Letter from Womankind CEO Niketa Sheth

Dear Friends of Womankind,

Amid the COVID-19 pandemic, we are fully and relentlessly focused on supporting our community. While this crisis is disrupting daily life and impacting our safety and well-being in ways we would have never imagined, all of us at Womankind aim to be a reliable, consistent resource to those in need and a frontline advocate for change.

Around New York City and the world, individuals, families, and nations are rising to this challenge with courage and perseverance. I am especially grateful to the staff members, volunteers, and supporters of Womankind for their continued response to our communities’ needs.

History suggests that economic downturns lead to a significant increase in domestic violence; this reality is at the forefront of our minds right now. Survivors are now confined at home for longer hours with their abusers, many of whom may be under worsening pressure. Worldwide, experts have rightly predicted a surge in incidents of domestic violence during this time. We also know that despite a rise in cases, many more will go underreported. Now more than ever, our work is necessary.

Approximately 75% of Womankind survivors are immigrant people of color, with average family incomes of $15K or less. Many are grappling with a heightened fear of anti-Asian racism alongside limited access to medical support as the effects of this virus disproportionately impacts communities of color.

In early May, New York City Mayor Bill DeBlasio appointed Womankind to the newly created Nonprofit and Social Services Sector Advisory Council to shape the city’s response to the COVID-19 pandemic. I am honored to serve alongside many key leaders on this Council, and I plan to bring Womankind’s expertise working with Asian communities to ensure the city meets the needs of survivors of gender-based violence and immigrants—two groups we serve that have been greatly affected by this pandemic.

Womankind remains at the front lines—our staff is practicing self-care while still determined to live out our values each day. We continue to find creative ways to meet the critical needs of survivors and their children, and we’re pivoting our service delivery to be nimble while continuing to advocate for policies to better support survivors. While we do not have all the answers—uncertainties regarding the duration and impact of our current situation is unknown—we remain focused on the needs of survivors in the short and long term.

At Womankind, we believe in the power of community, and we urge you to take action. Whether it’s calling your loved ones to remind them they’re not alone or reaching out to organizations like us to see how you can help, each individual effort matters to build a healthy and safe community. Together, we can rise above violence.

Niketa Sheth
CEO, Womankind

Given the devastating impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, nonprofits on the frontlines need your support now more than ever. Don’t wait. Support Womankind today. www.giveinmay.org/organization/Womankind2020
Womankind’s Services and Operations During COVID-19

While Womankind’s headquarters and community offices are still closed until further notice, our staff continue to deliver undisrupted critical services virtually. Our Residential Programs have an intrepid team working on-site around the clock to ensure all residents are well supported and taken care of.

- The two emergency residences remain staffed and emergency services continue.
- The 24/7 free multilingual Helpline 1-888-888-7702 is fielding increased inquiries. Chat and text services are available with extended hours on Monday-Friday from 10AM-6PM. Text for help in English (1-929-207-5907) or Chinese (1-929-207-5901). Chat available at iamwomankind.org.
- For those seeking help for the first time, please call the helpline for details on available services. We encourage current survivors to contact their advocates directly.
- The Pathways to Healing group for survivors of sexual violence is now running virtually.
- Womankind has disbursed emergency cash assistance to many survivors and families in need.
- We have distributed food and personal protective equipment to survivors and frontline staff thanks to the generous contributions of in-kind donors.
- The legal team continues to assist with family law and legal immigration cases.
- The Pathways to Empowerment program is helping survivors avoid eviction and navigate rent-freeze requests.
- Active volunteers or those interested in volunteering can email Tiffany Zayas, Volunteer Engagement Coordinator, at tzayas@iamwk.org.
- Check out this list of COVID-19 resources: iamwomankind.org/2020/03/23/covid19-resources.

Women Who Inspire Womankind

Womankind would not be where we are without the leadership, vision, and contribution of women—from our founders to our team of advocates, and everyone in between! This past Women’s History Month, staff shared stories of women who inspired them. Visit iamwomankind.org/2020/03/11/whm-2020 to read the collection.

*This woman—my mother—protected my brother and me, while she was trapped in an abusive marriage. This month marks ten years of freedom for us.

Watching her grow and realize her worth has been a privilege. She went back to school around the same time I was in college. One night towards the end of her final semester, she came into my room sobbing. Fortunately, they were tears of joy: She got an A on the final paper she needed to graduate. She was 60 years old and for the first time in my life, I heard my mother say, "Em, I think I might be smart." She finished her degree with a 3.9 GPA and Magna Cum Laude honors. Today, she is a case-worker at the Pennsylvania Drug and Alcohol Commission, where she advocates for people healing from addiction and alcoholism. She does marathons and travels and cooks, and she smiles more than I ever thought was possible."
Finding A Safe Space to Overcome Trauma at Pathways to Healing

SPECIAL CONTRIBUTION BY LIRA KIM, PATHWAYS TO HEALING SPECIALIST AT WOMANKIND

As the Pathways to Healing (P2H) Specialist, I have been really thankful for the opportunity to learn from survivors and our practitioners through this program. I have watched them show up every week regardless of their circumstances. I have watched communities form, as we learned to trust in one another, and I have seen hope become more tangible over time.

"I look forward to each session because I feel safe, as it truly is a judgment-free space and community," says Joy, a survivor and participant. "Actually, I observed how it has made a noticeable difference: when the session was postponed one week, I did not feel as relaxed and less anxious as I was starting to feel after each mid-week session. I was reminded that I am not alone in my journey."

It certainly takes time to get to know the body again, to heal the soul, to offer compassion to the self, but it is possible. And in the most authentic ways, it is quite messy, but also, very beautiful. Mercy, another survivor and participant, says, "I really enjoyed the combination of yoga and the Healing Circle, where other participants and I got to engage in different creative activities. I look forward to connecting with others and learning something new through P2H each session."

Pathways to Healing is a free 12-week holistic wellness program for adult survivors of sexual violence. Each 2-hour session focuses on building community and healing activities, like matcha meditation led by volunteer Danielle Chei (pictured above). There are four cycles each year, meeting seasonally. My hope for P2H is that it will continue to be a space that gets to know survivors and goes on journeys with them, a space that offers opportunities for survivors to design their path to healing with Womankind.

2020 News & Highlights

A. **Project Free** successfully hosted another annual anti-human trafficking conference. This year expert panelists discussed the use of technology as a tool in labor trafficking.

B. **CEO Niketa Sheth** joined peer Asian American-led and serving organizations at CACF’s annual press conference and rally to fight for fair funding from City Council. NYC is 15% APA and growing, yet we only receive 4.4% of their discretionary funding. [PHOTO COURTESY OF CACF]

C. For **Sexual Assault Awareness Month** in April, Womankind wore teal to stand in solidarity with survivors of sexual violence. While SAAM comes and goes every year, we believe, support, and listen to survivors every day.

D. Thank you to **Reveal Beauty** for giving makeovers to 30 women survivors at Womankind! Founded by Anna Doan, their mission is to empower women to believe in their worth and reset future generations with a new narrative of beauty, dignity & strength. [PHOTO COURTESY OF REVEAL BEAUTY]
GIVING IS AN ACT OF LOVE.

Make a donation. We accept contributions in the form of cash, check, credit card, or stock. Give online at iamwomankind.org/donate.

Become a monthly recurring contributor at $50, $100, or whatever amount works for you. Set up a gift that keeps on giving throughout the year.

Celebrate a birthday, wedding, or special occasion by donating in someone's name. A gift that makes a positive impact is a good alternative to material presents to honor friends, family, or colleagues.

Remember or cherish the memory of a loved one through Womankind. Your generosity honors your loved one's spirit and inspires hope.

Donate stock. It's easy to set up and may get a larger tax benefit than a cash donation.

Make a charitable gift through your will. With a bequest you'll leave a legacy of giving, make a lasting impact, and continue Womankind's ongoing mission.

Womankind survives on the generosity of individuals who believe in our mission.

Yes! I would like to make a gift of (circle one)

$50   $100   $250   $500   $1,000   $25,000   Other___________

Name ________________________________
Address ________________________________
Tel ___________________________ E-Mail ___________________________

___ Add me to Womankind's e-mail list

Name on Card ________________________________
Card Number __ __ __ __ - __ __ __ __ - __ __ __ __ - __ __ __ __  Exp Date ______/_______

Signature ___________________________________________ Date: _____________________

___ I am enclosing a check (made payable to Womankind).

___ In honor/memory of ________________________________

Stock or legacy gift? Contact Carolyn Antonio, Director of Development at cantonio@iamwk.org or 212-732-0054 ext. 105.

Fill out this form and mail your donation to the address above. Womankind is a 501(c)(3) tax-exempt organization. Your donation is tax-deductible within the guidelines of U.S. law. Our tax ID is 13-3286250. Thank you for your support.