Chai

Counselors Helping (South) Asians/Indians, Inc.

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# Mission of CHAI

To educate and find referrals for the South Asian community on issues related to mental health and wellness in the Baltimore/ Washington DC metropolitan area and to build cultural proficiency with mental health providers serving the needs of the South Asian community.

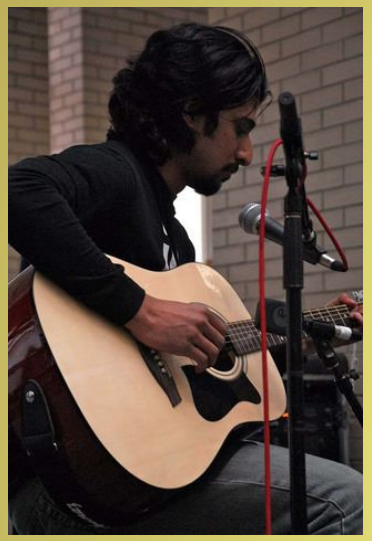
# What do we do?

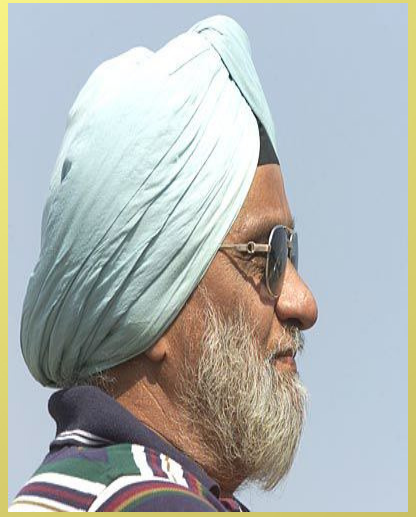
- **Locate mental health professionals who having skill sets that would be helpful to the South Asian community**
  - Language skills
  - Awareness of South Asian culture
  - Understanding and respect of South Asian religions
- **Educate the South Asian community about mental health issues**
  - Provide free translated materials on mental health
  - Provide free referrals to the community for counseling
  - Conduct workshops on mental health
  - Conduct Wellness groups that focus on prevention and support
- **Conduct professional cultural proficiency workshops on working with the South Asian community**
- **Break the stigma about mental health and build a bridge to access support**

# South Asians? Who, What, Where?

- Group One- Who? Culture, features, clothing?
- Group Two- What? Languages, religions, customs?
- Group Three- Where? Countries of origin, diasporas?

# You don't look.....





# Who are South Asians?

# Languages of South Asia

**I.Indo-Aryan (Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European) Sanskrit**

New Indo-Aryan- Hindi, Bengali, Punjabi, Marathi, Gujarati, Assamese, Oriya, Sindhi, Nepali, Sinhala, Kashmiri, Maithili, Bhojpuri, Magahi, Rajasthani, Konkani

**II.Dravidian ( Indigenous to the land)**

Tamil, Kannada, Malayalam, Telugu and approximately two dozen other languages, mostly tribal. Also Brahmin, spoken in Baluchistan in southern Pakistan.

**III.Munda (Austro-Asiatic)**

Approximately two dozen tribal languages, incl. Santali and Mundari, in central and eastern India.

**IV.Tibeto-Burman (branch of Sino-Tibetan)**

Tibetan, Newari, and 100+ languages in Himalayas and NE frontier

**V.Iranian (Indo-Iranian branch of Indo-European)**

Persian (= Farsi), Dari, Tajik, Pashto, Baluchi

**VI.Colonial and other "foreign" languages**

Indo-European (English, French, Portuguese, Dutch)

# RELIGIONS OF SOUTH ASIA

- The South Asian community includes followers of **many** faiths.
  - Hinduism
  - Islam
  - Buddhism
  - Christianity
  - Sikhism
  - Judaism
  - Jainism
  - Zoroastrianism

# Via other countries

## The Diaspora

- Africa
- Australia
- Canada
- Caribbean*
- Europe
- Europe
- Mauritius
- New Zealand
- South East Asia
- United States of America

## *Caribbean:

- Guyana,
- Jamaica
- Suriname
- Trinidad
- Tobago

# U.S. South Asian Population (National)

- 2.5 million South Asians (American Community Survey 2005)

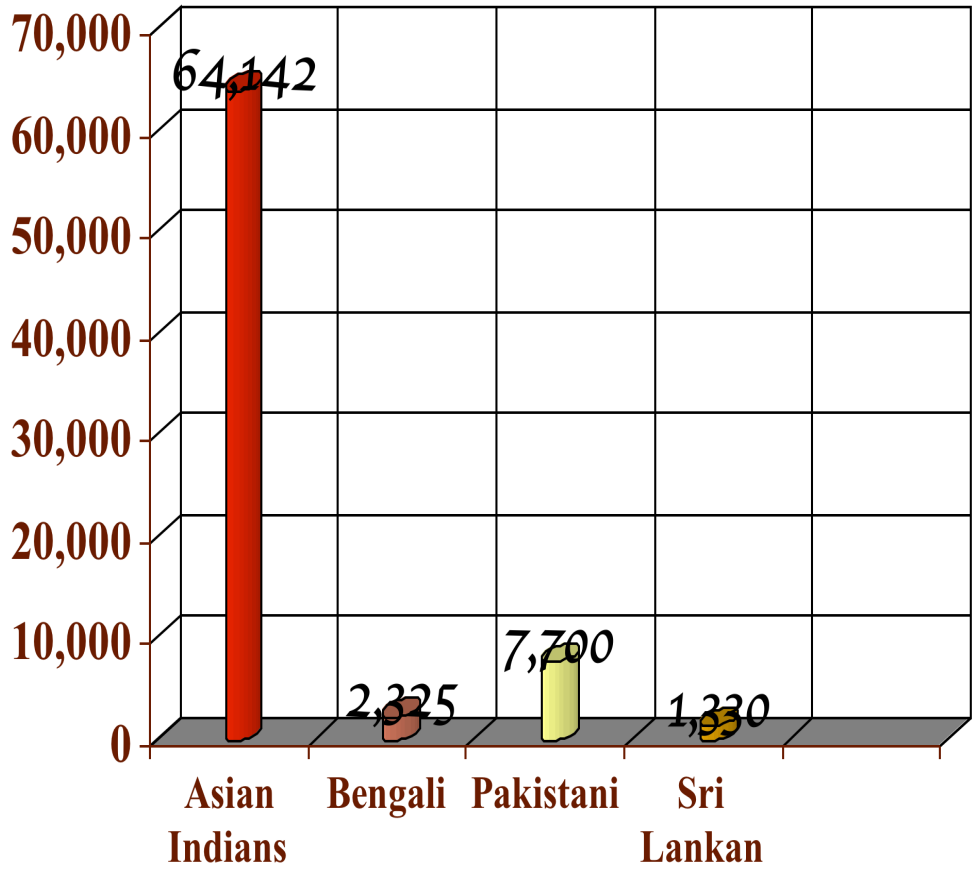
- Indians: 1,899,599
- Pakistanis: 204,309
- Bangladeshis: 57,412
- Sri Lankans: 24,587

- All groups more than doubled in size in last decade; fastest growing groups in Asian community are South Asian

- Pakistani community increased over 150% since 1990

- Bangladeshi community increased nearly 4 times in size since 1990

# Demographic of South Asians in Maryland



# Family & Community Strengths

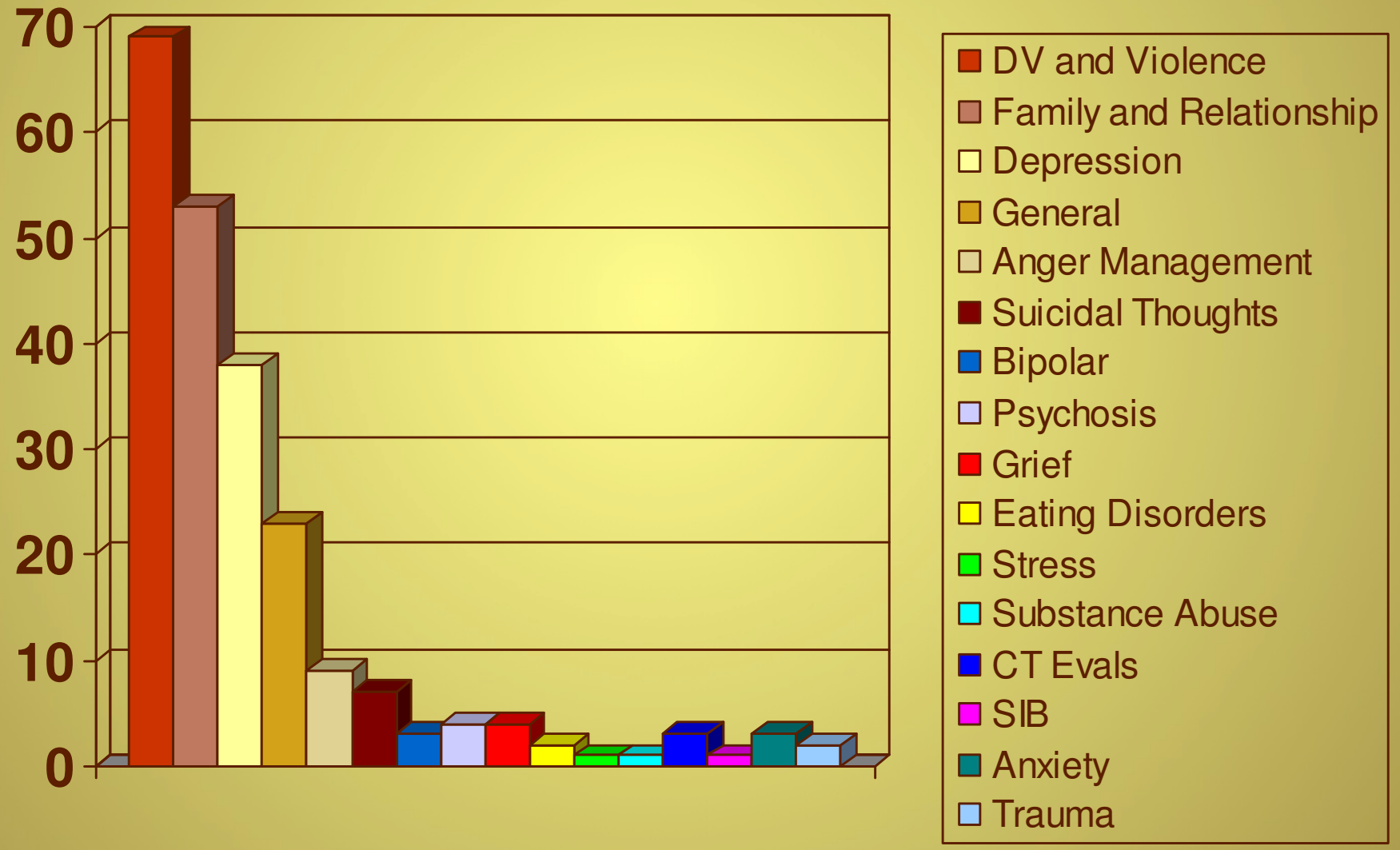
- Strong family bonds
- Strong ties to culture
- High value on education and success
- Strong religious beliefs
- Strong parental support for youth

# How Mental Health affects the South Asian Community

- 2 out of 10 people in the US have a mental illness & 2 in 3 South Asians suffering from mental illness will not seek help
- Suicide rates for South Asian community higher than other populations and young South Asian woman have higher rates of suicide than South Asian males in the U.S.
- Main reasons for referrals-
  - Domestic Violence
  - Family problems/communication
  - Depression
- Those seeking help have limited access to therapists with South Asian language skills and to therapists who have knowledge of the South Asian culture

# Types of Referrals

## (Data from CHAI 2001-2008 )



# Statistics on Domestic Violence

- Every nine seconds a women in the U.S. is physically abused.
- 1 out of 3 women reports abuse at the hands of an intimate partner
  - ***Study in Boston- 40% of South Asian women report that they know someone who is in an abusive relationship.***

# Issues Specific to Domestic Violence in South Asian Community

- Barriers caused by cultural/religious beliefs; linguistic barrier
- Isolation from home/family; also from adopted community
- Guided by values of privacy, honor, loyalty, shame
- Total dependency on one person, i.e. the abuser
- Lack of knowledge of legal rights and resources
- Visa status - fear of deportation/jail
- Perceived 'good life' in U.S.
- Involvement of in-laws; extended family members

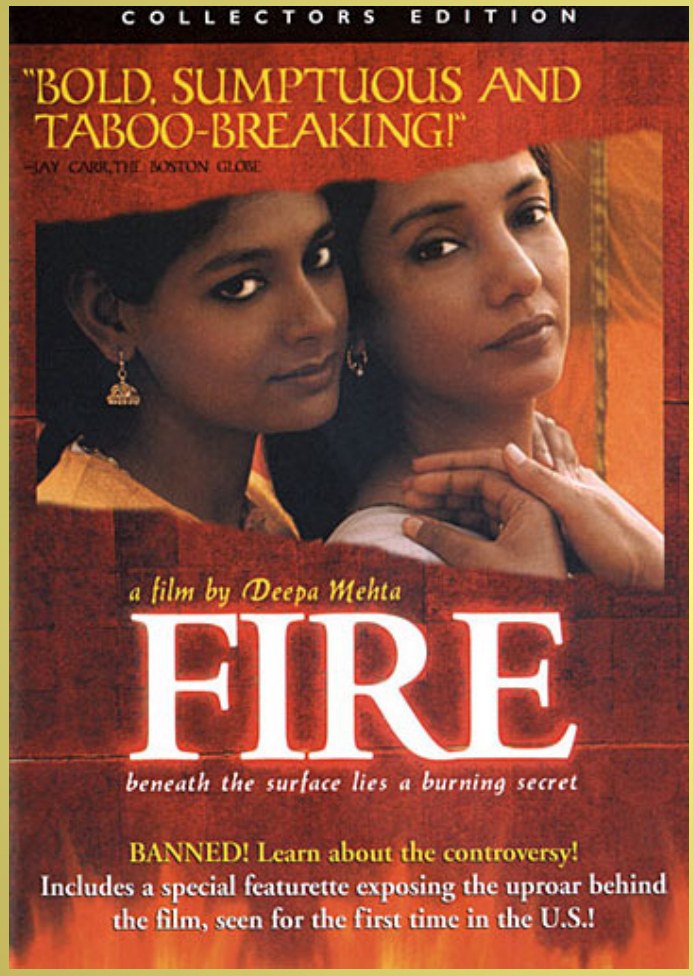
# Depression & Suicide

- The highest number of completed suicides for females is with the Asian women (2005 data- US)
- South India's suicide rate is 5-10 times higher than that of the global rate. (2004- WHO report)
- For every completed suicide, there are at least twenty suicide attempts (2008- Am. Foundation for Suicide Prevention)

# Community's Challenges

- Biculturalism and "Dual Lives."
- Internal racism and prejudices
- Domestic violence
- Difficulties in communication between generations
- High pressure and expectations
- Fear of community ostracism
- Lack of trust within community and outside the community of family issues
- Post 9/11 hate crimes and stereotyping
- Taboos in community with LGBTQI

# Taboos about LGBTQI



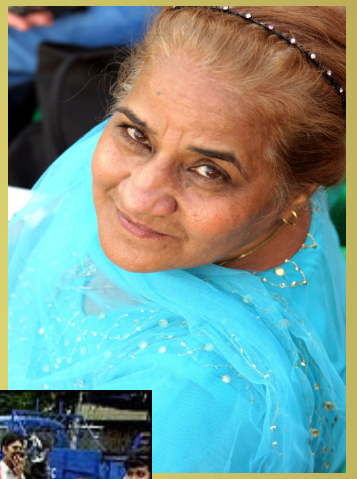

**View excerpt from "Fire"**

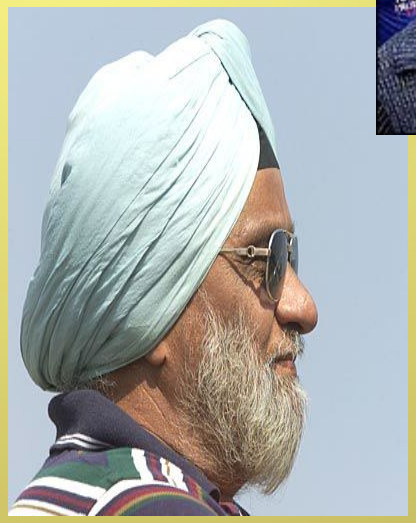
- Role of language – what does it mean to have words to describe what or who you are?
- Role of SA identity and coming out within the community

- Resources within community
  - Trikone
  - Khush DC
  - Al Fathia

# Why Bias, Discrimination and Hate Crimes Occur

- **Incidents targeting people because of:**
  - Race
  - Religion
  - Disability
  - Age
  - National Origin
  - Gender
  - Political Affiliation
  - Sexual Orientation





# How Bias/Discrimination/Hate Crimes Impact Our Community

- Hate crimes target an entire community, not just an individual *(example: Post 9/11 Backlash).*
- Muslim community severely impacted
- Rise in hate crimes, bias and xenophobia
- Particular laws and programs affecting the community (ex: Patriot Act; Special Registration)
- Can make community members feel disempowered and alienated from society

# What has been effective?

- Women's Wellness Group
  - Interviews prior to session to meet needs the women
  - Addressing racial, religious and gender stereotypes
  - Insight & sharing of alternative perspectives
  - Safe, welcoming and nurturing space
  - Wellness Group vs. "Support" Group
  - Peer acceptance and validation
  - Facilitator vs. group leader
  - Diversity within the group
  - Structure and flexibility
  - Tools to continue
  - Closed group
  - Time-limited

# Who's on a similar journey?

- Mental Health/Professional Communities
  - ACT- South Asian Child Sexual Abuse Prevention
  - ASHA- DV Resource
  - Domestic Violence Resource Project (DVRP)
  - Indo-American Psychiatric Association
  - MANAVI-DV Resource
  - Maryland Pro Bono Counseling
  - Maryland Psychiatric Foundation
  - National Alliance for Mental Illness (NAMI)
  - South Asian Mental Health Clinic @ JHU
  - South Asian Mental Health Association (SAMHA)
  - South Asian Psychological Association (SAPNA)

# Who will journey with us?

- Community
  - AID-India
  - Baltimore County Public Schools
  - Foreign-Born Information Referral (FIRN)
  - Governor's Office on Asian American Affairs
  - Howard County Muslim Council (HCMC)
  - Howard County Public Schools
  - Indus Women's Leadership
  - Muslim Community Center- Free health clinic
  - Network of South Asian Professional (NetSAP)
  - South Asian Americans Leading Together (SAALT)

# What has been effective?

- Entertainment-based Outreach/Fundraiser

## “15 Park Ave”

A film about a woman with schizophrenia and the impact on her family. The actress was present a the fundraiser to answer both questions about the film and her own experience with having a family member diagnosed with schizophrenia. In addition a panel of mental health experts spoke at the dinner discussion after the film to educate break the stigma about mental illness.