



# Ask Arita



Preventing crime, protecting the public and helping those in need



## Trapped in an abusive family

**Dear Arita**

**I'm at breaking point.** I've been married for five years to a man I hate. I live with him and our three children in his mother and father's house. I do all of the cooking and washing and am treated like dirt. I never wanted to marry him in the first place but I did not want to shame my parents and so went along with the marriage. I can't tell my parents how unhappy I am as I don't want them to feel guilty as they found my husband for me, and my father-in-law is very well respected within the community. I want to escape this house but there's nowhere I can go as once I leave I'm an outcast. I've never had a job and don't have access to any money. My children are all babies and I don't want this life for them when they are older. I'm crying writing this as I don't know who to turn to.

*Anonymous, Coventry*

**ARITA SAYS** Your marriage happened

before forced marriage became a criminal offence in June 2014 but that is clearly what has happened to you. However, it sounds as if you may be suffering from domestic servitude, which is where victims are forced to carry out housework and domestic chores in private households with little or no pay, with restricted movement. There are so many things that can be done to support both you and your children and to help you leave this situation. Karma Nirvana have volunteers on their help line, many of whom have been in similar situations to you, and have rebuilt their lives and that of their children. If you stay, you risk suffering mental health problems and lack of liberty as well as exposing your children to unhealthy relationships. Please contact the police who will assist you and your children to leave safely, and will guide you to support agencies who can help shape your future.

## Forced to move on while I'm grieving for the love of my life!

**Dear Arita**

**I am 30 and recently widowed.** 10 years ago my parents arranged the marriage between me and my husband and it was a great match and we were blissfully happy. After he passed away I moved back home and my parents started talking to me about getting married again – so soon after my husband's death! They said they had found the perfect man for me – a 50 year old friend of my dad's! I'm outraged as I don't want to get married again and I'm still grieving for my husband. I understand that they are getting old and they want security for me when they are gone, but I don't want to marry this man. My parents are mentioning it every day and pressuring me to change my mind. Apart from trying to guilt me into agreeing to marry this old man, they've been good to me and have taken care of me my whole life. I'm torn between worrying for my own freedom and loyalty to my family.

*Alisha, Birmingham*

**ARITA SAYS** Alisha, I am so sorry for your

loss and it is incredibly sad that your grieving process is being overshadowed by the pressure that your parents are putting on you to remarry. You have had a really successful arranged marriage to your late husband, where all parties were clearly consenting, but what your parents are now trying to do is to force you to marry a man without your true consent. I see by your words that you desperately love your family and they have been wonderful parents but what they are doing now is wrong. Many parents worry about their children and what will happen to them when they pass away themselves, and they see marriage as a means of reassuring them that their children will be looked after when they have gone. However, what they are doing is against the law and can have sinister consequences for you such as sexual assault and domestic abuse. For more help and support please contact your local police who will guide you through your options and put you in touch with other agencies who can support you.

## Arita's photo story

DAY 5



### FM facts!

Forced marriage affects a wide range of communities. There are no religions which support or advocate the practice of forced marriage. Forced marriage can happen to anyone from any background, regardless of social class, financial status and sexuality.

## CHANGE OF HEART IS BREAKING UP MY FAMILY

**Dear Arita**

**When I was 15 I went abroad on a family trip where I met my cousin and agreed to get engaged to him.** My parents and aunties and uncles all seemed so happy I just couldn't say no. At the time I was okay with it. I've been engaged now for three years and I no longer want to marry my cousin. When I told my parents they were very angry; my mum slapped me and my dad told me that I would bring disgrace to my family if I don't go through with it. I'm scared and I don't know what to do. If I don't do it and they kick me out I don't know where I'll go. I love my parents but I just can't see myself marrying someone I don't love.

*Leila, Walsall*

**ARITA SAYS** Leila, you were a child when you got engaged and clearly just went along with the arrangement to please your family and didn't really think about the long term consequences. Three years on and the reality of the situation has hit you and you no longer want the marriage to take place. It is likely that you have nothing in common with your cousin who is probably a stranger to you. Your parents are committing a number of offences against you including forced marriage and assault. You must tell the police what is happening straight away and they will give you immediate support and guidance to prevent this marriage from happening and to keep you safe.

### Need Help?

If you are worried about forced marriage, please call West Midlands Police on 101 or 999 in an emergency.

### Charities of the week

If you're at risk of forced marriage or scared you might be there are so many places you can go to seek help. This week we're highlighting:

#### CRASAC (Coventry Rape and Sexual Abuse Centre)

Coventry based charity CRASAC provide free and confidential support for victims of sexual abuse, from staff who understand the values of different cultures. They offer support through counselling and a crisis and advocacy service.

**Web:** <http://www.crasac.org.uk/>

**Tel:** 02476 277777

#### Coventry Haven

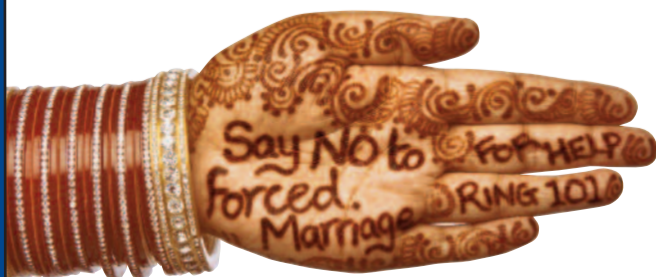
Local charity Coventry Haven offer support to women and their children experiencing all

forms of domestic abuse including forced marriage, honour based abuse and FGM (female genital mutilation),

**Web:** [www.coventryhaven.co.uk](http://www.coventryhaven.co.uk)

**Tel:** 02476 444077

It's not culture...



...it's crime

For help call 101

