

Advocacy Lessons at the United Nations from Marcia Barlow

The student delegation at Utah Valley University had the rare opportunity to receive training and guidance on advocating in the United Nations from Mrs. Marcia Barlow, Vice President of United Families International (UFI). UFI is a consultative non-governmental organization that works in conjunction with the Economic and Social Council of the United Nations. Her presentation focused around how the student body of UVU could advocate for all types of projects within the sphere of the United Nations. During most of her presentation she discussed the specifics of working within the United Nations, but after her main presentation the class on Sustainable Mountain Development had the unique opportunity to talk with Mrs. Barlow in a proximity setting.



Marcia Barlow (left) discusses Utah model of sustainable mountain development with UVU students

In the class, each student sharing the topic and main arguments for their research paper and effectively had the opportunity to advocate for their own research paper. The conversation quickly turned into a fascinating conversation of the Utah model of development, and why that model was so effective. This portion of the discussion centered around the danger of mountain communities utilizing only one resource and exploiting that resource. The foremost examples of this were in

Saudi Arabia and the Eastern United States. It was explained that environmental positives or possession of large amount of natural resources can work against the development of mountain communities. The idea that the first pioneers in Utah chose not to exploit natural resources, but instead foster a myriad of way to diversify economically provided the foundation for the success that Utah continues to enjoy today, especially in the fiscally responsible sense. Though isolationism is never a favorable policy, the isolation of the early settlers in the territory of Utah did indeed provide a way that they could learn to be economically self-sufficient. Mrs. Barlow explained that from her perspective another important factor in the success in the growth of the Utah model is that the main founders of Utah never went seeking for reparations for past offenses, defying the consensus that when one is wronged they deserve some sort of accommodation to make up for the inconvenience.

Too often in poor mountainous regions, the populations are marred by constant reparations and when this becomes the sole source of income, the community fails to diversify economically and becomes completely reliant on the country that pays the reparations. If these communities were to find ways to instead diversify economically, they would have the opportunity to become self-reliant and self-sufficient. The final consensus of the discussion in sum was that an isolationist policy to the rest of the world promotes self-sufficiency which can then be transitioned into a strong community that functions in harmony with the rest of the world. The issue facing mountainous people is that this policy of staunch isolationism is difficult to maintain when most of the benefits come over a longer period. Short-term benefits of a system of reliance on natural resources brings instant profit. Thus, creating an isolationist policy that is functional also requires a strict moral code that demands discipline. Overall, the conversation between the class on Sustainable Mountain Development and Mrs. Barlow gave valuable insights into why Utah is such an effective model on development and how the class can better advocate in the United Nations for global sustainable mountain development programs.

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