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*LA Times  
Editorial*

# A Center With a Difference

The Center for the Pacific-Asian Family is a shelter for battered women and their children, but it is a center with a difference. The women who arrive on its Hollywood doorstep frequently speak little or no English, they do not know that wife-beating is a crime, and they may be undergoing a difficult cultural adjustment to a new country quite apart from the violence inflicted on them.

The center began as a rape-hotline service but, as executive director Nilda Rimonte explained, the staff quickly realized that the needs of Los Angeles' growing Asian community were much broader. For example, she said, many Asian women were unaccustomed to the telephone, and certainly to discussing rape on the telephone with strangers. Women who were referred to existing shelters found no one who spoke their language or understood their culture, and the food was different. "These are basic needs; if you can't eat and you can't communicate, where are you?" Rimonte asked.

The Hollywood center can house 13 families at one time. In addition to providing a secure haven for the women, the staff works to help them understand their victimization and make decisions

for themselves. For half the women, Rimonte said, battering started in their native country, where it was considered acceptable to discipline one's wife. Once a couple moved to this country, the man might be forced to take a lower-status job. His wife might work, too, and these changes added to existing tensions.

Rimonte said the center also encounters unique problems in trying to help place the women in jobs, because programs helping Asians here are geared toward men, who have been the traditional providers. The women often are afraid to go to training programs anyway because they may run into their husbands, who are also seeking work.

The center opened last year, and faces the same financial problems of other social-service agencies. The program has a \$75,000 grant from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, but the money may be cut off in June. While the ARCO Foundation and the National Council of Jewish Women have provided grants, Rimonte is constantly on the lookout for an "angel" to help with fund-raising, especially if the federal money dries up.

It is a sad story, heard all too often in 1982.