

Salvaguardiendo mujeres en Abril

Spanish-language performance of 'The Vagina Monologues' in Kingston April 20 **BY CARRIE JONES ROSS**

IT'S HUMILIATING ENOUGH TO TELL SOMEONE that your boyfriend smacked you when he came home from work, aggravated from a rough day. How about when "home" is thousands of miles away and you don't even speak the language, or that your boyfriend will throw you and your kids out into this unknown, foreign land "if you make any trouble" for him. You don't even know whether the police will believe you, blame you or even possibly return you to the perils of your native land.

In an effort to illuminate the growing consciousness of the Latino community and the community at large to violence against women, Eve Ensler's *The Vagina Monologues* are being performed for the second year in a row in Kingston in Spanish. *The Vagina Monologues* is a series of scripted tales designed to empower women which chronicle sexual, exploratory or violent experiences with their not-so-privates. There are two Spanish-only performances — Saturday April 13, at the Newburgh Armory Unity Center and Saturday April 20, at George Washington Elementary School here in Kingston, both hosted by and to benefit *Somos la Llave del Futuro*, a Dutchess County-based not-for-profit that seeks to build leaders in the Latino immigrant communities of the Hudson Valley and Catskill region. Two former performers from last year's first Spanish performance are producing the play: *La Voz* Hispanic arts and culture magazine's managing editor Mariel Fiori and Maria Jimena Concha, vice-president of *Somos la Llave*. Fiori was five months pregnant and had the opportunity to perform a monologue on giving birth, which she described as exceptionally powerful. Last year's performances netted \$3,000 and were sold out.

"It's uncomfortable for women to have to tell their

story in another language," said Family of Woodstock's domestic violence services director, Kathy Welby-Moretti, who said she employs six translators just to

is to make them feel comfortable, which is [communicating in] their language. Also batterers will use a woman's lack of understanding. He threatens to deport non-documented woman. One [abuser] told a woman if she went out of the house she would be arrested. [Another problem is] limited knowledge of what the help available is for them."

Welby-Moretti said that she has witnessed women in migrant working camps who have called the police on their partner facing the ire of those running the camps, and the distinct possibility of losing their homes. She added that 21 percent of Latinas experience physical assault in their lives, and 7.9 percent have reported rape. She feels that number would be higher if women felt more comfortable to report the crimes. Welby-Moretti explained that the largest problem reported is how women don't know their options or about the available help.



The cast of last year's performance.

JAPHETH WOOD

THE PLAYS WILL INCLUDE women from countries such as Spain, Argentina, Mexico, the Dominican Republic and others. The target audience members range from restaurant workers to students and educators. "Last year was a lot of Mexicans who said they had never been to a play," said Fiori. "A lot of people said they don't have a connection or access to a play. It's another door to access culture that they don't normally have in their lives. We don't have so many plays in Spanish. Also some people don't even know what a play is, they use their imaginations."

In order to reach a healthy cross-section of people, they advertised with posters and on Spanish-language radio and newspapers. Fiori said they expect everyone from professionals to those who clean houses to attend.

Tickets in advance are \$10, \$15 at the door. Doors open at 7:30 p.m. and performances begin at 8 p.m. To purchase tickets online, visit monologosdelavagina.eventbrite.com/. The website for *Somos la Llave* in both in English and Spanish is somoslallave.org/en. The National Latino Alliance for the Elimination of Domestic Violence has help, advice, resources, training and support at www.dvalianza.org.

deal with the rapid influx of Spanish-speaking women in need of domestic violence counseling services. Like every culture, Welby-Moretti said that the Latino community has several exacerbating social mores which diminish the likelihood of a woman reporting a rape or battery, including a strong tradition of patriarchy. "A lot of times the woman doesn't call. The family 'handles' it, like the father or a brother," said Welby-Moretti, who said that fear of repercussion and the unknown are crowning factors. "First thing

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