

Puppetry for Advocacy at the 67th Session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women in New York City

by Anna Kim

As a legal intern with the Human Rights and Gender Justice clinic at CUNY School of Law, I had the opportunity to participate in the 67th Session of the Commission on the Status of Women this spring. **I am a 3L law student interested in the intersections of race, gender, and disability, as well as a puppeteer, clown and visual and performance artist.** Through the clinic I am currently assisting Lisa Davis, Special Advisor on Gender Persecution to the International Criminal Court, on researching issues regarding freedom of expression in Ukraine and Afghanistan. As a nonbinary and neurodivergent person of color, I use puppetry, clowning, installation and performance art as a way to express myself and my identity outside of my law practice. I wanted to use the opportunity to attend CSW this year to meet with practitioners who use puppetry and art as a tool for advocacy to learn how I might be able to do the same going forward in my law practice. I attended two events: Giant Puppets Advocate for Dignified Menstruation hosted by the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation, and Eco-Puppetry for Women's Joyful Expression, hosted by Beth Osnes, Professor of Theatre and Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado, and Sarah Fahmy, PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies from the University of Colorado.

On March 6th I attended the event Giant Puppets Advocate for Dignified Menstruation hosted by the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation. During this event we learned about using puppets and performance as a tool to connect stories to causes, breaking with the printed word and allowing for greater accessibility across languages and technologies. The puppets were used in Nepal to protest menstrual discrimination and were used as a tool for generating dialogue in the community around what is needed for truly dignified menstruation. We even learned practical construction tips, grant writing advice, and much more from the many standout speakers who were involved with the workshop including Radha Paudel (Founder of the Global South Coalition for Dignified Menstruation), Odette Laramée (Founder and Artistic Director of Mutual Productions), Samir Pariyar (Founder of Gifts for Girls), and Sabitri Bhandari (Chairman of Meteri Jaibik Pad).

On March 8th I also attend a workshop titled **Eco-Puppetry for Women's Joyful Expression, hosted by Beth Osnes, Professor of Theatre and Environmental Studies at the University of Colorado, and Sarah Fahmy, PhD in Theatre and Performance Studies from the University of Colorado.** The workshop was warm, intimate, and joyful. We began with a grounding meditation, envisioning and embodying the stages of transformation from larvae to butterfly, before moving on to movement and visual storytelling exercises. We learned about ecological concepts like biomimicry and biophilia and how such concepts can be incorporated into eco-puppetry and embodied in different contexts, employing puppetry in nature, protest, and demonstration. We learned about sustainability in puppet construction and how to use giant butterfly puppets to create playful disruption and facilitate difficult discussions about how women in the global South are both the most impacted by climate change and most left out of policy-making spaces. We concluded the workshop by donning butterfly costumes and puppets and parading to the UN headquarters in an act of playful disruption for International Women's Day. We made new friends along the way with inquiring people on the street who we were able to engage in discussion with. We ended the day outside the UN headquarters where we shared hugs and

warm words of parting before going off to other CSW events. It was a lovely and warm time where I got to experience the integration of puppetry and advocacy firsthand. I hope to continue engaging play and creativity in my advocacy and law practice going forward as I continue working towards a world that is more accessible, equitable, and ultimately joyful.