

MUJER

ANNUAL REPORT 2009-2010



LEADERSHIP TRAINING YOUNG LATINAS IN LEADERSHIP ROLES

This year MUJER included in its curriculum a 'train the trainer' program, with the goal of empowering young Latinas to become leaders in the Jane-Finch and Weston neighbourhood. This program consisted of 8 workshops which prepare 15 young women to plan and organize their own workshops to a group of their peers.

One of its workshops, called 'Young Latinas as Agents of Change', included practical youth-friendly information on the advantages of co-facilitation, knowing your audience, agenda develop-

ment, and breathing techniques to calm the public-speaking jitters. Other topics included Violence Against Women; Self Esteem and Self Worth; Sexuality and Reproductive Rights; and Addressing Changes in Society. Through this kind of leadership training model, participants gained tools, skills, and knowledge on promoting Healthy and Equal Relationships.

The program was composed of 6 theoretical workshops of 3 and half hours each week, as well as 2 school presentations and 2 sessions to build presentations. Through the practical component of the training, participants were expected to engage in public education, support school outreach and presentations, and honour their commitment to the completion of the whole program.

It was interesting to hear the reasons why each participant was attending the program. Two of them even admitted that they were there to receive community hours. But as the program wound down, the same two participants stated that they had learned a great deal and had become empowered to talk about important issues that are not addressed or taken seriously at home, which is the first step to becoming true agents of change in their communities.



Graduates of Young Latinas in Leadership Roles Training

Executive Director's Report



Engagement and Capacity Building:

2009 has been a very successful year for MUJER in building capacity and leadership skills for under-served and disengaged Latina youth in the Jane Finch Neighborhood. MUJER sees the importance of listening and working with youth, and thus the need to empower these young women to be leaders within their community. Through engagement and capacity building, these young leaders will mobilize for change and enhance their leadership skills by working with other young Latinas.

Achievements:

- Gender Equity and Human Rights. This was a pilot project for MUJER specifically directed around issues of anti-homophobia and anti-heterosexism, new knowledge was definitely acquired.
- Summer Camp program 2009, a group of 20 teenagers aged 11 to 15 residing in Jane and Finch. Participants enjoyed a cultural, recreational and educational program for 2 weeks.
- Successful Leadership Training Model for 15 Latinas youth ages 14 to 17 with 8 formal workshops. Leadership trainings for young Latinas from Jane and Finch Neighborhood on Healthy and Equal Relationship.
- We trained 40 youth Latinas in our LEADERSHIP TRAINING PROGRAM.
- We delivered 22 school and community workshops/presentations for 400 student and some adults of all communities.

Partnerships and Network:

MUJER has developed a good relationship with funders, community agencies, and youth groups, who have been supporting our efforts in working with young Latinas on sensitive issues that affect them. Outreach took place through community organizations, schools, Spanish-speaking media, school boards, and partners' agencies. We have continued with Youth Challenge Fund for the last year, and we continue working with City of Toronto AEHR on Access Equity and Human Rights.

MUJER made much progress in 2009. This was the second year that we continued working with youth initiatives to empower and engage young Latinas in the area of Jane and Finch. We have truly recognized the importance to empower young Latinas, and to encourage and their potential to become true activists/advocates for changes in society.

Looking forward we are planning to organize a Conference in the fall of 2010 with funding from The Trillium Foundation and the City of Toronto Identity 'N Impact Investment Fund fall. We are also grateful to the Status of Women Canada which has issued 3 years funding to address issues of health and behavior of Youth Latinas and their parents. All of this would not been possible without the support of ours funders, volunteers, partner agencies and staff.

Thank you all!!

Lilian Valverde—Executive Director



Left:
Members participating during MUJER'S 2008-2009 Annual General Meeting

Right:
Human Rights and Gender Equity Training Workshop



SUMMER CAMP-FOCUS ON YOUTH LEADERSHIP ON HEALTHY AND EQUAL RELATIONSHIPS

In July 2009, MUJER delivered a two-week summer camp program at St. Francis De Sales Catholic school, which aimed at fostering an understanding of the importance of healthy and equal relationships. The program worked with young women living in the Jane and Finch area between the ages of 11- 15 and who identified as Latina. Some topics in the program included: body image, self-esteem, self-care, nutrition, anti-homophobia, and

conflict resolution. Participants were also encouraged to engage in their community by participating in a scavenger hunt, a trip to The Spot (a youth drop-in in the area) and an extended trip to High Park.

The program also included an artistic component where the participants expressed issues in their lives and in their community through a play, artwork and music. This was the first time that MUJER worked with girls of such young age. This proved to be a challenge in certain occasion where the topics discussed were of sensitive nature, such as abuse. However, it was evident that young girls nowadays are more vulnerable than ever, largely because of the media, to issues that remain with them throughout their lives.



Summer Camp Leadership Training graduates.

LEADERSHIP TRAINING HUMAN RIGHTS AND GENDER EQUITY

MUJER offered Human Rights and Gender Equity training to young Latinas from Jane and Finch where there is a concentration of Spanish speaking population and a high percentage of youth at risk. Eight participants were selected among graduates of other MUJER trainings. This training took place thanks to funding by the City of Toronto, Access, Equity and Human Rights (AEHR) and Community Partnership and Investment Program (CPIP).

Building on the success of last year's Human Rights and Racism project, and on the needs highlighted by youth and the community at the Day of Awareness, we have learned that the Latin American community needs to continue to work on issues of human rights and gender equity. This work required effort and perseverance. At times some schools were hesitant to open their doors to our presentations, however, it was clear that there is a very high demand for the kind of work we do, particularly in schools/courses where discussions on human rights and gender equality are limited.

We received a very positive response from the community as youth became more aware of their actions and the meaning behind their language. We were also able to provide them with new language they could use to identify certain issues, like gender discrimination, homophobia, heterosexism, gender identity, etc. For many of them, it was the first time that these issues were being discussed in the classroom.

Through this pilot project MUJER gained more knowledge around the different communities that exist within the gamut of gender identity and sexual orientation. We have since then become more aware in terms of appropriate language and terminologies regarding the LGBTQ community. Furthermore, MUJER gained new appreciation for the different organizations that exist for youth within Toronto and in the Jane/Finch area specifically who may be exploring, questioning and living with identities outside the status quo, and we have shared this information with young Latinas.

Testimonials

"My relationship with MUJER began in 2003 when I enrolled in the Community Worker Program at George Brown College. MUJER provided me with incredible skills, resources and methods of deconstructing social injustices that I will be forever grateful for. The ability that MUJER has to develop, educate and promote Latina leadership in Toronto is phenomenal. Of all the great work that MUJER has done, **what I personally value the most is the space that it provides for growth and social change as well as the amazing friendships it creates for Latin-American women in Toronto.**"

Cindy Laparra— former Placement Student and volunteer

"MUJER is a great place to do placement because they don't look at you just as a student. You are more than that, you're a member of the team. They allow you to become as involved as you wish. **I realized that MUJER not only gives a voice to the Latin community but to me as well, and this is why I'm very happy with the choice of being a student at MUJER**"

Elvia Penate—Placement Student



Above: MUJERes at the yearly march on International Women's Day

Below: Newcomer Youth Theatre Group from the Mennonite New Life Centre perform during MUJER's celebration of International Women's Day



"My time with MUJER was fantastic and inspirational. I will never forget this experience and everything I learned. The workshops informed me about my rights, about what to do in certain situations, and much more. I learned the different types of relationships and different types of abuse that exist. This was particularly important to me because **I have friends that were going through abusive relationships and I didn't know what to tell them, and now I do.** I hope to continue being involved with MUJER in the future."

*Evelyn Oyenader—
Leadership Training participant*

"I came to MUJER in March 2009 seeking the opportunity to work as a volunteer, gain Canadian experience in the social service field, and more importantly, learn about the reality of Latin-American women in Canada. As a member of MUJER I have been able to be part of a team that works for and with women and Latin-American youth to empower them and enhance their potential within our community. **Being at MUJER has been a rewarding experience that has made me mature and become aware of my gender and the power that I have as a woman.**"

Maritza Monsalve—volunteer

Raising Awareness, Raising Funds, Having fun!

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

On March 6th, MUJER once again took part in the yearly Intentional Women's Day march to support women and their fight for equality. We marched vigorously alongside the Center for Spanish Speaking People, Mujeres al Frente, and the Hispanic Development Council. We chanted and marched together as women from different places and backgrounds for one reason: to fight for the equality of women.

This year, MUJER also held an event to celebrate IWD on March 12 at Culture Link. The program began with a powerful performance by the Newcomer Youth Theatre group of the Mennonite New Life Centre. It showed the issues of inequality between men and women and how it leads to problems such as violence against women. Participants took part in a discussion on how these issues affected their lives and how it plays out in society. Following the discussion was a moving and dynamic dance by Heryka Miranda. She performed the interpretation of a tree's spirit. We all enjoyed ourselves with fun music, delicious food and great conversation.

FUNDRAISING BBQ

On a stormy Saturday afternoon, which at the last moment turned sunny, MUJER held a BBQ to raise funds for our work in violence prevention in the Latino community. Thanks to the hard work of our volunteers (and the hospitality of the one who offered her backyard), we raised over \$3,000. Live music, raffle prizes, and a savoury BBQ South-American style made for a memorable afternoon and a great cause!



Musicians performing live at our fundraiser BBQ

CHRISTMAS SALE

Santa Claus visited MUJER in the beginning of December. On a very crisp Saturday afternoon, volunteers and artisans of our community came out to support the work of MUJER while showcasing their beautiful hand-made crafts. Part of the proceeds went towards the projects that MUJER does with youth.

The 'Bazar' was open to the community and was a day full of music, shopping and lots of hot chocolate!

Other Projects

POPULAR UNIVERSITY

LATINA FEMINISM: A PILOT PROJECT

In 2009 Mujer co-sponsored a course on Latina Feminism in conjunction with the Women's Studies Department at OISE. This project was extremely successful and incredibly exciting. For the first time, a free, theory-based course was offered to young women regardless of their academic background. The committee involved in the project was comprised of two Doctoral students responsible for the course's content and delivery, as well as two young women who took the lead in facilitating the seminar part of the course.

Young women applied for the course by submitting a letter of interest. After an extensive selection process, we ended up with 15 participants in the course. They were from very diverse backgrounds, nationalities, sexual orientations, and educational backgrounds. Discussions were passionate and participants were challenged on their worldviews while striving to respect and validate everyone's experience.

One of the most marvellous things was that the participants made presentations using the knowledge acquired in the course, but chose very different mediums to convey it: poetry, a video, PowerPoint, essays, etc. This course is one of the first experiments in providing a free feminist university course for women who are interested in solidifying their feminist praxis.

MUJER's Team

Board of Directors

Alejandra Cabezas - President
Alejandra Fuentes
Angelica Tang
Carmen Miranda - Secretary
Camila de la Maza
Consuelo Llanos
Gisela Vanzaghi
Mitzy Paz
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Silvia Arauz
Vera Souza

Staff

Lilian Valverde,
Executive Director

Youth Workers

Heryka Miranda
Bixi Lobo-Molnar
Silvia Arauz

Interns

Elvia Penate



MUJER's Board Members

Gracias !

MUJER wants to give special recognition to the individuals that have supported MUJER's initiatives over the years, your support makes it all possible. We thank you for believing in the importance of the work that MUJER does with the Latin American community.

Special Thanks

Sue Wilkinson Executive Director and all staff of Jane/Finch Community and Family Centre for their amazing support MUJER Work

Magaly San Martin for her valuable work and commitment for MUJER's Cause

Julia Sanchez and *Raul Sanchez* for offering House for the BBQ Fundraising

Alejandra Bravo for being an active advocate for MUJER

Volunteers

Alicia Romo, Alejandra Fuentes,
Camila de la Maza, Carolin Rios,
Francisco Nomes, Gisela Vanzaghi,
Jeannethe Lara, Jose Novielo,
Lautaro Fuentes, Maritza Monsalve,
Mitzy Paz, Melina Velazquez,
Nano Valverde, Sandra Videz,
Silvia Arauz, Taira Lesiaga,
Cindy Laparra,

We are extremely grateful to our Funders!

We thank you for believing in the importance of the work MUJER does with the Latin American community



Condition féminine
Canada

Status of Women
Canada



MUJER

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