The information provided here is meant to begin dialogue and open the door for the reader to honorably seek accurate information that will allow a better understanding of the uniqueness of Native cultures.

The absence of cultural accuracy from the beginning of written history, combined with a lack of appropriate and current truthful teaching materials, makes it challenging to have a true understanding of Native peoples.

One significant misconception of American Indians is the assumption that there is one shared common culture, language, physical characteristic, and description.

Unfortunately, a component of the definition of what constitutes a tribe has been determined by the federal government. For example, the United States currently recognizes only 562 federal tribal governments. "Federally recognized" means these tribes and nations have a "legal" relationship with the U.S. government. This number does not include indigenous, First Nation peoples who are only state recognized or tribes that have not been "recognized by the US government." There are many who have found their home in the United States from across the globe; examples include those who come from South America, Canada, or India.

The absence of cultural accuracy from the beginning of written history, combined with a lack of appropriate and current truthful teaching materials, makes it challenging to have a true understanding of Native peoples. Old westerns on television and in movies, toys, and mascots have shaped inaccurate images of American Indians. One significant misconception of American Indians is the assumption that there is one shared common culture, language, physical characteristic, and description.

It is crucial to pursue specific knowledge of the individual tribe that is historically accurate. Many native cultures have a partnership with the natural environment and a recognized unity of both the physical and spiritual world. There is often a balance and interdependent relationship between people and the use of animals, vegetation, agricultural fields, and earth materials. Numerous elements of the original cultural system continue to thrive; although some traditions of the various cultures may not have passively adapted, they have evolved or have been modified.

Text

While western civilization views text as the written word, there is no one religious document or text that speaks to all American Indian/Alaska Native peoples. AI/AN nations have long relied on a mixed-media setting of symbols, pictures, beads, speech, and songs to chronicle daily life, significant events, information, creation stories, and spiritual ceremonies. History of the tribe was frequently recorded by pictures or orally to fill different community needs. Linguistic text and symbols were used by different tribal individuals and incorporated in objects of religious,

ceremonial, and historic significance. The use of these materials was often dependent on the educator, healer, or teacher and on that person's level of spiritual and/or community understanding.

An illustration of this communication text comes from the Wampum Belt or the Winter Count. Wampum belts consist of rows of beads woven together that are traditionally made out of small, elongated, purple and white shells (wampum). Symbols on these belts were used to document the terms of an agreement or treaty and record interactions, seating charts for important council meetings, beliefs, or thoughts.

The Winter Count is a physical account pictorially represented by tribes like the Lakota Nation on animal hides or muslin. These Winter Counts were used in combination with a more extensive oral history passed from generation to generation. Notable occurrences such as epidemics, wars, weather, battles, calendars, or even school attendance were also recorded.

American Indian/Alaska Native spiritual teachings are often achieved through storytelling, songs, ceremonies, and practices incorporated into everyday living. While many AI/AN teachings are oral or visual, several tribes or individuals have written pieces of their spiritual teachings and ceremonies.

Catholic, Christian, or Quaker missionaries frequently lived among various American Indian/Alaska Native tribes. Early missionary activity on tribal land led to the adoption of Christianity by some tribal members and utilization of that philosophy and doctrine. There are also groups who have combined Christian teaching with traditional tribal beliefs and use a modified version of Christian text.

Numerous American Indian/Alaska Native traditional religious customs are sacrosanct and are not disclosed since spiritual practice is considered personal and confidential.

Worship

Numerous American Indian/Alaska Native traditional religious customs are sacrosanct and are not disclosed since spiritual practice is considered personal and confidential.

American Indian/Alaska Native people have had a long history of being persecuted by non-natives and the federal government for their religious beliefs. Although the U.S .Constitution provides protection for freedom of religion in the first amendment, unfortunately the government has not afforded the same safeguards for American Indian religions. These religious ceremonies and practices were outlawed under federal regulations from about the 1880's to the 1940's. Native Peoples were not allowed to exercise their right to pray or participate in ceremonies, and activities were driven underground. The result was that several spiritual traditions came close to the point of extinction. For native people, certain areas of land or grounds have sacred significance. During this period many sacred sites were desecrated and destroyed.

It wasn't until 1978, when Congress passed the American Indian Religious Freedom Act, that the policy changed from disrespect, prohibition, and repression to protection and preservation. American Indians were finally allowed the inherent right to worship through traditional ceremonies and possession of sacred objects.

There is still pressure on certain native Tribes/Nations to explain and describe their practices, philosophies, and rites. Although there are very few spiritual leaders who are questioned to spiritually define the meaning of their practice or to identify what is critical or indispensable to ceremonies, this is still of significant concern for the native community. AI/AN sacred sites are still being violated and many are in imminent danger of being damaged or destroyed. Government entities are still using western measuring techniques to decide how sacred an area is, thereby defining sacredness as a product or commodity rather than a spiritual component. Locations of many of these areas are guarded cautiously since these places may be fragile or damage has arisen due to outside visitation.

American Indian/Alaska Native communities have struggled for hundreds of years to worship in an uninterrupted honorable manner without outside interference and will continue to demand equal and respectful treatment.

Food

The natural connection to land and nature promotes the value and symbolism of food. Every tribal nation has its own unique food and recipes. Historically, the food was dependent on the living environment. Certain recipes and the use of indigenous ingredients and cooking techniques have stood the test of time and have been passed from generation to generation. Many celebrations, ceremonies, and memorials will include specific preparation of foods or recipes.

Current American Indian/Alaska Native recipes and foods have adapted to modern influences in terms of how they are processed and cooked. Transformation of the native food habits changed after colonization and, in general, AI/AN eat the same as anyone else in their location, with an emphasis on the traditional foods of the area. Fry bread is still a staple for many of the pueblos, and chokecherry pudding from the Lakota nation still makes mouths water.

If you are a non-native organization that will be serving American Indians, you should first begin to know the AI/AN organizations in your area, the services they provide, and begin developing the foundation for a positive network. Request and arrange training, if applicable, for management and staff. If there are no service providers in your area, there are many qualified American Indian and Alaska Native national agencies that would be willing to either train or provide local contacts. To truly respect the diet of someone who is either American Indian or Alaska Native, you first need to honor the individual and his or her particular needs and customs.

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The family structure and communal connections vary in American Indian/Alaska Native tribes. Many families often include mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. This familial web includes cousins, adopted relatives, and other extended relationships.

Family and Communal Connections

The family structure and communal connections vary in American Indian/Alaska Native tribes. Many families often include mothers, fathers, grandparents, aunts, and uncles. This familial web includes cousins, adopted relatives, and other extended relationships. On the reservation it is not uncommon to have household members living in close proximity to one another.

American Indian/Alaska Native spiritual leaders are critical to the spiritual and physical health of the tribal community. Native spirituality for members of different tribes is often fluid and not a stationary component, responding to the people, individual needs of the person, environment, or the village.

The power of relation supports tribal cohesiveness. It is represented through the traditions and honored through ceremonies. The presence or support from family and community members is crucial when relations are participating in ceremonies. Although the ceremony may be focused on the individual, the community understands that the ultimate gain will be for the community and the people.

Tribal family values frequently are reflected in the importance placed upon support of community contribution, collaboration, and a profound respect for elders. Admiration for elders is not only about chronological age but the central role and knowledge they hold. In the communities there are other honored individuals who exemplify the values and customs of the local culture and have acquired the information, compassion, and willingness to pass their awareness and understanding to future generations. Community elders give spiritual direction and encourage community development in understanding how to behave toward one's relatives and associations. Personal identity development is not only important but is necessary to the healthy development of the tribe.

Spiritual Leaders

Spiritual leaders, medicine men, and traditional healers go by different names but what they all have in common is that they are trained for several years in various ways and are an important component of the individual tribes. The awareness and information possessed by spiritual leaders are expansive in variety, uniqueness, accountability, and area of expertise. Part of their responsibility is to share their understanding of traditional teachings and practices which supports the community to maintain the balance of the physical and spiritual world.

Prior to the establishment in 1978 of the Freedom of Religion Act, spiritual leaders ran the risk of jail sentences for simply practicing their ceremonies. Apprentices who begin to learn the traditional ways do not use books or tape recorders to study the rituals but are guided by at least one teacher who supports them through the learning process. These instructors may stay with their students forever. American Indian/Alaska Native spiritual leaders are critical to the spiritual and physical health of the tribal community. Native spirituality for members of different tribes

is often fluid and not a stationary component, responding to the people, individual needs of the person, environment, or the village.

Violence Against Women

Prior to European contact, intimate partner violence against AI/AN women was an isolated event that resulted in punishment or sanctions against the perpetrator. In addition, these violent occurrences were perceived as actions against the community. AI/AN women were honored, respected, and seen as sacred. After European contact, however, violence against women became much more frequent. Colonization, which shifted attitudes and beliefs resulting in violence against AI/AN women, continues to result in internalized oppression.

Prior to European contact…AI/AN women were honored, respected, and seen as sacred. After European contact, however, violence against women became much more frequent. Colonization, which shifted attitudes and beliefs resulting in violence against AI/AN women, continues to result in internalized oppression.

Domestic violence is a crisis among American Indians/Alaska Natives as it is for any other population, but often there are additional obstacles to overcome. Protection orders for the AI/AN are even more complicated in tribal areas because of the vast jurisdictional issues; in addition, each authority may require different standards of proof, eligibility, or evidence.

Data on violence against AI/AN women is relatively difficult to obtain. The statistics currently available are grim:

- The National Violence Against Women Survey concluded that 34.1% of AI/AN women will be raped in their lifetime…more than 1 in 3.[1]
- Sexual violence against Native women occurs at an average annual rate of 7.2 per 1000, compared to 1.9 per 1000 for all races.[2]
- At least 70% of violent victimizations experienced by Native Americans are committed by persons not of the same race, a substantially higher rate of interracial violence than experienced by white or black victims.[3]
- A total of 17% of AI/AN women have been stalked and are more likely than victims of all other races to be injured and need hospital care.[4]

Jurisdictional issues are also dependent on where the victim or perpetrator lives, if they are members of the tribe, members of other tribes, or are non-native. AI/AN communities continue to struggle with limited or multiple jurisdictional issues and inadequate violence against women codes.

Other

American Indian/Alaska Native people continue to suffer institutional racism. The persistent use of the American Indian/Alaska Native image as a product, mascot, costume, or toy demeans an entire people. This allows members of the public to maintain and tolerate racism and to continue to contribute to culturally abusive behavior. The "Indian" stereotype is a mockery of the AI/AN cultures and an inaccurate depiction of an entire people. Using AI/AN imagery on logos and products continues to marginalize and provide a barrier to balance in honoring an entire people.

Walking Together on the Path of Liberation: For Domestic Violence Advocates Working with Buddhist Women

Jee Kruawan Suthamwanthanee

JEE KRUAWAN SUTHAMWANTHANEE was born and raised in Thailand in the Theravada Buddhist tradition. Most of her Buddhist knowledge, understanding, and practice comes from her family and her own reading. Jee came to the United States in the late 1980's to study counseling psychology but found herself more drawn to peer counseling, social justice work, and participation in the movement to end violence against women. Involved with the Asian Women's Shelter in San Francisco since 1991, she is currently coordinator of the Multi-lingual Access Model program. Jee has done collaborative work with NGO's in Thailand on domestic violence issues. In the U.S., she has collaborated with five Thai temples in San Francisco. As a domestic violence advocate and a member of the Thai Buddhist community, she sees herself as a bridge, educating the domestic violence community about Buddhism and the Buddhist community about domestic violence.

Introduction

Since 1991 I have been working at the Asian Women's Shelter in San Francisco, California. In this article I would like to share some experiences and views on working with women of Buddhist faith who are survivors of domestic violence. My name is Jee Kruawan Suthamwanthanee and I have been raised and have practiced Theravada Buddhism all my life. I am not a Buddhist scholar, not a very religious laywoman, and not a writer, either! I am an advocate at the Asian Women's Shelter and an ordinary Theravada Buddhist Thai woman.

Within Buddhism, as with many religions, there are many methods and traditions of practice and training.

Within Buddhism, as with many religions, there are many methods and traditions of practice and training. Some common traditions of Buddhism include Zen, Advaita, Dzogchen, Tibetan, Devotion, Vajarayana, Mahayana, and Theravada Buddhism. In this article I have tried to reflect the core of Buddha's teachings that are shared among many sects, yet please remember that Buddha himself said there are many paths to enlightenment.

In my experience working with clients from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma, I have noticed how cultural and Buddhist traditions are deeply integrated.

A Way of Life

Buddhist teachings emphasize that practicing Buddhism is a way of life. It is part of everything. Buddhists practice their faith not only by going to temple, listening to dharma talks (Buddhist teachings), reading and chanting sutras (scriptures), but also from the simple act of mindful breathing, by living our lives with peace and compassion, and by opening our hearts.

Because Buddhism is so interwoven with daily living, in a predominantly Buddhist country such as Thailand, where I grew up, Buddhism has become so integrated with our life that the two are hardly separable. Buddhist influences can be detected in Thai lifestyle, mannerisms, traditions, character, arts, architecture, language, and all other aspects of the Thai culture. In my experience working with clients from Thailand, Laos, Cambodia, and Burma, I have noticed how cultural and Buddhist traditions are deeply integrated.

…when a well-meaning advocate asks if eating vegetarian food is a religious practice, a client may not know or even have the language for describing whether something is a religious practice or a cultural preference.

Western society often categorizes and separates things in ways that may not make sense for someone from an Asian Buddhist background. For example, when a well-meaning advocate asks if eating vegetarian food is a religious practice, a client may not know or even have the language for describing whether something is a religious practice or a cultural preference. Some domestic violence shelter programs will provide special foods if it is a religious practice, but not if it is a cultural preference. At Asian Women's Shelter, we understand that religion and daily practice are often inseparable, and simply provide the foods that each resident requests. By providing the foods that are most familiar, comforting, and nourishing for each resident, we give the message that the shelter is their home, where they and their children can heal and grow strong. We want to provide not only a safe place but also a place where women can heal physically, emotionally,

and spiritually. Women can request foods and cook for themselves the way they like, so they can nurture their spirit and soul. In many cases, abusers would abuse women through controlling or withholding foods. Women in abusive relationships are often not allowed to buy or cook foods that they want to eat, or they might be controlled in terms of how much they can eat or not provided foods according to religious and cultural needs and practices.

A common Buddhist practice is to be a vegetarian, but not all Buddhists are vegetarian. Remember, Buddhism is practiced differently throughout the world. It is not uncommon that some Theravada Buddhists have specifically vegetarian meals only on holy days (fixed according to the moon's phases). Each month there are four or five holy days. Women usually have their own lunar calendars when they observe holy days.

We want to provide not only a safe place but also a place where women can heal physically, emotionally, and spiritually. Women can request foods and cook for themselves the way they like, so they can nurture their spirit and soul.

A common Buddhist practice is to be a vegetarian, but not all Buddhists are vegetarian.

Suffering

Buddha was a human being, and he suffered just as all human beings do. As Buddhists, we know that the core of Buddhism is to acknowledge suffering and transform suffering. The Buddhist monk Thích Nhât Hanh says, "When we recognize and acknowledge our own suffering, the Buddha—which means the Buddha in us—will look at it, discover what has brought it about, and prescribe a course of action that can transform it into peace, joy, and liberation. Suffering is the means the Buddha used to liberate himself, and it is also the means by which we can become free." [1]

Sometimes Buddhist women I have worked with in the shelter and other Buddhist practitioners misinterpret the concept of "life is suffering" as a reason to accept domestic violence. Women might be misinformed and encouraged to accept the suffering, being told that it is their karma (the law of cause and effect) or fate.

Sometimes Buddhist women I have worked with…misinterpret the concept of "life is suffering" as a reason to accept domestic violence. Women might be misinformed and encouraged to accept the suffering, being told that it is their karma…

I have heard so many Buddhist women who are survivors of domestic violence say that they must endure the violence because it is their karmic fate; that they were born to repay the karma from the previous life. These beliefs are contradictory and work against the effort to end violence in our lives. I

By breaking the cycle of violence she also helps her abuser stop creating further bad karma.

always have a conversation with clients around the *karma vipaka* (the result of intentional action). All the abused women I speak with about Buddhism admit that their abusers constantly practice the harmful *karma vipaka* in this life. The abusers commit harmful karma in all the ways that are condemned in Buddhist teachings (i.e., physical harm, harmful speech, harmful actions, harmful thoughts). If the cycle of violence continues, this cycle will repeat again, not only in this lifetime but in the future life. Karma is the law of cause and effect. Good cause creates good effect. Bad cause creates bad effect. All beings are the owners of their actions. Since we believe that we are the creators of our own future life (and future life means the next moment in this life as well as a future reincarnation), we want to have a happy and peaceful future life. Therefore, we will have to start it from this very life, this very moment to be away from the source of suffering and to be able to practice mindfulness, loving kindness, compassion, empathetic joy, and equanimity.

When a Buddhist woman understands her karma in this way, she is able to create a good future for herself and her children. She also helps her children to be safe, in peace, and to end their suffering. And in fact, she can see the instant *karma vipaka* that is happening now. And the next life will be even better. By breaking the cycle of violence she also helps her abuser stop creating further bad karma. Neither she nor the abuser will have to repeat the cycle of harmful karma any further. And that is also a loving thing and a gift from her to her abuser.

Reflections on Universal Well-being. Theravada chant.

May I abide in well-being
In freedom from affliction
In freedom from hostility
In freedom from ill will
In freedom from anxiety
And may I maintain well-being in myself.

May everyone abide in well-being
In freedom from hostility
In freedom from ill will
In freedom from anxiety
And may they maintain well-being in themselves.

May all beings be released from all suffering
And may they not be parted from
The good fortune they have attained.

All beings are the owners of their actions
And inherit their results.
Their future is born from such actions
Companion to such actions
And their results will be their homes.
All kinds of actions,
Be they skillful or harmful,
Of such acts,
They will be the heirs.

Kai's Story

Kai, a 27-year old woman, immigrated to the U.S. from Thailand together with her husband, Sak. Sak was extremely controlling in all aspects of her life. He did not allow her to study, to work, to meet new friends, or to leave the house without him. Kai was not allowed to make a phone call to her family in her home country. Sometimes Sak would write bad things about her on big pieces of paper and post them on the walls of their home. One paper said she was a bad, ungrateful wife. Another said she was a useless, unworthy person, good for nothing. Another said that even a stray dog was better than Kai because if a dog was fed, he would feel grateful and would love and obey his master.

All of these papers posted around the house contributed to Kai feeling terrible about herself and very ashamed. Although Sak never hit her, Kai felt that she was less than a person when living with him. When Kai went to a temple with Sak, she saw a brochure in Thai from the Asian Women's Shelter. She read it, wrote down the phone number and later on got up the courage to make a call. She learned that what she was experiencing was called abuse, and that she had options to be safe and to live with dignity.

As Buddhists, to acknowledge and end suffering is to acknowledge and work to end all forms of oppression.

Non-violence

We know that a peaceful society is not one filled with violence, hurt, fear, and suffering. We community members can help to build peace. Our spiritual beliefs, the work to end domestic violence, and the work of anti-oppression go hand-in-hand. They complement each other. At the heart of Buddhism is anti-oppression in all forms.

As Buddhists, to acknowledge and end suffering is to acknowledge and work to end all forms of oppression. For example, when women are devalued and not seen as equal to men, this can lay the foundation for power and control over women, including domestic violence. A common Thai saying is that women are an elephant's hind legs (i.e., the followers). This is a strong belief that prevents women and men from seeing women as independent persons able to make decisions or to make changes on their own. However, as in every religion and culture, values are evolving. Many women, including myself, no longer see ourselves as an elephant's hind legs. If anything, we now see ourselves as either the two right legs or two left legs. An elephant would have a harder time to stand if it just had left legs or right legs alone. It needs both left and right legs. It would also be nice if this elephant had two brains put together instead of one. And there is nothing in Buddhism that goes against women wanting to reclaim their place as equals.

This is why the anti-oppression work must go hand-in-hand with domestic violence work. Women are oppressed in and by society everywhere around the world. There are issues of poverty, social status, gender oppression, and racism. Children are neglected; women are raped. The problems are compounded. These are overwhelming issues that we cannot ignore.

As advocates, we cannot work to end violence in one arena while ignoring oppression in another. For example, when battered women's shelters say no woman deserves to be abused, do they really practice that belief? When a lesbian woman calls the crisis line, do they believe her? When an immigrant, non-English-speaking woman needs shelter, do they take her in, even if they cannot speak her language?

At the Asian Women's Shelter, we are committed to addressing all forms of oppression, and we are constantly learning and practicing self-reflection. We

build anti-oppression work into our programs, training, policies, and through the diversity of our volunteers, staff, language advocates, and board. We see ending domestic violence, as well as all forms of oppression, as part of our ongoing, lifetime work toward peace and liberation for all.

Compassion and Deep Understanding

A deeply rooted value in Buddhist practice is compassion and deep understanding. Many women who have experienced abuse from their intimate partners are told by their Buddhist religious leaders, Sangha (religious community members), or from reading Buddhist texts that they should practice deep understanding to see all the sufferings of the loved one who is abusing them. By understanding his suffering, her heart becomes filled with compassion; hatred and anger are replaced with compassion and understanding. While it is important to practice compassion and deep understanding for others, including those that we perceive as harmful to us or as our enemies, we must also practice compassion and deep understanding for ourselves. Many times these concepts are misunderstood to mean that abused women should practice compassion and deep understanding for their abusive husbands/partners, even if, by doing so, they are destroying their own physical, emotional, and spiritual peace and well-being.

While it is important to practice compassion and deep understanding for others…we must also practice compassion and deep understanding for ourselves. Many times these concepts are misunderstood to mean that abused women should practice compassion and deep understanding for their abusive husbands/partners, even if, by doing so, they are destroying their own physical, emotional, and spiritual peace and well-being.

Mutual compassion and deep understanding can be a powerful way for two people in a relationship to end their suffering, if both are courageous and open enough to acknowledge the pain and suffering and to transform that suffering into peace and healing. Unfortunately, in many domestic violence relationships the abuser does not acknowledge his own harmful karma and looks at his own suffering as an excuse for his violence and controlling behaviors, and not as a window to his own transformation.

Compassion and deep understanding are important Buddhist values, and at the same time it is important to also remind abused women of other Buddhist values, such as Right Action (*samyak karmanta*)—the practice of non-violence toward ourselves and others— and Right Mindfulness (*samyak smriti*)—transformation of our own suffering and the suffering of the world. For those who are struggling

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As long as safety and transformation are upheld and not compromised, advocates can also challenge ourselves to gain deeper understanding about the need for compassion, even for those who are hurting others, in understanding that true peace is embedded in the interconnectedness of all. Many paths that we, as a society, have taken to end violence are incomplete. Simply imprisoning perpetrators of violence or cultivating anger rather than compassion for those who are violent will not bring peace to our families, communities, and world.

Gratitude

When I left home in the 1980's to come to study in the U.S., my mother gave me a little Buddha image. I knew what it meant. It meant that I would be traveling 10,000 miles away from home. The distance was so great that it was not in her power anymore to come protect me in case anything should happen. And the Buddha image would protect me and bring me peace and happiness. She and I relied on the higher power that was greater than ourselves. The Buddha image reminds my mother and me about the powerful connection and interbeing with one another and the world, and about the Buddha energy and spirit within each of us.

Many of the women and children at Asian Women's Shelter fled from their violent homes to come to the shelter. Oftentimes they come with nothing, just the clothes on their back and the little Buddha image on their necklace. One woman told me that this was plenty for her. It was plenty for her to be alive. It was plenty for her that her kids were safe. It was plenty that they have a safe place to stay.

I humbly appreciated my client's grateful attitude towards life. She had tremendous strength and the ability to be content and at ease amidst crisis. However, I believe that as an advocate, as a fellow human being, as a 10,000-mile traveler away from home, and as a woman, it was my responsibility to seek

to understand what more I could provide for her and her kids during their stay at our shelter to restore peace to their lives, to help end their suffering from the abuse.

Buddhist clients in programs may not speak up or ask for more, appreciating what they have. Although they may not ask in the forthcoming manner that is a value in Western culture, they still have needs that would be greatly eased with the support and assistance of advocates. I have found that I can gain a deeper understanding of how I can be helpful by using many different approaches. For instance, I explain to clients that our program values speaking up and speaking directly about what might be helpful to them. I give examples of some things that have been helpful/useful to others. ("Buddha's birthday is coming up. I know in my family we like to cook special foods. Is that something you practice also? It is not too much trouble, in our program we honor many different traditions and holidays.") I create the space and time for the client to express herself and feel comfortable with me. I balance the gratitude she expresses for me and the shelter program with my own expression of gratitude for her, in her courage, strength, transformation, and healing.

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Ironically, sometimes gratitude can be a barrier. *Katannu Kataveti* is a Pali word for gratitude to the ones who have done good to us. Gratitude is a positive response to life; we deliberately bring into our consciousness the good things done to us in our life. *Katannu Kataveti* is a cultural virtue; it is highly regarded and cultivated. Being able to support and look after our parents, for example, is considered one of the great blessings of life. A mother who has raised her children, a father who provides meals for family members, a spouse who helps petitioning for her immigration—these are all examples of people for whom one feels gratitude. *Katannu Kataveti* can be a beautiful value that brings respect, a positive outlook, and appreciation. *Katannu Kataveti* is misguided when those for whom we have gratitude use their power to abuse and control others. When a woman feels deep gratitude to someone who is abusing her, it prevents her from revealing the abuses perpetrated on her.

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May's Story

May came to the U.S. from Laos for graduate school and met her girlfriend Wan here. Wan had lived and worked here for several years already. She knew a lot of people in their community, and people in the community knew that they were a couple.

Wan was much smaller than May. But when Wan was angry, she threw things at May, and sometimes she hit May, usually in areas that couldn't be easily seen. May was reluctant to tell people in their community. May was a committed laywoman at a temple; everybody knew and respected her. Wan was always sweet and helpful to others; and besides, she was much smaller than May. Would anyone believe May if she told? Would anyone in their community hold Wan accountable for her behavior? May also felt unsure about calling agencies for help. She had some anxieties about making calls: how would the police respond? Would they take her seriously? She also wondered if the shelter would accept someone like her... a lesbian, a Buddhist, a vegetarian who spoke only limited English.

May thought that living with abuse was her karmic fate, that she deserved it because of something she had done in a previous life. She talked to a monk and asked for his blessing to help her with her relationship problems. She also told him that she wanted to free captive birds and return them to their natural habitat to let them live free and happy lives. The monk was able to pick up the spiritual signals for domestic violence. He thought she might be experiencing domestic violence in her relationship with Wan. He asked her and did not blame her. He believed her when she told him what was happening. He also referred her to the Asian Women's Shelter for services that he could not provide. With the help of advocates from the shelter, May was able to create a viable safety plan and end the relationship with Wan.

Holidays and Worship Practices

For the lay community, major Buddhist festivals are maintained as public holidays in their home countries. They usually attend temples in the area. Chief among the celebrations are three all-important dates which commemorate significant events in the Buddha's life.

Makha Bucha, on the day of the February full moon, celebrates the occasion when 1,250 disciples gathered spontaneously to hear the Buddha speak.

Visakha Bucha, in May, on the full moon in the sixth lunar month, celebrates the day the Buddha was born, achieved enlightenment, and died.

Asalaha Bucha, on the full moon in July, is the anniversary of the Buddha's first sermon to his first five disciples.

All three occasions are marked by acts of merit-making, while in the evenings crowds gather at temples and other Buddhist sites joining in candlelit processions which slowly make three circuits around the main hall or sacred structure.

In the U.S., the temples will accommodate laypeople by having the occasions celebrated on the weekend closest to the event. At our shelter, many times we will plan outings with residents and volunteers to attend the festivals. We often provide language advocates (from our trained, on-call pool of peer advocates from over 20 different language/cultural backgrounds) to accompany clients to mosques, temples, or churches. Sometimes when it is not safe to go back to the same temple that a resident used to go to, our language advocates and staff will help find a location of a different temple where she can go for spiritual guidance, and we will provide transportation and accompaniment, if needed, for her safety.

When laypeople go to the temple, they bring food to offer to monks. Monks do not have income. They rely on the lay community. In return, monks provide spiritual guidance to the lay community. Both the spiritual community and lay community depend on one another. Women residing at the shelter may want to bring an offering to the monks when visiting the temple. At Asian Women's Shelter we coordinate and provide food for women to cook so that they may make the offering.

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If shelters can provide a quiet space for lighting candles, incense, and/or meditation and chanting, this would be very healing and helpful for many women at the shelter, not only Buddhists.

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In Theravada Buddhism, two other major occasions in the Buddhist calendar are *Kho Phansa* and *Ok Phansa* which mark, respectively, the start and the end of the Rains Retreat. The tradition predates Buddhism and derives from ancient India. (It is the rainy season in that region). Both are variable dates, set according to the lunar calendar and occurring in July and October.

Laypeople who cannot join the festivals or processions at the temple will usually worship at home. People do it differently. Some offer flowers, foods, and light candles and incense sticks at the altar before the Buddha image. Many of our clients who have brought along their Buddha image set the altar by their bed and above the floor, usually on their nightstand. Some just practice meditation.

Our residents understand being in the communal living situation. Lighting incense in the bedroom might smell and/or create smoke in the bedroom, it might affect others who are sensitive to the smell. If shelters can provide a quiet space for lighting candles, incense, and/or meditation and chanting, this would be very healing and helpful for many women at the shelter, not only Buddhists.

However, a Buddhist value is that practice is a way of life, and one can practice anywhere, not getting too attached to the form. Incense, meditation, chanting the sutras, having an altar and/or a Buddha image are only means of gaining insight—they are not insight itself.

Because Buddhist practice is so ingrained in daily living and can be very flexible and varied, sometimes advocates and other people who are unfamiliar with Buddhist practices may believe that a client is not very religious, because they do not observe obvious or strict rituals and worship practices. It is important for advocates to be aware of and not minimize worship practices that may be more flexible or less visible, yet just as important to a religious practitioner.

The role of religious leaders and the faith community

In Southeast Asia, the temples serve a more active function than monastic systems in the West. In the past, when Thai society was centered around village life, monks

would serve as teachers, doctors, and counselors, as well as spiritual guides. While this is less pronounced today, the multiple roles of monks have not died out completely, particularly in rural areas.

In these days, Buddhist monks serve more of a spiritual leader role. Lay community members come to seek the spiritual guidance and participate in merit-making at the temples. One of the most common concerns that lay people share with monks is their fate or karma (the law of cause and effect).

In the San Francisco Bay Area, where I work and live, there are about five Theravada Thai temples. Almost all of my Thai clients go to one of these temples. In Thai culture, the temple is an institution of spiritual refuge and guidance. It is significant in a time of suffering. Many survivors and/or victims go to a temple first when a crisis happens. It is without question that the faith communities can play an important role in supporting women during this time. Faith leaders do have the power to guide people in their life decision-making.

In Buddhism, the faith community is called the Sangha and is comprised of monks, nuns, and laypeople. Buddhists believe that practicing with a Sangha is essential. When a Sangha lives in harmony and awareness, it generates wisdom, support, and guidance, strengthens faith, and brings about transformation, joy, and peace. Sangha is one of the three treasures in Buddhism, three essential and interconnected elements to Buddhist practice: Buddha, Dharma, and Sangha.

In the U.S., the Sangha becomes even more essential because many members are new immigrants, may speak limited English, and may be isolated by racism and discrimination in their neighborhoods and workplaces, or shut out from other opportunities for making friends and creating community. Members of the Sangha often rely on one another for different kinds of support, for general well being, for safety, for comfort, for guidance, for surviving, for networking. We share the same culture, language, traditions, belief systems, and treasure the time we can spend together, especially because we are so far away from our homeland. Most of our clients do have families back in their home countries. The Sangha is also important because members living in the U.S. may be living here isolated from family, extended family, and community back in their home countries.

When domestic violence occurs within members of the Sangha, the faith community can be a powerful resource to uphold safety and non-violence, support survivors of abuse, and hold perpetrators accountable. But if Sangha members are unaware and uneducated about domestic violence, they may inadvertently condone it; they may blame the victim, ignore the problem, or believe that the problem will go away on its own.

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The Sangha can assist women to call a crisis line, make a safety plan, break isolation and/or escape the violence. Sangha members can be a resource to someone suffering from abuse by believing her, being a trusted friend, providing a safe place to go, etc. The Sangha can also assist abusers by helping them become aware of the suffering they are inflicting on their family members, and support and guide them to transform their violence and connect peacefully in the society.

Collaboration with Buddhist faith communities

I have received several crisis calls to the shelter from Thai women who said that they received our phone number from Buddhist monks at the temples. One woman said that the monk encouraged her to call the crisis line and let her know that she could speak to someone in Thai. To her it was the most encouraging thing to hear and know that this one phone call would not be a struggling experience for her and that she could express her feelings, fear, hope, and suffering. It gave her courage to know that someone would understand her culturally, spiritually, and linguistically. It is something that any of us would need in a time of crisis.

I am a part of a group of Thai women in our Theravada Buddhist community who have come together to collaborate with the Thai temples in our area. As members of the Sangha, we provide outreach education and are working together with monks from all five temples in the San Francisco Bay area to address domestic violence. Through our collaboration together, monks now understand the cycle of violence, the dynamics of an abusive relationship, and the importance of safety for women and children. We have discussed new interpretations of cultural and spiritual values. Faith leaders have a new and better understanding of domestic violence patterns, shared values and spiritual signals for domestic violence. As a

result of the collaborative work between domestic violence advocates and faith leaders/communities, we bring domestic violence to the forefront, to a level of consciousness never before seen in our communities. The two groups (domestic violence advocates and faith communities) now have improved understanding and deeper appreciation of each other's roles. Members of my group and myself are a bridge, because we belong to both the domestic violence advocate community and the Thai Buddhist community.

I am grateful that my religious beliefs and my work as a shelter advocate are interconnected, and that by practicing my faith and advocacy skills I can contribute to the larger movement to end violence against women across the diversity of all religions, all communities, all races, and all countries.

May all beings be free from suffering.
May all beings be at peace.

An Introduction to Christianity

Linda Olsen

LINDA OLSEN is the Executive Director for Eastside Domestic Violence Program (EDVP) in Bellevue, WA. She has worked for EDVP for 13 years, both as Executive Director and Shelter Director, and has worked in the field of domestic violence for 20 years. Linda has a Master of Arts in Theology from Pacific Lutheran Theological Seminary in Berkeley and a Master of Social Work from the University of Washington.

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Christians believe that God was born as Jesus Christ (referring to Jesus as the son of God) and lived as a rabbi/teacher in the Jewish community roughly two thousand years ago. His teaching frequently challenged the state and the religious officials of his time. The execution of Jesus by the Roman occupiers of Israel was an anti-Semitic act intended to destroy his teaching and the community that had formed around him made up of Jews and Gentiles. His death and resurrection are the keystone of the Christian faith. In this Christians believe that they are reconciled to God and that new life emerges from death.

After the death and resurrection of Jesus, the Christian religion developed and evolved into many different variations of this theme, with different traditions influenced by regional cultures and politics. Several Christian branches that have evolved are described in this guide. Because of the complexities in Christianity as in other faiths, it is always important for the domestic violence advocate to ask the woman to describe her own beliefs and practices and to not make assumptions about how her beliefs might inform her choices and decisions.

It is important for the shelter advocate to ask how a Christian woman might best be supported in her faith around holidays.

How a woman views the Bible has a major impact on what her journey is going to look like. Different approaches to understanding and applying scripture not only vary from one denomination and independent group within Christianity to another, but also within a given denomination. Religious fundamentalism and a literal interpretation of the Bible may inform a woman's view of her role in the family, her obligation to her husband, and how she should discipline her children. It may also affect her relationships in a communal setting with those of different religious beliefs and sexual orientations.

Significant variations exist within Christianity with respect to worship and celebration during holidays. It is important for the shelter advocate to ask how a Christian woman might best be supported in her faith around holidays.

Easter Sunday (which occurs in the spring) is the primary religious celebration for Christians as it observes the resurrection of Jesus Christ that serves as the witness to the divinity and purpose of Jesus. Many Christians may be very offended by Easter bunnies and egg hunts. Others will welcome the comforting spirit of Easter baskets that are routinely offered to shelters. Many Christians observe Lent (the 40 days prior to the resurrection of Jesus) with prayer and with giving up something important to them (such as a type of food). Ash Wednesday, the first day of Lent, is often observed in an evening church service. Weekly Wednesday evening services may be a part of a woman's tradition during Lent. Many Christians observe the Triduum (three days) which include Maundy Thursday (the last supper), Good Friday (the crucifixion), and Easter vigil (Saturday evening waiting for the resurrection).

The Christmas holidays, during the winter, are also celebrated in a variety of ways, depending upon denomination and tradition. Many Christians celebrate Advent (the four weeks preceding Christmas) with candles and scripture readings. Christmas Eve candlelight services may be important to some. Many also treasure the twelve days of Christmas that start on Christmas day (December 25) and end on January 6, or Epiphany. An Orthodox Christian woman may celebrate Christmas on January 6.

Finally, Halloween may be seen by many Christians as offensive and even evil. Yet other Christians know Halloween as All Hallowed Eve which precedes All Saints Day in the Catholic, Anglican/Episcopalian, and Lutheran church calendar. For Catholics in many Latin American countries, this is also known as the "Day of the Dead" which is an important family celebration in honor of those who have died.

In addition, it should be noted that Jehovah's Witnesses is a branch of Christianity that celebrates neither the traditional holidays nor individual birthdays.

Christianity is a very diverse religion that has drawn on the cultures of many regions throughout the world. It is complex and sometimes confusing. It is often a source of comfort and hope for those who believe in Jesus and in his teachings. The more in-depth descriptions of several Christian traditions in this book will open even more avenues for understanding and support. It is always important for the advocate to be careful about categories and assumptions, and to ask the woman how she may best be supported in observing her Christian faith.

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Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land: African American Black Church Culture and Domestic Violence

Sharon Ellis Davis

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I am an African American female pastor and survivor of domestic violence. This is a very important statement to make because it informs much of what I write about African American churches and communities as they impact African American victims of domestic violence. This article will encompass my experiences. However, its structure will reflect the combined experiences of myself and the African American battered women and families with whom I have come in contact over the past twenty years as a survivor, pastor, chaplain, friend, and victim advocate.

As I write about domestic violence and the historic black church, there are three things that need to be perfectly clear to the reader. First, there is no single

It is not simply the attitudes of the church (pastor and members) that can negatively or positively impact a victim of domestic violence, but also those of the family, which is an extension of the church.

definition or description of the "historic black church," or "the black church." For the purposes of this article, when I speak of the historic black church, I am referring to the organized churches that came into existence as the result of slavery, segregation, and the continued racial attitudes among white church members that have caused black people to collect themselves under one roof for the purposes of worship and advocating for the rights of black people. Out of this milieu, the historic black churches were born. These churches fostered certain beliefs and values that were important to black survival. Where there are no "typical black churches," many of these beliefs and values continue to exist in the black church culture and, in this light, are important to address.

…it is very important that service providers not lump women into categories based on their skin color.

Second, the terms *black church* and *black family* will be used interchangeably in this article. The origins of the historic black church began with families and in the homes of families. Family was not seen as separate from the church. Sermons, practices, beliefs, and values are/were preached from the home as well as from the church. This is an important concept for domestic violence providers to understand. It is not simply the attitudes of the church (pastor and members) that can negatively or positively impact a victim of domestic violence, but also those of the family, which is an extension of the church. A victim of domestic violence may have no church affiliation at all. However, her family structure and cultural experiences have most likely influenced her thinking and attitudes in ways similar to the impact of the church. In other words, the black church is fluid. Therefore, "the black church," whether structured or within families and communities, represents vital and visible places of safety and refuge for African American people. Its presence in many places has important functions, whether that influence is positive or negative.

Thirdly, when I speak from the context of the black *Christian church* and refer to African American women, this does not include immigrant African women who may be of other faiths (Muslim or Jewish) and bring with them experiences different from African American Christian women. Consequently, it is very important that service providers not lump women into categories based on their skin color. It is important to ask the women about their ethnicity and faith background.

African American people are a closely-knit group of people and come from a culture that believes in closeness. African American women are usually the nurturers in this environment. Battered African American women may see their role, even in the midst of abuse, as needing to provide nurturing and protection to their children and even their abuser. The black church/family reinforces these beliefs. Consequently, the theme of women as nurturers, protectors, and sustainers of the family unit is an important religious theme for African American women.

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The implications for understanding the movement of the black church and the black family are many. There is no way to tell what religious messages victims may be receiving based on their church affiliation. Victims of domestic violence may be receiving these messages from a number of places, such as their church, members of other churches, their family of origin, and their extended family. These messages may be mixed and confusing. Finally, even when the victims have received positive, liberating messages from the church, they may be negatively impacted by messages received earlier in life.

Consequently, this makes talking about the "black church" and the "black family" difficult but necessary. It would be dangerous, however, to take this and any other information and use it as Gospel or as a recipe for intervention. Black liberation theology always values the experience of people. As pastoral care providers and victim advocates, our first obligation is to listen to the victim. She will tell you most of what you need to know about her religious history and its impact on her thinking, acting, and victimization.

The impact of slavery and continued perceived racism has caused many African American female victims of domestic violence to resist, or at least minimize, the contact they have with institutions such as the criminal justice system and shelters.

The impact of slavery and continued perceived racism has caused many African American female victims of domestic violence to resist, or at least minimize, the contact they have with institutions such as the criminal justice system and shelters. In turn, slavery and perceived racism have called many black people to depend on their own institutions for advocacy, intervention, prevention, and guidance. For many African American people, the main institution to carry out this mission is "the black church." For African American victims of domestic violence, the church will be the initial place they contact as they seek help and safety.

Angela's Story

Angela had separated from Jerry after three years of marriage, tired of the constant abuse. Her in-laws began pressuring her to return, urging her to forgive Jerry and reminding her that "there are no perfect marriages." One Sunday, her pastor gave a sermon, pointing out that even Adam and Eve's marriage had problems. Angela began to wonder if her in-laws were right, and she was thinking about going back to Jerry. But when she talked to her pastor, he asked Angela if she had heard his other sermon, "When It Can't Be Fixed?" With support from her pastor, Angela realized that Jerry needed to take responsibility for his abusive behavior, find a treatment program, and put in the hard work necessary to make change, before it would be safe for her to return.

It will be the pastor's advice that could make the difference as to whether she will choose to initiate or continue with police intervention, as well as contact a shelter.

They will especially seek the assistance of the pastor (usually a black male), who serves as a powerful source of authority for an African American victim of domestic violence. It will be the pastor's advice that could make the difference as to whether she will choose to initiate or continue with police intervention, as well as contact a shelter. "The black church," however, has not had the history and experience of dealing with or understanding the needs of victims of domestic violence. "The black church" has had the experience of dealing with the impact of racism and helping to raise the self-esteem of its membership. One key impact of slavery was the systematic destruction of black families, the rape of black women and the emasculation of black men. Consequently, the value structure of many black churches is one of survival of the African American family. Domestic violence and the subsequent intervention mechanism of the secular society (criminal justice system) may be seen as threatening the family structure. Consequently, victims of domestic violence, when seeking help within the church, may encounter a culture that is more concerned with the preservation of family and would seek more toward reconciliation, rather than separation or protection of the victim.

What is occurring now, within the black church/family culture, is an attitude of survival for the endangered black family (husband, wife, children). This does not mean that the church is not sensitive to, or protective of, victims of domestic violence. What it does indicate, however, is its concern with hurting or destroying the family. What many pastors might attempt to do is to fix the problem by bringing the victim and the abuser together for counseling, without understanding the danger and negative impact this might have. An African American victim of domestic violence coming out of this environment may have difficulty living in a shelter because of what she has experienced and/or been taught about this systematic destruction of black families. These sermons can be conscious or subconscious from childhood, continuing to be heard today, originating in the family of origin, or in the media and society. The sermon is the same: "Save the black family." Victims, in coming to shelters, then, see themselves as participating in this systemic plot already designed to destroy black men, and mainly the black family.

Ask African American victims of domestic violence, "What got you through your abuse?" The answer, most of the time, would be the same as mine: "My faith and God."

Therefore, it is important for victim advocates to understand the connections between the history of slavery, continued racism, and the black church response to this oppression, setting up "*faith and family*" as deeply rooted values. What the black church/family means to African American people should never be understated nor misunderstood by advocates, especially white advocates. Also, the role the black church can play in the healing and restoration of victims of violence should not be negated because of its inappropriate and even harmful response to victims. Ask African American victims of domestic violence, "What got you through your abuse?" The answer, most of the time, would be the same as mine: "My faith and God." Whether the black church was helpful or harmful to African American victims, there continue to be deep emotional attachments to it; there continues to be a need to be connected to it; there continues to be a need to be understood and healed through it.

Whether the black church was helpful or harmful to African American victims, there continue to be deep emotional attachments to it; there continues to be a need to be connected to it; there continues to be a need to be understood and healed through it.

The dynamics that an African American woman has to face when making the decision to seek secular intervention for her safety come face to face with everything she understands as destruction of the family. She is now faced with the decision to sacrifice herself and save the family, or sacrifice her family and save herself. Many times an African American woman has to make this choice alone and against all the voices of her culture (church, family, and community).

Her ability to continue in shelter depends greatly on the shelter workers… connecting her…to a similar culture that can give her a strong sense of self…and help her to understand that she is saving, rather than dishonoring, her family.

Her husband is incarcerated. She is in a shelter, foreign to her and disconnected from her spouse. She can't reveal her location because of her concern that the information might get back to her husband. Her children don't understand. She is now alone, totally separated from the values of her culture. This is her state. She is in a strange land and foreign territory. Her ability to continue in shelter depends greatly on the shelter workers understanding these dynamics and connecting her as much as possible to a similar culture that can give her a strong sense of self, celebrate her decision to choose life, and help her to understand that she is saving, rather than dishonoring, her family. Also, it is very important for her to understand that, although her safety and well being are important, there is also concern for the abuser. This is evident through the availability of resources where the abuser and members of the family can receive intervention as well. Another way to address these issues is through understanding that there are resources in many churches available for the victim and her family. However, these resources may not live up to the expectations of the advocate or be seen as viable resources.

Bettie's Story

Bettie, a 46-year-old African American woman, had been abused by Al for the past seven years. She was thinking about reporting Al's behavior to the police and pressing charges. Al's friend convinced her not to, reminding her how racist the criminal justice system is and telling her that if Al had a criminal record, he would never be able to get a good job. Bettie felt that if she pressed charges, she would be the one responsible for locking him up. She feared that her family and friends would blame her for going against him at a time when he needed her the most. She decided to wait and hoped things would get better. Two weeks later, Al beat Bettie up so badly that she required hospitalization. Al is now in jail.

Over the past few years, knowledge of domestic violence has generated more attention through the outreach of shelter personnel to black churches, victims and church-based laypersons taking a stronger role in assisting victims of domestic violence, and increased opportunities to receive government funding for church-based programs. Consequently, the role of black clergy, especially pastors, has changed, mostly in positive ways, as many are concerned with seeking help for victims and are initiating church-based programs to assist victims of domestic violence. Therefore, the atmosphere for educating clergy and laypersons about the spiritual, emotional, and safety needs of victims is ripe.

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However, "the black church," as it evolves, continues to have many different layers and values. There are black churches whose leadership and values are based on and concerned with works of justice and confronting the evils of society. There are other churches whose values are based on doing God's work of healing and forgiveness; these churches may view reconciliation as the mission God wants all of society to embark upon. Both of these types of churches would be amenable to having domestic violence ministries. However, the methodologies of intervention would take different shapes and forms depending on the institution's core values. Some churches may have strong advocacy ministries—taking members to court, providing bodyguards, preaching sermons against violence and abuse, and helping women to see their equality with humankind and with God. Other churches may provide care, love, and support for victims. However, their theology would continue to be couched in the anthropology that women are subservient to men and should not be leaders in the church.

The role of the church in healing, intervention, and even prevention of domestic violence is a crucial one.

Another important element to understand in this discussion is that many African American women/victims do not see this difference in teaching and the possible effects it may have on their ability to break free of abuse. Victim advocates must understand this dynamic and know that even though churches may be very interested in participating in helping victims, they may not all help in the same ways. And some of the ways they help may, ultimately, end up re-injuring the victim of domestic violence. Yet, neither of these is a reason to not involve the church in the healing process of African American victims of violence. The role of the church in healing, intervention, and even prevention of domestic violence is a crucial one.

…advocates must be careful to not be judgmental of…the religious language and needs of their clients.

The language of African American victims of domestic violence is religious. As much as the church has helped or hurt the victim in its practices, this does not necessarily change the religious language. Shelter providers and victim advocates must be careful to not be judgmental of, or offended by, the religious language and needs of their clients. Instead, this should be a starting point toward helping to understand the needs of the victim as you seek ways to intervene based on her culture.

…the advocate must be clear with the victim that she is not promoting disconnection from family, especially from the male partner.

African American women like singing and dancing, poetry and people. African American women like to feel connected and be provided with opportunities for open expression. African American women like to feel connected to their family and are always seeking ways to heal and reconnect with their families, rather than totally separating from them. Therefore, the advocate must be clear with the victim that she is not promoting disconnection from family, especially from the male partner**.** The victim would sense this and possibly leave the shelter.

I teach domestic violence and pastoral care to seminarians who are studying to be clergy. During one of my sessions, I asked my students, "How committed are you to helping to save the African American family?" The white students, who were also advocates and service providers, quickly became angry and said they wanted nothing to do with the men. Many feminist women I know, who work in shelters and provide advocacy for victims, demonstrate this same message—of not caring for men who are abusers—in their words, actions, and persona. This type of attitude among providers could be a strong roadblock for women seeking outside intervention for domestic abuse. Victims, while understanding their right to safety, must feel they are in an environment that is not trying to advocate, through words or attitude, permanent separation from family. The black church/family sermon will resurface, memories of the historical past will confront and conflict with their need for safety, and family will win out, possibly to the ultimate destruction of the victims of domestic violence.

I believe that African American women are comfortable in different cultural communities due to a history that demands adaptability. However, in the midst of this diversity, there needs to be affirmation of African American culture. Culturally, African American women can be very vocal, assertive, and confrontational in their demands for equality and inclusion. This behavior is

usually seen by other cultures as a negative way of being. However, for African Americans, and especially African American women, it has been a survival mechanism. This survival mechanism may have contributed to the ultimate physical abuse by an abuser, who sees the woman's actions as aggressive and attacking his manhood. And, most likely, this has surfaced in the church and been viewed negatively as "usurping the authority of men." African American women, in their healing, need a place of voice even when that voice sounds intimidating and feels attacking.

The collective experiences of African American victims of domestic violence living within shelters have centered around their suspicion of white service providers, especially as it relates to their ability to understand who they are—mind, body, and spirit. This type of sensitivity helps to alleviate the separation from family, guilt and shame, as well as empowers them to become healed and whole.

Gail's Story

When Gail told Pastor Jimmy that her husband, Nate, was beating her, her pastor recommended that she not go to the local battered women's shelter. He had heard rumors that shelter staff encourage African American women to leave their husbands. After attending a domestic violence training, he and several members of his congregation discovered that his fears about the shelter were largely unfounded. Pastor Jimmy and the advocates from the local shelter entered into a partnership. He began to understand what it is that shelters can provide for victims of domestic violence, and also how the church could become a partner in protecting victims and in holding abusers accountable. As a result of this new awareness, Pastor Jimmy told Nate that he would no longer be permitted to serve in his role as deacon until after he received the proper help and had stopped abusing his wife.

While staying at a shelter, African American victims would value the holidays that connect them to church, family, and community: Christmas, Easter, New Year's.

While staying at a shelter, African American victims would value the holidays that connect them to church, family, and community: Christmas, Easter, New Year's. Participation in religious events would be dependent on individual desire and church history. However, the commonality that does exist is the need to be around family and friends. This would include opportunities to worship as a family and church family as well as to come together for feasts, which serve as a focal point for family gatherings. The significance of these days is to understand these holidays as the most vulnerable time for victims to attempt to reconnect with their families, which might place them in environments that are unsafe. Two ways to care for African American victims who are not able to connect with their church and family at these times would be to provide food and music that express their cultural rituals.

Two ways to care for African American victims who are not able to connect with their church and family at these times would be to provide food and music that express their cultural rituals.

African American victims may feel comfortable with an average meal, even if it is foreign to the standard "soul food" of their culture. However, on specific days of celebration (Easter, Christmas, and New Year's), it may be appropriate to serve foods that they are familiar with during that time of the year. "Soul Food" for many African American women is yet another expression of connection. The history of soul food follows the same course as the history of slavery in America. During slavery, blacks were provided the worst of the food groups. However, through spicy seasoning and lots of love, they were able to make a feast out of the remnants of the leftovers from vegetables and meat that white people had rejected. Therefore, not only was soul food a source of survival, it was a connection that families shared as together they sought to make lemonade out of lemons. Consequently, food, especially soul food, not only feeds the natural body; it carries the Spirit of African American ancestors and feeds the soul, thus named *soul food*. Holiday food consists of turkey, dressing, cornbread, collard greens, sweet potatoes, macaroni and cheese, chitterlings, and sweet potato pie, all cooked up nice and spicy. Even the smell of soul food cooking can bring comfort and healing.

Music is a valuable source of comfort to African American women. Even if they are unable to connect with their family and friends, providing them with opportunities for musical expression may be a source of comfort in a strange land. The history of African Americans includes singing and dancing even when there was very little to sing and dance about. However, music was the vehicle

of expression for pain, joy, sorrow, struggle, or victory. For African American victims of domestic violence, it would be surprising to discover what the right combinations of food, dance, fellowship, and faith sharing could do in the healing process, especially when African American victims of domestic violence are trying, with all they have, to "sing the Lord's song in a strange land."

> *"God of our weary years. God of our silent tears.*
> *Thou who has brought us Thus far on the way.*
> *Thou who has by Thy might, led us into the Light,*
> *Keep us forever in Thy path we pray…."* [1]

For African American victims of domestic violence, it would be surprising to discover what the right combinations of food, dance, fellowship, and faith sharing could do in the healing process…

Understanding the Intersection of Abuse and Religion for Mainline Protestants

Marie M. Fortune with James Watson

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The Protestant Churches in the United States are the products of the Protestant Reformation in Europe and England in the 16th century which created alternatives to the Roman Catholic Church. They include Lutheran, Anglican or Episcopalian, and Reformed (Presbyterian, United Church of Christ, etc.). There are a large number of denominations in the United States that would consider themselves Protestant (i.e., Christian but not Catholic). Many of these divisions of groups came as a result of disagreements over theology, polity (how the church is organized), or politics, (e.g., slavery).

Role of Clergy

Clergy are the spiritual leaders of churches. They are often referred to as "pastors." They respond to "a call" from God and from their church to serve in a paid or volunteer position. They are usually credentialed or licensed following required graduate degrees and examination by the church. They can be removed from ministry by action of their denomination as well. Non-denominational clergy are only accountable to their local, ordaining church; there is no larger structure within which they are supervised or held accountable. Denominations that have a national structure are usually organized in regions as well, with a designated head who may be a bishop or executive.

Culture

The mainline Protestant churches of Western European origin share a basic culture that affirms study and learning both inside and outside the academy. Building on late-classical Greek philosophical concepts, Protestantism rediscovered the classical disciplines of poetry, oratory, and rhetoric; and so we see in the Protestant tradition an explosion of hymn writing, preaching, and theological debate. These remain cultural characteristics of Protestantism today.

One must also take into consideration the contribution of ethnic culture. The church cannot be divorced from such culture. It is often a vehicle for its expression and transmission. Where reformation movements were closely identified with a particular founder or ethnic group, the dominant culture (primarily Western European) used the church as a way of conforming all others it encountered to that culture. To this day, Lutherans are primarily identified as German or Scandinavian, and the festivals they celebrate have those cultural overtones. As Lutheranism has moved beyond these ethnic barriers, it has had to confront its own cultural assumptions. The same may be said of Anglicanism. One may look at the Anglican Church in South Africa or India and recognize that there are English cultural assumptions that shape the limits of these indigenous churches. The Reformed churches very quickly moved into differing ethnic groups in the 16th century, reaching as far north as Scotland and as far east as Hungary, while straddling French and German culture in the center.

Perhaps the greatest lesson of cultural folly—confusing the message of the gospel with cultural assumptions—lies in the Native American experience of seeing their children taken to religious boarding schools where only English was allowed to be spoken, a European version of Protestant Christianity was practiced, European-style food was eaten, and European-style clothes were worn. These practices contributed to the genocide of First Nations people in North America.

The historic Black Church arose out of slavery as a source of resistance and hope for African Americans. It thrives today in many African American communities in various manifestations (e.g., National Baptist Convention, African Methodist Episcopal Church, etc.). The historic Black Churches carry forward a rich tradition of preaching and music and provided leadership for the Civil Rights Movement in the 1960's.

As a result of this, the dominant culture is less likely to be confused with a definitive way to practice Christianity, and the Protestant Mainline churches are becoming increasingly culturally diverse. Ironically, this embracing of ethnic cultural diversity has sparked a new Renaissance of poetry, oratory, and rhetoric, as cultures new to Christianity try their hand at hymn-writing, preaching, and engaging in theological debate in fusing the gospel with their own ethnic insights.

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Issues in Domestic Violence

Forgiveness

Forgiveness is the major spiritual issue for Protestant Christians dealing with domestic violence. Due to misinterpretation and lack of understanding of scripture addressing forgiveness, many Protestants believe that "forgive and forget" is the church's teaching. When referred to in response to domestic violence, this can mean that a victim/survivor is expected to disregard the harm she/he has experienced, renew relationship with the abuser with or without an end to the abuse, and then do it again as long as necessary. Following this interpretation, the entire burden of "resolving" the betrayal of trust caused by the abuser's violence lies with the victim/survivor.

This is not an accurate or useful understanding of forgiveness. Forgiveness is, rather, the possibility of healing a broken relationship IF the abuser ends his/her abusive behavior, IF the victim/survivor feels safe and interested in renewing relationship, and IF the abuser is accountable and repentant, i.e., he/she fundamentally changes. In the absence of these efforts by an abuser, forgiveness also means that at some point, the victim/survivor may decide to let go of the abuse she/he has experienced so that the wound can heal even though the scar will remain. This is possible if the victim/survivor experiences justice and support from her/his community.

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Divorce

Within Protestantism, there is a wide range of doctrine regarding marriage and divorce—from conservative to liberal. Ideally, the expectation is that marriage is a life-long covenant between two people. The reality is that there are things that can break this covenant. Traditionally, churches have taught that only adultery (sexual infidelity) breaks the covenant. The dynamic here is that adultery betrays the trust of the relationship: if both partners had promised to be monogamous, then sexual activity outside of the marriage betrays trust. In fact, there are other experiences that break trust. Surely violence is one of them. If you can't trust your partner not to hit you, what can you trust?

So the issue for the church, in the face of abuse in a relationship and the subsequent betrayal of trust, is what is the appropriate response? If the principle of "no divorce" supercedes the well being of the partners and children involved, then some people will be denied the opportunity to escape from a dangerous situation. If, rather, the church recognizes that covenants—while made to be kept—can be broken, the church's role is to help its members deal with the brokenness and resolve the situation in ways that support life, not death.

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Most mainline Protestant churches at this point allow for the need for divorce in the face of unending abuse. Although nonetheless painful for all involved, including the church community, divorce may certainly be the "lesser of two evils" and an important resource in helping to insure the safety of a victim/survivor and her children.

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Scriptures

The biblical scriptures are the core of the Protestant tradition. These are the texts over and against which all other texts, ideas, and practices are measured. They are made up of the Hebrew scriptures (Torah, Psalms, and Prophets) and the Christian scriptures (Gospels and Letters). The Bible is a plain text, and its meaning is superficially clear to those who read it. This is not to say that the Bible does not contain nuances which require scholarship to unravel. Indeed, Protestants believe that interpretation is crucial and that understanding context, biblical history, biblical culture, language and grammar is important. The dominant paradigms and root metaphors of the Bible revolve around healing, peace, steadfast love, grace, justice, and reconciliation.

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Protestants do not adhere to the belief in the inerrancy of scripture. There are many mistakes in scripture, both historical and scientific. Protestants believe that scripture is a record of how people of faith have struggled to understand who God is in relationship to them and to each other. The Bible is a narrative of the human heart seeking God. This illustrates a very important theological principle for Protestantism. There are no monolithic truths. Any such thing would be considered idolatry. The Protestant traditions live in tension between poles of thought. If an aspect of Christianity becomes predominant in culture, the Protestant tradition will naturally move to criticize it and create a tension with another concept.

In the 1960's, Mainline Protestant Christianity defined itself as engaging actively in social issues. A case can be made that in doing so it lost touch with its historic spiritual roots. Not long after social action depleted the church of energy, a spirituality emerged that was generally disconnected from society at large and focused on the spiritual feeding of the individual. The Protestant traditions have always recognized that one needs to hold action and being in tension with each other, and that they in fact inform and energize each other. One's actions are determined by one's being or identity, and one's identity is in turn shaped by what one does. Action alone is merely playing the role of a Christian busybody. Being alone is irrelevant and superficial. The Protestant tradition seeks to be engaged and relevant with focus.

Food

Food in and of itself is not an important aspect of the Protestant tradition. This is true because there are now so many ethnic cultures in its make-up, that no one thread of food can be common to all. The exception is bread and wine, which are central to the sacrament of communion (see "Worship" below).

Food as a vehicle for experiencing Christian fellowship and extending Christian hospitality is very important. Sharing food with a person breaks down the barriers we raise between each other and creates a sense of intimacy. Sharing food can only be done on a horizontal plane. It is done with one's peers. Masters do not eat with their servants. Food is not shared with an enemy. Abused and abuser cannot truly eat together unless the relationship is transformed. In these lopsided relationships, one may eat in the same time and place, but it is not a meal eaten at ease. It is, rather, done with guarded tension.

When the Protestant community shares food, it affirms that in Christ all distinctions of rank or privilege have been set aside. Food becomes a metaphor for the providence God has shown humanity in extending and sustaining life. Sharing food becomes a celebration for the essential goodness of humanity created by God. Sharing food with a stranger incorporates a person into God's bounty and is, also, literally life-giving.

Holidays

The common holidays celebrated in Protestant Churches are Advent/Christmas and Lent/Easter. Advent is the period of 40 days before Christmas that is celebrated as the birthday of Jesus. (No, this was never intended to be a shopping extravaganza.) Christmas is a winter holiday now observed on December 25 primarily as a family holiday during which gifts are exchanged. The theological emphasis here is that God's son, Jesus, was born and lived among us, teaching and preaching.

Lent is the period of 40 days before Easter. The week preceding Easter is known as Holy Week and is the remembering of Jesus' death and resurrection. Lent is a

time of reflection and soul-searching that hopefully leads to new experiences of transformation.

Lent and Easter are spring holidays. The actual dates vary because it is based on the lunar calendar. But it usually falls in March or April. As such, it is also linked to the celebration of spring and new life in the natural world.

Worship

As the biblical text is paramount in the Protestant traditions, so the reading and expounding of the text forms the core of Protestant worship. This means that preaching is central to a Protestant worship service. The style of worship varies in all traditions from what appears to be high mass to a casual contemporary gathering. There is a rich tradition of music both performed by the choir and sung by the congregants.

Two sacraments are commonly recognized by all: Baptism and Eucharist (communion). The criteria for a sacrament must be that it was instituted or commanded by Christ explicitly in the gospels. One way of looking at a sacrament is that it is an act that, when performed, confers God's grace on the participants. This is not a hard and fast rule, merely one perspective. God's grace abounds in the cosmos and is not necessarily triggered by a rite that we perform. Protestants recognize that there must be a spiritual awareness and openness to the grace of God that parallels participating in the sacraments for them to be effective.

Communion is celebrated frequently in the Lutheran and Anglican branches, but less frequently in the Reformed churches. The worship leader, priest, or pastor recalls for the congregation the last meal that Jesus ate with his disciples where he offered them bread and wine as symbols of his body and blood in anticipation of his death and as a sign of a New Covenant between God and God's people. Then the leader serves bread and wine (or grape juice) to the congregants (kneeling, standing, or seated) and all who choose participate in this communion. It is to remember Jesus' sacrifice, experience God's grace, and be in fellowship with others who make up the church viewed as the body of Christ.

Baptism is the act by which an individual becomes part of the church. For an adult, it is an act of informed choice and acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior. For a child or teen, it is usually an act initiated by an adult family member on behalf of the underage person as a blessing and welcome into the church community. This choice, made for the child or teen, can be affirmed or rejected when they reach adulthood. The ritual involves either pouring water over the head or completely submerging the person in a pool of water to signify becoming a new person in Christ.

Again, because there is no priestly function within the Protestant tradition, with the exception of the Anglo-Catholic wing of the Anglican tradition, nothing is sacred in a Protestant church. That is not to say that a Protestant church is a place of profanity. It does affirm, however, that there is no place in a Protestant church that is off limits to anyone. There is nothing that only special people may touch. There is no topic, even about God, that is tacitly forbidden to discuss. The Protestant church is a place where a person may come and feel fully human, with all the joy and laughter and all the tears and grief of the world. Protestant worship is presenting ourselves as we truly are before an embracing and compassionate God.

Family

Family is important to the Protestant tradition. Family, as a metaphor, is how many Protestant congregations would identify their own complex set of interrelationships. In this context, perhaps more than in any other, we find ourselves firmly pressed by culture to superimpose a set of assumptions on the church. Dominant North American culture has a long checklist of what family is supposed to be. The reality is that for most of us, our sense of what family is and our experience of it are less than healthy. Consequently, extending this broken metaphor to the church can also lead to unhealthy interpersonal relationships within a religious context. The tradition of a patriarchal family structure has, until very recently, been mirrored in church structure.

Increasingly, family is identified as a collection of people who live together in common for their common good, working together for each other's access to life, livelihood, and shelter. It is now no longer necessary for family to be defined by blood relationships and property rights.

Marriage is a mutual covenant before God, a partnership of equals, between two consenting adults for a lifelong relationship. Its mutuality must reflect God's characteristic of showing steadfast love and of acting in the best interest of the beloved.

It is not necessary that a marriage produce children. The messiah has already come, and the community of the faithful is no longer compelled to provide the gene pool for the messiah to come again. Should adult partners choose to bring children into this covenanted relationship, they are to be cherished and nourished as God cherishes and nourishes all.

The adult Christian, whether in a covenanted partnered relationship or not, has the responsibility to correspond to God's actions and intentions for the world: that is, to engage in healing, peace, steadfast love, justice, and reconciliation towards family members in particular and by extension towards the world in general. This person may indeed be single and with or without children.

The healthy identification of congregation as extended family makes it possible for those whose relationships have crossed cultural or social barriers and stigmas to become extended family, replacing those lost from crucial supportive roles in an extended family of origin. For example, in a context of racism, a couple composed of two individuals from distinct racial groups may lose support from—or even be disowned by—parents, siblings, or other family members. Often these couples, as they raise their children, successfully find people within the healthy mainline Protestant community who will act as surrogate grandparents, aunts, uncles, etc. The same dynamic is experienced by gay and lesbian couples who have been disavowed by their own families of origin, and becomes crucial as these couples raise their own children. This is possible in denominations that see themselves as open and affirming to L/G/B/T people rather than in those denominations that are punitive. Victims of domestic violence and abuse also may find an extended community of support and build their own new definition of family within this context. Consequently, there is no normative paradigm for the way a family may look or be structured within the mainline Protestant tradition.

Community Connections

The mainline Protestant Church has always been engaged within the community in which it finds itself, and in certain periods has been a major institution in shaping the very fabric of its society.

As text and the ability to read it is paramount in the Protestant tradition, these churches have a high priority on founding educational institutions, promoting access to public education as a guaranteed right for all, endowing universities, and funding public libraries. Many well-known private universities on the East Coast were founded as colleges by Protestant denominations and have a historic and deep connection with mainline Protestant churches during their establishment.

As Protestant churches affirm God's work of healing and wholeness, they also find themselves establishing hospitals, clinics, and mental health ministries, again providing care for those who do not have the ability to care for themselves. The dominant paradigm for mainline churches as they engage with society at large has been to provide ministries and institutions that care for those who are vulnerable or fall through the cracks of society. Consequently, mainline churches are learning to be supportive of laws that enable intervention in domestic violence and are providing safe places for survivors to piece their lives back together. Protestant churches are also involved heavily in food banks, programs for the homeless, and programs for those struggling with addictions.

Protestant churches believe that God is the sovereign of each individual's conscience. Even though some Protestant churches are organized on Episcopal lines, fundamental decisions are made by people voting their conscience at a representative assembly, reflecting organizations that are deeply democratic at heart. Consequently, there has been an extremely high participation on the part of members of Protestant churches in government and politics. In recent years this has included both liberals and conservatives. At the same time, in affirming sovereignty of conscience, the members of these churches have also at times engaged in significant public protest and civil disobedience to influence public policy and promote peace and justice, especially for those who have little or no voice in the public forum. Protestant churches both support the separation of church and state and believe that they must be engaged in the political process,

but at the same time affirm that they not be co-opted by it, so that they can exercise a conscientious prophetic voice of critique with integrity.

The vision that drives involvement of Protestant churches in the community is the belief that the church is one of God's tools for transforming society to better reflect the very reign of God, which is best embodied by the notions of healing, peace, steadfast love, justice, and reconciliation.

Working with Catholic Women

Sheila Garcia

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Role of Clergy/Religious and Spiritual Leaders

The Catholic Church is both hierarchical and apostolic. The bishops, led by the Pope, continue the work that Christ entrusted to the Twelve Apostles; that is, they preach, teach, administer the sacraments, and exercise authority for the good of the church. The Pope appoints bishops; in turn, bishops ordain priests and deacons to assist in their work. These three groups—bishops, priests, deacons—make up the Catholic clergy. All must be male and all, except deacons, must be unmarried.

In the U.S., like all countries, a bishop heads a geographic entity called a diocese. Each diocese is comprised of parishes, and the bishop appoints a priest (pastor) to run the parish. Large parishes may have one or more priests to assist the pastor.

The authority of the pastor is considerable and reflects the status that the Church accords the priesthood. In Catholic theology, the Eucharist is essential to the Church, and the priesthood is necessary for the Eucharist. When the priest

In many parishes, women are employed as lay ecclesial ministers.

celebrates the Eucharist (also called the Mass or the liturgy), he acts in the person of Christ himself. The pastor is accountable to the bishop, but he usually enjoys considerable freedom to structure the parish's pastoral activities. In practice, most pastors actively collaborate with their lay parishioners, especially on social justice issues.

Some abused women prefer to talk to these female ministers rather than to the pastor.

In many parishes, deacons assist the pastor. Deacons may not celebrate Mass or hear confessions, but they perform many other pastoral duties, including preaching. Many are involved in Christian service and social outreach.

In recent years, women have moved into leadership positions in dioceses and parishes. In many parishes, women are employed as lay ecclesial ministers. Although they are not ordained, they usually receive some theological education and formation and help the pastor to carry out his pastoral duties. Some abused women prefer to talk to these female ministers rather than to the pastor. The pastor may designate a lay minister as the appropriate contact on domestic abuse issues.

Culture

From the European immigrants of the 19th century to the more recent Latin American, Asian, and African immigrants, the Catholic Church is home to people of many cultures. The Catholic Church itself has developed a unique culture that binds together people of different languages, races, and traditions. One effect is that Catholics rarely leave their religion for another. The vast majority of Catholics remain connected to the church; even those who rarely attend Mass still consider themselves Catholic.

Major characteristics of this Catholic culture include:

(1) An emphasis on the community rather than the individual. God created human beings to be responsible for and to each other. We are to concern ourselves with the common good of the whole society. Moreover, since community extends beyond the grave, we can pray to

the saints and for our deceased family members and friends.

(2) Catholicism insists that the human person is essentially good. It acknowledges the reality of sin but emphasizes the triumph of grace. Catholicism speaks of a "natural law" within human hearts that enables people to know and to choose the good. With God's help—grace—people can overcome sin and do good.

(3) Just as human beings are good, so, too, is all creation. God is present in creation; God enjoys the world that he created and so, too, should we. Thus, dancing, singing, celebrations, and good food and drink are to be enjoyed, in moderation. The sacramental principle is core to the Catholic faith. It rests on the belief that God reaches out to us and we respond through the ordinary activities of life. It encourages Catholics to see God not only in the liturgy and the seven sacraments, but in all things.

Text

Catholics, like other Christians, accept the Bible as the inspired word of God. Catholics have become more familiar with the Bible since the Second Vatican Council (1962–65), which introduced more Scriptural texts into the Mass and encouraged Scripture-based preaching. Catholics believe that the Bible does not err in matters of faith or spiritual teaching, but they do acknowledge historical and scientific errors, as well as morally problematic material (e.g., on war, slavery, sexism).

Catholic Scripture scholars stress that correct interpretation of Scripture is essential. The literal meaning of a biblical passage cannot be ignored, but other factors must be considered to get at the deeper, spiritual meaning. These include the language, culture, and times of the author; the religious concerns of the people for whom it was written; and its meaning in today's world. Catholics believe that Scripture needs to be interpreted within the faith community, guided by the Pope and the bishops.

Catholic Biblical experts cite context as a major concern in biblical interpretation. Taking a passage out of context and interpreting it literally almost always leads to the abuse of Scripture.

Context means, for example, that one cannot hold Eph. 5:22 ("Wives should be subordinate to their husbands as to the Lord") as a universal principle, without considering how it relates to v. 21, which speaks of mutual subordination. One also needs to understand the passage in relation to the entire Letter to the Ephesians, which is about Christ's relationship with the church. Marriage reflects this relationship. Finally, the passage should be studied in relation to the entire Bible, which presents marriage in different ways according to prevailing culture norms.

Food

Food plays an important role in many Catholic celebrations. Catholicism's central act of worship, the Mass, is itself a ritual meal where Christ gives himself as food and drink to the community of believers. Sharing a meal reinforces the communal character of Catholicism. It is also a way to extend hospitality.

Baptisms, First Communions, Confirmations, and funerals are usually followed by gatherings in the parish and/or the family. Parishioners often gather around a meal, such as coffee and donuts after Sunday Masses, soup suppers during Lent, and at ethnic festivals.

Catholicism imposes few dietary restrictions, and all of these occur during Lent, the six-week penitential period that precedes Easter. On Ash Wednesday and all the Fridays of Lent, Catholics are expected to abstain from meat. In addition, on Ash Wednesday and Good Friday Catholics are required to fast, that is, to limit their food intake.

During Lent, many Catholics voluntarily give up certain favorite foods or undertake a modest fast, for example, by not eating between meals. The Church encourages these types of practices as a sign of repentance for sins and solidarity with the poor.

Holidays (Holy Days)

The Catholic Church celebrates Sunday as its foremost holy day of obligation. This means that Catholics are obligated to worship God by attending Mass. Sunday is a time to rest from work, to reflect, to perform charitable works, and to cultivate family and social relationships.

Along with other Christians, Catholics celebrate the great feasts of Christmas and Easter. Lent, the 40-day period before Easter, is an especially holy time. To mark the beginning of Lent, many Catholics attend Mass on Ash Wednesday and receive ashes on their foreheads as a sign of penitence. On Good Friday, when Christians recall the day Christ died, many Catholics attend church services and devotions such as Stations of the Cross. On the following evening, Catholics celebrate the risen Christ at the Easter Vigil. At this time, new members are welcomed into the Church.

Some feast days have particular significance for a specific ethnic group. For example, Mexican-Americans celebrate the feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe on December 12. This feast recalls the appearance of the Virgin Mary to St. Juan Diego, a poor Indian who lived in 16th-century Mexico.

Rosemary's Story

From all appearances, Rosemary had a wonderful life. She had a nice home, successful husband, three beautiful children, and the respect of her church community. She was very involved in her church, being trained as a lay counselor and spiritual guide to those in need. She had always loved God and believed she was continually feeling His blessings upon her. But she lived with a secret that threatened not only her strong faith but also her safety. She was living in an abusive marriage and, like many women living with domestic violence, no one in her church community knew. Although Rosemary knew God loved her, she was confused as to what her responsibility was as a Christian wife. Did this God that she believed loved her so much really want her to stay in a marriage filled with fear and trauma?

It took many years and many wrong turns for Rosemary to learn that the message of the bible was one of love and safety, not one of fear and oppression. What God wanted for her was a life of contentment, free from abuse of any kind. She found her answers from God as soon as she listened more closely to His intimate message to her. When she understood that the message brought forth by the Catholic Church is that God condones no abuse, she was able to be free. Rosemary ultimately ended her abusive marriage and found in the process the security of God's love through every transition of her new life.

Rosemary is currently working toward a graduate degree in social work and ultimately licensure as a psychotherapist. Her relationship with God is deep and His message to her stands strong. He has not left her side and she is continually reassured that there are those in the faith community who will work tirelessly on behalf of Him to bring an end to violence within our intimate relationships. Peace, safety, and contentment are not just appearances for her to keep up now—rather, they reside both in her home and in her heart.

Worship

Worship in the Catholic Church revolves around the Mass and the sacraments. If a priest is available, Mass is celebrated each day in most parishes. The Sunday celebration, however, is preeminent, since it recalls Christ's rising from the dead on Easter Sunday.

The first part of the Mass consists of Old and New Testament readings, preaching, and intercessory prayer. The second part re-presents the words and actions of Jesus at the Last Supper, when he took bread and wine, blessed them, and gave them to his apostles. Catholics believe that when they receive Holy Communion, they truly receive the body and blood of Christ under the appearances of bread and wine. Communion, which invites believers into the closest possible intimacy with Christ, is a source of comfort and strength to Catholics. Priests and lay ministers often take Communion to people in their parish who are sick or homebound.

Catholics celebrate six other sacraments besides the Eucharist: Baptism, Confirmation, Reconciliation, Marriage, Holy Orders (for priests and deacons), and Anointing of the Sick. Many Catholics receive the sacrament of Reconciliation before Christmas and Easter, although it is offered throughout the year. In this sacrament, they confess their sins to a priest who, acting in the person of Christ, offers absolution. Some Catholics, including both victims and perpetrators of domestic abuse, use the sacrament as an opportunity to discuss their situations and to seek guidance.

Despite common misperceptions, Catholics do not worship the Virgin Mary and the saints, but devotional practices are widespread. Many women feel a particular kinship with Mary who, they believe, understands their trials and suffering. Catholics, especially older ones, often carry rosary beads and recite the rosary—a Marian prayer—on a regular basis. Private and communal devotions to popular saints are also common.

Marriage and Family

Marriage is the partnership of a man and woman who are equal in dignity. In this partnership, mutual submission—not dominance by either partner—is the key to genuine happiness.

In Catholic teaching, the foundation of the family is the committed, permanent, and faithful relationship of husband and wife. Marriage and family have two purposes: the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of children. Each marriage is a covenant marriage, mirroring the covenant between God and God's people. Just as the latter is permanent so, too, is the marriage covenant. Marriage is the partnership of a man and woman who are equal in dignity. In this partnership, mutual submission—not dominance by either partner—is the key to genuine happiness.

The well being of individuals and society depends on healthy family life. The family has four tasks: (1) To form a community of mutually self-giving members; (2) To transmit life, both physically—by bringing children into the world—and spiritually—by handing on values and traditions; (3) To participate in the development of society, including political involvement; and (4) To share in the life and mission of the church, so that the family becomes a "domestic church"—the church in miniature.

Historically the Church has been an advocate of strong family life. Parishes often emphasize family ministry and family-oriented activities; however, church leaders have also recognized the need to minister to separated and divorced persons and single parents. Many dioceses and parishes now make special efforts to reach out to these persons and include them in parish activities.

Communal Connections

The church's social teaching obliges Catholics to show a "preferential love for the poor." Catholics acknowledge a responsibility to cooperate with God to improve the world, especially by assisting those who are most in need.

As a result, the Catholic Church has established an extensive network of schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and social service agencies. Almost every diocese supports an agency that is affiliated with Catholic Charities USA. These agencies provide counseling, emergency assistance, housing, crisis pregnancy help, and

other services, regardless of the recipient's religion or ability to pay. They usually work closely with other community agencies to address unmet needs and avoid duplication of services.

The Catholic Church has taken a special interest in meeting the needs of immigrants, refugees, and victims of human trafficking. Since 1975, the U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops has worked with the federal government to resettle more than 800,000 refugees. Many dioceses have Refugee Resettlement Offices to carry out this work.

A few parishes offer direct services to people in need. More often, parishes provide referrals (e.g., an abuse victim may be referred to the local Catholic Charities agency). They may also provide financial support and a pool of volunteers; e.g., to work in community soup kitchens or to staff domestic violence shelters.

The Catholic teaching on marriage is often misunderstood by Catholic married women who are abused.

The U.S. Catholic bishops have made it clear that no one is expected to stay in an abusive relationship.

Divorce

The Catholic teaching on marriage is often misunderstood by Catholic married women who are abused. The church teaches that marriage is permanent; hence it does not recognize divorce. Moreover, given church teaching on the sanctity of the family, some abused women mistakenly believe that they cannot leave an abusive marriage.

The U.S. Catholic bishops have made it clear that no one is expected to stay in an abusive relationship. They have said, "The person being assaulted needs to know that acting to end the abuse does not violate the marriage promises."[1] The inherent dignity of all human persons demands that they be treated with respect. Abuse violates this natural human right.

Catholic women who have left an abusive relationship and obtained a divorce are encouraged to seek a church annulment.

Catholic women who have left an abusive relationship and obtained a divorce are encouraged to seek a church annulment. An annulment is an official finding that a sacramental marriage bond never existed. A person who has obtained an annulment is free to remarry in the Catholic Church. Women who want to begin the annulment process should contact their pastor. Fees associated with the annulment process vary within the U.S., but usually range between $200 and

…the Catholic bishops of the U.S. strongly condemned domestic violence in their statement…

$1,000. Fees are typically payable over time and may be reduced or eliminated in cases of financial difficulty. An annulment in no way affects the legitimacy of any children born from the marriage.

Some divorced women who have not obtained an annulment mistakenly believe that they cannot receive Holy Communion. The church permits, and indeed encourages, divorced persons who have not remarried to receive the sacrament.

"We state as clearly and strongly as we can that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified. Violence in any form—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal—is sinful…"

Other Issues

In 1992 the Catholic bishops of the U.S. strongly condemned domestic violence in their statement, "*When I Call for Help*." Ten years later, in an updated version of the statement, they reaffirmed this message**:** "We state as clearly and strongly as we can that violence against women, inside or outside the home, is never justified. Violence in any form—physical, sexual, psychological, or verbal—is sinful; often, it is a crime as well."

"*When I Call for Help*" is addressed to women who are abused and to abusers, as well as priests, parish staff, and volunteers. Its message of understanding and support has given hope to abused women and, in some cases, has bolstered their courage to leave abusive situations.

Still, many abused women have not heard the message. Priests and deacons hesitate to preach about domestic violence because they do not know a great deal about it, or they do not know what to do if an abused woman approaches them. Consequently, domestic abuse is rarely mentioned from the pulpit. Worse, some clergy are so focused on keeping the family intact that they suggest couples counseling, although "*When I Call for Help*" specifically warns against this approach.

Despite the difficulties, progress is being made. Most dioceses require marriage preparation before a couple is married in the Catholic Church, and most marriage preparation now includes information about domestic violence. Many dioceses and parishes, as well as organizations such as the National Council of Catholic Women, have made domestic violence a priority. They welcome partnerships with secular advocates.

Working With Evangelical Women

Nancy Murphy

NANCY MURPHY, Executive Director of Northwest Family Life Learning and Counseling Center in Seattle, WA (www.northwestfamilylife.org), is involved in assisting individuals and families find hope and healing when facing the pain of domestic violence and related issues. She holds a Doctor of Ministry degree in Global Leadership from Bakke Graduate University. Nancy is a professor and program manager for the Domestic Violence Advocacy Certificate Program at Mars Hill Graduate School. She was raised on the west coast of Canada. Her commitment to the issue of domestic violence springs from her personal experience of abuse in her marriage; she eventually fled across the border to the United States with her three children. Nancy is now remarried and, in partnership with her husband Tom Murphy and their five children, is strengthened in her work against violence and abuse.

What is an Evangelical?

Evangelicals more commonly refer to themselves as Christians, or Evangelical Christians. Predominantly conservative in theology, they hold to a personal conversion experience, believing that the Holy Bible is the inerrant word of God, and hold to the hope of eternal life in Heaven.

Role of Clergy/Religious and Spiritual Leaders

A pastoral staff consisting of paid and volunteer church members often shares the leadership in Evangelical churches. The majority of the authority is held by the senior pastor who is most often, but not always, a male. Those who serve alongside the pastor are referred to as elders, deacons, ministers, missionaries,

directors, teachers, etc. The pastor serves the congregation in a wide variety of ways, most often to lead individuals to faith in Jesus Christ and into a genuine walk with Him as their personal Lord and Savior. While most Evangelicals are Trinitarians and believe that God is manifested in three persons, the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, it is generally taught that in order to become a Christian, you must accept Jesus as your personal Lord (meaning essentially the boss of your life) and Savior (saving us from the penalty of sin). By praying what is referred to as the sinner's prayer, one becomes a Christian. Their sin is forgiven, paid for by the death of Jesus on the cross, and they experience a new life; hence the phrase, 'born-again.'

Pastors give sermons primarily during church services on Sunday mornings, and, in most churches, in the evenings as well. The Sunday morning service is referred to as a worship service. Larger congregations have more than one morning service, all preceded by Sunday school classes for children, youth and adults. During the week, the most common gatherings are prayer meetings and bible studies with a number of additional activities most often referred to as ministries. There are women's ministries, men's groups, youth groups, and children's clubs. Church attendance is highly valued amongst Evangelical Christians in accordance with the teaching of the scriptures to "not forsake the gathering of the brethren." And in most cases, pastors and church leadership—referred to as elders and ministers—are highly revered and respected, as it is their job to be "prayed up and studied up" throughout the week, in order to meet the spiritual needs of the members or those who attend. The pastor may or may not be formally trained in a Bible School, a denominational seminary, or a theological seminary.

It has been suggested in the preface of the book, *Abuse and Religion: When Praying Isn't Enough*, that "each year more abuse victims, perpetrators and family members seek help from clergy and religious leaders than all other helping professionals combined." Whether this remains true or not is unknown; however, the statement does reflect a widely held belief amongst Evangelicals that with God's help, nothing is impossible! As a result, most look to the Church, to its leadership, and to others who specifically hold beliefs of Evangelicals to seek God's guidance in their decisions. Decisions that do not align with Biblical teaching are not encouraged, and so Bible reading and prayer inform one's direction.

Jeannie's Story

Jeannie was a referral from her pastor of a local Bible church. When she called, these were her words. "My family really needs help; most of all, I need to find an anger management class for my family. Two nights ago was the first time that the police came to our house. My husband is a good man, but when he is angry he becomes someone else. I have no desire to put my husband in jail or leave him. Unlike the typical abuser, he wants help badly and so do I. The only reason the police came to our house Sunday night was because my neighbors heard me screaming and called 911. It is not the first time that I have had injuries, but it is humiliating and shameful for me to be trying to hide bruises and black eyes, even if it is not more than a couple times a month. I care very much about my husband's reputation but it is becoming harder to protect him and myself. Please can you help us? Having the police come over the other night really scared me. They made me feel so bad, my head and lips were bleeding and I kept telling them nothing happened. I felt so ashamed and like a horrible mother. My husband would never touch our daughter, but the incident really scared her—it's hard to try to explain a black eye to her. I don't want my husband to get in any trouble. I don't want to sin against God by leaving him. He cries because he doesn't know what to do. Can you please help us?"

Evangelicals and Culture

This culture is marked strongly by adherence to the teachings of the Bible, more commonly referred to as the Word of God, or the scriptures. The Bible accepted by Evangelicals is composed of two parts: the Old Testament and the New Testament. The Old Testament begins with the creation story and The New Testament begins with the birth of Christ. Most often, the Bible is read and interpreted word-for-word, referenced by the chapter and verse by which it is found. For example, one of the most quoted verses is in the book of John, chapter three, verse sixteen.

> *"For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in Him, should not perish but have everlasting life."* [1] John 3:16

It would be common to hear an Evangelical make a statement such as, "God spoke to me through His Word," meaning that they read something in the Bible that was particularly meaningful to them for encouragement, direction or correction, and then quote the text.

There are many themes in the Bible, but there are four that are foundational to the Evangelical Christian experience.

One is sin. Simply,

> *"For all have sinned and come short of the glory of God."* Romans 8:28

Sin separates us from God, our Creator, and many sins are named specifically throughout the scriptures. Others have been named through cultural interpretation.

Second, forgiveness from sin is possible through confession.

> *"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and cleanse us from all unrighteousness."* John 3:16

Third, eternal life is available through the work of Christ on the cross.

> *"For the wages of sin is death, and the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."* Romans 6:23

This is called the gospel message, or the "Good News."

Fourth, salvation of souls is of great priority. There has existed for an Evangelical Christian a great life emphasis on missionary endeavors to spread the gospel in accordance with Jesus' words,

> *"Go into all the world and make disciples of all nations baptizing them in the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit."* Matthew 28:19

Spreading the gospel is most actively carried out through preaching outreaches such as special evangelistic services, revival meetings, neighborhood Bible studies, vacation bible schools, camps, ministries to the disenfranchised (hospitals, shut-ins, prisons, homeless), distribution of literature for people of all ages and cultures, and radio and television programming.

There are many leading teachers who fall outside of denominational lines such as Baptist, Pentecostal, Evangelical Free, Free Methodist, and Christian Missionary Alliance to name a few. In this lifetime, the most famous one is Billy Graham. Christian bookstores and booksellers abound, and books from the Bible to theological discussion books, how-to books, and fiction are written from a wide variety of perspectives.

The development of a Christian worldview is essential to many who call themselves Evangelicals. Among those who would refer to themselves as Evangelicals, however, there is wide divergence in terms of how faith and the interpretation of scripture are lived out. Some desire to be separate from "the world," meaning those who are secular, and as a result attempt to stay away from "worldly activities" that would influence them, such as watching most television programming, attending a public school, going to movies, frequenting dances, clubs, bars, engaging in premarital or extramarital sex, having an abortion, smoking, drinking alcohol, abusing drugs, taking psychiatric medication, gossiping, using pornography, swearing, etc. Others live to influence "the world" by being a part of it but not *of* it. One example of this would be living among the poor or working with the marginalized in order to serve them.

Evangelicals and Text

Evangelicals interact with text in a wide variety of ways. There is a continuum of which to be aware. On one end of this continuum, the more conservative Christians tend to use only the King James Version of the Bible and translate the Bible literally when applied to their lives. Most often, they do not interact with any other text except the Bible. These Christians most often engage in daily Bible reading and prayer, and take their Bibles with them most places they go. They

believe that God is faithful to solve their problems and that He is all they really need. Asking for help can be viewed as a lack of faith or a lack of trust in God.

For a woman in a shelter with this type of belief, it is very important that she be directed to a resource such as that provided by the organization Peace and Safety in the Christian Home (PASCH) (www.peaceandsafety.org). You can order a publication through their website produced by the Radio Broadcast Company, *When Violence Comes Home*, or one produced by the American Bible Society, *The Lord Hears Your Cries*. Both the organizational materials and these resources should speak to the language of this woman, affirming her experience and revealing to her through scripture that God loves her and hates abuse. These resources will most likely come as a complete surprise to her, but will free her in significant ways if she is feeling afraid of losing her faith, betraying her husband, or God.

Other evangelical Christian women will interact with the Bible as more of a guide, using more modern versions of the Bible, namely, Revised King James Version, New International Version, or the Living Bible. They will, again, often be engaged in daily Bible study and prayer but have more openness to other Christian writings and resources. Their struggles will still be theological. *I have been a faithful Christian wife, mother and woman. How could this have happened? Why can't I make it work? What is wrong with me?* For a woman in a shelter with this mindset, additional resources can be introduced. Marie Fortune's booklet, *Keeping the Faith,* is excellent, as is Nancy Nason-Clark's and Catherine Kroeger's book, *No Place for Abuse,* and the handbook, *God's Reconciling Love: A Pastor's Handbook on Domestic Violence* (see Bibliography, page 202).

An important way to address an Evangelical Christian woman is to engage in her struggle with a God who has created her, reminding her that, as it says in Romans,

"*Nothing can separate her from the love of God,*" (Romans 8:39) not a separation, a divorce, a stay at a shelter, or her anger, fear, or lack of faith. God created her, and He loves her and cares about her life.

For newer Christian women, or for more liberal Evangelical Christian women not so steeped in the historical male interpretations of the Bible, there may be more of

an openness to hear that God hates abuse and that she has a right to live a life safe from fear and harm, without the backing of a scriptural text.

Evangelicals and Food

For Evangelical Christians, there are no dietary restrictions whatsoever. There may be alcohol/beverage restrictions, but none for food.

Community is often built around food. When people gather together and food is present, the term used to describe the time together is called fellowship. It is a time of friendship building, relaxing and meeting. Potluck dinners are held after church services or during mid-week activities. "Good cooking" has often been celebrated with being a fine Christian woman, so homemaking skills are highly valued and many Christian women are extremely talented and resourceful in this area. (Not all, but many.)

It is also a common practice to have members from within the church over to each other's homes for dinners and gatherings. In addition, tradition has it that if someone is ill or has had a baby, a death in the family etc., other church members join together to cover the meals for the duration of the event.

Some churches have food banks that serve the members of their congregations or their community. Food is always in abundance and shared together with people of all ages and all walks of life.

Evangelicals and Holidays

The Christian calendar is full of special holy days and days of remembrance. However, there is one day a week set apart as a day of rest, two holidays that are celebrated that are very significant to the Christian experience, and one culturally celebrated day that is particularly distressing to some Christians.

The day of rest is referred to in the Bible as the Sabbath. Seventh Day Adventists are the only Christian denomination to honor the Sabbath on Saturday; most others honor this day on Sunday. In the story of creation, God rested on the seventh day. One of the Ten Commandments given by God to Moses in the Old Testament was to honor the Sabbath. Throughout the rest of the scriptures, we are reminded to keep the Sabbath, to have a day of rest. Again, the more conservative the Church, the stricter the adherence will be to this. For some, it means going to church but nothing else. It is purely to be a day of resting from your labors.

The two major holidays that are celebrated are Christmas and Easter. Commercially, Christmas is celebrated on December 25th of each year, but for evangelicals, Christmas is truly a season including the four weeks before Christmas day. The four weeks before Christmas Day are referred to as Advent, meaning "coming." It is a season of expectation and hope, the time of waiting for the coming of Jesus, the Messiah. This time of waiting symbolizes the waiting throughout the Old Testament for the new act of God that would bring deliverance to his people. For Christians, this season of expectation also symbolizes the waiting in anticipation for the Second Coming of the Christ when he will return and restore all things. Most Christians enter into the commercialized versions of Christmas but are quick to point out ideals such as, "Some people believe in a real Santa and a pretending Jesus, but we believe in a real Jesus and a pretending Santa." Churches often have great special musical productions and feasts during this season, as well as times of giving generously to the needy.

The Easter season is comprised of Good Friday and Easter Sunday. Good Friday is the day on which Jesus was crucified on the cross, and Easter Sunday is celebrated each year in memory of the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead. The date varies from year to year as it lies at the center of a liturgical year. Even in churches that traditionally do not observe the other historic seasons of the church year, Easter has occupied a central place as the high point of Christian worship.

Halloween is a particularly distressing day for some evangelicals who see it as a time to worship or glorify Satan, or incite demonic activity. As a result, many churches offer alternatives for families such as harvest carnivals or festivals, all of which include candy and fun, but most often without the scary costumes.

Sharon's Story

Sharon wasn't sure she would qualify as a domestic abuse victim. She got our number from a friend who she thought definitely was a battered woman so she figured she'd at least give us a call. She disclosed that she had been married for over 21 years to a man who hit her at one time. Another time he threw a flowerpot full of dirt at her. She felt he was more emotionally than physically abusive. Sometimes he called her names for no reason, and she suspected there were other women. She was crying as she spoke and said she found that she cowered in the corner when he would raise his voice. She wasn't sure she wanted to live anymore. She'd prayed, gone to church, confessed her weakness to God. A counselor at her church had talked with her about her unforgiveness, but she'd tried everything to make her husband happy and things were just getting worse. He would be home soon and if he found her crying uncontrollably, she knew that nothing good would happen. She was lonely, confused, and afraid.

Evangelicals and Worship

A part of worship happens within the walls of a Church structure that may be architecturally artistic, large and sprawling, a rented space in an industrial park, a private residence, a rented school building, or outside in a park somewhere. The variations are countless. Regardless, Sundays, and for some Saturdays, become a time of corporate worship. Regular attendance is not mandatory, but is customary. Some Christians focus on ritual and liturgical services; however, most evangelical Christians are more free and are interested in connecting with God with all their attention, affection, and ability, in all aspects of worship.

Corporate worship during a church service involves a fairly standard format, but the experience of the worship will vary considerably depending on the

For a battered woman in a shelter, her greatest refuge will be in the places of worship. Having times of prayer and places to pray quietly will calm her spirit and give her an opportunity to meet God for comfort, guidance and peace.

denomination, the personality of the church and the conservative or liberal nature of its theology. As a standard, a church service usually begins with music. Typically, the older the congregation, the more hymns are sung. The younger the congregation, the more contemporary choruses and upbeat songs of praise to God are sung or performed by bands and singing groups in front of the congregation. Following music are Bible readings, prayers, meditations, announcements, the offering, the sermon, and a closing prayer. This service lasts a minimum of an hour but can go three hours or longer.

However, worship for an evangelical is so much more than attending church. Apart from church, evangelicals are very active in private worship. Worship also involves prayer. Prayer practiced privately or in small groups develops a greater walk with Christ to deepen one's faith and is an essential part of growth and of worship.

Worshipping God with your time and talents is a common phrase referring to volunteering at Church or in the community, and tithing, that is, donating about 10% of your income to the church.

Worshipping God with your body is in the scriptural texts, and as a result there is much teaching on sexual purity as an act of worship.

For a battered woman in a shelter, her greatest refuge will be in the places of worship. Having times of prayer and places to pray quietly will calm her spirit and give her an opportunity to meet God for comfort, guidance and peace. Hearing music that turns her heart towards a God who loves her and knows her will soothe the pain and worry of the day and calm her frightened soul. Meeting together with other Christians to worship will decrease the loneliness and confusion of being afraid and hurt. And being honored for her faith will cause her to whisper prayers of thanksgiving for the safe shelter He has provided her.

If she has children, it will be very important to her that they have an opportunity to have the same times of worship with children their age and with adults who are similar in their faith, beliefs, and customs. Playing children's praise music, providing hopeful coloring books and stories of a Jesus who loves them will be of great comfort to their mother, and encouraging them to pray when they are afraid,

lonely, or angry will serve to build resiliency in the children to know that Jesus too cares about them, even in a strange place when everything feels so different.

Evangelicals and Family

Evangelicals view the family in three ways. The first way is the family unit, predominantly defined as a married man and a woman with or without children. Within the tradition of evangelicalism, there exist three paradigms of family.

One is hierarchical, whereby the man is the head of the household and the woman and children submit to the man, as unto God. Another view of the family structure is called complementary. In these homes, each person has their own well-defined role and they function together within the confines of these roles. Children are usually the responsibility of one parent more than the other. Lastly is the egalitarian model whereby each one is honored as together reflecting the image of God, and each person is equal to the other, adults as well as children.

All three of these models work very well to establish healthy, stable homes as long as both spouses mutually agree on them as tightly held beliefs and practices. None of them works well at all when patterns of power and control emerge.

The sanctity of marriage is a long upheld value of the Church, and it has not been the desire of the Church to see any marriage end in divorce. However, it must be said that as a result, many women have stayed in very dangerous marriage situations because the institution of marriage has been more highly valued in some cases than the physical, emotional, psychological, and spiritual well being of those living within that marriage. The ideal of a good evangelical Christian family must include peace and safety for all within the home, regardless of theological views of the way God intended the family to be.

The ideal of a good evangelical Christian family must include peace and safety for all within the home, regardless of theological views of the way God intended the family to be.

Secondly, for all who attend church there exists an extended church family. This family has been particularly significant for resources, love, acknowledgement, and belonging.

Are there any women of faith in the shelter (either staff, volunteers, or other women living in the shelter) who are Evangelical? These people will most likely have more impact on her initially, to tell her she deserves to be safe, than someone who does not share her faith.

Thirdly, all Christians believe that they are part of a much larger family together, that of the family of God. Here we recognize other believers and easily refer to them as brother and/or sister in the Lord. We are all a part of the family of God, regardless of gender, age, or race, and intend to spend eternity together in Heaven.

In a time of tragedy and transition, the church family and the broader family of God are extremely valuable to provide acknowledgement, hope, belonging, and safety. The members of the church family will all need to be educated in order to wisely protect and encourage a victim of domestic violence. As evangelicals often have very little contact with secular people, and their primary relationships are with like-minded Christians, it is essential that men and women be sought out from each of her "families" to provide seamless advocacy and support for her and her children.

Who amongst her "family" agrees that she needs to be safe and protected? Are there any women of faith in the shelter (either staff, volunteers, or other women living in the shelter) who are Evangelical? These people will most likely have more impact on her initially, to tell her she deserves to be safe, than someone who does not share her faith.

Who amongst her "family" agrees that her abuser needs to be held accountable for his violence? I would think this would be a very small number of people, but it starts with one to begin an alliance.

Evangelical Communal Connections

Who amongst her "family" will support her in her walk with God, even though she has separated from her abuser? It is essential that this network be developed, and as the body of Christ is worldwide, "family" is virtually available anywhere to come alongside her. Being a believer in Jesus Christ is an amazing connection with shared customs, language, and basic beliefs.

Community is experienced in a wide variety of ways. One is through shared beliefs. Community is also experienced through church membership and the activities offered there. Multitudes of organizations have been formed to meet

the social, spiritual, and physical needs of women, men, and children locally and globally. Within each of these organizations, community is experienced. Some evangelicals live together in intentional communities, sharing homes, neighborhoods, and possessions so that they can use more of their resources in the service of others. Community is experienced through attending schools at all levels that promote the Evangelical Christian worldview. Essential community, however, includes the basic rituals of Bible reading, reflection, meditation, teaching, preaching, food, fellowship, hospitality, music, communion, acts of service, and love.

The Bible clearly condemns abuse and violence against women and children; however, this teaching has not been emphasized among Evangelicals as it should be.

Evangelicals and Issues Related to Domestic Violence

This is a huge area! Domestic violence is at odds with the teachings of Christ. The Bible clearly condemns abuse and violence against women and children; however, this teaching has not been emphasized among Evangelicals as it should be. Christ came to destroy sin and establish peace and order back in creation. This ministry has now been given to the church (Jeremiah 29:7), yet peace has often been made possible through the sacrifice of women's safety.

Most evangelical women grappling with domestic violence will struggle with these major teachings of the Church: suffering, submission, headship, forgiveness, and divorce.

Most evangelical women grappling with domestic violence will struggle with these major teachings of the Church: suffering, submission, headship, forgiveness, and divorce. Until a woman is able to understand through the Scriptures that she does not have to stay in a violent or abusive marriage, she will never be totally free to move on, even if she finds safety.

Providing written, Biblically sound materials for her, and group support where other Christian women are in attendance, would be ideal. For her healing, she must come to reinterpret the texts in order to understand what God intends through the scriptures. For example,

> "*Wives…in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.*" Peter 3:1,2

It can become a resource to her if she hears it instead as, "I must leave and hold my husband accountable for the harm he has caused as it may be the one thing that brings him to repentance."

Scriptures such as these can easily be interpreted to mean that a wife has opportunity to help her husband change. It becomes a roadblock if she hears it as meaning that she must stay and try harder to be a better wife. It can become a resource to her if she hears it instead as, "I must leave and hold my husband accountable for the harm he has caused as it may be the one thing that brings him to repentance."

There are very few resources available to Evangelical Christian women regarding these key issues from the perspective of allowing them to seek the safety of leaving. If you are not theologically educated to discuss submission, forgiveness, and divorce, it would be best to provide the woman with written material or referrals to someone who can speak with her about these issues at every given opportunity. As a suggestion only, reading these teachings through with her, and having her explain the concepts to you as she goes along, could be wonderfully empowering to her.

Resources are currently available that address these theological issues at:

www.peaceandsafety.org

www.northwestfamilylife.org

www.faithtrustinstitute.org

www.cbeinternational.org (Christians for Biblical Equality)

Mary's Story

Mary was horrified to find out that other marriages were not like hers. She overheard a friend talking about how her husband had approached her for sex and how she hadn't been "in the mood." She'd actually turned her husband away. Mary began to question this woman's commitment to her faith. The Bible was clear that in marriage, your body was not your own, but belonged to your partner. Saying no was an act of selfishness, of sin. In trying to instruct her friend, Mary confided that she was available to her husband James at all times of day and night. Often she was approached several times a day. Mary had two little girls, ages 4 and 6, and when daddy and mummy were "busy," these little girls were to have "blanket time." They were to stay on their blankets in the living room and not move! And the little girls stayed where they were, often for great lengths of time, in fear of showing any disobedience. When Mary finally called, it was to seek confirmation that her experience was "normal." She knew her husband had a healthy appetite but she wanted to honor him. It was in asking the question, "Do you feel safe?" that the tears began to flow and other stories of control and harm began to be told. Mary clearly needed safety, but to find it would be a long, engaging process, whereby her faith and beliefs would be affirmed and her isolation broken.

Other Issues to Consider

Many theological and existential questions will arise, and providing an avenue to grapple with them would be a wonderful gift. Great questions for discussion would be:

What does God desire for us?

Is marriage to be a sacrifice? A sacrifice of life?

It is important to reassure a woman that to question her beliefs is not to question God.

Didn't Jesus already make the ultimate sacrifice with His death on the cross?

What is betrayal?

Is the family sacred if it is not safe?

What is accountability?

What is love?

How are the children?

Having a time to be able to question and not be ridiculed can be so very empowering. It is important to reassure a woman that to question her beliefs is not to question God. Besides, He's big enough to take a few doubts. It is life He cares about. Her life!

Latina Catholic Women Confronting Domestic Violence

Rocío Ríos
(Translated from Spanish by Angie Jauregui)

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Introduction

Being Latino and growing up in a Spanish-speaking country becomes a defining characteristic at the point when someone who is Latino becomes an immigrant. From the perspective of Latinos, our origin is innate and isn't defined while we are living in our native countries. But that origin becomes a distinctive trait when we decide to live in another country; it is then that we can talk about our roots, language, traditions, music, food, and religion. Being "a Latino" begins with crossing the border, when suddenly everything around us is different. That is why we are set on being surrounded by everything that makes us feel like we are in our own country.

Latinos also have their diversity and it is vital that this diversity be recognized.

The process is interesting, and one of the characteristics that serves to differentiate Latin American immigrants is their religious traditions. Catholicism is the dominant faith in Latin American countries. To be Catholic is as important as being Hispanic or having black hair, golden brown skin, or speaking Spanish. All of these traits serve to unite the social group of those who identify themselves as Catholic Hispanics in the United States.

The majority of Latin American countries express their faith through the Catholic religion.

But it is important to know that speaking of the Latino community does not imply that all Latinos (or "Hispanics," as they are known in this country) are alike. Latinos also have their diversity and it is vital that this diversity be recognized. Speaking with a Colombian is not the same as speaking with a Mexican, or an Ecuadorian, or a Panamanian.

The majority of Latin American countries express their faith through the Catholic religion. With the exception of Brazil in South America, Spanish is spoken in all countries of Central and South America and the majority of the population practices the Catholic religion. One of every two Catholics in the world lives in Latin America—that is to say, 528 million Catholics out of 1100 million believers. This is why as we journey through the major capitals of Latin America, the presence of huge cathedrals in the center of every city is undeniable as a historic testament to the arrival of Catholicism as the new religious doctrine.

The legacy of this era, known as colonial times, is connected to the way in which the traditions of important indigenous civilizations were left behind, as they had to change their devotion to the sun and moon and learn to identify with the legacy of Christianity. The Catholic religion—with its doctrine of faith, its devotions, its dissemination of the symbolic cross, and history of Salvation after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ—became a part of the history of this newly discovered civilization.

If we pause for a moment during this era, we can see that the figure of Jesus Christ arises with great preponderance with the introduction of the new culture in each country. Jesus Christ arrives with a very important connotation—represented by faith, the arrival of the Good News, and the dissemination of this through evangelization—as the task of reaffirmation and spread of the mission of the Catholic Church.

The need for evangelization was urgent. With the arrival of the Catholic religion, the devotion to many deities changed to the devotion to the "one True God: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit." Religion was introduced gradually in the same manner as the language and the new culture, which gradually began to take on its own identity. Unfortunately, the evangelization process was confused with domination by means of power during the time of the conquest, and in the majority of cases the dignity of the indigenous population of those lands, along with the importance of their deities, was disregarded.

One of the most important characteristics that is worth remembering, and that was fundamental to the colonization process, was the masculine character which is preponderant in our religion and which arrived with the spread of the Good News to these newly discovered lands. The role of the man was clearly established from the beginning through the role of the colonizers, who in some way replaced the masculine role of the chiefs or caciques who were the leaders of the indigenous communities. The priests, "disciples of Jesus Christ," arrived to teach a new doctrine that gradually left the history of the indigenous cults to one side.

For example, it is known that the indigenous communities like the Chibcha in Colombia, natives of the Andes, worshipped the sun and the moon. The masculine and feminine roles were implicit. With the arrival of the Catholic religion, the masculine role in the presence of Jesus Christ, the son of God, and the Holy Trinity, became very strong.

If we observe how the "Word" has been spread up to the present, it is important to remember that many religious communities arrived in our countries on an evangelization "mission." Communities such as the Franciscans, Jesuits, members of the Italian Consolata, just to mention a few, scattered over the entire continent creating religious communities, evangelizing and spreading religion through community catechism and educational institutions. In many Latin American countries, Catholic schools were built in the best locations to educate new generations. In the case of universities, Catholic institutions were not only the center for academic formation but also for religious formation.

The masculine role that was so preponderant from colonial times is still alive in our culture. It is important to analyze how, through faith and devotion to the Virgin Mary, the role of the "Mother" has been recognized as the center of faith.

The role of Mary is vital within Latin American culture. The fervor of popular piety has been spread through pilgrimages to Marian sanctuaries, which are so important in religious celebrations. Each sanctuary, which is the center of Marian worship, contains the great power of spiritual summoning, in connection with which beliefs, histories, and devotions to altars arise, undoubtedly enriching popular religion.

The images of Mary, which have their own history in each country, have been taking on their identities over time and form part of the uniqueness of each town. She is the Virgin, but she is also the Mother, and a whole social dynamic revolves around her, giving real dimension to the family within the Latino culture. The Virgin is the Mother of God, but she is also the Mother of Latinos, and if we see the way a faith tradition centered around her figure has been developed in Latin America, we see that the role of women has slowly been arriving at the center of this cultural group.

Marian vocations are an interesting aspect of Hispanic Catholic faith's cultural tradition. Each country worships its Virgin, whom they have transformed into their mother. For example, in Colombia the patroness is Our Lady of Chiquinquirá, who appeared before two shepherds in the Andes Mountains and is as important in this country as is Our Lady of Charity, the essential figure in the faith of fishermen, in Cuba. It is the same role as that of the Virgin of Guadalupe, who appeared before the indigenous Juan Diego in Tepeyac (Mexico). Through each one, we see the legacy of the evangelization process, that unites the history of the indigenous people with the Catholic faith tradition in the presence of the Mother of Jesus Christ: the Virgin.

Pope John Paul II recognized the role of the Virgin throughout the entire continent's history and he made it known at the Spanish Square in Rome, on December 8, 1993, when he said, "Mary, permit us to participate in your pilgrimage throughout the countries of Central and South America, where you are so well known and venerated. From Guadalupe in Mexico to the Appeared in Brazil; from Luján in Argentina to Our Lady of Charity in Cuba; from Our Lady of Coromoto in Venezuela to Our Lady of Copacabana in Bolivia and many other places…." "Mary be a pilgrim with us on the paths of the world…."

The Story of Gabriela, a Catholic woman from Costa Rica

"My husband said he would kill me and take my children away if I left him. Everything started when we left our country and came to live with my brother-in-law's family in the United States. It was then that my husband changed. He ceased to be the loving man who had promised to love and support me.

When we arrived here, he told me that I had to go out and find work, and that it didn't matter to him that I had no papers and was an illegal alien. "That is not my problem," he told me. He didn't care because he had legal documents. So I went out to look for work.

I began to knock on doors, which was a total nightmare because I wanted to be home taking care of our young son, but he wouldn't let me. And to top it off, he would threaten me with throwing me out if I didn't contribute with my salary.

I worked like this for several months, delivering newspapers from 2:30 to 6:00 a.m. When I would get home, I was tired but had to continue my work and care for my son who was very young.

One day, my husband hit me because I lost control and shouted at him. He hit me several times in the face and, in spite of this, I forgave him. It was very hard for me to leave him, as we had been married through the church. I was consumed with depression as I was alone and didn't have anybody to go to. I didn't dare tell my family in Costa Rica because they would have told me to leave him and return there. In spite of the problems, I wanted to rescue my marriage and keep my family together.

But months passed and he didn't change. I changed jobs because he demanded more money and he was always telling me that I had to work. I reminded him that before coming to the United States, he had promised me that I was going to care for my son, help in the home, and learn English. All that was a lie.

I kept working and I took refuge in prayer. I prayed, "God, give me a sign or something so that I can see if I should stay with this man or not. Help me, Lord." And God heard me because one day my husband got home a little drunk and I saw that somebody had kissed him on the neck." I asked him about it and he answered me that it had been a friend. I confronted him and again he hit me. It was then that I received the signal I had long been asking God for.

The next day I went to the courthouse and made our divorce official. When I served him the divorce papers and told him I was going to divorce him, he said to me, "You will be sorry." And that is how it turned out. He sent immigration authorities to my apartment. Apart from living the whole deportation process, he has taken my son away. That is what most hurts me, my son.

My son is now with me here at the Catholic Charities shelter where they have helped me very much. But I have to go before the authorities and I don't have anything. He took everything from me when he realized that I was going to divorce him. He went to our apartment while I was out and took all my things. I now await the deportation order and I am scared because he told me, 'If you go back to Costa Rica, I will kill you.'"

Gabriela has found help at the shelter and she prays all the time. But she has left the Catholic church because she says that when she was in the middle of the crisis, she didn't find the support that she needed. Now she belongs to a Christian church. At Catholic Charities, she has the financial support she needs while she waits to see if she will be returning to Costa Rica.

The Role of the Clergy

The role of the Catholic church has changed during the last few years. In our countries, people attend mass every Sunday, but not like they used to 20 or 25 years ago. Today, people go to church mostly for special occasions like baptisms, first communions, or marriages. In spite of this, the parish priest continues to be the person who guides the members of the community. Sunday mass continues to be the day that the community gathers together in its faith.

The Bible is the base of the Catholic faith. In it we find the Old and New Testaments. The Scriptures are the base of faith and of Catholic life. The sacraments are the way we journey through each moment and this is why parishes have various guided evangelization activities which are developed to make the Scriptures better understood.

In the United States, the parish dynamic offers different activities for families. During the week, catechism classes are held, as well as preparation for receiving the sacraments: baptism, confirmation, reconciliation, first communion, marriage, and healing of the sick. The parish priest is the head and his ministry is developed with the help of the parish vicar. In most cases, vicars have a direct understanding of and by the Hispanic community. The parish vicar is another priest who in some cases is bilingual, and to whom parishioners turn for advice—spiritual as well as personal.

The parish priest, the parish vicar, and the deacon play a very important role in the spiritual formation and faith of the community. Deacons are ordained by the bishops for this ministry of service. They form the lowest grade within the church's ministerial hierarchy and they serve the priests and bishops. They serve the community as a "permanent" ministry, a ministry they receive from the bishop and through which they can celebrate the liturgy and charity.

In this country, members of the Hispanic community relate directly to the deacons due to a lack of bilingual priests in the community. At many parishes, the deacon performs the liturgy and the homily. He is the priest's helper, especially during communion and reflection on the Scriptures. Many deacons are Mexican and have the benefit of relating directly with each member of their community. It

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This is why during moments of crisis, he is the first person people turn to.

is easy for the deacon to communicate with the parishioners because of affinity of culture, language and faith.

The priest, in representing Jesus Christ, is the one who delivers the message of the Gospel to the community. He is a masculine figure, in accordance with the masculine role that is so important in the Hispanic culture. The priest is the head of the church, the moral voice of society, as the father is of the family, the head of society.

The priest is a counselor, he is a friend, he is the one who has seen one's children grow up, who is there to deliver the sacraments, who gives the blessings throughout life and who is there to help parents with the spiritual formation of their children and with the two of them as a couple. The priest is the "godfather" of the family who is present during good and bad times. This is why during moments of crisis, he is the first person people turn to. His role is vital for Latino Catholic families.

In the United States, many religious formation activities take place in the church. One of the principal roles of the Catholic Church in the United States is to allow those who are newly arrived to meet other Hispanics. It is a place where one comes to relate to those of one's own race. There are catechism classes, Bible study classes, prayer groups, youth groups, choirs, and groups organized for people with problems such as alcoholism, like Al-Anon. These services are made available so that members of the parish can get involved in religious activities. Families gather and participate, coming together more often and forming a social nucleus.

Biblical Text

Marriage as an institution within the Catholic Church gives a new dimension to men as well as to women. This is experienced within the church and society. It is a commitment of faith, of one partner with the other, and it is a commitment that is difficult to break because of the intrinsic value it has. The value of God the creator and the mystery of Christ the Savior, fundamental to the Catholic vision, is manifested here.

> *"And God created man in his image; in his image God created him; man and woman he created them."* (Genesis 1:27)

The message of the Word reaffirms the importance of mutual help and the commitment between man and woman in the same way.

"This is why a man leaves his father and mother, to join his wife and they become one body" (Genesis 2:23–24).[1] Here the union of the man and the woman through marriage is related to God's act of creation and responds to his will.

The basis for what "our lives should be as Catholics," specifically if we are speaking of a marital union, can be found in the Bible. The saying, "Until death do us part," as the marriage rite ends, establishes a commitment within the couple that is assumed and many times maintained, leaving aside realities that break this "forever" commitment, realities such as that of abuse.

> *"Brethren: I want to tell you one thing: life is short. Therefore, it is convenient for those who are married to live as if they weren't; those who suffer as if they didn't suffer; those who are happy as if they weren't happy; those who buy as if they didn't buy; those who enjoy the world as if they didn't enjoy it; because the world we see is only temporary."* (Reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians 7:29–31) [2]

We can clearly see that the message of the Bible teaches us resignation in the face of suffering and the temporary nature of life. As we face domestic violence cases and we refer to readings such as this, the message of resignation and the ephemeral nature of life is implicit. That which is temporary. Many women find refuge in readings like this one and forge ahead, grasping at Scriptures. The promise of a "New Life" is sought day after day and their own suffering is offered as a sacrifice.

> *"The single man worries about the Lord's things and how to please him; on the other hand the married man worries about life's things and how to please his wife and this is why his heart is divided. Likewise, a woman that no longer has a husband and the single woman worry about the Lord's things and can dedicate themselves to Him in heart and soul. Contrarily, the married woman worries about things of this life and how to please her*

In the case of a woman whose faith is based in the Catholic religion… and who is being abused by her husband, it is very difficult to change the idea that she "should please her husband."

husband……" (Reading from the first letter of the apostle Paul to the Corinthians 7:32–35)

The relationship of a married man and woman is intrinsic in the Bible. In this case it is clear that in matrimony, the man as much as the woman has the other person as a priority in life. In the case of a woman whose faith is based in the Catholic religion and scripture, and who is being abused by her husband, it is very difficult to change the idea that she "should please her husband." This concept is common in Latin American culture and girls are educated in accordance with a "machismo" view that has been perpetuated by grandmothers and mothers during their own generation. This "pleasing" is not only experienced in the life of the couple. It is also experienced at home with the father and the brothers. This is how the requirement for a woman learning domestic chores is legitimized, so that later she can be able to perform these tasks in her married life. The man expects it to be this way and the woman "serves him," maintaining the role that has been established at home.

Many women who are victims of domestic violence…find refuge in prayer…

Many women who are victims of domestic violence, physical as well as sexual, find refuge in prayer and when they do so, are able to quiet the pain of disappointment which they live with because of the abuse. For the man, it is natural to see that "his woman" continues by his side in spite of his treating her without respect, and he hopes it will continue this way, because unfortunately there are Biblical texts that, according to some interpretations, legitimize the role of women in the context of marriage and family. This is why often the situation of domestic violence may go so far without being addressed, as the man is not conscious of why his behavior is wrong and the woman lives in fear, remembering the commitment "till death do us part" that she agreed to through this sacrament.

…often the situation of domestic violence may go so far without being addressed, as the man is not conscious of why his behavior is wrong and the woman lives in fear, remembering the commitment "till death do us part"…

To be married in the church does not have a legal connotation, but something much more: it is a sacrament. This is where the dissolution becomes difficult. It has to do with an action that puts the members of the couple in direct contact with the paschal mystery of Christ, which is alive in Christ's community.

"God blessed them saying, 'Be fertile and multiply. Fill the earth and rule it. Rule the fishes of the sea, the birds of the sky, and all the animals that live on the earth.' And this is how it was. God saw that what he had done was good." (Genesis 1:26–28, 31)

In most domestic violence cases, the obstacle to finding a solution will arise because of the woman's belief in the intrinsic value of the marriage promise as a sacrament. Many times it easier to offer support, leaving Bible readings aside, as the women who are victims of abuse, based on the interpretations they have often heard, may find in such readings a reason to forgive.

Cases have been seen where abused women leave the Catholic religion in order to get divorced and start their lives over, seeking refuge in another religion and, even more so, outside the church. The moral aspect becomes a burden when it comes time to decide whether to accuse the husband and whether to confront the problem in order to leave him.

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Food

Food is a vital part of Latino culture. It is difficult to imagine a celebration without a special dish of Latin American cooking.

Latinos do not have any kind of restrictions with respect to meat or drink. It is important to note that alcohol is a fundamental part of holiday or community celebrations in our countries. When talking about special celebrations, special dinners usually take place at home. There, the grandmothers are the ones to provide the delicious meals. Recipes of all kinds are prepared to feed guests.

In contrast to our countries, in the United States celebrations that take place in the church and which revolve around the sacraments are celebrated in a particular way with a community meal that in most cases takes place in the parish hall with the participation of Hispanic parishioners. In most cases the favorite dish is Mexican food, because of the large number of Mexicans who attend church and the fact that they constitute the largest number of immigrants in our communities.

But we shouldn't forget that although there are no restrictions, there are differences in the kinds of food eaten within the Hispanic community. Mexicans have brought with them their tradition of beans, rice, and enchiladas—a dish that,

like taquitos, is enjoyed at every celebration. For a Mexican woman in a shelter, this would be the ideal meal.

But if we speak of other Latina women in a shelter, it is important to be aware of where they come from in order to offer them the kind of food that they identify with in their own culture. In other Latin American countries rice is a delicious dish and forms part of the daily diet. A hot soup can be an ideal meal that does not require special preparation. What is helpful is to know that the traditional meal, which includes potatoes, cassava or manioc, fried banana chips and corn, is important in Latino culture.

Another aspect that deserves highlighting and is important when speaking of food and cultural celebrations is the fact that alcohol forms a part of the celebrations of our countries and alcoholism is a factor that can co-exist in cases where domestic violence is present. Immigrant men celebrate by drinking and in some cases we see alcoholism and domestic violence together. Beer is the preferred drink of Latino men and in many cases it is consumed with the meal. Women don't necessarily drink alcohol, but their husbands and companions generally do.

In the majority of cases, women are the ones who cook and, regardless of which Latin American country they are from, they maintain customs through family recipes. Meals reunite the family and the community as the recipes are used generation after generation.

Holidays

The Liturgical Calendar within the Catholic tradition is full of holidays that are celebrated throughout the year. The liturgical year begins with Advent, which is the preparation for the birth of the Savior. In our countries this preparation is carried out with a Christmas Novena that is prayed to God the Child during the nine nights before December 24th. In the United States, the novena is celebrated over the 9 nights but *before* December 12th when the Feast of Our Lady of Guadalupe, so important to Mexicans, is celebrated. Afterwards, Christmas and

New Year arrive. These two holidays are celebrated in community. The church is the center of the celebration and food is a vital part of the festivities.

Another very important liturgical moment is that known as Lent, which begins on Ash Wednesday, the day we reflect on our sins. The priest puts ash on our foreheads and says, "From ashes you came, ashes you will become," to show how ephemeral life is and to signal the arrival of New Life, which is the promise of salvation.

During these forty days, Catholics gather in prayer and meditate on their sins, offering fasting as penance. Fasting occurs every Friday and generally Latinos don't eat any kind of meat this day. It is mandatory to omit red meat from daily meals each Friday as a sacrifice. Penance also includes behavior such as not talking about others. All this occurs during the forty days in memory of the days Jesus spent in the desert, taking the parishioners towards a cleansing of their faults in search of forgiveness.

Holy Week, which occurs before Easter Sunday during the Easter Triduum (Thursday–Friday and Holy Saturday), is a time that has great significance for Catholics. They attend church as a family and pray the Via Crucis, often presented live in order to relive Jesus' steps towards the Cross. After this everyone gathers and eats together to maintain the spirit of the community gathering.

With the arrival of Easter, the liturgical time celebrating the Resurrection of Jesus Christ, Catholics gather to celebrate the miracle of the forgiveness of sins and the promise of Salvation that Jesus has given us.

Finally, on November 1st and 2nd we celebrate the Day of the Dead, when we remember loved ones and friends who have left this earth. This date is celebrated as a holiday in the Mexican culture; sweet bread is made and altars with photographs of the dead are created. In contrast, in some other countries a day of mourning occurs. It is important to recognize this date because Latinos, both men and women, participate with their families.

The Story of Maria, a Catholic woman from the Dominican Republic

"I got married to an American in the Dominican Republic. When we met, he invited me to meet his family and so I traveled to California to visit them. We married and then moved to northern California where we began our married life. Until then everything was going fine.

But when I got pregnant with my son, my husband changed and became distant. Nevertheless, I continued to shower him with attention as he expected. When my son was born, he didn't want to assume his role as father. Since then, I have carried this responsibility alone. Even more so since I had to find work, because my husband lost his job and hasn't shown any interest in working or studying.

Day after day he stays at home, sleeping. One day my son didn't go to school and stayed home all day. When I got home that evening, my son told me he hadn't eaten all day because his dad was asleep. I confronted him and he yelled at me. That is the way he normally communicates with me.

I am still in the same situation and I haven't sought help because I want to keep my family together. He is the father of my son. We got married through the church, and as his wife I should stay with him. My counselors have been priests, but one of them told me that I should look for a good moment to make a decision for the wellbeing of my son and myself. I have become a member of a group of catechumens and I pray all the time for God to help me. I believe that he will help me find my husband and my family again. I believe in his infinite mercy."

This case is an example of what a faithful Catholic woman might think about her situation. Remaining in an abusive situation without seeking help and, especially, thinking that with prayer the future will be better.

Worship

Sunday is the day that the family dedicates to prayer. Prayer takes place in church and everyone participates in Mass. Those who are able take communion in order to be in God's grace. Children approach the altar to receive a blessing if they haven't yet received their first communion. For Hispanics it is very important to go to Mass every Sunday and, more importantly, Mass needs to be held in Spanish. There the vicar, as well as the deacon, has a very important role in bringing the meaning of the Scriptures to the community in Spanish.

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During the week, one can attend church to pray the Rosary to the Virgin as a form of communal or personal prayer. Generally, Latina women participate in this prayer. Prayer groups gather once a week to read and reflect upon the Bible in a community prayer that takes place in the church with the participation of the pastor. Youth groups gather in the church and many times worship God by singing. In each parish we can see how the choir has become very important, especially now that there are hymnals and songbooks available in Spanish. It has been said that "those who sing, pray twice."

Another possibility would be having a priest available to the women, one who speaks Spanish and with whom they can converse alone…

These moments of community and personal prayer and reflection are very enriching and can offer inner peace to women who find themselves in a domestic violence situation. Those in shelters, especially Latina Catholic women who are initiating their healing process, will need these moments of community prayer in order to find spiritual strength.

It is very important to offer a Latina Catholic client an image of Jesus or the Virgin so that she can have it in her room and can pray alone.

Another possibility would be having a priest available to the women, one who speaks Spanish and with whom they can converse alone, share their problems, and, most of all, pray and receive the sacrament of reconciliation. It is very important to offer a Latina Catholic client an image of Jesus or the Virgin so that she can have it in her room and can pray alone. In the majority of cases, personal prayer offers spiritual peace which can help initiate the path to healing, especially after a relationship has been broken due to abuse. If possible, it is also helpful to have a rosary on the bedside table at night, with the hopes of inspiring prayer to the Virgin. Many women will find encouragement in praying by themselves.

Family

In Latina culture, the family is the center of all relationships.

In Latina culture, the family is the center of all relationships, community relationships as well as the relationship of faith in God. This is why families attend church together and participate in celebrations together.

In the case of immigrants, families (in the majority of cases, Mexican families) arrive in this country together and establish a social nucleus with roots in their own culture. This essentially means that they live with and interact with Mexicans, work with Mexicans, and help those of their own race. This is an important point because in cases of domestic violence, other family members may be available to help the victim of abuse.

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Traditionally, the mother and father support their children, but when they find out that their daughter has been abused, many times they shun the husbands and afterwards it is difficult to repair the relationship once other family members have intervened. This leads women in this situation to make the decision not to share their problem with parents or siblings, until their situation has reached a point where it can no longer be hidden.

The role of the priest, a friend and counselor, can clarify that the church does not agree with an abusive relationship.

On the other hand, the moral commitment established with marriage is another obstacle that many times leads parents to insist that their daughter resolve the problem so as not to end in divorce, which is viewed as sinful. The role of the priest, a friend and counselor, can clarify that the church does not agree with an abusive relationship. However, many women will still decide to return to their husbands.

But because not all Latina immigrants come from Mexico, another situation we see is where a woman arrives in this country alone and finds herself isolated from her family after having followed her husband here. She arrives without friends, without family, not speaking the language, and many times with children whom she has to raise and support. This is a situation which makes her vulnerable to abuse, as the distance between her and her family enables her husband to take advantage of the situation.

Many women arrive at a shelter in this situation, coming from countries such as Colombia, Costa Rica, Panama, Argentina, etc. It is important to recognize

the patterns and to find out if the family is aware of the situation and, more importantly, their opinion about the abuse crisis at hand. If there isn't support, abandonment is likely to be the experience of the abused woman.

Traditionally, our mothers showed us how to forge ahead and they especially taught us how to maintain the relationship, practicing forgiveness. This is what they themselves did, and that is why it is sometimes difficult to tell them what is going on because, even though they support us, deep down inside they will not agree with a decision to leave the abuser.

If we analyze the way the family is established in Latino culture, we see that respect for our elders is fundamental. Raising one's voice to one's parents or disagreeing with them is never accepted. Children must always respect their parents and accept their decisions, even if they are not in agreement with them. Parents can always voice their opinions and children must obey them without question. This respect is practiced throughout life and is backed by the morality that is learned within the values of the Catholic Church.

Because of this, it is very difficult to make a decision in the face of abuse. If the family supports us, everything is fine. But if we want to go back to our husbands, it will not be so easy, as the family may intervene. In the second case, if the family supports us but isn't in agreement with a separation, it will be very hard to count on them to get out of the situation.

For those who work with these cases in shelters or domestic violence programs, it is a tremendous help to speak with the person and especially to understand her point of view with respect to her role in the family, in order to help her see that it is important to seek their support, regardless of whether her family is in agreement with her separation or divorce.

Community Relationships

One of the main roles of the Catholic Church in the United Status is that of providing a place for those who are newly arrived to meet other Hispanics.

Many…victims of abuse …who have not made the decision to leave the abuser seek help from the church and find organizations that work to provide assistance …

Through Hispanic Ministries (as these offices that already exist in many North American parishes are called), the church offers a vital service to the community. There the Hispanic leader helps the parishioners, not only to become part of the parish but also to organize community and religious activities. The church in this country is the center for thousands of activities, and it is here that Latinos find the place to begin their new life as immigrants.

In many cases, the pastor offers support and there are classes and discussions related to family and social life. Many women who are victims of abuse and who have not made the decision to leave the abuser seek help from the church and find organizations that work to provide assistance in abuse cases. One of these organizations is Catholic Charities, where programs can be found that are designed specifically to help women who are victims of abuse.

Assistance is offered by an interdisciplinary staff of Latina women, psychologists, and social workers who go to those places where the community most needs them. Catholic Charity's Hispanic Program is one of the best resources for Latinas in this situation. They have created a program called Unique Project (*Proyecto Única*) through which women share their experiences and, even more importantly, begin the healing process. Many have done so and have succeeded in overcoming their past.

Issues Related to Domestic Violence

The life of immigrants is in part shaped by situations that have been lived in our own countries. It is not a secret to anyone that the Latino culture has the characteristic of "machismo" in it. But where does "machismo" come from? It comes from the tradition of domination that we experienced during the period of conquest. It comes from the predominant role of men in our society. It comes from a family tradition where the man has the last word and nobody argues with him.

We know that during our grandmothers' time, men went out to work and women stayed at home to care for the children and the home. This has changed because of

the educational level of women who have decided to attend university, showing a new perspective on the role of women in contemporary Latina culture.

…the family often does not support a woman as it is assumed that she should stick with her husband.

But this role, even though it has changed, still has a long way to go, because the tradition of our grandparents' times is still being lived in the rural areas of our countries, where peasant women continue to be under the supervision and subjugation of men.

If we observe the way we were raised, at home the father always decided what was done and no one questioned him, regardless of whether his decisions were good or bad. It is interesting to see that because women fear their husbands, many times they have remained silent, not expressing their opinions.

Guadalupe, a Mexican woman, speaking about her own experience, said, "My husband gets home drunk and if dinner isn't ready he beats me. I put up with it because he is a good man, he is the father of my children and he is the one who supports me." If we analyze her words, she says, "He is a good man." Here we see that being the father of her children makes him a good man in her eyes, even though he is abusing her.

It is interesting to see how many women who are victims of abuse don't dare to leave their husbands, because he is the father of their children and they prefer to tolerate it. They do this because, by tradition, a woman should be with her husband and listen to him and continue by his side. This is a situation that is experienced in the Hispanic family and if we recall how respect is so important in the culture, we understand why the wife "respects" her husband and doesn't think about solving the problem.

Traditions are such that, in the case of a crisis, the family often does not support a woman as it is assumed that she should stick with her husband. Traditionally, mothers don't accept separations so if a woman gets divorced, she is discredited. Many women who have experienced this have come to understand that this is a road they have to travel alone at first, as the family will not support them. It is easier for them to seek help from friends and, if they find someone in their same situation, they begin to become aware and understand more about their problem.

Talking about the problem is not easy. The silence of victims, and their hesitancy

Latina women are very reserved when it comes to conflictive situations …

to talk about the abuse, makes it hard to offer help. Latina women are very reserved when it comes to conflictive situations and they don't share easily. They only open up in a situation where a friend gets close to them and they are able to tell her what they are going through.

It is because of the role of the man, which he imposes with his "machismo," showing his power in the relationship, that Latina women take such a long time to decide to leave the abuser. Psychologists have seen that it takes seven attempts to finally leave the abuser. One of the key factors is insecurity and fear, as in many cases the abuse has ended in physical violence.

The church is a place where one can seek help.

The church is a place where one can seek help. The priest is a person who may inspire trust to talk about the problem. But in general, a Hispanic woman who is in the same situation may be the key to taking the first step.

But in general, a Hispanic woman who is in the same situation may be the key to taking the first step.

Domestic violence has taken on great importance because it is a problem that affects Hispanic families. It almost never ends in divorce, but it does result in separation. One factor is that Catholic marriage is seen as not accepting divorce, which is why people who decide to end the problem separate without making the separation legal.

Help groups and publications in Spanish are essential in informing women about the problem and often in helping women to become aware that they are in an abusive relationship. Frequently, due to a lack of information, many women may think that what they are experiencing is normal.

On the other hand, the fact of living far from her own country makes the woman's situation a more vulnerable one. If she lives with a Hispanic man, this can contribute to the isolation she experiences as an immigrant. And if we are talking about a Hispanic woman with a man from another culture, the language barrier and the lack of resources to prevent the problem can exacerbate the situation.

It is time to start working within the community, educating women about the dangers of abuse—physical, verbal, psychological, and sexual. When our Latina women are well informed, they will be better prepared to confront any situation.

Understanding Violence Against Women in the Hindu Context

Shamita Das Dasgupta

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A Brief Primer 0n Hinduism

The first important characteristic of Hinduism is that there is no ONE Hinduism. Hinduism is marked by multiplicity and accommodation of diversity. It might be best understood as ways of life in search of perfection or *moksha*. This perfection is considered absolute and the potential for it dormant in everyone. Thus, reaching perfection would mean liberating the latent power to fulfill one's potential and realizing the 'self' or soul. However, this task cannot be achieved in isolation of society and must be accomplished in the context of one's interpersonal relationships and social obligations. The process of reaching the goal of perfection is considered as important as the ultimate goal itself.

Hinduism is a living tradition where growth does not mean destroying the old and making way for the new, but recreating the old in the new. While Western

logic is linear, in Hinduism thought is circular, spiraling from a center thesis, thereby incorporating the past in the present. Hindu reasoning is often nonlinear and collective, with a profound sense of continuity. Although Hinduism does not rest on the notion of a god or gods, almost all variations of Hinduism acknowledge the idea of an amorphous supreme power, a power that is the founding principle of the cosmic system.

The ten essential underpinnings or motifs that guide Hindu life are:

1. The universe is real and knowable. That is, divine knowledge is accessible to humans.

2. The universe is orderly. Hindus do not recognize the dichotomy of the natural and the divine, but consider both as expressions of the same cosmic order.

3. All life is unity. Hindus believe that the soul or self is the same, and only expressions differ.

4. Each birth is a rebirth. In keeping with the belief in continuity, the self is considered eternal. Reincarnation does not signify continuity of individual consciousness, but continuity of self.

5. Each birth is determined by *karma*. The belief in causality or *karma* arises out of the concept of continuity and assumes that an act is the result of "forces" set in motion by previous acts (even in another life).

6. The human condition is one of misery but there is also the opportunity for eliminating misery.

7. *Atmansiddhi* (realization of self) is the goal of human endeavor.

8. Techniques of *atmansiddhi* can be different. This provides the basis of plurality and tolerance of diversity in Hinduism.

9. Each person is free to choose his/her own technique of *atmansiddhi*.

Although *karma* fixes the individual in his/her position in life, the method of *atmansiddhi* is an individual choice.

10. If one faithfully follows techniques of *atmansiddhi*, results are assured.[1]

Rachana's Story

Rachana, a 45-year-old mother of two girls, had experienced years of severe physical beatings at the hands of her politically powerful husband in her native country. She had suffered a miscarriage and serious trauma to her uterus and injury to her spine due to the physical abuse. In addition, her husband constantly threatened her children with making them witness their mother's death. When Rachana's husband decided to immigrate to the U.S., her family felt that, away from their vigilance, he might actually kill her. They made Rachana and her daughters promise to seek help from South Asian women's organizations in the U.S. in case she was in trouble, and they also attempted to alert at least one organization to keep an eye on her.

In the U.S., Rachana's husband began to deprive her of food and needed medication. When one of her teenage daughters implored her to call the agency, Rachana told them that it would be of no use. She told them that marriages happened between the same man and woman over seven lifetimes. There was no escaping this truth. Since she was bound to their father for eternity, what was the point of trying to escape him in this lifetime? They would end up with each other again and again, over many lifetimes. So, she must endure whatever fate had written for her.

Role of Clergy/Religious and Spiritual Leaders

Hinduism is not an organized religion; thus, there is little compulsion for attending a place of worship, worshipping a particular god, reading specific texts, or even declaring oneself as a theist (believer in god). An atheist can also be a Hindu, as Hinduism is based on lifestyle practices rather than belief in any particular god. Nonetheless, Hinduism accommodates as many gods (or idols) as human imagination can conjure up, since it recognizes that believers in the 'supreme power' may have difficulty in conceiving it in the abstract.

A Hindu place of worship is called *mandir* (temple), and each community may establish a number of temples dedicated to different expressions of the supreme power— gods and goddesses. However, a Hindu believer may never step inside a temple since each household frequently maintains its own personal shrine. Thus, Hindu temples do not have regular congregations. Unlike the clergy in Islam, Judaism, and Christianity, priesthood is not an organized occupation in Hinduism, and Hindu priests tend not to hold any kind of moral authority or power over the people who gather to worship in temples. The job of a Hindu priest does not include preaching or offering sermons to the faithful. Hindu priests, born in the Brahmin caste, are usually employed to conduct collective worshipping (*puja*) in community temples. Their work entails conducting *puja* rituals in temples and, on occasion, individual households.

Spiritual leaders (often called *guru*) in Hinduism are not necessarily priests and may originate from any class, caste, social position, and even religion. Spiritual leaders, who are believed to be divinely inspired, emerge fortuitously. In contrast to priests, Hindu spiritual leaders have more influence over their followers and are often controversial figures in society. They may communicate with their followers through writing, discourse, or personal consultation, as well as indirect contact across continents. While some spiritual leaders may gather large followings, others remain limited to smaller, local communities. A few well-known Hindu spiritual leaders are Ramakrishna Paramhansa, Maharishi Mahesh Yogi, Ramana Maharshi, Anandamayi Ma, Satguru Subramuniya Swami, and Sai Baba. These leaders are not tied to congregations or consistent places of worship.

Sacred Texts

Since Hinduism is not a formal or organized religion, it is not text-based. There is no *one* text that grounds its philosophical foundations. However, numerous Hindu texts contribute to the understanding of the philosophy (e.g., *Veda, Upanishad, Purana*, etc.). Perhaps the most read Hindu text is *Bhagavad Gita*. In addition to such "high" texts, various narratives, discussions, and discourses inform the faithful and may vary from practical instructions on how to worship a particular god or goddess, to poetry and stories, as well as biographies and teachings of spiritual leaders.

Another important feature among Hindus is diversity of languages. The region of South Asia where the majority of Hindus come from is resplendent in different languages, which have distinct scripts. Thus, although most texts were originally written in *Sanskrit* and ancient *Tamil*, they have been translated into different modern languages and imbued with local customs and colors.

Celebrations and Holidays

Hindu holidays and celebrations are too numerous to recount briefly. "[We celebrate] thirteen holidays in twelve months," is a common saying among Hindus. Over the years, many major Hindu celebrations have taken on cultural and secular overtones and are less associated with religious solemnity. Many holidays are observed locally and do not have universal significance among Hindus. Furthermore, each household may celebrate its personal god/s and goddess/es in different ways and at different times of the year. Traditional Hindus follow a lunar calendar that does not coincide with the Western Gregorian calendar. Following are some common Hindu holidays by their corresponding Gregorian month:

January

- ***Pongal*** (loosely tied to Hinduism) is celebrated mainly in south India and is associated with seasonal harvesting of crops.

- ***Magh Sankranti*** (Winter Solstice) is celebrated in northern India with a dip in the icy waters of holy rivers and offerings to gods/goddesses in temples.

February

- ***Ganesh Chaturthi*** is observed mainly by the people of Maharashtra (a state in the west of India); this day celebrates the generosity of the god of success, *Ganesha.*

- ***Vasanta Panchami (Saraswati Puja)*** celebrates the goddess of learning; a must for students.

March

- ***Holi*** is a jubilant celebration of spring with colored powder and water.

April

- ***Hanuman Jayanti*** is celebrated mainly among people from northern states of India and commemorates *Hanuman* (the monkey god) for his strength and dedication to duties.

- **Hindu New Year *(Vaisakhi)*** by the Hindu lunar calendar.

August

- ***Krishna Jayanti*** celebrates the birth of *Lord Krishna*.

October

- ***Navaratri*** is a nine-day celebration of the victory of good over evil observed mainly among people from the northwest regions of India.

- ***Dussehera/Durga Puja*** is one of the biggest celebrations in the Hindu religious calendar that stretches over two or four days in different regions

of India. It commemorates goddess *Durga's* deliverance of the universe from destructive forces.

November

- ***Deepavali/Kali Puja*** is a festival of lights and fireworks celebrating goddess Kali's fierce strength and forgiveness towards humans.
- ***Bhai Dooj/Bhatri Dwitiya*** is a celebration reinforcing the familial ties between brothers and sisters.

The Nature of Worship

Hindu *puja* or worship is not necessarily confined to temples or collective festivals. In keeping with the diversity of Hinduism, the styles of Hindu *puja* vary greatly. Although methods of worship may differ according to caste, class, gender, region, community, and family, a few common motifs tie observant Hindus together. For example, fire and water from the Ganges[2] are common sacred symbols. A few other items that have universal spiritual significance are *chandan* (sandalwood), *ghee* (purified butter), *sindoor* (vermillion powder), turmeric, coconut, and *phul* (flowers).

In addition to participating in collective celebrations and visiting local temples regularly or for occasional worship, each observant Hindu might establish a shrine at home. Daily worship at these household shrines may be a complex hours-long affair with a hired priest conducting rituals or a simple one where the matriarch lights oil lamps (or candles) and incense sticks. Often the shrines have pictures of ancestors and spiritual leaders beside the images of Hindu gods and goddesses, and the former are worshipped with equal fervor as the latter. For a number of religious celebrations, faithful Hindus might fast until the *puja* is concluded and/or abide by certain dietary restrictions (e.g., eating only uncooked food, soaked lentils, or avoiding rice, etc.) for a limited period. Frequently, women undertake esoteric religious observations for the good of the children, husband, or other domestic causes that are confined to their individual households and not shared with men.

A Taste of Food

A significant segment of Hindus are vegetarian.

…dietary rules may not allow them to cook in pots or eat off dishes that have touched non-vegetarian food.

Although Hindu immigrants, away from India, might not adhere to all dietary rules, exclusion of beef from diets is almost a universal practice…

Like many communities, food takes a central place in Hindu life and celebrations. Gatherings are always commemorated with food, good eating, and sharing of fare. Food is considered a part of warm welcome, gracious hospitality, and gentle etiquette. The general taste of food from the area tends to be spicy with very distinct regional variations in cooking styles. Different types of foods and drinks are associated with specific celebrations and *puja*. However, drinking of alcohol is not a traditional custom and often disallowed in religious observances and festivals.

A significant segment of Hindus are vegetarian. Strict vegetarians not only shun meat, fish, poultry, and eggs, but their dietary rules may not allow them to cook in pots or eat off dishes that have touched non-vegetarian food. Some may even refuse to eat food kept in refrigerators that are used to store meat, fish, or eggs. Vegetarians of certain regions may have slightly more relaxed rules about eating eggs or fish. Non-vegetarians may eat fish, eggs, poultry, and meat, except beef. Although Hindu immigrants, away from India, might not adhere to all dietary rules, exclusion of beef from diets is almost a universal practice among Hindus. Regional and familial restrictions on food are generally superimposed on such norms.

Mapping Differences Between Euro-american and Hindu Cultures

When one tries to understand a "culture" from afar, there is a tendency to focus on its superficial aspects and make broad generalizations. Summarizing a culture often leads to reducing it to stereotypes and overlooking the fine distinctions as well as the myriad of exceptions and complexities that enriches it. Thus, when attempting to understand a culture, it is important to keep in mind that we are overlooking tremendous intra-cultural variance and nuances. Although most insiders as well as outsiders of a community experience and perceive its culture as static and eternal, one of the most important features of a culture is dynamism. Cultures change continuously by adopting new customs and shedding various practices.

Hinduism is especially characterized by its personal, local, regional, and national variations. Although most Hindus are of Indian descent, individuals born into other faiths and countries, who have adopted the philosophy, have formed Hindu communities around the world. In addition, the basic principles of Hinduism have seeped into other religious communities in South Asia [3] and many Hindu beliefs now form the bases of various Indian and South Asian cultures (e.g., both Muslim and Christian communities in South Asia express some belief in the concept of *karma* and rebirth). Hindu cultures have also integrated many practices of other religious communities. Thus, it might be more appropriate to discuss Hindu cultures in terms of a culture of the region, rather than *the* culture of a religion.

The following is a brief summary of fundamental characteristics that differentiate South Asian and Euro-American cultures. The contrast is terse and binary, and thereby is an overly simplistic presentation of two complex cultures. Furthermore, to codify cultures in such a way is to contribute to the view that cultures are stable and unchanging. Nonetheless, such an overgeneralized comparison provides quick understanding of the significant differences between the two cultures.[4]

South Asian	Euro-American
A) Collective identity is emphasized. Individual identity is subsumed under family and group reference. Traditional family structure is extended.	Individual identity is emphasized. Family unit is nuclear.
B) Personal humility and effacement is considered a virtue and indicates a healthy personality.	Personal assertion is considered a virtue and indicates a healthy personality.
C) Authority in the family is distributed according to age and gender. Show of respect may involve unquestioned obedience and relegating decision-making power to authority figures.	Peer relationship among adults is the norm, and respect is exchanged regardless of roles and authority.
D) The concept of "insider" and "outsider" is strict. Only individuals considered "insiders" have access to private and family matters. Experts with no linkage to family and community (i.e., professionals) fall in the "outsider" category.	Privacy is generally maintained within the nuclear family. Professionals may gain access to private information in their capacity as experts.
E) Gender roles are viewed as complementary. Men's and women's spaces in public and private arenas are often segregated.	Although traditionally gender roles are considered different, overlaps are common. Social spaces of the two genders are not necessarily separate.
F) Communication patterns are often contextual (i.e., referring to information not directly related to the topic at hand), indirect, and implicit.	Communication patterns are often direct and explicit.
G) Fate, *karma*, or predestination of life is a common belief. *Karma* plays out over multiple lifetimes.	Life, only one, is what we make of it here and now.

Although both South Asian men and women are socialized in this pattern, women are indoctrinated more strictly and monitored more stringently than men. While misbehavior in men may be lamented, transgressions by women meet with serious censure and ostracism at best, and life-threatening violence at worst.

Cultural Characteristics and Domestic Violence

Cultural characteristics of a community affect people in significant and contradictory ways. Such effects are rarely unadulterated good or bad. Each cultural feature can be either a source of strength or a source of violence to women and men, in a given situation. For example, the emphasis on individual identity in the Euro-American culture can allow people to be autonomous and self-sufficient, and at the same time it can lead to alienation, self-absorption, and indifference to others' feelings. The following is a brief exploration of the South Asian cultural features elaborated above, as they may play out in violence against women in the family.

In most South Asian cultures, a compelling sense of family responsibility is instilled in individuals, especially women…

…collectivism may imply that women's identities are defined by the men in their lives. Ultimately, this may result in a sense of helplessness if such relationships are severed by violence.

A) The emphasis on collective identity can lead to strong feelings of connectedness in the family and community, while it can also usurp an individual's ability to make independent decisions and survive as a separate being. In most South Asian cultures, a compelling sense of family responsibility is instilled in individuals, especially women, beginning in childhood. In the case of South Asian women, collectivism may imply that women's identities are defined by the men in their lives. Ultimately, this may result in a sense of helplessness if such relationships are severed by violence. Furthermore, a battered South Asian woman's collective identity may make her vulnerable to abuse as she might hesitate to make unilateral decisions. For example, before she decides to end an abusive relationship, a South Asian woman may consider not only the opinions of her immediate relatives but also those of community members.

Many battered South Asian women are reluctant to leave their abusive spouses for the sake of sparing their parents distress, saving family honor, and preserving their siblings' eligibility for contracting desirable marriage alliances.

Collective identity also has significance for intervention in domestic violence situations, especially if it calls for separating from the intimate batterer. Leaving the abuser may mean not only escaping violence, but also leaving behind one's identity that has hitherto been defined in terms of family and community.

B) The teaching of personal humility and self-effacement may lead women to minimize the violence they have experienced and sacrifice their own happiness for the sake of the children, family, and community. Many battered South Asian women are reluctant to leave their abusive spouses for the sake of sparing their parents distress, saving family honor, and preserving their siblings' eligibility for contracting desirable marriage alliances. In addition, a South Asian woman may be reluctant to describe her abuse and distress clearly as she plays down her own welfare. Since assertiveness is considered a negative characteristic, many women dismiss the violence they have experienced and maintain silence about what they want.

   On the positive side, such humility foregrounds caring for others and balances happiness of others with one's self-interests.

C) The teaching of respect for age-authority in South Asian cultures creates an honored space for elders. It also ensures that young people learn from the wisdom collected through experience. At the same time, it may result in oppression, especially of women and children, within the family and thwart the growth of their autonomy. Elders in a family may disregard a daughter's safety and wishes for the benefit of family reputation, tradition, and collective advantage. Relatives or parents may encourage their battered daughter to preserve the marriage and not to break the sacred union between a husband and wife, thereby jeopardizing her safety. They may pacify the daughter by stating that abuse is an "adjustment problem" or routine "wear and tear" of married life.

D) While the distinction between insider/outsider can help create belongingness and cohesiveness within a family, it can also shroud

problems in a cloak of silence. Such strict codes of privacy may suppress women's ability to seek help outside (i.e., professionals) and leave them at the mercy of "insiders."

E) In the best of circumstances, complementarity of gender roles can mean individuals engage in tasks that they enjoy and which society values equally. Contrarily, such separation of tasks and roles may engender devaluation of women's work and their degradation in society.

F) Contextual communication styles can be the basis of group harmony and create a win-win situation for all. However, when imposed on a social context that is not conducive to or familiar with such communication patterns (i.e., Euro-American), it may lead to puzzlement, doubts about the female speaker's credibility, and discounting of her needs. Advocates and practitioners unused to such communication patterns may believe that a South Asian battered woman is confused, devious, and/or does not know her own mind.

G) The notion of karma or predestination underscores the connection between actions and consequences as well as continuity of life. However, for many South Asian battered women it may signify the inescapability of their current life situation and, therefore, the futility of trying to change it. Successful intervention might have to circumvent this belief in fate and highlight the aspect of causality; i.e., just actions to change one's life would result in ending violence in one's current life.

The notion of karma might be utilized in batterers' intervention programs also. Hindu abusers might heed to the fact that their violent behavior in this life would bring about consequences not only in this life but also in subsequent lives.

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Nayna's Story

Nayna's husband of 45 years went back to their native country on a vacation and married a much younger woman in a religious ceremony. He returned to the U.S. and threw Nayna out of the house where she had lived for the last 30 years. At the age of 63, Nayna had never worked outside her home, nor did she know anything about her family's finances. Although she had endured years of coerced isolation and emotional control, she had kept quiet so as not to embarrass her children and to make sure they were not separated from their father.

Nayna was an exceedingly religious woman with special dietary needs. She was extremely confused about where to go next and what she should do. She had no money, few skills, and felt completely mentally shattered. The police found her sitting on a park bench over an extended period and brought her to the local domestic violence shelter. When one of the advocates urged her to speak to their legal counsel, Nayna said that she did not want to do anything about what had happened to her. She said that this was the result of her own actions in a previous life and she had to pay for her own misdeeds. No one could help her in this.

Traditional Family Structures and Domestic Violence

Hindu family structures are not distinct from South Asian family configurations. That is, family structures are more a factor of regional South Asian cultures than of religion. South Asian family structures are diverse and, as in other cultures, are related to both economy and traditions. The customary family in South Asia is extended or joint, patrilocal or virilocal (brides move into husbands' family homes after marriage), and intergenerational (with grandparents living with sons, their families, the grandchildren, and their families). The extended family can be even larger, with cousins and distant relatives living under the same roof. Generally,

in South Asian families authority is hierarchical and distributed according to age and gender. That is, the eldest male holds maximum power in the family while the eldest female holds power over her sons and the women in the family.

Such extended families are often sources of strength for women who may live their lives surrounded by loving elders and peers. Young brides may begin their marriages with few responsibilities and enough free time to get to know their spouses, as there are many people to share household duties. Extended families provide tremendous support for child rearing also. Furthermore, at times of conflicts between couples, the presence of other family members serves as a restraining influence on abusive conduct. Often, older women intervene to resolve quarrels between couples and shield young women from their husbands' violence.

However, extended families can be a source of abuse for women as well. The youngest bride enters at the lowest position in an extended family, because she is often viewed as a threat to family cohesiveness and integrity. Older women take on the task of indoctrinating young brides into the family's ways. At times, such re-socialization can be abusive and has become infamous as "mother-in-law abuse." Unmarried or widowed daughters and sisters are not allowed a stable place or position in their natal families and are assumed to be occupying a temporary space while they await entry into their "permanent" or husband's home, after which they are considered loved "visitors." Widows are expected to remain with their husbands' families and may lead a life in limbo if their own or husbands' families do not want them. This lack of a permanent space for daughters in the natal family often leaves them without material and emotional support and renders them vulnerable to abuse in their husbands' households.

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Even though the tradition of extended/joint family is slowly eroding due to urbanization, migration, and social mobility, a psychological semblance of it continues in many families. The joint family system remains strong in certain localities, regions, and communities. In the South Asian American community, although the extended family may not be a common physical reality, its psychological grip on individuals lingers frequently. Even after families amicably split up due to limited physical space and migration, the joint-family decision-making structure may persist for years. Consequently, an immigrant battered woman in the U.S. might defer making unilateral decisions about leaving her

…an immigrant battered woman in the U.S. might defer making unilateral decisions…while seeking opinions of her elders and other family members who live in her country of origin.

partner even though her own life might be at stake, while seeking opinions of her elders and other family members who live in her country of origin.

As families gradually reconfigure in the United States by adding members to a South Asian immigrant woman's household (e.g., her husband's siblings and parents), the sources of abuse also keep expanding. In the South Asian community in the U.S., perpetrators of domestic violence are not just limited to spouses and intimate partners. Often, a woman's in-laws participate vigorously in her abuse. In the North American environment, which supports a nuclear family structure, a power struggle between the in-laws and the young wife is easy to understand. Thus, the South Asian mother-in-law in an extended family in the U.S. may engage in personally abusing her daughter-in-law and instigating her son to abuse his wife as a way of obtaining obedience. Often a husband is a passive observer/participant of an immigrant South Asian woman's battering, which reinforces her belief that the removal of extended family members would end all violence in her life. However, abuse of older women (mothers-in-law) is not unheard of in the South Asian American social context.

Systems of Marriage and Divorce and Domestic Violence

Traditionally, it is the responsibility of elders to arrange marriages of both sons and daughters in the Hindu family. The arranged marriage system is also the norm of the region. Although arranged marriages elicit an automatic negative response in the West, it is not necessarily abusive but only a system of organizing marriage. In the best of circumstances, arranged marriages are neither coercive nor oppressive. Arranged marriages occur through a process of complex family negotiations. Marriages in South Asia are considered family affairs rather than the business of two individuals, and arranging for a marriage allows all family members to be involved in the process. Even though the practice of arranged marriages might be changing somewhat in cosmopolitan urban areas, it is still the most common form of marriage in South Asian communities.

South Asians often do not view arranged marriages and autonomy to be oppositional. For instance, many families encourage their daughters to seek

higher education and responsible occupations and simultaneously expect them to accept marriages that are arranged for them. Today, a number of variations of the traditional model of arranged marriages exist where both the bride and groom have a voice and are encouraged to meet with their intended partners before the wedding.

Although there is no connection between the system of arranged marriage and domestic abuse, conferring immense priority to marriage often renders South Asian women vulnerable to violence by their partners. For Hindu and South Asian women, marriage is the most important social institution. An unmarried adult woman has a tentative position or role in society and thus is deemed "a problem." Consequently, family members try to get a daughter married as soon as possible and at all costs (e.g., dowry, expensive gifts, etc.). Even the most highly educated woman is considered to have little value if she has no male legitimizing her existence in society.

Although there is no connection between the system of arranged marriage and domestic abuse, conferring immense priority to marriage often renders South Asian women vulnerable to violence by their partners.

Correspondingly, South Asian women are generally socialized to accept male supremacy, especially the supremacy of their husbands. Like women in most other societies, they are trained to be responsible for the maintenance of marriage as well as family harmony, and will often go to extraordinary lengths to keep both intact. As marriage is considered a permanent bond, a Hindu battered woman may maintain an abusive relationship beyond the call of duty or reasonableness. Moreover, suffering is much valorized in South Asian cultures and may actually give the victim a sense of moral superiority over the abuser. Even when a South Asian woman is ready to leave her abusive relationship, respect for authority and family may paralyze her while she waits for instructions and suggestions from elders or other authority figures.

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In most religious communities around the world, divorce has limited acceptance. This, of course, makes it difficult for women to leave an abusive relationship. Similarly in the South Asian context, divorce is generally an unacceptable alternative, especially in Hindu families. Societal expectations require a natal family to encourage a daughter to remain married regardless of her situation in the marriage. Thus, even if she is being battered, a woman's parents may insist that she "endure" abuse to uphold her marriage vows. Consequently, the high premium paid to marriage and maintaining the "married" status renders women

vulnerable to various abuses in the affinal family (one's family by marriage), such as beatings, emotional torture, economic control, repeated dowry demands, day-to-day mistreatments, silencing, and even death.

If an unmarried woman's position is tenuous in society, a divorced woman's situation is categorically worse. Since, traditionally, divorce is an alien concept in South Asian cultures—especially among Hindus—a woman who has been divorced is considered "tainted" and "damaged goods." The very act of being divorced seems to proclaim to society at-large that there is something wrong with the woman, morally, psychologically, and perhaps even physically. Consequently, a divorced woman's parents may reject her outright and deny her their protection. They may disassociate from a divorced daughter because she has brought "shame" upon them and they have "lost face" in society because of her actions. Other members of the extended family and the community as a whole may also ostracize a divorced woman to save themselves from "guilt by association" and the resultant social censure. Often, such disapproval turns into verbal and physical abuse as well as other kinds of violence such as social ostracism, emotional withdrawal, and financial deprivation.[5] Although this attitude may be changing somewhat, especially in urban areas, divorce is still far from being common or easily permissible.

Issues of Sexual Assault

Stigmatization of sexual assault is an issue that battered Hindu women may experience. Since sexual chastity is considered an extremely important virtue for girls, any sexual violation brings with it stigmatization and blame upon the victim. Furthermore, marital rape is a problematic concept in Hindu and South Asian cultures. Since many young women are sheltered from knowledge about sex, rape within marriage is difficult to grasp and identify. Often, women are socialized to believe that a husband has a right to his wife's body and, therefore, coerced sex by a husband is not rape. Many South Asian (including Hindu) battered women clearly recognize and discuss having "forcible sex" with their partners, but may not use the term "rape." In the U.S., such coerced sex may take different forms.

For instance, a batterer may sexually abuse his wife by forcing unwanted sexual practices on her, while leading her to believe that such sexual conduct is the norm in America. Many abusers have mistresses and force their wives to support the relationship. An abusive husband may also withhold emotional/sexual intimacy to isolate his spouse in an environment where she does not have any relatives, force her to abort pregnancies when the sex of the fetus is unwanted, and restrict use of birth control.[6]

Shivani's Story

A local shelter once called me in for mental health advice about a battered woman in their shelter. They thought the 24-year-old South Asian woman was suffering from clinical depression. After having been brought from a local hospital to the shelter, Shivani was speaking only in monosyllables, was refusing to change out of a long, dirty nightdress, and had not, in the three days she had been there, eaten any substantial meals.

When I arrived on the scene, I realized what Shivani's actual problem was. She spoke only a few words of English, was unused to Western-style clothing, and felt the long nightdress was the closest to a sari she could find; and since she was a strict vegetarian, she could not use pots and pans that had touched meat. Most importantly, as a 'guest' in the shelter, Shivani was prohibited by her cultural upbringing from making excessive demands on her "host." Thus, she was trying to manage with what she had: the long nightdress and a couple of cartons of yogurt she had found lying around.

Community Connections

Community is extremely important to Hindu South Asians. Again, community relationships can be better understood in terms of South Asian cultures, rather than specifically Hindu culture. South Asian cultures are generally based on collectivity. Therefore, individuals are considered in reference to their family, clan, and village. Children are socialized to develop their identities based on extended family and community relationships and are encouraged to sacrifice personal interests for the good of the group. However, one's community may not always be based on religion, but also on linguistic, caste, class, and national origin. Furthermore, communities can be sources of support as well as abuse. Among South Asians who have emigrated to the U.S., community organizations based on languages (e.g., Bengali Association, Tamil Sangham, Oriya Sangha, etc.) and region (e.g., Bangladesh Association, Asian Indians in America, etc.) emerged first, followed closely by religious associations (e.g., Havik Society, JAINA, Vedic Society, etc.). Such community organizations offer their members practical assistance, encouragement, and psychological care during crises; and provide opportunities for networking and growth, friendship, culturally familiar entertainment, and symbols of "home." The existence of community ensures emotional and, at times, economic fulfillment for the South Asian Hindu immigrant population.

Research[7] indicates that although South Asian immigrants seem to have assimilated well in certain outward behaviors such as clothing and language, they tend to maintain traditional customs in the private realms of family and relationships. That is, South Asians adhere strictly to traditions where fundamental values are concerned such as food, marriage, gender and family relationships, as well as child-rearing practices. Immigrant South Asians have created networks of institutions of worship, language schools, religious camps, and cultural organizations in order to keep the connections to their traditions and customs vital and to pass on these values to the next generation.

Immigrant Community Demographics

The South Asian (Hindus included) people who are visible today have mainly arrived in the U.S. after the passing of the Immigration and Nationality Act of 1965. This Act liberalized the channels of legal immigration from Asian countries. Furthermore, since the immigration policies of the time allowed the entry of only technologically trained individuals, the early South Asian communities that were artificially formed here were quite uniformly upper-class. According to the 1980 U.S. census report, between 1970 and 1980 the population of Asian and Pacific Islanders increased 142%, an increase mainly due to immigration from Asia.[8]

Due to their high educational level and technical proficiency, the post 1970's immigrants quickly found economic success in this country and were subsequently dubbed "model minority." It took a decade for this group to settle down in their newly adopted land, after which it began to sponsor close relatives for immigration under the Family Reunification Act. As a result, the demographics of South Asian communities shifted noticeably in the 1980's. In contrast to the highly educated professionals who came in the decade of 1970, the new immigrants were less educated, small business owners, and working class. Today, the South Asian community in the U.S. is bi-modally distributed in terms of education and economics: the highly educated and economically successful technocrats, and the less educated working class. Between 1980 and 1990, the South Asian population in the U.S. increased 125%, with Asian Indians making up the largest portion of this statistic.

According to the 2000 census report, the South Asian population in the United States has doubled in the decade between 1990 and 2000, registering a 106% increase. It is now the third largest group of Asian Americans after the Chinese and Filipino Americans. In sheer numbers, the South Asian population in the U.S. today is 1.68 million (over 0.6% of the total population), not counting the undocumented workers who live in an invisible world. The 2000 census data also do not include many of the 400,000 or so H1-B visa holders who are living in the U.S. on a temporary basis. The last two censuses indicate that the South Asians are the fastest growing group among Asian Americans in the U.S. The three states with highest populations of South Asians are California, New York, and New Jersey.

The concept of protecting private information from "outsiders" may lead Hindu and South Asian women to avoid seeking professional help.

Nearly 67% of South Asians in this country are foreign born. Furthermore, more than 70% of South Asian women who reside in the U.S. entered the country after 1970. Although the majority of South Asians have achieved high financial success in this country, the picture is not monolithic. Especially for South Asian women, financial success has been elusive. For instance, according to 1990 census data, 59% of South Asian women over the age of 16 work outside their homes, but earn an average yearly salary of $11,746. In addition, since the majority of women have entered the country on dependent visas sponsored by their spouses, they are financially dependent on their husbands.

Battered South Asian and Hindu women may also be averse to seeking help from the police.

Issues of Intervention and Conclusion

The concept of protecting private information from "outsiders" may lead Hindu and South Asian women to avoid seeking professional help. Since anyone who is not a family member is considered an outsider, women tend not to trust professionals. Traditionally, interactions between the spouses, abusive or not, are regarded as private matters, not to be taken outside the home. South Asian women may also be reluctant to seek help from law enforcement, local service providers, or mainstream domestic violence agencies. In addition, they may view mental health services with great suspicion and mistrust. This issue becomes critical in legal and immigration-related cases, as U.S. courts often consider professional testimonies and affidavits as credible evidence of a woman's abuse.

Battered South Asian and Hindu women may also be averse to seeking help from the police. To the majority of South Asian women, intervention of law enforcement officers in their families is unacceptable. Police are generally feared, avoided, and considered a source of social embarrassment. Moreover, after the World Trade Center tragedy on September 11, 2001, many battered women have become increasingly reluctant to seek assistance from law enforcement, as they fear sudden detention and deportation of the male family members, offender and non-offender alike, under the Patriot Act.

Despite such barriers, successful intervention must take into account not just a woman's current situation but also her cultural background. In the

understanding of an individual's cultural background, religion must be given serious consideration. In the case of Hinduism, we need to understand not only the foundations of the religion but also the culture of the region from where it originated, and its relationship to violence against women. Similar to all religions and cultures, Hinduism has particular features that empower as well as disempower women. Unfortunately, often the disempowering parts overshadow the empowering parts of the religion. Nonetheless, it does not take too much effort to find woman-affirming references in Hinduism.

Perhaps Hinduism is the only major religion in the world that still places goddess worshipping at the center of its religious life. The feminine principle is venerated in Hinduism as the all-powerful life-giving force. Numerous formidable goddess warriors such as *Chandi, Durga,* and *Kali*—who liberate gods and humankind alike from evil—and compassionate ones such as *Saraswati, Lakshmi,* and *Jagadamba*—who preside over knowledge, prosperity, and well being—rule Hindu cosmology and households. However, revered female figures are not just confined to the sphere of gods. For the faithful Hindu, reciting the names of *panch kanya* (five daughters), *Ahalya, Draupadi, Kunti, Tara,* and *Mandodari*, all supposedly human beings, means washing away of sins. Thus, for many Hindu, a day must begin by remembering the names of these five sacred women. Furthermore, Hindu mythology cherishes male consorts, gods, and humans, who represent justice and steadfast love for their partners such as *Vishnu, Krishna,* and *Shiva* as well as *Rama*, *Bhima*, and *Jayadeva*. Hindu mythology, regional folklore, and current history have many examples of devoted couples who have worked together for justice, peace, and the betterment of the world. It is for the intervention workers to find these role models to inspire changes in those victims and abusers who are culturally and religiously observant Hindus.

Rather than ignoring or rejecting the system of religion itself, interventions with Hindu women and men need to distinguish and highlight the features that honor and celebrate powerful women and peaceful men. For practitioners who are not familiar with Hinduism, this can be a daunting task; and yet, this is the only way we can ensure that *all* communities, including Hindus, are served appropriately and effectively.

Rather than ignoring or rejecting the system of religion itself, interventions with Hindu women and men need to distinguish and highlight the features that honor and celebrate powerful women and peaceful men.

The Jewish Community and Domestic Violence[1]

Diane Ruth Gardsbane

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American Jews are extremely diverse in terms of "faith," ranging from those who have strong theological beliefs to those who express their Judaism on ethnic, cultural or political levels, rather than as a set of religious beliefs and practices.

Introduction

This article provides some introductory explanations about basic Jewish beliefs and practices in an attempt to help domestic violence advocates appreciate the needs of Jewish women who have been abused by their intimate partners. What follows is meant to facilitate very general insights into how Judaism intersects with a Jewish woman's experiences with abuse and her ability to access services.

American Jews are extremely diverse in terms of "faith," ranging from those who have strong theological beliefs to those who express their Judaism on ethnic, cultural or political levels, rather than as a set of religious beliefs and practices. Observance of rituals and traditions is just as diverse, including Jews at every point on the spectrum from extremely observant, to those who are "non-observant," with no direct correlations between faith, observance, and strength of Jewish identity.

…the role of Jewish family and community may be equally as important as, or even more important than, faith and worship.

Critical to understanding expressions of Judaism is understanding that the role of Jewish family and community may be equally as important as, or even more important than, faith and worship. All of these issues are addressed in more detail in the following pages. As reiterated throughout this article, it is always best to ask a particular woman about her needs relating to her practice of Judaism and her connection to Jewish community.

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It is hoped that the information conveyed here will help you understand and appreciate the range of Jewish identity and observance you may encounter and the significance a woman's Jewish heritage may have for her as a survivor of domestic violence.

Role of Clergy/Religious and Spiritual Leaders

There are five major Jewish movements in the U.S., with additional sects and divisions at both ends of the religious spectrum, as well as synagogues and groups that are independent. The major movements are Orthodox, Conservative, Reconstructionist, Reform, and Renewal. With the exception of the Renewal movement, each movement has its own seminaries and associations for synagogue and rabbinic membership.

Jewish clergy include rabbis and cantors; in all but Orthodox Judaism, clergy may be men or women. A common definition of "rabbi" is teacher, and education was traditionally a central rabbinic role. Today, rabbis serve in many capacities, most frequently as spiritual leaders and teachers for synagogues, educational institutions, and Jewish organizations. Pulpit rabbis are expected to provide guidance to congregants about life-cycle events (i.e., birth, *bat/bar mitzvah* for children at age 12/13, marriage, divorce), Jewish law and tradition, as well as spiritual leadership and counseling. Rabbis are revered for their knowledge; however, in accordance with Jewish tradition, they do not have any ability to serve as intermediaries with God on behalf of congregants.

Cantors lead congregations in chanting or singing the prayers, thus serving to bring individuals and communities closer to God spiritually. Cantors also serve as teachers, and often are charged with preparing young people to become *bat/bar mitzvah.*[2] Cantors are ordained clergy and can officiate at weddings, funerals, and other ceremonies.

Historically many rabbis minimized women's reports of abusive behavior, encouraging them to preserve *"shalom bayit"*—peace in the home—a Jewish value that goes beyond the mere translation of the words (discussed in more depth below). The fear of this response has discouraged many women from seeking help from rabbis. In a recent survey of 45 Jewish survivors of abuse, none had sought help from rabbis.[3]

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Today, increasing numbers of Jewish clergy are receiving training on domestic violence and how to create safe and effective responses for victims, survivors, and abusers. Although most rabbis acknowledge that domestic violence does occur in the Jewish community, many continue to assume it does not happen in their own congregations until they hear directly from a congregant to the contrary. Yet rabbis who have spoken out from their pulpits about the existence of domestic violence in Jewish families almost unanimously report that this serves to break the barriers to disclosure from congregants. These stories can help motivate rabbis and cantors to speak out and can guide their response to congregants who seek them out.

Advocates can play a valuable role in helping Jewish clergy become allies for women by providing or promoting education of Jewish clergy of all denominations. This may include meeting with clergy of area synagogues and Jewish social service agencies, inviting clergy to training sessions, and providing educational materials and resources for continued training.[4] The reciprocal relationships formed will help advocates understand the unique concerns of Jewish women while building knowledge about and trust in their services.

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Culture

Jewish communities, as well as individual Jews, are extremely diverse—religiously, politically, and ethnically. Yet there are many aspects of Jewish culture, based on Jewish law and religious tradition, that they share in common.

The role of marriage and family in Jewish culture is primary. According to the Talmud (Yevamot 63a):[5] "A man without a wife is not called a man." In fact, even today single and divorced Jewish men and women talk about feeling excluded from Jewish culture and community. There are also numerous issues that may make lesbian or gay individuals and partners feel excluded from Jewish community, including prohibitions based on Biblical text.

Both Jews and non-Jews tend to think that Jewish families are less likely to experience domestic violence. Jewish men are stereotyped as mild-mannered, intellectual, non-athletic, good providers, and meek, while Jewish women are considered strong, pushy, powerful and domineering. Jews in general are perceived as well-educated and successful—presumably protecting them from domestic violence. This ignores the stark reality that domestic violence is impervious to educational, religious, and class distinctions. Further, an assumption that Jewish women, if they are abused, have access to family wealth denies the existence of those Jews who live in poverty and dismisses what is well known about the tactics of abusers who restrict access to and maintain control of financial resources.

The concept of "*shalom bayit*" is an idealized notion of peaceful and harmonious family relationships that historically was to be preserved at all costs—with the wife traditionally made to feel the responsible agent of family peace-making, even though Jewish law actually considers husband and wife equally accountable. Yet rabbis, family, and community members have called upon "*shalom bayit*" as the justification and reason for women to remain in abusive relationships. In addition, some have used an interpretation of Jewish law that makes it a commandment to promote *shalom bayit* between husband and wife to validate this counsel. A great deal of energy has gone into helping women, rabbis, and community members understand that *shalom bayit*, when properly interpreted, actually supports a woman leaving a relationship that falls short of this ideal of peace in the home, if she chooses to do so.

Shame about being abused, while not restricted to Jewish women, takes on unique aspects in Jewish culture. According to Kaufman, Lipshutz and Setel:[6]

> The issue of shame in the Jewish community is a complicated one. So vulnerable to the random violence of surrounding cultures for so long, Jews still have the fear of looking "bad" to others. Throughout our history, Jews have often dealt with community dysfunction by flatly denying that problems such as spousal abuse, addiction, and incest even existed within Jewish communities. We idealized our homes as refuges from a hostile, anti-Semitic world. For generations of Jewish women and children, the abuse suffered within those families was hidden or even viewed as acceptable. Now that victims and survivors have demanded these issues no longer be ignored, they are sometimes blamed for "airing dirty laundry" or bringing shame on the community. Sadly, women victims often have a similar experience: When they take the courageous step of leaving an abusive relationship, they may be perceived as betraying Jewish ideals of family and marital fidelity.

Shame about being abused…takes on unique aspects in Jewish culture.

A woman risks loss of her entire community when she chooses to disclose her experience of abuse or separate from her abuser.

As mentioned, in addition to family, "community" plays a critical role in Jewish life. This community may consist of those who attend a synagogue, or it may consist of a group of family and/or friends. A woman risks loss of her entire community when she chooses to disclose her experience of abuse or separate from her abuser. Efforts to respond to these issues include building partnerships between Jewish communal workers and domestic violence advocates (Jewish and non-Jewish) and work to help synagogues develop protocols for addressing domestic abuse.[7]

Partnerships between Jewish and non-Jewish domestic violence agencies can help provide innovative solutions…

The small size of the Jewish community and the close connections Jews tend to have to one another may be a barrier for women who may seek anonymity in disclosing abuse, seeking help, or leaving an abusive relationship. For many, the need for anonymity is connected to safety for the woman and her children. Partnerships between Jewish and non-Jewish domestic violence agencies can help provide innovative solutions that encourage disclosure of abuse, strategies for holding the abuser accountable, and strategies for prevention and other means of intervention. In addition, advocates can help individuals and service providers in the Jewish community understand procedures that preserve confidentiality and safety for victims and survivors.

Religious Texts

Jewish text demonstrates the historical existence of wife abuse while, for the most part, affirming a wife's right to honor and respect.

For the purposes of this article, what follows is a simplified explanation of Jewish texts. The Jewish Bible includes the Five Books of Moses or Written *Torah,* and two additional sections written over a period of many centuries—Prophets and Sacred Writings. In addition to the Written Torah, Jews believe there is an Oral Torah, which consists of the oral interpretations of rabbis and scholars relating to what may be considered the abbreviated text that was recorded. Orthodox Jews believe that the Torah was written by Moses as dictated by God, while more liberal Jews believe it represents inspired writings of men over a period of many centuries. Regardless of the degree to which the Torah is thought to be written or inspired directly by God, it is considered sacred by Jews of all denominations and is believed to contain teachings that define the Jewish "way of life." Eventually the oral interpretation of the written Torah was recorded (2nd–5th centuries of the Common Era) and is known as the Talmud—the first comprehensive recording of Jewish law (known as *Halakhah)*, knowledge, wisdom, and tradition.

A fundamental aspect of Judaism is the concept that "text" is evolving—its meaning is meant to both be discovered and to change with interpretation over time. Different Jewish denominations have differing understandings about how, by whom, and to what extent changes can and should be made. Text study, which may involve animated discussion and heated exchanges about the meaning of a particular text, is known in all sects of Judaism as an activity of those who are "learned," and of those who are "learning."

Studying text that may present challenging concepts for contemporary women can provide rich opportunities to transform what might be perceived as barriers into resources. Jewish text demonstrates the historical existence of wife abuse while, for the most part, affirming a wife's right to honor and respect.

The following is found in the Shulchan Aruch, the 16th-century Code of Jewish Law:

> It is a sin for a man to beat his wife – . . . and if he does this habitually the court can punish him, excommunicate him and whip him and apply all measures of force until he takes an oath never to do so again. If he violates this oath he may be compelled to divorce her.[8]

Beth's Story

Beth and David, an Orthodox Jewish couple, have been married for 8 years and have 4 young children. Beth has endured physical, sexual and emotional abuse from her husband throughout most of their marriage. David uses Jewish law as an additional tool to abuse Beth. For example, he knows how important it is for Beth to keep a kosher kitchen. He insists on doing the shopping for her much of the time, but goes to a non-kosher grocery, located just across the street from the kosher market. Beth went to see a rabbi for advice. The rabbi advised her to confront her husband and to give him an ultimatum—if he doesn't change his ways in two months, she will leave him and take the children with her. When Beth followed the rabbi's advice, the abuse got worse and David threatened to kill her if she followed through on her threat to leave. At this point, Beth contacted the Jewish domestic violence agency she had seen advertised in the Jewish newspaper. The agency provided Beth with education about the Jewish context of domestic violence and safety planning. They then referred her to religious authorities who specialized in domestic violence and were able to advise her in a way that was sensitive to both her religious needs and her safety needs at the same time.

Food

Jewish dietary laws, called *kashrut* (meaning ritually "proper" or "fit" and often referred to as "keeping kosher"), detail what can and cannot be eaten (such as the prohibition against pork and shellfish), how animals must be slaughtered, and separation of foods that are designated "dairy" and those designated "meat." Some Jews adhere strictly to these laws, in and outside the home, and will eat only food prepared by strictly kosher guidelines in a kitchen that is certified "kosher." Others observe the laws to varying degrees, and some do not observe any of the laws. Many people who keep kosher at home will maintain a vegetarian diet outside the home. A Jewish woman should be asked what her observances are and what

A Jewish woman should be asked what her observances are and what accommodations, if any, she needs.

During Passover…an entirely different set of complex laws applies and many foods are forbidden…

accommodations, if any, she needs. Usually, she will be able to tell you where to obtain kosher foods if needed. Contacting a local rabbi for assistance may be a useful thing to do. A rabbi may also be able to direct you to people in the Jewish community willing to cook and deliver meals and/or, as discussed below, to invite a woman and her children to their home for the Sabbath or holidays.

Identifying Kosher Packaged Foods

Packaged kosher foods have a "kosher" symbol, called a *hechsher*, indicating the food has been "certified" as kosher by a particular rabbinic authority and identifying the food as "meat," "dairy" or neither ("pareve"). There are a growing number of kosher symbols, although some of the most common ones are a circle with a U inside and a K. A local rabbi can tell you what to look for in your area. Contacting a rabbi for help can be a good way to establish rapport and trust.

Passover: (March-April)

During Passover (a holiday described below), an entirely different set of complex laws applies and many foods are forbidden, most notably bread and foods made from five different grains. During Passover, Jews eat *matzah* (unleavened, flat bread) instead of bread and many will only eat foods prepared in a kitchen specially cleaned and prepared for Passover, and only packaged foods marked Kosher for Passover.

The Sabbath and Holidays

The Jewish year is replete with holidays that are rich with family and community traditions and observances. In addition, the Sabbath (*Shabbat)* has the elevated status of a holy day for Jews, beginning Friday at sundown and ending Saturday night, providing a weekly opportunity for physical and spiritual rest, relaxation, and renewal.

While there are established laws and customs for the weekly celebration of the Sabbath and for each holiday, observance is as diverse as the Jewish community itself. It is best to ask an individual woman about her particular beliefs and observances and how she would like to celebrate.

While there are established laws and customs for the weekly celebration of the Sabbath and for each holiday, observance is as diverse as the Jewish community itself.

Some significant points:

- The celebration of *Shabbat* and holidays at home can be as important as what takes place in a synagogue. Ritual may be more important than formal "worship" or "prayer."

- For observant Jews, an important aspect of observance is abstaining from what qualifies by Jewish law as "work" on the Sabbath and on particular holidays. Week-long holidays are marked by "non-work" days (the first and last day or two) and "work" days (the intermediate days). Because of this, preparation is important (for example, food must be made and stored ahead of time) and may require leaving a job early to be able to be ready for the approach of sundown.

- Different denominations of Judaism celebrate some holidays for different numbers of days, i.e., Rosh Hashanah may be a one- or two-day celebration and Passover may be seven or eight days.

Typically, the Sabbath and holidays begin with a festive meal, traditional foods, and blessings and singing, ideally celebrated with family and friends. Many families are happy to have guests at their table who would otherwise be alone. A synagogue or Jewish Family Service agency can be contacted to identify a host family.

The Jewish day begins at sundown. All Jewish holidays begin with candle lighting approximately 20 minutes before sundown on one day, and conclude the following day when it is dark (when three stars can be seen if the sky is clear, about one hour after sundown).

All Jewish holidays begin with candle lighting approximately 20 minutes before sundown on one day, and conclude the following day when it is dark…

While many of the major Jewish holidays are marked on secular calendars, some of the less well-known holidays are not. In addition, calendars may mark the day of the holiday, but it is important to remember that the holy day begins at sunset

A Jewish calendar can be obtained from a synagogue, or you can look on the internet for dates of holidays.

on the evening before the day noted. A Jewish calendar can be obtained from a synagogue, or you can look on the internet for dates of holidays.

While the secular calendar is based on the solar system, the Jewish calendar is based on the moon, with each month beginning with the new moon. An additional "leap month" is added seven times within each nineteen years to adjust the calendar for the solar year as well. Holidays occur on established days of the Jewish calendar but fall on different days of the secular calendar.

For victims and survivors of domestic violence, holidays may evoke complex feelings and may be times when additional support is needed.

For victims and survivors of domestic violence, holidays may evoke complex feelings and may be times when additional support is needed. Holidays can provide an opportunity for healing, spiritual renewal, and strengthening of family ties, but they may also be reminders of the "loss of the dream" sought through partnership with partners or spouses or evoke traumatic memories of times when abusive partners would destroy the sanctity of the day with abuse. In addition, all offer opportunities for abusers to twist the real meaning of liturgy to further their power and control—by making victims and survivors feel responsible for the abuse and guilty for leaving, or through other tactics. New resources that provide an understanding of Jewish holidays in ways that can support, rather than hinder, a survivor's healing are continually being developed. The selected bibliography at the end of this book provides a starting place that can be used to identify resources women may find useful.

There are numerous significant holidays during the year, although many Jews do not celebrate all of these. For information about all Jewish holidays, contact a rabbi or see one of the recommended resource books. Brief information is provided below about the four most commonly observed holidays—Rosh Hashanah, Yom Kippur, Hanukkah, and Passover.

Rosh Hashanah ("Head of the Year") (September–October) marks the beginning of the new calendar year and begins a ten-day period of intense prayer, reflection, repentance, and commitment to individual change, culminating with Yom Kippur. Rosh Hashanah is observed by festive meals and prayer in a synagogue.

Yom Kippur ("Day of Atonement") (September–October) is considered the holiest day of the year and is marked by solemnity, a twenty-five hour fast during which one does not eat or drink, and abstaining from all work and activity that

would diminish the opportunity for deep reflection. Yom Kippur evening is preceded by an early meal with services in synagogue, typically beginning before sundown. During the day of Yom Kippur, services last most of the day. At dark a "break fast" meal may be served at a synagogue or at home. Rosh Hashanah and Yom Kippur are also called the "High Holidays."

Advocates can support religious diversity by not scheduling important events on major Jewish holidays.

Hanukkah ("Dedication," known as "Festival of Lights") (November–December) commemorates the victory of the Maccabees (Jews) over the Syrians in 165 B.C.E.[9] and the restoration of the Temple in Jerusalem. The holiday lasts eight days, stemming from the legend that the only oil found in the Temple, sufficient for one day, lasted eight days, giving time for runners to obtain more oil for the light that is to always be kept burning. Customs include lighting a *menorah*, a candelabra with places for nine candles (one for each night plus the candle used to light the others), playing *dreidle* (a top that spins), singing songs, and eating foods fried in oil, notably potato pancakes (*latkes*) and jelly doughnuts (*sufganiyot*). Gift-giving has become common. Hanukkah occurs in the same season as Christmas; however, it is a minor holiday and does not have the same religious significance as either Christmas or as the other, more significant Jewish Holy Days and Festivals.

December can be a difficult time for Jewish children, who…can feel isolated or "different" from others who celebrate Christmas.

Pesach (Passover) (March–April) is a week-long holiday occurring in the spring. It begins with the *seder,* a ritual meal and service which tells the biblical story of the Jewish Exodus from Egypt, and highlights the holiday's central themes of liberation and renewal. More American Jews participate in a home *seder* than any other holiday observance. Several special *seders* have been developed by survivors of abuse to celebrate their own liberation. Passover involves complicated observances relating to food (see above).

Advocates can support religious diversity by not scheduling important events on major Jewish holidays. It is also important to understand that December can be a difficult time for Jewish children, who, even under the best of circumstances, can feel isolated or "different" from others who celebrate Christmas.

Worship/Ritual

While some Jews find synagogue attendance a critical aspect of their Judaism, others do not.

Jewish worship includes individual and communal prayer. A unique aspect of Jewish worship is the requirement of a *minyan,* or ten adults, for some prayers. This requirement speaks to the significance of community for Jews and supports the idea that an individual needs others to survive.

While some Jews find synagogue attendance a critical aspect of their Judaism, others do not. The National Jewish Population Survey of 2000–01 found that less than half of Jews surveyed were affiliated with a synagogue, and only 27% attended a religious service once a month or more. At the same time, 77% of those surveyed hold or attend a Passover *seder*, 72% light Hanukkah candles, and 59% fast on Yom Kippur— notably activities that do not require synagogue attendance.[10]

Many survivors…have been leaders in creating new rituals focused on healing.

Ritual has always played a central role in Jewish observance. For over thirty years, some Jewish women have been exploring existing Jewish rituals, as well as creating new rituals, to acknowledge the experiences that may have been ignored in the past. Many survivors and others associated with addressing domestic violence in the Jewish community have been leaders in creating new rituals focused on healing.[11] These explorations range from creating liturgy that uses gender neutral and/or feminine language for God (to address the concern of some that male language may evoke a patriarchal, controlling deity), to the use of the traditional ritual bath, or *mikvah,* for healing, transformation and renewal, to the development of ceremonies and ritual around the new month and holidays.

Judaism and the Concept of Forgiveness

A question many victims and survivors of domestic violence struggle with relates to their responsibility to forgive an abuser who asks for forgiveness. Judaism has a unique perspective about the concept of forgiveness, although many Jews are not fully educated about all of its aspects. First, and commonly known by Jews, God cannot forgive an individual for sins committed against another human being, although prayer may be part of the process of change for one who transgresses.

Only the person who was sinned against can provide forgiveness. Second, any requirement in Judaism to "forgive" is connected to a requirement of the person who has committed a wrong to truly change his/her behavior in a several step process of "*teshuvah*" (literally "to turn around"), often translated as "repentance," as a prerequisite to deserving forgiveness.

…any requirement in Judaism to "forgive" is connected to a requirement of the person who has committed a wrong to truly change…

The steps one must take to achieve *teshuvah*[12] have been interpreted in varying ways but basically include 1) acknowledgment of the sin and remorse, 2) making restitution for the damages caused, 3) desisting from repeating the sin (and most interpretations include that the person must be tested by having the opportunity to repeat the sin), 4) gaining forgiveness from the one who is wronged, and finally, 5) seeking atonement from God through prayer, confession, and other acts of penitence.

There is no requirement for forgiveness where there is not true change. Some would argue that in the case of domestic or sexual violence there is never a requirement to forgive, in part because there can be no adequate restitution for the damage caused.

The thought of destroying the family unit, of what the community will say…are all powerful deterrents to a woman who might think about disclosing abuse and/or leaving an abusive partner.

Family

Family plays a central role in Judaism, both historically and culturally today. The stereotype of the Jewish family is of two loving and nurturing parents who dote on their children. And, as noted above, holidays revolve around home and family celebrations. The thought of destroying the family unit, of what the community will say, the shame that may be brought upon the family, and of how one's children will be accepted, are all powerful deterrents to a woman who might think about disclosing abuse and/or leaving an abusive partner. In Orthodox families, the fear of exposing domestic violence is often based on the reality that the woman's children may find it difficult to find marriage partners if the family reputation is tarnished.

In reality, American Jewish families reflect divorce rates that are similar to those of American families overall: the National Jewish Population Survey of 2000–01

indicated that 9% of Jews are divorced,[13] while according to the U.S. Census of 2000, 8.6% of males and 10.8% of females are divorced.[14] In addition, Jewish families reflect the diversity of the community and include intermarried couples (31% of all intact marriages), single parent households, and partners who are lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgendered.

Laws of Ritual (Family) Purity and Sexual Relations

Jewish law views sex between husband and wife in a positive way and as necessary for a healthy relationship. Sexual relations are encouraged, both for the purpose of procreation and purely for enjoyment. Having sex on the Sabbath is considered a positive commandment. Jewish law may be unique in the detail afforded to the significance of a wife's right to pleasure and of the husband's responsibility to perform this particular conjugal duty. Jewish law forbids marital rape. Neither partner has the right to refuse sex over extended periods of time, and this is grounds for divorce for either husband or wife.

However, Judaism also proscribes a monthly period of separation ("*niddah*") between menstruating wives and their husbands. In fact, all physical contact between husband and wife is prohibited during a women's menstruation, until the end of seven days with no evidence of blood. This period of "*niddah*" ends with immersion in a *mikvah,* a "ritual bath," used for several different ritual purification purposes.

Most communities have one or more *mikvahs*, used by both sexes for conversions, before marriage, and by menstruating women each month. The process of immersion includes thoroughly washing before entering, the removal of all jewelry and clothing, and inspection by a *mikvah* attendant to be sure that there is no physical barrier between the water and the person's body.[15] After total immersion and recitation of a blessing, the person emerges spiritually purified. For some couples, the anticipation of the woman's return from the *mikvah*, after a period of separation, can help build and maintain mutual desire. Some women, particularly non-Orthodox women, find the customs relating to "*niddah*" and the *mikvah* troubling, including the mistakenly understood notion that women

are "unclean" during menstruation, cited as a reason to limit women's full participation and leadership in the public realm of Jewish religious life.

While Jewish laws relating to sex may be considered enlightened, it has been reported that some men utilize their own (incorrect) interpretations of Jewish law as further tools of abuse—demanding sex on the Sabbath or after a visit to the *mikvah* as an "ordained right," or by forcing a woman to have sex during the period of *niddah*.

Issues Related To Divorce

…issues relating to Jewish divorce are complex. For Orthodox and Conservative Jews, in addition to a civil divorce, a Jewish marriage is not dissolved until the husband provides the wife a divorce document known as the *get*.

Jewish women, like other women, face the threat of losing custody of their children as part of a divorce settlement. The abuser may have access to better legal representation as a result of control of the family's financial resources. Furthermore, abusers often capitalize on their professional connections and reputations to portray themselves as incapable of perpetrating the abuse of which they are accused.

Moreover, issues relating to Jewish divorce are complex. For Orthodox and Conservative Jews, in addition to a civil divorce, a Jewish marriage is not dissolved until the husband provides the wife a divorce document known as the *get.* This process is overseen by a rabbinical court (*bet din*) made up of 3 rabbis—in most cases all male. A woman whose spouse will not grant a *get* is called an *agunah* in Hebrew—a chained woman. An untold number of *agunot* (plural) exist around the world. The need to obtain a *get* potentially impacts every Jewish woman, since without it no Conservative or Orthodox rabbi is able to remarry her.[16] Even more tragically, the denial of a *get* impacts children born of future relationships, who will be considered *mamzerim* (illegitimate according to Jewish law), and unable to marry into particular sectors of the Jewish community.

A great deal of work has been put into finding solutions for *agunot*. While these all have limitations—either because they still require the cooperation of the presiding rabbi or local *bet din,* or because they require some level of participation from

the husband—they have helped many women acquire their freedom. The Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) is one of the leading organizations focused on this issue. JOFA's website (www.jofa.org) provides resources, information and referral sources for individual women in need of help in obtaining a *get*.

Ruth's Story

Ruth and Saul met in college through a Jewish campus-based organization. They married shortly after graduating and within three years had a small child and another on the way. Saul insisted that Ruth quit her job so that she could be a better parent. From the time she had been pregnant with their first child, he had criticized her parenting abilities. With time, the criticism increased. Whenever Ruth talked with friends or family, Saul berated her for not spending that time with the children. He would not allow her to hire babysitters or to join playgroups. Ruth's isolation from other adults increased. He constantly told her she was an inadequate mother, housekeeper and wife—and reminded her that she was supposed to be a "good Jewish mother." When the children began school, Ruth joined an adult bat mitzvah class at their synagogue, even though Saul was not pleased. When studying a particular Torah portion, the topic of women and abuse came up. Ruth was surprised to hear the rabbi join in a discussion that acknowledged that domestic violence existed in Jewish homes, both historically and in modern times. For the first time, Ruth began to wonder if what she was experiencing could be considered emotional and verbal abuse. She made an appointment to talk with the rabbi further. He affirmed her concerns and referred her to a local Jewish domestic violence organization.

Communal Connections

For many Jews, feeling connected to the "Jewish community" is an important aspect of life.

For many Jews, feeling connected to the "Jewish community" is an important aspect of life. Depending on the size of the city/town, the "Jewish community" may be comprised of numerous Jewish agencies and institutions that provide a range of functions, including religious, social, educational, psychological, residential, vocational, legal, and other services. A woman may find comfort in connecting to sources of assistance through the Jewish community, or she may be concerned about people knowing her situation.

To identify Jewish organizations and services in your community, contact a local synagogue or look in the phone book. In larger cities, a Jewish directory is published. However, even small cities will have some kind of infrastructure that can be accessed for Jews in need of help. Where the community is not large enough for a synagogue, there may be a group of people referred to as a *"chevra"* (translated as friends) or *"kehillah"* (translated as community) that come together to celebrate holidays or life cycle events.

Common elements of a Jewish community include the following:

Jewish Community Center (JCC) - Provides a range of functions, including an exercise facility and a gathering place for various social, educational, and artistic events, with membership offered to non-Jews also. JCC's may be good places to hold a support group.

Jewish Domestic Violence Agencies - Numerous cities around the country now have programs to specifically address the needs of Jewish victims/survivors of domestic violence. These may be independent agencies or they may be part of the Jewish Social Service Agency (see below) and/or other Jewish organization. Most collaborate in some way with a local secular domestic violence agency.

The Jewish Federation - Provides a centralized fundraising function for the Jewish community, typically raising money for local Jewish organizations and causes, as well as for Israel and other Jewish communities around the world. In some communities, the Federation serves as the coordinator of all local Jewish

services. Some Federations sponsor or co-sponsor local Jewish domestic violence programs. The local federation can be identified through the website of United Jewish Communities at www.ujc.org.

Jewish Family Agencies (referred to variously as Jewish Social Service Agencies, Jewish Family Services, Jewish Family and Children's Services, etc.) - Provide a range of social services for Jewish and non-Jewish individuals including counseling, resettlement assistance, vocational training or referral, elder care, and more. Many Jewish Family Agencies provide special counselors and/or advocates for victims/survivors of domestic violence. Assistance may range from only mental health services to a range of advocacy services. Some agencies sponsor entire programs to address domestic violence in the Jewish community.

Jewish day schools - Provide a Jewish education along with the state-approved curriculum. It may be traumatic for both the woman and her children to ask children to leave their Jewish school, even for a short while. While safety needs must take precedence, efforts to resolve these both for the short and long term may need to be considered a priority. In addition, the financial issues connected with private school may be a serious legal issue that needs to be addressed.

National Jewish women's organizations - Hadassah, Na'amat, National Council of Jewish Women, Jewish Women International, and others may sponsor programs or activities focused on raising awareness about domestic violence. They are often eager to collaborate with secular domestic violence programs.

Jewish newspapers - Many communities have a weekly Jewish newspaper with wide circulation. These may be used to publicize events or an organization's services.

Other Issues To Consider

Survivor Language

For some, the use of the word "survivor" in relationship to those who survive domestic violence is confusing, or even disturbing, because of the connection of the term with Holocaust survivor.

For some, the use of the word "survivor"…is confusing, or even disturbing, because of the connection of the term with Holocaust survivor.

Anti-Semitism

Anti-Semitism is a significant barrier to Jewish women disclosing or seeking services. From within the community women are told, both implicitly and explicitly, that destroying the myth that Jewish men are gentler, kinder, and more caring could have negative consequences for the Jewish community—lending fuel for anti-Semitism. Hearing from a police officer or advocate that they didn't think domestic violence happened in Jewish homes only confirms feelings of guilt and shame.

Anti-Semitism is a significant barrier to Jewish women disclosing or seeking services.

In addition, when accessing services from outside the Jewish community, there is fear of encountering anti-Semitism. Jewish women have been told, in subtle and not so subtle ways, that they don't "deserve" the limited services available to battered women and are assumed to have economic privilege and access to financial resources.

The Jewish caucus of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence was created in the 1980's, not in response to the needs of Jewish victims of domestic violence, but in reaction to the anti-Semitism felt by Jewish advocates within the domestic violence movement. A special issue of NCADV's *The Voice* was dedicated to anti-Semitism in 1990, with articles by both Jewish and non-Jewish advocates calling upon the movement to be sensitive to the needs of Jewish women.[17] Unfortunately, while some of the specific issues raised have been addressed, the concern of Jewish victims and survivors that their issues will be minimized or discounted because of their Jewishness has not been erased. In fact, fears of anti-Semitism, relating to real or imagined Jewish privilege or to politics in the Middle East, have increased in recent years.

What can you do? Understand that anti-Semitism is a form of oppression, learn more…and "advertise" your accessibility for Jewish women.

What can you do? Understand that anti-Semitism is a form of oppression, learn more about the many issues raised in this article, and "advertise" your accessibility for Jewish women**.** You can do this in many ways—place a public service announcement/ad in the local Jewish newspaper, contact synagogues and ask them to include your organization's name and phone number in their monthly bulletin, send rabbis a note inviting them to add you to their list of community resources, and use the myriad of suggestions in this article.

Poverty[18]

Complete poverty data among Jewish households is not available; however, the Jewish Population Study of 2000 measured poverty among those who are "more Jewishly connected" (4.3 million of the estimated total of 5.2 million Jews). Among this population, 5% of households report incomes below the poverty line, in addition to 9% of elderly Jews (age 65+).

Again, it is important to remember that many women will not have access to family resources.

Immigrant Population[19]

Over 8% of Jewish adults (335,000) have immigrated to the U.S. since 1980, with just over two-thirds of these from the former Soviet Union. The remaining one-third of Jewish adult immigrants are from 30 different countries, with 56% of these from Israel, Canada, and Iran. These two groups of immigrants differ in demographics, economic status, and community affiliations.

Immigrants from former Soviet Union (FSU) countries are older, with one-third over age 65, tend to live in the Northeast (58%), and are less well off (27% have incomes below the poverty line and 46% have annual incomes less than $15,000).

Immigrants from non-FSU countries are younger (55% are ages 18–34), more geographically dispersed (39% in the Northeast, 23% in the South, and 30% in the West), and are better off (11% have household incomes below the poverty line and 13% have annual incomes less than $15,000).

Confronting Domestic Violence

While some in the Jewish community may still be in denial about domestic violence, the past 20 years have witnessed a tremendous amount of work in Jewish communities of the U.S., Canada, Israel, and several other countries dedicated to breaking the silence around abuse and to the development of prevention and intervention strategies. There are approximately 60 local programs in the U.S. that address the needs of Jewish victims and survivors, dozens of local coalitions of individuals and organizations that focus on the issue, numerous articles that appear in Jewish newspapers and magazines, as well as public awareness campaigns and educational programs sponsored by numerous organizations. In some Orthodox communities, traditional mechanisms of banishing Jewish men who transgress sacred standards of behavior have been called into play to make men accountable for abuse.

There are approximately 60 local programs in the U.S. that address the needs of Jewish victims and survivors.

On a national level, the Shalom Task Force sponsors a national toll-free help line (888-883-2323, hours vary) to address specifically Jewish questions relating to abuse, and has brought together hundreds of rabbis of all denominations for training. In March 2005 the Jewish Orthodox Feminist Alliance (JOFA) sponsored ads advocating for solutions for *agunot* signed by 1000 rabbis, organizations, institutions, and individuals from around the world in Jewish newspapers in New York, Los Angeles, and London.

Jewish Women International (JWI) and its partners have sponsored two international conferences on the topic (2003, 2005) with 500 attendees from around the world at each conference. JWI's website (www.jewishwomen.org) provides a Directory of Resources listing local, national, and international resources for Jewish victims.

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A new initiative is JSafe: The Jewish Institute Supporting an Abuse-Free Environment, that hopes to begin certifying programs in the Jewish community as "safe" for victims and survivors of abuse as well as proactive in preventing domestic violence (see http://jsafe.org). As in the secular community, a shift in the pendulum of interest is evident in the work of the Jewish community to engage men in the work.

Conclusion

The major issues that confront Jewish women who are abused by their partners are in most cases similar to those confronted by any woman—autonomy and safety for oneself and one's children, economic security, and custody battles if she chooses to leave a relationship. Additional issues for many Jewish women include the traditional veil of secrecy relating to abuse in Jewish homes, the shame associated with revealing abuse, the still-present sense that airing one's dirty laundry may bring on anti-Semitism, and the fear of the anti-Semitism that one might encounter in accessing services from a secular agency. For observant Jewish women, additional barriers to seeking help may exist. Increased education, awareness, and culturally sensitive services are critical to increase the opportunity for all women to seek and access services needed to ensure their autonomy, safety, and availability of choices regarding their future.

Working with Muslim Women: Understanding Religious & Cultural Issues

Salma Abugideiri

SALMA ELKADI ABUGIDEIRI is a Licensed Professional Counselor whose private practice is in Sterling, VA. She works primarily with Muslim and Middle Eastern families, helping them to address marital, mental health, cultural adjustment, and other issues. She also provides training and consultation related to Muslim mental health needs to agencies and other professionals. Recently, she has become the director of the Peaceful Families Project, which is FaithTrust Institute's program for providing domestic violence prevention training to the Muslim community. Salma completed her Bachelor of Arts degree in Psychology and Near Eastern Studies at Indiana University; obtained her Master's of Education in Counseling and Human Development from George Mason University; and has post-master's certification in Marriage and Family Therapy from Virginia Tech.

Author's Note

This paper will talk about issues pertaining to the Muslim community from the perspective of the dominant opinion within Islam, which is a moderate voice. It should be noted that there are various schools of thought within Islam, including a split between Sunni and Shiite Islam. It is beyond the scope of this article to explain the differences between these schools. However, the main tenets and teachings of Islam are agreed upon by all Muslims. Those major differences that professionals may encounter when working with Muslim families will be noted in the article when appropriate. The writer of this article is a Sunni Muslim.

Role of Clergy

…*imams* may be consulted by the victim to help make a decision about whether or when to involve law enforcement, how to deal with the abuse, and whether to leave or stay…

Imams may also play a role with batterers, providing religious instruction for more constructive ways to behave in a relationship…

The word "clergy" has been used to identify religiously ordained leaders of various faiths; however, it is important to recognize the significant differences between the clergy of the Christian church and religious leaders of the Muslim community. Islam does not have a process for ordaining clergy, nor does it have an institutionalized system for places of worship. Rather, Muslim religious leaders are those people who have been accepted by their community as knowledgeable and pious people with good leadership skills.[1]

The Arabic word *Imam*, which literally means "leader," is used to refer broadly to anyone leading religious activities. It can be used in specific situations to refer to a man or woman who leads congregational prayer, or to the male leader of a community. Each house of worship, or mosque, has an *Imam* (typically a male), who is responsible for coordinating religious activities, leading the prayers, delivering sermons, performing marriages, and teaching religious classes. In large communities, multiple leaders may share these responsibilities, and all of these leaders may be addressed as *Imam*.

In the United States, the role of the *imam* is broader than in Muslim countries. Muslims in the United States rely on *imams* to guide them not only spiritually, but to help them deal with the problems of daily life. A recent study[2] showed that *imams* are being asked to provide counseling for an increasingly wide range of problems. Although *imams* have typically been approached for help with spiritual matters and relationship or marital concerns, this survey found that since September 11, 2001 they have also been approached for counseling related to discrimination issues, anxiety, and other mental health issues.

Furthermore, *imams* are often asked to give religious rulings or to make decisions regarding the Islamic perspective on many issues. In the area of domestic violence, *imams* may be consulted by the victim to help make a decision about whether or when to involve law enforcement, how to deal with the abuse, and whether to leave or stay in the marital home**.** In the event of separation or divorce, *imams* may be asked to administer the Islamic divorce, to give guidance regarding settlement and child custody issues, and to provide spiritual counseling for the victim who often feels guilty for ending the marriage. *Imams* may also play a role with batterers, providing religious instruction for more constructive ways to behave in

a relationship. Some *imams* have sought training in pastoral counseling or have training in anger management which they may use with the batterers.

Advocates should visit mosques to familiarize themselves with the services provided and with the staff there.

Another aspect of the *imam's* job may be to serve on interfaith committees, or to act as liaisons between the Muslim community and either private or county resources. Advocates in the mainstream population can increase their effectiveness when working with Muslim families by developing relationships with religious leaders in the Muslim community. Advocates should visit mosques to familiarize themselves with the services provided and with the staff there**.** When cases arise where collaboration may be useful, an established relationship will increase the likelihood of cooperation and lead to increased trust and greater likelihood for interventions to be successful and effective.

Sausan's Story

Sausan contacted me from a women's shelter. She was referred to me because the shelter staff quickly recognized that she would not be ready to leave the shelter within the 21 days that they were able to provide a safe place for her. She spoke Arabic and French, but no English; could not drive, had no identifiable job skills, and no family or financial resources. She had only been in the United States for a few months, coming from northern Africa to join her new husband, who had a prominent position with an international organization. The wife of her husband's friend knew that Sausan had not been the first victim of this man, and took her to the shelter after realizing that Sausan was living in a chronic state of fear. Sausan had been convinced by her husband that she would be mugged or raped if she left the house. Her husband had prohibited her to use the phone; and, rather than use the dishwasher and washing machine, she had to wash by hand. Sausan was lonely and depressed. Her husband usually responded to her by hitting, kicking or threatening her. She tried unsuccessfully to self-petition for residency under the Violence Against Women Act. With the collaborative effort of the shelter staff and the local mosque, she was able to successfully press charges against her husband, get spousal support, and return to her country feeling strong and supported.

Culture

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Muslims living in the U.S. represent practically all of the world's cultures. Muslims in each of these cultures reflect the influence of the cultural norms of their particular group. Muslims speak the language of their ethnic group, eat the local foods, and live according to the cultural values as long as these pose no conflict with Islamic values. While Muslims practice their religion to varying degrees, those who are pious share religious tenets, values, and rituals that provide a common ground. For example, regardless of ethnic background or native language, Muslims share common ritualistic practices.They greet each other with *Assalamu 'Alaikum (*peace be on you), say *insha Allah* (God-willing) when making future plans, and *bismillah* (in the name of God) before beginning any activity. Regardless of the country of origin, a Muslim could go into any mosque in the world and feel at home, knowing that the same five daily prayers will be observed in the same manner as in his or her hometown.

Because Islam provides a philosophy and a way of life, it contributes to the development of an Islamic culture. Islamic values are represented in art, music, architecture, food, language, lifestyle, and cultural norms. In countries where Muslims are the majority, or where Muslims have had a historical presence, the culture that pre-existed Islam has been shaped by Islamic teachings. This influence is reflected in art and architecture, such as the art form of calligraphy and the architectural use of domes and arches seen in many countries. Islam also affected family values and gender relations. For example, in pre-Islamic Arabia, it was culturally accepted to kill newborn girls because they were not desirable. Islam outlawed this practice and gave Muslim women in Arabia many rights, such as owning property and voting, that were only gained by Western women in the last century.

The intersection of Islam with local culture, and the manifestation of that intersection in individual families, vary greatly. Muslims of Arab descent may have more rigid family roles compared to American Muslims, who may have more relaxed roles in the family. Regarding Islamic attire (broadly called *hijab*[3]), which not all Muslim women may choose to wear, the merging of local culture and Islamic culture becomes apparent. An American woman may wear jeans and a tunic, a Pakistani woman may wear *shilwar qamiz,*[4] an Iranian woman may wear a *chador,*[5] and a Saudi woman may wear an *'abaya*.[6] While each of these women is

dressed in a manner reflecting her native culture or even personal style, what they have in common is their adherence to the Islamic value of dressing modestly by covering the hair and body, with the exception of the face and hands, whenever they are in public.

Sometimes local cultural norms directly contradict Islamic teachings, posing significant dilemmas. For example…abusive behaviors like beating or even honor killings may be socially sanctioned despite the religious prohibition.

Sometimes local cultural norms directly contradict Islamic teachings, posing significant dilemmas. For example, while Islam as a religion prohibits any form of oppression or injustice, some cultures that are predominantly Muslim may encourage men to be the disciplinarians of women, leading to abusive behaviors like beating or even honor killings that may be socially sanctioned despite the religious prohibition.

Another example pertains to divorce, which is allowed by Islam as a last resort. Islam specifies detailed divorce procedures designed to protect women from being treated unjustly. However, local cultural norms may lead to divorced women being stigmatized or even being ostracized from the community. Local laws in some predominantly Muslim countries may make divorce almost impossible for women to attain. U.S. divorce law differs significantly from Islamic divorce law, leading to complex issues for American Muslim women. For example, a Muslim woman whose husband pronounces she is divorced, or who initiates the divorce process herself, has a waiting period of three months before the divorce is final. During this waiting period, she continues to live at home but without engaging in sexual relations. This period offers a chance for reconciliation, as well as time to determine if there is a pregnancy. In contrast, Virginia law requires a one-year separation for couples with children before divorce papers can be filed. These types of situations require consultation and collaboration between *imams*, advocates, attorneys, family members, and sometimes mental health professionals.

Text[7]

The Qur'an is the primary text for Muslims. Muslims accept the Qur'an as the verbatim word of God, revealed to the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) in Arabia over 1400 years ago through the angel Gabriel. It was revealed in Arabic;

the original Arabic text has not been changed or modified since its revelation. Muslims all over the world, regardless of their ethnic background or native language, memorize chapters of the Qur'an in its original form, to recite during daily prayers. The Qur'an provides the overall framework of Islam, outlines its main principles and values, provides many details that guide interpersonal relationships and other matters, contains stories of the prophets from Abraham to Muhammad (peace be on them all), and serves as guidance for Muslims in shaping their worldview and living their daily lives.

As a supplement to the Qur'an, Muslims use the life example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) as a model to illustrate how Quran'ic teachings should be integrated in daily life. The Prophet's sayings and actions are collected in a tradition called *Hadith*. There are several collections of *Hadith*, with varying degrees of authenticity, which means that some narrations are considered more accurate or truthful than others. Several collections that are accepted as authentic by the majority of Muslims are those by Bukhari, Muslim, and Tirmidhi. The knowledge that we have about the Prophet's way of life and his traditions falls under the larger rubric known as the *Sunnah*.

Both the Qur'an and the *Hadith* have been translated into many languages. It is important to note that the original meaning may be changed during translation. Sometimes these differences in translation lead to very different interpretations and applications of Islam. For example, verse 4:34 has been translated differently in commonly accepted translations, illustrating how the translation and application of one verse can lead to significantly different outcomes.

> Husbands are the protectors and maintainers of their wives because Allah (God) has given the one more strength than the other, and because they support them from their means…[8]

> Men are in charge of women, because Allah (God) has made the one of them to excel the other and because they spend of their property in the support of women…[9]

> Men shall take full care of women with the bounties which God has bestowed more abundantly on the former than on the latter, and with what they may spend out of their possessions…[10]

In addition to being a source of guidance for Muslims, listening to Qur'anic recitation can be a source of great comfort. Shelters that provide accommodations for Muslim families should consider asking mosques or Islamic bookstores to donate copies of the Qur'an in Arabic, as well as English, Urdu, Farsi, and possibly Spanish.

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Food

Muslims enjoy a wide variety of foods. The Qur'an encourages people to eat all foods that are lawful and good.[11] The wide variety of fruits and vegetables, cattle, fish, and poultry that are available are part of God's blessing to His creation. The category of unlawful foods for Muslims includes substances like alcohol and other intoxicants that cloud one's judgment, pork or pork products, and any meat that has not been slaughtered properly or that has been dedicated to any other than God. All animals must be slaughtered according to specific guidelines, which include saying the name of God at the time of slaughter, using a very sharp knife, and draining the blood out of the animal.

There are two major opinions about whether Muslims can eat meat that has been slaughtered by people of other faiths. The Qur'an states that Muslims can eat the food of the People of the Book[12] (Christians and Jews) because they worship the same God and have similar guidelines. Based on this verse, there are many Muslims who will buy meat from any grocer since the United States is predominantly a Christian country. On the other hand, other Muslims will eat only meat that has been slaughtered by Muslims to insure that God's name has been pronounced at the time of slaughter and to insure that proper slaughtering techniques have been observed. For this group of Muslims, meat must be purchased from grocers that sell meat labeled as *halal* (permissible) or *zabiha* (slaughtered according to Islamic guidelines). Kosher products are often a good alternative, although most cities with a community of Muslims will have at least one Muslim butcher where *halal* meat can be purchased.

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people do not realize that meat products such as sausage, hot dogs, and pepperoni are usually pork or contain a mixture of pork and beef. Also, it is important to cook pork separately from the foods Muslims will eat since pork drippings or fat that has mixed with eggs, for example, will render the eggs inedible. Some Muslims will also avoid any medications that contain alcohol, like Nyquil, unless there is no alternative, while other Muslims will not object to these medications since they are being used for medicinal purposes.

Cultural differences play a significant role in determining which foods people prefer. Many immigrant families are not used to eating canned foods and may initially be reluctant to accept these items, even if they are very needy. Families from Middle Eastern, South Asian, and Southeast Asian countries may be used to very spicy foods, having initial difficulty adjusting to relatively bland American food. Staff members in some centers have creatively addressed this minor problem by providing hot sauces or spices like Mrs. Dash that can be added to foods if needed. Although some providers may feel burdened by the consideration of these needs, addressing the dietary needs of clients can contribute to making them feel welcome and valued, lessening the pain they may already be experiencing during a time of crisis.

Holidays

Muslims celebrate two major holidays during the year, *Eid ul-Fitr* (Celebration of Breaking the Fast) and *Eid ul-Adha* (Celebration of the Sacrifice). The first one occurs at the end of the month of Ramadan, a month during which Muslims fast from dawn to sunset. While fasting, Muslims abstain from food, drink, sexual relations, smoking, and any immoral or prohibited behaviors. Ramadan is a time for self-purification, a time to refocus on spirituality and on strengthening the individual believer's relationship with God. During this month, even non-practicing Muslims or people of other faiths may make the effort to fast with their fellow Muslims. It is a joyful month with both an individual and a communal focus. Individually, Muslims are conscious of their decision to obey God by fasting and are striving to strengthen themselves spiritually. Within their families,

Muslims wake up before dawn to eat together to prepare for the fast. They usually try to pray more and read more Qur'an during this month. At the community level, Muslims invite each other to break fast together, go to the mosque for congregational prayers at night, and reach out to help others in need more than at other times of the year.

According to the Islamic calendar, Ramadan is the ninth lunar month. The beginning of the new month is determined by the sighting or the birth of the new moon. Within the greater Muslim community, it is possible for individual communities to begin and end fasting on different days, depending on whether they use astronomical calculations or the actual sighting of the moon to determine the beginning of the new month.

The second holiday, *Eid ul-Adha*, occurs two months and ten days after *Eid ul-Fitr*. This holiday coincides with the *hajj* (annual pilgrimage to Mecca), which Muslims are required to perform once in a lifetime if physically and financially able. The holiday commemorates the historical event when Abraham was commanded by God to sacrifice his son. In honor of the sacrifice that Abraham was asked to make, Muslims slaughter an animal, a portion of which is distributed to needy families.

Muslims celebrate each *Eid* by beginning the day with special congregational prayers. Everyone wears festive clothing. Children have new clothes for the occasion. It is customary for children to receive money from relatives and close friends. Relatives come together for elaborate meals, and friends visit each other to share the celebration with each other. Many communities have carnivals to further enjoy the festivities. Muslims wish each other a blessed *Eid* by saying "*Eid Mubarak*."

The Islamic calendar is a lunar calendar, which is eleven days shorter than the Gregorian calendar used in the United States. Muslim holidays and other events rotate during the year, occurring eleven days earlier each year than the year before. For this reason, it is not possible to have fixed dates for these holidays that correspond to the Gregorian calendar.

If at all possible, advocates working with Muslim families should avoid scheduling appointments during these holidays. Immigrant Muslims may not realize they

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have the right to ask for the day off from work, or that their children can be excused from school if the holiday falls on a weekday. Encouraging families to take advantage of this right can contribute to a healthier adjustment and integration into American society.

Shahrezad's Story

I will never forget the courage and strength of Shahrezad, my first client. I was providing home-based counseling services because she could not leave her severely handicapped son to come to the agency. She had been struggling with depression ever since her pregnancy, when her ex-husband beat her severely and repeatedly on her stomach, and then abandoned her when she delivered a beautiful son who had neurological damage that would prevent him from walking, speaking, or feeding himself. She had stood up against her family who did not want her to get divorced because of the shame she would bring to the family name. After the divorce, she fought her family's demands that she place her son in an institution. She accessed every possible resource in the county and was able to get excellent care for her son, as well as education and job training for herself. When I wondered how she could manage so well, she brought her Qur'an and read the passages that had given her strength. She described her relationship with God that had become stronger through her struggle to deal with the test He had given her.

Worship

The Qur'an says that God created people for the purpose of worshipping Him.[13] Islam teaches that the worldly life is temporal, a test, and a means to eternal reward (or punishment) in the hereafter. Every act or behavior can be considered an act of worship—fasting during Ramadan or smiling at someone—if it is done with the intention of pleasing God or following His command. Muslims are encouraged to be in constant remembrance of God, always conscious of His presence and His Will. The awareness of God shapes both minor and major decisions that people make each day, whether these decisions are related to business, family life, recreation, or medical treatment. This awareness promotes the doing of good deeds, which will be rewarded on the Day of Judgment.

In addition to bearing witness to the oneness of God and to the prophet hood of Muhammad (peace be on him), Muslims are required to perform certain rituals, including daily prayers, fasting during Ramadan, performing *hajj*, and giving charity. These requirements comprise what is known as the "five pillars of Islam." There are additional rituals that are optional for those seeking increased piety.

The mandatory prayers are performed at five prescribed times during the day: before sunrise, midday, late afternoon, at sunset, and late evening. The exact times vary as the length of the day changes during the year; however, there is a window of time to perform each prayer. Before praying, Muslims make sure they are clean by performing the required ablutions: washing hands, rinsing out the mouth and nose, washing the face, the arms, wiping the hair, and washing the feet. Prayers may be performed in a group or individually, and must be performed in a clean place. Some Muslims opt to pray on a prayer mat or rug. During prayers, Muslims in all parts of the world face the *ka'bah*[14] in Mecca (which is northeast from the U.S.) as a way to commemorate God's Oneness as a united community. The prayers involve prescribed movements, such as standing while reciting the Qur'an, bowing, and prostrating. In congregational prayers, men and women pray in separate rows to minimize distractions during the prayer.

Fasting has been described above (see Holidays). It is mandatory during Ramadan and optional throughout the year. The elderly, the sick, menstruating women, and small children should not fast. Pregnant and nursing women may fast if they are not affected negatively, but have the option not to fast. Many children want

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to fast in order to participate in the family's worship; they may be accustomed to fasting by gradually increasing the hours without food. Many health benefits from fasting are often noticed, in addition to the benefits of increased discipline, self-purification, and appreciation for one's blessings.

The *hajj* has been mentioned under holidays. During the *hajj*, Muslims from all walks of life and all cultures visit the *ka'bah*, walking around it and praying according to prescribed rituals. It is a unifying and uplifting occasion, after which the worshipper has his or her sins erased, starting life with a clean slate.

Family

The family is the building block of the society. Teachings about family life—including roles, responsibilities, importance of maintaining family ties, and how to protect and preserve this unit—comprise a significant segment of the Qur'an and Hadith. The family begins by joining two individuals who are directly and equally accountable to God and who are equally responsible for building a mutually satisfying relationship and a healthy, God-fearing family unit.

The Qur'an places men as the "protectors and maintainers"[15] of women, giving them financial responsibility and a leadership position. Women are then freed to focus on nurturing and raising the children. This role provides the woman with great status in Islam, which recognizes the intergenerational contributions that a mother provides when she is able to nurture, guide, and educate her children properly. The Qur'an describes the marital relationship as based on love and mercy,[16] with the spouses being "garments"[17] for one another, protecting and taking care of each other. Children are blessings and gifts from God; they have the right to be taken care of and the responsibility to obey their parents and care for them during old age. Living in extended family situations is not uncommon. The extended family creates a built-in support network and has many advantages, but it can also contribute to conflicts when boundaries are not respected or when good communication is not practiced. Decisions impacting the family should be made by mutual consultation[18] and within the boundaries of what is permissible by Islam.

Islam recognizes that problems can occur in any relationship and provides instructions for preventing, as well as addressing, conflict, betrayal, and misunderstandings. In the event that spouses cannot live amicably and are unable to uphold God's teachings, they should divorce according to Qur'anic guidelines which insure that justice and mercy are part of any interaction and decision. Islam prohibits oppression and frowns on any kind of aggression. In the event of domestic violence, all resources for addressing and resolving the problem should be explored, including separation and divorce, if necessary.

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Muslim families vary greatly in the degree to which Islamic concepts are applied, the flexibility of each member's roles, the degree of authoritarianism or egalitarianism, and the expectations for males and females. These differences are influenced by the understanding of Islamic concepts, level of education, cultural norms or values, rural or urban location, and many other factors. Despite these differences, those values that are shared include respect for parents and the elderly, emphasis on protecting the family's reputation and specifically the women's, and a desire to maintain and protect the family's values from outside influences deemed as potentially corrupting. Practicing Muslim families will not allow their children to date, will be cautious about any mixed-gender activities, and may restrict their children from attending functions, such as school dances, that do not conform with Islamic values. In these and other matters, the well-being of the family and its desire to implement Islamic teachings will be placed above the desires of the individual family member.

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Communal Connections

Islam is a religion that places great emphasis on communal relations and activities. The major rituals—like prayer, fasting, and *hajj*—are all communal in nature. Isolation from the community is greatly discouraged. There are many verses in the Qur'an and many Hadiths that provide guidance regarding human interactions and relationships. Muslims have to prioritize by taking care of their primary needs first, then their immediate family members, their relatives, their neighbors, and finally the community at large.

Regarding the ritual acts of worship, there is a preference for prayers to be performed in congregation, whether at home with other family members or at the mosque. The Friday prayer, which takes the place of the usual mid-day prayer, must be prayed in congregation at the mosque. One of its purposes is to provide an occasion for Muslims to meet each other and stay connected.

While fasting is a ritual practiced individually, there is a preference to having the pre-dawn meal with family and to break fast with relatives and friends. There is a feeling of unity knowing that everyone in the community is also fasting, and there is an awareness of the experience of people who may be less fortunate when one is feeling the pangs of hunger.

Probably the ultimate communal act of worship is the *hajj*, involving millions of Muslims worshipping together in a manner that has not changed in over 1400 years. People of all social classes, all types of education and careers, all ages, all languages, and all cultures are bound by the common desire to please God by fulfilling this ritual in the way He has prescribed.

In the U.S., the mosque has come to be the focal point of many community activities. It is a place to worship, to study, and to celebrate. Larger mosques often have rooms that are rented out for functions like weddings, may have gyms for basketball and other sports, and serve as gathering places for youth. In large communities, parallel functions for different age groups may be held in the evenings or on weekends. Most mosques also provide social services to take care of the needy community members.

The relationship of the Muslim community with the larger community varies from place to place. After the attacks of September 11 and the backlash that was felt by many Muslim communities, there has been a noticeable increase in interfaith activities and other events that are designed to build bridges with other groups in the community and to establish collaborative and cooperative relationships. This step has been positive in that the Muslim community is not as closed off as it tended to be in the past; misconceptions inside and outside of the Muslim community are being corrected, and many people are discovering and appreciating their commonalities. Islam encourages tolerance of other people and their beliefs, and encourages Muslims to get to know people from different backgrounds.

In Muslim communities with large immigrant populations, there are barriers that may interfere with maintaining communal relations. Language barriers, limited access to transportation, and cultural adjustment issues are some of the factors that may discourage people from connecting with others. Stressors related to immigration, asylum, or war experiences may lead to depression or anxiety, further encouraging isolation.

Zakia's Story

Zakia did not show up at her appointment to get her food stamps. Her social worker was frustrated. She knew Zakia had probably had another run-in with her husband, who had unabashedly admitted hitting her with a hanger, a baseball bat, and a telephone cord. The social worker had already tried multiple times to get Zakia to the local shelter; once the taxi had even arrived at her house, but Zakia changed her mind at the last minute. The social worker wanted to call Zakia, but knew she first had to get hold of the therapist who also served as the interpreter. Taking a few minutes to deal with her own emotions, she realized her frustration had to do with wanting to get Zakia out of the abusive situation and feeling helpless to do so. She realized this was her goal and not Zakia's. She remembered a recent conversation in which Zakia had flatly told her and the therapist that she appreciated all the efforts to get her out of a bad situation, but all she really wanted was someone to listen to her until she had learned more English and her children were older. Realizing that she was in fact providing the type of support that Zakia was asking for, and meeting the client's goal, helped reduce the helplessness that fueled the social worker's frustration. Zakia was taking the steps she needed to prepare for leaving, but had not yet gotten to that point.

Issues Related to Domestic Violence

…there should be no room for domestic violence in a practicing Muslim family. Unfortunately, domestic violence does exist in Muslim families…

Islam prohibits any form of oppression or injustice.[19] Given the description of the family above, it is clear that there should be no room for domestic violence in a practicing Muslim family. Unfortunately, domestic violence does exist in Muslim families, as it exists in families from all faith traditions and ethnic groups. However, within the Muslim community as compared to the larger community, there are relatively less awareness and understanding of this phenomenon and less development of interventions to deal with the problem. The effects of verbal and psychological abuse may be minimized even though most Muslims would agree that these behaviors are un-Islamic. Even less attention has been given to sexual types of abuse, including incest, even though serious penalties are described in Islamic law for these types of transgressions.

Victims may find themselves invalidated and alienated when they approach family or community members for help. Because there may not be enough understanding of the dynamics of domestic violence, or of the short- and long-term damage that occurs in abusive environments, initial responses to the victim may include telling her to be patient, telling her to try harder or to avoid angering her husband, or asking her to forgive him before holding him accountable for his behavior. Thus, the burden of solving the problem is often placed on the victim.

Once the abuse is acknowledged, family members may intervene positively by giving the victim refuge or by letting the batterer know that the abusive behavior will not be tolerated. They may respond by encouraging a separation or a divorce. On the other hand, sometimes family members may contribute to the abuse by insisting that the victim not tell anyone about the problem and that she stay with the batterer.

In many Muslim communities across the country, changes are slowly occurring as *imams* are becoming more aware…Some *imams* intervene by asking the batterer to leave the home temporarily, by insisting that the batterer participate in religious counseling, and by collaborating with… advocates.

In many Muslim communities across the country, changes are slowly occurring as *imams* are becoming more aware of the prevalence and gravity of the situation. Some *imams* intervene by asking the batterer to leave the home temporarily, by insisting that the batterer participate in religious counseling, and by collaborating with mental health professionals and advocates.

Regardless of what interventions are applied, all efforts will be made to preserve the family unit. There is a reluctance to involve law enforcement officials or the

court system, for fear of compounding the problem by enraging the abuser and ruling out any chance of preserving the marriage. Even if a temporary separation becomes necessary, relatives and *imams* will be working towards reconciliation. It is only after all efforts have failed that divorce will be considered an option. This process can be quite frustrating for both the victim and the advocates involved, since they may have a better sense that the batterer will not change or that too much damage has occurred.

It is important for advocates to be supportive of the victim during this process and to avoid pushing her to make a decision without the support of her family or religious leader.

It is important for advocates to be supportive of the victim during this process and to avoid pushing her to make a decision without the support of her family or religious leader. Advocates can facilitate the process by identifying cooperative religious leaders, by building bridges with community leaders, by educating leaders and community members about the dynamics of domestic violence, and by providing encouragement to victims who choose to turn to their faith for guidance.

Other Issues

Despite Islam's prohibition on… domestic violence …it is not uncommon for abusers and uninformed Muslims to justify abusive behavior as being consistent with Islamic teachings.

Despite Islam's prohibition on oppression in general, and domestic violence in particular, it is not uncommon for abusers and uninformed Muslims to justify abusive behavior as being consistent with Islamic teachings. This manipulation of Islamic teachings is done by taking a segment of a verse from the Qur'an, for example, without considering the over-arching philosophy or context.

The most common verse that is used to justify wife-beating is the same verse that describes men as "protectors" of women:

> Men are the protectors and maintainers of women because God has given the one more (strength) than the other and because they support them from their means. Therefore the righteous women are devoutly obedient and guard in (the husband's) absence what God would have them guard. As to those women on whose part you fear disloyalty and ill-conduct admonish them (first) (next) refuse to share their beds (and last) beat them (lightly); but if they return to obedience seek not against them means (of annoyance): for God is Most High, Great (above you all). Qur'an 4:34

Muslim women…have unique needs that may require accommodation by shelter staff and other advocates.

Although it is clear which part of the verse is used to support physical abuse, it is important to look at the verse in the context of the Islamic paradigm regarding the family unit. Both men and women were created to worship God, and each is directly accountable to Him. Within this context, men have been given a leadership role with the responsibility of helping all family members obey God's (not the husband's) laws. In the case of disloyalty, or behavior that would compromise the integrity of the family unit, the husband is instructed to intervene by talking to her, then not sleeping with her, and finally hitting her. The scholars are in agreement that this "hitting" is to leave no marks and is symbolic of the gravity of her behavior.[20] This interpretation is consistent with the multitude of teachings exhorting men to treat women with kindness, the teachings emphasizing justice and mercy between all people, and the example of the Prophet Muhammad (peace be on him) who was known for his kindness and gentleness towards women. Furthermore, he is not known to have ever hit any of his wives, even when one of them was falsely accused of immoral behavior.[21]

The cultural and historical contexts are important to consider as well, as they have shaped the development of Islamic jurisprudence and the interpretation of Islamic teachings. Before Islam was revealed, women in Arabia were considered property of men and had few rights. A woman suspected of adultery or disloyalty would be immediately killed. The verse used to justify abuse is in fact protective of women from the revenge that was previously culturally acceptable. It provides a systematic, structured, and controlled approach to dealing with a serious threat to the marriage. While this verse only deals with the consequences for a disloyal wife, other verses spell out the consequences for a disloyal husband.[22]

Conclusion

While Muslim women who have experienced domestic violence have a great deal in common with women of other backgrounds regarding their need for safety, support, and advocacy, they also have unique needs that may require accommodation by shelter staff and other advocates. Ensuring that Muslim women have food available to them that conforms with their dietary restrictions

(no pork or alcohol) will help them to feel welcomed and understood. Supplying a Qur'an and prayer rug will provide comfort by offering familiar religious and spiritual symbols. During times of crisis, Muslim women may benefit from spending time at a mosque for worship and may need help with transportation or help identifying an alternative mosque to the one the abuser attends. Willingness of advocates to learn about the important holidays and avoid appointments on these days will allow Muslim women to hold on to familiar rituals during a time of hardship. Immigrant Muslim women may need extra time to learn how to use public transportation, job skills, or even basic skills like check-writing.

Working collaboratively with a professional or community leader from the same ethnic or religious background as the client may facilitate communication, decrease frustration for both the victim and the advocate, and lead to more culturally appropriate interventions. Although these accommodations may require some extra time and effort on the part of shelter staff and advocates, victims have reported that these efforts have been the acts of kindness that have made their journey easier and their burden more bearable.

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NOTES

Part I: Introduction

Working as Allies

1. From WAC 248-554-005 Definitions, WAC: Washington Administrative Code.

Part II: Working with Women of Many Religious and Spiritual Traditions

Walking with American Indian/Alaska Native Women

Working with American Indian/Alaska Native Survivors of Domestic Violence

1. Tjaden, Patricia, and Nancy Thoennes, *Full Report of the Prevalence, Incidence, and Consequences of Violence Against Women: Findings from the National Violence Against Women Survey* (Wash. DC: U.S. Dept. of Justice, 2000).

2. Bachman, Ronet, "The Epidemiology of Rape and Sexual Assault Against American Indian Women: An Analysis of NCVS Data." A presentation at the Women are Sacred Conference, Albuquerque, April 21–23, 2005 (available from Ronet Bachman, Dept. of Sociology, Univ. Delaware).

3. Perry, Steven W., *American Indians and Crime*: *A BJS Statistical Profile, 1992–2002* (Wash. DC: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004).

http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/aic02.htm.

4. Perry, Steven W., *American Indians and Crime*: *A BJS Statistical Profile, 1992–2002* (Wash. DC: U.S. Dept. of Justice, Bureau of Justice Statistics, 2004). (http://www.ojp.usdoj.gov/bjs/abstract/aic02.htm.)

Walking with Buddhist Women

Walking Together on the Path of Liberation: For Domestic Violence Advocates Working with Buddhist Women

1. Nhât Hanh, Thích, *The Heart of Buddha's Teaching* (Berkeley: Parallax Press, 1998).

Walking with Christian Women

Singing the Lord's Song in a Strange Land: African American Black Church Culture and Domestic Violence

1. Johnson, James Weldon, *Lift Ev'ry Voice and Sing* (New York: Scholastic, 1995).

Working with Catholic Women

1. U.S. Conference of Catholic Bishops, *When I Call for Help: A Pastoral Response to Domestic Violence Against Women,*" p. 1 (Wash. DC: USCCB, 2002). Available at <www.usccb.org/laity/help.shtml> or contact Sheila Garcia, Bishops' Secretariat for Family, Laity, Women and Youth, 202/541-3041 (e-mail sgarcia@usccb.org).

Working with Evangelical Women

1. All Scriptural quotations appearing in this article are taken from *The Holy*

Bible: New International Version (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Bible Publ., 1978). Used by permission.

Latina Catholic Women Confronting Domestic Violence

1. This quote and the previous "Genesis" quote are from Champlin, J.M., *El Rito del Matrimonio*, *Edición Pastoral* (Liguori, MO: Liguori Publ., 1996).

2. Unless otherwise noted, all Scriptural quotations are taken from *Leccionario I., Adviento–Pentecostes,* Conferencia del Episcopado Mexicano (Mexico D.F.: Obra Nacional de la Buena Prensa, 1999).

Walking with Hindu Women

Understanding Violence Against Women in the Hindu Context

1. Adapted from Organ, T.W., *Hinduism: Its Historical Development* (New York: Barron's Educational Series, 1974).

2. Hindus consider Ganges, or *Ganga,* a holy river. It originates in the Himalayan Mountains and traverses down many north Indian states to end in the Bay of Bengal.

3. The term "South Asia" refers to the countries of Bangladesh, Bhutan, India, Nepal, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. At times Afghanistan and Myanmar (formerly known as Burma) are included in this list. The area is also referred to as the Indian Subcontinent, a term used less and less today. Geographically adjacent countries configure South Asia and although each is a separate nation today, they share 5000 years of political and social histories as well as correspondence of cultures.

4. Adapted from Dasgupta, S.D., and S. Warrier, *In Visible Terms: Domestic violence in the Asian Indian context: A handbook for intervention*, 2nd ed. (Union, NJ: Manavi, Inc., 1997).

5. For an extended discussion, see Dasgupta, S.D., "Charting the course: An overview of domestic violence in the South Asian community in the United States," *Journal of Social Distress and the Homeless* 9:173–185 (2000).

6. See, Abraham, M., "Sexual abuse in South Asian immigrant marriages." In *Violence Against Women* 5:591–618 (1999); Abraham, M., *Speaking the Unspeakable: Marital violence among South Asian immigrants in the United States* (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 2000); Mazumdar, R., "Marital rape: Some ethical and cultural considerations." In *A Patchwork Shawl: Chronicles of South Asian women in America*, ed. S.D. Dasgupta, p. 129–144 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1998).

7. For example, see Agarwal, P., *Passage from India: Post 1965 Indian immigrants and their children; Conflicts, concerns, and solutions* (Palos Verdes, CA: Yuvati Publ., 1991); Bhattacharjee, A., "The habit of ex-nomination: Nation, woman, and the Indian immigrant bourgeoisie." In *A Patchwork Shawl: Chronicles of South Asian women in America*, ed. S.D. Dasgupta, p. 163–185 (New Brunswick, NJ: Rutgers Univ. Press, 1998); Dasgupta, S.D., "Gender roles and cultural continuity in the Asian Indian immigrant community in the U.S." *Sex Roles* 38:953–974 (1998).

8. The census report of the time did not separate South Asians from other Asians and Pacific Islanders.

Walking with Jewish Women

The Jewish Community and Domestic Violence

1. The author wishes to thank Rabbi Mark Dratch, Leigh Nachman Hofheimer, Michelle Lifton, Rabbi Drorah Setel, and Naomi Tucker for their valuable suggestions on this article.

2. At age 13 (or 12 for girls in some traditions), Jews are bound by the same commandments as adults. This "coming of age" is marked by a religious

ceremony, where a girl/boy becomes a *bat/bar mitzvah* (daughter/son of the commandment).

3. Jewish Women International (JWI), *JWI's Needs Assessment: A Portrait of Domestic Abuse in the Jewish Community*, p. 18 (Wash. DC: JWI, 2004).

4. Materials include *Embracing Justice: A Resource Guide for Rabbis on Domestic Abuse,* ed. Diane Gardsbane (Wash. DC: JWI, 2002), as well as videos and books available from FaithTrust Institute. For training, refer to FaithTrust Institute (www.faithtrustinstitute.org); the Shalom Task Force in New York and affiliate states (212/742-1478); and/or one of the many local Jewish programs that provide services to victims of domestic violence.

5. The Talmud is a comprehensive collection of rabbinic writings that forms the basis of *Halakhah*, traditional Jewish law.

6. Kaufman, Gus Jr., Wendy Lipshutz, and Rabbi Drorah Setel, "Responding to Domestic Violence." In *Jewish Pastoral Care: A Practical Handbook from Traditional & Contemporary Sources*, ed. Dayle A. Friedman, p. 252–253 (Woodstock, VT: Jewish Lights Publ., 2001).

7. For more information, contact Shalom Bayit: Bay Area Jewish Women Working to End Domestic Violence <www.shalom-bayit.org>.

8. *Shulchan Aruch, Even Ha'ezer* 154: 3.

9. Jews use C.E. (common era) and B.C.E. (before the common era) rather than B.C. and A.D.

10. United Jewish Communities (UJC), *The National Jewish Population Survey (NJPS) 2000-01: Strength, challenge and diversity in the American Jewish population,* p. 19 (New York: UJC in cooperation with the North American Jewish Data Bank, 2003). Available online at <www.ujc.org>.

11. For example, see *Ceremonies for Jewish Living* at <www.ritualwell.org>., sponsored by Kolot and Ma'yan.

12. Codified as the Laws of Repentance by Maimonides (1135–1204 A.D.), the rabbi, doctor and philosopher who wrote the comprehensive body of Jewish law known as *halakhah*.

13. *National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01,* p. 3.

14. U.S. Census 2000 <www.census.gov>.

15. Some organizations, notably the Shalom Task Force in New York and affiliate states (212/742-1478), have begun training *mikvah* attendants on domestic violence to help them identify signs of abuse and respond in ways that are helpful to women.

16. Reconstructionist rabbis strongly prefer a woman to have a *get* but will make decisions about marriage on a case-by-case basis. Reform rabbis do not require a *get*.

17. Articles in this special issue of *The Voice: A Journal of the Battered Women's Movement* include Gail Burstyn on "Jewish Identity, Anti-Semitism and the Battered Women's Movement" and Susan McGee on "Individual and Programmatic Mechanisms for Change."

18. *National Jewish Population Survey 2000-01,* p. 19, 21–22.

19. Ibid, p. 23.

Walking with Muslim Women

Working with Muslim Women: Understanding Religious and Cultural Issues

1. In Shi'ite Islam, an institutionalized clergy does exist. These Imams are direct descendents of the Prophet Muhammad, peace be on him, and are believed to be divinely appointed.

2. Ali, O.M., G. Milstein, and P.M. Marzuk. "The Imam's role in meeting the counseling needs of Muslim communities in the United States." *Psychiatric Services* 56 (2005): 202–205 (<http://ps.psychiatryonline.org>).

3. An Arabic word that means "a covering." The majority of Muslim opinion is that women may reveal their face and hands in front of men who are not closely related to them.

4. Urdu name for the native dress of South Asians consisting of very loose pants worn under a tunic.

5. Farsi name for the Iranian-style long, loose overgarment worn by women in public.

6. An Arabic word used for the long, loose overgarment worn by many Muslim women. It has traditionally been black but currently may be worn in many colors.

7. Unless otherwise noted, the author relied primarily on the following translation: Ali, Abdullah Yusuf, *The Meaning of the Holy Qur'an*, 10th ed. (Beltsville, MD: Amana Publ., 1999).

8. Qur'an.

9. Pickthall, Mohammed Marmaduke. *The Meaning of the Glorious Qur'an* (London: Ta-Ha Publ. Ltd., 1930).

10. Asad, Muhammad, *The Message of the Qur'an* (Gibraltar: Dar al-Andalus, 1980).

11. Qur'an, 2:158

12. Qur'an, 5:5

13. Qur'an, 51:56

14. The *ka'bah* is believed to be the first house of worship dedicated to God. It was originally built by Adam and later rebuilt by Abraham and his son to reestablish monotheism.

15. Qur'an, 4:34

16. Qur'an, 30:21

17. Qur'an, 2:187

18. Qur'an, 42:38

19. Qur'an, 42:39-42

20. Asad, Muhammad, *The Message of the Qur'an*, 110, f. 45.

21. Qur'an, 24:11

22. Qur'an, 4:128; 24:2–3.

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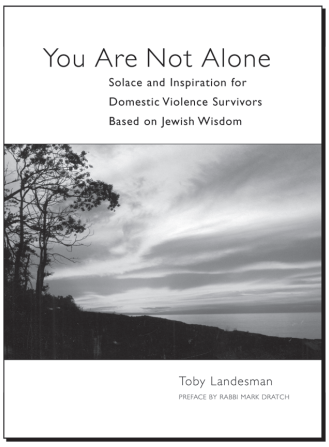

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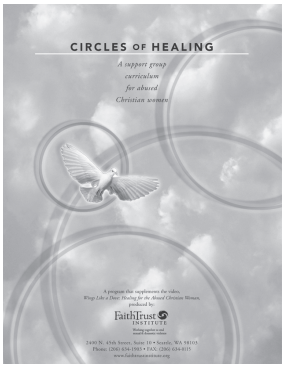

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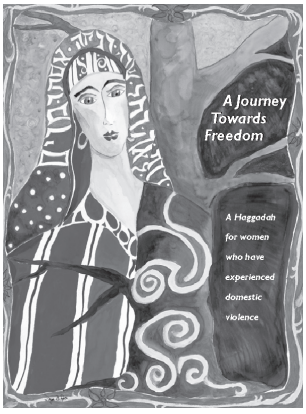

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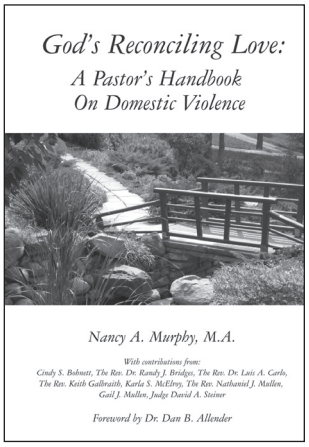

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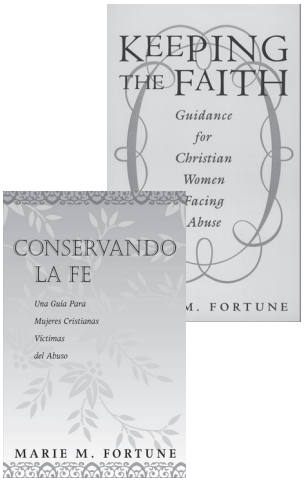

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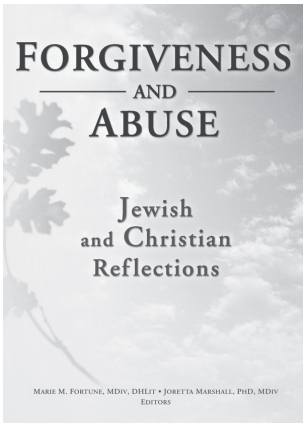

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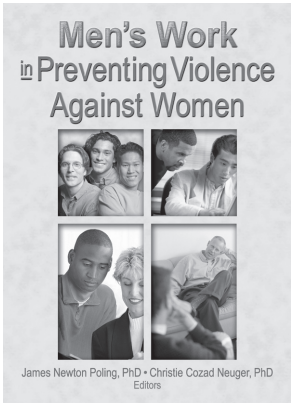

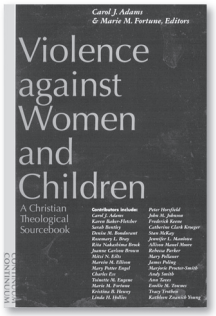

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