

Judy Lear

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Dear Dr. Claudia Mahler,

I am Judy Lear, a “PIP” (Previously Important Person). As part of your list serve, I received the email request for input on Older Women and would like to respond as an individual member of civil society. First, I will give my credentials as a PIP. Next, I will briefly acknowledge the reams of papers that have been written on the subject. Lastly, I will make a recommendation. I am honored to be able to share my personal thoughts with you.

I have been an activist fighting ageism, sexism and racism. As the Chair of the NGO CSW Subcommittee on Older Women (SCOW), I was a member of the team that put forth General Recommendation #27 of CEDAW on older women and protection of their human rights. Others on the team were Ferdous Ara Begum (CEDAW representative from Bangladesh), Bridget Sleaf from HelpAge UK, Susanne Paul from Global Action on Ageing, and many more from from both women and ageing NGOs. It was enacted on December 10, 2010. I count this as my qualifier for being a PIP!

For at least the last 30 years, there have been Reports of the OEWG, Secretary General, Principles of Older Persons, CEDAW and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights so I do not plan on elaborating on global agreements that have made some changes on ageing issues, especially for older women. I am sure you are aware of them.

I do have one recommendation — three little words — “of all ages.” To use those words on documents when referring to girls and women of all ages is inclusive of older women. It is also a positive step toward recognition and combatting ageism. I realize that there has been a push to use “ALL” that includes women with disabilities, LGBTQI, women in conflict, indigenous women, and more. This is not the same as women of all ages. Using the phrase “of all ages” will also encompass widows, who are not always older as has been addressed by my colleague, Margaret Owen of Widows for Peace. The inclusion of these words is simple, easy and less controversial than an endless list.

As I introduced myself, I am just an individual who has fought for rights of older women. I am now, at age 78, in that category. I have been aware of my growing invisibility. I apologize for not directly address your 12 specific requests, but I did feel it was important to write something. Thank you for your indulgence.

With warm regards,

Judy Lear, MPA-MC Harvard Kennedy School
International Council of Jewish Women, Women's Issues Committee
Every Woman Treaty, Founding Member
Gray Panthers, Past National Convener, Main Representative to UN
UN NGO Committee on Status of Women, Past Chair of Subcommittee on Older Women
UN NGO Committee on Ageing, Past Board Member
Minnesota Board on Aging, Past Board Member