

# BUILDING A MOVEMENT TO END VIOLENCE AGAINST GIRLS AND WOMEN

## *Build a Movement 101*

We are a diverse community of activists that come together as leaders in Move to End Violence to imagine what a more invigorated and powerful movement committed to ending violence might look like. Move to End Violence is a 10-year program of the NoVo Foundation designed to strengthen leaders, organizations and the entire movement working to end violence against girls and women in the United States. Every two years, the program selects a group of individuals to participate in an intensive experience to grow their leadership and collaboration and develop bold strategies.

We believe that the problem of violence against girls and women is so massive and systemic that we need to take a different approach, one focused on mobilizing individuals and communities to address the root causes of violence. We invite all movement activists and leaders to join with us to build the critical mass needed to truly end violence against girls and women.

### **A few guiding concepts underpinned our conversations and work during the past two years:**



- Our movement must place the most marginalized girls and women at the center of our efforts. When we see the world through the eyes of the most marginalized, we can see most clearly not only the problems we face but also the solutions we need. Marginalized girls and women who experience violence, including low-income women, women of color, immigrant women, native women and LGBTQ-identified people, face multiple forms of oppression which compound each other and profoundly impact their experiences with and responses to violence. Focusing on marginalized girls and women means ensuring that our actions, strategies, policies and programs not only respect and reflect their experiences but also serve to advance their agency and leadership in their own lives and in the movement at large. This is essential to our success in ending violence against all girls and women and in the broader struggle against oppression and social injustice.



- Violence against girls and women is part of the continuum of gender oppression and is fueled by social injustice including patriarchy, sexism, racism, classism, homophobia, transphobia, religious discrimination and anti-immigrant sentiment. To truly eliminate violence against girls and women, we must address the larger systemic issues that generate and sustain it.



- Our movement is inextricably linked to other struggles for social justice. Our success depends on the success of all movements for justice and dignity. Only by developing cross-movement partnerships can we become a powerful force in the broader fight for social justice and only then can we build the critical mass within our own movement needed to achieve our goal.

We believe our movement needs to be as expansive as the vision to end violence against girls and women. That means there is room for all of us to innovate, dream and come together to create a new path. Now is the time to join together to renew our movement and to pivot from where we are to where we want and need to be – bold, revitalized, inspired, aligned and strategic.

## Our Vision



We envision a world of interconnected people and communities actively working toward a society where all girls and women are safe and valued, and where everyone can reach their full potential. Our vision is for a world rooted in peace, justice and equality where violence against girls and women is no longer inevitable and where all people can fully exercise their rights. In this vision, we stand together with those who are oppressed and fight injustice, even in the face of resistance. In this vision, we work to create communities that are safe, loving and respectful of everyone's inherent human dignity. In this vision, we believe that meeting the needs and building the agency of the most vulnerable are essential to our collective progress and are the measure by which we judge our success. We all have a role in creating and living this vision.

## How We Get There

To achieve this vision, our movement needs to change how we work. Below are three fundamental shifts or “pivots” that can help us make this change.



### **PIVOT I: PROACTIVE**

We need to move from reactive to proactive, pursuing a bold vision for change.



### **PIVOT II: INTERCONNECTED**

We need to move from a fragmented field working in silos to an interconnected movement that has exponentially greater impact.



### **PIVOT III: SOCIAL CHANGE**

We need to move from a primary focus on meeting the immediate needs of people impacted by violence to an integrated approach that combines services and social change.



#### **Pivot I – Proactive:**

We need to move from reactive to proactive, pursuing a bold vision for change.

Our movement has made tremendous strides during the past 30 years. We have identified violence against girls and women as an urgent priority and set up vital services in every state in the nation. We have developed policies and laws to protect those who experience violence and

hold accountable those who use violence. However, we now spend most of our time addressing the overwhelming need and responding to an often hostile political landscape. Too often we are on the defensive and suffer from stagnation and burnout. To truly end violence against girls and women, we must proactively pursue a bold vision for change. Specifically, we need to:

- Believe that a world without violence is attainable and clearly articulate and embrace our vision.
- Advocate for and strategically use funding so that we prioritize prevention along with intervention and take holistic approaches that transform systems and communities alike.
- Celebrate innovation and risk taking.
- Be nimble and strategic, and galvanize the political will to proactively set our policy agenda.



### **Pivot II – Interconnected:**

We need to move from a fragmented field working in silos to an **interconnected movement** that has exponentially greater impact.

Our movement has become more specialized and developed greater expertise to serve and advocate for the needs of those impacted by violence. Unfortunately, this specialization has also led to an emphasis on short-term, fragmented approaches and greater isolation within the field and across movements. We need to work together strategically to generate the profound, long-term impact we seek. Specifically, we need to:

- Recognize that we are part of an ecosystem where all people and organizations in our movement are connected and where each has an important role to play.
- Harness the current expertise in our movement and other social justice movements for strategic collaboration, coordination and cooperation.
- Coordinate to build sustainable, collective leadership, recognizing that there is value in both sharing leadership and at other times strategically deciding who steps forward.
- Ensure that service providers and advocates within the movement work in full partnership to achieve our long-term vision.



### **Pivot III – Social Change:**

We need to move from a primary focus on meeting the immediate needs of people impacted by violence to an **integrated approach** that combines services and social change.

Our movement has a proud history of social justice organizing, but we have shifted away from those roots. Providing services and changing how systems respond to violence must remain priorities. However, they alone cannot effect the societal change necessary to create a world where all girls and women are safe and valued. We need to reintegrate a social change approach into all our work by supporting the leadership of girls and women who experience violence and mobilizing communities to address its root causes. Specifically, we need to:

- Collaborate with other social justice movements to embrace a broader agenda that challenges the systemic injustices, cultural norms, attitudes and beliefs that are the root causes of violence against girls and women.
- Engage communities to make ending violence a top priority and support them to develop solutions that ensure girls, women and all people are safe and valued.
- Invest in supporting the leadership of people impacted by violence to be agents of change, both in their own lives and in their communities.
- Measure the success of our services and advocacy by how they meet the needs and build the agency of girls and women who experience violence, especially those most marginalized.

## Approaches We Need to Take

To make the pivots described above, we need to take better care of ourselves and each other and develop practices for better communication and understanding. We believe these approaches are essential for the transformation of our movement.



### Deep and Sustained Care for Ourselves and Each Other

The pace we've adopted to keep up with the scale and scope of violence against girls and women is unsustainable. As writer and monk Thomas Merton said,

*"The frenzy of our activism neutralizes our work for peace. It destroys our own inner capacity for peace, because it kills the root of the inner wisdom which makes work fruitful."*

We cannot develop and implement visionary strategies for change in the long term if we are exhausted and burned out in the short term. To shift our work and movement culture, we need to care for ourselves and each other in a markedly different way so that as a movement we can move beyond surviving to thriving. By transforming ourselves, we will be able to engage in work that can actually transform our society. We also will see how interdependent we really are and how that requires us to support one another to bring our best and most powerful selves.



### Honest and Compassionate Communication

For too long, our movement has been fractured – a state that undermines our collective power. Meaningful partnership among all those working to end violence and oppression is crucial to our success. We need to build on the areas where we align and develop the trust needed to have honest conversations and articulate areas of disagreement. We need to be creative in finding a “third way” to move forward together when we disagree. We need to establish a consistent and collective practice of engaging in this type of authentic communication across all of our fields, roles and organizations. These relationships are necessary to face immediate challenges and the formidable ones ahead, and they are critical to our capacity to put our vision into practice.

## Moving Forward

As a first step toward building a renewed movement to end violence against girls and women, we urge you to talk with your organization, network or community about this vision and the actions needed to achieve it. Please also visit our website, [www.movetoendviolence.org](http://www.movetoendviolence.org), and sign up for email updates and encourage others to do the same. We feel honored to partner with you in this process and hope you will stay connected with Move to End Violence, with us and with one another as we move forward together.