

United Nations
57th Commission on the
Status of Women Sessions
Reflection Paper

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Attending the 57th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the United Nations was one of the most amazing experiences in my life. Listening to some of the most influential and amazing women in the world was powerful, inspiring me to be just like them and fight for what I believe in. I hope to take these experiences and what I learned at the conference to my future endeavors in school and work.

As my own research focused on how the media perpetuates a culture of rape and the tools of media literacy to help combat rape and rape culture, CSW encouraged me to examine the application of media and media literacy programs in global communities. The conference was permeated with social media with participants tweeting and facebooking about the conference, panels, and ending violence against women and girls, emphasizing social media as a method of enacting change and connecting with others.

The media is a powerful purveyor of culture and as the ability to shape views surrounding gender norms, roles, and violence against women and girls. Thus the media can either increase gender equity or decrease gender equity, depending on the type of images and messages being disseminated. Currently there is an underrepresentation of women in media production and decision-making worldwide. This is significant because when women are excluded, then not only is there not gender equity in the media business, then there will not be gender equity in society.

Fortunately there are numerous initiatives in the United States and abroad working to increase gender equity in both society and the production of media. One such effort is that of the Communication Initiative, whose mission is “*To convene the communication and media development, social and behavioral change community for more effective local, national, and international development action.*” The

Communication Initiative is comprised of twenty-three partner agencies and compiles research and data surrounding gender equity and the media, to examine trends in policy, programming initiatives, the portrayal of women in the media, etc. In a paper written by Mr. Warren Feek, executive director of The Communication Initiative that was presented as a part of an interactive expert panel at CSW, he recognizes the role that mainstream media will continue to have in advancing gender equity and how women can use various forms of media to engage in efforts to increase gender equity and share their knowledge and ideas. It is important to recognize the ability of women to change the world around them so that they can be given the tools to do so.

The implementation of digital and social media as key aspects of CSW is important steps to reaching out to other people, communities, and organizations that may not have the opportunity to attend CSW or the knowledge of what CSW is. The use of media may also help in bridging the gap between the movement to end violence against women and girls and men, who often feel as if it is not their issue or who feel disparaged by the messages. As many people stated throughout the conference, violence against women and girls is not a woman's issue, and we must find a way to incorporate more men, by recognizing that while men make up a majority of the perpetrators, women are not without agency. While in no way should women be blamed for the violence committed against them, nor should they be viewed as helpless victims. Instead we must acknowledge the ways in which women can implement change and seek to find ways to create a coalition of men and women, working together for this change.

CSW is a potent medium for transmitting initiatives and values that encourages people to think about solutions on a global scale. While it has already been successful in

working to implement change and inspire action necessary to end discrimination and violence against women and girls, it would be that much more successful if there was a greater inclusion of men. It is heartening to know that those involved with CSW recognize the lack of men that participate and have already begun discussions around ways to change this. From my short experience at this conference and the amazing women involved, I have no doubt that they will find a way to unite with men, to enact even greater and more successful change on a global level.

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