

# NAPAWF

National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum

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## PLATFORM PAPERS

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This collection of Platform Papers describe the six issue areas that form the basis for NAPAWF's work. The Platform Papers are not meant to provide a complete list of issues and concerns in these areas. Nor does the format of this collection assume that the issues discussed can be neatly separated into six areas. Rather, the Platform Papers are intended to be works-in-progress that serve as companions to the organization's grassroots work.

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PLATFORM PAPER ON

## Ending Violence Against Women

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## ISSUE AREAS

- Social prevalence and acceptance of violence against women
- Violence at the individual level, including domestic violence, intimate partner violence, elder abuse, rape and sexual assault, and child abuse
- Violence at a global level as it impacts and contributes to the continued cycle of violence among women and families in the U.S.
- Systemic violence perpetrated by the state and authorities
- Workplace violence

## PROBLEM STATEMENTS

While violence against women cuts across boundaries of race, class, sexuality and immigration status, our society's response to the epidemic has not reached all communities. In communities where statistics are available, API women are over-represented in domestic violence homicides. For many API women seeking help, resources are not as readily available as they are for white, U.S. born, and English-speaking women. Additionally, pervasive stereotypes about Asian Pacific Americans as "model minorities" without social problems perpetuate the notion that violence against women does not occur in our communities. At the same time, an opposing yet prevalent notion -- perpetuated both within and outside of our communities -- that violence against women is "just part of Asian cultures" reinforces racist and imperialistic ideas that Asian cultures are intrinsically violent and regressive in comparison to more "enlightened" Western societies. Within the API community, there seems to be less attention to female victims of

anti-API violence and of domestic violence cases. The forms of violence that API women experience -- domestic violence and sexual assault -- never galvanize the kind of community response that hate crimes do.

Violence against API women takes place in many contexts. Legal systems often revictimize the limited English-speaking woman, who may put her immigration status at risk and face deportation if she leaves the batterer or reports a crime, forcing her to appear more frequently in courts to confront the batterer or condoning the violence because it is supposedly part of her culture. Immigrant women may become involved in coercive relationships with their male sponsors, who may have more power and voice in the community. In addition to intimate partner violence, an increasing number of young Asian girls are experiencing police harassment and brutality in public spaces such as parks, malls, etc., where they are easily identified by law enforcement and continually harassed. The vulnerability of API sex workers to exploitation and lack of protection against violence is compounded by difficulties in organizing effectively, as well as the stigma attached to their profession. International trafficking and exploitation, mail order bride industries, and violence against women in situations of armed conflict are sources of problems for women who subsequently become immigrants or refugees to the U.S. or are violated in their countries as the result of U.S. policy or corporate actions. The workplace is another arena where violence against API women occurs. Lack of decent jobs for API women often forces them to tolerate sexual harassment and abusive conditions, including the withholding food and water and dangerous work conditions, for fear of losing their jobs. Law enforcement and justice systems often do not adequately protect API women, particularly those who speak limited English. In addition, there is a lack of culturally and linguistically appropriate programs and services to address the unique needs and barriers faced by API women and girls. There is a need for more trained bicultural interpreters at all levels of the response system as well as more bilingual and bicultural providers. In order for API women to access any point of a response system, extensive outreach and organizing at community levels around issues of violence, rights, and laws pertaining to violence in the U.S. are needed. The lack of research and data about the prevalence of violence-related deaths and violence against API women and girls contributes to the stereotypes that violence doesn't exist in our communities. Research needs to be broken down by API ethnicities in order to design ethnic-specific outreach and intervention strategies.

We need to develop analyses and strategies that takes into account the intersections of race, class, gender, sexuality and immigration status to challenge social norms about violence both within and beyond API communities. We also need to acknowledge the interconnected nature of all forms of violence and clearly articulate the impact on Asian women and girls. The challenge is to hold our communities accountable for violence against its women without colluding with anti-immigrant and racist movements.

## **PLATFORM GOALS**

- To end cycles of violence within API communities.
- To break the silence about violence by raising public and API community awareness and by establishing zero tolerance for all forms of violence against API women and girls, including the international trafficking for labor and sexual exploitation
- To ensure culturally appropriate services for API women who are victims of violence.

- To reframe the issue of violence against women more inclusively to encompass global violence against API women, workplace violence, hate crimes, elder abuse, same-sex intimate partner violence, etc.

## **ISSUE AREA OBJECTIVES**

- Improve access to culturally competent services to API women and children who are victims of violence; increase awareness of the cultural and language needs of API women and children who are victims of violence.
- Organize against all international trafficking of API women and girls for labor and sexual exploitation.
- Educate and organize to end exploitation and violence against API sex workers.
- Organize, educate and advocate on both local community and national levels to impact policies that support the end of violence against women and girls; work for full community involvement in this area.
- Research and data collection broken down by API ethnicities.
- Increase awareness of mainstream and API communities about violence against API women.
- Increase funding for programs that address violence against API women & girls.

## **ISSUE AREA STRATEGIES**

- Establish regional and national political advocacy networks and service collaborations among API domestic violence and sexual assault activists.
- Organize a national summit to promote freedom from domestic violence and sexual assault in all API communities.
- Advocate for, provide technical assistance to, and give support to the development of local shelters to provide API victims of violence with culturally and linguistically appropriate services (e.g. counseling, crisis intervention, self-sufficiency and empowerment), as well as multicultural and multilingual materials.
- Evaluate local domestic violence and sexual assault services to assess their ability to competently help API clients. Identify language needs and barriers to effective services.
- Develop a national clearinghouse to disseminate linguistically diverse resource materials. As part of the above strategies, develop informational packets on cultural competency and domestic violence for distribution to agency providers who serve API clients; develop a national directory of programs serving API survivors of violence; develop a Website.
- Advocate for more research, specifically on the prevalence of violence-related deaths and violence against API women and girls.
- Initiate a forum discussion about the international trafficking of women and examine its impact on different API communities in different regions of the U.S.
- Work with and encourage the formation of networks to disseminate information about rights and resources to all immigrant women (about laws in the U.S. regarding abuse, conditional permanent residency status, etc.)
- Develop protocols on violence against women for all professions -- police, schools, workplaces, etc.
- Organize strategically as U.S.-based API women with a specific response to the regulation (or lack of regulation) of international trafficking of women and girls.

- Create policy and advocacy strategies that address the issues and needs of "mail order brides."
- Develop primary prevention strategies for API girls, e.g. mentorship. Empower girls by involving them at all levels of program development and advocacy.

## **CURRENT ACTIVITIES**

- Support and coordinate the formation of a national network of programs and activists who are working to end domestic violence in Asian American and Pacific Islander communities. A planning group will be convened in the Summer of 1998 to begin setting the foundations for this national network.
- Support and coordinate with the national network of shelters working with refugee women.
- Sponsor and co-sponsor workshops and dialogues at the community level on issues of domestic violence.
- Network with and support local shelters and projects that are working to end domestic violence and anti-Asian violence and hate crimes.

## **NATIONAL CAMPAIGN PROPOSAL**

A national campaign related to ending violence against women will be developed in collaboration with existing API and refugee networks.