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## Panel on Social Justice Pedagogy and Academy/ Community Collaboration (Transcript)

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## TRANSCRIPT<sup>°</sup>

CONVERGE! REIMAGINING THE MOVEMENT TO END GENDER  
VIOLENCE SYMPOSIUM:

### Panel on Social Justice Pedagogy and Academy-Community Collaboration

UNIVERSITY OF MIAMI SCHOOL OF LAW

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**GONZALEZ-GUARDA:** Good morning everyone. Thank you so much for the opportunity to be here. My name is Rosa Gonzalez-Guarda. I am an Assistant Professor here at the University of Miami School of

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<sup>°</sup> This transcript has been edited from its original transcription for clarity.

<sup>\*</sup> Etiony Aldarondo is the Associate Dean for Research and Director of the Dunspough-Dalton Community and Educational Well-Being Research Center in the School of Education at the University of Miami. Aldarondo is also the Executive Director of The Council on Contemporary Families. Rosa M. Gonzalez-Guarda is an Assistant Professor at the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies and the Co-Director of the Research and Training Core of the School's Center for Excellence for Health Disparities Research. Ivon Mesa is the Director of the Violence Prevention and Intervention Services Division of the Community Action and Human Services Department of Miami-Dade County. Natalia Villegas is an Assistant Professor of Clinical at the University of Miami School of Nursing and Health Studies. Deborah M. Weissman the Reef C. Ivey II Distinguished Professor of Law at the University of North Carolina School of Law.

<sup>†</sup> Original remarks from the CONVERGE! conference omitted. Professor Deborah M. Weissman's remarks were redacted as she contributed to the following article: Deborah M. Weissman, *Rethinking a New Domestic Violence Pedagogy*, 5 U. MIAMI RACE & SOC. JUST. L. REV. 635 (2015).

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Nursing and Health Studies. I think it is also important for you to know my background. My background is in nursing and if any of you are close to a nurse, you understand that nurses go into nursing because they really want to be next to their patients. They want to be at their bedside providing the best care for them. And so one of the things I would like to do is break the stereotype that research separates you from the patient. I see research and being in this role in an academic institution as giving me an opportunity to become closer to patients, understanding their needs and the type of care they need, and developing interventions that are going to be more effective. I have had the wonderful fortune to have great mentors who have introduced me to wonderful community partners that I have the pleasure, honor, and privilege of working with. I want to thank Etiony Aldarondo who married us, who put us together in matching some of our interests and needs and resources. And I will hand this over to Ivon who can introduce herself.

**MESA:** Hi, good morning to all of you. My name is Ivon Mesa and I am the Director of the Violence Prevention and Intervention Division of Miami-Dade County. It is a pleasure for me to be here. I also feel the same way Dr. Rosa Guarda does in that I feel that the fact that we were able to meet and work together through Dr. Aldarondo has really made an impact on the programs that I oversee for the County. I think we have found that we have a perfect marriage because we can work with each other. I have elements that she needs and she has elements that I need, so basically it is a win-win situation for both entities. Miami-Dade County opened what is known as a Family Justice Center. The Family Justice Center that we have here in Miami is called the Coordinated Victim Assistance Center (“CVAC”), which is the only Family Justice Center in the state of Florida. CVAC is a one-stop center where victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking can come with their dependents and receive wraparound services. We have gathered professionals from different types of disciplines including therapists, attorneys, nurses, psychologists, among others. We conducted a community assessment among the service providers and clients and came up with some ideal partners that we should have at the Center. We have thirty five on-site partners that come on a periodic basis to provide services to the clients. Instead of having to go to twenty different places, a victim can come to only one place and develop a relationship with the Center, have a specific advocate assigned to her, and be connected with all these on-site partners.

I am big on conducting surveys and always trying to find out what it is that our victims are missing and with that information, I go out and find whatever services are needed. CVAC services range from financial literacy classes to self-defense classes to yoga classes. One of

our newest partners is the Cuban American Bar Association (“CABA”) who assists with mortgage foreclosure defense.

**GONZALEZ-GUARDA:** The processes that Ivon described she uses to bring together the partners at CVAC are processes we used to bring together partnerships to address prevention of domestic violence and its consequences through evidence based solutions, and we define evidence based very broadly. We came together in 2009.

The model we used for the project is really a circular model, as opposed to linear one. At the very beginning of this partnership is community engagement and community engagement occurred at various levels. First, there was community engagement between the academic and the community partner. There was also community engagement with the victims or the general population that we want to serve. There was also community engagement with the service providers and other leaders and experts in the field. After we did that, we conducted a formal community assessment to assess what the needs, opportunities, strengths and preferences were for domestic violence prevention. We looked specifically at the Hispanic community, but since then we have expanded to assess the needs of other communities in Miami-Dade County. Based on that assessment, we identified some priority areas for action. This process entailed us presenting our preliminary results of the community assessment to the community and having the community identify priorities from those results. So, for example, in our community assessment we found that there were a number of priority targeted groups that the community wanted to address including immigrant women, adolescents, and the elderly. We presented our findings in a community forum and asked the community to rank their priorities. The community prioritized addressing youth in the area of dating violence prevention. So we moved into developing a culturally tailored program for Hispanic adolescents, their families, and the school personnel where they went to school that addressed dating violence prevention. Right now that program is called JOVEN<sup>1</sup> and we are currently evaluating the effects of that program to see if there is any evidence of it working or not. The ultimate idea in our partnership is to create some solutions, programs, and strategies that could be disseminated to other communities or to other specific populations with similar issues.

We have developed five projects, focused on different areas, moving from identifying issues to address, to trying to address those issues, and then evaluate. We are going to talk briefly about two examples of this

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<sup>1</sup> See JOVEN (JUNTOS OPUESTOS A LA VIOLENCIA ENTRE NOVIOS/TOGETHER AGAINST DATING VIOLENCE), [www.miami.edu/sonhs/index.php/elcentro/research/studies/joven/](http://www.miami.edu/sonhs/index.php/elcentro/research/studies/joven/) (last visited May 22, 2015).

partnership. One of the projects that resulted was funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation. We are developing, implementing, and evaluating a dating violence prevention program in a local high school here in Miami-Dade County. Ivon is going to talk about another initiative funded by an Office of Violence Against Women grant.

**MESA:** Last year the Office of Violence Against Women created a new category of revenue for service providers that is geared towards reducing domestic violence homicides. The Miami-Dade County Community Action and Human Services Department applied for a grant and we received funding to evaluate the practices that we are utilizing here in Miami-Dade County. OVW proposed that we utilize two different models. One is called a Domestic Violence High Risk Team and the other one is called a Lethality Assessment Program. The domestic violence hybrid model is a model that is geared towards creating a multidisciplinary review panel that will be the decision making group that will be speaking directly to a victim of domestic violence who is facing a certain level of danger. If we receive the additional funding, we will be able to have that type of program here in Miami. In other words, we will have a roundtable that will include all kind of disciplines—from the court system, from the mental health system, from the legal standpoint, from immigration, from the Department of Children and Families. These individuals will be able to assist the victim and if the victim has a situation that she has not been able to overcome, these individuals will be able to help her do that. We also have another model which is the Lethality Assessment model. This is more of a law enforcement model. We will be told in September if Miami-Dade County will receive the second part of this grant. If we do receive the grant, we will be getting approximately \$600,000 to implement these two models.

**GONZALEZ-GUARDA:** One of the wonderful things, I think, about this project is that traditionally grant money has been given to academic institutions for research and evaluation and the academics then reach out to the community partners for partnership. In this case, the community partners were asked to reach out to an academic in the local community to partner with them. It is a great example of how when we are talking about community-academic partnerships, we need to look at the systemic issues that have been a theme in the CONVERGE! conference. One of the systemic issues that facilitate or hinder academic-community partnerships is that the grant mechanisms for funding are not equitable between academic and community systems. So, I think that is an issue that we need to address as we try to promote and facilitate more academic-community partnerships.