

# **SURVIVAL, SUPPORT A N D RESILIENCE:**

**Stories of LGBTQ  
Survivors and Victims of  
Domestic/Intimate  
Partner Violence**

*a release from*



*October 26, 2010*

## Introduction

For the first time, NCAVP (National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs) presents this collection of stories from lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and queer (LGBTQ) survivors of domestic/intimate partner violence as its own release, rather than as a part of our annual report *Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender and Queer Domestic/Intimate Partner Violence in the United States in 2009*. This release complements the data, analysis and recommendations made within the report with narrative evidence of the barriers that LGBTQ survivors with diverse experiences and identities encounter as they attempt to access support, advocacy, and services. Section 1 contains several narratives that provide in-depth examples of several of the most common structural barriers to safety and self-determination as experienced by LGBTQ survivors. Section 2 presents additional survivor narratives of LGBTQ survivors served by NCAVP member programs in 2009. In Section 3, we commemorate those LGBTQ people who were murdered by an abusive partner in 2009.

These stories are not only a testament to the resilience and resistance of LGBTQ people in their work to build healthy lives and relationships, but also illustrate the compelling need for the existence and expansion of LGBTQ anti-violence programs. Such narratives, paired with the findings and recommendations made in the 2009 report, demand the immediate attention and redoubled support of policy makers, community organizations, service providers and the general public to sustain and build NCAVP's movement to end domestic/intimate partner violence in LGBTQ communities.

If you are interested in starting an anti-violence program, becoming a member of the National Coalition of Anti-Violence Programs or if you would like more information, contact NCAVP at [info@ncavp.org](mailto:info@ncavp.org) or 212.714.1184.

# 1. Structural Barriers to Safety and Self-Determination

## ***Structural Barriers to Safety and Self-Determination: Cultural Competency with Marginalized LGBTQ People in Health Care, Police Response and Shelter***

The following narrative provides an example of the myriad barriers to safety and self-determination faced by LGBTQ members of other marginalized communities. The story of Angelica, an undocumented Latina lesbian survivor of domestic/intimate partner violence, illustrates her struggles to access safety and wellness, as well as the efforts of the STOP Domestic Violence Program, at the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center to provide her with culturally appropriate support and services.

*Angelica, Latina Lesbian non-transgender woman, 30s, monolingual in Spanish, undocumented (urban)*

Angelica moved to Los Angeles from her native Central American country in the hope of finding a better life for herself and her 6 year old son, Jose. Shortly after her arrival in the United States, she was hired as a housekeeper by her future partner, Maria. Because the beginning of their relationship seemed so perfect to Angelica, she believed she had finally found the life she had hoped for in America, for both Jose and herself. She tried to ignore the verbal insults from Maria that began during the second year of their relationship. However, the insults quickly escalated into psychological and financial abuse. Fearing that she would not be able to make a sufficient living for herself and Jose in their new country, Angelica stayed with Maria. The first time Maria physically assaulted Angelica, she told her that, if she considered leaving, she would harm Jose. The physical abuse continued to intensify until neighbors called the police during one especially severe argument. The police failed to intervene and a neighbor transported Angelica, who was badly injured, to a nearby hospital. Although the hospital staff treated her for her injuries, they failed to make a police report as required by law. Fearing for Jose's safety, Angelica and Jose fled their home with Maria in the middle of the night and found safety at a domestic violence shelter. None of the shelter staff could speak Spanish, so Angelica intermittently communicated with the staff by utilizing the assistance of a bilingual resident. Despite the help of this resident, Angelica was very isolated in the shelter and unable to obtain individual counseling or participate in the shelter's support group due to the lack of Spanish-speaking staff. Angelica contacted LAGLC's STOP Program and spoke to one of STOP's bilingual counselors who encouraged the shelter to provide transportation for Angelica to LAGLC so that she could obtain individual counseling services in her native language and participate in a support group specifically designed for Spanish-speaking lesbians. Although the shelter issued an allotted number of taxi vouchers to their residents each month, they failed to give Angelica the number of vouchers needed to make the trip

to Hollywood where LAGLC is located. With continued assistance and advocacy from the STOP Program on Angelica's behalf, she was eventually able to transfer to another shelter that readily provided her with the transportation necessary to obtain the lesbian specific counseling and support she needed.

*Submitted by the STOP Domestic Violence Program, L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center (LAGLC)*

### ***Structural Barriers to Safety and Self-Determination: Shelter***

The following narrative demonstrates the complex difficulties encountered by a lesbian survivor in accessing emergency shelter and the Colorado Anti-Violence Program's efforts to provide her with shelter when other, more traditional options failed to meet her needs.

*Deborah, Indigenous lesbian non-transgender woman, 30s (urban)*

My partner, two children and I are experiencing domestic violence from my ex-husband. I've been trying to find a way that we can all stay together and be safe, but am having a lot of trouble. Both of my kids have been molested and one now has a teddy bear with GPS recording, just to be safe. My ex-husband is filing for temporary custody, so I'm not sure what I have to do legally to keep them safest with me. I got a protection order against my ex, but my partner has been denied. I don't understand why, because she's in danger too. When we tried to get into a confidential shelter, we were denied because they won't let couples in. I tried to explain that my partner has a disability and that I'm her caretaker, so we can't be separated. It didn't make any difference. Thankfully, CAVP was able to work with another organization to put us up in a motel for a few days until we could figure out some next steps.

*Submitted by the Colorado Anti-Violence Program*

### ***Structural Barriers to Justice: Law Enforcement Response***

Research indicates and many NCAVP member programs report that survivors of LGBTQ domestic/intimate partner violence may face misarrest or dual arrest.<sup>1</sup> The following case from the STOP Domestic Violence Program, L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center (LAGLC) illustrates this trend and demonstrates the significant difference that culturally competent primary aggressor screenings can make.

*Jason, African American gay non-transgender man, 30s (suburban)*

Jason and his highly volatile partner, Samuel, shared a home in the outskirts of Los Angeles, nearly 100 miles east of the city. Unable to find employment, Jason felt trapped

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<sup>1</sup> Pattavina, A., Hirschel, D., Buzawa, E., Faggiani, D., & Bentley, H. (2007). "Comparison of the police response to heterosexual versus same-sex intimate partner violence." *Violence Against Women* 13(4): 374-394, NCJ 218287. Retrieved from <http://www.ncjrs.gov/App/Publications/abstract.aspx?ID=239986>

in his relationship with Samuel which had become increasingly abusive during their 5 years together. During a recent argument, Samuel hit his own arms and legs with a hammer, cut himself with a kitchen knife, then called the police and reported that Jason had abused him. The police arrested Jason and charged him with domestic violence. He was incarcerated for 3 days then mandated by the court to attend an approved batterers' intervention program. Fearful of returning home, Jason found refuge in a homeless shelter. Shortly thereafter, he called LAGLC's batterers' intervention program. Following completion of a comprehensive assessment, STOP clinicians determined that Jason was not a dominant/primary aggressor and advocated with the court and Probation Department on his behalf for appropriate services.

Like many LGBT victims, Jason reported fighting back consistently when Samuel became abusive, primarily because of the lack of LGBTQ specific domestic violence services in his area. He was, therefore, placed in a group for defending victims where he obtained the LGBTQ specific intervention he needed. STOP DV also provided Jason with individual counseling to address Jason's symptoms of post-traumatic stress disorder and referred him to LAGLC's Domestic Violence Legal Advocacy Program for legal assistance.

*Submitted by the STOP Domestic Violence Program, L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center (LAGLC)*

## 2. Additional Survivor Narratives

This section contains additional narratives from LGBTQ survivors who accessed services and support at NCAVP member programs in 2009. Each narrative has a different focus and may present information on challenges faced prior to accessing services or describe the survivor's engagement with an NCAVP member program. Collectively, the following stories demonstrate the broad range of experiences of LGBTQ survivors and the myriad ways in which NCAVP member programs provide them with support, inclusive of all strategies for survival and resilience.

### **Community United Against Violence (CUAV) – San Francisco, California**

*Monica, Latina heterosexual transgender woman, 40s, undocumented (urban)*

I first came to CUAV after my ex-partner's abusiveness escalated to threatening both my life and my current partner's life. In the most recent scary episode, my ex stood outside my house staring at us for an hour. Because I feared for my life, I called the police to make a report. I felt like I couldn't explain myself well enough in English because Spanish is my first language, and in the end the police officer didn't make a report. I came to CUAV both because I feared my ex-partner would kill me and because I felt that my depression and anxiety were taking over my life. I needed mental health services in Spanish, with someone who I could be totally open with about my experiences as an immigrant and a transgender person, and the ways in which my ex-partner was coercing me into paying for his expenses for crossing the border. I also wanted to take care of the anxiety and depression that stemmed both being abused and having a chronic illness. Working with an advocate at CUAV increased my self-esteem and decreased my anxiety—I got support to file a police report in Spanish, and learned new skills to cope with my depression and my ex-partner.

*Tatiana, Latina Lesbian non-transgender woman, 30s, documented non-citizen (urban)*

I came to CUAV because I was scared my ex-partner was going to kill me. My ex-partner stabbed a mannequin I was using in my studies and said he would do the same to me—I've never been so scared in my life. My advocate at CUAV prepared me for my restraining order hearing and arranged for me to have an interpreter. Unfortunately, my ex-partner brought a lawyer (they both spoke perfect English), and the lawyer made sure he looked believable. Because I looked so nervous and afraid, the judge thought I might be lying and didn't grant me the 3-year restraining order that most people get. Because CUAV prepared me and got me an interpreter, though, I was able to get a 1-year restraining order and that felt like a big victory for me in my path to healing.

## **Colorado Anti-Violence Program**

*Bruce, gay non-transgender man (suburban)*

Two years ago, my partner, who is a cop, stabbed me. I wasn't living in Colorado at the time. I moved to another state but my ex found me a few weeks later. I moved to another state and he found me several months after that. I went to a motel for a while, hoping to wait it out, but when I went back home, he was there. That's when I came to Colorado. I don't know how, but my ex got my phone number and e-mail and kept contacting me. I moved to another city in the state and then he showed up at my home. I used the last of my money to go to a hotel and didn't know what else to do. I finally found the Colorado Anti-Violence Program. After talking through some options with an advocate, I called police to increase their patrol around where I was, I cut off communication with my family (in case they were the ones giving my contact info to my ex) and I contacted two friends I trust. CAVP helped me get a bus ticket to another state, and am hoping this is the last time I have to move.

*Theodore, gay non-transgender man, 30s (rural)*

I've been trying to leave my ex for a while and he just won't leave me alone. I just want this all to be over. He stole my clothes and is trying to intimidate me by using his friends who are police officers. He called my work and outed me as HIV+ and I don't know what's going to happen. A CAVP advocate supported me in filing for a protection order, but somehow my ex got the date changed for the hearing and I wasn't notified. Since I didn't show up at the new date, the protection order was dropped. I just don't know what I can do to get him to stop.

*Valerie, Latina lesbian non-transgender woman, 50s (urban)*

I came from out of state to go to my father's funeral with my partner. When our plane landed, we rented a car and then got into a fight while we were driving. My partner assaulted me, made me get out of the car and then drove off with my luggage, my checkbook and cell phone. I had to be hospitalized from the assault and I had no way to get to the funeral. I called CAVP and they helped me find transportation back to my home state. I don't know what's going to happen when I get back there but I know if I get in tough spot, I can call CAVP for support.

*Stephanie, Latina lesbian non-transgender woman, 20s (rural)*

I've been with my partner for seven years. The first year was good, the last six have been verbally abusive and then she's been physically abusive for the past two years. We have two children together. I'm the birth mother, but we're both on the birth certificate. After the most recent incident, I called the police, but she left before they showed up. A friend told

me about CAVP so I called the hotline. CAVP helped me safety plan when I decided to leave and helped me figure out what important documents to take with me. I've been afraid to use my credit card because she'll be able to track me down. I came to a city where I don't think she'll find me and left all of my belongings at home. Everything seems to be calming down right now, but I'm still nervous about a bunch of things, including wondering if she might try to take the children away from me.

### **Kansas City Anti-Violence Project**

*Patricia, African-American lesbian non-transgender woman, 60s (suburban)*

I was with my girlfriend for 13 years. During the last six years I have supported her financially because she had a hard time keeping a job. We would get into arguments because she would say she had paid a bill but then she just took the money and we would get a notice that our utilities were going to be shut off. When I brought it up to her she would just tell me that I am stupid and to shut up. In the last year I had back surgery and we got into a fight and she hit me in the face, knocking me down, and started kicking me in the back. She then took my phone so I couldn't call anyone. I decided things had to change. I called KCAVP and my advocate helped me to make a safety plan and really listened to my experience. I have also been able to meet with a therapist that they got me in contact with for no charge. I haven't left my relationship yet but I do feel supported and that I have options when I do leave.

### **Buckeye Region Anti-Violence Organization (BRAVO) – Ohio**

*Jack, white gay non-transgender man, 30s (urban)*

My boyfriend Rob and I have been in a relationship for five years now. He has become extremely controlling this past year and I believe he is an alcoholic. Last week we got into an argument and he grabbed me, broke my fingers, and bruised my ribs. He seems to get more and more upset about anything I do and doesn't like me talking to other people. I think he needs counseling, but know that he won't go. I am getting more and more frightened of his behavior and am thinking of trying to get him out of the apartment, which is in my name. I have been told that I can't just throw him out; that I have to do some sort of eviction proceeding. I just don't know what he would do if I tried that. I really need some support to figure out what to do. A friend told me to call BRAVO and that they might have a support group or counseling.

*Jose, Hispanic gay non-transgender man, 20s (urban)*

I am new to Columbus and attending a state college. My parents moved to Ohio a couple of years ago and I recently came out to them, which was pretty difficult. It has been a long process for me and I just knew I had to tell them. As you can imagine I am new to

dating and had been dating this guy for just a couple of months when things got really crazy. I really felt like he was the one and we were having a great time together. He called me one night and wanted to come over. I told him that I was feeling really stressed and was buried in school work. He insisted on coming over and I told him "no." He accused me of seeing someone else and said he was coming over. I was perplexed and not happy with what he was saying. I ended the phone call and he called back. He continued to call and I could not reason with him. Finally I stopped answering his calls and he began texting me, which I ignored. Next I knew, he was at my front door pounding and screaming that I let him in. I was freaked out. I had never seen anyone act this way before and I was not about to let him in. He continued to scream and yell and said he would kill me if I did not let him in. I went upstairs and tried to ignore him and he finally left, but I could not sleep all night. Luckily I did not have any more to do with him after this, but it has always bothered me. This past year I found out about BRAVO and decided to volunteer on their helpline. During the training we learned about intimate partner violence and I realized how much my experience was like that of others who have dated or may be in an abusive relationship. I think this understanding will help me better understand the needs and concerns of the BRAVO callers. I would also like to do more to reach out to the Latino community in Columbus.

### **SafeSpace at the R U 1 2? Community Center – Vermont**

*Joann, white Lesbian non-transgender woman (rural)*

"Joann" called the SafeSpace office because she and her long term partner had recently split up. They were together for more than 15 years and have children together. Joann was scared because her partner was exerting power and control over her, makes all the decisions and has complete control over the household money. She is afraid to leave because she is not sure how this will affect her children. She does not want to make hasty decisions and strongly believes she needs to stay in the household for now. Joann's partner is emotionally, financially and physically abusive to her, however Joann reports that she does not hurt the children. Joann is concerned because her ex is seeing someone she met over the internet and exposing her children to someone she does not know. Joann has identified that what she needs right now is to come in and talk with an advocate on occasion. Joann has worked with SafeSpace to talk about these challenges and to develop her safety plan. Joann is aware of the support group and shelter options available to her at SafeSpace and knows that all she needs to do is indicate that she is in need of a safe place to retreat and the agency will work on getting it for her.

## **New York City Anti-Violence Project**

*Don, African-American gay non-transgender man, 30s (urban)*

I walked into NYC AVP after my caseworker at the Family Justice Center called AVP and made a connection. I told the counselor that my ex was getting out of jail, and that I was afraid my ex would come looking for me. I am still living in the same place as I was when my abuser first went to jail.

I had an order of protection which was valid until 2011, but I still felt unsafe in my apartment as an order of protection is just a piece of paper. The counselor tried to help me work through my options at keeping myself safe. I was told that if my ex does approach me I could call the police, or I could stay with a friend for a little while. I told her that the only way I would feel safe is if my locks were changed. I wanted to relocate, but I haven't finished paying off the rent. My counselor suggested a project that can replace my locks for free. I told the counselor I had already called them several times, but they have not returned any of my calls. The counselor suggested we call them together. She helped me explain my situation to the staff and in just 2 days after that phone call, my locks were changed. I finally felt safer in my home.

*Anonymous, Latino gay non-transgender man, 60s, immigrant (urban)*

I am a senior from El Salvador living in the USA since the early 60's. I can tell you it's very hard to grow old as an HIV-positive gay man and not having someone by my side. Five years ago, I met a much younger man and we began a relationship. In the beginning there was no exchange of money but as time passed, he began to ask me for money and I helped him financially. He had his own apartment and I had mine. We traveled to different places and had many very good times. Most of my acquaintances were jealous that I had a good looking young man with me. But I had to pay for everything. Over time, his expenses increased, making it difficult to sustain myself and my boyfriend on a fixed income. I helped my boyfriend to get jobs, but he never held them for long. One day he came to me very upset and asked me for money I did not have. He became angry and started a verbal argument which escalated into physical abuse. I think he might have been under the influence of drugs. He grabbed me by my neck and began to choke me. He then began to bite me on the face and both my arms. I had torn skin and bite marks over my body. He began to take my pants off as if he was going to rape me. Then my wallet fell out of my back pocket and he stopped. He picked up the wallet. He took wallet and all the money I had left, \$60.00. Before he stormed out he called me anti-gay names. I was in shock and did not know what to do.

I called a program I belong to and they referred me to NYC AVP. The counselor suggested I call the police and get medical treatment. The counselor also safety planned with me. The following day I went to AVP's office and signed releases so they could advocate for me. My counselor called the police for me and to and ensured an arrest was made. I no longer felt safe in my own apartment even after my boyfriend was arrested. The counselor called my housing agency and helped with my transfer. I now live in a different part of the city. The counselor kept in touch with the District Attorney's Office and helped ensure I received an exclusionary order of protection. She even helped me apply for a compensation of expenses that I incurred as a result of this crime. But most helpful of all was the counseling and emotional support I received from my counselor. Unfortunately, my boyfriend was found unfit to stand a trial because of his mental capacity due to drug use, and he was placed in a psychiatric hospital.

### **3. Murder Narratives**

This section presents narratives of LGBTQ people who are known or are suspected to have been murdered as a result of domestic/intimate partner violence. Such fatalities reflect the most extreme harms of domestic/intimate partner violence in LGBTQ relationships.

#### **Jeanette Martinez, 23, Latina lesbian non-transgender woman, Brooklyn, New York**

According to local media and reports from one of the victim's family members, on February 25, 2009, Jeanette Martinez (23), a mother of a 4-year old, was shot twice in the head in a broad daylight on a Brooklyn street by her ex-boyfriend because he was upset that she left him for another woman. Jeannette was pronounced dead at the scene. The offender then reportedly chased Martinez's girlfriend, Keila Ocasio (19), onto an oncoming traffic where she was struck by a car. As she lay on the ground, the offender is reported to have stood over her and fired 4 shots in her body. Ocasio survived, but was in critical condition after undergoing a surgery. According to the media reports, Martinez had filed a criminal complaint just hours before she was killed against the ex-boyfriend, and an order of protection against him was found in her pocket at the morgue.

#### **Shawn Henderson, 28, Black non-transgender man, Dallas, Texas**

On Saturday, October 24, 2009, Shawn Henderson was reportedly stabbed to death in his apartment in northeast Dallas. The next day, police arrested Terry Williams in connection to Henderson's murder, who neighbors reportedly believed was Shawn's live-in partner. According to police, Shawn's roommate witnessed the incident. No information was available related to the status of Terry William's charges.

#### **Barry T. Horn, 59, white non-transgender man, Brownsville, Texas**

Barry T. Horn was reportedly stabbed at least 77 times in his apartment in the early morning of October 24, 2009. He was found by a coworker on the morning of a gala for the Brownsville Museum of Fine Art, where he was an executive director. Police allege that Ernesto Ivan Martinez, 20, was Horn's former partner and that Martinez has confessed to the murder because Horn had "raped" him. The details of the pattern of power and control that existed in this relationship are unclear; however, reported evidence indicates that this murder may have been related to domestic/intimate partner violence between Horn and Martinez. Jury selection for Martinez's trial will begin on January 17, 2011.

**Yolanda Walker, 38, Black lesbian non-transgender woman, Kansas City, Missouri**

On November 9<sup>th</sup>, 2009, the body of Yolanda Walker was found shot to death in her minivan on South Benton Street in Kansas City. Police later arrested her live-in partner Blanche Johnson, 38, for allegedly committing the murder. According to court documents, the police had responded to their residence several hours before to respond to a domestic disturbance and no arrests were made at that time. Later in the evening the two women reportedly had an argument about Walker wanting to end the relationship. Johnson then allegedly told Walker she “had something for her,” pulled out a handgun and shot her twice in the chest. On August 20, 2010, Blanche Johnson was convicted of second-degree murder and armed criminal action in the death of Yolanda Walker. She was sentenced to 25 years in prison.

**Leti Martinez, Latina lesbian non-transgender woman, 20, San Jose, California**

20-year-old Leti Martinez was killed on Monday, December 28, 2009 in San Jose, CA in a violent dispute allegedly involving a vehicle driven by her ex-girlfriend, Jennifer Bautista. Jennifer was charged with vehicular manslaughter with gross negligence and hit-and-run, but not the murder charge that Leti’s family reportedly believed Jennifer deserved. CUAV provided help to members of Leti’s communities in accessing victim witness funds, fundraising to cover funeral costs, and healing from such a tragic loss. No further information was available at time of press.

**Name and Location Withheld**

NCAVP received a report of an additional LGBTQ domestic/intimate partner violence-related murder in 2009. In order to respect the confidentiality of the murder victim, the identity and circumstances of their murder will not be disclosed but is included for statistical purposes in this year’s report.