



#EngagingMenAndBoys

Men won't sit back and be silent in the movement to end gender based violence, domestic violence and abuse. Maitri is engaging men and boys through this social media campaign so that together we can raise awareness and work toward prevention.

Thank you Ganesh Babu Sigamani for joining this Maitri campaign

Here is a message from Ganesh Babu Sigamani:

I have been associated with Bay Area Tamil Manram (BATM) since the last 20 odd years. During my tenure with BATM, I got to observe in close quarters, the changing dynamics of spousal relationships among Indian immigrants.

During the early 2000s, there was a huge influx of Indian immigrants who would come through H1-B visas. Consequently, their wives would follow in H-4 dependent visa. Due to the parameters of dependent visa, coupled with financial dependence, girls would predominantly be in a vulnerable situation. This vulnerability would be exacerbated if the husband does not have the capacity to empathize with her situation or is downright abusive. With nowhere to turn to, South Indian girls would approach members of BATM informally and privately as the only safe zone available to them. What particularly struck me during these interactions was the "normalization" of abuse as a way of life. It was as if the dominant person did not know any other way to live, until someone emphatically pointed out the abusive nature of the relationship. In some cases, we were able to resolve their issues and in other cases it would lead to separation. However, we were able to help some of the girls with a roadmap for life ahead.

My observation is that we should bring about a change in how we raise our girls by giving them a clear sense of their rights and responsibilities.

About the author:

Ganesh Babu Sigamani's volunteering efforts started way back in 1999, as a contributor to the erstwhile "Mostly Tamil" radio show from Stanford University. He was the President of the Bay Area Tamil Manram (BATM) in 2000-01 and still continues to volunteer for them. As part of BATMs NGO committee, he has played a crucial role in 2015 Tamil Nadu flood relief where he was instrumental in rehabilitating several families by pooling in resources, through various NGOs. During his time with BATM, he executed several projects including initiating the "Giving Back to India" charity work, building 2 class rooms at Udavum Karangal Higher Secondary School @ Thiruverkadu, Chennai, acquiring state-of-the-art ambulance for a rural hospital and securing full-fledged water supply project to a group of villages.