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# THE INTERSECTIONALITY OF FORCED MARRIAGE WITH OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE IN THE UNITED STATES

National Network to Prevent Forced Marriage Webinar

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3.25.16




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## OUR WORK to end violence against women and girls



- Enabling individuals to transform their lives;
- Reframing the issue of violence against women in communities; and
- Changing the law.




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## PUBLIC POLICY ADVOCACY

*We work to correct flaws and close gaps in the US justice system in order to reduce vulnerability to violence and exploitation among immigrant women*



**WHAT WE DO**

- ✓ Administrative Advocacy
- ✓ Legislative Action
- ✓ Impact Litigation
- ✓ Media Engagement
- ✓ Movement Building




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### DEFINING "FORCED MARRIAGE"

*A marriage that takes place without the full and free consent of one or both parties.*

Lack of consent can be caused by an individual being:

- Younger than the legal age to marry
- Subject to some other incapacity or disability
- Subject to force, fraud, or coercion

*It is not arranged marriage, in which families may take the lead, but the ultimate choice to marry remains with the individual.*



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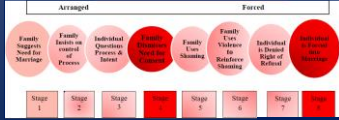
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### ARRANGED MARRIAGE → FORCED MARRIAGE



Arranged			Forced				
Family suggests, but individual chooses	Family initiates on behalf of parents	Individual consents to parents' choice	Individual consents to parents' choice	Family uses shaming	Family uses violence to subvert choice	Individual is denied right of refusal	Individual is denied right of refusal
Stage 1	Stage 2	Stage 3	Stage 4	Stage 5	Stage 6	Stage 7	Stage 8

Walter D. & Deborah Kay (2013)



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### DOES FORCED MARRIAGE REALLY HAPPEN IN THE UNITED STATES?

2011 national survey showed that Forced Marriage is a serious and underreported problem in the United States:

- Over 500 respondents in 47 states participated
- Identified **as many as 3000 cases** of forced marriage in the prior two years
- Close to half (41%) of all respondents had encountered at least one case



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### WHY SHOULD OTHER PROFESSIONALS AND ADVOCATES CARE?



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### FORCED MARRIAGE OFTEN INTERSECTS WITH OTHER FORMS OF ABUSE

- It is critical to recognize and to connect the dots between the mechanisms of power, control, and coercion that may precede a forced marriage, and the forms of abuse that can follow it.
- With this increased understanding of historic and related trauma, it is more possible to effectively identify opportunities for safety and healing.
- Forced marriage can lurk behind the issues that first present themselves: "...advocates speak to many women who are facing domestic violence, abuse and/or sexual assault in their marriage. Only later in these conversations does it emerge that the conditions upon which they may have been married were under duress, pressure and ultimately against their will" (Roy, 2011).

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### MAJOR STUDIES CITED

- AHA Foundation - *Is Forced Marriage a Problem in the United States?* (2015)
- Gangashakti - *Voices from the Frontline* (2013)
- South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario - *Who, If, When to Marry: The Incidence of Forced Marriage in Ontario* (2013)
- API/DV/Hmong Advocates - *Abusive International Marriages* (2012)
- Saudi Yatu Center for African Women - *A Closer Look at Forced and Early Marriage in African Immigrant Communities* (2012)
- Tahirih Justice Center - *Forced Marriage in Immigrant Communities in the United States* (2011)
- Manavi - *An Introduction to Forced Marriage in the South Asian Community* (2011)

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**FORCED MARRIAGE & CHILD ABUSE**

- Tahirih Study - Many respondents indicated that they had encountered victims under the age of 18.
- Gangashakti Survey - 41% of respondents discussed issues of child protection when asked about forced marriage case characteristics.
- Sauti Yetu Study - 40% of their youth population was married, engaged, or promised, and "of the 30 [study] participants...all but two faced pressures to marry or were already married before the age of 18."



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**FORCED MARRIAGE & SEXUAL ASSAULT**

- Gangashakti Study - 24% of respondents reported coming across rape as a consequence of forced marriage.
- SALCO Study - 26% of respondents reported sexual violence as a type of violence present in the forced marriage cases they had worked on.
- In the UK, Karma Nirvana, an NGO set up to respond to cases of forced marriage and honor crimes, reported that 10% of callers to their helpline reaching out about forced marriage made reference to having been raped.



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**FORCED MARRIAGE & DOMESTIC/FAMILY VIOLENCE**

- Gangashakti Study - Approximately half of all respondents reported coming across domestic violence (54%), including emotional violence (55%) and physical violence (51%), and almost one-third (35%) of respondents reported that financial and economic abuse was present in the cases they had encountered.
- Sauti Yetu study found similar patterns and Researchers at the John Jay College of Criminal Justice found that families imposed marital choices on their children "through coercion, emotional abuse, psychological pressure, kidnapping, trickery, physical violence or the threat of violence..."
- Tahirih Survey - Tactics commonly used or threatened against victims included emotional blackmail, isolation tactics, social ostracization, economic threats, threats of physical violence



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### FORCED MARRIAGE & STALKING

- Tahirih Study - Nearly a quarter of those respondents who provided information on tactics reported that victims had been stalked by family members, and 106 respondents reported victims were subjected to isolation by perpetrators.
- Stalking behaviors also noted in the Gangashakti study and consistently present in FM cases served by Tahirih and other agencies.



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### FORCED MARRIAGE & FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION

- **Female genital mutilation/cutting (FGM/C):** all procedures that involve partial or total removal of the external female genitalia, or other injury to the female genital organs for non-medical reasons (World Health Organization).
- Little statistical data or research on the topic of FGM/C in a U.S. context however recent research estimates 513,000 are at risk or have undergone FGM/C (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2016).
- While not all individuals who face forced marriage are also at risk of FGM/C, forced marriage can at times both necessitate and guarantee imminent FGM/C, and a survivor of forced marriage may have already experienced FGM/C in her lifetime.



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### FORCED MARRIAGE & HUMAN TRAFFICKING

- Some forced marriages may look like human trafficking if the driving motivation for the family is financial, to settle a debt or obtain a bride price.
- However, the forced marriage situations we have encountered often involve a host of reasons that parents are determined to see the marriage happen, most of them having nothing to do with money.



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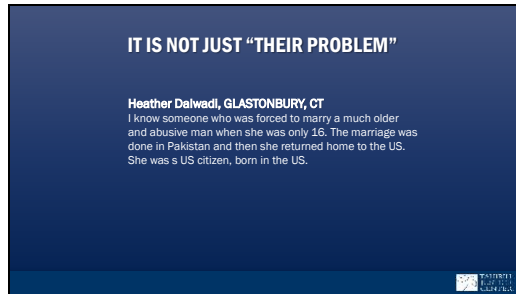
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**IT IS NOT JUST "THEIR PROBLEM"**

**Lucerto Umana, FREDERICKSBURG, VA**  
I've had friends in the same situation. I had one in particular that ran away as well but was found and taken back to their home country and I never heard from her again. I am afraid the worst has happened to her.



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**IT IS NOT JUST "THEIR PROBLEM"**

**Doe Tabor, EUGENE, OR**  
I too was a child bride.



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**IT IS NOT JUST "THEIR PROBLEM"**

**Ron Rea, HOUSTON, TX**  
I have personally conducted mental health assessments of young women who have been terribly abused by their own families for refusing to enter into forced marriages.



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**IT IS NOT JUST “THEIR PROBLEM”**

**Josy Rosenberry Chase, EASTPOINTE, MI**  
My best friend in high school in Michigan narrowly avoided a child marriage.



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**IT IS NOT JUST “THEIR PROBLEM”**

**Andrea Meyers, TUNKHANNOCK, PA**  
I was a domestic violence counselor at a shelter for women for 20 years. I've seen the effects first hand for women forced into marriages by family members. This is not a cultural issue, its a human tragedy.



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**THE FORCED MARRIAGE INITIATIVE @ TAHIRIH JUSTICE CENTER**

[www.PreventForcedMarriage.org](http://www.PreventForcedMarriage.org)

- Recorded Webinars
- Forced Marriage Toolkit
  - Resource Library
    - News
    - Survivor Stories
    - Get Help Portal
- Sign up for Forced Marriage Newsletter

For assistance with forced marriage cases, please contact:

Dina Bakry or Casey Swegman  
FMI@tahirih.org  
571-282-6161



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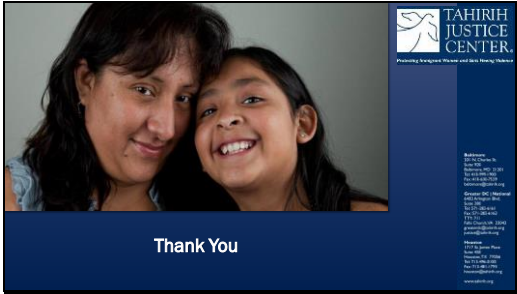
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