



AVOKAT FEMINIS

As an attorney with the Bureau des Avocats Internationaux (BAI), I work to make Haiti's justice system protect and support women and girls who are victims of sexual violence through legal proceedings.

I also educate and train women's rights organizations about related issues. I came to this work because I grew up watching my father doing violence to my mother; he later raped me. Mine is the experience of many women and girls in Haiti, who are sexually and otherwise harmed every day with impunity and in the complicit silence of our society. Like many others, I was not supported. Instead, I experienced and internalized social stigma and

But silence empowers abusers and isolates victims.

So I learned to talk about what I experienced as a violent harm that must be actively confronted, and I sought a law degree so that I could help others, especially those who are most marginalized, in that fight. I joined BAI in 2017 and now fight every day to advance women's rights and support victims of gender-based violence.





Haiti is facing a difficult crisis right now, which is the product of a system that is socially unjust, economically unequal, and politically unstable. If we want things to get better, we need to radically change our society and this cannot be done without eliminating violence against women and girls and confronting macho, patriarchal values.



For that, we need more and better forums where victims of violence and other gendered harms can safely share their stories and seek support and restitution,

and so that we can thereby educate and transform our communities to firmly establish that women and girls have the right to be free from violence, to work, and to participate in public and political life equally and without fear. And we cannot just pay lip service to these goals on symbolic days like these days of action or International Women's Day; or satisfy ourselves with joining conventions or legislating quotas which remain unimplemented fig leaves for the grave harms directed at Haitian women and girls. We need to openly discuss and confront these injustices.

- ME ABIGAÏL DEROLIAN