

**Institute for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit**  
**Building a Coordinated Caribbean position for CSW65**  
**Monday 8th February**  
**Remarks by Dr. Tonya Haynes**

- The Honourable Bridgid Annisette-George, Speaker of the House of Representatives of Trinidad and Tobago, and Vice-President of ParlAmericas
- Parliamentarians from across the region
- Ambassadors
- Ms. Roberta Clarke, Regional Director (ag), UN Women Eastern and Southern Africa
- Ms. Tonni Brodber, Representative, UN Women Multi-Country Office - Caribbean
- Dr. Hilary Brown, Programme Manager, Culture and Community Development, CARICOM Secretariat
- Ms. Ann-Marie Williams, Deputy Programme Manager, Gender and Development, Human and Social Development, CARICOM Secretariat
- Lady Anande Trotman-Joseph, President of the CIWiL Regional Board of Directors
- Ms. Alison Drayton, UNFPA Director for the Subregion,
- Dr. Rosina Wiltshire, Gender and Development Specialist, CIWiL Regional Board Member
- National Gender Machineries and members of civil society organisations
- Everyone joining us via Zoom today, good morning.

*Even tonight and I need to take a walk and clear  
my head about this poem about why I can't  
go out without changing my clothes my shoes  
my body posture my gender identity my age  
my status as a woman alone in the evening/  
alone on the streets/alone not being the point/  
the point being that I can't do what I want  
to do with my own body because I am the wrong  
sex the wrong age the wrong skin*

I begin with the words of Jamaican American poet June Jordan, still raw with grief at the killing of a former Institute for Gender and Development Studies student in Trinidad and Tobago, I am struggling to find my own words.

We are here to decide on collective and strategic action on issues of life and death for Caribbean women. On behalf of the Institute for Gender and Development Studies: Nita Barrow Unit, it is a sincere honour to address you at the start of "Building a Coordinated Caribbean position for CSW65" with its theme of "Women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life, as well as the elimination of violence, for achieving gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls".

Gender equality and the empowerment of all women and girls means confronting the multiple, intersecting and co-constituting modes of oppression which seek to deny us our full humanity, at the nexus of those issues which threaten Caribbean survival, the climate crisis, the

economic, educational and social fallout of the COVID-19 pandemic and relentless gender-based violence.

Even as women were completely excluded as speakers at the launch of the Caribbean Climate report and the ILO High Level event on “Creating a post-pandemic Future of Work in the Caribbean,” to name just two of too many high-level events which did not include women, we know that there is no future without women and no future without women’s leadership.

Women’s activism and unpaid community work sustain our society, knit us closer together and plug gaps in state social service delivery, particularly in supporting survivors of violence. It is in this area of public life where women’s leadership is visible and vital. While, as the Secretary General’s report outlines, “Direct funding of women’s organizations accounts for less than 1 per cent of the global official development assistance provided for gender equality and women’s empowerment (\$198 million), most of which flows through larger organizations which may not meet local needs,” any in-roads we have made in addressing VAW have been because of the leadership of women’s organisations. Women’s full and equal participation in decision-making at all levels, and especially the highest levels, must therefore be guaranteed and supported by state action.

CSW is a very fraught space for women. As Anne Marie Goetz puts it, “CSW has now become a space in which women’s rights are vulnerable to reversals.” Your collective and strategic engagement over the two days of this session can ensure the Caribbean shows global leadership on advancing gender justice.

Thank you.