**María Luisa Romero**

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EDUCATION

**HARVARD LAW SCHOOL**. Juris Doctor, *Cum Laude* (2008)

Harvard International Human Rights Clinic

Harvard Immigration and Refugee Clinic

**HARVARD COLLEGE**. Bachelor degree in Government, *Magna Cum Laude* (2004)

Latin American Studies Certificate

Thesis: *Democratization by Force? Panama’s Democratic Transition after the U.S. Invasion*

President-HACIA Democracy (Harvard Association Cultivating Inter-American Democracy)

**ACADEMIA INTERAMERICANA DE PANAMA**. High school diploma of Science and Letters, *Valedictorian* (1999)

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

**MINISTRY OF GOVERNMENT**. Panamá, Panamá

Minister of Government. *January 2017–April 2018*

Vice-Minister of Government. *July 2014–January 2017*

Main thematic areas of responsibility included supervising: (i) administration of the prison system for adults and of the Institute of Interdisciplinary Studies (youth in conflict with the law)*;* (ii) attention and protection of refugees, including presiding the National Commission of Refugees; (iii) National Civil Protection System; and (iv) indigenous affairs. Some of the key achievements included passing and implementation of law establishing a civil career in the prison service and consolidation of prison academy as essential pillars to reform prison system to make it more secure and respectful of human rights; strengthening of rehabilitation programs for persons deprived of liberty, which included as highlights the creation of Panama’s first commercial prison brand *IntegrArte* and the first recycling program inside prisons *Ecosólidos;* passing and implementation of law creating justice of the peace, which transforms local administrative justice in Panama; creation by law of the Logistical Regional Center for Humanitarian Assistance; execution of the Integral Development Plan for Indigenous Peoples; supporting the national human rights agenda, including by assisting the process to create the National Mechanism for the Prevention of Torture; and the modernization of the Ministry, by creating automated processes for government procedures and access of information.

**INDEPENDENT CONSULTANT**  *May 2013–June 2014*

Work included consultancies to the Rapporteurship on the Rights of People Deprived of Liberty of the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights of the Organization of American States (May-June 2014), the President of Puerto Rico’s Senate regarding civil rights matters (Sept. 2013-June 2014), the Central American Institute of Studies for Social Democracy, for the benefit of the Special Rapporteurships for Freedom of Expression of the Organization of American States and of the United Nations (Jan.-April 2014); and the Stanford Law School International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic, regarding an advocacy project on human rights violations in prisons in Panama (May-December 2014).

**DEBEVOISE & PLIMPTON LLP**

Litigation Associate. New York, NY *January 2010–April 2013*

Summer Associate. New York, NY *May–July 2007*

Advising or representation of companies and academic institutions on government investigations, regulations against money laundering, anticorruption policies and respect of human rights. In pro bono practice, represented Mauritanian citizen in asylum proceedings before the New York City Immigration Court and coordinated advocacy project in conjunction with the human rights legal clinics of Harvard Law School and Stanford Law School with the goal of improving prison conditions and fostering respect for prisoners’ rights in Panama.

**INTER-AMERICAN COURT OF HUMAN RIGHTS**. San José, Costa Rica  *Sept. 2008–Oct. 2009*

Work as attorney for the Court included processing and managing cases of alleged human rights violations in the Americas, legal research, and drafting Judgments as well as Court Orders regarding compliance and provisional measures. Most relevant judgment was the *Case of Gonzalez et al (Cotton Field) v. Mexico,* a historic case in which this regional tribunal addressed, for the first time as a central issue, violence against women and feminicide.

**INTERNATIONAL CRIMINAL TRIBUNAL FOR RWANDA**. Arusha, Tanzania *May–Aug.2006*

Legal internship assisting prosecutors in two criminal trials against alleged conspirators of the Rwandan genocide.

**PANAMA’S DIPLOMATIC MISSION TO THE UNITED STATES**. Washington, D.C.

Diplomatic attaché assisting with legal, political and commercial issues. *Oct. 2004–July 2005*

PUBLICATIONS

-International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School, *No Place to Hide: Gang, State and Clandestine Violence in El Salvador* (2007); (contributor to book under same name published by the Harvard International Human Rights Clinic and distributed by Harvard University Press in 2010)

-Tim Mayhle and María Luisa Romero; James L. Cavallaro, ed., “*Human Rights Stop at the Gate:” Injustice and Inequality in Panama’s Prisons*, International Human Rights Clinic, Harvard Law School (2008)

-James L. Cavallaro and María Luisa Romero, *Deprived of liberty and rights*, La Prensa (Panamá) (2008)

-James L. Cavallaro and María Luisa Romero, *Tragedy at Tocumen, A Call for Real Reform*, La Prensa (Panamá) (2011)

-Sean Hecker, Bruce E. Yannett and María Luisa Romero, *Mexico Catches Up: A New Law Against Corruption in Government Procurement*, Westlaw Journal of White-Collar Crime (2012)

-James L. Cavallaro, María Luisa Romero and Clara Long, *Prison System: Building Expensive Castles Is Not the Solution,* La Prensa (Panamá) (2013)

-María Luisa Romero, James Cavallaro and Clara Long, *Crisis in Panama Continues: Towards a Prison System that Protects Human Rights?*, Stanford Law School International Human Rights and Conflict Resolution Clinic (2013)

-María Luisa Romero, *Women Also Contribute to Diversity*, La Prensa (Panamá) (2017)

-María Luisa Romero, *A Bet on Human Capital: A Career in Prison Service,* La Prensa (Panamá) (2017)

-María Luisa Romero, *Equality and Productivity*, La Prensa (Panamá) (2018)

LANGUAGES

-Spanish (native); English (fluent); French (basic)

BOARDS OF DIRECTORS

-Cable and Wireless Panama, Director, July 2017-Present

RECOGNITIONS

-Panamanian civil society recognized activism in defense of the human rights of people deprived of liberty on International Human Rights Day (2013)

-Goodwill Ambassador for Sustainable Development Goal #16: Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions (Panamá, 2018)