DIAS-4-US

Building Community and Providing Care for LGBTQ+ Survivors in the AANHPI-SWANA Community

LOS ANGELES LGBT CENTER®

apigbv
ASIAN PACIFIC INSTITUTE ON GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE

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Introduction

When understanding the power and complexity of LGBTQ+ Asian/Asian American, Native Hawaiian, and Pacific Islander (AANHPI) and Southwest Asian and North African (SWANA[1]) community, utilizing an intersectional framework is essential. Many of those within the LGBTQ+ AANHPI & SWANA community experience violence on multiple scales including systematic violence, hate violence, historical violence, family violence, and intimate partner violence. However, they have less culturally specific resources than others in the community. In the words of Kimberly Crenshaw:

“Intersectionality is a lens through which you can see where power comes and collides, where it interlocks and intersects. It’s not simply that there’s a race problem here, a gender problem here, and a class or LGBTQ+ problem there.”

Using this intersectional lens, the National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence (the Institute) and Asian Pacific Institute on Gender Based Violence (API-GBV) collaborated to create a resource for the LGBTQ+ AANHPI and SWANA survivor community, which we will refer to as the Dias-4-Us[2].

This guide was born out of the need to support the community through understanding their values, needs, struggles, and desires. While exploring this document, we encourage readers to apply an intersectionality lens when turning these ideas into practice. We hope to offer pathways and strategies for filling in the gap to the Dias-4-Us community.

The National LGBTQ Institute on IPV and API-GBV would like to offer deep gratitude to all the people who offered their insight, knowledge, and personal experiences to this project. This project would not have been created without the intentional partnership with Dias-4-Us community members within our Community Advisory Board.

1 In this document, we refer to the Southwest Asian and North African diasporas as SWANA due to the history of the region.

2 The Dias-4-Us community includes hundreds of countries, cultures, languages, and traditions, however, the full breadth cannot be captured in its entirety within this document.

Methods

The Institute and API-GBV conducted two virtual listening sessions to better understand the Dias-4-Us community.

After a careful application process through an equity-based approach, 20 community members and service providers were invited to participate in these paid listening sessions. Two different sessions, each being two hours long and approximately a month apart from each other, were held. Of the 20 people invited roughly 10 people showed up for each session. The 10 participants who were present for the listening sessions were invited to be part of the Community Advisory Board (CAB) to continually offer feedback as the project was finalized. There were two additional meetings with the CAB to provide adjustments and critique to the report as it was being built.

Breakdown

2
Virtual sessions

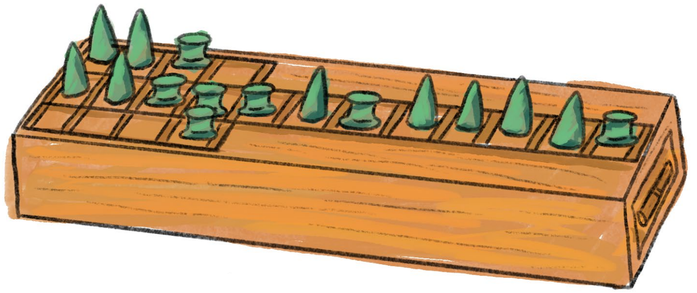
20
Community members

4
Sessions

10
Session members

1
Guide for Dias-4-Us





Illustrations: Chicken adobo from the Philippines; Game of Twenty Squares, also known as Senet from Egypt

Purpose

From these listening sessions a large number of ideas were generated. Consistent themes around safety and shame layered within intimate partner violence continually arose. The facilitators of the listening sessions explored with the participants what resources would be most helpful to better meet the needs of this community.

A strong finding from these sessions was that there was a critical need for community gathering spaces within the Dias-4-Us to create culturally responsive pathways to healing for this community.

Therefore, this guide was created for:
LGBTQ+ service providers
Domestic violence service providers
Community members who are organizing and facilitating community gatherings spaces made to center survivors in the Dias-4-Us.

This guide will cover:

1. Core themes that emerged from the listening sessions that revealed important information for facilitators to have when starting a community space including:

- Cultural shame
- Core fundamentals of domestic violence
- Understanding LGBTQ+ identity
- Cultural terminology

2. Considerations around creating a community space for survivors in the Dias-4-Us including:

- Landscape
- Structure
- Logistics

3. Macro context and considerations including:

- The facilitators' role
- Group dynamics and trust building
- Positionality
- Navigating conflict

4. Discussion prompts that group facilitators can use when working with survivors within the Dias-4-Us

1

CORE THEMES

To Understand When Creating Community Spaces for the Dias-4-Us

Cultural Shame

One theme that is essential for facilitators to understand and that emerged consistently from the listening sessions was the origins of shame within the Dias-4-Us.

Many people in the Dias-4-Us learn shame and love at the same time.

Remarks such as “I haven’t seen you in a week, you don’t love me anymore?” from family members are common. These moments, though often framed as affection, can leave a sour taste in your mouth and communicate conditional love.

Brene Brown, a white Southern author and researcher who studies emotions including shame, stated that guilt is “adaptive and helpful” while shame is an intense pain due to an experience that stems from feelings of unworthiness.

However, psychologists and researchers within the Dias-4-Us view shame differently. For example, Asian American therapist and author Sam Louie illustrates how collective cultures view shame compared to individualistic Western cultures. Collectivist culture emphasizes interdependent relationships and prioritization of what is best for the group over the individual.

Shame is often a motivator in collectivist cultures to maintain honor and ‘save face’ – another common cultural notion to preserve public appearance for the sake of the family or community. In Mandarin, someone who has been or feels ashamed would say that they 无脸, “do not have the face,” to do something, or to meet with (face) specific people. Across many Dias-4-Us cultures, honor represents collective worth and moral standing, and embarrassment or shame can be experienced as a loss of that honor.

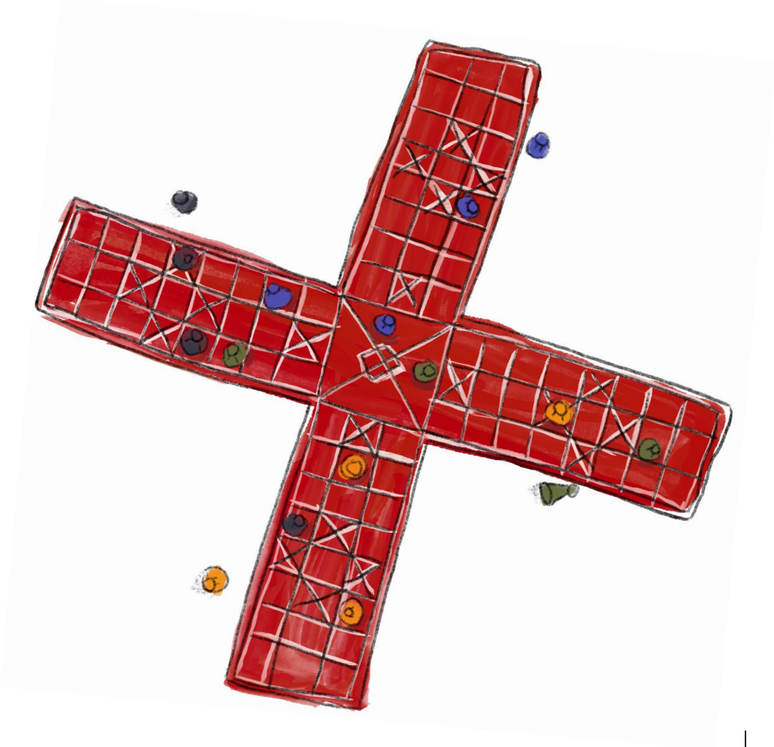


Illustration: Pachisi game from India

Shame is frequently gendered, with heightened expectations placed on those socialized as feminine. These gendered expectations can be particularly restrictive for LGBTQ+ people navigating rigid norms around masculinity and femininity.

However, it is essential for facilitators of community spaces to understand that LGBTQ+ people can be proud of their identities without outwardly expressing it. Members of the listening sessions identified that safety for the Dias-4-Us is a source of pride; while honor for the Dias-4-Us means safety and pride in their identity. Safety, pride, and shame can exist simultaneously. For example, a nonbinary Persian American femme can wear makeup that accentuates their facial hair amongst family, bringing feelings of pride, safety, guilt, shame, and honor.

Different cultures within the Dias-4-Us even have different names for shame. For example, in Arabic shame is "'عيب', pronounced as 'a'aib.' Formally, a'aib is defined as 'flaw' or 'defective' while its usage in spoken Arabic in social contexts can be most closely translated to 'shame'. It is often used in the phrase 'عيب عليك' (a'aib a'alaik), meaning 'shame on you'. Additionally, 'العيب اجتماعيا' – a social defect – is considered to be 'تصرف سيء ضمن المجتمع' (a bad behavior in society), equivalent to the phrase 'inappropriate behavior' in English." Moroccan author Leila Slimani notes that shame is much more apparent for those socialized as feminine. Shame can be gendered and easily placed on those socialized as feminine based on how they present to the world, even for something as small as laughing too loud. In Tagalog-speaking Filipino cultures: there is a phrase "walang hiya" which literally translates to "shameless" or "without shame" but it is used to describe someone who going against social norms of going with the flow to keep the peace, and reading the room to match the energy or "pakikisama." It's also typically aimed at folks socialized as feminine but "hiya" conveys how to behave appropriately. Additionally, for folks socialized as feminine, there can be an expectation that they should be quiet, demure, self-sacrificing, and subservient to men like the feminine archetype, Maria Clara, from classical Filipino literature (originally written in the colonial Spanish language). A Hindi and Urdu phrase is "Log kya kahenge" meaning "what will people say?" referencing a potential reaction from the community, an important topic within Dias-4-Us cultures.

In many of these cultures, collectivism further means that shame is shared in the family. When someone is seen as having shame, family members frequently carry the shame as well. This can involve extended family, or even those who live in another country. In some cases, this can even extend to a village or clan.

Listening sessions identified that shame is a consistent factor in many cultures within the Dias-4-Us, driven to keep the collective safe and of good appearance or standing. Unnecessary shame is often placed on LGBTQ+ individuals. Many listening session participants noted that shame can lead to unjust harm to LGBTQ+ individuals on the basis of LGBTQ+ identities being considered dishonorable. Participants also noted that systemic factors were often exacerbated when tied to colonialism.

In countries where LGBTQ+ people are consistently persecuted, shame is often used out of fear, to keep LGBTQ+ family members safe. However, this can lead to isolation, emotional trauma, and worse mental health outcomes. The long-term impacts of cultured shame deeply affect LGBTQ+ AANHPI and SWANA survivors and make it difficult to build healthy and safe relationships with their families, friends, and romantic partners.

Listening session participants stressed that shame is so fundamentally woven into the languages, customs, norms, and histories of AANHPI and SWANA communities that it is invoked in everything from minor everyday interactions (“don’t you feel ashamed to be wearing that?”) to major life circumstances (“we are ashamed that our child cannot provide for us in our old age”). For many people within the Dias-4-Us, feeling shame becomes a learned habit, and this internalized shame (“people will look down on me if I, as a girl, am not a good homemaker”) becomes a constant inward narrative that impacts decision making, self-worth, and relationships. One listening session participant described the feeling as a desire to “make oneself as small as possible to manage pain inflicted on by others.” Exploring the difference between culture and survival adaptations are essential steps that facilitators can take to break intergenerational cycles.

Fundamentals of Domestic Violence in the LGBTQ+ Community

When creating a safe space for LGBTQ+ AAHNPI and SWANA survivors, it is important that participants can access foundational information about the dynamics of domestic violence. Depending on the space, facilitators may want to incorporate meeting time, written resources, or informational sessions and discussions to cover key concepts.

It is important that the facilitators do not assume prior knowledge and meet participants where they are. Some key topics to introduce may include:

- Types of abuse
- Power and control
- Barriers to leaving
- Safety planning
- The effects of domestic violence on health

Groups that are operated out of a domestic violence service provider (DVSP) often offer crisis hotlines, shelter and housing resources, legal advocacy, and safety planning with a trained survivor advocate. Many impactful survivor spaces are also run by community-based organizations that are not DVSPs, which may feel safer or more accessible for some participants. However, facilitators in these settings should make sure participants know how to access external support when needed. We recommend that facilitators provide participants with information about 24/7 domestic violence hotlines and local DVSPs. To find their local DVSP, facilitators can search DomesticShelters.org. Similarly, some LGBTQ+ centers, though not all, have domestic violence programming. Connecting with local LGBTQ+ centers in advance can help facilitators understand available supports. Facilitators can use Center Link's search tool to locate nearby centers and may request outreach or educational materials to share with group members.



Illustration: Bibimbap dish from South Korea

Facilitators can also draw from national resources that offer tools and educational materials, such as:

- The Understanding Domestic Violence in the LGBTQ+ Community zine created by the National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence. This is an educational tool that covers the basics of domestic violence, how the LGBTQ+ community is uniquely impacted, and resources for safety planning and support.
- API-GBV's library of factsheets and tipsheets on how domestic violence impacts different communities such as Korean, Muslim, South Asian, Vietnamese and more that may be helpful for facilitators to print and bring with them.
- Recognize Violence, Change Culture has a number of tools and resources available that address domestic violence, hate violence, racism, and anti-LGBTQ+ hate.
- Futures Without Violence has a library of free brochures, posters, and tools that facilitators can order that offer educational information about a wide range of topics including the impact of domestic violence on health, how caregivers can support children healing from trauma, and youth-targeted educational consent and healthy relationship materials.

Additionally, facilitators may want to deepen their own understanding of domestic violence. One option is pursuing state-level Domestic Violence Advocacy Training certification by consulting local DVSPs about available pathways. The National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence also offers free, on-demand courses through its Ongoing Learning Center, covering a wide range of topics relevant to supporting LGBTQ+ survivors.

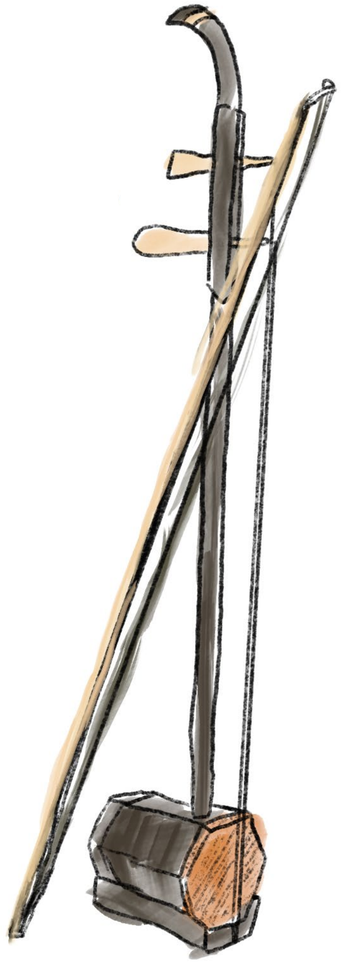


Illustration: Erhu instrament from China

Crisis Support

Access to 24/7 crisis support can be an essential safety resource. Because facilitators cannot provide around-the-clock support, participants should have clear information about crisis options. Some hotlines facilitators may share include:

Anti-Violence Project

24-hour hotline for LGBTQ+ survivors

Phone: (212-714-1141)

Love is Respect

Confidential support for teens and young adults

Phone: (866-331-9474)
Text: “LOVEIS” to 22522

The Trevor Project

24/7 support for LGBTQ+ youth

Phone: (866-488-7386)
Text (START to 678-678)

Trans Lifeline

A trans-led peer support hotline

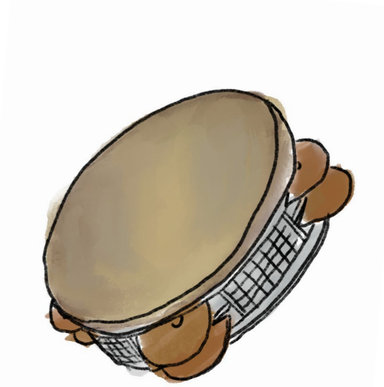
Phone: (877-565-8860)

Core Concepts on LGBTQ+ Identity

Core concepts around LGBTQ+ identity may be important to establish amongst group members, especially if the group includes non-LGBTQ+ participants who may have limited exposure to LGBTQ+ culture, sexual orientation, and gender identity.

Even within LGBTQ+ communities, there may be differing levels of awareness and shared language. These differences can be especially apparent in intergenerational groups, where terminology and meanings may vary by age. At the same time, intergenerational spaces can be deeply valuable for the Dias-4-Us. Hearing elders' stories can be affirming for younger survivors, while elders may find hope and connection in witnessing how newer generations navigate survival and healing. Acknowledging these differences and building shared understanding can help preserve intergenerational connection. For example, the term "queer" may be experienced as a derogatory slur by older generations, while many younger people now reclaim and use it as an umbrella term for LGBTQ+ identities.

Beyond differences in knowledge and terminology, it is critical that transgender, nonbinary, and gender diverse survivors and community members have spaces where they can expect respectful and inclusive language to be used about them and their identities. Cisgender community members may be less familiar with concepts related to gender identity, gender inclusive language, pronouns, and misgendering. It is important to establish shared understandings and norms around these core concepts during orientation, group guidelines, or early stages of the group. It can also be helpful to share this information in writing.





Illustrations: Riqq instrument from Egypt; gỏi cuốn (also known as spring rolls) from Vietnam

Some example language might be:

“We’ll ask folks to introduce themselves with their pronouns at the beginning of the group. We ask that members be mindful to use correct pronouns and gendered language of all participants. If you would like to know more about pronoun use, why it’s important, how to use pronouns, and what to do if you make a mistake, check out this site.”

“There are lots of beautiful and wonderful terms out there that put meaning and understanding to our identities. If you’re looking for language or terms for yourself, or looking to better understand language or terms shared in group, you can check out this glossary resource or ask the group facilitator for clarification.”

Keep in mind that shared terms established in one group may not necessarily remain relevant for another, so this conversation should be held whenever members change. Further, some group members may not wish to share some of their identities, so disclosing their gender identity, sexual orientation, etc. should always be an invitation, not a requirement.

Facilitators may want to also share printed versions of resources with the group, such as the ones above, or this Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression one page handout. It is helpful for the facilitator themselves to go through training on sexual orientation and gender identity.

For an online and on demand training on core concepts, facilitators can check out the course on Sexual Orientation, Gender Identity, and Expression 101 on the National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence Ongoing Learning Center here.



Illustration: Oud instrument from Persia

Intentional Inclusion of Marginalized LGBTQ+ Identities

It is critical that bisexual survivors feel welcomed and affirmed in the space. Bisexual people are disproportionately likely to experience intimate partner violence and are often the least likely to be out to people in their lives. Bisexual people may fear community rejection and biphobia or may have their own internalized stigma and shame around belonging in the LGBTQ+ community. As a result, bisexual community members may be hesitant to join LGBTQ+ community spaces. Explicitly naming bisexual inclusion through outreach materials, group agreements, and facilitator language can help counter these barriers. Facilitators may also benefit from training on best practices for supporting bisexual practices for supporting bisexual survivors.

For an online and on demand training on core concepts of supporting bisexual survivors of domestic violence, facilitators can check out the National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence Ongoing Learning Center here.

Similarly, Dias-4-Us survivor spaces have the power to create more visibility for identities that might be less represented and more likely to experience intercommunity marginalization, such as asexual individuals. The lack of education and awareness about asexuality leads many asexual survivors to not disclose this part of their identity out of fear of stigma, pathologization, and not being believed. Facilitators can take an active role in educating members about asexuality and providing resources to access more education and resources such as this primer on asexuality or the Asexuality Visibility and Education Network.



Illustration: Nihari dish from Pakistan

Cultural terminology

There are many terms within the Dias-4-Us for LGBTQ+ identities including “fa’afafine” in Samoa and American Samoa, “fakafefine” (also “fakaleiti”) in Tonga, “Māhū” in contemporary Hawai’ian culture, “tomboy” and “bakla” in the Philippines, and “kathoeys” or “ladyboys” in Thailand. Terms can vary from region to region in the same country, or even from community to community. For instance, northern India’s 4,000-year- old transgender and intersex community uses the term “hijra” — as do those in Nepal, Bangladesh and Pakistan (where “khwaja sira” is also used). However, due to regional and cultural differences, other communities in South Asia may not use “hijra,” or the term may have a different connotation or specific meaning. Just as discussed before with the term “queer,” cultural terms may be empowering to some and derogatory to others, or the impact of using the term may be contingent on the power dynamics of who is using it. Facilitators should make sure to have conversations about which terms are okay to use, check in with members to clarify, and add to community guidelines as appropriate.

References to the Middle East situate the region in relation to Europe and have colonial origins. This reflects a broader erasure even at the federal level, where SWANA origin was only recently acknowledged as a category for write-in within the White category in 2020, and in 2024 when “MENA” (Middle Eastern and North African) was approved for race and ethnicity data collection across federal agencies. Even within the category, North African communities are often underrepresented. We acknowledge that there is more work to be done to include more SWANA LGBTQ voices in our outreach and resources.



Illustration: Tabla instrument from South Asia/indigenous India

2

How to Make

INTENTIONAL SAFE SPACES

Group size and makeup

The size and makeup of a group may influence the goals of the sessions. Smaller groups often allow for more intimate discussion and provide more opportunities for all voices to be equally heard. On the other hand, larger groups allow for more diversity of voice and opinion. Intentionality is important. Some considerations for facilitators to explore might be:

- Diversity is important if your intention is to host a pan-AANHPI, SWANA, LGBTQ+, or Dias-4-Us space. In this situation, be sure to include participants from smaller communities that have been traditionally invisibilized: Southeast Asians, Micronesians, transgender individuals, etc.
- On the other hand, a group should not be open to all just for the sake of inclusivity. As one participant of the listening sessions stated, “when we allow our boundaries to become porous, we let in harmful dominant cultures or lack of accountability”.
- Inviting family members or community members who are not LGBTQ+ may make some participants feel less safe.
- Community norms might impact group selection. In some cultures, it is taboo for men and women to discuss topics related to sex and relationships with each other. In others, younger people may not speak up in the presence of elders, as a sign of deference.
- Local histories, inter-group relationships, and power dynamics can be complex. If possible, consult with a community member to understand how these nuances might show up amongst the people you are trying to reach. For instance, sitting very close to others might make some uncomfortable, or prolonged direct eye contact might be seen as aggressive or rude.





Illustrations: Phở from Vietnam; buuz dish from Mongolia

Community Protocols & Guidelines to Increase Safety

There are common practices and protocols within community gathering spaces that can ensure respect, accountability, and comfort. Below are some helpful protocols to ensure the safety needed for gathering spaces.

- Have an RSVP form to know who is coming in advance and ask if they have any necessary accommodations or concerns. Make this an optional step so commitment to the space is not required.
- Have a survivor advocate in the space to offer support if anyone feels overwhelmed or triggered.
- Explore whether an open or closed group may be the right fit. While closed groups may have the benefit of fostering safety, security, and shared understanding for group members, drop-in support groups can also be beneficial for LGBTQ+ survivors. Open, drop-in structures allow for members to continuously attend group sessions without the pressure to join at a certain time. It also allows for the group to be available to survivors whether or not they maintain consistent attendance, which more realistically meets the needs of survivors' whose availability may be impacted by the complications associated with navigating their safety and healing process. Because LGBTQ+ support groups often require more advertisement and outreach, having an open structure can also support having a more robust and full group. Many LGBTQ+ people rely on word-of-mouth advertising to identify resources that are safe and supportive. Additionally, LGBTQ+ survivors are less likely to seek out traditional domestic violence support services, so they may miss opportunities to learn that the group exists.
- Ask people to take a COVID-19 test ahead of time. Provide tests and masks at the event and share a written protocol for what happens if someone tests positive.
- Establish community guidelines together. Common ones include:
  - Take space, make space. Do not be afraid to speak up but please leave space for others.
  - Use "I" statements. Do not attempt to speak for others.
  - Practice engaged listening.
  - Say it messy. Practice speaking without self-judgement.
  - Practice and prioritize self care. Take breaks when needed.
  - Be okay with non-closure. You might not get answers every time, but you'll have new questions to reflect on. Have patience with yourself, others in the group, and the process.

Accessibility

Whether the group is virtual or physical, accessibility should be at the core of planning. Some considerations for physical spaces are below:

- If you're leasing in an office building or renting meeting space in a hotel or community center, is the building or hotel physically accessible or safe for LGBTQ+ people? What about building staff that the group members would interact with? Consider asking building management to place "all genders restroom" signs if they have men's and women's restrooms, or speak with staff beforehand to minimize the likelihood of harm.
- For some, connection to nature might be important. This might be an opportunity to hold part of your session outdoors, if privacy considerations, physical ability of participants, and space allow.
- In addition to conventional fidget toys, consider offering cultural crafts such as flowers for lei making, thread for weaving, etc.
- Food is a way of honoring culture. Offer cultural snacks and drinks that match participants' identities.
- Encourage participants to wear clothing that's comfortable or meaningful to them, including cultural attire, and to bring personal items or crafts that would help them feel safe and present in the space.

Considerations for accessibility

- Language access should be a priority. Budgets should include line items for interpreters and translation for outreach materials.
- Build in additional time for bi/multilingual meetings since interpretation adds time.
- Remind all participants to speak slowly, avoiding jargon, or acronyms.
- If interpretation is needed, consider having all participants wear headsets, so that the space is equitable.
- Use accessible language, avoid academic terms or jargon, and explain what some terms or acronyms mean.
- Build in plenty of breaks, especially after hard segments.
- Consider using non-traditional spaces such as discord or WeChat, or even hybrid spaces.
- Remember that your content may be heavy and potentially triggering for group members. Rather than jumping straight into content, time may be needed to establish trust and community amongst members. Sometimes, you may want to pivot from your established format or agenda to accommodate group needs.
- In terms of outreach, word of mouth from trusted family or community members is often the most powerful, as opposed to flyers or social media announcements. When placing physical flyers, you should target spaces frequented by the community. These might be churches, temples, salons, grocery stores, parks, or restaurants.

3

FACILITATORS' RESPONSIBILITIES

Facilitator's Role

From the listening sessions, participants shared the challenges of facilitating group conversations due to power dynamics, settings being in-person or online, and with developing accountable and generative spaces. In line with lessons from the Asian/ Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP) Keeping Us Safe Centering autonomy & care in planning our safety Toolkit, a facilitator should consider the following conditions and types of groups:

- Are people coming in from different geographical locations?
- What languages are people most comfortable with using?
- How do people identify in terms of their LGBTQ+ and AANHPI and SWANA identities?
- What is the age range of the group, and if the group is other providers, who do they serve?
- What are some practices that work in organizations or communities you work with? What are some strengths and things that you love about your community?

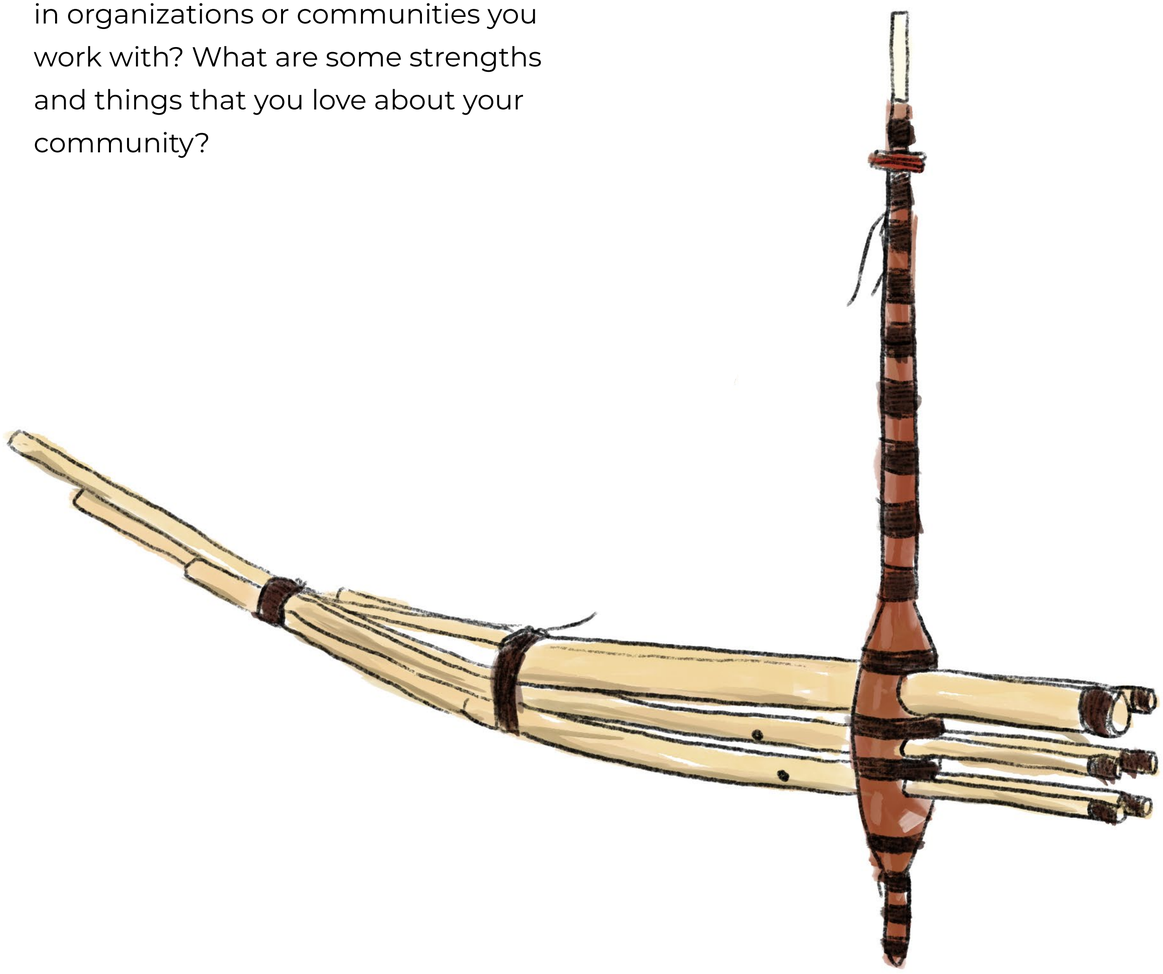


Illustration: Queej instrament from the Hmong people

Group Dynamics and Building Trust

Especially when working with smaller communities where folks may know each other or have close ties, there may be discomfort around participating. Reaffirming confidentiality and community agreements can help foster safety and participation. Facilitators may also consider incorporating activities that allow for anonymous or individually reflective participation, particularly for quieter groups. Trust often develops over time and may require multiple sessions, especially when addressing stigmatized or taboo topics such as intimate partner violence.

Depending on group composition, folks from historically underrepresented LGBTQ+ identities (such as asexual, nonbinary, and transgender) may feel tokenized. Pacific Islanders and Middle Eastern or Southwest Asian people also may feel more excluded in pan-AANHPI groups. Age or generation can be another factor: culturally, elders may hold more power so younger people may be quieter in group discussions with a wide range of ages.

If there is time and space, facilitators can consider more targeted groups that are also led by identifying facilitators to ensure that their experiences will be heard and valued without tokenizing smaller communities. Sharing resources and organizations for and by less visible communities can also deepen trust and grow awareness among pan-AANHPI groups also. A good facilitator will create opportunities for everyone to speak up with reminders of community agreements, providing alternate ways to engage, such as in small groups or in the chatbox if virtual, or by calling in people who have been quieter throughout a session.



Illustration: Nigiri dish from Japan

Facilitators' solidarity

Reflect on your own willingness to work alongside a group. Consider the following questions:

- What type of communication are you comfortable with, and are you prepared with resources, referrals, and a warm handoff if someone reaches out to you?
- In some cultures, gestures such as sharing a meal, spending time together, or exchanging small gifts are meaningful expressions of gratitude. Because refusing such gestures may be experienced as disrespectful, facilitators whose roles or organizations prohibit accepting gifts may want to name boundaries in advance and offer alternatives.
- For some community members, you might be the only other person who shares a few identities and lived experiences as them. Would you be willing to anonymously share someone's needs for mutual aid? What are your own boundaries in terms of potential communication in and out of these spaces, considering your own safety and needs?
- *If you as the facilitator do not share any identities with participants, consider co-facilitating with someone who does.* Not doing so can be perceived as extractive, or as requiring extra labor from participants to have to educate about their identities. Even when a facilitator shares some identities, it still can be helpful to approach a group with curiosity and openness when asking people how they would prefer to talk about their own identities.

As lifelong learners, facilitators are encouraged to remain attentive to ongoing political contexts affecting survivors both in the United States and in participants' countries or regions of origin. Acknowledging histories of war, displacement, and colonial harm can deepen trust, contextualize barriers to safety, and support more healing-centered spaces. Some ways to bring people into a space include creating a culture of curiosity regarding cultural flexibility, rather than humility, to lean into pride and strengths of Dias-4-Us communities. At least one listening session participant mentioned grieving spaces as a community need, and LGBTQ+ communities have a history of celebrating and mourning lives through creating art in response to the AIDS pandemic, the ballroom scene founded by the LGBTQ+ Black and Latine communities, and drag culture. Facilitators should have an understanding of the various cultures that may facilitate or be barriers to a community members' help-seeking and be willing to learn on an ongoing basis from participants.

Self Care

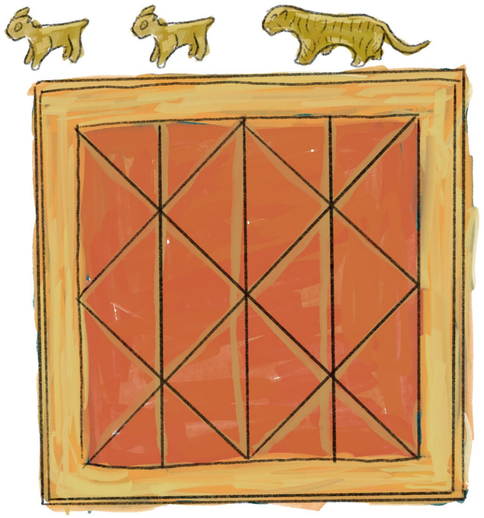
It can be difficult to make space for yourself while centering group needs in community spaces, especially if facilitators share identities with participants. Still, facilitators can prepare for moments of tension or feeling overwhelmed with grounding techniques and resource mapping before facilitating. In navigating these challenges and in navigating your own boundaries, facilitators can check in with themselves before and after facilitating in terms of their own needs.

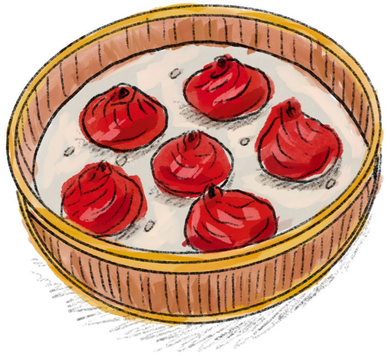
Self-reflection

The following are some considerations for self-reflection:

- How do I digest information and stay present with others?
- Am I feeling overwhelmed?
- How can I regulate my emotions?
- Would debriefing and processing be helpful?
- What kind of support is available?
- What are my favorite grounding activities or things to do to process a tough session?

Mapping out local resources can be helpful not only for group participants, but also for facilitators, especially for folks who do not have access to professional support. Many community-based organizations have created toolkits and practical guides on self-care, including Power to Break Free Foundation.





Illustrations: Xiāo lóng bāo (also known as soup dumplings) from China; Bagh Chal game from Nepal

Navigating Conflict and Harm

It can be difficult for a facilitator to pause and call out inter-group harm in the moment. Naming harm may conflict with cultural values that prioritize saving face or avoiding overt conflict. However, facilitators still have a responsibility to interrupt harm when possible.

For minor harms, a facilitator might gently correct the behavior and move on. For more serious actions, this may involve asking a participant to step out of the group. In many situations, referencing shared community agreements can provide a grounding framework for intervention.
Facilitators also have a responsibility not to exacerbate or escalate harm, particularly in small or tightly connected communities. This includes supporting survivors in identifying what forms of accountability or repair feel safest and most appropriate to them.

For example, if a participant is misgendered, it is important to match the response to the needs and preferences of the harmed person. A facilitator might privately check in to ask what repair could look like and what the survivor would like, if anything, from the harm-doer. This may include an apology, a mediated conversation, time away from the group, or temporary removal from the space.

While repair processes can offer a sense of justice, participants may need to be supported in accepting non-closure, as not all harm will be fully resolved. Modeling accountability when facilitators themselves make mistakes, and offering individualized support for participants unfamiliar with certain language or concepts, may be more effective than relying solely on written materials or public call-outs. Resources for self-care and additional support, such as counseling or advocacy services, should be available to participants, particularly following incidents of harm or conflict.

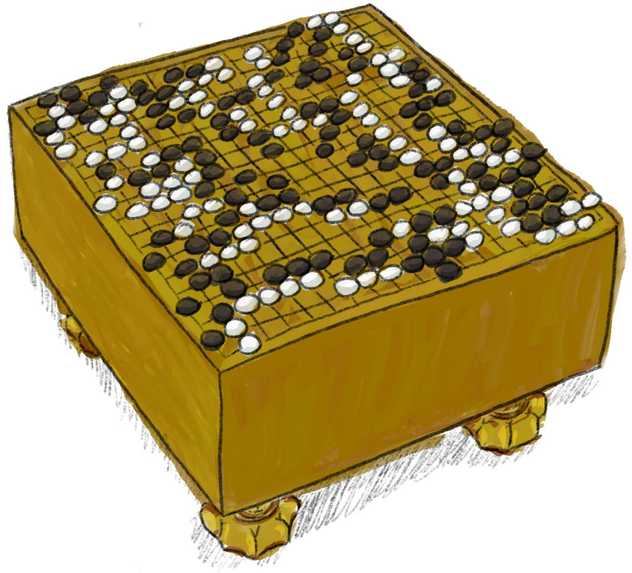


Illustration: Go game from China and East Asia

Moving at the Speed of Trust

When facilitating a group or training, it is important to recognize that trust takes time. Participants may need multiple sessions before they feel safe sharing personal experiences.

For example: some organizers and direct services providers within the Dias-4-Us are at culturally-specific or mainstream organizations that do not necessarily acknowledge LGBTQ+ identities, so they may not be “out” in their workplace or other settings.

Ongoing consent practices can include:

- Telling participants ahead of time if a virtual or in-person session will be recorded so they can opt out.
- Clearly sharing whether photos will be taken and providing visible opt-out options such as stickers or bracelets.
- Using screener questions or specific registration language when groups are intended for particular cultural or LGBTQ+ communities.
- Reminding participants of confidentiality and community agreements when tension or conflict arises.
- Sharing discussion topics or agendas in advance so participants can decide how much they want to share and feel less pressure in the moment.

Moving at the speed of trust means honoring each person’s readiness, prioritizing consent over disclosure, and allowing relationships and safety to develop organically over time.

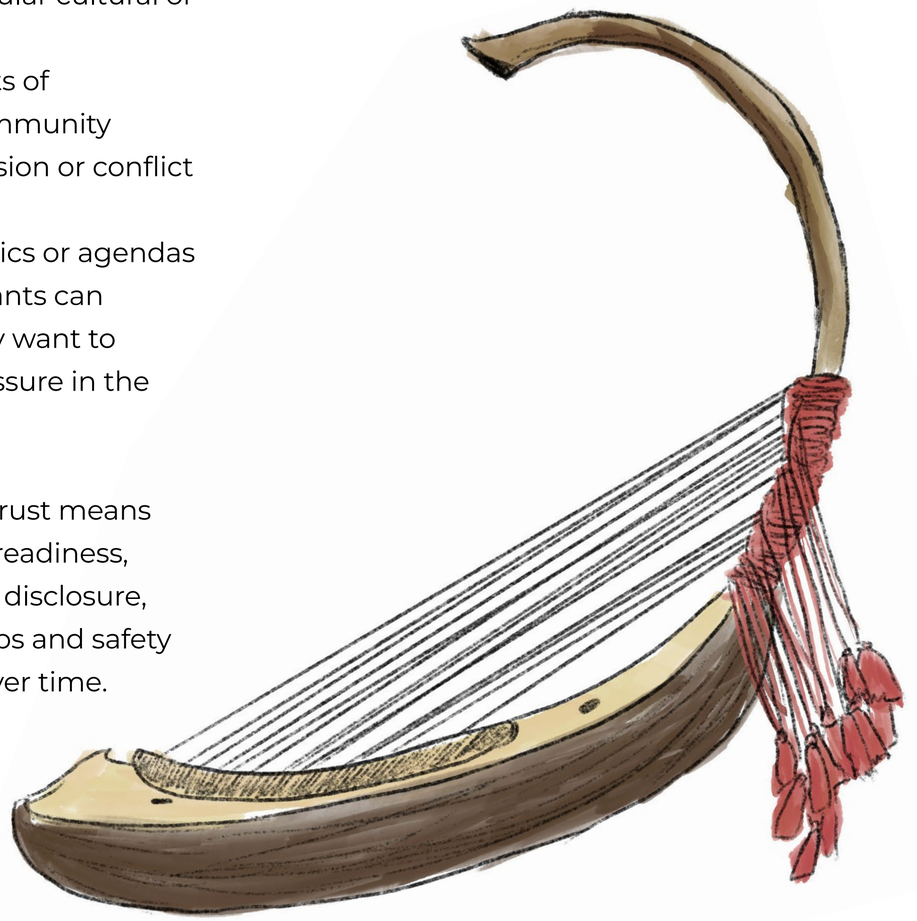


Illustration: Suang instrament from India

Creating Safer Family and Chosen Family Spaces

While not relevant to everyone, there are small steps to create more nurturing and inclusive families. While it is not the duty of survivors to educate their families, some survivors in the Dias-4-Us may still want social support from their families.

- Safety can look like sharing resources and having discussions about healthy relationships regardless of a partner's gender. Depending on the level of openness in families, bringing up non-Western gender expressions from the family's culture could provide further education.
- It can be helpful to determine which family members or friends could be points of contact for safety planning, or someone who would be willing to house a survivor if they need to spend time away from a partner causing harm.
- If there is a need among clients and/or group participants, facilitators can consider offering groups for trusted loved ones of people who are LGBTQ+.
- In households: creating safer spaces could look like emergency preparedness by choosing a safe room or physical space to have conversations about accountability and difficult conversations around shame.
- Discussing communication within a household. Identify code words, signs, or signals if someone feels unsafe outside of the house, or preferred ways to bring up conflict or disagreement (in-person conversations, texting, calling).

Another resource includes developing safety in pods and found family, from the Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP) Keeping Us Safe Centering autonomy & care in planning our safety Toolkit.



Illustration: Çoan ki game from China

Creating Joyful Spaces

Centering joy and healing rather than abuse and trauma can be a powerful way to “flip” the narrative. Listening session participants shared that as LGBTQ+ people and survivors of violence, they are often called to share, and thus relive, their trauma, which becomes the focus of the conversation. While understanding violence is important, it is just as important to have discussion around healing and resilience.

Community gardening, cultural crafting, music, dance, and cooking are all ways to bring people together. For example, a culturally specific organization may hold paint and chat events for the community, and another culturally specific organization may have a community closet that provides gender-affirming clothes and other gender-affirming services such as make-up lessons and gender-affirming haircuts for survivors and community. Another culturally specific South Asian dance collective may provide DV prevention workshops and training for dancers and artists, in addition to spaces for connection, competition, and collaboration.



Illustration: Pipa instrament from Persia and India

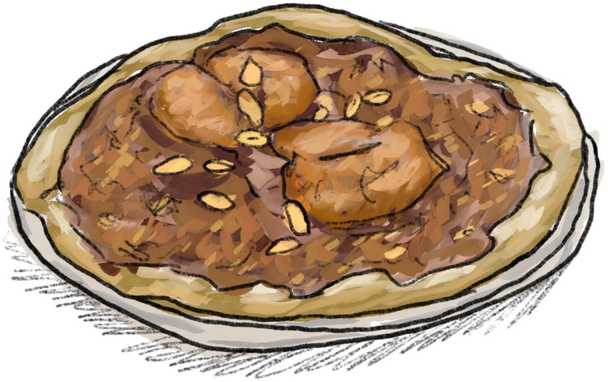
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DISCUSSION PROMPTS

Discussion Prompts

Facilitators can help lead discussions on key topics by providing discussion questions to allow members to share and give voice to the ways in which these different areas impact their life. Participants of the Dias-4-Us listening sessions highlighted core themes that are important to address in community building and healing work such as mythbusting, assimilation, internalized shame, and accountability.





Illustrations: Daegum instrament from Korea; Kabsa dish from Saudi Arabia

Mythbusting

Participants of the listening sessions described that common myths and societal attitudes can deeply impact survivors' mental health, their ability to access safety and help, and how their support systems respond to them. For LGBTQ+ and AANHPI and SWANA survivors, this is exacerbated by myths around their identities and how these myths intersect with their survivor experience. It can be important to address those myths and bring them out in the open in your community space.

Questions to bring up

Discussion questions to help bring some of these myths to light and discuss how they might impact the community might be:

- What are myths or common beliefs that are incorrect that you have heard about domestic violence?
- What are myths or common beliefs that are incorrect that you have heard about your culture or community?
- What are myths or common beliefs that are incorrect that you have heard about your identity, or about LGBTQ+ community members?
- How have these myths impacted your life?
- What do you wish people knew about LGBTQ+ AANHPI and SWANA survivors' experiences?

Some myths you may want to bring up, or ask people to explain why they are myths, might be:

- Only men can be abusers and only women can be survivors.
- Domestic violence is not that common especially in the LGBTQ+ community. It only happens to a small percentage of people.
- AANHPI and SWANA communities do not experience much domestic violence.
- In certain cultures, it is normal, and thus acceptable, for a man to use violence in his relationships.
- Only men or masculine-identifying people can be abusers, and only women or feminine-identifying people can be survivors.
- It is not abuse if there are no physical injuries.
- People abuse their partners because they cannot control their anger.
- Alcohol and drug use cause abuse.
- If a person is being abused, it is easy to just leave.
- If someone leaves their abusive partner or family, it means they no longer love the people who harmed them.
- Survivors of abuse provoke violence through their behavior.
- Bisexual women are just straight women who want attention.
- Bisexual men are just gay men who are in denial.
- People choose to be LGBTQ+.
- If someone does not report their abuse to the police, it is their fault.

Assimilation

AANHPI and SWANA communities are often seen as “perpetual foreigners” in the United States. Being LGBTQ+ can add another layer of othering and can feel incredibly isolating. On the other hand, familial or community spaces may not fully accept all of someone’s identities. Listening session participants shared that the feeling of not belonging pressures people within the Dias-4-Us to assimilate in different spaces, using code switching as a protective tactic.

For example, the Dias-4-Us may feel that they can’t be “out” about their LGBTQ+ identity to their family or that support is conditional on rejecting or silencing parts of their identity, making it difficult to leave abusive partners. Similarly, community members might limit what they share or how they express themselves to service providers when they see a provider displaying discomfort when they share aspects of their racial, sexual orientation, or gender identity. Additionally, AANHPI and SWANA LGBTQ+ survivors in shelter may not have access to familiar foods, and many LGBTQ+ social and community spaces may feel centered around cisgender, white, gay men, and exclusionary to others.

The ways in which community members have had to navigate both resistance and cultural loyalty across cultural history can be interesting, inspiring and sometimes heartbreaking. Sometimes silence and operating behind the scenes are modes of resistance in AANHPI and SWANA cultures, as opposed to the direct, visible style of Western resistance. This extends to the concept of “pride.” In the U.S., pride is evoked by the spectacle of rainbow flags, dramatic clothing, and massive parades. However, for someone who is AANHPI and SWANA, pride may not be as visible.



Illustration: Backgammon game from Mesopotamia and Iraq

Authenticity

Embracing and exploring authenticity can be core parts of a healing journey. Some discussion questions around assimilation might be:

- What parts of your culture, religion, etc. feel most important for you to hold on to?
- What are some strengthening or protective factors from your culture, religion, etc.?
- Have you ever felt pressure to change or hide parts of yourself to fit into different cultural, community or religious spaces? How did that feel?
- Have you ever felt pressure to change or hide parts of yourself to fit into different LGBTQ+ spaces? How did that feel?
- How do expectations around gender and family in your life impact your sense of self?
- Are there spaces where you feel safe being your full self culturally, emotionally, and personally? What about those spaces feels safe?
- What cultural practices, traditions, or values have helped you in your healing journey?
- In what ways can reclaiming our cultural identity be part of healing from abuse?
- What does “pride” look like to you?

Conversely, some community members may feel internal or external pressure to “represent” their AANHPI and SWANA or LGBTQ+ identities. For instance, this might look like pressure to wear their identity loudly when they are not comfortable doing so, or pressure to stay silent about abuse because it might reflect poorly on their community. Sometimes, this leads to the feeling that an identity is not valid unless it fits a certain box: one participant noted, “people affirmed that their ace [asexual] identity wasn’t due to trauma, so I felt ashamed to identify as ace because mine was due to trauma,” because they did not want to contribute to the myth that queerness could be “therapized out.”

Affirmations

Some affirmations on this might be:

- Remember that being asexual, transgender, Korean, a survivor, etc. is only one part of your identity.
- Remember that identities such as gay, lesbian, etc. are only loose categories without rigid definitions, and that there is no one way to hold those identities.
- Your identities are always valid.

Internalized Shame

The participants of the listening sessions highlighted how shame and stigma can impact LGBTQ+ AANHPI and SWANA survivors' lives in a myriad of ways. Many community members may hesitate to use services, questioning "Is this a service for us" or "Do I have to be a representative for my entire culture when I'm accessing services?" This shame and fear can make talking to a therapist, service provider, or advocate incredibly difficult. Some who witnessed abuse in their family as children might feel survivors' guilt and be closed off against help.

Coping mechanisms for shame include avoidance, self-hate, or lashing out at others. Being able to bring this topic to the forefront can be helpful for breaking down barriers and allowing healing to happen.

Some discussion questions around internalized shame might be:

- What cultural messages have you received around shame?
- In what ways have people cast shame upon you? What does that look like in your family?
- What role does shame play in your life?
- What role does shame play in your experience of healing and seeking safety?
- What harmful inner dialogue do you engage in? Could these messages stem from internalized shame?
- Are there things (such as being LGBTQ+, having experienced violence, having failed to attain something, etc.) that you fear talking about? Why do you think you feel that way?
- How can shame lead to increased risk of harm?
- How can we combat silence and shame? Or conversely for those who have experienced silencing as a form of abuse or shame, how can we reclaim silence as healing?



Illustrations: Masgouf dish from Mesopotamia and Iraq

Accountability, Justice, and Restorative Options

The listening session participants highlighted how important it is to explore what accountability, justice, and restorative options can look like for Dias-4-Us survivors.

Rooted in abolitionist principles, the concept of restorative justice teaches that separating harm-doers from the community – whether formally through incarceration, or indirectly through cancelling or shaming – only continues the cycle of violence, whereas building connections through communities working together to address harm will ultimately prevent violence from happening. This approach also recognizes that someone who has experienced harm might still want to retain their relationship with the harm-doer(s), and centers survivors in the path towards healing.

For more examples of restorative practices, see these restorative justice and transformative justice in Creative Interventions Workbook and SOAR's Imkaan: Practicing Possibilities for Justice A Transformative Justice Workbook.

In your group, this could start as simple as asking, "what does healing look like for you?" It could also mean that you limit focusing on what harm looks and feels like, and shift conversations towards addressing those harms. Fighting cancel culture and rethinking how harm is addressed means creating and sustaining community spaces that center collective safety, peace, joy, and connection.

Relatedly, addressing people who have committed harm is an important part of these discussions. Victim blaming and attitudes of "you're going to cause them to lose their job or ruin their lives by labeling them as an abuser or perpetrator" can prevent survivors from accessing available avenues of justice and accountability. Police and criminal systems may not be effective for some survivors since criminal responses often cause ripple impacts and harm our communities. Oftentimes people have to take sides and there can be division and infighting that creates long-lasting damage. Exploring how we create a world where people closest to the person committing the harm have the skills and capacity to step up and hold the person who has committed harm accountable is core to envisioning what future approaches to accountability in contexts of domestic violence and abuse can look like.

Discussion questions and prompts that can facilitate dialogue around envisioning these future approaches might be:

- What does accountability mean to you in relationships, in community, or from those who harmed you?
- Have you seen accountability modeled in a way that felt meaningful or healing? What did that look like?
- In your cultural or family background, how is conflict usually addressed? How does that affect your expectations of accountability?
- Do you feel safe or seen in mainstream legal or support systems as an LGBTQ+ person and/ or a person from the AANHPI and SWANA community?
- In your ideal world, what would justice feel like after harm has been done?
- How do we reclaim power as queer and trans survivors from the Dias-4-Us, without having to conform to any single “right” way to heal?





Illustrations: Ney instrament from Persia, Turkey, and Egypt; sayur lodeh dish from Indonesia

Conclusion

The Dias-4-Us deserve safe spaces that mirror their identities and honor their experiences. Whether support is needed with understanding the nuance of domestic violence, identifying the logistical aspect of a support group, or finding discussion topics- this guide can be a recurring resource for anyone supporting the Dias-4-Us community. We hope this guide offers groundwork and foundation for community practices to come. The ideas and suggestions in this guide can be adapted for the unique needs and experiences of your community, and we welcome creativity in its adaptation.

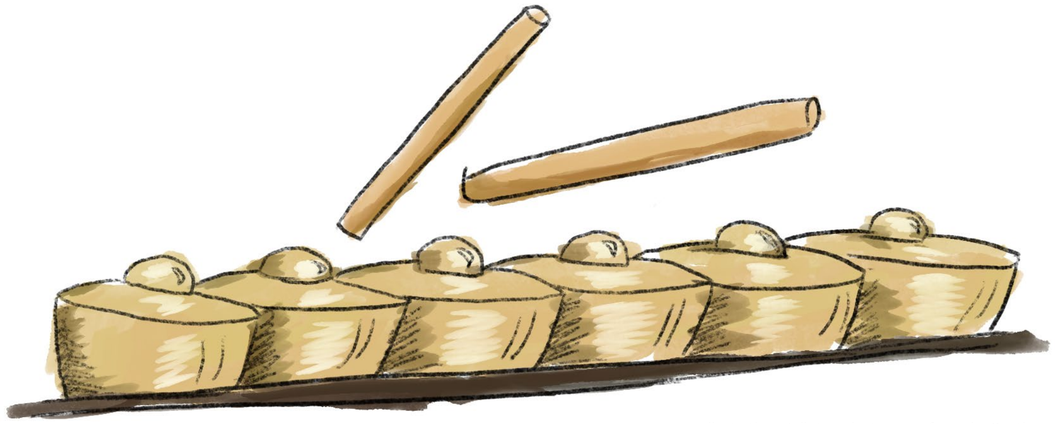


Illustration: Kulintang instrament from the Southern Philippines

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End Credits

Dias-4-Us was co-written by Shirley Luo, Krista Grajo, & Swathi Reddy from APIGBV with Savy Elahian & Amanda Gould from the National LGBTQ Institute on Intimate Partner Violence.

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