

# THE LATINA PROJECT: BREAKING THE CYCLE...BREAKING THE SILENCE



Artwork by: Tanya Torres

EMPOWERING VICTIMS OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
Bona0, Dominican Republic

Lead Advocacy Researcher  
Dr. Vilma Caban-Vazquez, Ed.D

SOCIAL CHANGERS WITHOUT BORDERS, INC  
ADVOCACY REPORT  
JULY 2013



Social Changers without Borders, Inc.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements.....	3
Foreword.....	4
Chapter 1 Literature Review of Domestic Violence.....	12
Introduction.....	12
Domestic Violence in the Dominican Republic.....	12
Domestic Violence Protection Law 24-97.....	13
Understanding Domestic Violence.....	14
Profile of an Abuser.....	15
The Complex Nature of Domestic Violence....	17
Domestic Violence Belongs to the Community. ....	17
Chapter 2 An Advocacy’s Researcher’s Quest.....	19
Research Questions.....	20
Research Study Participant Selection.....	21
Interview Design.....	22
Data Collection Process.....	22
Interviews.....	24
Interview Protocol.....	25
Qualitative Data Analysis.....	26
Evidence of Quality, Accuracy & Credibility of Findings.....	28
Chapter 3 Narrative Analysis of Research Findings.....	30
Theme 1: Economic Factors.....	30
Theme 2: Women Empowerment.....	31
Theme 3: Breaking Free From an Abuser.....	31
Theme 4: Socio-Emotional Factor.....	32
Theme 5: Raising Community Awareness.....	32
Implications for Further Study.....	33
Battered Women Economic Empowerment Project 2013.....	33
References & Appendices.....	36

## Acknowledgements

*“I alone cannot change the world...*

*But I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” ~Mother Teresa*

In preparation of this advocacy report, a great deal of coordination and international collaboration was necessary to make the following Latina domestic violence research study a reality. The lead advocacy researcher, Dr. Vilma Caban-Vazquez, would like to acknowledge all those whose support and contributions helped to launch a preliminary domestic violence research study in August of 2012. Subsequently, this practitioner-researcher is extremely grateful for all of the altruistic individuals whose perpetual support, via auxiliary resources and expanded community networks, abetted and nurtured her dream. With their support, Dr. Caban-Vazquez was able to develop a research-based action plan to offer more technical support to the battered women that she studied in August of 2012. First and foremost, the remarkable support of her faithful friend and fellow humanitarian Loida Pujols (former UN Consulate General to the Dominican Republic, 1998-2005) as well as Loida’s noble and supportive husband Albert Peña helped the lead researcher Dr. Caban-Vazquez achieve her dream of establishing an advocacy footprint in Latin America. Loida and Albert reached out to their network

of close family and friends and rallied support for this humanitarian cause. Dr. Caban-Vazquez is extremely grateful for their community service and assistance.

Consequently, a close childhood friend of Mr. Peña, former Councilman Victor Manuel Bastista, played a pivotal and instrumental community role in serving both as a representative of this initiative in his small rural town of Bonaó, as well as one of our strongest rallying supporters. In solidarity and support to this domestic violence cause, community advocates Mr. Peña and Mr. Batista locked arms to serve as advocates and shared voices for community change by coordinating various domestic violence conferences in numerous faith-based and educational venues. They were quite resourceful in their outreach and traveled across different towns and villages to network with various community stakeholders (Appendix A). They submitted press releases to various regional news media. As a result, news coverage about the domestic research project was shared with the Hortensia Magazine, which was based out of the capital of Santo Domingo. Furthermore, they reached out to Mery De La Rosa at the local television program "En Familia" and fortunately they gained a community news slot wherein they reported news of the upcoming events on Bonaó Television, Channel 12 (<http://www.bonaotv.com>). Their resourceful outreach efforts encouraged local women to attend the domestic violence conference as well as extended an invitation to consider being a part of the research study. Thanks to their noble efforts, over 50 participants attended the domestic violence awareness conferences and educational workshops. Eventually, the editor of the Hortensia Magazine traveled from the capital Santo Domingo to

observe the large group participant research discussions. As a way to demonstrate her support, she wrote a feature article about the lead researcher and the merit of this study and her efforts (Appendix B).

Using various informational platforms, Mr. Pena and Mr. Batista helped to raise community awareness about the prolific rate of domestic violence in the Dominican Republic. Dr. Caban-Vazquez is immensely grateful for all of their outreach. She was inspired by their natural leadership abilities to tenaciously mobilize a much-needed service to their community. Their campaign action plan was to bring the issue of Domestic Violence to the forefront of Bonao's community economic agenda. This was an extremely viable outreach strategy. The ultimate goal of involving several philanthropic community agents, faith-based organizations, educational institutions, telecommunication organizations, as well as town and provincial legislative leaders would help pave the way. In due course, their proactive stance could help the victims of domestic violence by opening potential lines of future funding and community support.

In addition, the lead researcher particularly extends her greatest appreciation to Senator Amable of the Alta Gracia Province in the Dominican Republic. This distinguished public servant, welcomed the lead researcher and her research team's arrival in the midst of his personal holiday. He received the delegates assigned to this research task with such genuine warmth, and enthusiasm. Senator Amable's willingness to assist the team in any way possible to

achieve a successful preliminary research study indicated his level of commitment to his battered constituents of Bonao, Dominican Republic.

With their joint and dynamic efforts, this compassionate international team of community advocates helped to bring the epidemic community issue of domestic violence to light. Moreover, with the collective endeavors of current and former United Nations staff and volunteers, over time ***The Latina Project: Breaking the Cycle...Breaking the Silence*** research project became noteworthy news outside the small town of Bonao. As such, prior to launching the economic empowerment project, Dr. Caban-Vazquez will travel to Geneva, Switzerland to confer with the United Nations Dominican Republic Ambassador as well as meet with the United Nations Dominican Republic Ambassador stationed in Santo Domingo. As an advocacy researcher, she will apprise the UN dignitaries of the status of the research project and her goal of presenting research findings and the implications of this research at the 2014 World Humanitarian Conference in Geneva, Switzerland.

A special thanks goes to Dr. Caban-Vazquez's fellow executive board members of the humanitarian research organization Social Changers without Borders, Inc. (Appendix C). Their belief in Dr. Caban-Vazquez's humanitarian research capabilities and their support nurtured her idea for this advocacy research study. She is proud to be an active member of this outstanding organization.

The lead researcher would also like to thank the talented Latina artist Tanya Torres for her artistic contribution. Tanya Torres has extended permission for Dr.

Caban-Vazquez to use her inspirational and cultural iconic figure—Cacibayagua: Taina Goddess— in any promotional literature and research reports sharing the worked centered on The Latina Domestic Violence Research Project. In August 2013, when the research team travels back to Bonao, Dr. Caban-Vazquez will deliver a special inspirational gift especially designed to inspire the 10 domestic violence victims (Appendix D) Mrs. Torres lovingly hand-crafted unique wearable art necklaces with the inspirational image of Cacibayagua— the mythical Taina Goddess. Traditional Dominican folklore describes how Cacibayagua is the original life source of the indigenous Taino Indians that emerged from her beautiful cave. The inspirational intention behind sharing this gift is to encourage the women. In the face of adversity and their personal decision to renounce the economic stranglehold of their abusers, these empowered women can recall the legend of Cacibayagua. The necklace signifies their promise and legacy as Latina women and descendants of the rich Taino culture. It is a symbolic reminder to tap into the spiritual strength of their inner Taina goddess. This artistic gift serves as a beautiful and concrete reminder of their legacy and the promise of their destiny as “empowered” women and not “beaten” women.

Dr. Caban-Vazquez is eternally grateful for the generous support she received from a loving circle of intimate family and friends. After the lead researcher did an extensive literature review of viable empowerment strategies for battered women, she recognized the strong potential for making the greatest impact in the lives of these abused women. Subsequently, she rallied for financial

support with the *Friends Against Domestic Violence* fundraising website at <http://www.gofundme.com/VIOLENCIA-DOMESTICA> (Appendix E). This community grassroots initiative helped to secure a modest portion of funds. As a result, with the additional financial support of Albert and Loida, the researcher was able to purchase 10 sewing machines and secure the safe shipment of those machines. In addition, monies raised helped to purchase the bulk of the essential seamstress tools needed to economically empower the domestic violence survivors. A compassionate circle of friends saw the collective power of this economic empowerment vision and they worked together to establish a toolkit for the success of this school uniform cooperative. Dr. Caban-Vazquez keeps her dedicated group of supporters updated on the latest developments of this work using her research blog at <http://doctoravazquez.wordpress.com>.

Last but not the least, she wishes to thank her husband James and her dear son Christopher for their encouragement in pursuing her research dreams. She deeply values their support and love in helping her create positive social change for battered women. In the spring of 2013, Christopher served as editor-in-chief of his college newspaper, and he invited his mother to write an informational article about this topic (Appendix F). This proud moment meant the world to her.

Lastly, without the love and support of her Heavenly Father this would not be possible. She firmly believes that her creator is celebrating the fruits of this community labor with Vilma's beloved mother. Without the love of community, this form of collective social change endeavor would not be possible.



## FOREWORD

As the only daughter of a battered Latina immigrant from Puerto Rico, I witnessed how my mother Maria suffered as a victim of Domestic Violence. Perhaps this is where I began fine-tuning my advocacy lens. It was in the midst of these turbulent moments where sparks took the form of my heart's desire to share the urgent call for helping battered women. Regrettably, there are unsettling memories which at times tend to resurface and they activate this researcher's desire to examine the extent of how my mother Maria suffered. When I was young, my mother would urge me not to say anything and to keep "family problems" PRIVATE. She would advise me that it's best not get other people involved in marital problems. As a result, Maria dealt with the conflicting pain of staying in an abusive relationship for the sake of her family and children. She carried this pain for over 25 years.

This researcher had a tough secret to keep. I wondered how many other women and children actually walk around with domestic violence "family problems" weighing down their heavy hearts. In April 2012, right before my mother lost her battle with cancer, I vowed at my mother's deathbed that I would use her story to... break the silence... and break the cycle of domestic violence.

As an advocacy researcher, in the summer of 2012, I had the honor of launching my first domestic violence research study in the Dominican Republic. *The Latina Project: Breaking the Silence...Breaking the Cycle* . It was my way of

establishing a research footprint on an elusive phenomena that maintains an emotional, spiritual, physical, and economic stranglehold on many Latino communities.

Initially, I was inclined to reach out to my mom's hometown in Puerto Rico, but after much introspection, I realized that personally it was too soon to examine this challenging topic—so painfully close to home. At this juncture, it was best to examine the broader issue of domestic violence. I recognized that it was important to widen the aperture of this obscure topic and gain a stronger understanding of the issues related to domestic violence in many Latino communities.

Ultimately, this qualitative researcher elected to pursue a replicable course of study that could help her examine the underlying universal themes that are evident in domestic violence in Latino communities. I selected a Caribbean sister community not far away from Puerto Rico...it was Columbus' first discovery... and symbolically it would serve as this researcher's first discover of domestic violence. It was the captivating country of the Dominican Republic.

## **CHAPTER 1: LITERATURE REVIEW**

### **INTRODUCTION**

How many times have you heard a friend or family member offer advice that it is best NOT to get involved in marital problems between a man and his woman? The sad truth is that for many battered women, their loved ones' hands-off approach of "not getting involved" is further perpetuating the vicious cycle of domestic violence. Domestic violence which is shrouded in silence and secrecy functions like a cancer that eats away at a woman—making her weak and more vulnerable to her abuser. In the United States, 1 out of 4 women you know are battered women and they may be guarding a deplorable secret about their husband, boyfriend, or domestic partner. Likewise the epidemic rate of domestic violence in Latin America is a tragic reality for many Latinas.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE IN THE DOMINICAN REPUBLIC**

Domestic violence exists for Dominican women across all economic strata. El Centro de Estudios Sociales y Demográficos affirmed that one in every three women you know in the Dominican Republic are victims of some form of domestic violence. Although this country is known as one of the finest vacation resort meccas of the world, the Dominican Republic is grappling with an issue that is not so publicly glorious and refined. Behind the façade of gorgeous beaches and exquisite holiday accommodations, many of this country's precious flowers face a violent and brutal existence. The truth is that many of the women who serve as well as visit

these fine resorts are indeed victims of violent attacks by manipulative and controlling husbands and partners.

### **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROTECTION LAW 24-97**

As this Latina researcher examined the dreadful truth behind the reality of domestic violence in the Dominican Republic, she was horrified to see how little is done to eradicate this brutal reality. A study by the Association of Women's Rights in Development confirmed that many Dominican women face this lonely battle and are often victimized twice, by their abusers and by the judicial system created to protect them. In 2011, data from the Prosecutor for Woman Affairs (Roxanna Reyes) confirms that every 1-2 days a woman is killed in an act of domestic violence. Within the last two years, over 60,000 annual complaints of violence against women are reported. However, approximately only 4% of the charges, brought up against the perpetrators, attended legal trials. Recently, official statistics from the capital's Santo Domingo Public Prosecutor's Office confirms that the alarming level of domestic violence continues. In the past 6 months, this province had 133 women killed by their former partners. An advocacy study, *Critical Path of Dominican Women Survivors of Gender Violence* commissioned by local Dominican women advocacy organizations, reported that tragically many of the victims that lost their lives were also victims of a legal system that did not have a responsive judicial staff equipped to deal with the complex issues of domestic violence.

In the 21<sup>st</sup> Century...how is this possible? If you can believe it, domestic violence in the Dominican Republic was not officially recognized less than ten years ago in January 1997—under the new *Human Rights Law 24-97*. So until this point, domestic violence was not only tolerated...it was considered legal. The reality of domestic violence in the Dominican Republic was brought to light by organizations such as PROFAMILIA (Asociación Dominicana Pro-Bienestar de la Familia) y La Oficina para la Promoción de Mujeres with the help of the United Nations Fund. It is difficult to believe that 15 years later, the efforts of human rights organizations have fallen on deaf ears. An investigation by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reveals that even though the 24-97 law was intended to promote major advances in the protection of women's rights in this nation, regrettably many Dominican judges do not apply and enforce the law. A commission investigated the knowledge base of many judges and Public Ministry representatives and they were simply unaware of the extensive content of this 15 year-old law. How is this possible? Perhaps the ugly truth may be that many of the male judges and law enforcement counterparts elect not to enforce it.

## **UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence (2012) asserts that the ultimate goal of domestic violence or abuse is to gain and maintain control of the victim. Fear is the paralyzing grip that keeps many victims in an abusive relationship. Regrettably many people who hear about a particular example or

tragic case can't believe why the woman never broke free from the abusive situation. As a community, noticing and acknowledging the critical and escalating signs of an abusive relationship can serve as the crucial step in breaking the cycle and silence of domestic violence (Allen, 2004). It is important to understand that there are many forms of domestic abuse or spousal abuse. Based on a survey developed by the United States National Domestic Violence Network (2011), if you answer "Yes" to many of the questions below, it is highly probable that you or someone you know is in an abusive relationship. Do you...

- Often feel afraid of your partner?
- Avoid certain conversations or topics for fear of making your partner angry?  
Often feel that according to your partner you can't do anything correct?
- Agree that sometimes you deserve to be mistreated by your partner?
- Wonder if you are the only one who is crazy in your relationship.
- Feel emotionally numb or helpless in your circumstances?

Many of the aforementioned questions focus on the issue of emotional abuse. Many victims feel isolated, intimidated, and controlled by their spouse/partner. It is important for victims of domestic abuse to understand that ultimately the abuser will escalate in his abusive tactics and ultimately resort to physical threats or other abusive repercussions to make the abused woman do what he wants.

### **PROFILE OF AN ABUSER**

A domestic violence abuser behaves in a controlling manner, not because he is not able to "control" himself. In fact, the abuser is very strategic about his actions and makes very clear and controlling decisions in order to control his

spouse or partner. He makes careful choices about when and where he will abuse his partner. In public, they may seem like the perfect spouse, but often times will lash out when they can't be seen. Moreover, an abuser is capable of "stopping" their abusive ways when it benefits him. If you suspect that someone you know is an abuser, answer the following questions. Does your partner...

- Consistently ignore your opinions and puts them down?
- Humiliate or yell at you?
- Treat you so poorly that you are embarrassed that your family and friends will see?
- Blame you for making them behave in an abusive way?
- Constantly criticize you and makes degrading remarks about you?
- Act very jealous and possessive?
- Try to control where you go?
- Try to control who you see?
- Try to control what you do?
- Keep you from seeing your friends or family?
- Limit your direct access to money?
- Limit your access to a phone?
- Constantly check up on you with numerous calls throughout the day?
- Constantly check and/or open your mail?
- Constantly check your email or wants you to give him your email passwords?
- View you as his property or sexual object?
- Have a bad or unpredictable temper?
- Harm you and threatens to hurt or kill you?
- Threatens to kill himself if you leave him?
- Threatens to take your children away if you try to leave?
- Threatens to hurt your children if you try to leave?
- Threatens to hurt other friends or family members if you try to leave?
- Destroy your personal belongings?

-United States National Domestic Violence Network (2011)

## **THE COMPLEX NATURE OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE**

The dynamics of domestic violence are extremely complicated and it helps to explain why victims struggle to break free from this violent pattern. Many women do not feel equipped or brave enough to examine potential options that can free them from the abuse (Allen, 2004). They have become emotionally, physically, and spiritually weak. Remember that the abuser has used a litany of vices to pin the victim and maintain her under his control.

## **DOMESTIC VIOLENCE BELONGS TO THE COMMUNITY**

Dominican women are not alone. The reality is that there are many Latina sisters who are suffering the same phenomena of domestic violence. Amnesty International (2012) reported that in Latin America, there is a 20% increase in the number of women killed by their partners or former partners. The sad truth is that women are not the only victims. When children witness the violent abuse of their mothers, there is a strong chance that they will either become victims or abusers in their adulthood. The cycle of domestic violence is more likely to continue. It takes a brave and supportive community to say "NO MORE" and sustain women empowerment that breaks the silence and the cycle. Thankfully, more Dominican organizations are addressing this issue and there is a growing network ready to serve the Dominican community.

Prior to the ratification of Dominican domestic violence laws, the United Nation recognized how Domestic Violence was a silent epidemic that was tragically



affecting the lives of so many women in this country. As a result, in 1979 the United Nations established INSTRAW (International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women). The mission of this research hub located in the capital of the country was to examine and find empirical findings that would inform capacity building strategies and community management programs that directly promote gender equality and women empowerment (UN-INSTRAW, 2013).

## **CHAPTER 2 AN ADVOCACY RESEARCHER'S QUEST**

This Latina strives to examine how the epidemic of domestic violence follows many of the immigrant Dominican women that settle in the Washington Heights and Dyckman areas in New York City. Regrettably, many Manhattan women shelters and community outreach groups are not able to be culturally responsive to the unique and complex needs of this particular immigrant population. As a result, many of these battered women eventually go back to their abusers and face insurmountable obstacles to break the cycle of domestic violence in their lives.

The goal of this research project is to collaborate with a local grassroots organization in the Washington Heights area, and offer research findings that can steer and shape their organization action plans to better serve this population of battered women. Ultimately, a program evaluation can demonstrate how this grassroots organization is effectively meeting the needs of Dominican women and making a noteworthy impact. Similar to the lead researcher's experience studying and evaluating of a Girls Rescue Shelter in Kenya, findings from this research study and program evaluation can help the grassroots organization seek and secure substantial grant funding from human rights organizations such as Amnesty International.

In August of 2012, Dr. Caban-Vazquez traveled to the small rural town of Bonao in the Dominican Republic. Her goal was to examine the phenomena of

Domestic Violence by interfacing with victims just like her mother. She realized that the delicate nature of this work would require the establishment of trust and security for these women. And with the help of several highly regarded and noble local community advocates, she was able to conduct a participatory action study. This lead researcher facilitated large group and small group discussions and interview focus groups. She also conducted private one-to-one interviews with many of the domestic violence victims and survivors.

### **RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

Dr. Caban-Vazquez recognized how questions can lead the way to creating a stronger understanding of domestic violence. Therefore, she framed her inquiry with the following research questions:

- What do you think are some reasons why women choose to remain in an abusive relationship?
- What are some of the obstacles that women face as they try to break the cycle of domestic violence in their lives?
- What would you suggest is a way to take care of the problem of Domestic Violence in the community?
- How can the community help women who are victims of domestic violence?
- What are the necessary resources that help to address this problem?
- What role do the men play in breaking the cycle of domestic violence?

- Is there anything you would like to share regarding your experiences with Domestic Violence?

## **RESEARCH STUDY PARTICIPANT SELECTION**

To hone in on the central themes related to domestic violence in the rural community of Bonao, Dominican Republic. This lead researcher used a qualitative and purposive sampling research technique—criterion sampling. A criterion sample size of 50 participants contributed to a large group discussion forum, small group focus-group interview sessions and 15 of the 50 study participants were involved in one-to-one interviews wherein said participants had a predetermined criterion—domestic violence victims (Hatch, 2002). These study participants represented a diaspora of various community stakeholders including spiritual leaders, civic-minded community members, students, mothers, daughters, aunts, grandmothers, caregivers, seamstresses, and artists.

## **INTERVIEW DESIGN**

In order to elicit qualitative data on historical practices and program structures, Rubin and Rubin (2005) recommend the use of qualitative interviews to help researchers reconstruct events that were not directly observed by said researchers (p. 3). For these aforementioned reasons, this lead researcher gathered a richer set of qualitative data by conducting one-to-one interviews structured and directed by an interview protocol. The qualitative data gathered

from interviews can be described as rich and structured conversations wherein the principal researcher followed up on questions posed after an observation and other formal and informal interviews (Creswell, 2008; Rubin & Rubin, 2005). In support of collecting a wide range of qualitative data, Creswell (2007) asserts that the collection of a rich data from various resources helps to ensure that the researchers triangulate findings. "Triangulation is the process of corroborating evidence from different individuals, and types of data within themes will arise" (Creswell, 2008, p.648). Dr. Caban-Vazquez triangulated qualitative findings by combing through detailed transcripts of one-to-one and focus group interviews with a wide range of community stakeholders.

### **DATA COLLECTION PROCESS**

This domestic violence researcher gathered information to develop a richer perspective of the multi-faceted dimensions of domestic violence in this Latino community. She acquired qualitative data from observation protocols, field notes, reflective notes, photographs, interview transcripts, electronic press releases, and other forms of unstructured text data found in newspaper articles, office memorandums, and formal and informal interoffice correspondence. Flick (2006) describes how the collection of "multifocus data" is a fruitful strategy to approach institutional routines (p. 272). Ultimately, the goal of collecting this wide range of data was to reach a point of "data saturation" which meant that participants shared findings pertaining to a set of categories or themes that began to repeat and

ultimately the researchers were not able to acquire any new data (Stake, 2008). With the use of multiple forms of data, Denzin & Lincoln (2008) describe how qualitative researchers can triangulate findings that help to corroborate data collected from the observation and interview participants. The use of multiple forms of data offered this researcher a vital tool for analysis, interpretation, and the trustworthiness of narrative findings.

Hatch (2002) asserts that the use of case study research falls within the “constructivist research paradigm” because the researchers intend to make sense of the participants’ world as well as offer rich narrative descriptions of the participants’ reality and perspectives (p. 16). The qualitative tradition of a case study is an interactive and sensitive examination because extensive qualitative data are primarily gathered from a small number of participants in the form of observations, structured interviews, and bounded time focus groups (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Researchers who conduct an instrumental case study choose to focus on separate or grouped individuals involved in a specific activity, event, or program (Creswell, 2008). Consequently, a wide range of qualitative data can be gathered to obtain various perspectives by conducting multiple interviews and observations (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). An in-depth analysis of qualitative data involved both inductive and deductive reasoning processes that brought to light a series of general themes that gradually emerged (Charmaz, 2000; Creswell, 2007). Through the use of a traditional qualitative inquiry and the framework of an instrumental

case study, Dr. Caban-Vazquez examined a series of issues related to the local phenomenon of domestic violence among the battered women that she studied.

## **INTERVIEWS**

Creswell (2008) defines an interview as a recorded and structured conversation between the researcher and participant(s) wherein researchers ask general or open-ended questions (p. 641). Face-to-face interviews can offer a source of audio data valuable for understanding participants' experiences and various events (Rubin & Rubin, 2005). Accordingly, this researcher conducted the interview process to further explore issues related to domestic violence and the victims' suggestions for potential community outreach activities. A total of conducted 15 one-to-one and focus group interviews ranging from 15 minutes to 20-minute interviews. In order to accurately gather data, the lead researcher recorded approximately 750 minutes of data from the large group discussions, focus group interviews and one-to-one interviews. She recorded this data using an Olympus Digital Voice Recorder (Olympus America, 2009). Qualitative data gathered from structured participant conversations helped Dr. Caban-Vazquez gather rich data to develop a stronger understanding of the domestic violence among the Bonao women of the Dominican Republic.

## **INTERVIEW PROTOCOL**

An interview protocol offered the framework necessary to steer a series of interviews with participants. In the interviews, the researcher posed a set of open-ended questions and recorded the participants' responses. Creswell (2008) asserts that participants can best express their experiences with open-ended questions. Data collected from interviews helped Dr. Caban-Vazquez "...uncover the meaning structures that participants use to organize their experiences and make sense of their worlds" (Hatch, 2002, p.91). Accordingly, this researcher posed a range of open-ended, probing, and follow-up questions. After an examination of questioning strategies within different interview forums, H.J. Rubin & I. S. Rubin (2005) assert that the use of "probing questions" and follow-up questions help the interviewees share extensive details that may aid in developing a richer understanding of the phenomenon under investigation. The preliminary questions answered in the participants' interviews served as helpful leads for finding answers to the sub-questions directing this program evaluation (Creswell, 2008, 1998; Stake, 2000). Throughout the interviewing process, the researcher collected audio data and transcribed the information from one-to-one interviews. Creswell (2008) described the transcription of audio data as the process of "...converting audiotape recordings or field notes into text data" (p. 246). The text data from one-to-one interviews assisted Dr. Caban-Vazquez in expanding her understanding of all of the social, emotional, physical and economical forces that shape domestic violence in this Latino community.



## **QUALITATIVE DATA ANALYSIS**

After collecting different forms of data, the lead researcher engaged in the process of analyzing the findings. The process involved three tiers of data analysis. Upon completing these different levels of data analysis, Dr. Caban-Vazquez adhered to a formal data analysis protocol that ensured the quality, accuracy, and the credibility of the findings.

### Preliminary Stage of Data Analysis: Open Coding

After the qualitative data was gathered and organized, the researcher followed a constructivist grounded theory data analysis approach (Charmaz, 2000; Creswell, 2007). She used this data analysis plan to make sense of the audio data and text data gathered from observations and structured interviews. During the initial stage of recording field notes and reflective notes, Dr. Caban-Vazquez had an opportunity to begin the data analysis process by reading the text data and developing sidebar or margin notes (Hatch, 2002). This traditional form of "hand analysis of qualitative data" is the process of reviewing the data, marking the data, and dividing the data into parts into codes or categories (Creswell, 2008, p. 246). As she engaged in the constructivist grounded theory data analysis process of reviewing a large body of qualitative data, she launched the preliminary process of sorting and coding the data (Charmaz, 2008; 2000). By using an inductive process of organizing the data into initial categories, also known as "open coding", this data consistently fell within topics that were "...extensively discussed by the participants"

(Creswell, 2007, p.160). This preliminary process of data analysis can help this advocacy researcher begin to see the scope of the data findings.

### *Second Stage of Data Analysis: Axial Coding*

Within the constructivist grounded theory of data analysis, the nature of the themes naturally moved from general to specific categories (Charmaz, 2008; 2000). This helped Dr. Caban-Vazquez identify “patterns of meaning in data so that general statements about the phenomena under investigation can be made” (Hatch, 2002, p. 160—161). Creswell (2007) describes this second stage of the coding process as “axial coding” wherein the researchers review the database and seek to find insight into specific “coding categories” (p. 161). This coding process offers the qualitative researchers “analytic scaffolding” for creating various data categories (Charmaz, 2008, p. 217). In fact, the object of the axial coding process is to make sense of the data and to identify codes that overlap or repeat so that you can collapse these codes into broader categories (Creswell, 2008, p.251). The broader categories can be seen as “themes” that have saturated data to support them (Charmaz, 2000). Researchers can organize these themes and codes within a “coding paradigm” or matrix (Creswell, 2007, p. 161). After coding the data and analyzing the various themes, this lead researcher began the final phase of the data analysis plan.

### *Final Stage of Data Analysis: Selective Coding*

Charmaz (2000) describes the final data analysis approach of the constructivist grounded theory as selective coding wherein the researchers begin to

theorize and develop statements that help to explain the meaning of the findings. Although it may seem that the coding procedures of data analysis fell within a linear process, Creswell (2008) describes it as an “ongoing process involving continual reflection about the data, asking analytic questions, and writing memos throughout the study (p. 190). As a qualitative researcher,, Dr. Caban-Vazquez engaged in the extensive process of data analysis to ensure the triangulation of data.

### **EVIDENCE OF QUALITY, ACCURACY & CREDIBILITY OF FINDINGS**

Using an ethical and standard qualitative research methodology, this advocacy researcher collected and analyzed a body of qualitative data that yielded answers to the aforementioned research study questions. A review of the recorded audio data and created transcripts of the interviews revealed data that could help this researcher better understand the complex nature of domestic violence (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). In order to ensure that the transcription process was correct, a graduate student from a local university served as a “peer reviewer” of the transcripts to ensure that the text data from the transcripts was consistent with the audio data from the interviews (Creswell, 2007). The researcher ensured the privacy of the interviewees by including pseudonyms in the transcript files (Creswell, 2008). Stake (2008) recommends that it is important for the participants to receive and review a copy of any final write-ups that demonstrate how the participants’ contributions are represented as direct quotes or interpretations (p. 140). Accessibility to the study participants was limited, therefore the researcher

elected to include the general statements shared by many of the participants. In light of the sensitive nature of this topic, the researcher managed her subjectivity by acknowledging and addressing this limitation. With the careful process of conducting structured interviews, and peer auditors this researcher worked to guarantee the accuracy of the study findings (Creswell, 2008; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Morrow, 2007). With the use of different measures to ensure accuracy, the following research findings were held to the highest standards of quality and precision.

In order to ensure the credibility of qualitative findings, Stake (2005) recommends that there should be procedures for dealing with data analysis codes that do not fit in the majority of themes and categories. Creswell (2008) describes information gathered from participants as “contrary evidence” which means that it is information gathered that “does not support or confirm the themes” (p. 257). In an effort to ensure a better understanding of the complexity of the themes, Dr. Caban-Vazquez analyzed the “discrepant information”. As such, within the narrative analysis of the findings, the lead researcher will present these findings to offer different perspectives that do not align with the majority of the data findings (Creswell, 2003, p. 196). Consequently, this will ensure that all ethical research procedures and protocols were in place for addressing the contrary or discrepant data. Ultimately, this will add to the credibility of Dr. Caban-Vazquez’s qualitative research findings.

## CHAPTER 3

### NARRATIVE ANALYSIS OF RESEARCH FINDINGS

Based on the data collection and analysis methods discussed above, Dr. Caban-Vazquez was able to identify several re-occurring themes from the interviews. These central themes can be grouped into the following categories of participants' needs: (a) economic factors, (b) women empowerment, (c) Victims' patterns (d) social-emotional factors, and (e) raising community awareness.

#### THEME 1: ECONOMIC FACTORS

The majority of the battered women interviewed communicated their dire need for economic resources that would enable them to leave their abusive relationships. Many of the women expressed their desire to successfully seek and secure employment outside of Bonao. Upon further examination, employment opportunities are extremely limited in this rural community. Many women expressed that they choose to remain in their abusive relationship because they don't want to disrupt their children's education by moving away and not having any economic resources to ensure that their children attend school. They selflessly chose to stay so that their children could at least have a better chance of attending school. The majority of the local men are the sole financial providers of the home. In light of the economic situation in their rural communities, if the battered women resolved to leave their abusive partners, these women would financially struggle to purchase the costly school uniforms that their children are required to have to attend

school. Many of the women hoped that there would be some form of career training available to the women of Bonao that would open some economic options.

## THEME 2: WOMEN EMPOWERMENT

More than half of the research participants wish they had a women's community center where they may attend more "chalas" or educational workshops. They believe that this community strategy would increase the awareness level about domestic violence in their community. Prior to Dr. Caban-Vazquez informational session about domestic violence laws with the participants, the majority of the battered women communicated in their interviews that they were not familiar with the Domestic Violence Law No. 24:97. Some women shared that if they knew where to go and get a legal advocate, they would feel more comfortable trying to leave their abusive partner.

## THEME 3: BREAKING FREE FROM AN ABUSER

A closer examination revealed that less than 25 percent of the participants interviewed in multiple research forums were actually able to break free from their abusive partner. Regrettably, half of the women that broke free from the abuser eventually returned to their abusive partner. In view of this shift, only 12 percent of the study participants were able to remain away from their former abusive partner. The researcher realized that she would need to probe further and plan future focus group interviews and one-to-one interviews to better understand the complex social

forces that were shaping the women's choice to come back to an abusive relationship.

#### THEME 4: SOCIAL EMOTIONAL FACTORS

Focus group interviews ( $n=15$ ) revealed that many of the women felt ashamed about their abusive situation. They expressed great difficulty about sharing their situation with other women in their community for fear of judgement. Others expressed that they believe one of the reasons why the community is tolerant of domestic violence may be due to the belief of a "man needs to be a man". Some women shared that some people have expressed that if the men don't behave this way and put their women in their place, then the women will get out of control.

Several older women shared their belief that the cycle of domestic violence in their community continues to flourish. They discretely noted several of the young women in the town who are dating or engaged to an abusive boyfriend. These older battered women earnestly conveyed their concern for these young women. The vicious cycle of domestic violence was quite evident in this community.

#### THEME 5: RAISING COMMUNITY AWARENESS

Many of the women felt it was necessary to involve the men in the community awareness initiatives centered on domestic violence in Bonao. Some of the women suggested a faith-based counseling group for abusers with a local

spiritual leader, pastor or priest. They expressed that it was part of the churches responsibility to address the issue of how the church congregants are also abusers of this wives.

### **IMPLICATIONS FOR FURTHER STUDY**

Based of the multiple themes that were revealed in this preliminary research study, this researcher considered potential areas for future study. This researcher recommends that future research should focus on the economic empowerment theme that was raised by the majority of the battered women. This form of future research may be helpful for other rural Latino communities that face this universal economic obstacle. Another area of future study can center on how various community stakeholders can raise community awareness on the issue of domestic violence (Johnson, 2003). The application of this future research can greatly affect social change within the Latino community. It can also inform government and social agency policy that is designed for the educational and economic empowerment of various communities.

### **BATTERED WOMEN ECONOMIC EMPOWERMENT PROJECT**

#### **SCHOOL UNIFORM COOPERATIVE**

Together one step at a time, we can break the silence and the cycle that have kept so many women and children oppressed by their abusers. With the generous support of Social Changers without Borders and the wonderful support



that Dr. Caban-Vazquez and her research delegates received, they will be able to set a course for a second year of research and technical support.

This lead researcher and her team will go back and work with a core group of the battered Latinas in Bonao. Using a secure lottery system, 10 out of the 50 women studied will become part of an economic empowerment project that will serve as a pilot for this study. With this plan, they will be able to directly help 10 of the 2012 research participants. These women will become part of a Self Help Group (SHG) that will create a School Uniform Cooperative (Davies, 2001). This economic empowerment project will enable and equip the domestic violence survivors to sew and sell school uniforms in and outside of their small town of Bonao, DR. This technical support is a direct result of the key findings shared by the victims of the study. The goal for offering this empowering self help group model is to ultimately release the women from the oppressive and economic hold of their abusive husbands or domestic partners (Allen, 2004; Rios, 2007). Research findings from the 2012 study showed that many of the women selflessly remained with their abusers to better improve their children's odds of remaining in school. Since the men were the sole decision-maker in managing finance, the women feared that they would struggle to purchase the costly school uniforms without any career training or employment options.

This summer, our direct technical and economic support will drastically empower ten out of the fifty women to develop a school uniform micro-enterprise.

Consequently, the battered women will gain the economic leverage they need to provide their children, and ultimately their community, with a vital educational resource and opportunity.

### **CERTIFIED TRAINING & APPRENTICESHIP**

Research-proven methods on effective practices and training will help shape the direction of this rural community-based project (Perkins, 2006; UN, 2001). The women will receive certified training from a team of seamstresses in the field. Furthermore, they will receive support from local merchants to sell and promote the women's school uniforms. The lead researcher's vision of expanding this would can be supported by proceeds from additional fundraising events. This may offer the women an opportunity to establish an apprentice program wherein the study participants will "reach one...and teach one".

Dr. Caban-Vazquez is eager to launch this work and realizes the great potential of replicating this form of empowerment work across many Latino rural communities. The findings from the upcoming 2013 economic empowerment pilot will help to establish best practices for developing sustainability in this form of community outreach.

## REFERENCES

Allen, N.(2004). *Battered Women's Multitude of Needs: Evidence Supporting the Need for Comprehensive Advocacy*. Violence Against Women, Vol. 10 No. 9. Thousand Oaks, Ca: Sage Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2000). Grounded theory: Objectivist and constructivist methods. In N. Denzin & Y. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup>ed., pp. 509-535).

Charmaz, K. (2008). Advancing social justice research. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln (Eds.), *Handbook of qualitative research* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed., pp. 203-241). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell, J. W. (2008). *Educational research: Planning, conducting, and evaluating quantitative and qualitative research*. 3<sup>rd</sup> ed. Upper Saddle River, NJ: Pearson Education, Inc.

Creswell, J. W. (2007). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Creswell J. W., & Plano Clark, V. L. (2007). *Designing and conducting mixed methods research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Davies, J. (2001). *Building opportunities for battered women's safety and self-sufficiency* (Practice paper developed by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence for TANF and Child Support Enforcement agencies and domestic violence advocates). Retrieved February 17, 2003, from [www.vawnet.org/vnl/library/general/welprac1.htm](http://www.vawnet.org/vnl/library/general/welprac1.htm)

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2008). *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Denzin, N. K., & Lincoln, Y. S. (Eds.). (2005). *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publications.

Flick, U. (2006). *An introduction to qualitative research* (3<sup>rd</sup> ed.). London: Sage.

Hatch, J. A. (2002). *Doing qualitative research in education settings*. Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Johnson, K. 2003. Dialectics of power in society and violence in the home: A comparative analysis of women's experience of domestic violence in Haiti and Nicaragua. Dissertation: University of Maryland.

Milstein, B. & Wetterhall, S. (2011). A framework for program evaluation: A gateway to tools. *Community Toolbox*. Retrieved from [http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub\\_section\\_main\\_1338.aspx](http://ctb.ku.edu/en/tablecontents/sub_section_main_1338.aspx)

Olympus America (2009). Features and Benefits of the Olympus Digital Voice Recorder VN-4100PC. Retrieved from [http://www.olympusamerica.com/cpg\\_section/cpg\\_archived\\_product\\_details.asp?id=1291&fl=2](http://www.olympusamerica.com/cpg_section/cpg_archived_product_details.asp?id=1291&fl=2)

Perkins, H. (2006). Commodification: re-resourcing rural areas. *The Handbook of Rural Studies*. SAGE Publications. DOI: 10.4135/978-1-84860-801-6.n17

Rios, E. (2007) *On the Road to Social Transformation: Utilizing Cultural and Community Strengths to End Domestic Violence*. Los Angeles, CA:

National Latino Alliance.

Stake, R. E. (2008). Qualitative case studies. In N.K. Denzin & Y.S. Lincoln(Eds.), *Strategies of qualitative inquiry* (pp.119-149). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Thomas, J. (1993). Doing critical ethnography. In Thomas, J. (2003). Critical Ethnography. *Encyclopedia of Social Science Research Methods*. SAGE Publications. Retrieved September 23, 2011 from website: <http://sage-reference.com/view/socialscience/n192.xml>

## APPENDIX A: COMMUNITY STAKEHOLDERS IN BONAO, DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

### **Listado de los Colaboradores al servicio de la Comunidad de Villa Sonador**

1. **Víctor Manuel Batista**
2. **Padre Román Miguel Jáquez** (Para ser reconocido por su gran aporte al desarrollo a la comunidad de Villa Sonador)
3. **Sixto Ant. Lora** (Reconocimiento por su gran aporte a la comunidad de Blanco)
4. **Dra. María Mercedes Fernández** (Reconocimiento por su gran aporte al desarrollo a la Provincia de Monseñor Nouel)
5. **Lic. Arquímedes Reyes Tavera** (Por Su gran trayectoria y dedicación al servicio de los derechos Humano de la Provincia Monseñor Nouel)
6. **Yahaira Herrera** (Reconocimiento por su gran labor al servicio de la comunidad de la colonia)
7. **Lic. Juan Francisco Tejeda** (Reconocimiento Por Su gran aporte al deporte y dedicación a los jóvenes de Villa Sonador)

### **Representante de los Grupos Organizados**

1. Lic. José Ant. Acevedo
2. Paulina Delgado
3. Ing. Junior García Guzmán
4. Lic. Martha Batista
5. Lic. Rafaela Jackelin Ventura
6. Lic. Winston Daniel Alonzo
7. María Fiordaliza Andujar Marte
8. María Josefina Morfa
9. Jacqueline Colon
10. Laura T. Ramos
11. Antonia Alberto Sánchez
12. María Cepeda
13. Adriana Colón
14. Joselin Joelis Reyes
15. Ángela Catalina Pujol
16. Leodora García
17. Tiodora Capellan
18. Mercedes de Jesús Mena
19. Mercedes Sánchez
20. Evarista Luna
21. Carolina Rivera
22. Dra. Amiris Lomber
23. Anselma Vicioso
24. Lic. Juan Antonio Ogando
25. Juana María Mejía
26. Mery De La Rosa
27. Maribel Veloz



## *Dra. Vilma Cabán Vázquez* **coordinadora de recaudación de fondos de Social Changers, Inc.**

*Por: Alejandrina Hernández*



Motivada por la necesidad imperante que tiene la familia de ser edificada en valores, unida en amor donde se detenga la violencia intrafamiliar y la mujer pueda ser valorada, respetada donde tenga oportunidades y se le ayude a tener un mejor estilo de vida, donde el drama de la violencia, el abuso y el maltrato no se viva más en los hogares.

Trabaja dando charlas a mujeres maltratadas y la comunidad de Sonador Bonaio en la Escuela Cacique Francisco Bonaio, tuvo la oportunidad de recibir una charla donde muchas mujeres fueron orientadas de cómo cambiar sus vidas y ser transformadas mediante la y la educación, la misma fue coordinada por el dirigente comunitario Victor Manuel Batista(Vincho), además colaboraron Alberto Peña y la licenciada Loida Pujols. Estas charlas están siendo llevadas por diferentes pueblos y comunidades del país.

Es Doctora en Educación, Miembro de la Junta Ejecutiva y Coordinadora de Recaudación de Fondos de Social Changers without Borders, Inc. Logros: Vilma ha servido como educadora durante 21 años en un Distrito escolar urbano en la región noreste de Los Estados Unidos. Como líder consultor de matemáticas de enseñanza y el maestro, la doctora Cabán Vázquez, ha diseñado la investigación apoyados por sesiones de formación profesional de desarrollo para el personal docente, los

líderes educativos y las familias. En su papel de profesor adjunto de posgrado en Bank Street College y Colegio Manhattanville, trabajó para preparar la próxima generación de maestros. En un esfuerzo por apoyar iniciativas de voluntariado de alfabetización, Vilma sirvió como entrenador nacional de voluntarios y consultor educativo para varias organizaciones sin fines de lucro tales como Ameri-Corps, APRENDE (Vinculación de la Educación y America Roads a través de Servicio Nacional) y VISTA (Voluntarios al Servicio de América). Este trabajo de consultoría a través de la Corporación para el Servicio Nacional despertó un interés para examinar los asuntos nacionales y globales de las disparidades socioeconómicas y educativas.

Como parte de sus estudios de doctorado en Walden University, dirigió y co-produjo un desarrollo profesional docente DVD de entrenamiento proyecto. Vilma ha viajado al extranjero con personas a programas de Embajador del Pueblo de Camboya, Egipto y Vietnam, en donde se desempeñó como líder educativo de matemáticas, presentador y delegado. Dentro de este foro internacional, que participan en el intercambio bilateral educativa y profesional con líderes educativos internacionales y sus homólogos para examinar la pedagogía y la reforma educativa. Como un gesto de intercambio profesional a los líderes de la educación en Camboya, Egipto y Vietnam / dignatarios, presentó una formación docente iluminando herramientas prácticas efectivas de instrucción en el aula diferenciados para el aprendizaje de matemáticas.

Recientemente, fue reconocida en el periódico local de su comunidad escolar para la organización de eventos para recaudar fondos de caridad con los estudiantes. Su objetivo es capacitar a los niños a convertirse en embajadores mundiales que promueven el cambio social positivo. Reconoce el poder de la investigación colaborativa y la trata de trabajar en estrecha colaboración con otros investigadores. En 2010, se desempeñó como co-investigadora de un proyecto educativo que en el 2011 fue presentado en la American Educational Research Association. Sus esfuerzos fueron reconocidos en "My Impact 2011 Walden" Walden University publicación. Actualmente, se desempeña en la Universidad Pública Walden Oficina Estudiantes de Relaciones y ella sigue buscando maneras de aumentar la conciencia pública sobre cuestiones urgentes educativas.

Intereses: Vilma desea ayudar a las comunidades pobres establecer y mantener programas educativos que promueven el éxito académico para todos los estudiantes. La doctora Cabán, está interesada en el rendimiento en matemáticas de los estudiantes económicamente desfavorecidos. Su misión es compartir técnicas de investigación probados en campo estrategias para promover un mayor rendimiento de matemáticas para estudiantes en desventaja económica y estudiantes de inglés.

APPENDIX C: SOCIAL CHANGERS WITHOUT BORDERS, INC.

FEATURE ARTICLE IN THE WALDEN UNIVERSITY ALUMNI MAGAZINE

NEWS & NOTES



Courtesy of Elizabeth Ndubisi-Ukandu and Dr. Wilma Cabán-Vázquez in Nairobi, Kenya.

## Self-Sustaining Social Change

Students and alumni alike work to empower women worldwide through Social Changers without Borders

By Sandra Bienkowski

●●● **ELIZABETH NDUBISI-UKANDU KNOWS WHAT IT FEELS LIKE TO BE POWERLESS.**

When her mother failed to give birth to a male heir, she, her sisters, and her mother were cut off from her extended family in Nigeria. It's an all-too-common occurrence and one that has driven her to spend the last several years absorbed in projects that will have a positive effect on the lives of women and children in Africa.

"I am determined to do whatever I can to assist women and their children, to empower them to redirect their destiny and self-worth," explains the Ph.D. in Public Health student. "I have always dreamed of giving back. When you empower women, you empower a community."

Ndubisi-Ukandu has put Walden's social change mission into action on a global scale. With her husband, Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration student Ahametula Ukandu, she established Social Changers without Borders in February 2010.



## APPENDIX C: SOCIAL CHANGERS WITHOUT BORDERS, INC.

### FEATURE ARTICLE IN THE WALDEN UNIVERSITY ALUMNI MAGAZINE (Cont.)

**NEWS & NO**

The pair also invited social change agent and 2011 Doctor of Education graduate Dr. Vilma Cabán-Vázquez to join the executive board of directors, along with 2010 Ph.D. in Public Policy and Administration graduate Dr. Sekela Mungai-Coles, Ph.D. in Public Health student Marcia Castano, and faculty member Dr. Tom Diamond.

**“When you empower women, you empower a community.”**

— Elizabeth Ndubisi-Ukandu

Social Changers without Borders now has chapters in all 50 U.S. states and in Africa. Its more than 300 members partner with on-the-ground aid organizations to offer public health education and programs to underserved communities. The organization also conducts research on how to eradicate preventable diseases such as malaria, dysentery, typhoid, smallpox, and polio in these communities.

Recent projects include traveling to Africa to organize aid for girls who have fled child marriages, constructing wells to supply safe drinking water, and partnering with Equality Now to conduct program evaluations to assess the achievements of grassroots organizations that work to end female genital mutilation.

“I believe in our mission,” says Cabán-Vázquez, who is now a fundraising coordinator and serves on the foundation’s executive board. “Little by little, we are seeing the fruits of our labor.”

The executive board consists of Walden alumni, students, and faculty members who guide the direction and vision of the organization. Board members also develop innovative ideas to offer aid to international communities. All alumni are invited to join a chapter or committee, participate in threaded discussions, and send proposals for projects. The organization is seeking scholarly field researchers across a wide range of disciplines who are interested in both aid- and research-based projects.

“With hundreds of members who have acquired research skills from a master’s to a doctoral level in various fields, Social Changers without Borders is positioned to carve a niche for its unique services in the field of nonprofit volunteerism,” says Ndubisi-Ukandu. “Our goal will always be to support other grassroots organizations with these special skills and, if necessary, become involved directly to effect social change.”

 To volunteer or to participate in Social Changers without Borders, visit <http://waldenicsring.com>. Remember to log your volunteer hours at [www.WaldenU.edu/service-network](http://www.WaldenU.edu/service-network).



**Announcing the New Ambassador Program**

**●●● BUILD YOUR ALUMNI NETWORK AND STAY CONNECTED**

To Walden by sharing your experiences with current and prospective students through the new Ambassador Program. Inspire others to reach their educational goals, network with other professionals and learn about opportunities to appear in print and online publications. Volunteer to share your stories and enhance your career profile by:

- Participating in a local information session.
- Sharing your experiences on a conference call.
- Joining a webinar as a guest speaker.
- Interacting with students via phone, email, or social media sites.
- Attending a professional conference.

 To become an Ambassador today, visit [www.myWaldenAlumni.com/ambassador](http://www.myWaldenAlumni.com/ambassador)

**WALDENU.EDU 1-877-225-7500**

APPENDIX D: TANYA TORRES ARTWORK CONTRIBUTION



[www.tanyatorres.com](http://www.tanyatorres.com)



# APPENDIX F: NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

## "Shrouded in Silence, Domestic Violence in the Dominican Republic"

03/07/13

News

Page 3

### New SGA Senate Elected Shrouded in Silence, Domestic Violence in the Dominican Republic

by Tatiana Ozaruk  
News Co-Editor

WCC students voted in the New Student Center on February 13, 2013, for 12 senators to be elected to the Student Government Association. The new senators are: Nora Anzalone, Steven Aranda, Carney Burns, Jacob Carmen, Drayvon Carmichael, Charles Foster, Gregory Gaafar, Kimberly Gomez, David Kwon, Sebastian Puerta, Christian Reyes, and Isaac Tejura. Electees were later that day inducted into the SGA as senators after successfully lobbying for election.

Despite the advertising through word of mouth and announcements on boards throughout the campus, many students remain unaware that the election took place, and, more importantly, what the electees are capable of doing. When asked what she would like to see being done by the recently elected governors, sophomore Megan Moore responded, "I wasn't even aware the student government did anything to begin with." Markian Ozaruk, another

SGA and be eligible for funding," and how the Senate can "reserve the right to dissolve a recognized club/organization of the SGA," including issuing of sanctions to any recognized club found to be in violation of SGA or College policies. However, what their Constitution doesn't have throughout its nine pages of detail, is a list of policies which they do not have jurisdiction over. The Constitution makes no mention of Westchester Community College's university policies, including security, academic, and other such policies which are also pertinent to student life on campus.

Students are encouraged by the SGA's website to stop by the SGA Offices in Student Center Room 103 or the Office of Student Involvement in Student Center 290 if they want further information on how to become a member of the SGA Executive Board. The Board attends weekly meetings to "share updates, approve policy, discuss progress on the goals the SGA set for the semester."

When asked for

by Dr. Vilma Caban-Vazquez  
Contributing Writer

How many times have you heard a friend or family member offer advice that it is best NOT to get involved between a man and his woman? The sad truth is that for many battered women, their loved ones' hands-off approach of "not getting involved" is further perpetuating the vicious cycle of domestic violence.

Domestic violence shrouded in silence and secrecy is like a cancer that eats away at a woman—making her weak and more vulnerable to her abuser. Domestic violence is a tragic reality for 1 out of 3 women in Latin America. In the United States, 1 out of 4 women you know are battered women hiding a deplorable secret about their husband, boyfriend, or domestic partner.

#### DOMESTIC VIOLENCE STATISTICS:

Domestic violence exists for Dominican women

though this country is known as one of the finest vacation resort meccas of the world, the Dominican Republic is grappling with an issue that is not so publicly glorious and refined.

Behind the façade of gorgeous beaches and exquisite holiday accommodations, many of this country's precious flowers face a violent and brutal existence. The truth is that many of the women who serve as well as visit these fine resorts are indeed victims of violent attacks by manipulative and controlling husbands and partners.

As this Latina researcher examined the ugly truth behind the reality of domestic violence in the Dominican Republic, I was horrified to see how little is done to eradicate this brutal reality. A study by the Association of Women's Rights in Development confirmed that many Dominican women face this lonely battle and are often victimized twice, by their abusers and by the judicial system created to

protect them.

domestic violence. In the 21st Century... how is this possible? If you can believe it, domestic violence in the Dominican Republic was not officially recognized until January 1997—

under the new Human Rights Law 24-97. Until this point, domestic violence was not only tolerated...it was considered legal. The reality of domestic violence in the Dominican Republic was brought to light by organizations such as PROFAMILIA (Asociación Dominicana Pro-Bienestar de la Familia) y La Oficina para la Promoción de Mujeres with the help of the United Nations Fund.

It is difficult to believe that 15 years later, the efforts of human rights organizations have fallen on deaf ears. An investigation by the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights reveals that even though the 24-97 law was intended to promote major advances in the protection of women's rights in this nation, regrettably many

sophomore expanded on that sentiment by saying he was "vaguely aware of the SGA-but no one really knows what they have done, and can do." Despite the SGA's website breaking down for visitors the hierarchy of positions, sections of the SGA Constitution, and a list of the recognized clubs, organizations, and student events, it remains unclear what they do and don't have jurisdiction over.

The SGA's Constitution reads "We, the student body of Westchester Community College, in order to establish a means from which the student body's voices can be heard and interests met...establish the Student Government Association of Westchester Community College," and the SGA's website states that the organization is "a forum that serves as the liaison between students and administration. Its chief role is to deliberate, approve, and set policies that are pertinent to the student body and the operations of the SGA." The Constitution details the SGA Senate's responsibilities, denoting their "power to officially recognize student organizations to become part of the

themselves, top priorities, agendas for the semester, and problems they and other students have raised about the campus, not one of the twelve elected senators had a comment to share.

across all economic strata. El Centro de Estudios Sociales y Demográficos reported that one in every three women you know in the Dominican Republic are victims of some form of domestic violence. Al-

apply and enforce the law.

In 2011, data from the Prosecutor for Woman Affairs (Roxanna Reyes) confirms that every 1-2 days a woman is killed in an act of domestic violence. Within the last two years, over 60,000 annual complaints of violence against women are reported. However, approximately only 4% of the charges, brought up against the perpetrators, attended legal trials.

Recently, official statistics from the capital's Santo Domingo Public Prosecutor's Office confirms that the alarming level of domestic violence continues. In the past 6 months, this province had 133 women killed by their former partners.

An advocacy study, Critical Path of Dominican Women Survivors of Gender Violence commissioned by local Dominican women advocacy organizations, reported that tragically many of the victims that lost their lives were also victims of a legal system that did not have a responsive judicial staff equipped to deal with the complex issues of do-

apply and enforce the law.

A commission investigated the knowledge base of many judges and Public Ministry representatives and they were simply unaware of the extensive content of this 15 year-old law. How is this possible? Perhaps the ugly truth may be that many of the male judges and law enforcement counterparts elect not to enforce it.

#### UNDERSTANDING DOMESTIC VIOLENCE:

The ultimate goal of domestic violence or abuse is to gain and maintain control of the victim. Fear is the paralyzing grip that keeps many victims in an abusive relationship. Regrettably many people who hear about a particular example or tragic case can't believe why the woman never broke free from the abusive situation.

As a community, noticing and acknowledging the critical and escalating signs of an abusive relationship can serve as the crucial step in breaking the cycle and silence of domestic violence. It is important to under-

Continue on Page 4

**6 credits in 6 weeks? Really.**

Attend classes in New York City, Westchester, and online.

Choose from more than 600 courses, including:

Biology	Communications	Math
Business	Computer Science	Political Science
Chemistry	Criminal Justice	Psychology, and more!

**Your Summer. Your Pace.**

**Sessions start May 30 and July 15**

Register today for our Special Summer Rate

[www.pace.edu/summer13](http://www.pace.edu/summer13)

1 (800) 874-7223

**PACE UNIVERSITY**  
Work toward greatness.