

ALAS History

In 2003 Arte Sana embarked on what would become an international project in response to the many e-mail inquiries that it began to receive from primary and secondary victims of sexual violence regarding the availability of Spanish language victim services. The goal was to create an online directory of the different types of sexual assault victim services available in Spanish that are offered by agencies across the U.S. This rich experience of communicating with many Latina victim advocates, learning of the marginalized working conditions that most of them faced, and identifying the Internet as a possible forum for support, technical assistance, and resource development, led to the development of the *Alianza Latina en Contra la Agresión Sexual* or ALAS (Latina Alliance Against Sexual Aggression). Considering the great gaps in services and current level of over-extension of many Latina victim advocates, the decision was made to create an action-oriented working group that could actually engage in the online creative process rather than just share existing resources.

Initiated in February 2004, ALAS is a national Latina victim advocate's group comprised of survivors, state sexual assault coalition and rape crisis center staff, immigrant and LGBT rights advocates, executive directors, consultants, professional trainers and university students. ALAS members' collective experience spans over 50 years of anti-sexual violence work that includes national and international experience. The majority of ALAS members have bilingual skills that include speaking, reading, and writing in Spanish.

Leadership Development

ALAS members' collective experience spans over 50 years of anti-sexual violence work that includes national and international experience. The ALAS group has embodied diversity with member cultural identifications and origins in countries and territories such as Argentina, Brazil, Guatemala, Mexico, Nicaragua, Panama, Peru, Puerto Rico, Spain, and Uruguay. In an effort to preserve and enhance our cultural identity and professional development, Spanish language communication is encouraged and information regarding Latin American human rights causes and perspectives are shared. ALAS members are encouraged to share their experience and are offered opportunities to participate in state and national training events, and as national advisory council members to represent Latin@ needs.

ALAS members have contributed to the topics and areas of focus for all four Arte Sana Nuestras Voces national bilingual sexual assault conferences and some have been key workshop contributors to the National Sexual Assault Conferences. Through its eight years of existence, ALAS has welcomed 70 Latinas and allies including the following notable former members:

Olga Trujillo (2004-2007)
Alva Moreno (2004-2007)
Kimber Nicoletti (2004-2007)
Lina Juarbe-Botella (2007-2009)
Ivonne Ortiz (2007-2010)

ALAS memberships have been influenced by the very conditions we work in, including a troubling turnover rate, changes in victim assistance agency or coalition affiliation, or the inability to actively participate in the group because of increased time constraints, yet our work has continued to impact on a national level.

From the development and national endorsements of timely position statements that address language, Latina advocate retention, and immigrant victimization issues, to the products created collectively and shared nationally such as those included in the [Existe Ayuda Toolkit](#), and even the promulgation of the arroba or @ sign since 2002, to promote gender-inclusiveness in the documents that advocates create or translate into Spanish, all of these tangible results demonstrate the impact of ALAS collective leadership through action.