

## Rights and Wrongs: The GLBT Experience

Public attitude toward the gay and lesbian community has eased in recent years, yet many concerns face the lesbian community. What issues does a lesbian face as she ages? Are they different from what any woman faces as she ages? What is the impact of same sex marriage on lesbians and on our society? What about civil unions? Is it true the military discharges lesbians more often than gay men? What will be the effect of "don't ask, don't tell" if it is repealed? Please join us as our speakers provide facts and answers to the questions that are quite often in the news.

Our speakers will be **Laurie Young**, Interim Director of Public Policy and Government Affairs with the National Gay and Lesbian Task Force and **Captain Lory Manning, US Navy (retired)**, Director of the Women in the Military project at the Women's Research & Education Institute.

**Date/Time:** Tuesday, February 23, 2010 / 12 noon sharp to 1:30 pm.

Open to the public, no reservation necessary.

**Place:** One Dupont Circle, 8th Floor, Washington DC

Bring brown bag lunch, soft drinks available from a machine.

### IMPORTANT NOTICE

A photo ID must be shown at the security desk of One Dupont Circle.

Please allow time to go through the sign-in system.

In case of bad weather and closing of government offices, the CWI meeting will be cancelled.

Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 23, 2010

# Gender Equality: United Nations and US Federal Support

## The New UN Women's Offices and US Plans for Beijing+15

WI's January speakers were **June Zeitlin**, director of the CEDAW (Convention on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women) Education Project at the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights and **Karen Richardson**, senior advisor on International Organizations to Ambassador for Global Women's Issues, Melanne Verveer, in the US Department of State.

**June Zeitlin** explained how this was a propitious time for her and others to work on US global women's policy after her years working on international women's issues at WEDO (Women's Environmental and Development Organization) in New York. She presently is in Washington DC at the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights. Her CEDAW project is an example of their expanded human rights mission. She has also been involved for a long time in coalition efforts to create a stronger women's agency at the UN that would consolidate the work of the four UN agencies with women-specific responsibilities.

Zeitlin has worked with the GEAR (Gender Equality Architecture Reform) campaign composed of 300 supporting groups from around the world for the past four years. It focused on creating a new UN Agency to better serve women and address gender equality. In the hierarchical UN structure, consolidation of the current four women-focused agencies with a high-level head should help give women's issues a consistent place at the high-level policy meetings and an increased budget as well as increased efficiency. The new consolidated UN women's office would include the four UN women's agencies: UNIFEM



*June Zeitlin*



*Karen Richardson*

(UN Development Fund for Women), INSTRAW (the International Research and Training Institute for the Advancement of Women); DAW (the Division for the Advancement of Women) and OSAGI (The Office of the Special Advisor on Gender Issues). UNIFEM has been the main operational agency at the United Nations to support women's programs around the world. Other agencies work to advance women's rights but it is only part of their mandate; advancing women's rights is UNIFEM's sole mandate. Of course other UN agencies also have responsibility for gender equality and gender mainstreaming is encouraged in all UN agencies and activities.

These four agencies have a staff of approximately 200 people worldwide, most of them are in UNIFEM. The total budget for all four agencies combined is now almost \$200 million but it had been \$100-150 million for UNIFEM alone. This budget for the four women's agencies is small compared to other UN agencies with typical budgets of \$800 million for UNFPA, or to UNICEF's more than \$3 billion budget. This illustrates how women's issues have not received the attention and priority necessary to fulfill the commitments governments have made in the Beijing Platform for Action, CEDAW and all the other human rights instruments that the UN is supposed to be helping governments implement. While we've made huge gains through the UN system for women's rights and many very good commitments on paper, translating them into action to bettering the lives of women all around the world has been ad hoc and slow.

In September 2009 the UN adopted a resolution to create a new consolidated gender

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equality entity headed by an under secretary-general. The secretary-general just issued a report on how this office would be implemented, consolidating the four small entities mentioned above into one stronger entity, thereby linking policy with implementation. It has a strong focus on working with and getting support at the country level and working with civil society entities such as NGOs. The report still needs to be approved by the General Assembly and the under secretary-general needs to be selected. Therefore, establishing this new office (which still doesn't have an official name), will provide a much stronger and expanded capacity to carry out the commitments to gender equality.

Consultations with countries and obtaining their additional budgetary support for the new office is a major undertaking. The GEAR campaign has suggested selection criteria for the under secretary-general and people are talking about choosing someone such as the past President of Chile, Michelle Bachelet. They would like to see someone appointed soon so she can lead the transition process. The candidate should know women's issues, have ties to the woman's movement, know how to operate in the UN system and how to raise money. The secretary-general's report recommended funding at \$500 million although the GEAR campaign asked for \$1 billion. The US Ambassador to the UN, Susan Rice, has been very supportive. GEAR would like to see the US give more than the \$9-10 million it has been giving to UNIFEM even though this is much better than in the past. Zeitlin pointed out that getting this far in four years is quite an achievement in the UN process.

She then gave a brief summary of the status of CEDAW, which just celebrated its 30th anniversary. The US is in the company of only seven other countries such as Iran, Somalia and Sudan in failing to ratify CEDAW. It had been favorably reported by the US Senate Foreign Relations Committee with bipartisan support in 1994 and 2002 but never voted on the floor. The CEDAW project at the Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights is pursuing multiple approaches. The NWLC (National Women's Law Center) is undertaking a legal analysis of the benefits of CEDAW in the US. The International

Center for Research on Women is reviewing examples of the impact of CEDAW ratification in other countries, the Communications Consortium is developing new communication tools and we will all be mobilizing groups around the US to push for ratification. Zeitlin urges more groups to join the expanded campaign to get CEDAW ratified which requires a vote by 2/3 or 67 Senators.

**Karen Richardson** described what should be very exciting news during the March 2010 meeting of the UN Commission on the Status of Women in New York City. The groups participating in the GEAR (Gender Equality Architecture Reform) Campaign have almost accomplished their initial mission to establish a high level, stronger, and better supported office focusing on women's rights in the UN. Richardson described how the US was planning to contribute to the activities of the two weeks of meetings of the UN Commission on Women and the one day celebration of Beijing+15, March 1-12, 2010 in NYC. These meetings should include the appointment of an under secretary-general as the first head of this new consolidated women's office as well as the announcement of the structure, mission, and funding for this office.

Richardson said that by the US paying attention to Beijing +15 and other activities of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) we would be continuing Secretary Hillary Rodham Clinton's message that women's issues were very important. During the CSW March 1-12 meetings there will be panel discussions, speeches, and resolutions. Her office was still discussing what the US resolution may focus on, perhaps global health issues. Women's economic empowerment may be the focus of a US side event. The role of men in combating violence against women may be a joint session with France. Ambassador Verveer may be a panel speaker. Richardson also hopes that Secretary Clinton will participate. The ambassador's office will be sending delegates from the public and office staff. As Tina Tchen, executive director of the White House Office on Women and Girls, mentioned at our November 2009 meeting, Verveer's office is also working with the White House Council on Women and Girls. There may be a combined report with that

## *Program Summary, continued*

office on what the US has accomplished to update the country reports on progress on the Plan of Action from the 1995 4th World Conference on Women in Beijing.

Both speakers are very interested in continued interaction with those who attended this CWI meeting. If you would like to be updated, please contact the speakers to be put on their email list. June Zeitlin: [Zeitlin@civilrights.org](mailto:Zeitlin@civilrights.org) and Karen Richardson: [Richardsonke@state.gov](mailto:Richardsonke@state.gov).

During the discussion following the speakers' presentations they were asked, "At previous CSW meetings there have been NGO briefings by the US delegation. Will this be done in March 2010?" Richardson said there will be discussions with NGOs at lunch time.

An attendee said, "there has been no information on what is happening for interested supporters such as the current meeting attendees as in the past. How about doing this?" Richardson said Verveer's office is working closely with Ambassador Rice and Secretary Clinton and that they are still planning and learning what is going on with these meetings. Someone later suggested that Verveer's office host a joint state and NGO meeting in DC to brief folks. Richardson appreciated that suggestion.

"What will the salary of the under secretary-general be and who will pay it?" Zeitlin said she didn't know but it would be in the UN budget.

Gender Action's Elaine Zuckerman suggested that Verveer's office get involved in influencing the IMF and other Development Banks to be more accountable on women's issues. Often their

loans hurt women. Richardson will arrange for her to follow-up more with Verveer.

"There were many meetings for NGOs before and during CFW session; what will be happening this year?" Richardson and Zeitlin pointed out that Beijing+15 is just a declaration and celebration for one day of the two week CSW, during which CSW countries will report on their implementation progress on the Beijing Plan for Action. Recent CSW negotiations were not useful because they decreased rather than increased some countries' commitments to progress on women's rights. Richardson agreed with a suggestion that it would be good to have video of UN CSW sessions and other information on the global women ambassador's website.

"Will there be a US report on implementation?" Richardson said yes, it may also build on the White House Council on Women and Girls forthcoming report from the agencies.

"How will these efforts and CEDAW help the ERA?" Zeitlin answered that some countries have incorporated human rights provisions in constitutions and other ways. Congress has to pass laws to implement treaties once the treaty has been ratified. We need 67 Senate votes to ratify CEDAW. It was pointed out that the US has let marriage age be established at state levels so the US can't commit to this part of CEDAW. Zeitlin said there may be reservations related to federalism issues as in other human rights treaties. CEDAW and disabilities rights are the two human rights treaties the Senate should be considering soon.

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## **Bunny Sandler inducted into the Maryland Hall of Fame**

CWI member Bernice (Bunny) Sandler will be inducted into the Maryland Hall of Fame in March. The Hall of Fame was established in 1985, to "honor Maryland women who have made unique and lasting contributions to the economic, political, cultural and social life of the state and to provide visible models of achievement for tomorrow's female leaders." The annual ceremony is held during Women's History Month at the Maryland State House in Annapolis.

[www.msa.md.gov/msa/educ/exhibits/womenshall/html/whflist.html](http://www.msa.md.gov/msa/educ/exhibits/womenshall/html/whflist.html).

The Hall of Fame has 125 inductees. Previous inductees include Clearinghouse long-time members Carmen Delgado Votaw and Sonia Fuentes (who has moved to Sarasota, FL). They are in good company with the likes of Clara Barton and Maryland Senator Barbara Mikulski.

## Maryland to Open Women's Heritage Center and Museum

According to the *Baltimore Sun*, The Maryland Women's Center and Museum will open sometime this spring in temporary headquarters on the first floor of the former Baltimore Gas and Electric Co. The center will include a mix of exhibits and displays, including a reference library, a student learning center and a history archive.

The idea for the center came from Jill Moss Greenberg, who serves as executive director. She is an activist, historian and educator and is herself in the Hall of Fame. Linda Shevitz, coordinator, Maryland Women's History Project, Maryland State Department of Education, was also instrumental to the fulfillment of the plans for the center; she is now program/education chair. Greenberg said, "Our motto is 'adding her-story to history to tell our story' so everyone's included."

## Global Gender Gap

For the past four years the Global Gender Gap Index has been issued by the World Economic Forum to provide gender parity progress information on the world's nations. This year the forum, held annually in Davos, Switzerland, included gender as an item in many of the issues discussed.

From *Women's e-News* "The Forum's annual Global Gender Gap report has become a trusted source of information about the world's nations towards gender parity. Its premise is that a nation's well-being is correlated to the status of women. One has only to look at the top of the report's rankings, dominated by Scandinavian countries, to see the connection.

*The Washington Post* columnist, Ruth Marcus said, "The focus is on the gap between men and women in each country rather than women's overall achievement, so countries are ranked on the gender differential rather than development level ... the U.S. ranked No. 31, where it's been for the past few years but worse than its No. 23 ranking from the first survey in 2006. Most of the other countries improved their rankings. ... The US did best on education. There is no gender gap in literacy rates, and women outperform men on school enrollment. We lag furthest behind on

political empowerment, with the female-to-male ration putting us at No. 70 on 'women in Parliament' this year ... the gap between the shares of women and men participating in the U.S. labor force is fairly small, but census data indicate it has increased rather than shrunk, and that differential has grown more in the U.S. than in any other country."

## Black History Month

*From the National Women's History Project*

The idea for acknowledging Black history was originated in 1926 by historian Carter G. Woodson, who chose the second week of February to mark the birthdays of two Americans "who greatly influenced the lives and social condition of African Americans — Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass." The "week" later became Black History Month.

An 18" x 24" poster celebrating Black women's history is available from the museum. The two-color design features original portraits of Harriet Tubman, Sojourner Truth, Mary McLeod Bethune, Madame C. J. Walker, Lena Horne, Lorraine Hansberry, Wilma Rudolph, Rosa Parks, and Marion Anderson. For further information, visit [www.nwhp.org](http://www.nwhp.org).

## In Remembrance

Ruth Proskauer Smith, long time reproductive rights advocate who helped found what is now NARAL Pro-Choice America, died recently at 102.

Beth Shulman, a member of WOW's board of directors, died Feb. 5. Shulman was one of the highest ranked women in unions, serving in various positions with The United Food and Commercial Workers International Union.

## President's Message

It is time to begin thinking of new board members. If you would be interested in participating, please contact me. I understand we are all stretched to the maximum; however, we need interested people to help us continue presenting these outstanding programs. About four to five hours a month, including the monthly meetings, would be greatly appreciated. You can reach me at 301-493-0002 or

[cwi-info@womensclearinghouse.org](mailto:cwi-info@womensclearinghouse.org).

*Barbara J. Ratner*



## Clearinghouse on Women's Issues

10401 Grosvenor Place #917  
Rockville, MD 20852

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### COMING EVENTS

#### February is Black History Month.

**Saturday,  
March 13**

**Creating Your Ideal World: Economically, Socially, and Professionally**

presented by Xi Omega Chapter, Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, 9am - 4pm;  
The Catholic University of America, Caldwell Hall, 620 Michigan Avenue NE.  
[www.akaxo.org/](http://www.akaxo.org/) Registration and additional information, contact Allison Watts;  
[howaru93@verizon.net](mailto:howaru93@verizon.net) or Daphne King; [daphnelk1908@yahoo.com](mailto:daphnelk1908@yahoo.com).

**Thursday,  
March 18**

**Bernice (Bunny) Sandler's induction ceremony** into the Maryland Hall of Fame in Annapolis at 5:30pm. \$30. President's Conference Room of the Miller Senate Office Building, followed by a reception at Government House (the Governor's home) hosted by First Lady Katie O'Malley. Reservations and information: Kenya Johnson at 410-767-8695 or e-mail [kjohnso7@dhr.state.md.us](mailto:kjohnso7@dhr.state.md.us)

**May 5-9**

**Legal Momentum's Women of Achievement Awards, in San Francisco.**

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*Photos: D. Anne Martin; January meeting summary draft by Sue Klein;  
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#### CWI Board of Directors, July 2009 - June 2010

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