

Visit from UN representative Hawa Diallo

On April 3rd, 2018 students attending comparative politics and some additional students at Utah Valley University had the opportunity to attend a presentation given by a representative from the United Nations. Ms. Hawa Diallo is originally from Sierra Leon, where her father occupied a position comparable to Secretary of State. Because of her transient life has a youth, she attended public schools in the United States since 2nd grade. She says this is where her desire to defend people's rights, standing up for the smaller kids that couldn't stand up for themselves.



Dr. Baldomerio Lago, Vice Rector for Global Engagement at UVU presents gift to Ms. Hawa Diallo

In 1986 Ms. Diallo was able to start her career in the UN as a tour guide for dignitaries. Although starting as a tour guide for the UN, it was imperative that she stay informed with the dealing of the organization. Staying informed about what is happening around us is not only

important as a member of the UN, but also vital if one wants to become involved in politics. Because of her experience and the information that she knew she was able to further her involvement as part of peace keeping operations.

Starting in Cambodia, she was able to witness and take part in the peace keeping operations in behalf of the UN with other members of the organization. During this time, the government in that country was in the process of change. Because of potential violence in that country during the elections, the UN was able to help maintain peace in that area. After the mission concluded she was invited to take part in peace keeping operation in Somalia, where she would spend 6 months with the regimes there. From day 1 the need for a mediator was apparent, since that was the day that inspired the film Black Hawk Down. Finally, she found her way to the UN Habitat located in Kenya.

During her presentation she touched on a topic that is more relevant now than it has ever been. She said that people from all over the world are the same, the only difference is their access to resources to excel. Something that we take for granted are the opportunities that we have here in the U.S. where nearly everyone has the opportunity to learn and at the very least complete high school. This is where the UN Habitat has stepped up to help those with less opportunities. The UN has not always been involved in actions like these. The approach has changed over time has culture has more and more understood. Ms. Diallo said, “The things that will be able to make a difference is your state of mind.” You need to learn about other cultures and peoples to be effective.

The actions that were taken in Kenya were able to help those youth that were not able to complete their education. These former students were able to get certified to hold certain jobs in administrative positions and contribute to each of their own countries.

This was a very good and relevant dialogue that the students of UVU were able to share with someone with over 30 years of experience. The topic of “Empowering Youth through Global Advocacy” is not only applicable but also central for all who wish to take part, whether domestic or abroad. I am looking forward to future opportunities to learn more from those like Ms. Diallo and to hear more about their experience.

Damon Ashcraft, Vice President, Sustainable Mountain Development Club