

## **BIO – ANTONIA A. VANN, CDVC**



Antonia A. Vann, a nationally recognized pioneering activist and expert in the field of violence against women prevention and cultural competency, is a nationally Certified Domestic Violence Counselor and Chief Executive Officer and founder of Asha Family Services, Inc. (Asha). Ms. Vann is passionate in her work with victims of domestic and sexual violence including those who are sex trafficked; incarcerated women victims and the areas of unjust policies used to mass incarceration poor people of color. Established in 1989, Asha is a comprehensive domestic and sexual violence intervention and prevention agency located in the city of Milwaukee, WI. Asha, the only recognized culturally specific domestic violence prevention agency in the State of WI for African American populations, employs methods specific to groups among this population.

Asha (a Swahili and Indian word meaning “Life” and “Hope”) is a private, non-profit, spiritually-based agency that also works with incarcerated men and women since 1990. Ms. Vann, maintains an extensive social network following that disseminates information specific to victims of domestic/sexual violence and sex trafficking and those who love them and on mass incarceration. Asha operates *Sistahs’ Cafe & Deli* and (future) *Sistahs’ Nails & Hair Salon* - These micro-enterprises are both job training and job development sites for program participants to enhance employable skills and to create jobs. Asha’s transitional housing programs included up to 15 private living units for victims and their children. Asha’s approach is holistic and includes healing. Asha holds State license as an outpatient substance abuse treatment clinic that also includes direct STI and HIV/AIDS education, testing and counseling referrals.

Ms. Vann, a formerly battered wife and survivor, began studying the impact of violence in her life and the lives of women and children in 1985. She began to research and develop Asha’s programming through her life experiences, studies and most importantly, listening to the authentic experiences of “like” women. Subsequently program development continued through her spiritual convictions, and training under the guidance of an academic Board of Directors while mentored by a host of nationally recognized experts in the field. Working directly with 1000’s of battered and abused women of all racial and socio-economic status, Asha has helped to save and change lives. Ms. Vann developed a comprehensive training manual specifically to train Asha personnel in the provision of culturally competent services. This manual was revised and is currently used to assist in training Healthy Start project personnel across the country to assess pregnant and post program participants for victimization. Since 1990, Ms. Vann continues to work with female survivors of domestic and sexual violence in multiple prison systems as well as continues to provide education to groups of incarcerated men.

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**Key personal Accomplishments:**

**1989** – Opened the first culturally specific domestic and sexual violence prevention organization in the State of Wisconsin for African American victims and families.

**1990** – Began providing victim support and healing groups for women in prisons with histories of domestic and sexual abuse and sex trafficking

**1990** – Began providing abuser education groups for men in prisons

**1992** - Opened Domestic Violence Victim Services Office in Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office.

**1993** – A Co-Founding Member of the national Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community (IDVAAC); [www.idvaac.org](http://www.idvaac.org)

**1994** – Developed and launched Ujima Men's Program. A culturally specific batterer treatment program designed by and for African American men for those who batter and abuse women and children.

**1995** – Domestic/Sexual Violence victim services and Drug Counseling to pregnant women in Milwaukee County Jail. Partnership with the Black Health Coalition of Wisconsin. Credentialed, Asha DV Advocates provide domestic violence, substance abuse and mental health services to pregnant women in Jail.

**1996** – Developed and launched the first Domestic Violence Crisis Intervention Team. A partnership with the City of Milwaukee Police Dept. Asha Advocates and Milwaukee Police Officers from District 5 respond to Domestic Violence crime scenes to provide immediate support to victims.

**1999** – State of Wisconsin Health Partnership – Asha personnel placed at the City Central Health Clinic. Asha personnel were rigorously trained to provide STI, HIV/AIDS education, testing and counseling to possible victims seen at the clinic.

**2007** – Opened Transitional Housing for Victims of Domestic/Sexual Violence. With a federal grant from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW) Asha opened 15 transitional housing units for victims and their children who were homeless due to victimization. Nearly 12,000 victim night stays annually.

**2003** – National Recognition of a Model Program – The federal government contracted with Ms. Vann to draft her culturally specific program design for national replication. The Publication "*Developing A Culturally Relevant Response to Domestic Abuse Services: Asha Family Services, Inc.*," was released in 2003 by the National Resource Center on Domestic Violence. With nearly 100,000 requests for

the publication nationally to date, it remains one of the top 25 requested publications in the VAWnet system.

**2008** – Opening Job Training and Development sites SISTAHS' Café & Deli. With a federal grant from the Office on Violence Against Women (OVW). Asha opened Sistahs' Café to provide job development, work experience and training to victims of domestic and sexual violence including sex trafficking victims working toward self-sufficiency and building a new life.

**Recognitions:** In March, 2013, Ms Vann received the “We Matter Milwaukee” award for her many years of engaging men building alliances with African American male leaders and male led organizations at city-wide community event on domestic violence hosted by The Voice of the Fatherless Child organization. In 2011, Ms Vann was featured in the Spring Issue of GIRLFRIENDS *Health Guide For Women of Color* on Sexual Violence Awareness as well as in the Girlfriends Summer 2010 Issue on Domestic Violence. In 2008, the Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence presented Ms Vann the “*Change Maker Award*” recognizing her pioneering contributions to the women’s movement on domestic and sexual violence specific to the African American community. In May 2006 Ms Vann was featured in SUCCESSors Magazine for inspiring role-models to watch. In 2004, Ms. Vann received her 2<sup>nd</sup> invitation to the White House by former President, George W. Bush. She was recognized for her local and national work with families impacted by violence and abuse in the home. In 2005, Ms Vann and her agency, Asha were featured in the May Issue of *Ebony Magazine* to address the issue of domestic violence homicides. In 2002, Ms. Vann was the recipient of the Wisconsin Correctional Association’s Dr. *Juliette Martin-Thomas Award* for her Commitment and Excellence in the field of Human Services. In 2003, she received the *I Am My Sister’s Keeper* award from the I Am My Sisters Keeper Annual Pastoral Women’s Conference. This same year she also received an award from the *Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community* for her work with male batterers and in the field of domestic violence. In 1996, she received the *ONI Award* from the New Jersey based International Black Women’s Congress for her commitment to the protection, healing and upliftment of lives of people of African ancestry. In 1995, she received the Barbara Ulichny Advocate of the Year Award from the Milwaukee Women’s Center in recognition of her proactive community advocacy on behalf of women and children.

**INVOLVEMENTS:** Member: National Steering Committee- Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community; Board Member: National Center on Domestic and Sexual Violence; Board Member: Wisconsin Coalition Against Domestic Violence; Commissioner – Milwaukee Commission on Domestic and Sexual Violence; Member: Milwaukee County Task Force on Human Trafficking; Member: Milwaukee Domestic Violence Homicide Review Committee and Domestic Violence Non-Fatal Review Committee.

**Publications include:**

Vann, A.A. *Developing Culturally Relevant Responses to Domestic Abuse: Asha Family Services, Inc.* 2003 (U.S. HHS, National Resource Center, Feb., 2003)  
(Continues to be one of the top requested publications on VAWnet since its release)

Rodgers, B., McGee, G. Vann, A.A. (2003) *Substance Abuse and Domestic Violence – Stories of Practitioners That Address the Co-Occurrence Among Battered Women*  
Journal on Violence Against Women: An International and Interdisciplinary Journal  
(Sage Publications)

Hadley, S; Vann, A; Seaver, C; Perez, J; *Next Millennium: Ending Domestic Violence-What Works?* U.S. Department of Justice; September, 2000

Vann, A.A.; *50 Tested Strategies for Faith and Justice Collaboration: Asha Family Services & Brothers Against Domestic Violence*; Center For Faith & Service; BJA and Pew Charitable Trusts. 2003

Vann, A.A. , *Proceedings of the Institute on Domestic Violence in the African American Community* U.S. Department of Health and Human Services; Washington, D.C. ; Chapters in: May, 1995, June, 1997, June, 1999, June, 2000;

Aborampah, O.M., Vann, A.A. (2000) *The State of Black Milwaukee. The State of African American Families in Milwaukee: Three Decades of Radical Changes As We Enter The Millennium.* p39-56.

Vann, M.D., and Drew, A.A. *African American Youth: A Culturally Specific Curriculum Guide* Milwaukee County Fighting Back. 1992