

Gaining experience about advocacy at UN from Ms. Diallo



Ms. Hawa Diallo during meeting with UVU students

On April 3rd 2018 at Utah Valley University (UVU), I had the privilege to meet Ms. Hawa Diallo who is the head of Unit and Focal Point for NGO youth representatives for United Nations Department of Public Information. Mrs. Diallo visited my comparative politics class where she shared her life story and how she came to be part of the United Nations (UN).

Diallo is originally from Sierra Leone. She studied here in the United States in New York City, to be precisely. She talked about her family: she has 3 brothers and is the only girl. She talked about how on her birthdays or her brother's birthdays all they would get as a birthday gift was books on basic facts about the UN. She explained that her family has always been in the public services of others: for example, during colonization era, her father was among the people that helped her home country Sierra Leone gain independence around 1961. She loves serving people or being in the public serves and that is easily explained due to her background.

Diallo shared with us how she entered in the UN: it was after she had completed her college degree when she wanted to go back home and had nothing to do, so all she would do all day was sit around the house and just watching television and TV shows. She used to watch TV shows like general hospital, until one day her mother got tired of seeing her just sitting around and doing nothing. Then her mother told her that she needed to work, so what her mother did was talk to someone she knew at the UN and got her daughter an entry level position in the communication department. Her job duties included meeting and greeting guests and answering questions they may have. Of course, after being in the UN for so long she danced. She also worked at the UN headquarters in Kenya for a while where she mainly focused on a youth project by helping young people to get skill like working on computers or in other information technology areas and be able to look for a job.

She also talked about her first peacekeeping mission she was sent to in Somalia, which was immersed in endless civil wars, gun shootings, and people fighting all the time. It was a challenging experience and the one that changed her life. It was during her time in Somalia that she realized that what she said to the people and how she helped them during these hard times truly mattered.

Ms. Diallo also shared with our class how one can get accepted in the UN. She mentioned some requirements: for example, if somebody would like a job in the UN as a translator, that person must at least speak 3 languages and the mother tongue should always be the first. Ms. Diallo is such an amazing woman who is down to earth and easy to relate to. She has an inspiring young mind. It was truly an honor and privilege to have her visit our class.

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