



# Body Economy Movement

The Global Women's Movement  
at the Beijing+15 Review

A REPORT ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM OF  
THE CENTER FOR WOMEN'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

# 20 Years

**Body, Economy, Movement: The Global Women's Movement at the Beijing+15 Review**  
***A Report on the 20th Anniversary Symposium of the Center for Women's Global Leadership***

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Center for Women's Global Leadership  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
160 Ryders Lane  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8555 USA  
Tel: 1-732-932-8782  
Fax: 1-732-932-1180  
Email: [cwgl@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:cwgl@rci.rutgers.edu)  
Website: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu>

Written and edited by Nathalie Margi and Mary Jane Real  
Production: Lucy V. Vidal and Katy Naples-Mitchell

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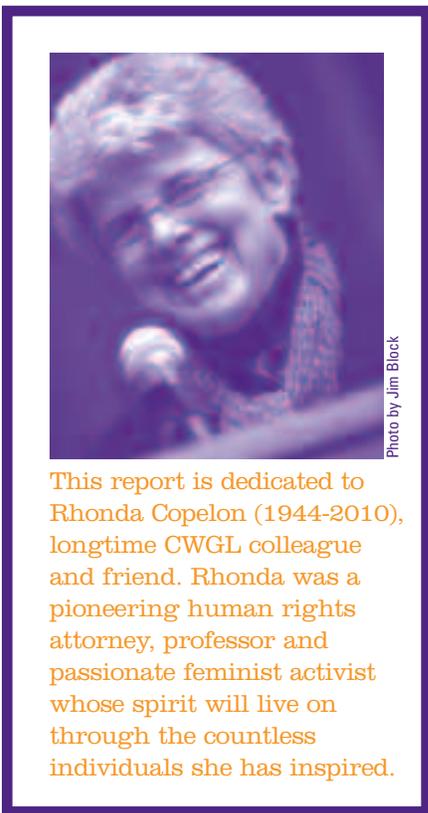
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# Preface

## Radhika Balakrishnan, CWGL Executive Director

The meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in March 2010 marked two significant anniversaries for the global women’s movement: fifteen years after the Beijing World Conference on Women and twenty years since the founding of the Center for Women’s Global Leadership (CWGL). In honor of both of these events, CWGL organized a 20th Anniversary Symposium entitled “Body, Economy, Movement,” which featured notable speakers from the global women’s movement. The three thematic areas in the event’s title appropriately encapsulated the essence of the symposium—an event designed to honor the history and accomplishments of the movement, outline the challenges that remain and focus in on pertinent issues in the fight for women’s equality, and set a new course for future advocacy and action. The symposium allowed us at the Center to begin re-conceptualizing our role in the movement not only through the continuation of existing programs, but also as we pursue new directions after the transition of our Founding Director, Charlotte Bunch, who remains linked to CWGL as our senior scholar.



This report is dedicated to Rhonda Copelon (1944-2010), longtime CWGL colleague and friend. Rhonda was a pioneering human rights attorney, professor and passionate feminist activist whose spirit will live on through the countless individuals she has inspired.

The Center for Women’s Global Leadership has always been a luminary institution for developing the capacity of activists around the world to respond to various challenges and to create new linkages and contexts for collaboration between disparate groups of change agents, seeding new dialogues and partnerships. The Center has not only engaged in international social movements, but with Charlotte’s unparalleled leadership, has also helped to create and shape the women’s movement in partnership with a network of global grassroots organizations and NGOs engaged in advancing gender equity. Although this symposium was aimed to analyze the history of the Center within the women’s movement, it also provided a unique opportunity to assess where we are headed at the Center and the best means for achieving our goals. As the new executive director of the Center, I am thrilled to lead this organization into its next phase of women’s rights advocacy. I look forward to building on the strong foundation CWGL has forged in the global women’s movement. CWGL has been a central player in this movement and in the transformative endeavor of demanding respect for the rights of all women. As one of

## Preface **CONTINUED**

the first organizations with a specific focus on developing multi-cultural leadership for advocacy around women's rights globally, the Center has been a catalyst, enabler, organizer, and leader in the evolution of this work.

As we consider our role in the future of the movement, I have brought a new, strong focus and specialization on economic and social rights to the core programmatic agenda of the Center. In the few months of my tenure, the integration of human rights partners and scholars has begun in earnest, with the collaborations of new networks and projects that will infuse CWGL's work at current and future venues. In light of the urgency of the economic crisis, the need for collaboration among human rights organizations, women's rights groups, and progressive economists makes this time at CWGL especially important and marked by potential for great gains in securing a broad range of human rights for all. These issues were discussed in depth at the symposium in the context of the "Economy" theme.

While many governments have signed a host of human rights treaties and have, to one degree or another, been effective in implementing these treaties in various areas of the legislature and public policy, the formulation of macroeconomic policy has often been criticized for its lack of attention to human rights. However, relevant government bodies, such as Finance and Economy Ministries, often lack the knowledge of economic and social rights and the appropriate tools to incorporate the perspective in an efficient and coherent manner. At the same time, civil society groups that advocate for greater consideration of human rights often lack the appropriate language, in-depth macroeconomic knowledge, political negotiation skills, and practical tools to work with these entities to develop dialogue and initiate advances in this area. Thus the Center for Women's Global Leadership has developed a multi-tiered endeavor including training, academic research, and international policy advocacy to help build the relevant capacities of these groups, enabling each of them to undertake a systematic examination of selected macroeconomic strategies from the perspective of human rights.

Though the future of the Center remains unscripted, we look forward to continued leadership as a harbinger of the women's movement as well as new partnerships, coalitions, and footholds in improving women's economic rights. This report on our 20th Anniversary Symposium outlines our history and pays due respect to the accomplishments of Charlotte Bunch and the first twenty years of the Center for Women's Global Leadership, but also poses important questions for the women's movement to grapple with at this critical juncture and historic moment.



# Background: The Global Movement for Women's Human Rights

## 2010: A YEAR OF ANNIVERSARIES

In 2010, as we begin a new decade, we also celebrate a number of key anniversaries in the global women's movement.

Almost 100 years ago, in March 1911, International Women's Day was celebrated for the first time, after a proposal from Clara Zetkin (Leader of the Women's Office of the Social Democratic Party in Germany) at the second International Conference of Working Women held in Copenhagen in 1910.<sup>1</sup> Over 100 women from 17 countries gathered at the conference, representing unions, socialist parties, working women's clubs, and including the first three women elected to the Finnish parliament. Women organized and engaged in countless meetings in towns and villages everywhere, exceeding all expectations with their numbers, energy and enthusiasm. Governmental commitments were slow to follow these vibrant grassroots women's organizing efforts. It was not until 1975, during International Women's Year, that International Women's Day was officially recognized and observed by the United Nations and a number of governments.

Just over 30 years ago, on December 18, 1979, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW) was adopted by the United Nations General Assembly.<sup>2</sup> The Convention defines what constitutes discrimination against women, establishes an international bill of rights for women, and outlines an agenda of action for countries to ensure that women and girls can effectively exercise these rights. This achievement was the culmination of decades of women's organizing and advocacy worldwide, particularly around the formation of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in 1946 to monitor and promote women's rights, and the First World Conference on Women in Mexico City in 1975, which called for the drafting of such a convention with effective implementation measures. On July 17, 1980, during the Copenhagen mid-decade review conference (World Conference on the United Nations Decade for Women: Equality, Development and Peace), 64 UN Member States signed the Convention and two States submitted their instruments of ratification. CEDAW entered into force on September 3, 1981, legally



binding governments that ratify or accede to it to eradicate all forms of discrimination against women. Women all around the world use CEDAW and its Optional Protocol (2000) to hold their governments accountable for upholding women's rights.

Fifteen years ago, from September 4-15, 1995, delegates from 189 countries met in Beijing, China to participate in the UN Fourth World Conference on Women.<sup>3</sup> Over 45,000 representatives from thousands of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) based in every region of the world gathered at the conference in Beijing and the parallel NGO forum held in the nearby town of Huairou, breaking all records of civil society participation at such an event. As an outcome of the conference, governments adopted the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action, an exhaustive and far-reaching document addressing women's issues worldwide.<sup>4</sup> The Declaration and Platform for Action identified twelve critical areas of concern: women and poverty; education and training of women; women and health; violence against women; women and armed conflict; women and the economy; women in power and decision-making; institutional mechanisms for the advancement of women; human rights of women; women and the media; women and the environment; and the girl-child. It listed objectives and recommended actions to improve women's access to rights in each of these areas. Although the Platform for Action (BPfA) is not a legally binding document, it serves as a policy guide for governments, institutions, private businesses and UN agencies, and establishes standards by which to evaluate policies and programs. By adopting the BPfA, governments strongly committed themselves to addressing obstacles to the advancement and empowerment of women.



Today, the BPfA remains the most progressive and comprehensive international agreement on women's rights. Governments made concrete commitments to respect the human rights of women and girls worldwide, set timelines and identified specific actions they would take to implement these engagements. Since Beijing, a number of significant UN and government steps have been taken toward securing women's rights, including Goal 3 for Gender Equality in the Millennium Development Goals, the adoption of UN Security Council Resolutions (SCR) 1325, 1820, 1888 and 1889 on Women, Peace & Security, and additional and improved national laws to address violence against women.

### **INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZING AND ADVOCACY FOR WOMEN'S HUMAN RIGHTS**

Indefatigable and visionary activism by women's rights organizations and women human rights defenders at the local, national, regional and international levels has been a primary catalyst for many of these positive developments in women's rights over the past few decades. Like other UN conferences before it, the Beijing conference provided invaluable opportunities for international networking as well as a space for women's rights activists to strategize and build the capacity of the movement. Moreover, it garnered unprecedented media attention for a meeting on women's issues, demonstrating to the world the strength and energy of the global women's movement. As former UN Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali emphasized in his statement on the concluding day of the Beijing Conference: "The commitments made in Beijing are not only the result of diplomatic negotiation. Behind them lies the strong and organized power

of the women's movement. The entire continuum of global conferences and summits has been shaped by the growing influence, passion and intellectual conviction of the women's movement."<sup>5</sup>

Indeed, women had been engaging in international coalition building and advocacy throughout a number of other UN World Conferences preceding the Beijing Conference. During the UN Decade for Women (1976-1985), women from diverse backgrounds increasingly worked together for women's empowerment across different nationalities, races, ethnicities, religions, classes, and sexualities. The first three UN World Conferences on Women, which took place in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, and Nairobi in 1985, were convened to assess the status of women and develop strategies for women's advancement. As Charlotte Bunch explains, "These conferences were critical venues at which women came together, debated their differences and discovered their commonalities, and gradually began learning to bridge differences to create a global movement."<sup>6</sup>

Other UN World Conferences leading up to Beijing strengthened inter-governmental commitments on development and human rights and provided women with the space to build and strengthen an international movement. These include the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), or Earth Summit, held in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil in June 1992, the UN World Conference on Human Rights, in Vienna, Austria in June 1993, the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD), in Cairo, Egypt in September 1994, and the World Summit for Social Development, which took place in Copenhagen in March 1995.

## 20 YEARS OF THE CENTER FOR WOMEN'S GLOBAL LEADERSHIP

2010 also marks the 20th anniversary of the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), one of the leading organizations in the global movement for women's human rights.<sup>7</sup> CWGL was founded in 1989 as a project of Douglass College at Rutgers University. Based at Rutgers, CWGL is part of the Office of International Programs in the School of Arts and Sciences and is a member of the Institute for Women's Leadership (IWL)—a consortium of women's programs at Rutgers University created to study and promote how and why women lead, and to develop programs that prepare women of all ages to lead effectively. The member units of IWL are the Center for American Women and Politics (CAWP), the Center for Women and Work, the Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL), Douglass Residential College, the Institute for Research on Women (IRW), the Institute for Women and Art (IWA), the Office for the Promotion of Women in Science, Engineering and Mathematics, and the Women's and Gender Studies Department.

CWGL's programs promote the leadership of women and advance feminist perspectives in policy-making processes in local, national and international arenas. Since 1990, CWGL has fostered women's leadership in the area of human rights through women's global leadership institutes, strategic planning activities, international mobilization campaigns, UN monitoring, global education endeavors, publications, and a resource center.

CWGL was instrumental in pushing the UN and the international community to view women's rights as a human rights issue. In her 1990 article, "Women's Rights as Human Rights: Toward a Re-Vision of Human Rights,"<sup>8</sup> Charlotte Bunch, founder of CWGL, introduced a new concept into the global women's rights movement, arguing for a human rights approach to women's rights. CWGL was created around this innovative theoretical and activist paradigm, with a particular focus on violence against women as one of the most pervasive manifestations of women's marginalized status around the world. CWGL played a leading role in the Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights, an international civil society coalition advocating for gender-based discrimination and persecution to be taken seriously by the international community as human rights abuses. The campaign revealed the gendered dimensions of human rights abuses and denounced the invisibility of violations against women in mainstream approaches to human rights.

## GENDERING HUMAN RIGHTS: THE VIENNA CONFERENCE ON HUMAN RIGHTS

In 1989, the UN General Assembly called for the convening of a second World Conference on Human Rights to assess advances and challenges in the field of human rights since the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR). The conference was held in Vienna, Austria in June 1993. The first and only other such conference had taken place 25 years earlier, in 1968 in Tehran. CWGL and partner organizations mobilized women's rights activists from all around the world in preparation for this event. In 1991, CWGL convened an ongoing working group on women's human rights. The same year, participants at CWGL's Women's Global Leadership Institute (WGLI) launched the first annual 16 Days of Activism against Gender Violence, linking November 25, International Day Against Violence Against Women, to December 10, Human Rights Day, in order to make a symbolic statement.<sup>9</sup>

For the first 16 Days Campaign, CWGL and the International Women's Tribune Centre (IWTC) co-sponsored a worldwide petition targeting the Vienna Conference and calling for the UN to "comprehensively address women's human rights at every level of its proceedings" and to recognize "gender violence, a universal phenomenon which takes many forms across culture, race and class...as a violation of human rights requiring immediate action."<sup>10</sup> The petition was disseminated in English, Spanish and French through dozens of women's networks. It was subsequently translated into 24 languages and used by women to initiate discussions, raise awareness and garner support for the initiative at local, national and regional levels. The Global Campaign for Women's Human Rights converged in Vienna for the conference, with a set of common demands and a petition that had gathered the support of over 1,000 sponsoring groups and almost half a million signatures from 124 countries.

Moreover, in collaboration with an international consortium of women's groups, CWGL coordinated a Global Tribunal on Violations of Women's Human Rights in the context of the NGO parallel events at the Vienna Conference. Thirty-three women from 25 countries testified about a wide range of women's human rights abuses before a panel of distinguished judges from different regions of the world. More than 1,000 people attended the daylong event, which denounced the enduring failure of international human rights instruments to uphold the human rights of women and girls. As a result of these efforts, in the outcome document of the conference entitled the Vienna Declaration



and Programme of Action, over 150 nations agreed that “the human rights of women and of the girl-child are an inalienable, integral and indivisible part of universal human rights” and that “violence against women in both public and private settings is a violation of human rights.”<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, the Declaration and Programme of Action formulated specific recommendations for the advancement of women’s human rights, notably calling for the appointment of a UN Special Rapporteur on Violence Against Women, a mechanism that was effectively established in 1994 to hold governments accountable for their record on women’s human rights.<sup>12</sup>

## **A GLOBAL AGENDA FOR WOMEN: THE BEIJING WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN**

The global movement for women’s human rights continued and strengthened its mobilization using similar strategies in preparation for and during the Beijing Conference, organizing caucuses, panels, strategy workshops and conferences, and lobbying decision-makers at the local, national, regional and international levels. Advocates circulated a petition urging the UN to promote and protect the human rights of women and to implement the promises made in the Vienna Declaration. The petition garnered over one million signatures. During the parallel NGO Forum in Huairou, CWGL coordinated a global tribunal on accountability for women’s human rights, building on the success of the Vienna tribunal two years earlier. These activities covered a wide range of areas such as violence against women in war and conflict; militarism and the arms industry; violence against women in the family; violations of bodily integrity and women’s health rights; economic discrimination and exploitation, including the negative impact of

structural adjustment policies; political persecution; issues pertaining to migrant, refugee and displaced women, as well as to indigenous peoples; and the rights of marginalized women, lesbians, disabled women and older women.

At the Beijing Conference, then United States First Lady Hillary Clinton declared that “it is no longer acceptable to discuss women’s rights as separate from human rights,” reaffirming what had become the mantra of the global women’s human rights movement since the early 1990s.<sup>13</sup> The significance of articulating women’s concerns through the framework of international human rights cannot be overstated. Human rights law is a powerful analytic and political tool for lobbying policy-makers at all levels, but also for grassroots organizing at the community level. It is deeply transformative since, as Bunch put it, it provides women with “principles by which to develop alternative visions of their lives without suggesting the substance of those visions,” allowing them to “articulate the specificity of the experiences in their lives” as well as mobilize collaboratively with others around a diversity of experiences.<sup>14</sup>

International agreements on women’s human rights constitute effective mechanisms to hold both state and non-state actors accountable for violations of the rights of women and girls everywhere. In contrast to the notion of human needs, which connotes benevolence and charity, the concept of human rights infers legal accountability and international scrutiny and provides an empowering framework to analyze individual experiences in the context of justice, the rule of law and universal human dignity. Human rights are inalienable, indivisible and

intersectional. Furthermore, the concept of human rights is dynamic; it is constantly being redefined and expanded. In the same way that women's rights activists used the human rights framework to voice their demands for gender equality, human rights defenders from all regions of the world are broadening its interpretation to advocate for indigenous rights, rights around sexual orientation and gender identity, and the right to economic justice in the context of the current financial crisis.

Therefore, one cannot discuss these UN conferences and international government commitments without acknowledging the unrelenting grassroots organizing efforts of women around the world that made these successes possible. Informed by a thorough understanding of the intricate interconnections between international and local spheres, advocates demanded government commitments to women's human rights at the UN conferences and at other global, regional and national arenas, based on their grassroots knowledge and expertise. Conversely, they domesticated human rights concepts and instruments and helped translate these promises into tangible results for women at the local level. Since these early days in global women's human rights advocacy, the movement has grown tremendously and achieved many successes. Despite this progress, implementation of these victories remains insufficient. In the face of this key obstacle, civil society continues to play its monitoring role and demand that governments implement the commitments made in the BPfA, especially in the context of new and emerging challenges.

## **BEIJING+15 AND CWGL'S 20TH ANNIVERSARY SYMPOSIUM**

Fifteen years after the Beijing Conference, from March 1-12, 2010, representatives from UN Member States and women's NGOs from all around the world gathered at the 54th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) at the UN Headquarters in New York City to review the implementation of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action and the outcomes of the 23rd Special Session of the General Assembly. Similar review processes had taken place during Beijing+5 in 2000 and Beijing+10 in 2005. In preparation for this review, the UN Regional Commissions and the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW) collected questionnaires from governments about their laws, policies and practices related to gender. The Regional Commissions, as well as women's organizations, coalitions and networks, also planned a number of regional meetings, many of which focused on addressing the impact of the current economic crisis.

## **CWGL Activities at the 54th CSW**

Over the two weeks of the 54th CSW, CWGL co-sponsored events broadly pertaining to issues such as women's human rights defenders, the proposed new UN gender entity, violence against women, and economic rights. Events specifically focused on state counter-terrorism policies and women human rights defenders; Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR); an International Tribunal on crimes against the women of Burma; comparative strategies to end violence against women; a new macroeconomic and gender development framework; the potential impact of CEDAW ratification in the US; and race, gender, and economic justice in the US. This list of topics covered in CWGL co-sponsored events provides only a glimpse into the participation of CWGL at the CSW.<sup>15</sup>

Furthermore, CWGL organized a "16 Days Campaign Round-Table Discussion" about the next stages of the campaign. Approximately 120 activists from around the world attended this session to collect feedback about a new campaign theme for 2010 and beyond regarding the intersections of militarism and gender-based violence. Radhika Balakrishnan, Executive Director, and Keely Swan, 16 Days Campaign Coordinator, led the discussion, while participants offered strategic and introspective comments about the new theme, including about the continuum of violence that women and girls face before, during, and after conflict situations and the realization that militarism does not end in warzones because women are constantly in militaristic settings.

## **CWGL 20th Anniversary Symposium**

Parallel to intergovernmental discussions on progress made on women's empowerment and gender equality, CWGL convened a Public Symposium on March 6, 2010 at the Hunter College Assembly Hall in New York City. The event, which was hosted by the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute and the Women and Gender Studies Program of Hunter College, celebrated CWGL's 20th anniversary and reflected on the past two decades of activism for women's human rights worldwide. Taking advantage of the presence of women's rights defenders from around the world attending the CSW, the daylong symposium provided feminist advocates with an opportunity to share experiences and analyses on the global women's movement and how it has influenced the UN and other institutions in advocating for women's rights through feminist organizing locally and networking globally.

The event examined the strategic breakthroughs and pioneering praxes that have advanced women's rights, as well as looked to the new energy that is shaping the future of the movement in vibrant and inno-



Mary Hartman,  
Former Dean of  
Douglass College,  
Founding Director,  
Institute for Women's  
Leadership (IWL)

vative ways. The main objectives of the symposium were to consolidate lessons learned in prior advocacy for women's rights from the perspectives of different leaders and activists in the women's movement; to provide an opportunity for women's rights activists around the world to reflect on the impact of feminist activism on UN processes, including the implementation of the BPfA and the plans for a new UN women's agency (Gender Equality Architecture Reform, or GEAR Campaign);<sup>16</sup> and to provide a platform for multiple generations of feminists to share experiences, innovative strategies, and reflect on the current challenges experienced in the women's movement. The event included multi-media presentations and plenary discussions with leaders of the women's rights movement from around the world, across different generations, from various sectors, and of varied expertise.

### **Tribute to CWGL Founding Director Charlotte Bunch**

Following the panel discussions, CWGL organized a tribute to its founder Charlotte Bunch, who transitioned on September 1, 2009 from her role as Executive Director to working with CWGL in her new capacity as Founding Director and Senior Scholar. A documentary film chronicling Bunch's lifelong personal and political commitment to women's human rights will be released soon.<sup>17</sup> In the spirit of Bunch's exceptional leadership and invaluable contributions to the global women's movement, CWGL launched the Charlotte Bunch Women's Human Rights Strategic Opportunities Fund dedicated to the uniqueness and insight of her vision, and with the versatility to address shifting challenges in the

areas of women's leadership and human rights.<sup>18</sup> The fund aims to continue Bunch's vision and her activism for women's human rights, both within and beyond CWGL. It plans to support efforts ranging from UN advocacy and women's leadership to sustaining activism, networking and movement building. The launch of the fund was greeted with enormous enthusiasm and support as well as generous gifts and pledges. The reception ended with songs on women's human rights and an International Women's Day dance party, illustrating the centrality of festive celebrations and relationship-building within the global women's movement, as well as a dedication to supporting younger generations in their continuation and reinventions of the movement.

### **STRUCTURE OF THE REPORT**

This publication aims to share the positive energy and innovative insights that emerged from discussions at the symposium. It begins by highlighting some of the key points raised in the welcome and introductory addresses by speakers Radhika Balakrishnan (Executive Director, CWGL; Professor, Women's and Gender Studies Department, Rutgers University), Charlotte Bunch, (Founding Director and Senior Scholar, CWGL; Distinguished Professor, Women's and Gender Studies Department, Rutgers University), Jennifer Raab (President, Hunter College), and Mary Robinson (President, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative; Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights; Former President of Ireland). Following the structure of the discussions at the symposium, the bulk of the report is organized around three major thematic pillars: body, economy and movement.

First, the report provides a synthesis of conversations at the symposium among feminist leaders working on issues of the body, including sexual and reproductive rights and gender-based violence. Moderator Alexandra Garita (Program Officer, International Women's Health Coalition) and panelists Lesley Ann Foster (Founder and Executive Director, Masimanyane Women's Support Centre), Pinar Ilkkaracan (Founding President, Women for Women's Human Rights - NEW WAYS; Co-founder, Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies), Ros Petchesky (Distinguished Professor, Political Science Department, Hunter College, Graduate Center of the City University of New York), and Jacqueline Pitanguy (Founder and Director, Citizenship, Study, Research, Information and Action) discussed the backlash on women's sexual and reproductive rights and threats to women human rights defenders, the value of the human rights framework in advancing women's bodily rights, and new strategies to build the capacity of the movement in advancing these issues.



The second section of the report focuses on gender and economic issues, based on discussions among Cathy Albisa (Executive Director, National Economic and Social Rights Initiative), Diane Elson (Professor, Sociology Department, University of Essex; Chair, UK Women's Budget Group), and Gita Sen (Founding Member, Executive Committee, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era; Adjunct Professor, Global Health and Population Department, Harvard School of Public Health; Professor, Indian Institute of Management), moderated by Rupal Oza (Director, Women and Gender Studies Program, Hunter College). Panelists pondered what directions activism around economic justice should take, how a human rights framework can advance women's economic and social rights, and how feminists and progressives can envision new tools and approaches to address the disproportionate impacts of the economic crisis on women. The aim of the dialogue was to discover how best to advance women's human right to economic justice in the current global context of neoliberalization and the financial crisis.

In the third section on sustaining and strengthening the global women's rights movement, the report compiles and builds on the observations of symposium panelists Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi (Co-founder and Executive Director, African Women's Development Fund), Peggy Antrobus (Co-founder, Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era), Sharon Bhagwan Rolls (Founding Coordinator, femLINKpacific; Vice President, National Council of Women Fiji), and Mary Jane Real (Visiting Global Associate, CWGL; Coordinator, Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition), moderated by Lydia Alpizar (Executive Director,

Association for Women's Rights in Development; Co-founder, ELIGE - Youth Network for Reproductive and Sexual Rights). This section articulates some of the enduring challenges confronting the sustainability of the global women's rights movement as well as some of the ways in which the movement can be enriched by new technologies and globalization and become more multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, and inclusive of multiple sexualities.

Finally, drawing from the experiences and insights shared by Haitian activist and researcher Stéphanie Louis (Research Assistant, Interuniversity Institute for Research & Development) the report reflects on women's role in reconstructing Haiti after the recent earthquake of January 12, 2010 and how Haitian women's leadership in this devastating humanitarian crisis can yield valuable lessons for women's participation in undermining unequal power relations and restructuring society at every level.

Gathering experiences from every region of the world and the vibrant energy of feminists of all generations at CWGL's symposium, the report sketches some new visions and strategies for the next 20 years of the movement and beyond.

# Introduction: A Symposium for Collective Strategizing

As thousands of representatives of governments and NGOs from all across the globe converged at the UN Headquarters in New York City to review the implementation of intergovernmental promises made in the BPfA, hundreds of women's rights advocates gathered at a Public Symposium convened by CWGL on the occasion of its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary to discuss achievements and remaining obstacles in the area of women's empowerment and gender equality from a civil society perspective. The symposium was held on March 6, 2010 at the Hunter College Assembly Hall in New York City.

Mary Jane Real, Coordinator of the Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD-IC), Visiting Global Associate at CWGL and main organizer of the symposium, enthusiastically welcomed the audience to the daylong event. The conference was moderated by Radhika Balakrishnan, Executive Director of CWGL, who gave an overview of the day's program and introduced the speakers. The event was the product of a fruitful collaboration between several institutions of higher education. It was convened by CWGL of Rutgers University, hosted by the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute and the Women and Gender Studies Program of Hunter College, and co-sponsored by the New School. Additionally, the Humanist Institute for Development Cooperation (Hivos), the Bella Abzug Leadership Institute (BALI), the Global Fund for Women, the United Nations Foundation and Abigail Disney generously donated their support and resources to the program. The conference began with introductory remarks by Jennifer Raab, President of Hunter College, Mary Robinson, Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights and Former President of Ireland as well as President of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative, Radhika Balakrishnan, Executive Director of CWGL and Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University, and Charlotte Bunch, CWGL Founding Director and Senior Scholar and Professor of Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University.

## **A CRITICAL JUNCTURE, Radhika Balakrishnan**

*Radhika Balakrishnan recently became the Executive Director of CWGL and joined the Rutgers University faculty as a professor in the Women's and Gender Studies Department. Balakrishnan holds a PhD in*



*Economics from Rutgers. Previously, she was Professor of Economics and International Studies at Marymount Manhattan College. She has worked at the Ford Foundation as a program officer in the Asia Regional Program. She is currently the Chair of the Board of the US Human Rights Network and is on the Board of the Center for Constitutional Rights. She has published extensively in the field of gender and development.*

Balakrishnan emphasized that the symposium not only commemorated 20 years of CWGL's work, but also noted that the global feminist movement is at a critical juncture. In many of the sessions at this year's CSW, activists pondered what strategies to employ in order to confront the numerous and compound challenges to the movement. There is notably a right-wing, religious fundamentalist backlash against women's rights, in particular against women's bodily integrity and sexual and reproductive health and rights. The global economy is in crisis, which is further entrenching the economic marginalization of women and the feminization of poverty. Feminist organizers are still confronted with many of the same issues they have worked on for a very long time, as well as emerging issues that require strategizing.

As Balakrishnan explained, the symposium aimed to provide a safe, feminist and interactive space to think about these issues collectively, through conversations around three critical issues: the body, the economy and the movement. She outlined the structure of the symposium and highlighted the main questions framing each panel. Faced with an intricate interplay of obstacles and challenges, including the professionalization of the movement, a growing fundamentalist backlash and a daunting financial crisis, participants explored how women's human rights defenders worldwide can refine their advocacy strategies, notably around bodily and economic rights, and sustain and strengthen the global feminist movement.

Throughout the conference, there was a strong emphasis on interactive discussions and question and answer sessions, embodying CWGL's commitment to collective decision-making and strategizing. CWGL saw its 20th anniversary as a great occasion to use its role as a convener and facilitator to create a space for women's rights

activists to all come together and engage in these important discussions. As Balakrishnan told the audience: “this is your space to use and help us all think through a critical moment in our history in terms of feminist organizing.”



## THE FEMINIST ROOTS OF HUNTER COLLEGE,

### **Jennifer Raab**

*Jennifer Raab, President of Hunter College, expressed thanks on behalf of the Hunter community for the privilege of welcoming this conference to Hunter, a fitting choice given the history of Hunter College and its commitment to human rights and women's empowerment.*

The list of outstanding Hunter female graduates is long and still growing. Alumnae include the late Bella Abzug (class of 1942), US Congresswoman and “thorn in the side of anyone who could still think women were second-class citizens,” as Raab put it. Bella’s vision lives on, notably through her daughter Liz, who heads the Bella Abzug Leadership Institute based at Hunter College. Just two weeks before she passed away in March 1998, Bella delivered one of her greatest speeches at the 42<sup>nd</sup> session of the UN CSW. Twelve years later, it was appropriate to gather at her alma mater to continue the discussion on the universal human rights of women, just as Hunter opened the Roosevelt House Public Policy Institute. As Raab concluded, “We look forward to the day when events like this can be nothing more than a celebration of equality achieved,” but in the meantime women’s rights advocates must continue their crucial work for gender equality.



## A DECADE FOR WOMEN AND GIRLS,

### **Mary Robinson**

*Mary Robinson was the first woman President of Ireland and a former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights. The recipient of numerous honors and awards throughout the world, including the 2009 Presidential Medal of Freedom by US President Barack Obama, Robinson is a member of*

*the Elders, co-founder and former Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders, and Vice President of the Club of Madrid. Now based in New York, Robinson is currently the President of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative. Its mission is to make human rights the compass that charts a course for globalization that is fair, just and benefits all.*

Robinson echoed Raab’s enthusiasm about seeing so many young women – “the future of the movement” – at the symposium. She noted the great excitement around Beijing+15 with increasing numbers of young women involved and committed to the principles of the BPfA. These women are organized and determined, and, thanks to new technologies like the Internet, are more easily connected than ever. Young activists are notably posting live updates from meetings and official sessions on social networking websites such as Twitter and Facebook, writing blogs on Beijing+15 and their campaign activities, and setting up online forums and discussions to share experiences and ideas and organize collectively.

Robinson paid a warm tribute to CWGL’s Founding Director, Charlotte Bunch, declaring: “Charlotte has been a mentor and a friend for more than a decade. She is one of the wisest voices, one of the most visionary thinkers and one of the most resolute fighters for women’s rights, for women’s empowerment, for all of the issues we need to take into account, like intersectionality. She has lived and walked the talk.” Robinson also saluted CWGL’s current Executive Director, Radhika Balakrishnan, for continuing Bunch’s great leadership.

As UN Member States and women all around the world celebrate the 30th anniversary of the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW), women’s rights advocates underscore the vital importance of ratifying CEDAW. CEDAW has almost become universally ratified, save for a few obdurate countries. Robinson denounced the failure of the US to ratify CEDAW and its lack of leadership in this regard. As she put it: “We might well ask, why are there any countries standing out from ratification? But we know that one very important country in our world, this country [the US], has not yet ratified CEDAW despite the fact that there is a genuine commitment to emphasize the importance for development of ... equality and empowerment of girls and women.” Today, there is a revitalized movement in the US to advocate for ratification. The challenge at hand is to convey the critical significance of CEDAW to the Obama administration, the US Congress and the broader public.

This year, we have a “birth to celebrate,” as Robinson phrased it, referring to the upcoming formal establishment of a new UN entity for gender issues, the result of years of lobbying, organizing and outreach on the part of the Gender Equality Architecture Reform (GEAR) Campaign, a global network of over 300 women’s rights, human rights and social justice groups, which is co-facilitated by CWGL. It is critical for this new agency to have a strong capacity at the country level and the visionary leadership to ensure that it delivers effective results for all women and girls.

2010 also marks the 10th anniversary of UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325, the first SCR on women, peace and security. In the decade since the passage of SCR 1325, women’s advocacy efforts have been instrumental in the adoption of SCR 1820 on sexual violence in conflict, 1889 on sexual and reproductive health and reproductive rights, and 1888, which called for the appointment of a new Special Representative of the Secretary-General on Women, Peace and Security with a comprehensive mandate that addresses impunity for sexual violence in the broader framework of participation, prevention and protection. These instruments, along with the new mandate which Special Representative Margot Wallström, former Vice-President of the European Commission, holds on combating sexual violence, are extremely important. As the BPfA so eloquently stated, “peace is inextricably linked with equality between women and men and development.”<sup>19</sup>

SCR 1325 is a landmark resolution with extraordinary breadth and potential which mandates that women participate actively in decision-making in all peace and security matters. It remains weak, however, in its monitoring, evaluation and implementation measures. Nonetheless, a number of countries are adopting plans of action on 1325 and domesticating this instrument to respond to local specificities and challenges pertaining to women’s equal participation in decision-making at all levels.

On March 7 and 8, 2009, in honor of International Women’s Day (IWD), President Ellen Johnson-Sirleaf of Liberia and President Tarja Halonen of Finland co-hosted an International Colloquium on Women’s Empowerment, Leadership Development, and International Peace and Security in Monrovia, Liberia.<sup>20</sup> On this occasion, Robinson recalled how moving and inspiring it was to witness an exchange between a woman president and women in protection roles in Liberia given the history of that country and the tremendous violence it has experienced. Such strong and affirming instances illustrate the role

of 1325 in empowering women to “com[e] out of conflict into confidence about their role in their society as women,” as Robinson so eloquently phrased it.

This example also brings to mind the case of Rwanda, a country that emerged from one of the most horrifying genocidal killings in recent history to become a leader in implementing 1325 and in taking an innovative and inclusive approach to post-conflict reconstruction. In March 1997, less than three years after the 1994 genocide, women in Rwanda organized a pan-African women’s conference that set the country on a remarkable course: today, Rwanda is a model in the region and in the world in terms of women’s political participation. The Constitution of Rwanda provides for a 30% minimum quota for women in Parliament, or 24 out of 80 seats.<sup>21</sup> In part as a result of this provision, the representation of women in the Rwandan Parliament jumped from 17% in 1997 to 49% in 2003, making it the country with the largest proportion of women in Parliament in the world, and to over 56% in 2008, making it the first nation in the world to have women in the majority of its Parliament.<sup>22</sup>

Rwanda is increasing and enhancing women’s representation not only in Parliament, but at all levels of decision-making. Furthermore, Rwanda has now adopted a Plan of Action on SCR 1325 that serves as a model for other countries in the Great Lakes region and beyond. Rwanda is currently planning to host a meeting with women from Burundi and the Democratic Republic of Congo to share experiences from the development of Rwanda’s National Plan of Action and plan a Great Lakes Regional Plan of Action. These recent developments in Rwanda and the region demonstrate the concrete impacts that international UN commitments can have at the local, national and regional levels.

In the context of the 10<sup>th</sup> anniversary of UN SCR 1325, Robinson is co-chairing a group of civil society organizations (CSOs) examining ways to strengthen 1325. This CSO group is working closely with a High-Level UN Steering Group that is chaired by UN Deputy Secretary-General Asha-Rose Migiro and is composed of relevant UN Heads of Agencies. Its aim is to facilitate coherence and coordination in the UN’s work, both in preparations for 1325 and in subsequent peacemaking and peace building efforts on the ground.

Of all the peace treaties in recent years, only 2.4% have women’s signatures. Indeed, peace agreements too often only involve men who

were involved in the conflicts. They are, as Robinson put it, “engagements between bad men, often with bad governments and other bad men in hotel rooms with television cameras, and enjoying the limelight – ‘baddies talking to baddies’ – and women in the background, having done most of the preparatory work coping with the conflict, but not actually in the front.” The example of Rwanda, among many others, has proven that quotas work for electoral purposes. Similarly, to address the extreme gender imbalance in peace treaties, quotas should be instituted to ensure that at least a third of the signatories on all sides and in every peace agreement are women.

One of the greatest strengths of the women’s human rights movement is the multigenerational spectrum it comprises, ranging from the numerous young women attending the symposium to older and more experienced advocates like Robinson. Robinson is involved in The Elders, an independent group of eminent global leaders brought together by Nelson Mandela and chaired by Archbishop Desmond Tutu. The Elders offer their collective influence and experience to advance human rights and sustainable peace. In their efforts to strengthen the empowerment of women and girls worldwide, they developed a statement calling on religious leaders to set an example and denounce gender discrimination and violence against women in their religious and traditional practices.<sup>23</sup> This approach is highly promising because it steers clear of caricaturing or vilifying entire communities and essentializing them as “cultures” that are detrimental to women’s rights and gender equality.

To conclude, Robinson stressed that CWGL’s symposium did not just mark the anniversary of a pioneering organization with outstanding leadership, but also aimed to discuss the next 10 to 20 years within the framework of the three panels organized around the themes of the body, the economy and the movement. As Liberia, Rwanda and countless other examples have demonstrated, it is possible to make significant progress on women’s empowerment, notably in the aforementioned thematic areas. The African Union has dedicated the next 10 years to African women. In the same way, the international community should make the next 10 years the decade for women and girls worldwide. Furthermore, advocates should use the organizational power of women in particular in the informal sector to change the attitudes towards women’s economic empowerment by promoting more social protection and removing barriers in the informal sector. This would empower women in the sector where most women work and foster women’s empowerment on their own terms.



## A SYMPHONY OF LIBERATIONS,

### **Charlotte Bunch**

*Founding Director and Senior Scholar of CWGL, Charlotte Bunch has been an activist, author and organizer in the women’s rights, civil rights and human rights movements for four decades. A Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor in Women’s and*

*Gender Studies, she is the author and editor of numerous essays, books and anthologies and the recipient of many awards. She serves on several boards and has been a consultant to many UN bodies. She was notably on the Advisory Committee for the Secretary General’s 2006 Report to the General Assembly on Violence against Women.*

Bunch added to the framework Balakrishnan laid out for the symposium, explaining that, while it marked the 15th anniversary of the Beijing Conference, what it mainly honored was the women’s movement, which made this event so meaningful. “It’s about the movement,” she said, “because it is the incredible power of global women’s organizing, not only for Beijing, but throughout the past 50 - 60 years that has made all of the advances that women have seen through the UN possible.” She notably cited the formation of the CSW in 1946, the Mexico Conference in 1975, which created the UN Development Fund for Women (UNIFEM), and the adoption of CEDAW in 1979, as products of the indomitable energy of the women’s movement.

Bunch underscored that any structural change we make in the UN emerges from the organizing and energy of the women’s movement and, therefore, needs to be constantly monitored and held accountable to the women’s movement that made it possible. Thus, the task of global women’s rights advocates does not end with the creation of structures or the ratification of CEDAW. What matters most is what we do with those instruments, how we use them, and how we keep the movement alive. In this context, one of CWGL’s main aspirations in convening this symposium was to allow women’s human rights defenders from all regions of the world to collectively reflect on the roots of the movement, in particular throughout the past 20 years, and investigate how activists have interfaced with the UN. In fact, as Bunch posited, women’s human rights advocates have transformed the UN more than it has transformed them, and that is the transformation the symposium aimed to explore.

One question that was raised in all three panels was, “What difference has it made to use a human rights framework?” In thinking about this point, Bunch recalled the 1960s slogan, “Revolution is a symphony of liberations,” referring to the women’s, black, and gay and lesbian liberation movements of the era. She explained that she had been reminded of this slogan recently while watching a documentary about the Venezuelan Youth Orchestra system, a grassroots initiative bringing together children of all classes and ethnic backgrounds to play music together. This collaboration has greatly influenced the lives of these young people and their ability to transform their world and transcend differences to work with others. Bunch made an analogy between this initiative and the global women’s human rights movement, explaining that the framework of women’s human rights has provided activists with a symphony of diverse issues under a common framework. “It is not that we all do the same work,” she clarified. “The music is made by all of these instruments being heard and [...] when any of these instruments isn’t heard, or isn’t succeeding, or isn’t moving forward, we have less success in creating the music, the change, the movement that we want.”

This vivid image symbolizes one of the major challenges of the global women’s human rights movement, namely appreciating and putting into practice the notion that all of the issues broached at the symposium, as well as others, are part of a big picture—the big picture of the movement. In order to enrich, strengthen and sustain this global movement, it is crucial to understand the interconnections among both the issues we focus on and the arenas we work in. Bunch stressed that it was not the UN that infused her with this faith and excitement, but the fact that diverse women’s rights activists had come together in these spaces that the UN had created. The concept of women’s rights as human rights has helped advocates remember this larger context.

Given the incredible diversity among women all around the world, how can the unique specificities of individual places and realities be brought together in a common movement and collaboration that is empowering for all women and girls? One of the challenges consists of understanding the relationship between diversity and universality. Recognizing women’s rights as human rights can only be successful insofar as we acknowledge and embrace the multiple and intersectional realities we face. The paradigm of violence against women has been particularly useful in illustrating that there is a common framework of patriarchy that takes different forms. Indeed, although our experiences may be diverse, our struggles are not totally different. The

same patriarchal control over women’s bodies and other aspects of their lives is operating in every part of the world. This universal dynamic takes different forms and calls for different strategies, but it is rooted in the same set of unequal and unjust power relations.

In the backlash against women’s rights, various fundamentalist, reactionary and anti-feminist forces have utilized the notion of religion, culture and diversity against women’s rights activists in an attempt to divide us. Patriarchy is a universal dynamic, a globally shared culture that manifests itself in different ways in various local contexts. In fact, it is one of the most universal institutional frameworks at the global level. Therefore, feminist activists must be particularly suspicious when Southern Baptists in the US, Iranian Mullahs and other religious fundamentalist groups all denounce sexual rights, claiming that these demands pose a threat to their unique culture while embracing various forms of male control as absolutely essential to preserving their “culture” and identity. This constitutes a political manipulation of religion and culture in order to gain or maintain power. Bunch shared a similar example from her early activist days in the civil rights movement in the US, when Southern Whites were arguing that racial segregation was a crucial and defining aspect of Southern culture, which outsiders to that culture, such as Northerners, could not understand.

In the face of this harmful constructed conflict of “culture” versus women’s rights, women’s human rights defenders need to reframe the notion of culture. Firstly, we should make clear that culture is everywhere, not just in the exoticized Global South as many in the North see it. As Bunch pointed out, the US has culture, from “culture wars” to “gun culture.” Moreover, culture is not static; it is fluid and changes all the time. It is also plural and made up of intricate and overlapping sub-cultures. Secondly, human rights have always been about changing cultures, and the women’s movement is not the only force striving to engender cultural change. Communities are composed of many distinct sub-groups and individuals who all have a right to shape and transform collective ways of seeing and living.

Hence, activists must not allow right-wing and fundamentalist forces to take over the debate; we should repoliticize the debate and reclaim our ability to name its terms. Instead of approaching our differences with discomfort and unease, we should envision them as a strength. As Bunch emphasized, “When someone raises the issue of difference, you are about to learn something that will make your work more effective.” This does not imply that we accept the differences that are the



manifestations of power and domination, but rather that we value and learn from the unique perspectives of differently positioned groups. In addition, the women's movement has also been negatively affected by the false dichotomy between victimization and agency. In reality, we are all simultaneously victims and agents most of our lives. Women's rights advocates often disagree about where to place the emphasis, yet to talk about one should not result in denying the other. A more holistic feminist approach would entail recognition that the boundaries between the two concepts are not so clear-cut.

All of these conversations enrich and strengthen the movement, which, in spite of the growing backlash against it and the innumerable challenges it faces, is refining, reinforcing and reinventing itself. This year, amidst the chaos of the CSW and the terrible violations of CSO participation in UN processes that must be addressed, there is tremendous energy, hope and excitement around Beijing+15. So many women want to be in New York for the occasion, not for the UN, but to gain strength from each other. There is a movement that wants to come together in more powerful ways. The UN is one arena of action, but we must find more ways and opportunities for women to share experiences and learn from each other, more ways to better link the global and the local.

Women are determined to be at the peacemaking tables, to share their voices in the responses to the economic crisis and in the reconstruction of Haiti after the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010. As Bunch told symposium participants, "the next generation of leadership is in this room." The activism of these emerging leaders is already

infused with new visions, new energies, new strategies. They are at the CSW and at the grassroots level, and although their class diversity is not as rich as it could be, they are more diverse, multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-sexual and multi-issue than ever before. The movement is growing and young women are framing their local activism within a bigger global picture. We must work to regain control over the discourse and the music of the next decades. As Bunch summed up, "as we fine tune our instruments for addressing the challenges today in the areas of body, economy and movement, these are recurring themes and we need new variations of our strategies for them, but they all require that we figure out how they fit into that larger social movement, that symphony of liberations that will produce the movement of the next decade."

# Body: Defending Sexual and Reproductive Rights and Ending Gender-Based Violence

In spite of the breakthroughs made in linking women's rights to human rights and framing violence against women as a human rights violation, incidents of violence against women are far from declining. On the contrary, implementation of women's basic human rights falters and violence seems to be reinventing itself in new and more insidious forms, beyond the reach of existing legal human rights remedies. Furthermore, there is a persistent resistance, at times violent, from conservative forces on several fronts against the full recognition of women's rights to bodily integrity and sexuality. Reproductive rights remain controversial in spite of many civil society and government initiatives to incorporate them within the rubric of human rights and health, such as the global campaign on maternal mortality as a human rights issue.<sup>24</sup> The growing advocacy on sexual rights faces serious backlash as illustrated in the political viability of recent legislative proposals to criminalize homosexuality in countries such as Uganda.<sup>25</sup>

This section is based on the first panel of the symposium. Panelists reflected on progress made in employing a women's human rights framework to address issues of the body, including violence against women. They also scrutinized enduring critical challenges to the full recognition of women's rights to control their own bodies and sexuality. In this session, as in the other two, panelists prepared brief presentations to start the discussions, but emphasis was placed on audience input and interactive dialogue. The following key questions guided the conversations:

- What difference has the human rights framework made in contesting violence against women and advancing women's rights to bodily integrity and sexuality?
- How can we more effectively confront persistent and current threats (such as right-wing religious movements) to women's sexual rights and to women activists/defenders?
- How have cross-movement coalitions strengthened the demand to end gender-based violence and for reproductive and sexual rights and justice?
- What is the impact of climate change on women's sexual and reproductive health and rights?
- Where do you see positive new energy/strategies for advancing this issue?<sup>26</sup>

Alexandra Garita, a feminist activist from Mexico and Program Officer for the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC), moderated the session. She introduced the speakers and started off the discussion, asking the panelists and the audience to think about some of the differences and similarities that are expressed in our bodies, our activist strategies, our politics, our approaches to challenging power and our uses of the human rights framework.



## DEVELOPING NEW NATIONAL AND REGIONAL INSTRUMENTS,

**Lesley Ann Foster**

*Lesley Ann Foster is the Founder and Executive Director of the Masimanyane Women's Support Centre, a South Africa-based organization focusing specifically*

*on gender-based violence, the gendered nature of HIV and AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health and rights.*

Foster spoke about her experience and expertise in South Africa. She saluted Charlotte Bunch and CWGL, explaining that CWGL was "where [she] really got her teeth in working on women's human rights." She explained that she initially became drawn to working on sexual and reproductive health and rights mainly through the very personal experiences of the majority of women and girls in her family, community and society. Indeed, violations of and impediments to sexual and bodily rights are extremely prevalent and have multiple manifestations. They notably include sexual violence, unsafe abortion, maternal deaths, HIV infections, AIDS-related deaths, domestic violence, rape, and other forms of sexual assault. Just to give one chilling example, in South Africa, many women have been raped to death

because of their sexual orientation. Such abuses constitute a tangible threat to the majority of women, both in South Africa and throughout the African continent.

Women's sexual and reproductive rights are both intimately personal and deeply political. In Africa, 1 in 16 women are likely to die in pregnancy or childbirth. In contrast, in countries of the Global North, the proportion of women facing this risk is 1 in 2,800. Furthermore, only 13% of the total of abortions worldwide – about 5.5 million a year – occur in Africa, yet the continent accounts for half of the deaths related to unsafe abortions, which also cause many women permanent damage in their reproductive or other organs. These are critical illustrations of deeply entrenched structural inequalities.

In addition, numerous African governments are adopting very conservative and homophobic legislation on Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning and Intersex (LGBTQI) issues, which is perpetuating the disproportionate marginalization and vulnerability of sexual minorities on the continent. This is due in large part to the widespread belief in African society that procreation is the only justification for sexual expression, and to the fact that societal survival is valued more strongly than individual expressions of sexuality and sexual feelings. Because of taboos around sexuality, young people lack information and education on safe and empowering sexual behavior. Popular media sensationalizes stereotypes about sexuality, adding to misinformation and misunderstandings about sexual practices.

In this context, the human rights framework has been a critical tool for women's human rights defenders. CEDAW and the BPfA provide clarity on issues of women's bodily integrity, such as the right to privacy, the right to life, and the right to live free from violence. These are vital concepts for demanding respect for women's bodies and holding governments responsible for ensuring the realization of women's sexual and reproductive health and rights. Women in Africa have been very active in using the human rights framework in their own contexts. Human rights have helped them define discrimination in its varied forms.

African women have not only developed conceptual clarity in the area of human rights, but have also pushed it further. Moreover, they have identified the erasure of the concept of intersectionality within the global women's movement and shown how this shortcoming increases the complexity of women's rights abuses. They have formulated stronger language, as well as established hosts of instruments to

advance women's rights at national and regional levels. Women activists using the human rights framework have won progressive legislation on abortion in a number of African countries, resulting in a 91% decrease in unsafe abortions on the continent. Furthermore, women have benefited greatly from domestic violence legislation in many more African countries.

Moreover, understanding the value of organizing at the regional level, African women have worked hard to ensure that gender equality is integrated into the mandate and agenda of the African Union. One of their greatest achievements was the Protocol to the African Charter on Human and Peoples' Rights on the Rights of Women in Africa, better known as the Maputo Protocol, which was adopted by the African Union on July 11, 2003.<sup>27</sup> The Maputo Protocol addresses women's rights in many areas, from political participation and social equality with men to control over their reproductive health and the eradication of female genital cutting. Although much work remains to be done to effectively implement its provisions, the protocol establishes a crucial framework for women's rights in the region.



## **BUILDING MORE INCLUSIVE COALITIONS,**

***Pinar Ilkkaracan***

*Pinar Ilkkaracan is a researcher and activist trained in psychotherapy and political science. She is the Founding President of Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – NEW WAYS and a Co-founder of the Coalition*

*for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR), a network of 45 leading academic and non-governmental organizations from Muslim countries.*

Ilkkaracan gave a brief overview of recent developments in the area of sexual and bodily rights in Muslim countries, using the history of CSBR to illustrate broader trends. CSBR was founded in Istanbul just one week after the attacks of September 11, 2001 in the US, which affected the geopolitical climate of the decade. The initiative started with only 21 people representing 14 organizations. At first, it remained nameless because its members, in spite of their generally progressive feminist views, could not agree on the term "sexual rights," which

became the most controversial issue at the meeting. Ultimately, it took two years for the coalition to resolve these disputes, and in 2003, after intense debates, the group decided to work explicitly on sexual rights.

Today the coalition is comprised of 45 NGOs and academic institutes from 15 countries in the Middle East, North Africa, South Asia and Southeast Asia. Its membership is extremely diverse, ranging from women's rights and human rights groups to organizations working on HIV/AIDS and LGBTQI issues.<sup>28</sup> The network acts as a bridge between the Middle East and Southeast Asia, which is critical given that a lot of religious fundamentalisms are currently being imported to Southeast Asia from the Middle East, whereas Southeast Asia has traditionally been a progressive area in terms of LGBTQI rights.

Similarly to the neoconservative trend in the US championed by the Bush administration, fundamentalist forces in Muslim countries are mobilizing around the notion of morality, rather than religion or culture, to enact their reactionary political agenda. This approach notably serves their interests in Turkey, a secular country where they cannot explicitly use religion to justify their arguments. The backlash has deeply impacted the LGBTQI movement, both in the country and the region. In Turkey, for the past five years, all the LGBTQI organizations, which had been working without benefiting from official NGO status, started to apply to register as NGOs. A court case was filed against them, claiming that they represented a "threat to public morality," and every one of them was threatened with closure. In Indonesia, anti-pornography laws were passed that were not really about pornography, but in fact aimed to control women's bodies, their way of dressing and their behavior by using the discourse of morality to suppress women's rights. Likewise, in Malaysia, morality squads patrol the streets and raid people's homes to castigate young unmarried couples that are living under the same roof.

The attacks against the US on September 11, 2001 and the ensuing discourses that emerged in mainstream international relations had deleterious effects across the globe, from the Middle East to South East Asia. As Ilkcaracan eloquently phrased it, the rise of Islamophobia in the West has been "like butter on the bread of the fundamentalists," since it has fueled and reinforced anti-Western attitudes in Muslim countries as a reaction. As CSBR explains on its website, "The so-called global 'War on Terror' led to growing Islamophobia and the tendency of the West to view Islam as a monolithic religion instead of recognizing the wide diversity of Islamic

interpretations and religious practices in Muslim societies. Increasing militarization and violence, such as in Afghanistan, Iraq, Palestine and Lebanon, led to unprecedented expansion of Muslim religious and nationalistic ideologies and drowning of existing liberal voices and spaces in the region."<sup>29</sup> This escalating context of opposition and conflict constitutes a huge threat to progressives in those regions, especially to feminist and LGBTQI organizations, which are often accused by fundamentalist and anti-feminist forces of importing "Western" values and violating local traditions.

In the face of these obstacles, CSBR sees the diversity of its membership and the breadth of its approach as its core strengths. The coalition considers that sexual and reproductive health and rights are not merely about sexuality, but rather, that sexuality is at the core of politics, that it is about political, social and economic power and inequalities. In this context, CSBR initiated an international campaign for the rights of queer Muslims on November 9, 2009 called One Day One Struggle.<sup>30</sup> The campaign was widely successful. In Pakistan, where homosexuality is criminalized, gay people went public for the first time. One of the main reasons they were able to do so was that they joined forces with heterosexual allies and called their movement the Queer-Straight Alliance for Human Rights. Similarly, in Cyprus, the women's movement and the LGBTQI movement came together to advocate for sexual and bodily rights. These successful and inspiring initiatives underscore the importance of taking a holistic approach and building diverse coalitions around human rights advocacy.



## TRANSCENDING DICHOTOMIES,

**Ros Petchesky**

*Ros Petchesky is Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of CUNY. She has been a researcher and advocate on issues of reproductive and sexual rights and gender and social justice for over 30 years. In the*

*1990s she directed the International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group.*

Echoing Ilkcaracan's presentation, Petchesky stressed the importance of queer-straight alliances, since, as she explained, "sexual and reproduc-

tive rights ... are not exclusively owned by feminists and by biological women." Conversely, women's bodily rights are not only about sexuality and reproduction, but also about "hungry bodies, homeless bodies, racialized bodies, militarized bodies," and the challenge for the movement in the coming years is to acknowledge, emphasize and reinforce the interconnections between all these issues.

According to Petchesky, one of the major achievements of the women's human rights movement pertains to language and conceptual frames. Her first practical experience with the global women's movement was when she participated in a National Conference and Festival of Filipina Women in Manila in 1990. There, she attended a workshop with women from all sectors and from different backgrounds – fisherwomen, peasants, teachers, etc. The theme of the workshop was "our bodies are our own, we own our bodies" and participants embraced it with the full understanding that owning one's body involves having enough to eat, a livelihood and shelter, and that economic and social rights and sexual and reproductive rights are mutually related. This example reminded her that ideas travel long distances and take diverse forms. In this context, universality and diversity should not be dichotomized and regional and international networks are a powerful tool to organize around a wide range of related issues.

The human rights framework has been a useful mechanism for the movement for bodily integrity. It provided activists with widely recognized norms, such as consent to marriage, sexuality education, maternal health as a human right, and sexual orientation and gender identity (which is the focus of a tremendous global human rights campaign, especially at the Human Rights Council in Geneva), as well as means of monitoring and processes and procedures of implementation. Enforcement of these norms, however, remains a significant problem. In addition, the growing backlash against women's human rights, which other panelists also touched on, has resulted in an onslaught of violence, moral policing, criminalization and fundamentalism. Nonetheless, as Petchesky emphasized, this backlash is also a sign of our success, indicating how visible, effective and powerful the feminist and queer movements have been.

In spite of these achievements, we should reflect on remaining gaps in our thinking. One of these limitations relates to how we use the term gender. Too often, it continues to be equated with biological women, when in reality, it does not merely designate women, but alludes to "the fluidity of different masculinities and femininities that flow through different bodies differently and at different times in one's life cycle," in the



words of Petchesky. Tying gender exclusively to women erases that men also have gender – just as the Global North also has culture. Moreover, it excludes those who do not fit neatly within the male/female duality, whether in their bodies or their psychic sense of self. It undermines the possibility of challenging binary thinking, as well as the prodigious diversity of our humanity.

Additionally, we must transcend the dichotomies between particularity and universality, and between victimization and agency. Today, victimization and protective discourses and agendas still dominate. Although protecting women and other marginalized groups from various kinds of violence and oppression is urgently necessary, a more egalitarian and inclusive approach should strive to empower, rather than protect, enabling women to be active agents in the struggle for their rights. Furthermore, criminalization and policing constitute the other side of the coin of the protection discourse. The criminalization and moral policing of all non-conforming sexualities, especially LGBTQI people and youth, is an aspect of militarization – as Petchesky phrases it, "it is militarization brought home domestically." We can only confront this violence by addressing the broader manifestations and structures of militarization.

At the global level, a number of effective and pioneering coalitions have been built between feminist, LGBTQI and HIV/AIDS groups, in particular around advocacy on sexual orientation and gender identity at the Human Rights Council in Geneva and in other global venues such as the

CSW in New York. Nevertheless, much remains to be done to link sexual and reproductive rights with social and economic rights. Some of the places where these connections are being emphasized are post-conflict and crisis situations such as Haiti, where women are mobilizing to get food, shelter and medicine, but also to defend their sexual and reproductive rights such as reproductive health care and protection from sexual violence. We must learn from these inspiring achievements and remember that economic and climate justice are ultimately about ensuring the pleasures of our bodies and of the Earth.



## REWRITING THE NARRATIVE OF HUMAN RIGHTS,

**Jacqueline Pitanguy**

*Jacqueline Pitanguy, a sociologist and political scientist, is the Founder and Director of CEPIA (Citizenship, Study, Research, Information and Action), an NGO based in Rio de Janeiro.<sup>31</sup>*

Pondering the first question posed by the moderator, Pitanguy explored the ways in which human rights are important as a political tool to frame and shape our activism to enhance women's rights in general, sexual and reproductive rights, and the struggle against violence against women in particular. As she phrased it, "human rights are written with the ink of power, of political struggle, of negotiation." They are dated and bear the imprint of the historical and political context they emerged from. Initially written by men in positions of political power, they have increasingly been reclaimed by women and other marginalized groups. CWGL has been a major actor in this process of rewriting human rights, as have many other NGOs from different parts of the world that have taken an active role in reshaping national legislation and constitutions as well as international human rights law.

Women's rights groups have been able to expand the concept of human rights by working in coalitions. It was the ability of the women's movement to achieve consensus in its diversity that made it a key political actor on a global scale, notably at the UN conferences in the 1990s. CWGL was one of the leaders of the movement asserting that "women's rights are human rights" at the Vienna Conference in 1993. In addition, numerous organizations around the world advocated and organized in coalitions and networks to convene a feminist meeting on reproductive

rights and justice in Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. These groups saw the great potential of bringing a new language to the human rights sphere and the tremendous effects it could have on concrete local action. This realization marked the impetus for the huge "symphony" that took place in the 1990s, to borrow Charlotte Bunch's metaphor. Successes at the global level enabled women to participate in the rewriting of national constitutions after dictatorial periods and in post-conflict societies in Latin America and elsewhere. Conversely, women's political struggles before the UN World Conferences of the 1990s yielded many gains in national constitutions such as the Brazilian Constitution of 1988, which included the recognition of health as a right, of the state's responsibility to realize that right, and of the notion that women and men had the right to choose the number of their children.

In short, human rights constitute a highly political discourse that frames activist struggles in important and effective ways, providing advocates with points of reference in conventions, treaties and constitutions to hold governments accountable. However, in the same way that women's human rights defenders have rewritten and reclaimed the narrative of human rights, this language is constantly contested by all kinds of groups with various and competing agendas. Women should never take feminist successes for granted, because conservative and fundamentalist forces are pushing to undermine these achievements, one contested word at a time, in international, regional and national agreements. Pitanguy shared the shame, anxiety and frustration she felt when she was working on the declaration on maternal mortality as a member of the Brazilian delegation to the 2010 CSW. She deplored the fact that the declaration did not include any language on unsafe abortion, a significant backward step 15 years after the Beijing Conference and the BPfA. Therefore, while this year of anniversaries is a moment to celebrate past achievements and the continued progress and energy of the movement, it is also essential to examine the very organized, articulated and connected backlash against women's rights. In light of these obstacles, now is the time to reflect on new strategies and common agendas built out of consensus in order to organize our resistance to these reactionary forces.

## FURTHERING THE DISCUSSION

As many of the panelists emphasized, one of the main challenges facing the movement to advance women's sexual and reproductive health and rights lies in addressing the conservative backlash against our agenda. We must reclaim our own power and strength as a feminist movement and as allies of other movements in order to further a gen-

der justice agenda. In this context, what kind of strategies can we envision to advance our agenda?

Petchesky recommended learning from the areas where there currently is tremendous energy. For example, she highlighted sex worker organizations (notably in India) that have emerged in the most unlikely places, in spite of homophobia, transphobia and all the stigma attached to sex work, as well as certain feminists who equate all sex work with sex trafficking. In the face of all of these obstacles, these sex workers are organizing, going public, linking sexual rights and the right to pleasure with reproductive rights and HIV/AIDS prevention as well as social and economic rights, such as the right to safety from violence and police brutality, the right to healthcare, etc. They provide an incredible model, both in how they are mobilizing and in how broadly they are conceptualizing their politics.

Echoing this point, Ilkcaracan underscored the crucial importance of building diverse coalitions in order to generate new and creative activist strategies. She explained that when CSBR started, although sexual rights (and especially sexual orientation) were completely taboo, even among feminists, the coalition benefited immensely from taking the time to incorporate LGBTQI organizations. She stressed that compartmentalization hurts the movement. As she phrased it, “we are losing a lot of power if everyone works on [one’s] own.” In addition, Foster mentioned exciting initiatives that are burgeoning in the African continent, such as a sexual health and rights conference bringing together key networks and coalitions to discuss the issue of sexual rights. Another important discussion is currently being launched on culture, religion, sexuality and women’s human rights.

Pitanguy emphasized the strong resistance against the women’s human rights movement, which resulted in some backward steps, such as the limitations of the maternal health resolution at the UN, and a number of homophobic and anti-feminist laws recriminalizing sexuality at the national level. She gave the example of Brazil, which promulgated a new national plan for human rights this year. Thanks to the active mobilization and advocacy of the women’s movement, which notably organized a number of national conferences on women’s rights, the plan defined the right to abortion as a human right, recognized the right to same-sex civil unions and established a truth and justice commission to probe all crimes of torture and murder during the dictatorship. It also included a restriction on the use of religious symbols in public places. The president signed the plan, but a massive opposition campaign was

launched by the Catholic Church against the provisions on abortion, same-sex unions and the display of religious symbols in public spaces. Additionally, the military and the Ministry of Defense denounced the proposal for a truth and justice commission. Because of this reaction, the government reneged on its provisions on abortion and same-sex civil unions, and the creation of the truth and justice commission is being stalled and put into question by interminable discussions.

All these issues are not separate and, as many panelists pointed out, progress in one of these areas requires advances in the others. Yet, although Brazil has a relatively progressive constitution and a strong civil society, and is generally supportive of LGBTQI concerns, when these issues were combined and articulated within a human rights framework, a strong backlash ensued. Not only is there a resistance to tackling these issues, but there is also an enduring reluctance to address them in a holistic way, perhaps because such an approach entails a profound destabilization of deeply entrenched power structures.

As Garita explained, although some progress has been achieved in the language of conventions and legislations, as well as in the growing LGBTQI movement for sexual rights at the international level, at the same time there is a considerable backlash in the criminalization of people and behaviors that were not previously criminalized. She asked: “Where is the power of our movements and what are we doing to reclaim these spaces?” Foster concurred and noted that the language of gender equality has been co-opted and hijacked to focus largely on the role of men. Theoretically, including men and boys is crucial to the advancement of gender equality, yet in practice this shift has taken away from efforts for the empowerment of women and girls. A number of gender ministries are being formed with many male ministers and a focus on fathers’ rights and family rights. These shifts are subtle, but they constitute a threat to feminist advances. The women’s movement needs to reclaim these spaces and the language of human rights and gender equality.

Audience members contributed to the conversation, raising a number of critical points. One participant mentioned the global petition to Amnesty International (AI) in support of the former Head of its Gender Unit, Gita Sahgal, which embodies some of the complex ramifications of the backlash linked to the “War on Terror.” This controversy exemplifies how the Manichean discourses that surfaced after the 9/11 attacks in the US have suppressed nuanced analyses and co-opted the language of human rights. While the US has used its “War on Terror” to



justify the violation of human rights both domestically and abroad, the religious right also mobilizes human rights to champion violent forms of identity-based politics and absolve themselves of their responsibility for human rights violations, especially those affecting women.

Wanda Nowicka, Co-founder and Director of Poland's Federation for Women and Family Planning and Co-founder of ASTRA, the Central and Eastern European Women's Network for Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights, described the recent Catholic fundamentalist backlash that has turned Central and Eastern Europe into a battlefield for women's reproductive rights and the rights of sexual minorities. In this context, she underscored the fundamental importance of connecting economic, social and cultural rights to civil and political rights in order to more holistically defend all of women's human rights. Another participant stressed that activists must use CEDAW at local levels in ways that take into account the particular challenges of each specific locality. For instance, in India, she explained that women have access to legal abortions as a part of family planning services, but that their reproductive choice too often gets hijacked by their husbands and other men in their family who pressure or force them to abort female fetuses. Additionally, she spoke about violence against women and the moral policing in the name of tradition and culture of women who dress in Western clothes or participate in "Western" holidays such as Valentine's Day. Another audience member stressed that sexual and reproductive rights are too often separated and need to be addressed together.

Jessica Horn, a women's rights activist working in Sierra Leone, reaffirmed the vital importance of feminist rights-based services. She remarked that right-wing advocates throughout the world reach people and propagate their message through service provision. According to Horn, feminists could learn from this tactic. Petchesky responded that a lot of women had been engaged in services and became exhausted because they lost funding and resources. She argued that feminists would gain most from intervening at the level of the macro-economic structures of neoliberalism and privatization. Pitanguy added

that, in the context of liberalization and the shrinking of the state, feminists should not try to substitute the state, but rather they should advocate for the state to provide more effective services for women. Ilkkaracan mentioned a group in Turkey called Women for a Feminist Economy that is fighting against privatization and striving to protect the shrinking sector of services. In addition, Foster denounced the political dimensions of funding that privilege service-based organizations targeting men over those aimed at assisting women. She gave the example of a men's organization whose budget grew from 1.5 to 40 million in the past five years, in contrast with the countless women's organizations that have been struggling to finance their projects and continue their work.

Another issue that was raised pertained to coalition building with religious groups. A women's studies professor in Oklahoma, USA shared the limitations of working in a very conservative and religious area where few organizations use a human rights framework in their advocacy. Ilkkaracan described a similar challenge in many Muslim countries, where women's rights groups often find it necessary to work within the framework of religion. Participants agreed that there is a wide spectrum of religious groups and that the possibility of building alliances with religious organizations depends on their agenda. Pitanguy contended that strategic decisions about alliance building vary according to specific contexts. For instance, in many countries the Catholic Church has played an essential role in struggles against dictatorships, and religious groups can often be effective allies in agendas against poverty. Nonetheless, certain issues, such as sexual and reproductive rights, often preclude working in coalitions with religious institutions.

Furthermore, participants brainstormed ways to challenge the global culture of patriarchy and strengthen international solidarity and alliances between women. Suggestions from the audience included taking into account the perspectives of immigrant women, organizing around CEDAW at the sub-national level, and engaging women in the US to participate more actively in the global women's rights movement, given the influence of the US in the world. In closing, Garita emphasized the urgency for the women's movement to reclaim its spaces and reframe discourse, as well as build cross-movement coalitions without losing sight of its core principles.

# Economy: Strengthening Women's Human Right to Economic Justice

While the global financial crisis has had devastating impacts, it also provides an opportunity to advocate for the adoption of a human rights framework to restructure governance and accountability in market economies. The occurrence of the financial crisis points to the need to evaluate and revise the rules governing the management of macroeconomic policies and the role of the market in the search for a more equitable distribution of resources and profits in a globalized world, where women too often remain the poorest of the poor. This chapter is based on the second session of the symposium, in which panelists considered both the interplay of structures (such as markets) and rights, as well as the implications of advocating for a gender conscious human rights framework in the regulation of market economies to bring about economic justice for (women and) all. The conversation was initiated by the following critical questions:

- What directions should we take for our activism around economic justice?
- What are the implications of adopting a human rights framework to advance women's economic and social rights in the current context of neoliberalization and the financial crisis?
- How can feminists and progressives develop mechanisms and tools for documenting and addressing the disproportionate impacts that the crisis has had on women?
- In light of growing challenges to the neoliberal system, where are possible new alternatives of thinking for advancing women's human right to economic justice?<sup>32</sup>

The moderator of this panel, Rupal Oza, is the Director of the Women and Gender Studies program at Hunter College. Her work focuses on political economic transformations in the Global South, the geography of right-wing politics, and the conjuncture between development and security.

The panel discussions focused on the economy and its implications for human rights and social justice. To guide the conversation, Oza sketched the broad contours of the current political moment. As we near the end of the first decade of the new millennium, Oza identified two stark political realities that marked the past decade. First, she pointed to the indefinite military campaigns waged by the US government since 9/11 in the context of the emergence of the Bush doctrine and the "War on Terror." This has resulted in devastating wars in Afghanistan, Iraq, and now extending into Pakistan, with consequences such as the securitization of everyday life, both within and outside of the US. Second, the world has suffered a dizzying amount of ravaging natural disasters in the past decade, displacing, injuring and killing thousands of people. These include the earthquake in Gujarat, India in 2001, the volcanic eruption in the Democratic Republic of Congo in 2002, the earthquakes in Central Asia, China and Algeria in 2003, the tsunami in the Indian Ocean in 2004, the earthquake in Pakistan in 2005, Hurricane Katrina in New Orleans in the US later that year, the earthquake in Japan in 2009, and most recently, the earthquakes in Haiti and Chile in 2010.

Wars and disasters have engendered a complicated and fractured terrain on which human rights and economic justice face unique challenges, ranging from displaced people, devastated homes, scattered communities and grieving families to acute health issues and resource and food shortages. Oza explained that, "In the wake of the magnitude of such upheaval...neoliberal policies and conservative political formations enter these spaces and adhere in the cracks generated by these catastrophes. As these political forms take root, [they create their] own uneven structures, where some gain at the tremendous cost of many others."

Activists must mitigate these injustices and advocate for the realization of human rights. This is a long struggle, since wars and disasters leave long and deep scars and the innumerable people affected by these catastrophes will be picking up the pieces of their lives for decades to come. Under these circumstances, how can women's human rights advocates consider, organize and advocate for human rights? In Oza's terms, "What structures of accountability can we generate when economies of the wealthy few are tied to the devastation of the disenfranchised many?" In closing, Oza emphasized how appropriate it was to grapple with these questions at Hunter College, given its diverse student body and its long-standing commitment to international human rights. As she summed up, hosting this confer-

ence at Hunter also “pays tribute to the bridging conversations between the UN, activists, students, policy-makers and academics that Charlotte Bunch pioneered.”



## PRACTICING INTERSECTIONALITY,

### **Cathy Albisa**

*Cathy Albisa is the Executive Director of the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI). A graduate of Columbia Law School, she is a constitutional and human rights lawyer with a background on the right to health.*

According to Albisa, one of the most important themes activists need to tackle when addressing issues such as economic justice, global warming, war and security, is the concept of intersectionality. How can feminist and human rights activists deal with broad issues that affect women both specifically as women and because of other aspects of their lives? As Albisa put it, this notion is complex and “not very well made for a bumper sticker,” and it constitutes a significant challenge for economic justice advocates, notably in the context of the current global recession.

Albisa shared some of the insights that emerged from a project she worked on as part of the International Women’s Human Rights Law Clinic at CUNY, under the leadership of its outgoing director, Rhonda Copelon.<sup>33</sup> Albisa contributed to a Gender Report in preparation for the first official visit of the UN Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing to the US.<sup>34</sup> The goal of the Special Rapporteur’s trip was to examine housing issues and the collapse of the housing sector in the US through the lens of the global financial crisis. The impact of the crisis was severe, with some new ramifications as well as a tremendous acceleration of previous impacts that had been occurring due to the same neoliberal policies that had led to the collapse of the economic and housing structures to begin with.

Research for this project indicated that an issue as fundamental as people’s access to housing cannot be resolved by neoliberal strategies such as providing people with credit. Rather, a comprehensive approach incorporating multiple strategies is essential in dealing with people’s fundamental right to housing in order to ensure that all

people, including those who do not participate in the market, have access to housing.

Albisa and her research colleagues were not surprised to find that women, especially women of color, were highly concentrated in programs that were directly subsidized by the government (such as public housing and voucher programs) and that twice as much money is put into tax deductions for mortgages than is allocated to housing for the poor. What the researchers were surprised to uncover was the extent to which gender discrimination in access to credit put women on the pathway to poverty and a lack of housing. Until the late 1980s, women could not get a mortgage in many cases and often had to prove they were single and on birth control to obtain one. This pattern of gender inequality compounded by racial discrimination made Black women five times more likely to get predatory loans than White men with a similar income and credit history. Despite its lasting structural effects and its critical role in the feminization of poverty, this phenomenon is largely unknown.

A key challenge here is that although the disproportionate vulnerability of women of color in the US has been fostered and entrenched by gender discrimination, it has been exacerbated by a number of other factors, such as race, ethnicity and class. Thus, while defenders of women’s social and economic rights must discuss gender inequality as a cause of this marginalization, they also need to take into account the multiple issues facing the broader communities that women of color belong to. Activists must find a balance in order to advocate for and on behalf of women not just as women, but as people, as members of social groups and communities, without losing sight of the intersectional analyses of the multiple discriminations that women face. To address the issues in women’s lives in a more holistic manner, activists need to overcome the silos that confine them. Women’s rights and anti-poverty advocates should interact more, particularly in this global economic crisis, which aggravates women’s economic marginalization. Activists must work to eliminate any hierarchies between various issues, so that “what happens to women because they are women,” as Albisa phrased it, does not get erased in the name of allegedly larger agendas. This is by no means a new issue, but it is a conversation that remains unresolved.



## MAKING ECONOMIC POLICY A HUMAN RIGHTS ISSUE,

**Diane Elson**

*Diane Elson is Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex, in the United Kingdom. She has served as advisor to UNIFEM, UNDP, and Oxfam. Elson is chair of the UK Women's*

*Budget Group and a past Vice President of the International Association for Feminist Economics.*

Since Lehman Brothers collapsed almost two years ago, triggering a massive financial crisis that affected the lives of people worldwide, prevailing violations of human rights have been exacerbated and new ones have taken shape. People all across the globe lost their jobs, their incomes and their homes. Some pondered whether the situation might have been different if Lehman Brothers had instead been Lehman Sisters. Merely placing more women in positions of economic power, however, would not suffice to solve the problems of the economic crisis. Instead, the structures of economic power need to be challenged and transformed to create more equitable economies in terms of gender, class, race, ethnicity, regions, countries, and so on. A number of strategies can be employed to tackle this challenge, including focusing on the financial sector.

At the onset of the crisis, many activists were optimistic about new opportunities the crisis might afford to destabilize neoliberal structures of global capitalism. In fact, such possibilities did not materialize. The International Monetary Fund (IMF) “came back from the grave,” as Elson phrased it, and became especially engaged in issuing loans to “assist” Eastern Europe in this recession, in large part to avert a banking collapse in Western Europe. In other countries, what had initially been acknowledged to be a crisis in the private financial sector became defined as a crisis of public finance. Suddenly, it was no longer the banks that were recognized as the problem, but the governments, which were construed as inefficient because of excessive budget deficits. In addition, there was a resurgence of the speculative power of hedge funds and other financial institutions, which was geared towards making short-term profits by speculating against currencies and forcing governments to take decisions leading to the further undermining of human rights.

In spite of this bleak picture, the crisis has created some opportunities. For instance, it has made more evident the connection between civil and political rights and social and economic rights. One strategy that Elson has been utilizing, in collaboration with Balakrishnan and others, is to build alliances and links between the human rights and progressive economist communities. Progressive and heterodox economists predicted this crisis long ago, and in a sense its occurrence has empowered them, since they were proven right. In the section of the symposium on the body, panelists underscored the value of queer-straight alliances. Similarly, economic rights advocates have been fostering dialogues between these two groups that do not usually interact much. Balakrishnan has been leading a group of women and men from the US and Mexico in scrutinizing and evaluating the macroeconomic policies of these two nations in light of their human rights obligations, and developing auditing tools for activists.

Just as women human rights defenders worldwide mobilized to frame violence against women as a human rights issue, economic policy must be considered a human rights issue. This would make clear to financial ministries, banks and corporations that they have human rights obligations and would empower people to hold their governments accountable for their economic policies. In the academic sphere, economics professors need to develop and teach economic reasoning that does not merely focus on and privilege flawed concepts such as the maximization of economic growth.

Elson argued that the banking system has been revealed as socially useless and deeply dysfunctional. Hence, the task at hand for advocates of economic rights is to transform it into a banking system that is beneficial to people's lives and leads to the protection of human rights. One of the key causes of this problem is governments' failure in their obligation to uphold human rights and protect people from the predatory behavior of profit-driven initiatives including banks. Countries like India, where the government had imposed stricter regulations on the banks, have been far less affected by the crisis. Economic rights advocates need to counter the rhetoric that equates free-market policies with liberty and emphasize that effectively regulating banks does not limit human freedom but rather enhances it. Activists should mobilize to demand that governments exercise due diligence in this regard and eradicate the predatory structures of the market that value corporate profit over people's well-being.



## RECOGNIZING, REALIZING AND REDEFINING HUMAN RIGHTS, *Gita Sen*

*Gita Sen is Adjunct Professor of Population and International Health at the Harvard School of Public Health and serves on the Executive Committee of Development Alternatives with*

*Women for a New Era (DAWN), a network of which she is a founding member.*

"I feel a little bit like the women's movement: aging, creaky... but indomitable," Sen began. She expressed particular enthusiasm about young feminists, which she called the "new shoots" of the women's movement, its future, and a source of great hope and optimism. Sen saluted the legacy of Charlotte Bunch and CWGL and their central role in the global movement to assert women's human rights. She remarked that this framework has been so paramount to feminist advances over the past 20 years that it is hard to imagine that the language of women's human rights has not always existed. Just as human rights have allowed sexual and reproductive rights activists to frame their advocacy more effectively, the human rights framework is equally advantageous in the economic sphere.

In economics, as in other areas, Sen highlighted three crucial elements in human rights advocacy. The first stage is the recognition of human rights. This entails the creation of norms, the setting of standards, and the transformation of discourse. It is the fundamental first step without which any gains would be extremely difficult. Yet, it is not enough. Although it provides activists with goals and outcomes against which to measure their efforts, it does not necessarily give them methods to achieve those goals and reach those outcomes. Hence, the second stage, namely realization, as the women's movement calls it, or implementation, in the language of governments, must follow recognition. Realization clarifies how rights can effectively be guaranteed. It is a much less glamorous stage than recognition, since it involves nitty-gritty details such as enforcement, funding, and the creation of institutions. The recognition and realization of rights go hand in hand; both are absolutely essential and mutually dependent. Thirdly, Sen emphasized the importance of definitions and discourse. "We may be in this stage," she explained, which in some senses might be prior to the

recognition phase. She asked, "Do we, for the economics area, have our definitions about human rights adequately in place?" According to Sen, the initiatives of Balakrishnan, Elson and many others are helping advocates reach that point, but much work remains to be done to achieve the equivalent of the "women's rights as human rights" moment in Vienna for economic rights issues.

In this context, experiences from India offer some useful lessons and models in promoting the effective realization of rights. Conventional narratives about India extol its economic growth and booming cities even in the midst of the global financial crisis. Sen dismissed these claims as "shining India nonsense the government likes to talk about." The other side of India (like China) is great and growing inequality, as well as heightened levels of absolute poverty. After trying to argue for years that economic reforms had reduced poverty, the Indian government finally admitted that the extent of rural poverty in the country is around 40%. This percentage does not merely denote inequality but absolute and abject poverty. In the face of this kind of polarizing change, social movements with many women in leadership have been organizing for demands such as the right to work, the right to food, and the right to information, with an emphasis on accountability. These rights-based movements have transformed what used to be a benevolent, charity approach for social security and social welfare into an approach demanding government accountability on economic and social rights as guaranteed and deriving from the constitution.

How can activists worldwide learn from this movement to articulate economic concerns within the language of human rights and make this kind of shift happen on a global scale? Firstly, Sen championed Official Development Assistance (ODA), explaining that this alternative-financing mechanism focuses on taxation rather than aid as benevolence.<sup>35</sup> She contended that at the international level, ODA is to charity as a tax on financial transactions is to an income tax or other taxes at the domestic level. As she noted, the crisis provides openings, notably in promoting different approaches to development aid that create a basis for rights. Secondly, Sen stressed the importance of working in alliances and coalitions to change the systems for the global governance of financial and economic systems. Networks like DAWN and the Women's Working Group on Financing for Development (WWG on FFD) have been actively engaged in such initiatives. Thirdly, as Sen observed, the ILO speaks about decent work from Geneva, but it has to occupy a more central place in debates and discussions about the right to work and strategies to ensure its implementation at the global level.

Ending on an optimistic note, Sen insisted that there is hope with national governments despite their shortcomings. She related that in many countries, especially in the Global South, governments sign on to all kinds of agreements at the international level, but when representatives return home, their constituents are unaware of what they signed on to and find it difficult to hold them accountable – whether it be on negative or positive initiatives. Consequently, changes are slow at the national level. An interesting example to remedy this limitation is an act recently passed by the Thai Parliament stipulating that the government cannot sign on to any documents unless they go through the Parliament. This is a potentially positive model in ensuring that international commitments are enforced domestically.

## FURTHERING THE DISCUSSION

In the discussions following the panelists' insightful presentations, militarization was highlighted as a critical aspect of the economic crisis. Petchesky notably cited the privatization of war and resources, as well as the complicity of governments in the arms trade, drug trafficking, and other corrupt activities. This Orwellian geopolitical climate where "war has become peace" stifles human rights and challenges activists for economic justice to imagine different strategies and develop closer alliances with feminist groups working on peacekeeping, arms control and armed conflict. Elson pointed out that colossal defense expenditures take away from funding for essential social services. She explained: "In the UK, if we have to cut expenses to cut our budget deficit, we could do an enormous amount by cancelling the order for the next generation of nuclear submarines... If we did that we would have no need to cut things like care." As Elson demonstrated, governments make choices when faced with situations like the financial crisis. Sen added that the motivation behind these decisions can largely be explained by the fact that defense spending generates profit, while services are seen as a negative side of the budget. Despite the common claim by many governments and mainstream economists that there are no other possible approaches to government spending, there are clear alternatives in countries "where a lot is being spent on arms and armies," as Elson phrased it.

Participants agreed that economic justice and gender equality are intimately connected. Therefore, broad-based alliances and networks linking local, national and global arenas are necessary to defend women's economic and social rights. Alliances between labor unions and feminist movements were mentioned as one important strategy. Furthermore, Rosa Lizarde from the Feminist Task Force - Global Call to

Action Against Poverty (FTF-GCAP) underscored the value of connecting analysis with organizing, notably through initiatives such as the one mentioned by Elson to bring together progressive economists and human rights activists. Elson observed that gatherings such as this symposium provide a valuable space to discuss these issues. Lizarde mentioned FTF-GCAP's International Women's Tribunals on Poverty on which both Albisa and Bunch sat, and shared that the coalition was planning to organize another tribunal for the Millennium Development Goals (MDG) Summit in September 2010.<sup>36</sup>

While broad-based coalitions are critical, Sen asked, "Should women want a bigger piece of a poisoned pie?" – describing the limitations of a framework that merely focuses on equality and stressing the importance of targeting and deconstructing the systemic causes of inequalities and injustice. Additionally, one of the most crucial lessons women's human rights advocates have learned is that alliance-building involves both gains and losses and that sometimes, as Sen put it, "those with whom we build alliances can end up hurting us." For example, she mentioned anti-abortion booths that were set up at the World Social Forum. The challenge here lies in ensuring that women's rights, including the most controversial issues such as sexual and reproductive rights, do not get sold out and undermined in the name of alliance building.

Joanna Kerr from ActionAid International regretted that the session on the economy had received far fewer questions than the previous panel on the body. Recalling the strong macroeconomic analysis that came out of Beijing, she pondered why there had been a gap in feminist activism in this area and how the women's movement could become more actively engaged with economic issues. In response, Elson motioned to the intensification of economic inequality between various women as a key factor that precludes more privileged women who have jobs in NGOs and academia from feeling the pressing issue of economic and social rights "in their guts." In addition, gender budgeting needs to be de-bureaucratized and linked to the women's movement and to the economic, food and fuel crises. UNIFEM and others are trying to reinforce these connections and demystify these macroeconomic issues.

On the other hand, Sen pointed out that the Beijing Conference was very strongly focused on economic issues, especially structural adjustment policies, even though most of the women at that conference were relatively privileged economically. According to her, the lack of



Lydia Alpizar,  
Association for  
Women's Rights in  
Development (AWID)

involvement of the women's movement in economic justice struggles can in part be attributed to shifts in the market and in the nature of employment. The increasing flexibility of labor markets has profoundly affected where people work, how they survive, their job security and the kind of work they do. Funding for women's organizations working on economic issues has plummeted, which has been a momentous obstacle and source of discouragement among activists. In this context, the women's movement needs to reclaim economic gains achieved in the BPfA.

One member of the audience contended that the language about sexual and reproductive rights has been created by the women's movement whereas the language of economics is foreign to many feminists. Albisa asked why the women's movement had not created similar language and concepts around economic rights, stressing that governments will never take human rights seriously unless they are legitimized by social movements. Linking the panels on the body and the economy, Oza emphasized the need to think about the maintenance of bodily integrity in the context of economic disempowerment at the global level, stressing that a more holistic approach to human rights is crucial since "we do not lead disjointed lives." Another audience member spoke about the urgency of connecting poverty with the economic crisis and the severity of this crisis for poor women in the Global South. Women's economic rights issues were already serious before the crisis, and women were organizing in slums, for improvements in sanitation, etc. One of the problems, this participant continued, is that

those women's voices are not part of the conversations at venues like CWGL's symposium and in decision-making realms more generally.

Moreover, participants broached the difficulty of reconciling human rights and economic discourse. Elson pointed out that while utilitarian-based economic analysis is indeed at odds with human rights, there are other forms of economic analysis that can create this possibility. Activists need to build linkages with trade unions and with women who are organizing where they live and work for social and economic rights. In this regard, Elson gave the example of the UK Women's Budget Group, a watchdog organization that focuses on care and services and brings the voices of poor women in various cities to articulate the shortcomings of public services.

The fact that the language of mainstream economics can be alienating and disempowering is not a coincidence. Orthodox economics is an ideological process posing as scientific analysis to serve the interests of the few. Neoclassical economics is not going to change its elements or its language. Thus, the language of economics needs to be popularized and demystified so that people can formulate analyses that are rooted in and useful to their everyday lives. Elson, Balakrishnan and others are developing macroeconomic education programs for human rights activists and grassroots organizations. DAWN is also working on training programs on overly mystified economic issues, highlighting the interconnections between globalization, sexual and reproductive rights, political ecology, and other issues. Furthermore, although feminists and trade unions need to collaborate more, at the same time, due to the informalization of labor markets at the global level, fewer workers (both male and female) have access to unions. Therefore, the challenge for labor and women's rights advocates is to emphasize the connections between production and reproduction as well as between the formal economy and the care economy and to draw insights from these linkages in order to articulate better programs for action and advocacy.

# Movement: Sustaining Global Feminist Organizing and Building Leadership

The success of mainstreaming women's human rights has brought with it new organizational complexities and challenges. While there has been a general increase in attention and resources allocated to gender equality initiatives, more women's institutions – both small grassroots organizations and global networks – are experiencing severe financial difficulties, especially due to the current economic crisis. Among many factors, women's organizations face intense competition, as the number of groups has grown exponentially and other established NGOs stake their claim in the field. The methods of applying for grants have also become highly specialized and labor intensive. This is increasingly troublesome at a time when women's human rights defenders face threats and violations because of their gender and/or because of the controversies surrounding the rights they advocate for. As new Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) become increasingly available and accessible, the potential to engage across generations, national boundaries and issue areas transforms our advocacy work and our means of organizing. This chapter synthesizes insights from the third panel of the conference, in which presenters and audience members discussed how to learn from past experiences and overcome obstacles to build a global women's rights movement that is more powerful, diverse, inclusive, connected and sustainable. The following critical issues were examined:

- What are the current challenges confronting the sustainability of a global women's rights movement (such as global/local and North/South tensions, access to resources, protection for women defenders, etc.)?
- How can we foster stronger and more diverse leadership as part of building the women's movement, and what challenges exist in doing so?
- How can the women's movement and other social movements support each other better to sustain feminist organizing and build women's leadership in all arenas?
- How can the women's movement take advantage of the opportunities created through the availability of innovative and widely available ICTs?
- How can women's movements be more multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, and inclusive of multiple sexualities, and what positive examples towards this exist? What are the issues we need to confront to make sure our movement is really multi-racial, multi-ethnic, multi-generational, and inclusive of multiple sexualities?<sup>27</sup>

This panel was moderated by Lydia Alpizar, a Costa Rican feminist activist who lives in Mexico City. Alpizar has been the Executive Director of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) since 2007 and Co-founder and Advisor of ELIGE - Youth Network for Reproductive and Sexual Rights (Mexico).

Alpizar stressed the importance of celebrating our achievements. She notably paid tribute to the legacy of Bunch's vision of women's human rights and to the leadership of Balakrishnan, whose fruitful continuation of CWGL's efforts is a testimony to how we can build strong and sustainable feminist organizations and movements. When we talk about the movement, Alpizar asked, who are we talking about, who is part of it, and who decides who is part of it? There have been major shifts in the world, which have affected movement building in important ways throughout the years. Concretely, these include the emergence of new actors, a new world order, and a more multi-polar world, but also different expressions of violence against women. As Alpizar clarified, while the context has changed dramatically, women's human rights activists have changed dramatically, too.

Many of the diverse voices that were starting to emerge in Beijing have become globalized movements producing new theories and practices. For example, the global indigenous women's movement has challenged our understanding of human rights by highlighting the importance of collective rights and concerns. The women's movement has changed because so many actors are using human rights language, but are not necessarily looking to the UN as the main avenue to bring about change. In response to some of the points that were raised during the previous panel on economics, Alpizar remarked that perhaps there were not as many questions for the economics session because the part of the movement that was at the CSW and the symposium is not very involved in these issues. Alpizar argued that organizations that focus on gender and economic issues are present in dif-

ferent spaces and that women's organizing needs to bridge these divides. For instance, she spoke about women in the International Peasant Movement La Via Campesina, describing that these women are at the center of the work of the peasant movement and have a rich expertise in economic issues.<sup>38</sup> Alpizar challenged women's rights advocates to establish connections with other social movements and tackle the difficulties and opportunities that emerge in our diversity in order to devise more effective and powerful activist strategies.



## FOSTERING DIVERSITY WITHIN AND ACROSS MOVEMENTS,

**Peggy Antrobus**

*Peggy Antrobus is from the Caribbean and lives and works in many of the island states. She served as Advisor on Women's Affairs to the government of*

*Jamaica and established its Women's Bureau in 1974. Antrobus is a founding member of many regional and international organizations including CAFRA (the Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action), DAWN, and the International Gender and Trade Network.*

At 75 years old, Antrobus expressed her great joy in returning to global meetings such as Beijing+15 activities and CWGL's 20-year anniversary symposium, giving her an opportunity to reconnect with colleagues and friends she made throughout her years in the movement. Echoing other panelists, she emphasized the importance of honoring the global women's movement and recognizing that "it is because of the movement that we will ensure the advancement of women's rights... and that we will secure economic justice for all women despite the setbacks." Antrobus stressed that diverse coalitions are powerful motors for change, in particular at the local level. The panels on the body and the economy provided inspiring examples of vibrant and innovative coalitions, bridging the gap between HIV/AIDS and sexual and reproductive rights activists, and between progressive economists and human rights defenders, for example. In addition, women's human rights activists and women involved in peace and conflict networks should collaborate more.

Antrobus posed three main questions, namely: given the backlash and obstacles facing women's human rights activists, where is the power

of our movement, where is the hope, and what do we need to do to mobilize more effectively, notably on issues of economics and militarization? She outlined some of the intersections that need to be revitalized between global and local spheres, between the Global North and South, and between mainstream and marginalized women.

Women working at the grassroots level are vastly under-represented at the global level. According to Antrobus, one of the reasons why we are still struggling to build strong alliances between trade unions, rights activists, progressive economists and other groups is because of this divide between global and local spaces. She underscored the importance of recognizing the distinction between the two and acknowledging that the most meaningful change, namely the effective realization of rights, occurs at the local level. She described the difficulty for local activists to participate in international movements and negotiations. By devoting less time and energy to their essential grassroots efforts they risk jeopardizing progress at the local level, underscoring the continuing need for global-local collaborations

Antrobus attributed the tensions between the Global North and the Global South to the asymmetry between the two. In the context of the global economic crisis, she stressed that women in the North need to challenge the economic policies of their governments that affect the lives of women and men in the South in profound ways. She cited the work of DAWN and mobilizations of women in trade unions at the global level as well as efforts on the part of Balakrishnan, Elson and others to engage progressive economists and human rights activists in constructive dialogue in view of bridging the divide across geographies, disciplines and movements.

Antrobus emphasized that the power of the movement lies in its incredible diversity. She spoke about the 2008 AWID Forum on the power of movements, sharing that she traveled to South Africa for this important event with a variety of women's groups, including some that did not explicitly identify as part of the women's movement, in order to foster these kinds of cross-movement exchanges and broaden the scope of the international movement for women's human rights. Addressing the question she had posed concerning the hope of the movement, she conveyed that to her, the hope lies in participating in events such as CWGL's symposium, among old friends, new people and young people – demonstrating the strength, the resilience and the future of the movement.



## DEFENDING WOMEN DEFENDING RIGHTS,

### **Mary Jane Real**

*Mary Jane Real is currently a Visiting Global Associate at CWGL and the Coordinator of the International Coalition on Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD IC), an international network of over 20 women's rights, human*

*rights and LGBTQI organizations to support women human rights defenders.<sup>39</sup>*

Real broached some of the evolving challenges of the women's human rights movement since the Beijing Conference. In Beijing, women from all around the world declared that they "hold up half the sky." In the 15 years since Beijing, the movement has grown tremendously. Today, it is dynamic, diverse, vibrant, and its passion for gender equality and women's empowerment has not waned. In international spaces such as UN conferences and meetings and events such as CWGL's symposium, women's human rights defenders draw hope and strength from each other, reasserting that they still hold up half the sky today. Through the global women's movement, countless women have turned oppression into opportunity.

As Alpizar noted, since Beijing much has changed in the world, both within advocates themselves and in the challenges they face. In addition to the host of natural disasters that were previously mentioned, Real outlined the complex political arena that is threatening many gains of the women's movement. She cited the financial crisis, the dominant neoliberal economic discourse and increasing militarization, as well as neoconservative and fundamentalist movements that aim to take over liberal governments and enact their right-wing political agendas, "eroding support for international cooperation and making a farce of the advocacy for women's human rights at the UN." Furthermore, the language of human rights, the very tool the women's movement has so successfully mobilized for its own goals, has been co-opted, among others by states with authoritarian agendas notably to justify the "War on Terror" and by fundamentalist groups espousing violent forms of identity politics.

These forces challenge women's rights activists to remain vigilant and scrutinize their own analyses, practices and alliances. Evoking the uni-

versality and indivisibility of human rights, advocates must stress that women's rights should not be bartered away, perceived as competing with other human rights, or compromised in negotiations with other social movements over priorities. As Real eloquently put it, "Women's human rights are integral and central to human rights. We claimed so in Vienna, we demand so today." In addition, she stressed that women's human rights defenders face threats from state and non-state actors, including from their own colleagues in social movements. They come under attack both because of their gender and because of the controversies emanating from their advocacy. In increasingly conservative contexts, LGBTQI activists are particularly targeted and perceived as transgressive. Another alarming trend is the rise of human rights violations by non-state actors. As right-wing politics gain ground, more conservative norms are arbitrarily imposed on women at the local level, and in many instances women's abusers are members of their family and community.

WHRD IC, which Real coordinates and of which CWGL and AWID are members, was formed as a resource and advocacy network for the protection and support of women human rights defenders. It includes women human rights activists as well as men who defend women's rights and LGBTQI groups that are committed to women's and gender issues. The coalition was formalized in 2008 after an international campaign. Today, meeting the needs of women human rights defenders is increasingly challenging in the context of the rampant criminalization of political dissent and the global financial crisis.

Funding is an especially critical issue for women's organizations and women's human rights defenders worldwide. The 2009 update of AWID's research in *Where is the Money for Women's Rights* reports that in 2008, Official Development Assistance (ODA) had reached a total of USD 119.8 billion, its highest level in recent years. ODA support for gender equality initiatives increased as well.<sup>40</sup> This increase, however, is not felt by women's groups on the ground. As the Urgent Action Fund for Women's Human Rights (UAF) has pointed out, an increasing number of women's organizations are applying for bridge funding to cover their operations after donors are unable to meet their funding commitments. In addition, more and more women's organizations are requesting support for protection and security, which now constitute the top priority area for UAF's grant making.

Accessibility to funds is a growing concern since the aid effectiveness agenda has realigned priorities for bilateral and multilateral aid.

Fundraising has also become increasingly competitive, with sizeable grants from government donors awarded through bidding processes that require highly sophisticated skills and a considerable investment of time and resources, which takes away valuable time from programmatic activities and increases the workload of organizations that are for the most part under-resourced and over-burdened.

Moreover, although larger international NGOs are often able to raise more funds than other organizations, they seldom re-grant to small women's groups as they implement programs themselves. Compounding these inequalities within the women's movement, economic disparities give organizations in the Global North more access to funding, notably from private philanthropies, than their Southern counterparts. In this context, many small women's groups and women human rights defenders rely on women's funds both for their protection from threats and attacks and for the continuation of their work. Fortunately, the AWID report states that women's funds do not plan to reduce their grant making this year. This pledge of support comes at a great cost, though, since small women's funds themselves have been struggling financially in this economic crisis and have had to resort to emergency cost-saving strategies such as donations of staff time. As Real sums up, once again, "women have externalized the cost of their labor, running women's funds, organizations and initiatives at the expense of their own well-being."

Real spoke about the opportunities and challenges of new media for organizing and advocacy. Technological advances have helped compensate the lack of resources, facilitated communication and outreach, and magnified the mobilizations and international solidarity initiatives of the global women's human rights movement. Nevertheless, Real emphasized that new ICTs cannot replace actual action. Joining a group or supporting a cause on Facebook or posting updates on Twitter should only be part of the many strategies activists use to advance their campaign goals. As she put it, "community organizing is not passé. Actual demonstrations are needed to change the status quo. Technology is cool, but we still need warm bodies to bring about social change."

Finally, she stressed the necessity of working across movements, entities and universities. As she explained, WHRD IC was born at CWGL at Rutgers University. She highlighted that in order to be truly inclusive, activists have to take risks and stand up not only for the causes that affect them personally or that are closest to their lives, but also for the concerns of other minorities, such as LGBTQI groups, who con-

tinue to be marginalized. As participants proclaimed at the Nairobi Conference, "Every issue is a woman's issue. The hierarchy of human rights is futile, irrelevant. We cannot rest unless every one of us enjoys the full spectrum of human rights."



## PUTTING THE SOUL BACK INTO THE MOVEMENT,

**Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi**

*Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi is Co-founder and Executive Director of the African Women's Development Fund, the first Africa-wide fundraising and grant making organization for African women.*

Adeleye-Fayemi began by sharing that although she frequently speaks about money and the women's movement, she felt wary of broaching that topic once again. Instead, she initiated a frank conversation about feminist movement building, money, and leadership, challenging the movement to confront three main issues. First, she described an "alignment challenge" both in the global women's movement and in different movements, between the vision, the values and the practice of activists and organizations. Too often, Adeleye-Fayemi deplored, "we say one thing, we stand for something, and then we practice something else," and this manifests itself in who we bring to the table, who we exclude, whose voices we choose to hear, and many other aspects of our work.

Second, Adeleye-Fayemi referred to a "leadership challenge." Over the past decades, the global women's movement has succeeded in building an infrastructure to further its agenda through institutions, international think tanks, service delivery programs, resource centers, and a whole range of spaces and processes. Yet this architecture has become problematic in some instances. Sometimes these spaces which should be empowering are used to exclude and disempower, whether deliberately or not. According to Adeleye-Fayemi, this often stems from leadership or alignment issues, whereby activists fail to put into practice in their organizations and movements the very principles that shape and bolster their advocacy. Therefore, Adeleye-Fayemi urged women's human rights defenders to "[put] the soul back into the movement." She explained that the institutionalization and the professionalization of the movement have forced activists to work in certain ways, building structures, projectizing their work, and speaking the

language of funders. Even the new technologies that have been so useful are sometimes used in ways that divide and harm the movement, digging ditches instead of building bridges. In the process, she pressed, “some of us have forgotten what it means to be there for another woman.”

Third, Adeleye-Fayemi discussed the daunting “sustainability challenge” facing the movement. Echoing Real’s concerns, she described the financial difficulties of many women’s groups worldwide who “exist on shoestring budgets” and depend on “bridging grants” to survive in unstable and uncertain conditions. As Adeleye-Fayemi phrased it, “most of the women’s organizations are on life support” and continually risk disappearing, which has profound effects on women all around the world who need these organizations to continue their crucial work.

In closing, Adeleye-Fayemi emphasized that activists need to rededicate themselves to the reason why there is a feminist movement in the first place. She reminded women’s rights activists that they did not enter the movement for career progression, but out of the passion to challenge all forms of patriarchal oppression. In the face of the professionalization of the movement, activists must strive to make it more welcoming and inclusive. For instance, women who are not affiliated with institutions or organizations should be included as agents of change and active participants in the movement. Following the example of the Latin American *Encuentro*, a regional meeting for activists to discuss women’s rights issues, women in Africa set up the African Feminist Forum as a space where African feminists can get together to share experiences, reflections and strategies, irrespective of their organizational affiliation. Adeleye-Fayemi encouraged women in other regions to create similar formal feminist spaces. In terms of resourcing the movement, Adeleye-Fayemi suggested that the movement consider working differently, establishing more collaborations and mergers

instead of creating more separate organizations and networks.



## INVESTING IN THE NEXT GENERATION,

**Sharon Bhagwan Rolls**

*Sharon Bhagwan Rolls is a Fiji Islander. She is the founding Coordinator of femLINKpacific and the Vice President of the National Council of Women Fiji.*

Bhagwan Rolls acknowledged the next generation, “our daughters, sons and younger sisters” who are the future of the movement. Committed to involving youth, femLINKpacific uses media and ICTs to connect women with policy, notably on peace and security issues. Bhagwan Rolls showed an inspiring video clip produced by young women in the context of femLINKpacific’s Generation Next project to express what peace and security issues, such as UN Security Council Resolution (SCR) 1325, mean in their lives.<sup>41</sup> FemLINKpacific sees security as a fundamental and crosscutting issue that affects every aspect of women’s lives. The organization uses community media as an enabling and participatory process to empower and inform women to transform their communities, including political spaces within their own organizations.

As Bhagwan Rolls underscored, conversations about activism, actions and priority-setting in the women’s movement are never complete without the inclusion of all women in all their diversities of race, faith, age, sexuality, etc. Empowering young women is one of the top priorities of femLINKpacific. Bhagwan Rolls acknowledged the role of the World YWCA in investing in her as a young woman, “giving [her] a voice to raise and a space to understand who [she was].” That investment continues to inspire and motivate her to develop and implement programs, such as femLINKpacific’s Generation Next project for young women producers and broadcasters, “enabling young women to discover their voice and give voice to others.”

FemLINKpacific uses radio to reach rural women and keep them updated about the policies and political decisions that affect them. In addition, the organization takes an ecumenical and interfaith approach, addressing the role and responsibility of religious leaders who too often define the status of women without making the link between faith values and human rights standards.

In this context, women need to be supported to be innovative and demand a transformation so that governments, civil society groups, and faith-based organizations are held accountable on women’s human rights, development, peace and human security. We need to build and strengthen women’s capacities and leadership in their communities, particularly through existing women’s organizations. In addition, women need enabling information and communication channels in order to redefine indicators for women’s human rights from their own realities, so that the implementation of global priorities is informed by their grassroots and community-level knowledge. We

must end discriminatory practices, which prevail in the economic, social and political spheres, notably through the lack of institutional support and the failure to integrate women's equality and human rights standards into national development processes.

Furthermore, women's rights activists need to strengthen their alliances and their collective desire for peace and security. This necessitates better collaboration among women's groups, for instance between women's human rights defenders and women peace activists, as well as with partners, such as feminist faith-based organizations. As Bhagwan Rolls summed up, "Women must have the capacity and the means to redefine targets and indicators set by international agencies and governments so that they are inclusive, equitable and just. As women we must have the political voice and power to negotiate for our peace and security from the micro to the macro level." Development, human rights, peace and human security must be infused with the expertise, experiences and concerns of women worldwide.

## FURTHERING THE DISCUSSION

Moderator Alpizar initiated the discussions, asking symposium participants if the movement should continue what it has been doing so far, or if its infrastructure and organizing strategies should adapt to evolving challenges in the current geopolitical context. How can the movement be a nurturing, energizing space that is more inclusive of diversity and more sustainable? A diverse group of audience members, including young women and men as well as newcomers to the movement spoke about including youth, rural women, and working across religions and cultures, in particular given the rise of fundamentalisms.

A young woman in her twenties shared that after having felt hopeless and doubtful about whether she had a place in the global women's movement, the symposium had re-energized her. She mentioned that she worked at the UN and would take that energy back to help make the UN a more welcoming and fulfilling place for young women. Another young woman with no organizational affiliation said that she attended the event after hearing about it on Facebook. Other young women spoke about the challenges of recruiting their peers to care about women's human rights in light of the backlash and the stigma against feminism.

Bhagwan Rolls reiterated the importance of fostering young women's leadership and encouraging them to make issues of women's human rights, development, peace and security personal and tangible. Liz

Abzug emphasized that young women have to exercise leadership and convince their peers. Real reminded symposium participants that, as women in many countries with conservative or fundamentalist influences have experienced, women should never take their rights for granted, but must remain vigilant to defend them, because they can be lost in a moment. In addition, she commented that, as young women in the video clip shown by Bhagwan Rolls demonstrate, feminist activism can be fun and engaging.

Participants discussed ways to broaden the movement and make it more inclusive. Bhagwan Rolls shared that coming from a multi-faith family and country and working with progressive faith-based and inter-faith organizations such as the YWCA made clear to her that she could be both a Christian and a feminist. She also reminded audience members not to fall prey to the stigmatization of Islamic fundamentalism, but rather to recognize that there are many manifestations of religious fundamentalisms, including among Christian denominations. Real described two distinct and in some respects compatible approaches to women's rights activism in the context of religion. Some women's groups have been working within their faiths to reinterpret religious texts and principles to advocate for women's rights, while others have focused on expanding secular spaces. In various contexts, different strategies can be effective.

The issue of the inclusion of rural women into the global movement was also broached. Participants brainstormed how to better reach women in rural areas, which tend to be especially isolated and marginalized. Some young women from the US asked about how to more effectively connect US issues, and national or local advocacy in general, with the global movement. Emphasizing the interconnections between "local" and "global" spaces, Bhagwan Rolls stressed that, as a permanent member of the UN Security Council and one of the most influential countries in the world, the US has a particular responsibility to be more involved in the Security Council and the UN in general. She described how women in the Pacific and other regions have domesticated SCR 1325, SCR 1820, CEDAW, the BPfA and other international commitments, highlighting their relevance at the community level. Real emphasized that women in the US and in the Global North in general should resist the widespread tendency to conceive of violence against women or human rights abuses as problems that only happen in other countries, and should examine the interrelations between various local spaces and between local and global spheres. In order to enhance the participation of rural women

and other marginalized groups in the global women's movement, Real reaffirmed the value and relevance of community organizing and highlighted the power of the local in establishing a dialogue between different constituencies.

Inclusion and sustainability are mutually constituted; in order to be more sustainable and powerful, the movement must amplify its outreach and expand its scope. Adeleye-Fayemi averred that sustainability does not just pertain to financial resources, but also to how activists position and make the case for their work and how they build partnerships and relationships. She pointed out that the AWID *Where is the Money* report found that most of the individual donors to organizations such as Amnesty International and Oxfam are women. This underscores the value of "democratizing philanthropy," as Adeleye-Fayemi phrased it, putting more resources into the hands of rural women and raising our own funds in order to ensure that "the funding of our revolution... is on our own terms." Furthermore, responding to the young women who had asked how to recruit peers who did not fully grasp the anti-feminist backlash, Antrobus recommended returning to consciousness-raising groups, which were so popular in the 1960s and 1970s. These strategies could be effective ways to start from people's individual lives and make connections between these personal experiences and the broader structures of industrial capitalism and militarism that put profit before people.

Rhonda Copelon of the International Women's Human Rights Law Clinic at CUNY concurred with Antrobus' suggestion to reinvigorate consciousness-raising groups, which helped make the women's human rights movement so powerful. She reminded the audience that at the beginning, human rights organizations did not support the notion of women's human rights, or the idea that violence against women was a human rights issue. In fact, the reason why there is a women human rights defenders movement is because gender remains a marginalized issue, even within the human rights field, as was illustrated by the Amnesty International controversy with Gita Sahgal. Copelon added that fundamentalisms constitute an issue for women's rights but also for economic rights, since they are often associated with right-wing political parties. This underscores the importance of taking a holistic approach to human rights.

In conclusion, participants demonstrated the energy, resilience and crucial relevance of the global women's rights movement. Responding to Antrobus' remark at the beginning of her presentation, a young

woman emphasized that young feminists are learning from the experience and insights of their elders and are motivated and energized to continue the movement. "We are not tired, and we are not creaky," she exclaimed, emphasizing that this symposium was not only an opportunity to reflect on Beijing and the past 15 years, but also to strategize about the next 15. Young women and committed men are building the movement and activists of all ages can learn a lot from their fresh ideas, initiatives and enthusiasm.

Activists, academics and others from all regions of the world participated in the symposium. Out of the few men present, most were young men, and a number of them had questions – demonstrating a shift in the young generation in terms of improving the involvement of men and boys in global feminist advocacy. The panel ended with a note on Haiti and a call to action in solidarity with Haitian women, who have been exceptionally active in asserting their right to participate in reconstructing their country after the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010. Antrobus spoke about the power of the global women's rights movement in mitigating the asymmetries between the Global North and South, in large part through CWGL's emphasis on providing women from all around the world with a space to develop a methodology to mobilize women in their own countries on the basis of the lived experiences of these women, by articulating their concerns and then translating them into the language of human rights. As Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi summed up, "the global women's movement is the most powerful social movement we have on the planet right now and it continues to make an incredible difference in the lives of women."



## Conclusion: New Visions, New Strategies

Through the thematic pillars of the body, the economy and the movement, this report and the symposium it is based on sketched some of the successes and challenges of the global movement for women's human rights in the 15 years since the Beijing Conference, as well as some visions, approaches, tools and strategies for the future. Speakers in the chapter on the body notably examined the backlash on women's sexual and reproductive rights, the value of framing violence against women and other bodily concerns as human rights issues, and strategies to take back women's bodies from these abusive and alienating forces. The speakers on the economy discussed activism for economic justice in the context of the current financial crisis, the interconnections between human rights and economic justice, as well as ways

to use the global economic crisis as an opportunity to reframe economic discourse around human rights and the daily realities of people's lives. The speakers on the movement described some of the divisive dichotomies and other challenges impeding activists' progress, as well as tools and strategies to build leadership, foster diversity and strengthen and sustain the diverse global movement for women's human rights.

As Balakrishnan put it, CWGL's symposium and the Beijing+15 review marked a critical juncture for women's rights activists. Since Beijing, there have been many successes for the advancement of women's empowerment and gender equality, including the BPfA and other international governmental commitments. Yet the women's movement faces daunting challenges, including the rise of a well-organized backlash from the religious right, which learned from the achievements of the women's movement and borrows its organizing and advocacy strategies to gain influence in international spheres such as the UN.

Since the first review of the BPfA five years after Beijing, conservative and anti-feminist governments and NGOs have been mobilizing to weaken its language and renege on prior commitments for women's human rights. Over the past 15 years, these forces have grown into a global movement bringing together countries with otherwise conflicting and turbulent relations. Although these international alliances between such "strange bedfellows" are still common, some of them are slowly eroding. For instance, after almost a decade of the former Bush administration in the US and its anti-choice and homophobic policies, the current Obama administration is taking a very different approach to international relations, UN negotiations and global women's rights issues.

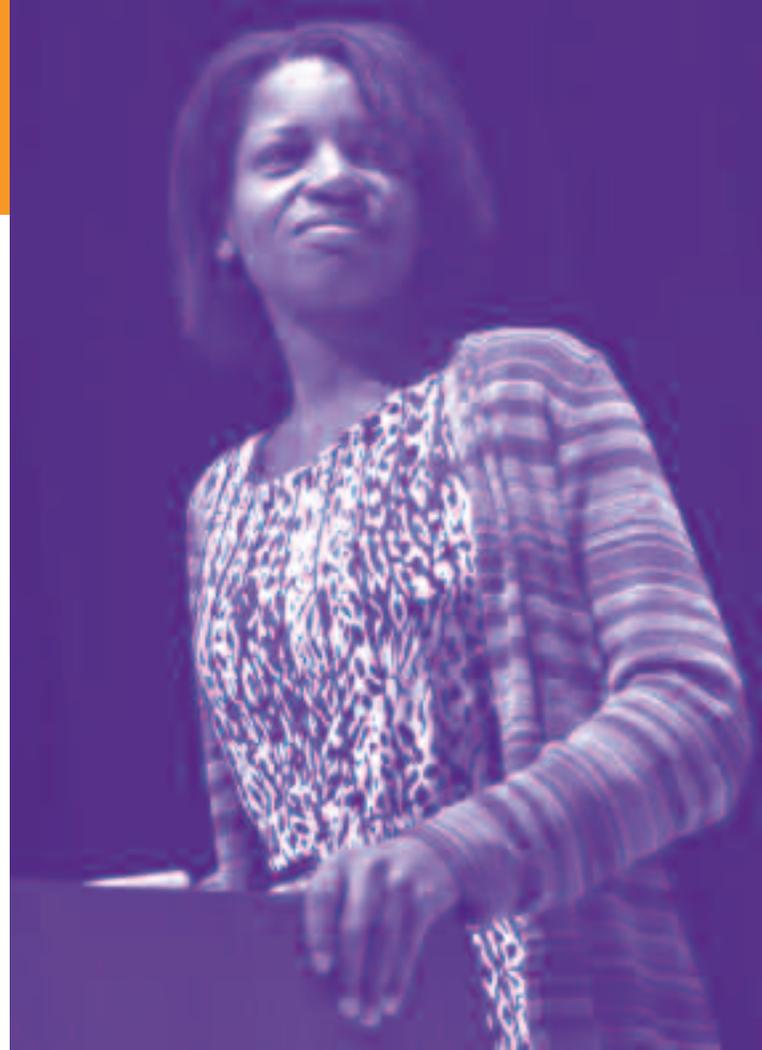
One of the main achievements of the international women's movement was its use of human rights as a tool for organizing and framing its demands. The human rights framework plays an indispensable role in demanding government accountability for the improvement of the lives of people on a global scale. The global women's movement critically analyzed the human rights framework and revealed its male bias at the outset, demonstrating how the alienation of women on an international scale was perpetuated by this systemic inequality. However, rather than discounting human rights as a useless vector of male privilege, the women's human rights movement recognized the intrinsic value of human rights. It is precisely because human rights constitute such an essential and effective instrument that they need to be improved and

used as a framework for advocacy to demand redress for the abuses that continue to affect women and minorities.

Informed by the concrete experiences of women worldwide, activists allied grassroots organizing at the local level with global UN advocacy from all regions and framed women's rights as human rights to build an international movement through cross-regional networking and coalition-building. At the symposium, one of the main strategies participants cited for the continued success of the movement consisted of seeking more diverse and inclusive visions and collaborations. They stressed the importance of building coalitions, both within and across movements, in order to take a more intersectional approach to human rights and broaden the scope of their activism. Moreover, the movement is enriched by the new energies of the young generation and by an emphasis on celebration of accomplishments in order to sustain the advocacy efforts of women's human rights defenders.

A theme that emerged during the symposium concerned crises serving as opportunities to question existing unjust structures and build new systems out of the lessons learned from trauma and hardship, as the examples of Rwanda, Liberia and others demonstrated. The economic, food, climate and other global crises all represent such opportunities for lasting social and geopolitical changes, as well as invaluable opportunities for coalition-building and international solidarity for women's human rights. The symposium provided a space for Haitian women, in particular, to share their experiences and insights on the situation in their country since the devastating earthquake of January 12, 2010. Since this catastrophe, Haitian women have shown exemplary leadership and initiative in asserting their right to participate fully in reconstruction processes in order to ensure that rebuilding efforts are gender-responsive.

Stéphanie Louis, a psychology student and research assistant at the Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED) in Haiti, described the situation there. INURED recently undertook an assessment with the Huairou Commission on the situation of Haitian women after the disaster, organizing focus groups with about 400 marginalized women from 20 different women's organizations to assess their immediate needs in the aftermath of the earthquake. Most of these women are sleeping in the streets, since their homes were destroyed or damaged. Their urgent needs include water, food, shelter, medicine and clothing. Violence against women, especially rape, is rampant, and in order to protect themselves, women have to sleep in



groups and in shifts. For the long term, they need safe shelters, the ability to find employment to ensure their independent economic livelihood, universal education for their children as well as psychological support and financial aid to attend university. All of these concerns, Louis emphasized, are human rights issues.

As Louis conveyed, women in Haiti do not only want to be recipients of aid, but demand to participate actively in reconstruction efforts intellectually and socially. The earthquake is an opportunity for women to raise their voices and assert that they will no longer endure being left behind, and Haitian women have responded to this opportunity with inspiring organizing and solidarity to enhance women's participation in decision-making at all levels and establish the foundations for a more equitable and just society. Haiti is not the only country to face a crippling natural disaster, as Oza pointed out in her enumeration of disasters that affected the world in the past few years. The recent earthquakes in Chile (February 27, 2010) and China (April 13, 2010) acted as powerful reminders that women and men all around the world need to build on existing experiences and apply lessons learned from countries that face disasters, in particular from the creative strategies and practices of women's groups confronting these challenges.



Charlotte Bunch,  
CWGL Founding Director and  
Meryl Frank,  
US Representative to  
the Commission on the  
Status of Women

Reflections from speakers and participants demonstrated that international NGOs must build stronger alliances with local and national groups in order to mutually build and strengthen their capacities. Haitian women need assistance in the short-term, but also most importantly, in putting in place long-term policies to integrate women's specific needs and a gender perspective into all sectors of reconstruction. Alpizar urged symposium participants to take action in solidarity with Haitian women by signing an oral statement that was delivered to the CSW to demand the inclusion of gender-sensitive language in the outcome document of the Commission.<sup>42</sup> In addition, participants were urged to support proposed language for a resolution on women's economic empowerment, including specific language on Haiti. The leadership of Haitian women in the face of this tragic devastation is a model for women's activism worldwide, exemplifying how to find openings in a time of crisis.

In spite of growing and compounding challenges – from logistical obstacles that impeded civil society participation at the 2010 CSW and Beijing+15 review, to more daunting political hurdles such as the enduring anti-feminist backlash co-opting the spaces and strategies of the women's movement, to the escalation of women's economic marginalization in the context of the current global financial crisis – the women's movement remains powerful and resilient. In fact, as some of the panelists pointed out, the backlash itself is a testament to the success of the movement. Women everywhere are turning crises into opportunities, especially by using innovative tools such as new ICTs to connect with other women across the world, communicate more efficiently and broaden their outreach and collaborations. Young women are taking existing leadership and visionary feminist strategies and beginning to

shape a better future for women's human rights and gender equality. In spite of governments' failures to implement their commitments from Beijing, women have been empowering themselves and each other to take matters into their own hands, demand accountability from governments, and realize the human rights of women and girls at all levels.

Commenting on the Beijing+5 review processes, Cynthia Meillon stated in 2001 that, "While the Beijing Conference showed the world that an international women's human rights movement existed, Beijing+5 proved that it has remained intact and continues to grow stronger and more diverse. This may be the most important lesson we have learned from the experience, and the one that will best serve us in the future."<sup>43</sup> Global spaces such as the UN conferences and this CWGL symposium allow women from all regions of the world to draw energy and inspiration from each other and celebrate the powerful force they become together. As Bunch expressed at the end of the symposium, "I feel that working with people who are trying to do something to make the world better, to make the world reflect what we care about, is really very exciting. Of course sometimes it's hard, and [there is] backlash against it, but it's the most rewarding thing I can imagine doing with my life."<sup>44</sup>

In celebration of the 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary of CWGL, the symposium aimed to capture some of the vibrant energy of the movement that was tangible not only at the symposium and tribute, but also throughout the 2010 CSW and Beijing+15 activities worldwide. Fifteen years after the Beijing Conference, the women's movement is far from declining; it is becoming stronger, more innovative, more global, and more inclusive, and it continues to critically analyze, challenge, improve and reinvent itself.

- <sup>1</sup> Learn more about International Women's Day here: <http://www.internationalwomensday.com/about.asp>.
- <sup>2</sup> The full text of CEDAW is accessible on the website of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women (DAW): <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm>.
- <sup>3</sup> Read more about the Beijing Conference and its follow-up on the UN-DAW website: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing>.
- <sup>4</sup> The full text of the BPfA is accessible online: <http://www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/beijing/pdf/BDFpA%20E.pdf>.
- <sup>5</sup> From: Boutros-Ghali, Boutros. "Introduction: Translating the Momentum of Beijing into Action." *Platform for Action and the Beijing Declaration*. United Nations, NY: Department of Public Information, 1996.
- <sup>6</sup> From: Bunch, Charlotte and Samantha Frost. "Women's Human Rights: An Introduction." *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. Routledge, 2000. Accessible on CWGL's website: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/whr.html>.
- <sup>7</sup> Learn more about CWGL on its website: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu>.
- <sup>8</sup> Published in *Human Rights Quarterly* 12 [1990]. Accessible online: <http://www.jstor.org/stable/762496>.
- <sup>9</sup> Learn more about the 16 Days Campaign here: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/16days/home.html>.
- <sup>10</sup> From: Bunch, Charlotte and Samantha Frost. "Women's Human Rights: An Introduction." *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. Routledge, 2000. Accessible on CWGL's website: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/whr.html>.
- <sup>11</sup> The full text of the Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action is accessible on the website of the UN Office of the High Commissioner on Human Rights (OHCHR): <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/law/vienna.htm>.
- <sup>12</sup> Learn more about the UN Special Rapporteur on violence against women, its causes and consequences on OHCHR's website: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/women/rapporteur>.
- <sup>13</sup> Read the full transcript of Hillary Clinton's speech here: <http://www.feminist.com/resources/artsspeech/inter/hill.htm>.
- <sup>14</sup> From: Bunch, Charlotte and Samantha Frost. "Women's Human Rights: An Introduction." *Routledge International Encyclopedia of Women: Global Women's Issues and Knowledge*. Routledge, 2000. Accessible on CWGL's website: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/whr.html>.
- <sup>15</sup> For a full list of CWGL events and speaking engagements at the 54<sup>th</sup> CSW, and to read more about UN and NGO activities around the Beijing+15 review, visit CWGL's website: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/policy/b15/index.html>.
- <sup>16</sup> The GEAR Campaign is a global network of over 300 women's, human rights and social justice organizations worldwide that advocates for the creation of a new, strong and well resourced UN entity dedicated to women's empowerment and gender equality, in order for the UN to remedy its current fragmentation and lack of coordination on gender issues and to deliver better results for all women. On September 14, 2009, the UN General Assembly adopted a resolution by consensus to establish this new entity, and its formal creation occurred via unanimous resolution passed by the UN General Assembly on July 2, 2010 after four years of advocacy by civil society groups and women all around the world. The GEAR Campaign continues to urge the UN to immediately set up a transparent process for recruiting the best-qualified Under Secretary-General to head this agency. Learn more about the GEAR Campaign here: <http://www.gearcampaign.org>.
- <sup>17</sup> *Passionate Politics: The Life & Work of Charlotte Bunch*. A Joyce Warshaw Film. Executive Producer: Dorothy Sander. Producer/Director: Tami Gold. Co-Producer: David Pavlosky. Editor: Sonia Gonzalez-Martinez. Soon to be released.
- <sup>18</sup> For more information or to contribute to the Fund, please visit: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/whatsnew/CB%20WHR%20Strategic%20Opportunities%20Fund.pdf>.
- <sup>19</sup> BPfA, Para. 113, Women and Armed Conflict.
- <sup>20</sup> Learn more about this important colloquium on its website: <http://womenscolloquium.org/>.
- <sup>21</sup> Read the full text of the Rwandan Constitution of 2003 here: <http://www.mod.gov.rw/?Constitution-of-the-Republic-of>.
- <sup>22</sup> For more information on women in Parliaments, visit the online database of the Inter-Parliamentary Union here: <http://www.ipu.org/>.
- <sup>23</sup> Read The Elders' statement here: <http://www.theelders.org/media/mediareleases/religious-and-traditional-practices-discriminate-against-women-and-girls>.
- <sup>24</sup> Learn more about the Maternal Mortality Campaign: <http://www.whiteribbonalliance.org/GlobalMaternalMortality.cfm>  
<http://demanddignity.amnesty.org/en-gb/campaign/maternal-mortality>.
- <sup>25</sup> Learn more about the Ugandan Anti-Homosexuality bill: <http://www.iglhrc.org/cgi-bin/iowa/article/takeaction/resourcecenter/1088.html>  
<http://www.hrw.org/fr/news/2009/10/15/uganda-anti-homosexuality-bill-threatens-liberties-and-human-rights-defenders>.
- <sup>26</sup> Concept Note, CWGL 20th Anniversary Public Symposium, December 5, 2009.
- <sup>27</sup> Read the full text of the Maputo Protocol: <http://www.achpr.org/english/women/protocolwomen.pdf>.  
Learn more about the Maputo Protocol and how African women's human rights defenders are organizing around it: <http://www.africa4womensrights.org/tag/Maputo%20Protocol>.  
Read about some of the fundamentalist backlash against the Protocol: <http://www.maputoprotocol.org/index.html>.
- <sup>28</sup> Learn more about CSBR on its website: <http://www.wwhr.org/csbr.php>.
- <sup>29</sup> <http://www.wwhr.org/csbr.php>.
- <sup>30</sup> Ilkharacan showed a short documentary film on this initiative at the symposium. It can be found on the website of Women for Women's Human Rights here: <http://www.wwhr.org/news.php?detay=48>.
- <sup>31</sup> Learn more about CEPIA on its website: <http://www.cepia.org.br/en/default.asp>.
- <sup>32</sup> Concept Note, CWGL 20th Anniversary Public Symposium, December 5, 2009.
- <sup>33</sup> Learn more about the International Women's Human Rights Law Clinic on its website: <http://www.law.cuny.edu/clinics/clinicalofferings/IWHRC.html>.
- <sup>34</sup> Visit the Special Rapporteur's website: <http://www2.ohchr.org/english/issues/housing/index.htm>.
- <sup>35</sup> Read the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD)'s definition of Official Development Aid on its website: [http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en\\_2649\\_34447\\_42398912\\_1\\_1\\_1\\_1,00.html](http://www.oecd.org/document/0/0,3343,en_2649_34447_42398912_1_1_1_1,00.html).
- <sup>36</sup> Learn more about the activities of GCAP and the FTF on women's economic rights at the following websites: <http://www.whiteband.org/resources/issues/gender-equality/>  
<http://www.whiteband.org/about-gcap/reports/feminist-task-force>.
- <sup>37</sup> Concept Note, CWGL 20th Anniversary Symposium, December 5, 2009.
- <sup>38</sup> Learn more about La Via Campesina: <http://www.viacampesina.org/en/>.
- <sup>39</sup> Learn more about the WHRD IC on its website: <http://www.defendingwomen-defendingrights.org>.
- <sup>40</sup> To learn more about Where is the Money for Women's Rights? visit AWID's website: <http://www.awid.org/eng/About-AWID/AWID-Initiatives/Where-is-the-Money-for-Women-s-Rights>.
- <sup>41</sup> Watch this clip as well as other video projects of femLINKpacific on its website: <http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/index.cfm?si=main>.  
Learn more about Generation Next: <http://www.femlinkpacific.org.fj/index.cfm?si=main.gen&cmd=generation>.
- <sup>42</sup> Read the full text of the NGO statement to the CSW on "Ensuring Haitian Women's Participation and Leadership Are Institutionalized in All Stages of National Relief and Reconstruction" on the website of the Huairou Commission: <http://www.huairou.org>.
- <sup>43</sup> From: Meillon, Cynthia. "Beijing+5: Beginning and Ending with Women's Human Rights." *Holding on to the Promise: Women's Human Rights and the Beijing+5 Review*. Edited by Cynthia Meillon in collaboration with Charlotte Bunch. Center for Women's Global Leadership, Rutgers, the State University of New Jersey, 2001. Accessible online on CWGL's website: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu/globalcenter/publications/holding.html>.
- <sup>44</sup> LaParo, Kendall. "Rights activist unifies women's voices at UN." *The Daily Targum*. Rutgers University, 2010. Read the full article here: <http://www.dailytargum.com/university/rights-activist-unifies-women-s-voices-at-un-1.2197872>

## WELCOME

### Jennifer Raab

President, Hunter College

### Mary Robinson

President, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative  
Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights  
Former President of Ireland

## INTRODUCTION

### Radhika Balakrishnan

Executive Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership,  
Rutgers University

### Charlotte Bunch

Founding Director, Center for Women's Global Leadership,  
Rutgers University

## PANEL 1

**BODY** - Defending Sexual and Reproductive Rights,  
Ending Gender-based Violence

**Moderator: Alexandra Garita**, International Women's Health  
Coalition (IWHC)

**Lesley Ann Foster**, Masimanyane Women's Support Centre

**Pinar Ilkkaracan**, Women for Women's Human Rights  
(WWHR) - NEW WAYS

**Ros Petchesky**, Women and Gender Studies Program,  
Hunter College

**Jacqueline Pitanguy**, Citizenship, Study, Research,  
Information and Action (CEPIA)

## REPRESENTATIVES OF HAITIAN WOMEN'S ORGANIZATIONS

## PANEL 2

**ECONOMY** - Strengthening Women's Human Right to  
Economic Justice

**Moderator: Rupal Oza**, Women and Gender Studies Program,  
Hunter College

**Cathy Albisa**, National Economic and Social Rights Initiative

**Diane Elson**, Department of Sociology, University of Essex

**Gita Sen**, Development Alternatives with Women for a New  
Era (DAWN)

## PANEL 3

**MOVEMENT** - Sustaining Global Feminist Organizing and  
Building Leadership

**Moderator: Lydia Alpizar**, Association for Women's Rights in  
Development (AWID)

**Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi**, African Women's Development Fund  
(AWDF)

**Peggy Antrobus**, Development Alternatives with Women for a  
New Era (DAWN)

**Sharon Bhagwan Rolls**, femLINKpacific

**Mary Jane Real**, Women Human Rights Defenders  
International Coalition (WHRD IC)

## TRIBUTE TO CHARLOTTE BUNCH

Short preview from the soon to be released film

*PASSIONATE POLITICS: The Life & Work of Charlotte Bunch*

A Joyce Warshow Film

Executive Producer Dorothy Sander

Producer/Director Tami Gold

Co-Producer: David Pavlosky

Editor: Sonia Gonzalez-Martinez

**Kavita Ramdas**, Global Fund for Women

**Mary Hartman**, Institute for Women's Leadership,  
Rutgers University

## CLOSING REMARKS

### Ellen Chesler

Director, Eleanor Roosevelt Initiative on Women and Public Policy  
at Roosevelt House, Hunter College

**Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi** is Co-founder and Executive Director of the African Women's Development Fund, the first Africa-wide fundraising and grantmaking organization for African women. Adeleye-Fayemi was also the Director of Akina Mama wa Afrika (AMwA), an international development organization for African women. During her time with AMwA she conceptualized the African Women's Leadership Institute and the Regional Leadership Development Center, which together have helped train over 2,000 women leaders in Africa. She has served as the President of AWID and has written and published numerous articles and academic papers on popular culture, feminist activism and leadership.

**Catherine Albisa** is the Executive Director of the National Economic and Social Rights Initiative (NESRI). A graduate of Columbia Law School, she is a constitutional and human rights lawyer with a background in the right to health. Albisa also has significant experience working in partnership with community organizers in the use of human rights standards to strengthen advocacy in the US. She co-founded NESRI in order to build legitimacy for human rights in general, and economic and social rights in particular. She is committed to a participatory human rights approach that is locally anchored, but universal and global in its vision.

**Lydia Alpizar** is a Costa Rican feminist activist who lives in Mexico City. Alpizar has been the Executive Director of the Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID) since 2007, and managed the *Where is the Money for Women's Rights* and *Building Feminist Movements and Organizations* Strategic Initiatives of AWID from 2003 to 2006. She is Co-founder and Advisor of ELIGE - Youth Network for Reproductive and Sexual Rights (Mexico). Alpizar is on the Board of Directors for the Global Fund for Women and is a member of the International Council on Human Rights Policy. She is a graduate from the Human Rights Advocacy Training Program at Columbia University's Center for the Study of Human Rights.

**Peggy Antrobus** is from the Caribbean and lives and works in many of the island states. Since 1974, when she served as Advisor on Women's Affairs to the government of Jamaica and established its Women's Bureau, she has worked for the advancement of women's rights and development. In 1978 she set up the Women and Development (WAND) Unit at the University of the West Indies, and is a founding member of many regional and international organizations including Caribbean Association for Feminist Research and Action (CAFRA), DAWN, and the International Gender and Trade Network. She has contributed chapters and articles to many publications and written *The Global Women's Movement: Origins, Issues and Strategies* in 2004.

**Radhika Balakrishnan** recently became the Executive Director of CWGL and joined the Rutgers University faculty as a Professor in the Women's and Gender Studies Department. Balakrishnan holds a Ph.D. in Economics from Rutgers. Previously, she was Professor of Economics and International Studies at Marymount Manhattan College. She has worked at the Ford Foundation as a program officer in the Asia Regional Program. She is currently the Chair of the Board of the US Human Rights Network and is on the Board of the Center for Constitutional Rights. She has published in the field of gender and development. Her publications include: *Why MES with Human Rights: Integrating Macro Economic Strategies with Human Rights* (written in 2005); *The Hidden Assembly Line: Gender Dynamics of Subcontracted Work in a Global Economy* (edited in 2001); *Good Sex: Feminist Perspectives from the World's*

*Religions* (co-edited with Patricia Jung and Mary Hunt in 2000). She has also authored numerous articles that have appeared in various books and journals.

**Sharon Bhagwan Rolls** is a Fiji Islander. She is the Founding Coordinator of femLINKpacific and the Vice President of the National Council of Women Fiji. Bhagwan Rolls' main interests include media as well as women, peace and security policy. She is also committed to the empowerment and inclusion of young women in decision making, and as Coordinator of femLINKpacific continues to build upon the interest and skills of young women in the community. At the recent CSW session at the UN, Bhagwan Rolls was an active member of the Women's Media Caucus. In June 2005, she was included in the list of Pacific women for the 1,000 Women for the Nobel Peace Prize 2005 initiative.

**Charlotte Bunch** is Founding Director and Senior Scholar of CWGL. She has been an activist, author and organizer in the women's rights, civil rights and human rights movements for four decades. A Board of Governors Distinguished Service Professor in Women's and Gender Studies at Rutgers University, Bunch is the author of numerous essays and books and has edited or co-edited nine anthologies including CWGL's reports on the UN Beijing Plus 5 Review and the World Conference Against Racism. Her contributions to women's human rights have been recognized by many awards, including her induction into the National Women's Hall of Fame in October 1996 and her selection by former US President Bill Clinton as a recipient of the Eleanor Roosevelt Award for Human Rights in December 1999. Bunch has served on the boards of numerous organizations and is currently a member of the Advisory Committee for the Human Rights Watch Women's Rights Division and on the board of the Global Fund for Women. She has been a consultant to many UN bodies and served on the Advisory Committee for the Secretary General's 2006 Report to the General Assembly on Violence against Women.

**Diane Elson** is Professor of Sociology at the University of Essex, in the United Kingdom. In 2006, a chapter on her research on gender and development was included in *Fifty Key Thinkers in Development*. She has acted as Advisor to UNIFEM, UNDP, and Oxfam. Elson is the Chair of the UK Women's Budget Group and a past Vice President of the International Association for Feminist Economics. Her recent publications include: *Budgeting for Women's Rights; Monitoring Government Budgets for Compliance with CEDAW; Feminist Economics of Trade; "Auditing Economic Policy in the Light of Obligations on Economic and Social Rights"* (with Radhika Balakrishnan); and "Gender Equality and Economic Growth in the World Bank *World Development Report 2006*."

**Lesley Ann Foster** is the Founder and Executive Director of the Masimanyane Women's Support Centre, a South Africa-based organization focusing specifically on gender-based violence, the gendered nature of HIV and AIDS, and sexual and reproductive health and rights. She established Masimanyane as a way to help victims of domestic violence and abuse become financially independent. Foster believes that broad grassroots work is the key ingredient in mounting a successful campaign for the prevention of violence against women in South Africa. In 2005, she was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize for her work at Masimanyane, and in 2009 she won the inaugural Southern Africa Social Entrepreneurship award for women social entrepreneurs.

*continued next page*

**Alexandra Garita** is a feminist activist from Mexico and Program Officer for the International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC). Prior to joining IWHC, Garita led the international advocacy program at the International Planned Parenthood Federation (IPPF) where she focused on sexual and reproductive rights, HIV and AIDS, and women's rights. She also formed part of Decidir (Choice: Youth Coalition for Sexual Citizenship), where she advocated for young people's rights to safe and legal abortion in Mexico City prior to the liberalization of the law. Garita holds a B.A. in International Relations from Boston University and an M.A. in the Theory and Practice of Human Rights from Essex University.

**Pinar Ilkkaracan** is a researcher and activist trained in psychotherapy and political science. She is the Founding President of Women for Women's Human Rights (WWHR) – NEW WAYS and a Co-founder of the Coalition for Sexual and Bodily Rights in Muslim Societies (CSBR), a network of 45 leading academic and non-governmental organizations from Muslim countries. Ilkkaracan has initiated a nationwide human rights education program to enable women to exercise their rights in Turkey, which is now implemented in more than 40 provinces. In 2007, she received the prestigious International Women's Human Rights Award of the Gruber Foundation.

**Rupal Oza** is the Director of the Women and Gender Studies program at Hunter College. Her work focuses on political economic transformations in the Global South, the geography of right-wing politics, and the conjuncture between development and security. Her first book, *The Making of Neoliberal India: Nationalism, Gender, and the Paradoxes of Globalization*, was published in 2006 by Routledge, New York and by Women Unlimited, India. Oza has published a number of articles in peer-reviewed journals. Her current project examines the links between special economic zones, the discourse of security, and Hindutva politics in Gujarat, India.

**Ros Petchesky** is Distinguished Professor of Political Science at Hunter College and the Graduate Center of CUNY. She has been a researcher and advocate on issues of reproductive and sexual rights and gender and social justice for over 30 years. In the 1990s she directed the International Reproductive Rights Research Action Group, which participated in the International Conference on Population and Development (ICPD) and Beijing Women's Conference during that decade.

**Jacqueline Pitanguy**, a sociologist and political scientist, is the Founder and Director of CEPIA (Citizenship, Study, Research, Information and Action), an NGO based in Rio de Janeiro. At CEPIA, Pitanguy coordinates research on gender issues and facilitates advocacy and educational programs relating to violence against women and reproductive health. She has been a Professor at the Pontificia Universidade Catolica de Rio de Janeiro and at Rutgers University. She also held a cabinet position as President of the National Council for Women's Rights in Brazil. She is a recipient of the Medal of Rio Branco, the highest decoration of the Brazilian Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Twenty years ago, Pitanguy participated in the initial discussions and planning meetings to create CWGL.

**Jennifer Raab**, President of Hunter College, is a lifelong New Yorker whose career has included high-profile positions in government, public service, civic affairs and the law. As Hunter College's 13th president, she has built upon the College's strong foundation, refined its mission, overseen its academic programs and spearheaded its growth and development as one of the world's leading urban centers of higher education. A graduate of Harvard Law School, Raab also had a successful career in law. After graduating from Cornell University, she went on to earn a Master's in Public Affairs from the Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton University. Raab is the 2006 recipient of the Benjamin E. Mays Award for A Better Chance, awarded to "an educator whose principles of personal commitment, integrity, achievement and concern for others reflect those of Dr. Mays, the late President of Morehouse College."

**Mary Jane Real** is currently a Visiting Global Associate at CWGL and the Coordinator of the International Coalition on Women Human Rights Defenders (WHRD IC), an international network of over 20 women's rights, human rights and LGBT organizations to support women human rights defenders. Previously, she was regional coordinator of the Asia Pacific Forum on Women, Law and Development (APWLD), and has been a long-time activist in the women's rights and human rights movements in the Philippines and throughout Asia.

**Mary Robinson** was the first woman President of Ireland (from 1990 to 1997) and a former United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights (from 1997 to 2002). As an academic, legislator and barrister, she argued landmark cases before the European Court of Human Rights as well as in the Irish courts and the European Court in Luxembourg. She also served on expert European Community and Irish parliamentary committees. In 1988, Robinson and her husband founded the Irish Centre for European Law at the Trinity College. Ten years later she was elected Chancellor of the University. The recipient of numerous honours and awards throughout the world, including the 2009 Presidential Medal of Freedom by US President Barack Obama, Robinson is a member of the Elders, co-founder and former Chair of the Council of Women World Leaders, and Vice President of the Club of Madrid. Robinson serves on several boards and chairs the GAVI Alliance Board and the Fund for Global Human Rights. She is President of the International Commission of Jurists, Honorary President of Oxfam International and Patron of the International Community of Women Living with AIDS (ICW). Now based in New York, Robinson is currently the President of Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative.

**Gita Sen** is Adjunct Professor of Population and International Health at the Harvard School of Public Health and serves on the Executive Committee of Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN), a network of which she is a founding member. Sen is a pioneer in the field of gender and development. Her recent work includes research and policy advocacy on the gender implications of globalization and economic liberalization, the gender dimensions of population policies, and the links between population and the environment. She is a Professor at the Indian Institute of Management in Bangalore, India, and has been a visiting professor at the Center for Population and Development Studies at Harvard University.

# Acknowledgments

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## PRESENTERS

- Bisi Adeleye-Fayemi, *African Women's Development Fund (AWDF)*  
Cathy Albisa, *National Economic and Social Rights Initiative*  
Lydia Alpizar, *Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)*  
Peggy Antrobus, *Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)*  
Radhika Balakrishnan, *Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)*  
Sharon Bhagwan Rolls, *femLINKPACIFIC*  
Charlotte Bunch, *Center for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)*  
Diane Elson, *Department of Sociology, University of Essex*  
Lesley Ann Foster, *Masimanyane Women's Support Centre*  
Alexandra Garita, *International Women's Health Coalition (IWHC)*  
Mary Hartman, *Institute for Women's Leadership, Rutgers University*  
Pinar Ilkkaracan, *Women for Women's Human Rights/NEW Ways (WWHR)*  
Stéphanie Louis, *Interuniversity Institute for Research and Development (INURED)*  
Rupal Oza, *Women and Gender Studies Program, Hunter College*  
Ros Petchesky, *Women and Gender Studies Program, Hunter College*  
Jacqueline Pitanguy, *Citizenship, Studies, Information, and Action (CEPIA)*  
Jennifer Raab, *Hunter College*  
Kavita Ramdas, *Global Fund for Women*  
Mary Jane Real, *Women Human Rights Defenders International Coalition (WHRD IC)*  
Mary Robinson, *Former UN High Commissioner for Human Rights, Former President of Ireland, President, Realizing Rights: The Ethical Globalization Initiative*  
Gita Sen, *Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)*

## COLLABORATING ORGANIZATIONS

- Association for Women's Rights in Development (AWID)  
Breakthrough  
Citizenship, Studies, Information, and Action (CEPIA)  
Creating Resources for Empowerment in Action (CREA)  
Department of Women's and Gender Studies, Rutgers University  
Development Alternatives with Women for a New Era (DAWN)  
Girls' Power Initiative (GPI)  
Institute for Women's Leadership, Rutgers University  
International Women's Human Rights Law Clinic, CUNY Law School  
MADRE  
Masimanyane Women's Support Centre  
The New School  
Office of International Programs (SAS), Rutgers University  
Women's Environment & Development Organization (WEDO)  
Women for Women's Human Rights/NEW Ways (WWHR)  
Women Won't Wait Coalition  
World YWCA

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## AUDIO/VISUAL/MEDIA

- Kevin Campbell  
Paula Cort  
Giovanna Chesler  
Tami Gold  
Sonia Gonzalez-Martinez  
David Pavlosky  
Rutgers University Relations,  
Sandra Lanman  
Dorothy Sander  
Ubiquis

## CWGL STAFF

- Radhika Balakrishnan, *Executive Director*  
Charlotte Bunch, *Founding Director and Senior Scholar*  
Margot Baruch, *Program Coordinator*  
Jewel Daney, *Administrative Director*  
Mika Kinose, *Office Manager*  
Keely Swan, *16 Days Campaign Coordinator*  
Lucy V. Vidal, *Information Manager*  
Mary Jane Real, *Visiting Global Associate*

## CWGL INTERNS AND ASSISTANTS

- Alyssa Cocchiara  
Ariana DasGupta  
Desiree Ficula  
Nathalie Margi  
Hera Mir  
Jalilah Muhammadi  
Banu Nadide Olcay  
Lesley Pairol  
Zachary Stoebling

## OTHERS

- Roxanna Carrillo  
Mallika Dutt  
Susana Fried  
Joanna Kerr  
Cynthia Rothschild  
Indai Sajor  
Ellen Sprenger

## HOST

Hunter College

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Center for Women's Global Leadership  
Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey  
160 Ryders Lane  
New Brunswick, NJ 08901-8555 USA  
Tel: 1-732-932-8782  
Fax: 1-732-932-1180  
Email: [cwgl@rci.rutgers.edu](mailto:cwgl@rci.rutgers.edu)  
Web: <http://www.cwgl.rutgers.edu>

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