



# THE CEDAW TRILOGY

Play #3

## BRINGING CEDAW HOME

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Setting: Government Center Hearing Room; present day

Props: Name plates for each Supervisor

Characters: (In order of appearance) Chairman Paul Erwin; Community Organizer Jane Arnold;  
Supervisor Caroline Auguste; Supervisor Amanda Strand; Supervisor James Peck;  
Supervisor William Sullivan

### **Narrator:**

The final play in the CEDAW TRILOGY is set in a county government center where the Board of Supervisors is prepared to discuss a proposed Resolution in support of CEDAW.

This is an account of a fictional meeting. The dialogue is inspired by recent statements found in the public record and media communications. Let's listen in on the meeting.

**Chairman Paul Erwin:**

Today's session will come to order. We begin with the proposed CEDAW resolution.

After opening remarks from our petitioner, I will ask each Supervisor for any statement.

At this time, I yield the floor to Ms. Arnold, the representative from the community coalition that brought this Resolution to our attention.

**Ms. Jane Arnold (Community Organizer):** Thank you, Chairman Erwin.

[CEDAW](#) is an acronym for the United Nations' Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women. CEDAW is an international human rights treaty focused on gender equity and the empowerment of women and girls. It was adopted by the UN General Assembly in 1979.

This Resolution is important for so many reasons. CEDAW promotes studies in gender equity. A gender study will gather and analyze information on the effects of discrimination on women's health care, safety, employment, housing, transportation, and homelessness. And that is just to name one advantage.

Our coalition believes that respect for the human person begins at home, in our own community. We support all appropriate measures that seek to end discrimination against women. By adopting a CEDAW Resolution today, our municipality would join other cities and counties across the nation affirming fundamental human rights.

A CEDAW Resolution can have real impact, and San Francisco is a shining example. After adopting CEDAW, the city saw 44 months free from domestic violence related homicides and, an increase in women owned small businesses. The San Francisco Mayor established a Task

Force on Anti-Human Trafficking, and the city's gender analysis revealed the city's need to reflect gender diversity in its Commission and Boards.

Other examples abound: In Los Angeles, a CEDAW Ordinance led to a public library program to expose young women to science and math AND a 12-fold increase in public funding of contracts awarded annually to certified women-owned businesses.

Our coalition believes that you will be applauded for your endorsement of the Resolution and rewarded with our votes.

**Chairman Paul Erwin:** Thank you, Ms. Arnold. We have all reviewed your coalition's proposed resolution. Supervisor Auguste, do you wish to make any opening remarks?

**Supervisor Caroline Auguste:**

Yes, Thank you Mr. Chairman. I support the CEDAW resolution. It is indisputable that women and girls are disproportionately impacted by the economic fallout from Covid 19. In September 2020 alone, 865,000 women left the U.S. workforce, four times the number of men. And our Black women and Latinas experienced an even larger decrease in the labor force than White women. For a lot of these issues, the reason is a lack of childcare or paid family and medical leave.

We still need to deal with the significant wage gap between men and women. Today's resolution will start the ball rolling by undertaking studies to expose these gender-based inequities.

I yield back the remainder of my time.

**Chairman Paul Erwin:** Supervisor Strand, do you wish to make a statement?

**Supervisor Amanda Strand:** Yes, thank you, Chairman Erwin.

This resolution adds another layer of redundancy to our already government-heavy rules and regulations. We have protections for women on the books already.

But, equally problematic with this Resolution is that it changes the historical definition of women to include biological men. The Resolution is essentially an effort to cement the idea that those who identify as women, are women! If we follow this new definition of women to its logical conclusion, then all non-biological women will mix with biological women in jails, homeless shelters, and domestic violence shelters. Non-biological women could compete in women's sports and take scholarships from biological women.

I believe that we need to draw the line. We cannot protect everybody's rights. When transgender people's rights start infringing on biological women's rights, I say I cannot support this Resolution until this issue is worked out. I will vote against the Resolution.

I yield back.

**Chairman Paul Erwin:** Supervisor Strand yields back her time. Supervisor Peck, do you wish to make any statement?

**Supervisor James Peck:** Yes. Thank you, Chairman Erwin.

Today is not the time or place to belabor the downturn in the economy and the loss of jobs for both men and women during the pandemic. Let's turn the page on that narrative and focus on the resolution before us.

I do NOT support the resolution. CEDAW is an international treaty that will tie America's hands and force us to follow the will of a group of so called "experts" sitting somewhere in Europe debating women's human rights under the auspicious name of the Committee on the Elimination of Discrimination against Women.

Believe me, I bear no ill will against women. I am married, have 2 daughters and one granddaughter. I love them all dearly and wish nothing but the best for them, but not at the hands of some overseas so-called "expert" committee.

To add insult to injury, the United Nations does not have a stellar resume when it comes to protecting human rights. Look at the UN's response to the Uighurs situation in China. How can we possibly support any United Nations human rights treaty when their own treaties fail to protect the most vulnerable people from torture, surveillance, forced labor and cultural persecution? **(Supervisor Peck leaves the meeting.)**

**Chairman Paul Erwin:** Let the record reflect that Supervisor Peck left the meeting. We come to you Supervisor Sullivan. Do you want to put a statement on the record?

**Supervisor William Sullivan:** Yes, thank you Chairman Erwin.

I want to address the inaccurate and misleading comments by two of my colleagues. Just now, Supervisor Peck implied that CEDAW is controversial or has lots of international opposition. And then he left the meeting! The truth is that CEDAW is overwhelmingly adopted internationally. Out of 193 countries in the United Nations, only six (6) have failed to adopt CEDAW. Those outlier countries include Iran, Sudan, Somalia, Palau, Tonga, and the USA. The non-ratifying nations do not have a great track record on human rights. I, for one, do not find solace in America's association with those countries.

And what is equally chilling is that Supervisor Peck and Supervisor Strand totally disregard the intent of CEDAW.... The intent is to promote fairness and respect for the dignity of all human persons. CEDAW raises awareness of inequities between men and women. We know discrimination against women exists. CEDAW gives us a tool to collect data and scrutinize its causes. It is our duty as legislators to improve the lives of our constituents and CEDAW gives us that opportunity.

Furthermore, Supervisor Strand asks us to treat transgender women in a category all to themselves. This approach ignores the rampant gender discrimination and sexual violence against these individuals, who are discriminated against AS WOMEN. I suggest that my colleague's laser-focus on transgender women has deep rooted biases that do not reflect human rights values, nor the will of her constituents.

I vote in support of this Resolution.

I yield back my time.

**Chairman Paul Erwin:** Thank you, Supervisor Sullivan. I also wish to put a statement on the record.

I believe that, when any opportunity comes before us that raises awareness of inequities to women, it is our duty to do so.

Our county supports all\_our citizens. The county supports policies of inclusion over exclusion and fairness over bias for all human beings.

IF we already had laws on the books protecting women's human rights, we shouldn't still see inequities between boys and girls in the classroom or between men and women in the workforce. We shouldn't see so many women with children living in poverty or unable to access public services. We shouldn't see women and girls suffering acutely from harassment and physical violence in their homes, in their workplace, and in the community or online.

With my vote today the Resolution passes with a 3-2 majority. We will pursue gender equity studies in this county and scrutinize our policies and practices so that we may verify our commitment to the equality of women and men.

On behalf of the Board of Supervisors, I thank Ms. Arnold for bringing this CEDAW Resolution to our attention.

Today's meeting is adjourned.