

"I founded the AHA Foundation as a survivor of honor violence, including female genital mutilation and an 'arranged' marriage. My motive for doing so was simple: to help girls in similar situations in the country where I have made my home."

— *Ayaan Hirsi Ali*



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Annual Report 2015



ahafoundation

Preventing Violence. Ending Shame. Reclaiming Honor.



Dear Friends,

2015 has been undoubtedly one of the most successful years for the AHA Foundation since its inception in 2007. The Eric Schmidt Challenge was met and we received almost 3,000 signatures for our online petition asking the President to put in place a National Action Plan to address honor violence in the US. We also launched a text-based helpline for women and girls experiencing honor violence and abuse and an online training program for frontline service providers. ***We have our supporters to thank for everything we accomplished last year!***

For those of you who have been following Ayaan's work, she remains a staunch champion for the rights of women and girls coming from societies where gender discrimination is the norm. Based on her own experience of finding freedom in the West, she continues to fight for other women and girls to experience this freedom as well. I often say there are many more "Ayaans" out there, women seeking to bring positive change to their communities, if they are given the chance to pursue opportunities to achieve their aspirations.

As we increasingly grapple with issues of global security and political unrest, it remains of continued importance that we give immigrant and refugee women and girls the opportunity to live in a society that offers them equitable opportunities, and protects them from violence and abuse through rule of law. When empowered to live to their full potential, these women become agents of change, shaping their families and communities in ways that further strengthen our society. I cannot think of a more effective way of countering extremism, promoting dialogue and driving global change.

I want to end this letter by letting you know that I am stepping down as the Executive Director of the AHA Foundation so that I can devote more time to my studies and writing. I will continue to be involved as a Senior Advisor and leave the management of the AHA Foundation with Amanda Parker who will take over as interim Executive Director. Amanda is a passionate advocate for women and girls' rights and she was part of the team that founded the AHA Foundation. I am confident she will be exceptional in her new role.

We very much look forward to 2016 as an even more successful year for the AHA Foundation. We look forward to working with you to achieve more victories against honor violence. Thank you for your continued support.

Stephanie Baric

A Detailed View

In 2007, Ayaan Hirsi Ali founded the AHA Foundation to protect US women and girls from honor violence that shames, hurts or kills thousands of women and girls in the US each year and puts millions more at risk. Ayaan Hirsi Ali's passion, courage and leadership have led the AHA Foundation to become the preeminent organization working to end honor violence, while enabling survivors of these crimes to thrive.

The AHA Foundation works to achieve its mission in four ways:

- 1 Meeting the needs of women and girls in crisis
- 2 Speaking out about gender-based violence and oppression through advocacy, coalition partnerships and media efforts
- 3 Training officials on how to recognize and respond to these issues
- 4 Gathering data to inform and strengthen our work

In 2015, the AHA Foundation continued to fulfill its core mission while activating new, strategic initiatives to strengthen outcomes now and in the future through:

- Programs and Trainings
- Research
- Advocacy
- Coalitions and Partnerships
- Strategic Planning and Growth

"In 2015 the AHA Foundation reached several major milestones that have been years in the making. If I had to choose, I would say that the launch of the text line, the first-ever helpline for girls at risk of honor violence in the US, is our #1 accomplishment of the year. It brought a little sigh of relief — finally the victims and those at risk have a way to seek help 24/7. Now that this is accomplished, we can turn our energy to advocating to change laws to better protect women against violence, training professionals who work with victims, and coming up with innovative ways to fight for each girl's rights."

– Stephanie Baric,
Executive Director of
the AHA Foundation

In 2015, the AHA Foundation's programs actively worked to:



To speak anonymously with a compassionate, non-judgmental Crisis Counselor for free 24/7, individuals facing honor violence and forced marriage can now text FREE to 741-741. Texts are private and secure.

Meet the Needs of Women & Girls in Crisis

Honor violence is an often-overlooked form of abuse that harms thousands of women and girls in the US each year. It is often hidden deep within the walls of a family home, leaving victims alone and afraid, with nowhere to turn. A girl may have very little warning that she will be thrust into violence. In some cases, she may think she is traveling abroad on a family vacation, when she realizes at the airport that she will be forced into an unwanted and dangerous marriage. Or, after experiencing continual violence at home, she may feel there is no way out. It has been a long-term goal of the AHA Foundation to give these women a safe place to seek help – in a discreet way, without notifying their abuser they are reaching out – immediately, no matter the time of day.

In 2015, the AHA Foundation partnered with Crisis Text Line to launch the first ever US helpline for women and girls facing situations of honor violence and forced marriage.

While in some Western European countries such helplines have been available for years, in the US, this helpline is just now available and is the result of years of hard work. Women and girls in the US now have an easy, fast and most importantly safe way to seek help. They can contact trained professionals in a discreet way, without notifying their abuser that they are reaching out – and they can send a request for help right away, no matter the time. A text line gives these girls a chance to take charge of their lives and escape violence in an easy and immediate way.

To ensure as many women and girls as possible are aware the text line is an available resource to them, the AHA Foundation will soon post public service announcements around the country, in magazines and major transit hubs such as airports, buses and subways.

In addition to giving women across the US this critical lifeline, the helpline will be an invaluable tool for obtaining much needed data, collected anonymously, of the incidence of honor violence across the country. Armed with this data, the AHA Foundation will be in a stronger position to demonstrate the need for resources and legislation to better protect victims as well as those at risk of honor violence.

Train Officials and Educators on How to Recognize and Respond to Issues Related to Honor Violence

A major obstacle in protecting women and girls from honor violence is the lack of education on the distinct nature of these crimes as well as awareness that these abuses happen in the US; even those on the front lines who should be best able to respond to instances of honor violence are in many cases ill-equipped to do so. Training professionals how to identify and correctly handle cases of honor violence can mean the difference between freedom and a lifetime of rape and servitude in a forced marriage, or even the difference between life and death, for a girl facing honor violence. For these reasons, it is a priority of the AHA Foundation to ensure that professionals likely to encounter victims are properly trained to recognize and react to these crimes.

This winter, the AHA Foundation will launch an e-learning facility that provides relevant, no-cost trainings for service providers who work with women and girls who have experienced honor violence or who are at risk for gender-based violence and oppression. The e-learning facility will include dynamic presentations that can be accessed and completed at the student's discretion. Certification for successful completion of the e-learning training modules will be available.

During consultations with law enforcement and through participation in civil society meetings, the need for similar trainings to address the topic of female genital mutilation (FGM) became clear. Over the past year and in partnership with Culture Works!, the AHA Foundation has created a training course that reviews laws pertaining to FGM in the US and cultural sensitivities that should be considered when handling cases. The training courses are currently being reviewed

by sexual violence experts and peer organizations; the program will be launched and available to professionals via our e-learning facility and through live trainings this winter.

As part of our commitment to training as many professionals as possible, this December the AHA Foundation held a free webinar for law enforcement agents, educators, domestic violence and social work professionals, and others who work directly with women and girls in the US to protect them from violence and abuse. More



than 160 of these targeted professionals signed up to hear Naila Amin, a survivor of and advocate against honor violence and forced marriage, share her harrowing and inspiring story as well as best practices for protecting other women and girls from experiencing the same abuses she faced.

Gather Data to Inform and Strengthen Our Work

In February 2012, the AHA Foundation provided draft language and a letter of support to Representative Frank Wolf for the Appropriations Bill that would compel the US government to begin tracking honor violence. Once the bill was passed, the Department of Justice (DOJ) was required to begin collecting data on honor violence.

As a result of this legislation, the DOJ's Office on Violence Against Women and the National Institute of Justice were directed to find the best



“The prevalence of honor violence and honor killings in the U.S. will only increase, unless we act now. We have a duty to protect these young women and to be a voice for them. Most importantly, it is the right thing to do.”

— Detective
Chris Boughey
Peoria, Arizona
Police Department

AHA Foundation Advocacy Leads US Efforts to Track Honor Violence

Report on Exploratory Study Into Honor Violence Measurement Methods

Authors
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Prepared for
US Department of Justice

way to determine the prevalence of honor violence and recommend best practices for law enforcement and service providers for prevention. To comply with this mandate, the DOJ commissioned a report on potential methods to identify the prevalence of honor violence in the US. The AHA Foundation was frequently consulted during the drafting of the report and heavily cited in the final report itself. Foundation staff provided significant background information about honor violence and our programs, and shared our studies on honor killing and forced marriage carried out by the John Jay College of Criminal Justice.

The resulting report confirms that frontline service providers, educators and law enforcement will likely not recognize honor violence and abuse as different from domestic violence, which ultimately hinders any government effort to systematically collect data on these crimes. The value of the report is that finally in the US there is government recognition that honor violence is taking place in our country. This is a first, critical step to taking action to prevent honor violence.

The DOJ report is also important because it is an affirmation that the AHA Foundation is taking the right steps to stop honor violence by providing trainings on the distinctive nature of honor violence versus domestic violence, advocating for legislation to protect the rights of those vulnerable to honor violence, and creating a safe space for survivors and those at risk of honor

violence to seek help. For the AHA Foundation, the report means that our advocacy efforts to draw attention to honor violence in the US are beginning to show results.

Raise Awareness about Honor Violence that Harms Women and Girls in the US through Advocacy, Coalition Partnerships and Communications

Advocacy:

More than 500,000 women and girls are at risk of female genital mutilation in the United States. Even so, although there is a federal law banning the practice, only twenty-four states currently have legislation, which outlaws FGM, including nine out of the fifteen states recently highlighted by the Population Reference Bureau as having the highest number of girls at risk of FGM in the country. At the AHA Foundation, one of our key policy initiatives is to ensure that all women and girls in the US have adequate legal protections to keep them from having to endure FGM. Highlights of our 2015 work include:

- Updating the AHA Foundation's model FGM legislation to include a provision on education, prevention and outreach to vulnerable communities, and disseminating information to health care providers, teachers, and law enforcement. Addressing the underlying social pressures and

norms that perpetuate FGM will help end the practice in vulnerable communities.

■ Supporting legislation in the following states:

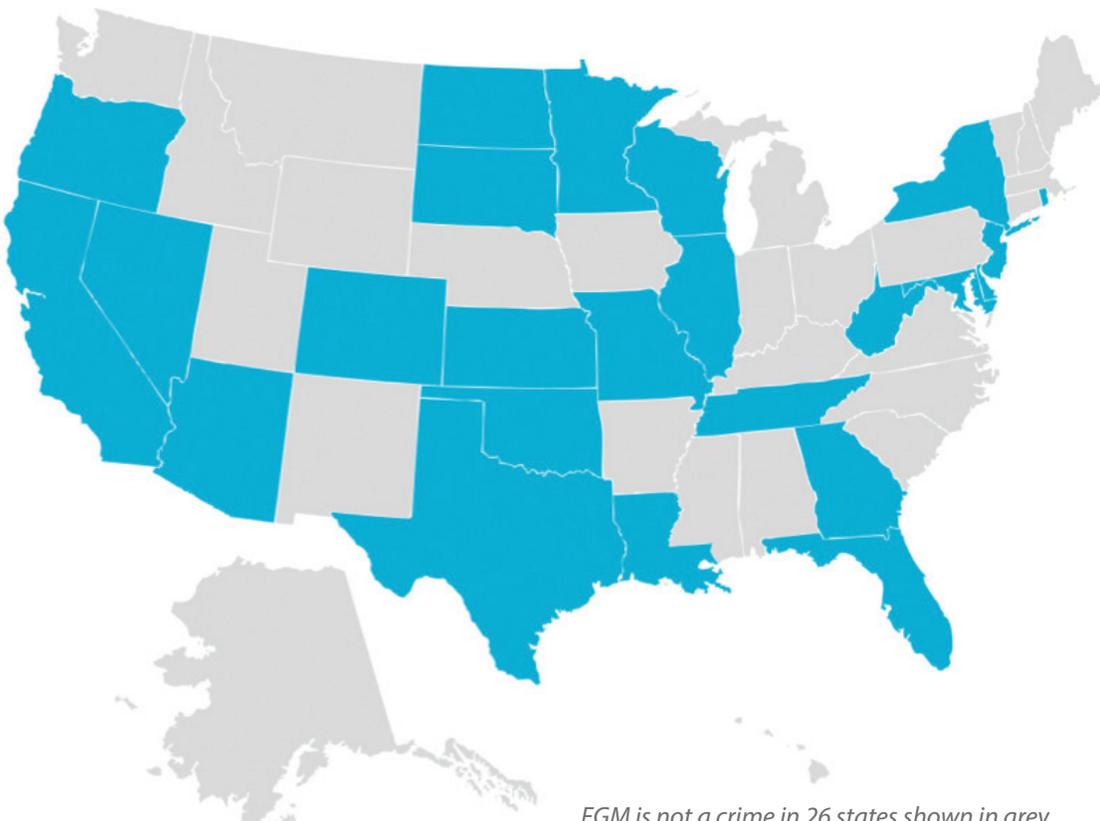
PENNSYLVANIA | The AHA Foundation briefed Representative Murt's staff on FGM and activated our network of grassroots supporters from Pennsylvania to voice their support for the legislation, coinciding with a press conference Rep. Murt held on the topic. The Foundation also sent a formal letter of support to the Pennsylvania House Judiciary Committee.

SOUTH DAKOTA | The AHA Foundation provided a response to address concerns that a ban on FGM would infringe on religious freedom. The Foundation also sent a letter in support of the bill to all members of the South Dakota Senate. The legislation was passed by the Senate and signed into law in March 2015.

MASSACHUSETTS | In the state of Massachusetts, the AHA Foundation continued its support of the Massachusetts Women's Bar Association on their efforts to enact a state FGM ban. As part of that work, we urged our Massachusetts network to contact their state legislators in support of the legislation. In addition, the Foundation provided written testimony for the December 1st hearing on the bill and was listed as a press resource by the Massachusetts Women's Bar Association.

WASHINGTON | The AHA Foundation provided both telephone and written briefings for Representative Elizabeth Scott in preparation for her meeting with the Chairman of the House Public Safety Committee to make her case for the bill to be considered by the Committee when they return to session in early January.

The AHA Foundation also responded to requests from supporters in **North Carolina** and **Montana** who want to work to pass legislation in their states.



FGM is not a crime in 26 states shown in grey

“Thank you for doing this. The U.S. is long overdue to address and prevent honor-based violence and forced marriage. I was born and raised in the U.S. but was faced with these very real threats when I left my family nearly 20 years ago. Can't even begin to underscore what it would have meant to have resources available at that time.”

— Yasmine,
AHA Foundation Supporter



End Violence Against Women and Girls in the US

Demand a national
action plan to fight
honor violence

#breakthesilence



Ayaan Hirsi Ali
Founder of the AHA Foundation



Many people, including US members of Congress, assume honor violence happens only in foreign countries, far away from America. The fact is: honor violence is a silent epidemic in the United States, with large communities here who uphold the codes of honor and shame that perpetuate it. To help bring this issue out of the darkness and into the light of day, Ayaan Hirsi Ali and the AHA Foundation started a petition to President Obama, urging him to enact a national plan of action to address honor violence in the US. To date, this petition has been signed by more than 2,300 individuals who understand the grave problem we face in the US and are determined to see action to stop it.



This fall, as part of that work, Stephanie Baric, Executive Director of the AHA Foundation, and AHA Foundation Senior Director, Amanda Parker, spent time on Capitol Hill meeting with staff members from the offices of twelve representatives and senators to raise awareness about honor violence in the US and to garner their

support for the national action plan to address the issue. These meetings were highly successful and set the groundwork for Ayaan to hold a congressional briefing on honor violence in the US this spring.

In 2014, Stephanie Baric provided written testimony for a Senate Hearing Committee on Canada's "Zero Tolerance for Barbaric Cultural Practices Act," calling for support to amend federal statutes to prevent early and forced marriage and polygamy. This legislation was passed into law in 2015.



Coalition Partnerships:

The AHA Foundation is a leading voice within several notable coalitions that raise awareness about key issues facing women and girls in the US today, including violence and oppression stemming from culturally-motivated practices and beliefs. Speaking out alongside coalition partners makes our voice louder and increases our impact.

The AHA Foundation joined the Forced Marriage Working Group, a coalition of experts and advocates working together to fight forced marriage, in meetings in March with government representatives at the Department of Homeland Security, United States Citizen and Immigration Services, the Department of Justice and the White House Council on Women and Girls to discuss the issue of forced marriage in the US and push for a national action plan to ensure survivors have the resources and support they need. The Forced Marriage Working Group plans to develop a national action plan in 2016.

As part of the International Marriage Broker Regulation Act, each person coming to the US on a spousal or fiancé(e) visa receives a pamphlet from the Department of Homeland Security advising them on legal rights available to immigrant victims of domestic violence. Together with members of the Forced Marriage Working Group, the AHA Foundation provided draft language addressing forced marriage to include in the pamphlet. The importance of this document cannot be understated; as a new immigrant to the US, it may be the only opportunity to inform an otherwise sheltered victim of honor violence or forced marriage that they have rights and that there are legal avenues for them to remain in the US even if they report abuse and leave their visa sponsor.

“Violence and control of women has been a problem for centuries, we should all stand against it. When another human is deprived of rights it is a threat to the rights of all of us.”

— Douglas, AHA Foundation Supporter

Communications and Awareness:

The AHA Foundation remains one of the most outspoken and articulate voices on ending violence against women and girls in the United States that stems from harmful traditional practices. In addition to our advocacy efforts, we spoke out in the following ways:

MEDIA OUTREACH | In 2015, Ayaan Hirsi Ali was featured prominently in the media, both in the US and internationally, following the terrorist attacks at Charlie Hebdo in January, across Paris, Beirut, and San Bernardino in the fall, and throughout the year due to publishing her most recent New York Times Bestseller, *Heretic*. These events prompted Ayaan to do national interviews with the Diane Rehm Show, Hannity, The Kelly File, Fox and Friends, and internationally with Canada’s *Globe and Mail* and *Maclean’s*, and Denmark’s *Jyllands Posten*, to name but a few. In reference to Martin Luther King’s epic march for equal rights from Selma to Montgomery, Alabama, Ayaan asked readers “Will you march with us for Muslim women’s civil and political rights?” in the *Huffington Post*. The *New York Times* featured a review of *Heretic* and invited Ayaan to share her favorite books as part of their “By the Book” column. An abstract of *Heretic* was published in *The Wall Street Journal* in advance of its March publication date.



Foxnews.com interviewed Stephanie Baric in response to the release of the report commissioned by the Department of Justice discussing the collection of honor violence data in the US. During this interview, Baric raised awareness on what constitutes honor violence and discussed its increasing prevalence in the US explaining

that, “the problem will continue to worsen if authorities don’t identify and address it.”

Not only did this media attention raise awareness of the AHA Foundation and our mission, it also helped generate a 2,313 increase in social media followers and newsletter subscribers during the time of the Heretic press coverage, accounting for an immediate uptick in our grassroots network of 4%. You can read these articles and other related news coverage here: <http://theahafoundation.org/news/>



PUBLIC SERVICE ANNOUNCEMENTS | In 2015, the AHA Foundation raised awareness across the US placing pro bono PSAs in twelve regional magazines including Boston Common Magazine, Hamptons Magazine, Ocean Drive Magazine, Texas Monthly Magazine, Michigan Avenue Magazine, and Gotham Magazine. The number of individuals reached through these PSA placements is more than 3.3 million.

SOCIAL MEDIA NETWORK | The AHA Foundation engages followers through its website, emails and

e-newsletters, Facebook and Twitter. In 2015, the AHA Foundation’s supporter network increased to more than 58,000 members. This represents an increase of 13% over our total network at the end of 2014.

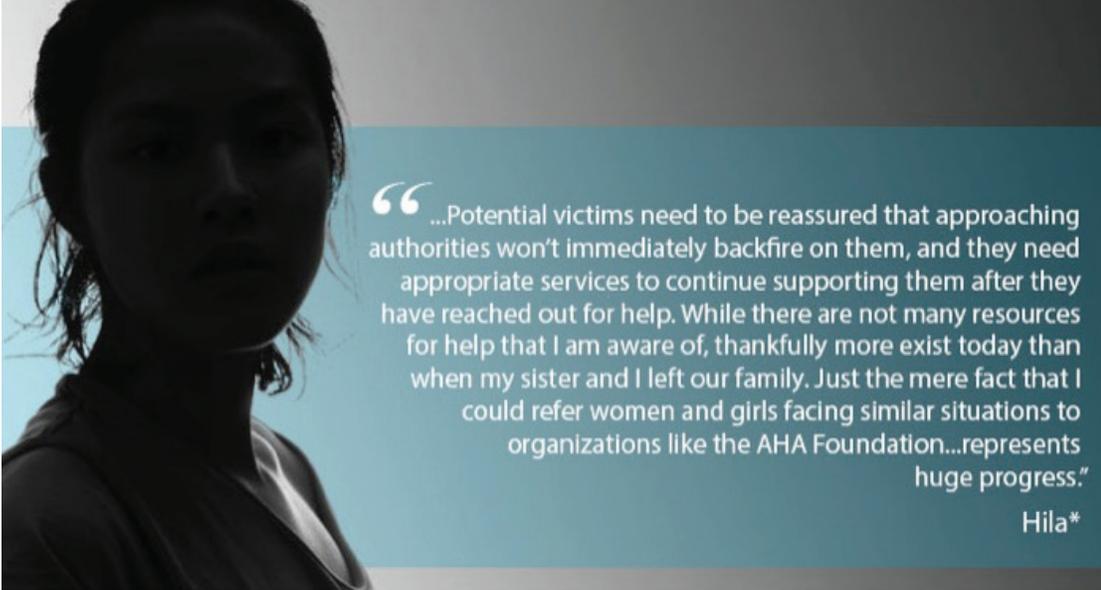
NEW WEBSITE | To coincide with the launch of Heretic, the AHA Foundation unveiled a new website, Facebook and Twitter pages to better showcase our mission and vision in a clearer, more compelling manner. This dynamic new website puts Founder Ayaan Hirsi Ali front and center and allows supporters to more easily connect with her and her work.

Ayaan Hirsi Ali received the following awards and accolades:

- The Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation’s Bradley Prize. Bradley Foundation President and Chief Executive Officer Michael Grebe explained, “Through the Bradley Prizes, we recognize individuals like Ms. Hirsi Ali whose accomplishments strengthen freedom at home and abroad, with the hope that others will strive for excellence in their respective fields.” Previous award recipients include Harvey Mansfield, William Kristol, Jeb Bush, Fouad Ajami, and others.
- The Lantos Foundation for Human Rights and Justice’s Lantos Human Rights Prize awarded to individuals who “exemplify courage in the defense of the rights of others in their work and at a very profound level personally.” Previous award recipients include His Holiness the Dalai Lama, Dr. Elie Wiesel, Shimon Peres, Paul Rusesabagina, Chen Guangcheng, Hillary Clinton, and others.



Photo: Ron Sachs
Ayaan Hirsi Ali receives the 2015 Lantos Human Rights Prize.



“...Potential victims need to be reassured that approaching authorities won't immediately backfire on them, and they need appropriate services to continue supporting them after they have reached out for help. While there are not many resources for help that I am aware of, thankfully more exist today than when my sister and I left our family. Just the mere fact that I could refer women and girls facing similar situations to organizations like the AHA Foundation...represents huge progress.”

Hila*

**Name changed to protect identity*

Looking Ahead

The work of the AHA Foundation is more relevant and critical than ever. Global events point to increasingly horrifying accounts of culturally-motivated abuse and murder of women and girls around the world. And here in the US, the number of women and girls experiencing honor violence, coercion and oppression is rising at an alarming rate.

In 2016, the AHA Foundation will build on the impact of our award-winning work and expand efforts to address cultural norms and behaviors that perpetuate abuse and discrimination.

We know we need to reach more women and girls in crisis, and we have the strategy and infrastructure in place to do it.

- In 2016, the AHA Foundation will take our message to the future leaders of this world and empower them to further our work in new and exciting ways with the **launch of our Campus Program**. By partnering with existing, like-minded college campus groups, we will build a force of men and women fighting to protect the rights of women and girls.

- We will take our advocacy efforts to the next level by **holding a congressional briefing on Capitol Hill to coincide with International Women's Day**, raising awareness among policymakers about the existence of honor violence in the United States and spurring them to take action to prevent it. We will continue to advocate for

policies that protect the rights of women and girls, such as criminalizing female genital mutilation and forced marriage.

- In 2016, the AHA Foundation will convene stakeholders including academics, frontline service providers, law enforcement, educators and other professionals for a multi-day **conference discussing solutions to the problem of honor violence in the US**. The conference will result in formal proposals with specific steps to undertake to end honor violence in this country.

- We also will increase efforts to **engage our grassroots network and strengthen relationships with supporters, community organizations and advocacy groups**. We will give our network ways to turn their advocacy into action, and to turn that action into a movement.

- We will continue to ensure that **women and girls who are facing honor violence, oppression, and coercion have a way out** – and that survivors of these crimes get the help they need to cope and thrive.

A decade of working with women and girls, community activists and women's rights thought leaders has taught us that if we want to live in a world of peace and democracy, we must address the root causes of violence and oppression that plague millions of women and girls worldwide. In 2016, the AHA Foundation will more closely align with Ayaan Hirsi Ali to amplify her work to raise awareness about women and minority rights. We will continue to shine a spotlight on honor violence crimes and, in doing so, aim to end them all together.

“Ayaan's bravery has given so many victims like me the courage to rise up as trailblazers in our own community



and nation. By campaigning to end honor violence, Ayaan's touched a raw nerve and the epicenter where the problem begins.”

— Nemat Sadat,
LGBTQ Rights Activist



There is no culture,
religion or tradition that justifies
this type of violence.

Learn More, Get Involved, Become an AHA Champion

Just as Ayaan Hirsi Ali transcended violence, oppression and coercion rooted in traditional cultural beliefs, other women and girls experiencing these types of harmful practices can live freely with your continued support.

We encourage you to learn more about the AHA Foundation's work at theahafoundation.org and join our conversations about issues related to gender-based violence and oppression on Facebook and Twitter at @AHAFoundation. Please encourage your friends and family to follow us as well.

You also can contact our staff to learn more:

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*Stephanie Baric, AHA Foundation Senior Advisor
Phone: 925-482-6273 | Email: stephanie@theahafoundation.org*



ahafoundation

Preventing Violence. Ending Shame. Reclaiming Honor.

You Can Make a Difference!

**End violence.
Stop shame.
Reclaim honor.**