



To guide refugees and immigrants in the journey toward self-determination and social equality

“Cultural Dynamics: Women’s Voices”

Remarks by

Lynn Moline, Board Chair, CAPI

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Good morning. It’s my honor and privilege to welcome you to Cultural Dynamics: Women’s Voices. I’m Lynn Moline, chair of the board of CAPI, a founding member organization of the Refugee and Immigrant Women for Change, the sponsor of this luncheon.

As I look around this room, it’s impossible for me to fail to recognize myself as a minority representative of the European cultural heritage. But as I think about it, I’m a third-generation descendant of immigrants from Norway and Germany who came here with no wealth, no advanced skills, and no English. But they came with great energy, determination, and hopefulness. It’s not lost on anyone here that this story of coming from a faraway place is the story of America, and it sings as much truth today as it ever did.

We are excited to present Ms. Gbowee, an extraordinary leader with an extraordinary message. And that’s just the starting point because our purpose today goes far beyond sharing her story: our purpose today is a call to action; a call to action to every person in this room.

Let me explain how we got here and what we are asking you to do. Within the last 12 months, CAPI’s board and staff coalesced around the reality that the needs of the refugees and immigrants we serve far transcend the critical basic needs we provide. We realized that our clients also need the knowledge and skills that lead to true self-determination. So we at CAPI fundamentally transformed our very mission to focus on self-determination and social equality for refugees and immigrants.

However, it became immediately and strikingly apparent that the majority of people CAPI serves are refugee and immigrant women. And we didn’t have to look too deeply to understand that societal behavior stacks the deck against women’s social equality and equal access. So, one of our new strategies focuses explicitly on cultural gender equity concerns.

Of course, we immediately recognized that we could not begin to undertake this task alone. So last year, CAPI approached a number of other immigrant organizations, and seven of them agreed to join us in that cause. Those agencies are all represented in this room today, and as I name them and their executive directors, please join me in recognizing them for their leadership:

- *Dr. Alvin Siaka, Executive Director of African Health Action Corporation*
- *Mr. Sunny Sinh Chanthanouvong, Executive Director of Lao Assistance Center in Minnesota*
- *Ms. Roxana Linares, Executive Director of Centro*

- *Ms. Doris Parker, Executive Director of the Liberian Women's Initiative of Minnesota*
- *Ms. Raj Chadhary, Executive Director of SEWA- Asian Indian Wellness*
- *Dr. Wilhemina Holder, Executive Director of Women's Initiative for Self-Empowerment, and*
- *Ms. Pham Thi Hoa, Executive Director of CAPI*

So that's how the Refugee and Immigrant Women for Change was born. And that brings us to today, our first public event.

But I said our purpose today is a call to action. What action are we calling you to? We are calling on you and your organizations to *join us in a powerful grass roots movement to change perceptions of and behaviors toward women*. We believe that gender inequity is at the heart of pernicious problems like sex trafficking, teen pregnancy, domestic violence, and discrimination in schooling and health care. Together, we can strike at the root causes of social problems like these that tear at the very foundation of our communities.

So we are beyond excited to be here today with you. In just a moment, Doris Parker will tell you more about RIWC and introduce our speaker. And as she does so, please begin enjoying your lunch.

