



NO SHOW BALL NEWSLETTER

BALANCING THE SCALES:
SYSTEMIC RACISM AND RACIAL BIAS IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM
IMPACTS ON OUR CLIENTS IN POST-CONVICTION RELIEF

In this fourth week of Amara's 6th annual **No Show Ball**, imagine for a moment: You have no money; no family, spouse or partners; and no friends with means. You are under- or uneducated. You have lost your job, and there are no immediate job prospects. With no means of financial support, how are you going to survive? What would you do to get enough money to pay the rent, buy food, and take care of your children?

Many of Amara's clients have faced some version of this scenario. Some were preyed upon by sex traffickers. Others felt like sex work was their best choice or only option. But a conviction or even an arrest for engaging in sex work further limits our clients options for achieving a life free of violence, stigma, and discrimination.

Generous donations like yours allow Amara to provide post-conviction relief to sex workers and sex trafficking survivors. Won't you help today?

POST-CONVICTION RELIEF

A person with a criminal record must overcome substantial barriers to secure stable housing, obtain legal employment, enroll in education, and qualify for public benefits. The inability to pass a background check prevents our clients from accessing important resources and subjects them to unnecessary stigma and shame. Sex workers often face housing insecurity and sexual harassment as a result of arrests, charges, or convictions for solicitation and prostitution. Survivors of sex trafficking are often not identified as survivors during their involvement in the criminal legal system; instead, they are often arrested, prosecuted, and convicted for crimes linked to their trafficking experience. For these reasons, we are committed to representing clients who seek post-arrest and post-conviction relief, including expungement, record sealing, and vacatur. Amara's attorneys work with clients to assess client eligibility, gather appropriate evidence, and follow up with record-keeping agencies to ensure compliance with court orders. Sadly, as we shared in our first NSB newsletter, black and brown survivors are disproportionately impacted by criminal records. It is therefore no surprise that black and brown women have the greatest need of post-conviction relief. Consider the following findings from the University of Michigan Law School:

- Almost half of U.S. children have a parent with some form of criminal record (including arrests).
- Because criminal records are not equally distributed across the population, the effects of these collateral consequences are disproportionately concentrated by race, gender, and

poverty status, especially affecting black men. Therefore, the concentration of criminal records may be a significant contributor to racial disparities in employment and other socioeconomic outcomes.

- Those who do obtain expungement:
 - have very low subsequent crime rates (only 7% are rearrested after 5 years).
 - have lower crime risk than the population as a whole.
 - have a very low baseline recidivism risk
 - have much better employment and wage prospects (1.13 as likely to be employed and wages go up by 25% versus the pre-expungement trajectory).

Each jurisdiction we serve has specific rules regarding eligibility and evidence required for individuals to access post-arrest and post-conviction relief. Currently, DC has the most expansive vacatur relief, Maryland also has limited vacatur relief, and Virginia has no relief for Amara clients. This is where you can help: **Petition Virginia Lawmakers to Pass Criminal Record Relief Legislation.**

Virginia was the last state to enact standalone human trafficking laws. Although Virginia has made strides to improve its response to human trafficking, it still has no criminal record relief laws on the books for survivors of human trafficking. If you are a resident of Virginia, let the General Assembly know that you care about survivors of human trafficking. Add your name to [our petition](#) urging the Assembly to pass legislation offering criminal record relief for survivors of human trafficking.



Client Story

Each year, we provide support to survivors who were not identified as survivors when they were arrested, incarcerated, and convicted of crimes that they were forced to commit while they were being trafficked.

Watch [Breaking Free - A Survivor's Journey](#) to learn how Amara supports clients in removing criminal records that serve as barriers to happiness, employment, housing, and educational opportunities. Though we made the video in 2016, the survivor's journey portrayed is still the reality for the dozens of survivors we supported with post-conviction relief in 2020. For example, Lisa, whose story we shared in our first No Show Ball Newsletter faced these same barriers when the police and prosecutors missed the clear red flags of trafficking. Amara was able to expunge two cases for her including her criminal case and this cleared the way for a housing background check and removed potential issues when she testified against her trafficker.



Ways to Give

Grant funding that supports Amara's work in Maryland and Virginia excludes post-conviction services, so we rely on generous donations from individuals like you to help cover the full costs of our Legal Representation Program. Whether you make a one-time gift or a recurring donation, your generosity will help us close this funding gap, and allow our clients to gain control over their lives!

Your gift of:

- \$50 covers fees to gather documents for post-conviction relief;
- \$100 covers the costs of an eligibility assessment for post-conviction relief;
- \$250 covers drafting and filing a petition to seal damaging criminal records;
- \$500 covers a contested hearing to vacate a conviction;
- \$1000 covers the full representation for post-conviction relief;

No amount is too small and every dollar 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.

Visit www.amaralegal.org/donate.



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