



Looking Back and Towards the Future

As we kick off our 5th Annual No Show Ball, we'd like to remind you about where we began. When the [Amara Legal Center](#) was founded in September 2013, we were lawyers, social workers, business leaders, and community organizers who wanted to make a difference in the lives of those impacted by sex trafficking. At that time, the work was carried out by our founding executive director who rented out her apartment and slept on her couch in order to afford to represent our clients that first year. Since then, we've grown into a community advocacy and legal resource of six full-time staff members, volunteers, and cherished supporters.

Having represented over 500 clients in D.C., Maryland, Virginia, since 2013, we've heard so many different client experiences but one major common barrier: criminal records. Many of Amara's clients have criminal records for prostitution or related charges, even when their involvement in commercial sex was against their will. A criminal record prevents our clients from finding legal employment, student aid, public housing, and other social services. For one client, her criminal record prevented her from attending her child's school field trip. According to a study done by the Women's Centers of California, **84% of those engaged in sex work report experiencing current or past homelessness.**

When our clients look for an exit ramp from "the life," their criminal record makes it difficult to be self-sufficient. That is why Amara assists clients in filing petitions for expungement relief. An expungement is a court-ordered process in which the legal record of an arrest or a criminal conviction is "sealed," or erased in the eyes of the law, depending on the jurisdiction. Our legal team stands by our client's side throughout the entire process.

While we receive grants to support our expungement work in Washington, D.C., support from our community of donors would make it possible for us to continue this service for clients in

Maryland and Virginia.



Giving Tuesday

Join us tomorrow as we host our [Facebook](#) live kickoff! During the Facebook live, you'll have an opportunity to ask questions and learn how you can get involved. And as with any gala, we will have raffles! Join us for a chance to win prizes!

Also, Facebook will match donations made after 8 am on Giving Tuesday on Facebook up to \$7 million on a first-come, first-served basis. Please donate as close to 8 am as possible because funds were allocated "in seconds" last year!

To learn more about our services and what your gift to the No Show Ball helps us do, visit www.amaralegal.org. You can make a donation [here](#).

Staff Spotlight: Sidney McCoy

Throughout the No Show Ball, we will highlight Amara team members - the people who are helping to impact the lives of our clients. First up, meet Sidney!



Why do we provide the service specifically highlighted in the newsletter?

Expungement or vacatur of a criminal record enables our clients to secure employment, housing, education, and access other resources on the journey to self-reliance and

completeness. Our trafficking clients have also indicated that it is also vital for their own mental well-being that the law recognize the duress that was present when they were forced to commit a crime. Criminal record relief such as expungement allows survivors to free themselves of the stigmatization of being labeled a criminal for crimes they were forced to commit.

Thank you for your support!

Emergency Client Needs

In addition to legal services, many of our clients have short-term, emergency needs. Since they are not legal services, these important client needs -- including baby formula, groceries, child care, and transportation costs -- are not typically covered by our grant funding. We rely heavily on sources of unrestricted funding, such as donations and general operating support, to ensure our clients' emergency needs are met.

Give Today



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