

NO SHOW BALL NEWSLETTER

BALANCING THE SCALES:

SYSTEMIC RACISM AND RACIAL BIAS IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM
IMPACTS ON OUR CLIENTS IN CRIMINAL DEFENSE

In this second week of [Amara Legal Center's](#) 6th Annual **No Show Ball**, we'd like to share how systemic racism and racial biases penetrate our criminal defense practice. If you believe in the importance of this work, we hope you will consider making a contribution today, maybe as a gift in the name of a friend or loved one.

CRIMINAL DEFENSE

Amara provides sex trafficking survivors and sex workers with trauma-informed legal representation for the myriad of criminal and civil violations stemming from their involvement in the commercial sex industry. Each client has a unique story, but after having represented over 500 clients in the region, we know the stigma of criminal charges is always the biggest obstacle our clients face in living self-determined lives free of violence. Many of Amara's clients have been charged with prostitution or related charges, even when their involvement in commercial sex was against their will. Because criminal records pose significant barriers to securing employment, obtaining stable housing and receiving other vital services such as mental healthcare, the availability of excellent criminal defense can literally be the difference between life and death.

As a direct result of systemic racism, Black women are overrepresented in the commercial sex industry, so it's not surprising that most of Amara's clients are young, Black, and female.

Consider:

- The implicit biases held by law enforcement officers affect their interactions with Black people, even when the officer is a person of color. (e.g., Black people are violent and criminal)
- Research suggests that women of color are more likely to be arrested for crimes where they were the victims because they are perceived as "overly aggressive."
- The phenomenon of "adulthoodification," borne out of the legacy of slavery, causes Black girls to be viewed as needing less protection and knowing more about adult topics, including sex, than their White peers.

These unchecked biases mean people of color as a whole are disproportionately arrested, charged, convicted, and imprisoned. Black LGBTQ individuals, especially those who are victims of violence, experience heightened discrimination from law enforcement. "Transgender and gender non-conforming women of color report disproportionately high rates of harassment, physical assault, and sexual assault at the hands of police compared with all transgender individuals."

Overcoming these biases requires community-based organizations like Amara to continue to train on the identification of victims, provide criminal defense representation, and elevate the voices of our clients in pursuit of racial justice and criminal justice reform.



Client Story

Lisa* was referred to Amara because her assigned public defender thought she might be a sex trafficking survivor. At 21 years old, she was pregnant with her trafficker's child. As we read the statement of probable cause outlining the facts that led officers to charge her, we could not believe how the officers and the prosecutors missed the red flags: one woman shared that the male "co-defendant" hit her and that he shared her earnings; a gun was found under the bed of the hotel room; and the male "co-defendant" was wearing a black fur jacket draped over the shoulder, a gold chain, a gold pendant, a three piece suit, and leather shoes.

While four women were found in the hotel room that day, only the two black women were arrested and charged.

Luckily, we were able to represent Lisa. With our client's permission, we shared her trafficking experience with the prosecutor, and pointed out the red flags. The prosecutor dropped the case. While ultimately Lisa had a "successful" result, she should not have been charged to begin with.

*Name has been changed to protect confidentiality.



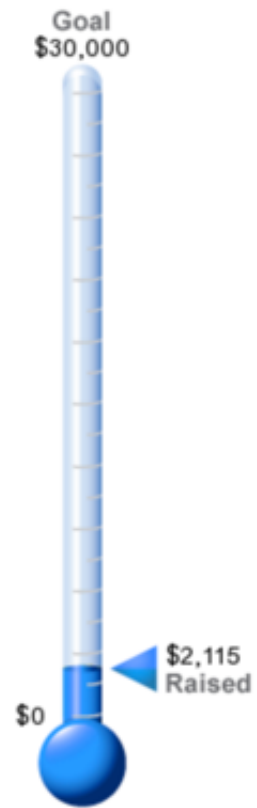
Ways to Give

Our grants do not cover our criminal defense work and your monthly, yearly, and one-time donations are making a positive difference! Thanks to you we are able to provide essential legal services that our clients need to overcome the legal and social barriers that they face on a daily basis.

Your contributions allow Amara to provide needed services. A gift of:

- \$50 covers fees and court costs associated researching a criminal case.
- \$100 covers the costs of new criminal defense client intake.
- \$250 covers costs for developing a safety plan for a trafficking survivor.
- \$500 covers the costs of sealing or expunging damaging criminal records.
- \$1000 supports legal defense against unjust charges.

Every amount helps!



Federal Workers Can #ShowSomeLove to Amara, #43434 in the 2020 CFC

If you're a federal worker or retiree you can set up a one-time donation or continued support directly from payroll at www.givecfc.org until January 15th, 2021.

Use our CFC #43434 to find us!

Donate Online

You can make a donation to the 2020 No Show Ball until December 31st [here](#).

Benefit Amara while you Shop on Amazon

Shop on smile.amazon.com/ch/46-3819394 and Amazon will donate a portion of your shopping to Amara.

We Gratefully Accept Checks

Please make checks out to "Amara Legal Center, Inc." and mail to 1629 K Street, NW, Suite 300, Washington, DC 20006

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