

New Beginnings



At the beginning of every year, many of us make resolutions for how we will improve our lives in the months ahead. Every day, many people start their journey to a fresh start after traumatic involvement in the commercial sex industry. Some seek a new beginning by reaching out to Amara for assistance with changing their name or gender marker, others seek expungement of criminal records, others seek to regain custody of their children, and yet others may seek all three.

Amara's attorneys strive to support clients' new beginnings as they seek to live self-determined lives that are free of violence, stigma and discrimination. For example, name changes can allow a survivor to live without fear their trafficker will find them. For a transgender client, a name change means they will be able to live their truth fully for the first time. Our work to support clients' in expunging their criminal records, sealing their name, correcting their gender marker, help protect them from potential harassment and discrimination by preventing employers, landlords and others from accessing sensitive personal information. Our family law practice supports clients in reunification with their children as they regain custody of their children from family members or foster care.

As Amara works with each individual client in pursuit of their new beginning this month, we also spend this month raising awareness about the struggles of human trafficking survivors. January is National Slavery and Human Trafficking Prevention Month and we will participate in a number of events to raise awareness of the issues impacting our clients:

- In partnership with a number of community-based organizations, Amara will participate in the [Prince George's Human Trafficking Taskforce's Code Blue](#) series to discuss issues affecting our clients. Join us each week and check out the first week's discussion [here](#).
- On January 21st, our Executive Director will participate in a Faith Based Panel to share how faith-based organizations can support survivors.
- On January 26th, our Maryland attorney [Caroline Ackerman](#) will participate in a Virtual Town Hall to educate Prince George's County residents about resources for trafficking survivors.



Client Story

From the age of seven, Jessica* was sexually abused by a family member and trafficked by her parents so they could buy drugs. Jessica was able to get away from her family and start a new life. However, because several of her family members were in the police force, she was never fully able to escape her past. Her family was always able to find her. Jessica was constantly moving and even tried to change her name but they still found her.

Confused, Jessica came to Amara to see how her family was still able to find her despite her name change. We explained to Jessica that all name changes are public record, and in DC, a motion must be filed to seal records of a name change. However, that motion to seal still isn't enough as the motion to seal is also public. In order to keep information about their name change private, another motion must be filed to seal their original motion to seal a name change. Without taking this critical procedural step, Jessica's family would continue to find her.

Amara helped Jessica with the necessary filings and connected her with social service organizations to help her work through her trauma. Jessica is currently getting a master's degree, under her (second) new name.

*Client's name is changed for safety purposes.



Amara Update

As we share about new beginnings, we also share the bitter sweet news that our Executive Director, Llamilet Gutierrez, will end her time at Amara on February 28th. Under Ms. Gutierrez's leadership, Amara has grown to a full-time staff of six, expanding service to clients in the Commonwealth of Virginia, and growing the organization's presence in Maryland. She spearheaded a variety of operational improvements and expanded the organization's partnerships in communities throughout the Washington Metropolitan Area, all while maintaining high standards for providing excellent trauma-informed legal services to survivors of sex trafficking and sex workers. "Llamilet did an incredible job leading Amara during a time of great transition and growth," said Board Chair Sakala Rutherford. "We thank her for her service and appreciate her efforts to set the organization up for continued success well into the future. We wish her well." Read the full press release [here](#) and stay tuned next month to learn

about our new executive director.



THANK YOU FOR JOINING THE PARTY! NO SHOW BALL

Amara appreciates your generous contributions and support to our 6th annual No Show Ball during a year that has been so challenging for everyone. Heightened racial tensions following the murder of George Floyd inspired us to dedicate 2020's No Show Ball to sharing our insights into the unbalanced nature of our legal system and the systemic racism that impacts our clients' lives daily.

Although the roots of inequity and bias in the American legal system for Black and Brown communities can be traced back to our country's founding, we know that—case by case, and client by client—Amara's work can help balance the scales for those who have had their rights violated during involvement in the commercial sex industry.

We raised \$10,762.92. We are forever grateful for you and your support. For every retweet, shared post, and friend tagged. Thank you!

Your Donations Support

Donations to Amara Legal Center ensure our staff attorneys can continue to provide clients with excellent legal representation in family law cases including custody, name and gender changes, and civil protection orders; post conviction matters including expungements, vacatur, and sealings; victim witness advocacy; and criminal defense. Your contributions allow us to provide comprehensive legal services and resources that are not otherwise supported by grants.



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