



UNITED NATIONS ASSOCIATION  
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## ***UNA-Southern NY Holds Consultation on Injustice in the Criminal Justice System: A Way Forward***

NEW YORK, NEW YORK – (August 28, 2015)—Broad issues in criminal justice and race and more specific issues and steps toward improvement in New York State, engaged experts representing about 30 civic organizations at a consultation hosted by the United Nations Association of the USA Southern New York State Division (UNA-SNY) on August 5. State Senator Ruth Hassell-Thompson (36<sup>th</sup> District) was keynote speaker. “Think globally – act locally” was the meeting’s mantra. Based on the UN Human Rights Council’s exchange with U.S.A. officials as part of its Universal Periodic Review, experts at the consultation explored opportunities for criminal justice reform at state and local levels and offered recommendations. The reviews by the UN bodies present American citizens an excellent opportunity to examine our policies and laws, in relation to treaties our government has ratified.

Senator Hassell-Thompson provided information and advice from her extensive experience in these matters in Albany and in her home base of The Bronx and Mt. Vernon. The consultation highlighted: Women and girls; School-to-prison pipeline; and Sentencing, prison and post-incarceration. It also discussed the systemic racism at the core of the justice system. It focused on policy and police and corrections-related issues.

UNA-SNY president Jeanne Betsock Stillman welcomed the participants. Chris Whatley, Executive Director of the UNA-USA, offered remarks on UNA-USA and UN actions on human rights. Experts at the meeting included educators, law enforcement officers, social workers, non-profit executives, sorority and service club members, human rights specialists, health professionals, the executive producer of the long-running TV series, *Lockup*, and members of UNA-USA chapters in the Mid-Hudson Valley, Brooklyn, Queens, New York City and Westchester.

UNA-SNY and collaborating organizations have addressed a letter to Senator Hassell-Thompson summarizing the meeting’s outcome. Among other points it highlighted support for Governor Cuomo’s efforts to facilitate prisoners’ studies toward college degrees, and support for the *New York State Council on Community Re-Entry and Reintegration* that he established last year. We view the

conversion of Fulton prison in the Bronx into a center that offers emergency and temporary housing, job training and social service referrals, which is now developing, a very positive model. These points and the other recommendations were aimed at reducing criminality and recidivism, improving lives, reducing racial bias in the U.S.A. and NYS criminal justice systems and saving the taxpayers money.

Videos of the opening remarks and keynote speeches and of the closing small group reports are available on YouTube: View a video of the Consultation at <https://youtu.be/Uc1fp8MzV04> (courtesy of A.J. Woodard, BlackWestchesterMagazine). Also view videos <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zpiNUQ-884Y> on Sentencing, Prison and Post-incarceration; <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AzFy5nk5AWo> on Women and Girls; and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MihgvrTSokM> on School to Prison Pipeline. (Courtesy of Sultan Maruf, UNA-USA Queens Chapter president.)

### ***ABOUT UNA-USA***

The United Nations Association of the United States of America (UNA-USA) is a membership organization dedicated to informing, inspiring, and mobilizing the American people to support the ideals and vital work of the United Nations. For 70 years, UNA-USA has worked to accomplish its mission through its national network of Chapters, youth engagement, advocacy efforts, education programs, and public events. UNA-USA is a program of the United Nations Foundation. UNA-USA and its sister organization the Better World Campaign represent the single largest network of advocates and supporters of the United Nations in the world. Learn more about UNA-USA's programs and initiatives at [www.unausa.org](http://www.unausa.org).

**The UNA Southern New York State Division** offers members opportunities to increase awareness of the United Nations in the community, network with other members and advocate for the UN with our congressional representatives. The Division works in the five boroughs of New York City and in the counties of Columbia, Dutchess, Greene, Nassau, Orange, Putnam, Rockland, Suffolk, Sullivan, Ulster and Westchester. It includes chapters in Brooklyn, the Mid-Hudson Valley, New York City (Manhattan), Queens and Westchester. The Division's active Young Professionals Group and Energy Project (which includes climate action) offer opportunities to become involved in major issues. Current work focuses on Human Rights, especially protecting the rights of women and girls; working to end human trafficking; and working on the Post-2015 Development Agenda leading to the Sustainable Development Goals. [www.unasouthernny.org](http://www.unasouthernny.org)