

Shalini Konanur

**Executive Director
South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario**

Shalini Konanur is the Executive Director and a lawyer at the South Asian Legal Clinic of Ontario (SALCO). Shalini oversees SALCO's litigation, advocacy and outreach on issues that impact low-income South Asian Ontarians. Shalini is also a steering committee member of the Colour of Poverty – Colour of Change campaign that focuses on public advocacy on the racialization of poverty and the intersection of race and gender as they impact women in Canada. Shalini's own legal practice also focuses on issues of gender-based violence, including forced marriage, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, and elder abuse.

Shalini graduated from Osgoode Hall Law School in 1998 and was called to the Bar in Ontario in 2000. Shalini has spent her entire legal career working in Ontario's robust legal clinic system. She started her career at the Renfrew County Legal Clinic, serving rural and remote populations in North Eastern Ontario. She then moved on to work at the Mississauga Community Legal Clinic, where she was hired to start the clinic's immigration practice and to do outreach to racialized communities. In 2008, Shalini became SALCO's Executive Director, shortly after it received funding to become a legal clinic from Legal Aid Ontario. She has worked alongside her dedicated colleagues, board, and volunteers to make SALCO a powerful voice for racialized women.

Shalini currently sits on the Provincial Roundtable on Violence Against Women, where experts provide input into government programs, legislation, etc... that advance the rights of victims of violence. Shalini is also the current Vice-Chair of the Board of Directors of Sandgate Women's Shelter (York Region), who serves women and children fleeing domestic violence. At the federal level, Shalini is actively involved in advocacy for stronger protections within immigration for women facing abuse, stronger protections for people facing forced marriage, and in pushing for a both a gender and race framework for government decision making.

SALCO celebrates its 10th anniversary as a legal clinic in 2017. In the past 10 years SALCO has become a critical voice on issues of equality for vulnerable and marginalized Ontarians. SALCO is a national leader on the issue of forced marriage in Canada, including the only report on the incidence of forced marriage in Canada. Through its forced marriage project, Shalini and other colleagues have trained thousands of Canadians on forced marriage, and have worked with governments to introduce policies and protections for forced marriage. Through test case work and advocacy SALCO has lobbied for equality rights based on gender, race, religion, and immigration status (www.salco.on.ca), including the right to wear niqab in court settings.

Shalini is a past recipient of the South Asian Bar Association's Female Lawyer of the Year award, the Canadian Bar Association's Legal Aid Leader award, and the Social Service Network's Impact in Family Violence award. Shalini feels privileged to be supported by SALCO as she continues her advocacy and legal work on issues of women's equity and equality.

