



rights4girls

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Dear Friends,

We hope you continue to stay safe and healthy during this unprecedented time. As you know, COVID-19 has hit us all in unexpected ways, yet our advocacy on behalf of vulnerable girls and young women continues at full speed. This includes prioritizing our work to respond to the urgent needs arising from the current health crisis. Check out some highlights of our recent work below:

## Disrupting the Abuse to Prison Pipeline

We're thrilled to report that we've **succeeded in obtaining the release of almost all detained children from DC's juvenile detention centers**—where they were at increased risk of contracting COVID-19. Through our advocacy with the Youth Justice Project (YJP) coalition, we're continuing to push beyond this victory in hopes of securing the release of all committed children in the District.

In addition to advocating for the release of children from prisons, both in DC and across the country, we're also pushing for improved conditions like better access to food, water, meaningful education, and quality medical care for those who remain incarcerated. Rights4Girls is **directly meeting the needs of vulnerable youth** by providing books, games, and portable DVD players to children who remain locked up—most of whom are currently held isolation for up to 23 hours per day.

Finally, we are also **supporting the release of incarcerated trafficking survivors**. As part of this advocacy, we were honored to support a petition for the release of Patrice Smith, a 21-year-old young woman currently serving 25-years-to-life in New York for protecting herself from a 71-year-old man who paid to rape her when she was only 16.



R4G team members participating in the #FreeOurYouth campaign to push for the release of incarcerated children from prison.

## Centering Girls' Voices & Engaging Youth

This Spring, the DC Girls' Coalition (DCGC), co-convened by Rights4Girls and Black Swan Academy, **hosted virtual youth forums** that provided girls and gender-fluid young people in DC an opportunity to speak out on issues of importance to them. In March, we co-hosted a COVID-19 virtual town hall where **over 200 attendees tuned in to hear girls voice their needs and identify the barriers they are facing due to the pandemic**. As a result of this critical event, DC Mayor Muriel Bowser and the DC City Council received a list of recommendations which they can follow to address the specific needs of girls of color in DC. The girls also posted [videos](#) online describing their experiences during the pandemic and why they support the Girls' Coalition policy [agenda](#). To learn more and stay engaged with the DC Girls' Coalition, sign up for our [newsletter](#).

Due to the pandemic, we have moved our *Life of Girls* workshop series, in partnership with the Georgetown Law Juvenile Justice Initiative, to a digital platform. **Through weekly virtual check-ins, we provide girls a safe space to discuss challenges or needs in their lives or communities during this challenging time** and connect them to valuable resources. In addition to exploring creative ways to engage youth virtually, we have been reprioritizing staff time to **provide mentorship, advocacy, and support to individual girls** who no longer have access to school counselors and other community supports.



The DC Girls' Coalition Youth Advisory Board discussing coalition policy recommendations.

## Building Awareness Around Gender Violence

This spring we continued to educate policymakers and the public around issues ranging from sex trafficking, the abuse-to-prison pipeline, and the rise in child abuse and family violence to audiences around the country and the globe. Over the past three months, our team has conducted presentations and trainings that **reached over 1,500 youth, communities, and practitioners.**

We were also grateful to partner with the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation to **inform their most recent work highlighting the systemic inequities that fuel the sex trafficking of Black women and girls.** The new report, [\*Black Women and Girls: Sex Trafficking in the U.S.\*](#) cites much of our resources and work while offering key policy recommendations to end this violence.



Cherice Hopkins of Rights4Girls, a Now & Next Speakers Series presenter.

## What are the historical effects of the sex trade on women and girls of color? Let's discuss.

R4G's Cherice Hopkins presented on the legacies of racial and gender violence that fuel the trafficking of girls of color today for the WorldWE speaker series. Watch the recording [here](#).

## Supporting Our Local Community

Throughout the pandemic, we have made it a priority to support our frontline partners in meeting the immediate needs of vulnerable young people in our community. To date, we have **contributed funds to support DC girls and their families with basic needs, provided food and snacks to trafficking survivors, furnished clothing to DC youth in group homes, and purchased goods to support incarcerated youth** in DC. If you would like to join us in these efforts, please consider contributing to the following trusted partners:

- To help meet the basic needs of child trafficking survivors in the DMV region, support our friends at [Courtney's House](#), DC's only survivor-led program serving trafficked and exploited youth.

- For in-kind donations or funds for the provision of food, cleaning supplies, laptops, baby supplies, and other essential items to **young women and girls in DC**, please email Kaya at [klowery@blackswanacademy.org](mailto:klowery@blackswanacademy.org).

As always, our work would not be possible without your support. [Please consider making a gift](#) to help us continue our critical work and advocacy on behalf of vulnerable young women and girls.

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