

Day 2. Panel on "Recreating a Healthier Environment for Empowering Women and Girls"

On the Day 2 of our trip to the 63 Session of the Commission on Status of Women, UVU delegation attended the panel dedicated to "Recreating a Healthier Environment for Empowering Women and Girls". The event took place on March 18th at 2:30pm at Salvation Army Auditorium, and featured 5 speakers discussing their experiences and approaches towards women empowerment.



Panel Speakers

First speaker, Hsin Chin Shih, the CEO of Jieh Huey Social Welfare & Charity Foundation talked about her community efforts in Taiwan, discussing both benefits and disadvantages of their society. Despite being modern and progressive state, Taiwan suffers from such issues as rural youth outflow, rural urban disparity, highest worldwide speed for population aging, and poverty of urban population. Even though those issues can be burden for women, with the help of respective organizations such as JHF, women can fulfil the important roles in their communities, such as taking jobs as care-givers, thus gaining self-confidence and stable income, as well as having opportunity to take care of family and local elderly. It's implemented through the recruitment and training of rural women and youth, with a mission to help people in rural communities and improve the quality of life and expand their opportunities. Also, the speaker talked about organization's progress, including the services delivery in 3 rural areas, providing

stable income for their employees (95% of whom are women) and support for 1000 elders and disabled every month. Then Ms. Chin Shih shared the individual stories of women working in their service programs and explained how those promoted women's empowerment, improved their family life and raised their role in community.



Our Delegation Leader and Panel Speaker, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev

Next speaker, UVU Professor and Former Ambassador of Kyrgyz Republic to US and Canada, and our delegation leader, Dr. Baktybek Abdrisaev, talked about the role contribution of non-traditional students towards women's empowerment. He discussed student's organizational efforts regarding high-level events taking place on UVU campus and in Utah, including their contribution towards mountain forum agenda such as UVU delegation trips to UN in the past years for CSW and HLPF - High Level Political Forum. At the end, Dr. Abdrisaev gave thanks to such NGOs as Russian Academy of Natural Science and Utah-China F.I.S.H.&D&C for their support of the efforts of student-run coalition of clubs Utah International Mountain Forum, and in particular their contributions towards student delegation coming to Utah. It worth noting that UVU delegation was very supportive of Professor's Abdrisaev's speech (which was expressed in multiple cheers and applause), much to the delight and surprise of other panel speakers.



UVU students listening to panel speakers' remarks

Next, Dr. Antoinette Ellis-Williams, Professor of Women's & Gender Studies in New Jersey City University, delivered an excellent speech regarding modern role of girls and women in their respective communities and the challenges they must overcome. Delivering her arguments, she used her personal life's example, describing the issues she had to overcome as the black child immigrant from Jamaica. Her family provided her with opportunity of choice and equality, bright example being her right as a young little girl to chose a seat at the head of dining table in the household with 4 brothers, parents and grandparent. Yet, despite her family being very supportive of her education and career goals, members of the black community were rejecting her family's endeavour to integrate into American culture and get educated, with some family friends claiming her not-a-marriage-material when she was in course of her PhD program. Thus, she addressed how much more struggle women might face due to both gender and racial stereotypes, from both society and its own community. Dr. Ellis-Williams appropriates many elements of her culture (including the style choice of wearing the scarf), yet she described how people driven by stereotypes and generalization expresses their hatred on her after 9/11 just because of the way she looked. Then, she addressed the need for social education, particular when it comes to culture of boyhood and how it correlates with the attitudes towards girls, as well as social behavioral constructs which are stereotypically preferred for boys only such as wit and critical thinking, At the end, she talked on the gender messages in historical, political/legal, economic, cultural (internal), media, religious areas; highlighting importance of engaging each to fight gender inequality. Finally she summarized women's empowerment as a proactive behavioral strategy, which can be summarized by a quote of Shirley Chisholm "If they don't give

you a seat at the table, bring a folding chair”. Personally, for me this speakers perspectives were the most inspiring among the other talks of the entire day of side events, as she addresses the current inequality situation from very realistic standpoint, yet points out all the good experiences and support she received from her family.

Finally, Dr. Ali Mazzara, Director of Educational Programs in the Office of Global Affairs for the State University of New York, talked about the funding their programs provide for financially underprivileged yet bright women, many of whom are first-generation university students. Another pannelist, Pauline Tzuang, Charter President Zonta Club of Taipei Cosmo (2016-2018) and Member of Translation Committee for Zonta International, had her remarks be delivered by her colleague due to the health issues, particularly talking about her organizations contributions towards women’s empowerment in Taiwan, with funding the trip to capital for kids from remote rural areas.



Final Group Photo

At the end, all speakers delivered their closing remarks and took a bunch of photos with the audience members, which once again proves that such events promote cooperation and engagement of people from all over the globe.

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