

# CONNECTED



**CONNECT Mission** – CONNECT is dedicated to the prevention and elimination of family and gender violence and to the creation of safe families and peaceful communities.

CONNECT transforms the attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors that perpetuate family and gender violence and addresses these complex issues through prevention, early intervention services, and community empowerment.



Peer Organizers meet to celebrate POGE program completion

## Peer Organizers Keep Neighborhoods Safe by Mobilizing Within

Monserath emigrated from Ecuador to the U.S. in 1990. After starting a family she became interested in civic leadership, but had trouble finding a role that allowed her to communicate in Spanish, the language native to most of her Rosedale, Queens community.

Noting her desire to work to improve the welfare of her neighborhood, Monserath's Corpus Christi Church recommended her for CONNECT's Peer Organizing Gender Education Program (POGE), a network that prepares individuals to do outreach around intimate violence. After completing the POGE curriculum, Monserath was armed with information to raise awareness in Rosedale and had built the confidence, savvy and skills to interface with community members on this charged topic.

Monserath diffused information all over her neighborhood; speaking with her daughter's teacher and school nurse, posting fliers in local laundromats, hair salons, and international calling phone booths. "This has been an unforgettable experience, to have the opportunity to help my community," she says. "As immigrant women... we are so conditioned to give, but not to receive or stand up for our rights."

POGE combines education, training, support and guidance to empower participants to change the culture around family violence in their community. Using these tools and resources, trainees can innovate strategies to raise awareness and mobilize their community around intimate violence.

"Change must come from within a community in order for it to have lasting results," says CONNECT liaison Patricia Martinez. "Our organizers come from Bolivia, Chile, Colombia, ...they know what engagement strategies work best in their own communities here in New York."

Martinez worked with Lead Trainer Rosanna Ramirez to select participants for the POGE pilot. They asked partner organizations like churches and cultural centers to identify someone who had potential for activism. Those selected went through an 18-hour curriculum addressing various issues and skills, including gender roles, active listening and group leadership.

Later, each trainee conducted over 40 hours of community work, ranging from informal conversations with other women on the warning signs of family violence, to speaking out in community affairs, to giving referrals to crisis centers.

Though the first round of POGE has finished, many organizers continue to volunteer. CONNECT is excited to continue building a network of community leaders this Spring, when the second round for Bengali speakers begins.

"As women in my community found out what I was doing, they would open up and tell me about their situations," says Peer Educator Marisol. "My neighbors used to know me as the Avon lady; now they introduce me as the lady who knows about domestic violence!"

**Roseanne Malfucci**

### Peer Organizers in Action



Eliana Godoy, Peer Organizer

### Ana Reaches out to the Ecuadorian Consulate

Ana approached the Ecuadorian Consulate Office, often a refuge for undocumented immigrants. She convinced the consulate officials to post information on domestic violence on their public bulletin board.

### Eliana Turns Grief into Art

Cultural cafe owner Eliana worked with her mother, enhancing a childhood skirt with swatches that signify community grief caused by violence. She displays the patchwork piece at her cafe, next to a list of emergency resources for domestic violence victims.

CONNECTED





# Letter from Exec

Every day the media barrages us with reports of violence against women and children. Regularly we hear of an array of horrifying news, from the many incidents of intimate violence in our own New York City neighborhoods, to the recounting of mass rapes and killings from around the world. However, journalists rarely cover another important aspect of these stories—the persistent efforts of resistance against such oppression. Here at CONNECT our creative and long-term partnerships with communities bring support to such endeavors, and thus to the movement of ending the violence that tears our families apart.



**CONNECT Executive Director  
Kala Ganesh**

We continue to deepen our relationships with communities by engaging in thoughtful discourse on the significance of gender norms, roles and privileges. CONNECT’s programs take direction from our community partners, maintaining a perspective that is both intimate and sweeping. Without losing focus on the individual families and their struggles for safety, we keep our eyes on the vision of creating violence-free neighborhoods.

In this issue you will get a glimpse of the progress of some of our newest community-led projects, including the Peer Organizing Gender Education program and the Interfaith Theological Roundtable. These collaborations foster leadership development and meaningful dialogue, beginning a steady transformation of the ways people understand violence against women and children. My grateful thanks to every one of CONNECT’s staff members for their fearlessness in walking down new paths and their profound belief in human innovation and possibility.

*Kala Ganesh*

## Credits

### Editor

Roseanne Malfucci

### CONNECTED Team

Elizabeth Kenney

Patricia Martinez

Marlon Walker

### Articles

Debanuj Dasgupta

Kala Ganesh

Ramesh Kumar

Sally N. MacNichol, Ph.D.

Roseanne Malfucci

### Design

Asma Shafi

### Printing

Rasco Printing

### CONNECT

### Board of Directors

Lilliam Barrios-Paoli

Ronnie M. Eldridge

Derrick M. Gordon, Ph. D.

Marion S. Kaplan

Verona Middleton-Jeter

Alyson Spindell

## How To Donate

As you can see from CONNECTed’s articles, our innovative programs are reaching communities throughout New York City. Your commitment to these issues and financial support helps CONNECT continue to advocate for the safety of New York City families.

We are very excited about our successes, which have attracted the attention of so many supporters. However, your assistance is still critical to us. We need your individual contributions to ensure the continuity of our work into the future. Please join in the effort of providing assistance and ensuring “safe families, peaceful communities” for all.

To donate online, visit [www.connectnyc.org/donatenow](http://www.connectnyc.org/donatenow) or call us at 212-683-0015 X 221 to learn more about how you can help.

You may also send a check or money order to:

CONNECT

P.O. Box 20217

Greeley Square Station

New York, NY 10001-0006

**Your support will make a difference!**

## Contact Us

Main: 212-683-0015

Fax: 212-683-0016

[connect@connectnyc.org](mailto:connect@connectnyc.org)

[www.connectnyc.org](http://www.connectnyc.org)

Legal Advocacy Helpline:  
212-683-0605

Help in English and Spanish.  
Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm

(For 24 Hour Assistance,  
Please Call 1-800-621-HOPE)





# Theological Roundtable

*“The agenda to end violence against women is enormous, given that we are essentially attempting to turn the tide of centuries of norms, beliefs, attitudes and behaviors that encourage and support violence against women. Faith-based communities represent a critical ally in this effort.”*

-Marie Fortune, Faith Trust Institute Founder



Roundtable members reflect on each other's efforts

Historically, the relationship between the movement to end violence against women, and many faith communities has been a strained and sometime adversarial one. At times, members from both groups have expressed suspicion of the other's intentions, despite the fact that nearly every religion takes a stance against harming kin.

Many domestic violence advocates felt that male-dominated power structures and doctrines perpetuated notions of gendered superiority and control. At the same time, religious leaders sometimes misunderstood advocates' attempts to help women and children find safety, often seeing their interventions as outsider infiltration aimed at breaking up a family.

Today, faith-based attempts at addressing domestic violence are growing as more and more religious institutions have begun to realize how many of their families are struggling with violence. Here at CONNECT we have established the *Interfaith Theological Roundtable*, the product of over two decades of conversation with clergy and people of faith. The Roundtable serves several purposes: the discussion of complex issues that arise when dealing with intimate violence from a spiritual perspective, for consultation on specific cases of violence and abuse, and to support

the educational efforts of individuals, in organizing efforts in each individual faith community.

The roundtable is open to all faiths — including Christians, Hindus, Jews and Muslims, as well as spiritual activists working outside the context of organized religion. Some members represent independent ministries addressing family violence including Trinity Healing Center, Redeemed Outreach Ministries and House of Peace.

Working together allows us the chance to look at both the liberating and oppressive elements of our different faith traditions. We have explored theological understandings of justice, forgiveness, sin, and our images of God. We share information, articles and resources, as well as strategize around issues like guidelines for holding abusers accountable and the safety and healing of victims.

Over the past year and half, the Interfaith Theological Roundtable has built its own committed community, one of collaboration and dedication to ending intimate violence. By supporting each other's efforts we are continuing to shape a rich network with expanding impact on the safety of New York City's religious and spiritual communities.

**Sally N. MacNichol**  
**M. Div, Ph.D.**

*CONNECT's Interfaith Theological Roundtable meets every third Thursday of the month to discuss the struggle to end violence in our lives, in our faith communities and in our world from a spiritual and theological connection.*

## Brooklyn Connect Mural Arts Project:

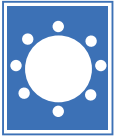
Our mural, created last summer in Central Brooklyn, was the end result of three projects.

- A collaboration of Brooklyn Connect network members to develop a common understanding of how to prevent domestic violence
- Conversations within our communities about how to end violence against women and girls
- The effort of network members, neighbors, artists and Brooklynites to help display our vision of a Brooklyn free of family violence into the world.

There are many stories and journeys of learning and loving in this mural, and we thank all the brave women, youth and men who helped create this beautiful piece and NYSCADV for funding this project.

**Ramesh Kumar**





## Meet Our Partners

**Debanuj Dasgupta**

*Queers for Economic Justice Immigration Project Director*

In the early 90s Debanuj Dasgupta started the first gay and lesbian support and counsel club in India, later founding NAZ, the first HIV/AIDS foundation for Indian men. Later in the decade he became a peer counselor for Asian Pacific Islander Coalition on HIV/AIDS (APICHA) in New York City, and also began consulting for the South Asian domestic violence organization, Manavi. Dasgupta was recently awarded the New Voices Fellowship, having just finished consulting on several projects at CONNECT.

### *Tell us about your work with CONNECT.*

I worked with men in the Bangladeshi and Bengali community, doing research and outreach to find out knowledge of intimate violence. I also facilitated a discussion group for South Asian Lesbian and Gay Association (SALGA). The discussion focused on intimate partner violence in same sex relationships and the impact of homophobia and transphobia on queer communities.

### *What were your findings?*

When I went to community meetings to talk about violence, I would get put last on the agenda. Lots of the men said “this doesn’t happen in my community”, but when I gave examples [of the many kinds of abuse] people were surprised. It was very hyper masculine environment. I had to go back into the closet when conducting this work.

### *What are the some of the challenges facing these communities?*

At CONNECT I did a cultural-sensitivity training for DV service providers and often there was the notion that a fight between two men or two women is not real. Service providers didn’t know where to refer their queer clients, and did not have knowledge of [our] family dynamics. For example, for South Asians there is this idea of compulsive heterosexuality; lots of pressure on women to marry.

Regarding immigration ‘reform’, the Real ID act is especially difficult for survivors of DV because of its nationalized identity database. Perpetrators can have access to survivors’ information and transgendered people often cannot get cards because their gender [presentation] doesn’t match their biological gender in the database.

### *How do you see the queer/immigrant/intimate violence movements coming together?*

I don’t see the movements intersecting that much - my work has always been to bring them together! The HIV movement addresses the intersection because if you are at risk for sexual violence your control over your body is also minimized. But overall, the issue of DV in these communities is still not adequately addressed.



Dasgupta conducts thoughtful and sensitive outreach

## Statistics

**ON AVERAGE, AT LEAST one in three women is subjected to intimate partner violence in the course of her lifetime.**

**Murders of women often involve sexual violence, with between 40 & 70% of female murder victims killed by husbands or boyfriends in the U.S.**

**In Europe, North America and Australia, more than half of women with disabilities have experienced physical abuse, compared with one third of non-disabled women.**

Taken from United Nation's Chief Kofi Annan's Report Ending Violence Against Women: from Words to Action, October 9, 2006.

*Without the continued support of our community partners CONNECT's work would not be possible. Thank you.*

# CONNECT Annual Benefit



## SAVE THE DATE

CONNECT'S ANNUAL BENEFIT  
THURSDAY FEBRUARY 15, 2007

6PM - 8PM

TAJ LOUNGE - 48 W. 21 STREET



## 16 Days of Activism



As part of the 16 Days of Activism Campaign sponsored by the Center for Women's Global Leadership at Rutgers University, members of CONNECT, Art for Change, Sanctuary for Families, NYANA, The Door and The Network for Gender Rights hosted a two part event this winter. On December 7th, over twenty women organizers came together to create art collages on skirts to express the challenges and rewards of women's activism. On December 14th, the community gathered at the Julia De Burgos Cultural Center in Harlem to view the skirts and celebrate the women.