



CSW64 / Beijing+25 (2020)



Participants are coming from: Papua New Guinea, Mozambique, Tanzania, Uganda, Portugal, Canada, USA and Mexico. Anyone in the New York area can attend our panels listed here.

+Our panel by and focused on girls is: *Tuesday, March 10th*: **TOMORROW'S WORLD TODAY.**

+Our Sacred Activism event is: *Thursday, March 19th*: **FORWARDING THE PLATFORM FOR ACTION THROUGH HEALING AND SUSTAINABLE PRACTICE**

Reflection on UN Fourth World Conference on Women, Beijing 1995

In 2020, the global community will mark the twenty-fifth anniversary of the Fourth World Conference on Women and adoption of the Beijing Declaration and Platform for Action (1995). The Grail was well represented at this conference, a milestone event in the history of women's rights. To mark this celebration, each issue of our newsletter will present a testimony about this journey to gender equality.

By **Marita Estor**



Marita has a Doctorate in Economics which served her well as senior civil servant in the German government. She worked in women policies at national and international levels including the UN Conferences on Women in Copenhagen and Nairobi. She coordinated the German preparations for the Beijing Conference. As she was part of the Grail International Presidency Team (IPT—1988-1998), she retired from her government position and represented the Grail at Beijing. She went on for many years working with and on women's issues in various contexts because of her profound belief that empowering women is key for the transformation of societies.

The Beijing Conference became the important event of the Grail in 1995. When we had the IC-Meeting in Sydney(1995), we discussed our participation. Some came via Berlin on the Peace-Train to Beijing: from USA: Mary Buckley, Teresa Wilson and her husband, and Italy: Pia Zucculini. Also participating: Mary Gindhart (USA), Elizabeth Kibuywa (Kenya), Margarida Amelia Santos(Portugal) and myself(Germany). Among the 30,000 participants in the NGO-Forum in Huairou we were a small group, but we had two programs prepared. Also the Chinese President didn't want the NGO people in Beijing, near the delegates. But in Huairou we had a good chance to meet many women from 189 countries!

In New York beforehand we had raised the question: "Will there be a space for religion in Beijing?" There was space: a flat school building and the classrooms were turned into a mosque, a Hindu-Temple, a synagogue, a protestant church and a catholic chapel! The last one was always crowded: the priest from the patriotic church celebrated Mass three times a day in English. The Filipinas had even brought a large Statue of Our Lady! A sister from Hongkong organized a discussion with Bishop Michael (patriotic church) from Beijing, who explained the situation of the Catholics to us. One member of the German delegation had the chance to meet a community of the underground church and shared her experiences with us. Only the Bahai' group had a public space in Huairou and offered prayers and programmes. Augusta Gabianu (Germany/Ghana) at that time worked as liaison officer of the World Bank to the African Union in Addis Ababa, but assisted Gertrude Mongella as special advisor.

There is much to share but that the Platform for Action still gives impulses to realize the Human rights of women that we didn't expect then. That the explicit mentioning of the Girl Child – a very personal concern of Gertrude Mongella for the African girls – is still generating new ideas and action is for generations a blessing. That the faith-based NGOs now are fully recognized and for their commitment for Human Rights, social transformation and education (from a presentation by Azza Karam) is only since recent times and opens new possibilities.

United For Equity and Ending Racism-UFER: Board Meeting

(Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, January 12-18, 2020)

Overview

A special convergence of factors made this meeting particularly wonderful: an extraordinarily generous hostess, a small dedicated group of attendees, a resolve by participants to overcome obstacles and move ahead, a balance of intense discussion with contemplative morning moments, and a context of ancient history and deeply devotional Christianity. We all left more committed than ever to the vision, mission and values of UFER which we summarized in a closing statement. Grail members Monica Maher (president) and Patricica Camisao (treasurer); Rodnie Delva-Sénat (Secretary General), Berhane Ras-Work and Terrefe Ras-Work (hosts for the meeting), Bijay Singh).



UFER Ethiopia Statement 2020

UFER holds a vision of an inclusive and equitable global community on a sustainable planet where all members of one human race enjoy full health, dignity and well-being in a context of freedom, equality and justice protected by universal human rights principles.

To realize this vision, UFER works to build a peaceful world free of all forms of racism, inequity and injustice, including gender-based violence and other forms of intolerance, through education, training and advocacy within grass-roots movements, at the United Nations and in other international platforms.

UFER's values include gender equity, racial justice, voice of the voiceless, unity in diversity, non-violence, peacebuilding, contemplative action, transparency, accountability, and the universality, indivisibility and inalienability of human rights principles.

Update from our interns

Learn by Doing: Subway Experience (Noella)

Attending meetings is one of the tasks a Grail Intern has to do during CSW preparations! It was my turn to go for the 2020 Dialogue for Peace & UN75 on 45th Street. The others were at other meetings, so I had to go alone. Going was pretty easy though 10 minutes late trying to look for "UNITAR Building" on 801 First Avenue 45th Street where the entrance was. That day I learned to differentiate between Street and Avenue. The discussion was really good. The youth were worried about the future due to climate change, corrupt leaders among others and wished the UN Secretary General would enforce and improve the educational system for the youth.

It was eventually time to go back home, I smartly located the Grand Central (subway) on 42nd Street. I swiped my Metro card and waited 4 minutes for my train. At the first stop, I realized I was in a right train but going Down Town instead of Up Town, Bronx! I had to drop off at the next stop since it had already taken off. The second lesson; difference between Up Town and Down Town. From the lessons above, I located the subway again and Up Town, Bronx. Swiped my card, but it displayed "Insufficient Cash"! I had neither money nor phone to call the folks at the Grail Center (who were beginning to get worried as it was getting late). hahahahaha.... Don't ask how, but I finally reached home safe and sound.



Quest by Carolina Nava

Weeks ago we began to read the book of "St. George and the Dragon, the Search for the Holy Grail" as part of our daily prayer moments. The first day, after Mary Kay finished reading, I couldn't help asking for the book so I could copy a part of the text that had captivated me.

"I am on a quest and, from all that I have read, it seems that people who are on missions frequently get lost." "That's right," the dragon agreed. "Those who know where they are going in life generally go nowhere, at least nowhere important"

That particular day, reading led me to think about the personal search that a person close to me undertook; However, it was not until today that I was trying to sit down and write these lines that I recognized that: December 28, 2019 at 4:40 p.m. (Mexico time) I also started my own search.

I took a plane to New York with the intention not only to help with the preparations for CSW64, but also with the intention of changing the course of my life. To find bits of me that had been lost over the years. To embrace illusions and hopes. I cannot say at this point in the path that I know where I am going, but I can say that it feels like I'm on the right way; although it is certainly not the easiest. Until now, New York and living in community with the Grail have represented a place outside my comfort zone, reading itself as: a place that has allowed me to grow. I do often feel lost, but it's the first time in a long time, that feeling lost has such a hopeful taste. So, if the question today is, how has it been so far being an intern in The Grail? The answer will certainly be: It feels like the part of my autobiography where everything changes.



IDG in CHERAN, Mexico

The Proposal "to raise the voices of girls in order to ensure a growing union and prove that 'together we can change the world'", has become increasingly strong in the community.

The very cause of advocating for justice for all the girls has already been placed at the center of a local agenda, thanks to the interest of some sectors and key people.

Two of the local schools of the community of Cherán, did a hour workshop:

1. at Emiliano Zapata Elementary School, San Francisco neighborhood of Barrio Cuarto, using a facility located on a shore just outside the town, worked with 18 girls aged 8 to 13 years;
2. at Tsitsipandákuri Elementary School, Barrio Primero, Santa Cruz neighborhood, we met with a group of 20 girls also ages 8 to 13.

The workshops included activities and dynamics to help the girls understand the theme. Then we looked at characteristics of girls in the community, as well as the importance of their roles within their home and their family. Following are a few of the girls' comments:

Cherán's girls are strong and brave.....We have rights, like eating well, with good meals that nourish us.....We are smart.....We work hard and support a lot in our homes.... We like to do and propose new things in our homes and in school (innovative)....We are powerful.....

As organizers of the workshops, we were also moved by aspects such as (this is our 3rd year):

- The willingness to reflect was greater than the previous year,
- The advances in their role within the family and the community. In homes they are gradually gaining recognition.
- We realized that the media puts pressure on the girls to be part of a phenomenon of consumerism that systematically undermines the quality of their food and health.





Young Women's Leadership Training Program

Speaking of Mexico....are there any young women, age 18 to 28, in your country that would like to be part of this program? In brief: Participants will live in an international community of 20 women, October 4-17, 2020. They will be a group of engaged, young women with leadership potential who will commit to share their expertise with your local community in ongoing local projects and training with other young women and girls. (If you need again a full description of the program or an application—due April 30th--, write to Abida azeja72@gmail.com)

Generation Equality Forum

The Generation Equality Forum is a civil society–centered, multi-stakeholder, global gathering for gender equality, convened by UN Women and co-hosted by the governments of Mexico and France:

7 – 8 May, Mexico City, Mexico (Kick-off) for 2000 participants

7 – 10 July, Paris, France (Culmination) for 5000 participants

Preparation: a variety of actions using different platforms. Through conversations around six thematic groups reviewing Beijing+25, there is hope to unite in a common framework and celebrate the power of women's rights, activism, feminist solidarity, and youth leadership to achieve transformative change.

To follow all processes, visit the UN Women website AND Generation Equality Forum.

The application for Mexico and Paris meetings will be open soon.

Commission for Social Development (CSocD-58)

From Noelina Nakabuye: This year CSocD focused on advocating for the homeless. Homelessness is the lack of belonging, lacking an address or a secure and lovable place for settlement (my understanding). Churches, governments and NGOs presented their endeavors and challenges while addressing homelessness in relation to children (street children), the girl child, women, youth, disabled and elderly. Poverty, unemployment, discrimination, domestic violence, climate change are among the key causes of homelessness. As the global community is working hard to achieve the 17 SDGs by 2030, homelessness should be put into consideration as it affects all of the goals.

From Carolina Nava: This was my first time at the Commission for Social Development. The priority theme this year was: Affordable housing and social protection systems for all to address homelessness.

Something that struck me a lot was the lack of a universal definition for homelessness. And, the lack of counting of people living in this situation. But, without a doubt, what I have left in my mind is the lack of visibility that we give to these people. Now I recognize the importance of naming and turning to see what makes us uncomfortable--what and who we often make invisible.

The Grail was a co-sponsor of the Salesian Mission side event: YOUTH HOMELESSNESS: Interrogating Policy Gaps and Legislative Vacuum

In the months ahead...

America regional forum on Sustainable Development – 28 - 31 March

Commission on Population and Development – 30 March to 3 April

Youth Forum - 1 – 2 April

Permanent Forum for Indigenous Issues - 13 - 24 April

75th session of the UN General Assembly (UNGA 75) 15-30 September

CSW-65 will begin 2nd or 3rd week of March, 2021. Start now looking for who might attend!