

VICKI LOPEZ LUKIS



Vicki Lopez Lukis is a well-respected authority regarding criminal and juvenile justice issues with a focus on increasing public safety and reducing corrections costs. Her expertise includes prisoner reentry and girls in the juvenile justice system. She consults with local, state and national government officials, policymakers and stakeholders on these issues.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis currently serves as a member of the Florida TaxWatch Center for Smart Justice Advisory Board. Building on the Florida TaxWatch legacy of providing relevant, timely, powerful research to the leaders and policymakers in the state, the Center for Smart Justice is focused on providing concrete evidence found in data and research to drive the discussion on reform in the correctional system in Florida.

She was recently appointed to serve on the Florida Senate Juvenile Justice Education Work Group, which has been tasked with reforming the delivery of educational and vocational services for children involved in the juvenile justice system in hopes of improving outcomes and recidivism rates.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis served as a consultant to The Pew Charitable Trusts, specifically their Pew Center on the States Public Safety Performance Project, which helps states advance fiscally sound, data-driven sentencing and corrections policies that protect public safety, hold offenders accountable and control corrections costs. Her responsibilities included advocating for introduction and passage of legislation based on criminal justice reform recommendations that have been developed by key stakeholders such as Florida TaxWatch and its Government Cost Savings Task Force; deploying stakeholder alliance in support of executive and legislative action; working with the Governor's Office and relevant executive agencies to implement reform recommendations, which increase public safety and decrease corrections costs; engaging high-level stakeholders and other leaders for targeted media and legislative activities; and building a broad and diverse set of new and traditional voices to advocate for corrections reform in the state.

She served as the executive director of the Girls Advocacy Project (GAP), Inc., and currently serves as a pro bono consultant to the project. GAP is the only comprehensive prevention/intervention/educational project in the State of Florida – and one of the few in the nation – serving girls while they are in detention. GAP was initiated in 1999 in Miami and expanded in 2006 to Fort Myers, Orlando and Palm Beach. GAP currently serves girls detained in the Miami-Dade and Orange Regional Juvenile Detention Centers. This program operates in partnership with the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis was a member of the Smart Justice Coalition Steering Committee, an effort spearheaded in 2009 by the Collins Center of Public Policy, composed of a highly committed group of experts and advocates for rational justice reform. She was invited to present at the November 2009 Justice Summit, a statewide meeting of stakeholders organized by the Collins Center with a focus on advancing criminal justice reform efforts in Florida. Her presentation, *A Look to the Future... and How We Get There*, provided a history of reform efforts and laid out a plan to build statewide coalitions,

specifically with the business community, new reentry partners, so as to improve the advocacy of efforts at the legislative level. The essence of Mrs. Lukis' reform efforts is to save money and increase public safety by improving opportunities for work for ex-offenders upon their re-entry into their local communities.

She also was invited to speak at *The Future of Sentencing, Corrections and Crime Reduction in Florida: A Conversation between Florida Journalists and Policy Makers*, an advanced criminal justice seminar for Florida journalists, editors and columnists seminar organized by the Center on Media, Crime and Justice at John Jay College in New York, with support from the Public Safety Performance Project of the Pew Center on the States and in collaboration with the Collins Center. The aim of the seminar was to deepen media understanding of critical sentencing, incarceration and re-entry issues now before the Florida legislature, and much of the nation.

In February 2010, Mrs. Lopez Lukis was invited to speak at the University of Miami School of Law Therapeutic Jurisprudence Center at its Psychology, Public Policy and The Law Journal Symposium, *Rethinking Prisoner Reentry in the Era of Mass Incarceration*. She presented a history of criminal justice reform efforts and current strategies to successful reform. In February 2009, she was invited to speak at the University of Miami Law School Helping Others Through Pro Bono Efforts (H.O.P.E.) Public Interest Resource Center. Her presentation focused on juvenile justice advocacy efforts and gender specific programs for girls.

In April 2008, Secretary Walter McNeil appointed Mrs. Lopez Lukis to the Florida Department of Corrections' Reentry Advisory Council. In August 2008, the Secretary appointed her as the Council's vice-chair. The Council assists the Department in the development and coordination of strategies to improve outcomes for released offenders. She also helped to establish the U.S. Attorney Southern District of Florida Reentry Task Force to better coordinate the reentry efforts of the Weed and Seed sites with those efforts of the Council. As part of her role, Mrs. Lopez Lukis has been invited to present at several statewide reentry summits hosted by the U.S. Attorney of the Middle and Southern Districts.

In May 2008, Governor Charlie Crist appointed her to the Prison Rehabilitative Industries and Diversified Enterprises (PRIDE), Inc.'s Board of Directors. PRIDE is a not-for-profit corporation that operates the prison industries program. The entity provides inmates with vocational and on-the-job training that can lead to meaningful employment after release. It also provides limited post-release job placement and support.

Prior to serving in her position with GAP, Mrs. Lopez Lukis served as Chairman of Florida Governor Jeb Bush's Ex-Offender Task Force, which was established by Governor Bush in April 2005 and funded by The Annie E. Casey Foundation. The Task Force was a 17-member panel whose responsibilities included identifying barriers to successful reentry and providing recommendations that would eliminate these barriers.

As Chairman, Mrs. Lopez Lukis worked closely with the Casey Foundation to identify national experts that were invited to present before the Task Force. She supervised the executive director and other staff and consultants hired to support the work of the Task Force. She engaged executive agencies whose work intersects with corrections to learn more about the challenges in providing necessary services to ex-offenders and conducted workshops with the agencies to discuss the barriers related to employment and licensing restrictions. She coordinated the public relations efforts of the Task Force in a statewide effort to educate the general public and policymakers on the work of the Task Force and the importance of implementing the recommendations contained within the Task Force's final report. She was also interviewed by National Public Radio and newspapers throughout Florida about the Task Force's final report and had several opinion editorials published. The Task Force's final reports can be found at: <http://www.aecf.org/KnowledgeCenter/searchresults.aspx?keywords=Florida%20ex&source=refinesearch>

She briefed legislative staff and key leaders including the legislators of the relevant policy and appropriations committees in the Florida House and Senate and was invited to present the findings and recommendations of the Task Force.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis also served as the Chair of the Community Partnership Initiative Committee and developed a model program for ex-offenders who are released in several counties in Florida. The objective was to produce successful reentry results based on the research and reforms recommended by the Task Force. She helped to develop and strengthen local reentry networks throughout Florida and has continued to support these efforts. She met with local county and city government officials and their staff to encourage them to develop systems, which would provide necessary transition services to ex-offenders returning home to their communities.

While on the Governor's Ex-Offender Task Force, Mrs. Lopez Lukis represented Governor Bush at numerous events including the following:

- Participated in a panel entitled *Building Coalitions with Police, Prosecutors and "Unusual" Suspects* at the National Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers' 4th Annual State Legislative Network Conference. Her presentation included building coalitions with faith-based organizations and ex-offenders in criminal justice reform efforts.
- Presented to the Arkansas Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers a lecture entitled *It's Not Over After Sentencing* detailing the needs of clients as they make their transition into prison and reentry into the community.
- Presented at the annual conference of the Oregon Association of Criminal Defense Lawyers with a focus how the criminal justice system affects women differently and gave an insider's view of prison.
- Participated in a panel discussion at the Manhattan Institute regarding *From Recidivism to Redemption: Ending the Cycle of Incarceration*. She presented the work of Governor Bush's Ex-Offender Task Force. Her comments can be found at http://www.manhattan-institute.org/html/cb_45.htm.
- Presented at The Prisoner Reentry Institute at John Jay College of Criminal Justice as part of the Occasional Series on Reentry Research. She responded to a presentation on the *Punitiveness in the Imprisonment of Women, 1977 – 2004*, a report authored by Dr. Natasha Frost and commissioned by the Women's Prison Association, which examines the dramatic increase of women in prison.
- Published in the April 2006 issue of the American Journal of Public Health a Letter to the Editor in which she focused her comments on the public health issues relating to incarceration and reentry into society.
- Participated in several reentry summits hosted by the U.S. Attorneys in the Middle and Southern Districts of Florida and the Bureau of Prisons.

As a result of her work with the Task Force, in March 2007, Mrs. Lopez Lukis was invited to participate at the White House *Compassion in Action Roundtable*, "Improving Prisoner Re-Entry Services Through Faith and Community-Based Partnerships" and gave a presentation regarding the current status of reentry work in Florida.

She was also invited to participate on a panel of the Community Voices Men's Health Meeting "Saving Men's Lives II: A Grassroots Policy Dialogue" held at the Cannon House Building in Washington, D.C. This effort is funded by the W.K. Kellogg Foundation and managed by the National Center for Primary Care at the Morehouse School of Medicine. She presented to U.S. Senators and Representatives and their staff information regarding men's health issues and reentry. She further participated in panel discussions at the Community Voices 2009 and 2008 Freedom Voices Conferences. The Town Hall 2009 session, entitled "Reforming the Juvenile and Criminal Justice Systems: How Can They Work for Vulnerable Boys and the Parents of Young Children?" featured an engaging discussion regarding policies that can improve the outcomes of the juvenile and criminal justice systems, and of the children and families whose lives they impact. The "Voices of the Underserved" 2008 session gave "voice" to the issue of health disparities and prisoner reentry.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis was invited to present at the White House National Summit on Prisoner Reentry in November 2007. The Summit's audience included top Federal, state and local corrections officials,

academics, media and nonprofit leaders. The event highlighted some of the country's best models for government partnership with community- and faith-based organizations to reduce crime and break cycles of recidivism. Mrs. Lopez Lukis was asked to present the Florida model developed by the Task Force.

Building upon the work of the Task Force, Mrs. Lopez Lukis was hired as a consultant in September 2007 by the The Rockit Fund, a non-profit organization that supported lobbying and was related to the JEHT Foundation, a grantmaking non-profit focused on the transformation of U.S. criminal justice policies and practices. She reviewed an extensive listing of public employment and licensing restrictions found in policy, rules and statutes and worked with the Florida Governor, executive agencies and the state legislature in an attempt to reform these restrictions for ex-offenders so as to provide employment opportunities while preserving public safety.

In 1990, Mrs. Lopez Lukis was elected to the Lee County, Florida Board of County Commissioners where her responsibilities included:

- Vice Chairman - Board of County Commissioners,
- Chairman - Lee County Port Authority,
- Chairman - Tourist Development Council,
- Chairman - Affordable Housing Committee,
- Board Liaison - Veterans Advisory Committee,
- Board Liaison - Housing and Community Development Committee, and
- Member - Transportation Metropolitan Planning Organization.
- Member - Florida Tourism Commission, a statutory commission established by the Governor and Florida State Legislature to develop funding mechanisms and marketing plan for the Florida Division of Tourism.

Her tenure as a Lee County Commissioner led to a highly publicized criminal case regarding her personal relationship with her husband who was her boyfriend at the time and a prominent Washington D.C. lobbyist with issues before her board. She went to trial and was convicted of one count of mail fraud for depriving her constituents of her "honest" services by lying to a newspaper reporter about that relationship. She was sentenced to 27 months in a federal prison and self-surrendered on August 9, 1999 to the federal women's camp in Coleman, Florida.

While incarcerated, she advocated on behalf of her fellow inmates securing their access to health care, family visits and contacts, education and general rights as defined by the Bureau of Prisons. She counseled the women and established a speaker's bureau to address topics such as parenting from afar and led group sessions to facilitate discussions regarding women inmate issues. She also began a yoga class to increase self-awareness and to help the women maintain their spirituality and peace of mind. Through the Chaplain's office, she assisted in bridging the gap between faiths. She continues this legacy by speaking at federal and state prisons bringing hope and encouragement to those preparing to return to society.

On November 21, 2000, President Clinton commuted her sentence. On December 9, 2004, Governor Jeb Bush and his Cabinet restored her civil rights in Florida. On June 24, 2010, the United States Supreme Court held in an unrelated case (U.S. v. Skilling) that the federal statute governing honest services fraud could only apply to cases involving bribery and kickbacks. Mrs. Lopez Lukis was acquitted of bribery and thus filed her Petition of Writ of Error *Coram Nobis* to vacate her conviction. The government joined in seeking the Writ of Error *Coram Nobis* and on February 14, 2011, the U.S. District Court of the Middle District of Florida granted her motion and vacated the judgment, which completely nullifies Mrs. Lopez Lukis' conviction and clears her record of any conviction.

Upon her return to South Florida, she continued her career in public service as Executive Director of Cool School, a therapeutic, after-school gang prevention program. Cool School began as a pilot project within Barry University's Academy for Better Communities. It provided after school and therapeutic social services to the many at-risk children and their families in the South Beach, Overtown, Perrine, Northwest Dade, Little Haiti, East Little Havana and Liberty City communities located in Miami-Dade County.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis was an active member of the Junior League of Miami (JLM) from 1998 – 2005 and is currently a sustaining member of the Junior League of the Palm Beaches. She is involved in state public affairs efforts with the Association of Junior Leagues International and presented the Florida model at the 2010 Annual Conference. She served as the Chair for the JLM GAP Committee in 2003-2004. As Chair, she developed a challenging action plan for JLM volunteers and provided a program that helps to give girls involved in the juvenile justice system a strong sense of self, community and personal empowerment with the end result of rejecting unhealthy relationships, substance abuse and the temptation to become involved in future criminal activity. In December 2004, she was awarded the GAP Girls Power Award for her dedication, devotion of time, unbounded energy and loving spirit regarding her work with the GAP girls.

In 2003 and in 2004, she was awarded the Junior League of Miami President's Leadership Award and the 2003-2004 Volunteer of the Year Award for her distinguished work as Chair of the GAP Committee. During her active years, she was a Planning Member-at-Large charged with advancing the concept of GAP statewide. She was also a member of the Public Affairs Committee and of the State Public Affairs Committee representing the legislative agenda of the Junior Leagues throughout the state. In 2004, she was the recipient of the prestigious Junior League of Florida's Berta Blecke Award for Outstanding Efforts in Legislative Advocacy for her tireless efforts on behalf of girls in the juvenile justice system. As a result of her efforts, Junior League of Greater Orlando, Fort Myers and Palm Beach have developed their own GAP volunteer community projects to complement the GAP program. She continues to advise and train Junior League and other community-based volunteers who serve young girls in detention.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis, in partnership with Brenda Valencia Aldana, a woman she met while both were incarcerated at FCC Coleman, have developed a program for juvenile offenders detained in the Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center. The presentation is a moment-by-moment replay of Mrs. Aldana's criminal case. Together they emphasize the events that led to Mrs. Aldana's arrest, conviction and incarceration. Their presentation involves the children and the detention staff as actors in the drama. It is a powerful story that educates children about the risks they take when they follow the lead of others or are in the company of those who commit crimes. Mrs. Aldana's compelling case was the subject of a CBS *60 Minutes* program, which focused on the negative impacts of the mandatory minimums sentencing laws.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis is a past member of the Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center's Community Advisory Board where she lent her expertise about girls in the juvenile justice system as it relates to detention.

In July 2004, Mrs. Lopez Lukis decided to devote all of her time and efforts to the volunteer work she has been performing since her release from prison. In 2005, she added to her agenda work with the ARISE Foundation, founded by Edmund and Susan Benson, which has been working with troubled teenagers for 18 years. Through the generous grant from the Office of Juvenile Justice and Delinquency Prevention, she developed a training program for Department of Juvenile Justice staff which is geared specifically for girls who are in juvenile detention and commitment facilities throughout Florida and nationally. In addition, she traveled to several facilities to conduct the training utilizing her direct experiences from the work that she has been doing for three years at the Miami-Dade Regional Juvenile Detention Center. During her travels, she held focus groups with staff and the girls to learn more about their stories. She addressed the girls and shared her own story about her prison experiences with the sole purpose of inspiring the girls to focus not on their mistakes but instead on how they can build upon them to lead strong and successful lives.

She is the Past-President and current Board Advisor of ArtSpring, Inc., a not-for-profit 501(c) 3 arts-based organization in Miami-Dade County, Florida that promotes art-making and creativity as tools for promoting self-growth and effective life skills for underserved and institutionalized women and girls. The two main on-going programs entitled *Inside Out* and *Breaking Free* provide an alternative mode of intervention for adult female inmates and adjudicated girls housed in correctional facilities. She co-facilitated a workshop for the University of Massachusetts Amherst Arts Extension Service; 2004 Winter Institute for Arts Management entitled Community Involvement: Serving different populations. In this workshop, she

shared how effective an art curriculum can be for women in prison and girls in detention. Her objective was to invite other community arts organizations to provide similar services in their respective communities.

In December 2005, she developed a writing workshop project entitled *Bridging the Gap*, which involves a unique partnership between Mrs. Lopez Lukis, the Girls Advocacy Project (GAP); ArtSpring, Inc.; the Florida Department of Juvenile Justice (DJJ); and the Florida Department of Corrections (FDC). The objective is to develop a published anthology of the writings of the women inmates participating in ArtSpring's *Inside Out* program that can be shared with the GAP girls and others who find themselves in or who are at-risk of becoming involved in the juvenile justice system. It is her hope that the women's stories will inspire the girls to change their lives while they still possess a second chance.

Bridging the Gap is the subject of a national documentary funded by a generous grant from The Annie E. Casey Foundation. It can be viewed in its entirety at www.reentrymediaoutreach.org/gap.htm. This website also contains more detailed information about the project. The documentary enjoyed its premiere in April 2007 at the University of Miami Bill Cosford Cinema, Miami, FL and in July 2007 at Cinema Paradiso in Ft. Lauderdale, FL.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis has been invited to present this project at state and national conferences dealing with the criminal justice system, with particular interest by those that focus on juvenile and adult female offenders. In October 2007, she participated in a performance of *Any One of Us: Words from Prison*, a project conceived by Eve Ensler, an award winning playwright and author of *Vagina Monologues*. She joined Eve and other Miami community leaders and activists in reading the words from women in prison participating in writing workshops at four prisons around the country. This performance included works collected in the *Bridging the Gap* writing workshop.

In May 2007, she was awarded the Faces of Courage Girls Award by the Florida Network of Youth & Family Services for her outstanding efforts on behalf of girls in the juvenile justice system. She was also awarded the 2007 Women's Courage and Vision Award from the Bennett College National Alumnae Association Miami Chapter for her generous service to the needs and lives of those in Miami-Dade County, FL.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis' work with juvenile offenders has drawn the attention of international authorities in juvenile justice. She was invited to be a member of a scientific committee for the European Union's International Observatory of Juvenile Justice and presented at a conference in Spain in October 2007.

She is an alumna of Leadership Florida, an affiliate of the Florida Chamber of Commerce whose mission is to build a strong, diverse, statewide network of leaders with a shared commitment to connect its communities and to make Florida a better place in which to live and to prosper. She is also an alumna of Leadership Lee County and Leadership Miami. She remains active in Leadership Florida bringing awareness to statewide leaders of the issues surrounding the criminal justice system in Florida.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis has engaged female offenders because of her personal experience and her dedication to preventing girls from entering the adult system. She has emerged as a strong advocate for all women and girls in the justice system.

Mrs. Lopez Lukis was born in Tampa, Florida on March 28, 1958. She was raised in Fort Myers, Florida and graduated from Cypress Lake High School just having turned 16 years old. In 1974, she was the youngest person to be admitted to the University of Notre Dame and graduated in 1978 with a BBA in Accounting. She began her professional career in public accounting working for Coopers & Lybrand and Arthur Young. She then moved to the private accounting sector working in internal auditing and assistant controller functions. In 1987, she obtained her Series 7 and Series 54 Securities Licenses and worked for AmeriSecurities Capital Corporation, a correspondent branch of Paine Webber.

She is married to Sylvester Lukis, a lawyer/lobbyist, and has three children, Donald F. Wolfe III, Alexander and Adrian Lukis.

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