

HONORING OUR LEGACY



**The History of the National Center for
Victims of Crime**

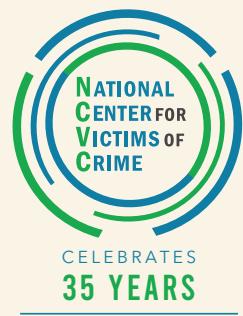


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Mistress of Ceremonies Beverly Sills with Dominick Dunne, the Sunny von Bulow Awardee at the third annual awards dinner on September 22, 1992. This dinner raised \$423,680 to support the Center's programs and services.

In reference to this award, Elizabeth Taylor said of Dominic Dunne, "You have always championed the rights of victims of violence – once dedicated to a cause, you don't sit silently by."

The National Center for Victims of Crime is indebted to our many supporters over the years.

We would like to acknowledge the thousands of survivors and advocates who we have worked with over the years.

Thank you for trusting us to do this work and for sharing your stories.

INTRODUCTION AND CONTEXT



Center Directors (L-R) Christine Edmunds, Anita Boles and David Beatty discuss Senator Joseph Biden's "Violence Against Women Act" with him at a press summit highlighting the Act's many provisions to increase protections for American women.

The Sunny Von Bulow National Victim Advocacy Center was born out of a conversation between Alexander von Auersperg and E. Gene Patterson, the Center's first Executive Director, more than 35 years ago. It was created by Ala Ishlam and Alexander von Auersperg after the victimization of their mother, Sunny von Bulow. Now, in 2021, is known as the National Center for Victims of Crime.

Following their family's traumatic experience with the criminal justice system, Ala Ishlam and Alexander von Auersperg were inspired to build an advocacy organization to make the criminal justice system more victim-centered. They envisioned an organization that helped to prevent other victims from revictimization and being left out of the justice process, as their family had been. They sought to provide grassroots, survivor led groups with the tools and resources that they needed to be successful.

Their goal was to **redefine justice** for crime victims and to ensure that their voices were heard and valued by the justice system. Through their efforts, the movement sought to change the conception of victims as nameless, faceless into powerful advocates with a voice, rights, protections and agency.

Since those early days, the National Center for Victims of Crime has become the **nation's leading resource and advocacy organization** for victims of all types of crime. We have played a critical role in shaping the national discussion on the impact of crime, what victims and survivors need in order to recover and what justice and healing means in practice.

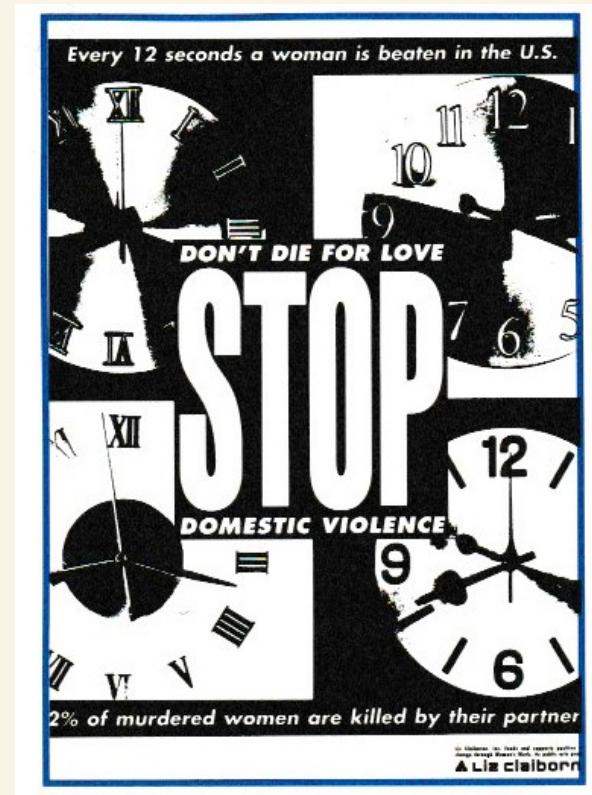
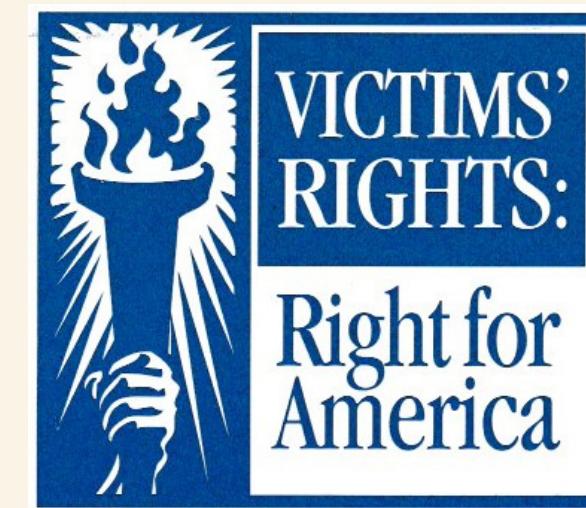
Ala and Alex turned personal tragedy and pain into willpower and **systemic change**. They changed the narrative, from revictimizing harmful publicity and media attention into an awareness that crime, and it's concurrent trauma, are crises that affect us all. Instead of turning inward, they transformed their pain into collective action. Because of that decision, our country and the national discourse on the criminal justice system and victim and survivor rights is changed for the better. They drew attention to a criminal justice system that focused solely on bringing perpetrators to account, with no regard to those harmed by these perpetrators. They sought to even the scales of justice, drawing together a board of powerful leaders to connect, coalition build, and assist grassroots survivor led groups across the nation.

Prior to the National Center (then known as the Sunny Bulow National Victim Advocacy Center) the National Organization for Victim Assistance (NOVA) was the only national organization in the field of victims services. NOVA focused on meeting immediate needs through crisis response work. In the words of Anne Seymour, an original staff member at the Center and renowned victim and survivor advocate, "there wasn't much of a field back then." The National Center assisted grassroots organizations, helped to create organizations and worked with partners to create and build up nationwide and statewide coalitions in order to organize and empower the voices in this emerging field. In addition to coalition creating, they also sought to change the national conversation about victim's rights.

Much of our prized protections and laws, such as the **Violence Against Women Act**, state constitutional amendments and statutes protecting the rights of victims, are the result of this collaboration, advocacy, resource sharing and leadership.



Advocates fighting for a proposed South Carolina constitutional amendment for victims' rights, 1993
Dean G. Kilpatrick, Connie L. Best, and Sherry A. Falsetti



SUNNY, ALA AND ALEX

HONORING OUR LEGACY



SUNNY VON BULOW

The National Center was established in 1985 as the Sunny von Bulow National Victim Advocacy and Resource Center and was founded in honor of Sunny von Bulow, who passed away in 2008.

HONORING OUR LEGACY



Our co-founders, from L-R, Alexander von Auersberg and Ala Ishlam



"Until the formation of your agency, many organizations struggled along, lacking the knowledge of how to go forward. With your help, they are beginning to realize their dream of providing extensive services for crime victims."

- Linda Barker, Executive Director of Washington Victim Services, 1986

Victim's rights are, in 2021, understood to be complementary to defendant's rights and an integral addition to balance the scales of justice. What, in hindsight, now seems natural, humane and appropriate were, at the time, hard fought, contentious and laborious victories. As an early PSA of ours aptly quoted: "Find out how blind the justice system can be. Become a victim."

Serious issues in application, service, and access persist into 2021. However, it is important to recognize how far we have come in order to give us the strength to keep moving forward.

The National Center was formed at the end of 1985 in Fort Worth, Texas and was incorporated with the IRS in March of 1986. It was formed to address three major areas:

- **to serve as a national resource for victims and their advocates,**
- **to establish training programs and other self-help opportunities to help victims and their advocates deal effectively with the judicial system, understand victim's rights, seek reparation and cope with grief;**
- **and to encourage and promote research concerning victims of violent crime through the establishment of a national data bank and resource library.**

In the first month of operations, staff worked out of a kitchen in the Fort Worth area. Despite this initial hurdle, within the first three months of operation, the Communications team shipped out over 5,000 Crime Victims Rights Week original resource guides with enclosed action steps to groups across the nation.

From the beginning, the National Center sought to foster equitable partnerships- to provide adaptable resources and support where they were truly needed and requested, rather than imposing stringent and ineffective solutions.

In our first year of operations, the National Center sent out a comprehensive needs assessment survey to determine what type of victims' organizations existed, to ascertain the services they provided, and to find out what type of support and services they needed the National Center to provide. 1,002 organizations participated. It is from this initial survey that the priorities of the National Center were created.

1986 - OUR FIRST YEAR OF ACTION

"The ambitious goals of our Center present a tremendous challenge to the silent victim, to the criminal justice system, and to concerned citizens who believe in our right to a safe and peaceful environment."

- Alexander Von Auersperg, 1986

The Sunny von Bulow National Victim Advocacy Center equipped an emerging, grassroots movement with the resources, support and training it needed to be successful. The result: a powerhouse collaborative survivor led movement swept the nation by force, **waking up Americans to the injustice system** and the plight of victims and survivors.

The National Center sought to change the discourse on crime, develop a national network, distribute and enhance resources, educate the public and the media and support providers and victims.

The organization quickly developed into a national network for victim service organizations, policy makers, law enforcement, survivors and concerned individuals to come together and advocate for change. **In 1986, the Center served 2,972 organizations. In 1987, after only two years in the field, we had 4,893 partner organizations.**

The National Center viewed changing the discourse on crime and victims as an especially important aspect of their mission. They engaged in strong public awareness campaigns, educational training and technical assistance programs. They sought to identify gaps and provide services and support in order to **educate both providers and the public** about victim's rights and crime.

The National Center also ran a substantial resource library: in 1986, **the Center's data bank contained more than 3,000 national, state and local victim service organizations** and had the capacity to facilitate referrals and resource distribution to victim support groups, victims and their communities.

The National Center tailored educational resources to the needs of victims advocates, creating the first **"Victims' Rights: Opportunities for Action,"** as well through statistical fact sheets about victimization, such as **"An Overview of Crime and Victimization in America."** These resource and informational guides laid the groundwork for regional and eventually, national conferences, like our National Training Institute today. These resources solidified a focus of the National Center that carries into the present: the importance of education, outreach and awareness campaigns to create sustained change.

In addition to this multi-tracked education, the Center identified an under focused area of the movement: media coverage and relations. The Center began to **educate media professionals, student journalists and professors** about how to cover and address victims of violent crime while protecting the rights and needs of victims.

These strategic investments and programming **strengthened the capacity of the movement** to enact needed change and would not have been possible without several key pioneers.

EARLY PIONEERS

"If not for the sake of justice or simple human decency, then for pragmatic reasons, it is imperative that we respond to the plight of innocent victims of crime. They do not ask for pity; they only desire understanding and support of the efforts to restore balance to the justice system, a goal that benefits every American, stricken by crime or not."

-Hon Lois Haight Herrington



Original staff members, including Anne Seymour and Gene Patterson, taken in 1986



Morris Gurley with early supporters



L-R: Alexander von Auersberg, Anne Seymour, Attorney General Meese, Frank Carrington, Mary Carrington, Ala Ishlam, Morris Gurely, Gene Patterson



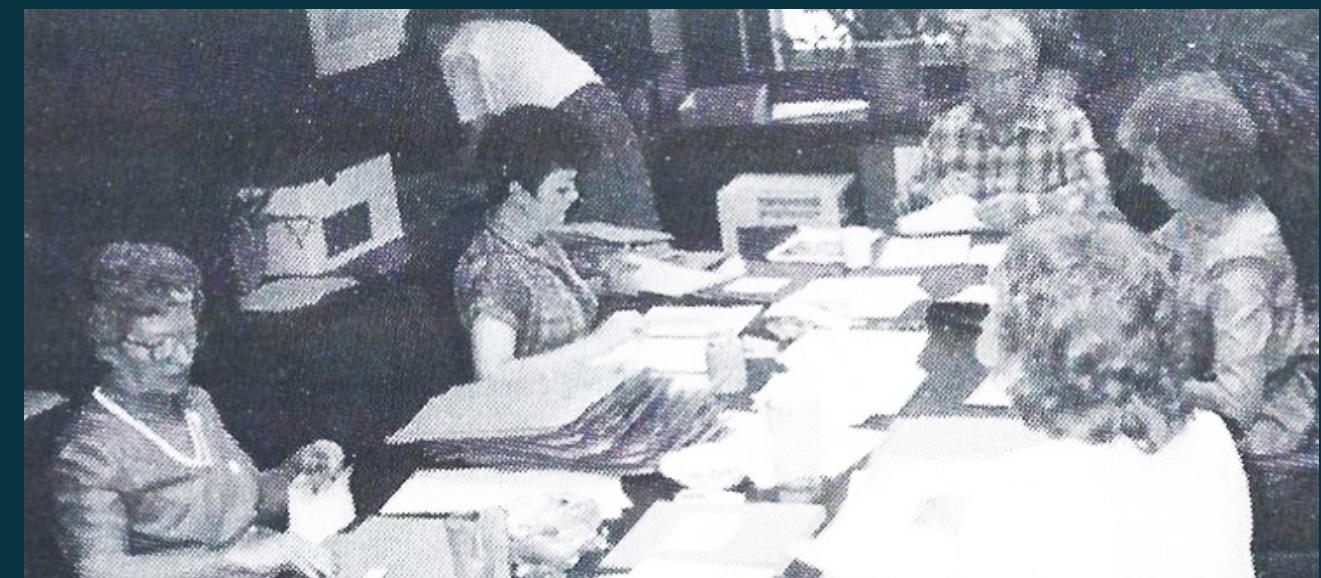
Actor Beau Bridges, Ala Ishlam, Alexander von Auersberg and James Brady at a benefit for the National Center



Volunteer Roz Micklin in 1986



Staffer Joanne Shaffer at work



Center staff and volunteers in 1986

"A victim of crime or his or her representative has the right to be informed of, to be present at and to be heard at all criminal justice proceedings at which the defendant has such rights, subject to the same rules of evidence which govern the defendant's rights. If requesting that the victim be excluded from the proceedings, the defendant must prove by clear and convincing evidence that the exercise of these rights by the victim will interfere with the defendant's rights."

- Proposed constitutional amendment circa 1987

The National Center worked to provide citizens, survivors and organizations with the information and resources necessary to champion meaningful legislation that codified victim's rights into law. The National Center was a founding member of the **National Victims' Constitutional Amendment Network and Steering Committee**, which was created in 1987. This initiative was instrumental in the passage of victims' rights amendments throughout the United States and had vast support across the United States. In 1987, 40,000 Americans signed a petition supporting a victim's rights amendment to the sixth amendment. The pursuit of these rights became a central focus for the victim rights movement and for the National Center.

By the end of 1991, seven states had incorporated victims' rights into their state constitutions. By 1992, NCVC had assisted in the passage of constitutional amendments in nine states through strategic partnerships, resource sharing, research and public relations.

The National Center supported this movement by sharing information with the media- in 1992 alone National Center staff provided resources and interviews to **spread information and educate 1,250 journalists** - from local radio stations, to every major daily newspaper to all network morning shows and evening newscasts.

OUR FIRSTS:

National Resource- By 1992 NCVC created the nation's most comprehensive database of over 18,000 victims' rights and related criminal justice statutes.

Providing Legal Support- The Crime Victims Litigation Project was the first of its kind. It was managed by the legendary Frank Carrington, Esq. At its peak, it held a **database of 5,000 civil cases** and citations that provided valuable legal resources for victims and their attorneys who chose to pursue civil actions. This program helped to de-mystify and provide support for victims and attorneys who pursued civil processes and was the precursor to the National Crime Victims Bar Association.



THE WHITE HOUSE
WASHINGTON

November 25, 1987

I am pleased to extend warm greetings and congratulations to everyone gathered to celebrate the Sunny von Bulow National Victim Advocacy Center.

Addressing the needs of crime victims has always been among my highest priorities. In 1982, I commissioned the President's Task Force on Victims of Crime to study the problem of victimization and to make recommendations for change. Their findings were startling. Victims were being mistreated by the system in many ways.

In just two short years, your organization has done much to follow through on the Task Force's recommendations. Your mission statement truly captures a most important theme of my Administration's approach to this difficult problem: your emphasis on citizen involvement in curing the plight of victims. As I have said before, there is no problem so big that it cannot be overcome by that great force for good in our country, the volunteer spirit of the American people.

The Sunny von Bulow National Victim Advocacy Center has already assisted thousands of other organizations and individuals. Your work in providing training, information, and encouragement to victim advocates, law enforcement officers, those in the judicial system, and our fellow citizens is impressive. Your emphasis on coalition-building and private sector initiatives is refreshing, and your establishment of a Crime Victims Litigation Project is innovative and timely.

Again, congratulations. Nancy joins me in extending best wishes for your continued good work in behalf of all innocent victims of crime. God bless you.

Ronald Reagan

KEY WINS: 1990s

1992: INFOLINK, a national toll-free information line, launched in December of 1992 and offered access to over 5,000 victim assistance programs nationwide, as well 64 resource packages, mailed free of charge. The launching of INFOLINK was assisted by a PSA from Brooke Shields, following a CBS broadcast of *I Can Make You Love Me: the Laura Black Story*.

1992: RAPE IN AMERICA, A REPORT TO THE NATION was published in 1992 by the National Center and Crime Victims Research and Treatment Center at the Medical University of South Carolina was the first national empirical data about forcible rape of women in America.

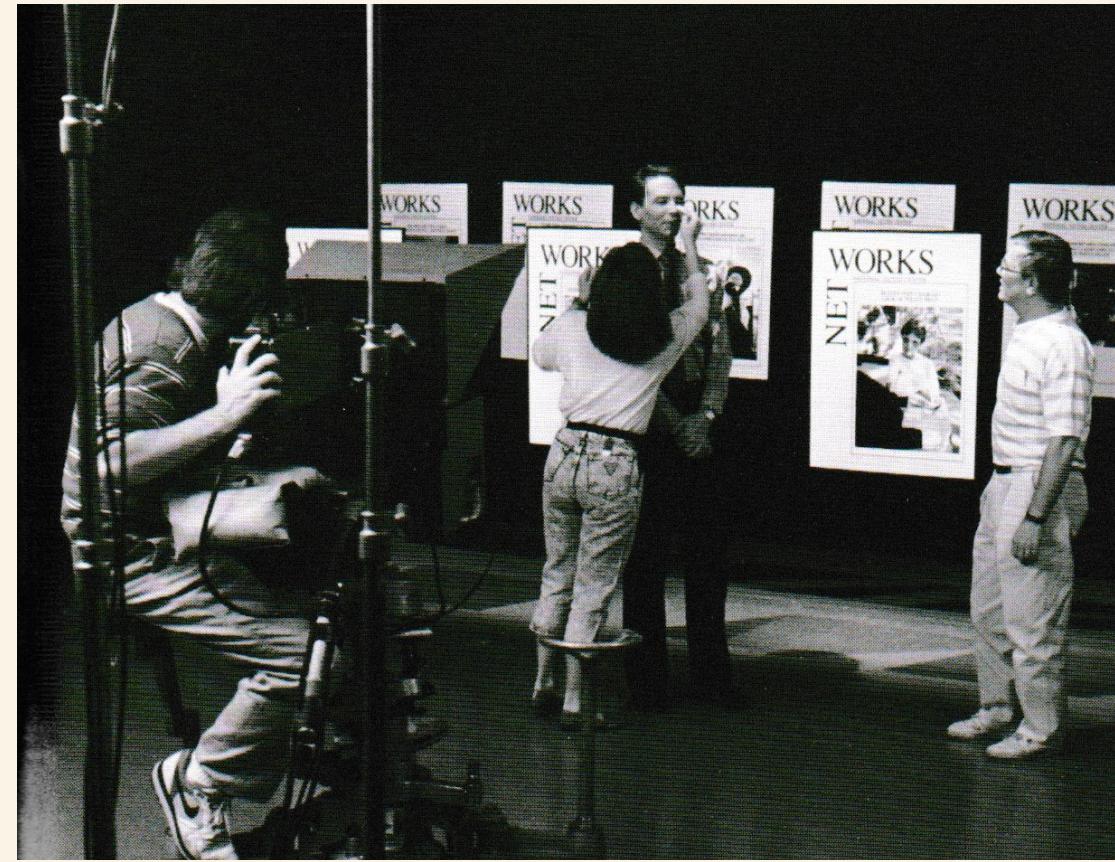
It found that at least **12.1 million American women** has been the victim of forcible rape, and that, more than six out of ten of all rape cases occurred before victims reached the age of eighteen. Additionally, this report found that 84% of rape victims did not report to the police. This report, which received over 100 million media hits, countered the prevalent myth that the majority of rapists are strangers to their victims and are adults and laid the groundwork for appropriate policy, services, media and healthcare, and procedure to address this epidemic of violence.

1992: The coalition grew from 3,000 in 1986 to 8,000 local victim service organizations in all 50 states and at the federal level by 1992.

1993: The **Violence Against Women Act** passes. This landmark legislation was supported by research from the National Center and was the first step in establishing protections for victims and survivors.

1999: NCVC forms the **National Crime Victim Bar Association** to promote civil justice for victims of crime.

Consequently, elit



Press conference, early 1990s



"Rape in America" press conference participants (L-R): Christine Edmunds, Dr. Dean Kilpatrick, Dr. John Boyle, Cassandra Thomas, Jay Howell, and Anne Seymour

KEY WINS: 2000s

2000: The **Stalking Resource Center** formed in partnership with the Office on Violence Against Women, which trained over 100,000 professionals.

2002: All 50 states, the District of Columbia, the U.S. Virgin Islands, Puerto Rico, and Guam have, by 2002, established crime victim compensation programs.

2004: NCVC releases *Repairing the Harm: A New Vision for Crime Victim Compensation in America*, which examines compensation data from all 50 states, the September 11th Victim Compensation Fund, and compensation programs in other countries. The report also recommends a framework for strengthening victim compensation in the United States.

2012: The National Compassion Fund is created to equitably and transparently distribute funds to survivors and communities affected by mass violence tragedies.

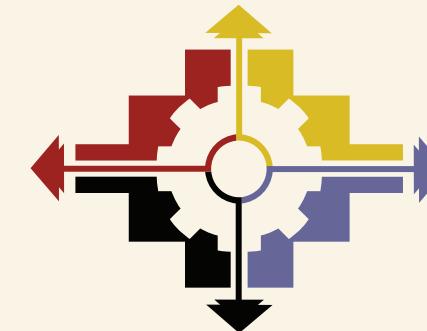
2015: VictimConnect is created as a national helpline in 2015 and provides **confidential and trauma informed support** and referrals nationwide, to all crime types, regardless of crime type or legal severity.

2015: D.C. Victim Hotline is created to provide local support to survivors and victims in the D.C. area. It is now the **sole entry point for D.C. youth and adult survivors of sexual assault**.

2018: The **Tribal Resource Tool**, an online mapping tool, is created with funds from OVC to connect AI/AN survivors with culturally relevant, local, and trauma informed resources.



Tribal Resource Tool exhibit at NTI, 2019



Native American/Alaskan Native
Survivors of Crime
tribalresourcetool.org



NATIONAL
COMPASSION
FUND



The **National Center for Victims of Crime** has adapted over the years to address and execute programming aimed to fill gaps identified by our partners. But our commitment to empowering grassroots leaders, providing resources, sharing information and training remains steadfast.

Assisted over
10,500

visitors by chat, text and call through the
VictimConnect Resource Center

Provided support to over
3,700

visitors through the **D.C. Victim Hotline**

Held webinars for over
5,800
attendees

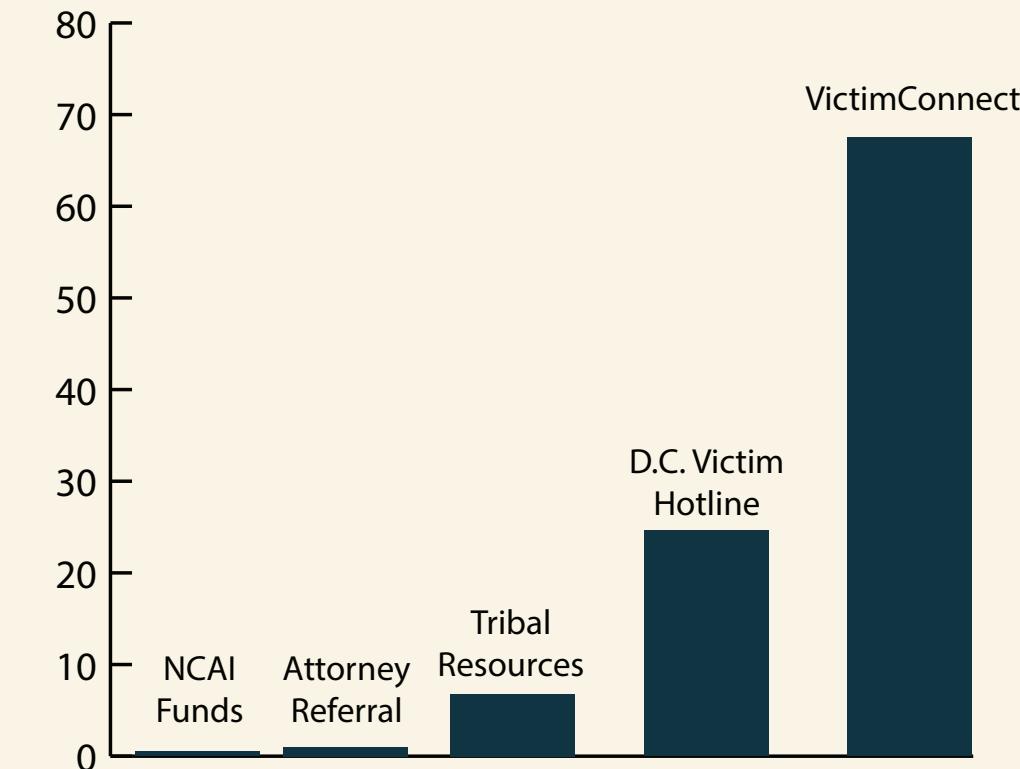
To learn more about where we are and where we're going, view NCVC's 2021 Report, titled *Looking Forward*.

Connected **AI/AN survivors** of abuse with nearly

1,000

local, culturally relevant resources through the
Tribal Resource Tool

Direct Service and Resource Mapping



THANK YOU

This report, like many enterprises in life, was the result of a concerted group effort. However, we would be remiss if we did not highlight several key partners, without whom, this report could not have come to fruition.

A personal, heartfelt thank you is due to Morris Gurley. Morris co-founded the National Center with Ala and Alexander 35 years ago. As a strong proponent of research, and looking towards the past to inform the future, Morris was a strong advocate for the creation of this report. We are, as a staff, as a victims rights community, and as a nation, indebted to him for his service and commitment to this cause.

Ala and Alexander, as our founders- no words can adequately describe the impact that you both have had over these 35 years. Thank you both for your keen intellect, your compassion, your forward thinking approach, and your support to the National Center.

Thank you to our Board of Directors, whose wit, passion and drive continue to bring the National Center to new heights. A special thank you is due to our Board Co-Chairs, Mel Hewitt and Kim Goldman, who consulted on these twin reports, *Looking Forward and Honoring our Legacy*.

Anne Seymour- the light in the darkness. Anne was the original Communications representative of the National Center and recently celebrated her 37th anniversary as a victim's rights advocate. She provided us with a verifiable treasure trove of annual reports, newsletters, quotes, and perspective into this key time in our history.

A special thank you to our fearless Executive Director, Renee Williams and to our humble, hardworking staff who work tirelessly and collaboratively to make our mission alive.

Thank you to our many supporters over the years.



Staff member answering the phone circa 1986



Anne Seymour speaking at a conference



Gloria Stewart, actor James Stewart, Anne Seymour, and Ellen Griffin Dunne in 1987



Staff member hard at work



Alex and Nancy von Auersperg



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