

Layli Miller-Muro's Bio

Layli Miller-Muro is the Founder and Executive Director of the **Tahirih Justice Center**, a non-profit organization dedicated to protecting women and girls from human rights abuses through the provision of legal aid and public policy advocacy (www.tahirih.org). Since 2001, she has led the organization in its service to over 12,000 women and girls, growing it from a staff of 6 to over 30, and expanding its offices to Houston and Baltimore in addition to the Washington, DC area. In recognition of its sound management and innovative programs, under Layli's leadership, Tahirih won the Washington Post Award for Management Excellence and its innovative use of pro bono attorneys to quintuple its resources was featured in the Stanford Social Innovation Review.

Layli founded the organization in 1997 following her involvement in a high-profile case that set national precedent and revolutionized asylum law in the United States. Fauziya Kassindja, a 17-year-old girl who had fled Togo in fear of a forced polygamous marriage and a tribal practice known as female genital mutilation, was granted asylum in 1996 by the US Board of Immigration Appeals. This decision opened the door to gender-based persecution as grounds for asylum. Using her portion of the proceeds from a book she and Ms. Kassindja co-authored about the case (*Do They Hear You When You Cry?* Delacorte Press, 1998), Ms. Miller-Muro established Tahirih.

Prior to joining Tahirih as Executive Director, Ms. Miller-Muro was an attorney at the law firm of Arnold & Porter where she practiced international litigation and maintained a substantial pro bono practice. Prior to joining Arnold & Porter, Ms. Miller-Muro was an attorney-advisor at the US Department of Justice, Board of Immigration Appeals. The author of numerous articles on female genital mutilation, immigration law, and human rights abuses against women, Ms. Miller-Muro is frequently asked to lecture at universities and conferences throughout the world. She has appeared as a commentator about female genital mutilation, the International Marriage Broker industry, US immigration policy, and women's right on Fox News, CNN, BBC, NBC Nightly News, PBS, CNBC, NPR, the New York Times, and the Washington Post. She is an invited participant at Renaissance Weekend and TEDx, a former Term Member of the Council on Foreign Relations, and a member of Leadership Greater Washington.

Ms. Miller-Muro received her JD (summa cum laude) and MA in International Relations from American University and BA (Phi Beta Kappa) from Agnes Scott College. Ms. Miller-Muro was honored with the 2010 Meyer Exponent Award, the 2010 Top 40 Feminists under 40 Award, 2010 Smart CEO Brava! Women Business Achievement Award, 2008 Excel Award for Excellence in Chief Executive Leadership, the 2006 Washington College of Law Cicchino Public Service Award, the 2005 Soroptomist Award, the 2004 DC Bar Association Young Lawyer of the Year Award, the 2004 and 2002 Public Leadership Education Network (PLEN) Mentor Award, the 2004 Wendy Webster Williams Award of *The Georgetown Journal of Gender and the Law*, Feminist Majority Foundation Award (2000), African's Children's Champion Award, Africa's Children's Fund (1999), Young Alumni of the Year Award, Agnes Scott College (1998), Voices of Courage Media Award, Women's Commission for Refugee Women and Children (1998), Human Relations Award, Agnes Scott College (1993), and Woodrow Wilson Princeton Community Service Award, Princeton Alumni Association (1990).

Through direct legal services and public policy advocacy, the Tahirih Justice Center works to protect immigrant women and girls seeking justice in the United States from gender-based violence.