

## Tribute to Kay Fraleigh

By: Denise Scotto, Esq., Past Vice Chair, NGO CSW/NY

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I remember clearly the exact moment when I met Kay Fraleigh; it was back in the 1990s. At the time, when the International Criminal Court Prep-Coms were held in the UN NY Headquarters, as a young public interest lawyer with trial experience, I was appointed to attend as an NGO delegate. During these periods, many special events were organized, and Kay and I met at one of those early receptions. Kay was representing the International Alliance of Women and she was with Eleanor Brown, Esq., and June Willenz, other champions of women's rights, who were all wanting to learn more from me about our efforts relating to 'gender justice.'

Without question, they adopted me on the spot. Little did I know, the giant Kay was, as they introduced me to the history of the UN World Conferences on Women, and, before I knew it, little by little, they brought me into their world, into the work of NGO CSW/NY. Kay effortlessly became an informal mentor, and, in her capacity with the United Methodist Women, she maintained a research library with documents relating to the UN CSW and other important meetings, briefings and events concerning the rights of women and girls which she provided access to freely. While her library was an essential research body to many who wrote articles and books about the UN and women's rights, it also was a great resource to those, including students, who were involved in advancing women's rights in their country of origin.

It is undisputed that Kay was a leader in advancing women's rights globally. She held many leadership positions that impacted advocacy on issues that affected women and girls around the world. She served as the committee Chair of the UN Decade for Women from 1975-1985 during which time the UN World Conferences on Women were held—in Mexico City in 1975, Copenhagen in 1980, and Nairobi in 1985.

Kay was also Chair of the NGO CSW/NY from 1981 through 1991 and initiated various means to bring NGO representatives together with UN Secretariat staff and UN experts. She was a genuine friend to Peg Snyder the Founding Director of UNIFEM, Noleen Nyzer, Director of UNIFEM and Angela E.V. King, UN Special Advisor on Gender Issues & Advancement of Women as well as the many Directors of the UN Division for the Advancement of Women and INSTRAW. In particular, she created the Annual NGO CEDAW Committee Luncheon which

was held when the CEDAW Committee was based in NY in the Secretariat of the UN DAW as well as the Annual UNIFEM CEDAW Reception. She was devoted to Esther Hymer, the founding Chair of the NGO CSW/NY and carried on the legacy of promoting world peace. Let us remember the UN's focus on "Women, Peace, and Development."

For those of you who are unaware, the UN Commission on the Status of Women was held in Vienna, Austria before returning to NY Headquarters. Kay was always there in Vienna and encouraged others to join her. She became a bridge between those who were unable to attend those sessions and with those on the ground in all corners of the globe providing news and updates about the UN CSW's work and outcomes.

Another historical piece of Committee information is that Kay had an office on the 12<sup>th</sup> floor of the Church Center. This is where she maintained the impressive library of documents, and, in some ways, more importantly, where women would congregate. In fact, the NGO CSW/NY office was run out of Kay's office until Past Chair, Leslie Wright updated its working methods and professionalized the Committee.

It is not an exaggeration to observe that Kay mentored thousands of women from across the globe. As many of us know, Zoe Chang, my former colleague from the UN DAW, remarked, "She was the kindest, most inclusive person." Additionally, many NGOs accredited to the UN held their meetings in Kay's office including one of the legal organizations that I represent at the UN. Even when the office was moved from the 12<sup>th</sup> floor to the basement level of the Church Center, women would flock there at any time to hold meetings or to simply visit Kay.

When Kay eventually retired, we organized a special Luncheon held in the UN Staff Café (pre UN Capital Master Plan). Peg Snyder, Zoe Chang, other UN DAW staff, Mia Adjali from the Methodist Women and Esther Hymer's daughter attended along with members of various UN accredited NGOs. Needless to say, Kay was thrilled but said she didn't want all the fuss.

One of the things that we see when we look on the walls of the second floor of the Church Center is the number of beautifully framed posters relating to women. We have Kay to thank for that as she also collected them. There is so much more to share, but, I will sum up with the words of Carl Murrell, Representative of the Baha'i International Community to the UN that he wrote to me which conveys so much in a short and succinct manner, "She was a treasure."