CON GANAS : Building Resilience Through Connection

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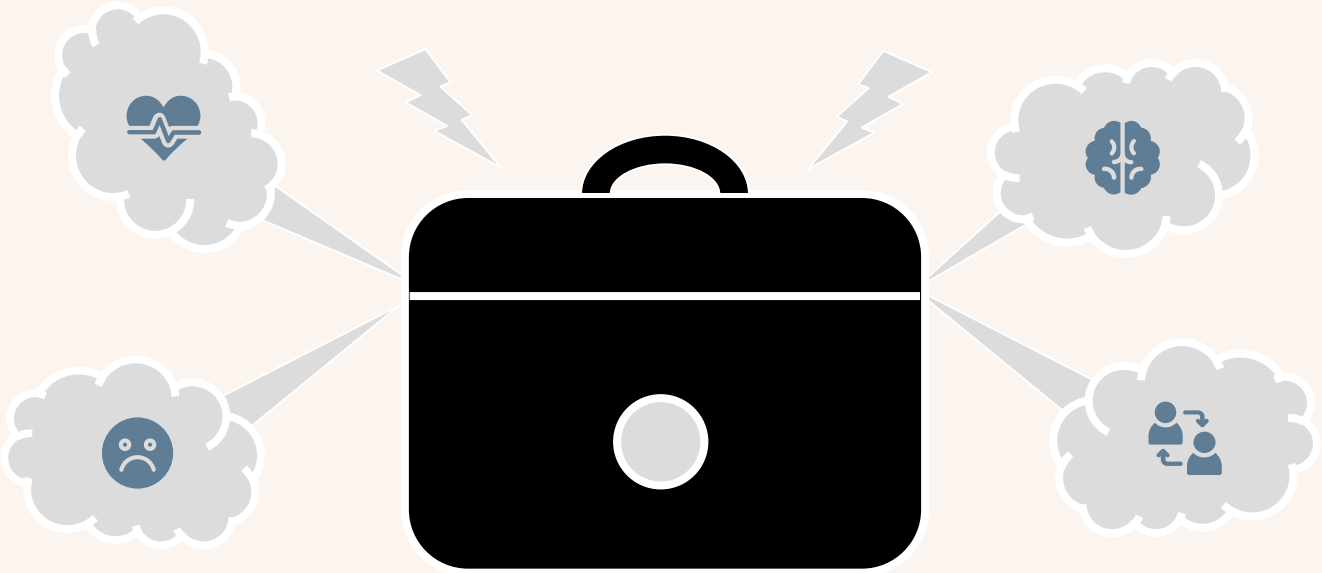
All the vatos: a hymn to vatos that will never be in a poem - Urrea

THE “MAN BOX”

All the vatos loving their menudo

THE HEALTH COSTS:

WHEN MACHISMO BECOMES A PRESSURE COOKER



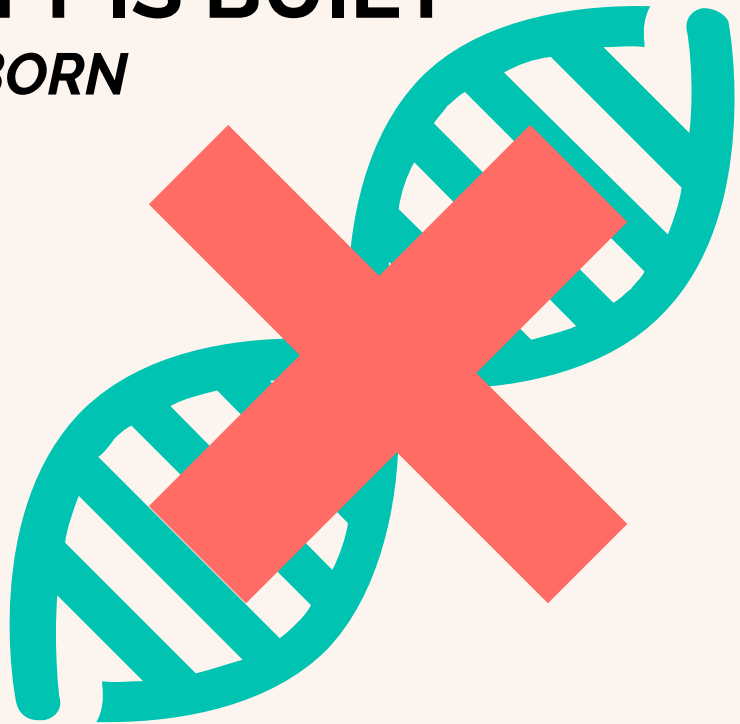
MASCULINITY IS BUILT

NOT BORN

Not biology.

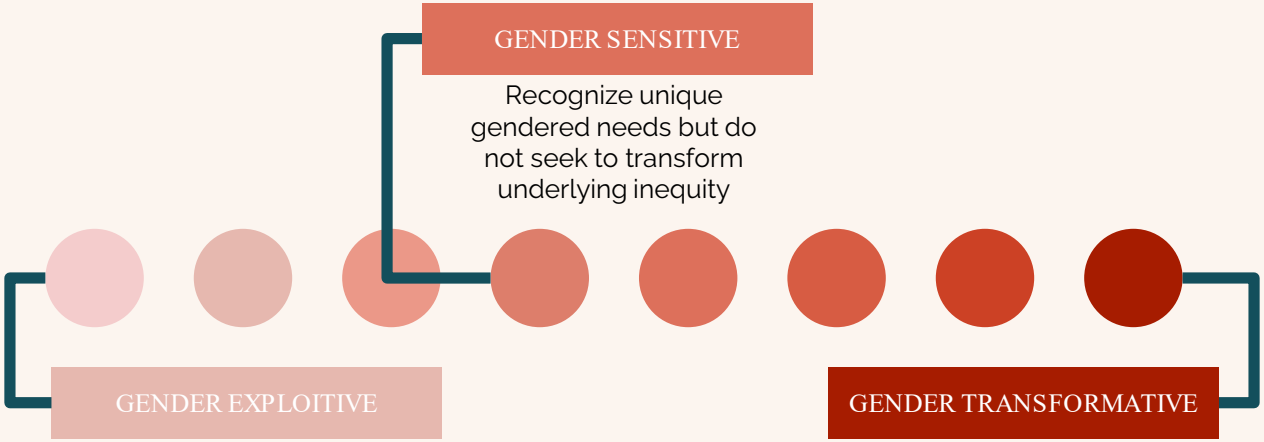
Invented, taught, upheld.

Can be DISRUPTED and REIMAGINED.



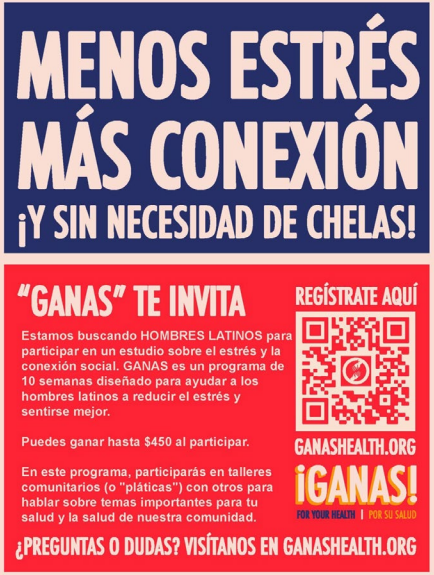
A TIME OF URGENCY:

THE NEED FOR GENDER TRANSFORMATIVE WORK



“BRINGING MEN IN”

MEETING MEN WHERE THEY ARE



All the vatos sleeping under mota

THE GANAS HEALTH INITIATIVE

GENDER-TRANSFORMATIVE HEALTH

Grounded in culture & language

Honors complexity of men's lives

Disrupts harmful norms, builds healthier ones

Fosters reflection, community, and care

The problem is NOT that “men do not care about health”.

COMMON DEFICIT FRAME

- Men are hard to reach
- Men do not seek help
- Masculinity is only a barrier
- Men need information

GANAS STARTING POINT

- Systems rarely reach men relationally
- Help is often stigmatized or inaccessible
- Masculinity can also be transformed
- Men need spaces for reflection, connection, and support

HOW WE UNDERSTAND THE PATHWAY

STRUCTURAL STRESSORS

Racism, economic strain, immigration stress, discrimination, work instability

GENDERED EXPECTATIONS

Provider pressures, emotional control, self-reliance, endurance

STRESS AND DISCONNECTION

Loneliness, suppression, delayed care, limited support, unhealthy coping

HEALTH CONSEQUENCES

Metal distress, chronic stress burden, sleep disruption, chronic disease risk

GANAS intervenes through:
reflection + dialogue + connection + coping + critical consciousness

The GANAS curriculum

10 Community building and next steps

09 Healing, Affirmation, and accountability

08 Healthy Relationships

07 Stress coping II

06 Stress coping I

05 Mental Health

04 Power and control

03 Chronic stress and coping

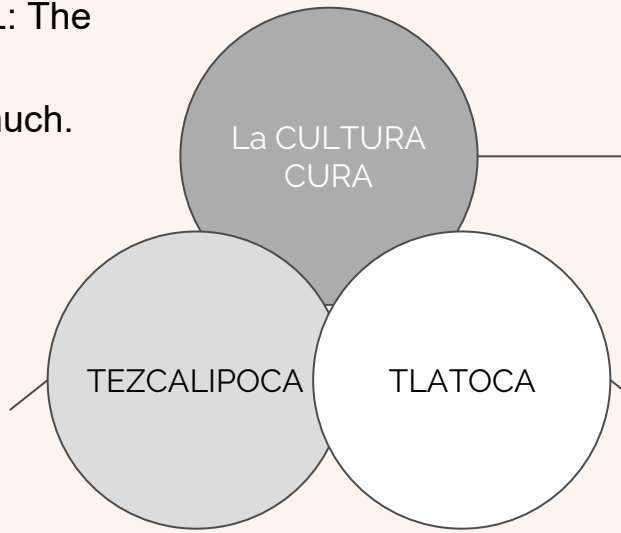
02 Identity, place, and histories

01 Masculinity, stress and health

10 WEEKS

CORE INGREDIENTS

THIS IS ALL RELATIONAL: The curriculum matters, but the container matters just as much.



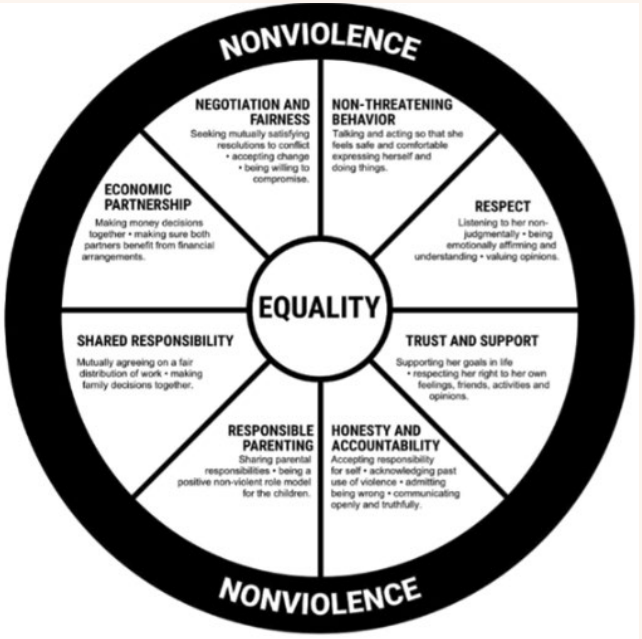
language, examples, facilitation style, food, relationships, family,

masculinity, stress, power, coping, mental health, and relationships

telling stories, responding to each other, challenging each other, affirming each other, and building trust.

AN EXAMPLE

VIOLENCE
PHYSICAL
SEXUAL
USING COERCION AND THREATS
Making and/or carrying out threats to do something to hurt her • threatening to leave her, to commit suicide, to report her to welfare • making her drop charges • making her do illegal things.
USING INTIMIDATION
Making her afraid by using looks, actions, gestures • smashing things • destroying her property • abusing pets • displaying weapons.
USING ECONOMIC ABUSE
Preventing her from getting or keeping a job • making her ask for money • giving her an allowance • taking her money • not letting her know about or have access to family income.
USING EMOTIONAL ABUSE
Putting her down • making her feel bad about herself • calling her names • making her think she's crazy • playing mind games • humiliating her • making her feel guilty.
POWER AND CONTROL
USING MALE PRIVILEGE
Treating her like a servant • making all the big decisions • acting like the "master of the castle" • being the one to define men's and women's roles.
USING ISOLATION
Controlling what she does, who she sees and talks to, what she reads, where she goes • limiting her outside involvement • using jealousy to justify actions.
USING CHILDREN
Making her feel guilty about the children • using the children to relay messages • using visitation to harass her • threatening to take the children away.
MINIMIZING, DENYING AND BLAMING
Making light of the abuse and not taking her concerns about it seriously • saying the abuse didn't happen • shifting responsibility for abusive behavior • saying she caused it.
PHYSICAL
VIOLENCE
SEXUAL


NONVIOLENCE
NEGOTIATION AND FAIRNESS
Seeking mutually satisfying resolutions to conflict • accepting change • being willing to compromise.
NON-THREATENING BEHAVIOR
Talking and acting so that she feels safe and comfortable expressing herself and doing things.
ECONOMIC PARTNERSHIP
Making money decisions together • making sure both partners benefit from financial arrangements.
RESPECT
Listening to her non-judgmentally • being emotionally affirming and understanding • valuing opinions.
EQUALITY
SHARED RESPONSIBILITY
Mutually agreeing on a fair distribution of work • making family decisions together.
TRUST AND SUPPORT
Supporting her goals in life • respecting her right to her own feelings, friends, activities and opinions.
RESPONSIBLE PARENTING
Sharing parental responsibilities • being a positive non-violent role model for the children.
HONESTY AND ACCOUNTABILITY
Accepting responsibility for self • acknowledging past use of violence • admitting being wrong • communicating openly and truthfully.
NONVIOLENCE

COMMUNITY-ENGAGED IMPLEMENTATION

WHAT WE ASSESSED

FEASIBILITY
– Recruitment, enrollment, attendance, retention, session delivery, facilitator experiences, partner capacity.

ACCEPTABILITY
– Participant feedback, focus group reflections, perceived relevance, comfort with the group format, desire to continue

FORMIDABILITY/PRELIM EFFICACY
– Sleep, stress, depression, anxiety, social connection, coping

Finding 1: High Interest + Program Reach

90+ → **21**

ENGAGED

ENROLLED

Finding 1: High Interest + Program Reach

Puentes de Salud pilot reach

- **90+ men** engaged with GANAS programming through Puentes outreach
- High demand led to a **participant waitlist**
- **15 men** enrolled in the in-person hybrid version
  - Weekly sessions at Puentes de Salud
  - WhatsApp engagement between sessions
- **6 men** enrolled in a fully WhatsApp-based version
- Mean age of in-person hybrid participants: **35.5 years**

Key finding: *GANAS generated strong community interest and reached Latino men through trusted community-based outreach.*

Finding 2: Strong Engagement and Low Discontinuation

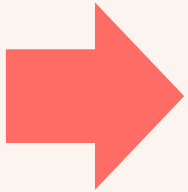
Feasibility indicators

- Hybrid model: weekly in-person sessions + WhatsApp reinforcement
- Fully WhatsApp-based version also tested
- Only **3 total discontinuations**
  - **2** in-person hybrid participants
  - **1** virtual participant
- More than **80%** of participants attended **at least 8 of 10 sessions**

Key finding: *The hybrid GANAS model was feasible, with strong retention and high session attendance.*

Finding 3: Preliminary Sleep Findings Were Encouraging

Pittsburgh Sleep Quality Index (PSQI)

8.2  **4.1**

A total PSQI score of 5 or less indicates good sleep quality, while a score greater than 5 suggests significant, poor sleep quality **40%** of participants achieved a clinically meaningful improvement of **≥3 points**

Key Finding: *These findings suggest GANAS may support improvements in sleep-related behaviors and provide justification for sleep as a primary outcome in future evaluation.*

Finding 4: Stress-Related Emotional Symptoms Decreased

DASS-21 mean scores, baseline to post-program

Domain	Baseline Mean	Post Mean	Pattern
Stress	**10.6**	**7.5**	mild → normal
Anxiety	**9.6**	**3.4**	Moderate/Mild → normal
Depression	**11.6**	**2.8**	Moderate/Mild → normal

Key finding: *Participants showed clinically significant reductions in stress, anxiety, and depression symptoms over the 10-week program.*

Finding 5: Focus Group Feedback

“The infographics we got every week helped me understand about how stress affects our body and our health, and I can share it with my family.”

“It feels like I have a new group of people that we can all talk about the stuff we are dealing with.”

“The way we learn to be men, we don’t learn about how to care for ourselves … we learn from trial and error but we hurt a lot of people on our way.”

“A lot of us have a messed up view about what things are supposed to be like, men need to be strong and provide and satisfy their woman and that is anxiety and stress ... [here] we can talk comfortably about these things, no judgements.”

Finding 5: Focus Group Feedback

“I wish I had this when I was young, we just learned from the streets. We need to get everybody in here … All the brothers on the corner, they need to be in here. We have so much to learn.”

WHAT WE ARE LEARNING

- **GANAS Reached Men Carrying Intersecting Stressors**
  - Latino men, undocumented, SES precarity, socially isolated, ICE persecution
- **The Program Was Feasible, but Engagement Required Relational Infrastructure**
  - “The Secret Sauce”
- **Participants Experienced GANAS as a Rare Space for Honest Dialogue**
  - Men didn’t ‘actually know’ what they were signing up for because they didn't have the context
- **Connection Functioned as Both Outcome and Mechanism**
  - social connection, vulnerability, group trust, masculinity reflection
- **The Pilot Identified Clear Refinements for a Larger Trial**
  - health signals + implementation lessons + future directions

WHAT NOW?

R01 NIMHD: *¡GANAS!: a Transformative Masculinities Intervention to Increase Social Connectedness and Reduce Stress in Latino Men*

“The health of men cannot be improved simply by asking them to be more palatable versions of themselves”

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