

**For Immediate Release**  
**June 5, 2014**

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**YWCA of Queens at the United Nations Economic and Social Council Youth Forum**  
HSE Student Tiffany Rodriguez Advocates for Young Women's Empowerment and Speaks Out Against  
Violence on Women and Children

Flushing, NY (June 5, 2014)- At the invitation of UN Women, **Tiffany Rodriguez from the YWCA of Queens spoke at the United Nations Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC) Youth Forum on Tuesday, June 3, 2014.** Youth organizations and youth leaders from around the world gathered to address global development challenges and how to ensure that young people are considered active citizens with relevant solutions. **Tiffany Rodriguez, a student of YWCA of Queens' High School Equivalency (HSE) program, participated in a forum entitled "Beijing +20: What? An Interactive Dialogue with Young People about Gender Equality and Women's Empowerment in the Post 2015 Context," highlighting violence against women and children.**

This ECOSOC Youth Forum event was planned around the upcoming 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action, a milestone event that focused on furthering gender equality, development and peace and empowering women around the world. **Rodriguez was one of 8 young women representatives from girl-focused civil society organizations that came together for a conversation with the Executive Director of UN Women, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka.** This forum is intended to impact a wider development agenda being discussed by member states, the UN and civil society.

Each young woman highlighted a key area of action and gave her own perspective on the challenges that continue to hold women, young women and girls back from fully and equally participating in society. They discussed the key role of education and its importance in achieving gender equality; particular emphasis was placed on creating and teaching quality educational materials for girls and boys on non-discrimination, peace building and sexuality. Issues such as environmentally sustainable development and female entrepreneurship underlined the importance of investing in girls' training and ideas.

Tiffany Rodriguez spoke out against violence against women and girls, focusing on rape as one of the most destructive and harmful forms of repression. **She did not shy away from a difficult subject as she shared that, "...women often get blamed for the things that happen to them. To start fixing the problem, we need to shift the blame to the actual perpetrators of the crime... We have to teach men that they do not have the right to a woman's body."**

Tiffany called for a change in how society views and responds to violence as, "it doesn't matter what she's wearing, or if she said 'yes' at the start of the night or after a few drinks. It doesn't matter if she's your girlfriend or your wife. Men have to learn the importance of consent. We need progressive campaigns to promote these ideas. We need harsher punishments against rapists. They need to be treated like murderers, because in a sense, they are. Rapists murder a woman's sense of security, comfort and confidence. They kill her ability to trust. No one should be able to get away with that. Rape needs to be as taboo as incest. It needs to be something that people find truly repulsive. And when we start to attack the issue of rape, we should find that other forms of violence against women will begin to decrease in occurrence as well."

for every woman

Through her participation, the reality of young women struggling to stay safe in their communities was brought into the conversation. Her voice and that of YWCAs continue to call for the recognition that violence against women and girls is one of the most serious challenges to gender equality in every country of the world and must be central to local, national and international planning and development. Although many advances have been made in the lives of women and girls, too many obstacles to equality still remain. Encouragement and support for girls to engage in political processes is still a challenge that calls for building the confidence of girls and young women as leaders and active citizens who know their rights.

For more information about how to give your time, talent, tenacity and financial support to the YWCA of Queens, please visit [www.ywcaqueens.org](http://www.ywcaqueens.org) or contact us at 718-353-4553.

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#### **YWCA World**

The World Young Women's Christian Association (World YWCA) is a global network of women leading social and economic change in over 120 countries worldwide. The World YWCA advocates for peace, justice, human rights and care for the environment and has been at the forefront of raising the status of women for more than a century. The World YWCA develops women's leadership to find local solutions to the global inequalities women face. Each year, it reaches more than 25 million women and girls through work in over 22,000 communities. Through advocacy, training and development the World YWCA empowers women, including young women, to lead social change. To learn more, please visit [www.worldywca.org](http://www.worldywca.org).

#### **About the YWCA of Queens**

The YWCA of Queens, founded in 1978, is a multi-tiered community organization with a wide range of education, career services, home health, and social services programs located at the center of one of the most diverse communities in the country. The YWCA of Queens' mission is to eliminate racism and empower women through education and advocacy. The YWCA of Queens is located on 42-07 Parsons Boulevard in Flushing, New York. To learn more, please visit [www.ywcaqueens.org](http://www.ywcaqueens.org).

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