**CEDAW Manuscript**

**Introduction and Directions**

This manuscript accompanies a PowerPoint presentation about CEDAW.

The words in brackets **[ ]** refer to PowerPoint slides that accompany the text. The PowerPoint slides are designed to be projected on a large screen (or electronically) behind the speaker. The words within the brackets should not be read aloud; they are given as a guide to identify which slide should be on the screen at a particular time.

The word **[click]** means that you need to advance the slide to add additional text or images, or to move to the next slide.

We encourage you to include additional details about your own community.

World Without Genocide requests that our work be referenced but it may be used without payment of royalty fees. Thank you for raising awareness and for becoming an ‘upstander’ and an advocate on this issue in your community.

**[Slie 1 - black] [click]**

**[Slide 2 - title]**

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights was passed by the United Nations in 1948. This document affirms the rights that every person in the world should have – because of being human.

However, there was no corresponding statement of women’s rights, and the inherent assumptions about the Universal Declaration was that it applied to men.

CEDAW (‘SEE-daw’) is the acronym for the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against Women. It was passed in 1979 and it is known as the women’s bill of rights – the first, ever, to focus on eliminating injustices facing women all over the world. It is a document for countries, referred to in international language as states, and what states should do to end discrimination.

Why was CEDAW needed? There was no universal definition of the forms of discrimination that exist against women, and how to eliminate the discrimination had never been addressed.

Let’s look at some of the situations that women encountered. **[click]**

**[Slide 3 - Women’s rights from the bench]**

**[click]** 1855: Missouri v. Celia, the court ruled that a black woman is property without right to defend herself against a master’s act of rape.

**[click]** 1873: Bradwell v. Illinois, the Supreme Court ruled that a state can exclude a married woman from practicing law.

**[click]** 1951: Hoyt v. Florida, the Supreme Court upheld Florida rules making it less likely for women than men to be called for jury duty because “a woman is still regarded as the center of home and family life.” **[click]**

**[Slide 4- Women’s rights from the bench]**

**[click]** 1965: Griswold v. Connecticut, the Supreme Court finally overturned one of the last state laws that prohibited married couples from using contraceptives.

**[click]** 1971: Phillips v. Martin Marietta Corp., the Supreme Court outlawed the practice of private employers refusing to hire women with pre-school children.

**[click]** 1974: Cleveland Board of Ed. v. LaFleur, the Supreme Court determined it is illegal to force pregnant women to take maternity leave on the assumption they are incapable of working in their physical condition. **[click]**

**[Slide 5 - Women’s rights from the bench]**

2015: Ewald v. Royal Norwegian Embassy – Minnesota District Court found that Norway violated equal-pay law by paying a female employee $30,000 less than her male counterpart. **[click]**

**[Slide 6 - What are some challenges that women in the US face today?]**

*DO NOT READ: Facilitate a discussion about some of the challenges that women in the US face today. Topics can include: hiring, pay disparity, political representation, equality in the criminal justice system, sexual and gender-based violence – e.g., #MeToo stories, etc.* **[click]**

**[Slide 7 - National numbers]**

Let’s look at some national numbers relating to violence and discrimination against women.

**[click]** 1 in 4 college women will be sexually assaulted.

**[click]** 5.3 million incidents of intimate partner violence occur each year among women 18 and older.

**[click]** The US ranks 56th on maternal deaths during pregnancy and childbirth.

**[Slide 8 - National numbers]**

**[click]** Every nine seconds, a woman in the US is assaulted or beaten.

**[click]** Women constitute 65% of the victims of murder-suicides in the US.

**[click]** There were 200,000-400,000 untested rape kits in the US. **[click]**

**[Slide 9 - National numbers]**

**[click]** Women make 82 cents to a man’s dollar, a gender gap of nearly 20%.

Women of color make less.

**[click]** African American 63 cents

 Native American 60 cents

Latina 55 cents

**[click]** Of 38.1 million Americans living in poverty, 56% are women.

We know that there is a direct link between women’s political representation and access to economic equality and other forms of justice. What does it look like in Washington? **[click]**

**[Slie 10 - women’s numbers - elected office]**

**[click]** Women in the US Senate EVER, since 1789: 58[[1]](#footnote-1).

**[click]** Today: 24, which is 24% (100 seats).

**[click]** Women in the US House of Representatives, a body of 465 members: Women have held a total of 345 seats – in 232 years.

**[click]**Today, women represent 27% of the House members.

**[click]** Today, women total 31% of people in state legislatures throughout the country.

We’ve looked at women’s inequality: in economics, in political representation, and in experiences of violence. **[click]**

**[Slide 11 - CEDAW logo]**

That brings us to CEDAW, the Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination against women. **[click]**

**[Slide 12 - CEDAW’s core principles]**

**[click] CEDAW has three core principles**

**[click]** Substantive Equality – women are equal to men in all areas.

**[click]** Non-Discrimination – women should not face discrimination.

**[click]** State Obligation – nations have an obligation to support women’s equality. **[click]**

**[Slide 13 - CEDAW]**

**[click]** The Convention has 6 parts and 30 articles.

**[click]** Part 1 - The first part of CEDAW is an overview of the areas in which women experience discrimination: in the political, social, economic, and cultural spheres. The state is urged to take all appropriate measures, including legislation, to end discrimination in these areas.

**[click]** Part 2 advocates for equality in the political and public arena, ensuring that **[click]** women can vote, participate in governmental and nongovernmental organizations, and that they can acquire, change, or retain their nationality equally with men. In many parts of the world, this is not the case. **[click]**

**[Slide 14 - CEDAW]**

**[click]** Part 3 focuses on equality in education, employment, and health, with special attention to unique problems facing women in rural areas. This section covers the right to work, to the same employment opportunities for training, to equal pay, to access to health care, the right to bank loans, etc.

**[click]** Part 4 refers to civil matters such as contracts, rights of residence, right to enter into marriage equally with men, to divorce, and to freely choose a spouse. **[click]**

**[Slide 15 - CEDAW]**

These last two parts refer to what a country’s obligations are when ratifying CEDAW.

**[click]** Part 5 specifies establishing a committee to evaluate progress made on implementing CEDAW. The committee is selected by secret ballot from a list of people nominated by the various countries. Every country must submit reports every four years.

**[click]** Part 6 details the mechanics of signing the convention. **[click]**

**[Slide 16 - Nations that have not ratified CEDAW]** map

There are only six countries on the planet that haven’t ratified CEDAW: Sudan, Somalia, Iran, Palau, Tonga, and the US. **[click]**

**[Slide 17 - US ratification of CEDAW]** Human rights are women’s rights; women’s rights are human rights. **[click]**

**[Slide 18 - Ratification Process]**

In 1979, the United Nations adopted CEDAW.

The process in the US for any United Nations convention, resolution, or treaty is that the president signs it, sends it to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee where it needs a majority vote, and then it goes to the U.S. Senate. The House of Representatives does not vote on these matters. **[click]**

**[Slide 19 - Votes in Senate]**

It needs 67 votes in the Senate.

The Obama administration supported CEDAW, but there was no advocacy in the last administration in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee or the Senate. **[click]**

**[Slide 20 - CEDAW’s History in the US]**

**[click]** In 1980 the Carter administration signed it.

**[click]** In 1994 the Senate Foreign Relations voted in favor of CEDAW, 13-5, with bipartisan support – but it didn’t go to the floor of the Senate.

**[click]** In 2002 the Senate Foreign Relations Committee again voted to support it, 12-7, again on bipartisan lines.

**[click]** In 2010 the Senate Judiciary Committee held a hearing.

**[click]** In 2011 a hearing highlighted CEDAW.

There was a bipartisan meeting of a sub-committee of Senate Foreign Relations Committee senators in 2014, men and women, urging support. **[click]**

**[Slide 21 - Obstacles to ratification]**

**[click]** US ‘exceptionalism’ – this is the belief that the US is superior in human rights and we don’t need to participate in global programs.

**[click]** No ‘Proxmire for CEDAW’ – There is a compelling Wisconsin story here. William Proxmire, shown here, was a senator from Wisconsin from 1957 to 1989, the longest-serving Wisconsin senator in history. He took on something that lent him ‘hero’ status for many of us.

In 1948, the day before the Universal Declaration of Human Rights was passed at the United Nations, the UN ratified the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, known as the Genocide Convention. As with CEDAW, individual countries had to bring it to their own legislatures for approval.

Years went on, and then decades, and the US still hadn’t ratified the Genocide Convention.

Finally, in the 1960s, Sen. Proxmire was asked if he would advocate for it. He said yes; he thought it would be a slam-dunk.

From 1967 until 1986, Sen. Proxmire gave speeches every single day that the Senate was in session, a speech a day for 19 years, 3,211 speeches, every one of them unique, until the Senate finally ratified the Genocide Convention in 1986. It was signed into law in 1988 – 40 years after it was passed by the UN.

We haven’t had a Proxmire for CEDAW – yet. Perhaps a senator will step up in honor of Proxmire and following in his path.

**[click]** Misunderstandings

There are some widely-held misunderstandings, what I call ‘myths,’ about CEDAW. **[click]**

**[Slide 22 - Myth 1]**

**[click]** MYTH #1

Ratification would give the international community too much power over U.S. law.

**[click]** FACT

Bills to implement CEDAW provisions would have to be passed in the House and Senate. **[click]**

**[Slide 23 - Myth 2]**

**[click]** MYTH #2

**[click]** Discrimination is too broadly defined in CEDAW. Implementation would result in “frivolous” lawsuits.

**[click]** FACT

**[click]** The same strict standards would apply to sex discrimination claims that apply to race discrimination. CEDAW wouldn’t result in frivolous lawsuits any more than challenges to race discrimination have done. **[click]**

**[Slide 24 - Myth 3]**

**[click]** MYTH #3

**[click]**CEDAW will destroy traditional family structure by redefining roles of men and women.

**[click]** FACT

**[click]** CEDAW does not regulate family life.

**[click]** CEDAW urges states ‘to adopt education and information programs to eliminate prejudices and practices that hinder women’s full social equality.’ **[click]**

**[Slide 25 - Myth 4]**

**[click]** MYTH #4

**[click]** CEDAW encourages abortion by promoting access to ‘family planning.’

**[click]** FACT

**[click]** CEDAW intentionally does not address abortion.

**[click]** Countries where abortion is illegal have ratified CEDAW. **[click]** Examples include Burkina Faso and Rwanda.

**[click]** The U.S. State Department labelled CEDAW as *‘abortion-neutral.’* **[click]**

**[Slide 26 - CEDAW’s impact around the world]**

CEDAW’s single most important impact is that it gives women, and men, a stronger stake and incentive in organizing and acting for non-discrimination, with participation in international, local, and national organizations.

Some examples:

**[click] In Bangladesh** as many girls now go to school as boys.

**[click] Mexico** used CEDAW to create a General Law on Women’s Access to a Life Free from Violence, signed by all the states in the country.

**[click] Kuwait** extended voting rights to women following a recommendation by the CEDAW review committee.

**[click] Japan** passed equal employment practices laws and policies.

**[click] Colombia** ended forced sterilizations of disabled women. **[click]**

**[Slide 27 - Why the US should ratify CEDAW]**

Demonstrate commitment to women’s rights globally, be part of the international community, and address discrimination and violence locally. **[click]**

**[Slide 28 - CEDAW in action]**

1 in 3 women in the world will experience physical or sexual violence. **[click]**

**[Slide 29 - CEDAW postcards]**

The goal of the program called Cities for CEDAW is to get support in 100 cities. This will represent millions of men and women across the country who believe in equality for women and want to see greater efforts to end discrimination in our own local communities, our state, and across the country. Postcards can be downloaded using the QR code displayed. **[click]**

**[Slide 30 - letter to senators]** Letters to your senators can be downloaded using the QR code displayed. **[click]**

**[Slide 31 - World Without Genocide Action for CEDAW]**

The state of Minnesota has had significant support for CEDAW.

Six cities in MN have passed resolutions endorsing CEDAW’s principles: Minneapolis, St, Paul, Duluth, Edina, Red Wing, and Richfield.

The Minnesota State Bar association endorsed CEDAW, reflecting support from 17,500 lawyers.

The Minnesota Nurses Association ratified it, adding the voices of 21,000 nurses.

Nationally: There are 42 cities for CEDAW, 11 in California. More than 200 organizations have signed on.

CEDAW provides an opportunity for education and advocacy for everyone to speak up and stand up. **[click]**

**[Slide 32 - Action for CEDAW] (click for each one)**

**[click]** Sign letters; **[click]** get organizational ratification; **[click]** join CITIES for CEDAW. **[click]**

**[Slide 33 - logo] [click]**

**[Slide 34 - image attributions and data sources] [click]**

1. Appointed to fill a vacancy on October 3, 1922, Rebecca Felton of Georgia took the oath of office on November 21, 1922, becoming the first woman to serve in the U.S. Senate. Felton served only 24 hours after taking the oath, but her historic appointment paved the way for other women senators. First woman elected to the Senate: Hattie Caraway of Arkansas in 1932. [↑](#footnote-ref-1)