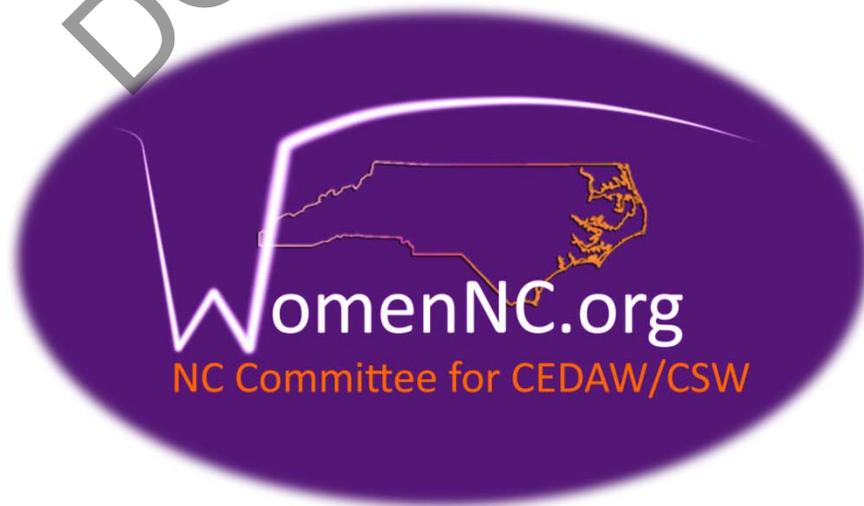


United Nations
57th Commission on the
Status of Women Sessions
Reflection Paper

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Attending the 57th United Nations Commission on the Status of Women provided an unparalleled opportunity to engage in discussions, connect with individuals working toward human rights for all, and to discover solutions related to human trafficking. An amazing experience that I am grateful for, participating in the Commission exposed me to innovative and community based solutions, new career possibilities, and community of individuals passionate about eliminating violence against women. From day one to the end of the conference, I learned more than I could ever expect, was inspired to continue utilizing my voice to advocate for women, and was filled with hope by the multitude of unique and successful solution models. Reflecting on my experience at the CSW, I will discuss the conference generally and the panels I attended. I will then explore my personal takeaways from the conference including professional development and greater exposure to the field of human trafficking. Finally, I will explore the lessons and solutions related to my research topic of human trafficking legislation and policy.

The Commission on the Status of Women provided great access to non-governmental organization (NGO) panels, governmental sessions, and individuals working to end violence against women. The first event that we attended as a group was NGO Consultation day, an event and space for NGO representatives to discuss and collaborate on many of the most pressing issues related to ending violence against women. At Consultation day, there were panels about human trafficking, engaging men and boys in ending violence against women, and social media involvement in ending violence. There were also impassionate speakers and performances that motivated me and the entire audience to continue to fight for women's rights. It was a fantastic way to start the conference because it informed the NGO community about some of the most pressing issues in the fight to end violence against women, gave NGO representatives a chance

to connect, and motivated the community to continue their work and find new innovative solutions.

Consultation day was particularly memorable because of its focus on human trafficking. After introductions and welcoming remarks, the group, Girl Be Heard performed a power dramatic piece about women affected by sex trafficking. Girl Be Heard is non-profit based in New York that uses theater as a way to empower women to use their voices, become leaders, and to be brave members of society. At Consultation day, the girls performed riveting stories and experiences of women and girls impacted by sex trafficking. One member in particular read a poem about Disney princesses where she said, where she talked about how the dream of finding her prince was thwarted by traffickers. It was heartfelt, sad, and emotional; it motived me to continue to advocate for those affected by human trafficking.

Consultation day also included a panel discussion about human trafficking. It included politicians, judges, activists, and academics working in the field of human trafficking. Each speaker provided a unique view to issue. For example, Judge Lillian Hofmeister from Austria talked about human rights and human trafficking while Dr. Barabara Spinalli from Italy discussed femicide and human trafficking. It was an incredible opportunity to learn about the issue from different angles. It also exposed me to new issues surrounding human trafficking such as femicide. As a law student, I was particularly drawn to the words of Judge Hofmeister who said we knew the status of laws by where women are in the laws. If women are not framed or included in the laws, then they will not have any rights. If women are not included when legislators write laws about human trafficking, then they will not have protection or support. Those words will stick with me for the rest of my career as I continue to advocate for women.

In addition to Consultation day, I had the opportunity to attend about 13 governmental and NGO sessions. Each session covered a topic connected to the theme of the CSW and focused on solutions. I attended panels discussing human trafficking, date violence, the role of law, legal solutions, solutions in the midst of corruption, sextortion, and country specific solutions to the issue as a whole. At the end of the conference, I left feeling very well-informed. I also left with a list of solutions and models to present to the non-profits and community groups that I worked with. While each solution will not work for every community, I now have a tool-kit of options to try to eliminate violence against women in North Carolina.

At the CSW, some of my favorite events were the NGO sessions. At the NGO sessions, each group had the opportunity to profile an issue and demonstrate what they are doing to address it. As noted, I left the conference with a tool-kit of ideas and this was due in large part to the NGO sessions. For example, I attended a session held by the World Association of Girl Guide and Scouts and Soroptimist International about dating and relationship violence. Working with young girls weekly at my church, I often think about how to communicate the importance of healthy relationships to youth. The Girl Guides presented an activity where they hung a clothes line in the middle of the room. One side of the line represented unhealthy relationships and the other side represented healthy relationships. The middle was for relationships in between. They then handed various images of individuals in relationship. Audience members were asked to pin their images to the clothes line, hanging it where they the relationship best fit on the spectrum of healthy or unhealthy. My picture was of two individuals, a male and female, talking at a bar with a man standing jealous in the background. I found myself immediately thinking it was unhealthy because of the jealousy, but had an incredible conversation with the woman standing that provided different insight. She commented about knowing the roles of each

person in the picture and talked about how the jealousy could be viewed as a one-side problem. While I did not share the same views on all aspects of the image, I thought the exercise was a great method to initiate discussion and an analysis of what really is a healthy relationship. It is a tool that I hope to use with the youth in my community.

The governmental sessions also provided great tools and discussion. I had the opportunity to attend a session given by the United States Mission to the United Nations with our group. The session was motivating because I heard about initiatives and legislation happening in my country and government. One of the initiatives discussed by Deputy Attorney General Jim Cole was the “1 is 2 Many” campaign, a project supported by Vice President Biden and created to engage men and boys around the issue. Deputy Attorney General Cole showed a video campaign that included many popular athletes such as Jeremy Lin and David Beckham. Their message was clear, stop violence against women and girls, one is too many. I was very excited to see this initiative starting in my background and country. The panel also included a representative from the World Bank who discussed an initiative to use mobile phones to end violence. Working in countries where mobile phones are more readily available than land lines and other amenities, their initiative gives an app or tool to those suffering from domestic violence. This governmental session was motivating and provided great tools and solutions.

In addition to the tools and solutions gained from the conference, I also benefited professionally. Before attending the CSW, I knew that I wanted to find a way to combine my interests in criminal and human rights law, but I did not know how that would look. At the conference, I ran into a different person each day who was doing what I wanted to do in some way. For example, on the first day of the conference, I attended the panel “Winning Strategies for Preventing Violence Against Women- Global Models” by the San Francisco Department on

the Status of Women and the Women's Intercultural Network. It was the very first session I attended and one of the speakers was Manhattan Assistant District Attorney Audrey Moore. She is the head of the office's Special Victims Bureau that works on cases involving human trafficking, domestic violence, sex crimes, child abuse, and elder abuse. She had one of my dream jobs. She discussed what her office was doing to help survivors of human trafficking. She also talked about what her office is doing to catch and prosecute perpetrators of human trafficking. From day one, I began to see and realize the many opportunities present to combine my interests and passions.

Throughout the conference, I attended sessions related to legal solutions and effective legislation. On the fourth day of the conference, I attended a session held by the New York Anti-Human Trafficking Taskforce. I went expecting to learn more about the issue and glean tools to better advocate for survivors. Instead, I met and interacted with lawyers who are working to support survivors and create effective legislation. The speakers at this panel were key drivers in passing New York's anti-trafficking legislation. They were also key players in continuing to add to the legislation to make it stronger and effective. Again, I was presented with more ways I could combine my interests.

Every day at the CSW provided an opportunity to connect with individuals with years of experience and great ideas. At every panel I attended, I met someone working in the human rights field who also had a legal background. I met criminal attorneys, business lawyers, immigration attorneys, and many other types of lawyers. I left the conference knowing that I can and will combine these two interest areas of mine. I also recognized how many people are combining my interests in North Carolina. Before, going to the CSW, I thought of those two fields as very separate and one dimensional. I now know I can combine my interests effectively.

For example, I can work in a non-profit supporting survivors of trafficking while also advocating for strong legislation to catch and prosecute trafficking perpetrators.

Attending the CSW also provided unparalleled exposure to field of human trafficking. Starting with Consultation day, human trafficking remained an important issue throughout the conference. It was raised as a topic for analysis at almost every session I attended, even those not specifically related to the issue. This breadth of coverage provided the opportunity to learn more about human trafficking generally and from various angles. For example, I attended a presentation given by a Ph.D. student who works in Texas. She has worked with survivors of trafficking for years and knows where and how sex trafficking is perpetrated in her community. Because of this, she talked about community based solutions such as working with health inspectors and individuals who examine restaurants to identify trafficking. She teaches inspectors the signs of trafficking in these locations. She provided realistic community based models. I also attended a session on legal issues related to trafficking. With most of the panelists being lawyers, discussion and questions centered on laws related to trafficking. The speakers and the audience talked about what makes a strong human trafficking law. One representative from the New York Bar Association noted that increasing penalties does not necessarily make the law stronger. She noted that strong penalties sometime further affect populations who are already disproportionality imprisoned. It was great discussion and provided great insight into the topic. Both of these panels were focused on human trafficking and both took very different approaches. The CSW was the perfect place for exposure to the field from all angles.

Additionally, the CSW provided an opportunity to learn more about the topic generally. For example, before attending the conference, I had not made a connection between femicide and human trafficking. During Consultation Day, Dr. Barbara Spinalli from Italy spoke about the

connection and her research. She noted that women are being killed more and more because of human trafficking. Femicide is often tied to culture, with men killing women because of rape, sexual violence, sexual orientation, and in the name of honor.¹ Women involved in human trafficking often suffer violent deaths as a result of tradition or culture. They also often suffer deaths at the hands of perpetrators. Before attending the CSW, I had not made the connection. As I have continued to learn more and research, I have seen and read articles and more information on this particular connection.

If there was one word to sum up the CSW and many of the solutions presented at human trafficking panels it would be collaboration. Many speakers on human trafficking panels stressed the importance of collaborating with governments, non-profits, and other service providers. For example, ADA Moore noted that her bureau and office works with non-profits in the area to insure that survivors of human trafficking receive the services they need. At her office, they proactively investigate many of their prostitution cases to see if there is any evidence of trafficking. Doing their part to identify survivors and prosecute perpetrators, they then rely on and work with non-profits to provide holistic support to survivors. This is similar to work of JusticeMatters and other local non-profits in North Carolina to combat human trafficking. Through collaborations like the North Carolina Coalition Against Human Trafficking, non-profits, governments, and the private sector can come together and provide holistic support and solutions to the issue.

Attending the 57th Commission on the Status of Women was a great experience. I am grateful for the opportunity and I have benefited immensely. The experience provided space to learn more about women's rights, explore my research area in depth, and connect with advocates

¹ *Femicide is on the Rise: Speaking Out At #CSW57*, SOROPTIMIST INTERNATIONAL, <http://www.soroptimistinternational.org/who-we-are/news/post/458-femicide-is-on-the-rise-speaking-out-at-csw57>

from around the world. As I continue to learn more about human trafficking and women's rights, I will constantly think back to this experience and the solutions that I gathered. If I could take one aspect away from this experience it would be motivation and hope. Observing all the unique solutions and knowing that there more ideas in the works, I am motivated that we as a society can and will one day end violence against women. Moreover, I know that I will continue to use my voice to advocate for women's rights.

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