



Reach Across the Aisle

How 2 Feminists worked with Christian Conservatives

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WHO IS KOREAN AMERICAN FAMILY SERVICES (KFAM)?



- KFAM empowers underserved Korean American and Asian Pacific Islander families through culturally responsive services.
- Founded in 1983 by Korean immigrant women inspired by Dr. Tae Young Lee, Korea's first female attorney
- Serves 6,000+ clients per year

KFAM OVERVIEW

- 42 Staff
- 14 Board Members
- 150+ Interns/Volunteers per year

- 4 key programs :
 - Counseling
 - Family Violence
 - Asian Foster Family Initiative
 - Child & Adult Wellness



COUNSELING AND MENTAL HEALTH

- KFAM's mental health services are tailored to the unique needs of Korean American families, adults, & children
- Over 400 Korean clients annually receive counseling, medication support and case management



CHILD & ADULT WELLNESS

- KFAM promotes child wellness & development through our Child Care Food Program
- Parenting seminars, children's art workshops, Mommy & Me classes and other programs for Korean immigrant parents
- Tobacco Prevention campaign mobilizes Asian Pacific Islander residents to pass anti-second hand smoke ordinances



ASIAN FOSTER FAMILY INITIATIVE (AFFI)

- AFFI launched in 2014
- AFFI recruits, trains, and supports Korean and other Asian Pacific Islanders (API) resource (foster) parents
- Strive to provide culturally appropriate homes to Korean/API foster children



FAMILY VIOLENCE

- KFAM's Center for Women and Children provides free trauma-informed care and support for victims of violence.
- In 2018, provided 100+ survivors with case management, counseling, & support group to
- Crisis hotline & walk-ins to 171 victims
- Works with Korean survivors of sexual assault, sex trafficking and domestic violence
- Plus DV batterers' intervention, individual/couples/ family counseling, child supervised visitation, family law clinics



Partnering with Korean Clergy

- Started in 2012 to build DV awareness, reduce stigma, improve 1st response
- 70%-80% of Koreans attend church regularly
- Expanded to SA in 2017
- Trained more than 1,000 Korean clergy members
- 40 hr. SA & DV trainings, 2-day retreats, all-day clergy conferences, etc.
- More referrals, better first responders, reduce victim-blaming attitudes



Why Christian Leaders?

- Easy way to reach out to the community
 - approx. 70-80% of Korean American immigrant families attend church regularly
- The role of church & respect given to Christian leaders by the community → influence cultural norms
- Church itself has various resources from the congregation
- Congregation often gives absolute trust in faith leaders



Activity (1)

Identifying Values

Values: SA v. Faith Community

Sexual Assault Community

Feminist Origins

Progressive, social justice values

Survivor-Center

Faith Community

Patriarchal System

Christian, conservative values

Family/Group-Centered



Challenges?

- Since there are more male pastors, they brought conservative male dominant culture
- Uncomfortable talking about sex, especially pre-marital sex and teen dating
- A lot of victim blaming → Delilah and Jezebel attitudes
- Won't acknowledge SA occurs in their congregation
- When church found out about SA, they would want to hide it rather than to open up or to speak up
- Messy situation when perpetrator & victim attends church together
- When a pastor helped a victim, she ended up leaving the church in the end b/c of embarrassment

What Does it Take to Work with Christian Leaders?

- A lot of time/energy to build trust first before trying to change leaders' belief
- Flexibility/patience handling different perspectives (sometimes opposing comments)
- Modifying training/outreach material to make it acceptable to Christian leaders
- Emphasis on how the training & issue is related to their work in ministry
- Need to attend events to make connection (ex. religious conference, prayers, services, etc.)

Activity (2)

Group Discussion

KFAM's Strategy with Christian Leaders

- Emphasizing “Healthy Relationships” rather than “Sexual Assault”
- Utilizing group of Christian leaders as bridge (KFAC)
- Providing useful information/resources (e.g., 1-page sheet with list of dos/don'ts & numbers to shelters, legal aid, etc.)
- Having an event that could provide “healing” for them as well (2-day retreat for pastor's wives focused on self-care)
- Providing opportunity for them to work closely with KFAM (e.g. volunteer to facilitate small group discussion during 2-day retreats)
- Carefully timing controversial topics that could trigger negative reaction (hold off until trust is built)
- Facts rather than opinion

Activity (3)

Developing Strategy

Takeways

- Be patient – building trust takes time
- Be humble – these are the respected leaders of the community who hold far more influence & sway than we do
- Be open minded – they may share different value systems and priorities, but ultimately we are all trying to create healthier relationships
- Be ready to be challenged – can be difficult working with those who may not respect things you feel deeply about
- Know your limits – think ahead where you, your colleagues, or your agency may have to draw the line

[For each scenario, you can replace Christian with other faith group of your choice]

Scenario. 1

Your agency is trying to build relationships with faith leaders in your community. Knowing that faith leaders are usually conservative and not interested in SA, what strategies would you use in order to approach them effectively? What are you going to say?

Scenario. 2

Your agency is trying to hold an event with a group of Christian leaders to increase their awareness/understanding in SA. What type of event do you want to have? What kind of message do you want to deliver through this event? How would you tailor this event to reach out specifically to Christian leaders?

Scenario. 3

You are providing the SA 101 seminar to a group of Christian leaders. During the seminar, a few pastors raise the topic of LGBTQ community. They share their extremely negative opinions about the LGBTQ population calling them “sinners.” How would you respond?

Scenario. 4

You are providing an SA 101 seminar to a group of Christian leaders. During the seminar, one female pastor says, “It is all because women nowadays are so promiscuous. They dress provocatively and go out drinking with men. They’re equally to blame for leading men on.” How would you deal with this female pastor?

Scenario. 5

You are meeting with a couple of Christian leaders to plan an event together, but you are not Christian. During the conversation, they keep on asking if you are Christian or not. Also, they keep rejecting your ideas because you “don’t understand Christian community and the church system.” The event is supposed to be your agency’s event, but they want to include time for prayers and Bible study as part of the event. How would you approach and plan this event with them?

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