

# **Spanish Women's Workshop Report – 2022 Orientation Assembly Report**

## **Esther Esquivel**

Good afternoon and Happy New Year to Everyone.  
I wish you a 2022 full of blessings and learning opportunities.

### **WHY HISPANIC ALCOHOLIC WOMEN DO NOT STAY IN AA?**

When I was asked if I wanted to speak about the Hispanic Women in AA, I immediately said yes and ever since I have been reflecting about everything I've learned during the last six years.

My name is Esther, and I am an alcoholic. My sobriety date is November 1, 2001. I am rotating out of the alternate-DCM position for District 18. My homegroup is Grupo Amanecer in Vista, we meet at 8:00 a.m. I am a member of the Virtual Hispanic Women's AA group that meets everyday at 10:00 a.m. I previously served as the Area 8 liaison for the Hispanic Women's Workshop (TMH - Spanish Acronym). I now participate in the advisory council for the TMH in AA. I feel grateful for the trust that you have given me to speak about something that makes me very happy, this service.

The Beginning  
Purpose  
What happened after the first Workshop  
Where we are now

This has been a dream for many Old-timer Hispanic AA women, that I myself yearned for, and it seemed so far away, almost impossible.

### **How it Begun**

During PRAASA 2016, while chatting, many Hispanic AA women realized that they were experiencing similar situations in their groups. They shared the experiences that many women were having since the moment they arrived in AA groups in their different areas. Together, they decided that something needed to be done.

When we started to make phone calls and sending emails asking if anyone was interested or if their areas wanted to participate in an event for Hispanic women, we begun to realize that in the majority of the areas there were few sober Hispanic women. Little by little the areas responded with willingness to be a part of something that could help reach out to Alcoholic Hispanic women. We invited the Spanish-speaking districts and the women in their groups to join this service and participate. In that workshop pre-planning meeting we had the participation of: Area 05, Southern California; 06, North Coastal California; 08, San Diego and Imperial; 93, Central California; area 07 joined us later on.

There were groups that worked within the principles of AA and would encourage the newcomer women to stay, they would give them other alcoholic women's numbers, take them to groups where they could meet more women; supported them in providing service in and outside of their groups. The problem was that not all groups were like that. Most areas had

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few alcoholic women; in some groups, the women were not alcoholic, rather they were wives of alcoholic fellows that would accompany them to meetings.

When we asked, we were told that women would show up, but that as men, they did not know how to work with them, due to the lack of women in the groups, the newcomers would feel lonely and would not return. They spoke about their experiences from before arriving in AA. Their families did not support them, they prefer to hide them and let them drink at home. Some of their partners, knowing that they are alcoholic women, would provide the alcohol as a means to keep control over these women.

In the area liaisons meeting, the women shared the reasons why they were ashamed to self-identify as alcoholic women and when sharing their experiences, they were ridiculed and judged by their male counterparts. Also, some of their husbands would forbid their attendance at meetings because "they only see men there," because of jealousy, and the excessive cursing in some groups. In other experiences, women were told that they were not alcoholic because they refused to share intimate details of their lives and were told that they needed to go to Al-Anon instead. We heard stories of women who have been harassed. Some old-timers would seduce the newcomer women give that most of them are vulnerable, frightened, lacking attention and affection, which makes them easy prey for predators. Other forms of abuse toward alcoholic women are: emotional, psychological, financial, sexual.

Some female newcomers cannot relate to the experiences of the male fellows. Some women were asked for sexual favors in exchange for court-card signatures or for social services. It is a delicate situation since these women need to meet the requirements of the law. Furthermore, some women that stay in group reject, bully or offend other newcomer women so that they leave, because they feel displaced by the newcomer.

Regarding sponsorship, some women shared their intimate fifth step with their sponsor and would later on hear their sponsor share their fifth step from the podium or with other fellows. That creates a lack of trust toward sponsorship or to remain in alcoholics anonymous meetings. We have also been told that AA Women's meeting are outside of traditions and that they are not Alcoholics Anonymous.

During my service with the H&I committee (in North San Diego) I realized that were women that would not be able to go to a group with men in attendance and we did not have a Spanish-speaking women's group where they could feel safe and recover in a healthy environment.

Something that we still face is the the aggression from some male fellows and officers. These men are misinformed and spread misinformation by rejecting us and bullying us for participating in this workshop.

#### **The Purpose**

The Hispanic AA Women's Workshop is sponsored by areas within the general service

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structure in Alcoholics Anonymous to develop greater unity amongst Hispanic Women in AA. The workshop seeks to encourage the exchange of ideas, experiences and provide an opportunity for Hispanic alcoholic women to share experience, strength and hope with others and carry the message of AA to the still suffering alcoholic women. In the THM, we practice the three legacies of recovery, unity and service.

Not all women are strong enough to survive in this environment.

We decided to take accountability of our fellowship and ensure that newcomer women can find a healthier environment than the one we found. If we do not have a recovery-oriented home group and if we do not have a healthy relationship with my fellow alcoholics, we will not be able to work with others and this might lead us to taking a drink.

Today we know that alcoholism is a very cruel disease that can destroy us and make us and our loved ones suffer; the risk of dying from alcoholism is always near. Sadness, bitterness, and depression can hinder anyone's recovery.

It is proven that Alcoholics Anonymous works when one alcoholic helps another alcoholic. We need alcoholic women to claim their seat in the rooms; that those of us that have stayed take up formal sponsorship; that we recover so that we can do 12th step work with others, sponsor newcomer women; that we raise our hands and take our place in general service.

#### What Has Happened Since the First Workshop

On December 3, 2016 the first ever Hispanic AA Women's Workshop was held in San Diego and Imperial's Area 8 with the support of areas 05, 06, 09 and 93. In that meeting, 70 Hispanic women from Nevada, Colorado, Texas, Arizona, California, Mexico and Panama gathered for the first time. We provided simultaneous interpretation for our English speaking women in attendance. We also transmitted via internet to women joining us from Florida, New York, Hawaii and Mexico. We shared our experience, strength and hope. It was very inspiring to have women leaders that have served their groups and in general services; to name a few: Amalia C, past delegate area 11, panel 55; Irene D., La Vina Editor; Paz P. Area 3 Non-Trustee Chair of AA Grapevine, and Lissa P. from Area 93.

We were witnessing something incredible for the first time.

It was immediately encouraged that we open Spanish-speaking AA women's meetings everywhere.

After 50 years of PRAASA, we requested that PRAASA gave us a room for the first Spanish-speaking women's meeting; and every year thereafter we have a room for our meeting.

We united and attended the International Women's AA Conference where we had a liaison and Spanish interpretation and that encouraged us to keep going.

Box 459 published an article about TMH.

The Grapevine and La Vina recently published a book with Hispanic women stories.

A NEW PAMPHLET. Hispanic women are considered a remote community.

In 2018 Area 05 sent an agenda item to the General Service Conference to create a Hispanic Women's Pamphlet. The Conference approved its creation by a 124 to 8 vote, it would be written by and for Hispanic women in AA. This pamphlet being part of third tradition literature,

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provides an avenue for the remote community that are Hispanic women to share their experience, strength and hope; so that they feel welcomed whenever they arrive in a group. The pamphlet is a 12th step tool in aiding groups where there are no women; it will allow them to recognize their disease and ask for help to recover and remain sober. Most of the literature that we have are stories that have been translated into Spanish but we needed our own stories. The General Service Conference reflects the group conscious of AA as a whole and it allows us to acknowledge when anyone reaches out for help, regardless of age, gender, religion, if they are atheist, if they are agnostic, their language, or if they have special needs, we want the hand of AA always to be there.

Where we are now

At the last workshop in December 2021 in Phoenix Arizona, the advisory committee decided to pull the next host out of the hat and Area 08 won the privilege to host the 2022 TMH. All of this would not be possible without the support of everyone that has helped us in some way. Our intense gratitude to Area 08 San Diego/Imperial for their trust, continuous support and their great example of love and service.

Thank you very much,  
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