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My Story: Sustainable Mountain Development and the World

Since I was a little boy, I've had the desire to help others. It is the greatest feeling in the world when you can do something that puts a smile on someone's face. I have never really been interested in making a lot of money for myself. I was unsure how I could do what I loved as well as maintain a job that would take care of my family. I decided to major in art, and help people by making them laugh.

I spent two years of my life on an LDS mission in Honduras. Those 2 years changed my life completely. I discovered myself, and learned how to work hard and I found ways to connect with people I have never met before. I believe the key to a better world is being genuinely kind and willing to work hard. Life is very difficult, which drives people to focus on themselves. When I arrived in Honduras, I didn't speak the language, and people looked at me like I didn't belong in their country. I worked hard to learn Spanish, and took the time to listen to people and their problems. With time, I was able to connect with people I never met or cared about. I developed a love for them and I genuinely cared about helping them succeed and overcome their hardships. Being there and seeing the way others live gave me a different perspective on life. It helped me realize that there is a bigger picture, and there are people out there who need help. I discovered that people could only achieve true lifelong happiness when they worked for it themselves. I learned how to show people the steps to success, and encourage them to take the leaps.

My religion has shaped who I am, and how I think. This has led to a deeper sense of self worth and optimism for a better world. One of the greatest examples I have found is that of Jesus

Christ. He lived over 2,000 years ago, yet his teachings still have an impact on people all across the globe. The basic principles he taught open the minds of many in his day, but had major impact on my own mind. Now, and throughout history, religion has had a negative connotation to those who are not of the same faith. Rather than open discussions, hearts and minds are closed. Everyone thinks their way is the only right way. The teachings of Jesus Christ are aimed at bringing people together, and inevitably inspiring people to not only hope for a better world but work to make it better.

Looking back on my pioneer heritage, I know that despite all odds, good things can come from anywhere. They came to Utah with nothing but comradery and a collective idea. When Ambassador Macharia came and spoke with us in a private gathering, I was moved by his optimism for a better world. With all the political turmoil today, it would be easy to abandon hope, and predict the end of times. He spoke about looking at the bigger picture of history. Every point in history, whether it be the world wars or the rights of mankind, has seemed like the most important time to those living in that era. We need to take a step back and plan for the next historic events to take place. This is why I believe sustainable mountain development is such an important issue to discuss as well as plan for. If people were able to look at climate change in a different light, we may start to work together quicker. Many question climate change with a narrative similar to: "How can we prevent a world that is supposedly changing rapidly. The world is always changing, it always has." It isn't about preventing the climate from changing, but rather taking care of what we love and preparing ourselves for the future. What happens when the glaciers in the mountains melt completely, and sea levels rise. How will we store water? What will we use for energy when we no longer have fossil fuels? These may seem like abstract

questions now, but one day they will be major problems. Rather than wait and deal with the emergencies that will occur, we can start planning today.

I asked the ambassador about my future. I wanted to know his recommendations for degrees or fields of study. He told me “Do what you love doing, and do it well. You can’t always plan out everything in life.” In his own life, he worked hard to go to school in the United States. He held a job and worked hard in school just like all of us nontraditional students. He never expected to have accomplished all that he has. He did what he loved, and the opportunities came. His advice was very powerful to me, and this answered so many questions I’ve had for a very long time.

In conclusion, it isn’t easy to think about future generations or the people all over the world you don’t currently know. No one man, or a government can bring about change for a better planet. The work needs to be done by the people living on this earth. All the individuals living in the mountains, valleys, and oceans play an integral part in global change. If we take the time to get to know each other, and work to be the best we can, we will have a positive influence in the world. The future is only as bright as we make it.