



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Jose Peralta

Senator Peralta Enlists Queens Clergy In Battle Against Domestic Violence

JOSE PERALTA November 16, 2010

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Senator Peralta Launches Faith-Based Initiative to Combat Domestic Violence

As part of his campaign to combat domestic violence, State Senator Jose Peralta enlisted the help of more than 30 Queens clergy, who accepted his call to talk about the problem of family violence with their congregations and to provide referrals to potentially life-saving services.

At a meeting with the clergy at the Langston Hughes Library in East Elmhurst, Senator Peralta asked the clerics to take up the issue during services on the last Sabbath of October, which is Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

“Domestic violence is called the crime of silence,” Senator Peralta said. “Fear is what causes the silence—fear of embarrassment, fear of breaking up a family, fear of retribution by the batterer. It is incumbent upon us as leaders to speak out about domestic violence, whether in a church or legislative chamber or at home.

“We need to educate ourselves and then others about initiating discussion and providing referrals to life-saving help from experienced, committed service providers,” Senator Peralta added. “That is the goal of my campaign to combat domestic violence. Enlisting these community leaders to lend their respected voices to the effort is a very important first step.”

During the meeting, the clergy heard from public and non-profit sector service providers and experts, including Amy Barasch, executive director of the New York State Office for Prevention of Domestic Violence; Alexandra Patino, executive director of the New York City Family Justice Center in Queens, part of the Mayor’s Office to Combat Domestic Violence; and Elizabeth Dank, assistant Queens district attorney, Domestic Violence Bureau.

“Domestic violence is a very important social issue affecting families from all walks of life,” said Josephine Flores, senior staff attorney, Legal Aid Society, who also addressed the clergy. “The Legal Aid Society is just one of many resources in New York City that is here to help. We represent victims in court and through the legal process. We hopefully enable victims to regain power and stability in their lives.”

Also on hand to inform the clergy about her agency’s services was Rev. Carol Dougherty-Steptoe, associate vice president, Queens community and criminal justice programs, at Safe

Horizon.

“As the nation’s largest victims assistance organization, we understand the importance of partnering with faith-based communities, community organizations and our elected officials to effectively combat the issue of domestic violence.”

Among the diverse group of clerics in attendance were Iman Mohd Qayyoon of the Muhammadi Community Center in Jackson Heights; Marvin Bentley of the Antioch Church in Corona; Rev. Erwin Canizares of Woodside Foursquare Church; and Pratip Dasgupta of the Queens Ethical Humanist Society in Jackson Heights.