



## Letter from the President

Dear U.S. National Committee for UN Women,

Within the last 12 months, the critical role that women play in securing sustainable peace

and equitable development has continued to move to the forefront and has even made the headlines. We all cheered in October when the Nobel Committee awarded the Nobel Peace Prize to 3 women who worked to protect women during violent uprisings and to ensure their full participation in peace-building. On International Women's Day this year, the UN Secretary General and the President of the General Assembly formally proposed the convening of a 5th World Conference on Women (5WCW) in 2015. Crowning years of work by women's groups and activists, their call for member nations to support a conference is a further recognition of "the importance and relevance of women's issues for global progress. (Ki-moon, 2012)"

USNC-UN Women is engaged with both achievements. The Metro NY chapter recently welcomed Leymah Gbowee, one of the Peace Prize laureates, at an evening reception where Ms. Gbowee inspired the audience with her call to action to stand up on behalf of women and human rights in all communities (please see related article). The San Francisco chapter continues to be a very active partner in the 5WCW coalition. After working hand-in-hand with other women's organizations to secure support for the conference, the chapter and national board members are now striving to have San Francisco, birthplace of the UN, named as the host city.

This nationwide activity comes naturally for USNC-UN Women, as we are the voice within the US for women worldwide. Our chapters and members work within their communities to engage Americans in global women's issues, from human trafficking to increased political participation, and to inform them of the crucial work that UN Women does to support women's rights. Our annual conference on June 2 in Washington, DC will continue this trend, as we gather to discuss women's leadership in politics, civil society, and peacebuilding. Please join us in this unique opportunity to engage experts in leadership and global peacebuilding about progress already made and progress that has yet to be secured.

Finally, if you wish to become more involved with the mission of USNC-UN Women or would like to start a chapter in your community, please let us know by emailing our office at: [director@unwomen-usnc.org](mailto:director@unwomen-usnc.org).

Best regards,

Maggie Forster Schmitz

## 2012 USNC-UN Women Annual Conference and Member Meeting

**Women Lead:  
Politics, Civil**



**Society, and  
Peacebuilding Worldwide**

**June 2, 2012**

**George Washington  
University,  
Marvin Center**

To register online, go to:  
[www.unwomen-usnc.org/civcrm/event/info?reset=1&id=80](http://www.unwomen-usnc.org/civcrm/event/info?reset=1&id=80)

## NATIONAL COMMITTEE MEETING 1ST MARCH 2012

*Remarks by Ms. Lakshmi Puri,  
Deputy Executive Director, UN Women*

"It is my great pleasure to see so many familiar faces and new colleagues following the annual National Committees meeting in Australia in September last year. I understand we have 14 National Committees represented today. This high level of participation is unprecedented and speaks volumes about the increased engagement between National Committees and UN Women. We are committed to this long-standing partnership and are appreciative of your continued commitment and work to support UN Women.

In January, UN Women commemorated its first anniversary. Over the course of the year, a clear vision has been articulated and a

## UN Women-USNC Board of Directors

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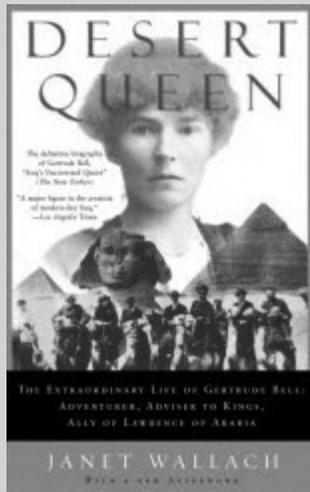
### USNC-UN Women Office

Susan Cutri, Program Director  
1120 20th Street NW, Suite 720  
Washington, DC 20036  
202-939-2675  
[www.unwomen-usnc.org](http://www.unwomen-usnc.org)

## Book Review

by Leita Kaldi

### Desert Queen by Janet Wallach



This biography of Gertrude Bell, a Victorian woman who explored, mapped and excavated the Arab world, is crammed with historical details. Wallach's scholarly research is edifying, but may become tedious for some. Gertrude Bell who, as a wealthy, educated Victorian woman, felt entitled and empowered to conduct her daring adventures among Arab desert tribes, as well as alongside world colonial leaders who presumed to decide the fate of that part of the world as a part of the British colonization.

Although she was a liberated feminist, Bell did not support women's suffrage, convinced that women of the lower classes could not understand their countries' politics. Bell herself was the object of ridicule among her male peers. She fought to attain decision-making power, feeling like "a Person" whenever she overcame her adversaries.

An accomplished archaeologist, she uncovered many treasures from ancient Arabia and was also a consummate athlete, who scaled the highest peaks of the Swiss Alps. A photo shows her at the Cairo conference in 1921, the only woman in the company of Winston Churchill, T.E. Lawrence, Sir Percy Cox, and other world powers of the day.

Subsequently, she gradually saw the imperial conquests in Arabia disintegrate, as people demanded independence. Discouraged and depressed, she ended up taking too many sleeping pills, and never woke up. She is not well known in the lands that she loved, in spite of her incredible presence there. As one Arab sheikh remarked, "If this is what the women of England are like, their men must be lions."

(Gulf Coast Chapter)

Strategic Plan has been endorsed by the Executive Board during its first annual session and is now being implemented.

I would like to reiterate that like UN Women itself, National Committees now have to think and act on a larger scale within your respective countries so that together we can achieve our ambitious vision and mandate in support of women. Despite all the support that we have received in our first year, we must realize that we live in a time of austerity, of shrinking budgets and increased scrutiny on the way we use the little money we have. We cannot ignore this reality and continue to do business as usual. We can also understand how difficult it must be for National Committees to operate in this environment.

We count on National Committees to strengthen outreach in your respective countries, as many still have to translate their enthusiasm for UN Women into a financial commitment. We need to join forces where UN Women also makes a stronger case in support of National Committees when communicating with your respective governments, whether it is to facilitate a tax-exemption status or funding operational work of National Committees.

We are increasing our capacity to manage the partnership with National Committees with greater communication tools and resources on advocacy and fundraising. In moving forward with the partnership, we understand that change will take time, which is why we need to set both incremental targets and longer term goals reflecting our larger vision. But we must also look further than ourselves and promote investment in gender equality and women's empowerment in general and work in partnership with governments, civil society, the private sector and universities to promote the goals. UN Women's biggest impact will not come from programs that we run ourselves but from influencing others, leveraging results and using small resources to catalyze big changes."

### Metro New York Chapter Hosts Nobel Peace Laureate

by Cheryl Benton

The Metro NY chapter was thrilled to host an evening with Nobel Peace Laureate Leymah Gbowee, who along with Ellen Johnson Sirleaf and Tawakkul Karman, was awarded the 2011 Nobel Peace Prize "for their non-violent struggle for the safety of women and for women's rights to full participation in peace-building work." Leymah Gbowee is the executive director of the *Women Peace and Security Network Africa*, which builds relationships across the West African sub-region in support of women's capacity to prevent, avert, and end conflicts. She is a founding member and former coordinator of the Women in Peacebuilding Program/West African Network for Peacebuilding (WIPNET/



WANEP). She also served as the commissioner-designate for the Liberia Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Abigail Disney, Producer of *Pray the Devil Back to Hell* and the *Women, War, and Peace* series, introduced Ms. Gbowee, who thoroughly captivated and inspired everyone in the audience. Ms. Gbowee urged everyone to take action in our own communities to advance women's equality and stand up to injustices, echoing this message in her book, "...I believe, I know, that if you have unshakable faith in yourself, in your sisters and in the possibility of change, you can do almost anything."

Sponsored by Bank of America, the event was held on March 13, 2012, in their new corporate offices at Bryant Park in NYC. Attendees had the opportunity to meet Ms. Gbowee during a wine reception, where she graciously signed copies of her book *Mighty Be Our Powers: How Sisterhood, Prayer, and Sex Changed a Nation at War*.

### Put On Your Walking Shoes...

by Susan Cutri

...and participate in one of our Annual 5K Walks to raise awareness against gender-based violence! Each year USNC-UN Women chapters organize to take a stand on violence against women and girls. The walks draw attention to the global issues, educate our local communities, and highlight UN Women programs to prevent violence and empower women.

Bring your family, friends, and colleagues to walk for the cause and enjoy the fun.



Pets, strollers, and children are welcome! Remaining walks this spring include:

- June 2, 2012 Atlanta, GA
- June 2012 San Francisco Bay Area, CA

The USNC East Florida Chapter hosted a walk in late Fall, the Gulf Coast Chapter joined together in January, and Southern California Chapter held a cake-walk on March 31. North Carolina and Washington, DC all had walks this April. Make sure to join them next season!

Go to your chapter pages at [www.unwomen-usnc.org](http://www.unwomen-usnc.org) or [www.unwomen-usnc.org/walks](http://www.unwomen-usnc.org/walks) to read about walks in your area. If you can't participate in a walk, you can still help USNC by sponsoring a walker on [Firstgiving.com](http://Firstgiving.com). For more information about sponsorship, email [director@unwomen-usnc.org](mailto:director@unwomen-usnc.org) or call 202-939-2675.

## More on CEDAW

by Crystal Lander

The **CEDAW Task Force of The Leadership Conference on Civil and Human Rights** is leading a coalition effort to engage in outreach and education about the U.S. ratification of CEDAW. Coalition members hail from a diverse set of organizations and institutions:

Wade Henderson, *President and CEO, The Leadership Conference*  
Nancy Zirkin, *Executive Vice President, The Leadership Conference*

### Task Force Co-Chairs:

Lorraine Cole, *CEO, YWCA USA*  
Marcia Greenberger, *Co-President, National Women's Law Center*  
Don Kraus, *CEO, Citizens for Global Solutions*

Laura Murphy, *Director, Washington Legislative Office, ACLU*

**The CEDAW Task Force is made up of the following committees and organizational chairs:**

- **Advocacy** - Citizens for Global Solutions and Amnesty International
- **Communications** - Communications Consortium Media Center and The Leadership Conference
- **Grassroots Outreach** - The Leadership Conference and Citizens for Global Solutions
- **Legal** - National Women's Law Center and ACLU

**For more information about the CEDAW Task Force, contact:**

**June Zeitlin,**  
*Director, CEDAW Education Project*  
The Leadership Conference  
202-263-2852 (office)  
[zeitlin@civilrights.org](mailto:zeitlin@civilrights.org)

## Happy Int'l Women's Day!!!

from Stephanie Block (sent March 10, 2012)

This morning the UN announced official support of a UN FIFTH WORLD CONFERENCE ON WOMEN! I've been serving on the San Francisco Steering Committee to get a Fifth World Conference in 2015 to SF for a year now! Many of you met the intrepid Jean Shinoda Bolen, permanent delegate to UN and major long-time 5WCW activist, when you were here in June. Well I spent the first half of last week at the UN with the SF delegation, we peppered the 1000s of international delegates with 5WCW buttons, and we took our message loud and clear to the UN! And I cannot believe it BUT JUST TODAY the UN officially announces its support!!!!!!

...No word yet where the conference will be held. We want SF, but who knows? Cross your fingers, please...

WOOO HOOO,  
Stephanie

## Know Your Board Members

Grace Richardson of New York brings a wealth of experience to the USNC Board. Upon retiring from Colgate-Palmolive as Vice President of Global Consumer Affairs, she became involved in organizations dedicated to empowering the lives of women, serving on numerous boards, and chairing the Board of the NYC YWCA.



Originally from Lynn, MA, Grace graduated from Simmons College and now serves on the Simmons College Corporation/ Board. She earned a MS at Cornell and an MBA from NYU. Originally, Grace "majored in Home Economics in college because I thought I wanted to be a dietitian - but at age 19 when I worked at a hospital one summer as a dietary aide and had to work on the 4th of July, I decided that I didn't want a job where I had to work on a holiday. So that was the way I made one of my career choices - as a 'mature' 19 year old!"

Over the past year Grace has served as advisor on outreach for Abigail Disney's PBS film series, "Women, War and Peace." She mentors young professional women through Women Unlimited, Inc., The SSS Foundation, Cornell University and Simmons College. The list of her activities is extensive, and she is the only member of the USNC Board with a pilot's license.

## USNC at the UN!

By Stephanie Block

USNC for UN Women president, board members and supporters were out in force at the 56th annual Commission on the Status of Women at the UN earlier this year, including me! Not only was it my first time at the CSW, it was my first time at the UN! I couldn't believe it as I walked through the hallowed halls with my official blue badge dangling around my neck. In conference room after room, dedicated men and women from governments and NGO's sat ironing out policies, sharing best practices, enumerating concerns and proposing solutions. Pinch me, I'm world changing!

This year's theme was rural women, and after all that talking and planning and questioning and Power Pointing, resolutions emerged on issues like female genital mutilation, maternal mortality, and indigenous women. Moreover, official support to hold a 5th world conference on women was announced! (Was it any coincidence it came after our friends from the San Francisco delegation peppered almost every participant with 5WCW campaign buttons?)

Your USNC friends met with UN Women at their New York headquarters, and we dialogued with officials at the architecturally impressive United States Mission building across the street from the UN. Obviously, there was some casual debriefing over sangria one rainy night, and we were also greatly entertained at several events hosted by our fabulous Metro NYC chapter.

We ambled with ambassadors, mingled with ministers, and uniformly spread the word about USNC! How to make next year even more amazing? Getting you to come with us!

## Link with USNC\_UN Women on LinkedIn!

By Stephanie Block



Yes, we're on LinkedIn, too!

And our organization has a proud presence on LinkedIn, where you painstakingly plan your next corporate coup. We humbly invite you to become our follower on LinkedIn at USNC\_UN Women.

Here, you'll find all the great information you expect from us: Inspiring UN Women programs across the globe, issues that affect women, and local events near you! Not only that, but you'll be able to see who's on our board and engage with lovely, like-minded people. Supporters of USNC for UN Women are a powerful, passionate bunch. What a great network!

You may think of LinkedIn as all business, but this Silicon Valley juggernaut is a great tool for non-profits. What a way to live out the corporate social responsibility lifestyle! We're all about gender equality in the workplace, so let's lead by example and fix the world one link up at a time.

See you on LinkedIn!

PS: It's so easy to engage with USNC for UN Women online. We're in the midst of your friends' baby and pet pictures on Facebook.

Our Tweets resound among breaking news out of Syria and Kardashian love affairs: @USNC\_UNWomen.



**2012 USNC-UN Women Conference & Member Meeting**

**Women Lead: Politics, Civil Society, and Peacebuilding Worldwide**

June 2, 2012

George Washington University, Marvin Center

**TO REGISTER BY MAIL, PLEASE COMPLETE THIS FORM AND SEND IT WITH YOUR CHECK OR CREDIT CARD INFORMATION TO USNC-UN Women, 1120 20th Street NW, #720, Washington, DC 20036**

First name: \*

Last name: \*

Email: \*

Address Line 1:

City, State, ZIP Code: \*

Telephone: \*

**Type of Registration (please select one):**

**\$100.00 USNC-UN Women Member**

**\$125.00 Non-Member**

**\$ 50.00 Student**

**I will attend Congressional Education Day**

**I will not attend Congressional Education Day**

**Payment Method:**

Check payable to USNC-UN Women is enclosed

Charge my credit card

Cardholder Name: \*

Billing Address (if different than above):\*

Telephone Number: \*

Card Type: \*

Card Number: \*

Security Code: \*

Expiration Date: \*

*If you have questions, please email [director@unwomen-usnc.org](mailto:director@unwomen-usnc.org) or call 202-939-2675.*

1120 20th Street; Suite 720  
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United Nations Entity for Gender Equality  
and the Empowerment of Women



NATIONAL COMMITTEE  
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