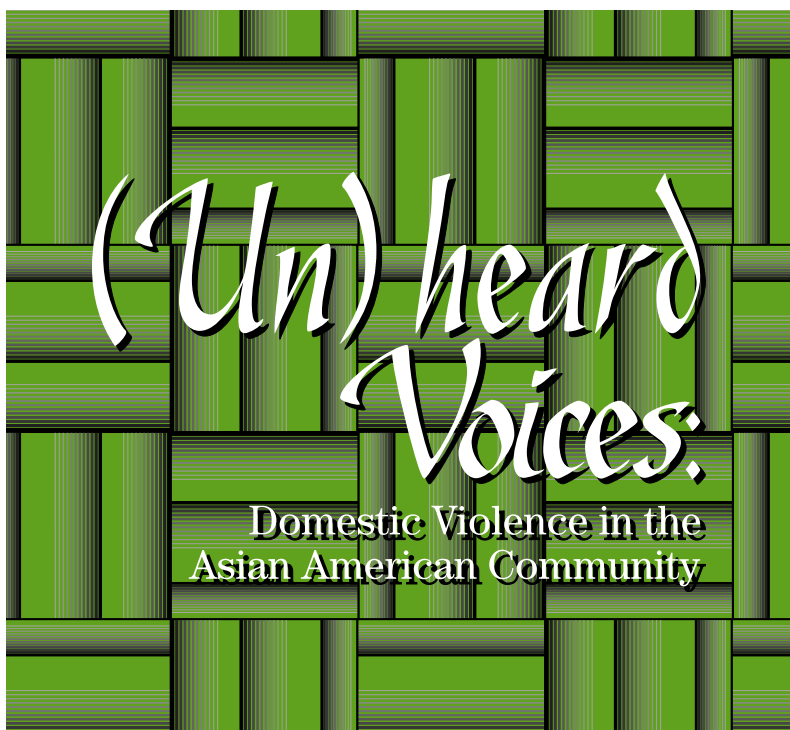


(Un)heard Voices.

**Domestic Violence in the
Asian American Community**

FAMILY
VIOLENCE
PREVENTION
FUND

**Produced by The Family Violence Prevention Fund
with a grant from the Violence Against Women Grants Office,
Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.**



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FAMILY VIOLENCE PREVENTION FUND

Beckie Masaki

ASIAN WOMEN'S SHELTER

Produced by The Family Violence Prevention Fund

with a grant from the Violence Against Women Office,
Office of Justice Programs, U.S. Department of Justice.



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Introduction

Asian American¹ women have been involved in the battered women's movement since its beginnings almost three decades ago. Many of them have worked in their communities to end violence in the lives of women and children. Over the last ten years an increasing number of Asian American women are conducting research and working in mainstream domestic violence programs. Throughout the nation, there are many programs run by Asian Americans to help the women and their children in their respective communities live free from violence. Many of these programs also educate the community to build support for the victims, so that women are not forced to give up their family and community ties in order to be safe.

With the expansion of the domestic violence movement in the Asian American communities, longtime advocates realized that there was a need to understand their own attitudes and beliefs about domestic violence as well as those of the community. Abundant anecdotal information indicated that a range of opinions, strategies, and activities were being used by various programs. If the movement to end violence against women were to succeed, it was critical to understand both the attitudes as well as the strategies used by the varied Asian American communities.

Consequently, focus groups were organized to examine common cultural attitudes and beliefs on domestic violence among the Asian immigrant groups. Once the basic information was compiled, the unique and distinctive cultural differences between the various groups would be analyzed. In addition, information on the effectiveness of different strategies and shifts in the communities' response to domestic violence would be obtained. Assessment of the various strategies was essential to understand the importance of cultural context in developing and evaluating strategies in community education and ending domestic violence.

Given the enormity of the task, the Family Violence Prevention Fund (FVPF) chose to work with two community-based groups to conduct the focus groups. FVPF has a long history and extensive experience analyzing public opinion on domestic violence. The other two groups — Asian Women's Center (AWS), in San Francisco, and Manavi, in New Jersey, have both been in existence for fifteen years. AWS is a shelter and an advocacy program that provides services to all Asian American


¹ Asian American is a highly contested term. Originally coined by the U.S. Census Bureau as a term for categorization, it masks the diversity of the various groups as well as the different immigration histories of the communities that constitute Asian America.



women through a multi-lingual access program. In addition, AWS has conducted a series of focus groups for Asian American women in same-gender relationships. Manavi, a South Asian (India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, and Nepal) women's group, has a similar history of advocacy and services, as well as community education. Manavi has also conducted a number of focus groups to assess the needs of South Asian women.

Through a rigorous selection process, the groups designated staff to assist FVPPF at various stages of the focus groups. Initially, one staff from each of the three groups was involved in developing the methodology, conducting the focus groups, and reporting on the findings. Other members were added as needed.

At the end of this report, tables are presented that show the number of participants who agreed with the items on the generated lists. Not all who were present responded; consequently, the numbers may not add up to the total number of participants (sixteen). Percentages were not calculated, as the size of the groups was kept small.



Methodology

The FVPPF, AWS and Manavi (Focus Group Team) decided that two separate focus groups would be conducted. The first focus group would include survivors of domestic violence, Asian domestic violence advocates, Asian community leaders, academics, Asian members of institutions, and others. The second focus group would include Asian women in same-gender relationships who have experienced domestic violence, Asian domestic violence advocates who have extensive experience working with victims in same-gender relationships, Asian community leaders active in the gay and lesbian civil rights movement, academics, Asian members of institutions, and others. A separate report on same gender domestic violence in the Asian community is also available from FVPPF.

The Focus Group Team (Team) also decided that men would not be included in these focus groups, as this was the first national Asian-American focus group on domestic violence, and many of the survivors participating may have concerns about safety.

Additionally, the Team discussed the inclusion of Pacific Islanders, which has been an area of much controversy, and was a difficult decision to make. Historically, Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders were considered one category, and many of the groups working with survivors of domestic violence served both groups. In the early 1990s, the U.S. Census Bureau separated the two into specific categories, but many service providers continued to work with both as one group. The Team decided to include some Pacific Islanders but focus mostly on Asian Americans. Despite efforts to contact Pacific Islanders, however, only one advocate from Samoan community participated. The members decided that better effort would be made for future focus groups.

A questionnaire consisting of eleven questions (see Appendix) was created to get at the cultural dimensions of the problem. The questions centered around the following themes: the occurrence and causes of domestic violence, victims and perpetrators, feasible options for victims, the kinds of services needed and the barriers facing victims, and issues around community response. The Team tested the questions with South Asian advocates in New York and some of the questions were revised.

The team developed criteria for the participants. These included ethnic and multi-cultural diversity, geographic location in the U.S., and the categories outlined above. An exhaustive list of participants who met the criteria was generated. The list was then carefully reviewed to ensure as fair and diverse a representation as feasible given travel and time constraints. Participants were prioritized and contacted to inquire about their ability to be involved in the focus groups. Because of the



number of people interested in participating, the first focus group was divided into two sections to allow for maximum participation and discussion with only eleven people in each section.

Prior to the focus groups, the staff of the three organizations discussed logistics, reviewed the questions, developed a participant profile questionnaire, and scheduled a one-day training for the facilitators and note takers. The training included basic points on how to conduct a focus group and allowing the conversation to flow but also channeling the discussion. The importance of unobtrusive note taking was emphasized. How to deal with difficult issues that might arise in the session, especially conflict among the participants, was discussed. Role plays were used to instruct the facilitators.

The final participant list was generated and logistics of date, time, and location were determined. Both of the focus groups were held in

Chicago during the Millennium Conference to End Domestic Violence, but were held on separate dates and times. Specific participants were assigned specific sections to ensure diversity of representation. Permission to tape record the discussions was obtained from the participants. Participants were assured anonymity and were given an option to not fill in a general profile questionnaire. Each section of the focus group lasted approximately three hours. The majority of the participants wanted to continue the discussions. The focus group was the first time in years they had been able to unite and seriously discuss domestic violence within their communities and debate common themes and strategies.

| <i>Participant Profile</i> | |
|---|----------|
| Range of years in field | 1 to >22 |
| Average number of years in field. | 9 |
| Ethnicity | |
| Chinese American | 3 |
| Filipina | 2 |
| Japanese American | 2 |
| Samoan | 1 |
| South Asian | 6 |
| Vietnamese | 1 |
| Bi-racial (Chinese and European American) . . | 1 |
| Occupation | |
| Academic | 3 |
| Accountant | 1 |
| Attorney | 1 |
| Community organizer | 1 |
| Domestic Violence Advocate/Administrator . . | 7 |
| Program Coordinator | 1 |
| Research analyst | 1 |
| Student | 1 |
| Region of the U.S. | |
| National | 1 |
| East Coast | 4 |
| West Coast | 9 |
| Midwest | 1 |
| Other | 1 |
| No response to questionnaire | 6 |



Voices from the Focus Groups

Prevalence of Domestic Violence

The participants, many of whom have experienced long-term abuse both as adult victims and as children, unilaterally agreed that domestic violence occurs in all the communities that comprise Asian America. The experiences of domestic violence is corroborated by evidence of abuse within the family, by the community, and is additionally supported by news reports and feminist scholarship. The participants recognized the importance of stating the problem because of the invisibility of the issue within the communities and the ways in which mainstream stereotypes render domestic violence a non-issue for Asian Americans. Participants also recognized that providing testimony about the prevalence of domestic violence is crucial for generating more funding, research opportunities, and funneling appropriate resources for the women and children.

The majority of the participants believed that domestic violence against women stems from a legacy of patriarchy and sexism that is widespread in many Asian American communities. As a result, women are socialized to believe and accept that violence in a relationship is acceptable, that male power expressed abusively is part of the cultural milieu, and therefore batterers are not held accountable for their behavior in their own communities. Also, women continue to believe that they are worthless, and that revealing the situation to anyone can be a cause of great shame to their families and communities. As put succinctly by one participant:

“I think its our cultures that allow it to happen. We do not hold somebody accountable for that kind of violence...you see that the batterer gets invited to parties, it’s the woman who gets isolated...”

In some ethnic groups, such as South Asians, the issue of dowry — its payment or non-payment — and its variants in the U.S. can escalate domestic violence. For many battered Asian women, immigration concerns and status can be a serious cause for concern. In fact, advocates think that in some immigrant and refugee communities, such as the Vietnamese, stress of immigration — uncertain status and often changing roles, especially role reversals — can force men to become violent as they feel their power and position being eroded.

Additionally, religion and associated belief structures can exert a strong influence in some communities. For example, the long history of Spanish colonization in the Philippines left behind the “Jesus



Syndrome,” which exalts women to sacrifice for the family and achieve martyrdom by submitting to abuse. The more one submits, the more one is idealized. Interestingly, the share of the sacrifice falls disproportionately on women and is predominantly encouraged by the priests.

“...[the] whole thing about Jesus being crucified for his people...I don't feel like it's the men that internalize that symbol. It's always the women. So, I think it's two things operating at the same time. It is the gender factor as well as religion...”

All of the participants agreed that Asian American women have to deal with the constraints of their own cultures as well as those of an indifferent mainstream culture that denies that domestic violence occurs amongst Asian Americans. As a result, most battered Asian women gain very little assistance from systems that are supposed to help them find a measure of safety.

Is it Cultural?

The role of culture in violence is contentious. One participant voiced:

“When violence of any sort is attributed to communities, the whole issue is double-edged. On the one hand, Asian American communities are seen as traditional with exemplary family values, a low divorce rate, and intact families that sustain and support its members. Simultaneously, tradition also signifies backwardness.”

In other words, mainstream U.S. society perceives Asians as a traditional people, who do not know that violence against women is bad. The focus group discussed the issue of hypocrisy when the same action is viewed in different communities. For example, if a young white woman marries a much older man, she is described as being dysfunctional and irrational; yet when the same occurs with a young woman from a community of color, the action is immediately attributed to the culture of the group – not just the individual – and, by extension, the group is considered primitive and backward.

The use of the term “other,” which helped legitimize the colonization of many parts of the world, is now used to justify the continued oppressive view of battered Asian women.



Who are the Victims and Perpetrators?

The majority of the participants agreed that women are most affected by domestic violence. One participant disagreed, stating that women in heterosexual relationships can be as violent as men. She thought that while patriarchy confers some entitlements to men, women under the same system can also be violent. Her own experiences as a child contributed to this perspective. Other participants objected, stating that even though some men are subject to various forms of violence in society, they can be virulent and horrible depending on the situation and their class position.

Within the Asian American community, the majority of domestic violence victims are women. Although some women may resort to violence to end a horrific situation, equating men's and women's violence within this overwhelmingly patriarchal system is extremely problematic.

One participant was uncomfortable with the usage of the word "victim." She suggested that it connoted subordination and added to the stereotype of Asian women being passive and submissive, rather than focusing on the complex realities of their situation that lead to their continued subordination. Discussion ensued about the difficulty of finding appropriate terminology. Simple categories of definitions, while helpful, can mask realities and hide the difficult decisions women have to make, such as following "tradition" and remaining with the perpetrator, family, and community, or following "feminists" and deciding to leave. Lacking a better alternative, the term "victim" will continue to be used.

The majority of the participants felt that the definition of domestic violence needs to be clarified, and that without clarification one can run into problems identifying victims and perpetrators. While most agreed that women are the victims and men the perpetrators, one member argued that children, not women, are the primary victims since they have no voice and are unable to change the situation. Also, it is often hard for the child to distinguish who the instigator is and who is being victimized. For those who suffered through and witnessed violence in the family as children, even theoretical knowledge does not necessarily change the view that there might be mutual battering. Four of the participants were disturbed by this analysis and insisted that the definition be revisited to include that the person who batters wields psychological and physical control.

Using this definition, three of the participants felt that family and community can be both victims and perpetrators. In many Asian communities, the perpetrators' families collaborate in the continued violence against their daughters-in-law, and the women's family may also



be affected. One participant felt that a distinction needed to be made between battering and supporting the silence around battering as a consequence of the situation and structure of family and community. Two participants suggested extending this categorization to include the judicial and immigration systems that continue to victimize Asian women by denying access to services.

Is Calling the Police an Option?

All of the participants believe that calling the police is always an option, but there was discussion as to whether this option is a viable one for Asian American women. Agreement was reached that Asian American women could consider calling the police, with a number of caveats. At least two felt that having the police response helps the victim build a paper trail that is essential to any future process in the judicial system. One of the survivors felt that the police response depends on the education they have received in the area of domestic violence and the issues facing particular communities.

At least six of the participants felt that the police in their communities were better than those in their home countries. Yet, three of the survivors shared their experiences of the police being unhelpful and racist in their treatment of both the victim and the perpetrator. This was particularly relevant to advocates working with Southeast Asians for whom historical associations and the prevalent racism against the Vietnamese worsen the situation. Experiences with the police in the country of origin exacerbate the situation for the immigrant women. As a result, many have difficulty going to the police and do so only as a last resort. All of the advocates agreed that women should be educated on how to deal with the police and how to get accurate information on the responding police officer, should a follow-up be necessary.

For eight of the participants the issue of police response continued to be problematic and they felt that some of their clients had been subject to racism and additional harassment by the police.

Others provided examples of the police making a commitment to eradicate racism in the force. One survivor talked about a program in San Diego in which the police chief worked with members of the community to resolve difficult issues and improve accessibility to the police force. An advocate also talked about the difference Asian police officers can make. She felt that “there is a good connection, so we can call them and they are very sensitive overall... but sometimes an Asian officer is much more rough than a non-Asian because of cultural issues.”

Participants agreed that police, while an option, are definitely not an asset in combating domestic violence. Clearly, there is a need to



state that domestic violence is criminal behavior, but can it be done only through the criminal justice system? Concerns included the police not taking action when called and the act of taking batterers to jail —from which they leave angrier and more upset — without offering added protection for the victims. Many raised the issue of the community's role in watching over the batterer, and felt that adequate community support could help. One advocate articulated that the police and the criminal justice system may be more involved in domestic violence because they receive a lot of the funding. Therefore, communities need "to look at where we can work with or in the criminal justice system to get better services from them." There is a need to define domestic violence as criminal behavior, but questions arose as to whether this can be done only through the criminal justice system.

Is Calling the National or Local Hotlines an Option?

The hotline is a resource for women to get immediate assistance, information related to domestic violence services, appropriate referrals, and emotional support. The participants felt that a hotline is a necessary option but is fraught with problems that need to be rectified before being a viable option for battered Asian women.

One such problem is language accessibility and the difficulty of obtaining all the languages necessary to service the Asian community. Many hotlines claim to be multilingual; however, the person who speaks a particular language may not be available, or the caller is put on hold until that person is found, or the caller needs to go through numerous steps to access the right person. All of these situations are aggravating and need to be eliminated. Also, the group decided that the AT&T language line is not sufficient, and more often than not the women may feel victimized again. The usability of a hotline is also challenged if the women are monolingual in one Asian language.

Another problem is the lack of information provided on child care or employment, which women often need to know about in order to make a careful decision. The lack of useful information is intertwined with layers of racism that affect Asian women. One participant pointed out that some staff show their racism by referring the woman to another program so as not to have to deal with her. "White people do not want to talk to anybody with an accent." One participant had a positive experience with a statewide hotline at which the worker recognized her Japanese accent and referred her to the Asian Women's Center where she was able to get the services she needed and be free from the violence.



Barriers Confronting Asian Battered Women

Asian battered women deal with barriers on the individual and institutional levels as well as on a cultural level within the community. These barriers can be listed as separate categories, but they also interact in different ways in different Asian communities.

At the individual level, two of the most important barriers are fear and shame. These are followed by a lack of fluency in English and not

knowing the cultural parameters of the U.S. Age and a lack of marketable skills are also barriers for the individual Asian woman.

The cultural values of a community can perpetuate a woman's isolation and sometimes force her to leave her community in order to live free from violence. Leaving a violent relationship may not be a choice without community and family support. In many Asian American communities, the hierarchical structure of the family may lead to violence from family members as well as from the spouse, which can further demoralize the woman in ways the outside world cannot understand. Intricately linked to this is the fact the seeking help from outside agencies is usually not acceptable, but women are forced to seek such help when faced with a very difficult choice. Community members can place additional burdens by shaming the woman, especially if she is in an inter-racial or same-gender relationship. Additionally, the isolation created by the community and the batterer can make it difficult for

Summary of Barriers

Institutional

Monolingual worker
Immigration
Welfare policy
Refugee resettlement
Racism and homophobia
Lack of health insurance
Lack of training
Lack of child care and affordable housing
Insensitive systems

Cultural

Values
Isolation
Shame
Other kinds of relationships (i.e., same gender or interracial)
Community
Religion
No support from community
No support from family

Individual

Values around shame and fear
Self esteem/self confidence
Language
Cultural fluency
Age
Lack of marketable skills
Status
Socialization patterns
Not knowing resources and law



a woman to know what resources are available and what the legal system can and cannot do for her.

When battered Asian women do seek help from outside agencies, the hurdles they face are tremendous. The primary institutional barriers are racism and homophobia and its variant expressions in the U.S. system. Racism is particularly problematic for Asian women. The attitude that immigrants don't belong and shouldn't ask for help or cause trouble is just one variant of racism. Another is the myth of the "model minority," which assumes that Asian women don't have issues with domestic violence. Yet another involves the xenophobic belief that people from colonized parts of the world are inferior to Americans.

Participants felt that the issue of racism was further complicated by a lack of clear racial identity within society. One participant expressed the feeling of not knowing where she belonged as a bi-cultural person. She felt that Asian Americans identify more as Asian and not enough as Americans, which can create barriers; and that in Asia, Asian Americans are not considered Asian at all. Moreover, Asians are not united under the banner of Asian Americans. She felt that such unity could strengthen the demand for better resources.

Immigration policy, especially the refugee resettlement policy, and the current welfare policy have additional barriers for battered Asian women. When a woman seeks services she encounters a number of barriers including lack of sensitivity of service providers; the need to justify accessing services; the lack of services overall, lack of documents (restraining or protection orders, multilingual signs in the courtrooms, multilingual brochures) in the woman's language, and the judicial system process. Once a woman decides to seek help but cannot get help because of problems with the service delivery or the criminal justice system, it becomes harder for her to think about seeking assistance again. All of the participants felt that, although individual and cultural barriers are difficult to overcome and are closely linked, institutional barriers are the most difficult to overcome but also the ones that need to be changed quickly.

What Should Happen to the Batterers?

All of the participants agreed that the perpetrator should be held accountable, but the question as to what that meant was more difficult to answer. There was general agreement that women should not have to bear the consequences — the batterer should pay for his actions. There was strong sentiment that the criminal justice system should not allow batterers to use the "cultural defense" argument,



wherein domestic violence is assumed to be part of the Asian culture. Advocates acknowledged that batterers are also loved family members, which makes sending them to jail a difficult decision. Three of the participants think that the batterers should go to jail to be punished. One participant responded that men leave jail worse than they were before, that “jail is the college for learning criminal behavior.” Another participant reminded everyone that the criminal justice system also has perpetrators. In all, it was agreed that punishment was necessary for the men to understand the consequences of their actions.

There was general agreement that options, other than those available from the criminal justice system, need to be explored. The use of community sanctions was discussed. In other countries, community sanctions in the form of shaming, ostracism, or banishment are socially acceptable and carry great weight for the perpetrator. Such sanctions are most effective in countries where the population doesn't move around much and perpetrators can be tracked and held accountable. However, in the U.S., which has a highly mobile population, keeping track of people is problematic. One suggestion was to post batterers' names on a website or attempt to get large monetary compensation for civil damages to the woman.

Lastly, there was concern about batterer's treatment programs, some of which exacerbate the batterer's problems and violent behavior.

Is Domestic Violence a Public Matter?

The participants agreed that domestic violence is both a community problem and a public matter. Violence in the home left unchecked by the community and government can lead to violence outside the home. Also, children affected by domestic violence may continue to perpetuate violence if society does not deal with the issue. One person felt that the government should do more to end violence against women since women are also taxpayers and the government has a responsibility to make its citizens feel safe in their own homes.

Another topic of discussion was the division of private and public violence. Participants felt strongly that private violence is a misnomer since private violence has enormous consequences on society in terms of the costs to taxpayers to cover emergency medical services, the police, the judicial system, and other services, as well as the affects on the morale, health, and safety of all citizens. Calling domestic violence a private matter is a way to silence the issue. It was suggested that falsely defining domestic violence as “private” may arise from using the word “domestic” instead of “family” or “public” violence. Some debate ensued



as to whether using the term “family” might be used to define only one type of family, i.e., heterosexual. All of the participants agreed that the public/private debate could be worked out if better connections were established between the issues, such as the link between domestic violence and violence in the media or other forms of gender violence.

What Can the Community Do to Stop the Violence?

The community has a moral responsibility to deal with domestic violence. When more community members get involved in stopping the violence, victims gain support, which helps them make life-affirming decisions. The community should also find ways to hold the batterer accountable. To eliminate patriarchy, communities need to be continually educated about male privilege. As one member pointed out though, some communities are reactionary and often difficult to change. For example, you can educate the police but you cannot change the masculinity of the police system. Any community education should also cover the connection between sexism resulting in gender violence and racism and homophobia.

The definition of “community” needs to be broadened to include service providers, the police, employers, and school officials, all of whom should undergo training on domestic violence so they can work with the victim on safety concerns and find ways to hold batterers accountable.

One of the participants reminded the group that each person is also a member of a community and needs to continue to educate everyone:

“...you know you have to handle the chisel if you want to chip away. You cannot just say, ‘Look, here this is wrong.’ Do something about it.... Here’s your chisel and get to work. The tool is how we raise our sons, how we raise our daughters, how we speak about domestic violence, how we encourage others to speak out.”

Children should be taught about domestic violence from an early age. They should learn that the violence they witness in the house is morally wrong and that there are ways to stop it. This is a critical group to educate: they are the future.



What Kinds of Services Would Make a Difference?

Participants determined that all of the resources that battered Asian women need should be made available. These include a national hotline to provide crisis intervention in all languages, safe homes in all counties of the nation, legal services that understand the issues facing immigrant and refugee women, and better intervention by the judicial system.

Additional resources and services should be mobilized for both documented and undocumented battered immigrant women. The latter should have access to special services due to their precarious situation. One New York advocate explained how New York City emergency shelters limit a woman's stay to ninety days, but public housing is not accessible to her if her immigration status is questionable or her papers haven't yet cleared. Sometimes, shelters deny access to undocumented women because of their reimbursement policy in that state. Now with welfare reform, the troubles for battered immigrant women are amplified.

Concerns about the judicial system included its lack of trained interpreters, and that the interpreters should be held accountable for any collusion with the perpetrator to pressure the woman to drop charges, etc. Another concern was the trouble the system causes the women when it pushes them to prosecute. The participants agreed that there needs to be a mandate to provide clear and concise training for all professionals in all systems and to encourage creative solutions. Mainstream programs should integrate services for Asian American women and collaborate with community-based programs.

Discussion ensued about the kinds of funding necessary. Funding should fit the needs of the women in the community rather than the community fitting the needs of the funding agency and institutionalizing the community-based program. Funding has to be consistent, and a wide range of essential services must be provided. Lack of such services may force a battered woman to return to the perpetrator, especially for financial reasons.

Participants felt that crisis services should be enhanced and consistently provided to all Asian women. Continued services that help women after they have left shelters should also receive funding, such as transitional and affordable housing, job skills training and job placement assistance, child care, ESL classes, driving lessons, and continued support services. Service professionals should undergo cultural sensitivity training to better assist Asian American women. The training should address the intersections of the various forms of oppression. All of the services should work together to alleviate a woman having to repeat her story to the different providers.



All of the participants agreed that the discussion focused mainly on intervention, which is necessary and needed, but that much more focus needs to be given to primary prevention in the specific ethnic community.

One of the survivors explained that receiving help from a service provider dedicated to helping women from the Asian community made a difference. The Asian Women's Shelter explained to her all of her options, guided her through the entire process, and supported her unconditionally. Along with the Family Violence Prevention Fund, AWS provided support long after she had left the abusive relationship by connecting her to a job training and placement program and other support services for women who have left. These were essential for her and her child to continue to live free from violence.



Conclusion and Recommendations

Joining together to talk about the issues confronting battered Asian American women was exhilarating for all of the participants who were inspired by the new ideas, perspectives, and strategies. As stated by one woman, “It gives new perspective when I go back to work. I feel rejuvenated.” Many of the participants felt it was important for those who have been in the movement for so long to continue to get together, and one participant wants to reclaim this opportunity so that Asian American women can continue to reinterpret their cultures and change their communities.

There was broad consensus that battered Asian women share common concerns. All of the groups highlighted the issues of shame, family, community, and isolation. Cultural issues vary for each community; for example, religion is critical for the Filipina community, while dowry is a serious concern for South Asians. Another common concern was racism within professional agencies. Many of the advocates felt they needed to focus on educating their own community as a means to provide support for a woman choosing to live free of violence. The need to develop national strategies was made clear: advocates need to continue conversations to learn what strategies work where and how.

Survivors, researchers, and advocates agreed that strategies used by women in other parts of the world should be learned to see if they might work at the local or national level. The willingness to look outside the U.S. was important.

In conclusion, while Asian American women have done a lot of work for women in their communities, it is clear to see that there is still much work to be done.

The following remarks from the focus groups may serve as a basis for recommendations to improve services to battered Asian women.

- There was clear consensus that domestic violence is a serious issue in all the Asian American communities.
- Research is needed to bolster anecdotal evidence of the extent of violence against women. This research should be inclusive of all groups that comprise Asian America and highlight the differences as well as the commonalities of the groups.
- Racism seriously limits access to law enforcement and social services, but on occasion, both have provided sensitive services to Asian American battered women.



- Law enforcement has to work with the community to better understand the needs of Asian American battered women.
- Law enforcement officials need to undergo extensive training on raising awareness of racism and developing protocols and policies that will address the needs of Asian American women.
- Racism in the mainstream social services has to be addressed and specific policies developed to build effective services.
- Specialized immigration services should be made available and easily accessible throughout the U.S.
- Consistent and available interpreter services in all Asian languages should be available in all systems. Interpreters should be trained on the issue of domestic violence and be held accountable when there is evidence of collusion with the perpetrator.
- Various sanctions for Asian American perpetrators should be considered. They should be sensitive to cultural nuances but still hold the perpetrators accountable.
- Funding for Asian American domestic violence programs and services should be consistent and available throughout the nation. This should include funding for community outreach and education.
- Funding should allow for dialogue on current concerns and theories on domestic violence, e.g. annual conferences to discuss current state of knowledge, creative programs, and activities among the Asian American domestic violence programs.
- All national policies should consider issues for Asian American battered women.
- Asian American advocates should act in an advisory capacity for all national, state, and local initiatives.



Appendix

Tables

Questionnaire

National Resources



Tables

These tables represent the questions from the generated lists and the number of participants who agreed with the items. Not all who were present responded; consequently the numbers may not add up to the total number of participants.

Table 1
Prevalence of Domestic Violence in the Asian American Community

| | |
|---|---|
| experience working with women | 6 |
| child survivor | 1 |
| adult survivor | 6 |
| experience working in the field of feminism | 4 |
| seen in community and family | 5 |

Table 2
Causes of Domestic Violence

| | |
|--|----|
| Legacy of patriarchy and sexism | 16 |
| Socialization in the culture | 11 |
| Power and control | 2 |
| Oppression | 1 |
| No accountability for the batterers | 10 |
| Acceptance in the community | 12 |
| Religion | 2 |
| Entitlement | 1 |
| Loss of status | 1 |
| Gender factor | 2 |
| Lack of good role models | 1 |
| Belief that the relationship is all that matters | 1 |



Table 3
Who Are the Victims?

| | |
|-----------|----|
| Women | 22 |
| Children | 7 |
| Family | 5 |
| Community | 5 |
| Men | 1 |
| Batterers | 1 |
| Pets | 2 |

Table 4
Who Are the Perpetrators?

| | |
|--------------------------------|----|
| Male partners | 20 |
| Extended family | 5 |
| Neighbors | 5 |
| Teens who batter their mothers | 1 |
| Those who have power | 6 |
| Women | 2 |
| Community | 15 |

Table 5
Is Calling the Police an Option?

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Yes | 18 |
| No | 1 |
| Under certain circumstances | 2 |



Table 6
Concerns Regarding the Police

| | |
|--|----|
| Past bad experiences | 6 |
| Fear of racism, harassment, and deportation | 18 |
| Could lead to another difficult situation | 3 |
| Depends on situation and if the police have been trained | 5 |
| No action taken by the police | 4 |
| Some good experiences with trained police | 3 |

Table 7
Is Calling the Hotline an Option?

| | |
|-----------------------------|----|
| Yes | 18 |
| No | 1 |
| Under certain circumstances | 2 |

Table 8
Concerns Regarding the Hotline

| | |
|--|----|
| Serious language barrier | 15 |
| No multilingual access | 16 |
| Not immigrant friendly | 3 |
| Gives out suitable information | 5 |
| Provides emotional support and resources | 7 |
| Some good experiences | 5 |



Table 9
What Should Happen to the Perpetrator?

| | |
|---|----|
| Tough jail sentences | 6 |
| Batterers treatment programs | 2 |
| Hold him accountable | 22 |
| Community sanction | 15 |
| Banishment | 2 |
| Monetary fine | 2 |
| Do not allow him to use “cultural defense” arguments - severe sanction | 2 |

Table 10
What Can the Community do?

| | |
|---|----|
| Educate community | 22 |
| Educate families | 2 |
| Community should hold him accountable | 18 |
| Public schools should teach domestic violence | 11 |
| Eliminate patriarchy | 2 |
| Provide support to victim | 2 |
| Change institutional barriers | 2 |

Table 11
What Kinds of Services are Useful?

| | |
|---|----|
| National multilingual hotline | 5 |
| More collaborative work | 9 |
| Safe home in every county | 4 |
| More prevention program | 18 |
| Transitional housing | 11 |
| Public campaign on Asian domestic violence | 5 |
| Funding to meet the needs of the community and not vice versa | 8 |
| Effective training for all service providers | 9 |
| Funding for follow-up services | 13 |
| Community support for victims | 22 |
| Integration into mainstream programs | 2 |



Questionnaire

1. Do you think domestic violence occurs in the Asian Community?

If yes, how do you know it occurs? If no, how do you know it does not occur?

2. What causes domestic violence, and why?

3. Who are the victims of domestic violence?

4. Who are the perpetrators of domestic violence?

5. As an advocate (or a member of the community) do you feel that calling the police is an option for a survivor?

Would you advise someone you are helping to call the police?

If yes, why?

If no, why?

6. As an advocate (or a member of the community) do you feel that calling the local domestic violence hotline is an option?

Are you comfortable advising someone you are helping to call your local domestic violence hotline?

If yes, why?

If no, why?



7. What are the barriers confronting Asian survivors of domestic violence?

8. What do you think should happen to the perpetrator or batterer?

9. Is domestic violence a public matter?

If yes, why?

If no, why?

10. What could the community do to stop domestic violence?

11. What kind of services would make a difference for battered Asian women



National Resources

(Partial Listing)

Apna Ghar

4753 N. Broadway, Suite 518
Chicago, IL 60640
Crisis Line: 323/334-0173
800/717-0757
Office Line: 323/334-4663
Specifically for South Asians

Asian Women's Shelter

3543 18th Street, #19
San Francisco, CA 94110
415/751-0880
415/751-7110

Asian Task Force Against Domestic Violence, Inc.

P.O. Box 120108
Boston, MA 02112
Crisis Line: 617/338-2350

Asian Women's Home

2400 Moorpark, #300
San Jose, CA 95128
408/975-2739
408/975-2730

Center for the Asian/Pacific Family

543 N. Fairfax, Room 108
Los Angeles, CA 90036
323/653-4042

Kan Win Korean Hotline

P.O. Box 59133
Chicago, IL 60659
773/583-1392

Maitri Crisis Line

P.O. Box 60111
Sunnyvale, CA 94086
408/730-4049
Specifically for South Asians



Manavi

P.O. Box 2131
Union, NJ 07083
908/687-1353
Specifically for South Asians

Narika

P.O. Box 14014
Berkeley, CA 94712
800/215-7308
510/540-0754
Specifically for South Asians

New York Asian Women's Center

39 Bowery, Box 375
New York, NY 10002
212/732-5230

Rainbow Center

P.O. Box 540929
Flushing, NY 11354
718/539-6546
Specifically for Korean community

SAKHI

P.O. Box 20208
Greeley Square Station
New York, NY 10001
212/695-5447
Specifically for South Asians



Family Violence Prevention Fund
383 Rhode Island Street, Suite 304
San Francisco, CA 94102-5133
Phone: 415.252.8900 Fax: 415.282.8991
<http://www.fvpf.org>