

UNITED NATIONS REPORT

Matilda Johnson

WEST AFRICA AREA



World Federation of Methodist & Uniting Church Women

**13th World
Assembly 2016**

Houston, Texas, USA

INTRODUCTION

It was a great honour for me to represent World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women (WFMUCW) at the United Nations Commission of the Status of Women (CSW) 57 and 58 Meetings of March 2013 and 2014 respectively.



My House on the Hilltop in Bronxville



Snowing in New York

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INTRODUCTION

Priority Theme: Challenges and achievements in the implementation of the Millennium Development Goals for women and girls.



Working with Adjali, Murielle and Brenda



Working with Adjali, Murielle and Brenda

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INTRODUCTION

Review Theme: Access and participation of women and girls to education, training, science and technology, including the promotion of women's equal access to full employment and decent work.



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SESSIONS (TALK SHOPS) ATTENDED

- Violence Against Women (VAW) in Rural Areas of Central Asia
- ActionAid's Making Cities safe initiative [I shared with them the work of Action Aid in The Gambia and the problems we have had with some young refugee girls from the neighbouring countries]
- Respect for women and girls: equality for all, organized by the International Council of Women
- United Methodist Women Global Network for Peacebuilders- Violence, economics and war: from theory to practice session and
- Faith's response to Domestic violence

SESSIONS (TALK SHOPS) ATTENDED

- International Federation of University women's session on Ending violence against women and girls-effective practices.
- United Methodist Women's session on Violence against women: what do race and class have to do with it? (Apparently nothing, since violence does not subscribe to race or class but cuts across all barriers and levels of society).
- Presbyterian Women on the topic- From Hurt to Hope: women of the Church confronting institutional violence was very educative and revealed several incidences of violence within the Church.
- World YWCA Session on Human rights, security and Young women- panel discussion on: Violence against young women and girls in conflict and non-conflict areas.
- Challenges and Opportunities of Technology for Combatting Violence Against Women, sponsored by the Women's Intercultural Network.

SESSIONS (TALK SHOPS) ATTENDED

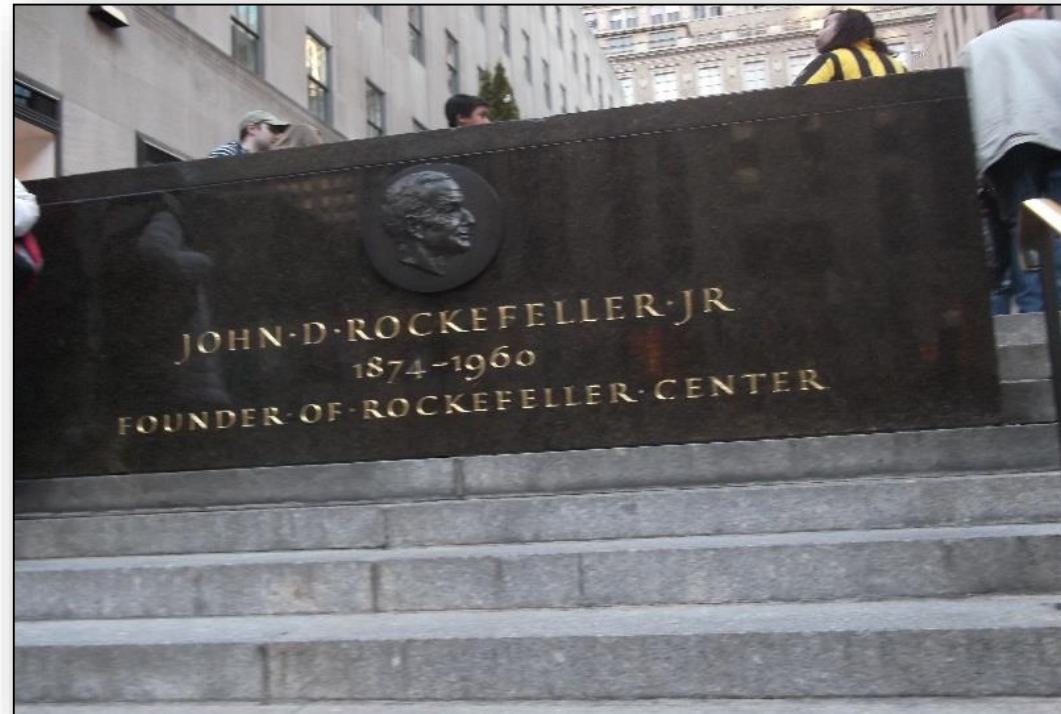
Sessions very revealing and I could identify with some of the issues since VAW is cross cutting and somewhat similar in all countries and communities. The discussions were very enriching and there was opportunity for contributions and experience sharing.

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SIGHTSEEING

Tour of the City Centre with Murielle



Boat Ride with Murielle and Brenda



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SESSIONS (TALK SHOPS) ATTENDED

- YWCA of Nigeria and YWCA of Zambia's joint session on: Prevention of Violence against Women and Girls, focusing on FGM and its various forms. The session was enhanced by a role play by YWCA Nigeria.



Role Play



Role Play

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SESSIONS (TALK SHOPS) ATTENDED

- Ecumenical Women Advocacy meeting with the Gambian Representative at the UN- HE Dr Derrol Tommy, at the Gambia House. (discussions held with the Honourable Representative, and some members of the Gambian delegation to the CSW - they included the Deputy Speaker of the House, the Deputy Permanent Secretary at the Vice President's Office and Ministry of Women's Affairs, the Presiding Bishop of the Methodist Church The Gambia.



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SESSIONS (TALK SHOPS) ATTENDED



Brenda Speaking on GBV



Advocacy and information sharing on GBV to Adults at Ashbury Methodist Church



Children's Message – Violence Against Girls

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COMMISSION OF THE STATUS OF WOMEN (58CSW)

9-21 March 2014, United Nations, New York USA

Although the “agreed conclusions” adopted by the Commission on the Status of Women at the conclusion of its 57th session in March 2013 (E/2013/27) cover all forms of violence against women and girls, in all contexts and settings; Emerging forms of violence such a cyber stalking and cyber bullying, gender related- killings or femicide, and the need for safety in public spaces.



Conference in Session



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It was evident that there had been lapses in the efforts of CSOs (including Faith based organisations), to adequately advocate, campaign and lobby for the existing laws to be enforced; and governments to either domesticate the international treaties they have signed or implement them. The non-the involvement of 'men' (who are mostly the perpetrators) was very evident.



Conference in Session



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CSW SESSIONS ATTENDED

9-21 March 2014, United Nations, New York USA

Ecumenical Women and the MDGs. Their priority areas for CSW58 were:

- Hunger and poverty / education- schools / health- HIV&AIDS / violence against women and girls – child brides.
- Advocacy for a proactive Church

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CSW SESSIONS ATTENDED

9-21 March 2014, United Nations, New York USA

- Breaking the Taboo- making inclusion a reality: sexual and GBV targeting women and girls with disabilities- a panel discussion (presenters centered their papers on the need for women and girls to be part of the development process regardless of their abilities or otherwise. They called for a narrowing of the gap amongst women and girls with disabilities; and to examine the power relations between women and girls with disabilities. Why power relations? – because society see women with disabilities as weak and cannot contribute to society. The structural imbalances also contribute to power relations. The practice in some Institutions was highlighted- stigma, discrimination, electroshock therapy, forced injection /treatment. Women ultimately lose custody of their children, and some undergo forced sterilization.

CSW SESSIONS ATTENDED

9-21 March 2014, United Nations, New York USA

My question was whether the recommendation of the Department of Health and Social Welfare for sterilisation of a disabled or mentally challenged woman, who has been impregnated several times by unknown men is an act of violence against the woman?

Views were divided, after a noisy debate the panel still considered it violence against the woman, since her consent was not sought to carry out the operation. I hold a different view.

- Economic Rights- GBV and sustainable development. Organised by Centre for Women's Global Leadership (CWGL)
- Experiences of young feminists challenging harmful practices and traditional systems in Mozambique(the speakers each narrated painful experiences of their work with victims of FGM, Fistula (a result of FGM and child marriages).

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CSW SESSIONS ATTENDED

9-21 March 2014, United Nations, New York USA

- ‘Hear the voices – the African women and girls want’ – a film screened by Nana, a Ghanaian
- Conversation Circles organised by the NGO CSW Forum(its purpose was for Networking, Building trust and Sharing ideas for the future). [participants we were given questions to answer individually and then discuss our answers collectively] the questions were: **what does economic empowerment mean?; What are the gaps in your country? ; Indicate steps to create a new atmosphere of economic empowerment- how?**
- Achieving equal access for women to technology and employment, panel discussion by Solar Cookers International
- Strategies for enhancing women’s political participation: the role of education in capacity building- [panel discussion in which I presented The Gambia’s viewpoint that **Education is the Key. Women who get to the top and are at the top need to earn it.**

CSW SESSIONS ATTENDED

9-21 March 2014, United Nations, New York USA

- Role of Religious Communities in accelerating the achievement of the MDGs for women and girls[If Churches are discriminating against women then how can women progress? How can women reach the top?] **If women of faith don't speak out, who will?**
- **Worship services** -organised and coordinated by the Ecumenical Women Worship Team. **The Opening Worship was led** by the Ecumenical Women Worship team, and the theme was the DOOR, giving ACCESS.
- **World Federation of Methodist and Uniting Church Women** prepared a service on MDG 6.
- **The Closing worship service** was very unique- the open Door, the sign for women to go out into the world and spread the word of love and peace to all. The worship ended on a high note with the Lighting of Candles- and with lots of farewells and promises to meet again next year, God willing.

CONCLUSION

I feel proud and honoured to have represented the WFM&UCW, together with Brenda Smith, our representative to the UN. I could not have asked for a better mentor and partner. Thank you Brenda.

I want to thank the Executive Committee, and most especially Madam Vice President, Regula, for all the encouragement and support in making my trip a reality. I also extend thanks to The Gambia Unit for subsidizing my accommodation expenses.

The experiences of CSW will forever remain with me, and I am committed to using the knowledge gained and the networking opportunities to further the cause of women. I thank you all and God bless you.

 IN EVERYTHING *Give Thanks*
1 THESS. 5:18

