

Praxis International –
Rural Violence Against Women

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Women's/Survivor's Education and Support Groups for Social Change

**Rose Thelen, Praxis Technical Assistance Partner, and Teresa Mills,
Peace at Home Family Shelter, Fayetteville, AR**

May 16, 2018

>> Hello and thank you for joining. It looks like we are at the top of the hour and ready to get started.

>> Good afternoon, everybody. This is Rose Thelen and I'm the facilitator of the webinar today which is Women's/Survivor's Education Support Groups for Social Change. I'm pleased to have all of you with us today. We have the pleasure of having Teresa Mills with us on the phone and will be talking to you today. Before we get started, Liz, do you have some allege -- logistics you would like to talk about?

>> I do. Hello, everyone and welcome to the webinar. Just a couple of tips to help pave the way for your participation. As I'm about to say, we have captions running in the bottom of the screen and I'm noticing we don't. They are momentarily coming I hope. I will continue with the rest of the logistics to say we encourage because the phone lines are muted -- we encourage you to participate with Rose and Teresa today in the Q&A box. Your comments and questions will be routed to the presenters and they will respond within the webinar itself. I'm going to pause for a second. Rose and Teresa are you able to see the captions ?

>> Yes, I see captions. Are you getting them, Teresa? To yes.

>> --

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>> Yes. That is just my screen. I'm glad they are in the session. I will remind you that if you are inclined to adjust the webinar box to your own personal display preferences, we encourage you to do that by clicking on the icon on the far right of each of the webinar boxes. Also if your internet audio becomes unstable, if you are connected by voice over IP, you can dial and by telephone at any point and once that connection is made, turn your speakers off. This webinar is being recorded and will be posted to the Rural Technical Assistance recording page of the website and if you have any technology issues during the presentation today, don't hesitate to contact our presenter, TA2TA host, Patricia. With that, Rose --

>> What I don't see is Teresa's picture on the screen. Do you have that up?

>> Yes I can see the picture of the two of you.

>> I just see myself. I know Teresa is there so without further ado, let's get started. Today we are going to talk about social change groups and these are opportunities for women and survivors to get together to address the social conditions and change the way that society is organized that in fact is the root cause of Violence Against Women and all other forms of oppression. When we started as a movement back in the early to mid 70s, there was a strong sociopolitical analysis of what violence was caused by an what we needed to do to not just treat the violence but to end it. Over time -- and this is probably the subject of another webinar, but what we've seen is over time that there has been a shift or drift towards doing only groups that are about healing or working on the individual as opposed to working to change the culture. There's been a resurgence of late in interest in maybe we need to get back to bringing women and survivors into the movement for social change and how do we do that? What are some examples of ways that people have done it in the past and ways people

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are currently doing it? And as I mentioned at the top of the hour we have the great pleasure of having Teresa Mills with us today and she is a CEO of Peace At Home Shelter in rural Arkansas and she comes to us through her participation in the advocacy Learning Center wherein she went back to her program in Arkansas and did a bunch of things that were about refocusing, redirecting, adding components in various places in her programming that were directed at ending the violence against women and moving beyond treating the individuals. We are very pleased to have Teresa with us today and as you can see, there's a definition of a social change group on the screen. It is fairly intuitive that we are talking about getting people together to change the cultural norms, gain improvement in the lives of women and survivors, and hold offenders accountable and other ways to shift the power imbalances that exist in the culture that give rise to support and actually benefit from any quality, oppression and violence accused -- used to maintain. Before he moved to the next slide, Teresa, can you introduce yourself? Tell us a little bit about yourself.

>> Hello, everyone. As Rose said, Teresa Mills with Peace At Home in Fayetteville, Arkansas. I'm really excited to talk to the participants. I think there is a unique challenge and opportunity within rural communities and I think we have a really good dialogue around ways to address some of those challenges and opportunities and have a great conversation about how we can redistribute the power back to survivors. Thanks for being part of a call today -- our call today.

>> Let's start with talking about the various kinds of social change groups. This is not a definitive or the only way of thinking of this but this is how we put it together for today's webinar. We've got -- as you can see from the screen we have the advisory groups, action groups, court watches. We have groups that are

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single focus and we have groups that are multi-focus. We've also got -- going through all of these groups that can have groups that have a strong connection and link with the program itself or you can have autonomous groups that more or less -- perhaps the program is involved in some way of providing a space or funding or supporting the group in other ways to take place and do the actions that they are involved in. They are clipped -- completely autonomous. We will talk about some of these features as we go, but taking a look -- let's start with court watches. Teresa, you currently are in the process of adding a court watch or court watches to your menu of opportunities for involvement by women who use your services, survivors as well as people from the community. Can you tell us a little bit about your court watch?

>> Yes, I will say that the court watch program really came from challenges that survivors were bringing to us about their experiences in the judicial system. I think one of the challenges we have in rural communities is really around language accessibility. We have a lot of survivors who English is not their primary language and they go to court and there may or may not be a court interpreter or the one that is there may or may not fully describe what the survivors experience is if perhaps they are in an order of protection hearing. One of the things we are developing is a court watch program in tandem with the local law school that week -- so that we can make sure that when survivors are in court, even if they are not connected to Peace At Home, that they are getting the services they deserve and are entitled to in the law. One of the big issues for us is around language access. So making sure a court reporter isn't saying something like he pushed me against a wall when what the survivor is saying is he shoved me up against the wall, I hit my head and I slid down and I was bleeding. So we really want to make sure that accessibility issues are there. That's really what the court

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watch program is evolving -- involving and that came from survivors telling us this is a problem. They are not saying what I said in court.

>> That's an important point, Teresa, that really these -- the focus of some of your groups is going to be about addressing issues that were brought to you by the people that come to your program, right? And that was a shift you made as well where you started to identify, survey, interview and ask questions about what their experience is like. Is that right?

>> That's exactly right and I would say that has been one of the most important things that we've done. Who better to tell me what my strategic plan or my program or funding priorities should be than the women who are living it today? I think we need these programs but if I'm not experiencing it today, then I'm probably -- even though I sit in the chair, may not be the best person to make those decisions without really being informed from survivors who are walking it today. We really shifted all of those power structures back to focus groups and individual interviews of survivors and exit surveys and really just giving multiple opportunities for survivors to tell us where their challenges are, what the services should look like, what the unintended consequences are the programs that we are thinking about and what we are not doing well. Really living in the space with them. That has been a big shift for us.

>> You are segueing into the advisory group idea there, right? You have a program assessment committee? Is that part of this? Court watch came from there? Tell me how that relationship came about or if there is a relationship between the advisory group that you have and the court watch.

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>> Yes, we have a program assessment committee that is a board committee. These are board members who are also survivors of domestic violence and for a long time our program had prioritized having survivors on the board, but I think we really -- I don't want to say we marginalize the survivors or the program committee but I think we kind of did. There's really no other way to say it. Over the last several years what we've really done is made them the center of the board meeting. What the committee really does is they are the ones that initiate and develop the strategic plan for the board. They are the ones that assess the effectiveness of our current programs from a survivors lens. They are the ones that consider unintended consequences of may be some sort of organizational or programmatic change. They are the ones that act as the appeal process for any current survivor whose working with a shelter. They really have become the owner of the program piece. I think a lot of times programs get tied to funding and so the finance committee or fundraising committee pick up a lot of board space and they have a right to take up board space. It's important for the organization but at the end of the day [Indiscernible]. Having that be the anchor of the work of the board has been really important and having survivors really insurers -- insurers that we are not just checking the box.

>> Half of your board is survivors? So you don't -- it is not just checking off. We have people on our board -- you have equal amounts of survivors Avenue -- as community people so they are not token positions on the board. That makes them very strong and survivor centered which a lot of people give lip service to but like you say, it doesn't always mean much. That's a good example and this is something I know Praxis is invested in any time they make a change or consider doing any kind of programmatic change or develop a procedure or protocol or blueprint, for example. They always are running it by some sort of advisory group,

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generally in Praxis it is ad hoc and then it's an ongoing group of people from the board, but it's a way of making sure that what they are doing is what is needed. What do the survivors, the women who you -- use the services you -- think of the particular changes under consideration. I think it really is a way to keep your mission straight, right? Let's talk about action groups because this one is near and dear to my heart because I was involved in a huge effort in Minnesota in the late 80s to do action groups because we had had a year-long committee in Minnesota about what we called therapist and because we saw this drift where we started out as a movement. We had a sociopolitical analysis. We knew that battering was not caused by the individual victims or her poor choices or her dad boundaries. Or she didn't know any better, didn't know what a healthy relationship was and those kinds of things. We knew it was part of the social conditioning and yet what we saw happening in the 80s was more and more our programming was directed at groups that got women together to think about healing, which was important, but it was the healing that was more about taking a look at our individual psychology and how can we feel better about ourselves? And how can we recover from the horrible things that happened to us? What we knew was that many people feel better, are healed and empowered etc. by taking action. By getting information that presents the world as a problem and allows people to change the condition that put them there. So we had this year on two -- therapism to look at a psychology sort of model impacting our capacity to change the world. And to maintain the movement and that sort of thing. Action groups sprang up all over Minnesota and what we saw when we offered these opportunities to the women who came to our programs was that a lot of women wanted to get involved. It wasn't like they had to, but in addition to doing the support group, we had an action group where women could take action on changing the community

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response or changing the political climate or various things. The one I was involved in in Minnesota, we were going to take action -- and this is what you call a multi-focus. We were going to take action wherever a procedure or protocol further disempowered and impoverished women. It was broad. We took action on housing, pornography, all kinds of things. It was very exciting and the women got involved in the political sphere. It was just -- I don't know -- a vibrant time but again what we saw was funding started to shift and drift and it made some people in the community nervous. We continued on and there were about 15 action groups in Minnesota in the late 90s, but there was a change at the top and the funding at the state level and many of them went away, but we are trying to revitalize them again. Not just in Minnesota, but all over. I'm excited when I heard about your particular sisters project, it was very exciting. Do you want to tell us about that? It's a really good example of an action group.

>> Yes, I've talked about the fact that we've done a lot of focus groups and individual conversations with survivors and out of those conversations really came this idea of women wanting to be part of the movement again and not just recipients of services. So out of this we had several women who were really interested in putting together what they referred to as a sisters supporting sisters project. It really came out of some shared experiences that these women had in the criminal justice system and in the family court system. What I would argue is probably racial discrimination that they had experienced. This group really is a survivor led action group. They have come together to really talk about some of their shared challenges with law enforcement and child protective services, the court system and housing. And they would just craft activities to raise the awareness of some of these barriers or challenges and they've done everything from visiting with stakeholders, doing speaking engagements, participating in

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local marches. They really gathered momentum around we can end the challenges that are being thrust upon us as a result of our experience with violence. A really good example of this is we had survivors come to us through this group talking about the fact that they could not get local landlords to lease to them pork --. Or if they were being leased to they were getting evicted at a high rate and they thought they were being targeted because they were victims of domestic violence. At first blush the shelter was like, I don't know. That can't be true. It turned out that what was happening was landlords were writing into leases what they referred to as crime addendum's which included the fact that you could be a big did from your home if you called law enforcement three or more times. Inc. about that from a place of domestic violence survivors whose perpetrator is stalking them or still harassing them or in some way creating an unsafe environment for them. The victim is being put in a place of having to choose between their housing or calling law enforcement. That was a really serious unintended consequence that the sisters group identified, met with the landlords to talk about and express their concern, brought the awareness to my organization and so now through our continuum of care, we are talking about this issue in a way that maybe we wouldn't even have had awareness around in putting pressure on those landlords to make sure they are not screening out or being discriminatory to domestic violence survivors. It was completely as a result of these women sitting in a room, talking about the fact that they were getting evicted, they couldn't get people to lease to them and they needed to do something about it.

>> Yes, and also to your credit, Teresa, the reason they were sitting in a room together was you wanted to find out about why judges -- what was the experience of women when judges weren't writing children into the protection

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orders, right? What you discovered was it was fairly -- it was a good example that a lot of women of color were the vast recipients of this particular injustice. In bringing them together to talk about that they started to get interest in these other things that were impacting them and to your credit, you provided the means whereby they could continue to meet and work with you to move forward and address some of these challenges. I'm excited about that. We are coming upon an election season coming up and I'm assuming there's going to be some sort of involvement around what's happening in the political process. I know this is a survivor -- group that is pretty much directed autonomously by the group itself, but I just have to believe that because of the election season that it will be coming to their awareness because so many of these issues are impacted, as you know, through the bigger institution of the political process that the states and national level and it impacts where money goes and what kind of opportunities exist and workups happen. You mentioned also when we were discussing this before that there is an offshoot from this group. A transit survivor group? Is that still in the works? The original group were primarily African-American women who were primarily having challenges within the family court system. That core group has stayed together and other individuals have joined but one of the individuals of that group is trans and really started talking about the unique challenges, particularly in rural communities, for trans individuals to access services. Even the whole conversation around pronouns, forms and there's a lot of confusion around how to serve the community. She was really mobilized by this because she was talking about her prior shelter history and she had been in shut -- several shelters before and of course had a number of horror stories. She said can we talk about that issue also? Is there something we can do to inform and educate and is there -- it was funny because she said isn't there a statewide

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coalition for domestic violence? And she's -- I said there is in Arkansas and every state has one.

>> And she said can we talk to them and do something? And I said we absolutely can. She has now formed an ad hoc group to talk to the state coalition about doing trauma informed services for trans individuals. A current survivor leading the way. This is an and agency. It's an individual. Our statewide coalition Director is thinking about ways to include them in our annual Directors conference and ways they can really bring that to the forefront and inform services for future victims. I didn't bring that to the forefront, I didn't identify that as an issue. That is a survivor that had an experience and I'm acting as a connector for that individual, which could potentially change victim services in the entire state of Arkansas.

>> That's really good. That's a good example of taking direction and providing what's needed as opposed to you deciding what they need, right? We won't go into great depth here about how these groups are doing their work. I know your sisters group meets weekly, is that right?

>> That's correct.

>> We will talk about some of the logistics later, but if for any of you that want to have some more information about how to operate these groups, you can contact either me or Teresa and we will put up -- I believe we have the contact information at the end of this. Let's talk about some of the benefits that these social change groups are beneficial and we have three different categories here of how are they beneficial to survivors, the programs themselves and the movement to end domestic violence? Teresa, obviously you've been talking as you go. It has

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to be particularly beneficial to the people who are coming to these groups to actually see change occur, right?

>> Certainly.

>> Can you say more about that? What else do you see for survivors?

>> I think for survivors it really puts them back at the center of the work. It's really true empowerment, true healing. It recognizes that experiencing violence doesn't make you damaged. It gives you -- you can be part of this global movement and you can be part of ending violence against women and girls and you are not just some damaged victim that needs services from people who know better than you. It changes the power dynamic and it also kind of returns the work to its roots in a way. I think that is really empowering for survivors because it's less about what's wrong with them and more about what's wrong with the system.

>> Yes, super. It reminds me of what I think Gloria Steinem talks about. It's about linking with the women you work with as opposed to ranking. You are not the person who's got all the answers and hear is a list of things you need to do in order to conform to what the expectations that we have are and if you do we will give you our [Indiscernible]. You can stay here and at a certain point we will deem you healed or whatever it is. I think this is one of the big issues that we see and recommend that the people on the line take a look at your program. When people come to your program do they see themselves as sisters? It used to be about sisterhood, or do they see themselves as damaged goods? That they need the intervention of these super women to help them get better? That's putting it out there fairly bluntly, but the community often thinks that these women are damaged goods. Sort of the collective unconscious assessment of women who are

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victims of domestic violence are damaged. They need to be fixed and not only are they damaged as a result but in fact maybe they are damaged to start out with and caused it? This really turns that on its heel and says no, these women know what is needed in the culture to assist and help and prevent. I'm reminded, I go back a long time and when we started shelters and rape crisis lines, it was all about the women themselves who were the victims who were doing this. As we got institutionalized they started to become this ranking or hierarchy that is often a byproduct of establishing yourselves and getting legitimacy. So that is something we saw in our action groups. It was like, okay, we are accessing the women's strength instead of just always about what's wrong and what isn't working. What we know also is of course in order to change conditions we need the group -- large groups of people -- to push for change so just a mass of women getting together and working on these things together, I thought I think it is generative as well. Were there other things you saw relative to this or tell us about what you see happening in your programs. You've alluded to it somewhat but say some more about that. Did you see -- tell us about the changes you saw that were beneficial in your program.

>> I think in terms of our program, the biggest thing I saw was a shift in the advocate client interaction. When it became the advocate and survivor and not the advocate and client and they were really walking that journey together and the power dynamic changed. I think that was really healing and supportive for the advocate staff. I think sometimes advocates they really focus only on the response to the violence and the lives of the women we are working with unless -- and less on ending the violence. Especially when you have a residential program you are thinking this client is only going to be here for 45 days and we got to find a job and there is no safe housing and she doesn't have [Indiscernible] and you

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can get in this loop. All you are doing is thinking about everything that the survivor doesn't have. What this does is it shifts and all of you -- you think about the strengths the survivor brings to the table and that forces the advocate to respond in a different way and the focus becomes different. If all we are doing is answering the crisis line, then we are not actually engaging the system that is creating the crisis calls. I think what became important for us is how do we shift our focus and shifted away from deficits to strengths? I think that became energizing for staff. It became inspiring for staff. I think it addressed burnout particularly in rural communities where it's all about resource deprivation. There are no substance use referrals. There is no public transportation or there is no barrier. This became different. This became let's not focus so much on what's not there but let's talk about what is there and the strengths and the ability of us to use our voice in a collective way. That was really changing and powerful for our organization, especially for frontline staff.

>> Super. That's great. Our movement to end gender-based violence seems fairly obvious, but you have -- do you have anything to add? Do you think it gets you back to a movement? Do you have a greater sense that there is a movement? Sometimes we talk fairly soon -- nostalgically about the movement and I've had people say where is the movement? I see a bunch of programs providing services but there is a movement? Do you have a number for them? I'd like to call them up or something. Do you see this?

>> Have you put that -- what you are doing in the works -- groups you are working with, have you put them in the broader movement?

>> I think that has probably been one of the biggest paradigm shifts for our organization is really reframing our work in the context of the movement and this

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was about power and privilege and oppression. I think for a long time, Peace At Home is 40 years old. We were one of the first shelters in the entire nation and the first in Arkansas and we have historically done great work with survivors. We have great programs, but at the end of the day we were missing some really important connections around the root cause of violence in the lives of survivors and their roles in the movement. I think we provided great services to survivors, but we were not being engaged with survivors and pushing back against the system of oppression. I think we just kind of got off the movement. We got off the train and ended up doing program work and forgot what it really means to be an advocate. Part of being an advocate is a little bit of education. Back to the system and calling out oppression and calling out injustice. This is social justice and you can't do that if you are only doing programming.

>> Program support?

>> It can't be all of it.

>> Right. Well said. I think -- it is the same thing we've seen in other places for this to happen. You can have a local movement that starts to change some of the conditions that exist at a local level but in Minnesota we had a social change group that started in Duluth and it went elsewhere and ultimately it tipped the state -- took the state by storm and in my local area we got many changes to the law enforcement practices. We were able -- we got involved politically and were able to influence whether a particular prosecutor became a judge and we were doing surveys of people who were running for office and publicizing the results. There was a lot of energy and you could see it in the faces of the women we were working with and also the advocates were part of it. They were doing the actions as well and instead of us sitting around and smoking our brains out and whining

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about the cops not doing this or that or the judges not doing this or that, the social action group was somebody who we could work with to do an inside outside routine about getting some awareness to this problem. The action group could do things that we couldn't do and yet we were able to say this is something that the action group is taking action on because it's important to them and we are not here to shut them down. They want to do something because they are not seeing anybody do anything to stop the violence even though it's against the law. So we have a book of different actions we took and how we finessed some of these things between the advocacy program and the action group itself. We will talk about that in a couple more slides here. We are getting a birds eye view here to talk about some of the principles of social change advocacy, which includes not just the advocacy, social change group, and you've been talking about this as we go through that the whole orientation of the advocate about now we are doing groups for social change and I'm finding out experience of victims and providing opportunities to be involved. This is social change advocacy and so it is part -- the advocacy group is part of this whole orientation for the advocate. So here are some principles. The whole idea and that you talked about is is not just this ranking where I will advise you as the victim got all the resources available when and -- in fact she might've taken advantage of those already and had a horrible experience and needs to tell you what needs to change so that they will be -- really will be useful agencies or movements for her to take advantage of. It's a dialogue, a linking. You tell me what have you done? How did it work for you? What problems did you experience? Would you call the cops again? Was it does what was it like when you got your protection order? If you got a protection order, when it was violated, what happened? How did the child protection worker treat you? All of these things is more about let's work together thinking about

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these things. You tell us what's going on and we will see what we can do to provide the means whereby both you as a member of an action group and we as an abacus he program can make a change. That goes along with the sisterhood concept. We really do have to -- I was thinking the other day that there is this implicit bias about victims of domestic violence in particular. Sexual violence as well but domestic violence, they are just defective. So we need -- I was talking to a cop and he thought the solution was that we need to get these women -- and he saw his job is going in to the scene of a domestic and being able to get these women in touch with an advocate so that the advocate could teach them how to fly right and do what they needed to do to leave the sky. To -- this guy. Instead of -- he wasn't seeing his job is going in there and getting this man to stop, they were there to identify more programs, to go to the shelters and straighten up and fly right. To be able to take a look at what you are providing and take a look at your website and take a look at all of the services you provide -- are they about focusing on the world is a problem or is it just about providing individual help? These are those -- some of the ways to think about it in your program. How do we shift here? How do we get back to become a part of a movement? The time is right. You have the #MeToo movement and other actions -- other social actions going on where people are really engaging again in saying we need social change here. So how do we be part of that instead of an auxiliary group that provides services? Also, as a part of that what is the intersection and complexity of the violence that is being experienced by the people who come to our program and how is it related to other forms of oppression? What does the victim need? You can have a victim who calls 911 want to try to get the batterer to stop and all of a sudden they are involved with 12 different agencies in five different case is going on because they dialed 911. One of the things that we see is a critical need for

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many women and survivors is doing something with the community, with the system, with the social safety net that actually does provide safety for her and gets the violence to stop. You look at the programming that occurs and you will see programs are providing parenting groups or boundary classes and things like that and you say is that what they need? What is it the victim needs? You've spoken eloquently to this, Teresa, about what is it they need? What are they need from us to get the community to really provide some justice, which is a huge need for many victims. And of course you are talking about collective action. We are talking about the power when it is shared, part of a collective group, how that can -- is able to meet the challenges of going up against -- the change social conditions. And finally, we've been talking about taking a look at a sociopolitical analysis and not just a psychological analysis. I didn't mention a group that was started. It is up in Duluth and perhaps I will mention that when we go to the next slide because it's not necessarily appropriate right here. Allow me to stay on track here. A little bit of an academic here on the core principles. How do these fit with your own mission? I'm going to move it to the next one because we are going to talk about what do victims need to get involved? I'm thinking about people out there saying don't come to our groups? We don't have women involved. We try to [Indiscernible] and other things. What is it you know that has been a need that you've been able to meet in order to get more involvement from women and survivors in your groups, Teresa?

>> I think there are practical things that make sense. Some of this has a little bit of cross to it and I'm aware of that. Can you have volunteers that provide childcare while the group meets? Is there a space at your facility or space where they can be safe? Can you do small things like offer gas cards for them to be able to get back and forth or bus passes? One of the challenges we have here in Arkansas is

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there is no public transportation. Everyone has to have a vehicle. There are a lot of survivors who don't have a vehicle so can you arrange a way to pick up survivors so they can get to the group? Can you deal with the issues about what gets in the way of them being able to participate and if you are asking survivors, what prevents you from participating or what would make it easier? That information will come to you. Maybe you provide dinner for the sisters supporting sisters group. We provide dinner for them and that is something that for them and the childcare -- if I were you I would say we don't have that in our budget but I think that is something easy for restaurants in your community -- we've been able to build great relationships with them. They will donate dinner once a month for a year or something like that. We can really do small augments of shelter resources to support these groups. Sometimes there practical things around the logistics of participation that you can do that can be helpful. I also think as programs we have to think about maybe some of our arbitrary rules that we have for active clients to participate in services. I think, for instance, many programs have -- you have to go so many months after receiving services before you can volunteer at a program or be an employee or you could be some way engaged in the shelter from an advocacy place. I think that is a rule that is just power. That is us as an organization making decisions about whether or not the survivor is healthy enough to be part of the very movement that was designed around them. One of the things we need to do was if a current client is interested in participating in advocacy efforts, we find a way to make that happen. That might include safety planning or some additional conversations, but the fact that they are receiving services does not preclude their ability to be part of this movement. It was really just an irrational fear of harm to the survivor but at the end of the day who better than the survivor to be part of this and who are we as an

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organization to say that the survivor can't participate? I think you have to think about it from both a logistics place for survivors. And also an organizational frame of do we have rules or policies or procedures or structures that get in the way of their participation?

>> Super. I think you are right on with some of the practical things that women might need, such as transportation, childcare, food and one of the things we saw is a need was that the women in our groups wanted to learn more about this whole oppression idea, this whole way that I was taught and learned that I was the cause of my own beatings because I chose the wrong guy or that kind of thing. It was news or in fact this was a whole social phenomenon. It was about a social structure. We did a bunch of -- we had a bunch of education sessions and the curriculum that was developed in Duluth, which I think I can mention at this point is called in our best interest. It is still for sale at [Indiscernible]. It takes a look at the various components on the power and control and talks about each of those tactics from the individual, personal, relational level and the cultural level. It talks about the links between those tactics and how they are conditioned through our social development in terms of gender dynamics, in terms of cultural access and those sorts of things. That was something that the group needed and wanted. The other thing we did was we developed protocols for how to Inc. about an action and how we decide whether inaction was based in love and not vindictiveness. We tried to use the Gandhi principles and [Indiscernible]. We had a protocol for deciding what we do and how we do it and how we would run it by the shelter. Did you have a relationship with your sisters group and decisions they make about particular actions?

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>> Yes, it became really important that they had support but autonomy. The group doesn't have to have the shelters permission or approval to engage in action because that is just weird power. But we can -- they can inform us, they can ask for participation and support. We attend their advance -- events as sisters and peers. We have provided what I would consider to be almost technical assistance to them in ways. For instance, one of the women in the sisters group really wanted to start sharing her story publicly. She thought that would be powerful as an example of some of the system failures she had experienced and she had a lot of anxiety around being public. So one of the things we were able to do was to bring in public speaking coaches to be able to work with the sisters group to talk about how to maximize the power of their story, talk about how to present that and be able to get that donated for them and not to screen out what they are going to say but how do they communicate to the most effect to manner what it is they are wanting to share with the global audience. I think it is supportive and engaged, but it's not approval. Does that make sense?

>> Yes, it does. We had a protocol in the action group to take a look at any unintended consequences. Any action that we did that was done -- that was done in any ramifications. Is there a cost to pay? All of those things are considerations. Let's talk about in our final time together, the advocacy program readiness because I think that is a critical piece of how do we do this? We have a few things up here. The mission and strategic planning -- obviously you saw this is doing part of your mission. Is it something you had in your mission or did you change your mission statement to reflect that you were going to do these sorts of things?

>> It was in our mission. I think we just weren't necessarily engaged in it in the same way. When we started living the mission, it began.

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>> One of those mission statements that didn't -- wasn't really happening to speak up.

>> Right.

>> Did it figure into your strategic planning at all or maybe that goes into the next box? The staffing, funding and board/community support is probably -- as I look at this light I think that is probably the most -- has the most use for people on the webinar because as you mentioned before, money is a big issue. Talk about that with us, will you? Has anybody [Indiscernible]? What about funding? Were you nervous about whether it would be a problem with the community? That it would reduce community support? How did that go for you?

>> Yes, I would say our board was terrified. I think they were really concerned that we were going to upset the community. We were going to upset -- upset the community partners and we were going to be rabble-rousers and those difficult women who were trying to end relationships and ruin good men and all those stereotypes that happen. There was a lot of fear especially when we started talking to judges about the order of protection discrepancies that we were seeing that there was going to be a backlash and the judges were going to approve any orders of protection for survivors. There was a lot of fear about anything that would rock the boat. What we found may be to our surprise was just the opposite happened. When we started engaging in social justice and started pushing back against institutional oppression, we really started having a voice and started having survivors speak their truth and survivors speak about their experiences that the community really embraced and really rallied around us. If anything, I can think of several gifts of significance that have come into the organization specifically as a result of our engagement in social justice.

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>> Gifts meaning money?

>> Yes, money. It keeps the lights on and fulfills operation payroll which is a real challenge for programs across the country. It is incredibly expensive to provide quality victim services and I think anything that jeopardizes that, people get very nervous about and very anxious about. I think what we found was it actually connected us to the community in a much more robust way and that the donations and support has come as a result of that work in a way that when we were just providing services to people that the community understood to be damaged or made bad choices or whatever -- people don't necessarily want to give to that but they are very excited to give to ending oppression and social justice. And this movement for a peaceful world free of violence. Where do you want to put your money?

>> That's great. You mentioned before that is substantial.

>> Yes.

>> I think you mentioned six figures?

>> Yes. [Indiscernible - multiple speakers]

>> That is something that you hear a lot. Where do we get the money? We only get money to provide individual services, we don't get money to do social change. So you are talking about using money that doesn't come through a typical funding stream, but is a donation to be able to do this type of programming?

>> Of course, I'm not talking about the [Indiscernible] funding. This is an federal funding or state funding. These are individual gifts but we as nonprofit leaders know that individuals are the bulk of giving in the United States. Individuals are

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are a significant portion of that giving and what we found was individuals really rallied around social justice for us and really felt much more compelled to give and give gifts of significance which has also been -- allowed us to do great programming.

>> Do you think the time -- hasn't got anything to do with the MeToo Movement? Do you think the climate is right for this particular activism?

>> I do. I think there is a national awareness of how the system isn't where we want it to be. I think you can look at the MeToo Movement and look at some of the very public sexual harassment and sexual assault claims that it happened. It is really bringing an awareness to the realities of whammy -- many women today who are not aware of it before because it had not been their experience. I think we can benefit from the fact that there is a national conversation about this issue.

>> Very good. Staffing again, did you put all this into place? Do you have a person who is engaged in providing this kind of programming? How does that look?

>> Do you shift duties?

>> That's always -- that is great, Teresa, but this is on page 6 of the things I would want to do with my very limited time. It takes time. I think initially it was me leading the charge, but then I had a couple of board members that really got excited about this and joined the conversation and started helping out and I think it slowly became part of the work that the entire staff was engaged in. We don't have a person -- a single person. It is really just the entire organization is engaged from the place that they are. I will say the sisters group meets with me about once a month. We just have a standing once a month meeting, but that is a pretty small investment of my time for us to be engaged in this movement.

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>> Are you getting any recognition or interest at the state level with the coalition and other programs in Arkansas to do this work?

>> Yes, I think the state coalition has been paying close attention to us and one of the breakout sessions at our Director's retreat this year is going to talk about the social justice model and how to do women's groups that are not just let's talk about the damage and violence and really turning that back to consciousness awareness and social engagement. It's going to be one of the breakout sessions. I'm interested to see how that goes in other places in the state.

>> Super. We are getting towards the end of our time together. I'm seeing that there isn't any contact information on this closing slide. You can contact Liz at Praxis International.org if you have questions of either Teresa or me and she will get the information and this will be -- I think it is being recorded and it will be on the website. I'm not 100% sure of that. Any questions you may have, feel free to contact us and also let us know about anything that you are trying as well. Are you making any changes within your own program? That kind of thing. We are always interested in that. Teresa, once again, it's been great to have you on our webinar and I'm really excited about the work you've done and I think we should just put in a little pitch for the advocacy Learning Center at Praxis International because that kind of started the ball rolling for you, didn't it? To absolutely. I cannot say enough positive --

>> Absolutely. I can't say enough positive things. It really changed the entire culture of our organization. If you have not done ALC, I would certainly encourage you to look at that. It will impact you as an individual advocate and potentially your entire organization.

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>> Thank you everybody for being on the call today. We will see you next time.
Thank you, Teresa.

>> Goodbye, everyone. [Event Concluded]

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