



Advocacy at the UN

By *Connie de la Vega*

Six students, including one LLM student from Brazil, participated in the University of San Francisco's Frank C. Newman International Human Rights Law Clinic during the Spring 2020 semester, representing Human Rights Advocates at the meetings of the UN Human Rights Council's (HRC) 43rd Session in Geneva, Switzerland. While one student prepared a written statement and another prepared a project for the 64th session of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (CSW) in New York, the latter session was cancelled due to the Coronavirus.

HRA's written statement for the CSW was prepared by Carolina Quesada during the Fall semester (See, Human Rights Advocates, UN Doc. E/CN.6/2020/NGO/7 (Nov. 20, 2019), available at www.unwomen.org/en/csw/csw64-2020.) The statement addresses the economic inequalities that contribute to the gender gap and the feminization of poverty. The feminization of poverty is considered as the disparate impact that poverty has on women where pay disparity, gender stereotypes, and unequal burden of

family responsibilities on women increase the problem. According to the World Economic Forum it will take approximately 202 years to achieve gender parity in all areas of life. The gender wage gap is an issue all over the world. The gap not only shows that women do not receive equal pay for equal work, but also that poverty itself has become systematically feminized. The gender wage gap is an issue for every country in the world. The gap not only shows that women do not receive equal pay for equal work, but also that poverty itself has become systematically feminized. The statement included examples from different regions of the world: Latin America and the Caribbean, North America, Africa, Europe and Asia. Because the CSW did not meet due to the Coronavirus, there are no Agreed Conclusions or resolutions for this session.

Despite the cancellation of side events at the 43rd session, the six Frank C. Newman Interns who attended the HRC were involved in activities in the main meeting room and the resolutions drafting sessions. While HRA was only able to make one oral statement during the general debate, the students worked together to cover four topics in a minute and a half. Many of them were involved in resolution drafting sessions and they all



Advocacy at the UN (from left to right): Iuri Prado Muci de Lima, Leighton Lee, Connie de la Vega, Edgar Zaragoza, Carolina Quesada, Natalie Del Cid, Sumaya Bamakhrama.

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met with government delegates, special mandate holders and members of other non-governmental organizations. They also met HRA's International Advisory Board member Cruz Melchor Eya Nchama.

The Council did postpone the last week of the session to a later date to be determined. It did approve 15 decisions on outcomes of the Universal Periodic Review and presented 40 Draft Resolutions which will be voted on when the session is continued. The draft resolutions include the right of migrants (L. 4), right to work (L.6), cultural rights (L.10), the effects of foreign debt (L.11), the right to food (L12), the elimination of

racism (L.16), the right to adequate housing (L.20), the prevention of genocide (L26), the prohibition of torture (L30), rights of the child (L.32), and the rights of persons with disabilities (L.34). The HRC decisions and draft resolutions can be found at: <http://www.ohchr.org> by going to Human Rights Bodies, Human Rights Council, Documents, Resolutions, 43rd session. The HRA written statements can be found at the same web site under Documents. All the students' reports are available at the HRA website: www.humanrightsadvocates.org (under UN Advocacy) as well as under documents at the HRC website.

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

The Rights of the Child: Exploitation of Children – Social Media Grooming

By Leighton Lee

In March 2020, I was given the opportunity to represent Human Rights Advocates ("HRA") at the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council ("HRC") at the Palace of Nations in Geneva, Switzerland. My topic focused on one of the key issues, the link between technology and the sexual exploitation of children, that the Special Rapporteur identified during her tenure. (A/HRC/7/13). In preparation for the 43rd session, I researched social media grooming and its implications on the sale and sexual exploitation of children. Social media grooming is a form of child sexual abuse where there is the intention to secure the trust of a minor as a step towards future engagement of sexual conduct using social media applications as the primary form of contact. (The Rights of the Child: Exploitation of Children—Social Media Grooming, A/HRC/43/NGO/57).

Today, more children have access and use technology, such as smart phones and tablets, and social media applications than ever before. This rate increases every day as the popularity of social media applications rapidly grows. Because of the ease associated with making and monitoring these social media applications, authorities in many state parties have noted that online grooming is particularly difficult to pin point and track. I urged states to provide safer online regulations to more closely monitor and understand how social media applications are used to promote the exploitation of children.

The general understanding of social media

applications and the ways in which perpetrators of social media grooming may use them change frequently. There are new applications and forms of online communication that are developed every day. This contributes to the exploitation of children because this form of predation is ever changing making it more difficult to distribute knowledge that is current. Thus, I urged the HRC to hold a panel on social media grooming to educate state parties in the most current policies and tactics that can be implemented in order to combat social media grooming.

In Geneva, I was unable to make my statement before the Council due to the limitation on the number of NGOs allowed to speak. However, I was able to speak with delegates and participate in the resolution drafting sessions. I was able to support and suggest language that specified that particular attention needs to be paid to the online aspects of the sale and sexual exploitation of children, and identified social media grooming as a gender-based human rights violation in the Rights of the Child resolution, which was accepted into the final draft. (A/HRC/43/L32).

The most interesting takeaway from my experience at the Human Rights Council was to see how the delegates interacted with each other. During the main session, the delegates were seated in alphabetical order and there was very little socializing between them. There were a few side conversations, but for the most part, the main sessions were without much banter. However, dur-

ing the breakout session, many of the delegates socialized with the other delegates that spoke the same primary language as they did. They would sit in the sessions with those parties, a majority of them not having sat next to each other in the main session, and would then speak to support those delegates that they were sitting next to. This was important for lobbying because the relationships between the delegates showed which state parties aligned and who would support your language.

Overall, I am incredibly grateful for this educational experience that allowed me to further understanding international human rights and highlighted the importance of international collaboration.

Adoption of a Universal Standard of Care for Data Protection and Inclusion of a Gender Perspective in Legislation

By Carolina Quesada Ponce

During February and March of 2020, I was given the incredible opportunity of participating in the Human Rights Council 43rd Session in Geneva, Switzerland. In preparation for the 43rd Session, I decided to research the right to privacy because the number of data breaches worldwide by State and Non-State actors has increased with little substantive to change to laws to prevent breaches in the future or mitigate damages to victims. According to Risk Based Security, a vulnerability intelligence, breach data, and risk ratings company, during the first half of 2019 alone, there were 3,813 breaches reported which exposed over 4.1 billion records. (See, RiskBased Security, “2019 on Track to being The “Worst Year on Record” for Breach Activity,” Available at: <https://pages.riskbasedsecurity.com/2019-midyear-data-breach-quickview-report>.) Not all data breaches are required to be reported therefore, the number of exposed records are likely to be higher. Individuals’ personal information has been obtained, retained, and improperly used; however, despite numerous breaches there have been few legislative reforms to fix the problem.

As stated by the Special Rapporteur on the Right

to Privacy, Dr. Joseph Cannataci, in his 2019 report, it is important to protect individuals’ personal data because it is crucial to a person’s autonomy and decision making ability. (See, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy, The Right to Privacy in the Digital Age, ¶ 7, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/40/63, February 27, 2019.) Privacy enables us to create boundaries and protect us from unwarranted interference in our lives, allowing individuals to negotiate who they are and how they want to interact with others. The misuse of the acquired data causes more than economic damages, since information that individuals have chosen to not make public can be used to force them to act or refrain from acting a certain way. Furthermore, if biometrics is accessed, it can impact the victim’s present and future information security practices. (See, RiskBased Security above.) Due to the right of privacy being so central to a person’s identity and potential to impact an individual’s quality of life, I advocated for States to adopt a universal standard for the protection of people’s digital private personal information and for a gender perspective to be included in the legislation of protections at the Human Rights Council.

Adopting a universal standard for data protections is crucial because States around the world have adopted their own legislations regarding data protection all varying in degree of protections afforded to the affected individuals. The varying degree of protections in States’ legislation is problematic because of the very nature of online data – it can be accessed anywhere with online access. Therefore, there are gaps in protection because despite some States having proper legislation to protect individuals’ data, the same data can still be accessed in another State that lacks the proper protections. However, having a universal standard for all is not enough because certain individuals are more susceptible to being victims than others. As stated in Dr. Cannataci’s report for the Human Right’s Council 43rd Session, States need to embed gender equality in the practice of the right to privacy because “[p]rivacy offers protection against gender-based violence, discrimination and other harms that disproportionately affect women, intersex and non-binary gender individuals.” (See, Special Rapporteur on the Right to Privacy, Report of the Special Rapporteur on the right to privacy, U.N. Doc. A/HRC/43/52, February 12, 2020.) There is a need for additional protections to be placed for vulnerable populations such as women and LGBTQ.

As part of my participation in the Human Rights Council I submitted a written statement recommending:

(1) the creation of comprehensive domestic legislation to protect privacy rights online; (2) the adoption of a universal global legislation on data protection and cybersecurity; and (3) for gender perspective in legislation, implementation, and enforcement of privacy laws. (See, Human Rights Advocates, UN Doc. A/HRC/43/NGO/58 (Feb. 12, 2020).

During my internship at the Human Rights Council, I was able to attend several agenda item debates, observe how Special Rapporteurs and State delegates interacted in each agenda item, and speak directly to State delegates about the need for a global framework for data protection and inclusion of a gender perspective. I learned a lot about the importance of considering multiple factors, like learning State positions regarding specific topics, because it will often guide who can be approached regarding a particular topic and what terminology should be used to be an effective advocate. Unfortunately, the drafting sessions for my particular topics were cancelled. However, I was still able to attend drafting sessions for other topics and observed how States' delegates reached an agreement on language and discussed disagreements on terminology, what topics should be covered in each resolution, and how NGOs lobbied during drafting sessions.

I am so grateful that I was able to have this experience during such hard times. Despite the fear of a pandemic, there were still people committing to making a change. While the Human Rights Council was still in session, people were quick to adopt measures for the safety of the attendees and diligently continued lobbying for the topics discussed in the 43rd Session. This opportunity afforded me the ability to learn more about the right to privacy and data protection and gave me a glimpse to what advocating for human rights as a career could possibly look like.

Criminalization of Homelessness

By Natalie Del Cid

In March 2020, I was given the incredible opportunity to represent Human Rights Advocates (HRA) at the 43rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC). My report was focused on

the right to adequate housing in the context of the criminalization of homelessness. Today, there are an estimated 1.8 billion people around the world that lack adequate housing. The right to adequate housing is a human right that States frequently violate. In keeping with international law, States should be focused on protecting and ensuring the right to housing for those who are homeless and inadequately housed rather than criminalizing them. (Special Rapporteur on adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, A/HRC/40/6, Jan. 15, 2019.)

Criminalization of homelessness worsens the problem, instead of fixing it. When homeless people are burdened with high fines they are systematically affected. These fines do not allow homeless people to break out of homelessness because of a continued cycle of oppression that prolongs homelessness by creating barriers to their employment and housing options. Criminalization creates a circulation from homelessness to and from the criminal justice system, which depletes resources that could otherwise be used to solve the problem.

In order to circumscribe the violations committed by the criminalization of homelessness, I submitted a written statement with recommendations that the Human Rights Council urge State Parties to not criminalize homelessness. (Ending Criminalization and Discrimination Based on Housing Status, A/HRC/43/NGO/59, Feb. 17, 2020). My report examined the systematic cycle of discrimination criminalization of homelessness causes in countries such as the United States, Hungary and the United Kingdom. For example, in 2019 an estimated 552,830 people were counted as homeless in the United States. However, the United States continues to take measures that are worrisome and potentially detrimental to homeless people. For instance, the new head of the United States Interagency Council on Homelessness, has expressed that localities should stop providing food to the homeless because it is enabling them. Another example is the constitutional amendment passed in 2028 by Hungary's parliament banning people from living in the streets. The ban uses the criminal justice system to minimize the visibility of people experiencing homelessness. As a member of International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, Hungary is bound to provide adequate housing and it can be argued that this amendment violates their obligation.

Once in Geneva, I attended the drafting ses-

sion for the resolution on Adequate housing as a component of the right to an adequate standard of living, and the right to non-discrimination in this context, which was sponsored by Brazil, Finland, Germany and Namibia. My mission was to get my language to “urge State Parties to not criminalize homelessness,” which was included in the resolution. The language stated that State Parties were “to take all measures necessary to eliminate legislation that criminalizes homelessness and to take positive measures with a view to prevent and eliminate homelessness by adopting and implementing laws, administrative orders, cross-sectional strategies and programmes at all levels that are, among others, gender- age- and disability-responsive and based on international human rights law.” (A/HRC/43/L.20). I was also able to speak with several delegates and the Special Rapporteur on my topic. They were all very receptive to the changes that needed to occur in order to enable ALL the right to adequate housing.

Overall, my experience at the HRC was amazing and humbling. HRA and the Frank C. Newman International Human Rights Law Clinic have afforded me one of the greatest professional and academic experiences of my life. I would like to thank Human Rights Advocates, Professor de la Vega and the Frank C. Newman International Human Rights Law Clinic and for affording me this opportunity.

Rights of Persons with Disabilities: Increasing Access to Information and Communication Technologies

By Edgar Zaragoza-Guzman

In March 2020, I participated in the 43rd session of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland as a representative of Human Rights Advocates. My research and report focused on how insufficient access to information and communication technologies violated the human rights of persons with disabilities. Information and communication technologies (“ICT”) include any communication product that stores, sends, and retrieves information electronically in digital form.

As a result of vast technological advancements in recent times, technology has become increasingly integrated with a variety of aspects of everyday life. However, while there has been a surge in usage of ICT, the movement has failed to account for equal accessibility for persons with disabilities. Insufficient access to ICT violates the rights of persons with disabilities by hindering their ability to fully and equally participate in all aspects of society as citizens. In addition, insufficient access to ICT for persons with disabilities violates other human rights such as the right to education, the right to work, and the right to culture. Lastly, I also researched the effects of countries’ nonexistent or ineffective policies surrounding ICT on the rights of persons with disabilities, and different approaches that worked for some countries.

To address these violations, I submitted a written statement with recommendations urging the Human Rights Council urge State Parties to facilitate private entities and mass media to provide accessible means for persons with disabilities to acquire content and information generally accessible to the rest of the public; promote the development of new technologies that are cost-efficient and considerate of ability to be used by persons with disabilities; increase government funding for research and implementation of new technology to assist persons with disabilities; develop policies that directly address this issue - making sure to include persons with disabilities in the conversation; and effectively implement developed policies within reasonable time after being created. (“The right to culture: Access to Information and Communication Technologies for persons with disabilities,” A/HRC/43/NGO/56, February 11, 2020.)

During my time in Geneva, I was unable to make my oral statement before the Council due to a limit on the number of non-governmental organizations (“NGOs”) that could speak at the end of the interactive dialogue. As a result, I decided to focus my efforts on lobbying delegates and attending the drafting resolution sessions to ensure that my recommendations were included. Through extensive lobbying efforts on the main floor, during drafting resolution sessions, and areas outside of meeting rooms, I was able to get my report to delegates from Mexico, New Zealand, Japan, China, South Korea, Russia, the Special Rapporteur on the rights of persons with disabilities, and the special rapporteur on the right to culture. I attended the three drafting resolution sessions hosted by Mexico and New Zealand and voiced my support of language that reflected my recommendations. Although voting on the

final resolution did not take place, the language that I sought to be incorporated was included in subsections (i)-(k) of the fourth operative paragraph. I believe that my report, participation in the drafting resolutions sessions, and lobbying efforts led to the incorporation of language in the final resolution that addressed the various recommendations in my report.

The drafting resolution sessions proved to be a vital part of the Council as it allowed for more participation by NGOs and interactions between State Parties, especially those that belonged to the same regional group. It was fascinating to see which State Parties aligned in their views and the reasons why some decided against certain edits to the resolution.

Overall, I had a wonderful experience attending the 43rd session where I got to meet a wide array of people, collaborate with my classmates and Professor de la Vega, and see my advocacy efforts on my particular topic come to fruition. It was also my first time in Europe, so I greatly appreciate the cultural experience. The entire experience further motivated my interest in international law, and I hope to be able to continue being involved in the field.

The Promotion and Protection of Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms While Countering Terrorism: Human Rights Abuses in Re-education Camps

By Sumaya S. Bamakhrama

In March 2020, I represented Human Rights Advocates Inc. at the 43rd session of the United Nations Human Rights Council (“HRC”) in Geneva. My research and report are focused on the topic of protecting human rights while countering terrorism, specifically targeting re-education camps as a tactic in combating terrorism. Re-education camps have been utilized as a tactic in attempt to eradicate terrorists. They operate as internment camps to indoctrinate certain groups. Most governments tend to exploit the misleading name “re-education camps” to carry out

practices against anyone who is deemed a threat. My study mainly addressed China as a modern case study for using re-education camps under the umbrella of countering terrorism while committing human rights violations by capturing and subjecting whomever they deem as a threat to torture and cruel, Inhumane, and degrading treatment, deprivation of life, arbitrary detentions, and forced disappearances. I also discuss a counter case study in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia and how they are successful with the implementation of re-education centers or “Family House” in countering terrorism. They only admit convicted individuals. In these Saudi Arabian centers, and the program is clear and comprehensive, which targets different aspects of the prisoners’ lives simultaneously.

I concluded my research and report with some resolutions to mitigate the human rights violations caused by those re-education camps, such as the ones used in China. I recommended that the HRC set clear guidelines and controlled methods and practices if governments are to use re-education camps as a tactic in countering terrorism; and to require the states to follow such guidelines and controlled methods. Also, for states to release detailed data of approaches, curriculums, programs, and methods used at the camps; have all current established camps be more transparent with easy access for monitoring non-governmental bodies; limit all current camps to a short period of time and purpose; eliminate the mass detention at the current camps and release the individuals held there; and to only detain in the camps already convicted terrorists or extremists.

Ironically for this 43rd session, China was the head of the counter-terrorism resolution drafting session, but unfortunately, I wasn’t able to attend because for some reason the first meeting was canceled and no other drafting session for this resolution was scheduled during our time at the Council. It is not clear if they will reschedule it anytime soon. However, I was able to meet with the Special Rapporteur, Ms. Fionnuala Ní Aoláin, after the interactive dialogue regarding counter-terrorism, and I was able to give and discuss my report with her. Moreover, I had the chance to deliver an oral statement at the General Debate before the Council summarizing this and four other topics – the right to food, the right to privacy, the right to culture, and the sale and exploitation of children. You can find the oral statement at minute 33:14 of the following link: <http://webtv.un.org/meetings-events/>

[human-rights-council/watch/item3-general-debate-contd-23rd-meeting-43rd-regular-session-human-rights-council/6139063823001/?term=](https://www.unhcr.org/refugees/press/2019/06/13/6139063823001/?term=) (minute 33.3).

Even though I wasn't able to attend the drafting session regarding my topic of counter terrorism, I attended other drafting sessions addressing other subjects. I found the contrast between the formal agenda item sessions in front of the HRC and the informal resolution drafting sessions very interesting. The resolution drafting session is where all the actual action and change takes place at the Council. Delegates pay more attention and interact during the sessions to assert their sovereignty by their objections or votes in promoting certain language to be added to or removed from the resolutions. Delegates were very careful when presenting their objections and gave rational reasons for them. In these sessions I got a better understanding of the cultural differences between States and how certain issues and language could have an impact on these differences.

Overall, it was an eye opening and enriching experience to observe how the UNHRC operates, as well as how States interact and communicate along with NGOs trying to promote and prevent violations of human rights.

The Right to Food: Fishery Workers' Rights

By Iury Prado

I attended the 43rd Session of the Human Rights Council (HRC) as an intern for HRA (Human Rights Advocates). My topic was related to the right to food. At the 40th Session the Human Rights Council had discussed violations of fishery workers' rights so I followed up on this important issue in my written statement (Right to food - Fishery Workers' Rights - A/HRC/43/NGO/60) and also in my research paper. I also had the opportunity to attend the resolution drafting sessions regarding my topic (A/HRC/43/L.12) which included: recalling all previous resolutions of the General Assembly and the Human Rights Council on the right to food; all resolutions of the Commission on Human Rights on the issue;

referenced the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, which provides that everyone has the right to a standard of living adequate for his or her health and well-being, including food; the Universal Declaration on the Eradication of Hunger and Malnutrition; the United Nations Millennium Declaration, in particular Millennium Development Goal 1 on eradicating extreme poverty and hunger by 2015; and the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development, in particular the Sustainable Development Goals on ending hunger, achieving food security and improved nutrition, and promoting sustainable agriculture and on ending poverty in all its forms everywhere.

Fishery workers play an important role in the right to food and nutrition worldwide, as well as in the fight against global hunger, as described as a goal of the 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development – Goal 2. The fishing sector is responsible for assisting almost 880 million people. Paradoxically, fishery workers who rely on fisheries for work are encountering an arduous barrier to be aware of this right. "Fishers," ILO, available at: <https://www.ilo.org/global/industries-and-sectors/shipping-ports-fisheries-inland-waterways/fisheries/lang--en/index.htm>.

It was very interesting to observe how the HRC works in person as I had previously studied the theory during the Fall 2019 semester. In the final analysis, the private sector, the fishery organizations, and the consumers are the main actors in helping to raise awareness and to eliminate the bad working conditions. Furthermore, private actors have to take targeted measures to ban exploitative working conditions and to implement protections consistent with international law. Implementing fair recruitment methods may reduce the risk of human trafficking and forced labor. I thank Professor de la Vega, the Clinic and HRA for giving me this great opportunity at the HRC.

Your contributions are greatly appreciated by HRA!

Please consider renewing your membership and making a donation – both of which are tax-deductible – by completing the form attached to this issue of the Newsletter.

Promoting NGO Participation at the Commission on the Status of Women

By Kelsey Craven

In March 2019, I was given the incredible opportunity to represent Human Rights Advocates (HRA) at the 63rd Commission on the Status of Women (CSW63) at the United Nations (UN) Headquarters in New York City. I was supposed to attend the 64th Commission on the Status of Women (CSW64) that was to take place in March 2020, and I was planning to address the lack of non-governmental organization (NGO) participation at the CSW. However, just a week before CSW64 was scheduled to start, it was cancelled due to the coronavirus disease (COVID-19). Although I was not able to lobby delegates or collaborate with other NGOs in person this year, I believe this is an ongoing issue for future CSW participants to pursue in order to ensure that NGOs are given adequate access to the CSW.

During my first experience at the CSW, I noticed a lack of NGO participation in delegate meetings and discovered that some NGO representatives were prevented from participating in the CSW altogether due to being denied their visa applications. In a typical year, approximately 5,000 NGO representatives travel to the UN Headquarters in New York to participate in the annual CSW. (Connie de la Vega & Alen Mirza, *A Practical Guide to Using International Human Rights and Criminal Law Procedures* (2019)). Almost all of these NGO representatives are women who have dedicated their careers to combatting gender discrimination and inequality and, therefore, have a vital input as to what gender issues need to be addressed in the international community. Furthermore, many country delegates are male, so it is even more important that female NGO representatives are able to participate in CSW discussions and meetings.

However, almost all of the delegate discussions take place behind closed doors. At CSW63, only a couple delegate discussions were open to a very limited number of NGO representatives, and they were often not allowed to speak. Furthermore, because delegates are spending most of their time in these closed-door meetings, it is extremely difficult to speak to delegates

individually. This is very different from experiences at the UN Human Rights Council in Geneva, where NGO participants are given adequate access to make oral statements and speak with delegates individually. They are also allowed to participate in resolution drafting sessions.

Another major issue relating to NGO access to the CSW is the recent increase in visa denials for NGO representatives. The United States government is under an obligation to allow foreigners to travel to the United States for UN events. When the UN Headquarters was established, the United States entered into a treaty called the UN Headquarters Agreement (“HQ Agreement”). The HQ Agreement states that the United States “shall not impose any impediments to transit to or from the [UN Headquarters] of... [NGO representatives].” (Agreement Regarding the Headquarters of the United Nations, U.N.-U.S., June 26, 1947, 11 U.N.T.S. 11.) However, according to multiple NGO representatives who I spoke with last year and have been attending the annual CSW for several years, the rate of visa denials has drastically increased since 2017. No one knows exactly how many people were denied visas, but at least forty-one people reported they were denied visas in 2019. U.S. Consulate officials denied these visas for vague reasons, such as failing to establish sufficient ties to their home countries or “being too young.” Furthermore, almost all of the people who have been denied visas are from African countries.

There may be a viable legal case against the U.S. government for arbitrarily denying these visas in violation of the HQ Agreement, which would be a case of first impression for the courts. Currently, the biggest hurdle to challenge these visa denials is a lack of evidence, because many, if not most, visa denials have not been reported. If there are more reported cases, then one may be able to establish a pattern and practice of arbitrarily denying NGO representatives access to the UN Headquarters. Although I was not able to gather evidence at the CSW this year, this is an issue that should be continued to be pursued in order to ensure adequate and equal NGO access to the CSW.

HRA Annual Meeting

By Kathy Burke

Human Rights Advocates held its 2020 Annual Meeting on April 21, 2020. As has been the practice for many years, the meeting was preceded by the oral reports of the law students who attended the Human Rights Council as Frank C. Newman interns. But departing from traditional practice, the meeting and the student reports were conducted virtually instead of in person. HRA had to take this extraordinary measure because of the governmental shelter-in-place orders that prohibited group meetings, so as to prevent people from spreading the covid-19 virus during the pandemic.

The new Board of Directors was unanimously elected at the meeting, including new Board member Anna Manuel. Board members who were re-elected are: Trevor Yan; Julianne Traylor; Connie de la Vega; Kathy Burke; and Bette Gedlu. The Board expressed appreciation for the contributions of valued outgoing Board members Alen Mirza and Jacqueline Scott Brown, both of whom had decided to step down. The newly composed Board will serve for one year.

Also at the Annual Meeting, Connie de la Vega presented the Treasurer's report, which was approved by the HRA members. Interested members may

request copies of the Treasurer's report by emailing Connie at delavega@usfca.edu.

The Frank C. Newman student intern reports were thorough and enlightening, as always. The students' articles about their experiences are published in this newsletter.

Message from the President

By Trevor Yan

At the 2020 Annual Meeting on April 21, HRA's Board of Directors thanked outgoing Board Members Alen Mirza and Jacqueline Brown Scott for their contributions to the Board's work over the years. We are grateful to have served with them to advance international human rights. We also welcomed a new Board Member, Anna Manuel, following her election to the Board at the Annual Meeting. Anna brings her valued expertise at the intersection of international human rights and immigration law. The Board looks forward this year to addressing the new challenges facing our world from an international human rights perspective, including the need to eliminate racial discrimination in all aspects of society.

SAVE THE DATE: OCTOBER 13, 2020, 5:00 P.M.

WHAT IS THE RELEVANCE OF INTERNATIONAL HUMAN RIGHTS LAW FOR ADDRESSING SYSTEMIC RACISM IN THE U.S.: A ZOOM DISCUSSION FEATURING PROFESSOR BEN G. DAVIS

HRA announces that on Tuesday, October 13, 2020, at 5:00 p.m., it will sponsor an important discussion of international human rights advocacy regarding racism in the U.S., to be led by Benjamin G. Davis, professor of law at University of Toledo College of Law.

Following the death of George Floyd under a police officer's knee in Minneapolis, human rights activists and Mr. Floyd's family urged the United Nations Human Rights Council to investigate police brutality and racial discrimination. The Council responded, and on June 17, 2020, it unanimously set up an inquiry into systemic racism and violent policing against people of African descent.

The October 13, 2020, event will address this "George Floyd Resolution" (and its future implementation) as an example of how international and domestic law intersect and now shape the world of human rights advocacy.

The event will begin with presentations by a panel of international human rights law specialists, led by Professor Davis. HRA invites all interested persons to participate in a discussion following the panel.

This event is free. Interested people should check our web site for further details about how to participate, including getting information within 24 hours before the scheduled start of October 13, 2020 at 5:00 p.m.

HRA NEWSMAKERS

We are always happy to receive information about former students of the Clinic working in the human rights arena:

Kirsten Elsasser – Human Rights Officer at the Office of the President of the Human Rights Council in Geneva, Switzerland.

Sun Kim – Legal Officer at the International Investigative Mechanism for Myanmar (IIMM) created by the Human Rights Council.

Amol Mehra – Director, Industry Transformation at Laudes Foundation working to address the climate crisis and inequality through supporting approaches to redefine and redistribute value for the good of all.

In other news, **Cruz Melchior Eya Nchama**, Current member of the HRA International Advisory Board was re-elected to the Conseil Municipal of Grand Sacconex in March.

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Human Rights Advocates

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I want to become an HRA member to support HRA's activities and receive the Newsletter and announcements of events. Enclosed is my check for annual dues, fully tax-deductible, in the amount of:

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