



2019 ANNUAL REPORT





George Zarubin, Executive Director

A MESSAGE TO OUR DONORS

In one of my favorite films, *Dead Poets Society*, Robin Williams plays the role of a high school English teacher who inspires his students with the Latin phrase *carpe diem*, roughly translated as “seize the day,” and explains that “words and ideas can change the world.” At AHA Foundation, we firmly believe in the power of ideas and their potential to bring about immense change in the world. Throughout 2019, thanks to support from our donors, we seized the day through hardships and political discord that threatened the progress we made over the past decade.

This year began with a challenge to our work in passing legislation to ban female genital mutilation (FGM). A federal district court case found the federal anti-FGM statute to be unconstitutional, and that development propelled us into action. We played a leading role in nearly a dozen states to pass laws that ban FGM or improve existing

legislation. We also had the opportunity to introduce our model legislation and train legislators from the remaining 15 states that lack anti-FGM bans. Ideas matter. Laws matter. And advocacy for both state and federal protections can improve the circumstances for hundreds of thousands of women and girls around the U.S.

We also seized the opportunity to bring ex-Muslims, Muslim Reformers, and stakeholders together in a workshop to discuss strategies to combat Islamism, a form of extremism that threatens Western civilization, with Enlightenment thought. The participants were divided into working groups that will continue to think, write, and advocate for change.

Our campus program generated some controversies this year. Various groups wanted to shut down ideas that they did not want to hear—ideas centered on the rights of women and girls, free

speech, and the need to curtail Islamic extremism. But we did not allow these ideas to be silenced and has reached over 400,000 people with Enlightenment ideas.

We need to take a stand. We have and we will continue to fight for our mission!

For me, the critical point in *Dead Poets Society* was the moment when Williams states “... the powerful play goes on and you may contribute a verse... What will your verse be?”

We sincerely appreciate the support of our donors, to those who have contributed to the ideals we uphold. These are the verses we are writing. Your support makes that possible.

Sincerely,

George Zarubin



“I think of the AHA Foundation as an accomplishment, because it’s this institution that has brought all of us together saying, “Let’s stop mumbling about what the world should look like, and let’s take the steps to bring the people together, raise the money, and take it from thinking about it to doing.”

— Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Founder of AHA Foundation

2019 HIGHLIGHTS

- Upheld our position as the national leader in anti-FGM advocacy and played key roles in five of the seven states that passed FGM bans—the highest number of state-level FGM bans of any single year in U.S. history
- Conducted a seminar at Stanford University to connect ex-Muslims and Muslim reformers, bringing us one step further in amplifying their voices and activism against Islamism
- Compelled the release of governmental statistics revealing the number of marital visa approvals involving children
- Organized 15 events defending free speech and promoting critical thinking and women’s rights at 13 colleges around the country
- Advised congressional leaders in developing a bill to close visa loopholes that enable child marriage in the U.S.
- Facilitated our Founder’s address to students at Pepperdine University School of Public Policy, one of her first events after facing repeated attempts at being silenced on college campuses

11 ANTI-FGM LAWS PASSED

300+ PROFESSIONALS TRAINED

320+ WOMEN AND GIRLS IN CRISIS ASSISTED TO DATE

38,302 GIRLS AND WOMEN PROTECTED BY NEW LAWS

400,000+ REACHED AT 20 COLLEGES THROUGH CAMPUS PROGRAM

1,100,000+ REACHED THROUGH SOCIAL MEDIA

ENDING FEMALE GENITAL MUTILATION IN THE U.S.

4 STATE-LEVEL STRENGTHENING BILLS PASSED

7 STATE-LEVEL BANS PASSED

9 FEDERAL INITIATIVES INTRODUCED

38,302
GIRLS
PROTECTED
BY NEW LAWS

ANTI-FGM EFFORTS AT THE FEDERAL LEVEL

Bipartisan Cooperation is the Only Way Forward

In 2018, the presiding judge in *United States v. Nargarwala*, the first federal prosecution of an alleged FGM practitioner, deemed the federal anti-FGM law unconstitutional and key charges against the defendants were consequently dismissed. When the Department of Justice refused to defend the federal law, it seemed the movement to combat FGM would be defeated.

Throughout 2019, we supported efforts of congressional leaders attempting to restore the federal anti-FGM law and pushed for a bill that would fix its purported constitutional issues.

Despite barriers posed by political discord, we are determined to foster cooperation and consensus between members of both the Republican and Democratic parties. Our bipartisan approach comes with challenges, but we are confident that we can bridge the divide by stressing a joint responsibility to protect our girls from this human rights abuse.



George Zarubin (L), with Rep. Scott Perry at an event promoting anti-FGM policy in the U.S.

At the federal level, AHA Foundation:

Engaged in ongoing discussions with House Judiciary Committee staff, members of Congress, and political advocacy organizations to secure bipartisan support for a bill that would uphold the constitutionality of the federal anti-FGM law.

Consulted with our pro bono attorney at White & Case, LLP regarding amendments needed to strengthen the federal anti-FGM law and offered recommendations to the House Judiciary Committee.

Met with Sen. Joni Ernst, who led the 2019 Violence Against Women Act reauthorization effort for the Senate majority, to provide a briefing on FGM in the U.S. and recommend language for the reauthorization bill. This landmark legislation criminalizes violence against women but does not yet include FGM.



AHA Foundation Senior Director, Amanda Parker (white jacket), attending the ceremonial signing of one of the strongest anti-FGM bills in the country.

ANTI-FGM EFFORTS AT THE STATE LEVEL

AHA at the Helm of the Nationwide Effort

This year, AHA Foundation saw record legislative achievements and an increased interest among state lawmakers in ending FGM in the U.S.

The disappointments from the *Nagarwala* case drove much of the momentum behind state-level legislative initiatives and fueled the realization that no girl is safe until this practice is banned in all 50 states.

AHA Foundation remains at the helm of this nationwide effort. We worked in five of the seven states that passed FGM bans in

2019 and assumed a critical role by providing testimony, informational briefings, and statutory consultation.

Two states, Utah and Arkansas, based their bills directly on our model bill and now have some of the strongest legislative defenses against FGM in the country. Likewise, Tennessee used our recommended provisions and as a result, significantly increased the strength of its FGM ban.

At the state level, AHA Foundation:

ARKANSAS

- Spearheaded a legislative initiative with state Senator Breanne Davis, which resulted in the passage of one of the most comprehensive anti-FGM bills in the U.S.

UTAH

- Collaborated with former state representative Ken Ivory to lead the charge in criminalizing FGM; Utah now joins Arkansas, Tennessee, and Michigan in having one of the strongest bans in the country.

IDAHO

- Engaged in educational outreach and legislative advocacy, which supported the successful passage of the state's anti-FGM law.

PENNSYLVANIA

- Partnered with Representative Thomas Murt every year since 2013 to pass an anti-FGM bill; a ban was finally passed this year.
- Addressed audiences at the Zonta International 100th anniversary to discuss FGM in the U.S. and celebrate the organization's history of empowering women and children worldwide.

NORTH CAROLINA

- Advised Senator Joyce Krawiec throughout the legislative process for the state's newly passed anti-FGM law.

KENTUCKY

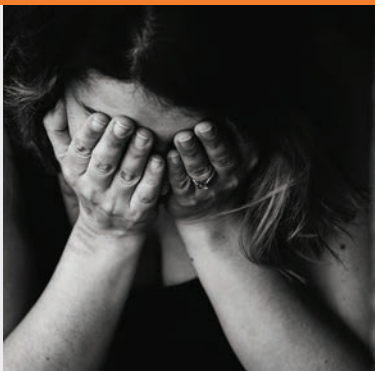
- Secured sponsorship for a 2020 anti-FGM bill from state Senator Julie Raque Adams; we also reached out to dozens of lawmakers and met with key members of legislative leadership to raise awareness and galvanize support.
- Facilitated in-person testimony from a local FGM survivor and addressed lawmakers at preliminary hearings with the Interim Joint Committee on Health, Welfare, and Family Services and the Interim Joint Committee on Judiciary to discuss FGM criminalization.

TENNESSEE

- Helped strengthen amendments to existing legislation: state legislators passed a bill to strengthen their anti-FGM law that was based on the AHA Foundation's state-by-state grading assessment and model bill.

WASHINGTON, D.C.

- Provided legislative consultation and discussed criminalization efforts with the lead policy advisor for an anti-FGM bill.



“Female genital mutilation is not something that just goes away. It is something a person will carry with them every day in some way... If it's never talked about, it's not going to end. Silence keeps the practice going until it is exposed to the light.”

— Jennifer, U.S. survivor of FGM

LAUNCHING A NATIONWIDE ANTI-FGM CAMPAIGN

Free Girls – Stop The Cut



Developments at the federal level have inspired AHA Foundation's newest campaign: Ban FGM in the U.S. by 2020. Throughout the year, we laid the groundwork for this effort—one designed to pass laws in the remaining 15 states that have failed to criminalize FGM.

To assist with this initiative, we developed a legislative toolkit that offers guidelines to lawmakers and advocates. It is a comprehensive resource for those who wish to strengthen existing legislation or pass anti-FGM bans in states that currently lack anti-FGM laws.



Amanda Parker (L) with former Utah state Representative Ken Ivory garnering support for anti-FGM laws in the U.S.

Collaboration with The American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)

AHA Foundation is working with the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a membership organization of state legislators and policy stakeholders, to promote our Ban FGM by 2020 campaign.

In cooperation with ALEC leadership, AHA Foundation has:

- ▶ Secured the adoption of our model FGM bill as the basis of ALEC's official model policy.
- ▶ Conducted a seminar where legislators from all states that lack FGM laws were brought in for a hands-on, in-depth workshop, with the ultimate goal of passing our model bill during the 2020 legislative session.
- ▶ Invited a U.S.-born FGM survivor to speak at the ALEC annual meeting. While there, she had the opportunity to share her story and call on lawmakers for urgent action to prevent this abuse from taking place in their respective states.

ENDING CHILD MARRIAGE IN THE U.S.

FEDERAL CHILD MARRIAGE EFFORTS

Revealing the Truth About the Child Marriage Loophole

AHA Foundation was the first to identify and alert authorities about loopholes in U.S. immigration law that have facilitated thousands of child marriages in the U.S.

Early in 2019, this effort culminated in the release of an investigative report by the Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs Committee that confirmed our

suspicions: 8,686 petitions involving minors were approved, and, 95% of the time, girls were the younger party involved.

Throughout this year, we actively advocated for legislation that would finally set a minimum age to sponsor or receive spousal or fiancé(e) immigration benefits.



This year, AHA Foundation:

- ➔ Advised U.S. Senators Ron Johnson (R-Wis.), Joni Ernst (R-Iowa), and Tom Cotton (R-Ark.) on legislation that would set a minimum marital age of 18 for visa applications.
- ➔ Provided Senator Johnson's office with title recommendations and draft language for the bill that highlighted the child protection aims of this initiative.
- ➔ Met with House Judiciary Committee staff and conducted ongoing bipartisan outreach among federal legislators to garner support for Sen. Johnson's bill and its companion bill in the House of Representatives.

STATE-LEVEL CHILD MARRIAGE EFFORTS

An Uphill Battle Filled with Unease

AHA Foundation has been advocating for every state to set a baseline age of 18 for marriage. To date only two, Delaware and New Jersey, have outlawed marriage before 18—this small number is a testament to the uphill battle we still face. Though challenges lie ahead, we remain dedicated to ending child marriage in the U.S. by our 2030 goal.



Senior Director Amanda Parker attends event protesting child marriage in Pennsylvania.

This year, AHA Foundation:

MARYLAND

Provided in-person and written testimony in support of SB 231 and written testimony for the partner bill, HB 855; both bills would outlaw child marriage in the state.

MASSACHUSETTS

Met with dozens of lawmakers and provided written testimony to encourage support of a child marriage ban. The bill passed in the Senate and awaits a hearing in the House Ways and Means Committee to continue its progress towards passage.

PENNSYLVANIA

Participated in a press conference and protest held by our sister organization, Unchained at Last, in support of bills HB360 and SB81 that would ban child marriage in the state of Pennsylvania. Both the House and Senate unanimously voted to pass their respective versions of the same bill, and one of the chambers must now act for this legislation to move forward.



"I should not have had to endure any of these situations, and we must put laws in place to protect children in the U.S. Federal legislation does not protect minors at all because it leaves the marriage age and exceptions in the hands of the states. By having different laws across different states, determined individuals can shop around and find a state that allows for child marriage, which is exactly what happened to me."

— Genevieve, Child marriage survivor

CRITICAL THINKING UNIT



CTU fellows with AHA staff, and human rights activist, Masih Alenijad (front row, fourth from right) at the 2019 training.

Our college campus program, Critical Thinking Unit (CTU), defends freedom of speech by promoting and encouraging critical thinking in higher education and amplifying the voices of ex-Muslims and Muslim reformers. Student fellows also use the fellowship to advocate for the rights of women and protections against FGM, honor violence, and child and forced marriage.



AYAAN HIRSI ALI ON WOMEN'S RIGHTS AND OPPRESSIVE CULTURES AT PEPPERDINE UNIVERSITY

After facing repeated attempts at being banned from speaking on U.S. college campuses, our founder was thrilled to address students at the Pepperdine School of Public Policy for an event titled *The (Transformative) Power of Women*. She described coming-of-age in a fundamentalist Muslim household, and stressed the importance of girls' education. She also emphasized the need to confront ideas and cultures that continue to oppress women and girls.

2019 CTU TRAINING

In August, CTU hosted their annual summer training for student fellows in Washington, D.C. The training gathered 14 students from top North American universities to hear from staff and guest speakers, Dr. Muhammad Fraser-Rahim of Quilliam and human rights activist Masih Alinejad.





IMPACT IN THE WORDS OF CTU FELLOWS

“Without access to funds, vetted speakers, and support, it can be extremely difficult for students to invite quality speakers to campus. CTU is an amazing opportunity to access a full package of support from professionals.”
 — **Andy, Portland State University, Fellow 2017-2018**



“We all know how awesome the CTU program is, but I would like to take a minute to thank the donors who provide financial support for the program. Thank you for allowing me to bring meaningful discussions to my college campuses. Also, thank you not only for showing me the potential I have to impact my community but also for allowing me to discover my true passions.”
 — **Adriana, American University, Fellow 2018-2019**

“One thing I love about CTU is the ability to meet activists like Faisal and Masih as well as passionate students from all over the country. It makes me feel like I am not alone in advocating for issues of human rights and free speech. I would like each donor to know that there is a dedicated group of students across North America working to help end harmful cultural practices, promoting civil dialogue and confronting extremism.”
 — **Mohamed, University of Rochester, Fellow 2018-Present**



“My favorite elements of CTU are the training, and network it cultivates. CTU ensures that we are taught about how advocacy can translate into physical change through anything from mobilization to legislative reform. Essential skills such as event planning and lessons from distinguished international fighters against ideological extremism are only some of the tools I’ve been equipped with and had reinforced since I joined the program.”
 — **Noam, York University, Fellow 2018-Present**

UNITING AND AMPLIFYING ACTIVISM AGAINST ISLAMISM



Seminar attendees from our Coalescing Networks to Combat Islamist Ideologies Seminar in Palo Alto, California.

After her bestselling book *Heretic* came out in 2015, Ayaan imagined making her vision a reality, one where voices of activists, Muslim reformers, and ex-Muslims are connected and amplified in the fight against Islamism, a dangerous ideology that threatens the Western civilization.

AHA Foundation took the first leap toward this vision by hosting the Coalescing Networks to Combat Islamist Ideologies

Seminar with the Hoover Institution at Stanford University in October this year. At the conclusion of the seminar, attendees felt like they were no longer lone voices, shouting into the wind, but rather, more connected to each other, focusing not on their differences, but on their shared goals and values. This affirmation will propel these brave visionaries to stand arm in arm to raise their voices together, even louder, to promote human rights and modern ideas.



Photo: Mike Myers

“These activists [Muslim reformers and ex-Muslims] ...these people are all shouting at the wind and the idea was, how do we bring them together? We are threatened, we have financial constraints, we have personal constraints, we are usually deplatformed, so we are not only speaking to the vision that we want to realize but we are also speaking to the experiences we’ve had...”

— Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Founder of AHA Foundation

IMPACT THROUGH MEDIA CAMPAIGNS

AHA Foundation is dedicated to shedding light on human rights abuses by bringing the stories of survivors and at-risk individuals to the forefront of public awareness. Alerting the general public through media engagement is pivotal in making progress and breathing life into the ideas that our founder has fought so tenaciously to defend. Through our outreach, hundreds of thousands across the globe have been informed on the issues of FGM, child and forced marriage, and the need to defend Western values.

This year, AHA Foundation was featured by a number of outlets including:

- ➔ ***The Louisville Courier-Journal, Part of the USA Today Network*** | Called for an FGM ban in Kentucky by co-authoring an op-ed with Kentucky state Senator Julie Raque Adams and a survivor who resides in the state.
- ➔ ***Wall Street Journal*** | In her op-ed in the Wall Street Journal, titled "Can Ilhan Omar Overcome Her Prejudice?", our founder, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, addressed the problem of Islamist anti-semitism.
- ➔ ***NBC News*** | Alerted the public about child marriage in the U.S. on two separate occasions.
- ➔ ***Detroit News*** | Made a statement to the Detroit News regarding the groundbreaking trial United States v. Nagarwala.
- ➔ ***Wyoming Public Radio, NPR Affiliate*** | Discussed the uptick in FGM criminalization in the U.S. and the lack of protective laws among Western states.
- ➔ ***Nightside with Dan Rea*** | Shared information about the child marriage visa loophole that has enabled thousands of child marriages in the U.S. and emphasized the urgent need for legislative action.
- ➔ ***Good Morning Cleveland, ABC News 5*** | Featured in recognition of the International Day of Zero Tolerance for Female Genital Mutilation (FGM).
- ➔ ***KUTV, CBS News Affiliate*** | Spoke about FGM and the effort by Utah state lawmakers to ban the practice within their borders.
- ➔ ***In-Sight Journal*** | Discussed the mental and physical health consequences of FGM, its prevalence across the globe, and the cultural facets of FGM.
- ➔ ***Womenace to Society Podcast*** | Appeared twice this year, once to alert about the dangers and reality of FGM in the U.S., and a second time to bring awareness to child marriage in the U.S.

DIRECT SERVICES, TRAININGS, AND OUTREACH

Our direct aid services to at-risk individuals remains one of the most crucial aspects of AHA Foundation's work.

In 2019, through our helpline, our team offered support to 38 women and girls seeking assistance. Most cases involved individuals facing the threat of forced marriage, FGM, or honor violence. Since AHA Foundation's inception, our team assisted 320 individuals in need of support.

These numbers represent only a tiny fraction of those still living in fear of these practices.

Women and girls deserve to live lives of dignity and affirmation, free from fear of abuse. This year, we empowered



medical staff, psychologists, police officers, and other professionals likely to encounter women and girls in danger with the information they need for culturally competent and effective responses.

Boise, Idaho

Traveled to Boise, Idaho to train, educate, and advocate for laws banning FGM and child marriage. We gave three presentations to frontline professionals and influential residents of Boise at the Faces of Hope Victim Center, including the Lt. Governor and the First Lady of Idaho.

Provided FGM education to over 200 medical professionals with the Central District Health Department and the Family Medicine Residency of Idaho.

Boston, Massachusetts

Educated a group of approximately 100 young women from around the world about FGM and other gender-based abuses at the Women2Women International Leadership Program.

New York, NY

Called for the ratification of the Equal Rights Amendment and condemned the Department of Justice's refusal to defend the federal FGM ban alongside activists and elected officials at a press conference with U.S. Representative Carolyn Maloney.

Brussels, Belgium

Participated in the 3D International Expert Meeting on Management and Prevention of Female Genital Mutilation/Cutting where experts from around the globe shared their expertise, research, and best practices approach to FGM.

San Diego, California

Trained therapists, school psychologists, and other professionals likely to encounter women and girls at risk of FGM at the Institute on Violence, Trauma and Abuse annual conference.

Washington, D.C.

Called for bipartisan cooperation to end child and forced marriage and FGM on a bipartisan panel for International Women's Day on Capitol Hill hosted by Concerned Women for America.

Educated attendees at a World Bank luncheon to encourage the use of the international financial institution's influence to combat child marriage.

"What do I say to girls who find themselves in a context where they do not have control? I would develop the strength of mind that you get up every morning, pull yourself by your bootstraps every morning; you have to think life is worth living; what you are developing with a strength of mind is a strength of character, because for those of us who are lucky enough to overcome that adversity we then have to come to the conclusion not to think of ourselves as victims but to think of ourselves as victors."

— Ayaan Hirsi Ali, Founder of AHA Foundation



LOOKING AHEAD – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

In 2020, we must continue to seize the day! Fifteen states do not have legislation banning female genital mutilation (FGM). We want to see 2020 as the year when every state in the country bans this practice! Once laws are in place, we also need to continue our efforts to collect data on where these incidents are occurring. We must train institutional stakeholders nationwide—doctors, school nurses, child protective services, law enforcement, and prosecutors—on how to help survivors and protect girls at risk.

Similarly, we must continue to fight for the rights of girls and women from child marriages and forced marriages. Last year, the first two states, New Jersey and Delaware, passed laws banning child marriage. We need to combat the dangerous ideas that perpetuate these abuses and support the dignity of girls and young women in our communities. We hope that these practices of FGM and child and forced marriage in the U.S. will be a thing of the past 10 years from now.

Ideas matter. So in 2020, we hope to increase our efforts bringing activists to speak at North American campuses to promote the rights of girls and women. We also will continue to defend freedom of speech and work with proponents of Islamic reform.

These are huge goals for a small non-profit like the AHA Foundation. Your gifts make these efforts possible. **CARPE DIEM!**



“Ideas matter. Laws matter. And advocacy for both state and federal protections can improve the circumstances for hundreds of thousands of women and girls around the U.S.”

— George Zarubin, Executive Director - AHA Foundation

DONOR SPOTLIGHT

LUCAS PRAKKE

Ever since Ayaan Hirsi Ali appeared on the political scene in Holland all these years ago she was daily in the [Dutch] news. I was astonished by the single-minded determination with which she pursued her agenda.... People like Ayaan don't fit in normal patterns but there have to be people like that.

I read several of her books, realized all that she has been through and hugely admired her courage. About seven years ago I decided to donate [each] year for the rest of my days. I am now 82 years old but I hope to be able to continue my contribution for a few more years.

— Lucas Prakke

ROELINA BERST

Roelina Berst and her late husband Dr. Charles Berst of Los Angeles, California, have been supporting the work of AHA Foundation and its founder, Ayaan Hirsi Ali, for almost ten years now. Together, they attended a book signing where they met Ayaan. After Charles passed in 2019, Roelina made a gift to AHA in loving memory of her husband.

Having roots in the Netherlands, Roelina felt connected to Ayaan and has admired her bravery to speak out against harmful cultural practices.

If I had to describe Ayaan in a few words they would be: brilliant, brave, and fearless. I am captivated by her mind and soul and her courage to speak up even when it's difficult. Her bravery to speak out against these harmful practices like FGM and child marriage, even in her youth, is riveting and inspiring to all. I am so proud to support her Foundation and their mission to end these practices in the U.S., and look forward to supporting them for many years to come.

— Roelina Berst



Photo: Mike Myers

ESTABLISHED BY AYAAN HIRSI ALI

to put the ideas she writes about into practice, the AHA Foundation is a 501(c)(3) nonprofit that works to protect women from honor violence, forced marriage and genital mutilation.

Our programs advocate for freedom of speech on campuses and in public debate, and amplify the voices of Muslim reformers.

Learn about AHA Foundation's work at TheAHAFoundation.org, stay in touch with the movement by signing up for our newsletter updates, and join our conversations about issues related to gender-based violence and oppression on Facebook and Twitter at [@AHAFoundation](https://www.facebook.com/AHAFoundation). Please encourage your friends and family to follow us as well.

Together, we can put an end to FGM, child and forced marriage, and other horrifying practices that are hurting women and girls behind closed doors in American communities. Together we can relegate dangerous ideologies that are often used to justify these abuses to the past.

JOIN US.

SUPPORT OUR WORK. GIVE A GIFT TODAY.



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