



TAHIRIH  
JUSTICE  
CENTER®

*Promoting Justice  
for Women & Girls  
Worldwide*

2004 & 2005 ANNUAL REPORT



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

Bahá'í Writings

**THE MISSION OF THE TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER IS TO ENABLE WOMEN AND GIRLS FLEEING GENDER-BASED VIOLENCE TO ACCESS JUSTICE.**

The Tahirih Justice Center is a nationally recognized Washington, DC area-based organization that enables women and girls fleeing gender-based violence to access justice in the United States through high-quality pro bono legal services and bridge-building public policy advocacy. Through its programs, the Tahirih Justice Center protects immigrant women and girls seeking justice in the United States from gender-based violence such as female genital cutting, torture, rape, trafficking, honor crimes, forced marriage, and domestic violence. Tahirih embraces a holistic approach, providing a range of medical and social service referrals in addition to the legal services provided by Tahirih's staff and network of pro bono attorneys. Tahirih's public policy advocacy is directly informed by client needs and is designed to create systemic change to ensure that immigrant women and girls receive long-term protection from violence.

Dear Friends,

With your crucial support, the Tahirih Justice Center continues in its ninth year to provide life-saving legal protection for women and girls from around the world who are fleeing human rights abuses. We vigilantly pursue legislative opportunities to protect the legal status of our clients and quickly mobilize on their behalf to ensure their access to legal, social, and medical services. The past two years were banner years for the Tahirih Justice Center, and this report highlights some of our victories.

Of particular note is the national prominence of our public policy advocacy efforts. Through the persistent advocacy for, and ultimate passage of, the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act, the Tahirih Justice Center found itself on the national stage and in media outlets such as *Newsweek*, NBC Nightly News, Fox News, and *The Washington Post* advocating for the protection of "mail-order brides." Our non-partisan approach and unique perspectives rooted in the daily experiences of our clients have earned Tahirih credibility and trust among lawmakers and colleague organizations.

During 2004 and 2005 combined, Tahirih witnessed the stunning more than quadrupling of new cases as compared to 2003. We accomplished this not by hiring more attorneys, but by more than doubling our cadre of pro bono lawyers from prominent Washington, DC firms and by bringing on additional paralegal and social worker support to increase the efficiency of our legal team. As a result of these strategic efforts, we have dramatically increased the number of women and girls we protect.

Finally, we have made institutional improvements that have increased staff productivity and job satisfaction. These changes include providing additional benefits for staff, making our workplace more family-friendly by supporting the efforts of parents to balance their work and family life, overhauling our technology infrastructure, upgrading computers, and increasing professional development opportunities. Through these efforts, Tahirih seeks to live its values and enable its staff to work in a supportive environment as they dedicate themselves to the women they serve.

We hope that in these pages you will feel the impact of our progress and the urgent needs of our clients. There is so much to be done to increase Tahirih's capacity to respond to the overwhelming numbers of requests for assistance we receive. With your continued support, we look to the future with great optimism and hope for our increased capacity to provide justice for the women and girls we serve.

Warm regards,



**LAYLI MILLER-MURO**

Executive Director



**LESLIE NICKEL**

Board Chair

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## ABOUT THE TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER

### TAHIRIH

Tahirih (Tah-heh-ray) is a renowned figure in Middle Eastern history—an exemplar of women's strength in mid-19th century Persia during a time and place when most women were kept illiterate and hidden from the public sphere. The daughter of a Mullah, Tahirih was a child prodigy and by the age of 13 had memorized the Quran.



*The Conference of Badasht, depicting Tahirih, by Ivan Lloyd.*

She would discuss theology from behind a black curtain with top Mullahs from throughout Persia who would come to hear her views. She defied social mores and distinguished herself as a renowned poet and religious scholar.

A revered heroine in the Bahá'í Faith, Tahirih was one of the first disciples of The Bab, who foretold the coming of Baha'u'llah, the prophet founder of the Bahá'í Faith. Tahirih became the first woman in recorded

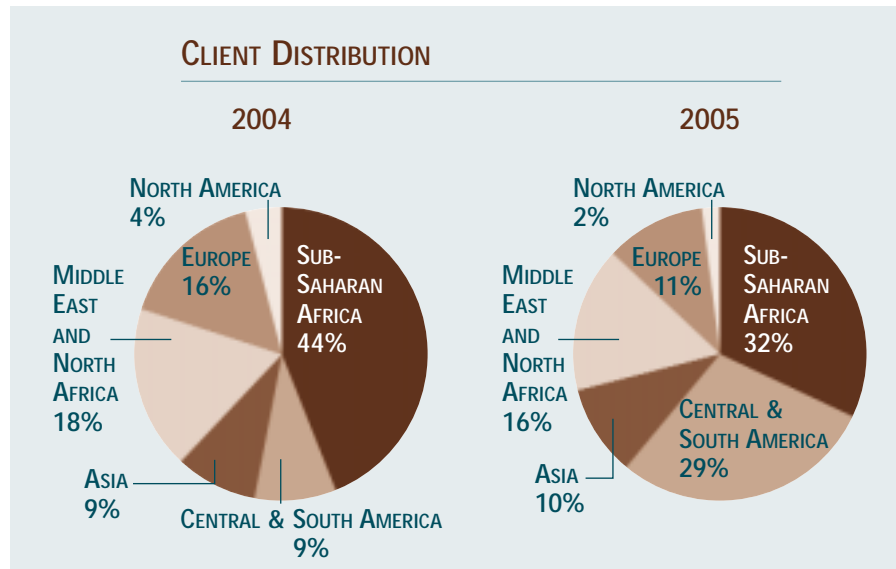
Middle Eastern history to discard her veil in public, proclaiming the dawn of a new age as she did so. Her unveiling in front of an assemblage of men gathered at a conference to discuss the Bahá'í Faith's independence from Islam symbolized a dramatic departure from traditions of the past and unambiguously affirmed the Bahá'í principle of the equality of men and women. The conference where her unveiling took place, in 1848, was held just two weeks before another momentous event in women's rights history—the Seneca Falls Conference in New York, considered the birth of the women's rights movement in the United States. Tahirih was executed for her beliefs at the age of 34. As the hour of her death approached, she turned to her executioner and declared, "You can kill me as soon as you like, but you cannot stop the emancipation of women."

**“The appearance of such a woman as Tahirih in any country and in any age is a rare phenomenon, but in such a country as Iran it is a prodigy—nay, almost a miracle. Alike in virtue of her marvelous beauty, her rare intellectual gifts, her fervid eloquence, her fearless devotion, and her glorious martyrdom, she stands incomparable and immortal amidst her countrywomen.”**

Professor E.G. Browne, Cambridge University, 1927

## SAVING THE LIVES OF WOMEN AND GIRLS FROM ALL OVER THE WORLD

Since opening its doors in 1997, through direct services and referrals, Tahirih has assisted more than 4,500 women and children. Tahirih's clients are fleeing abuses such as female genital cutting, torture, rape, trafficking, honor crimes, widow rituals, forced marriage, and domestic violence. In 2004 and 2005, respectively, Tahirih served 978 and 1,074 women and children, which was more each year than the year before. Even as we handle an unprecedented number of cases, Tahirih continues to maintain a 98 percent success record and has never had a client deported.



### 2004 & 2005 Countries of Origin of Tahirih Justice Center Clients



#### SUB-SAHARAN AFRICA

ALGERIA  
CAMEROON  
CONGO  
COTE D'IVOIRE  
ERITREA  
ETHIOPIA  
GABON  
GAMBIA  
GHANA  
GUINEA  
KENYA  
MALI  
NIGERIA  
SENEGAL  
SIERRA LEONE  
SOMALIA  
SOUTH AFRICA  
SUDAN  
TANZANIA  
TOGO  
UGANDA  
ZAMBIA

#### ASIA

CHINA  
BANGLADESH  
PAKISTAN  
INDIA  
INDONESIA  
JAPAN  
MONGOLIA  
PHILIPPINES  
PAKISTAN  
SOUTH KOREA

#### CENTRAL and SOUTH AMERICA

ARGENTINA  
BARBADOS  
BOLIVIA  
BRAZIL  
COLOMBIA  
COSTA RICA  
ECUADOR  
EL SALVADOR

#### GUATEMALA

GUYANA  
HONDURAS  
PANAMA  
PERU  
ST. KITTS AND NEVIS  
TRINIDAD AND TOBAGO

#### EUROPE

ARMENIA  
BOSNIA & HERZEGOVINA  
FRANCE  
GERMANY  
POLAND  
RUSSIA  
SERBIA  
SPAIN  
SWEDEN  
UKRAINE

#### MIDDLE EAST AND NORTH AFRICA

AFGHANISTAN  
EGYPT  
IRAN  
IRAQ  
LEBANON  
MOROCCO  
SYRIA  
TUNISIA  
TURKEY  
YEMEN

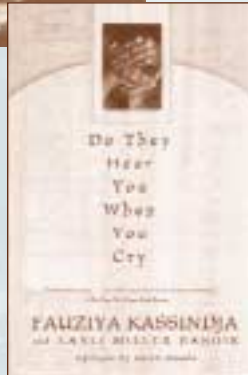
#### NORTH AMERICA

MEXICO

## HISTORY



Layli Miller-Muro and Fauziya Kassindja.

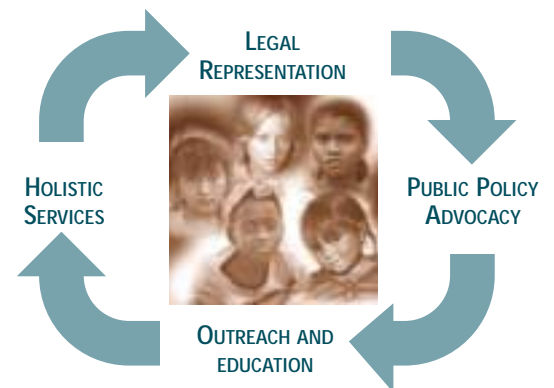


Layli Miller-Muro founded the Tahirih Justice Center in 1997, following a well-publicized asylum case in which she was involved as a student attorney at American University. The case was that of Fauziya Kassindja, a 17-year-old girl who fled Togo in fear of a forced polygamous marriage and a tribal practice known as female genital cutting. After arriving in the United States and spending more than 17 months in detention, Ms. Kassindja was granted asylum on appeal. Her case made legal history and established national precedent, enabling women to receive asylum on the basis of gender-based persecution. Ms. Miller-Muro's portion of the proceeds from the book she co-authored with Ms. Kassindja, *Do They Hear You When You Cry?* (Delacorte Press, 1998), was used to create the Tahirih Justice Center.

## AN UNUSUAL APPROACH— BALANCING HOLISTIC DIRECT SERVICES AND PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

While many organizations focus on either direct services or public policy advocacy, Tahirih is an organization that unusually engages in both, providing a critical bridge between grassroots and advocacy organizations. In fact, according to a survey conducted by the Tahirih Justice Center in 2005, it is the only direct legal services organization in the Washington, DC area with registered lobbyists on staff. Through an annual strategic planning process, Tahirih regularly assesses the needs of its clients and designs its public policy advocacy around their most pressing concerns. Tahirih's intimate understanding of the abuse suffered by immigrant women who use our direct legal services provides unique insights that enable the design and execution of effective campaigns for systemic change. Through partnerships with prominent national organizations and participation in numerous national and regional coalitions, Tahirih raises the voices of immigrant women and girls and brings a critical grassroots perspective to advocacy.

### TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER PROGRAMS: A HOLISTIC APPROACH



## TERESA'S STORY: HELP TAHIRIH PROTECT WOMEN BEFORE IT'S TOO LATE

Thirty years ago, a World Bank official brought Teresa to the United States to work as a nanny and housekeeper for his family. Although she entered the country as a legal immigrant and expected to work for pay in a supportive home, she never received a penny. She was mistreated and not allowed to learn to read or write. Eventually, her visa expired and she was forced to remain an undocumented immigrant, in servitude, for nearly three decades.

In January 2005, Teresa was violently strangled by her captor. The family's daughter and her friend, Sabina, who both thought of Teresa as a surrogate mother, removed her from the house and provided her with shelter. Having gone without medical care for decades, Teresa soon suffered a stroke and was rushed to the hospital. Because she was undocumented and had no health insurance, the hospital had no legal obligation to help her beyond emergency room assistance. Even so, it kept her in its care for six months. To minimize the amount of staff help required to change her bed pan, Teresa was catheterized. This caused repeated urinary tract infections, which resulted in a fatal kidney infection. Teresa died on July 21, 2005—just days before Tahirih staff were scheduled to perform an intake interview in her hospital room.

Because Teresa was a victim of human trafficking, she may have been eligible for a visa that would have entitled her to medical benefits. Tahirih could have protected her but by the time we became aware of her case, it was too late.



*A photograph of Teresa taken shortly before she died.*

The US government estimates that 14,500-17,500 people are trafficked into the United States each year. The majority of these victims are women and children, many of whom may be enslaved in households that appear completely normal to neighbors and friends. We have the means to liberate women like Teresa and bring their captors to justice. But first, we have to let them know that there is a way out.

Teresa's story moved the Tahirih Justice Center and Teresa's supporters to start a fund in her name. The Teresa Fund will enable women facing violence, who believe they have no way out, to get the legal help to which they are entitled and gain freedom. Please enable us to help women before it is too late through your support of The Teresa Fund.

**“Teresa is the kindest, most loving person I have ever known; she loved me as if I were her own. Her abusive treatment as a virtual slave could have been averted if I had known there was help available for her. We came so close to freeing her and saving her life. I failed my Teresa and I will carry that pain with me always. We all failed.”**

—Sabina



## OUR PROGRAMS

### DIRECT LEGAL SERVICES

Tahirih provides immigrant women and girls with expert pro bono legal assistance to ensure that they receive access to the legal protection to which they are entitled under US law. Tahirih's direct legal services, provided both in-house and by outside pro bono attorneys, embrace a holistic approach, offering a range of social and medical service referrals.

#### ■ GENDER-BASED ASYLUM

Tahirih provides pro bono legal representation to women and girls fleeing gender-based violence in immigration and federal courts. Since 1996, gender-based asylum law has slowly developed to provide greater protections for women and girls fleeing gender-based violence. Tahirih seeks to improve protections available by applying asylum laws, engaging in public policy advocacy, and litigating pioneering cases in an area of law that is constantly evolving.

#### ■ BATTERED IMMIGRANT WOMEN PROJECT

Tahirih provides pro bono legal representation to immigrant women seeking to access their right to permanent residence under the Violence Against Women Act so that they are not forced to choose between deportation and remaining in an abusive relationship.

#### ■ PROTECTION FOR VICTIMS OF TRAFFICKING AND OTHER CRIMES

Pioneering the use of the newly created T and U visas, Tahirih provides pro bono legal representation for immigrant women and girls who have been trafficked to the United States or are victims of other violent crimes.

#### ■ SOCIAL AND MEDICAL SERVICE REFERRALS

For most of Tahirih's clients, addressing their emergent legal needs is only the beginning. In order to help them truly find justice, Tahirih helps clients access desperately needed social and medical services. For the first time in Tahirih's history, in the summer of 2005, a full-time

social worker was brought on Tahirih's staff. She works with social service, mental health, and medical providers to serve women and girls fleeing violence. While maintaining a corps of physicians who have agreed to provide free medical services to our clients, Tahirih advocates on behalf of those clients to receive the best medical care possible regardless of their legal status or ability to pay.

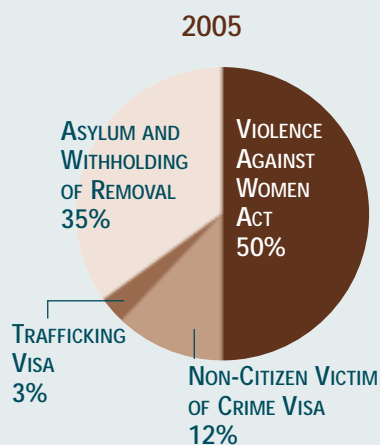
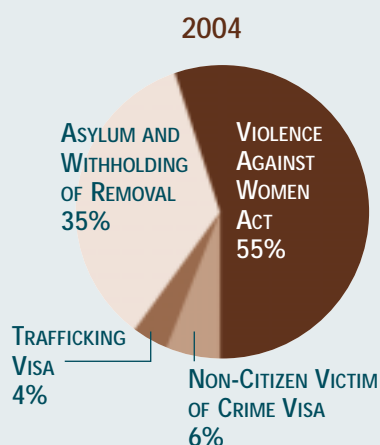
### PUBLIC POLICY INITIATIVES

Tahirih is an emerging leader in national public policy debates, engaging in advocacy on behalf of immigrant women that is directly informed by the experiences of its clients. Tahirih's public policy advocacy seeks to transform policies, develop regulations, and set precedent to ensure the long-term protection of women from violence. Tahirih is positioned as a non-partisan organization that has a strong track record of working with Republican and Democratic lawmakers, conservative and liberal organizations, religious and secular supporters, as well as local and national like-minded partners. In addition to building alliances on all sides of the political spectrum, Tahirih has developed private partnerships with corporate pro bono lobbyists eager to work on behalf of immigrant women. Tahirih has taken leadership roles in two initiatives by actively engaging in several advocacy efforts including the protection of asylum-seekers, the promotion of due process rights for immigrants, and the solidification of domestic violence as grounds for asylum.

#### ■ CAMPAIGN TO END EXPLOITATION BY INTERNATIONAL MARRIAGE BROKERS

In recent years, the international marriage broker (IMB) industry has exploded in response to a demand by some American men for "traditional" wives from countries such as the Philippines, Russia, and Ukraine. Increasingly, the business model and marketing practices of many of these agencies are attracting predators, and a growing number of women are paired with abusive men. Unfamiliar with the English language and the US legal system, given little information about their prospective husbands, and misled or not told about their rights by agencies

### TYPES OF CASES LITIGATED





wanting to preserve their profitable matchmaking track records, many women are left in dangerously violent relationships. The Campaign advocates for the accountability of these agencies, seeks legislative change, and engages in litigation and public outreach to protect women from abuse.

■ **INITIATIVE TO ENSURE POLICE PROTECTION FOR IMMIGRANTS**

In response to legislative efforts to compel state and local police to enforce federal immigration law, Tahirih works on a national level to advocate on behalf of abused immigrant women to ensure their ability to obtain police protection without fear of being deported or placed in detention. On a local level, Tahirih works to organize and build bridges between immigrants’ rights groups and local police departments to raise awareness about the importance of preserving access to police protection for immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence, trafficking, and other violent crimes.

**INTERNATIONAL NGO CAPACITY BUILDING**

Building on its public policy advocacy success in the United States, the Tahirih Justice Center serves as a resource for women’s rights organizations internationally and conducts trainings to support building their capacity to advocate in the media, through the courts, and through legislation. Tahirih has worked with local NGOs in Kuwait, Brazil, Ghana, Gambia, Botswana, South Africa, New Zealand, Australia, and Russia. In 2004 and 2005:

- Tahirih’s former Director of Legal Services, Lisa Johnson-Firth, in collaboration with Elena Mashkova, Director of Femina, a leading Russian women’s rights organization, led part of a three-day training titled “Toward Gender Equality” in the Tatarstan Republic of the Russian Federation. The training, held in April 2004, was designed to educate female NGO leaders about strategies for preventing violence among women and girls.
- The New Zealand Human Rights Commission and the New Zealand Bahá’í Community invited Layli Miller-Muro,



Layli Miller-Muro meeting with the South African Human Rights Commission.

Tahirih’s Executive Director, to be a keynote speaker at the Living and Learning Human Rights Conference in Auckland in July 2004. The conference, a joint initiative of the Human Rights Commission and the New Zealand National Commission for UNESCO, hosted over 300 participants from 37 countries and was aimed at strengthening human rights education in New Zealand and the Pacific. Layli also gave presentations to the Human Rights Commission, the Office of Women’s Affairs, and the New Zealand Human Rights Network. She was interviewed on national New Zealand television on the “Breakfast Show” and on New Zealand Public Radio.

- Layli traveled to South Africa and Botswana in November 2005 to conduct public speeches and media interviews, and meet with nongovernmental organizations to promote the legal status of women. Meetings were held with key legal advocates in South Africa, including Albie Sachs, a judge on the South African Constitutional Court (the highest court in South Africa) and the South African Human Rights Commission. In Botswana, Layli met with more than 13 NGOs to share ideas and strategies. She also met with Botswana’s first female Chief, who was formerly the head of the House of Chiefs (which operates alongside the national parliament), with whom she explored opportunities for traditional leaders to advance the status of women.



Jeanne Smoot at IMBRA Reception.



Melysa Sperber meeting with Franca Ukpai-Ama, a Tahirih client.

Tahirih has been extremely fortunate to work with pro bono lobbyists and media specialists who have dedicated hundreds of hours to support our work. We would particularly like to thank:

- Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP
- Altria Group, Inc.
- Arnold & Porter LLP
- Cassidy & Associates
- Chevron
- Mike Mihalke
- Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP
- Prism Public Affairs
- Quinn Gillespie & Associates LLC
- Van Scoyoc Associates

# UNDERSTANDING THE CHALLENGES TAHIRIH'S CLIENTS FACE

## WOMEN SEEKING REFUGE FROM VIOLENCE

Gender-based asylum, which emerged in 1996 and has since been debated and tested in courts within the US Department of Justice and by the Department of Homeland Security, enables Tahirih to help women who face human rights violations in their home countries based on their gender. Many of Tahirih's clients are trying to escape these brutalities and come to the United States seeking justice and protection.

While some protections exist for women fleeing human rights abuses, immigration law is a field that is quickly changing and evolving, with decisions being frequently made and reversed depending on who is reviewing a case. Both attorneys and clients face a complex and fluid system

that is hard to navigate in the best of circumstances. Tahirih's clients often do not speak English, have little understanding of US culture, and are frequently fearful of law enforcement. Without Tahirih's expertise and experience, our clients would have little hope of successfully navigating the court system.

## FEMALE GENITAL CUTTING (FGC)

Still practiced as a rite of passage in many African countries because it is viewed as a cultural tradition and is thought to control women's sexual desires, female genital cutting involves the complete or partial removal of the external genitalia. An estimated 130 million women today have undergone FGC, and an additional two million girls and women are being subjected to it each year.<sup>1</sup> Among its many harmful effects on a woman's body, women who have undergone FGC experience a 50 percent greater likelihood that they or their baby will die during childbirth.<sup>2</sup>

The appropriate term for female genital cutting has been in debate among human rights activists and academicians for many years. During the 1990s "female genital mutilation" or "FGM" was prevalent and used in most international legal documents. The practice has also been referred to as "female circumcision." In recent years, "female genital cutting" or "FGC" has gained prevalence and is the term used in this report. The Tahirih Justice Center does not take an official position on what term is most appropriate. Regardless of the term used, the practice is widespread and has severe health consequences for women and girls throughout the world. FGC is often forced on very young girls and is frequently performed under unsanitary conditions and with no anesthesia. According to the World Health Organization, there are four different types of female genital cutting being practiced:

Type I • excision of the prepuce, with or without excision of part or all of the clitoris;

Type II • excision of the clitoris with partial or total excision of the labia minora;

Type III • excision of part or all of the external genitalia and stitching/narrowing of the vaginal opening (infibulation); and

Type IV • pricking, piercing or incising of the clitoris and/or labia; stretching of the clitoris and/or labia; cauterization by burning of the clitoris and surrounding tissue; scraping of tissue surrounding the vaginal orifice (angurya cuts) or cutting of the vagina (gishiri cuts); introduction of corrosive substances or herbs into the vagina to cause bleeding or for the purpose of tightening or narrowing it; and any other procedure that falls under the definition given above.

<sup>1</sup> Office of the UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, *Harmful Traditional Practices Affecting the Health of Women and Children*, Fact Sheet No. 23, 27 July 2006.

<sup>2</sup> Eke N. and Nkanginieme K., "Female Genital Mutilation and Obstetric Outcome," *The Lancet* 367, no. 9525 (3 June 2006): 1799-1800.

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## *Franca's Story*

Franca fled Nigeria in March 2005 following months of persecution by her husband's family. They blamed her youngest daughter's dwarfism on Franca's refusal to allow her two daughters to undergo female genital cutting.

Franca's husband's family demanded that Franca relinquish her youngest daughter for a spiritual cleansing ritual that would involve burying her up to her neck, whipping her legs with a cane, and cutting her genitals. They also demanded that Franca's older daughter be forced to undergo female genital cutting. Franca refused to submit to these horrific demands.

While Franca was futilely seeking protection from the government, some of her husband's family members began stalking her. They appeared unannounced at her home saying they intended to take her children by force. Franca fled her home and stayed with various friends in Lagos. She pulled her children out of school. Still Franca could not find the support she needed. Local NGOs advised her to leave the country. Franca, a successful banker, liquidated all her possessions and purchased plane tickets to the United States. She came to Tahirih just days after arriving in the United States, where she was living in a half-finished condo in Maryland with no heat, furniture, or appliances.

Tahirih succeeded in getting Franca and her children into a homeless shelter in Alexandria, Virginia. Tahirih placed her case with Crowell & Moring pro bono attorney Heidi Steiber (now at Mayer Brown Rowe and Maw LLP), whose commitment, dedication, and expertise led to a wonderful conclusion. Franca and her son and two daughters were granted asylum on August 30, 2005.

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The governments of many African countries have outlawed the practice of female genital cutting, recognizing its forced nature and danger to the health and well-being of women and girls. However, it is still often practiced in the name of tradition and custom. Both laws and their enforcement vary widely throughout Africa; even though many countries recognize FGC as a problem, few real steps have been taken to eradicate it and its illegality only has a minimal effect. The following African countries have passed legislation directly outlawing FGC:

BENIN	ETHIOPIA
BURKINA FASO	GHANA
CENTRAL AFRICAN REPUBLIC	GUINEA
CHAD	KENYA
COTE D'IVOIRE	NIGER
DJIBOUTI	SENEGAL
EGYPT	TANZANIA
	TOGO

*This list was compiled from the US State Department's 2001 Report on Female Genital Mutilation: "Prevalence of the Practice of Female Genital Mutilation (FGM); Laws Prohibiting FGM and their Enforcement; Recommendations on how Best to Eliminate FGM" and "Female Genital Mutilation (FGM): Legal Prohibitions Worldwide Factsheet," Center for Reproductive Rights, February, 2005.*



## TORTURE AND RAPE

Sexual assault, rape, and torture are often used to oppress, dominate, and punish women and girls worldwide. One out of every three women around the world has been beaten, coerced into sex, or otherwise abused in her lifetime.<sup>3</sup> Rape is increasingly a weapon of war. In Rwanda alone, half a million women were raped during the 1994 genocide.<sup>4</sup> Although rape is a crime in almost every country, many rapes go unreported because of the victim's embarrassment or fear of retribution for naming her assailants.

In South Africa, a woman is raped every 83 seconds—only one in 20 of these cases, however, is reported to the police.<sup>5</sup> Other forms of torture are inflicted on women and girls around the world. In India, for example, 40 percent of women are physically abused by their partners. Of these, 50 percent report violence during pregnancy.<sup>6</sup> Also in India, 15,000 women are killed each year in “kitchen fires” designed to look like accidents.<sup>8</sup>

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### *Marie's Story*

*Marie\*, an 11-year-old immigrant girl from Mexico, came home one day to find her mother lying in a pool of blood, unconscious on the floor. She had been severely beaten by her husband, Marie's stepfather. Although Marie's mother had been repeatedly abused by her husband, this time it was more severe than ever before. Marie called 911. The police and trauma team air-lifted Marie's mother, who had sustained a serious head injury, to the hospital. The police arrested Marie's stepfather and held him in jail for a month. Upon his release, Marie's stepfather was outraged that she had called for help. In revenge, he raped Marie and she became pregnant. Tahirih is now handling the case of both Marie and her mother. Upon her mother's release from the hospital, Marie and her mother had nowhere safe to stay. Tahirih and her advocate succeeded in arranging emergency housing for mother and daughter at a secure women's shelter far from Marie's stepfather. Tahirih placed the cases of Marie and her mother with Crowell & Moring pro bono attorney Traci Patterson. Through her expert representation, Marie and her mother's U visa petition was approved on November 17, 2005. At 12 years old, Marie gave birth to a baby girl, whom she is raising.*

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<sup>3</sup> Lori Heise, Mary Ellsberg, and Megan Gottemoeller, “Ending Violence Against Women,” *Population Reports Series L*, No. 11 (Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health, Population Information Program, December 1999).

<sup>4</sup> Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, *Women in an Insecure World: Violence Against Women – Facts, Figures, and Analysis*, ed. Marie Vlachova and Lia Biason (Geneva, Switzerland, 2005).

<sup>5</sup> UNIFEM, “Enhancing Protection from Gender-Based Violence in Populations Affected by Armed Conflict” (workshop, Nairobi, Kenya, January, 2005).

<sup>6</sup> International Center for Research on Women, *Domestic Violence in India: A Summary Report of a Multi-Site Household Survey* (Washington, DC, 2003).

<sup>7</sup> Partha Banerjee, “A Matter of Extreme Cruelty: Bride Burning and Dowry Deaths in India,” *Injustice Studies* 1, no. 1 (November 1997).

<sup>8</sup> Geneva Centre for the Democratic Control of Armed Forces, *Women in an Insecure World: Violence Against Women – Facts, Figures, and Analysis*, ed. Marie Vlachova and Lia Biason (Geneva, Switzerland, 2005).

\*Name changed to protect privacy

## HONOR CRIMES

Worldwide, 5,000 women die as a result of honor crimes each year.<sup>9</sup> In Pakistan alone, more than 1,000 women are killed annually in the name of honor.<sup>10</sup> In many other cultures, women suspected of having premarital sex, rape victims, and women accused of adultery are murdered by their male relatives because the violation of a woman's chastity is seen an offense against her family's honor. In Jordan and Lebanon, for example, 70 to 75 percent of the perpetrators of honor killings are the women's brothers.<sup>11</sup>

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### *Khalida's Story*

*Khalida\*, a native of Pakistan, married her husband Asad\* through an arrangement made by their families. Khalida finished her medical school studies prior to the wedding and began her residency a month after she was married. Her husband was abusive and jealous from the very beginning. Khalida's movement was restricted and she had to be accompanied wherever she went, including work.*

*While Khalida worked at the hospital, her mother-in-law and her husband criticized her for neglecting what they said were her duties of cooking and cleaning. When Khalida had to stay at the hospital for 24-hour emergency duty, her husband told her she was a whore and that she attended school to attract men, thereby dishonoring the family. Khalida's husband raped her repeatedly, including once during Ramadan when Muslims are supposed to abstain from sex while fasting. When Khalida miscarried her first pregnancy, her husband slapped her and blamed her work at the hospital.*

*Under pressure from her husband, Khalida eventually stopped working, hoping that her being at home would calm him down. Even after she left her job and gave birth to two children, Khalida's husband continued to abuse her. He was angry that she had given birth to daughters instead of sons. Her husband threatened Khalida with the guns he kept in the house illegally.*

*After years of trying to escape, Khalida finally fled to the United States with the help of her brothers who were already here. Tahiri's Director of Legal Services, Colleen Renk Zengotitabengoa, successfully represented Khalida's case. Tahiri filed Khalida's asylum case on October 19, 2003, based on fear of persecution from Asad and his family following the divorce. Khalida was granted asylum in 2003 and was able to keep both her daughters with her. To this day, her husband and his family do not accept the end of the marriage and threaten to hurt Khalida if she returns to Pakistan.*

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<sup>9</sup> UN Population Fund, *Lives Together, Worlds Apart* (2000): 33.

<sup>10</sup> Radhika Coomarasamy, *Integration of the Human Rights of Women and the Gender Perspective: Violence Against Women*, Report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, its Causes and Consequences: Cultural Practices in the Family that are Violent Towards Women, E/CN.4/2002/93 (31 January 2002): 12.

<sup>11</sup> UNIFEM, "Not a Minute More: International Day for the Elimination of Violence Against Women: Facts and Figures" (October 2004): 2.

\*Name changed to protect privacy

## FORCED MARRIAGE

All over the world, women and girls are forced to marry against their will. Worldwide, 82 million girls, mostly from poor families, will marry before their 18th birthday and face a higher probability of becoming infected with HIV than their unmarried peers.<sup>12</sup> Early marriage creates health risks, because of premature sexual activity and exposure to HIV/AIDS, and limits young women's opportunities to pursue education. Women who try to escape such a marriage may be ostracized, imprisoned, beaten, or killed by their male relatives.

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### *Fanta's Story*

*As a young woman in Guinea, Fanta\* was abused and scarred by female genital cutting. This painful ritual was required before she could be married. After enduring this disfigurement, Fanta was forced by her family to marry an older man who was already married. Fanta finally found a measure of peace in raising her children. Then her husband decided that their oldest daughter, Saran\*, had to endure the same genital cutting and be married. Fanta pleaded with him and managed to postpone the marriage until Saran completed high school, but could not make her husband put it off any longer. Saran's father accepted a dowry for Saran from a man who already had three wives and demanded that she consent to the marriage. He threatened to kill his wife if she interfered anymore.*

*Saran, like her mother, tried to prevent the genital cutting ritual and forced wedding. Family members ruthlessly beat her for her opposition. Saran suffered a broken leg, a dislocated knee, and a deep head wound.*

*When Fanta and Saran appealed to the authorities, police said it was a family problem and berated them for going against local customs.*

*Fanta could not step aside and let her daughter endure the same suffering she did, although her efforts to protect her daughter provoked death threats from community members who felt she was acting improperly. Fanta's last chance to protect her daughters was to leave the country, so she sold all her possessions and fled to the United States.*

*Once Fanta and her daughters arrived in the United States, staff and volunteers at the Tahirih Justice Center worked with Fanta to prepare an asylum application. The case moved through the courts with frustrating delays over two years, during which Fanta and her daughters feared they would be sent back to Guinea. Summer legal intern Lauren Celello prepared a brief under the supervision of Staff Attorney Melysa Sperber, and Director of Legal Services Colleen Renk Zengotitabengoa advocated for Fanta in court. On July 14, 2005, Fanta and her daughters were granted asylum in the United States.*

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<sup>12</sup> UNFPA, "Investments in Adolescents' Reproductive Health is Critical to Fighting Poverty and HIV/AIDS, Says UNFPA Report," Press Release, 8 October 2003.

\*Name changed to protect privacy



## WIDOW RITUALS

Millions of widows of all ages around the world endure extreme poverty, ostracism, violence, homelessness, poor health, and discrimination. No inheritance or land rights, physical abuse, and humiliating and life-threatening mourning and burial rituals are some of the human rights violations justified by some traditions. Examples of rites that a widow may be forced to endure include sitting with her husband's body until he is buried and drinking the water used to cleanse the body, surrendering all rights to her husband's property to his family, being taken as a wife by her husband's brother (who may have other wives), and being forced to have unprotected sex with a social outcast to cleanse the widow of her husband's spirit.

### *Sandrine's Story*

*Sandrine\* and her husband, Patrice\*, lived in a village in Cameroon. The couple was wealthy and Patrice's family relied on them for financial support. Sandrine and her husband considered each other equals in marriage and therefore she had joint ownership of their financial assets.*

*Sadly, Patrice died in a tragic car accident in 2003, leaving behind his wife and three young children, two daughters who are currently 5 and 8 and one son, currently 14. After the funeral, Patrice's family designated an elder to make decisions on the next steps for Sandrine and her children. The decision was made that Sandrine had to marry Patrice's younger brother, Armand\*. Her marriage to Armand would be polygamous, as he had two other wives. When Sandrine refused, his family demanded that she marry Armand because they had already paid a "dowry price" for her and thus had ownership over her. They were also interested in keeping her husband's finances within the family.*

*\*Name changed to protect privacy*

*Armand threatened to kill Sandrine and her children if she did not marry him. A few days after the funeral, his family placed a snake in her house and threw eggs on her car. Sandrine left her home and took her children to her aunt's home. Armand's family began watching her to ensure she would not leave with her husband's money.*

*Sandrine fled Cameroon and came to the United States with a tourist visa, issued for a vacation she had planned with her husband before he died. Her children remained in hiding in Cameroon under continued threat from Armand's family.*

*Through the dedication and expertise of her pro bono attorneys, John Clark of Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal, LLP (formerly with Perkins Coie, LLP) and Betsy Tao of Clifford Chance, LLP (formerly with Perkins Coie, LLP), Sandrine was granted asylum on August 28, 2004. But their efforts did not stop there. Clark and Tao filed a petition to expedite Sandrine's derivative asylum application for her youngest daughter who was most vulnerable to Armand's family. That petition to expedite was initially denied, even under these extreme circumstances. Without the expedited application, the process could take 14 to 17 months. Bo Cooper, a Tahiri Board member at the time, and former General Counsel for the INS, stepped in to advocate for Sandrine and her five-year-old daughter. They were successful and the application was finally approved on July 18, 2005. In November of 2005, Sandrine submitted all the proper paperwork to the Consulate in Cameroon so that her daughter could leave the country for the United States. Unfortunately, the Consulate requested further information the cost of which is prohibitive for Sandrine who is in ill health and has extremely limited resources. As a result, she continues to be separated from her children who remain in hiding, under the care of her cousin.*



## DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

Women who come to the United States with their immigrant husbands or who marry American citizens once they are here are especially vulnerable to domestic violence because they are unfamiliar with their rights in the United States. They may be told that if they seek refuge from abusive relationships they will be deported and, once returned to their native countries, will be shunned. Nearly three-quarters of abusive partners never file immigration papers for their abused spouses, and those who do usually do so several years late. The Violence Against Women Act protects immigrant women who are victims of domestic violence in the United States by removing the threat of automatic deportation and thus removing an abusive partner's control over a woman's immigration status. Only 45 countries worldwide have any legislation protecting women against domestic violence.<sup>13</sup>

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### *Carolina's Story*

*Carolina\**, a woman from Colombia, had two miscarriages while living with her abusive husband. He blamed her for both of these miscarriages by telling her that something was physically wrong inside her. After her second miscarriage, Carolina's husband became physically violent during their arguments. He would sometimes cover her mouth to keep her from breathing and try to choke her. The physical abuse did not stop when she became pregnant for the third time with their daughter. She was always afraid to fight back because she did not want him to become even more violent. Fearing for the safety of her daughter, Carolina separated from her husband and contacted Tahirih for assistance. Carolina has received approval for her petition under the Violence Against Women Act and has been granted an employment authorization document. Carolina will use this work permit to make a better life for herself and her daughter, and will eventually be able to apply for permanent resident status.

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<sup>13</sup> Elisabeth Rehn and Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, *Women, War, Peace: The Independent Experts' Assessment on the Impact of Armed Conflict on Women and Women's Role in Peace-Building*, UNIFEM (2002): 15.

\*Name changed to protect privacy

## TRAFFICKING

Between 600,000 and 800,000 people—mostly women and girls—are trafficked each year around the world. Trafficking involves recruiting or coercing a person into forced labor or sexual exploitation. Trafficking victims often find themselves in dangerous, abusive, or exploitative situations such as forced prostitution, slavery-like conditions, sweatshop labor, or domestic servitude. While some women and girls are coerced into trafficking situations, others are sold by their families.

Many women around the world want to leave their native countries to seek better economic opportunities and steady work that pays a living wage. Often such women are taken advantage of by traffickers who promise good jobs and education in the United States but don't deliver, instead consigning these women to domestic servitude that more closely resembles slavery and sweatshop labor conditions.

According to the US Department of Justice, between 14,500 and 17,500 people—mostly women and children—are trafficked to the United States each year. Trafficking is the leading source of profit for organized crime around the world. The majority of trafficking victims come from Southeast and South Asia.

In 2000, the Victims of Trafficking and Violence Protection Act created a "T" visa to allow those who have been trafficked into the United States to access necessary public benefits and to eventually petition for permanent residency. Unfortunately, the strict eligibility requirements for T visas have made it difficult for some trafficked women to obtain them. Congress also provided for a "U" visa which enables immigrant victims of certain serious crimes, such as rape or child molestation, also to remain in the United States. Both types of relief (T and U visas) require victims to cooperate with US authorities in bringing the brutal perpetrators to justice.

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### *Adama's Story*

*Adama\* is a native of Nigeria who was trafficked to the United States when she was 14. A Nigerian couple had arranged with Adama's parents to bring her to the United States to attend school in exchange for the paid job of taking care of their children. When she arrived, however, Adama was made to work without pay and was repeatedly beaten and raped by her employer. She was forced to work seven days a week and was not allowed to contact her family. She escaped the household in 2001, when she was 19. Tahirih's Irena Lieberman, then Director of Legal Services, represented Adama's case. Adama was granted her T visa approval on October 2, 2003. Adama has since been able to earn her GED. Her dream is to become an attorney and work for the FBI so that she may prevent what happened to her from happening to others. She enrolled at the TESST College of Technology and has been approved for financial aid. In the first semester of work toward an associate's degree in criminal justice, Adama earned a 4.0 grade point average.*

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*\*Name changed to protect privacy*



## EXPLOITATION OF INTERNATIONAL BRIDES

In recent years, the IMB industry has exploded in response to a demand by some American men for a “traditional wife” from countries such as the Philippines, Russia, and Ukraine. Between 9,500 and 14,500 foreign fiancé(e)s enter the United States every year as a result of IMB matches. Increasingly, the business model and marketing practices of many of these agencies are attracting predators, and a growing number of women are paired with abusive men. Unfamiliar with the English language and the US legal system, given little information about their prospective husbands, and misled or not told about their rights by agencies wanting to preserve their profitable matchmaking track records, many women are left in dangerously violent relationships. The



The Arnold & Porter litigation team, Nataliya Fox, and Layli Miller-Muro on the day of the victory in *Fox v. Encounters International*.

Campaign to End Exploitation by International Marriage Brokers advocates for the accountability of these agencies, seeks legislative change, and engages in litigation and public outreach to protect women from abuse.

Tahirih’s work on behalf of so-called “mail-order brides” was widely reported in the media including *Newsweek*, The O’Reilly Factor, Fox News, NBC Nightly News, National Public Radio, *The Washington Post*, *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*, ABCNews.com and CNN.com.

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“While many women that you are used to would never cater to you like in old-fashioned times, a filipina will insist that she make you more comfortable... There are not too many girls like this anymore (especially domestically), but rest assured that this character trait is ingrained in the mind of the average filipina.”

—[www.manilabeauty.com](http://www.manilabeauty.com) (August 8, 2006)

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Americanized—This is the worst thing that can happen to your sweet, innocent Latin wife. She becomes like the women you are trying to get away from. She can become Americanized through her friends or her work. It only takes one lesbian or feminist to plant the seeds in her head, our society can do the rest...”

—[www.latina-women-girls-brides-wives-ladies.com](http://www.latina-women-girls-brides-wives-ladies.com) (August 22, 2006)

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“In Russia, she doesn’t have a choice to stay home to take care of her husband, house, and children—for her, it is a dream... she is the weaker gender and knows it.”

—[www.chanceforlove.com](http://www.chanceforlove.com) (May 27, 2005)

## *Nataliya's Story*

Nataliya, a Ukrainian woman, was paired with James Fox through Encounters International (EI). She was told that he was "the best of the best," "financially and mentally stable," and "serious about family." She was further assured that EI would help her by providing immigration advice and services, counseling, and assistance with understanding and adjusting to America. However, EI's screening process of male clients consisted only of an interview and taking James Fox's fee of \$1,850.

James Fox had a history of domestic violence and, when Nataliya confided to Natasha Spivack, the president of EI, that James went into "wild rages" and beat her, the Russian woman told Nataliya that this was "normal," that American men were "prone to violence" and that Nataliya should "learn to defer to her husband." Further, Spivack told Nataliya that she had to stay in the marriage or she would be deported. Nataliya was unaware that in the United States domestic violence is a crime, because it is not in Ukraine, and she had no one to turn to. The violence escalated and became much worse after Nataliya became pregnant. After an especially brutal encounter three weeks after the birth of their child, Nataliya went to the emergency room, where a nurse told her that she had other options. Nataliya escaped to a domestic violence shelter, where she found help and was referred to the Tahirih Justice Center.

Tahirih helped Nataliya receive legal immigration status in the United States, but did not stop there. We realized that her abuse, and the role of the international marriage broker (IMB) in facilitating it, was part of a larger problem. Tahirih partnered with Arnold & Porter LLP and brought the first lawsuit in the United States against an

IMB. Encounters International tried numerous times to get the case dismissed. In November 2004, Encounters International was found liable on several counts: for breaching its duty of care by failing to tell Nataliya about a federal law that permits foreigners to escape abusive marriages without fearing automatic deportation; for misrepresenting that it screened male clients when, in fact, it did not; and for publicizing and falsifying Nataliya's story as a "success" even when Nataliya had fled to the shelter. In November 2004, after a two-week federal jury trial, Nataliya won. Fox v. Encounters International marked the first time an IMB was held responsible for its role in enabling the abuse of a "mail-order bride." The result was almost a half a million dollars in damages awarded and a clear message sent to the IMB industry that they could not continue to pair foreign women with abusive men with impunity.

### TAHIRIH PARTNERS WITH CONGRESSIONAL CAUCUSES, LIFETIME TELEVISION, AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, AND MIRA SORVINO TO COMBAT "WOMEN AS COMMODITIES"



Actress Mira Sorvino addresses the Congressional Briefing on Women as Commodities.

On October 18, 2005, the Tahirih Justice Center co-hosted a Congressional briefing with the Congressional Human Rights Caucus, Congressional Women's Caucus, Lifetime Television, and Amnesty International to bring attention to the growing problem of women and girls being treated like

commodities in the global market. The briefing featured Academy Award-winning actress Mira Sorvino, who shared a passionate statement in support of international efforts to combat the selling of women and girls. Speakers at the briefing included Rep. Frank Wolf (R-VA), Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA), Rep. Chris Smith (R-NJ), Rep. Hilda Solis (D-CA), and Rep. Janice Schakowsky (D-IL).

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**"Tahirih has proven time and again to be an important ally and a key element in our national advocacy strategy, as the voices of some of the most vulnerable among us—such as the battered women, trafficking victims, and women asylum-seekers that Tahirih represents—resonate powerfully across the political spectrum."**

*—Marshall Fitz, Director of Advocacy, American Immigration Lawyers Association*

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**"We have been greatly impressed with Tahirih's creativity and acuity in our strategic planning sessions. They have suggested bold new avenues for outreach to legislators or the media that are both welcome and necessary in the current pervasive anti-immigrant environment."**

*—Elisa Massimino, Washington Director, Human Rights First*

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**"The Tahirih Justice Center is a critical ally in our work advocating for reforms in the legal rights of immigrant victims of violence against women. They bring to national advocacy the real life stories and experiences of the women they serve—a contribution that is invaluable."**

*—Leslye Orloff, Associate Vice President and Director, Immigrant Women Program, Legal Momentum*

## WORKING IN CONGRESS TO PROTECT THE RIGHTS OF IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND GIRLS

### PROTECTING INTERNATIONAL BRIDES THROUGH LEGISLATIVE ACTION

A historic law was signed on January 5, 2006, by President Bush that provides foreign women with critical information to protect themselves from violent abuse by men they meet through international marriage brokers. Through a four-year effort, the Tahirih Justice Center led the drafting of, and national advocacy for, this momentous law.

The International Marriage Broker Regulation Act of 2005 (IMBRA), introduced by Senators Sam Brownback (R-KS) and Maria Cantwell (D-WA) and Representatives Frank Wolf (R-VA) and Rick Larsen (D-WA) in the fall of 2005, was attached to the bill to reauthorize the Violence Against Women Act (HR 3402). IMBRA provides foreign women with important information about their prospective American husbands, such as whether the men have violent criminal histories. The law also mandates that foreign women know the rights and resources available to domestic violence victims in the United States. Through this law, foreign women who marry American men will be given critical tools to protect themselves and their children from domestic violence.

The passage of IMBRA was the result of cooperation and coordination by a wide

range of organizations and individuals who represent many political, religious, and cultural communities. Tahirih especially recognizes Legal Momentum, the National Network to End Violence Against Immigrant Women, the National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum, the GABRIELA Network, and Amnesty International USA for their critical and core involvement in drafting and advocating for IMBRA. We are grateful for the instrumental advocacy of Joe Grieboski at the Institute for Religion and Public Policy with Republican leadership and of Father Stan DeBoe, formerly with the Conference of Major Superiors of Men, which represents the 210 Catholic religious communities of men in the United States. We recognize the pro bono lawyers and lobbyists who spent untold hours conducting research, drafting, and lobbying on behalf of IMBRA at Arnold & Porter LLP; Akin Gump Strauss Hauer & Feld LLP; Paul, Hastings, Janofsky & Walker LLP; Quinn Gillespie & Associates LLC; Van Scoyoc Associates, Inc.; Mike Mihalke; Altria Group, Inc.; Chevron; and The Estée Lauder Companies Inc. We thank Lifetime Television for its efforts to raise awareness about IMBRA and mobilize public support.

### PROTECTING IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND GIRLS' ACCESS TO POLICE PROTECTION FROM VIOLENCE

September 11, 2001, brought about a dramatic shift in US attitudes and policy towards immigrants. A reactionary push for more aggressive enforcement of immigration laws steeply increased requirements to qualify for legal status or relief, and sharply curtailed due process rights for all immigrants. A host of "Homeland Security" focused bills have been introduced and hotly debated, and some have become law. While the Tahirih Justice Center recognizes and respects the need to protect our country and promote compliance with our laws, we have vigorously opposed aspects of these proposals that would have extremely harsh consequences for the vulnerable women and girls we serve, who already face overwhelming obstacles to reaching safety and security.



*Coalition partners celebrate the passage of IMBRA. Layli Miller-Muro (Tahirih Justice Center), Kiran Ahuja (National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum), Joanne Lin (Legal Momentum), Rep. Rick Larsen (D-WA), Jeanne Smoot (Tahirih Justice Center), Maureen Greenwood (Amnesty International USA), Josephine Escalante (GABRIELA Network), and Jumana Musa (Amnesty International USA).*



## OPPOSING THE DEPUTIZATION OF STATE AND LOCAL POLICE AS IMMIGRATION AGENTS

The “CLEAR ACT,” “Homeland Security Enforcement Act,” and related proposals encourage state and local police to enforce immigration laws. Because many immigrant women may fear deportation, irrespective of their current legal status, deputizing police as immigration officers would deter victims and witnesses of violence from turning to the police for help. The obstacles that the women Tahirih serves have to overcome to reach safety are already steep, from language to cultural barriers to even their forced physical isolation from the outside world. But like all immigrant crime victims, their legal status—or lack of it—can be the most powerful deterrent to coming forward. In order to combat the threat of police being deputized as immigration enforcers, Tahirih has engaged in and led both national and regional opposition advocacy.

### ■ NATIONAL EFFORTS

Tahirih has served as a nationally recognized expert resource to Congress, the White House, the advocacy community, the media, and others on the alarming implications of these measures for immigrant victims. After the CLEAR Act was reintroduced in June 2005, Tahirih spearheaded a sign-on letter to Congress from nearly 100 organizations that advocate for immigrant survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, human trafficking, and other crimes.

### ■ REGIONAL EFFORTS

In late 2004 and early 2005, the Tahirih Justice Center convened three community-wide meetings to help ensure immigrants’ access to police protection in the Washington, DC area. The sessions brought together a diverse mix of concerned participants including members of the law enforcement community, immigrant advocacy organizations, domestic violence service providers, and leaders in the immigrant community. Concrete community mobilization that followed these

meetings included a resolution by the Montgomery County Council opposing CLEAR and the formation of the Virginia Alliance for Sensible Community Policing Efforts, a statewide coalition to promote trust and cooperation between police and immigrant communities that has successfully advocated against measures to embroil Virginia police in federal immigration enforcement duties.

## OPPOSING TOUGHER STANDARDS FOR ASYLUM-SEEKERS AND OTHER VULNERABLE GROUPS AND REDUCED DUE PROCESS PROTECTIONS

In an effort to protect our clients’ access to legal protection from violence, Tahirih has responded aggressively to many proposals in Congress that would prevent them from reaching safety. Among the proposals Tahirih fought were provisions in the Intelligence Reform and Terrorism Prevention Act of 2004; REAL ID Act; and Border Protection, Antiterrorism, and Illegal Immigration Control Act of 2005 that would expand expedited removal (deportation without a hearing); criminalize those out of immigration status; prohibit refugees who flee to the United States with a false passport from receiving asylum; and increase the burden of proof for many asylum-seekers. To counter the threat to our clients that these measures presented, Tahirih worked closely with other national immigrant advocacy organizations, reaching out strategically to Democratic and Republican allies, providing examples of the human impact of such proposals, rallying opposition through action alerts and letters to Congress, and replying to requests for information from staff of members on the House Judiciary Committee, the Women’s Caucus, and other legislative offices about problems with these proposals.

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**“The Tahirih Justice Center is an important partner in our efforts and an emerging national leader opposing restrictive legislation on behalf of immigrant women. The Tahirih Justice Center is making a vitally important contribution to the overall struggle to protect the due process rights of immigrants.”**

*—Angela M. Kelley, Deputy Director, National Immigration Forum*

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**“The Tahirih Justice Center is an impressive organization, strategic and deliberate in its approach to issues, with a proven track record of effective public policy advocacy and high-quality legal representation.”**

*—Bo Cooper, former General Counsel of the United States Immigration and Naturalization Service*

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**“Tahirih seeks to blend a unique combination of policy, direct client services, and litigation to elevate the issues impacting immigrant women and provide a human face to the atrocities that afflict women worldwide. Tahirih has become a refuge for these women, a place where they meet advocates with such passion and energy to champion their causes yet feel at home with advocates who genuinely care about their welfare and success as new immigrants in this country.”**

*—Kiran Ahuja, Executive Director, National Asian Pacific American Women's Forum (NAPAWF)*

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## *Amina's Story*

*Amina\* was in an abusive marriage. During an incident of domestic violence, Amina called the police for help. When the officer arrived, Amina was unable to properly communicate with the officer because of the language barrier. Amina's husband, however, spoke English and informed the officer that Amina had a fake green card. Amina's husband had secured the fake green card for her but did not inform the officer of that fact. The officer left the home, indicating that there would be some follow-up with federal immigration authorities regarding Amina. A domestic violence detective contacted Amina to set up a time to meet to discuss her case. Amina was extremely fearful about this meeting and called the Tahirih Justice Center. Tahirih contacted the detective to discuss Amina's case and discovered that we had previously trained this detective as part of our outreach to law enforcement about immigration relief available to battered immigrant women. When the detective finally met with Amina, he did so as a potential ally and advised her to no longer use that green card and to keep his number in case she was in need of further help from the police for domestic violence.*

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*\*Name changed to protect privacy*

## **WORKING WITH LAW ENFORCEMENT TO PROTECT IMMIGRANT WOMEN AND GIRLS**

The Tahirih Justice Center has worked to build relationships with law enforcement agencies. These outreach efforts have not only enhanced our national and regional policy advocacy, but also have strengthened our local direct services partnerships. Law enforcement agencies whose members attended Tahirih trainings and briefings include police from Montgomery and Prince George's counties in Maryland; police from Alexandria, Arlington, and Fairfax counties in Virginia, as well as police from the District of Columbia.

In November 2005, at the invitation of the Virginia Attorney General's office, Tahirih staff presented on the special relief and protection available to immigrant crime victims, as well as on related legislative issues, during two all-day trainings to about 70 judges, magistrates, prosecutors, police, state agency officials, and domestic violence advocates from all over Virginia. At the invitation of the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, Tahirih staff made a similar presentation to a law enforcement and advocate audience from across Maryland.

## TAHIRIH'S OUTREACH AND MEDIA

### EXPERTS IN THE PROTECTION OF WOMEN FROM HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES

Tahirih staff members are experts in their fields and are regularly called upon to conduct trainings and give public presentations. During 2004 and 2005, Tahirih participated in trainings and presentations at the following universities, conferences, and organizations:

AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP  
ALEXANDRIA, ARLINGTON, AND FAIRFAX COUNTY  
(VA) POLICE DEPARTMENTS  
ALEXANDRIA INOVA HOSPITAL  
ALEXANDRIA OFFICE FOR WOMEN,  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE PROGRAM  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY  
AMERICAN UNIVERSITY, WASHINGTON COLLEGE  
OF LAW  
ANNE ARUNDEL DOMESTIC VIOLENCE  
COORDINATING COUNCIL  
ARLINGTON ASYLUM OFFICE  
ARLINGTON COUNTY HEALTH  
EDUCATION ROUNDTABLE  
ARNOLD & PORTER LLP  
CONGRESSIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS CAUCUS  
CRIMINAL INVESTIGATIONS BUREAU  
OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT  
CROWELL & MORING  
DC AREA VAWA NETWORK WORKSHOP  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE RESOURCE PROGRAM  
DOMESTIC VIOLENCE INVESTIGATION UNIT  
OF THE FAIRFAX COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT  
FAIRFAX COUNTY VICTIM ASSISTANCE NETWORK  
FAIRFAX COUNTY VICTIM/WITNESS SPECIALISTS  
GEORGE MASON UNIVERSITY  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY LAW CENTER  
GEORGETOWN UNIVERSITY  
GLOBAL YOUNG LEADERS CONFERENCE  
HOGAN & HARTSON LLP  
KARAMAH  
LEGAL SERVICES OF NORTHERN VIRGINIA  
MADEIRA HIGH SCHOOL  
MARYLAND NETWORK AGAINST DOMESTIC  
VIOLENCE  
MONTGOMERY AND PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY  
(MD) POLICE DEPARTMENTS  
MONTGOMERY COUNTY POLICE DEPARTMENT  
TRAINING ON HUMAN TRAFFICKING

MONTGOMERY COUNTY WOMEN'S COMMISSION  
NATIONAL IMMIGRATION FORUM  
NATIONAL NETWORK TO END DOMESTIC VIOLENCE,  
LAWNET PROGRAM  
NORTHERN VA REGIONAL MEETING  
OF SEXUAL ASSAULT INVESTIGATORS  
PUBLIC LEADERSHIP EDUCATION NETWORK  
SCHOOL WITHOUT WALLS  
TRINITY UNIVERSITY  
TUFTS UNIVERSITY  
VIRGINIA ATTORNEY GENERAL'S OFFICE "SERVING  
UNDERSERVED COMMUNITIES" CONFERENCE  
VIRGINIA DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY SERVICES  
WASHINGTON AREA WOMEN'S FOUNDATION  
WILMER CUTLER PICKERING HALE AND DORR LLP  
YOUNG PROFESSIONAL BUSINESS ETHICS FORUM

### MEDIA

During 2004 and 2005, Tahirih staff and clients were quoted or featured in the following media outlets:

ABC News  
ALL HEADLINE NEWS  
AMERICAN PROSPECT MAGAZINE  
ATLANTA-JOURNAL CONSTITUTION  
BBC  
THE BALTIMORE SUN  
BUSINESS WIRE  
CBS News  
CBSNEWS.COM  
CHICAGO TRIBUNE  
CNN.COM  
CONTRA COSTA TIMES  
DES MOINES REGISTER  
FALLS CHURCH NEWS-PRESS  
FOX NEWS  
FREE SPEECH RADIO NEWS  
LAWCROSSING.COM  
LEGAL AFFAIRS MAGAZINE  
MSNBC.COM  
THE NATION  
NATIONAL PUBLIC RADIO  
THE NEWSTANDARD  
NEWSWEEK  
OMAHA WORLD HERALD  
THE PHILADELPHIA INQUIRER  
RADIO AMERICA  
SAN JOSE MERCURY NEWS  
VATICAN RADIO  
VOICE OF AMERICA  
WAMU: KOJO NNAMDI SHOW  
WASHINGTON BUSINESS JOURNAL  
THE WASHINGTON POST  
WOMEN'S E-NEWS



## WORKPLACE THAT EMBODIES TAHIRIH'S VALUES

In 2004 and 2005, the Tahirih Justice Center engaged in significant strategic efforts to increase its institutional capacity and enhance its internal operations.

To make Tahirih a great place to work, the organization:

- Enables staff raising families to have flexible work schedules;
- Provides a child-friendly work environment;
- Conducts in-house stress management, teambuilding, communication, and diversity trainings;
- Created a 403(b) retirement fund and flexible spending accounts; and
- Has monthly ice cream socials.

To make the best use of volunteers, Tahirih:

- Established the Bahá'í Service Fellowship, which provides a one-year stipend for two full-time fellows to support the Legal Services Team;
- Professionalized our volunteer and intern management; and
- Used highly experienced volunteers to help with graphic design, IT, human resources, and public relations matters, in addition to those providing pro bono legal and medical services for our clients.



*Tahirih staff and interns picnicking at the park.*



*Tahirih client Olga Sanchez and her daughter at a Tahirih art day.*



*Child of a Tahirih client at a Tahirih art day.*

To foster a culture of learning and growth, Tahirih:

- Conducts annual board and staff retreats to evaluate progress and establish goals;
- Assesses progress on organizational goals semi-annually;
- Performs regular 360° staff evaluations that include feedback to management;
- Established a mentorship program so staff can learn from outside experts;
- Provides a professional development stipend to all employees; and
- Conducts regular internal skills-building and team-building training.



*Bahá'í Service Fellow, Rosita Najmi, and a client's child at a Tahirih art day.*



*Development Volunteer, Ivi Kolasi, and a client's child celebrate at Tahirih's holiday party.*

WORKPLACE THAT EMBODIES TAHIRIH'S VALUES

## TAHIRIH IS SUPPORTED BY AN ACTIVE BOARD

Tahirih is fortunate to have the dedicated and selfless support of our Board members. In addition to bi-monthly meetings, an annual retreat, raising or giving \$1,000, and regularly making thank you calls, Tahirih board members often sustained our efforts through personal donations of money and time. A few stellar examples include:

- In December 2004, Michael MacLeod diverted a personal trip to climb Mt. Kilimanjaro to stop in Nairobi at the American Embassy. Michael inquired about a long-stalled visa petition for the daughter of one of our T visa (trafficking) clients. Due to Michael's persistence and dedication, the visa was finally issued and our client was finally reunited with her daughter after years of separation.
- In the spring of 2005, Mojgan Sami, while traveling on business, went to the American Embassy in Accra, Ghana, to assist our client who had been separated from her children for five years. The children's visa applications had been initially approved but never issued, in part because the children received notification too late to attend the required appointment. This put them in jeopardy of never being able to leave for the United States. Thanks to Mojgan's dedicated and skillful advocacy, the children have now been reunited with their mother in the United States.

- Throughout 2005, and with the expertise, guidance, and generosity of spirit of board member Leah Rampy, Tahirih implemented a mentoring program for the entire staff. This program matches each staff person with a mentor that exhibits the skills, leadership qualities, or life experience that interests each staff member. Leah worked with each staff member to identify mentors and then facilitated the introductions. Mentors agree to meet over lunch at least twice a year with their Tahirih staff member.
- Leslie Nickel and Bo Cooper provided countless hours of expert public policy and legal advice and assistance throughout the Campaign to End Exploitation by International Marriage Brokers.

## TAHIRIH RECEIVES HONORS AND AWARDS

On December 4, 2004, Layli Miller-Muro, Tahirih's Executive Director, received the District of Columbia Bar Association's Young Lawyer of the Year Award, and on April 30, 2005, she received the Soroptomist Making a Difference for Women Award for the South Atlantic Region.

Layli was also recognized in The Meyer Foundation's 2004 Annual Report as an "extraordinary leader" who is "transforming Greater Washington." Layli, along with 11 other area executive directors, is profiled in the Foundation's annual report.



## CATALOGUE FOR PHILANTHROPY

Tahirih is honored to have been selected as part of the 2004 *Catalogue for Philanthropy's* guide to giving in the Greater Washington area. According to the *Catalogue*, Tahirih was reviewed by "30 professional grantmakers and leaders at 20 foundations and nonprofit organizations." The honored nonprofits are "certainly some of the best small charities in Greater Washington" where a "donation makes a very big difference indeed."



Tahirih Board Members: Hamid Samandari, Theresa Loar, Leslie Nickel (chair)

TAHIRIH IS SUPPORTED BY AN ACTIVE BOARD

## 2004 BENEFIT

At Tahirih's 2004 fundraising benefit—A Woman's Life, A Child's Future: A World of Possibilities—Tahirih honored Hauwa Ibrahim, a dynamic and dedicated human rights advocate. Ms. Ibrahim shared her experiences as the lead attorney in the case of Amina Lawal, a Nigerian woman sentenced to death by stoning for having a child out of wedlock. The case garnered worldwide attention and support. Through her successful defense of Ms. Lawal, Ms.

Ibrahim has advanced a legal framework that protects and promotes women's rights under Muslim law, known as Sharia law.

Gisele Celestine Djofang, a Tahirih client, also shared the story of her fight

for freedom. Ms. Djofang had been a women's rights activist in her home country of Cameroon when she was imprisoned and severely tortured. After fleeing horrible atrocities and a forced marriage, Ms. Djofang fled to the United States where, with Tahirih's help, she was granted asylum. With her young daughter at her side, Ms. Djofang spoke not only of the struggles she had to overcome, but also of the new life she is rebuilding in the United States. Ms. Djofang completed a job training program and found employment. To honor her

Tahirih attorney, Ms. Djofang changed her daughter's middle name to Colleen.

Tahirih presented three awards at the 2004 Benefit, including the Pushing the



Hauwa Ibrahim addresses 2004 Benefit.

Envelope Award, presented to Ms. Hauwa Ibrahim in honor of her incredible achievements in pursuit of justice; the Pro Bono Award, presented to Erika Moritsugu and Jonathan Stoel of Hogan & Hartson LLP for their dedication to excellence in representing Tahirih clients; and the Volunteer Service Award, presented to Stewart Allen and Shaun Amini for their ongoing commitment to support Tahirih's Information Technology needs.



Tahirih client, Gisele, her attorney, Colleen Renk Zengotitabengoa, and Gisele's daughter, Brittany Colleen (named in honor of her attorney).

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## 2005 BENEFIT

Tahirih was honored to have Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan as the evening's keynote speaker. Her Majesty is an avid human rights advocate, actively involved in a number of international organizations committed to advancing global peace-building and conflict recovery. Her speech highlighted the escalation of violence against women around the world as a deep wound that must be addressed. Her Majesty fiercely condemned such violence as a human rights abuse and praised Tahirih's efforts in combating injustices against women and girls.

Other distinguished participants included Senator Joseph R. Biden from Delaware, author of the landmark Violence Against Women Act; Congressman James Moran from the Eighth Congressional District in Virginia, an avid supporter of Tahirih's efforts to protect immigrant women and girls; and Franca Agnes Nwaigbo Ukpai-Ama, a Tahirih client who fled Nigeria with her three children in fear of persecution by her husband's family.

Tahirih presented three awards at the 2005 Benefit. Each recipient received a piece of framed artwork, hand-made by children of Tahirih clients. The awards included the Pushing the Envelope Award, presented to The Meyer Foundation for the tremendous support and encouragement its staff has provided to Tahirih; the Pro Bono Award, presented to

Arnold & Porter LLP for its dedication and excellence in representing Tahirih clients and for winning a landmark case against an international marriage broker; and the Volunteer Service Award, presented to Dorothy Rudzik for her creative efforts in helping Tahirih achieve a professional public image.

For the first time, Tahirih—through the help of dedicated volunteers—was able to offer child care services during the Benefit, making it possible for many clients and their families to

attend. The children enjoyed refreshments, a movie, and a private visit with Her Majesty. One little girl, Laura, came wearing her own crown.



*Senator Joseph Biden (D-DE), Layli Miller-Muro, Her Majesty Queen Noor of Jordan, and Congressman James Moran (D-VA) celebrate a year of success at Tahirih's 2005 Benefit.*

## 2005 BENEFIT CONGRESSIONAL CO-CHAIRS

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*Editor's Note: Although every effort is made to ensure the accuracy of this listing, we may overlook someone. If this is the case, please accept our apology and notify us immediately.*

SUPPORTERS. WITHOUT YOU, OUR PROGRAMS WOULD NOT BE POSSIBLE. WE THANK YOU.



# TAHIRIH'S PRO BONO LEGAL SERVICES

## PRO BONO NETWORK

In order to serve as many women as possible, Tahirih reaches out to the top law firms in Washington, DC and recruits attorneys who donate their time and provide life-saving legal representation to our clients. In 2004 and 2005, Tahirih's network of pro bono attorneys grew from 100 to over 200. Unlike most legal services providers, Tahirih serves as co-counsel on all cases referred to pro bono attorneys, with staff attorneys serving as active mentors to ensure that immigrant women receive the most knowledgeable legal representation available. Tahirih now co-counsels on 75 percent of its cases with outside pro bono attorneys. Tahirih works closely with the attorneys in its pro bono network, communicating monthly through an electronic newsletter, regular trainings, close mentorship relationships, and the ongoing provision of social services assistance to clients represented by pro

bono attorneys. This expanded network allows Tahirih to more efficiently represent a greater number of women and girls.

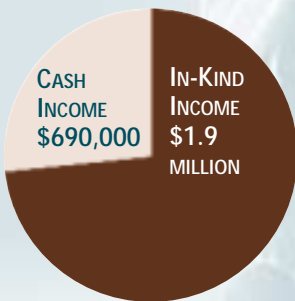
Tahirih's pro bono support from Washington-area law firms allows it to leverage revenue two and one half times over—effectively turning each dollar donated into almost three. In 2004, 72 percent of Tahirih's income came from donated professional services, with slightly more than 28 percent from grants, corporations, and individuals.

Law firms that are working on Tahirih Justice Center projects on a pro bono basis:

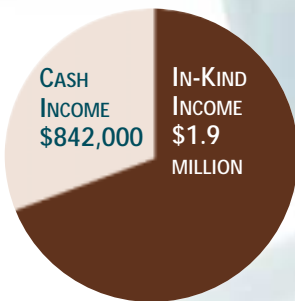
- AKIN GUMP STRAUSS HAUER & FELD LLP
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## LEVERAGING PRO BONO RESOURCES

2004 TOTAL INCOME:  
\$2.5 MILLION



2005 TOTAL INCOME:  
\$2.7 MILLION

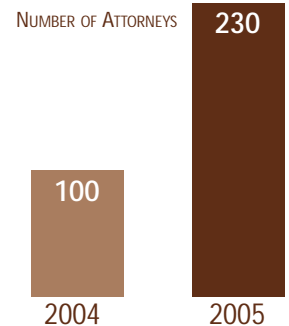


Managing Immigration Attorney, Rená Cutlip, meeting with a client.

## MAKING THE LEGAL SERVICES TEAM MORE EFFICIENT

During 2004 and 2005, Tahirih restructured its Legal Services Team to include a Managing Attorney, two staff attorneys, and three paralegals—two of whom are full-time Bahá'í Year-of-Service Fellows. This structure ensures that each attorney is paired with her own paralegal. It allowed the Legal Services Team to streamline its case management and better utilize attorney time. In addition, the Legal Services Team welcomed a new member in 2005—a social worker who works to ensure that the full spectrum of our clients' needs, including housing and medical care, are met. This new structure enabled Tahirih to open 132 percent more new cases in 2005 and represent 69 percent more active cases than the same time in 2004.

## GROWTH OF TAHIRIH PRO BONO NETWORK



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Very special thanks to Sergio Pessolano, for the stunning portraits used throughout this publication. Mr. Pessolano was



born in Rome in 1956 and at the age of 14 began taking pictures of people simply by going once a

week to St. Peter's Square. In the 1970's he began to work in photojournalism, taking pictures of student protests that sometimes ended in violence. These photos can be found in "Quelli Del 77" published by *Il Fotogramma* (Rome 1999). Today, having reached outstanding technical and expressive ability, he travels the world in pursuit of unique images. The amazing portraits used here are only a small sampling of his magical ability to capture a face.



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