

Statement of the Battered/Formerly Battered Women's Caucus of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence 2004

In order for the domestic violence movement to facilitate effective and positive social change in our society, it is imperative that Battered and Formerly Battered Women have a clear presence and a loud voice to direct and guide this movement. We have a commitment to provide compassionate, respectful support to the women we serve. As a movement, it is in our best interest to consider survivors' wealth of knowledge and resources, as well as represent those who have been silenced.

As Battered and Formerly Battered Women we fight against the stereotypes dominant culture forces upon us. Then, we turn to the Battered Women's Movement that purports to validate and support us, to find we must continue to struggle and educate. We refuse to have our experiences, reactions and our history pathologized. We will not be defined as having a psychological malady that caused, created, or attracted abuse to us and to our lives. We will not be defined as having a psychological malady because we have been battered.

The Battered and Formerly Battered Women's Caucus of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence call upon all Battered Woman's Projects, Organizations, and Workers to stop using clinical language, and mental health/social work models in their work with Battered Women and Children. These approaches were embraced to gain respect and support for the battered women's movement, but they have failed to do so. While this approach may have gained respect and financial advantage for some battered women's workers, this language has done so at a cost of re-victimizing, stigmatizing, disrespecting, and demeaning Battered Women. It has also inadvertently aided batterers using institutional systems to persecute Battered Women, in areas such as child custody proceedings.

The Battered and Formerly Battered Women's Caucus of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence call upon all Battered Woman's Projects, Organizations and Workers to recognize that it is your day-to-day advocacy and interaction with Battered Women and their Children that creates social change. Focusing on mental health/social work models that promote the idea that Battered Women need treatment distracts from our most immediate work and deepest belief: the needs she brings to us for safety, support and justice and her inherent autonomy to direct her life and define her identity.

The Battered and Formerly Battered Women's Caucus of the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence call upon researchers and academics within the movement to make their primary focus the cultural and systemic basis of abuse to women and children. We challenge researchers and academics to step up as partners in promoting social change to end battering and sexual assault. We also challenge them to reevaluate current practice that focuses on the outcomes of such research that concentrates on creating and perpetuating the concept of domestic violence as individual psychopathology and/or as caused by alcohol/drug abuse. We recognize past research has increased funding and validity for some; however, we believe the interpretation and implementation of such findings has aided in the suffering and death of the very individuals the research was intended to serve...Battered Women and Children.