Centered on Campus:
Elevating Cultural Responses to Domestic Violence, Dating Violence, Sexual Assault, and Stalking on Campus

The Importance of a Culturally Responsive Campus

Aysia Evans

Welcome to the Centered on Campus Podcast My name is Aysia Evans and I am the Campus Culturally Specific Program Manager for the National Organization for Victim Advocacy (NOVA).
Throughout this podcast series, we will delve into the nuances of how different cultural communities perceive, address, and respond to domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking or DVSAS. This podcast will also address the needs of culturally specific communities by centering the intersectional and lived experiences of students and survivors..

Aysia Evans (00:01.304)

Today's episode is titled, The Importance of a Culturally Responsive Campus, in which we will be discussing why it's important to keep cultural considerations at the forefront of discussing student survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault, and stalking. Today, we have some wonderful partners from our culturally specific consortium working with the Office on Violence Against Women. Please take a moment to introduce yourselves to our listeners.

Chimi (00:32.542)

Hi, I am Chimi Boyd Keyes. I use she/her pronouns and I am a consultant based in North Carolina. I focus on racial and gender equity and

intersectional approaches to gender -based violence, support and advocacy.

Maria Limon (00:50.707)
And my name is Maria Del Socorro Limon Castro. I am an OG advocate and currently working as a consultant supporting domestic and sexual violence programs trying to figure out the sticky issues that affect their advocacy in particular as it affects Latino or Latinx communities and my pronouns are she, her, and ella.

Aysia Evans (01:26.04)
Chimi and Maria, we are so excited to be talking to you both today. I know we have a wealth of knowledge in this room with us. And so I'm gonna go ahead and just jump right into the conversation with our first question today. So Chimi, could you tell us how does cultural responsiveness play a role in effectively supporting student survivors of domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking?

Chimi (01:56.15)
Well, it has a really, really important role. It's something that we cannot continue to ignore. And cultural responsiveness is just the idea that we are looking at all the identities folks bring into spaces and doing it in a respectful way where we're listening to people, we're relating to people in ways that show that we honor who they are and their identities.

So it's not just the kind of cultural sensitivity and the kind of words that we've been using in the past, but it's really saying that we're committed to making sure that everyone feels respected and included in the spaces and feels a sense of belonging.

Aysia Evans (02:42.622)
Absolutely. And I think one of the things that we've talked about here at Nova, it comes to naming this framework that has already been named so many times, a lot of people refer to it as cultural competency, right? But one of our directors, Shannon Collins, one of the things that she talked about

was how, you say cultural competency, it might kind of allude to whoever is listening to you that it is something that can be reached as if it's a final destination, right? And cultural responsiveness, having cultural considerations, that's not a final destination. That's not something that you check all these boxes or complete all these challenges. And now all of a sudden you're culturally competent, like you don't need to improve anymore. You don't need to learn anymore. And so I think it's really important how you highlight, you know,

This is why we're using this word cultural responsiveness because it's something that changes over time when there are new considerations that need to be made, when there's new information that needs to be made because in this role, we are all lifelong learners or at least we should be, right? And so those are things that are very important. And so I kind of want to hear your take on, know, what, how does cultural responsiveness play a role in effectively supporting survivors, Maria?

Maria Limon (04:09.475)
You know, if I had a magic wand, so I am Medicare years old, I just turned 66, and I've been working in this area for a while now. And if I had a magic wand and if I could go back in time to apply the understanding of the world that I now carry, I would name it cultural curiosity. To have this curiosity of where people come from, of their stories, yeah, and their histories, and how that impacts their ability to recover from any kind of violence that's been visited upon them, regardless of who they are, how they present, and any of that. And so when I think about the importance of this work, I just call it, it is just relevant, period. Because in order for my advocacy to be effective, I do my best work when I pause and I listen and I start to understand the story of the person who I'm advocating on behalf of and with because I consider myself advocating shoulder to shoulder with people who have been forced to manage the effects of violence.

So I love the idea of being curious about the cultures that they come from and what they bring and the strengths that they bring because we know that anybody who is, in Spanish we call it, are super vivientes. It kind of

translates into not just survivor but super bumped up survivor. Anybody who is a super viviente is best when they use every strength available to them, their own personal strengths. And that comes from their cultural understanding of the world, the values that they hold and using all of those strengths in order to build a life for themselves after having been victimized, I think is really important. I kind of have stopped talking about cultural relevancy and I include it, but I talk more about being curious and engendering this muscle in our programs to build a curiosity. And I have to say that it's really helpful and Shannon is one of the people who helped me get here. She is very curious and will study things, and will study history to develop this deeper understanding and that's what makes her work so effective. She takes all of these realities into account and I really deeply appreciate that perspective for myself personally.

Aysia Evans (07:13.25)
Yeah, for sure. Thank you for sharing that, Maria. And I think one of the things that is so important that you shared in kind of us moving away from kind of talking around or talking through kind of what cultural responsiveness is, is talking about that curiosity piece, right? And I think that we hear this as practitioners in the field previous to my work at Nova, I was a campus victim advocate. So remaining curious about, you know, the different culturally specific populations that might come in to see me and how I can best benefit them, how I can best support them in one of their most vulnerable times, right? And so we've kind of talked through this a little bit, but Chimi, if you could talk about how intersectionality impacts the way that practitioners support the needs of student survivors of DVSAS. And if you could share some examples of how cultural responsiveness has been tailored to meet the unique needs of diverse student populations. So has there been an instance where you've had to tailor your approach in how you support a student due to the cultural considerations you have now decided to put at the forefront of you supporting that particular student that needed your help.

Chimi (08:38.152)

Oh my gosh, yes. It's so important to consider all the identities that survivors bring into spaces, intersectionality, like we were just talking about, because a lot of times what we make the mistake of doing is assuming that the most prominent identity that we see in a person is what feels most prominent for them in that moment. And because there's so many experiences and so many identities that folks have, we have to think about how all those experiences and stories culminate into creating that unique experience for that survivor or the folks that are going to be pro -social bystanders or whatever you are encountering with the folks you're serving on your campus, they bring all of that into the space. And so, what we have to do is make sure that people are allowed to talk about their identities, know, encourage them, share your own stories. I'm big into storytelling and so creating space for storytelling, asking questions and just allowing people to speak. Not so much the storytelling of their trauma, but just of who they are, their lived experience is gonna really help any advocate in being able to serve folks better.

The other piece is that, and this is more difficult, it takes more time, so campuses have to be committed to this, is that we can't do one size fits all programming. And I know that funds are limited, people resources are limited, and so we wanna do a program for all the black students or all the LGBTQ students or all the students who identify as Latine or Latinx, but the truth of the matter is, the students that you're serving are all those things at once, right? And many others. And so we cannot just do this kind of umbrella programming that, you know, I worked in higher ed for 18 years. And so, you know, I know better now. And so I do better or encourage campuses to do better. But we did that kind of stuff early on thinking that we were checking boxes and what we knew later was that we were missing some identities that even when we talk about lgbtq plus populations trans folks are having very different experiences than folks who identify as lesbian or you know different identities that people bring into spaces and so we have to do a lot of additional work in order to serve their needs the storytelling piece is very important i can give a few more things that i've seen or i've done myself as a former campus advocate.

One of the things is the partnership beginning with organizations, whether it's on -campus organizations or community organizations that already have great buy -in and trust in their own lived experience across different identities is gonna be really, really important. Sometimes we think we have to do everything in -house and make it all up and carry all the burden and that's when we make mistakes. And so that partnership building that and not just when we need something, right? So it's an early cultivating of relationships that's about mutual respect, mutual aid when needed, right? What do you need? What do we need? How can we work together? But you have to do all that work ahead of time. In addition to that, just my experience working at both predominantly white institutions and historically black universities. It's very different in the sense of the identities that people carry and people kind of make assumptions, especially with HBCUs, that there's a homogenous group and it isn't. So really having great conversations with folks on those campuses around. Let's move past the obvious. What is it that we think that people are experiencing? And let's dive a little deeper. What are minoritized populations within an HBCU campus or culture, for example? What are they not getting in being able to serve them better?

Aysia Evans (13:18.464)
Absolutely, Chimi. And I think that just brought up a couple of things for me. So speaking directly to this last point that you made, I think that when we are working with practitioners who are in those minority majority spaces, so HBCUs, tribal colleges, minority serving institutions, right? There's already this understanding of "Okay, well, we deal with marginalized populations, right? Like that's our forte." But something that I like to talk about professionally and personally is just the spectrum of the said identity, right? And so for me specifically, I talk about the spectrum of blackness, right? And so, you know, as a black woman, it's kind of like, there's not just one particular type of black woman that you come into contact with or one particular type of black person you come into contact with. And so, when we're thinking about supporting students, is there only one type of student that feels safe seeking support on your campus, right? Is this the heterosexual, cisgendered, straight Christian student that feels supported

accessing your resources? Or can someone who is atheist, not super involved on campus, enjoys anime or whatever the case is, something that does not seem to be a part of the cookie cutter approach to blackness, right? For example, are they able to comfortably seek your services and feel validated, heard and affirmed in their experiences on their campus just because they're not the stereotypical black person? Right? I think those are conversations that we need to have and they can be tough conversations because it calls for us to kind of look into our own community and have conversations about what is accepted and what is not. and, and how we can create space for all of those people within that community to feel like they are safe and to feel like they are validated in their blackness or their queerness or whatever they need to feel validated in, right?

I think the other piece is storytelling. Whenever we are able to allow students to tell their stories and give them back their narratives of either what happened to them, what they experienced or just their lives, you know, we're helping them really break down and understand what their cultural background means to them. And it is through storytelling and it is through that kind of narrative reflection that they're able to come into themselves and really understand that, you know, I can be who I am within my own culture. This doesn't mean that I'm different. This doesn't mean that I'm no longer a part of said culture. I can identify with my culture and have these different experiences. And so being able to empower students to tell their stories will help them feel more affirmed in who they are and really stand strong in learning and really understanding their cultural background.

And the last piece of what you talked about, excuse me, when it comes to, you know, partnerships and collaborations that, you know, leveraging your relationships with student groups, leveraging your relationships with offices on campus. We know that a lot of our grantees are utilizing those collaborative approaches when it comes to their CCR teams. But we also want to think about, you know, what does this actually look like when there is mutual aid and mutual respect for each other, right? Can we tap into student organizations that we know that already have that buy -in, right?

The SGA's, the neo -black societies, the NAACP chapters that might be on campus, the queer student unions and things of that nature, you know, that already have some of that buy -in on campus. How can we tap in with those students and see what they need, right? Because also, taking the moment to take that extra step and show them that we as practitioners are willing to get to know them as students, but also as leaders and be there to support them is also going to be something that's going to change their perspective about how they reach out for support if they are able or if they are ever in a situation where they need our assistance, right? And so I think those things are very important. And so when it comes

So that we've talked a little bit about, you know, how intersectionality impacts how we support our survivors. But Maria, I want to hear a little more about what are some of the common barriers that we've seen or some of the challenges that students might face when it comes to providing culturally specific support and what are some of the things that these institutions can do to help overcome these barriers?

to ensure that all survivors receive the appropriate care.

Maria Limon (18:26.323)
It's interesting when you spoke about the cookie cutter approach, I thought about how we can have a basic cookie recipe that we adapt as we go. And when I think about what makes sense for programs, how they can think about the advocacy that they provide to people who have diverse needs, diverse identities and histories and stories and experiences of multiple kinds of violence because some students may be experiencing the violence of poverty. Some students may be experiencing the leftover trauma of their migration story to this country. And so all of these things are present for people and when I think about myself, if I were a programmer, I would have to think about the values that I hold and how it is that I embody those values when I'm working with and on behalf of students.

As you were speaking, I was writing down notes and you immediately reflected the values that we uphold in our movements to end these kinds of

violence. And you spoke about safety and respect and validation and I believe those are the ingredients for a basic cookie that we should all consider how we use those ingredients when we're working on this. I know, I know with people who are, with people who may be allergic to gluten or whatever that is, right? You know what I mean? I think that in my lived experience, have developed an understanding of the role that colonization has played in my own life.

And when I think about what it takes to work with people who are immigrants to this country, and it's not just people from the Americas, know, all of the Americas, it's people from Haiti, it's people who are, they're presenting here in El Paso because they're coming through the border here, people from all, you know, so many different African countries and throughout Asia. And when I think about positioning myself to be a support to them, as they are dealing with the violence, the domestic and sexual violence that they may have experienced, I consider how I apply these basic values in my approach to them. And what does that look like? And how can that be adapted? And I also consider the massive amounts of mistakes that get to be made. And I talk about programs on campus or anywhere. We get to celebrate the mistakes because they're experiments that didn't necessarily work. I think our, it's not our ethics so much as it is our integrity can be put on the line when we don't clean them up, when we don't learn from them.

And so when I think about the importance of considering the vast experiences that people have and what they bring into the room when they come to programs for support, I think about that. for myself, the thing that I have learned in working with Spanish speakers in particular, because that's my experience, who are presenting for support, one of the major battles, it's kind of an internal battle that I have to take on is the beliefs that they come in with as a people who've been colonized. And the people who've been colonized have been encouraged to not raise a fuss, to not call attention to ourselves, to be quiet and go along, head down and just proceed. And I know it's not this Latino immigrants. And so, how can I keep that in mind as I'm supporting them? Because so much of the work that we do is about

uplifting stories. So much of the work that we do is about, gosh, encouraging people to pick their head up and say, you know what, I'm worth it. My life is worth it. And whenever I do that, I have to understand the battles internally that this person is waging in order to step up for themselves. And they're going against all of those cultural beliefs. And I think our programming is affected when we don't take those beliefs into account. And so the beauty of what Chimi was talking about is the expansiveness that we get to incorporate into our programming on campuses. And the campus is a great place to do it because it is about intellectual expansiveness. So yeah, I can say so much more, but I think I'll take a breath right now.

Aysia Evans (23:52.334)
You've been providing us with a word so far. And I think I especially got goosebumps when we talked previously too, about what is internalized, right? That internalized socialization. And I think that that is what makes working in this space of victim advocacy, DVSAS prevention, response, support, intervention, so nuanced for people of color, people who have marginalized identities, because there is a constant struggle. Once again, as a black woman, there's a constant struggle of, you know, hey, something just happened and I'm angry, but do I want to show up as the angry black woman in a space that doesn't always see women who look like me as a victim, right? Even though I'm doing this work and I am trying to support people who are victimized, people who are survivors that look like me, but you know, darn it, I'm angry, right? I'm angry today. But are my colleagues gonna be like, you know, here she goes being an angry black woman, right? So now I have to figure out, do I have to swallow that and be like, my gosh, hi, how are you? Like, how's your day? Like berries and cream, sunshine and rainbows, like, you know, or do I get to be authentic? Do I get to be my full transparent self? And I really like how we're kind of following along with this cookie analogy because you're right. I think whenever we think about the cookie cutter mold, right, we're thinking about, you know, sugar cookies, knowing that there's chocolate chip and oatmeal raisin and crumble cookies and insomnia cookies. There are so many different types of cookies that exist.

But everybody's bare bone basic sugar cookie doesn't even entail some of the same things that we need to feel safe, right? And so I really like how you brought up that point, Maria, for that piece and also just what is internalized because, you know, the way that I show up can directly influence how I'm supporting someone.

You know what I'm saying? And I remember being a campus victim advocate and students coming into my office and breathing a sigh of relief because they're like, my God, you look like me. Like finally somebody that's going to understand what I'm talking about without me needing to be very cautious of my words because they might not understand what I'm saying. Right. And this is across the board for the plethora of marginalized identities that exist

And so I want to hear from you, Chimi, also, you know, what are some other barriers or challenges that you have seen students face coming from culturally specific communities when they are trying to access support for the domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking instances that they have, you know, experienced?

Chimi (27:03.852)
Yes, and I want to also piggyback on what you all have been talking about which is excellent and also answer your question There's a book, it was published back in like 2008, but it's called shifting and It talks about the experiences of black women. It's a research project, but it can be certainly transferable to many historically marginalized populations, but the idea in shifting was that

Black women shift white when they go to school or work They shift back black when they go back home or back in their communities and then there is an internal Shifting where they self -medicate or deal with you know You know mental health trauma mental health issues physical things show up ailments high blood pressure other sicknesses because they are internalizing the oppression that they are receiving and then there's an

external shifting where it's just like you were just talking about where they're just like tired they've been dealing with microaggressions and oppression every single day and so they have an a way of expressing themselves in a classroom or in a committee meeting or a staff meeting that is not go along get along right

And it's just a way for them to express all the things, the burdens that they've been carrying, right? And so one of the things that I tell people about is I say, do you cause people to shift? you in spaces in your office, in your center, on campus, where you expect people to abide by the rules that you have set, maybe rules that are rules of our colonizer or what you call normal, but is actually something meant to make you feel comfortable. And so we do things without thinking about it, right? Because our privilege allows us to do that. And so I encourage people to have those conversations with your staff or with your advocates and say, hey, what are ways that we're causing people to shift? Code switch is another way of saying it, in our spaces and how can we interrupt those behaviors? And you can literally dissect environmentally, in our language, in our physicality, how those show up and come up with a strategy and how we can, you know, make it a place that feels like belonging. So I just wanted to put that out there. And that is a barrier, right? Causing people to shift.

But to answer your question about other barriers, one of the things that is connected to the experience of historically marginalized populations with systems is that when you are saying, we are here, we're gonna help you, we have all these resources, you are asking people on campus to enter a system. And even though sometimes because of the work we do, we don't think of ourselves as a system, we are of systems that have not been kind, who have caused trauma and pain generationally to different identities, and you're just saying, we built it, now come, you have not addressed those barriers that folks are feeling or experiencing. And so what I encourage folks to do is put the elephant in the room. If you are mostly white staff, say, hey, we're a bunch of white folks, we see that, we're a bunch of cis folks, we're a bunch of whatever the identities are that are privileged identities name that in the spaces you show up in and trainings you know on your

website well you know whatever makes sense for you in your social media whatever makes sense for you name the elephant in the room first of all and then say we want to work together in solidarity we want to you know work together to figure out what your needs are how we can address whatever you need to address, recognizing these barriers and challenges that are already built in, in the systems that we're now asking you to be a part of. I always find that when that is put up front, people sigh with relief. They're like, okay, these are the identities in this space, but they're at least thinking about what it is that they're doing.

Because let's be honest, the majority of the folks that are serving on our campuses are part of privileged identities. They're usually not as diverse as we would like them to be. I think that's changed. I've been doing this for a long time and it's definitely better, but there's a long way to go. so pretending that that's not in the room, I think is a huge mistake. And then the other thing is the systems around criminal justice, around campus processes. We have to really check ourselves as advocates around what that means for folks as well. So sometimes we know our survivors feel very much a burden around not sending a perpetrator to a situation where they have to also engage in a system, maybe get kicked out of school. They know that they has long -term effects on communities that have already had major burdens around education and opportunities. And so again, naming all those things, knowing that that's real for a lot of survivors who are part of historically marginalized identities is really, really important. We can't pretend like it looks the same for everyone because that's where we build that wall and that's when they stop coming. And then it's hard to overcome that.

It's hard to stop those narratives and those stories in our communities once they start being told of the mistakes that we're making in serving the folks we're trying to serve.

Aysia Evans (33:27.562)
I think especially the piece of you talking about how we just need to name what's in the space. I had a couple of allies at my previous institution and

even the office that I worked in, I was the only black person. I was the only person of color, right? And being able to have my colleague and my supervisor name that and be willing to understand what that means in terms of support for me, but also students who are coming in to utilize our services that look like me or have differing marginalized identities was important, right? That curiosity piece that Maria talked about earlier, even as practitioners and colleagues from one to another is so very important to be able to feel safe enough to say, Hey, I need a little extra support because of X, Y, and Z and have my colleague and my supervisor really lean into that and understand that that's going to give me a better platform to be able to give these students the support that they need. The other piece that's very important to recognize is

Whenever we're talking about, you know, naming what's in the room, just because I look like you doesn't mean I've had the same experiences. Right. So that's why in presentations and conversations when it comes up, cause you know, you don't want to do it awkwardly, but specifically in presentations, I like to give a breakdown of my own demographics. Right. So there are some things that you can see.

about me and there are some things that you cannot see about me, right? And I like to put those on front street because you never know who you're talking to. Once again, we might look the same or similar, or we might sound the same or similar, or we might've had some similar experiences, but my demographics won't necessarily always line up with yours, right? And so being able to name what's in the room and provide like that language to let folks know this, these are the things that are going to shape my experiences and my perspectives, but also shape how people experience me, right? And how survivors might perceive me because they might walk into the space and I share some similar identities with their perpetrator, right? Now we're having another conversation about how even my identity could have just re -activated, re -triggered someone and now they no longer feel safe coming into this space to seek support.

And so I think that goes into our next question of when it comes to cultural responsiveness, Maria, how does that contribute to building trust and creating a safe environment or a brave environment for survivors to seek support services?

Maria Limon (36:37.323)
That question immediately brought one of my own personal stories to mind. I was grappling with a challenge and I was talking to a friend of mine who was white and middle class and I am a Chicana raised in poverty. And so we had come from very different places. I love and adore this woman. And she kept asking me, well, what do you dream? What do you see? What do you want? know, what's your vision? And I was drawing blanks. I had nothing, nothing. And she couldn't understand. She just could not understand that I, this articulate, bold, in -your -face advocate and activist was drawing blanks when it came to myself. And a few weeks later, I was listening to a woman from Mexico. She's a dynamic thinker who I just adore. And she laid out the effects of colonization on our people and one of the things that she spoke about was how during the colonization, we were forced to assimilate in order to survive. And part of that assimilation required stripping our peoples of their imagination for a world outside of the bleakness that was being presented by the colonizers.

And it struck me like a ton of bricks that I'd been struggling with not having a vision and then I understood why. And it made such a difference to have that perspective as I proceeded to make my own plan as a survivor myself. You know, and I've been doing this work forever. So I can only imagine what it would be like for somebody who has immigrated to this country who, because of the colonizing forces all over the world has had to assimilate and what they might encounter when they walk in, right? And the inability of advocates to understand where the epigenetic nature of the trauma that they have survived. Because it's not only their trauma, they're carrying the legacy of their ancestors' trauma.

And so when I think about what we can do in that regard, I think a lot of it has to do with slowing down. In order to institute the kinds of ships that, the

good ships that Chimi was talking about, it requires us to really dig down in ourselves and look at where the unaware racism sits, where the stereotypes, excuse me, the misinformation may have creeped into our own brains and what we might do as a team on campus to address that with our partners.

And I also remember how when working with a survivor, what part of my job, a survivor who's a Spanish speaker and clearly an immigrant, part of my job involved coaching them around assimilation. They had to assimilate. The people we work with when they interact with these other systems, they are forced to assimilate. They have to assimilate in order to navigate those systems. And I would rather be open about that dynamic. I would rather just say, we are not here. We haven't figured everything out yet. So let's work together. And I'll assist you with the pieces with the bits of perspective and information and approach you might take as you proceed and interact with programs in different areas, whether it's the police department, whether it's whoever it is, right? Hospital systems, whatever that might be, and be honest and open about that and apologize and say, I'm so sorry we haven't figured everything out yet. I'm here to listen to you to figure out what's gonna make the most sense for you.

And when I think about overcoming those challenges, I put myself in the shoes of somebody who might approach them. And that would work for me. As a Spanish speaker, to have somebody come in, it may not be another Mexican, but there may be somebody there who does their best to speak Spanish to me when they can. Because that is a sign to me that they're trying. And as somebody, as a survivor to come in and say, you know what? Thank you so much for that. feel more I feel, you know, I don't see myself completely. But that makes me feel safer that you have some awareness about what's going on for me. So yeah, yeah.

Aysia Evans (41:38.926)
Yeah, thank you for that. And I think that this conversation about how these support services and these policies and procedures that we have on campus are all systems. I think with how revolutionary the three of us are

on this podcast episode, the revolutionary work that we are doing, you know, I feel like whenever I tell people what I do, you get the, Ooh, wow. Like that's heavy. Right? So, you know, people see that this work is needed and this work needs to be done. And we like to think of ourselves as, know, yes, we're about to do it. We're about to get in the field, but it's still a part of a system.

And you both are right in saying, you know, as a younger practitioner in the field, when I was a campus advocate, being able to highlight here are the systems that we have for you at this current moment, right? And being able to say, these systems might not give you the justice that you are seeking. These systems might not be the most accommodating to access, but I am here to navigate that process with you. And within my scope, I can make you feel as supported as you need to be, being able to say those things is very important.

And Maria, one of the things that I have always remembered that you have said when we're talking about just moving throughout this work, moving throughout life is moving at the speed of humanity. That is something that ever since I heard you say it, which was like on the first phone call that I met you a couple months ago, when I tell you that has not gotten out of my mind, it has not left my mind on days where I feel like I have to rush and do this and do this and do this. I have been able to say stop and move at the speed of humanity. And it has given me the space to also really kind of take from what you just vocalized as your experience being like, but what about Aysia, right? Like what does little Aysia need? What does grown Aysia need? What does Aysia, the survivor, Aysia, the whatever, insert experience here, what does she need? How does she want to move forward? What are her goals? And I think that hearing that just allows folks who are in this field to bring the humanity back to ourselves. I feel like we're often supporting others, thinking about others, putting others first and all this other stuff. And that is great, but we also cannot pour from an empty cup.

And I think that we say that a lot, but we don't really understand what that means. Right. And so I think another piece that you and Chimi both spoke about, and I want to hear a little bit more from Chimi on this is especially in the roles of our CCR teams. We have some grantees that are thinking about sustainability of the work that they've been doing. And so I want to know, how can collaborations with community organizations and cultural groups, whether they're on campus, off campus, enhance the support that is available to student survivors of DVSAS? And if you have some successful examples and stories that have improved those survivors' experiences, let us know.

Chimi (45:23.378)

Absolutely, collaboration is key. It's an anti -oppression approach. And so one of the things, I'm just gonna point to a research project that has just been concluded in North Carolina where they looked at LGBTQ+ plus serving organizations who are not gender -based violence advocacy programs. They're centers across the state of North Carolina and the research project basically looked at funding them to serve survivors, right? And so the idea was that they would have the tools and the things that they need because they already have a trusting relationship with folks who would need the services. And the data shows that it was very, very successful. And so what I borrowed from that is the idea that we don't have to be the one stop shop. What we wanna do is empower our collaborators on campus and in the community that already have those relationships with folks. We don't need to hold all the information about how to serve survivors, right? So what we do is we get together, we share information, we help them to do what they do better, certainly encourage referring them to advocacy organizations on campus, but they know how to do things because of lived experience that we may not know how to do, whatever those identities might be. And so sometimes that's hard for advocates because we're like, no, this is what we do. This is our expertise, but everyone can share information, right? And so we certainly put in safeguards to make sure that everyone is doing the right thing, but we want to think of information as something that is collaborative, not something that we own or hoard. So that's one thing I want to put out there.

The other anti-oppression approach is being accountable to the organizations and the people that you're serving. And so I encourage partnership around feedback. So sometimes we do the intake form or we send a survey out to folks we've served in our centers and try to find out how well we did. And we may or may not get the real deal. And so that is certainly one mechanism, right, of getting feedback. But I also encourage you to have listening sessions with organizations that serve different identity groups or have a closer collaboration with different identity groups and find out what their stories are, what they're hearing about how well you're doing.

So that's another collaborative way. It's like you're getting feedback and you're being accountable to those organizations and being willing to hear the good and the bad, right? Not that you're awesome, but sometimes there's some areas for improvement, but working with those organizations to get that feedback. And then being, again, anti-oppression, being accountable to changing, making adjustments in our approaches based on the feedback and showing those communities how you're using that information. That you're not just being info gatherers, but you're also being change agents with that information and being very transparent about how that information is being used. To me, those are some hallmarks of good community and other campus organization collaboration. And so if you're doing that, great. But if that's something that folks could improve on, those are some areas we could definitely take a look.

Aysia Evans (49:16.462)
For sure. And I think one of the things that comes up, and I do this, I talk about this in my presentation during TTI 3 prevention at the intersections is we have to let go of our ego when we do this work. Again, we're working with folks who are vulnerable, who are in new spaces, and have experienced things that they have never experienced before. Violence has been enacted upon them. And we don't have time for our ego to take the forefront, right? So if we're receiving feedback and the things that we are doing as a CCR team or the support measures that our institution offers, if

they're not enough, or if they're not able to hit some folks that are disproportionately impacted, by domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking, we need to be able to receive that. And, you know, again, that humanity piece, no, it's not gonna feel good. It can be overwhelming. It can be like, dang, you know, I really thought we hit it on the nail with this one, but we didn't, right? So how can we move forward? How can we learn and remain curious? I feel like the theme of today's conversation has been curiosity, openness, transparency, but also reflection, right? That is a part of being culturally responsive. That's very important. You have to constantly be in a state of reflection. And it's not as overwhelming once you start getting used to doing it. And so I think that those pieces are very important.

Maria, what do you think about the collaborations with community organizations and cultural groups to enhance the support that's available? Do you have any successful examples of doing so that our campus grantees can potentially steal from you?

Maria Limon (51:21.251)
You know, I think about it, you know, I am very proud of myself for coming up with slowing down to work at the speed of humanity. And it is also about slowing down to work at the speed of love, slowing down this work at the speed of compassion, slowing down to work at the speed of effectiveness, slowing down to work at the speed of reflection. All of that requires a level of slowing down that programs by and large across the board, on campus, off campus, do not have the, gosh, they just don't have the capacity for it because there's so much pressure to treat or to support as many people as possible to get things done, right? And so I understand that that's a reality, but to start thinking about what that might look like, the reality is that there are survivors every year.

The reality is that there are survivors working in programs and on campuses. And what would it take for people to slow down in order to be able to release ego, in order to be able to allow themselves to be uncomfortable? It takes an investment of time and resources. And as

leadership in campus programs, to start considering how to invest in those mechanisms and how to rewire the structures so that there's time for that. i think it's not necessarily a success story, but it is a successful strategy. And I think that goes along with the people who are most affected by the program should, not by the program, but by the problem, should be the ones designing the program and with caveats, right?

I think about what that can look like and what that can sound like in terms of, I remember working as a volunteer coordinator and there was a survivor who was part of the group and she was working on the line and she insisted with the caller, I was working at the National Domestic Violence Hotline, she kept insisting that this survivor needed to take X, Y, and Z approach because it worked for her as a survivor. So it's being thoughtful about those kinds of dynamics that can exist, but it's also about gathering the information, gathering the experiences, and then you building programming and approaches and perspectives designed upon that. It's not just a day -to -day, this is a protocol and this is a policy that is a part of it, but that should be built on the application of the values that we uphold? What are the principled actions that we can take on a day -to -day basis? The programs that do that are the programs that are most successful in terms of their, in terms of their accountability to the people coming to them for support. And I have to say that it has engendered a great deal of goodwill between program staff and structures because it not only applies for the survivors who are coming to them, but it also applies to the work with partners. If the partners see that you're slowing down to really listen to what their goals are and understand their priorities and how those priorities might mesh with the campus' priorities, it goes a long way towards engendering goodwill and I believe the trust that is required for the sustainability of any program.

Aysia Evans (55:14.144)
Absolutely. And I think that when it comes to, I keep saying I think, and I'm like, actually, I feel like I know this, but I think that when we're talking about, you know, these collaborations, they also have to make sense, right? I think a lot of times we can be so eager to collaborate with different offices on

campus or academic programs even to help with sustainability. But then we kind of get into the weeds of structuring what this partnership looks like. And then we're kind of like, I don't necessarily know if that makes sense. Right. And so I think that is definitely another piece that comes to mind. hearing you talk about the humanity, the passion and all of that, the feels, what some folks like to call it about working in this particular functional area, because we can't not have the feels, right? It's a part of being a human working in this field. And so I think when we're having collaborations or we're doing partnerships that don't quite make sense, it kind of negates that humanity piece that we're trying to bring into the work. And so I think that this conversation has been so fruitful thus far.

I feel like there's been a lot of golden nuggets that have been given during this conversation. I wanna hear from you both starting with Chimi, just to kind of close us out for the educators, practitioners, and just our listeners, right? Who are interested in improving their cultural responsiveness efforts on campus when it comes to supporting student survivors of DVSAS. What are some initial steps or resources that you all would recommend? You know, how can educational institutions play a role in promoting cultural responsiveness and if there are any strategies that you feel like the folks listening can employ to kind of start creating this space for student survivors.

Chimi (57:20.094)
Absolutely, I mean, I think first of all, you just want to continue to be a learner. There's so many resources online, there's books you can read, but you also wanna talk to people and you wanna get their stories. As I said before, getting feedback, getting information from people in a transparent way so they understand how you're gonna use their information is so important. And you wanna just get more information. You don't want to build it first, which has already been discussed. Co -designing, as Maria talked about, so important. We want to make sure that we start there. And then after that, we want to make sure we have regular check -ins to decide if this is the right approach and be open to tweaking. Sometimes we feel so much pressure around grant funding that we feel like we have to do it this

way no matter what. But there are ways to make sure that you can fulfill your obligations within grant guidelines, but also be open to changing course when it doesn't serve the communities you're trying to serve. And so always being open to that is really important. The information gathering is your first step.

Changing course as you go through it is the second step. And then the last step is, as Maria said earlier, just take it slow. Make sure that you're doing the things that work for you as a staff as well, because it's hard. This is hard work. And so you want to make sure that you're also honoring all the people who are trying to serve folks in the community and on campus, making sure that they're okay always checking in around that and creating space for stories whether they are positive or not positive around how they're feeling. So I think if they can employ those three things, they'll be in good shape.

Aysia Evans (59:24.482)
All right, Maria, take us home.

Maria Limon (59:28.24)
You know, when I think about my own experience and my own learning and my own continual learning, I have to think about how it is easy to feel shame for not having figured things out. Looking back at my life as an advocate and working in programs and in the community, reflecting on the mistakes that I have made and not shaming myself, not beating myself up.

So when I think about what programs can do in order to take on these approaches, I consider how terrifying it is to go against the grain because most of us are required to look professional, sound professional, be professional. And it is very much going against the grain to publicly and chimiopenly say, you know what, I don't know how to do this. Or you know what, I made a giant mistake here and I need support.

trying to figure out how to proceed in the best way possible. And I think developing those kinds of relationships aside from time, it takes a

commitment to self because the only ways I have been able to do that is to commit to undo and unravel all the toxic narratives that living in a violent society have encouraged me to believe about myself and others.

And it's not easy work and I cannot do it alone. And so I have found colleagues to process things with, colleagues who I trust, colleagues who I've made mistakes with to reflect on these things because it's a giant puzzle. And I think extrapolating that onto a campus level, I can't even imagine the pressure that program staff are under. And so to go about things gingerly and tenderly and even with love and the deepest compassion available internally for the program staff and extending that to the program partners, I think by engendering that among the staff, will carry out into the programming making allowances for people's strengths, whoever it is that they are, celebrating, I would even call it celebrating mistakes, I think it's huge. I learned to do that at a session that I was leading with some advocates and it was astonishing how much shame people carry for the mistakes that they may have made. And so I think taking on this work around cultural responsiveness and making sure that it's relevant to the people you are working with and on behalf of the potential for feeling a lot of shame and embarrassment for the mistakes that we have made. I'd like to remind people that it is not our fault. We've been tossed into this stew of misinformation and stereotypes about each other and about ourselves. And to take it on with a level of delight. To say, ooh, we get to do this now. We get to figure out how to go ahead and support the immigrants from Haiti that have

started coming to our campus. How can we figure this out? From a place of delight, I think about the perspectives people can embody and apply to themselves and then extend that to the community is the best place for programs to start.

Aysia Evans (01:03:08.034)
Thank you so much for that. Chimi and Maria, this has been such a thrilling and enlightening conversation. I have enjoyed my time kicking it with the OGs this morning and recording this podcast. I feel like we've definitely

gotten a wealth of information and knowledge to share with our OVW grantees and their CCR teams. And so thank you so much for taking time.

out of y 'all's busy schedules to share just a little bit of the knowledge that you all have for us. And so this concludes another enlightening episode of the Centered on Campus podcast. We hope that you found our exploration of cultural responsiveness on campus impactful and thought -provoking. Remember, the journey doesn't end here. We encourage you to continue this conversation with your own campus communities and your community coordinated response teams.

Please do your part in advocating and elevating culturally responsive approaches to preventing, responding, and supporting survivors of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking. If you have any questions, comments, or suggestions, please send them to CampusTA@trynova .org. This is Aysia Evans with NOVA signing off. And remember, please take care of yourself and others.