



United Nations Entity for Gender Equality
and the Empowerment of Women

NATIONAL COMMITTEE
UNITED STATES

UPDATE

WINTER 2011/2012

CEDAW 2012

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CEDAW - What the heck is it!? Why is it important!?

By Kay Colson

see daw, acronym, Abbreviation for Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women

I have been hearing about CEDAW for a long, long time. As we were working on the 16 Days of Activism, my sister said to me, "CEDAW is really, really important and it's time the US recognized this importance!" At that point I realized I did not know enough to speak convincingly to the subject when asked. Perhaps I am not the only one who could use a brush up or learn more on CEDAW, so here are some important facts:

1. CEDAW is a landmark international agreement that affirms principles of fundamental human rights and equality for women around the world.
2. The CEDAW agreement was adopted in 1979 by the United Nations General Assembly and entered into force in 1981...*that's 30 years ago!*
3. Almost all countries have ratified CEDAW, in fact **187 out of 193 countries have said YES to CEDAW.**
4. Only **6 nations have NOT said YES to CEDAW.** They are:
 - Iran
 - Palau
 - Sudan
 - Somalia
 - **The United States of America - can you believe this???**
 - Tonga
5. Women's rights **are** human rights but women's rights are not universally respected ... not even ratifying CEDAW is a shameful

status for the US! What must this say about us as a country and leader in the world? This surely does not represent the general feelings of US citizens. ***The United States should be leading the way!***

6. In countries that have ratified CEDAW, women have partnered with their governments to improve the status of women and girls, and as a result have changed laws and policies to create greater safety and opportunity for women and their families. CEDAW can make a difference for women and girls specifically to:

- Reduce sexual violence
- Provide access to education & vocational training
- Ensure the right to vote
- End forced marriage, child marriage & ensure inheritance rights
- Help mothers and families by providing access to maternal health care
- Ensure the right to work & own a business without discrimination, trafficking & domestic violence

Passing CEDAW is a must for the United States. The US public strongly supports the principles and values of equality, fairness, education, and basic human rights, but there is much work required to get CEDAW passed. The Senate Foreign Relations Committee (the Committee that typically reviews and votes on international treaties before they are considered by the full Senate) has twice voted favourably on the CEDAW treaty. However, ***it has never been brought to the US Senate floor for a vote where ratification will require a two-thirds vote*** to pass (67 out of 100 Senators). ***We have to ask ourselves "Why is this??"***

Presidents Reagan, Bush, and Clinton were successful in achieving the ratification of similar landmark agreements on torture, genocide and race discrimination. Ratification of CEDAW would continue America's proud bipartisan tradition of promoting and protecting human rights by extending those rights to cover women and girls specifically. It's up to us to make CEDAW fully known to and understood by the US public and supported by our congressional representatives.

CEDAW - How to support this important landmark international agreement in the United States

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The New Jersey Chapter of USNC-UN Women Launch Party

The New Jersey Chapter of USNC-UN Women celebrated their launch on September 15th at the home of Neale Godfrey (USNC Board Member) in Chester, NJ. Neale and Yvonne Garlin, President of the New Jersey Chapter, greeted guests and introduced the guest speakers. Carol Poteat Buchanan, USNC Past President, spoke about UN-Women and the role of the United States National Committee. Don McPherson, a USNC Board member and retired NFL player, encouraged the guests to become involved in both National and Chapter activities, working to prevent violence against women.

Neale was delighted to host the event and said, "This is only a start to raising consciousness and changing behavior. Don was an inspiration to all of us and we're so grateful to him for being our spokesperson". Neale also thanks her granddaughter, Gavin, for being the next generation of UN Women, noting that she is extremely proud there are three generations of Godfrey men and women dedicated to making the world a better and safer place for women and girls.

Inviting everyone to join the newest USNC Chapter, Yvonne reported that the chapter is looking forward to empowering New Jersey's women through its support for UN Women and its programs. The 68 member chapter is currently working to organize a march to fight violence against women.

USNC Board Convenes in San Francisco

by Stephanie Block

What a San Francisco treat for the intrepid board members of USNC-UN Women to convene here for the first time! This beautiful city by the bay boasts a mild winter climate, countless sites, world class restaurants, enticing nightlife and fascinating people. As an international city and the birthplace of the UN, what better place to inspire USNC as we plot our course for the coming year?

USNC is a national board with members scattered across the country and an ever-growing cadre of chapters. We can't wait for this extended visit with our San Francisco Bay Area Chapter. Past board retreats have occurred coast to coast in chapter cities.

Become a proactive advocate for the protection of the rights of women and girls ... take the pledge for CEDAW, the Convention for the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women, the landmark agreement that affirms those rights and offers countries a practical blueprint to promote basic rights and to open opportunities for women and girls in all areas of society. Go to: <http://www.cedaw2010.org/index.php/component/content/article/65>

I pledge to stand with women and girls around the world in strongly supporting CEDAW until all countries recognize the equality and human rights of women and ratify this important treaty. As such, I will do the following:

- Sign up to get periodic updates about CEDAW.
- Educate my family, friends and colleagues about the importance of CEDAW.
- Urge my organization to sign-on as a supporter of CEDAW.
- Educate my policy makers about the benefits of CEDAW.
- Support CEDAW grassroots activities in the United States.

CEDAW - Know it ... Understand it ... Advocate for it ... Educate others!

16 Days of Activism Against Gender Violence

November 25 to December 10

USNC-UN Women joined women's groups around the globe to raise awareness and work to eradicate violence against women. For 20 years, the 16 Days Campaign has been successfully used as an organizing strategy by individuals & groups around the world to call for the elimination of all forms of violence against women. Organizations in more than 164 countries have participated in the 16 Days Campaign.

During the 16 Days of Activism, USNC members and the Social Media committee worked to post daily on the USNC-UN Women website, on Twitter and on Facebook. Every day focused on a theme, and encouraged cross-talk and action items. We had a large following on our web page and increased the followers on social media sites.

Advocacy efforts of the East Florida Chapter

by Luz VanMeek

On October 18th, Luz Van Meek, President of the East Florida Chapter Board, and Board Members Eileen Tanne and

Mihu Bisaria met Congressman Ted Deutch in his office in Boca Raton to advocate for an increase in funding to UN Women. Congressman Deutch is a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee which has oversight over legislation relating to diplomatic relations, foreign assistance, the Peace Corps, national security developments affecting international relations, arms control, international sanctions, peacekeeping efforts, policies of the State, Commerce, and Defense Departments, the global promotion of democracy and human rights, and other international issues.

Luz Van Meek introduced the purpose of UN Women, its strategies and its work around the world and described parallel activities that take place at Chapter level including the Step Out to Stop Violence against Women and Girls walk, the collaborations to prevent human trafficking and the use of documentaries to inform the community about women's global issues. Mihu Bisaria focused on describing the Learners to Leaders program and the Chapter's partnership with our local university. Eileen Tanne spoke about women's political leadership, conflict resolution, the recent Nobel Peace Prize winners empowering thousands of women to end the Liberian war and concluded restating the need for his support to secure increased funding for UN Women.

The information captivated him and extended the meeting from 15 minutes to more than half an hour. He pledged to be an advocate for UN Women and its work. This advocacy work is crucial to our mission; we need to speak up and speak for women who do not have a voice.

Fund Development - USNC re-Launch Campaign

by Kay Colson

Despite UN Women's important work, women and girls still suffer around the world ... in fact, ***we have not substantially moved the needle in fighting for women and girls*** to have the right to live free from violence, poverty, and discrimination. Because of the efforts of our dedicated membership, ***the US National Committee for UN Women (USNC) historically contributes approximately \$50K annually to UN Women.*** Does this in any way reflect the spirit and passion of our membership and our country? ***We do not believe it does and we are ready to change that ... starting now!***

Why now? In 2010 the UN consolidated its efforts as the global champion for women and girls worldwide under the new name **UN Women** in order to ac-

celerate its progress, more effectively coordinate programs, and increase name recognition in all outreach activities. The UN tapped **Michelle Bachelet**, former President of the Republic of Chile, as Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director of UN Women, bringing her incredible background and experience as a mother, doctor and leader to the causes of women worldwide. These decisive actions, many years in the making, signal a change in intent at the highest level. With these efforts in place, UN Women was launched!

The USNC is now ready to re-Launch itself as well, not only as the official representative of the United States for UN Women, but as a leader among all national committees for UN Women around the world. We believe the **current level of US support for UN women is unacceptable**. We believe **the US can and should lead the way in moving the needle closer and faster to improving the lives of women and girls and eliminating violence** against them in large part.

After careful planning, we have identified a target of raising \$1 million payable over 3 years to ensure appropriate infrastructure and leadership to support the work of the USNC and our chapters. In order to accomplish this, we are re-engaging the 4,000+ past donors to UN Women, expanding our new donor reach, and conducting fund raising training at our Jan 2012 Board meeting (first time ever!). From there, the Board will be driving the re-Launch Campaign to success.

The funds from this campaign will enable us to invest in USNC infrastructure so that relationships can be built, existing/new donors can be nurtured, and we can appropriately increase the quality, frequency and continuity of our communication with all donors and the public at large. We will build a fund development engine capable of **raising real dollars** and **broader awareness**, thus securing our position of leadership in the fight to effectively build advocacy for women and girls. We are ready to launch and we are asking you to join us in this effort.

In the coming months, we will be reaching out to share our story and secure your continued support. We invite you to renew your commitment and advocacy as well. There is no time like now and we look forward to your partnership in this important re-Launch of the United

States National Committee for UN Women. Interested in joining the USNC Fund Development team? Contact Kay Colson, 972.849.9732, kaycolson@gmail.com.

Getting to know our Board Members:

President Maggie Forster Schmitz has been active with USNC since 2005, "a year after we moved from Boston to CA. Being involved in the local chapter helped open the door to the international community in Southern CA."



A graduate of Mt. Holyoke, Maggie's experience in college triggered her interest in international human rights. She was a German Studies major with international relations concentration. She said, "The biggest influence was studying abroad when the Bosnian atrocities started coming to light and listening to the discussion taking place in Germany, which was still wrestling with the legacy of the Holocaust, and how that influenced its domestic and foreign policy decisions regarding the Balkans... [my] first job was at a small German non-profit that works to improve German-American relations, the Atlantik-Brücke." She then went on to get her Masters in International Economics and Relations at the Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies and has continued to work in the field. Maggie currently works as a consultant in the field and just completed a project for UNICEF. Prior to being elected President, Maggie was Secretary of USNC and served on many committees. She brings a wealth of experience and commitment to the office. Her key priority for USNC for 2012 is to increase chapters and overall members, and to lay the groundwork for greater influence on Congress via these chapters, members, and overall advocacy.

She said, "In taking on this role, I purposely relinquished several other volunteer positions. My husband is very supportive of all my roles and shares childcare and other duties." On a personal note, Maggie grew up in Wisconsin and enjoys reading, cooking and gardening. Her favorite book is *To Kill A Mockingbird*.

Twitter Twerrific!

by **Stephanie Block**



Twitter is like attending the most fabulous cocktail party with your dream guest list. That one NPR correspondent you like is here, plus your favorite sports teams, celebrities, pundits, personalities, and your cousin Sabrina. And best of all, not one of them can write anything longer than 140 characters.

Twell me more! There are over 100 million people on Twitter all over the world, and Twitter has been at the center of everything from revolutions to celebrity scandals. It's free, it's easy to use, and it doesn't require you to do much of anything!

Plus, USNC-UN Women is on it. Let's twake it from the twop. Sign up for a free account and start to search for people and organizations. We are @USNC_UNWomen. Follow us! The more accounts you follow, the more good information comes across your homepage in delicious little bites.

And guess what? Twitter is a constant waterfall of new information, so check back as much as you like for the latest news! There's always someone new showing up at your Twitter party.

The next step is joining the conversation. You care deeply about women's issues, so once you get comfortable with Twitter, why not Retweet something that we've posted? Or talk about how you adore @USNC_UNWomen? If you mention us, we'll see it and then we'll know that you're at our Twitter party. Lucky us!

Biography of Asher Jay, Designer of the T-Shirt for Walk to Prevent Violence

Winning design for T-shirt contest. Asher Jay is a designer, artist, writer and activist. Educated at Parsons The New School of Design, she pursued a career working for various fashion houses in New York. She became passionate about textiles, printmaking and pattern design, fascinations that are frequently referenced in her fashion line and artworks.

A staunch supporter of animal rights, wildlife conservation and sustainable development, Asher Jay found herself using her fashion, art and writing to raise awareness. She produced several graphic campaigns, wrote many narratives, and pieced together numerous collections and canvases to eloquently elucidate the serious issues currently assailing our fragile planet.

Through her extensive travels across the globe, and her studies in art history, she developed an aesthetic sensibility that is an amalgam of contrasting cultural influences. She produced



works for the Academy Award winning documentary, *THE COVE*, to raise awareness about the slaughter of dolphins.

See www.asherjay.com for more information about this talented woman.

Vice President Crystal Lander joined USNC in 2007 thanks to my friend and former board member, Tina Patterson... I have really enjoyed helping this organization



grow. The members and board are so dedicated that it makes all the hard stuff worthwhile.

Crystal grew up in Philadelphia. She attended the University of Michigan; she earned a Master of Public Health in International Public

Health at Tulane University, Certification in Intensive Portuguese Language Certification at University of Texas and also studied at University of Havana School of Medicine and Public Health and Pontificia Universidad Catolica Madre y Maestra. An international traveler and linguist, Crystal is now studying French.

Crystal lives in Washington, DC; she is the Director of Policy & Advocacy of Management Sciences for Health (MSH). Her extensive resume includes positions in advocacy and training and global travel. She has "worked with Congressional staff on congressional meetings, briefings and bill language, helped prepare staff to communicate with policy audiences, including working with communications staff to prepare testimony for hearings and policy briefings."

As chair of the Advocacy committee of USNC, Crystal's top priority for USNC for 2012 is to enhance our "visibility as a strong organization for women, grow our grassroots efforts and have a successful annual conference." On a personal note, Crystal relaxes by reading historical fiction or seeing movies; her favorite books are the Number One Ladies Detective Agency Series, "I love learning about Botswana while reading a good story."

Membership Challenge

by **Terry Brackett**



A strong voice is needed to promote the rights of women around the globe. UN Women is that

voice and the U.S. National Chapter must be a loud voice. To be loud and be heard, we need to increase our membership and so... It's time for healthy competition between chapters and between those who participate in our Circles of Giving. USNC-UN Women is initiating a challenge to its chapters and to its members to increase the number of men and women who support USNC-UN Women. The goal of USNC is to empower women and girls and to give them a voice worldwide. We can only do

that by increasing our own voice through an increased number of supporters. Here is the plan:

1. Between November 11, 2011 and February 7, 2012, the chapters will be competing to add new participants in our Circles of Giving and renew those who have let their participation expire.
2. On February 10, we will announce the chapter that signs up the greatest number of new participants and/or the renewal of participants who are in grace period. That chapter will receive front-page acknowledgement in the next Newsletter and recognition on USNC's Facebook page and Twitter. In addition, the winning chapter will receive five one-year Sustainer Circles to be used in any way the winning chapter decides.
3. Registration for these new or renewing Circle supporters may be done online at www.unwomen-usnc.org/donate or by sending in the registration(s) to USNC-UN Women, 1120 20th St. N.W., Suite 720, Washington, D.C. 20036.

Invite your friends, neighbors, colleagues to raise their voices for women around the world. Let's make our voices shout.



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