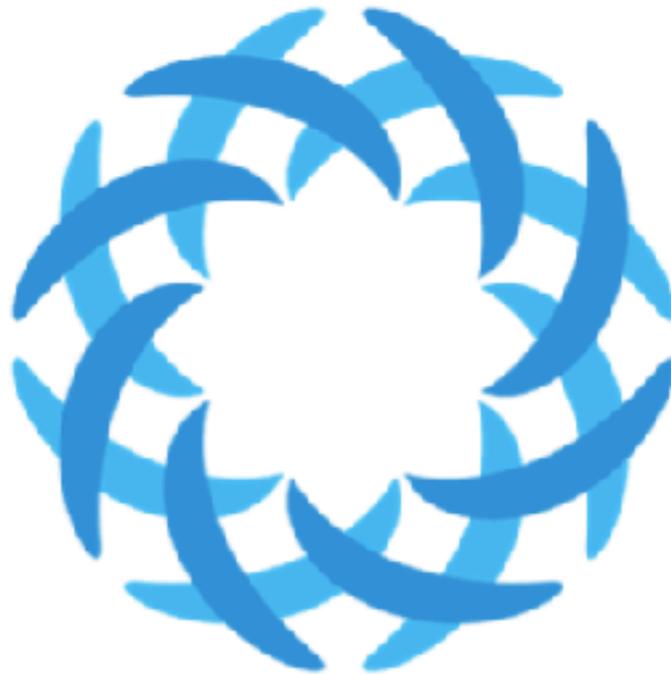

Commission on the Status of Women

Education, Employment, and Leadership

St. John's Preparatory School • Danvers, Massachusetts • 9 December 2017



SJPMUN XII

building a better tomorrow

A Letter From the Chair

Hello Delegates,

My name is Sam Demeo, I am a Senior at St John's Prep, and I will be serving as your chair for the Commission on the Status of Women. This is my fourth year as a member of the Model UN Club. Since Freshman year, I have attended and chaired many conferences and committees, and I am looking forward to working with all of you this December. This will be my third year as a chair at SJPMUN. Hopefully we can engage in a meaningful discussion about the education of women in developing nations, and learn more about this very important issue at SJP MUN XII. Once you receive this paper, I encourage each and every one of you not only to research the history and struggles of women in this issue, but also to research your particular nation's beliefs and goals relative to this issue. Be sure to think critically about the history and specific views of your nation on this issue, and consider the steps you will need to take in order to create a successful resolution. I wish you the best of luck in your preparations. If you have any questions, don't hesitate to email me!

Good luck,

Sam Demeo '18

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CSW (The Commission on the Status of Women)

Description of the Committee

The Commission on the Status of Women (CSW), instrumental in promoting and establishing women's rights, documenting the reality of women's lives throughout the world, and shaping global standards on gender equality and the empowerment of women, is the principal global intergovernmental body exclusively dedicated to the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women. Established by Council resolution 11(II) of 21 June 1946, the CSW is a commission of the Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC).

The CSW has decided to adopt multi-year programs in order to further progress their goals established by their Plan of Action. These actions include, but are limited to:

- Engage in general discussion on the status of gender equality
- Identify goals attained, achievements made and efforts underway to close gaps and meet challenges in relation to the priority theme
- Evaluate progress in implementing agreed conclusions from previous sessions
- Address emerging issues, trends, focus areas and new approaches to questions affecting the situation of women

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- Play a catalytic role for gender mainstreaming in the UN and contributing to gender perspectives to the work of governments
 - Agree on further actions for the promotion of gender equality and the empowerment of women by adopting agreed conclusions and resolutions

Statement of the Problem:

The 1995 Beijing Declaration and Platform for action states in clause 5 that the UN “Recognize[s] that the status of women has advanced in some important respects in the past decade but that progress has been uneven, inequalities between women and men have persisted and major obstacles remain, with serious consequences for the well-being of all people” (Beijing Declaration)

This section will provide an overview for some of the major problems facing women today and their descriptions.

Gender inequality is an economic detriment to the entire world, and according to the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD), “Investments in gender equality yield the highest returns on all development investments” (NCGP). Despite the clear benefits of a more equitable society, in many nations, economic systems are structured in a way that put women at a disadvantage during every stage of life, through unequal access to education, employment discrimination, and

barriers to obtaining leadership roles. Sometimes these barriers are explicitly stated in the laws of a nation, while other times social and cultural norms prevent women from achieving their full potential. Regardless, the Commission on the Status of Women must recommend steps and guidelines for the economic empowerment of women throughout the world.

1) Education

Article #26 of the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that “everyone has the right to education.” However, for many young girls, their gender is their only barrier to achieving an education. Less than 40% of nations provide young girls and boys with the same access to education (Commission). In fact, according to the United Nations Entity for Gender Equality and the Empowerment of Women, “Among the world’s 123 million illiterate youth, 76 million are female,” and “Poverty, pregnancy, school-based violence, child marriage and discriminatory gender norms are some of the major obstacles to girls’ education worldwide” (Commission). In many cases, governments may favor male education over female education, such as the government of Pakistan, where strict discriminatory laws segregate male and female schools. The Pakistani government only funds 40,000 primary schools for girls, while funding 123,000 primary schools for boys (Commission).

However, gender inequality in education is not limited to developing nations. Despite the fact that slightly more women than men are currently enrolled in higher education globally, these same

women are often discouraged from studying Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), due to social expectations and bias, along with the difficulty of balancing childcare with demanding STEM programs. In fact, although in the US, women earn 60% of all bachelor's degrees, they only earn 20% of all degrees in Computer Science and Physics, and 18% of all engineering degrees (Welsh).

2) Employment

According to the NCGP, “Almost 70 percent of employed women in South Asia work in agriculture, as do more than 60 percent of employed women in sub-Saharan Africa” (NCGP). However despite their extensive participation in the agricultural labor force in developing nations, less than 20% of landholders in the entire world are women, giving women no chance to truly change their status in the world (NCGP). However, even in more socially progressive nations, women still suffer from discriminatory legislation that puts them at a disadvantage in the workforce. Although the Americans With Disabilities Act of 1990, alongside its counterparts in other developed nations ban formal discrimination against women in the hiring process or the workplace, this discrimination still occurs. A recent study published by the American Psychological Association demonstrated that writing published under the name “John McKay” was almost always evaluated more highly by than the same writing published under the name “Joan McKay” (Swim).

Furthermore, while many societies encourage men to pursue their careers at all costs, women are expected to stay at home doing “unpaid work” such as child care and household chores. Melinda Gates argues that “This is one of those root inequalities that exist all over in society and we just don’t talk about it very much,” while “In the United States, women spend about four hours a day on unpaid work, compared with about 2.5 hours for men” (Miller). Due to societies that set up legal and social barriers to female employment, women are unable to achieve the influence to eliminate those very barriers.

3) Leadership

The Center for American Progress states that “While [women] are 44 percent of the overall S&P 500 labor force and 36 percent of first or mid-level officials and managers in those companies, they are only 25 percent of executive- and senior-level officials and managers, hold only 20 percent of board seats, and are only 6 percent of CEOs” (Werner). This decreasing proportion of women as one travels up the hierarchy of a company reflects the different barriers that women face every step of the way on the path to leadership. In the American election cycle of 1992, the year was dubbed the “year of the woman”, due to the fact that the number of women in the Senate doubled, while the number of women in the House grew from 28 to 47 (Werner). However, since 1992, the movement for more female representation in Congress has stalled, and the numbers remain relatively similar today. In more

developing countries, small groups of highly motivated women generally manage to achieve remarkable leadership positions, but the majority of working class women remain slaves to male dominated cultures. African women such as Joyce Banda, Ellen Johnson Sirleaf, and Folorunsho Alakija have all achieved prominent roles in politics and business, proving that women possess the skills necessary to succeed (Associated Press). However, incidents such as the Boko Haram schoolgirl kidnappings in Nigeria in which thousands of young girls have been captured by terrorists, demonstrate how such successes are rare in a society with so many barriers to a woman's success (Associated Press).

The Beijing declaration for women declares that "Women are key contributors to the economy and to combating poverty through both remunerated and unremunerated work at home, in the community and in the workplace. Growing numbers of women have achieved economic independence through gainful employment" (United Nations). However, the Beijing declaration also laments the fact that women "lack access or are denied access to education and vocational training, employment, housing and economic self-sufficiency and they are excluded from decision-making processes" (United Nations). This contradiction lies at the heart of women's issues today: How can a group of people so crucial to the success of a society be so effectively excluded from its benefits?

History of the Problem

Ancient societies had mixed opinions on women rights. While in, for example, the Vedic period (1500 BCE-600 BCE) in India women enjoyed equal rights as men, women in ancient Greece did not possess any political rights and society generally accepted them only as parts of the Greek household rather than of larger society (Blundell). In turn, the Romans copied many Athenian laws in regards to women's rights as women could not own property, serve in the military, and usually obeyed to the rules of the patriarchal households adopted commonly in those times. Because of Roman influence, these laws on women would stay prevalent in Europe up until the downfall of the Roman empire (A.N). In China, women also lived as inferior to their male counterparts through the "Three Obediences" law in which women had to obey their husbands, fathers, and sons under all circumstances, and bore no right to hold property or vote (Blundell).

Early Europe did not see much women's rights in the even Renaissance as only Christine de Pisan became notable for writing *City of the Ladies*. Other than that, for the period of the 16th to early 18th century, women did not play a significant role other than to marry in their early 20's and serve their husbands. This would change in the eve of the Enlightenment as salon hosts like Madame Geoffrin gave women a voice in cultural affairs (Tallentyre). Mary Wollstonecraft published her famous *Vindication on the Rights of Woman* to shape feminist philosophy in Europe. In France, women further

played a significant role in the French Revolution as women were the ones who marched to Versailles and Olympe de Gouge would write “Declaration fo the Rights of Woman”, a document which asked for women’s rights in France. However, the Napoleonic Code would strip women of divorce and property rights (Tallentyre). The 19th and 20th century, however, changed the view of a woman’s role in society. A transition from a household role to seeing female writers, female property owners, and even holding professional jobs became prevalent in England, Russia, and France. The Bolsheviks in the Soviet Union during World War I and II encouraged women to become the “mothers of the nation” meanwhile Nazi Germany saw women as the “heart” of the Reich in producing an army (Hagemann). As such, in post war periods women saw an increase in control of their own lives as Europe saw an increase in child-care facilities, more liberal divorce laws, and feminist writing led by Simone de Beauvoir.

Meanwhile, the Americas saw its first feminist movement in the 19th century as Elizabeth Cady Stanton famously called four of her friends to have “tea” near Seneca in 1848 to discuss women’s rights. This simple tea party later became the Seneca Falls Convention where 300 women which included Stanton, Lucy Stone, and Lucretia Mott signed the Declaration of Sentiments calling for the end of discrimination towards women. The issue of feminism would not come back into the national scale until the 1920’s when Congress, influenced by feminists like Alice Walker, passed the 19th

Amendment which gave women a right to vote (Evans). The World War II period also saw a massive increase in the role of women as they worked to make weapons, vehicles, and serve as nurses in the Army. This increase of women in the labor force allowed for women's rights to be further discussed in the 1960's when Congress passed the Equal Pay Act, which guaranteed same work wages regardless of gender, race, or status (Smith). Major feminist movements continue on in North America, acknowledging other women's issues like abortion, domestic violence, and reproductive laws.

Latin America may have not seen as many advancements in women's rights as Europe and North America have, but this is slowly improving. In South America a woman's status varies by country from country. While Argentina may have had Cristina Fernandez as President just a few years ago, women in Bolivia struggle to make wages while having to take care of a family (Commission on the Status of Women). Although in Latin America women serve the traditional role in the household, they have become more dominant with many becoming the head of it. However, a common problem in Latin America, *machismo*, a philosophy which sees women as less than men, continues to run rampant. For example, an InterPress News article found that 17 and 53 percent of women in the countries like Panama, Mexico, and Guatemala are victims of violence, and this scenario is exacerbated because 92 percent of reported crimes go unpunished (Moreno). Abortion also remains largely illegal throughout Latin America, while education laws, although not barring women from obtaining an education, do not

favor or enforce the situation of many poor women who have a household to take care of. However, women's movements in countries like Peru, Ecuador, Uruguay, Brazil, and Chile is seeing more attention and obtaining action on problems like a wage gap, women's education, and the perception of a woman's role in society (Moreno).

Asia and Africa, however, deal with far heavier problems regarding women's rights. For one, Asia sees a massive human trafficking problem where the main victims are young women. According to Olivia Enos of *The Daily Signal*, Asia accounts for two thirds of all human trafficking, where women comprise over 90% of that. Due to Asia having a very strong hold on traditional culture, women mostly live in a household role and have not seen any major changes in lifestyle. Although countries like Japan, China, and India have laws to defend women's rights, societal, religious, and traditional ways of live still prevail and have kept women in the same position. Africa also sees a lot of traditional philosophy towards women where tribal rituals such as genital mutilation of the clitoris still exist (African Women). Women in Africa also do not seem to have equality as a reality. From illiteracy rates in women being as high as 77% in Burkina Faso to women making up the majority of the poor, as much as 70% in some countries, as well as the AIDS/HIV epidemic affecting women the most, Many African nations need guidance regarding women's rights (African Women).

Questions to Consider

- How have women's rights changed from classical times to today?
- What are some major issues which still persist for women from the past today?
- How are some issues unique to every continent/country?
- Where should the most attention be paid to women's issues in the modern world?
- Should the Beijing Declaration be updated to reflect a more modern world?
- How can we address women's issues in the following places: Africa? Asia? Latin America?
North America? Europe?

Bloc Positions:

Bloc Positions will vary by continent and even by country, however, a general trend follows continent by continent. Delegates are encouraged to research more into their specific position and address general problems in the committee.

Europe: Generally in a very good standing on women's rights. However, it will want to address some things like domestic abuse rates. Otherwise, Europe should be mostly devoted to offering suggestions for general major trends of problems in other regions of the world based off their own laws, experiences, and histories.

North America: Also in a very good standing when it comes to women's rights, they will be looking at the problem of leadership roles in their nations lacking women and some wage inequality. However, their main focus should be to advise other nations.

Latin America: A medium ground for women's rights, the situation in Latin America is improving, however, delegates should pay close attention to solutions to the problems in Latin America. The main focus will be education and wage inequality, and although they should receive advice, ultimately the nation will voice their recommendation.

Asia: Filled with heavy women's rights issues ranging from wage inequality to educational problems in women, Asia should focus on and present major issues in their continent, statistics will vary from country to country. However, Asia should acknowledge their traditional values as well, and whether the recommendations will match their national identity.

Africa: The continent with perhaps the most women's rights issues, Africa has a variety of issues to acknowledge with trends of statistics usually not favoring women. Intertwined with national identity, Africa, along with the rest of the committee, should acknowledge the following: Poverty, education, women's voting rights, human trafficking, lack of female leadership.

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