

# WOMAN OF THE YEAR 2008



## Krishna Patel

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### CONNECTICUT

Thanks to Krishna Patel's work with other federal prosecutors and law enforcement officials, the dangerous leader of a sex-trafficking ring now faces nearly a quarter century in prison.

Patel helped prosecute the case of Corey Davis, who pleaded guilty in March to having prostituted five girls, the youngest only 12 years old. Davis allegedly promised the girls modeling contracts and then forced them to work as strippers and prostitutes. And his tactics were brutal: He allegedly punished one victim by slashing her with a box cutter and another by shoving a pistol into her mouth.

But Patel, an assistant U.S. attorney for Bridgeport, Connecticut, has proved just as tough, only on the right side of the law.

As the coordinator of the Federal Project Safe Childhood, she helps lead a federal initiative to prosecute crimes against children, specifically sex crimes such as Internet pornography, sex with minors and sex trafficking. She is also a chair of the Smuggling and Trafficking of Persons Investigative Task Force (STOP IT), whose mission is to combat human trafficking.

A typical day at the office for Patel, 39, can mean working on cases involving girls who were smuggled across U.S. borders for prostitution rings, such as in the Davis case, or catching men who have crossed state lines to have sex with minors they met on the Internet.

"This job makes you realize how absolutely horrible people in the U.S. can be," said Patel, who is also an expert in criminal immigration. "It's unbelievable. Being a prosecutor is about putting bad people in jail. I think my job enables me to have an impact on a group of people in a way that only we can do. To be able to affect good policy is to constantly be able to be

in a position to do what's right. It's a luxury that we are guided by."

Patel, who grew up in Kenya among a large community of Indian immigrants, moved to the United States with her mother when she was in the fourth grade. Her mother, who worked as a wildlife artist, didn't want Patel to attend a British boarding school in Africa. They moved in with family in New Jersey, with her father, a geologist, joining them shortly thereafter.

Both her parents were involved in the sciences, and Patel always assumed that they wanted her to follow suit. But the Rutgers alum said that she always knew that she would go into law, taking a strong interest in politics, government and American history in high school and throughout college. She said that her decision to go into law was unusual for an Indian at the time.

"In terms of having role models of South Asians in the different sectors of law, government and the judiciary system, they were just not there," Patel said. "It's not part of my world and not part of my everyday experience, but I'm used to it."

Patel is married to Divyesh, who was born in Uganda and grew up in London, before studying in the United States. The couple has a 6-year-old son. She said she strives for balance between family life and her career.

"At the end of the day, you have to look at your life and the choices you've made and be able to feel like you've made a difference somehow. So, even if it's not a field that traditionally sees a lot of Indian women, I think the more we can encourage and affect the larger population by showing we're capable of being a part of this world, the better."

The passionate prosecutor who speaks fluent Gujarati and embraces the teachings of Buddhism is planning a month-long summer trip to South Africa, Botswana, Zimbabwe and Mauritius. During the trip, the family will go on a safari and bungee jump. "Travel, of course, is very important to me," she said.



As an assistant U.S. attorney in Connecticut, Patel helps keep kids safe by locking up sexual predators. She's also an expert in immigration crimes.