She’s So Vocal! Honoring Marilyn Reyes-Scales

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VOCAL-NY builds power among people affected by HIV/AIDS, drug use and mass incarceration to create healthy and just communities. This originally appeared on their Blog



Marilyn Reyes-Scales is a mother, a grandmother, an activist, a public health worker, and so much more. Yet, for many years she was burdened by one label that seemed to outweigh the rest: a felon.

Marilyn was convicted on drug charges in the mid-1990’s and spent two years incarcerated upstate. When she came home, all she wanted was a fresh start. She had children to support and bills to pay but kept getting denied jobs because of her criminal record. “My sentence should have ended when I completed my prison time,” says Marilyn. “Instead, I am overlooked and ignored because I am forced to check a box disclosing my conviction history.”

Fueled by her experiences and her desire to improve job prospects for people coming home from incarceration, Marilyn got to work. She canvassed at parole offices and courthouses, educating people about VOCAL’s campaigns and bringing new members into the organization. Marilyn also became a core leader in our efforts to pass the NYC Fair Chance Act, city legislation that prevents employers from asking about conviction histories until after a conditional job offer.
Marilyn has shared her story at City Hall, on Capitol Hill, and even on the front page of the New York Times. Marilyn’s advocacy uplifts her own experiences but also the experiences of so many women who have had their lives upending by the failed drug war and mass incarceration.

For these reasons and more, we are thrilled to honor Marilyn at our “She’s So VOCAL” gala on June 18th. We hope you can be there with us to celebrate!

Please buy your tickets now for this special event celebrating women, like Marilyn, who have dedicated their lives and careers to ending the HIV/AIDS epidemic, the drug war, and mass incarceration.

You can also toast the accomplishments of Marilyn, and our other women leaders by sponsoring the event or buying a journal ad in their honor.

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