

Yasmin Vafa is an award-winning human rights attorney and the co-founder and Executive Director of Rights4Girls, a national organization dedicated to ending gender-based violence against young women and girls in the United States. Yasmin has driven key legislative reforms at the federal and state levels resulting in tens of millions for victim services and protections for survivors of human trafficking. She has testified before the U.S. Senate, state legislatures, and international human rights bodies, and co-authored influential reports exposing the systemic criminalization of survivors of sexual violence. Her work and advocacy have been featured in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *Los Angeles Times*, NPR, ABC News, and other major media outlets.

In addition to her advocacy work, Yasmin serves as adjunct faculty for the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, where she helps lead the *National Judicial Institute* and the *National Multi-Disciplinary Institute on Child Sex Trafficking*. She has served on numerous federal task forces and advisory committees and is a founding co-chair of World Without Exploitation, the nation's largest anti-trafficking coalition, representing over 200 organizations committed to ending human trafficking and sexual exploitation.

Yasmin Z. Vafa, Esq.

Alexandria, VA 22310 • [REDACTED] • [linkedin.com/in/yvafa](https://www.linkedin.com/in/yvafa) • [REDACTED]

SUMMARY OF EXPERIENCE

Nationally recognized expert on gender-based violence and the criminal justice system with more than a decade of successful legislative advocacy, research, coalition-building, and effective engagement with state, federal, and international governing institutions. Award-winning thought leader focused on laws, policies, and cultural shifts required to address the links between race, gender, and violence against marginalized women and girls of color.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

Rights4Girls, Washington, DC

Co-founder, Executive Director, January 2016–Present

Director of Law and Policy, November 2011–December 2015

- Established Rights4Girls as the most respected US policy expert on the barriers to justice for girls of color who experience sexual violence and sex trafficking
- Testified before the US Senate Judiciary Committee, US House of Representatives Bipartisan Task Force to End Sexual Violence, Congressional briefings, numerous state legislative bodies, and international governing institutions on issues relating to violence against girls, sex trafficking, and juvenile justice reform
- Co-authored multiple nationally-recognized reports and opinion pieces on girls in the justice system, criminalized survivors, and sexual exploitation
- Designed and co-led the National Judicial Institute on Domestic Child Sex Trafficking—a two-day training for juvenile, family, and tribal court judges that has trained over 1,000 judges nationwide
- Expanded judicial trainings into the National Multi-Disciplinary Institute on Child Sex Trafficking to support cross-system collaboration and education of systems professionals on how to improve responses towards trafficked youth across child welfare, juvenile justice, and the courts
- Co-founded World Without Exploitation, the nation's largest anti-trafficking coalition, with more than 220 organizations working to end human trafficking and sexual exploitation
- Co-led, launched, and spun-off the DC Girls' Coalition, including a Youth Advisory Board to help inform local policies impacting the lives of girls and gender-expansive youth in the nation's capital
- Co-founded and led the Girls at the Margin National Alliance, a coalition of more than 200 local, state, and national girl-serving organizations working to improve the lives of vulnerable girls
- Developed and led federal and state policy strategy on anti-trafficking and criminal and juvenile justice reform for girls and young women
- Testified as an expert witness in criminal trials supporting survivors of gender-based violence and sex trafficking who are charged as defendants
- Featured in *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, *NPR*, *PBS NewsHour*, *ABC News*, *NBC News*, *The Boston Globe*, *Miami Herald*, *The Seattle Times*, and other outlets

Successes:

- Testified in support of and passed *AB 379* in California (2025), legislation closing the legal loophole that protected adults who exploited child victims of sexual exploitation. In addition, successfully developed and advocated for *SB 292* in Hawaii (2025) which provides safe harbor to survivors of sexual exploitation and *SB 544* (2025) which allows trauma-informed sentencing for child victim-defendants; *SB 2323* in Illinois (2025) which creates a statewide standard of care for trafficking victims; *SB 267* in New Hampshire (2025) that deters trafficking while funding victim services; *S278/H5358* in Rhode Island (2025) which provides immunity protections for sex trade survivors and *S.297/H5357* which repeals discriminatory fines on prostituted women; and finally *S.146* the federal *TAKE IT DOWN Act* (2025) which provides victims of image-based sexual abuse access to justice against those who post such content online.

- Successfully advocated for *HB 268* in Virginia (2024) and *SB 545* in California (2023), laws that will protect child trafficking victims accused of harming their abusers from being tried as adults, and will instead, keep child victims in the youth legal system where they can access treatment and services
- Strategized and passed *An Act to Reduce Commercial Sexual Exploitation* (2023) and *An Act to Provide Remedies for Survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation* (2023) in Maine, making it the first US state to adopt an Equality Model framework, ending criminal penalties for individuals in the sex trade and sealing their prostitution records so they can rebuild their lives
- Developed and passed the *Prevent Unfair Sentencing of Youth Act* (2023) in Illinois allowing judges to employ trauma-informed sentencing and depart from sentencing guidelines when child sex crime victims are accused of harming their abusers
- Worked to pass the *Trafficking Victims Prevention & Protection Reauthorization Act* and the *Abolish Trafficking Reauthorization Act* (2023) to provide much need services and support to survivors
- Supported passage of the *Violence Against Women Act* reauthorization (2022) which included historic protections for Native survivors for crimes committed by non-Natives
- Successfully advocated for and consistently expanded: i) girls’ juvenile justice funding in the federal budget up from \$3M in 2016 to \$4.5M in 2024; and ii) trafficking prevention in girls funding from \$2M in 2014 to \$4M in 2024
- Succeeded in doubling federal appropriations for human trafficking victims and tripling the authorizations for victims (2017-2024)
- Led advocacy for passage of *Abolish Human Trafficking Act* and *Trafficking Victims Protection Reauthorization Act*, tripling authorization levels for survivors (2017-2018)
- Worked to pass the *Juvenile Justice Reform Act*, including language I developed to protect child trafficking victims and girls in the child welfare system (2016-2018)
- Worked in coalition with survivors and their families to pass historic federal legislation amending Communications Decency Act to close a legal loophole shielding internet service providers from criminal liability when knowingly facilitating child sex trafficking (2016-2018)
- Supported passage of California law SB 1322 to end the arrest and prosecution of all minors for prostitution offenses in the state (2016-2017)
- Successfully led campaign to persuade Associated Press to revise its influential AP Stylebook to end use of term “child prostitute” (2015-2016)
- Drafted bill language and led strategy for passage of *Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act*, a law providing new support and funding to domestic trafficking victims (2014-2015)
- Successfully advocated for policy change in Los Angeles County—the largest in the country—to end the arrest of minors for prostitution (2014)
- Led anti-trafficking advocacy for successful passage of *Preventing Sex Trafficking and Strengthening Families Act*, a law reforming the child welfare system to better identify and protect trafficked youth (2013-2014)

Bilzin Sumberg Baena Price & Axelrod LLP, Miami, FL

Corporate Attorney, December 2009 - October 2011

Summer Associate, May 2008 - August 2008

- Collaborated on multi-million-dollar deals related to real estate and corporate finance transactions; Clients included Wall Street financial institutions, and national/international companies.

Amnesty International Australia, Sydney, Australia

Acting Refugee Coordinator, December 2004 - July 2005

- Led organization’s Refugee Advocacy Team; worked to shift national policy on mandatory and indefinite detention of asylum-seekers and refugees.

PUBLICATIONS

- Yasmin Vafa & Nora Hennick, *Buyers Unmasked: Exposing the Men Who Buy Sex & Solutions to End Exploitation*, Rights4Girls (2025).

- Yasmin Vafa & Rebecca Epstein, *Criminalized Survivors: Today's Abuse to Prison Pipeline for Girls*, Rights4Girls & Georgetown Law Center on Gender Justice & Opportunity (2023).
- Rebecca Epstein, Yasmin Vafa, "Girls reporting sexual abuse shouldn't have to fear being prosecuted." Los Angeles Times, March 3, 2023.
- Tiffany Allen, MSW, Mary Bissell, Esq., et. al, *National Policy Platform: Centering Girls, Young Women and Gender-Expansive Young People*, Girls at the Margin National Alliance (2021).
- Tina Frundt, Yasmin Vafa, "There's a way to decriminalize prostitution without putting women at risk." The Washington Post, August 2, 2019.
- Yasmin Vafa, Eduardo Ferrer, et. al, *Beyond the Walls: A Look at Girls in D.C.'s Juvenile Justice System*, Rights4Girls & Georgetown Law Juvenile Justice Initiative (2018).
- Rebecca Epstein, Yasmin Vafa, et. al, *I Am the Voice: Girls' Reflections from Inside the Justice System*, Rights4Girls & Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality (2018).
- Yasmin Vafa, Maheen Kaleem, et. al, *Survivor Protection: Reducing the Risk of Trauma to Child Sex Trafficking Victim Witnesses*, Thomson Reuters & Rights4Girls (2017).
- Malika Saada Saar, Rebecca Epstein, et. al, *The Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline: The Girls' Story*, Rights4Girls, Georgetown Law Center on Poverty and Inequality, & Ms. Foundation for Women (2015).
- Chelsea Parsons, Yasmin Vafa, et. al, *Three Key Challenges in Combating the Sex Trafficking of Minors in the U.S.*, Center for American Progress (2013).

PROFESSIONAL AFFILIATIONS

- Member, FC-CSEC Advisory Board at Wellesley Centers for Women, Wellesley College, 2025-present
- Consultant/Advisor, AEquitas, 2023-present
- Consultant/Advisor, Center for Justice Innovation, 2023-present
- Advisory Committee Member, Dept. of Health & Human Services National Advisory Committee on the Sex Trafficking of Children & Youth in the U.S., 2017-2024
- Judicial Faculty/Consultant, National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges, 2013-present
- JuST Response Council, 2015-present
- Contributor, The Huffington Post, 2016-2018
- Advisory Member, Dept. of Justice National Girls' Initiative, 2015-2017
- Task Force Member, Dept. of Justice Task Force on the Use of Restraints Against Pregnant Women & Girls Under Correctional Custody, 2012-2014
- Member of the District of Columbia Bar and the Florida Bar

AWARDS

- Last Girl First Award, Apne Aap International, 2024
- 21 Leaders for the 21st Century, Women's eNews, 2021
- Beacon of Hope Award, My Life My Choice, 2021
- Levin College of Law Alumni Award for Outstanding Public Service, 2019
- Leading Together Award, Black Swan Academy, 2018
- Lois Haight Award of Excellence & Innovation, US Congressional Victims' Rights Caucus, 2016
- Inspiring Hope Through Survivor Leadership Award, Los Angeles County, 2012

EDUCATION

University of Florida Levin College of Law – *Juris Doctor*, 2009

Honors:

- Book Award, International Human Rights Law
- Kluger, Peretz, Kaplan & Berlin, P.L., Merit Scholarship

Boston University – Bachelor of Arts, 2004

PRESS MENTIONS (partial list)

[Is It Ok to Pay for Sex](#)

NPR: Open to Debate | June 7, 2024

[Why Some Advocates Are Pushing Back Against Decriminalization in the Sex Trade](#)

NPR: On Point | August 29, 2023

[Alleged Sex Trafficking Victim Sentenced to 12 Years in Prison](#)

The Washington Post | August 23, 2023

[Commentary: New Law on Youth Sentencing Will Protect Child Sex Trafficking Victims](#)

Chicago Sun Times | July 15, 2023

[How Sexually Abused Girls Are Still Ending Up in Jails and Prisons](#)

The Washington Post | April 10, 2023

[Opinion: Girls Reporting Sexual Abuse Shouldn't Have to Fear Being Prosecuted](#)

Los Angeles Times | March 3, 2023

[Sex Trafficking Survivor Advocates for New Law to Protect Child Victims](#)

ABC News | January 24, 2023

[In Washington, a Fight to Decriminalize Prostitution Divides Allies](#)

The New York Times | October 17, 2019

[Bill Proposed to Decriminalize Sex Work in Washington, DC](#)

ABC News | November 2019

[No Such Thing as a 'Child Prostitute'](#)

Ms. Magazine | September 17, 2019

[Are D.C. Residents Really Ready to Live in a 'Sex Tourist Destination'?](#)

The Washington Post | August 9, 2019

[Cyntoia Brown Freed after 15 Years in Prison](#)

ABC News | August 8, 2019

[Opinion: There's a Way to Decriminalize Prostitution without Putting Women at Risk](#)

The Washington Post | August 2, 2019

[The Epstein Case Is Not an Outlier. Child Sex Trafficking Is 'Pervasive' in the U.S.](#)

PBS NewsHour | July 9, 2019

[How a Future Trump Cabinet Member Gave a Serial Sex Abuser the Deal of a Lifetime](#)

Miami Herald | November 28, 2018 (*Note: Award-winning piece that re-opened the Epstein case*)

[What Cyntoia Brown's Story Can Teach Us About Juveniles and Justice](#)

NPR: 1A | December 5, 2017

[Advocates Say Cyntoia Brown's Case Is Part of the 'Sexual Abuse-To-Prison' Pipeline](#)

NPR: All Things Considered | December 3, 2017

[Backpage's Sex Ads Are Gone. Child Trafficking? Hardly.](#)

The New York Times | March 11, 2017