



Human Rights & Community Relations

Denver Women's Commission
Chaer Robert, Director
201 W. Colfax Avenue, Dept 1102
Denver, CO 80202
p: 720-913-8465
f: 720-913-8470
www.denvergov.org/women

Chaer Robert
Denver Women's Commission
January 25, 2009

CEDAW Revisited

“Where, after all, do universal human rights begin? In small places, close to home—so close and small they cannot be seen on any maps of the world. Yet they are the world of the individual persons; the neighborhood.....; the school or college.....;the factory , farm or office...Such are the places where every man women or child seeks equal justice, equal opportunity, equal dignity without discrimination. Unless these rights have meaning there, they have little meaning anywhere. Without concerned citizen action to uphold them close to home, we shall look in vain for progress in the larger world.”

Eleanor Roosevelt, 1958



Eleanor Roosevelt chaired the first Commission on Women—President John Kennedy's Presidential Commission on the Status of Women in 1961. This Commission, along with the United Nations' worldwide conferences on women, were the seeds that created many state and local governmental commissions on women.

December 2008 was the 50th Anniversary of the adoption of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights by the United Nations. Eleanor Roosevelt championed that effort 50 years ago. Growing out of the UN Commission on Human Rights, UN work on women's rights ultimately resulted in the adoption in 1979 of the **Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women (CEDAW)** by the UN General Assembly.

CEDAW is a collective value statement of the equality of women. It is our tool of accountability for action by governments to equalize women's rights, as countries report on progress they make towards women's equality.

Today the US stands apart from the community of nations. Currently 185 countries have ratified the CEDAW treaty. The United States is in the company of only Iran, Nauru, Palau, Qatar, Sudan, Somalia and Tonga which have not yet ratified. It is time, after all these years, for our country to ratify CEDAW. Look for the issue to be considered by the U.S. Senate in the coming year.