

Black Lives Matter: Karon Hylton-Brown | Walter Wallace Jr.

As we finished the October Newsletter, we learned of the death of two more young black men at the hands of the police. Walter Wallace Jr. was shot to death by police in Philadelphia. Karon Hylton-Brown was killed in a police chase which was initiated because Mr. Hylton-Brown was allegedly not wearing a helmet and riding on the sidewalk in a moped.

Why is Amara, an organization that provides legal services to survivors of sex trafficking and sex workers, talking about black lives lost due to police involvement? The truth is, these deaths hit us close to home. Our clients are primarily black cis- and trans- women. Our clients are the mothers, sisters, aunts, wives, girlfriends, and cousins of these young men. Our clients too have been targeted and prosecuted due to the color of their skin.

In Karon Hylton-Brown's case, he is the family member of our intake coordinator, Tawny Bush.

Each one of these deaths takes a toll on our clients, our attorneys, our partners, and our supporters, particularly our stakeholders of color. [Each death reminds us that in the United States, a black person is three times as likely to be killed by police.](#) Each death reminds us that there are less lethal methods of enforcement. Each death reminds us that there is a systemic lack of transparency and accountability in law enforcement. Each death reminds us there are better ways to provide law enforcement. Each death reminds us that while a person may have committed a crime, an officer is not judge, jury, and executioner. Each death reminds us that too often we categorize those who are "worthy" or "unworthy" of mercy. Each death reminds us that our clients are criminalized by police, courts, social workers, and other institutions within the legal system. Until the underlying systemic racism is resolved, our services will continue to be necessary and vital. We will continue to educate our communities that Black Lives Matter.



A Message from Board Member Lori Simms

Every year Amara Legal Center observes National Domestic Violence Awareness Month October to help raise awareness about these pervasive and life-threatening crimes, recognizing and honoring victims and survivors. But the trauma of domestic violence faces many of Amara's

clients every day of the year, and we work tirelessly to help connect them to the services they need while helping them navigate the region's justice system to address their unique legal circumstances.

Most Individuals who have survived sex trafficking or engaged in sex work have experienced some form of domestic violence. In many cases, an individual's initial introduction to sex work occurred when a partner or family member persuaded them, through force, fraud, or coercion, to perform sex acts with strangers against their will for financial benefit. In such circumstances, the victim and trafficker typically live together, allowing the trafficker to control, manage, and oversee, every aspect of the individual's life, and subjecting them to violent, aggressive, and manipulative behaviors.

This intersectionality of domestic violence and sex trafficking is well-documented. As the [National Network to End Domestic Violence](#) points out, abusers and traffickers exhibit similar patterns of behavior to exert power and control over their victims. "Domestic violence is a crime that effects every community, regardless of age, economic status, race, religion or nationality," stated [United States Attorney Matthew Schneider](#). "The heavy emotional toll that domestic violence takes on a person can last a lifetime."

In addition to providing free legal services that help our clients reclaim their lives, Amara works hard to connect clients with vital social services, such as medical care, housing support and counseling. If you suspect someone you know may be experiencing domestic violence or sexual assault, please check out this [free trafficking assessment tool](#) to identify and assist potential victims of trafficking.

For more information on domestic violence or to get immediate help, visit the National Domestic Violence Hotline website or call 1-800-799-SAFE (7233). Amara Legal Center stands at the ready to help survivors with legal representation that can help them restore their sense of safety, including securing civil protection orders or providing victim witness advocacy. To contact Amara Legal Center for help, or to make a donation in support of our work, please visit our website at www.amaralegal.org.

[Collective Action for Safe Spaces](#) created a mini toolkit to outline the various ways domestic violence survivors are impacted by the retributive justice system, and which local DC organizations are doing work to support survivors navigating this system. Here is the link to view the full toolkit: bit.ly/casdvam2020

Amara Releases DC Vacatur Toolkit

Subsequent to the passage of the DC Trafficking Survivors Relief Amendment Act of 2018 (D.C. Law 18-2391), Amara began working on guidance to make sure the DC legal community is prepared to put the criminal record relief to good use for trafficking survivors. In short, the law allows for convictions to be vacated and expungement or sealing of criminal records for certain

offenses when the conduct of the person was the direct result of the person having been a victim of trafficking.

With critical funding provided by DC's Office of Victims Services and Justice Grants (OVSJG) and in partnership with McGuireWoods, Amara staff attorney Caroline Akerman completed work on an extensive toolkit and conducted an initial training of interested DC attorneys and social service providers on October 7. This work represents Amara's continued efforts to educate the community about the availability of vacatur in DC, clarifying how to determine a client's eligibility for vacatur, expungement, or sealing, and explaining the process for obtaining vacatur, expungement, or sealing.

While the District of Columbia previously had general laws providing for record sealing, the 2018 Trafficking Survivors Act provides more powerful tools through access to vacatur and expungement. Under this new law, only ten petitions for vacatur of convictions have been filed, all of which were granted. In the coming months, Amara will dedicate additional resources toward identifying individuals who might benefit from DC vacatur, providing enhanced access to screening through our network of intake partners, and offering the legal services needed to trafficking survivors.



Upcoming Events

During these final months of 2020, Amara is working tirelessly to bring together the organization's community of donors by offering a number of ways to get involved, get educated and show support.

Earlier this month, Board members Lori Sims and Rachel Ament successfully pulled together our first ever virtual benefit concert, Amara's Star Night In, featuring a strong line up of amazing musicians and comedians. In addition to raising needed dollars, a fun time was had by all. Please join me in extending a special thank you to our event donors at the supporter, sponsor, and champions levels for their continued dedication to our mission who made Amara's Star Night In a financial success:

- David DiGiovanna - Amara Champion
- Oxana Romanyuk - Amara Sponsor
- Todd Crawford - Amara Supporter
- Lori Hohenleitner - Amara Supporter
- Rachel Martin - Amara Supporter
- Colber Prosper - Amara Supporter
- George Rutherford - Amara Supporter

- Anh Vu - Amara Supporter

If you missed out on our virtual concert, you can still get involved and support Amara's work by participating in one of our next virtual events. Coming up in:

November: Women Beyond Empowerment Panel

On November 11th at 5:30 pm, join us for our first annual "Women Beyond Empowerment" Panel. Prominent leaders [Michelle Salzman](#), [Shanika Ampah](#), and Sarolyn Morgan, LCSW-S, BCD will discuss their personal experiences in the commercial sex industry. As a Victim Assistant Specialist for Homeland Security Investigations and a clinical social worker with the Healing Hearts Network, Ms. Morgan raises awareness to sex trafficking in communities across the country. Through professional advocacy, courage, or survival, our panelists will open your eyes to varying perspectives on how each woman found her power.

The panel will be moderated by [Elizabeth Nolan-Brown](#). Ms. Nolan-Brown is a senior editor at [Reason](#), where she writes regularly on the intersections of sex, speech, tech, crime, politics, panic, and civil liberties. She is also co-founder of the libertarian feminist group Feminists for Liberty.

Learn more about our panelists and reserve your space [here](#).

Amara Legal Center invites you to its **First Annual Women Beyond Empowerment** November 11th, 2020 · 5:30 pm EST

Join us for a panel discussion about surviving and thriving after involvement in the commercial sex industry including available resources.

Panel Discussion featuring:

- 
Michelle Salzman
- 
Sarolyn Morgan
- 
Shanika Ampah

Moderator:

- 
Elizabeth Nolan Brown

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December: The 5th Annual "No Show Ball"

On December 1st, we'll kick off Amara's No Show Ball, our annual virtual fundraiser to raise money to help us start off the new year strong and ready to support our clients' needs. Stay tuned to find out how you can join the virtual party!

As with all our events, all proceeds support Amara's mission of providing free legal services to those negatively impacted by the commercial sex industry in D.C., Maryland, and Virginia.

Other Ways to Give

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

The 2020 Combined Federal Campaign continues until January 15th, 2021. CFC connects federal workers and retirees with non-profit organizations to which they can contribute. This year's theme is Show Some Love. Show your love and appreciation to everyone who is working together to support, care for, and change our community. If you're a federal worker or retiree who wants to get involved visit <https://givecfc.org/> and use our CFC #43434 to donate to Amara Legal Center.

Shop with Amazon Smile to Benefit Amara Make a difference this holiday.

Shop for gifts at smile.amazon.com/ch/46-3819394 to generate donations for Amara Legal Center and check out our [AmazonSmile Charity Lists](#) to donate items we need most.



We would like to thank [THE MORRIS AND GWENDOLYN CAFRITZ FOUNDATION](#) for their continued support. The Morris and Gwendolyn Cafritz Foundation is committed to building a stronger community for residents of the Washington, DC metropolitan area through support of programs in the arts and humanities, community services, education, health and the environment. Amara is one of the Cafritz Foundation's 2020 grantees.

We are grateful to partner with the Cafritz Foundation to continue to serve the trafficking survivors and sex workers in the DC-metro area whose rights have been violated while involved in the commercial sex industry.



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