



# ELEVATING SURVIVOR VOICES IN THE ANTI-TRAFFICKING MOVEMENT: TIPS FOR ATTORNEYS AND ADVOCATES



## Survivor Leaders Created the Modern Anti-Trafficking Movement :

The modern anti-trafficking movement is still relatively new, and grew out of groundwork laid by the anti-prostitution and anti-pornography movements that were active in the 1970's. Survivor leaders have spent decades building this movement by reaching out to and educating federal and state legislators, law enforcement, non-profit organizations, domestic violence service providers, courts, and other institutions about how to best identify and help trafficking survivors.

Veteran survivor leaders created many of the first local programs serving trafficking survivors, and their efforts to connect across cities and regions across the United States transformed their work into a national movement dedicated to increasing protections and services for trafficking victims. The advocacy of these survivor leaders laid the groundwork for and provided critical input into the drafting and passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act of 2000, the first federal human trafficking law in the United States.

Current survivor leaders continue this essential work within the anti-trafficking movement - organizing national and state-level networks to support and develop new survivor leadership.

## How to Elevate and Center Survivors in Anti-Trafficking Advocacy Work:

- **See survivors beyond their stories.** Remember that survivors are more than just their trafficking experiences. When providing services, acknowledge that their experience being trafficking does not define their lives, and find ways to leverage and highlight their other life experiences, skills, and knowledge.
- **Treat survivor leaders as professionals.** When a survivor is providing you with their feedback or input, advocating with and/or for your organization, or speaking about their story per your request, be sure to compensate them for their time and expertise. Ask how the survivor leaders you are working with want to be introduced to other colleagues or at event, and lead with the qualifications they wish to highlight.
- **Remember that survivors have likely experienced multiple forms of systemic discrimination such as racism, transphobia, xenophobia, and classism.** Being an effective anti-trafficking activist requires allyship and advocacy that goes above and beyond “typical” anti-trafficking work. Advocates must fight to disrupt the systems that put people at higher risk of being trafficked. This includes, but is not limited to, engaging in anti-racism, anti-poverty, harm reduction, and housing equity work.

## Additional Resources:

The **Maryland Survivor Network** (MDSN) is committed to personal and professional development for survivors of human trafficking, serving the anti-trafficking movement with authenticity and transparency, and cultivating a holistic physical and digital space dedicated to self-care, group care and field care. Email [MDsurvivornetwork@gmail.com](mailto:MDsurvivornetwork@gmail.com) for more information.

The **National Survivor Network** is a coalition of nearly 300 survivors of human trafficking from all over the United States and abroad. For more information on their work to create a world without human trafficking, please visit: [www.nationalsurvivornetwork.org](http://www.nationalsurvivornetwork.org)

**Empower Her Network** collaborates with ready survivors of human trafficking who find themselves in the same vulnerable circumstance that led to their initial exploitation by removing housing barriers, financing education, and uncovering employment opportunities. For the ones who are ready, EHN clears a path to the future they design. Visit [www.empowerhernetwork.org](http://www.empowerhernetwork.org) for more information.

**Sun Gate Foundation** funds educational opportunities provided to survivors of Commercial Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking in the United States. Please visit [www.sun-gate.org](http://www.sun-gate.org) to learn more.

This tip sheet was created as part of the [Human Trafficking Prevention Project \(HTPP\)](#), a collaboration between the University of Baltimore School of Law and Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service (MVLS).

Recommendations on this tip sheet are adapted from the HTPP webinar:

**“Survivor Leadership: Reclaiming and Recrafting Justice in Anti-Trafficking Work”**

featuring guest presenters Dr. Vednita Cartner (Founder of Breaking Free, Anti-Sex Trafficking Activist, and Author), and Shamere McKenzie (CEO, Sun Gate Foundation and Baltimore Empowerment Advocate, Empower Her Network).

The webinar is available at: [www.mvlslaw.org/ht](http://www.mvlslaw.org/ht)

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