

Coalition Chronicles

**A newsletter of
End Domestic Abuse WI
Volume 35 Issue 1**

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Movement Building

Patti Seger, End Abuse Executive Director

After more than 30 years in the movement to end domestic and sexual violence, I've seen a lot of change as a young advocate, and now as a "seasoned" one. I remain passionate, committed, and hopeful about our ability to change things for the better, but, time has made me more realistic about how long it will take to achieve the kind of transformation needed to actually, truly end violence against women and girls. When I was a bold 19-year-old, I thought we would have handled this situation by the time I was 30. We would change laws and ensure that police and prosecutors saw domestic and sexual violence as the crimes that they were. We would provide shelter for thousands of victims, and work towards wholeness and healing with them. We would secure funding to support our work, and victims would be safe. Now in my 50's, I can look back and see that to some degree we have done all of those things.

But do these accomplishments mean we are anywhere close to ending violence against women and girls? Did we really know what it would take to change the social fabric of our world? Many of our achievements did not bring about real solutions to the enormously complicated problem of violence against women and girls. We did not fully understand and face the complexities of gender-based violence within distinct communities, nor the nature of domestic and sexual abuse in later life, or instances of women abusing men. We developed a system of services and laws and then we settled in for the long haul. To a certain degree, we stopped pushing hard at the edges for fear that we'd lose all of the progress we had made. But this meant that we would be forever confined to a social service model—providing vitally important support to victims, but not really changing the conditions that lead to violence.

This issue of the Coalition Chronicles reflects a shift in perspective. After all of these years of working toward and not achieving an end to gender-based violence, advocates and activists across the nation are coming together to think in a new way, to innovate, and to build a movement once again. We are shifting focus, gaining renewed strength, better understanding the intersections of oppression that sustain and maintain violence, and redirecting our efforts. We don't know where we will land, but we do know that we need to move and grow. It is clear that even as we support victims with the best strategies we know today, we must prepare a better way for the children who will come to us in the future.



Learning to Move Again: Re-igniting the Movement to End Gender Violence

Patti Seger, End Abuse Executive Director

Passionate and committed. Revolution and resistance. Challenging the systems. Creating something from nothing. Women, and some men, unified to bring familial violence out of the shadows. Fast paced. Overworked. Thousands of victims served. Thousands more on waiting lists. Resources strapped. Doing what we can but never able to get ahead. Revolving door. Never-ending violence. Women are dying. Scarce funds and resources. Tired and overwhelmed. Passionate and committed.

These are the words of the movement to end violence against women and girls. These are the rhythm and habits that have developed over the past 40 years.

A Brief History:

The Women's Liberation Movement of the late 1960's and 1970's grew out of the Civil Rights Movement. And out of the Women's Liberation Movement grew the Anti-Rape and Battered Women's Movement of the mid-1970's. All three of these movements were successful in their own way. As their momentum grew, so too grew the mainstream recognition that things must change. Out of each of these movements, laws were passed that aimed to bring justice and equality to people of color, to women, and to those affected by domestic and sexual violence. Our government responded by recognizing discrimination, abuse and violence and also by providing funding so that organizations might form to support those most directly affected by all of these issues.

Fast forward 40+ years:

Where do we find ourselves on the road to liberation now? Change is slow, and at times it feels the slow moving "change train" ground to a near complete halt. As our work became funded, primarily by government sources, grant limitations seemed to overpower our sense of possibility. At the same time, the crush of those coming forward to seek services and support requires that our time is fully occupied. There is little time or energy left for protesting, and because we fear losing the funding that we fought so hard to obtain, we operate within the restrictions that it brings. The growth in backlash and counter-movements has caused us to hunker down and fight to retain what we have gained.

We collaborate now with system-based partners, even when that may mean sacrificing some of our dearly held values. We compromise because getting something on behalf of those who are oppressed and victimized is better than getting nothing.

We are exhausted from the strain of the work and have little time to think about strategies to go upstream, to prevent violence and oppression in the first place. We have become disconnected from one another, each of us working in our own silos. We have settled in and we have settled out. We who work to end domestic and sexual violence are now a "field" of practice rather than an active, vital movement. Our sole focus is on serving those who come to us. Our work with victims is referred to as "social services." And because we are not simultaneously fighting to change the conditions that cause and promote oppression and violence, we have lost one of our greatest values of all—our commitment to social change, justice, equity, and dignity for all humans.

Movement Re-ignited:

Racism, homophobia, sexism, and gender-violence impinge on our collective dignity and humanity. In recent years, the desire for a social justice movement to grow and flourish has increased. This decade has awakened many of us from our complacency and has re-ignited our urge to connect, to unite, to stand up and to speak out. The killing of 17-year-old Trayvon Martin for "wearing a hoodie while Black" sparked national outrage. The subsequent killings of Michael Brown and Eric Garner by police intensified the public outcry over state violence and birthed a new movement, Black Lives Matter. Marches and demonstrations across the nation challenged us to engage in conversation about racial and social inequities. When Marissa Alexander was arrested, charged and convicted to 20

years in prison for defending herself against her violent husband, anti-racism activists and advocates for battered women joined forces. The Free Marissa Now! campaign drew compelling attention to the systematic over-criminalization of gender violence and the backlash against victims within communities of color. These bold movements have awakened many of us in the gender-violence field to recognize that *we will never* end violence against women and girls by continuing our work in its present form. We must evolve and develop new practices to replace the habits formed over the years.

Passionate and committed. Breathe in, breathe out. Make a clean cut. Gather up new intentions, push them out. Movement building. Gender and race equity. Forward stance. Building space. Intentions and practices. Shared purpose horizon. Unity. Movement. Passionate and committed.

These are the new words and phrases that we are adopting as we move from our complacent “field” back into movement. We are wiser now. We recognize that the movement as we built it 40 years ago isn’t sustainable today. We cannot help others if we are overtired and overwhelmed. We know that we cannot do this work alone and that we need to build new alliances. We recognize the need to examine the alliances we have made along the way to understand if they were built on false solutions or real change. And we now know that we cannot provide social services alone. We must also work to change the conditions and systems that support gender violence. We know that we need to take an intersectional approach to violence, we need to address all forms of oppression in order to achieve true liberation. And we know that, yes, change is slow, but the legacy we leave today will make a tremendous difference in generations to come.

In late 2014, End Domestic Abuse WI initiated a movement-building process entitled the *Future of Services*. In 2015, we were joined by the WI Coalition Against Sexual Assault with whom we have been hosting gatherings with domestic and sexual violence program directors and advocates, looking toward a new shared purpose and identifying new strategies for the work to end violence against women and girls... to the last girl.

Future of Services for Victims of Gender-Based Violence in Wisconsin: Movement Building

Colleen Cox, End Abuse Education Coordinator

In recent discussions about the future of services in Wisconsin, local domestic abuse and sexual assault service providers, state coalitions, and national partners have been exploring ways to redefine our work, break apart silos that divide us, move from being reactive to proactive, and support victims and survivors as we work towards social change.

As these discussions took place over the last two years, participants collected background reading from many different sources, to bring more voices and ideas into the discussion. These materials are available in [Dropbox](#), loosely organized by topic area. Selected readings from the Future of Services Dropbox are summarized in boxes throughout this issue of the Chronicles. The article, *Letting Go: One Shelter’s Struggle with a Changing Movement*, ([page 14](#)) is from that Dropbox collection. Although this article reflects some circumstances specific to the “small working-class western drinking town” in which the shelter is located, the author’s sometimes painful observations of the shelter’s history parallels what many domestic abuse victim advocates have observed in their own programs.

Also featured in this issue of the Chronicles: two directors’ perspectives on the future of services, from Beth Schnorr and Naomi Cummings; reflections from Patti Seger on re-igniting the movement to end gender violence; a discussion of advocacy to eliminate racial disparities in Wisconsin and its connection to ending domestic abuse, by End Abuse’s Tony Gibart; highlights from the Day without Latinos and Immigrants, celebrating Voces de la Frontera’s successful defeat of anti-immigrant legislation, and featuring RISE Law Center’s Grisel Santiago-Rivera speaking about what that means for immigrant and mixed-status families, victims and their children.

Link to Future of Services Dropbox

<https://www.dropbox.com/sh/as0jzbpmderpq6/AABNcDhgRKpipjNHMJIntj13a?dl=0>

Perspective on the Future of Services

Naomi Cummings, Executive Director, The Bridge to Hope, Menomonie

I left home the day I graduated from high school and moved to San Francisco where there was a “counter-culture” in full swing. That was 1969, and the Women’s Liberation Movement was just gaining attention. I started reading everything I could on the subject and went to a few “Consciousness Raising” sessions. I was a pretty angry woman as I learned about sexism and how my life had been shaped by it. I remember scratching on a women’s bathroom stall, “Women of the World – Unite!” My first act of advocacy, though I promise I never wrote on another bathroom stall again.

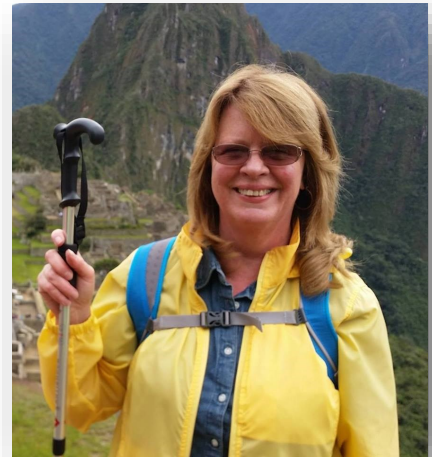
I first walked into The Bridge to Hope in 2008 seeking information on abusive relationships after realizing that I was in one. At that time, I didn’t even know there was a label for what I had been living with. After a divorce, I returned part-time in 2009 as an administrative assistant while I finished a degree in non-profit management. By 2010, I was hired as the executive director.

Within a few months of being at The Bridge I realized that the people coming to us for services did not fit into the simple stereotype of “domestic abuse victim.” Abuse was a part of the fabric of their lives, but not necessarily the only one. Victims didn’t have the skills to support themselves. They had no safety nets. They had lived in poverty all their lives. They struggled with addiction. I noticed how many of their stories included being raped by their father’s friend or a relative when they were 15, and how their lives spiraled downwards after that. I listened to women who were still hoping for the white picket fence and Prince Charming but were repeatedly crushed and victimized instead.

I was fortunate enough to attend the White Privilege Conference two years ago and had my eyes opened to privilege and systemic racism. I don’t think I’ve ever had such an “ah-ha” moment. The ramifications of the class system in this country have always been obvious to me, but I didn’t have a very clear understanding of intersectionality. It has become clear that domestic abuse is not a stand-alone issue, but a part of the whole picture that also includes racism, sexism, and all the other “isms” and oppressions that victimize people and make them vulnerable. *None of us are free until we all are free.*

While efforts to change systemic forms of oppression can seem overwhelming, we can all take steps moving towards that goal. At The Bridge we have been exploring other avenues. We have been facilitating support groups for people in recovery at our local Alano Club to talk about healthy relationships. We have a “Let’s Talk About Sex” group for women that has been very popular. It empowers women to feel more positive about their bodies, and it’s a safe space to talk about what’s in their hearts and minds. We have also completed a county-wide training using the Maryland Model of the Lethality Risk Assessment Protocol. Our local law enforcement agencies all joined together with us to establish a more effective protocol to get help to victims when they are in the most danger.

I feel like we are on the cusp of great social change. The Black Lives Matter movement is raising awareness in our culture about the reality of racism and oppression. Women on campuses are angry about sexual assault and their raised voices are changing the conversation. The rights of LGBTQ individuals are part of our national conversation; we are moving from “tolerance” to “celebration.” These are exciting times!



Although Naomi spent the first 29 years of her life in California, it was “love at first sight” when she landed in Wisconsin. She’s grateful to live in such a beautiful state, though the winters will always seem too long. She has raised four fine sons and is pleased that they all chose partners who are proud feminists.

The Future of Services meetings have been so inspiring to me because together we are examining all these connecting issues in a holistic way and seeing how all the parts come together to form a kaleidoscope. There are differences; life in Milwaukee is much different from life in a small town in Northern Wisconsin, but there are threads of similarity. Poverty is rampant, drug abuse is widespread, and there are so many people who don't feel that they are part of a community who cares about them. The Future of Services group is looking ahead and realizing that our movement needs to change and to adjust to our ever-changing society. I'm fond of saying that if you're in the middle of a lake and just treading water, you will eventually drown. We all need to keep swimming forward. There's a new dawn on the horizon.

Future of Services Readings:

Collaboration as a Way of Thinking

["Essential Mindset Shifts for Collective Impact"](#) is a follow-up to the influential article, ["Collective Impact,"](#) in the *Stanford Social Innovation Review*. In "Collective Impact," the authors defined five key conditions necessary for collaboration to make deep, cross-sector impacts on tough social challenges: (1) a common agenda for change (2) shared data and measurements (3) mutually reinforcing activities (4) continuous communication and (5) backbone support for the collaboration. In this article, the authors add to these conditions "mindset shifts," which are also necessary to harness the potential of collective impact work. They stress that collaborators must be accustomed to involving all of the right stakeholders, not just traditional partners. Additionally, the authors urge a shift to appreciating the full value of relationality – that the creation of networks and structures to share information, resources and credit often, itself, produces beneficial change. Lastly, the article argues that the traditional problem-solving mentality, which seeks a single technical solution to a predetermined problem, must give way to adaptive approaches that seek to respond to ever-changing conditions through a variety of interventions.

Perspective on the Future of Services

Interview with Beth Schnorr, Executive Director,
Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs, Appleton

We've been contemplating who we are as a "movement" – what was known in the 1970's as the battered women's movement and has evolved as a movement that must encompass many forms of social justice and include all forms of gender justice. What brought you to advocacy, and was there a point at which you began to see yourself as part of a larger movement? How did that happen for you?

During a college internship in the '70s, I began working in a free clinic helping young women access birth control. The experience heightened my awareness of the high level of risk for domestic and sexual violence faced by young women. Seeing the profound affect abusive intimate relationships have on overall access to healthcare, specifically reproductive healthcare, exposure to sexually transmitted diseases and physical violence during pregnancy, opened my eyes to the complexities of women's lives in a sexist society. My own experience with domestic violence made it personal.

I came into the "movement" at an exciting time (1978) and had the privilege of getting involved in State and National Coalition work early on. This made a huge difference as I was exposed to some very powerful, articulate and intelligent women both locally and nationally. These women inspired me, motivated me and shook me to my core. They were gay, straight, black, white, Latina, young and old. They were living the intersectionality of oppressions and taught me so much. We were talking about homophobia, racism, classism, ageism and religious bias back then, though not as broadly or openly as we are articulating these oppressions today. I remember reading Suzanne Pharr's book, "Homophobia: A Weapon of Sexism" and realizing that working in this movement, whatever it was to become, would be my life's work. "Hold on, it is going to be a bumpy ride!"

How do you see social justice being infused into the daily work of people at your program?

The day-to-day work in a domestic abuse program can be stressful, task oriented and reactive. When we are constantly in crisis mode, it is difficult to take a step back and think about the true impact of our work and to take advantage of opportunities to connect with others doing social justice work in our community. However, every small step forward will keep us headed in the right direction, and the more we do, the more it becomes a natural part of our ongoing work.



Beth Schnorr has worked since 1978 as a volunteer, women's advocate and domestic abuse shelter administrator. She has been Director of Harbor House Domestic Abuse Programs since 1990.

Beth has been a Wisconsin Representative for the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, and has held numerous board and committee positions with the Governor's Council on Domestic Violence and with End Domestic Abuse WI. Additionally Beth was named Women in Management's Woman Manager of the Year in 2002, and she is a member of Appleton Downtown Rotary Club. She graduated from the first Social Innovation Leadership Experience for non-profit executives (2011) sponsored by J.J. Keller Foundation, and holds a degree in Social Work (UWGB, 1978).

The following are a few examples of how we are working to infuse a social justice perspective into our mission:

- Hiring Practices: Our interview process includes questions aimed at understanding awareness and analysis of the intersectionality of oppressions. We do not require degrees. Education is valuable, but is it not accessible to all. Life experience can inform one's work in profound ways.
- Training of new staff, volunteers and board members: Basics of anti-oppression work and the intersectionality of oppressions are components of training. These concepts are also part of ongoing training for staff, often brought to us by staff members themselves. We seek local resources for ongoing training on diversity and inclusion for all staff.
- Encourage staff from traditionally marginalized groups to attend leadership development opportunities offered state-wide and locally.
- Provide opportunities for staff to get involved in groups working on social justice and make this part of job descriptions.
- Anti-oppression principles are woven into the curriculum of the Prevention Education Program we provide to students in the classroom and the topic of presentations by "Zero Tolerance," our peer education teen drama troupe. These principles are also part of our training for professionals (clergy, healthcare, law enforcement, etc.) provided by our Community Education Program.
- Make program/office space available for groups such as Deaf Unity, UNIDOS, and others to provide co-advocacy on site.
- Community collaborations: We seek to make connections with others who are working on social justice issues in our community and who work with populations that are vulnerable to violence. A few examples are our partnerships with Casa Clare (an AODA residential treatment center for women), NAMI, Children's Protective Services, and LGBT Partnership.

How does a grounding in social justice work have an impact on the individual interactions of each advocate and survivor?

Looking at our movement from a broader standpoint has helped us stay grounded in the life experiences of those who come to us for help. We know that domestic violence and sexual assault can happen to anyone regardless of race, ability, religion, age, socio-economic status etc. However, it does not affect each person in the same way. If we seek to understand the full life experiences of those we help, we are more apt to develop strategies that work and we will be more open to trying new approaches. This keeps us, as advocates, open to learning, flexible in the strategies and policies we co-create and less judgmental. I believe it allows for more creativity in programming, lowers staff burn-out and creates more honest dialog. It focuses more on "screening in" vs. "screening out" individuals who come to our organizations seeking help.

The future of services initiative aims to bring together domestic abuse agencies across the state to examine the services we provide and their connection to social justice. Going forward, what do you see as some of the priorities for your organization?

The kinds of connections we make with others in our community must continue to evolve. It is essential for us to assure that survivors from communities of color, the LGBTQ community and the Muslim community, to name a few, are at the table when setting future priorities. We will continue to develop welcoming spaces within or organization for this work to happen and allow staff time to work outside of our walls. Advocates need to be empowered to make those connections by providing for flexible schedules and time to dream big. Collaborations

with those working on poverty, trafficking, immigration reform, suicide prevention, improved mental health and more will continue to be a priorities for us. This does not always mean we will be leading these efforts, but we will have an important place at the table as we develop new models for co-advocacy.

We will continue to work on deepening our knowledge of trauma informed care. This means changing our physical spaces to allow for more dignity, privacy and confidentiality. It means moving forward with the “Last Girl” in mind. It means ongoing training for staff, flexibility to develop new programs and continued focus on wellness for survivors and staff. This includes adequate staffing levels as well as adequate pay and benefits.

What are some of your reflections on the Future of Services meetings, and sharing this initiative with Harbor House?

Working in this movement is stressful for us all. We don’t always take the time reflect on our work, think big about the future or connect with colleagues. Future of Services has provided a wonderful opportunity to do this – to honor our past and look to the future with fresh eyes. After each session, I have spent time sharing what I have learned with my co-workers. As a result, we came up with “Development Days” – one day per month for each employee to spend learning, whether that is visiting another program, watching a webinar, meeting with community partners, dreaming big, etc. We have repeated some of the exercises – even the Social Change Tai Jai! But watching the video of Jackie Payne’s speech focusing on the “Last Girl” was perhaps the most impactful. Across communities our strategies to reach her will be different, but we remain committed to moving forward with her at the forefront of our minds.

Future of Services Readings:

Does Our “Success” Sync with Survivors?

The 2014 paper, [*How Do Survivors Define Success?: A New Project to Address an Overlooked Question*](#), from the [Full Frame Initiative](#) attempts to “answer two simple yet fundamental questions: how do survivors of domestic violence define success for themselves, and do other stakeholders involved in the domestic violence field—practitioners, policymakers and funders—define success for domestic violence survivors in the same way?” The report found that there is often a significant disconnect between survivors’ definition of success and definitions used by service providers and other stakeholders. The report also found that many advocates already perceive this disconnect and believe that the field must reexamine its central assumptions. The authors make several recommendations, including a call for funders and other stakeholders to create measures of program success based on survivors’ definitions of success and a call to redesign traditional program services “to explicitly support survivors in enhancing and capitalizing on their informal social connections and community resources.”

Racial Disparities and Advocacy for Survivors of Abuse

Tony Gibart, End Abuse Policy Development Director

Almost every national study on racial disparities confirms what advocates and survivors of color in Wisconsin already know: the severe racial disparities in our state are among the worst of any state in the country. For example, a 2014 study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation, [Race for Results: Building a Path to Opportunity for All Children](#), found that Wisconsin is last in the nation for wellbeing of [African American children](#). This fact is not surprising considering Wisconsin has recently been one of the three worst states when it comes to the [disparity between African Americans and whites in employment](#). This level of inequality continues to have life and death consequences in our state; in 2014, Wisconsin was the only state in which the life expectancy gap between black and white people [grew significantly](#).

What does this mean for the anti-domestic violence movement in Wisconsin? A lot. Our state's staggering degree of racial inequality seriously compromises our ability to end or even significantly reduce domestic abuse in Wisconsin. Victims living in communities decimated by high unemployment and economic insecurity face enormous challenges when attempting to escape abuse and sustain healthy families. Racial disparities also undermine attempts to improve the law enforcement response to domestic abuse. We will never be able to foster true safety through policing or the courts when African Americans and other communities of color see a criminal justice system marked by inequality and disparate treatment. Wisconsin incarcerates African-American men [at a rate higher than any other state](#) and nearly twice the national average. Eliminating this and other racial disparities in Wisconsin's criminal justice system is vital to providing justice to victims.

Our state's staggering degree of racial inequality seriously compromises our ability to end or even significantly reduce domestic abuse in Wisconsin.

Therefore, as advocates working to end domestic abuse in Wisconsin, we must continue to see our movement as connected to and a part of movements to achieve true racial equality in Wisconsin. Consistent with this principle, in the previous legislative session, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin looked to support proposals that addressed racial disparities, and we raised concerns when initiatives would exacerbate problem. For example, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin supported [Senate Bill 172/Assembly Bill 260](#), which would require that the state legislature consider if any bill that modifies a crime or changes a criminal penalty will have a racially disparate impact. Because End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin at times advocates for changes to criminal laws or penalties, one might argue that SB 172/AB 260 could potentially stand in the way of enacting legislative changes. However, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin supports the concept of analyzing all criminal law changes for racial impact based on the broader view that, given the crisis-level disparities in Wisconsin, racial equity must be a touchstone for all criminal justice system policy decisions.

End Abuse views this position as a practical necessity for achieving our mission. The deep disparities that plague our state cannot continue if we are to achieve justice and safety for all of Wisconsin's communities. The change we seek requires the empowerment and engagement of all communities, and such a future is impossible without addressing racial disparities. Policy solutions that may work for some but that harm the most marginalized will take us further from our goal. Therefore, as we continue to work towards robust, effective and victim-centered responses to domestic abuse, we will continue to put racial equity at the center of our advocacy.

Day Without Latinos and Immigrants

Tony Gibart

As a movement oriented towards social justice, we are connected to advocates for a network of related causes. One way we can grow our movement is by sharing our time, energy, and voice with other movements that may sometimes be thought of a separate from ours but that have goals that are clearly aligned with the future we envision.

Early this year, End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin was involved in an effort to block two anti-immigrant bills in the state legislature. Both bills would have made it more difficult for undocumented victims of domestic violence to seek help and safety within the legal system. We made arguments at legislative hearings, met with officials and called our legislators. All of these actions were important and made a difference, but until February 18 it seemed that both bills were headed for passage. In particular, if it had become law, Assembly Bill 450 would have driven a wedge between immigrant victims and law enforcement. It would have taken us backwards, eroding community members' ability to trust police officers and creating a class of individuals who would effectively have had less access to legal protection.

However, things changed for the better on February 18, 2016. That day was the "Day Without Latinos and Immigrants." Voces de la Frontera, Wisconsin's leading grassroots immigrant rights group, helped organize a rally of approximately 20,000 people at the Capitol in opposition to Assembly Bill 450.

The people power on display at the Capitol was inspiring. While many of us often feel disfranchised in our political system, those of us who are immigrants are likely to experience disfranchisement to a far greater degree. Voces de la Frontera, through its grassroots movement building and collective action, returned political power to the people. Through this work Voces de la Frontera confronted our elected officials, who could not avoid seeing and hearing from the many mothers, daughters, fathers and sons who would be further marginalized and endangered if AB 450 were to be passed.

The next day, the Majority Leader of the State Senate signaled that his chamber would not move the bill forward. Shortly thereafter, the Governor said he was "okay" with the Senate not acting on the bill. A mass movement achieved a tangible victory that many political insiders thought highly unlikely. As a result, more domestic violence survivors in Wisconsin will be able to create a path to safety.

The victory in defeating AB 450 through movement building offers an opportunity to reflect on how domestic violence victim advocates can give support to connected social justice movements in order to move us closer to our goals. Below is an article from Common Dreams about Voces de la Frontera and the Day Without Latinos. Following the article, is a statement from Grisel Santiago-Rivera of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin and the RISE Law Center about her participation in the Day Without Latinos rally.



*Grisel Santiago-Rivera, RISE Law Office
Managing Attorney*

*This and the following photos are from a
protest at the Wisconsin State Capitol on the
Day Without Latinos and Immigrants
February 18, 2016.*

Day Without Latinos: Thousands Protest Anti-Immigrant Bills in Wisconsin

Published on Thursday, February 18, 2016 by [Common Dreams](#)

By [Nadia Prupis, staff writer](#)

Wisconsin needs Latino and immigrant workers, and today everybody knows it,' says Voces de la Frontera.

Thousands are gathering at the Wisconsin State Capitol in Madison on Thursday to protest what immigrant rights activists say is racist legislation. Workers, students, and activists walked off the job and out of their schools for a massive action in Wisconsin on Thursday, protesting two anti-immigration bills currently advancing through the state legislature.

Thousands of Wisconsinites converged at the State Capitol in Madison for [A Day Without Latinos and Immigrants](#), organized by the grassroots rights group Voces de la Frontera, among other organizations. The crowd chanted "Si se puede/Yes we can!" and brandished signs reading, "We are workers, not criminals" and "Wisconsin is not Arizona," a reference to the state that in 2010 passed [infamous legislation](#) that opponents said encouraged racial profiling of Latinos. *Fusion* [reported](#) that at least 14,000 people are in attendance.

"Today we are seeing a general strike of thousands of Latino and immigrant workers that is causing major disruption in industries throughout Wisconsin," said Voces de la Frontera executive director Christine Neumann-Ortiz. "Workers and their families are mobilizing on the Capitol to tell Governor [Scott] Walker and the Wisconsin State Senate to stop these racist, anti-immigrant bills from moving forward. Wisconsin needs Latino and immigrant workers, and today everybody knows it."



The bills in question are [AB450/SB369](#), which would prevent cities and towns from enacting legislation that prohibits employees from inquiring about the immigration status of an individual who has been charged with a crime; and [SB533/AB723](#), which would block counties from issuing local identification cards to people who cannot access state IDs. According to Voces de la Frontera, this legislation is racist and, in the case of AB450/SB369, would lead police to detain undocumented people for deportation.

Thursday's action is also a call to the [presidential candidates](#) to earn the support of immigrants and workers, Neumann-Ortiz said. "This battle is giving us the opportunity to build a statewide structure to organize the Latino vote that will challenge any candidate who is anti-immigrant in 2016 and beyond," she said. "Wisconsin's fight reminds us that Latino and immigrant workers are willing to flex their economic power to send the message that they will not stand idly by while politicians try to pass laws that threaten their families and take for granted their labor."

Wisconsin State Rep. Melissa Sargent wrote in an [op-ed](#) for the *Daily Cardinal* on Thursday that xenophobic legislation has turned immigration into "something to attack rather than celebrate." The bills under consideration "limit our local governments in their ability to deal with their communities in a way that aligns with their shared values," she wrote. "We have to move away from talk of biometric tracking and stopping all people from specific religions from entering our nation. That is not who we are as a country. Simply put, we are better than the rhetoric we hear on the evening news."

"Our communities cannot succeed if we live in fear of our friends and neighbors," she wrote.

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RISE Blog Post/Blog de RISE

By Grisel Santiago-Rivera, Director & Managing Attorney, RISE Law Center

"Yo me llamo Grisel Santiago-Rivera y soy la abogada supervisora en el Centro Legal RISE en End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin (Acabemos con el Abuso Doméstico en Wisconsin). Hoy día estuve presente en la marcha Día Sin Latinos e Inmigrantes en el Capitolio. Fue grandioso ver a tantas personas hoy en una demostración en contra de las políticas anti-inmigrantes siendo consideradas en la legislatura hoy. Me hizo pensar cómo nuestras leyes afectan a todos los inmigrantes, pero en particular a todos los inmigrantes que no tienen suficiente documentación y son sobrevivientes de la violencia sexual y doméstica, quienes con más frecuencia están en riesgo de sufrir violencia sistematizada cuando hay leyes como estas que desalientan el que se reporten crímenes violentos.

Durante la pasada década RISE ha representado a miles de inmigrantes que no tienen suficiente documentación y hemos visto la cara del miedo y la desconfianza en la policía, lo cual previene que familias inmigrantes reporten crímenes violentos que han presenciado o, peor, de los que han sido víctimas. Afortunadamente, ha habido progreso a pasos agigantados para mejorar relaciones con la policía, pero este proyecto de ley va a empujar a los inmigrantes sin suficiente documentación y familias con estado mixto en la penumbra, así como empeorar el ambiente de miedo – dejando a esos que frecuentemente son más vulnerables - todavía más vulnerables - al abuso y la violencia.



Me siento orgullosa de haber estado ahí, de pie, representando a RISE y a End Abuse con todos los inmigrantes valientes, oponiéndonos a estos proyectos de ley que son dañinos y perjudiciales para los inmigrantes. Demasiadas veces la solución de nuestros políticos al ineficiente sistema de inmigración en este país es aislar a los inmigrantes y a las familias con personas con diferentes estados migratorios – dejando a las víctimas y sus hijos separados de la ayuda y protección que se merecen. Para los inmigrantes sobrevivientes de violencia especialmente, las consecuencias de no tener una identificación gubernamental son peligrosas.

Fue un honor y un privilegio el haber estado en la marcha, ayudando a que nuestras voces se escuchen y nuestra presencia se vea. Cuando se fuerza a los seres humanos a permanecer escondidos, el sufrimiento y la injusticia se multiplican en esa oscuridad. La presencia de los Latinos en el Capitolio hoy fue claramente un acto de resistencia contundente en contra de estos proyectos de ley, pero fue también un acto de resistencia esclarecedor en contra de las actitudes y creencias subyacentes que los inmigrantes están limitados a estar escondidos. Gracias a todos los que estuvieron ahí ayudando a que la fuerza y vitalidad de las comunidades inmigrantes en Wisconsin no pasen desapercibidas."

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By Grisel Santiago-Rivera, Director & Managing Attorney, RISE Law Center

"My name is Grisel Santiago-Rivera and I am the Managing Attorney at the RISE Law Center at End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin. Today, I attended the Day Without Latinos and Immigrants rally at the Capitol. It was great to see so many people today demonstrating against the anti-immigrant policies making their way through our legislature today. It made me think how these laws affect all immigrants, and in particular undocumented immigrant survivors of sexual and domestic violence who are often most at risk of systemic violence when there are laws such as these in place which discourage reporting violent crimes.

Over the last decade RISE has represented thousands of undocumented immigrants and seen first-hand how fear or distrust of law enforcement has stopped immigrant families from reporting violent crimes that they may witness or worse are victims of. Fortunately, there have been great strides made to improve relations with law enforcement but this proposed legislation will push undocumented immigrants and mixed status families back in the shadows and exacerbate a climate of fear, leaving those who are often most vulnerable, even more vulnerable to abuse and violence.



I was proud to stand there representing RISE and End Abuse with all of the courageous immigrants who oppose these harmful anti-immigrant bills. Too often policymakers' solution to our country's broken immigration system is to alienate immigrants and mixed status families – and leave victims and their children separated from the help and protection they deserve. For immigrant survivors specifically the consequences of not having a valid government-issued ID are dangerous.

It was an honor and a privilege to be at the march today, helping make our voices heard and making our presence seen. When human beings are forced to remain hidden, suffering and injustice thrive in the darkness. The Latino presence at the Capitol today was clearly a forceful act of resistance against these bills, but also an enlightening act of resistance against the underlying attitude and belief that immigrants should be confined to being hidden. Thank you to all those who were there for making the strength and vitality of immigrant communities in Wisconsin visible for all to see."

Letting Go: One Shelter's Struggle with a Changing Movement

Stacey L. Corbitt, MSTC

Editor's note: This article appeared in September 2011 in The Voice: The Journal of the Battered Women's Movement, and is reprinted with permission.

This article attempts to assess the current and future viability of an existing domestic violence shelter program based on the effectiveness of its program identity and operation. Consideration is given to the opinion of one expert's conclusion that the long trend in shelter identity and operation has been away from activism-based, volunteer-run communal facilities to bureaucratic, vaguely women-oriented service organizations that rely on public funding and practice selective exclusion of victims. A careful review of some observations of the expert in comparison with the recent history of one typical rural western shelter program offers a realistic prediction of that program's likelihood of success going forward. Obviously, many other factors, like funding and public outreach, play major parts in program success; however, this brief discussion focuses on the internal and public identity of the program. Finally, some possible directions for successful change strategies are introduced. It is hoped that the information provided here will shed some light on struggles faced by shelter programs around the country as they contemplate their own futures in relation to ongoing and new challenges.

Definitions

First, a word or two about some terms as used herein. *Shelter* refers to a physical facility and its internal workings and services, while *program* indicates the organization that works to eradicate domestic and dating violence and closely related crimes in a community. A *shelter program*, then, is a program whose services are based within, and provided through, an operating shelter. These terms are simple but important for purposes of the case study discussed in this writing. *Program identity* is a combination of internal and external elements. The internal factors are generally a program's membership (its directors, staff, volunteers, and brand) and its formal mission statement. The external part of identity involves the beliefs its community and potential clients have about the program. Put simply, program identity is both what the program perceives about itself and what the community it serves thinks and says about the program.

Ideally, internal and external factors complement each other and run in the same vein so that everyone knows what to expect, making for a clear and reliable program identity. In reality, a deeper look at the subject program of this article ("the Shelter") tells a different story. Stakeholders who have been involved a long time seem to think of the program as being simply a shelter management function. It seems as though the physical facility and its continued use as a domestic violence victims' shelter drives decision-making efforts of the staff, the board, and also most other members of the program. This article, therefore, references the Shelter as the subject of its case study not to confuse readers with the terms, but rather to make clear that, for many involved, the program really exists to serve the physical facility rather than the victims and at-risk community.

Background

The Shelter has been in its current undisclosed location in this small working-class western drinking town for about 30 years. The cops know its location. Fortunately, none of those who have perpetrated violence against their partners or families have been known to abuse that knowledge. Local service providers and delivery drivers usually sign a photocopied agreement not to disclose on their first visit. A number of long-time donors like to

drop by with toiletries, bedding, and clothing donations, but they insist to staff their visits are discreet. Perhaps most importantly, clients are assured that other clients have not and will not tell anyone where the shelter is located, and those clients promise to also keep the secret. Periodically, a 19-year-old with a bruised cheek and a baby will write down the name of her abuser during intake, and the shelter staff will identify him in the records system as a child who spent time at the shelter when his mother was a client years ago. Very few aspects change in or about the Shelter.

Likewise, very little changes in or about the community in terms of the silent acceptance of domestic violence as a “family matter,” with ever-increasing economic hard times making it more difficult than ever for victims to leave their abusers without money, and a job, and a solid plan. Those who work in service of victims cannot argue with the possibility of shared culpability for at least some of the violent crime in the community. Women in this town do their fair share of the work as well as their fair share of the drinking, fighting, and drug abuse – just as the men do. Law enforcement officers who have all the right training and experience with domestic violence likely are sometimes justified in saying, “If I have to come back here, you're both going to jail.”

Unlike law enforcement officers and program staff, the policy and decision-making body of the program is more exposed to – and responsive to – the idealized version of the victims they serve. The board of directors is a group of volunteers, mostly county employees and retired businesspeople who are not active in the program on a day-to-day level. Board members seem to have a sense of importance and pride about serving the local battered women's program, even if that service translates to a lunch meeting once a month where the program director reports on regular business and very little else of substance is addressed. Put very simply, the Shelter is as proud and stubborn an entity as the town and its people themselves, and nobody is open to any major change – even as the dynamics of domestic violence and the movement are changing around them.

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The Way It Is

So we have an entity, the Shelter, which has been here forever and intends to keep on keeping on. We have a community made up in part of those who serve the status quo as well as the adult population who fill the positions of abusers, victims, helpers, and bystanders. We have not even considered the teens who are engaging in risky behaviors younger and younger, or the increasingly underserved mentally ill population. A full article could be written about the silent suffering of the Native American women here, and perhaps another about isolated spouses of college students from the Middle East. But here we will maintain a focus on the existing program and its identity as a long-standing shelter whose efforts now are doing little, if anything, to break the intergenerational cycle of violence as promised by the program's mission statement.

What happened? The Shelter was started by a few volunteers – tough, local women who three decades ago saw

a need for service and change and did something to provide service and to effect change. But today's Shelter sees idle staff and disappointed volunteers muttering about leading a horse to water and wringing their hands over an emerging view of the sacred facility as a flophouse, a stop-over for drug-runners and lowlifes. When and why have shelter programs started to change in ways that indicate abandonment of their activist agendas?

In *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*, Evan Stark describes the battered women's movement as being “stalled,” saying “it has gone as far as current strategies can take it.”¹ Dr. Stark discusses fundamental changes in shelter programs over 30 years or so that have essentially sidelined their founders' activist agendas in favor of a “go along to get along” method of providing garden-variety social service. The Shelter, upon close examination, seems to have taken a development path described by Dr. Stark. He writes about a large number of shelters in the early years of the movement that tracked a “therapeutic” model of service he describes as follows:

“Backed by a small core of clinicians, nonprofessional staff set out to break the cycle of abuse by providing residents with information about appropriate behaviors (staying away from violent men, non-abusive parenting) and organized individual recovery through a highly regimented format that combined individual case management (also called advocacy) and mandated services with group work oriented toward changing ways of behaving and thinking thought to be habitual.”²

He explains that rapid growth of shelters in the United States was boosted – and changed – by their relative success in obtaining government funding, which in turn led to staffing by business executives rather than activists.³ Among the other changes that accompany state-managed federal funding are governance by volunteer boards comprised in some cases of politically-motivated non-stakeholders and, ultimately, insulation from resident interaction and influence due to shelter administration moves out of shelter facilities.

Evan Stark's discussion applies very closely to the evolution of the Shelter discussed herein. Staff and volunteers have all heard the romantic tale of the founding group of courageous neighbors who built the program and eventually secured a dedicated facility. VOCA and VAWA answered so many prayers, and the Shelter established itself as a progressive private service within its community. Everybody loves a winner: donors multiplied, paid management and staff positions developed, and the requirements of appropriate government grants came to largely define and formalize the Shelter's identity. This growth and progress was a good thing: more families could be helped in more ways, and coordination and collaboration with public service agencies strengthened. Year after year, the Shelter's goals reflected word-for-word the goals of the federal agencies that funded it. The Shelter's relationship with its funders continues to be very strong – probably in part because that is the Shelter's

Victims don't always do the things they are supposed to do in order to qualify for service; they often don't even think of themselves as victims.

¹ Stark, Evan (2007). *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*. (50.) New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

² Stark, Evan (2007). *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*. (74.) New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

³ Stark, Evan (2007). *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life*. (75.) New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

most important relationship. It is an unfortunate circumstance that the community for whom the Shelter was originally begun has not conformed to the same goals. In particular, victims don't always do the things they are supposed to do in order to qualify for service; they often don't even think of themselves as victims. And those who are at high risk for abuse fall in a largely untended group who don't need victim services but *prevention* services – which are largely unfunded and unavailable. Nelson Jackson pointed out that “You can't expect to meet the challenges of today with yesterday's tools and expect to be in business tomorrow.” This rings as true in the social service world as it does in business. “Yesterday's tools” are things that never change, like the assumptions made by the public at large about the Shelter, its purpose, and its level of use. Another tool that never changes is the mentality of volunteer board members who feel good about themselves, if only because they are associated with a charity. Offering a brief emergency hideout for anyone who claims to be a victim is another of yesterday's tools. “The challenges of today” are things like the college student population and including, at least locally, at-risk spouses from less protective cultures than our own. The underserved mentally ill are an ever-growing challenge as are the younger and younger teens whose lives include daily alcohol and drug use by second and third generations of batterers and victims alike. Technology is a massive challenge, both in terms of that which is used to victimize as well as the clearly steep learning curve for advocates who are still only answering old-fashioned crisis lines, without any live online presence. Some of today's challenges are also yesterday's challenges. For example, one challenge that has been around a long time is encapsulated in the following thought: *is there an issue with focusing outreach directly at the typical or traditional victim? She isn't responding and hasn't been for some time now, after all. What if we were to leave her be, stop staring directly at her and re-focus on the teens, children, and college students who respond differently because they don't already “know” they are to blame for abuse and bad situations?* The Shelter only has yesterday's tools in its arsenal and is likely to fail as it faces new challenges if it doesn't adapt and update.

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The result of so many years of providing emergency beds, referrals, and advocacy to often one-at-a-time clients for the Shelter and many others like it are programs without any remaining shred of connection to activism within the movement. The result is another local social service organization that competes with homeless and addiction programs and relies on heart-wrenching victim accounts to 'connect" it to the public it hopes to serve without requiring the community to link the problem to their own experience and accountability. The Shelter still employs the “power and control wheel” with clients, and advocates are serving up a more supportable, watered-down version of empowerment that is supposed to be attained through emphasis on information and referrals, emergency clothing and short-term shelter, and law enforcement and court advocacy. The real clients, whether “true victims” or not, generally have some level of complicity for their situation and face a gauntlet of stereotyping by which shelter staff often determine the level of need applicants have for emergency services. The

⁴ Stark, Evan (2007). *Coercive Control: How Men Entrap Women in Personal Life.* (78.) New York, NY: Oxford University Press.

low pay, lack of education, and emphasis on maintaining shares of a threatened funding pool have all created a reality in which, as Dr. Stark puts it, "... does more to manage troublemakers [in shelter] than to help women make trouble for abusive partners or for the service institutions that fail to protect them."⁴ System change and paradigm shifting efforts do not fit neatly within the measurable objectives mandated by government agencies who parse out the federal dollars upon which shelters now depend. In fact, feminism and activism not only don't fit neatly into the government-funded picture, *they don't fit in at all.*

The Way It Could Be

Are these disappointing trends described by Dr. Stark in 2007 creating enough discord and pressure to cause a shift back to a more pure model? Not as far as we know here – but, remember, we're in the sparsely-populated rural northwest. We don't have the luxury of time to wait and see if change will be effected here eventually; we need to just change it. Tomorrow is all but here, and yesterday's tools are standing in the way of today's challenges. Many in the community may be thinking that, surely, a long-established program with so much local support has kept up on trends and adapted to serve current needs. Not so. A determination must be made, honestly and without emotion, regarding whether the area's *victims* have real need for the existing emergency shelter at this time and whether they value its services. Such a determination must not give weight to the needs, desires, or preconceptions of the board or donors – it must be made purely on the victims' responses. Improved access to orders of protection, including Montana's Hope Card, may be reducing victims' need for traditional emergency shelter.⁵ Given the likely misuse of the Shelter's resources by a majority of clients during the past several years, the program may determine that a reduction or suspension of emergency victim services and a shift to prevention efforts would better serve its area. One could hope that the VAWA and FVPSA funders would follow suit and expand the services acceptable for funding to meet actual needs. It seems that a hidden-location shelter is more novelty than security today.

Perhaps "outing" the Shelter and using it to serve needs more broad than emergencies would be in order. Teen and family resource centers do not currently exist in this community, and even a child custody exchange station may help eliminate violent confrontations that occur between conflicting parents. Again, federal funding sources ideally would acknowledge such efforts and update their applications to encourage prevention education efforts instead of requiring emergency shelters make up the majority of a program's needs. Staff and volunteers of the subject program experienced hopeful feedback from limited recent attempts to shift community focus toward early education and prevention through outreach efforts at preschool through college venues. Overwhelming concern about federal funding in the future led to strong resistance in the old guard; however, those efforts

⁵ Montana Department of Justice – Victim Services (2010). Hope Cards. Retrieved May 4, 2016, from <https://dojmt.gov/victims/hope-cards/>

System change and paradigm shifting efforts do not fit neatly within the measurable objectives mandated by government agencies who parse out the federal dollars upon which shelters now depend. In fact, feminism and activism not only don't fit neatly into the government-funded picture, *they don't fit in at all.*

rapidly dissolved in the day-to-day business of fighting to keep underpaid staff and reaching out to disinterested victims.

But even if the ideal of a fully-used facility and funding for prevention is off in the distance, a donating community that has shown its heart is in the right place might appreciate getting an updated focus with a positive message for the future. In other words, perhaps it is time to gently but repeatedly explain to the community that yes, violence is still happening in your neighbors' homes. No, the shelter people still can't go make your adult daughter take your grandkids and hide from him in the Shelter. Yes, domestic abuse reports in the newspaper every day represent only a fraction of actual incidents. No, whether they "need" it or not, battered women in this town rarely seek emergency shelter, or any help at all, from the program. And yes, the Shelter still needs its supporters – perhaps now more than ever – if it is to continue its mission of breaking the intergenerational cycle of violence. Perhaps for many, the Shelter's facility is really all that remains of those glory days of activism, when brave local women openly acknowledged domestic violence and provided its victims an emergency respite. Maybe that is why so many of its stakeholders hold fast to doing things the old way in spite of the new and growing needs in the community. But if the mission is truly to break the cycle, to change the future, then letting go of the past is a necessary step. The teens of the community are ready to learn prevention now, and they mustn't be made to wait until they are victims to be served. The victims may have other, better strategies that no longer rely on use of emergency hidden shelter, and they must be allowed to make their own decisions. The facility may have once served best as a hidden shelter, but it mustn't be wasted space now, waiting for the return of victims and hiding from those who need a shelter in which to learn how to never become a victim.

Future of Services Readings:

Intro to Allyship

["Getting in Touch with My Ism's: Lessons Learned in the Journey of an Aspiring Ally"](#) by Alan Berkowitz is a personal reflection of a "straight, white, European heritage, physically able and male person" as he learned to move from being a "passive objector" to engaging in the "active and conscious process" of being an ally to groups of people who experience oppression. In the essay, Berkowitz's strives to be accessible and concrete with his message, providing examples from his own experience. The piece is a solid introduction to the fundamentals of aspiring allyship.

Love With Power

[The Movement Strategy Center](#) offers [Love With Power](#) "as inspiration for all of us who believe that another world is possible and that we must find ways to get there together." Through *Love with Power*, the Movement Strategy Center "honors groups who are creating the new ways to bring about social transformation" and hopes *Love with Power* "will inspire social justice groups and other change agents to explore, adopt, and strengthen collective transformative movement building and practice as an intentional and ongoing part of their work."



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