

## **1. Radhica Saith**

In 1986 the Halfway House was established. The goal was to provide a safe space for women who were victims of domestic violence, rape and Incest. We shone a light on these hidden crimes, making people aware that these were daily happenings in the lives of so many women and children. Although many knew, no one spoke out. I am pleased that what was in 1986 a lone voice among a small group of women, has cascaded into a roar. Let's keep going!



## **2. Gaietry Pargass**

"Domestic Violence is a complex problem rooted in social and cultural norms and, it is evident that legislation by itself cannot eradicate this form of gender-based violence. Dedicated legislation is nevertheless crucially important for protection against domestic violence and to reduce impunity. It also provides an enabling environment for disrupting the social and cultural norms that perpetuate domestic violence. Over the past 30 years, the Domestic Violence Act of Trinidad and Tobago has been progressively strengthened in a manner that seeks not only to reduce impunity but also to catalyze the social and cultural transformation necessary for eradication."



### **3. Diana Mahabir Wyatt**

It seems that life is itself a stressful journey but I believe deeply that everyone on this journey should have at least one safe place to rest along the way. Once, when I was broke and desperate with two children to care for, another woman helped me, and I promised that when any woman asked me for help I would not ask a question or judge, I would help. So, I started the Shelter for Battered women, and the CADV and the need for social change to protect the lives and rights of women just kept growing. While in Parliament I realized that without legislation, a culture of violence would not, could not change so I worked on legislation to curtail and hopefully prevent the growth of domestic Violence as social, economic and political stresses grow. The legislation needs upgrading every decade as the environmental stresses grow and change. All of us must work together to ensure the safety of our society.



### **4. Senator Hazel Thompson-Ahye**

The legal and moral principle that violence against women is a violation of their human rights should be taught to children from a very young age. Researchers who studied the use of the Danger Assessment Tool urge all service providers: teachers, police officers, legal, medical, social services practitioners and victim advocates to learn the risk factors for severe and fatal violence

to help potential victims to understand the likelihood of their suffering harm or death.



## **5. Ramesh Lawrence Maharaj, SC**

The repeal and replacement of the Domestic Violence Act of 1991 with the enactment of the Domestic Violence Act Chap.45:56 was a historic and important law reform measure to outlaw domestic violence against women and girls. This was an important and historic law reform measure which I was involved in as Attorney General because it promoted the defence of human and fundamental rights of victims of domestic violence, it made domestic violence offenders more accountable to the justice system, it gave greater access to justice to victims of domestic violence and it also saved lives and continues to save lives of victims of domestic violence.



## **6. Lynette Seebaran Suite**

Trinidad and Tobago should be very proud of its long legacy in combatting domestic violence and gender based violence generally. Notwithstanding the persistence of the problem we can be proud that, in relative terms , we can be said to have a mature approach to domestic violence. We have legislation, special courts, government programs, a vibrant non-governmental sector, a multiplicity of non- governmental and some government shelters and

a police service that has recently recommitted to their role in protecting those vulnerable to this perpetual scourge.

These, however are efforts largely aimed at mitigating the problem once it has arisen. It is a continuing challenge that after 30 years we have still not hit on the correct formula for protecting intimate partners from the perils of exiting abusive relationships, securing safe housing for them and their children and providing training and jobs for single parent households. Of course, the answer lies in prevention, in adjusting the way we parent and socialize our children as to gender roles and respectful relationships, and as to the value of peaceful and enduring family life where children and adults can thrive. That task is one to which the entire society should commit, recognizing that numerous agencies and actors, from civil and corporate society to the education and health sectors to religious communities, the politicians, the influencers and individuals ourselves. Let us take the opportunity this anniversary affords us to reflect on gains and gaps, to recognize the numerous individuals and influences that have brought us to this moment , and to plan constructively for a future where intimate partner and of family violence become more and more things of the past.



## **7. Emanuel Hosein**

Violence in the family does not only adversely affect the self-esteem, psyche and the economic potential of victims. ...Terrified children who witnessed battles between their parents tend to come to accept that violence is somehow an appropriate way of dealing with problems, frustrations or whatever is troubling them. The Bill before us seeks to break this cycle of anti-social behavior

No one wishes to suggest, Mr. Deputy Speaker, that this bill will be a cure-all; far be it from the truth. What we hope is that as this mechanism for relief is provided with this piece of legislation, and as persons in the society utilize the mechanism available to them for protection, that we will begin to see a changed pattern of behaviour.



#### **8. Nafessa Mohammed**

The eradication of the scourge of domestic violence must continue to be our goal.

Successive governments have sought to grapple with these issues since the enactment of the first Domestic Violence Act in 1991. However, there are kinks in the system which still require urgent remedial action.

Apart from the inter connectivity with the various social service providers, a more preventative approach is required. Our advocacy must continue. Family life is at the heart of the problem. Programmes to restore some basic old fashion values amongst parents, teachers and children are much needed. Training amongst first responders, the referral systems, the Court facilities, the timeliness in obtaining protection orders, the availability of shelters for women and children, the empowerment programmes, the enforcement of protection orders etc continue to be areas that require ongoing attention.

We must intensify our efforts to achieve our goal!



### **9. Amber Denoon**

One career, many jobs, the TTPS provided me with many opportunities. The implementation of the DV Act 1991, brought hope for victims. My team and I were excited. Our Community Policing Strategic response was successful, deepening partnerships, networking and developing awareness programmes became the norm. I needed to sell the strategy, so I personally officiated at training courses nationwide. It wasn't easy, but I knew the Executive team was supporting my efforts and I was committed. Success was evident. Officers were well trained and our public relations ratings improved considerably. My happiness comes from doing, I see changes when I do things, and it stays with me.



## **10. Colin Robinson**

After reading the bill, LGBTI advocates asked our fellow civil society advocates also lobbying on the bill, as well as the Opposition and Independent senators, not to waste time in an election year fighting Government over explicit inclusion of same-sex relationships in the legislation. We'd been figuratively backdoored into the legislation, and Government throughout our collaboration bluntly refused to remove man-and-wife language from cohabitational and visiting relationships.

What concerned us instead was how bad mind, carried over from the original legislation, impacted non-LGBTI people. To prevent same-sex couples from being covered in 1999, the government of the day had restricted people under the same roof from getting protection unless related by blood, marriage or adoption (Colin Robinson, Newsday, 5 July, 2020).



## **11. Roberta Clarke**

The daily news of domestic violence can be bleak but the truth is that the world is different. Collective power and solidarity have broken the silence. Domestic violence is recognized as an inexcusable and widespread harm, especially against women and girls. But we all need to do more. We still struggle with impunity; with under-policing and with inadequate access to justice. We still struggle with patriarchy. Yet we refuse to be cynical or defeated. Join us in building a culture of equality, respect and peace.



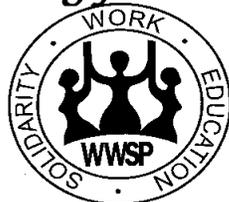
## 12. Margaret Sampson-Brown (Police Officer: Victim and Witness Support)

Being silent was never an option for me, whilst there were and continues to be “hurting people” who desperately required interventions and support. Through the years 1991 when the first Domestic Violence Act was proclaimed and until I retired in 2011 as an Assistant Commissioner my goal was to make the silent world of victims of domestic violence noisy. The constant interactions with committed and dedicated partners outside the circle of policing made my goals achievable. My message to fellows, **don’t give up, speak out, someone will hear you.**

## 13. Workingwomen

Workingwomen recognizes the family as a site of multiple forms of interpersonal violence. Our campaigns against “domestic violence” included media messages and interactive workshops. Through this work we learned that even if participants came to reject violence against women, they were not about to relinquish the right to beat children. In 2000 we therefore turned to holding sessions all over the country on “Parenting for Peace” and “Discipline Without Violence.” On the heels of our work, the government subsequently initiated action against corporal punishment in schools- the first time that the State openly declared disapproval of child beating. Ending violence against children creates the culture that can end violence against women and gives children the right to a life free from fear and harm in which they can develop their fullest potential.

## *Women Working for Social Progress*



*Workingwomen*  
Founded January 1985

#### **14. Hindu Women's Organization**

The Hindu Women's Organization (HWO) salutes the activists of the women's movement whose pioneering work brought about the assent and coming into force of the Domestic Violence Act in 1991.

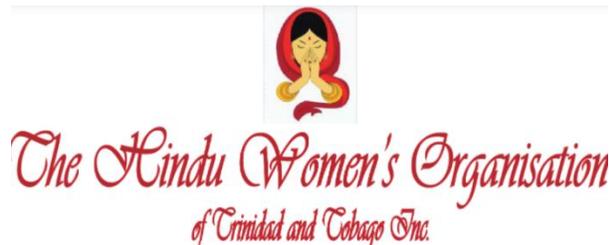
Our fledgling organization joined the Network of NGO's in 1994 at which time CAFRA was the focal point for local women to become familiar with gender issues which were carded for discussion at the Beijing Conference in 1995.

Later, with a heightened sense of awareness to gender- based violence, the HWO addressed family issues within our own communities.

In 2011 we initiated the call to change the Marriage Acts of T&T which legitimized child marriage and on 2nd September 2017, the Amended Marriage Act was proclaimed with child marriage becoming illegal.

Such an outcome would not have been possible without the initial collaboration and support of those women leaders who took concrete action which led to the proclamation of the Domestic Violence Act 1991.

The HWO looks forward to strengthening our ties as we work together in the interest of all citizens.



#### **15. Judith Jones**

When the Domestic Violence Act was passed in 1991 we knew it was not perfect but it was a start. It was a long overdue acknowledgment that gender-based violence was more than just "man/woman business" but a scourge that permeated our whole society and was unacceptable. It represented a recognition that attitudes had to change. And for change, thanks to the lobby of some powerful women, the law was in the vanguard of the movement. We hoped that with time, with the sensitization and education of the public and the Judiciary and further amendments, if not eradicated, gender based violence would be brought under strict control.

Over the years we have seen some improvements to the Act but we have not as yet gotten it right. It remains my regret that by the continued omission to include persons in same sex relationships within the ambit of the Act a significant portion of our population is unable to access the protection offered by the Act and, as a consequence, equal treatment under the Law. There is still work to be done.

#### **16. Claudia Groome-Duke**

I congratulate the Alliance for State Action to End Gender-Based Violence, for your work and for commemorating the 30th Anniversary of the assent and coming into force of the Domestic Violence Act on 16th August 1991.

I feel honoured and in reflection, as Medical Social Worker, Secretary of Education, Youth and Sport and Secretary of Health and Social Services in the Tobago House of Assembly, we advocated for and implemented the Domestic Violence Act by establishing policies, systems and mechanisms to pursue justice and effective services for victims, survivors and perpetrators.

My vision is to end gender-based violence.



### **17. Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action TT**

CAFRA TT is proud of the advocacy of its members that contributed to the passage of the landmark Domestic Violence Act over thirty years ago, and its legislative amendments over the years. More recently, CAFRA TT's 2019 study on GBV, which interviewed domestic violence survivors, LGBT+ persons and GBV perpetrators, revealed some startling findings. All the domestic violence survivors had experienced physical, emotional and sexual abuse in their intimate partner relationships; as well as suffered and witnessed domestic violence as children. All the LGBT+ persons had experienced various forms of domestic violence in their family and intimate partner relationships. And all the GBV perpetrators, who were serving prison sentences for GBV offences, had been beaten and saw others beaten during their childhood, and the majority had also been sexually abused as children. CAFRA TT calls for the establishment of a National GBV Task Force to co-ordinate: the prevention of GBV; the protection, support and care of survivors; and the rehabilitation of perpetrators.



### **18. Coalition against Domestic Violence- 16<sup>th</sup> August**

CADV has led advocacy for responsive policy and legislation since 1988. We believe that the Domestic Violence Act, effectively implemented, can protect and prevent family violence before it occurs. But we have seen that the Act is not working as it should and many are exposed to harm even though they may have a protection order. These deficits should not make us cynical or resigned. We must be more determined, more attentive and demanding of those agencies that have a special responsibility to ensure timely access to justice and effective police protection. A lot has changed, but we must all do more. We must all be active upstanders, speaking out against domestic violence and speaking truth to power. CADV salutes all those champions over the years and re-commit to leading processes where collective voices and action are responsive to the needs of those affected.



**Trinidad & Tobago  
Coalition Against Domestic Violence**

### **19. Institute for Gender and Development Studies**

The Institute for Gender and Development Studies, St Augustine Unit has a long history of involvement in research, outreach and advocacy to confront gender-based violence including Domestic Violence (DV), Intimate Partner Violence (IPV) and Child Sexual Abuse (CSA). Staff and students have undertaken public service roles, committed themselves to in-depth research projects, presented on panels and at conferences, and produced innumerable publications. Most importantly, as an activist Institute, the IGDS joins forces with NGOs, community and youth groups, and partners with international organizations and corporate groups to roll out national campaigns and strategies to create awareness and push for policy change. Countless members of staff and associate staff have contributed towards the DV Act TT and its amendments over the three decades.



#### FOR SHORT QUOTE

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#### 20. Dr.Linda Baboolal

NGOs continue to play a very, very large and important role here. A number of seminars have been held by NGO's on topics like the family unit; the breakdown of family life; child abuse and domestic violence; parenting, the single parent unit, all with an aim of getting to the root causes of delinquency. I want to praise these NGOs..., in fact, and to assure the Member for Chaguanas that my ministry continues to work very closely with NGOs and, as I said earlier on, give subventions to many of them.... There is a list of more waiting to get subventions in the new year.. So, Madam Speaker, if it were not for the NGOs and the part which they play on a daily basis in helping to alleviate the social problems; in working with people and children out there, my work and my ministry's job would be a 24-hour, seven-day one, in order to be able to cover all the ground in which they help us. I want to publicly thank all NGOs who have not only given very unselfishly of their time, but of their organizational skills, to help with my ministry's work and benefit the entire community. (Hansard November 26,1992)

#### 21. Aisha Corbie

Domestic Violence is indeed an issue of mammoth proportions within our society. Notably, the Domestic Violence Act of 1991 charted the course for us to address many of these ills. However, as we continue pursuing progress in this area a change in societal and institutional norms is required. “In my experience of victim services and policy development over the years I have seen the long-term effects of Domestic Violence on women, children and men. The fabric of the family is usually severely impacted, with adverse effects on the well-being and trajectory of our nation’s children. Too often I

have encountered teens who are victims of exploitation, youth that are enticed into gangs and women who experience domestic violence, with one thing in common: they all experienced or witnessed domestic violence as a child. Domestic violence today must not be underestimated, if not addressed it significantly affects our society tomorrow. As we acknowledge the marked achievements of the Act we must remain committed to intensifying the work on this issue as we seek to reduce the pool of victims.”

Clinical Psychologist, Manager- Victim and Witness Support Unit

22. Faris Al Rawi

The fight against domestic violence in all its intolerable forms must never end!

As AG it has been my duty to reform the law but more importantly to cause meaningful improvements to the systems that operationalize the law.

Allowing all courts the jurisdiction to give domestic violence protection and establishing 24 hour access at every police station across the nation to obtain domestic violence protection orders are just two reforms that have provided powerful improvement in the fight.

Deep and radical reforms will continue under our government as we continue to move as one in dedication!

23. The Network of NGOs of Trinidad and Tobago for the Advancement of Women.

As we commemorate 30 years of passing of legislation to address violence against women and family violence, we salute the pioneers who worked night and day, country to town to bring about a change in society to recognise what was once considered “husband and wife business” is in fact a crime.

Today, after 30 years are we better off? Yes. we are, yet not quite where we should be. Terms like sexual violence, emotional violence, stalking, incest and rape in marriage have found their way into the everyday language of those who have suffered previously with little or no help for redress. V

The latest amendments to the Domestic Violence Act have offered some hope in terms of how the law deals with problems surrounding family violence. Among the important issues are the handling of Protection Orders; the establishment of a National Domestic Violence Register; and mandatory reporting of domestic violence to a child. These concerns must be taken seriously allowing for stricter implementation. These measures should not be seen as “just on paper”, rather women, children and families as a whole must feel safe and protected by the law.