

No to Bystander Silence - Victim Rights are Human Rights
Official Statement from ALAS:
Alianza Latina en contra la Agresión Sexual

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Sexual Assault Awareness Month (SAAM) 2010 was a successful one by many standards. Rape crisis centers, student groups, allied professional, and state coalitions across the nation offered an array of awareness building campaigns and events. On April 27, H. Res.1259: "*Recognizing and supporting the goals and ideals of Sexual Assault Awareness Month*" was also considered on the floor of the House of Representatives. April 2010 will also go down in history as the month that SB 1070 was signed into law by Governor Brewer in Arizona. These two landmark events represent the philosophical and political chasm that Latina victim advocates and allies face each day at work.

As U.S. born, naturalized and resident Latinas, we, just like many other people of color, know what racial profiling feels like in stores, at the airport, at parent/teacher gatherings, at a conference hotel... In addition to its demeaning qualities, racial profiling also has real consequences for victims of crimes and those who work so hard to provide them with compassionate services.

Victim rights are human rights!

Imagine living with the danger and mental stress of being stopped **everyday** at any possible location based on the subjective criteria of another because of the car you drive, the language of the music you listen to, how dark your skin is, how thick your accent may be, or how you are dressed.

Imagine being stopped on the way to a rape exam or to meet with someone about the overt targeting of immigrant women for sexual harassment in an office, hotel, restaurant, crop fields, or meat processing plant.

Imagine knowing that the girls just brought to the house next door are victims of human trafficking who are being raped and sexually exploited, but you have an injured family member at home with an expired work visa.

Imagine the needs of your sexually assaulted son and the fear that grabs at you as you contemplate the ramifications of reporting the crime.

Imagine that in addition to bedtime stories, you have to rehearse a plan of action with your young children in case you or your partner is deported through an ICE raid.

Imagine being a gay Latino victim of a hate crime and fearing possible repercussions of reporting it to the police.

These risks and fears, currently experienced by many immigrants throughout the United States, will now be exacerbated in Arizona as all who fit a subjective immigrant profile may now be treated as "illegals." Because we are among the most diverse groups in the U.S. it is less likely that our *güero* or *rubio* (fair skinned and blue-eyed) brothers and sisters will be stopped.

"Mister you don't have to wait in line."

"Once returning from a border crossing by foot, my blue-eyed husband with blond hair who happened to be a citizen of South America was invited to go to the head of the line, while I, the Chicana from Texas was not extended the invitation. The assumption was that certain features = American."

-Latina victim advocate

The damage has already begun

Sexual assault victim advocates in Arizona and along the U.S./ Mexico border are already seeing the toxic impact of fear. Some survivors are not willing to report sexual assault under this threatening environment, and without this necessary step victims are trapped in silence and anonymity. The following exemplifies the fear and confusion already gripping Latin@ victims of violent crimes:

"The mother of a child survivor who is a U.S. citizen did not want to report and she refused linkage to local crisis center or drafting possible plan of action. The child survivor does not understand what was happening, and harder still - his mother is unable to explain it to him or help him get services to make him feel better."

-Latina victim advocate

Police officers who are already overextended will now need to assume immigration enforcement duties in Arizona and will have less time to assist victims of violent crimes such as rape and sexual assault – regardless of their residency status. The risk of a possible increase in "fight or flight" behavior caused by sheer desperation and fear may also place many in danger.

Immigrant communities are saddened, hurting and scared. Multi-generational families with members on both sides of the border are now being forced to make inhumane decisions regarding their future. Families whose loved ones include military veterans from World War I to Iraq who have made the ultimate sacrifice in the name of justice, human rights, and safety – now live in fear in this country.

Victim advocates, allied professionals, and all who value human rights should be very concerned, if not outraged about the further marginalizing and possible re-victimizing consequences of Arizona's state sanctioned racial profiling.

We cannot be silent bystanders in the immigration debate!

SPECIFIC ACTIONS for Victim Advocates to Respond to SB 1070 in Arizona

The following action steps have been endorsed by:

- **The National Alliance to End Sexual Violence**
- **The Texas Association Against Sexual Assault**
- **The California Coalition Against Sexual Assault**
- **The North Carolina Coalition Against Sexual Assault**
- **The Vermont Network Against Domestic and Sexual Violence**
- **Organización en California de Líderes Campesinas, Inc.**
- **The Louisiana Foundation Against Sexual Assault**
- **Casa de Esperanza**
- **Women of Color Network (WOCN)**

1. Check your agency policies

Has your agency developed a policy regarding reaching all victims regardless of their immigration status or is it implied in your code of ethics? Have you translated this message of inclusiveness and made it public?

2. Check your outreach efforts to quell fears and reassure survivors of their rights. What is the public perception: is there a clear delineation between law enforcement and ICE personnel duties or are they perceived as one in the same?

Do you offer Community Education in Spanish?

Do you include content in Spanish on your website and it is accessible through an "Español" tab?

3. Educate others on the social layers of victimization

Integrate a segment in your outreach efforts on the relationship between different forms of violence and oppression.

4. Check your own backyards

Hate rhetoric and legislation is nothing new; German, Italian, Irish, Japanese and Haitian communities have been among those targeted in the past. Check for legislation modeled after Arizona's SB 1070 being considered in your state and join others who are defending immigrant human rights in your region. Many states have already considered a variety of anti-immigrant legislation proposals such as trying to block citizenship for babies born in the U.S. to undocumented immigrants and extra taxes on hard-earned money sent from the U.S. to family in Latin American. The following states are considering adopting similar measures to those included in Arizona's SB 1070:

- Georgia
- Maryland
- Ohio
- Texas
- Utah

It is important that victim advocates be aware of all legislation that may directly or indirectly contribute to immigrant re-victimization.

5. Get involved!

Take action at whatever level you have time for and feel comfortable with.

Speak up

Talk to your fellow classmates, your co-workers, your neighbors, your church congregation and the media – show your solidarity in your local Spanish language media.

Write to your representatives

Let them know of your concerns as a victim advocate and as a fellow human being.

Join the mobilizations

Exercise one of our nation's fundamental rights of free assembly and join others to express our concerns through an agency/center banner, t- shirt, button, or other peaceful activities.

No to bystander silence!

Victim Rights are Human Rights!

¡Ya basta con la violencia de cualquier tipo!

For more information regarding other states considering adopting similar measures to those included in Arizona's SB 1070:

Deal: I'll enact Arizona's immigration law in Georgia

http://www.theweekly.com/news/2010/April/27/Deal_immigration.html

Delegate Wants Immigration Fight in MD

<http://www.abc2news.com/news/local/story/Delegate-Wants-Immigration-Fight-in-MD/rozgMKvpgEKqzM-3a1y32w.csp>

New Arizona immigration law sounds good to Butler County officials

<http://news.cincinnati.com/apps/pbcs.dll/article?AID=/AB/20100427/NEWS01/4280359/>

Texas lawmaker to introduce tough immigration bill

<http://www.dallasnews.com/sharedcontent/APStories/stories/D9FC60000.html>

Lawmaker wants to bring Arizona immigration law to Utah

http://www.sltrib.com/Nation and World/ci_14963407?source=pkg



Initiated in 2004 by Arte Sana, ALAS is a national Latina-led membership network of victim advocates working to address and prevent sexual violence. Through collaborative efforts and cyber activism, ALAS promotes the leadership of Latina victim advocates and develops models, resources and develops models, resources and policies to empower communities and eliminate access barriers for survivors. ALAS honors the diversity of the Latin@ culture by respecting the similarities and differences of our languages and histories.



Arte Sana
Victim Advocacy *SIN Fronteras*
(without borders)

Founded in 2001, Arte Sana (art heals) is a national Latina-led nonprofit committed to ending sexual violence and other forms of gender-based aggressions and engage marginalized communities as *agents of change*. Arte Sana promotes awareness, healing, and empowerment through bilingual professional training, community education, and the arts.