



Anglican Communion Office  
*at the United Nations*

May, 2016

### **Internship at the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations**

During the first week of my spring break, I interned for the Anglican Communion Office at the United Nations (ACOUN). This week also happened to be the beginning of the 60<sup>th</sup> session of the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women (UNCSW60), an annual event. At the session, the priority theme was women's empowerment and the link to sustainable development. While working in the Anglican Communion Office, I had the opportunity to go to many of the UNCSW60 events, listen to many powerful speakers, and meet many women from all around the world.

While watching the opening UNCSW60 event, I heard many delegates share their ideas about how to improve the lives of women in their home country. Many countries agreed that women needed to be represented in the media industry and that women needed to be given education and especially pushed towards scientific fields. Many wanted women to be lawmakers and all talked about the untapped potential of women. When women are undervalued in a society, that society is only using half of its population, putting it at a huge disadvantage. Another theme of the conference was the inclusion of men in the conversation on gender equality. Women have been fighting for their rights for centuries, but men still seem to be absent from the table. Without the help of men, who still hold most of the power in many societies, women will be unable to obtain their goal of equality and society as a whole will suffer.

I attended two other UNCSW60 events. The first was a discussion about migrant women and what we can do to help them. I read a story about a woman who had to leave her home and children in India in order to make money to send home. I learned about the Kafala system, a system used in Saudi Arabia, Lebanon, and many other countries, to monitor migrant workers. Unfortunately, many women become tied down to one employer and are unable to leave these employers even if they face physical abuse. Many came up with the idea to hold these governments accountable for their faulty systems. Others thought banning women from going into such countries could help fix this problem. One main goal of this discussion was to include migrant women in the class of people protected by the laws of a country. If a country makes a law that allows women to advance, migrant women should benefit from this law as well.

Another discussion I attended discussed the representation of women in the media. Often the media does not accurately portray women, and they are almost always underrepresented. While women represent around 51% of the population, men hold 73% of top management jobs. Women are often considered too fragile to handle dangerous situations, which can put female journalists at an extreme disadvantage. One woman stated that women need to have powerful role models to look up to and to motivate them. We must understand that great stories have great impact on our lives. Therefore, we should make documentaries and have news reports that showcase powerful women. Many of the women speaking agreed that we need to break the stereotypes that working women face. Women who are assertive and try to improve their status are too often called “intrusive” or “aggressive”. If we cannot break such stereotypes, women will continue to advance extremely slowly.

While working at the Anglican Communion Office, I also met many Anglican women from all around the world. One woman talked about how women and their struggles are almost always erased in history. Women are almost always overlooked even when they have made a huge impact in so many different countries. She talked about how women are the key to peace, as women are more often inclined to look for the peaceful way out. She also said that women do not need to be empowered, they already are. All we need to do is listen to them. Many other women talked about the specific sexism they face in their home countries. I discovered that whether women are in South Korea or the United States, they still face unattainable beauty expectations and sexist double standards. I also learned that in many countries women still do not have the right to their own bodies. Many countries have laws restricting abortion, and sex trafficking is also a major problem all around the world. Talking with these women made me understand that the daily struggles of being a woman are universal. While it might seem obvious, this is not something we tend to think about. Women of every age—on every continent— face similar difficulties day in and day out. I believe that conferences like UNCSW60—that allow women from many different cultures to engage in a dialogue about the issues they face—are the best way to change the way women are seen and treated throughout the world.

Finally, I would like to give advice to any future interns. I suggest you do two things while working at the Anglican Communion Office. Use your UN pass as much as possible. It is not going to be there forever and you will learn more than you can ever imagine listening to people that are older and more experienced than you. Most importantly, talk to the women around you. They have faced so much and your conversations with them will be the most informative and most powerful part of your experience.

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