

Online event gives women a platform - Jean Silvan Evans

HOW splendid to hear that research by women in Wales will be beamed across the world as part of the celebrations for this year's United Nations annual conference of the UN Commission on the Status of Women (UN:CSW) to be held later this month.

Usually held in New York, UN:CSW, which monitors progress on women's rights, this year makes its debut as an online only event, and Wales Assembly of Women, a non-governmental organisation accredited to UN:ECOSOC, will showcase some of the latest research on how women in Wales are represented in public life.

In a session entitled Women's Representation in Wales: How Gendered is my Valley?, a panel of three post-graduate women researchers will focus on elected women in Welsh local government, women in Welsh sport leadership, and the experiences of disabled women, to see how far various sectors have succeeded in introducing greater diversity to their senior decision making.

Leah Hibbs will analyse the experiences of women councillors in Welsh local government in the significantly entitled "What do you know? You're a woman!" Philippa Davies will examine women's experiences of Gender (in)Equality in Welsh Sport Leadership; and Ruth Nortey will survey the challenges and shortcomings of the Representation of Disabled Women in Public Life in Wales. All three speakers are awardees of the annual Audrey Jones Awards for Women's Scholarship, sponsored by Wales Assembly of Women in memory of celebrated women's rights campaigner and founder member Audrey Jones.

Chair of Wales Assembly of Women Dr Eleri Evans said the seminar was "absolutely on topic" for UN:CSW's priority theme this year of women's full and effective participation and decision-making in public life.

She said: "We need to keep our focus on the representation of women in public life. A recent report by the UK Government committee on women and equalities found UK Government support policies during the pandemic repeatedly skewed towards men. This is not good enough.

"In Wales we have a chance to do things differently and indeed the country caused waves worldwide in 2003 as the first legislature to achieve 50:50 gender balance with equal members of men and women. But although Wales broke this significant barrier, women are still underrepresented in public life and business, paid less than men, and more likely than men to be working below their qualifications level."

She said that was why she was delighted Welsh Government Minister for Equalities Jane Hutt MS, who was a friend of Audrey Jones, would be taking part in the online session.

Co-ordinator of the Audrey Jones Awards Dr Jane Salisbury said: "Audrey fought tirelessly for women's rights and equality. She would be so heartened by the platform we have created in her name to share robust and evidence-based research. It is only in learning about the lived experience of women that we can share good practice, shine a light on areas where inequality persists, and contribute to making a difference in the lives of women and girls."

The Wales Assembly of Women panel will take place on March 18 at 8.30pm. Everyone has to register on the virtual event platform to watch the panel. Just search online for NGO-CSW65 Forum registration.