



**WomenNC Fellowship Summary –
Participation in the 58th *Commission on the Status of Women (CSW)*
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58CSW report prepared by Amy Watson

At round tables of 30 and in auditoriums of 600, New York brought the world together this past week, and we were there. We as the 2014 Fellows were there in layers of jackets and enthusiasm. We were there to bring the voices of youth and be a part of the change.

CSW is where the world comes together to both envision and require a better future for women. This future is a vision because when the world is better for women, it is better for everybody; this future is a requirement because women's rights are human rights. NGOs and politicians alike gathered to set up the stakes that mark this future—goals, measurements and standards that almost 200 countries will be held accountable to in the years to come.

To be there and hear the individual voices, the back and forth discussion that make up this call piece by piece, was a great opportunity for each of us. Throughout the whole of our time we were challenged to both step in closer, examining the implications of certain policies, and step out further to see the full landscape of how issues interconnect. At NGO sessions and round tables we looked at individual issues such as how various nations combat trafficking, the socio-economic effects of violence against women, and impacts on rural communities. At receptions and in the General Assembly, these issues lined up side by side. While on a micro level, there was far more taking place than we could have hoped to fully take away, the overall implications and the connections back to our own passions and research were impressed on each of us.

All throughout our time at CSW, we heard politicians and NGO leaders alike calling for a greater youth involvement, recognizing the need for our input. While they may not always know how best to make space for us at the table, they clearly want us to show up so that we can craft those spaces together. And that was precisely what we did. Through our presentations at the WomenNC Panel we got to be a part of that youth voice and continue to make the fight personal. It was a key component for each of us to see how our own topics connected back into what was being discussed across the convention at large. Oftentimes in a session we would look at another fellow and smile when the needs being addressed were just what we all had brought to the table. It was very reaffirming to hear the world talking about the things we had put so much time into researching.

In addition to the wealth of knowledge and the experience of bringing our own voices, CSW meant an opportunity to meet and be inspired by those who have been in this fight much longer than we have—people we might not meet under any other context. Delegates from the Ministry of Labor in the Czech Republic, United States Ambassadors to the UN, and the Brazilian Undersecretary for Women are just some of the dignitaries we as fellows got to interact with. Organizations and renowned activists such as UNICEF, Ellie Smeal, and Girl's Learn International continued to add to our experiences and connections.

From global politics, to NGO activism and lobbying, every aspect of how the world comes together and seeks change was represented in New York. And at each of those corners and through each of those processes, we were there, asking questions, sharing our voice.

While many will find ways to criticize the pace or the proceedings of the United Nations, as will always be the case for large collaborations, there can be no negating that the process of CSW and the official document it will produce form one of the loudest voices for women's equality on a global scale. The closing out of the Millennium Development Goals causes this year, this past week, to have an even greater bearing. To be in the midst of it all was worth the early starts, the New York cold and all the months that preceded this one week.