

**Moving from Humiliation and Exclusion to Participation:  
Ending Poverty in All its Forms**

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I grew up in poverty. I was always ridiculed and criticized by my peers because they didn't experience poverty so they didn't quite understand it but, due to my intellectual ability, I was able to get into the good schools and pass tests.

The father of my children had serious alcohol issues and a form of a mental illness. I was trying to work with him to address it, but he was in denial. It was a lot of tension and a negative environment in our household. In the best interest of the children, I had to make a hard choice, to opt out of that relationship. I honestly think if we would have worked together we would have been stabled, we could have done a lot better. I had to leave him and to take care of the kids by myself.

That's where it all began.

I was deeper in poverty than I already was. We were living in the shelter. When someone is humiliated and excluded, the consequence could be emotionally distressful, financially distressful and physically distressful. And when you're already in poverty, you're already having all of that.

Three of my children have special needs: autism, ODD... It means that between the different therapists for my children and for myself, it takes five days of my week. Also, I was a student, studying psychology to try to better my financial position.

I got overwhelmed with struggling and trying to do everything. So, I decided to initiate my own self-care. I'm a single parent, I didn't have no alternative child care providers because when you have kids with special needs you can't just leave your children with any and everybody. I needed to go to the hospital cause I was feeling overwhelmed.

I gave my kids dinner and I said: "after you all have dinner, we are all going to go to the hospital." I'll never forget the evening.

When I got to the hospital a lady came, asking me to sign two temporary papers. The day I got discharged from the hospital I asked where my kids are, and they told me: "they're in foster care". They took my kids away for six long months. And I was only in the hospital for six days. And not only did they take the kids away, I felt tormented and humiliated.

## International Day for the Eradication of Poverty – 17 October 2016

I learnt to fight and to speak. Before when I received a call from the foster care, I was greatly affected by it but now, it doesn't so much bother me because I call my lawyers' team. I tell them: "Listen this is what I am facing, can you tell me the perimeters around my interaction?" And I don't let them intimidate me, anymore.

I know who I am because they went on their process of humiliating and putting me through that, but, at the end of the day, I ruled that I could take care of my kids. Every time, I get up in the morning, I know that I take care of my kids. They could say whatever they want, I take care of my kids well-being 100%.

I also know that I advocate very well, not only with foster care but also for the education for my children. It's really sad because the parents that aren't as secure and educated as me, who have language barriers, their children could stay for a very long time in foster care.

That's why I keep speaking!

I participate at whatever I can participate in. I participate in education forums, in particular with schools, because if you educate parents and learn from their knowledge, expertise and experience you can come to the table and collaborate in work with others to see what we can do.

Speaking at the United Nations is a learning experience for me. I had a professor who worked for the UN for many years. And, she was always emphasizing the UN. And, she always wanted me to be in the UN seat.

If you are poor, you are not going to be at the table. And if you get to the table, you got to know what you're talking about, because they not going to take you credible because you're poor. You can talk from some of your personal experience, but it has to be facts and some of your personal opinion.

If you're poor you need to get to the table. Otherwise people are not going to know you exist.