I am glad that I attended the Forum Theatre Training in July 2006; it reminded me of the importance of context in community organizing. For example, it is important to be mindful of how gender and race play a role in every situation. Forum theatre is an innovative way to engage people in a dialogue not only about issues such as domestic violence, but also about individuals’ intimate roles in a situation and the creation of alternatives or solutions.

Activities at the training reminded me that gender and race have an incredible impact on the dynamics in the classroom, group work, and relationships. My favorite parts of the training were the discussions after each scenario was presented—these discussions brought out intriguing questions and a sense that we always should be digging deeper, in order to understand a situation on all levels.

I felt that the training was beneficial to me as a community organizer because it showed me how to demonstrate how larger issues can be made personal, whether the issue is domestic violence prevention, affirmative action, or youth issues in education. In using forum theater, you can give people an opportunity to play a role in a scenario, and be involved in the issue being discussed.

It was also FUN to meet other New Visions members, take part in theatre exercises, and feel the energy of the passionate participants in the room. The most important thing that I took away from this training is the unique power of telling untold stories; the importance of good discussion to process as a way to grow together as a community in order to deepen our understanding of different issues that women face.

New Visions Awarded a Grant for Youth Camp

By Neel Pandya, Staff

New Visions has been awarded the Young Women for Change grant by the Michigan Women’s Foundation. The purpose of this grant is to educate young women about issues which impact them, and give them the knowledge and skills to be leaders around these issues. The grant will enable us to develop a program specifically for the youth around the issues of dating/domestic violence.

We are planning to host a youth camp, in the spring/summer of 2007, which aims to reach out to the following youth:

- Young men and women between the ages of 16 and 19
- Live in one of the following four counties: Macomb, Oakland, Washtenaw, and Wayne
- Interested in working with an Asian/Asian American community youth group or community-based organization around the issue of dating and domestic violence

This exciting youth camp is open to 10 – 15 youth. Participants will be recruited from the various communities we work in: Filipino, South Asian, Korean, Chinese, and Hmong. The youth will have the opportunity to learn about dating/domestic violence and to use theater methods to raise awareness about these issues.

If you are interested in helping to plan the camp (e.g. develop curriculum) or to recruit youth, please contact Neel Pandya at pandyan@umich.edu
New Visions: Alliance to End Violence in Asian/Asian American Communities

New Visions is a grassroots organization whose mission is to inspire and support sustainable community action for ending violence against women in Asian communities of Southeast Michigan. Affiliated with the University of Michigan School of Social Work, we are a partnership of local Asian communities and domestic violence-related agencies dedicated to one vision: “Asian women are safe, and Asian communities are free of violence.”

New Visions Calendar of Upcoming Events:
- October 8th—3rd issue of Monthly Visions
- October—Community Film Series (TBA)
- Call for Titles for the October Event. Are you good at making up jingles or rhymes? We need your help in coming up with a title for the October Event. Please submit your ideas to eunjl@umich.edu

Monthly Visions

New Visions Hosts its Second Forum Theater Training

By Neel Pandya, Staff

On July 30th, 2006, New Visions hosted a follow-up Forum Theater training. Mr. Jeffrey Steiger, Director of the University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching Theater Program, facilitated the training. The training was attended by a total of 10 individuals, both members and non-members. During the training, attendees participated in acting exercises and activities, such as role-plays, and had engaged in interactive discussions. Overall, the training was a success!

Theatre: A Powerful Tool for Dialogue and Change

By Angelita Velasco Gunn, Associate Director, Michigan Coalition Against Domestic and Sexual Violence

I attended the recent Forum Theatre training this past July and walked away feeling both pleased and hopeful.

Theatre has a long history of going beyond entertaining audiences to providing social commentary or posing moral dilemmas through performances. The forum theatre model takes this concept one step further. Audiences are not passive witnesses to the dilemma being presented but they are encouraged to be active participants in solving the dilemma by interrupting the scene and changing the story or dialogue. This method encourages thought and dialogue which are essential first steps to changing assumptions—specifically around domestic violence and victimization.

During the mid-1980s and 1990s, my activist work included working with a small semi-professional theatre company in Minneapolis—Teatro Latino de Minnesota. Our company developed and grew out of a national Chicano/Latino theatre movement whose missions were to provide a more accurate history of Latino people in the United States and promote a greater understanding of our communities’ struggles around race, poverty and violence. We also promoted the celebration of Latino people in the United States. I witnessed first hand how our performances achieved our goals of promoting compassion and understanding of Latinos as I often had the opportunity to mingle with audiences after each performance.

I have a deep respect and understanding of the role theatre can play in educating audiences and am encouraged by New Visions’ decision to carry on this tradition in the Asian communities they serve.