



'til Every Woman Soars

15

TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER

*15 years of seeking justice in communities, courts, and Congress
for immigrant women refusing to be victims of violence.*



The Tahirih Justice Center is a national nonprofit organization that protects courageous immigrant women and girls refusing to be victims of violence by providing free legal defense and elevating their voices in communities, courts, and Congress. Tahirih is creating a world where women and girls enjoy equality and live in safety and with dignity.

The Tahirih Justice Center was founded on several principles from the Bahá'í Faith: justice, unity in diversity, the oneness of humanity, consultation as a decision-making tool, a nonpartisan approach to politics, engaging in work in a spirit of service to humanity, dedication to excellence, recognition that men are part of the solution, and equality of women and men. Tahirih is not governed by Bahá'í institutions and is an independent organization with staff from many faiths serving clients without regard to religious background.

Photos on this page and cover are courtesy of Sergio Pessolano.

Our Story

The creation of the Tahirih Justice Center (Tahirih) was shaped by a profound commitment to social justice and a series of defining moments in its founder's life.

As a young woman growing up in Atlanta, Layli Miller-Muro, Tahirih's Founder and Executive Director, was exposed to issues of racism and injustice. Her first taste of social activism came when a school incident involving an interracial couple escalated into a school-wide brawl. Layli led dialogues at the school that soon became a model for other schools. The stage was set for her to become a community leader.

After high school, Layli traveled to West Africa for a Bahá'í social and economic development project. It was there that she became aware of extreme forms of domestic violence and female genital mutilation.

The experiences stayed with her. As a law school student at American University, Layli wrote a law journal article about whether female genital mutilation could be a basis for asylum. While working for a private immigration attorney, she went on to represent 17-year-old Fauziya Kassindja, a girl who fled Togo in fear of a forced marriage and female genital mutilation. Layli became Fauziya's friend and advocate.

On appeal, Layli brought Fauziya's case to American University's Human Rights Law Clinic where it climbed to the highest immigration court in the nation and ultimately set legal precedent. Fauziya was granted asylum in a precedent-setting case after spending 16 months in detention in the United States.

The landmark case enabled immigrant women to receive asylum on grounds of gender-based persecution.

And it changed Layli's life as well. **"That very formative experience opened my eyes to the many issues that women face all over the world—pervasive violence and injustice and the desperate need for legal advocacy on their behalf."**

Layli and Fauziya co-authored the book, *Do They Hear When You Cry?*, about the case. All of Layli's portion of the proceeds from the book were used to create the Tahirih Justice Center in 1997.



Top: Fauziya Kassindja and Layli Miller-Muro; bottom: Tahirih Founder and Executive Director Layli Miller-Muro. Photo by Michael Colella.



TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER



**You are a young woman from Venezuela.
You've lived in the United States since you were a teenager.
You meet a young man, begin to date, and fall in love.
But then, things change.**

He becomes controlling, then violent—even throwing a cell phone at your face. After marriage, you are repeatedly raped and beaten. Your every move is monitored, even in the bathroom. Your money and passport are stolen. Even after you separate, he violates a protective order and attempts to run you off the street with his car. You are undocumented and fear deportation. He threatens to “get you” before the police can find him.

**You learn about an organization called the Tahirih Justice Center—
a name that becomes a lifeline.**

Tahirih provides a free lawyer and finds you a safe place to stay. You are given counseling. Slowly, but surely, you begin to reclaim your life and find your voice.

**This is just one of the hundreds of heart-breaking cases each year that come before
the Tahirih Justice Center, a national nonprofit organization that
protects courageous immigrant women and girls who refuse to be victims of violence.**

**The Tahirih Justice Center is a recognized national leader in providing
free legal services, legislative advocacy, and expertise
on behalf of immigrant women and girls fleeing violence.**



Since 1997, the Tahirih Justice Center has helped more than

14,000 women and children find justice.

Tahirih staff member, Estefania, working at the front desk in the DC Area office. Photo by Nguyen Khoi Nguyen.

Tahirih protects women and girls from around the world who seek protection under US law from violence including:

Forced marriage

Every three seconds, an underage girl is forced to marry against her will.

United Nations Population Fund, June 4, 2004 Press Release, "Married Adolescents Ignored in Global Agenda," <http://www.unfpa.org/news/news.cfm?ID=456>.

Female genital mutilation

Every minute, almost six girls endure female genital mutilation.

World Health Organization, Female Genital Mutilation Fact Sheet. <http://www.who.int/reproductive-health/fgm/> (last visited February 14, 2008).

Torture and rape

Every hour, almost 29 women or girls report a rape to the police.

United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, *The Eighth United Nations Survey on Crime Trends and the Operations of Criminal Justice Systems (2001 – 2002)*, Table 2.8: Total Recorded Rapes, <http://www.unodc.org/pdf/crime/eighthsurvey/8sv.pdf>.

Honor crimes

Every day, 14 women and girls are murdered because they are considered a dishonor to their families.

United Nations Population Fund, *State of the World Population 2000*, Chapter 3: Ending Violence Against Women and Girls, <http://www.unfpa.org/swp/2000/english/ch03.html>.

Trafficking

Every year, between 600,000 and 800,000 people are trafficked across national borders into modern-day slavery and approximately 80 percent are women and girls.

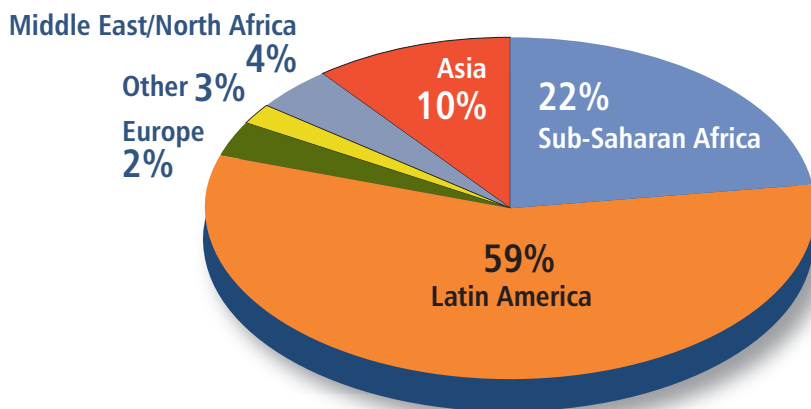
US Department of State Office to Monitor and Combat Trafficking in Persons, Fact Sheet: Facts about Human Trafficking, December 7, 2005, <http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/fs/2005/60840.htm> (last visited February 14, 2008).

Domestic violence

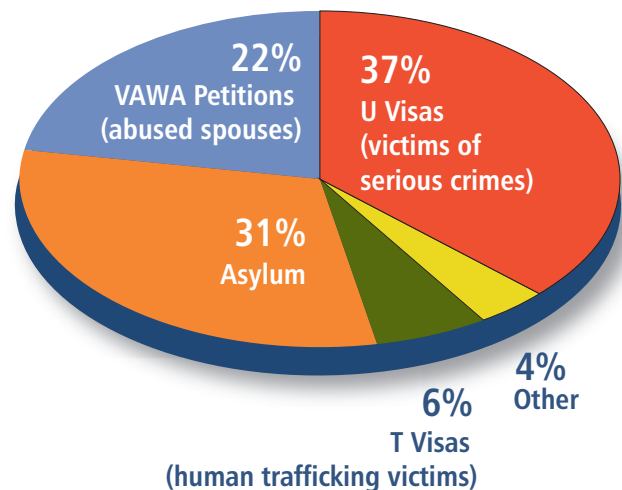
Right now, one out of every three women in the world has endured abuse—many here in the United States and in our own communities.

Ending Violence Against Women. Population Reports, Issues in World Health. Series L. Number 11, XXVII. Population Information Program. The Johns Hopkins School of Public Health. December 1999.

A current snapshot of clients by country of origin



Types of relief



How we work

Tahirih's internal decision-making utilizes a deliberate process of consultation, which is a thoughtful, open discussion of viewpoints and perspectives that represent as many stakeholders as possible. Tahirih recognizes that to be most effective, we need to be unified in our efforts. Our work is conducted in a spirit of service to others, reflecting professionalism, compassion, and respect.

Tahirih seeks not only to transform the lives of our clients, but to transform society. Our holistic approach integrates legal and social services as well as public policy advocacy and public education.



Deliberate
Rights Build
 Life-saving Coordinating
 Respectful Opportunities
Connecting
 Service Power
 Bridging Dedicated
 Holistic

Immigration Law Services including gender-based asylum, protection for survivors of domestic violence, and protection for victims of trafficking and other violent crimes

Family Law Services and Referrals including temporary and permanent orders of protection, divorce, custody, and visitation

Case Management Services including safety planning, goal setting, and referrals to shelter, counseling, food, clothing, medical care, and other resources to help clients rebuild their lives

Direct Legal Services

Training and technical assistance for:

- Attorneys
- Police Officers
- Judges
- Prosecutors
- Legislators
- Social and Medical Service Providers
- Other Nonprofits

Public Policy Advocacy

Campaign to Prevent Abuse and Exploitation through the International Marriage Broker (IMB) Industry

Advocacy to Protect and Promote Rights of Immigrant Survivors of Domestic Violence, Sexual Assault, and Human Trafficking

Forced Marriage Initiative

Gender-Based Asylum Advocacy

Advocating to End International Violence Against Women

Public Education

Speaking engagements at:

- Universities
- Law schools
- Community Mosques, Churches, Temples
- Media outreach in public education and publications





The Tahiri Justice Center elevates the voices of immigrant women and girls not just for survivors, but also for their children and grandchildren. And we elevate their voices nationwide in communities, courts, and Congress.

Communities

In Communities

Raising the voices of courage, educating the community

Tahirih engages in extensive outreach and training to the public and policymakers, and to professionals who work with women and girls like Tahirih's clients—creating the kind of environment and momentum in which impactful change is possible.

Staff members also reach out to collaborate with a wide spectrum of advocacy organizations around the country, including both likely and unlikely allies. Tahirih has built coalitions that can make real progress and a measurable difference in the lives of the women and girls we serve.

In 2011 and 2012 alone, Tahirih:

- Conducted 211 outreach and education events to amplify the voices of our clients.
- Trained more than 4,500 professionals to better address the needs of immigrant women and girls fleeing gender-based violence.
- Gave 20 media interviews in prominent national media outlets, including:



Newsweek

THE
HUFFINGTON
POST



TEDx
x = independently organized TED event

The Washington Post

TIME

BusinessWeek

BBC
WORLD

- Gained attention in 66 articles on legal developments and issues facing vulnerable immigrant women and girls.

Raising Their Own Voices: Tahirih's Wings

Understanding that the most powerful voice of Tahirih's work and the issues faced by our clients are the women we serve, Tahirih supports a group of former Tahirih clients who self-organized and call themselves "Tahirih's Wings." The goals of the Wings are to support each other, support Tahirih, and speak out to raise awareness of the issues they have faced.

Facing page, from left to right: Tahirih Senior Public Policy Attorney, Heather Heiman, doing a live interview on Foxnews.com about Tahirih's groundbreaking Forced Marriage Initiative, January 2013; Layli Miller-Muro presenting at TedX Grand Rapids; Tahirih staff member, Samira, welcoming a guest at the 2010 DC Gala; Tahirih former staff member, Ivi, with clients and their children at a client art party at Tahirih's DC Area office in 2006.

Ruth's story

Ruth was one of Tahirih's first asylum clients. She fled Kenya in 1997 to escape a forced marriage to the brother of her deceased husband, a violent man with two wives, and to spare her daughter from forced female genital mutilation.

Ruth and her daughter went into hiding. She ultimately left everything she knew to come to the United States. After finding the Tahirih Justice Center and partnering with pro bono attorney Jan Pederson, she, her daughter, and her son were granted asylum. She now serves on the Board of the Tahirih Justice Center and works for a local government office in Fairfax County, Virginia, helping refugees rebuild their lives.



“My sister-in-law and I were very close. Her two daughters were forced to be cut. She warned me: ‘Keep running if you can.’ And that’s what I did—running from one house to another.

When I first came to the United States, it was like starting all over again. I had one suitcase. I had no clothes for the weather. I had nobody to talk to. I don’t know how I did it. I didn’t think about life in a foreign country. I just thought about my girl. I knew I had to fight until the end. That is what has kept me going—the fear that someone will harm or take her. I said to myself, ‘Now I have to get my child better and start a new life, without my stomach in knots.’



My daughter now lives without fear. My son is a filmmaker with a passion for telling the story of the disadvantaged.

Tahirih has showered me with love and understanding. They gave me personal support that nobody else would give me. They have been a stepping stone to a better life.

At first, I didn’t want to tell my story. I felt ashamed. Now I see that telling my story changes people’s minds. They see how painful it is to force someone to marry.

If women are protected, we will have a better society. I don’t think I will stop sharing my story.”

From top to bottom: Ruth presenting at the 2006 DC Gala; Ruth presenting the Law Firm of the Year Award to Roberta (Bert) Ritvo of DLA Piper LLP at the 2011 DC Gala.

**“When you protect a woman,
you protect a child and their community.”**

Ruth



Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan spending time with children of our clients and staff at the 2005 DC Gala.

In Courts

With Tahirih attorneys and a powerful pro bono attorney network

Immigrant women and girls who flee human rights abuses need expert legal representation to gain protection and access to immigration status that they are entitled to under US law, and to navigate complex and time-consuming laws and legal processes.

The Tahirih Justice Center has created a pro bono network of more than 1,200 attorneys from more than 200 law firms who partner with Tahirih's in-house attorneys on 60-75 percent of their cases.



From top to bottom: Jeanne Smoot, Tahirih's Public Policy Director, is busy at work; new attorneys at the 2011 Pro Bono Attorney Network Welcome Reception in Houston.

Pro bono attorneys donate their time and expertise to represent the cases of women and girls fleeing violence. These pro bono professional services are a vital resource for Tahirih and allow the organization to maximize the number of women and girls for whom we can provide high-quality legal representation.

Tahirih trains and mentors each pro bono attorney in relevant areas of the law, as well as the cultural sensitivities and traumatic circumstances that their clients have faced, so that every volunteer attorney has a deeper understanding of their clients' personal stories and the barriers they face to justice. To further support the success of the co-counsel arrangement, Tahirih provides case management services to meet clients' other needs like housing and mental health services.

"Tahirih is one of the few organizations working on women's immigrant issues," says Steven Schulman, pro bono partner at Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP in Washington, DC. "One of the key things they provide is the social work backing. As a pro bono attorney, that is key. Tahirih's ability to handle that allows us to focus on the legal work."

As co-counsel, Tahirih strives to ensure that the relationship with the client goes beyond the transactional. "It is not just a legal process, but also an interpersonal process," says Jessica Salsbury, Managing Attorney, Greater Washington, DC office.

Tahirih Justice Center is effective with a

99% litigation success rate.

Legal representation

is the single most important factor affecting
the outcome of an asylum case.

American Bar Association study

Courts

Tahirih leverages a large network of in-kind and financial contributions.

Thank you to our current private institutional supporters:

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& Flom LLP
South Texas College of Law
Steptoe & Johnson LLP
Sterne Kessler Goldstein Fox PLLC
Thompson Hine LLP
Troutman Sanders LLP
Valencia Law Firm
Venable LLP
Venture Max Ltd.
Vinson & Elkins LLP
Watt Beckwith Thompson Henneman
& Sullivan LLP
Weil, Gotshal & Manges LLP
White & Case LLP
Wilmer Cutler Pickering Hale and Dorr LLP
Winston & Strawn LLP
Wodkins & Reed Counseling Services, LLC
Worldview Entertainment Holdings Inc.
WR Starkey Mortgage LLP
XO Communications LLC

Foundations

Aaron and Lillie Straus Foundation
Abell Foundation
Bridgeway Charitable Foundation
Ralph M. Cestone Foundation
DLA Piper Foundation
Diller – von Furstenberg
Family Foundation
Equal Justice America, Inc.
Equal Justice Works
Eugene and Agnes E. Meyer Foundation
ExxonMobil Foundation
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Harris and Eliza Kempner Fund
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Foundation
Morton K. and Jane Blaustein Foundation
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Sayyed Ali Moazzum
Educational Fund, Inc.
Shell Foundation
The Simmons Foundation
The Skadden Foundation
SMI Foundation Inc.
Summit Charitable Foundation
Texas Bar Foundation
Trellis Fund
The Venable Foundation



Reflections of a pro bono attorney

“Our clients have fundamental issues we take for granted: access to transportation, childcare issues, working cell phones, and they are working all the time. It takes several meetings just to gain trust, for clients to share the intensely personal and often horrific acts that brought them in for help. You try to take in the client’s story as best as you can.

Then you need to get documentation—hospital records, police, and school records. And there are applications for work authorization or to reunite clients with children from whom they have been separated.

Each case is powerful: the woman who was beaten and left for dead, who was able to get mental health services and reunite with her daughter after three years apart.

Or the young girl who was sexually abused by a family friend and was brave enough to stand up in court.

The Tahirih mission resonates with me. I have the opportunity to help someone who might never get access to justice if it were not for the work of Tahirih and pro bono legal teams. It is so powerful an incentive to do this work.

You are helping someone reunite with her family or gain legal status so she won’t get sent away in the night.

You witness such bravery—women willing to stand up in public and denounce the person who has committed heinous acts against them. It makes my efforts seem incredibly small in comparison.”

Sean Arthurs, former Shearman & Sterling LLP associate

Sean Arthurs, receiving the Tahirih Pro Bono Award, pictured with Maryland Congresswoman Donna Edwards.

Adila's story

Adila,* a devout Christian from Tanzania, fell in love with and married a Muslim man whose family was closely connected to the extremist Mujahedeen. When their second child became very ill and suffered brain damage, her husband's family blamed her, claiming that Adila was cursed. Adila's husband began to regularly and violently beat her, until he threw Adila and their children out of their



“Coming to Tahirih was like a miracle. I was new in America in 2010, I had diabetes and back problems and I didn't know what to do about it. I had no insurance. I was referred to the Tahirih Justice Center and came in to meet the staff. They instructed and guided me.

I took the certified nursing assistant instructional over again and completed it. I started working for a company for nine months. I liked that work, but then the company closed and I was unemployed for a while. I am working part-time now. It's hard for me to pay my rent, but still, I can say that I am happy in America.

The difference for me here is that I am living in peace—I have peace of mind. I have a lot of opportunities.

I don't like to talk about my story because it makes me feel like I am going back to where I was. But maybe I can encourage those who are going through the same situation as I had to not give up.

In our country there are religious conflicts in villages and tribes. It is very hard, especially for women. Here I feel free to worship. I can go to church here, and I've met two ladies from Tanzania who are now my friends.

home. When her husband passed away, his family sent members of the Mujahedeen to follow and threaten her. She fled to the United States shortly thereafter. With the work of Tahirih and its pro bono attorneys Ellen Ginsberg and Megan Kraai of DLA Piper LLP, Adila was granted asylum.



My dream is to be reunited with my children, settle down in stable housing and get my certification status so that I can go back to school and become a special education teacher, like I was back home.

It's amazing, I feel like I am new entirely. I am crying talking about this. Not sad tears. I am so happy.

I support Tahirih, but Tahirih supports so many people. It's like a channel. Tahirih has carried the burden of everyone who has suffered."

**Adila's name has been changed to protect her privacy.*

"Tahirih has carried the burden of everyone who has suffered."

Adila

In Congress

Addressing needs and gaps in protection

The Tahirih Justice Center's work draws on a powerful combination of direct services, outreach and education, and public policy work advocacy. We have a strong track record of building diverse, bipartisan coalitions to advance the protection of women and girls and to make sure that their experiences inform the decisions on the laws and policies that affect them. Clients are often engaged as spokespeople at Congressional and other policy briefings, putting a face to the issues of violence against women and giving courageous women an opportunity to use their own stories for greater good.



From left to right: *Law & Order* Actor, Sam Waterston with Layli Miller-Muro and Kathleen Behan; Congressman Frank Wolf (R-VA) meeting with members of Tahirih's Wings; Former Senator Sam Brownback (R-KS) speaking at the 2006 DC Gala; Tahirih Director of Public Policy, Jeanne Smoot, speaking at a reception to celebrate the passage of the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act in 2006.

Tahirih's advocacy efforts over 2011-2012, for example, included:

Forced Marriage Initiative. In 2011, Tahirih conducted the first-ever national survey about forced marriage in immigrant communities in the United States (identifying as many as 3,000 cases in a 2-year period), published results that were highlighted by national media, formed a National Network to Prevent Forced Marriage, and engaged in extensive outreach and education in order to create a coordinated national response to this emerging serious problem.

Campaign to Prevent Abuse and Exploitation through the International Marriage Broker (IMB) Industry. Tahirih drafted and secured initial passage of legislation to clarify and strengthen industry regulations, close gaps to curb abuse, and ensure strong enforcement against "mail-order bride" agencies and would-be predators who use them.

Protecting and promoting access to asylum for women and girls seeking refuge from gender-based persecution. Tahirih worked closely with Senate and House champions to introduce critical asylum reforms, including the gender-based asylum provisions that Tahirih helped draft.

Protecting and promoting rights of immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Tahirih rallied bipartisan allies to support legislation to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) and to oppose proposals that would endanger immigrant victims and roll back protections. Within the national advocacy coalition, Tahirih played a leadership role on VAWA's protections for immigrant victims and was a lead representative on those issues to Congress.

Ending violence against women and girls worldwide. Tahirih promoted key legislation such as the International Violence Against Women Act and the International Protecting Girls by Preventing Child Marriage Act.

“Our advocacy initiatives are motivated by the real-life needs of our clients. The amazing women and girls we serve deserve every last one of the allies that we can muster and marshal for their protection.”

JEANNE L. SMOOT, ESQ.
DIRECTOR OF PUBLIC POLICY, TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER



Congress

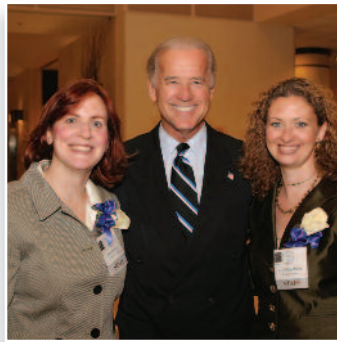
Tahirih's Key Advocacy Campaigns

Tahirih successes include:

Campaign to Prevent Abuse and Exploitation through the International Marriage Broker (IMB) Industry. Tahirih's advocacy and impact litigation to curb abuses by and through the international marriage broker industry ("mail-order bride" agencies) has garnered national attention. In 2012, we secured passage through the Senate and House of Tahirih-drafted amendments to strengthen the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act's (IMBRA's) implementation and enforcement.

marriage in a 2-year period alone, involving victims whose families originated from at least 56 different countries;

- **Responding to numerous media inquiries about forced marriage and related issues,** including from Dan Rather Reports, *Newsweek*, NPR, CBS Evening News, CNN's 360 with Anderson Cooper, and NBC's Rock Center with Brian Williams;



From left to right: Congressman Rick Larson (D-WA) speaking at a reception celebrating the passage of the Tahirih-drafted International Marriage Broker Regulation Act in 2006; Vice President Joe Biden with Layli Miller-Muro and Jeanne Smoot at the 2005 DC Gala; Actor Rainn Wilson speaking at a 2011 Tahirih-sponsored Congressional Briefing on Asylum Reform; Tahirih's Wings visiting Capitol Hill along with Director of Public Policy, Jeanne Smoot, in 2010.

The IMBRA legislation creates safeguards to protect foreign women from violent abuse by men they meet through international marriage brokers. It provides foreign women with information about the violent criminal history of their prospective American husbands, as well as about the rights and resources available to domestic violence victims in the United States.

Forced Marriage Initiative. Tahirih's groundbreaking work on forced marriage in the United States has made a previously hidden problem visible. Tahirih is galvanizing service providers and policymakers nationwide to improve the protections, support, and assistance available to women and girls facing or fleeing forced marriage.

Tahirih's advocacy achievements include:

- **Conducting a first-ever national survey on forced marriage in immigrant communities** with stunning findings. More than 500 respondents from 47 states reported encountering as many as 3,000 cases of forced

- **Launching a National Network to Prevent Forced Marriage** to connect concerned advocates and allies from around the country, as well as convening a Working Group of leaders with particular issue expertise to identify advocacy priorities; and
- **Researching and beginning to develop legislative and policy proposals,** for example, to establish a special kind of "forced marriage protection order" in the United States.

As a result of our growing national profile on forced marriage and extensive outreach and education, Tahirih is also receiving an increasing number of calls for assistance from individuals from across the country trying to resist or escape forced marriages and from service providers trying to help them. Tahirih's Forced Marriage Initiative is a joint initiative of our Legal and Social Services and Public Policy programs that responds to the need for help and guidance in these complex and often high-stakes cases.

Tahirih's expansion: Meeting a growing need

For more than 15 years, the Tahirih Justice Center has matured from a local nonprofit to an organization that is expanding its reach to meet community needs across the country. Our strategy for expansion is reflective of how we conduct business every day: with thoughtful planning, market research, and time-consuming consensus building.

After Tahirih's Greater Washington, DC office opened in 1997, we spent the next 10 years refining our model, building staff and expertise, and strengthening and deepening our public policy work.

When Tahirih decided to add field offices—first in Houston in 2009 and in Baltimore in 2010—it was a strategic process that included determining where in the country we could find a confluence of potential law firm partners, immigrant communities, donors, and like-minded organizations. We set up intensive exploratory meetings with local funders and community nonprofits.

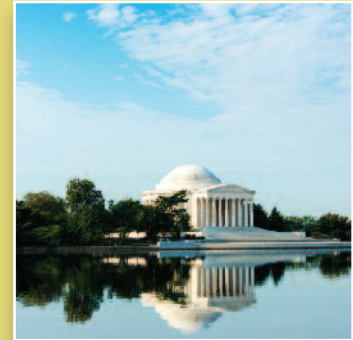
Changing the pro bono culture in communities

The Houston office, now with a staff of nine, was able to hit the ground running. Tahirih provides field offices with a structural and operational plan. “We are immediately set up for success for our clients and partners,” says Houston Director Anne Chandler. The Houston office has had a large impact in helping to create a culture of Houston's mostly corporate law firms to support pro bono cases. Now more than 30 firms have taken on significant volunteer work and there are strong pro bono medical clinic partners. “We're proud that we are holding the hands of a growing number of girls and women seeking assistance,” Chandler says, “and that we are increasing the knowledge and sensitivity in the broader community of our clients' struggles—by training judges, shelter workers, and medical professionals.”

Creating a culture of sharing between field offices

Tahirih's shared culture of communication—including regular video conference calls and video conference calls with offices and attorney partners—keeps the Greater Washington, DC, Houston, and Baltimore offices connected, sharing best practices.

“We are 100 percent collaborative and consultative,” Morgan Weibel, Supervising Attorney at the Baltimore office says. “We learn from each other because of our distinct geographic locations and the differences in the client cases we are seeing at each office.” Weibel, who was inspired to go into this field when, as an undergraduate, she heard a speech by Layli Miller-Muro, says, “I'm proud of the work and the reputation we have across the country. We routinely hear: ‘We're so happy to have you. You do great work.’”



Washington, DC

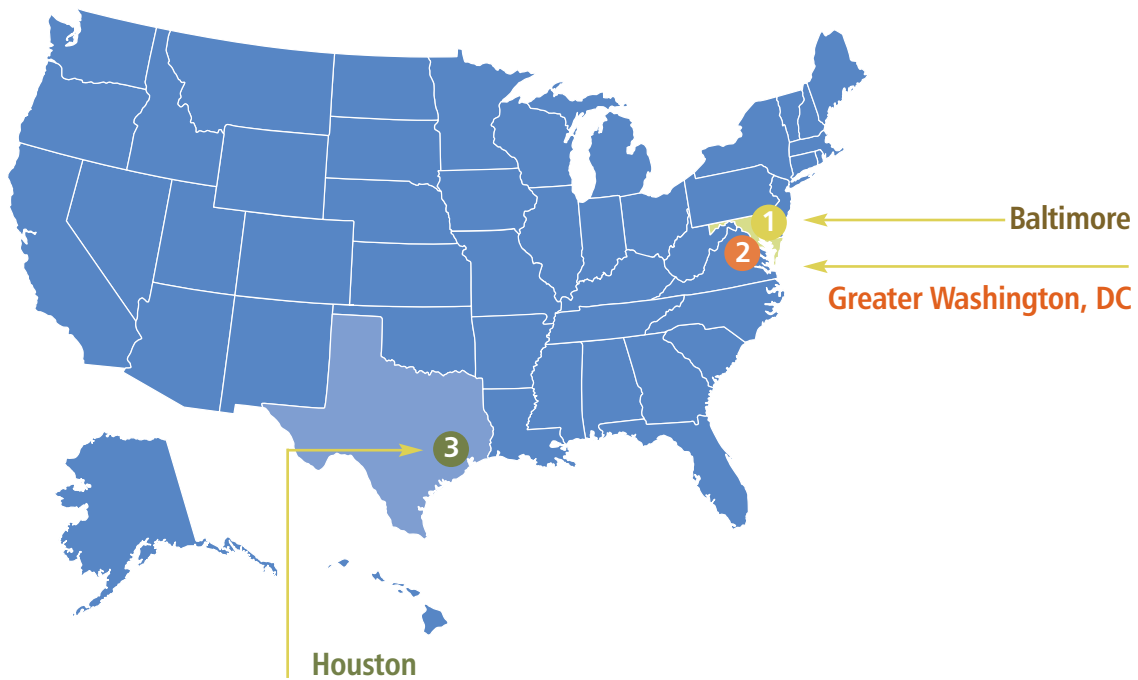
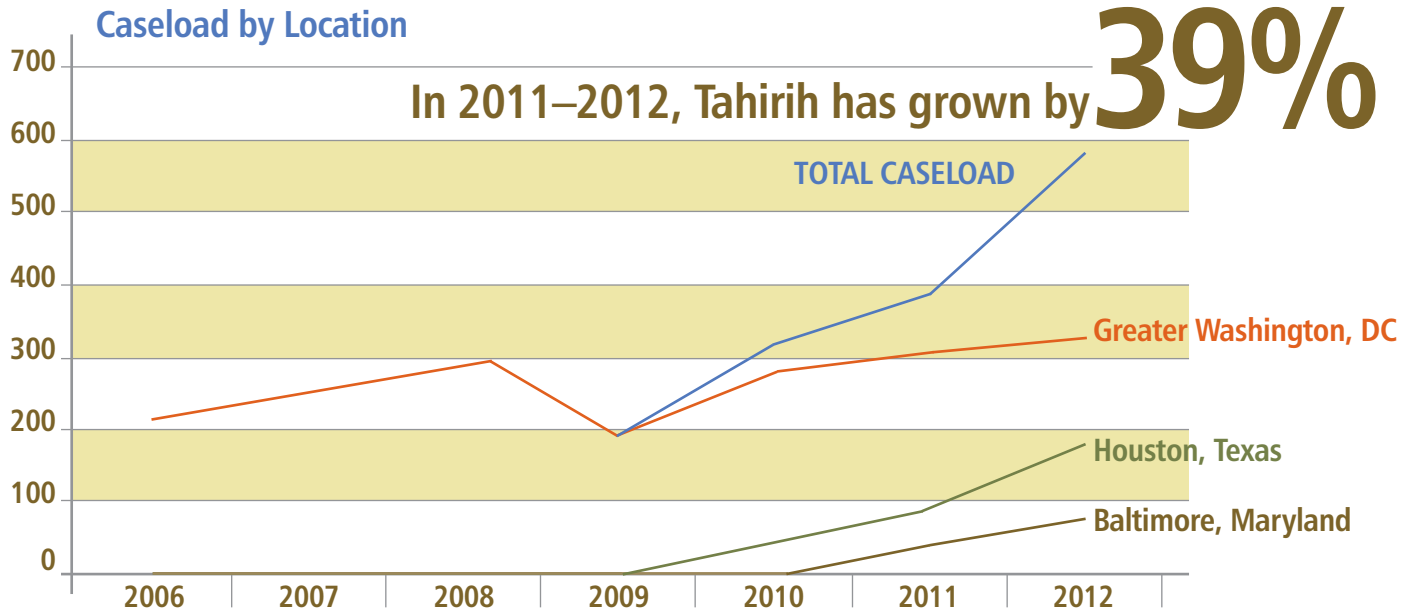


Houston, Texas



Baltimore, Maryland

Protecting More Lives



By 2017, Tahirih’s goal is to open offices in two more cities and support the courage of many more women and girls throughout the United States.

Vision for the future

The need for Tahirih's services has never been greater. Our vision for the future is to substantially increase the number of immigrant women and girls in the United States who are protected from gender-based violence by:

- Providing direct, holistic pro bono legal services in five cities throughout the United States.
- Leading advocacy in the United States to protect immigrant women and girls fleeing violence.
- Leading efforts in the United States to protect victims of forced marriage.



TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER

Join us. Stay informed. Get involved. Donate.
www.tahirih.org

With a 15-year track record of growing programs, retaining high-performing staff, and building organizational sustainability, Tahirih is prepared to help immigrant women and girls soar.

Photo courtesy of Lucia Williamson.



“The women we see each day on the outside may appear broken or fragile. But they are heroes... creating change for generations of young women. They come to Tahirih at a moment when they are ready to change their lives and, in so doing, unleash a transformative power in their families and society.”

LAYLI MILLER-MURO, EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER

Our history

1996 **INSPIRATION:** The highest immigration court in the United States issued a landmark decision, *Matter of Kasinga*, granting asylum to a young woman from Togo who fled “female genital mutilation.” This case established gender-based persecution as grounds for refugee status in the United States. Tahirih founder Layli Miller-Muro helped litigate this case as a law student at American University.

1997 **BEGINNING:** The Tahirih Justice Center is founded by Layli Miller-Muro, following the well-publicized asylum case, *Matter of Kasinga*, in response to an outpouring of need from women like Fauziya in desperate need for free legal protection from human rights abuses.

<p>Tahirih hires its first paid staff and begins representing women seeking asylum because of gender-based persecution.</p>	<p>Tahirih, in partnership with the Feminist Majority Foundation, establishes the Afghan Women Project that enables several hundred Afghan women to receive refugee status in the United States.</p>	<p>Tahirih serves as a consultant to the US State Department to assist in the conceptual development of legislation that becomes law, The Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act.</p>	<p>Tahirih launches the Campaign to Prevent Abuse and Exploitation through the International Marriage Broker Industry to address the abuse of “mail-order brides.”</p>	<p>Tahirih launches the Pro Bono Attorney Network.</p> <p>Tahirih launches its Public Policy Advocacy Program.</p>
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1998

Matter of Adeniji—Tahirih litigates a precedent-setting decision that clarifies that the mandatory detention provisions contained in the Illegal Immigration Reform and Immigrant Responsibility Act of 1996 cannot apply retroactively.

1999

Tahirih begins representing victims of human trafficking under the new law.

2000

Afghan Women and Children Relief Act becomes law. A Tahirih client and former Board member, Farida Azizi, provides remarks on behalf of Afghan women at a signing ceremony by invitation of the White House.

2001

The Immigration and Naturalization Service (INS) establishes new visas for trafficking victims (T visas) and victims of serious crime (U visas). **Tahirih works closely with the INS** to ensure law enforcement’s compliance with this law.

2002

“When I look back I know that if I hadn’t been through all these things, the case wouldn’t have reached the many people that it has today. This is the work of God. And it is truly unbelievable.”

FAUZIYA KASSINDJA, PBS INTERVIEW

Tahirih wins the **first lawsuit in the United States** against an international marriage broker (“mail-order bride” agency), resulting in the award of almost \$500,000 in damages to Tahirih’s client.

Tahirih **expands our holistic services** by hiring an in-house full-time social worker.

Tahirih launches our **Family Law Representation Program**.
Tahirih begins our **Muslim Women Outreach Initiative**.

Tahirih receives the *Washington Post* Award for **Excellence in Non-Profit Management** and launches our three-year strategic plan for national expansion.

Tahirih Director of Public Policy, Jeanne Smoot, receives **Agent of Change Award** from the Virginia statewide domestic and sexual violence coalition for her public policy leadership on behalf of immigrant women.

Tahirih opens our office in Houston, the fourth largest US destination for immigrants.

Washington Post features Tahirih in an article about the challenges facing female asylum seekers.

Tahirih **hosts Congressional briefing on needed asylum reforms and releases report, Precarious Protection: How Unsettled Policy and Current Laws Harm Women and Girls Fleeing Persecution**.

2004

2005

2006

Drafted by Tahirih, the **International Marriage Broker Regulation Act** becomes law, enabling foreign women to receive life-saving information before marrying men through these agencies.

2007

Tahirih launches the **Pro Bono Medical Network**—a group of medical and mental health professionals who provide free services and expert testimony for Tahirih clients.

2008

Tahirih Congressional briefing **draws attention to threats** to the development of gender-based asylum law.

2009

Tahirih briefs the Obama transition team on gender-based asylum concerns.

Tahirih co-leads a **national task force** to draft legislation to protect access to gender-based asylum.

Tahirih pioneers the use of the U visa and receives one of the first U visa grants in the country.

Tahirih embarks on a **significant expansion of services** with the opening of the organization's third office in **Baltimore**.

Stanford Social Innovation Review highlights Tahirih's model of pro bono representation in article, *The Power of Many*.

Tahirih conducts first-ever national survey on forced marriage in immigrant communities in the United States and launches **Forced Marriage Initiative** and **National Network to Prevent Forced Marriage**. Tahirih releases report and *Newsweek* highlights results in special issue.

Layli Miller-Muro, Tahirih Executive Director, receives Goldman Sachs' **100 Most Intriguing Entrepreneurs Award**.

Tahirih-drafted amendments to strengthen International Marriage Broker Regulation Act **passed almost unanimously by the Senate Judiciary Committee**.

As a co-chair of the Immigration Committee of the National Task Force to End Sexual and Domestic Violence, Tahirih is a lead liaison to Congress building support for a **strong bipartisan reauthorization of the Violence Against Women Act**.

2010

Tahirih launches **African Women Empowerment Project** and **Public Policy Council** to advise and support policy initiatives.

Layli Miller-Muro wins the Meyer Foundation's **Exponent Award for Excellence in Nonprofit Leadership**.

2011

Layli Miller-Muro is named one of *Newsweek's* **150 Fearless Women**.

Tahirih **develops five-year strategic vision** to increase public policy advocacy and serve more women and girls nationwide.

Layli Miller-Muro wins the **Diane Von Furstenberg People's Choice Award**.

Tahirih **staff grows** to 39.

2012

Tahiri (TAH-heh-ray) was a prominent figure in Middle Eastern history—the example of women’s strength.

She was a prominent poet, religious scholar, and leader. Advocating for a break from traditions of the past, Tahiri was the first woman in recorded Middle Eastern history to publicly remove her veil before an assemblage of men. Her last recorded words before being executed as a heretic at 32 were: “You can kill me as soon as you like, but you will never stop the emancipation of women.”

Tahiri became a model and a beacon for many women and men around the world—and demonstrates the kind of determination and strength of the brave women and girls the Tahiri Justice Center serves every day.

“The world of humanity is possessed of two wings—the male and female.
So long as these two wings are not equivalent in strength, the bird will not fly...
and extraordinary attainment for humanity will not be realized.”

—BAHÁ'Í WRITINGS



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