

*What's Next for Voices4Change
advocate: Kelsey McKay, founder of
RESPOND Against Violence*

**A Note
from Hope
Katz Gibbs,
publisher,**



**Inkandescent Women magazine,
and Filmmaker Tracy Schott, founder
Voices4Change and host of the
Voices4Change Radio Show — We are so
happy to introduce you to truly amazing Kelsey**

McKay, a highly recognized national expert on criminal asphyxiation in the context of sexual and interpersonal violence, child abuse, and human trafficking.

She is also the president and CEO of **RESPOND Against Violence**, an organization that integrates the experience of individuals, communities, and systems to improve the collective response to violence and trauma.

“After decades of work on the front lines, RESPOND was established to



fill identified gaps in the system that impede justice, healing, and advancement of reform,” says the former prosecutor in Travis County, Texas, who worked exclusively to prosecute

strangulation related crimes. “We are committed to providing tools to assist practitioners and facilitate a survivor’s experience with the systems designed to protect them.”



Today: Kelsey now trains and consults nationally to implement sustainable protocols and strengthen how communities collaborate, investigate, treat and prosecute strangulation and cases ranging from intimate partner violence, human trafficking, sexual assault, child abuse, and homicide. And, she serves on multiple faculties, advisory boards, and committees.

“When my daughter was raped and murdered, I knew I had to do something. Starting a non-profit to address the issues which ultimately led to her murder was the direction I decided to take. I knew nothing about the system I hoped we could help change. And then I met Kelsey McKay, founder of RESPOND. Kelsey’s knowledge and institutional insight have proven invaluable in building our non-profit. Her experience, familiarity with barriers, and her ability to translate complexities helped us make true progress. I am forever grateful for RESPOND’s collaboration on the work we do.”

Learn more:

- Click here to learn more about **RESPOND** Against Violence.

- Learn what Kelsey is doing at [McKay Training & Consulting here](#)
- Be sure to listen to Tracy's podcast interview with Kelsey on the [Inkandescent Radio Network](#) at [Voices4ChangeRadio.com](#) — Live on Facebook, Tuesday, January 19 at noon EST.
- *Please scroll down for Kelsey's responses to our 4 questions: What's Next for RESPOND.*

What's Next for Texas Prosecutor and Women's Advocate Kelsey McKay, founder, RESPOND Against Violence.

[An interview with Hope Katz Gibbs & Cynthia de Lorenzi, authors, Your What's Next Journal](#)

Hope & Cynthia:
Tell us about your
business/industry
and where it was
before the pandemic
hit in March 2020.

Kelsey: Before the
pandemic,
consumption of my
product, which is
training law
enforcement,

prosecutors, advocates, and other practitioners
in criminal justice, required in-person training.
To meet that need, I traveled non-stop across the
country to train at conferences, police
departments, and a variety of other forums. So,
a large part of my time was moving from one



place to another to distribute information and engage different practitioners in the criminal legal community. It was exhausting and invigorating all at the same time. It was mostly chaotic as I tried to balance my time and the constant demand for consultation on cases with my desire to create forward movement.

**Hope &
Cynthia:
Where were
you
personally in
your life
when
COVID-19**



arrived in the US? What were your short and long-term goals at that time?

Kelsey: My personal life struggled as I did my best to balance being a mom of two young kids, a marriage, the demands of my career, another family business, and my constant lack of presence. At the time, my short-term goal was survival, both financially and physically. My long-term goal, which the pandemic has actually accommodated, was to create a virtual on-demand training platform so that more practitioners could have access to high-quality, forward-thinking training on topics related to domestic violence, sexual assault, and trauma.

By having an on-demand library, I hoped that I could provide basic training on topics like strangulation and domestic violence while allowing myself to expand into different areas and grow as a problem-solver. Many amazing programs solve the specific and difficult

challenges that practitioners encounter when they work with victims who need help to navigate the criminal system after experiencing violence or trauma. I want to help integrate those programs into communities to help victims experience the criminal system and enable law enforcement to better communicate with those victims.

Hope & Cynthia: What are your thoughts now about your industry, your business, your personal life, your heart?

Kelsey: Depending on how we define “my industry”—which I consider criminal justice—it’s a broken system. I hope that my participation in finding solutions will change this, but it’s a long game and a costly investment both emotionally, financially, and

psychologically. My personal life and heart are full, having tucked my children into bed almost every night for a year. The space that COVID provided between me and the rest of the world that was constantly grabbing at me has been nice and finally provided the acceptance and perspective that I need a better balance. I've been with my parents, which has been a gift and a challenge all in one. My hardest fight has been to bring self-care into my daily routine



without using guilt as a justification to ignore myself.

**Hope & Cynthia: Now the big question —
What do you see coming next?**

Kelsey:

- **For your industry:** A wave of unity and unison of survivors and supporters demanding change, accountability, and transparency from a system that has crushed them for so long. I hope to advance the conversation to a place where people don't have to pick between police and underserved populations. I want the voices of victims and survivors to be heard and for policies and curriculums to integrate those needs into the criminal justice response design.

- **For your company:** A transition into a more virtually based platform that can provide on-demand access to training that provides solutions to practitioners who work in the field. I also grew to RESPOND Against Violence—a non-profit think-tank that gathers the best programs and influences in the field to advance the world of criminal justice.
- **For yourself:** Committing to exercise, health, and to be more narrowly focused on goals. Specifically, to permit me to jump into projects that feed me and fuel a better world for those around me. To never stay stagnant, but to also remember that I need to rest.
- **For the country:** We can learn to talk with each other to recognize that we are all better

together. We must learn to have difficult conversations about topics so ingrained in our people. I hope that every person can find another human they trust and love, and talk through a disagreement about our Country respectfully. Understanding where others come from is key to bringing people together.

- **For the world:** I hope our world will become less scary and that we can get to know and appreciate different cultures. I grew up in a developing country, and it provided such incredible insight into happiness and hope.
- **For women:** I want to help women recognize the role that gender plays in our world and impacts our lives. I want women to be safe, have choices and feel protected by a system that is set up against them. I want to talk about everyday challenges, like motherhood

and work-life balance, and connect women that feel isolated to a world of support.

Hope & Cynthia: One more question — now tell us the one question we didn't ask you — and give us your response.

What are the things that you do to find peace in this difficult industry?

Kelsey: Lately, learning to use watercolors— which gives me pauses of peace and beauty.