

UN Update - Sister Helen Martinez - Journal for November 22-28, 2014

International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women and Global Report on Trafficking

On Saturday afternoon, the five of us travelled on the Staten Island ferry to celebrate Presentation Day with the Staten Island Sisters at 419 Woodrow Road. It was my first ride on the ferry and the five mile, 25 minute ride gave us a majestic view of New York Harbor. There was a perfect view of The Statue of Liberty and Ellis Island. As the ferry started to move, we saw the skyscrapers and bridges of Lower Manhattan recede. Sister Beatriz met us at the dock and she drove us to the convent. It was a great way to see the island en route to the convent. We received a very warm welcome and soon after, there was a celebration of Mass by an Australian priest—Father Michael Goonan—friend of Sister Lorraine Hale. During the liturgy, we also renewed our vows. We had hors d'oeuvres in the community room and that was followed by a splendid dinner. We were given a lovely gift of cards which had the photographs of Sister Marilyn Fenton, RSM. We had great conversations with the Sisters and a true spirit of hospitality was in evidence. I was delighted to see some familiar faces - Sisters Beth Hassel and Linda Isola. After dinner Sister Lorraine gave us the grand tour of the house and we looked at their display of archives located in the front entrance. Next morning we had breakfast together with some of the Sisters. I cooked bacon for four of us. Great laughter ensued. We then took the train back to the station to get the return ferry.

On Monday morning, the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) in collaboration with the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking, held a "High Level Interactive Launch of the 2014 Global Report on Trafficking in Persons. Speakers included Simone Monasebian, Director UN Office on Drugs and Crime, NY Office; H.E. Andrei Dapkunas, Permanent Representative of Belarus and Coordinator of the Group of Friends United Against Human Trafficking; H.E. Libran N. Cabactulan, Permanent Representative of Philippines; Rani Hong, Trafficking Survivor /Founder Tronie Foundation; Alyse Nelson, President/CEO Vital Voices Global Partnership; Sir Paul Sorvino, actor/humanitarian and Kay Buck, Executive Director Coalition to Abolish Slavery and Trafficking. I was so glad to get a copy of the **2014 Report on Trafficking in Persons**.

The report sheds light on national, regional and international specifics that must be taken into account if responses to this heinous crime are to be tailored and effective. There are at least 152 countries of origin and 124 countries of destination affected by trafficking in persons. Trafficking mostly occurs within national borders or within the same region, with transcontinental trafficking mainly affecting rich countries. In Africa and the Middle East child trafficking is a major concern, with children constituting 62 per cent of victims. Trafficking for forced labour, including in the manufacturing and construction sectors, domestic work and textile production has also increased steadily in the past five years. About 35% of the detected victims of trafficking for forced labour are female. The report highlights that impunity remains a serious problem: 40 percent of countries recorded few or no convictions, and over the past 10 years there has been no discernible increase in the global criminal justice response to this crime, leaving a

significant portion of the population vulnerable to offenders. Victims in Europe and Central Asia are mostly trafficked for sexual exploitation, whereas in East Asia and the Pacific forced labour drives the market. In the Americas, the two types are detected in almost equal measure. Most trafficking flows are interregional, and more than 6 out of 10 victims have been trafficked across at least one national border. The vast majority of convicted traffickers - 72 per cent – are male and citizens of the country in which they operate.

Simone Monasebian reported to us that, "One in three trafficking victims are children. This is a five percent rise compared to the findings of the 2012 report. Many of those children are girls. Indeed, two out every three children trafficked are girls. When women are added to the figures for young girls, females account for 70 percent of trafficking victims worldwide. Trafficking is truly trans-global. There are no countries where vulnerable individuals can escape its dangerous net."

US actor Paul Servino said "The responsibility for me in being an actor – an a performer, sculptor, all the things I do, singer, everything I do- is to use whatever integrity I have in bring to bear on all my work, so that the true nature of performers' existence is to illuminate the human condition." After we listened to the story of Rani Hong, he made another comment, ""When I sit next to this beautiful woman here and realized that she was a victim of this heinous crime, it's disturb my insights and it should disturb everyone."

I felt very moved and full of admiration when Rani Hong told her story from the heart and she opened my eyes to how greatly human trafficking affects us every day. She is a survivor of child trafficking and one of the world's leading voices in the fight against modern-day slavery. At the age of seven, Rani was taken from her family in Kerala, India and sold to a slave master. No longer of any value to her slave owner, she was sold into illegal adoption. "My childhood ended at age of seven. That's a very young age. That was the last time I saw my mother, my father, the last time I would have any contact with my family for the next 21 years." She recalled for us, "I was taken to an area where I did not know the language, where everyone was a stranger." ... "I cried for my mom to come and get me – that's all a seven-year-old mind can understand." She became traumatized, stopped eating and became physically and mentally ill. "My captors labeled me 'destitute and dying,' meaning that I had no value in the forced child labor market." She explained that the only way the traffickers could profit from her was to put her up for illegal international adoption. Trafficked into Vancouver, she was beaten, starved, and caged. "In my case, my owner just beat me to the point that I was close to death. Since I was no longer of use to my slave owner, so then I was sold to illegal adoption from India to Canada, Canada into the Seattle-Washington area, where I currently live." She told us that her husband is also a trafficking survivor and a child soldier.

She spoke very passionately about those who have no voice and we heard her message. "As we meet, a boy in a cocoa plantation is carrying a heavy sack and bleeding hands wondering if anybody will ever look for him. As we meet, another child, crying herself to sleep in a brothel, imagining the day she'll be treated more like a piece of property... Today, I speak for those without a voice."

She has put distance between her life today and the situation she endured in her childhood. She has come from being a survivor to a global visionary human rights leader. She broached the topic in a very compelling manner and kept the focus on the strength of the human spirit. When Amitha and I met her afterwards, she was animated, with an easy smile, kind eyes, and an intensity that evokes attention.

To raise awareness and trigger action to end the global scourge of violence against women and girls, the UN observes International Day for the Elimination of Violence against Women on 25 November. The 16 Days of Activism against Gender-Based Violence which follow—ending December 10, Human Rights Day—provide an opportunity to mobilize and raise awareness. It invites individuals and groups to mobilize and call for the elimination of violence against women and girls.

This year, the UN Secretary-General's Unite to End Violence against Women campaign invited us to "Orange Your Neighborhood," with the color designated by the Unite campaign to symbolize a brighter future without violence. The UN began the commemoration on Monday evening with its headquarters, the iconic Empire State Building and large screens of Times Square, lit up in orange - the color that the UN has chosen to symbolize the commitment to end violence and a brighter future without violence.

On Tuesday morning, Elsa, Alex, Jancy, Mary Margaret and I went to the Commemoration of the International Day to End Violence against Women 2014 - Theme: "Orange YOUR Neighbourhood", which was held in the ECOSOC Chamber. The event included the participation of: Ban Ki-moon, UN Secretary-General, H.E. Ambassador Lana Nusseibeh, Permanent Representative, United Arab Emirates; Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, UN Under-Secretary-General and Executive Director, UN Women; Babatunde Osotimehin, Executive Director, UNFPA; Chirlane McCray, First Lady, New York City and Teri Hatcher, Actress. The moderator of the event was Amna Nawaz, Correspondent for NBC News.

The Secretary-General addressed us and said that violence against women and girls is a global pandemic that destroys lives, fractures communities and holds back development. "But violence against women and girls does not emerge from nowhere. It is simply the most extreme example of the political, financial, social and economic oppression of women and girls worldwide." He explained that violence against women is not confined to just one region, political system, culture or social class but it is present at every level of every society in the world. It happens in peacetime and becomes worse during conflict. He reminded us of the events of this past year when we saw the kidnapping of more than 200 girls in Nigeria; the Indian schoolgirls who were raped, killed and hung from a tree; graphic testimony from Iraqi women of rape and sexual slavery during war; the continued bullying of women on the internet. More than 80 per cent of governments have passed laws on domestic violence and sexual harassment. He said, "It is up to everyone to play their part; women's rights are not only women's business. Men and boys are finally taking their place as partners in this battle. The [HeForShe campaign](#) I launched two months ago brings together one half of humanity in support of the other." He called violence against women and girls a global pandemic and said it is up to both women and

men to bring it to an end. “Let us commit ourselves together. Starting from today and all the year around, to put an end to this global disgrace.”

In a similar vein, Ms. Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka explained that this day was an opportunity to “shine an orange light” on violence against women that takes place at home, in schools, nations, cities, and villages. She urged for support to confront that “horror” and “extinguish it” and highlighted that the issues of fighting violence against women is going to be a high priority on the agenda for future global development. “This is an important moment as the world is getting ready to gear up to the post-2015 plan of action.” “No culture, no nation, no woman – old or young – is immune to this human rights violation. And very often, the perpetrators go unpunished.” ...“And these women are determined to reclaim their lives.” She urged that “there is no time for complacency or excuses, the time to act is now.” “We need young people, members of Parliament and political parties, religious and traditional leaders as well as men and boys to play their roles. ... “We know what works now. The Millennium Development Goals initiative, along with other studies, has generated quite some data and best practices that demonstrate that the importance of protecting women and girls and providing services to those who fall victim to these horrendous crimes.” “We are in a unique position in history and a lot of will among the people of the world to forge ahead and conquer violence against women,” Recalling meeting women who have been victims of violence, Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka said that she “forever will be haunted by their suffering” but also inspired by their courage.

Teri Hatcher gave an emotional speech about her lifelong struggle with the scars of sexual abuse and told about her molestation by an uncle when she was seven years old. She blamed herself and kept silent for years. Even her family stayed silent while her uncle stayed free. She suffered emotional pain throughout her adolescence. She hid the abuse for two decades until she read about the suicide of a young girl who also had been abused by the same man. She contacted the District Attorney’s office, she made a deposition which established a pattern and credibility. Eventually her uncle was convicted and died in prison. She said poignantly that she and other victims have to live forever with their scars. She ended her sharing by saying, “I am one of three women who for the rest of her life battles the voice in her head that accepts blame for abuse, a voice that is antithetical to self-esteem, self-worth, and happiness. This is a statistic that has to change. One in three women can no longer have to face a stigma and a fear that prevent them from seeking help.

One in three women should NOT feel afraid to report it, as they too often do, because they are not believed or taken seriously. When society further shames the victim by asking “Why did the victim stay? Why didn’t she say anything?” instead of asking “Why did HE abuse her?” , we empower the abusers to continue their abuse. That one in three could be your mother, your daughter, your sister. It is unacceptable to not actively and passionately work to change a society in which ANY woman is violated, injured, tortured or killed. Everyone everywhere has a responsibility to end violence.

I am one in three, and I WILL BE the one who yells from the rooftops until those numbers change. Until every woman who has faced abuse feels less alone and safe enough to

have the courage to find her own voice – until violence against women is no longer a part of any woman’s story – silence will not be a part of mine.”

Following her speech, Hatcher received a standing ovation from the other members of the panel, and the audience.

In a move to work together, UN Women and New York City signed an agreement to enhance the safety and empowerment of women and girls. This means the City is going to support public education and advocacy efforts organized by UN Women in the context of the 20th anniversary of the Beijing Platform for Action and will join the Safe Cities Global Initiative.

I felt proud to be at the signing by Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka and Chirlane McCray, the wife of the Mayor, of the Memorandum of Understanding. Ms. Mlambo-Ngcuka welcomed New York to a worldwide partnership that includes cities in Africa, Asia-Pacific, Europe and Latin America. She said, “We deeply appreciate the commitment of the City of New York to make the streets and public spaces safe for women and girls. With this agreement, New York City demonstrates its global leadership as a champion of women’s security and gender equality. We look forward to working together in this important partnership.”

Chirlane McCray responded, “Every day, in cities across the globe, women and girls are trapped in lives defined by fear and violence. Here in New York City, we have launched a comprehensive effort to connect victims to the resources they need to break the cycle and establish their independence. But we must do even more, which is why we are joining the UN Women’s Safe Cities Global Initiative. We are committed to doing our part to create a world – and a city – where all women and girls can live their lives without fear of violence.”

Under the Safe Cities Global Initiative, UN Women works with municipalities to make public spaces free from sexual harassment and other forms of sexual violence. New York will develop and advocate policies and practices to boost women’s safety, equality and empowerment. I can only hope that other major cities in Canada and the United States will follow the example of New York.

One of the most moving events of the morning was the performance by Danai Guira from her play **Eclipsed**. It is set in Liberia near the end of the civil war. Three women, who have been abducted and made “wives” of a rebel commander, live together in a shack. One is the boss, one is pregnant, and one is the new girl. Each woman finds a different way of coping with the horror of her situation. We hear Maima, an abductee who has escaped by becoming a rebel soldier.

After that session, Amitha, Judy and I walked around the UN Gardens to view some of the sculptures there. I felt happy to be with such memorable works of art. I loved especially the bronze sculpture “Let us beat our swords into ploughshares”. It depicts the figure of a man holding aloft a hammer in one hand and a sword in the other, which he is making into a

ploughshare. It is meant to be a symbol of humanity's desire to put an end to war and change the means of destruction into creative tools for humanity's benefit.

In the afternoon, Mary Margaret, Alex, Jancy, Elsa and I attended a panel discussion and an interactive discussion : "Violence against Women: Best Laws and Policies - Learning from the winners of the 2014 Future Policy Award Successful strategies since the adoption of the Beijing Platform for Action, remaining challenges and the way forward ". It was held in the Dag Hammarskjöld Library Auditorium. Women in partnership with the IPU and the World Future Council focused on implementation of laws and policies, effective practices, gaps and the way forward in relation to the review of the Beijing Platform for Action at its 20th anniversary. Speakers included: Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka, Executive Director and Under-Secretary-General, UN Women Margaret Mensah-Williams, President, Coordinating Committee of Women Parliamentarians of the Inter-Parliamentary Union; Marja Ruotanen, Director of Human Dignity and Equality, Directorate General of Democracy, Council of Europe; Michael Paymar, House of Representatives, Minnesota and Ms. Melissa Scaia, Executive Director, Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), Duluth; H.E. Mr. Andreas Riecken, Deputy Permanent Representative, Permanent Mission of Austria to the United Nations; Nafissatou J. Diop, Senior Adviser, Coordinator UNFPA-UNICEF Joint Programme on FGM/C: Accelerating Change, UNFPA. The Moderator was Alexandra Wandel, Director, World Future Council.

The panel moderator briefly introduced the Award and addressed questions to the panelists. The Future Policy Award celebrates policies that create better living conditions for current and future generations. The aim of the award is to raise global awareness for these exemplary policies and speed up policy action towards just, sustainable and peaceful societies. The Future Policy Award is the first award that celebrates policies rather than people on an international level. Each year the World Future Council chooses one topic on which policy progress is particularly urgent.

This year the Vision Award was given to the Council of Europe – Convention on Preventing and Combating Violence against Women and Domestic Violence (Istanbul Convention), 2011. During her intervention in the Panel, Marja Ruotanen highlighted the importance of the Council of Europe Istanbul Convention as a unique and the most comprehensive global instrument to address violence against women and domestic violence, the measures to be taken in order to guarantee the effective implementation of the Convention and the setting up and role of the monitoring mechanism. This legally binding human rights treaty commits States parties to adopt a comprehensive, multidisciplinary response to violence through long-term preventive actions along with measures to ensure the prosecution of perpetrators and protection of survivors. In effect since August 2014, it is currently the most comprehensive international instrument on violence against women and is open for accession by any State in the world.

Michael Paymar and Melissa Scaia spoke about domestic violence and the Duluth Model. The Duluth Model's "Coordinated Community Response to Domestic Violence," a partnership between Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs (DAIP), and criminal justice agencies of the City of Duluth and St. Louis County, was named world's best policy. Out of 25 international nominations, the "Duluth Model" was the only policy to be awarded the 2014 Future Policy

Award for Ending Violence against Women and Girls, or Gold Award. The "Duluth Model" is the first humanitarian policy to be honored in the history of the award.

It won the Gold Award for prioritizing the safety and autonomy of survivors while holding perpetrators accountable through community-wide coordinated response, including a unique partnership between non-profit and government agencies. What came to be known as the "Duluth Model" required the cooperation of multiple entities, including the Domestic Abuse Intervention Programs and numerous criminal justice agencies. Coordinated Community Response (CCR) is a model for effective implementation of intimate partner violence legislation, involving all relevant stakeholders in a community. It rests upon a shared, gendered understanding of violence against women and prioritises the safety and autonomy of survivors along with ensuring perpetrator accountability. Regularly evaluated and adaptable, The Duluth Model has inspired policy making and implementation around the world. This approach to tackling violence against women has inspired violence protection law implementation and the creation of batterer intervention programs in the United States and around the world, including Austria, Germany, Britain, Romania, and Australia.

A silver award was granted to Burkina Faso for its law on prohibiting Female Genital Mutilation, adopted in 1996. We watched a two minute film about FGM. Since the adoption of the law and the implementation of a National Action Plan, surveys confirm a significant decrease in the proportion of younger women who have undergone the harmful practice. About 12 per cent of girls under the age of 14 are cut now, compared to 25 per cent in 2006. This law translates the government's commitment to eradicate female genital mutilation/cutting by criminalising it. The effective implementation of the law in Burkina Faso is ensured through a range of accompanying measures, defined in a national action plan, and initiatives in the field of social policy, education and public health. The approach has proven successful in reducing FGM/C, holding perpetrators accountable and changing attitudes.

Austria also received the silver prize for its law granting psychosocial and legal court assistance for victims of violence during criminal and civil procedure in Austria in 2006. It effectively safeguards the rights of victims of violence and empowers them during court proceedings. This was a seminal change to the country's Criminal and Civil Procedure Act and introduced the pioneering measure of a legally enshrined right to psychosocial and legal court assistance for all victims of violent crimes. The Austrian government entrusts specialised victim support organisations with the implementation. Positive feedback and increasing uptake by victims of gender based violence and sexual abuse are testimony to the success and importance of this legal provision. Andreas Riecken answered questions posed by the moderator. What are the key objectives of Austria's provisions on psychosocial and legal court assistance for victims of violence during judicial procedures in the Criminal Procedure Act and the Civil Procedure Act? What strategies, in general, were put in place to ensure its effective implementation? What were the main challenges and how they were overcome? Are there remaining challenges today? What further steps are needed and currently envisaged by the government?

On Wednesday, we bid farewell to Alex. She shared her experience with us and gave some helpful ideas. We enjoyed the Indian food for lunch. I shall miss Alex- her energy and

enthusiasm for justice was quite admirable. We wish her luck as she returns to Australia and medical school in Brisbane, Australia.

On Thursday, I took the Long Island Rail Road train to spend American thanksgiving holiday with my cousin, Susan Dopfel, and her children and grandchildren. It was a lovely way to celebrate the holiday with my American cousins. In between times, I enjoyed reading an interesting novel called Trans Atlantic by Colum McCann which is set in NL 1919 - Alcock and Brown; Dublin 1845-46 and New York 1998. We spent the holiday at cousin Douglas Dopfel's home with a table of 13 persons - including a lovely lady from Hong Kong, Tom Ho. We watched some football and my team Dallas Cowboys lost the game to Philadelphia 33-10!! Friday was spent enjoying the company of another cousin - Priscilla Hass Gilmore, and her husband Emerson. I also met for the first time, Peter Dopfel's two daughters- Emma and Ryann. Sunday, I attended 8:00 Mass at the Parish Church, St. Francis Assisi. Following breakfast, Sue drove me to the LIRR station for the return to Manhattan.