

Equal in law and life: tribute to Justice Ruth Bader Ginsburg

International Human Rights Day, December 10, 2020

9.00 am – 11.30 am EST

Organizers: UN Women, Harvard Law School Center on the Legal Profession, Stanford Law School Center on the Legal Profession, and University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School.

Background

Women Leaders for Generation Equality honor the transformative potential of Justice Ginsburg’s global legacy

Judith Resnik of Yale Law School writing in the Columbia Journal of Gender and the Law in 2013 asserted that: “One way to honor Justice Ginsburg’s path-breaking inquiries is to continue the “international human rights dialogue” in which she has long engaged. Resnik writes that “she urged us to take up the central issues afresh – to focus on what role law can play in empowering women in all corners of the world, with very different governing legal systems, and to consider what needs yet to be accomplished.” This is indeed befitting for a legal luminary and icon who broke the glass ceiling in the legal profession.

UN Women therefore seeks to honor Justice Ginsburg’s global legacy of pursuing equality, on International Human Rights Day (December 10th) 2020, by convening an intergenerational group of women leaders and advocates for gender equality for to reflect on the transformative impact of her work on equality in the law and in life. Conversations taking place among women leaders, jurists, policy makers, young legal scholars, civil society and others from around the world will explore how women’s leadership in jurisprudence and their interpretative work on constitutional justice can help alter the legal landscape in communities and countries where women and men experience grave threats to both de jure and de facto discrimination. These transnational conversations will explore lessons and stories from around the world and reflect on the pioneering legal strategies that Justice Ginsberg adopted in particular her emphasis on interpreting the Constitution of the United States in its fullest capacity to allow justice to prevail in favor of comprehensive and substantive equality.

Justice Ginsburg’s legacy and the way it has shaped the lives of generations of women and girls, reflects the spirit of Generation Equality. The Generation Equality Forum (GEF), a joint effort convened by UN Women and co-chaired by the governments of Mexico and France with the leadership and active collaboration of civil society, will celebrate the power of women’s rights activism, feminist solidarity, women’s leadership and youth participation to achieve transformative change and set an agenda of concrete action to realize gender equality before 2030.

The existing women’s leadership gap in formal spaces must change. As Justice Ginsburg so often highlighted, women are underrepresented in leadership positions, whether in politics, the civil service, the justice system, in private companies or other sectors. To fulfil the vision of the Beijing Platform for Action and to accelerate progress, the number of women in leadership must go up and the norms, regulations and standards around leadership must reflect greater diversity, inclusion and accountability. Within this framing, the Leaders for Generation Equality campaign will be welcoming over 200 global women leaders who will lend their voice, impact and power to Generation Equality and support outreach and mobilization for the Forum.

Format

- 2.5 hour event on 10 December 2020, International Human Rights Day.
- Organized as **two conversation circles** set up as interactive dialogue sessions with an intergenerational cast of speakers. **Speakers will not deliver prepared statements but rather be engaged in a moderated discussion by a skilled and expert moderator, familiar with the issues under discussion.**

Opening discussion circle on women's leadership in the law, followed by a discussion circle focusing on how interpreting equality provisions in national constitutions can strengthen equality in the law and practice in different country contexts.

1. First Discussion Circle: Equality in Public Life – the role of women leaders in transforming law and life (9:00 am to 10:00 am ET)

The session will highlight the role that leading women jurists, policy makers and law makers together with male allies can play in transforming the conditions towards full equality in society.

2. Second Discussion Circle: Equality in the law – how feminist interpretations of the law can promote equality in public and private spheres (10:00 am to 11:30 am ET)

The session will highlight the role of national constitutions in supporting these concepts (family law; workplace equity; representation/voice/parity; bodily security and autonomy) in different contexts. Discussions will focus on how interpreting equality provisions in national constitutions can strengthen equality in the law and practice in different country contexts. The session will draw on this aspect of Justice Ginsberg's judicial philosophy and legacy and highlight good practices.