All survivors of domestic and sexual violence face many challenges seeking safety and justice when accessing the criminal or civil systems. The challenges for survivors from marginalized communities are magnified for several historical reasons as well as the current configuration of programming and services. Advocates seeking to assist survivors from any of the historically underserved and marginalized communities need to be conscious of not only their own race and gender biases but how these biases are present in all systems. In working with marginalized survivors, considering historical oppression as well as daily microaggressions will make for better-informed advocacy and guide survivors towards a sense of safety and justice.

This two-and-a-half-day conference will bring together ICJR grantees, along with advocates, to assess how they can advocate for marginalized survivors while taking into consideration the realities of the survivors’ lives. Working with long-time practitioners, researchers and BWJP staff, advocates will: 1) describe the context of abuse experienced by marginalized victims; 2) articulate how contemporary attitudes impact communities; 3) evaluate the implications of operating in a culture of disbelief where race and gender tips the scale, and 4) better assist victims to find optimal solutions and develop plans that lessen harm.

As a result of this conference, you will be better able to:

- Engage with survivors from some marginalized communities and evaluate options,
- Examine how women’s stories are heard and how credibility issues affect survivors in all systems,
- Describe the impact of arrest on survivor credibility and how it further marginalizes survivors from underserved communities,
- Explore the effect of mental health, substance abuse, and coercion and how it intersects with race, class, and gender,
- Discuss the rates of sexual assault in Indian Country, the current barriers to adequate prosecution of these crimes, and strategies for working with these survivors,
- Recognize sexual abuse among LGBTQ survivors and recommend approaches to working with them,
- Address distrust of the criminal and civil legal system and its impact on advocacy,
- Determine how woman directed advocacy adapts to the needs of survivors from underserved or marginalized communities.

This project was supported by Grant No. 2015-TA-AX-K027 awarded by the Office on Violence against Women, U.S. Department of Justice. The opinions, findings, conclusions, and recommendations expressed in this conference are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Department of Justice, Office on Violence against Women.
Day One, Wednesday, November 1, 2017: Reaching Out and Working with Marginalized Communities

7:30-8:30  Registration
Location: Regency Ballroom A Foyer

8:30-8:45  Welcome and Opening Remarks
Sujata Warrier, Ph.D., Battered Women’s Justice Project
Location: Regency Ballroom A

8:45-10:00  What Works Now? Practical Scenarios on Issues Confronting Women from Marginalized Communities
Sujata Warrier, Ph.D., Stephanie Avalon, & Marijka Muras, Battered Women’s Justice Project

Grantees working to improve the criminal justice response must understand that many victims access criminal or civil legal options simultaneously or in close succession. This highly interactive session uses scenarios that illustrate potential challenges advocates may encounter with survivors from marginalized communities. The participants will identify challenges they see and discuss how they would respond in each setting. Faculty will assist advocates in assessing issues that arise across and within settings with different victims from marginalized communities.

10:00-10:15  Break

10:15-10:30  Opening Plenary – Advocacy Today: Identifying and Meeting Survivors’ Needs
Rosie Hidalgo, J.D., Casa de Esperanza

Survivors from marginalized communities have many reasons to distrust the criminal and civil legal systems advocates routinely work with. When advocacy is closely identified with these legal systems, survivors from marginalized groups transfer their distrust to the advocates. Ms. Hidalgo will identify and discuss problems currently evident in many jurisdictions discouraging survivors from seeking help from law enforcement and the courts. Strategies will be offered on ways to reach out to, overcome distrust, and engage with survivors from immigrant, refugee, and other marginalized communities.

11:30-1:00  Lunch on your own

1:00-2:15  Workshop Sessions I: Working with Survivors from Marginalized Communities
(Workshops Repeat)

A. Advocacy with Survivors from Immigrant Communities
Rosie Hidalgo, J.D., Casa de Esperanza
Location: Regency Ballroom A

Survivors living in immigrant communities face layers of isolation as well as fear of intervenors. This workshop will further explore issues raised in the plenary, help
advocates create individual and system efforts that engage these survivors, and address system barriers.

B. Working with Vulnerable Survivors from Muslim Communities
_Aisha Rahman, J.D., Karamah: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights_
Location: Scarborough 4

While Muslim communities are hugely varied, many ICJR advocates have limited experience with survivors from these communities. This workshop will inform advocates about some of the differences among these groups, and recommend strategies for effective advocacy with survivors from Muslim communities.

C. Arrested Survivors and Credibility
_Cindene Pezzell, National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women_
Location: Scarborough 5

Victims of battering often end up charged with crimes as a direct or indirect result of their experiences of being abused. While it is common for survivors’ credibility to be questioned, this problem is even worse for victims who are also defendants. Though the criminal legal system might label them “perpetrators,” victims charged with crimes don’t stop being victims. This workshop will explore many of the common ways that victims of battering end up being arrested; the unique challenges they face in the criminal legal system as defendants, particularly when other oppressions come into play; and the additional risks victim-defendants face as a result of being charged, convicted, and/or incarcerated. We will also explore some concrete advocacy strategies that may help improve outcomes for victims of domestic violence who have been charged with crimes.

2:15-2:30 Break

2:30-3:45 Repeat Workshop Sessions I: Working with Survivors from Marginalized Communities

A. Advocacy with Survivors from Immigrant Communities
_Rosie Hidalgo, J.D., Casa de Esperanza_
Location: Regency Ballroom A

B. Working with Vulnerable Survivors from Muslim Communities
_Aisha Rahman, J.D., Karamah: Muslim Women Lawyers for Human Rights_
Location: Scarborough 4

C. Arrested Survivors and Credibility
_Cindene Pezzell, National Clearinghouse for the Defense of Battered Women_
Location: Scarborough 5

3:45-3:50 Move to Closing Plenary
Closing Plenary – Woman Directed Advocacy: An Essential Approach with Survivors from Marginalized Communities

Sujata Warrier, Ph.D., Battered Women’s Justice Project
Location: Regency Ballroom A

Based on the work of Cris Sullivan, Jill Davies and others, woman defined advocacy engages with and builds on the survivor’s perspective rather than offering a menu of options predetermined by programming. For survivors from marginalized communities, these predetermined options often do not work. Offering the phone number for the hotline, for example, assumes that all black women will readily access this service. Using examples from the morning session, Dr. Warrier will work with advocates in aiding them to recognize why woman directed advocacy offers the best strategy, especially when working with under-served communities.

End of Day One

Day Two, Thursday, November 2, 2017: Engaging Survivors and Communities

8:30-10:00 Plenary – Why Does the Past Matter?
Sujata Warrier, Ph.D., Battered Women’s Justice Project and Victoria Sweet, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
Location: Regency Ballroom A

This highly interactive exercise will take advocates through a historical journey experienced by Native and African American women and other marginalized communities in the history of the U.S. Using various examples, advocates will learn about historical trauma, loss, and grief and the enduring impact of colonization, marginalization, and cultural oppression.

10:00-10:15 Break

10:15-10:45 Plenary – From the Past to the Present
Sujata Warrier, Ph.D., Battered Women’s Justice Project and Victoria Sweet, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges
Location: Regency Ballroom A

Facilitators will process the interactive exercise from the morning and conclude with learning points. These learning points will connect the past to the present-day manifestations of micro-aggressions and structural violence that impact the everyday lives of marginalized survivors and the choices they make, including how survivors attach meaning to their context.

10:45-10:50 Stretch Break
10:50-12:00  Plenary – Tainted Witness: Why We Doubt What Women Say about Their Lives
Leigh Gilmore, Ph.D., Wellesley College
Location: Regency Ballroom A

The plenary will explore myriad ways in which race and gender biases impact victim credibility. Using her research, Dr. Gilmore will explore the reasons women are considered unreliable witnesses to their own experiences. She will explore how the legacy of slavery, colonialism, and the long insidious history of race and gender are connected to the notion of lying, and the reasons why women are not considered reliable witnesses.

12:00-1:00  Lunch on your own

1:30-2:45  Workshops Sessions II: Vulnerable Survivors and Credibility (Workshops Repeat)

A. Are Survivors with Mental Health Problems and Substance Abuse Problems Credible?
Rachel White-Domain, National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health
Location: Scarborough 4

Survivors may experience mental health effects of abuse. In addition, individuals who have a preexisting psychiatric disability are at a greater risk of being abused. Abusers may coerce or force their partners into using alcohol or drugs, and survivors may use or abuse alcohol or drugs to help them survive and cope with abuse. Stigma related to mental health and substance abuse can hurt survivors’ credibility. Abusers are very willing to use this against mentally ill or substance-using survivors by undermining and controlling them. This workshop will explore these dynamics and offer important strategies to identify this form of coercion and advocate for survivors.

B. Are Poor Women Credible?
Lisalyn Jacobs, J.D., Just Solutions
Location: Scarborough 5

People experiencing economic insecurity also experience disproportionate rates of domestic violence. Similarly, experiences of violence place people at greater risk of poverty. Poverty, therefore, is an unavoidable issue when working with survivors of domestic violence. This workshop will discuss how economic instability undermines survivors’ credibility and suggest an approach to economic agency that centralizes survivors’ intersecting identities.

C. Evaluating Options and Building Trust with African-American Survivors
Gretta Gardner, J.D., Ujima, Inc., DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
Location: Regency Ballroom A

For many African-Americans, the arc of historical oppression and its current manifestations makes it hard for many survivors to use the standard systems of options
that grantee advocates may offer. Ms. Gardner will address options for working with survivors skeptical of the legal system.

2:45-3:00 Break

3:00-4:15 Repeat Workshops Sessions II: Vulnerable Survivors and Credibility

A. Are Survivors with Mental Health Problems and Substance Abuse Problems Credible?
  Rachel White-Domain, National Center on Domestic Violence, Trauma & Mental Health
  Location: Scarborough 4

B. Are Poor Women Credible?
  Lisalyn Jacobs, J.D., Just Solutions
  Location: Scarborough 5

C. Evaluating Options and Building Trust with African-American Survivors
  Gretta Gardner, J.D., Ujima, Inc., – DC Coalition Against Domestic Violence
  Location: Regency Ballroom A

End of Day Two

Day Three, Friday, November 3, 2017

8:30-9:45 Workshop Sessions III: Underserved Victims of Sexual Assault (Workshops Repeat)

A. Sexual Assault in Indian Country
  Victoria Ybanez, Red Wind Consulting, Inc.
  Location: Regency Ballroom A

  Ms. Ybanez will discuss the use of sexual assault as a means of colonization and current high rates of sexual assaults in Indian Country. She will highlight the challenges in getting these crimes prosecuted and discuss some of the approaches for engaging and working with Native survivors.

B. Disability and Sexual Assault
  Nancy Smith, Vera Institute of Justice
  Location: Scarborough 4

  People with disabilities suffer surprisingly high rates of sexual assault. This workshop will discuss sexual assault of disabled people, share tools for working with survivors, and help advocates assist law enforcement and prosecution in adopting protocols for working with the disabled community.
C. Sexual Violence in the LGBTQ Community  
*Suzy Salamy, MSW, New York City Anti-Violence Project*
Location: Scarborough 5

The National Coalition of Anti-Violence Projects (NCAVP) estimates that nearly one in 10 LGBTQ survivors of intimate partner violence (IPV) has experienced sexual assault from their partners. Studies suggest that around half of transgender people and bisexual women will experience sexual violence at some point in their lifetimes. This workshop will prepare advocates to better address sexual assault survivors from the LGBTQ community.

9:45-9:50  Break to Move

9:50-11:05 Repeat Workshop Sessions III: Underserved Victims of Sexual Assault

A. Sexual Assault in Indian Country  
*Victoria Ybanez, Red Wind Consulting, Inc.*
Location: Regency Ballroom A

B. Disability and Sexual Assault  
*Nancy Smith, Vera Institute of Justice*
Location: Scarborough 4

C. Sexual Violence in the LGBTQ Community  
*Suzy Salamy, MSW, New York City Anti-Violence Project*
Location: Scarborough 5

11:05-11:20 Break

11:20-12:30 Closing Plenary – *WE CAN! AND WE WILL!*  
*Victoria Ybanez, Red Wind Consulting, Inc.*  
*Location: Regency Ballroom A*

Advocacy has evolved over the years to respond to changing attitudes and environments affecting domestic and sexual assault survivors. Today more than ever, victims from marginalized communities need advocacy that begins from the survivor’s perspective. Advocates have demonstrated 30 years of adapting to political and cultural changes. All it takes is awareness, desire, and commitment.