



Minnesota
Indian Women's
Sexual Assault
Coalition



SHARE TIME WISELY
CONSULTING SERVICES

CREATING PATHWAYS TO SOCIAL CHANGE AND HEALING CULTURAL HARM



Community Acknowledgements



Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition (MIWSAC) and Share Time Wisely Consulting Services collaborated to envision collective empowerment and liberation to address white supremacy, lateral oppression, and potentially heal historical harmnastics experienced by and between Indigenous, African American, Asian/API, Latina and other communities. This collaboration is an effort to apply the common lessons learned from the vicarious harm done to our immediate Minneapolis and national communities. We hold a shared commitment to providing intentional and authentic support to those harmed long-term by the murder of George Floyd in the local Minneapolis/St. Paul community, anti-Blackness practices, and the COVID-19 and violence pandemics. A small group of local and national African, African American, Black, Caribbean (ABC), and Native (with brown skin) activist/advocates who work at grassroots and sexual and domestic violence coalitions, local domestic violence programs, and as consultants; voluntarily shared their wisdom offerings, stories, and expertise with MIWSAC. Four, 1.5-hour conversations, including ASL interpreters for a Deaf facilitator; and one 2-hour national conference panel session were held virtually with MIWSAC staff and advocates who attended the 2022 MIWSAC conference.

Further acknowledgement and appreciation extend to this group of professional human beings who identify as mothers, grandmothers, expectant-mother, teachers, organizers; statewide, national, tribal, community leaders; consultants, entrepreneurs, from all of Turtle Island, including Deaf, dog lovers, gardeners; share the spectrum of skin color and hair textures; formerly educated and seasoned movement builders. Though often not being able to fully self-identify, they are more than the sum of their resumes and bios which represents over 500 total years of experiences across the anti-violence movement. A select core group of African/African American local leaders from MN will continue building relative relationships with MIWSAC to hold community accountability in making the changes discussed through this process.



Purpose

MIWSAC supports collective empowerment and liberation to address anti-Blackness racism, oppression, diversity, equity and inclusion, and violence against other communities.



Approaches

African, African American, Black, Caribbean conversations with MIWSAC via, wisdom sharing, community survey, conference panel to identify purposeful and supportive actions to address anti-Blackness and violence against other communities.



Objective

Use various means to create open and confidential conversations with African, African American, Black, Caribbean, and Native advocates to identify strategic approaches to heal negative impacts of colonial constructs.



Intended Outcome

Develop an introductory tool to train co-collaborators in disrupting Anti-Blackness, racism, and oppression. Work in tandem with community advocates to develop cultural practices to encourage healing historical division and lateral oppression.



Work with Meditations and Affirmations

Identify community values to do this work with cultural humility, transparency, respect, and trust. Honor the shared history of community and support cultivated among BIPOC. Acknowledge shared leadership in creating culturally responsive services, practices and policies that saved many lives, as well as the lessons learned from various challenges and unintentional harms. Build trust with an understanding that we hold the key to make the changes we want to see.



Do this work with curiosity and hope. We won't have all the answers but walk with us with hope and light. Not be held or bound by fear and rejection... just walk in the truth about why we are here.



Panelists & Contributors

Courageous Fire, LLC

DeAnna Swope

Nnenna Minimah

Shaheen Akinitsisahn Day Hedgepeth
(Mockingbird)

Vivian St. Juste Scheweizer

Cultural Wellness Center

Phumulani

Sexual Violence Center

Minnesota Coalition Against
Sexual Assault

Willie Lynch Letter, myth or not, the inhumane strategy worked. Thankfully, this activity brought us to this day of unlearning and undoing. We are actively using our hearts, minds, bodies to heal this stuff. We have committed to visiting these hard places, by hearing and sharing to heal harms against one another in the best way that we know how at this point in our individual and collective spiritual journey.



Sit with the notion of Blackness and how it shows up here on this land.

I learned about the values that were supposed to be ours that were erased for everybody on this call, sometimes we simply don't know who we are, or we forget, and it benefits somebody but not us.



Love is accountability – community accountability that helps us to grow beyond..

Empower with Shared Leadership

All participants at the table saw themselves and one another as leaders in their community, state, and nationally. Each leader brought years of experience in the areas of public policy, direct services, organizational administration as executive directors, program directors, community organizers without competition. Understanding and practicing the concept of shared leadership puts the core issues of survivors in the center while recognizing that all leadership styles have a place at the table. Stepping up, stepping back, taking risk, holding emotional intelligence, respecting ritual, staying at the table without a complete understanding of the other's pain. Stretching with willingness to share the journey takes a significant amount of trust to tear down the fences of historical colonization.

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We didn't just jump into the movement; our grandmothers, ancestors and relatives came to do this work before the [mainstream] movement and based it on how we treated one another.

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Learn Cultural Humility and Responsiveness

[Cultural humility](#), in essence, is about showing compassion and respect for the human experience within all communities; accepting difference, [acknowledging bias](#), understanding constructs that divide and conquer. When diverse communities reach a place of comfortable vulnerability among one another, trust can be established and maintained by [responding to one another's shared or unique needs](#). This requires actively seeking to know and serve one another rather than competing with a scarcity mindset. Understand that when we serve our communities we strengthen them, ensuring that everyone is safe and thrives. Competition, on the other hand, seeking extreme independence can cause individuals to yield to the greed of capitalism, which has the propensity to divide whole communities and abandon those who can't adequately care for themselves and their families. This creates a loss for families and directly increases chances of violence against women and girls through sexual and domestic violence, human trafficking, and [criminalization leading to incarceration](#).

Our communities have the highest disparities among women regarding missing and murdered victims. Lateral oppression is our participation in the tactics that divide us and that does not serve us well or keep us safe. Risk can show up differently per community based on your origin story, location, cultural, religious or spiritual beliefs, economy, and access to information and resources.

“Colonization has affected our individual perspectives and then it becomes the community perspective - people of mixed-race heritage look down on others to be a part of colonization inclusion. Taking on the same negative attitudes to feel included with colonizers.” First generation immigrant from Africa experience the same. Before moving to the U.S., a person may not be aware of what Blackness means here. “I have witnessed anti-blackness in Asian and East Indian communities. In SE Asia there is an anti-blackness umbrella. In black and brown communities there are anti-black immigrant attitudes. We want to build bridges. What does it mean to be anti-black immigrant and anti-African?” These are complex issues rooted in this work. We need to build bridges and understand where these complex issues are coming from.

Lack of knowledge or unfamiliarity of ‘the other’ is the issue. We have to take time to learn each other’s history. African immigrants (refugees) move here because of war in their countries or school come here – not enough true learning of the true and real history of those indigenous and African communities. They have education about Indigenous and African American communities from TV and it creates bias, and we interact from those biases. We all see each other as the other and divided - so we are divided and able to be conquered because of the division. We need to do cultural self-studies and try to unite as one.”

Building bridges to Deaf communities is critical to their safety net. Anti-Blackness discussions are quite limited and resources for sexual and domestic violence victims in BIPOC communities are even less accessible (e.g. DC:4, GA:18, TX:1, PA:1). Most folks are not emotionally prepared to have the conversation, lack of confidentiality in virtual spaces tends to make people feel exposed, and interpreters are not always accessible or affordable. Lots of attempts to start services have failed. Disability work and services is often treated as an add-on though survivors experience a unique trauma in the inability to hear and do not have access to interpreters as they should. Indian and African American communities lack access to services in particular, and as do all communities due to resistance.

Respectfully crossing cultural boundaries is to learn about other communities first and eliminate personal bias. A particular love language that reduces fear and distrust is required. If you don’t know a person’s pain, you can’t reach them. If you don’t know their belief system, you can’t communicate with them. For example, if



you have not lived on a reservation, in urban or rural areas, dispelling the negative social stereotypes, stigmas and media images helps to mitigate the potential for harm and rejection. Yet, policies sometimes divide and harm us. How do we meet funding mandates and maintain balance? How can we tell the truth while shaking and live within a community where there is no accountability for those doing harm? We go with respect to people's circles... know when to speak and be quiet. We are learning on a continuum. Lots of processing to build resilience.

Respect Cultural Spirituality

When a common and distinct cultural element of faith and spirituality is freely shared, a demonstration of undivided attention and appreciation is required throughout courageous conversations. Holding Circle is an honest, transparent, and confidential table set with deep offerings of hope to acknowledge and heal individual and collective harm - it is a priceless gift. The natural flow to open up and hear the hardness and embrace the truth storytelling was an exceptional source of strength to face the shared historical experiences with loss of cultural Indian and African identity and language. How do you ground yourself to hear stories of genocide, being treated as property through chattel slavery, blood quantum requirements, microaggression, tokenism, being pitted against the other, as well as incidence of rape and domestic violence? Some things were quite challenging to hear, and still through the transparency, there was a sense of ethereal healing taking place at the table. Spirituality was a shared and individual phenomenon between these multicultural alliances. This very sensitive historical cultural aspect is most often put aside or gets lost when sharing space with mainstream organizations. That's why members of this community can find it challenging to be fully present in those meeting spaces and work environments. The lack of knowledge and sensitivity to ancestral lineage at the table is a barrier among many other political positions of privilege.

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We have similarities as far as our relationship with the Creator and missionaries.

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Spirituality and religion are freedoms promised by America but often the demands can be risky to women's freedom and well being. "Learning that you are being abused is couched in language and cultural norms - God is not questioned in the Black church nor is patriarchy or when it is in the father child relationship. You have to get outside past those standards to actually realize that something is wrong with the co-signing of it." Beatings in some Black culture is not classified as abuse. It is taboo to question authority or ownership of your body to a "man of God." Black women living like this is hard to identify it as being abuse - sex with husband can't be rape but just the wife's fault. She doesn't know how to identify that as abuse. Generally speaking, "When Black women feel threatened we don't

seek help because we are strong black women and have a sense of pride. Others see you as you were not strong enough not to let the abuse happen.” Isolation keeps them from family and friends for most aspects of life though “loyalty is huge in the Black community - family abandonment is real and the victim must work her way back into the family.”

Grow into Reconciliation

All communities must be willing to step up to the plate to unlearn and learn new ways of being to reconcile a past that they didn't create. The communities represented by these participants, Asian, and other immigrants, live with daily challenges presented by [historical vestiges of colonization](#), current [hate crimes](#), economic and health disparities, and unfortunately lateral oppression. Reconciliation is an ongoing and active process of righting institutional and individual harms. It is difficult to know where to begin, depending on the storyteller. The goal is to acknowledge the past, garner and own the prevalence of present community power, and build a new future for generations coming after us. Collective empowerment can create collective liberation.

Right wrongs by starting with cash and moving from conversation to tangible action and accountability.

Healing is a Process

A common thread of healing reflections emerged throughout the multiple conversations. Basically, defining healing as a means to identify and embrace stolen parts and find just enough inner peace to affirm [our] humanity. It is understanding that crimes committed against our ancestors happened and we are genetically, emotionally, and spiritually impacted in immeasurable ways. Healing is about symbolically “companion planting” the connective threads of our experiences and honoring the strength in the struggles we have overcome to continue this journey. Healing is knowing that “we are a we” and that “we/I belong” with inalienable human rights in spite of spurned white supremacy behaviors.

Many people in Indian communities don't know what happened...lots arrogance to deal with – need to know how they stand with their actions – it's a challenge to get up and not be how society wants to make you. The more ouches are exposed the more healing we can have. We need all our sisters. Teach the foundation of how things get lost and ways to wake up and not stay lost. We are struggling due to policies and rules. We know the hardship on health and wellness... trying to counter it and it is a struggle to get up every day.

Be Accountable

Taking the first step together to talk about our experiences, belief systems, shared historical trauma, and quest for healing was a way to acknowledge and understand our various and unique needs. Naming the problems first was necessary to identifying what we wanted to change and to make an intentional commitment about it. Accountability is a verb; it is not inert. In order to operationalize commitment, these initial conversations should lead to long term actions that will include specific steps to demonstrate the support we discussed.

The term Anti-Blackness doesn't do anyone favors but it is a familiar term, and trying to name a new language and come from a place of humanity, we have to name it and not whitewash it. We have to get to the origin teachings mentioned by the [Wellness Center](#). Be real and come with love. Responsibility and accountability for embracing all things - cash is vital.

Accountability: Teach the foundation of how things get lost and ways to wake up and not stay lost. It doesn't require professional educational degrees to make social change but a lifetime "in this body and of wisdom" is just as valuable. Hold yourself accountable as a spirit as we are all human and have spirit which doesn't have blood quantum.

Those who don't have black resemblance are more prone to fall into denial. When the George Floyd Black Lives Matter uprising happened, some community members began to address anti-blackness and the way Indigenous mixed folks are treated by both Indian and black communities. It's a hot topic and it is difficult. Colonialism is an issue. Racism came from the black community too. It is an internal problem in indigenous communities. Discontinue this to help change things for future generations. Dark skinned Indians tend to look down on other dark-skinned Indians as they are trying to confirm their own identity. NC area Indians mostly have a brown complexion... they are not claiming their black roots - it's easier to separate as black rather than claim indigenous mixed with black.

The issue with anti-Blackness starts in the Indigenous community not from outside. There are also anti-Indigenous dynamics from Black community. When marriages take place, the hostilities are intergenerational. How do we address anti-blackness internally - how do we shift that - when inappropriate things are said, how to disrupt that when we come from different and mixed identities, and we are so similar and so divided? That is not by accident. "How do we come together to share the commonalities, hurt, pain, and bring it forth by withstanding our pain and standing together?" That is the beginning of accountability that leads to healing.

Be Intentional

Our [Movement] funding is problematic and perpetuates scarcity, lack and disenfranchisement. [Dr. Beth Richie wrote about how we won the mainstream and lost the movement](#). The complexity of this issue speaks to how Black women in

particular are victims of the criminal justice system and punished by it, while the movement distances itself from their experiences. Its entitlement to funding has kept their organizations open while prison cell doors shut behind Black and Brown women victims of domestic and sexual violence. With that same funding we work diligently to pay staff who show up in helpful ways. However, we continue to sign on to hefty contracts that are not helpful and sometimes harmful to the work. How do we prevent the race for funding culturally specific populations from becoming a distraction for our communities? Complex policies and incompetent practices are perpetuated while BIPOC communities simultaneously “fight for funding, only to find ourselves locked out in ways that we did not see coming?”

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We have the power to say how we will do the work based on our values and hold accountability. Do something different. Money will come. Base your organization on value and principle to hold funders accountable – the state loses if Minnesota is not willing to change the narrative about harm and safety based on the organization’s values. Challenge with facts about the harm done to our community. Encourage funders to not continuously fund the same organizations that are doing harm and/or ignoring the factual issues. Pull the funding from organizations that are not doing the necessary work but receive the money. Look at data to see the need for concrete and necessary changes.

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Address the issues of culturally specific organization’s requirements to work harder and do more in order to follow mainstream culture and procedures. How do we require organizations to do self-study in their ability to make critical changes? How can we encourage this in a way that is empowering to get past the guilt, shame, trauma and bow out and not make changes? Try to understand where these attitudes come from: family members that learned this from public education systems, media, publications. Do not be afraid to inquire about how to change. How can this be empowering for the people who are impacted?

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Fear of backlash and being left out when I support communities outside of my own.

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“After moving to the mainland, I learned that I was black and not American because I was not able to vote. Moving to the U.S. questioned all my identities... without hesitation I knew I was Black and woman and that impacted the doors opened to me... neither of them do I want to change... I embrace my beautiful black features. My son's father is Black with native background.”

“We have so much in common. It is not by accident that we do... but that we were either raised or culturalized to believe that we did not. Here we are. In the last decade we are realizing how much we have in common and how much we can relate to one another. Whoever set it up I am sure they are quite disappointed, but I am quite pleased that we are figuring it out.”

“I read [A House on Sugar Beach](#) which expanded my mind about what we know in America about the journey back and forth from America to territories and Africa continent, and what Liberia means... It is such a beautiful reminder that even though we are in our own communities and our own nations we really have so many similarities...oppression, historical trauma, intersections, healing, and our intersections trying to do this work together.”

Replicate Sustainability

For at least the past 22 years, the anti-gender-based violence movement has held forums, conferences, institutes to address cultural competency. National organizations provided training and technical assistance regarding the Cultural Spectrum and endangerment of BIPOC. Directories for culturally specific services were published to increase not only victim's access to services, but to build and give advocates/activist access to a national network of support. Toolkits, prevention models, promising and best practices, national and organizational statements have circulated the nation. Yet BIPOC survivors have been hardest impacted by the Corona-COVID 19 pandemic, violence stemming from white supremacist behaviors, and economic plunder that left them homeless and unemployed. Best practice mainstream “program models” have not upheld their [safety needs presented during the pandemics](#), which highly impacted these communities who are currently counted as missing and murdered.

Through our transparent conversations, we learned more about various forms of violence perpetuated by the core issue of ‘whiteness’, who is marginalized and how, and their continuum of need. The culture of our lives does not fit within mainstream approaches. Our communities are lacking culturally responsive services, which are not as easily replicated.

Self Care

Not enough could be said about self-care in this environment where we are entering a post-pandemic period. While at the same time the effects of the pandemic are not fully known. Frontline victim services advocates are exhausted by the increase and impacts of violence against women, hate crimes, and political unrest. Advocates on the frontlines are disparately BIPOC and work long hours for low pay and fear loss of employment. Often they are tokenized in organizations as only one or one of a few employees serving a majority of BIPOC victims of sexual and domestic violence. The movement needs these advocates as much as victims do.

The issues of white supremacy and anti-Blackness can be minimized or overlooked to keep the peace at decision making tables where BIPOC advocates are missing. It is one of the most uncomfortable conversations to have as violence increases daily and advocates' health is at risk. During the height of the pandemic, Indian and Black people were highly represented among fatal cases. Selfcare is critical to their ability to maintain employment, support victims, and care for their families. This is the time to advocate for all advocates who are overwhelmed by the vicarious trauma of the people they serve and victims of racially motivated violence and managing crisis-oriented organizations. The scarcity mindset says that advocates are the lowest paid while holding the most important job in the organization. The social justice mindset says that BIPOC advocates are vital to the work and deserve better pay and healthcare. As sexism shows up in policies like the overturn of Roe v. Wade that puts women and girls in danger, especially BIPOC communities where violence against them is so prevalent.

We must nurture ourselves; we can't do this alone. You have to take care of yourself and nourish yourself to give to the clients and have sacred time for yourself – not just taking care of clients but for yourself. Have a wellness minded perspective in this work. It took me time to learn that for myself. Motto: Love, live, lead.” Stepping outside of the anti-gender violence movement to connect with the reproductive rights, homeless, Black Lives Matters and Reparations movements is a way to organize for overall self-care and safety.



Offering Excerpts from The Table

The struggle is real! Using our own voices and culture to support BIPOC communities with authentic and intentional actions.

Be comfortable in addressing the various cultural issues and racial leadership inequity in the anti-gender violence movement with authenticity

Determine how our local and national communities can work together better, without pitting one against the other to compete for visibility and funding.

White Aspiring Allies and Indian advocates support ABC communities when they are absent at decision making tables and forums? Actively encourage equitable representation. Cheerleading behind closed doors in an email is not helpful. Speak out loud at the table in the moment to support.

Understand that the honor of being identified as an Aspiring Ally is granted not chosen by white women or other non-BIPOC advocates.

BIPOC and historically marginalized communities must name the harm Aspiring Allies do. What is the language to use? What is the ethical process?

Acknowledge the power and baggage of the English language. Must get to the root of the words we use as a movement and in our broader society to identify populations.

Reset our norms based on unhealthy, ignorant beliefs, stereotypes, and stigmas regarding race and racism.

Understand the tactics of land and resource graphing used to divide us.

Challenge funder's formula in prioritizing mainstream organization services over BIPOC needs, noting the statistics of historically marginalized populations.

Right wrongs by starting with cash/funding and moving from conversation to tangible action and accountability. Deal with the policies that divide and harm us.

Create engaging ritual practices to promote healing at multi-cultural tables.

Resources

Resources are hyper-linked below and throughout the document

[MIWSAC Conference Panel with ABC Community](#)

[8 Behaviors That Help Develop Personal Accountability | B STATE](#)

[8 Habits of Highly Accountable People | Inc.com](#)

[5 Ways to Promote Accountability | gallup.com](#)

[HF 70 1st Engrossment - 91st Legislature \(2019 - 2020\) | mn.gov](#)

[Every Woman Treaty](#)

[Building Accountable Communities | Barnard Center for Research on Women](#)

[MMIWP Task Force has 10 new recommendations for the state | Tacoma News Tribune](#)

[Minnesota Indian Women's Sexual Assault Coalition | miwsac.org](#)

[Minnesota Missing and Murdered African American Women Task Force | mn.gov](#)

[Task Force On Missing And Murdered African American Women in the U.S. | Bing News](#)

[Panel Backs Task Force On Missing And Murdered Black Women | CBS Minnesota](#)

[Minnesota Task Force Will Address Missing And Murdered Black Women Crisis | newsone.com](#)

[Minnesota Launches Task Force on Missing and Murdered Black Women; 1st of Its Kind in the U.S. | EURweb](#)

[Bill Creates Murdered and Missing Black Women and Girls Task Force | insightnews.com](#)

[Minnesota legislative panel backs task force on missing and murdered Black women – Twin Cities](#)

[Making Space to Rise Discussion Guide](#)

Resources

[Invisibility is the Modern Form of Racism Against Native Americans | Teen Vogue](#)

[Black or African American? Neither \(Here's why\)](#)

[Our Space | Cultural Wellness Center](#)

[The Shadow Pandemic: Violence Against Women During COVID-19 | UN Women Headquarters](#)

["BIPOC", the Shared Oppression Myth, and the Black Natives It Erases](#)

[Grandmothers Hands: Racialized Trauma and the Pathway to Mending. | Resmaa Menakem](#)

[Interrupting Bias: Calling Out vs. Calling In | Seeding the Way](#)

[Implicit Bias: How it Effects Us and How We Push Through | Melanie Funchess | TEDxFlourCity](#)

[What Racism Is | Toni Morrison](#)

[What Is Post Traumatic Slave Syndrome | Dr. Joy Degruy](#)