



Freedom Network USA

LEADERSHIP TEAM

JEAN BRUGGEMAN
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Jean Bruggeman is the Executive Director of Freedom Network USA. Most recently, Jean served as a Human Trafficking Fellow with the **Office for Victims of Crime** within the **US Department of Justice**. She supported OVC's efforts to improve and expand access to legal and social services for crime victims, provided training and technical assistance to service providers and government agencies nationwide, and supported OVC's intergovernmental efforts to improve services for victims of human trafficking. Jean provided leadership in the development of the **Federal Strategic Action Plan for Services to Victims of Human Trafficking in the United States**, the first OVC **Human Trafficking Survivor Forum**, and the OVC video series "**The Faces of Human Trafficking**."

Jean has 20 years of victim services experience and expertise in nonprofit management, language access, immigration, human trafficking, and domestic violence. She has developed comprehensive legal and social services programs for survivors, provided direct legal representation to survivors, authored training resources, developed an interpreter service to ensure access to legal services in the District of Columbia, and served as the Interim Executive Director of **Ayuda** in Washington, DC.

She is a graduate of the **Georgetown University Law Center** and **Bryn Mawr College** and is a member of the DC and Maryland (inactive) bar associations.

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MELINDA SMITH

DIRECTOR OF
PARTNERSHIPS



Melinda Smith currently serves as the Director of Partnerships for Freedom Network USA. Melinda is responsible for fostering relationships with key stakeholders to increase organizational capacity, and for positioning Freedom Network USA as a thought leader in the anti-trafficking movement. She previously served as the organization's National Coordinator.

Prior to this, she worked on social issues related to women's health and language access for those with limited English proficiency.

She received a master's degree in social work (MSW) from the **University at Buffalo** and an undergraduate degree in political science.

KAREN ROMERO

DIRECTOR,
FREEDOM NETWORK
TRAINING INSTITUTE



Karen Romero joined Freedom Network USA with a history in direct service provision and program management in the areas of human rights, including violence against women and immigrant rights. The **Freedom Network Training Institute** develops and delivers high-quality training and technical assistance to human trafficking programs on access to housing for human trafficking survivors.

Karen is a native Spanish speaker who worked with survivors of sexual assault as a bilingual therapist at Utah's **Rape Crisis Center**. She went on to direct the **Women in Jeopardy Program** at the **YWCA**, a residential program for victims of domestic violence, and later served as the Social Services Director for **Ayuda** in the DC metropolitan area. Most recently Karen worked at **Polaris** on the strategic initiative to address the sex trafficking of women and girls from Latin America.

She received her master's degree in psychology from the **University of Utah**.