CONVERGE!
Re-Imagining the Movement to End Gender Violence

February 7-8, 2014
University of Miami School of Law
University of Miami School of Law Race and Social Justice Law Review
Miami Worker’s Center Sisterhood of Survivors
Center on Applied Feminism (University of Baltimore School of Law)

For over 40 years, gender violence has been the focus of feminist activism in the U.S. Where are we headed now? This conference will bring together survivors, activists, and academics from law and social sciences to reconsider the dominant U.S. responses to gender violence, to build capacity for political mobilization and reform, and to train others in the many innovative approaches to gender violence that have developed all over the country. We seek to refocus U.S. priorities in funding, activism, legal responses, and social services in ways that better address the intersecting inequalities that create and maintain gender violence. This conference offers a unique combination of peer-to-peer strategy exchanges, activist/academic cross-fertilization, and hands-on training, with the overall objective of fostering a transformative political agenda for social change.

► Structural Inequality and Gender Violence
New scholarship and activism incorporates a broader view of the links between gender violence and colonization, sexism, heterosexism, racism, anti-immigrant bias, and economic injustice. Yet, national funding priorities and the dominant approaches to gender violence frequently fail to address these larger social conditions that create and maintain violence. Economic strain increases the risk for intimate partner violence, as does living in oppressed neighborhoods, yet current strategies often make the relationship between these issues invisible. Similarly invisible are the links between crime policies of hyper-surveillance and mass incarceration that devastate the economic, political, and social fabric of targeted poor communities of color, thereby increasing the risks for violence, or the manner in which dehumanizing prison experiences create a cycle of violence that spreads from prisons back to neighborhoods and relationships. Participants will identify strategies for organizing against these structural inequalities.

► Re-Imagining Mobilization Against Gender Violence
The national “violence against women” frame often addresses only intimate partner violence and sexual assault. But organizing efforts all over the country are addressing a broader scope of gender violence against women from workplace violence, to street violence, to violence in the home, to violence against women in prison. And while there has been some progress in recognizing intimate partner violence and sexual assault against LGBT individuals, too often the violence is misidentified and minimized.

Gender violence also includes much male-on-male violence that is not intimate partner violence. Violence is often used as a tool to police and define the boundaries of masculinities. Participants will discuss the links between male-on-male gender violence and gender violence that is directed against women and girls and against individuals who are gender non-conforming. They will share organizing strategies that are focused on redefining masculinities and that address the ways
in which dominant conceptions of masculinity harm both women and men and foster gender violence.

► **Alternatives to Criminal Justice Strategies**
Activists of color have identified the ways that the current heavy reliance on criminal justice interventions has been problematic for communities of color and immigrant communities. Inspired in part by the activism surrounding INCITE!, the last several years has seen a renewed energy for innovative strategies and community capacity building that is not focused on criminal intervention or is focused on a *re-imagined* criminal justice response. These alternatives, including transformative justice initiatives, restorative justice programs, and community organizing strategies, may improve outcomes for poor women, LGBTQ victims, immigrant survivors and women of color. Unlike many service programs, and in sharp contrast to the individual focus of criminal justice interventions, these initiatives can serve as catalysts for survivors and their allies to organize for social change. Activists and academics will share the successes and challenges of these initiatives, relevant research, and offer hands-on guidance for their implementation.

► **Reframing Gender Injustice as a Violation of Human Rights**
Recent developments in international human rights law recognizes the impact of multiple forms of discrimination in gender violence cases and offers opportunities to reinvigorate and expand U.S. work. The decision of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights that the U.S. violated a domestic violence survivor’s human rights in the *Lenahan v. U.S.* case creates new possibilities for activism and reform, as does the 2011 Report of the U.N. Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women in the U.S. Activists and lawyers will discuss the use of a human rights framework that links the relationship between inequality and human rights violations, including all forms of gender violence.

► **Responding to Retrenchment and Stalemate**
Participants will share strategies for addressing areas in which we see retrenchment and stalemate. In the courts, judges fail to apply domestic violence child custody laws to upper class abusive fathers and continue to have biased and outdated views of “battered women.” Judges frequently fail to consider the relevance of social policies that focus on poverty prevention, economic assistance, and distribution of services. In the military and in prisons, sexual assault and IPV remain persistent problems despite reforms. At the federal level, the response to the victimization of Native American women continues to be inadequate to the task of addressing the ongoing harms of colonization. While there have been significant reforms, the response to LGBTQ victims of gender violence too frequently remains hostile or indifferent.

► **CONVERGE!**
Building a progressive response to gender violence requires that feminist organizing against gender violence be based in an intersectional understanding of the ways in which various forms of inequality create and sustain violence. But a progressive response also requires that all work for social justice incorporate a gender analysis that appreciates the risks for gender violence. Activists and researchers in equality struggles including anti- mass incarceration, immigrant rights, economic rights, LGBTQ equality, and racial justice are encouraged to be a part of this conversation.
Conference Description

The conference will meet Friday-Saturday, February 7-8, 2014 at the University of Miami School of Law campus in Miami, Florida. The conference will include two full days of speakers, panels, and hands-on workshops.

Keynote Speaker – Dr. Beth Richie

Beth E. Richie is The Director of the Institute for Research on Race and Public Policy and Professor of African American Studies and Criminology, Law and Justice at The University of Illinois at Chicago. The emphasis of her scholarly and activist work has been on the ways that race/ethnicity and social position affect women’s experience of violence and incarceration, focusing on the experiences of African American battered women and sexual assault survivors. Dr. Richie is the author of Arrested Justice: Black Women, Violence and America’s Prison Nation (NYU Press, 2012) which chronicles the evolution of the contemporary anti-violence movement during the time of mass incarceration in the United States and numerous articles concerning Black feminism and gender violence, race and criminal justice policy, and the social dynamics around issues of sexuality, prison abolition, and grassroots organizations in African American Communities. Her earlier book Compelled to Crime: the Gender Entrapment of Black Battered Women, which is taught in many college courses and is cited in the popular press for its original arguments concerning race, gender and crime. Dr. Richie is qualitative researcher who is also working on an ethnographic project documenting the conditions of confinement in women's prisons. Her work has been supported by grants from The Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, The Ford Foundation, and The National Institute for Justice and The National Institute of Corrections. Among others, she has been awarded the Audre Lorde Legacy Award from the Union Institute, The Advocacy Award from the US Department of Health and Human Services, and The Visionary Award from the Violence Intervention Project. Dr. Richie is a an board member of The Woods Fund of Chicago, The Institute on Domestic Violence in the African Community, The Center for Fathers’ Families and Public Policy and a founding member of INCITE!: Women of Color Against Violence. In 2013 she was awarded an Honorary Degree from the City University of New York Law School.