

## INCITE! 3rd Color of Violence Conference

Mantilla, Karla

The 3rd Color of Violence Conference (COV) was held by INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence organization on March 11-13 in New Orleans. [See the May/June 2002 issue of off our backs for detailed coverage of the second COV conference.] The theme of the conference was "Stopping the War on Women of Color."

Over a thousand women from across the country and around the world attended. The conference took place in spite of the fact that a large mainstream foundation withdrew a grant in the amount of \$100,000 because of INCITE!'s support for the Palestinian cause.

In a move to both save money for the organization and make the conference financially accessible for a large number of low-income conference goers, the conference stood out from most other conferences because it was not held in an expensive hotel in the middle of an upscale downtown urban area. Instead, it was held in a community center in a historic African American neighborhood in New Orleans, with workshops held in an elementary school across the street.

At the start of the opening plenary, there was an awesome performance by Faith Nolan, a musician who plays guitar, harmonica and tambourine at the same time. She has a wonderful voice, brilliant political lyrics and a bluesy style that is compelling and mesmerizing. (Don't ever miss an opportunity to hear a performance by her!)

Beth Richie, author of *Compelled to Crime: The Gender Entrapment of Black Battered Women*, was the facilitator of the plenary. She began by saying that the goal of the conference was to "talk about violence but also resistance." She said the "real war is war on the streets, institutions, military bases and for women, in their homes."

Amara Ferez, executive director of Sisters in Action (SIA), based in Portland, Oregon, reported that 80% of SIA membership is girls ages 11-17. In 1999, SIA was shut down but was subsequently reopened independently. The shutdown was demoralizing and unexpected since it happened when SIA was only three years old. The staff had little experience with fundraising, administration or infrastructure. In regard to fundraising, the first thing they did was to write grants, but that meant they took on more work. There was a conflict between doing what "we wanted to do internally and what to do to fulfill grants." The administrative part of the organization became immense-establishing and managing such things as insurance, payroll, 501(c)(3) requirements, personnel policies, legal matters, by-laws, articles of incorporation, job descriptions, letterhead, computers, various accounts, etc. It became a "struggle to do social justice work in the nonprofit structure, a struggle to articulate political analysis, a struggle so the culture of the organization was not mimicking the practices we were fighting against."

Perez explained the context behind their work: the pillars of colonialism are 1) taking land and resources; 2) force and technology; and 3) killing people. Those in power employ the pillars of colonialism to keep control, but analyze and explain local issues and policies in language that masks their real agenda-inequality. In Portland, schools with the highest number of students of color and poor students were the first casualties of this process. Authorities told the schools they were not functioning, but the reality was that the schools were actually discredited, which promoted flight from those areas. The next step is that the curriculum is altered and replaced with test preparation to pave the way for charter and private schools. This leads to the depletion of public schools. Ferez pointed out that "they use our concerns-education and equity-with the real intent of undermining the institutions they have fought for decades to establish." She concluded that it is important to unmask these issue campaigns that reshape the dominant culture and popular politics and to expose the truth behind the lies. The projects SIA has worked on include helping youth leaders create T-shirts for their schools to foster school pride in those schools labeled "non-performing" through the "No Child Left Behind" act. SIA also created a "critical cemetery" with a large "death row" mural to highlight the various programs that have died or are being eliminated. In another political awareness project, SIA created a haunted house complete with dazed children, their thinking caps on the floor, to dramatize how the schools are becoming places devoid of critical thinking.

But SIA has found that administrative and fundraising work has been more taxing than all the activist work. Perez emphasized that people must stop thinking that work needs to be done somewhere "out there." The grassroots activist community should not be led by

the nonprofit model, so that the community abandons critical analysis in favor of what a foundation determines to be relevant or important. We must not forget that strategic radical movement building is not on the foundations' agenda. Ten years ago, Perez thought that the management skills needed to manage a nonprofit were more important than organizing skills. Ferez explained, "but that leaves activist organizations dependent on the 'foundation dance,' which exhausts us. The foundations persuade us that we can't do the organizing work without their money." She concluded that we "must prepare for a radical movement that is not funded" by foundations.

Next, Noura Erekat, a Palestinian American student-activist completing her legal education at U.C. Berkeley Boalt Hall School of Law, did a performance art piece about a Palestinian woman trapped in the occupied territories, unable to leave, mired in poverty and bereft at the loss of her loved ones and her children. In a particularly emotional part of the piece, she declared, "I am no murderer, but when I am hungry I will eat the flesh of my oppressor! Yes I would, and so would you!" She ended saying "I am not afraid to cry. I'm gonna cry all the way to freedom.... I may be poor and I may be sick of these concrete walls. Tell your friends that I cry, that I love, that I am so angry, that I am alive, but most of all tell them that I will be free!"

The next speaker was Mahsa Shekarloo, an Iranian woman who is active in women's organizations in Iran and the co-founder of Badjens-an online journal in English that addresses women's and gender issues in Iran. Her most recent project involves the creation of a health center for sex workers in Tehran. She traveled from Iran to attend the INCITE! conference and is a member of INCITE!'s national collective.

She began by giving some general information about Iran that many Americans are not aware of. She said that Iran was called Persia by foreigners in the past, but it was always called Iran by its people. She noted that Iran is famous for pistachios, cats and poetry.

Shekarloo explained that Iran is currently in a sensitive and precarious position. The U.S. government is increasing its belligerent tone and threats toward Iran, implying that the United States might take action against Iran. She gave a brief history of Iran, starting with explaining that earlier, Iran was controlled by Russians in the north and the British in the south. She said that while the nationalist movement in Iran peaked in the early 20th century, which resulted in taking back the country, the foreign influence did not end then. In the early 1950s there was a popular prime minister, Musaddiq, who nationalized the country's oil. The British panicked and called on the United States to help do something about it. The United States responded by helping the British engineer the coup d'etat that deposed the prime minister, who was forced to live out his life in exile. The United States then brought back the shah, which resulted in increasing repression. Then in the 1979, there was a mass-based revolution which deposed the shah. One year later, university students took over the U.S. embassy because the shah had fled to the United States. Shekarloo said Iranians feared that the United States would engineer another coup d'etat. She noted that the students who took the hostages released all the women and men of color, saying that they too were victims of U.S. colonialism and U.S. empire.

She explained that Shiite Muslims are the overwhelming majority in the country. During the 1980s there was a war with Iraq that lasted eight years and resulted in one million deaths, by official count. The war was funded and supported by the Europeans and Americans through the illegal selling of arms to Iran in the Iran-Contra deal. [This was a secret arrangement in the 1980s to provide funds to the Nicaraguan Contra rebels from profits gained by selling arms to Iran. The Iran-Contra affair involved two initiatives undertaken by the Reagan administration. The first was to aid the Contras in Nicaragua who were trying to overturn the Sandinista government there. The second was to trade arms with "moderates" within the Iranian government in order to obtain the release of American hostages.]

During the war, Shekarloo explained, dissent was stifled and repression inside Iran increased, especially repression of secular, leftist and Marxist elements. After the war was over, there was a gradual lessening of repression. But one year ago, neoconservatives came to power in the government, which has increased fear and threats. She explained that when there is fear from the outside, like threats from the United States, people inside Iran are told that if they voice dissent with their government, they will be playing into the hands of the enemy. Shekarloo noted, "We feel it on the inside," when there is pressure from the United States.

She said that she is a big admirer of INCITE! and has taken things she has learned at INCITE! conferences back to Iran. She said that, "We too fear the police," and that it is important to make the larger linkages between what is happening to women of color in the United States and what is happening to people in other countries, like Iran. She told the audience that "You in the United States have responsibility. You have a greater voice here, even though it is still not much, it is more than in Iran." She said they rely on the U.S. anti-war movement. She noted that anti-war activism in the United States lessened after Iraq was attacked, but that Americans should continue protesting. She noted that there are many men of color in the military and asked what could be done about this, expressing dismay that for many men of color, the military is the only viable option to get an education. She said, "Nothing is uglier or worse that

when the oppressed becomes the oppressor."

She also counseled the audience to "turn off the TV. That will get you nowhere," saying that she used to be a TV junkie, but that it is so depressing. She noted that Iranian women are connecting with white women, and that white women are far more organized than women of color. But she said we need to organize to prevent other wars from happening.

The last portion of the plenary involved a spoken word performance from Sisters on the Rise and Sista II Sista from the South Bronx.

Some of the teenage girls spoke after the performance. One noted that there are "so many inequalities we face as Third World women in the United States, so it is important to take care of oneself in order to be an activist, since people are the main resources in activism." She advised taking lunch breaks, taking walks, traveling-doing these things, if not for yourself, for the movement. She emphasized that "we need to take care of our resources for the movement."

Another spoke of raising consciousness, organizing to change conditions in the country and seeking reproductive justice grounded in economic and social realities. She described the Center for Immigrant Rights in the Bronx, which builds solidarity and maintains schools for pregnant and parenting teens. She cited that "seven out of ten teen mothers drop out of school, and the Bronx has one of the highest rates of teen motherhood."

Another talked of starting a campaign to challenge violence against women movements to avoid using the criminal justice systems in partnership with critical resistance. She announced that INCITE! was inaugurating an initiative at the conference to reveal the real impact of policing on women of color. She noted that this revolution will not be funded, and that INCITE! lost a significant amount of funding because of its anti-war position and its support of the Palestinian cause. She said that INCITE! would not compromise its position and so did not end up receiving the money, but that the organizers "put on the conference on anyway using labor, vision, energy and rage-and not so much money."

## Reproductive Justice

### Workshop: Organizing for Reproductive Liberation for Women of Color

Presented by Theryn Kigvamasud' Vashti and Leak Henry-Tanner

Henry-Tanner is a member of the Nez Perce Tribe of Idaho, works as a community advocate for the SIDS Foundation of Washington in Seattle, and is a long-time activist on the issues of tribal sovereignty, treaty, reproductive health and civil and human rights as well as organizing opposition to white supremacists and challenging the anti-democratic far right. She talked about looking at personal violence in the context of state violence and asked, what is driving both of them? Regarding reproductive justice, she said there is high infant mortality in Seattle, and mentioned forms of dangerous reproduction such as the more widespread use of Depo Provera on poor women of color who do not have access to better reproductive information and methods. She explained that a greater number of women of color are poor or living with disability, and that the prochoice/pro-life arguments don't resonate in communities of color.

Henry-Tanner gave a brief overview of the history of native American/indigenous peoples in America, explaining that they have lived here for thousands of years and that once contact with Europeans was made, choices that native American/indigenous women could make before began to be taken away. Two key factors were colonization, where, for example, under the Indian Removal Act, the army removed native peoples from their homelands which resulted in the deaths of their babies and children; and militarization, where wars have been waged against native people to enforce policies of genocide and to acquire their land. She explained that later on, the widespread use of boarding schools for native children resulted in the forced assimilation of native people with attempts to "turn native children into white people, farmers." She said "They took Native children away, beat them, cut their hair, didn't allow them to wear any traditional clothing," and "the child welfare system of today is similar: they take the children away and raise them to be 'American.'"

Kigvamasud' Vashti is a community organizer at Communities Against Rape and Abuse (CARA) in Seattle. She told of the reproductive history of African Americans that "during the passage from Africa, babies died and were taken away and women were raped on a massive scale" by slaveowners. She talked of the problem of vaginal fistulas-scar tissue over the vagina-that formed due to early sexual abuse. She said that the doctor of gynecology who invented the speculum did it to remove the fistulas. The speculum was shaped like a tablespoon, and they experimented on slave women without anesthetics. She told that the first time anesthesia was used was because a slave women screamed so loud that the doctor said he couldn't concentrate. She then talked about the rise of the eugenicists during the

1920s and 1930s who wanted to control "undesirable populations." Eugenicists have targeted African American women for the marketing of the pill in order to prevent them from having babies. Incarcerated black men were targeted for sterilization and poor women who they determined were "feeble-minded" or with disabilities were sterilized. She reminded the audience that Margaret Sanger, who is a hero of Planned Parenthood, opened a clinic in Harlem where disabled and poor people were targeted for sterilization-women's ovaries were removed without discussing it with them. She said that over one million women have been sterilized without their knowledge.

She said that today, "women in communities of color feel guilt when we try to exert control over our own bodies," and that men of color sometimes try to prevent women of color from having control over their reproduction. She said that often, "Black men don't recognize their privilege in a sexist heterosexist society." She said that producing people is important for women of color because they have experienced so much forced sterilization.

Discussion with the workshop participants followed. One participant said that "Part of my respect for life is that if I can't maintain this life, then my desire to not have this child is an issue of respect for this life." Another said, "I had an abortion and it made me respect life more. I won't have a child until I can take care of the child. I was in an abusive relationship-I couldn't even protect myself." Another explained that "there are herbs we can take to bring on menses. Abortion is in our own hands." She said that women of color are "disconnected from the process of control of our fertility. We don't give each other information on that." A participant responded by talking about the current drive to recriminalize abortion. She talked about the need "to recapture reproductive technologies in our own hands," and recommended going "outside the box" to create a "safe underground."

Another participant talked about how white activism in reproduction is split between pro-choice and pro-life, and that "most sisters don't like abortion, but support people's right to have it. White people use that to split and divide." She said that "People make different choices all the time-you don't have to hate them for their different choices." One woman said that "we need to be able to say in intimate circles, 'I had an abortion,'" asking, "How do you address an issue when you can't even discuss it?" A woman added that there is a problem with the language of pro-choice and pro-life, and that "women need to be proactive in controlling reproduction and procreative function." A third woman responded that "Using pro-life is a problem. Pro-choice is about women making procreative choices-I am growing people, not just popping out people!" Another woman joined in, saying, "Pro-choice/pro-life doesn't even address our lives. Our women can't have children. Industries are toxic to our health causing multiple miscarriages. Economics affect us, where we work and live. Infertility treatments are unbelievably expensive." A 19-year-old audience participant said that the "pro-choice/ pro-life division doesn't make sense to the young women I work with." She said "I took girls to march for women's lives," and their "reaction to white women who are afraid they will lose reproductive rights was, 'The reason we know they can take away your reproductive rights is because they took away ours.'" She added that women of color can be socialized to be "other mothers," which can be important and powerful, but it can be oppressive if it's all a woman can do.

Henry-Tanner said that on the reservations, "one tribe had no babies for five years, they had so many miscarriages due to toxic waste dumps. Pesticides were used that drained off into the water, causing the babies to be born deformed."

Kigvamasud'Vashti explained that the marginalized disproportionately have different experiences shaped out of poverty and/or disability, such as "making the choice to not have children because we're poor, or women who are drug addicted who want to have kids but can't get drug treatment, or they can't get prenatal care because they get turned over to law enforcement."

A participant talked about positive eugenics-"supporting the kinds of families you want to procreate" as different from "negative eugenics-disincentives to reproduce." She mentioned that when a white family had sextuplets through fertility treatments, they received gifts of cars, a house, diapers and college for the children. But when a black woman had five or six children naturally, it was not in the news and they got no money or gifts. She also said that racism has an impact on infant mortality, and that when women are under greater stress, the body produces hormones that make a woman infertile.

Loretta Ross, founder and national coordinator of the SisterSong, Women of Color Reproductive Health Collective, was one of the audience participants. Ross talked about "speaking to a new framework," saying that "we don't have choices if there are bullets on the way to school." She explained, "We coined the term, 'reproductive justice'-which is reproductive rights through a social justice lens, such as the right to live in a clean community, to have a living wage." She said, "I was co-director of that march [the April 25, 2004, March for Women's Lives in Washington, D.C.]. I forced the organizers to spend one quarter of a million dollars on women of color organizations. And women of color forced name a change from March for Freedom of Choice to March for Women's Lives." She said "Our job is to

build a women of color reproductive justice movement."

by Edith Mann

Anti-Racism

Workshop: An Anti-Racist Philosophy for Personal and Community Empowerment

Presented by Kimberley Richards and Angela Winfrey-Bowman

This interactive session was designed to help participants understand how racism affects not only their communities, but their personal lives and ambitions as well, stressing the inter-connectedness of communal and personal goals. The process created a space for women to address manifestations of internalized racial oppression, which comes to people of color in multigenerational messages of worthlessness and inferiority that have impaired their ability to have their full humanity come to the forefront.

Racism was defined as race prejudice plus power, as imposed by those of European descent. Dr. Joy Leary reconfigured Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder to conceive of posttraumatic slave disorder, which results in pervasive internalized racial inferiority.

Participants told about many of the "messages" in their communities and personal lives, which included: all black women are strong, this is not your home, you are less than, you are half as important, you are culturally inferior, you have a lack of capacity or knowledge, you are the model minority (Asian).

Next participants looked at the "manifestations" of these messages, which included: denial, tolerance, shame, distancing, assimilation, protectionism, moving to base, anger, rage, self-destruction, exaggerating visibility, colorism and ethnocentrism.

Then presenters and participants shared "healing strategies" including listening actively, beginning selfwork, educating young people, telling the truth about your youth, bringing your culture to the front and naming the messages.

The following two workshops were joined as one, creating a large panel of women from the same region of the world, where daily news coverage does not tell the real story.

Workshop:

The War on Terror's Impact on Women in Iraq and Iran

Presented by Yara Badday, Nina Farnia, Proshat Shekarloo, Masha Shekarloo

Participants came with the purpose of learning: how women of color activists in the United States can take a more proactive stance in responding to the needs of women in Iraq and Iran; how to effectively organize toward preventing violence outside of U.S. borders versus trying to intervene once it has happened; how to actively work to end military recruitment of members of our community; and how to make sure there is inclusion of Iraqi and Iranian women's voices as we work toward ending racist occupation of Iraq and threats of intervention in Iran.

Reports were shared on the situation of women in Iraq and Iran, and the current military occupation that has threatened the safety of women in Iraq. Panelists emphasized that this is not the first colonization of Iraq, that there is a legacy of resistance and that Saddam created a crisis and then things fell apart. They want the United States out so Iraqis can deal with their country themselves. They also reported that people rely on street news and that U.S. soldiers of color are beginning to understand the impact and connections to their own situation while white soldiers are trying to persuade Iraqis not to trust soldiers of color.

Regarding Iran, panelists said that the regime is pro-Palestinian, that Muslim women and men are in solidarity, that is, there is not a need to "free the women." They also said that there has been increased prostitution. The country is internally fragile, especially under the current threat of war. Policing other communities is unacceptable, they said. Iranians are anti-war and anti-terrorism. The youth of Iran "get it"-that is, there are shifting views of late, and knowledge is power. Panelists suggested people in the United States could refuse to serve in the military, and Americans could change how wars are funded. They suggested visiting [www.nationalpriorities.org](http://www.nationalpriorities.org) to learn more about how money is used for war.

There was a discussion on some ways in which the media has been used to generate support in communities of color to promote war in these countries. The conclusion included a discussion of what effective and inclusive organizing looks like.

#### Arab Women

Workshop: We, Too, Are Your Sisters: Solidarity with Arab/Arab American Women

Presented by Jan Attia, Nada Elia, Noura Erekat, Amira Jarmakani, Nadine Naber, and Zeina Zaatari

All over the United States, Arab/ Arab Americans have moved from being an invisible minority rarely included among people of color, to being hyper-visible. Yet Arab American women are still grossly misrepresented, and continue to be viewed through racist images that brand them anything from exotic to superoppressed to anti-Semitic, and their issues and activism continue to be silenced, misunderstood, and misrepresented. This workshop countered the vicious myths that silence them, in an effort to build stronger alliances with other women of color and to strengthen the Palestine solidarity movement among radical women of color organizers and activists.

Panelists explained that in the case of Arab women, "saving the women" can be a double silencing and stereotyping. They said that talking about issues can be taboo, that assumptions are difficult to overcome, that talking is a process, that we can have this discussion now, and that there is solidarity. They emphasized that Palestinian women bear the direct impact of anti-Arab policies. They acknowledge that the anti-war movement is mostly white and talked about struggles over being "at the table." Political awareness is often fragmented, with people identifying with various aspects rather than being anti-war in a holistic way (incorporating, say, the intersections of sexism and Zionism). The situation of Arab people was compared to the U.S.-Mexican border with the border crossings, walls, violence, breaking up of families, and exiled existence. They stressed that being anti-Zionist is not anti-Semitic. (For more information, go to the INCITE! website for the article titled, "The Forgotten Ism.") They talked how politicians confuse the issues to justify taking Palestine, and how colonialism and incarcerations are connected, and how important it is to bring the movement to other communities of color.

#### Micro Radio

Workshop: Resistance on the Airwaves: Micro Radio

Presented by Aurelia Flores and Julia Schiavone Camacho

The presenters explained that micro radio is a small, unlicensed radio facility that can transmit on unused radio frequencies and can be heard within a local range. Micro radio is made up of a sound source, a mixer board, microphones, a power source, a portable transmitter, an antenna, and a cable that can be hooked up to a house, apartment building, tree or car. It can be heard for approximately one to five miles. The equipment is relatively economical and accessible, with the total expense from \$1,200 to \$1,400.

They also gave an overview of the steps to prepare a radio program, including conducting an interview, recording and editing sound and creating news reports. The presenters and participants discussed ways to use micro radio as an organizing strategy to address violence against women of color and how it can be used as a tool for making media that promotes social justice.

Micro radio is not meant to be a form of mass communication, but to promote dialogue with people in a local area. It focuses on oral communication rather than written communication, which is vital in communities where there are many people who are not literate. It is a way to promote listening to each other, and to publicize local events. It is easy to learn how to set up the equipment. For copies of the workshop material, contact [AURELIA.E.FLORES@saic.com](mailto:AURELIA.E.FLORES@saic.com). For more information about micro radio visit [www.prometheusradio.org](http://www.prometheusradio.org).

by Amaya N. Roberson

#### Anti-Street Harassment

Workshop: How to Organize an Anti-Street Harassment Campaign in Your Community

Presented by the Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team

These young women of the Rogers Park Young Women's Action Team, ages 14 to 18, focused on creating a youth led activist force.

Since June 2003, the girls have met once a week to organize around harassment near Rogers Park in Chicago, Illinois. Their work began when Friends of Battered Women and their Children (a domestic violence agency) put on a teen forum. The girls who attended overwhelmingly spoke about how they felt threatened when walking down a main street in their neighborhood. They said they experienced verbal abuse and catcalls ("Hey baby" and "Smile for me"), and, worse yet, men touching them, grabbing their hair and clothing and sometimes even following them home all under the guise of trying to "holla" at or get with these very young girls. They were harassed on their way to school by both older men and boys their own age who loitered outside of stores or on corners.

Some of the girls decided to actively address the violation of their personal safety. Eight girls were recruited from the community and, thanks to a grant from the Girl's Best Friend Foundation, they spent their summer interviewing their peers about harassment. They called themselves the Young Women's Action Team, surveyed 168 neighborhood girls and interviewed 34 young women in focus groups. They then produced a report, "Hey Cutie, Can I Get Your Digits?" to answer the question: Do other young women experience the same disrespect? According to their findings:

- \* 86% said that they had been catcalled on the street.
- \* 58% said men or boys on the street had harassed them.
- \* 36% of those respondents who had been harassed suggested that this happened once a day or more.
- \* 54% said that they never responded to the catcaller or harasser.
- \* 53% felt like they could not do anything to stop street harassment.
- \* 60% felt unsafe walking around in Rogers Park.
- \* 61% of those who felt unsafe were most uncomfortable at night (8 p.m. to midnight).

The demographics of their survey participants were;

- \* 22.6% between the ages of 10 and 13
- \* 36% were between the ages of 14 to 16
- \* 25% were between the ages of 17 to 19

Their ethnicities were:

- \* 55% African American/Black
- \* 22% Latina/Chicana/Hispanic
- \* 10% Asian-American
- \* 5.4% White/Caucasian

With this report in hand, the girls executed a wildly successful grassroots campaign to raise awareness about the harassment they faced on a daily basis. Their collective voice also demanded that adults step up to tackle this public menace. The girls in their words "stalked" local leaders, including police and elected officials, until they took notice.

The girls asked for and got more street lights on their main walk to school. They also brilliantly enlisted the help of local business owners-like the candy and convenience stores where harassers habitually congregated that the girls could not even enter on a normal day. Recognizing their economic power, the girls let the shop owners know that their safety is good for business and many agreed to post signs in their windows reading:

R-E-S-P-E-C-T let me tell YOU what it means to ME! Respect my body. Respect my mind. Respect ME. STOP STREET HARASSMENT.

The girls also got impressive news coverage including articles in the Chicago Tribune and the Chicago Sun Times as well as a spot on their local evening news. A lot of the buzz around this project resulted from the girls being so young and so well organized, a fact that shows the effectiveness of youth organizing. When a teenage girl tells a reporter she cannot walk to school without being sexually harassed by a man old enough to be her father, people take notice.

I was struck by the energy these young women possessed. They were articulate, well informed, creative and full of excitement during their presentation. There were about 10 girls running the workshop. They were accompanied by two adults who gave the girls plenty of room to shine. The girls effortlessly shared the spotlight with each other, proud of the work they had done and aware of their impact.

They had already organized workshops to educate both boys and girls about street harassment and had extended their campaign to teen dating violence. Impressively these girls sparked a continued dialogue in their community about violence against women.

At the workshop, they spoke confidently, one girl saying "harassment is anything that makes you feel uncomfortable," and another chiming in "men may not feel like they are attacking us-but we feel attacked."

These girls also gave workshop participants tangible tools to facilitate their own campaigns. They brought their extensive report about street harassment of girls in Rogers Park, along with a campaign planning chart provided by Chicago's own Pink Bloque ([www.pinkbloque.org](http://www.pinkbloque.org)), a list of manuals, books and reports they found useful and a handout with a graphic explaining the "Escalation of Street Harassment" that they designed themselves. They distributed a flyer about what harassment looks and feels like and ways to stop a harasser. The girls also showed off the tee-shirts and signs they made that called for respect of women and girls.

Three of the girls, Jackquette Smith, Jonnae Taylor and Emilyya Whitis, even performed a spoken word piece about Little Red navigating through the Hood while dodging insults from the Big Bad Wolf.

These young women of color showed how powerful community activism can be when girls take the lead and how necessary it is for some of us older girls to take a step back. When we mentor youth and give them the room to take on leadership their confidence blooms, our movement grows and change happens. These girls put on the best workshop of the conference and inspired me to come home and work on a street harassment campaign in my community. That earns them a gold star for feminist rabble rousing -a key goal of any INCITE! gathering.

For more information on INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, visit [www.incite-national.org](http://www.incite-national.org).

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