



# NO SHOW BALL NEWSLETTER

SYSTEMIC RACISM AND RACIAL BIAS IN THE LEGAL SYSTEM  
IMPACTS ON OUR CLIENTS IN VICTIM ADVOCACY

Chilean writer Isabel Allende once said, “We only have what we give.” This insight echoes through 2020, reminding us that we can’t always control what we’re given, but we can control what we give to others. Allende reminds us that in a year where we feel so out of control of our health, our democracy, and our economy—we can control what we give to our community. I found myself fretting about my job, so I gave food to the food bank. I was worried about racial injustice, so I participated in an anti-racism training. I was concerned about the health of our community during the pandemic, so I raised funds for Amara Legal Center. Giving to others gave me a constant comfort that I hope you will feel when you donate to Amara.

When you give to Amara, you will be comforted knowing that you are directly helping your neighbors access free legal representation. Amara attorneys have been working hard during the pandemic to address structural racism, advocate for clients, and connect them to other social services. When I hear the stories of how we assisted clients in achieving their freedom, or I see all of the work we do in statewide coalitions, I know my donations went to greatly improving the lives of others. I know that Allende’s words are true, even throughout the ups and downs of 2020. We only have what we give, so consider giving to Amara Legal Center today.

- Katelyn Crawford, Amara Board Member

## **VICTIM-WITNESS ADVOCACY**

DC, Maryland, and Virginia have all codified their own Victim’s Bill of Rights, which lay out the fundamental principles for treating victims of crime fairly, with dignity, and with respect for their privacy during criminal cases. However, without an advocate to ensure compliance with the Victim’s Bills of Rights, police, prosecutors, and judges often run afoul of protections afforded to victims.

The Amara Legal Center provides victim-witness advocacy to ensure our clients rights are honored, their wishes clearly communicated, and their boundaries respected. Amara attorneys provide clients with free legal representation when clients decide to pursue charges against their traffickers. Amara attorneys prepare clients for the experience of speaking with police officers, prosecutors, as well as testifying in front of a judge, courtroom staff, 12 jury members, and their abusers. Amara attorneys attend meetings with officers and prosecutors. Amara attorneys seek immunity for clients who were forced to commit crimes during their victimization. Amara attorneys advocate for our clients’ protection, creating safety plans and

seeking protective orders for our clients from their abusers. We are dedicated to ensuring that our clients receive dignified treatment under the law.

Many of our clients have had experiences with a criminal legal system that has treated them unfairly simply because of the color of their skin. Consider a [Delaware study](#) of 500 victims of crime which found:

Black victims were least likely to receive help after they were victimized, which many said led them to be less likely to report later crimes to law enforcement;

- 40% of Latino and almost 60% of black survivors reported having had an experience with law enforcement that they characterized as inappropriate;
- Black people are 34 percent more likely and Latinos are 38 percent more likely, respectively, than white people, to report having been the victim of a violent crime.

Our clients' experiences create a unique need for victim-witness advocacy. At Amara, our attorneys have to overcome police who want to arrest or charge our clients, prosecutors that do not believe our clients, and judges who disregard our clients. We recognize the reality of our clients' lived experiences and use a client-centered approach to support our clients in whatever way they decide to engage (or not) with the legal system.



## Client Story

As I sit in the hallway, looking at the doors I'll walk through, I imagine the faces I'll see inside the room. Almost all of them will be the faces of strangers. But there is one face I know I'll recognize. The face of my abuser is one I know I'll never forget no matter how much I want it to disappear from my memory. I can't control who I'll see when I walk through those doors any more than I can control what happened to me.

So, I think about the things I can control.

Today I'm reading my victim impact statement. I thought testifying was the only time I'd speak in court, but my lawyer told me that, at the sentencing hearing, I'd be able to tell the judge about what I'm still going through. The truth is that my physical injuries aren't the only things I'm recovering from. I don't know if I can ever feel safe again: when I'm walking home, taking my kids to the park, even sitting at home with the doors and windows locked. I feel like I can never let my guard down. At first, I was worried about sharing even more with a room full of strangers —cracking open my pain again and again—but I've also thought so much about what I didn't get to say when I testified. I want the judge to know what happened to me isn't over. I'm still

surviving.

Looking back, this trial has been a journey. Hard moment after hard moment along the way. When you're going forward, you don't always see how far you've come. I don't know if I was ready yesterday, but today I am ready. I am here for justice. I am here for me.



## Ways to Give

By supporting Amara Legal Center, you are demonstrating your commitment to second chances, to the value of every life, and to the right of every individual to live a self-determined life free from violence, stigma and discrimination.

Your gift of:

- \$50 covers filing fees and costs for a motion to seal a name change;
- \$100 covers the costs of the intake process for a victim witness case;
- \$250 covers costs for developing a safety plan for a trafficking survivor;
- \$500 covers the costs of obtaining a protective order;
- \$1000 covers one victim-witness representation in a criminal case;

Every amount helps!



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### 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](http://www.givecfc.org) until January 15th, 2021.

### Benefit Amara while you Shop on Amazon

Shop on [smile.amazon.com/ch/46-3819394](https://smile.amazon.com/ch/46-3819394) and Amazon will donate a portion of your shopping to Amara.

### We Gratefully Accept Checks

Use our CFC #43434 to find us!

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

**Donate Online**

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

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Visit [www.amaralegal.org/donate](http://www.amaralegal.org/donate).

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