



**Rights4Girls** is a human rights organization dedicated to ending gender-based violence against young women and girls in the U.S. We advocate for the dignity and rights of young women and girls—so that every girl can be safe and live a life free of violence and exploitation.

Girls in the United States are subject to violence at alarming rates. One in four American girls will experience sexual violence by the age of 18. Girls aged 16 to 19 are four times more likely than others to be victims of rape, attempted rape, or sexual assault. And, nearly one in five women reports being subject to rape in her lifetime.

Sexual violence cuts across every boundary of race, ethnicity, and class. Yet for girls at the margins, the experience of sexual violence and the trauma that results often funnels girls into the juvenile justice system through a Sexual Abuse to Prison Pipeline. Girls are currently the fastest growing segment of the juvenile justice population and disturbingly, sexual abuse is a primary predictor for justice involvement in girls.

When we fail to recognize and appropriately address their trauma, we deny girls the protections afforded to other victims of sexual abuse. Too often, girls are criminalized for behaviors that are natural responses to trauma—behaviors such as running away or self-medicating through substance use. In the worst cases, they are arrested and detained for prostitution, despite being victims of child sex trafficking.

It is imperative to frame violence against women and girls in the U.S. within a human rights context. Comparable rates of gendered violence in Africa, Latin America, and Asia have warranted a human rights movement giving voice and visibility to women and girls. Now is the time for a similar human rights approach to highlight the conditions of sexual violence, exploitation, rape, and trafficking in the U.S. Gendered violence in the U.S., like gendered violence abroad, restricts women and girls' rights and the realization of their full potential and dignity. Rights4Girls strives to make the lives of American young women and girls a human rights priority.

## **Our Work**

We achieve policy change through education, engagement, and movement building. We focus on policy because we believe in transformational change for girls. When policies are improved for girls and young women, the impact is sweeping, enduring, and generational. Policy reform does not just help one girl—it provides recognition in law to ensure safety and support to thousands of abused and exploited girls.

## **Our Goals and Objectives**

- Advance public policy that protects the dignity and rights of young women and girls, especially those from vulnerable communities.
- Develop public awareness and media campaigns to give visibility to gendered violence in the U.S.
- Create global partnerships with international human rights and women's rights organizations to include the experience of violence against young women and girls in the U.S.
- Dismantle the sexual abuse to prison pipeline for girls, particularly girls of color.
- End domestic child sex trafficking and the sexual exploitation of young women.
- Improve conditions of confinement for girls and young women in the juvenile and criminal justice systems.