



# MUJERes Sharing Stories

MUJER

ANNUAL REPORT 2007

## MUJER Wins City Award



Carolina Rios & Carmen Miranda at Radio Station

In 2007 MUJER's Leadership Training on Violence Prevention Model won the 2007 Mayor's Community Safety Awards. Alejandra Bravo explained in her nomination letter that the model "is a uniquely innovative, empowering, successful violence prevention program aimed at young immigrants in the city of Toronto."

Our model was recognize for its ability to mobilize young people as agents of change to prevent violence and promote healthy relationships within the school, the family



Trainees presenting at School

and neighbourhood. The emphasis on young women further mobilizes, training them to be key actors and

leaders in this social change process.



Trainees preparing presentations for younger girls

MUJER is extremely successful at reaching young people, empowering them, prompting them to action, and developing them into lead-

ers. Whether presenting in schools, community centres or other informal gatherings, MUJER's front line spokespeople are young women themselves. This ensures that the message is carried by peers, but also allows the organization to define the challenges and solutions to violence in the community by incorporating the perspective of youth as a driver of the process.

MUJER has been able to build a new generation of leaders committed to violence prevention work. MUJER has directly trained over 75 young women; they in turn have trained 200 young women. More than 600 additional young men and women have participated in their programs.

MUJER's engagement of youth in identifying the roots

of violence has had other unique and powerful expressions. MUJER held a series of forums and meetings in secondary schools in which it asked young people themselves (a diverse group of youth) what were the causes of youth violence.

MUJER also asked youth for the solutions. The answers were startling. For while they included such solutions as longer opening hours for community centres, better access to training, etc., the



Leadership Training Graduates

youth ranked "more time with our parents" as the most important solution. The reason: so many parents have two or three jobs in order to meet the needs of their families. This experience demonstrates that youth involvement is critical for the success of any violence prevention program. Their engagement can identify the problem and lead to solutions based on lived experience.

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# President & Executive Director's Report



Sayonara Mairena,  
Joe Mihevc, Lilian Valverde  
at Open House 2007

*“MUJER has emphasized young women to further mobilize them to be key actors and leaders in this social change process”*

We would like to give our sincere thanks to all of MUJER members and those people who collaborate with the organization. We want to give particular thanks to the Board of Directors, the volunteers, and the staff for their energy, commitment, passion and dedication in all activities and programs that MUJER has delivered in 2007.

It was a successful year, full of commitment and challenges. We achieved outstanding results. Twenty five new youth leaders graduated in 2007. We have done 25 school and community presentations and workshops run by trainees.

We also did one Youth Community Forum and many interviews and media presentations. We reached over 500 youth Latinas/os and children and involved 85 volunteers (most of them young women) in different activities.

MUJER has emphasized young women to further mobilize them to be key actors and leaders in this social change process.

We would like to make special

reference to young women graduates from the Leadership Program. Many of them now are part of our Board of Directors, committees and have given volunteer time in a number of our activities. These

young women have shown a deep commitment and passion to achieving results. They daily demonstrate the effectiveness

of MUJER's Leadership Program, in training a younger generation of women to lead activities and action in our community. We believe that by mobilizing young people as agents of change in preventing violence and promoting healthy relationships we can build strong organizational capacity and a more vibrant, resilient and healthy community.



Magaly San Martin  
& Lorena Gajardo

During 2007, MUJER delivered innovative programs and we have built significant new partnerships while sustaining ongoing partnerships. We have delivered programs

in partnership with the Ontario Government and City of Toronto, among others. We are

extremely grateful to the Brumara Foundation for their tremendous financial support.

Here are some of the projects and activities that MUJER delivered during 2007:

- **Healthy and Equal Relationship:** Young Latinas in Leadership Roles, supported by Ontario Women's Directorate.
- **Educational and Prevention Action Program for Young Latinas** who have been victimized by sexual assault and other forms of violence, funded by The Ministry of the Attorney General of Ontario.
- **Partnership project with the Ontario Council of Agencies Serving Immigrants** more on page 4.
- **Access, Equity on Human Rights and Racism:** More on page 3.
- **2007 Mayor's Community Safety Awards** MUJER is proud to receive this award as recognition of our work.

To finalize thanks to partner agencies, the Toronto District School Board, Councilors and Trustees to all colleagues who contributed with their support to our work in a number of ways during 2007.

Sayonara Mairena  
President

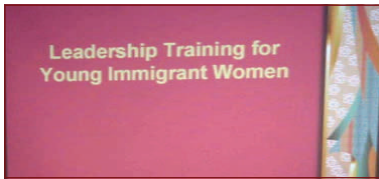
Lilian Valverde  
Executive Director



Alejandra Cabezas, Minister of  
Ontario Women's Directorate &  
Carolina Rios

# MUJER Was There!

## MUJER Presented Leadership Model at OCASI's Conference



MUJER participated in the OCASI Professional Development Conference held in October 2007.

MUJER's team delivered an information session and a workshop. Three young former participants of the leadership trainings facilitated the information session. They shared their experiences as young

Latina immigrants living in Canada. They spoke about the different ways in which the organization has provided them with a safe space to grow and continue to work within their communities as role models and leaders.

Lilian Valverde and Magaly San Martin delivered a workshop explaining the Leadership Training for Immigrant Women Model. The facilitators offered a description of the Leadership Training Model, the theoretical /social framework used and the outreach,

recruitment and selecting process for participants. Attendants learned how the model can be adapted by other communities with different needs and characteristics. They also learned successful strategies to engage immigrant communities to address, reduce and prevent violence in their lives and to assist young women to take leadership roles.



**Lilian Valverde & Magaly San Martin Presenting**

## MUJER's Open House 2007

In September of 2007, MUJER had a re-launching event. In order to get ready for the event we painted and re-organized the office. We celebrated MUJER's past and present accomplishments with some of our partners, volunteers, founders, funders, and staff. We developed new alliances and partnerships. Our youth met

our political leaders working in and for the development of women. MUJER guests met some of our socially engaged young leaders, who have demonstrated a commitment to promoting the development of women through their involvement with MUJER. The afternoon was full of sharing stories on how

MUJER has touched the lives of different women. Women from different generations, beliefs and backgrounds came together and shared why MUJER is an important organization for them and why it must continue. Thank you to everyone who attended the event. It was truly a success!



**Attendants enjoying food and entertainment**



**Members of the Board & attendants**

On March 7<sup>th</sup>, 2008,

despite the cold, snowy evening, many community members, including volunteers, family and friends, came to MUJER's IWD celebration to show their support to the organization and the work that we do. MUJER took advantage of this commemorative event to acknowledge

## International Women's Day

the women in our community by providing a space in which inspiring women like Silvia Arauz, Jeannethe Lara, and Alejandra Cabezas shared their personal stories. Also in attendance was spoken-word artist La Revolucionaria who performed two powerful pieces, one in Spanish and one in English. And to wrap up the evening, Paula López accompanied by her husband shared their musical talent through singing and guitar playing. These expressions of life experience were complemented by others' contribution to thought-provoking discussions,

further exemplifying the diversity in what it means to be a woman. As our circle in the small MUJER office grew larger throughout the evening, it was wonderful to see different generations of strong women coming together, laughing, talking, reflecting, and sharing good food. MUJER would like to thank all women for their stories throughout the years and their vision of hope. Let us never forget the words of Audre Lorde: "When I dare to be powerful, to use my strength in the service of my vision, then it becomes less important whether I am afraid."



# Our Work with Youth

## Gracias to All Our Committed Volunteers

Imagine what it would be like to work at a small office, with very few resources, where you and the Executive Director are the only staff and you both work part time. And imagine that you have ahead a big mission to fulfill, such as achieving social justice for all Latin American women and children.



How do you do it?

Passion, commitment and hard work on behalf of the staff is **Bixi Painting MUJER**

definitely part of the answer. But we all know that there is only so much that you can accomplish when you have few resources. So what else can you do? Work with volunteers!!

Over the past years, MUJER has developed the capacity to engage volunteers who come in all sizes and shapes and support us in a variety of ways.

In 2007, 85 volunteers contributed their time and skills. They help us fundraise,



deliver workshops and presentations

### Strategic Planning

as part of our leadership training program, outreach people in the community, provide information of services available to women and promote our organization and the work we do.

To all of them, we say Thank You, and we look forward to your continued support.

## Leadership Training on Sexual Assault



### Training Participants

The project on Leadership Training on Violence Prevention and Sexual Assault was geared to young Latinas ages 18 to 25. The trainings first and foremost increased the self-esteem of the participants and gave them tools to address violence in their lives and in their

communities. It was a starting point to talk openly about sexual abuse and violence against women. Trainees learned more about how to avoid re-victimization resulting from sexual assault and violence in their lives. These young women also helped younger Latinas recognize signs of sexual abuse and violence.

The first component of the project was the workshops addressing issues such as contextualization of violence against women, sexual assault, signs of abuse, healthy sexuality, healthy relationships, etc. The girls were, also, trained presentations development and facilitation skills.

The second component was for the trainees to deliver five presentations to Latinas ages 13 to 17 on healthy relationships and the identification of signs of danger. Trainees were responsible for the development and outreach of their workshop.

In the development of the curriculum and the delivery of the trainings MUJER had the support and expertise of women working in agencies like Toronto Women's Hospital, Planned Parenthood, Toronto Rape Centre, Jessie's Centre for Pregnant Teens and METRAC.

## Human Rights and Anti-Racism Workshops

The training prepared young Latina women ages 18 to 30 as leaders and advocates of human rights and anti-racism. The training addressed racism and its interconnectedness to other forms of discriminations like classism and sexism, its roots; and racism in a Canadian context. They also looked at the role of the Ontario Human Rights Commission. The trainees shared with us that they found the workshops educational and motivating.

For the practical component, the trainees participated in the outreach process; they planned,

and implemented presentations on human rights and anti-racism at schools or community centres with great enthusiasm and commitment.

The response received from the youth attendants to the presentations was amazing. They actively participated in the presentations showing a strong interest in the topics. They engaged in the discussions and felt comfortable enough to share their life experiences and how they have been affected by racism. Through the



### Training Participants

presentations we realized the great need that exists among youths to speak about issues of racism and discrimination that they face on a daily basis at schools,

workplaces, and in their neighbourhoods.

We are very proud of our trainees who are role models and leaders with a commitment to educating others on human rights and anti-racism.

# MUJERes Sharing

## Struggle for an Identity

Growing up in Brampton during the 90's was a bit of a challenge for me. Looking back now, I many times regret many of my actions and thoughts as a child. However, I have more recently come to the conclusion that how could I have acted and thought in any other way? Most of my school friends and the people in my neighborhood were Canadian European descendant. My parents are immigrants from Peru and I was embarrassed of this. I was embarrassed for the beans and rice we ate instead of the hotdogs and fries my

friends ate. I was embarrassed for not looking like the other girls and always being teased by them as being fat because I didn't have their body type. I was embarrassed for a culture I knew nothing about.

Then when I was about 9 we moved to Peru for a while. I discovered a whole country of people that spoke Spanish, that ate the same food as I did, that looked like me and were not considered fat. I began to understand who the Incas were, what Guanabana [Soursop] tasted like, and I also was shocked at the great



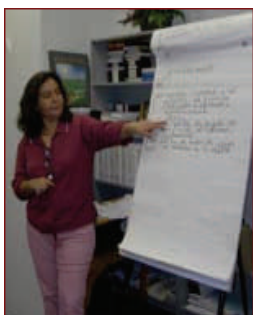
Alicia Performing at Event

disparity and poverty that my people were living in. When we moved back to Canada year later, I was a new person or perhaps the same one but with eyes a little more open. I understood and appreciated my culture. I also realized what I had many times taken for granted in Canada was now something to appreciate. I felt a new calling. I thought of those people in Peru begging for money every time we stopped the car. Something was not right, I didn't exactly know what, and I didn't know how I could help but I was certain I would.

Alicia Romo

## Why I Have Stayed Involved at MUJER Through the Years?

MUJER is a squalid, little organization that continuously struggles for funding. However, because of the women who participate in it, it always seems like a gigantic organization that raises Latinas' voices over the deafening indifference of the government or even other community agencies. MUJER has carried out projects on shoestring funds always because there have been Latinas to whom it has become painfully clear that we



Magaly facilitating a leadership workshop

need a space, we need a voice, we need a presence. There is so much that can be done if only we are given an opportunity.

This has become obvious in the Latin American young women's leadership training.

For me, it is incredibly rewarding to meet young women who are eager to discuss issues, who are curious about their identities and (her)stories and who are committed to change. It is always gratifying to see young women become inspired to finish a

life project and excited to give back to the community. I am grateful that I can be given the chance to be a mentor and, at the same time, learn from the experiences of young women. I see myself in their reflection. Many things have not changed since the time when I was a young activist: sexism, racism and violence. But now, we have far more tools to confront these oppressions and, more importantly, there is far more of us to rely on each other.

MUJER opened a path. It is the women who tread on it that will make it into a wide road for all of us.

Magaly San Martin

## MUJER: source of inspiration

MUJER has saved me. It's a place where I can be myself. I'm a person, not an immigrant, not a woman of color, not someone with an accent, but just Alejandra, the passionate, spontaneous, outspoken and direct, real me.

MUJER has saved me from boredom, from feeling helpless, useless, skill less, worthless. The women at MUJER have reminded me of who I really am and what I can really do. They have reminded me that many things have to change and that not only can

we change them but that we *must* change them. I have been reminded that it is OK to be pushy when you must; it's OK to enter a conflict if we must.

MUJER inspired me to do better, to keep on trying even when I feel that it is not possible and all the odds are against me.

MUJER has inspired me to work hard, to



Alejandra Cabezas, Sayonora Mairena, Cindy Laparra & Carmen Miranda inspired

push even harder, and to speak even louder. It has inspired me to create new things. It has inspired me to remember where I came from and where I want to go. It has inspired me to dream big, it has inspired me to learn from the ones that came before me. It has inspired me to be me, just the way I am.

But most of all MUJER is a place where I have FUN.

Alejandra Cabezas



# MUJER's Team

## Board of Directors

Alejandra Cabezas  
Angelica Tang-Treasurer  
Bixidu Lobo-Molnar-Secretary  
Brenda Acevedo  
Consuelo Llanos  
Jeannethe Lara  
Gisela Vanzaghi  
Linamaria Aristizabal  
Mitzy Paz  
Sayonara Mairena-President

## Staff

Lilian Valverde (Executive Director)  
Carolina Rios (Project Coordinator)  
Heryka Miranda (Project Coordinator)

## GRACIAS!

MUJER wants to give special recognition to the co-founders of LACEV— MUJER, for their Vision, Commitment and Dedication. They made possible to build LACEV - MUJER 17 years ago, many of them still maintain their support and enrolment in different activities and bodies of MUJER. Also MUJER is please in recognizing the valuable contribution of a group of volunteers who made the difference for the pass 5 years with their support and dedication in diverse areas of need.

### **Founders Members**

Alejandra Priego  
Sayonara Mairena  
Maritza Sanchez  
Janet Lara  
Magaly San Martin  
Consuelo Llanos  
Julia Sanchez  
Ruth Lara  
Viviana Fleming  
Loly Rico  
Lilian Valverde  
Irenes Altimira

### **Volunteers for more than five years**

Alejandra Bravo  
Angelica Tang  
Taira Liceaga  
Raul Oliva  
Lautaro Fuentes

## 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.

**The Brumara Foundation**

**The City of Toronto**

**Ontario Women's Directorate**

**Individual donors**

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