

# SARA J. TONCHI

Atlanta, Georgia | [sara@sarattonchi.com](mailto:sara@sarattonchi.com)

## Transformational Leader and Social Justice Advocate

Engaging and visionary leader with a national reputation for advancing organizational impact and effectiveness. Brings over two decades of experience in the nonprofit and social justice sectors, with a lifelong passion for helping leaders and organizations achieve their highest potential. Known for an open mind, tenacious spirit, and a collaborative style. Expert at guiding organizations through growth, change, and transformation with clarity, resilience, and purpose.

Team Building & Facilitation | Executive Coaching | Strategic Planning | Fundraising & Philanthropy  
Partnerships with Unlikely Allies | Public Policy | Research | Problem Solver | Board Development & Governance  
Public Speaking | Crisis Management | Communications | Racial Justice | Finance & Budgeting

## AWARDS AND HIGHLIGHTS

2019-2022	"500: Our City's Most Powerful Leaders," Atlanta Magazine
2018	"Commitment to Equality Award," State Bar of Georgia's Committee to Promote Inclusion
2012-2018	"Notable Georgian," Georgia Trend
2015	"Top Ten New Guard of Atlanta," Atlanta Magazine
2014-2015	"Top 100 Influential Georgia Women," Georgia Informer
2012	"40 Under 40," Atlanta Business Chronicle
2012	Leadership Atlanta Class of 2012, The oldest sustained community leadership program in the US.
2011	"Five of the Future," Atlanta Magazine
2010	"40 Under 40," Georgia Trend

## PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

### FOUNDING PARTNER | LUNOOR CONSULTING & SARA TONCHI, LLC

Jan 2022 – present

Independent consultant for nonprofit organizational strategy, development, and leadership. Provides bespoke services to a portfolio of racial and social justice leaders and organizations. Specializing in organizational, board, and leadership development; transition navigation support; strategic planning; and political and public policy advocacy. Some projects/clients have included:

- **Georgia Justice Funders Table, Grantmakers for Southern Progress & Public Welfare Foundation:** The Table is a new initiative that convening local and national funders and donors to collaborate and invest in unprecedented ways to build a new and better Georgia. [Read my report.](#)
- **Senior Advisor, Stacey Abrams for Governor:** Served as senior strategist in executive leadership of the campaign, overseeing four departments. Led research and policy, directing a team of lawyers and researchers responsible for public policy, opposition research, vetting, and disinformation tracking. Piloted creation of candidate's policy platforms, partnering with Georgians statewide with issue expertise and direct experience. Spearheaded debate preparation for candidate, including overseeing development and integrity of all debate research, messaging, and mock debate practice.
- **Executive Coach:** Provides hands on support and leadership and strategic coaching to executive directors and senior organizational leaders in social justice organizations working for climate justice, justice reform, and to advance leadership of justice-impacted people.
- Clients in 2024-25 include Georgia Youth Justice Coalition, Asian Pacific Institute on Gender-Based Violence, New Disabled South, Georgia Budget & Policy Institute, Women on the Rise, Feminist Center for Reproductive Liberation, and more.

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR | Southern Center for Human Rights (SCHR)

Jan 2010 – Dec 2021

*The Southern Center for Human Rights works for equality, dignity, and justice for people impacted by the criminal legal system in the Deep South. SCHR fights for a world free from mass incarceration, the death penalty, the criminalization of poverty, & racial injustice.*

**ORGANIZATIONAL LEADER:** Transformed the 45-year-old organization into a highly reputed, mission-driven non-profit, setting the bar for excellence as the first non-lawyer to head the firm. Built a local, regional, and national network of top legal professionals, corporate executives, elected officials, community leaders, and donors aligned with mission and vision.

**STRATEGIC CHANGEMAKER:** Impacted the entire non-profit ecosystem in the Atlanta area. Identified critical human rights challenges and opportunities to grow SCHR's influence dramatically, while expanding the scope of legal and social services available to clients. Served as a key spokesperson to the media and policymakers.

**PROGRAM DRIVER:** Led efforts with executive team, board of directors, donors, and community stakeholders to drive alignment, scalability, and deliverables. Partnered with local and national organizations to help influence policies and provide case-specific information. Testified on public policies to elected officials at local, state, and federal levels.

**TEAMBUILDER:** Recruited and developed top talent and built a culture of long-term retention, while sustainably doubling staff from 20 to 45+. Oversaw staff performance, collaboration, training, and alignment with organizational values and racial justice.

**SKILLFUL FUNDRAISER:** Grew budget from \$2M to \$5M+, breaking fundraising goals year-over-year for 11 straight years. Earned a “4-Star Charity Navigator” rating for nine consecutive years (less than 5% of nonprofits get eight or more 5-star ratings). Built partnerships with foundations, Fortune 500 corporations, and large private law firms to help drive awareness and donations.

**PARTNERSHIP DEVELOPER:** Secured multi-year funding to establish SCHR’s first sub-granting program to key coalition partners. Cultivated community involvement and donations with influential presentations. Drove organizational awareness to secure pro bono partnerships. Promoted community leadership and engagement within SCHR’s team.

**INDUSTRY INNOVATOR:** Trained and lectured on local and national platforms on criminal legal reform priorities, the death penalty, mass incarceration, the criminalization of poverty, and the intersections of race, poverty, and justice.

**LARGE-SCALE PROJECT MANAGEMENT:** Led the planning, management, and negotiations for a \$4.2M commercial real estate purchase and a \$2M sale. Developed and directed execution of SCHR’s 5-year strategic plan.

## **PUBLIC POLICY DIRECTOR | SOUTHERN CENTER FOR HUMAN RIGHTS**

**May 2001 – Dec 2009**

SCHR’s inaugural Public Policy Director. Represented SCHR at the Georgia General Assembly on a full range of criminal justice and public safety initiatives. Built the organization’s credibility as a national leader and innovator in public policy. Served as SCHR’s spokesperson for cases and campaigns, including class actions, death penalty litigation, the criminalization of poverty, and race discrimination. Directed legislative advocacy, communications, coalition engagement, and outreach to unlikely allies including survivors of crime, law enforcement, prosecutors, and conservatives. Developed and executed a multi-faceted strategy (including litigation, communications, legislative advocacy) that culminated in the passage of the *2003 Georgia Indigent Defense Act*, which created a statewide public defender system for the first time in Georgia.

## **SELECT LEADERSHIP AND COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT**

<b>Inaugural Chair of Advisory Board</b> , Motherhood Beyond Bars (Georgia)	2024 to Present
<b>Member</b> , Square One Collaborative on Reckoning and Justice	2023 to Present
<b>Vice Chair</b> , Parkside Elementary School PTA	2023 to Present
<b>Founding Advisory Board</b> , New Disabled South	2022 to Present
<b>Commissioner</b> , US Senators Raphael Warnock and Jon Ossoff’s Federal Nominations Advisory Commission	2021 to Present
<b>Advisory Board</b> , Institute to End Mass Incarceration at Harvard Law School	2021 to Present
<b>Chair of the Board of Directors</b> , The Promise of Justice Initiative (Louisiana)	2019 to Present
<b>Board Member</b> , Motherhood Beyond Bars (Georgia)	2018 to 2023
<b>Member</b> , GO Team at Parkside Elementary School (elected position)	2021 to 2023
<b>Vice Chair of the Board of Directors</b> , re:power (National)	2018 to 2022
<b>Advisory Board</b> , American Constitution Society, Georgia Lawyer’s Chapter	2010 to 2021
<b>Advisory Council</b> , National Institute for Trial Advocacy	2017 to 2019
<b>Chairperson</b> , Georgians for Alternatives to the Death Penalty	2008 to 2010
<b>Steering Committee</b> , International Arab Women’s Solidarity Association	2000 to 2010

## **SELECT PUBLICATIONS AND PODCAST APPEARANCES**

<a href="#">The High Crime of Being Poor in the Deep South, <i>The Women Podcast</i></a>	2021
<a href="#">The Criminalization of Poverty, <i>Justice in America Podcast Episode 12</i></a>	2019
<a href="#">Opinion: Disenfranchising [People with Felony Convictions] Hurts Georgians, <i>Atlanta Journal Constitution</i></a>	2019
<a href="#">Criminal justice reform in Georgia cannot end with Governor Deal, <i>Atlanta Magazine</i></a>	2018
<a href="#">Why Georgia’s most important decision on Election Day isn’t Trump or Clinton, <i>Atlanta Magazine</i></a>	2016
<a href="#">Five Things Wrong with Georgia’s Death Penalty, <i>The Marshall Project</i></a>	2015

## **EDUCATION AND TRAINING**

**Bachelor of Science in Family and Community Services and Women’s Studies | BERRY COLLEGE, Rome, GA**  
**Strengthening Democracy Fellow, 2017 | ROCKWOOD LEADERSHIP INSTITUTE**