

Coalition Chronicles

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Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence
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Organizing: Power to the People to Prevent Domestic Violence

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This edition of *Coalition Chronicles* was a project of WCADV's Prevention Workgroup:
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A Message from the Director

Have you ever asked yourself, "how do I prevent something from happening?" Instinctively, most of us know that we have to do some advance planning and plot out anticipatory measures to do so. We have to determine what the outcome might be if we don't develop and implement some type of counteraction to that possible outcome. Seems quite a bit like gazing into our future using a crystal ball, doesn't it? This is exactly what WCADV has been working towards for the past 9 years as we started to ask ourselves, "how can we prevent domestic violence from happening?" As we have sought to prevent violence, we have tried our best to understand the root causes of abuse and to position ourselves out in front of those causes, stopping them from ever happening in the first place. While it's difficult to imagine that we will ever be able to fully accomplish the goal of preventing domestic violence, we completely believe that our work to prevent this type of human suffering is worth our efforts.

This Coalition Chronicles represents the final entry of a year-long series on Prevention of Domestic Violence. We hope that you have found inspiration and new vision towards a brighter, violence-free future in these pages. As we are on this journey together, we all look forward to a day in which all humans will be treated with dignity and respect. This is something we can all wish for in the new year!

Sending you peaceful wishes in 2012.

Patti Seger

Wise Youth: Inspiring, Learning, Creating Today and for the Future

“I learned about inspiring people. I learned a lot. I learned to be nice. I learned to be me.”

These are just some of the things 6th grader, Yakira, learned after taking the Discovery Dating class with Wise Women Gathering Place’s Program Outreach Specialist, Jen Schanen.

Jen “came on the scene”, as she puts it, to join the Wise Women Gathering Place (WWGP) in 2010. As the Program Outreach Specialist, Jen does many things, including working with the WWGP’s Discovery Dating Program and Wise Youth. When Jen tells people about what she does for work, a common response is “Oh... so you’re a teacher?”, and Jen responds with, “No, I’m more of a facilitator”. Working with youth in the Oneida, Seymour and Green Bay communities, Jen teaches informally in many capacities, but she states with confidence and ease, “the kids know what they’re doing”. As an adult ally facilitating youth work and change, Jen believes the “point is to break it down until things make sense” instead of believing that “kids are inherently not destined to ‘get it’”. It’s about “working it out of them and putting it into a framework to have what they want to see happen.... happen!” To break it down, Jen is a rockin’ preventionista, meeting youth where they are at and helping them create change in their communities.

DISCOVERY DATING AND WISE YOUTH GROWING ACROSS THE AGES---

Discovery Dating is the WWGP’s healthy relationships curriculum, written by executive director and retired midwife, Alice Skenadore. “Discovery Dating has shown promising results in preventing teen pregnancy, and is currently being assessed for its impact on improving personal agency and preventing other risk behavior such as intimate partner violence. The curriculum teaches students of all ages methods to make better

decisions, set goals, and identify personal values”, Jen explains.

The Discovery Dating Program has proved to be a wonderful catalyst of change for youth in the community with “2010-2011 school year pre- and post-test results indicating that Discovery Dating students at Oneida Middle School increased their personal agency by 12%”. This gain in personal capacity has carried over to the exciting change happening with Wise Youth. “Wise Youth confronts issues like dating violence, sexual assault, teen pregnancy, suicide, and alcohol and drug abuse head on... <they> do service projects, have great conversations about important topics, and raise awareness in the community.” Many of the youth participating in Wise Youth also participated in the Discovery Dating Program in their schools and community. Some got involved in Wise Youth after their participation in the Discovery Dating Program, others got connected through the schools’ guidance counselors and another large group got involved through their peers. One Wise Youth member brought a friend, another brought their cousin... that cousin brought their cousin... and the group expanded.

Last year 5-10 youth came to their Friday afternoon meetings and this year attendance has grown to 15-25 coming together weekly with the participants usually being in the 5th to 12th grades. The environment and community create an open space where youth of all ages can learn from each other and Wise Youth participants’ ages can range from 6 to 18 year old some weeks. The intergenerational dynamic as well as the youth-led focus of the group have created many opportunities for the older youth to “step up” and help out with activities like a lock-in, explains Jen. Not only do the older youth in the group recognize they are leaders in Wise Youth, they “realize they are leaders in their classrooms and communities, making good choices”.

POSITIVE SAFE SPACES FOR GROWTH---

Wise Youth is about a lot of things— one of which is giving youth a positive environment to be in for a few hours each week. There is stability that comes from having a core group of consistent adults in the space and there is variety that comes with the activities. There are many kinesthetic and active opportunities for youth that support different ways of learning and processing that may not be addressed in the classroom. “The space is safe and full of good role models”, Jen describes. “It’s a place where the youth can make a difference and be leaders”. They can work on their communication skills and “find better ways to speak with each other and to be open”. It’s a place where youth receive “messages that there are adults and peers that care about them”. It’s a place where youth “can just be themselves!” In addition to the positive group environment, Jen makes time to “work one-on-one with setting dreams and goals” for each of you the youth, “so they know someone believes in them”.

The details of what happens in the space (and community!) each week are inspired and led by what the youth are doing and wanting to do. Using [ToP Facilitation](#) and [Focused Conversation](#), the youth come to a consensus and name what they want to do for the-short term and longer term. When the Wise Youth got together in September to have a consensus workshop about what they wanted to do this year that supported their mission, they came up with a long list of ideas that fit into categories such as “Being Positive Prevention”, “Helping People and Animals”, “Working with Elders”, and of course, just “Fun Stuff”. The list includes many ideas such as “be drug, alcohol, cig and bully free” and “make positive videos” to “be super active”, “help people everywhere” and “have treasure hunts”.

The last few months have included a variety of activities such as participating in the Oneida’s Relay for Life to raise money for cancer research and prevention (including brave donations of some

Wise Youths' hair for wigs for cancer patients), serving dinner at a thanksgiving feast for community members, organizing games and activities for other kids at the Oneida Farmer’s Market Bash, spreading nice messages through “reverse trick-or-treating” where treats and positive messages were left on door steps, raking leaves at elders’ houses, participating in the Oneida Powwow Parade (and winning first, no less, in the vehicle category with their message of Peace, Respect, & Belonging)--- just to name a few! Not only are Wise Youth reaching out in their own community, they are traveling to different parts of the state to attend conferences that bring together communities of youth to share ideas and make connections.

“At an age where it can be hard for youth to think outside of themselves and are busy juggling lots of internal things”, Schanen says, “<the Wise Youth> are attending lots of community events, finding volunteer opportunities and just trying to be out and about with the community”.





CONNECTING WITH THE COMMUNITY---

When asked what about how her work is community organizing, Jen responds that Wise Women Gathering Place itself has been community organizing since its start with talking circles done by Alice Skenadore (WWGP Executive Director) and Beverly Scow (WWGP Assistant Director). For years, a circle of women came together weekly, meeting around the kitchen table, studying topics related to childbirth and midwifery, sharing their problems and coming together with open ears and hearts to resolve the challenge or offer support. Since then, WWGP has “grown exponentially and now encompasses several endeavors intended to promote Peace, Respect, and Belonging in our community” as the website states and as their many programs show. Wise Youth and the Discovery Dating Program are two of those endeavors that continue to directly engage youth of the community and reach out to the larger communities they are a part of.

Doing community organizing is “what makes sense”, Jen says. “The trauma this community has suffered is because someone from the inside or outside thought they knew what was best” and it's important for "people to feel like they're being heard". Today, the community is “looking for healing and change, working through historical trauma” (see side definition of historical trauma). This healing and change seems to be cross-generational. “Kids are ready for something positive. There is an urge to be optimistic”.

With Wise Youth and the other WWGP work Jen is involved in such as a committee looking at barriers to accessing wellness and healing services, it’s been important to “move forward with community

Historical Trauma

Historical Trauma (HT) is cumulative in its emotional and psychological wounding, over the lifespan and across generations, emanating from massive trauma experiences. (Nebelkopf, 2004) The historical trauma response (HTR) may include substance abuse as a vehicle for attempting to numb the pain associated with trauma. The HTR often includes other types of self-destructive behavior, suicide thoughts and gestures, depression, anxiety, low self-esteem, anger and difficulty recognizing and expressing emotions. (Nebelkopf, 2004)

The legacy of historical trauma, specifically regarding boarding schools, has negatively impacted [Native families]. The HTR is complicated by socioeconomic conditions, racism and oppression. Risk factors, including mental illness and other family problems among Native people, may be exacerbated by the HTR and generations of untreated HT survivors may pass on this trauma to subsequent generations. (Nebelkopf, 2004) Parental and other intergenerational boarding school experiences negatively impact protective factors against substance abuse, such as parental competence, parental emotional availability and support, and parental involvement with a child’s schooling. (Nebelkopf, 2004)

Parents raised in boarding schools were victims of punitive discipline, were stripped of their cultural values, many were beaten and locked in basements for speaking their language and practicing their culture, and a devastating separation from family as children as young as four years old. (Clary, 2011)

A lack of effective Native parenting role models and the lack of nurturing, as well as the presence of abuse in boarding schools, have resulted in parents who are uninvolved, non-nurturing, punitive, and authoritarian to varying degrees. Consequences of the boarding school legacy and spiritual oppression-poor spiritual foundation, weak Native identity, and poor family affiliation-are associated with Indian youth alcohol and other substance abuse. (Nebelkopf, 2004)

feedback and meet people where they are at”, Jen says. “When you get rigid, you’re not meeting the needs of community”.

FUTURES WITH FLEXIBILITY AND HOPE---

Jen and the other Wise Women Gathering Place staff continue to have flexibility and check in with the women who once met around Alice’s kitchen table (and continue to meet around formal and informal kitchen tables) and those like them, as well as with the younger generations whose voices are being heard through Wise Youth and beyond.

Meeting the needs of communities through their feedback, meeting them where they are at and being flexible will look different in different communities. Efforts can appear large and subtle. For instance, last year when the Wise Youth wanted to make videos on QPR (question, persuade, refer) for suicide prevention, compassionate communication and bystander intervention and properties of tobacco for smoking cessation, Jen remained flexible despite potential technology obstacles and helped the Wise Youth make what they wanted to see happen.... happen! Based on the youths' energy and their consensus workshop plans in September, these won't be the last of the videos with youth sharing their voice about issues that are important to them and their communities.

As Wise Youth grows, Jen hopes the youth continue to “be more positive, less likely to hold each other down and have good words for each other”. Jen shares with gratitude, “I am lucky to be a part of this community.”



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Continued...

In terms of healthy relationships, being raised in boarding schools provided no healthy relationship models, of couples co-parenting, problem solving together, and celebrating together as a couple.

The effects of historical trauma are not exclusive to Native American communities, and not just emotional but physical, too. Populations that experience chronic stress build up wear and tear on their organs and systems. In African American communities, this leads to premature birth weights that are twice that of white American women. Says one African American woman, “It’s like gunning the engine of a car, without ever letting up. Just wearing it out, wearing it out without rest. And I think that the stresses of everyday racism are doing that” (California Newsreel, 2008).

ALL PEOPLE ARE IMPACTED BY HISTORICAL TRAUMA.

All people have a history that involves war, racism, sexism, gender discrimination, heterosexism, persecution due to spiritual beliefs, ageism, slavery, torture, witch hunts, famine and/or others forms of suffering as a group of people with a shared experience. Our ancestors survived and coped as best they could, but when an overwhelming hurt occurs, we internalize it, carry it and pass it on to our next generation, and so on. However, there is much hope for change in our community. Discovery Dating provides an incredible opportunity to begin healing and is a vitally necessary approach to counteract these dire circumstances.

I think it does us all a disservice when people who work for social change are presented as saints – so much more noble than the rest of us. We get a false sense that from the moment they were born they were called to act, never had doubts, were bathed in a circle of light. But I'm much more inspired learning how people succeeded despite their failings and uncertainties. It's a much less intimidating image. It makes me feel like I have a shot at changing things too.

*-Sonya Tinsley,
A young African-American
activist*

Social Movement Victories

We can feel overwhelmed when we consider the enormous change required to end violence against women. How can each of us actually make a difference? WCADV uses a brief exercise to take a fresh look at how we can make change happen. The exercise aims to:

- Identify social change movements in the US and beyond
- Link our work to these movements
- Explore elements that have helped changes become permanent

For a full description and directions for this Social Movement Victories exercise visit :

<http://www.wcadv.org/prevention-exercises>



Wisconsin Woman Honored with Two National Awards for Community Organizing Work on Domestic and Other Violence

Kabzuag Vaj, a community organizer and advocate with victims of domestic violence has been recognized with two national level awards this year: as a Champion of Change by President Obama and as a recipient of the Alston Bannerman Sabbatical Fellowship.



In June, Kabzuag was informed she was a recipient of the Fellowship. Since 1988, the Alston Bannerman Fellowship has honored and supported longtime organizers of color by giving them the resources to take time out for reflection and renewal. Fellows receive a financial award to take sabbaticals for three months or more. To qualify for an Alston Bannerman Sabbatical Fellowship, a recipient must:

- be a person of color living in the USA (or territories)
- have more than 10 years of community organizing experience
- be committed to social change work in communities of color

Beyond the basic eligibility criteria, the Alston Bannerman Program seeks applicants whose work:

- attacks root causes of inequity by organizing those affected to take collective strategic action;
- challenges the systems that perpetrate injustice and effects institutional and structural change;
- builds community capacity for democratic participation and develops grassroots leadership;
- acknowledges the cultural values of the community;
- creates accountable participatory structures in which community members have decision-making power;
- contributes to building a movement for social change by making connections between issues, developing alliances with other constituencies, and collaborating with other organizations.

The Alston Bannerman Program believes that **organizing** low-income people at the grassroots level is an indispensable part of successful social change.

Kabzuag was also one of 14 leaders from across the country who were honored as Champions of Change in a White House ceremony in October, Domestic Violence Awareness month. Following is text from a Women of Color Network Update written by Doua Thor regarding this recognition:

Kabzuag Vaj – A Champion of Change in Eradicating Violence in AAPI Communities

Kabzuag Vaj’s story begins like that of many other Hmong Americans who immigrated to this country. As a child, she arrived in the U.S. as a refugee with her mother and siblings. She spoke no English, had few resources, and life was difficult, but at 15 years old she began working to empower and organize her community. Last Thursday, she was honored by the White House as a “Champion of Change” for her work to eradicate domestic violence. This honor is a testament to her courage, dedication, and passion for serving low-income immigrant communities. I am proud to support my friend as she is honored for her work during Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

I first met Kabzuag many years ago when we were starting our careers as advocates for Southeast Asian American, particularly Hmong American, communities in Minnesota and Wisconsin. Over a million Southeast Asian American refugees were resettled in the United States from 1975 to 2002—a large percentage making their new home in these Midwestern states. The Hmong had fought alongside American troops in Laos during the war in Southeast Asia, and they were brought to the U.S. as refugees when a Communist government took over the country in 1975 and began persecuting the Hmong for their allegiance to America. Because of their history as refugees, and because of their relatively recent arrival to this country, the community continues to face high rates of poverty and other issues including barriers to education and health access.

Kabzuag now serves as Executive Director of Freedom, Inc., a grassroots organization that advocates and serves low income communities of color in Madison, Wisconsin. The organization, which she also co-founded, looks at root causes of violence by offering empowerment, organizing, and leadership training to women, youth of color, and queer youth.

Like many other cultures, Hmong Americans rarely discuss domestic violence. Traditionally, Hmong marriage disputes are mediated by male relatives of the married couple and couples are usually compelled to stay together no matter how violent the situation. For women, going outside of this system to find help is an act of defiance and courage.

According to a study by the Asian and Pacific Islander Institute on Domestic Violence, 41 – 61% of Asian women report experiencing physical or sexual violence by an intimate partner in their lifetime. Moreover, a significant percentage of Asian American children are also exposed to domestic and family violence—60% of Cambodians, 62% of Chinese, 80% of Koreans, and 72% of Vietnamese report experiencing physical abuse as children.

For years, Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) women like Kabzuag have been an integral part in ensuring that the anti-domestic violence movement includes the voices and experiences of AAPI women and advocating for culturally and linguistically appropriate responses for our communities. While we honor Kabzuag and all the “Champions of Change,” let us also remember the struggles and contributions of all AAPI women who have, over the years, worked tirelessly to find an end to domestic violence.

Congratulations Kabzuag!

Doua Thor serves as a Commissioner for the President’s Advisory Commission on Asian Americans and Pacific Islanders.

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Three Phases of Evaluation Through Community Readiness Assessment Model

This article is a companion to *Developing Prevention Action Plan using Community Readiness Model* which appeared in WCADV's Coalition Chronicles Vol. 30 Violence Prevention Fundamentals – Building a Foundation.

For many of us evaluation means the work we do toward the end of a project. It feels complicated, time consuming and, maybe even, unrewarding.

What if we could find tools that help us shift our thinking and experience with evaluation? What if we could build evaluation into the beginning of a project or new effort, not just the end? What if evaluation could help us shape what efforts we make to end domestic and dating violence?

Through the DELTA primary prevention project, WCADV has begun thinking about evaluation as a wrap-around effort – assessment, implementation and reflection. Evaluation is the work we do first and the decisions we make to get a project going. It's connected to our daily, weekly or monthly endeavors to accomplish our goals. And it is ways we measure if we succeed and to what degree.

One of the tools that WCADV uses to incorporate evaluation into all phases of our work is [Community Readiness Assessment Model](#) by the Tri-Ethnic Center for Prevention Research. The Community Readiness Model

helps you to 1) identify which of the nine readiness levels your community represents and 2) craft a plan of action to bring the community further forward in its awareness, understanding and support of domestic and dating violence prevention. The Model requires four to six community leader interviews, followed by scoring, and finally group action planning. After nine to twelve months you reassess using another round of interviews to measure if change has occurred. (Additional overview information about the Community Readiness Model is available in [WCADV Coalition Chronicles Vol. 30 Violence Prevention Fundamentals – Building a Foundation](#))

Around Wisconsin, the Community Readiness model has been used in multiple ways. A CCR that wanted to ramp up its action around domestic violence awareness in its community used the Model to reach out to displaced workers. A sexual assault advocate used the Model to expand her agency's presence in one of the small cities in their coverage area. And a children's advocate worked with school personnel to form a response and prevention effort after a high profile harassment incident gripped their community. These are just a few examples of ways that DV agency staff worked with

community members to measure readiness and craft actionable efforts.



Universally, they discovered that despite our years of hard work, most communities are at low levels of readiness. Daily, people are bombarded with negative messages and enveloped in social norms that promote and support domestic violence. Our efforts toward change are up against these overpowering norms and social structures that keep community readiness low.



The [Community Readiness manual](#) offers lists of approachable and realistic strategies that match each level of readiness.

Appropriately, at low levels of readiness community organizing strategies come into play for their focus on individual change which leads to collective change. As you review the list of strategies for levels like Denial (Level 2) or Preplanning (Level 4) you will find activities that are built around relationship building, uncovering shared self interest, small group dialogue and developing and working within affinity groups. These strategies involve telling your local stories and

personalizing the statistics and the issues. These low levels of readiness efforts lead us down a different path than traditional awareness-raising such as trainings, rallies, marches and dinners. They points us to go smaller, intimate and focused – individual, community-based.

The Community Readiness Model also provides us with a simple and doable means of reassessing to measure change as a result of our efforts. No complicated databases or spreadsheets. The Model does require time to conduct interviews, generate scores and reflect on their meaning. This is time well spent as we move our

communities thoughtfully, methodically and with deeper community involvement, on to higher levels of readiness.

Consider using the Community Readiness Model the next time you are contemplating developing a new program, awareness effort, or reaching out to different aspects of your community. It's an approachable way to incorporate evaluation with community engagement. It's just perfect for prevention.

Mobilizing and Organizing the Community

The social change necessary to end violence against women will require a fundamental shift in societal worldview, including people who directly and indirectly experience the issue. The current dominant model of domestic violence service delivery has achieved considerable success in improving victim safety and offender accountability through such methods as policy development, systems change initiatives, victim services, batterer intervention, sex offender treatment, and provider education. Creating the deep shifts necessary to end domestic and other interpersonal violence, in addition to addressing its affects, calls for approaches that mobilize and organize communities.

Community mobilizing and community organizing lie along a continuum of engagement and ownership of collective solutions to complex issues. Both approaches facilitate change within communities to alter the basic patterns of social interaction, values, customs, and institutions in ways that will significantly improve the quality of life. There are numerous definitions of these two concepts and many definitions overlap. We are using the following definitions to guide our work in this area:



Community mobilization is roughly defined as individuals taking collective action to address specific community issues. It involves joint responses to community-defined social needs, giving communities an effective voice in program delivery, service, and policy.

It can take several different forms, depending on the extent to which “grassroots” community members (neighborhood residents or local group members) versus official community and government leaders and organizations are actively involved in defining the problems and deciding on solutions.

Community organizing is the process by which communities come together, define their visions and values and build their collective strength to realize those visions. There are many ways in which communities can organize, and many valuable “models” of organizing. Quality organizing efforts and community organizations share certain core values and characteristics:

- They result in long-term democratic organizations which belong to, fully represent and are accountable to their communities.
- They focus on and continually develop new community leadership in the context of organization building and community action.
- They consciously and creatively alter long term relations of power in a community, supporting powerless or disenfranchised people in gaining the relationships and political power they need to effect change.
- They work towards social, economic, and racial justice and positive long-term change, by working to change social policy, building effective community controlled institutions and/or other strategies.
- They build working relationships among organizations and communities with shared values and goals in order to maximize their efforts for attaining those goals.
- They define issues and communities in a historical and geographic context to connect their work to regional, national and global society and issues.
- They develop and nurture a consciousness of the issues and the connections among communities and they develop the skills to clearly communicate these principles with others.

The significant differences between community organizing and community mobilizing are that when people “mobilize” they get together to effect a specific social change, but generally have no long term plan. When the particular campaign that mobilized them is over, these groups usually dissolve and long-lasting community-based power is not built. Mobilizing is sometimes a tactic of community organizing in order to engage more people in a particular campaign or effort.



Power and Social Change

This is an excerpt from the article “Power and Social Change” published in January 2006 by [Grassroots Policy Project](#).

Introduction

The word power is derived from the Latin word *potere*, which means “to be able.” This basic definition focuses on power as the potential to shape our lives and the world around us. However, power also has to do with “control, influence or authority over others.” (Webster’s Dictionary).

We use the word power as a way of describing a set of relationships between and among people, taking place within an historical context and through given social structures. Consider the relationship between employers and workers. In a society in which most of us (over 60 percent) do not have power over the pace and content of our work, or the power to organize and direct production, class distinctions continue to play an integral role in defining and perpetuating unequal power relations. Likewise, the historic role of race and of racism in shaping all aspects of society is a critical factor in understanding current, unequal power relations in all spheres of life—economic, political and social. Similarly, power relations correspond with the ways in which gender roles are constructed. Power relations based on gender permeate our institutions to the extent that, even when individuals try to behave differently, the social structures tend to perpetuate inequality.

Power-over and power-with. Traditionally, power is thought of in terms of power-over. An employer has power over employees because she can fire them. The employer has even more control if jobs are scarce and workers are forced to compete for them. In housing, landlords, lenders and realtors have power because they control who gets housing. Some collective approaches to shifting power in relation to jobs and housing include organizing workers into unions, organizing tenants and creating housing co-ops. These are examples of people coming together to shift control

“Power is the ability to achieve a purpose. Whether or not it is good or bad depends upon the purpose” Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Frequently, people in the anti-domestic violence movement have an uneasy relationship with the word “power”. It often carries the negative connotation associated with the Power and Control wheel. And, the social norm of “power over” is one of the six social norms identified as supporting and promoting violence against women (see the [October 2011 Coalition Chronicles](#) issue for more information on these norms). But the development of “power with” is at the root of community organizing so that power can be used for building the social change that will create healthy communities and relationships.

over resources by exercising **power-with** instead of power over. Power-with emphasizes inter-dependence and collective action among community members, constituencies and workers as a way of shifting and expanding power for the good of the whole, rather than the benefit of the few.

The 1st face of power: direct political involvement in visible decision-making

People often think of power in society as shaping the results of political decision-making: policies, laws, rulings and decisions made by public officials, legislators, and members of the executive and judicial branches of government. Electing public officials is part of the 1st face of power. The political parties, PACs, lobbyists, and major contributors are dealing with this arena much of the time.

Groups are attempting to exercise power in the 1st face when they lobby for bills or fight against bad laws, register voters, hold accountability sessions with public officials, and are involved in activities connected with day-to-day politics.

The Three Faces of Power



The 3 faces of power are: 1) direct political involvement; 2) organizational infrastructure; and 3) ideology and worldview.

Gaining access to the arenas where decisions are made is very important. However, it can be all consuming. It can keep us focused on the short-term, on this election and this legislative session and this immediate, visible struggle. It can divide and fragment us into disparate issue groups, each reacting to the immediate challenges in its issue area. Even multi-issue groups fragment their work, as it is often an effective way to organize in the short run, and it isn't so obvious what the down-side is.

A popular myth about the way power works in a democracy is that the rules are fair and that the playing field is more or less level. It overlooks all the unacknowledged rules that tend to reinforce the structures of power that shape our society; this means that many groups in society have little or no access at all. To better understand how power operates to keep so many people out of the game, we need to look at power's other faces.

The 2nd Face of Power: building infrastructure, and shaping the political agenda

The formal political arena is not the only game in town. The power to shape what gets on the political agenda or what is kept off, is another, less visible face of power.

Behind-the-scenes forces are at work to determine who gets a seat at the decision-making tables and whose issues get addressed. Keeping things off of the agenda is one way that the powerful can avoid serious challenges to their power.

Just how do these behind-the-scenes forces exercise their power to shape and constrain the political agenda? They usually do it through organized networks. Corporations, trade unions, think tanks, universities, media, religious groups and other organizations try to influence what is on the political agenda. They exercise the power to shape the agenda not as isolated organizations, but as part of a network or political infrastructure. Coalitions, trade associations, overlapping boards, and country club memberships are ways of building ties between organizations to pursue common goals. We use the term political infrastructure to indicate the most developed and coherent networks of organizations, with implicit or explicit goals that go beyond the immediate interests of the member organizations.

The 3rd Face: shaping meaning

"Public sentiment is everything. With public sentiment, nothing can fail; without it nothing can succeed. Consequently he who moulds public sentiment, goes deeper than he who enacts statutes or pronounces decisions." Abraham Lincoln

Dominant power relations are maintained through the power to shape people's understanding of the world and their own self-interests. This is the 3rd face of power. It operates in the arena of worldview, culture, myths, stereotypes and values. It is exercised in part through control of the institutions that shape and create meaning: religious institutions, the media, television, mass consumer culture, popular ideas about government and about workers and bosses, etc. It operates through people's daily life routines: having to work every day in positions with little autonomy, going to schools and religious institutions that discourage critical and independent thinking — these are unquestioned, naturalized habits that profoundly shape how we interact in the world.

**A change
to society
that protects people
first
before it protects
profits
will not come
because we wish for
it to happen or
because we wait for it
to happen.**

**It will come only
if we *make* it happen.**

**Change will not come
because we are right
because we are good
people
because we want it
badly**

**we can only count on
the things that we
take
or take back
because whatever
things
are given to us
will always be theirs
not ours**

**There is only one real
way
to bring about
change**

**and to eliminate
poverty
in America**

**and that is to fight
back
and organize.**

*from the Afterword to
Organizing (Si Kahn)*

Powerlessness

If we look at the 3rd face of power, which is used to keep people from seeing themselves as agents of change, or to even believe that change is possible, then we see that non-action and non-participation are important problems. Non-participation breeds a greater sense of powerlessness, making participation by oppressed groups even less likely.

Status quo power relations are reinforced by the fact that most of us experience powerlessness as part of everyday life. For most working people and historically oppressed groups, the experience of being shut out of decision-making processes gets internalized and understood as the natural state of things, and the powerless develop a culture of silence. In spite of the historical imbalance of power in this country and corporate power over decision-making, agenda setting and meaning, we have a rich history of resistance. Social change groups organizing in diverse communities and workplaces can give people a place to act together, reflect on their actions, engage in collective analysis, and challenge the 2nd and 3rd faces of power with new ideas and experiences. When they are combined, critical thinking and political action can break through the culture of silence.

Worldview

We all have conceptions and images of our place in our family, our workplace and community, and in political and civic life. We have beliefs about responsibilities, rights and wrongs, and the role of institutions, including government, in our society. These beliefs are linked to assumptions about race, class, gender and sexuality. And while we each have our own collection of such values and beliefs, which are reinforced by our own experiences, we absorb meanings, frames of reference and ideologies from our social world, which shape our understandings in mostly unconscious ways. These socially-generated beliefs about the world are what we call worldview. Many different ideas and belief systems in our society compete for attention. Despite these competing worldviews, there is a set of beliefs and conceptions about the world that we can identify as *the dominant worldview*.

Themes

Themes are the basic elements of worldview. Themes are expressed through myths, stereotypes, images, stories and commonsense sayings. They contain assumptions about the world and about human nature, and they explain existing social relationships, such as who has power and why, what the proper roles are for women and men, and what a family is supposed to look like.

For the complete article see:

http://strategicpractice.org/system/files/power_and_social_change.pdf

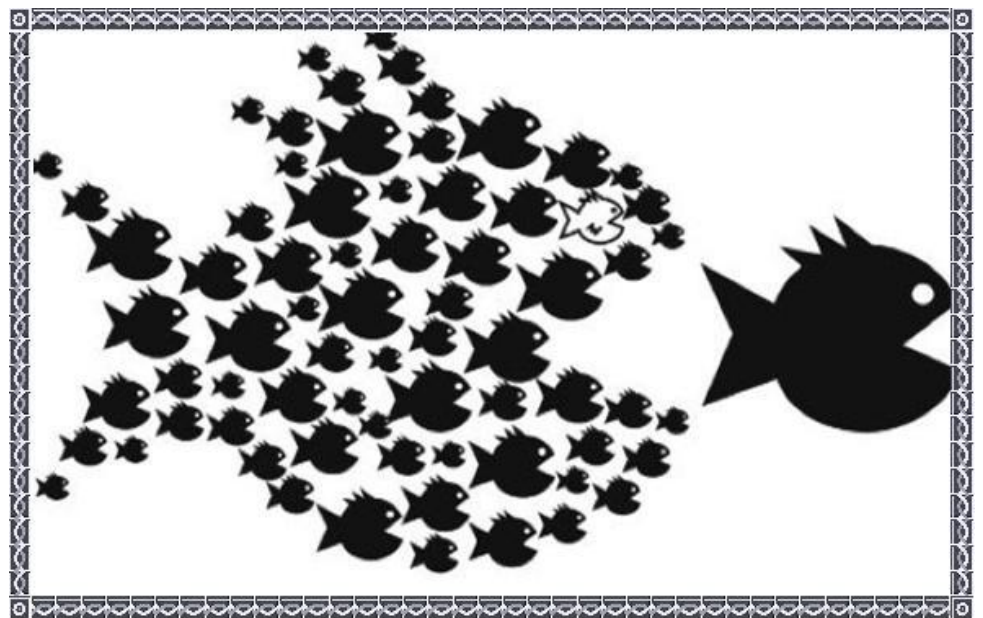
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If you give me a fish
you have fed me for a day.

If you teach me to fish
you have fed me until
the river is contaminated or
the shoreline seized for development.

But if you teach me to organize
then whatever the challenge
I can join together with my peers



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Understanding Elements of Community Organizing: WCADV's Community Engagement Initiative

For most of us who are part of the work to end domestic violence, we know that there is a connection between the success of this work and improved community well-being – if there is little or no violence in our homes then our communities are healthier. Even though we know this, we still often struggle to effectively engage with our communities for both improving intervention and prevention efforts.

The Kansas Coalition Against Sexual and Domestic Violence has developed this list of benefits of using community engagement strategies for ending domestic and sexual violence. These are included in their extensive [Community Organizing Toolkit](#):

- **Expansion of ownership and responsibility regarding the issue** – By fostering the involvement of a wider range of stakeholders in the issue, investment in and responsibility for ending sexual and domestic violence is expanded beyond that of local domestic and sexual violence service agencies. This can increase the likelihood of community support (in multiple forms) for the local agency, victims, and the change initiatives.
- **Connection of people and resources** – Community engagement builds relationships between individuals, institutions and community organizations, creating increased awareness of and investment in the issue.
- **Development of better solutions** – Bringing a greater diversity and number of voices to the issue increases the likelihood that more creative solutions will be developed and that solutions will be more responsive to the needs of those impacted.
- **Promotion of social justice** – By providing a mechanism for more effective collaboration between institutions, organizations and community members, community engagement allows for increased sharing of power and decision-making, facilitating equity and highlighting issues of social injustice.
- **Change in community norms** – Community engagement expands the focus of sexual and domestic violence services to mobilization of the larger community about the issues, and fostering a community norm that emphasizes the unacceptability of violence against women. Such a norms change enhances prevention initiatives by reducing the likelihood that violence will occur and intervention initiatives by increasing support for victim safety and offender accountability.
- **Focus on root causes** – Community engagement fosters a more critical examination of the underlying causes of sexual and domestic violence among the public while fostering dialogue to help increase awareness and dispel myths and misconceptions.
- **Increased sustainability** – By engaging the community throughout issue identification, solution development and program implementation, there is an increased likelihood of institutionalization, (as in the issue becoming an established part of the organization) and thus sustainability of change initiatives. Group learning and decision-making have been demonstrated to be key elements in institutionalization.

To support DV and dual programs in tapping into these benefits, WCADV developed a new training strategy – the Community Engagement Initiative (CEI). This project offers teams of two to three people from eleven DV/dual programs the opportunity to learn and apply community mobilizing and community organizing approaches to their work (see definitions for this elsewhere in this issue). The Initiative includes three components spanning over five months:

- Community Organizing and Mobilization Training (September 7 – 8, 2011)
- Follow-up with group through three conference calls (October, November and January)
- Mentor support from WCADV Community Engagement Initiative staff (one on one calls or emails through January 2012)



The lead trainer for CEI has been Teresa Thomas Boyd from Milwaukee who has 15 years of community organizing experience. During the two-day training session, Teresa and a team of five WCADV staff framed the concepts of community engagement with discussions and exercises on understanding *power* and *worldview* (see article Power and Social Change elsewhere in this issue for more in-depth definitions of these two terms). Understanding both of these concepts is key to understanding social change and community organizing.

The power in organizing is based on the recognition that the collective assets of an organized group are greater than even the most powerful individual.

Worldview refers to the formal and informal, conscious and unconscious shaping of meaning and behavior through beliefs, popular culture, media, presentations of history, myths, etc. Understanding how worldview (including how we understand power) connects to action is critical for effective community organizing and mobilizing. Understanding our own and others' world view can help us turn our community events into more deliberate strategies for addressing domestic violence.

One of the first tools the Initiative introduced and practiced is the *one-on-one*. As its name implies, the one-on-one is an intentional meeting between two people in order to understand each other's *self-interest* and establish a working connection. Self-interest is often misunderstood to be selfishness, but on the contrary, its Latin root means "self among others" – where/how do my needs connect with the needs and interests of my community and greater society. Effective one-on-ones aren't about "selling" others on your own issue, but about understanding what others care about and how their self-interests are connected to others' self-interests. One-on-ones are an important tool for building collective power, a critical tool in community organizing and can be used to build effective public relationships in other community engagement approaches as well.

A team of three from New Horizons Shelter and Outreach Centers has implemented one-on-ones in their work since participating in the Community Engagement Initiative. Jen Scaccio, Children and Youth Advocate, has used this tool to expand New Horizons' connections with the community of people working with children and youth. "It (CEI) has given me the tools to get out there in the community. I've built more critical relationships in the three months since the training than in all my previous time in this work."

Developing a strategy is what moves organized people to accomplish their goals. The CEI training delved into strategy development using the Strategy Chart created by the [Midwest Academy](#) and involves asking a number of questions:

1. What are your long, mid, and short-term goals? How will your plan:
 - create improvements in people's lives?
 - give people a sense of their own power?
 - change the relations of power in your community?

2. What are your organizational considerations? What resources does your organization have to contribute to your plan? How do you want your organization to be strengthened by this campaign (e.g. expand into new constituencies, expand leadership opportunities to new people, etc.)? What internal problems have to be considered for the plan to succeed?
3. Who cares about this issue enough to want to join or help us? What do they gain if you win? What risks are they taking? Who is opposed to your plan? How strong are they?
4. Who has the ability to give your organization what you want? How do you reach them? What exactly do you want them to do?
5. What tactics will you use to apply your collective power and make it felt by those who can give you what you want?

A sixth group of questions not actually on the Strategy Chart, but that is critical for all of our work, are reflective/evaluative: What went well? How do we know that? What didn't go well? What positive changes did we create? What would we do differently and why? Using these reflective questions and the Strategy Chart can help an organization or group build an effective plan for creating change in their community.

The CEI experience has spurred a number of changes in the way the participant teams do their work. Denise Johnson, a member of the Indian Women's Leadership Circle team that participated in CEI, explains how her group has been implementing what they learned: "This training (CEI) has brought the Indian Women's Leadership Circle closer together and helped us develop our purpose more. We have done more one-on-one talks with almost all of the members. It has changed the work we do by leading us toward more action steps. For example, we are committed to writing letters to our representatives about these awful budget cuts and even meeting with our congressional representative."

When the Indian Women's Leadership Circle and the other CEI participant teams gain a greater sense of their own power as a community to create the changes they want to see they are living out Mahatma Gandhi's famous quote of "you must be the change you wish to see in the world".



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Teen Summit: Ride the Wave to End Teen Dating Violence and Sexual Violence –

March 12-14, 2012 at the
Chula Vista Resort in the
Wisconsin Dells

This statewide Summit brings
together a diverse group of teens
and adults to learn how to
prevent teen dating violence and
sexual violence—and what to do
if it happens.

For more information on this
event and other WCADV
trainings visit our website at
www.wcadv.org



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Save the Date!
Saturday
May 5, 2012



THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT IN 2011



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