Join us for a panel discussion at the United Nations!

Combating Mass Incarceration, Improving Systemic Justice and Policing:
Impact on Women and Marginalized Communities in Latin America and the Caribbean

Tuesday March 14, 6:30 – 8:30pm
Conference Room 4, United Nations Headquarters Building
New York, NY, 10017
UN Security Check in is at 5:30pm Sharp

Keynote speaker:
- H.E. Mrs. Janet Camilo, Minister of Women of the Dominican Republic

Panel moderator:
- Ms. Gabriela Ramírez-Vargas, John Jay College, Assistant Director, Ronald H. Brown Program

Speakers:
- H.E. Dr. Henry Leonard Mac-Donald, Ambassador and Permanent Representative of the Permanent Mission of the Republic of Suriname to the United Nation & HeForShe Campaign Ambassador for the Advancement of Women;
- Ms. Roxana Reyes, Deputy Attorney General for Women’s Affairs of the Dominican Republic;
- Ms. Maria Dolores Fernos, Attorney, Associate Professor, InterAmerican University School of Law - Former Women’s Advocate, Puerto Rico Government;
- Dr. Jodie Roure, Associate Professor, Director and Project Investigator at John Jay College of Criminal Justice, City University of New York
- Dr. William Ramírez, Attorney, Executive Director of the American Civil Liberties Union & Adjunct Professor at the InterAmerican University School of Law
- Ms. Nora Vargas-Acosta, Attorney, Clinical Professor, University of Puerto Rico School of Law
- Ms. Michelle Leung, Associate Producer at VICE Media

Aim of the event: The current review theme for CSW 61 focuses on the challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) for women and girls. This CSW 61 high level side event will focus on how the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) can accomplish Women’s Economic Empowerment in the Changing World of Work by addressing pressing social issues currently subjugating women and marginalized groups in Latin America and the Caribbean (LAC). The panel will provide emphasis on LAC diasporas and the fight to eliminate obstacles to the economic empowerment of women. It will focus on SDG5 (which aims to achieve gender equality and empower all women and girls), and SDG 16 (which aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all, and build effective, accountable, and inclusive institutions at all levels).
Most violence is perpetrated by intimate partners. This trend is extracted from data compiled from surveys conducted between 2005 and 2015, in 52 countries, (including only one developed country) which indicates that 21 per cent of girls and women aged between 15 and 49 experienced physical and/or sexual violence at the hands of an intimate partner in the previous 12 months. Estimates on the risks of violence experienced by women with disabilities, women from ethnic minorities and among women above the age of 50 are not yet included, owing to data limitations. Additionally, human trafficking disproportionately affects women and girls, since 70 per cent of all victims detected worldwide are female. These render women and girls unable to work, contribute to their self-sustainability, the workforce, the family unit, and the global market, thereby affecting us all. It also disadvantages women from full participation in society which in many cases includes educational institutions which directly minimizes their exposure to the instructions necessary to learn about the changing market needs. On campus rape and rape culture in our LAC communities have drastically increased causing women protests. Such violent acts often remain unpunished causing a culture of impunity and deter women from full participation as citizens in the workforce and society. This is an issue women in the LAC region and its diaspora have been subject to and the affect is compounded when gender is intersected by factors including race, ethnicity, national origin, immigration status, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, to name some areas.

Additionally, as a global society, we have become increasingly aware of the need to improve our policing and incarceration policies and rise of said rates, especially as it pertains to women and marginalized groups. The truth lies in the numbers, as mass incarceration becomes a global endemic that disparately compounds the violence suffered by marginalized groups, especially women. It is also heavily correlated and often a result of unconstitutional policing and a criminal justice system in need of reform. Per the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime, “at any one time more than 10 MILLION people around the world are being held in prison and other places of detention and only about 1/3 of them are held in connection with a violent crime” and more than 700,000 are women, “a number that's growing far more quickly than the general prison population.” In the US, 65 MILLION people have an arrest record and experience the “civil death” of discrimination by employers and landlords, and whoever else conducts a background check (US Supreme Court Justice Sotomayor in Utah v. Strieff, October Term, 2015). A grand majority of these are people from the LAC diaspora. SDG16 looks to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development, provide access to justice for all and build effective, accountable and inclusive institutions at all levels. In his report on the progress towards this goal, the UN Secretary General once again states that progress with respect to the rule of law and access to justice is mixed. He highlights that, globally, the proportion of people held in detention without sentencing decreased slightly, from 32 per cent of total detainees in 2003-2005 to 30 per cent in 2012-2014.

These issues will be addressed on this panel with recommendations on how to improve the safety for all persons in such situations. This panel will also contextualize the SDGs as they pertain to policing and mass incarceration, discuss methods adopted to improve the situations of human beings who have been disparately impacted by such policies, and propose recommendations in line with the MDGs and the SDGs. The experts will provide research studies and data along with recommendations and best practices.