



Asian-American Network  
Against Abuse of Women

On July 2, 2005, ANAA held its first Symposium on the topic of “Violence against Women in South Asia\_the ground reality in Pakistan”. The speakers at the seminar were Dr. Abid Minto Senior Advocate Pakistan Supreme Court, Hassan Abbass Fellow, Fletcher School of Law and Government, Dr. Khalid Siddiqui, Islamic Scholar and Marriage Counselor, Congresswoman Sheila Jackson Councilwoman Ada Callahan from Houston and Nilofer Bakhtiar, Special Advisor to the Prime Minister on Women’s Development. The speakers represented a wide variety of perspectives on the issues of violence against women in Pakistan.

The proceedings began with introduction by Naila Qureshi of Asia Society, and Dr Amna Buttar of ANAA. Dr Amna Buttar highlighted the plight of Pakistani women and their struggle for justice. Later on, a telephone statement was read by Dr. Shazia Khalid, herself a victim of rape, in Sui Balochistan. In a truly courageous and heartrending narration of the events that led up to the gruesome crime. Dr. Shazia illustrated how victims of violence in Pakistan are increasingly taking speaking out about this silent scourge that plagues Pakistani society.

Councilwoman Ada Callahan highlighted how the plight of oppressed women across the world could serve as a unifying force allowing women from around the world to break the shackles of oppressive customs and laws. Dr. Minto, Pakistan’s eminent legal scholar lent further depth to discussion by identifying feudalism as the root cause for gender inequality in Pakistan. The next speaker, Hassan Abbass, having spent several years as a police officer in Punjab presented to the audience, the grave obstacles facing women from the law enforcement perspective. Congresswoman Sheila Jackson in having graciously accepted the invitation to attend the event, stood with ANAA President Amna Buttar and made the vow that in her position as member of both the Women’s Caucus and the Human Rights Caucus in the US Congress, she would make every effort to assist in the fight for women’s rights in Pakistan. Dr. Khalid Siddiqui, highlighted how the customs that lead to mistreatment of women have no basis in Islam. Finally, Ms Nilofer Bakhtiar, the Prime Minister’s Advisor to Women’s Development presented the current Pakistani administration’s perspective. She highlighted several programs for women that have been introduced by General Musharraf’s administration and stated that while change was necessary it “would have to be implemented gradually”.

ANAA was happy to have organized such a well attended and invigorating discussion. Our intent was to spark debate on the deplorable condition of women in Pakistan who do not yet have access to basic human rights. The speakers at our event presented divergent viewpoints on the issue but helped together facilitate discussion on how this urgent crisis can be resolved.

Our special thanks go out to all the speakers, our co-sponsors Asia Society, Voices breaking boundaries, WKPFT Houston, M.J Khan, DAYA and George Brown Convention Center. Without their help, we could not have made this event the success that it was.