



## Do They Hear You When You Cry?

*Fauziya Kassindja*

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# Do They Hear You When You Cry?

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## **Do They Hear You When You Cry?** Fauziya Kassindja

The story of Fauziya Kassindja, who fled her African homeland to escape female genital mutilation and forced polygamy. Fauziya's progressive father had shielded her from the tribal practice of polygamy and female genital mutilation in Togo, Africa, but when he died in 1993, everything changed. At the age of 17, she was forced to marry a much older man who already had three wives, and to undergo preparation for female genital mutilation without any painkillers or antibiotics. Days before the ritual was to take place, Fauziya's sister helped her escape to Germany, and from there she travelled to the United States seeking political asylum. When she arrived in the US she was stripped, shackled and imprisoned for 16 months by the Immigration and Naturalization Service. Layli Miller Bashir, a second-year law student assigned to Fauziya's case, found a broken, emaciated girl who had been shuffled from prison to prison, was suffering from an untreated bleeding ulcer, had been subjected to several strip searches, and denied the right to follow her daily religious practices. She enlisted law professor, Karen Musalo, an expert in refugee law, who assembled a team to fight on Fauziya's behalf. Fauziya was finally granted asylum on 13 June 1996, a landmark decision.

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