

# Coalition Chronicles

A newsletter of  
End Domestic Abuse WI  
Volume 36 Issue 3

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Dear friends,

This Coalition Chronicles features narrative and photos from our recent conference, **Collective Liberation: Movement Building for the Years Ahead**. We chose the title *Collective Liberation* because we know that individual experiences and community well-being are intrinsically connected. We know that as long as some suffer oppression and violence, we all suffer. We hosted this inspirational conference because we know that we must all work together to build the kind of world we envision for ourselves and for future generations. We also focused on movement building, recognizing that as we work together to end violence against all, we must catalyze and connect with new partners, build new relationships, and center decisions on those who are most marginalized.

Nearly 400 people attended the Collective Liberation Conference. This Chronicles is for them, to continue to spark their imagination for justice and dignity for all. It is also for all who did not attend the conference, to give them insight into the wisdom and inspiration that sparked the imagination of those who attended.

Let us all work for the collective liberation of all!

Peace in 2018,



## Bonnie Brandl: What's Age Got to Do With It?

Bonnie Brandl, Director of the National Clearinghouse on Abuse in Later Life (NCALL), a project of End Domestic Abuse Wisconsin, was one of four featured plenary speakers at this year's Collective Liberation Conference. Bonnie's presentation, *What's Age Got to Do With It?*, addressed how critically important it is for the violence against women movement to encompass experiences of survivors across the lifespan.

With nearly 30 years in survivor-centered work, Brandl has long challenged the "invisibility of violence against older women" in the broader movement. Bonnie's plenary wove in moments of humor, personal history, and [survivor stories](#) to highlight how ageism is reflected in our everyday language, attitudes, and actions that surround us. This internalization and acceptance of ageist culture enables exploitation and abuse in later life – an often overlooked aspect of violence against women.



**“Older victims deserve to live their lives with dignity and respect.”**

**— Bonnie Brandl**

### Tools and Resources on Abuse in Later Life

As part of a shared mission to enhance the safety and quality of life of victims across the lifespan, NCALL and the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) have worked together with advocates throughout the country exploring how to better meet the needs of older survivors of abuse. For two decades, NCALL and OVW have talked with older victims and professionals in the field, held listening sessions with subject matter experts, reviewed the literature, and facilitated trainings. From this process, NCALL and OVW created numerous tools and resources on abuse in later life.

- [Working with Older Survivors of Abuse: A Framework for Advocates](#) (released June 2016) describes seven guiding principles with minimum guidelines and practical strategies for domestic and sexual violence advocates and programs to consider when working with older survivors.
- [The Abuse in Later Life Education Series for Advocates](#) (June 2017) consists of 13 instructional video clips featuring national experts discussing key topics advocates encounter when serving older survivors. The training modules are formatted as videos, each less than 30 minutes in length. A worksheet accompanies each module with links to additional resources and questions for advocates and programs to consider as they incorporate key content into their practice.
- [Trainers' Toolkit](#) (October 2017) contains several new and redesigned resources for trainers, including interactive exercises, a variety of PowerPoint slide sets, and [videos](#). Trainers may use these components to create or supplement their own abuse in later life training.

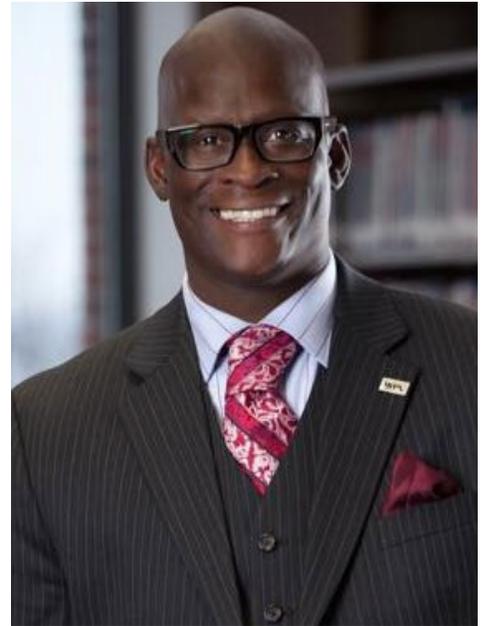
In addition to these new resources, NCALL has created information sheets, curricula, toolkits, videos, webinars, web graphics, and posters for various audiences on different topics related to abuse in later life and unique issues facing older adults and survivors of abuse. Please visit NCALL's [Resources and Publications page](#) to view these materials, or [contact the NCALL staff](#) for assistance finding helpful resources.

## Dr. Eddie Moore

Dr. Eddie Moore (self-proclaimed 'Doctor Diversity') delivered a powerful opening keynote address. He offered insight on topics like early conditioning and implicit bias ("I learned my most hate in my most innocent state."), true commitment to diversity ("What's your PROOF that you value diversity?"), equality vs. equity, comprehensive commitment to ending violence by changing the landscape ("Is EVERYONE included in and leading your work?"), and surrounding ourselves with those who challenge and hold us accountable as we self-reflect.

One of the messages in Dr. Moore's keynote was that most of us spend the majority of our time within our racially segregated groups, in part because we are comfortable with what we know. Understanding privilege is helpful only when we also take action toward racial justice, and one way to move to action is to develop a daily practice.

In partnership with Debby Irving and Dr. Marguerite Penick-Parks, Dr. Moore created the [21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge](#) to help people get started:



**"Do your work to do your work!"**

**—Dr. Eddie Moore**

Have you ever made a successful change in your life? Perhaps you wanted to exercise more, eat less, or change jobs? Think about the time and attention you dedicated to the process. A lot, right? Change is hard. Creating effective social justice habits, particularly those dealing with issues of power, privilege, and leadership is like any lifestyle change. Setting our intentions and adjusting what we spend our time doing is essential. It's all about building new habits. Sometimes the hardest part is just getting started. The good news is, there's an abundance of resources just waiting to empower you to be a more effective player in the quest for justice.

### **The 21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge:**

- For 21 days, do one action every day to further your understanding of power, privilege, oppression, and equity.
- Visit the [21-Day Racial Equity Habit Building Challenge webpage](#) for suggested readings, podcasts, videos, observations, and ways to form and deepen community connections.
- The Challenge is adaptable to all forms of social justice.
- Because understanding white privilege is a powerful lens into the complexities of doing social justice work, listed resources focus on that specific issue.
- You can embark on the challenge individually, with friends and family, or organization-wide.

# Lateefah Simon

Lateefah Simon, President of the [Akonadi Foundation](#), joined us by Skype to deliver a thought-provoking afternoon keynote followed by a question and answer session. She reminded us of the danger and violence of ahistoricism and begged us to explore what our movement might look like were it to move beyond resilience and survival to true healing, dignity, and thriving.

A few memorable quotes from her talk:

- "Let us hold our hearts steady, and as we imagine a future that is free from violence, let us *keep moving* for the sake of our communities..."
- "Our priorities have to shift to beloved community."
- "There is an urgent need for public policy advocacy and organizing."



## Recommended Books

In response to a participant's request for recommended reading, Lateefah offered two book titles:

- ◆ **Sisters of the Yam** by bell hooks, published in 1994, explores strategies for self-recovery and healing for Black women whose emotional health has suffered from the daily assaults of racism and sexism. "Sisters of the Yam stands apart as a self-help book, [bell hooks] says, because it links self-recovery with political resistance." Read a short [review of Sisters of the Yam](#).
- ◆ Read about **Pedagogy of the Oppressed** by Paulo Freire, published in English in 1970, and [why it is still relevant](#). Lateefah specifically recommended the first chapter.

## About Lateefah Simon

Be inspired by this [San Francisco Chronicle article](#) about Lateefah's early activism on behalf of young women living on the streets in San Francisco, which led to her becoming executive director of the Center for Young Women's Development at the age of 19.

"No family rehabilitates in a grant cycle."

— Lateefah Simon

"Black women have not focused sufficiently on our need for contemplative spaces. We are often 'too busy' to find time for solitude. And yet it is in the stillness that we also learn how to be with ourselves in a spirit of acceptance and peace. Then when we re-enter community, we are able to extend this acceptance to others. Without knowing how to be alone, we cannot know how to be with others and sustain the necessary autonomy."

— bell hooks

"Education either functions as an instrument to...bring about conformity or it becomes the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world"

— Paulo Freire

# Farah Tanis

## Honoring the Past to Move Forward: Violence Prevention Through Transformative Conversations in Communities Across the Country

Farah Tanis, Co-Founder and Executive Director of [Black Women's Blueprint](#), delivered the final keynote address. She shared her personal story in connection to honoring the past to move forward. She offered reflections on the Black Women's Truth and Reconciliation Commission on Sexual Assault, an extraordinary undertaking organized in 2016 by women and girls of African descent. Many of the organizers were denied access and assistance from the criminal justice system, and realized their own collective transformation could not happen without public recognition and acknowledgment of the injustices and harms they had experienced.

Farah Tanis is a women's human rights activist working at the grassroots to address the spectrum of sexual violence against women and girls in Black/African American communities, and working with Historically Black Colleges and Universities on issues of gender, race, sexuality, anti-violence policy, and practice. Her work has been an inspiration to End Abuse's gender violence prevention program.



**“For many women the ‘me too’ movement is extremely complex. For many women - due to loyalty to race, a lack of access, poverty, class, and immigration status - ‘me too’ is not an option.”**

**— Farah Tanis**

## Acknowledging the Past to Create New Futures

For my father who had missed his inheritance of joy and real human connection because he was so broken out of shape, there was no time to speak with him of alternative ways of being a man, or about healthy masculinity, humility, humanity, non-violence, and love without prerequisites. But there is time for our future generation of men and boys.

— Farah Tanis

From [Forgiving My Father: Reflections on Girlhood, Being Free and My Trips to Africa](#), posted on the *Move to End Violence: Building Movement for Social Change* website June 29, 2016

## Public Domestics

Sagashus Levingston partnered with End Abuse to hold a public display, book reading, and conversation from her book, *Infamous Mothers*, in parallel with the statewide conference, Collective Liberation:

Movement Building for the Years Ahead on November 16, 2017. Sagashus Levingston is a PhD candidate and instructor in the Department of English at the University of Wisconsin-Madison, and the founder of the organization also called Infamous Mothers.

The multimedia format included gallery-type displays of visuals from the book, a book reading, and a question-and-answer period that led to a deeper level of reflection and engagement with the audience.

The *Infamous Mothers* stories intimately detail the real-life experiences of women parenting in the midst of sexual abuse, physical violence, drug use, and poverty. Many of the women's stories contain common themes of being sexualized and dehumanized during formative years of their lives. They were subject to compound and transgenerational trauma. From these inhumane conditions, the women found ways to succeed for themselves and their children.

Based on the courage of unabashed, unapologetic storytelling, the book and the

event explored the power of narrative, particularly counter-narratives that challenge or complicate the dominant tropes around which cultural expectations and social policy are constructed. The women in *Infamous Mothers* tell their stories because their stories are a source of power that would otherwise be hidden by the stereotypes surrounding Black motherhood. Central to the purpose of the book is the idea that motherhood, and Black motherhood in particular, is and should be seen as a source of tenacity, hope, and creative potential.

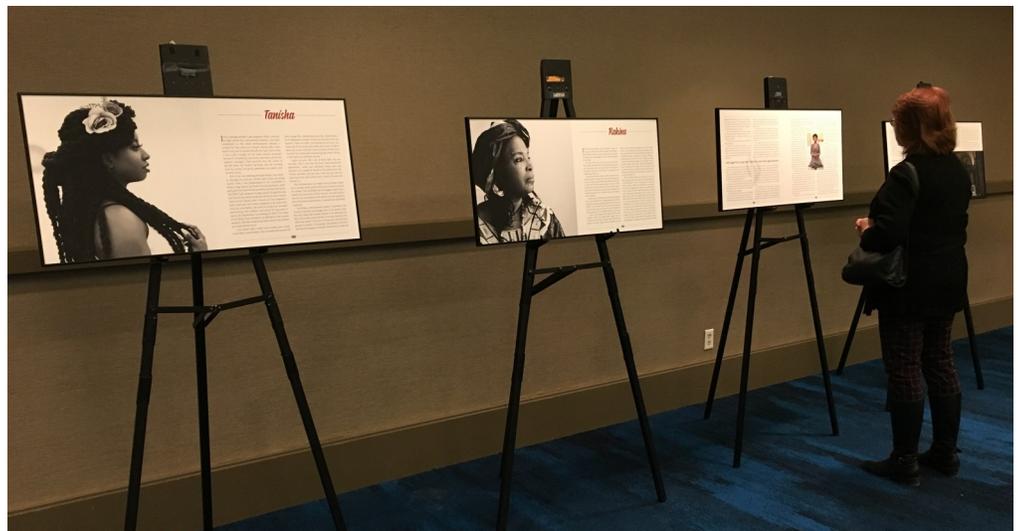
In addition, this project points to the need for a revitalization of storytelling within feminist circles. In the early stages of the feminist and battered women's movement, survivors' narratives played an important



**“Sometimes we are exceptional not in spite of what we’ve gone through, but because of what we’ve gone through.”**

Link to [Sagashus Levingston’s TEDx Talk](#)

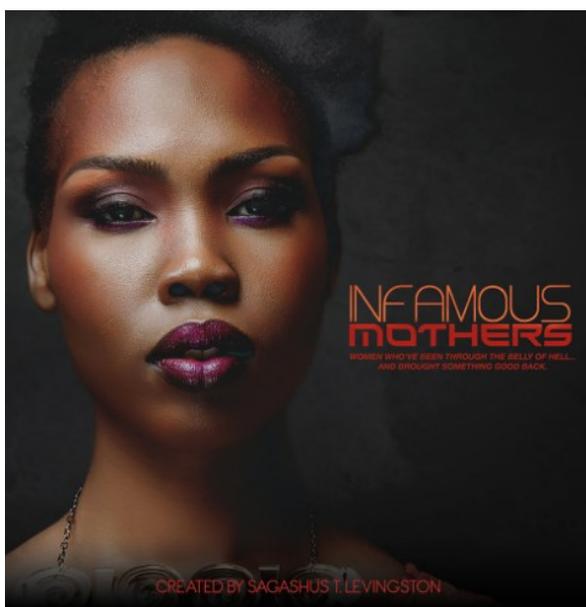
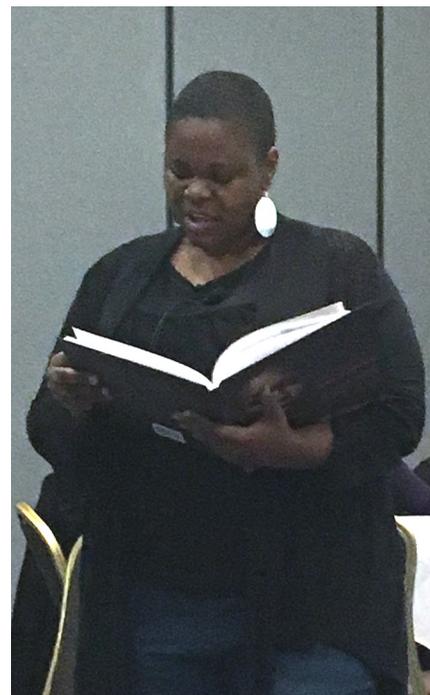
Read Sagashus Levingston’s [For the ones couldn't bring themselves to say #metoo](#)



role in defining common experiences of oppression and towards demanding political reform. However, the stories of mothers like those included in *Infamous Mothers* were often left out of this discourse. These stories were left out in part as a manifestation of a larger culture which prioritized white, middle and upper-class stories before others in nearly all societal venues, and in part because stories of sex work, drug use and multiple children from multiple men were not seen as politically advantageous to achieving funding and legislative victories. This project works to re-center stories that were marginalized and asserts that these stories are powerful.

*Infamous Mothers* is a compilation of personal narratives from Black mothers, many of whom have survived sex work, domestic and sexual abuse, and drug addiction. In the words of the book, these women “did more than go through the belly of hell and survived, [they] brought something good back - coming out on the other side as doctors, artists, nurse practitioners, homeowners, counselors, and so much more.”

The realism and intimacy of the stories contained within *Infamous Mothers* dispel and displace the negative stereotypical images of Black motherhood in America. The book locates in these stories a common heroism that overcomes imaginable odds and asks, “What would the world be like if employment, educational, economic, and family policies treated Black motherhood as containing extraordinary potential, instead of devaluing Black motherhood as a burden on society?”



## PREVENTING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

**End Abuse awarded 18 Community Micro-grants to support programs implementing anti-violence initiatives in communities throughout WI through mid-June, 2018. These projects focus on engaging youth and use an intergenerational model to connect youth with elders or generations that came before them.**

**Four of these projects are centered on *Infamous Mothers*. A critical part of these projects is getting copies of the book into the hands of women and girls in the community: Public Domestics, Interrupting Silence, and Breaking Taboo (the Catalyst Project, in Madison) and Intergenerational Listening Tables (Northeast WI African American Association, in Green Bay).**

## Books by Collective Liberation Presenters

### Smoking Out the Shadows, by Rosalind Metcalf

“*Smoking Out The Shadows* is based on different events that took place, which increased my level of vulnerability, causing me to be the perfect fifteen year old for a predator to kidnap and force into sex trafficking.”

—Rosalind Metcalf

Watch this [September 2017 interview with the author](#).

Rosalind created Healing Starts Today, whose mission is to end human trafficking, prevent violence, and empower our community with the tools to achieve health, personal growth, wellness, and awareness through rescuing, education, and by helping individuals to develop productive life skills. Visit the [Healing Starts Today Website](#).



### Your Ruby's Worth, by Jodine Basterash

Jodine has found fulfillment and determination empowering the community through her domestic violence initiatives and her advocacy helping victims to discover their self-worth. She is a non-traditional domestic violence advocate bringing awareness through social media and nightlife events. She supports and works with two domestic violence agencies in her community.

**Your Ruby's Worth** shares her personal testimonies of self-identity, growing up fatherless, and being a domestic violence survivor and rape survivor starting at the age of 10. She shares her personal journey of discovering her ruby's worth: enduring time, heat, and pressure, passing the tests of difficult times, forming her into one of God's precious rubies. Visit her website [Adore to Empower](#).

### A Message from Jessie, by Buck Blodgett

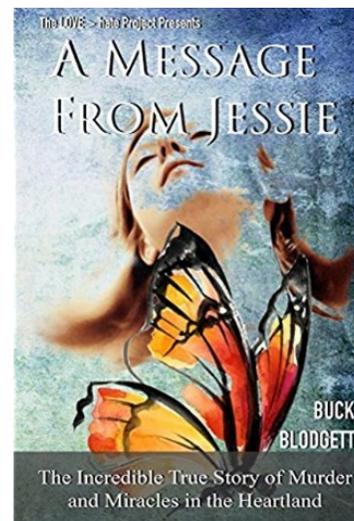
“But, of course, most of life—the mundane minutes, seconds, and moments—was just normal life. Now, life would never be normal again, of course. No, it would be a moment-to-moment wrestling match, a constant duel for my attention between the abyss and the life of purpose.”

—excerpt from [A Message from Jessie](#)

“Love is stronger than hate.”

That was a grieving dad's message to a thousand people at his daughter's funeral after she was brutally murdered in their home. Borne of this statement was Jessie Blodgett's legacy: The LOVE>hate Project.

Visit the [LOVE>hate website](#).



## Presenters Share

*Workshop presenters submitted information and resources to share with readers of the Chronicles.*

### Safe Homes

Golden House Executive Director Karen Michaels and Program Manager Holli Fisher shared their experiences implementing the *Safe Home* pilot project in 2016, using quality improvement methodology in the [POINT Initiative](#) (Poverty Outcome Improvement Network Team) of Northeast WI. Safe Home was developed in response to the severe lack of housing available to victims and their families in Brown County – a need familiar to victim advocates in many Wisconsin counties. Their program goal was safe permanent and independent housing for victims of domestic violence and their children.

To implement Safe Home, they: identified services gaps in the community; allowed the use of discretionary funds in their budget to help survivors address financial barriers to safety and stabilization; made staffing adjustments to address mobile advocacy and access points for receiving services; increased knowledge of survivors' rights related to housing; acted as a bridges between tenant and landlord; and partnered with other community agencies such as transitional living programs.

Outcomes included decreases in “turnaways” for shelter due to capacity (January-October: 171 households in 2016 versus 68 households in 2017) and in length of stay (38 days in 2016 versus 25 days in 2017). Additionally, 92% were still stably housed after 18 months. Questions can be directed to Karen Michaels, Executive Director ([karen@goldenhousegb.org](mailto:karen@goldenhousegb.org)) or Holli Fisher, Program Manager ([holli@goldenhousegb.org](mailto:holli@goldenhousegb.org)).

### Advocacy for Domestic Violence Homicide Cases—Honoring Lives Lost and Serving Families of Victims

Wisconsin loses lives every year to domestic violence homicide incidents. An increasing number of domestic abuse agencies are interested in providing advocacy services on homicide cases within their own communities.

Jessica Honish, Courtney Olson (Rainbow House Domestic Abuse Services), and Michelle Coppens (Sojourner Family Peace Center and Milwaukee County Domestic Violence High-Risk Team) shared what they have learned doing this work, discussed why this work is critical, and identified some considerations for interested agencies.



**Sara Krall introduces presenters Jessica Honish, Courtney Olson, and Michelle Coppens. Visit [DOMESTIC HOMICIDE HELP](#), the website they have created with the mission of bringing comfort in the days to come for family members who have lost a loved one to domestic violence.**



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Please support our work to end abuse in WI & beyond. Your gift will help further our mission to prevent and eliminate domestic abuse.

To make a donation, click the link above or go to [www.endabusewi.org/donate](http://www.endabusewi.org/donate)

**THANK YOU!**

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