



**The Training Institute for Mobilizing Men**

**August 2007- May 2009  
Final Report**

**Men Stopping Violence  
Atlanta, Georgia**

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*“If you’re thin-skinned, get out of the work. My brothers say, ‘Why are you doing this?’ All I have to do is refer back to our mother, our nieces, our daughters.” – Tony Bellamy, North Carolina*

## **Introduction**

### **Overview**

After 15 months of training, phone conversations, information exchange and support, it had come down to this: 30 people sitting in a circle in a New York City hotel conference room.

They came from eight states to participate in this last activity for the Training Institute for Mobilizing Men (TIMM), an initiative by the Atlanta-based organization Men Stopping Violence (MSV), in cooperation with A Call to Men and the National Coalition to End Domestic Violence. This was perhaps their last opportunity to speak and share as a group, and they spent most of the day together on May 20, 2009, talking about the meaning and the challenges of men and women working together to end violence against women.

After TIMM participants and facilitators had scrutinized both the successes and the challenges of the project, they came away energized by their ability to have the difficult conversations, by their willingness to challenge and support each other and by the knowledge that they are not alone in the work.

“This is not about a program,” said David Lee of the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CALCASA). “This is about a mindset.”

TIMM was indeed created to cultivate a particular mindset, one that assumes that men have a role in efforts to prevent male violence against women through organized, community-based initiatives and in partnership with women.

For 27 years, MSV has been educating and mobilizing men. Long experience in this work has shown MSV and others working on this issue that making a significant impact requires a large increase in the number of men who can do the work with a high level of competency. More and more organizations working on behalf of women’s safety have come to share this outlook.

But inviting men to engage in any committed or organized way can be a big step for organizations that traditionally have seen themselves as advocates for women – as bulwarks between victims and “the enemy.” And men seeking to help, either in collaboration with an advocacy organization or in some other way, may find themselves facing unanticipated challenges – from their partnerships, from their communities, and from their own personal struggles around what it means to be a man doing this kind of work.

TIMM sought to provide education, assistance and information exchange in a supportive and welcoming atmosphere for both men and women who believe that male involvement has the potential to expand the movement to end violence against women. This document presents the challenges and lessons learned from that endeavor. And as the TIMM project drew to an end, participants also asked themselves important questions about what was needed to build on their efforts.

## Criteria and Goals

The goal of TIMM was to help state coalitions working to end domestic violence create or improve programs that educate and engage men in prevention and intervention. In 2007, the U.S. Department of Justice Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) awarded Men Stopping Violence a grant to implement the TIMM project, in cooperation with the National Network to End Domestic Violence. In an effort to build collaboration and bring a broader range of perspective to the project, MSV also chose to include the nonprofit organization, A Call to Men.

TIMM was created to assist from five to eight state coalitions that were working with men or planning to work with men. An additional audience for TIMM training was the men with whom the coalitions were working or planned to work.

Topics and ideas explored included:

- Men's roles and responsibilities in ending violence against women.
- Community-centered approaches to addressing men's violence against women.
- Engaging men to be allies in ending violence against women.
- Exploring the principles of accountability.
- Getting started in mentoring young men who want to work for women's safety.
- Age-specific trainings for youth and young adult men.
- Defining a role for batterers' intervention programs in the work to organize men as allies.
- Cultural competency.

To be eligible for TIMM, state coalitions had to:

- Have staff resources committed to working to engage men and have a partnership with a community-based organization working to engage men.
- Be able to send two people to an intensive training with Men Stopping Violence in early 2008; including at least one man designated to coordinate the efforts of engaging men.
- Send at least two people to the final conference in May 2009.
- Commit to participating in conference calls and e-mail discussions on a regular basis for two years, sharing information with other participants about successes and challenges.

Out of 15 state coalitions that submitted requests, eight were invited to participate in TIMM. They were:

- Idaho Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
- Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence
- North Carolina Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Ohio Network to End Domestic Violence
- Texas Council on Family Violence
- Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Action Alliance
- West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence
- Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

## Initial Training and Technical Assistance

### 2008 Conference

TIMM participants began their journey together at a three-day conference in 2008 that provided intensive training. Each of the eight coalitions sent at least one representative and one community partner; a total of 22 people attended the conference, including two representatives from OVW.

The conference was divided into topic areas, including:

- Deconstructing violence against women.
- The challenges and opportunities of men and women working together to end violence against women.
- The Core Principles of engaging and mobilizing men.
- Strategies for engaging men and lessons learned.
- Developing plans concerning engaging men in each state.

Presenters from Georgia (including Men Stopping Violence staff), New York, and Massachusetts led the group in exercises and discussions, designed to both disseminate information and to help create a space for the group to explore difficult subjects.

In evaluations of the opening conference, many participants said that those three days together was energizing for a number of reasons.

“Attendance at the opening training helped create a bond between the attendees, both from within the state and with the other project partners,” said Tammy Lemmer of the Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence. “Among the most valuable aspects was the dedicated time carved out of everyone’s busy day-to-day schedules to make the mobilization efforts a priority.”

Creating space for participants to bond and network was only one aspect of the opening conference that was valued.

“The opening training was personally a crucial foundational piece in understanding barriers that do or could exist when attempting to communicate what the needs of a community might be as it relates to male involvement,” said Valerie Nash of the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence. “The opening training brought out a variety of different reference points communities may be operating from that may create additional and/or unspoken barriers in mobilizing men.”

That meeting alone was enough to inspire some coalitions and community partners.

“Our participation at the training, and the idea sharing in particular, also helped us identify concrete steps to be launched upon our return to the state,” said Lemmer.

## Technical Assistance

After the initial training, coalition and community participants returned to their respective states, and some of the real work of the project began.

To be successful and useful, TIMM would have to be more than an attempt to transfer skills to men who then became organizers or allies. It takes conscious effort for men to consistently and strongly support women's leadership, to not collude with men in defending their privilege, and to keep the reality of victims at the center of the work.

TIMM consultants continued to support and connect to coalitions and community participants through regular conference calls, a LISTSERV, sharing of best practices and organizing materials, and face-to-face meetings. The conference calls addressed a variety of issues regarding engaging men in efforts to end violence against women. Some of those included discussions about how to hold abusers accountable, how to increase program capacity during tough economic times, and many other issues.

"John Tramel, the representative from Men Stopping Violence who offered us technical assistance, was an invaluable resource that was always available and took initiative to create a positive working relationship with our team and to support our efforts," wrote Jennifer Margulies, Hilda Gutiérrez and Andréa Giron of the Texas Council on Family Violence. "Our work also benefited from the feedback on our men's engagement guide that we received through the TIMM project."

The West Virginia Coalition Against Domestic Violence (WVCADV) benefited from an on-site visit from Dick Bathrick, Director of Programs for MSV, when "things felt like they were falling apart," said Sue Julian.

"It really helps to have in-person technical assistance from men who understand the issues and who have been involved in the work," she said. "I think it gives other men an incentive to forge ahead."

Regular conference calls as well as calls between individual TA advisors and participants were also an important component.

"Quarterly conference calls helped in keeping WVCADV up-to-date on what other states were involved in and provided ideas for activities," said Julian.

"The quarterly calls ... kept the project and our efforts 'current,' meaning we couldn't let our tasks fall off radar. The report-outs on the national calls built in some accountability and motivation to be productive in order to have accomplishments to share," said Lemmer of Michigan.

"It (technical assistance) provided an outside, objective voice whose mission was solely to bring clarity on how organizing could be done, options to possible engagements and the expertise through knowledge and experience," said Nash of Wisconsin. "It gave credence to the real issues that intersect gender, race, geographic location, etc., that was already known by most coalition staff and community partners but never spoken about."

Various articles and educational materials were shared amongst the participants through the LISTSERV. Participants also used the LISTSERV to discuss issues they were having in their work and to seek advice and support from each other and the TA team.

## **Lessons Learned**

TIMM participants agreed that projects for engaging men need clear expectations. The value of this collaborative effort was that the support and interaction inherent in the project bolstered the commitment of all of the partners to continue to work on generating and sustaining effective strategies, despite the many challenges to doing this work.

“There is no one act that can create an environment where men and women just suddenly and instantly work together and become a team, but it is a process of learning what works together and then doing that,” said Nash of Wisconsin.

Also in assessing the successes and challenges that were illuminated by the TIMM project, many participants appreciated opportunities to challenge their own assumptions about what is needed in order to stay committed.

“The most important lesson I learned is that no matter how many men I may be able to organize, I have to first be the change that I want to see in them,” said David Lomax, a police officer and community partner from Ohio. “Simply meaning, I have to walk it like I talk it.”

## **Successes**

TIMM participants gathered at the New York seminar on May 20, 2009, talked a lot about the value of coming together in a safe space, a place where their efforts are valued, to ask the difficult questions and to open up to new ways of working.

“It was an amazing experience meeting people in a space that was accepting,” said Nash from the Wisconsin coalition.

Sharing ideas, challenging each other, being able to talk about difficulties in doing the work with men – these were all things that participants said they valued about TIMM.

Many of them also said they appreciated being challenged by other participants and pushed to think of other ways to work. Some of the conversations that took place over the course of the project inspired advocates to incorporate some of TIMM’s ideas into concrete actions.

“We did our five-year strategic plan and it was an incredible effort to put in there that we were going to work with men,” said Sherrie Goggins of the Virginia Sexual and Domestic Violence Alliance. “It was a leap for us. I feel like we moved as a result of this project.”

Lee of CALCASA, which was one of the non-TIMM coalitions that attended the closing conference, spoke of how the kinds of topics being discussed in the TIMM project helped advocates to break free of their orthodoxy and consider different ways of moving forward. For some, this also meant enduring a break with colleagues.

Michael Orr, a priest who works for Dominion Family Services in Michigan, said that after the first TIMM conference in 2008, a component on heterosexism was added to their domestic violence program.

“To get the priesthood to touch this issue is very difficult,” he said. “I lost a lot of friends over that. However, the men benefited tremendously. I credit TIMM with moving us along.”

Tony Bellamy, who runs a North Carolina organization called Not Tonight Domestic Violence Peace, Inc., established a class as a result of his involvement with TIMM. Called “Ordered Steps,” it focuses on lifestyle choices for men and is taught at a local church and at a homeless shelter.

Working with TIMM, he said, helped connect him to others who supported his efforts.

“We’ve had the opportunity to coordinate DV events with four or five community churches, establish a positive relationship with the local DV shelter, as well as the local sheriff’s department to conduct a DV symposium and candlelight service annually.”

“I didn’t even know that this kind of work was going on,” Bellamy told the participants at the New York conference. “Because of this, doors that were shut in our community – local shelters – have been opened.”

## **Challenges**

There were a number of themes that participants brought to the discussion about challenges they face in trying to plan and implement programs that engage men. Those challenges included:

- Staying aware of and addressing racial issues, particularly as they relate to white female leaders and men of color seeking to work with men on the issue.
- Navigating the relationship between men from communities coming into the work and women in leadership positions at coalitions and advocacy organizations.
- The resistance of many men to include work on homophobia in their programs, particularly in faith communities and among men of color.
- Ambivalence and resistance from female advocates and leaders about working with men.
- Lack of true accountability for male allies due, in part, to a lack of resources. Without the means to staff programs that engage men, advocacy organizations were dependent on male volunteers.
- The potential for competition among programs and organizations.

## Intersectionality

Beginning with the opening conference, TIMM trainers and consultants challenged participants to consider the ways in which oppressive systems, such as racism, heterosexism and classism, affected the ability of advocates to work in concert with community partners.

“We all need to take a closer, harder look at how racism (as well as homophobia and other oppressive attitudes/beliefs/behaviors) are impacting our decision-making and prioritizations with regard to mobilizing men and involving men in the work of ending violence against women and promoting respectful relationships,” said Goggins of the Virginia coalition.

Most of the participants from state coalitions were white women and most of the community participants were men of color.

“So we generally have a white woman working with a man of color and that leaves women of color out,” said Tony Porter, Co-Founder of A Call to Men.

A number of participants and facilitators noted that this dynamic seemed to lead to some reticence among some participants, particularly in the early stages of the project.

“My observation is that it was very difficult for white women to challenge black men and the other way around,” said Ulester Douglas, Director of Training for Men Stopping Violence. “There was a power differential there and it wasn’t adequately addressed. ... The conversations weren’t happening about the meaning of that.”

A significant amount of time at the closing conference was devoted to discussing how TIMM’s commitment to addressing homophobia and heterosexism affected those participating, particularly the male partners from the community who were working directly with men.

There was at least one man who left the project because of his discomfort with discussions about this subject. “In addressing homophobia, he didn’t feel comfortable working that out in that group,” said Tramel. “And he wasn’t sure he would be supported in working to advocate for women unless he made a commitment to ending heterosexism as well.”

Some TIMM participants also made the point that there is an assumption that work with men excludes gay men. Douglas noted that the term “men” in the context of this work, seems to be defined as heterosexual men.

“As you’re thinking about continuing to engage men and boys, we should not operate from a heterosexist model. I see gay men being as much of a problem in perpetuating sexist ideals,” he said.

“When these prevention efforts come into play, we haven’t gone into the gay community to find gay men to work with,” said Porter.

Yolo Akili, an MSV facilitator, also noted that advocacy for lesbian women who experience abuse is also limited.

### The Working Relationship

“Women’s leadership ... sometimes I wonder if we define it well enough,” said John Tramel, TIMM coordinator and MSV staff member. As an example, he related a conversation he had with the head of one state coalition, who made it clear that she felt it was time for men to take this on; she didn’t see a men’s initiative as her full-time job. So while on the one hand some female advocates may be reluctant to do a lot of caretaking of men entering the work, on the other hand “the men are saying. ‘I’m here to be under women’s leadership’ and they were waiting for orders from her,” said Tramel. “ ... There needs to be some kind of concrete plan about how the leadership looks.”

At the same time, some advocates are also skeptical or ambivalent about men’s involvement because of the possibility of collusion among men working with other men in communities. “If we’re not working in solidarity, this could end badly,” said Bathrick of MSV.

For some participants, lack of financial resources also affected the working relationships between coalitions and community partners. With little to no money budgeted for men’s initiatives, male volunteers were often recruited to work with other men in communities. Volunteers often had the mindset that they would show up when they could.

“Where’s the accountability there? Where the resources are not there for mobilizing men, that’s a set-up,” said Bathrick.

### Ambivalence

Another challenge that was discussed at the final TIMM meeting was what some experienced as reluctance from female advocates to work with men. Even some of the coalitions who applied to be part of the project seemed ambivalent about it.

“Some states said, ‘We don’t really want to talk about men and boys.’ But it was stated up front that that was what the project was about,” said Douglas. “Sometimes I wonder if battered women’s advocates really believe it’s necessary to engage men.”

“Some coalitions are really invested in understanding that prevention is victims’ services,” said Porter. “... There are women who have dedicated their entire lives to this work so even if prevention is the direction we need ... it is in some respect pushing them out of their life’s work.”

### **What Next?**

As the discussion at the closing conference showed, the list of challenges is long. Rather than be daunted by the difficulties, however, TIMM participants seemed to welcome the opportunity to talk about what they truly needed to create and sustain effective initiatives for men.

Included on that “needs” list were:

- A definition of what it means for men in a particular community to work under women’s leadership. For both the women and the men tackling this issue, the term “women’s leadership” can mean different things to different people.
- Help for men coming to this kind of work in learning how to engage with women – “get real” – around issues involved.
- More engagement among men and women doing this work, to work out issues and ideas, and to get support.
- Structures that ensure that those who are not as vocal, particularly if they are new to this kind of work, are included in the conversation.
- Openness and creativity from advocates and those running programs for men when seeking community allies, and a willingness to meet men where they are, both physically and philosophically.
- Particular strategies for engaging men in faith communities.
- New ideas about connecting with men working in communities who are not connected to a coalition.
- Training for community partners to give them encouragement, acknowledgement and validity.
- Time and space for the kind of inner work and self-exploration required.

“It’s great that so many people are getting together to do this work and we’re thinking about how to organize effectively,” said Hilda Gutierrez of the Texas Council on Family Violence. “This is a good first step; let’s think about what we can do beyond this and make it a long-term effort.”