



Domestic Violence Awareness: for Social Change

ACTION

Developed by the
Domestic Violence Awareness Project
in collaboration with
National Resource Center on Domestic Violence



DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS: Action for Social Change

Developed by the

Domestic Violence Awareness Project

in collaboration with the

National Resource Center on Domestic Violence

a project of the

Pennsylvania Coalition Against Domestic Violence

Funding

Funding provided by a grant from the
National Center for Injury Prevention and Control,
Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC)

Grant #U1V/CCU312521-08-3

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Special Thanks

The Domestic Violence Awareness Project extends special thanks to the many advisory group members and affiliated organization staff who contributed and reviewed text for this manual.

The project staff and advisory group members also thank the many individuals and organizations who contributed information about Domestic Violence Awareness Month events they have planned over the years.

Table of Contents

Domestic Violence Awareness Project	vi
Domestic Violence Awareness Month	vii
Introduction to <i>Domestic Violence Awareness: Action for Social Change</i>	viii
A Note on Gender and Language	ix
 CHAPTER ONE – Violence Against Women and Social Change	
Gender Violence and Patriarchy	1
by Grace Poore and Firoza Chic Dabby-Chinoy Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence	
Social Change to End Violence Against Women (or to Reclaim Women’s Sovereignty)	11
by Brenda Hill Sacred Circle, National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women	
Culture and Disability	17
by Deborah Beck-Massey Domestic Violence Initiatives for Women with Disabilities	
Whose Voice, Whose Table?	31
by Grace Poore Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence	
 CHAPTER TWO – Working Within Our Own Communities	
Introduction	43
Working Within Our Own Communities: Older Adults	44
by Deb Spangler National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life	
Ending Violence Against Native Women: Working Within Our Nations	55
by Brenda Hill Sacred Circle, National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women	
Working Within Our Own Communities: Asians and Pacific Islanders	65
by Firoza Chic Dabby-Chinoy Asian & Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence	
 DISCUSSION OF TERMS	
An Open-ended Discussion of Some Terms Used	79
by Brenda Hill Sacred Circle, National Resource Center to End Violence Against Native Women	
 RESOURCES	
National Organizations	87
Tribal Coalitions	93
State Domestic Violence Organizations	95

NOTE: This is Section One of *Domestic Violence Awareness: Action for Social Change*. Section Two, currently being developed, will address organizing and communications planning.

Domestic Violence Awareness Project

In 1995, the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC DV) convened several national domestic violence organizations – the Family Violence Prevention Fund, the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, the National Domestic Violence Hotline and later the National Network to End Domestic Violence – to launch a new effort to support domestic violence programs’ awareness and education efforts for Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM), observed annually in October. The collaborative effort became the Domestic Violence Awareness Project (DVAP).

Over the years, the project has evolved and today the DVAP is a diverse and unique partnership of local, tribal, state and national domestic violence organizations and networks. The DVAP collaborates to collect, develop and distribute resources and ideas relevant to advocates’ ongoing public and prevention awareness and education efforts not only in preparation for DVAM, but also throughout the year. The work of the DVAP strives to creatively bring to life its statement of purpose:

The Domestic Violence Awareness Project (DVAP) supports the rights of all women and girls to live in peace and dignity. Violence and all other forms of oppression against all communities of women and their children must be eliminated. To change belief systems and practices that support violence against all women, the DVAP recognizes and promotes the participation of the entire community in building social intolerance towards domestic violence.

The purpose of the DVAP is to support and promote the national, tribal, state and local advocacy networks in their ongoing public education efforts through public awareness campaigns, strategies, materials, resources, capacity-building and technical assistance. These strategies include campaigns that address the victimization of women throughout their lifespan. The voices, leadership and expertise of women who have been battered are acknowledged as critical and necessary components of these campaigns.

(Created April 2000)

Please visit us online at dvam.vawnet.org or contact the Technical Assistance and Public Education team of the NRC DV if you would like more information about the project or to be added to our mailing list. Our contact information is:

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Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Domestic Violence Awareness Month (DVAM) evolved from the “Day of Unity” in October 1981 conceived by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. The intent was to connect advocates across the nation who were working to end violence against women and their children. The Day of Unity soon became an entire week devoted to a range of activities conducted at the local, state, and national levels.

The activities conducted were as varied and diverse as the program sponsors but had common themes: mourning those who have died because of domestic violence, celebrating those who have survived, and connecting those who work to end violence.

In October 1987, the first Domestic Violence Awareness Month was observed. That same year marks the initiation of the first national domestic violence toll-free hotline. In 1989 the U.S. Congress passed Public Law 101-112 designating October of that year as National Domestic Violence Awareness Month. Such legislation has passed every year since with NCADV providing key leadership in this effort. Each year, the Day of Unity is celebrated the first Monday of Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

- Adapted from the *1996 Domestic Violence Awareness Month Resource Manual* of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

Introduction to DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS: Action for Social Change

It is, as always, an honor to support you in the work that you do, including your efforts to raise the awareness of and educate our communities about domestic violence. The Domestic Violence Awareness Project (DVAP), coordinated by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence (NRC DV), is particularly proud to present to you the first installment of the revised manual *Domestic Violence Awareness: Action for Social Change* (formerly titled *Domestic Violence Awareness: Tips, Tactics & Resources*). This manual draws upon the expertise of its authors – members of our Project Advisory Group, a committed, diverse and experienced group. As always, the manual is intended to be

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of knowledge evolve, so
will this material**

dynamic and organic, meaning that as our collective bodies of knowledge evolve, so will this material. We (both the NRC DV and the DVAP Advisory Group) believe that the diversity of perspectives in this material is its very strength. As befits our Advisory Group, the organizations they represent and their constituencies, you will find in these pages a tremendous array and scope of experience, priorities, approaches, analyses and

opinions, always from an advocacy-based perspective. Consequently, you may expect to find similarities, differences, parallels and perhaps contradictions from one piece to another. The NRC DV believes that the best work we can do at this time is to provide a means to gather this information and distribute it to you. We hope it elicits rich discussions and many more contributions, and that in the process you find it useful and inspiring. Please let us know what you think! You may call us at (800) 537-2238 or complete and return the enclosed feedback form. We will use your input to direct future revisions and rewrites.

In this first installment you will find discussions of social change, gender and language and analyses of violence against women. You will also find the beginnings of a new section titled “Working within Our Own Communities.” It is to date comprised of contributions from advocates who work with Asian and Pacific Islander communities, Native communities and older adults. This section of the manual assumes an individual and organizational commitment in that it is not intended to train advocates to serve the people so far represented here, it is instead meant to further support those already doing this work. We hope it begins to illustrate the tremendous power, creativity and mobilization of advocates nationwide and also inspire each of us to move beyond minimum standards of operation.

We have already begun work on the second installment of the manual is devoted to discussions of communications planning – not only what it is and some strategies and tools, but also, we hope, some candid discussions of what some of the current and common roadblocks might be. We hope to support you in a broad range of your communications work, including but not limited to, events planning and other awareness initiatives, training/education initiatives, collaborative efforts with other organizations and systems, working with media and internal program communications (how we describe our histories and visions, train our staff, foster our best efforts, etc.). We look forward to devoting the next project year to this part of the manual.

Again, thank you for the work that you do, and please let us know how we may best support you in the future.

A Note on Gender and Language

At the request of the DVAP Advisory Group, the NRC DV organized conversations in the fall of 2003 specifically devoted to exploring the use of gender in the language used to describe the work to end domestic violence: “battered woman” vs. “victims and survivors of domestic violence,” etc. There were, of course, varying perspectives and convictions – while Project Advisory Group members and staff may agree that domestic violence is a gendered phenomenon and part of the broader reality of violence against women that serves to maintain the patriarchy, we struggle with holding ourselves accountable to those we automatically exclude when we present the victim as female/mother and the batterer as male. We found that what we were really talking about were our conceptualizations of sex (biology) and gender (social norms) and how they must, at the same time, both converge and remain distinct. We were talking about how we have learned to see things as either/or, for example, pass/fail, guilty/innocent and, in this case, male/female, to identify and judge ourselves and others, and how this limits us and becomes its own means of power and control. We were talking about whether or not we can honestly say we respectfully serve and fully support all victims and survivors of domestic violence. We were talking about the possibility of our own collusion.

The flip side of the same coin, however, was that as we listened to each other – not to figure out how to build our defenses, but to stretch our own thinking – we were also beginning to articulate the enormous possibilities within reach to strengthen immeasurably the work we have already done. Consider the following and the weight it adds to the term, “violence against women”:

If the boundaries around ‘women’ become trenches, what happens to inter-sexual people? Can we really fix a policy that’s so clear about who was born ‘woman’? ... If we were going to decide who is a ‘real’ woman, who would we empower to decide, and how could the checkpoints be established? ... The modern trans liberation movement is redrawing the boundaries to show the depth and breadth of sex and gender oppression in this society.

(Feinberg, 1996)

We found, therefore, that the questions at hand – what defines woman and who decides – potentially constitute a paradigm shift for us in that they call into question what we define as “the work” and how we do it. We need more time and constant critical thought in order to acknowledge and reconcile the excellent work done by domestic violence programs and advocates with the continued movement that constitutes social change. At this point we have no consensus, we have no answers, we have only the agreement to hold ourselves accountable and listen to each other, question each other and proceed with the work each of us does in the manner that we deem most respectful and integrated. So in the manual you will find that different authors approach the issues differently; it is the hope of project advisory group members and staff to be able, in time to come, to further our analyses and share our “why’s” and “how’s” with you.

The NRC DV staff wish to thank Sujata Warriar for facilitating and contributing to these discussions.

Works Cited

Feinberg, L. (1996). *Transgender Warriors: Making History from Joan of Arc to Dennis Rodman*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press.

