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# RAISE YOUR VOICE! SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH IN THE UNITED STATES



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# SOUTH ASIA



- Afghanistan
- Bangladesh
- Bhutan
- India
- Maldives
- Myanmar
- Pakistan
- Sri Lanka

# SOUTH ASIAN IMMIGRANTS

- Immigrants
  - Naturalized Citizens
  - Permanent Residency (Green Card)
  - Wives on Conditional Green Card
  - Temporary workers – H1 and H4 Visa holders
- Second generation – born in the U.S.

# SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH

- An important population that needs to be addressed
- Second generation issues, such as identity crisis (being American at school and Indian at home)
- Parents have frozen identity, which causes conflicts
- Traditionally youth in South Asian communities are seen as naïve and inexperienced

# SOUTH ASIAN YOUTH

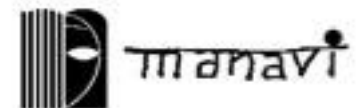
- Parents may see them as an extension, rather than individual and autonomous beings
- Youth can be susceptible to forced marriage
- South Asian LGBT+ youth are marginalized even further

# EFFORTS

- High school discussion groups, with high school leaders coordinating discussions about various topics affecting South Asian youth
- University discussion groups with student organizations to address South Asian college identity, healthy relationships, and academic pressure
- Day long workshop to provide youth with a platform to educate community members about topics affecting South Asian youth

# ABOUT MANAVI

- Manavi means 'woman'
- Based in New Brunswick, NJ
- Mission is to end violence against women
- Established in 1985 by six South Asian women
- Founded to establish a voice for South Asian immigrants in the United States
- Strives to provide direct services to victims of violence and spread awareness of violence against women





# SERVICES

- 24/7 Hotline
- Crisis intervention
- Advocacy
- Culturally and linguistically specific counseling
- Sexual Assault Support Services
- Legal Advocacy Program
- Outreach and Education
- Economic Empowerment
- Cultural Competency Training
- Transitional housing (*Ashiana*)

# ASHIANA

- Ashiana ('nest' in Urdu)
- Opened its doors in 1997
- Culturally specific transitional home
- Home for women and their children
- Can accommodate up to nine residents
- Provides culturally specific services
- ONLY South Asian transitional home culture-specific housing available on the East Coast to South Asian women

# LEGAL ADVOCACY

- Project Sumantrana ('good advice' in Sanskrit)
- Emerged organically in 1997
- Culturally specific legal services
  - Legal clinics
    - Immigration law
    - Family law
  - Legal referrals
  - Court accompaniments
  - Cultural trainings for court personnel

# SEXUAL VIOLENCE AND BARRIERS IN SEEKING SERVICES

Four common environments of experiencing violence:

- Marriage
- Family
- Work/education place
- Dating scenario

The barriers in disclosing and seeking services are:

- Individual
- Family/community/cultural
- Institutional

# INTERSECTION OF DOMESTIC AND SEXUAL VIOLENCE

Domestic violence includes physical, mental, emotional, financial, and sexual abuse

Sexual violence includes rape, child sexual abuse, and intimate partner sexual violence

The use of fear, humiliation, misery, manipulation, and power in order to control the victim

Socialization about girls' safety focuses on stranger rape

Young girls are blamed for their own victimization as they are viewed as sexual

# STATISTICS

- 1 in 4 women are raped by their husband in their lifetime, RAINN
- 1 in 3 women and 1 in 4 men have been victims of [some form of] physical violence by an intimate partner within their lifetime, NCADV
- In a study of a convenience sample of 208 South Asian women recruited through community outreach, by the Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence, 21% reported having ever experienced physical and/or sexual abuse at the hands of their intimate partner
- On average Manavi helps at least 300 survivors a year

# BARRIERS TO SEEKING HELP

Several variables affect and prevent survivors from disclosing acts of domestic and sexual violence to authorities:

- Culture and religious background
  - Sex and sexualities are often taboo topics
  - Strong belief in fate
  - Strict loyalties to family and culture
- Lack of information and resources
  - Fear and distrust of legal authorities
  - Lack of evidence to prove abuse
  - Fluency in English and lack of knowledge about rights
  - Legal residency status – immigration used as a tool of control

# BARRIERS TO SEEKING HELP

- Social pressures
  - Insider/outsider distinction
  - Ideology of good wife and mother
  - Bias against divorce
  - Shame – self, family, and community
  - Guilt – failing marital and family responsibilities
- Fear of losing custody of children
- Financial difficulties
- Stigma of mental health





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