

# *40 years 40 stories*

East Los Angeles WOMEN'S CENTER



*We are a community.  
Nothing gets done just by  
one person, it gets done in  
relationship to each other.  
For forty years this  
organization has been led  
by leaders in the  
movement, dedicated staff  
and committed volunteers.  
No one can say the power  
of women empowering  
each other doesn't work.*

*~ Connie Destito,  
ELAWC Co-Founder*



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***You're only as  
strong as the  
greatest challenge  
you overcome.***

*~ Norma Bastidas  
Survivor, advocate*

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*She would console  
and encourage  
survivors; let them  
know it wasn't their  
fault. She would say:  
“You can walk down  
the street naked, but  
nobody has the right  
to violate you!”*

~ Yvette Garcia,  
quoting her mother,  
ELAWC founder,  
Irene Mendez-Banales



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**Before I came to ELAWC, it wasn't important how I looked, if I fixed myself up, because my feelings were so low. The difference now is I feel beautiful, I feel alive... I enjoy every moment.**

~ Martha Promotora,  
Survivor



*If we're aware of  
what's going on  
around us, we'll have  
more power and a  
stronger voice.  
So it's up to us to  
change the world!*

~ Dianna Martinez,  
Youth Organizer

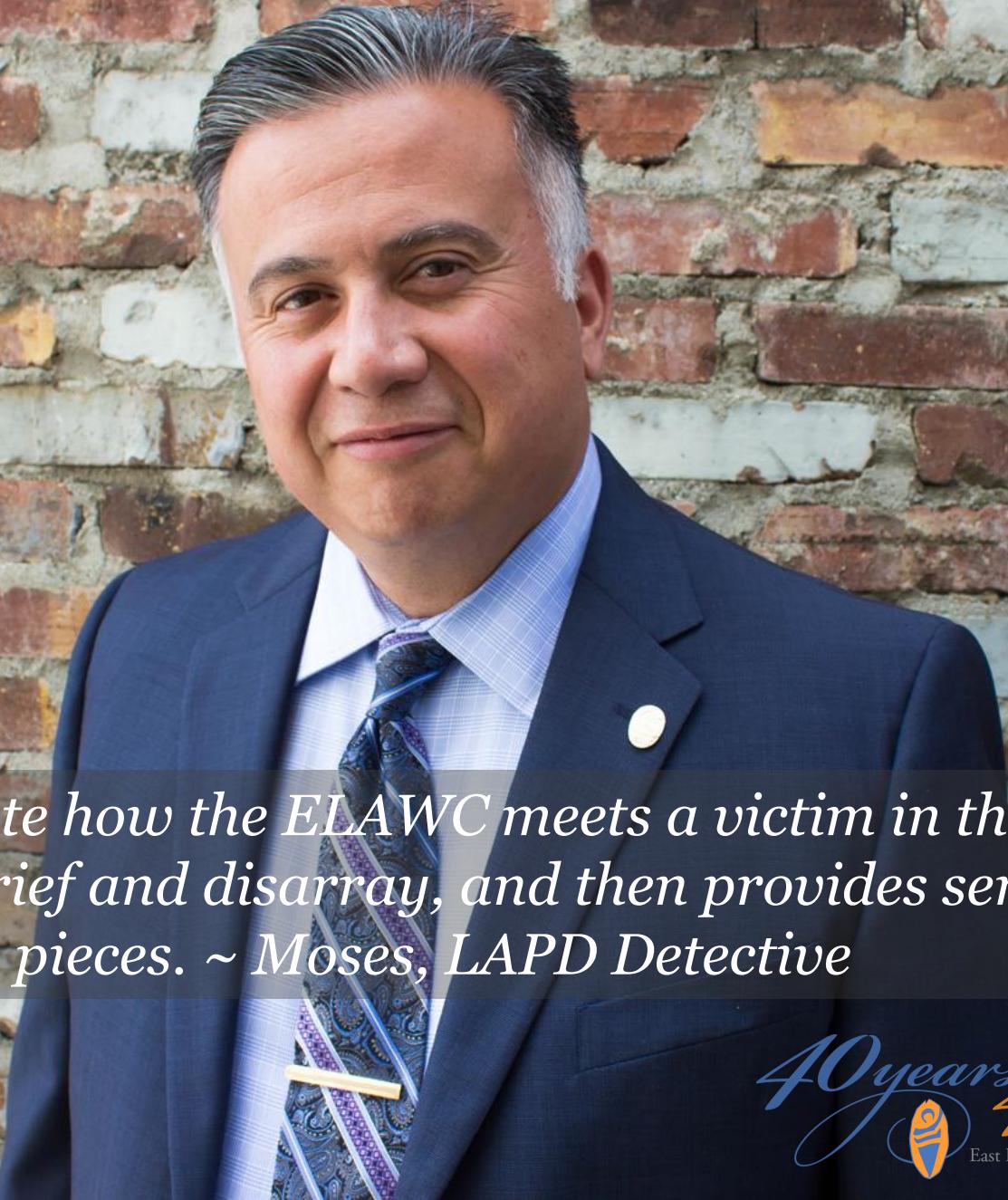
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**Because of ELAWC, I've had so many experiences  
that changed me. I'm a whole new person.**

**Whatever I plan or whatever my goals,  
there are no limits. I know I will reach them.**

*~ Mirna, Promotora*

A professional portrait of a man with short, grey hair, wearing a dark blue suit jacket, a light blue plaid shirt, and a patterned tie. He is standing in front of a brick wall.

*I appreciate how the ELAWC meets a victim in the moment of crisis, grief and disarray, and then provides services to pick up the pieces. ~ Moses, LAPD Detective*

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ELAWC gave me  
that sense of  
purpose again and  
hope. I will never  
forget them for  
being there during  
such critical  
moments.

~ Yadira  
Volunteer, Survivor





*Sometimes we become closed within our four walls, and what you know within is all that exists. At ELAWC you learn what's beyond your tiny space; you learn about personal rights, your dignity and the social movements of those who fought before for those rights.*

~ Karla Ortiz,  
Youth Advocate

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*Most organizations  
only talk about  
diagnosis and  
medication, but  
these are not all a  
woman needs. She  
needs support,  
family, care; she  
needs healing of  
old wounds.*

~ Thelma  
Director, HIV  
Prevention Services



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*I didn't only want to get help  
so I wouldn't lose my kids.  
I wanted to get help because  
I love my kids.*

*~ Beneda, Survivor*

*Growing up, I asked:  
“What if there were  
no child abuse or  
trauma in the world?”  
I wanted to do  
something to create  
that vision, it's what  
drives me.*

*~Leticia Chacon, CEO,  
Human Services  
Association*



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*Justice is necessary  
in the world; we  
need be a just  
people with just  
policies, otherwise  
there are negative  
ramifications.*

*~ Diane Araujo,  
Founding Member*



*What my childhood  
rape did to me is  
that it turned my  
scars into stars.*

*I'm one of millions:  
I'm never going to  
quit being a voice  
for survivors.*

*Cynthia,  
Survivor, Volunteer*





*I'm always so pleased with the Center's victim advocacy efforts. The difference in the survivors from when they walk into the hospital to when they walk out is monumental!*

~ Christine D  
CSULA Police Officer, retired

*I go into the community to do something I really care about. As a Promotora for Domestic Violence, I discovered I can be of service to others. It helped me become calmer.*

*I feel at peace.*

*~ Barbara O.,  
Promotora*



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I wouldn't be where I am now if it wasn't for the Center. They gave me a better sense of self-esteem, they helped me get stronger. Because of the support, I was able to get my kids back.

*~ Anita, Survivor*



I am so proud of the women in our community. Their passion and dedication to make a difference in the lives of women affected by trauma inspires me to continue this work.

~ Veva Lopez, Coordinator  
*Promotoras Contra la Violencia*





Working at ELAWC has changed the way I think. It feels good to be of service to women in my community, to know I'm impacting their lives. I want to be a part of the change, when women are finally equal and can say, "Just because I am a woman doesn't mean I am less than."

~ Tanya, Youth Advocate



I owe all my growth  
to ELAWC, I learned  
to be an independent  
woman who has  
rights; the right to  
say yes and the right  
to say no.

~ Ana, Survivor

When I grow up I  
want to work at  
ELAWC ~ Isabel

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**ELAWC has been the  
greatest gift.**

**My life is whole, I feel  
happy inside, and that  
stems from being heard,  
from receiving the  
compassion and  
understanding I needed.  
I keep that with me  
every day.**

Damaris  
Volunteer, Survivor





*The most important thing for a survivor is to lose the fear: the fear of being able to move forward in life, the fear of going out and doing what they used to do, the fear of taking on something new, the fear of someone hurting them again.*

*~ Mary Elaine,  
Volunteer*

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I feel proud to be a part of ELAWC, to be working together with so many people, with different abilities, who are helping women plan and build better lives.

~ Alma, Promotora



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*I feel very blessed to have come to ELAWC. I feel like a princess. I hold my head up high and renounce and refuse anything negative in my life.*

*Nothing and no one will hurt me again.*

*~ Alma, Survivor*

