



Praxis International Announces New Executive Director

June 13, 2017



Kata Issari **Executive Director**

St. Paul, MN, June 13, 2017 – Kata Issari is named Executive Director of Praxis International, one of the nation's leading social change organizations dedicated to ending gender-based violence. Ms. Issari brings 35 years of expertise to the position, and is poised to lead Praxis International through her innovative vision. According to Ms. Issari:

"Praxis is a powerful catalyst for social justice and I am incredibly honored to be selected as Executive Director. Eliminating gender-based violence is a challenging but achievable goal. It takes bold action, dedicated advocacy, speaking out, community engagement and - most importantly - working collectively with survivors and communities to promote broad-based transformation. I'm extremely hopeful about all that we can accomplish together."

Ms. Issari's 35 years of experience began as an advocate and activist. Through the years she has held other positions as therapist, clinician and as administrator for grassroots, campus and national sexual assault and domestic violence organizations. Ms. Issari established the first clinical program, including a 24-hour rape crisis line, at the University of Michigan's Sexual Assault Prevention and Awareness Center. She is a founding member of INCITE! Women of Color Against Violence, and has served as a board member of the National Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Advocates for Abused and Battered Lesbians (now the Northwest Network of Bisexual, Transgendered, Lesbian and Gay Survivors of Abuse), and the Women's Funding Alliance in Seattle.

Originally from Iran, Ms. Issari immigrated to the U.S. as a child and grew up in California and Michigan. Today she and her family live in Seattle, Washington, following a recent move from Honolulu where they lived for 19 years. While in Hawai'i, Ms. Issari served as Program Director of Parents and Children Together Family Peace Center for 12 years where she was instrumental in the design and implementation of Namelehuapono, the only Hawaiian culturally-based, gender-based violence intervention for Native Hawaiian and Polynesian survivors and offenders in Hawaii. She also provided key leadership for Keiki Safe, an innovative school-based counseling and community response service for children exposed to domestic violence, as well as the design of a group counseling program for battered women and their children that was funded by the U.S. Department of Justice, Safe Start Promising Practices initiative.

Ms. Issari most recently served as the Executive Director, Hawai'i Region, of the Joyful Heart Foundation where she provided local and national leadership on Joyful Heart's innovative programming to address sexual assault, domestic violence and child abuse policy, education, and intervention. She led a statewide collaborative of nonprofits, government agencies and private sector entities in the implementation of Hawai'i Says NO MORE, an unprecedented local effort to engage communities in ending sexual assault and domestic violence. She also led the design and implementation of Heal the Healers Hawai'i, a locally-based model to address compassion fatigue in advocates and counselors at sexual/domestic violence, trafficking and/or child abuse organizations as well as worked closely with state legislators to pass landmark Hawai'i legislation addressing the state's backlog of untested sexual assault evidence kits.

"Kata has a unique ability to capture the strength of survivors and communities, and uses this strength to transform programs, services and organizations. We are excited to partner with Kata to support her philosophy, and see how it will broaden Praxis International's spheres of influence and impact." Board of Director Co-Chairs, Sandra Pilgrim-Lewis and Umi Hankins

The Board of Directors and staff of Praxis are excited to partner and grow with Ms. Issari's leadership. We are honored to work with someone of her professional caliber and experience. Kata will assume her role as Executive Director on July 10, 2017.

About Praxis International

Praxis works to end violence against women and their children. Our mission is to join with other progressive social change organizations and programs to work toward the elimination of oppression in our society. Praxis was founded in 1997 by Dr. Ellen Pence and a small group of domestic violence activists. The primary goal of Praxis at that time was to develop the Praxis Safety and Accountability Audit - a method and process of examining and changing institutional practices and their impact on women's lives. Some of the best-known practices in the field of criminal justice reform to end gender-based violence originated with Dr. Ellen Pence and others at the Duluth Domestic Abuse Intervention Project - the Power and Control Wheel, Community Coordinated Response (CCR), and risk and lethality assessments - and were developed further at Praxis. Today, Praxis is poised for continued impact through a multidimensional approach to ending gender-based violence and our core programs: Institutional Analysis (changing public institutions to meet the needs of people), Blueprint for Safety (criminal justice reform), the Advocacy Learning Center (strengthening social change advocacy), and Rural Technical Assistance on Ending VAW (support to rural advocates and CCRs).

Visit www.praxisinternational.org for more information about our work.