**San Diego Diplomacy Council – Blog Post**

As a San Diego native who returned home after 9 years, I felt like a tourist in my own city. The streets and locales - once a friendly reminder of what I had called home, suddenly felt so foreign. I came to realize how little I knew of my own hometown. But what I have come to uncover is a treasure trove of organizations, initiatives, and changemakers working collaboratively to drive positive change both locally and across the globe.

I arrived in San Diego to attend graduate school at the Joan B. Kroc School of Peace Studies at the University of San Diego. Thus far, what I have obtained is not only a world class education from the west coast capital of peace, but a way in which to merge my theoretical education in the classroom with real world practice.

This past summer, I began an internship with the San Diego Diplomacy Council (SDDC). The San Diego Diplomacy Council seeks to “connect and empower local and global leaders to create a more peaceful, prosperous and stable world” by curating professional, cultural, and educational experiences through programs and services connecting San Diegans to the international sphere.

As an executive intern, I worked closely with the Executive Director of the San Diego Diplomacy Council, Fabienne Perlov. While my position transitioned into a completely virtual experience, I commend the SDDC on finding transformative ways to innovate through the COVID-19 pandemic. For instance, the SDDC organized a truly unique signature event highlighting the ways in which videogames can promote peace and diplomacy. The ability to seamlessly connect a virtual experience like videogames to the interpersonal experience of diplomacy into a single event was both cutting-edge and inventive.

But what I most enjoyed and respected about my internship experience were the ways in which the SDDC staff and the Board of Directors showed a genuine interest and commitment to weaving the voices of interns into the culture of the organization. In casual conversation, I shared with them the concerns, challenges, and barriers that international students shared with me at the start of the pandemic from housing and so on. This conversation prompted them to create space for a few international students to share their obstacles to be addressed by the City of San Diego International Affairs Board.

The San Diego Diplomacy Council has also demonstrated a genuine interest in becoming an anti-racist organization. I helped design a self-assessment of diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) within the SDDC. The intention has been to develop and implement an action plan prioritizing concrete initiatives to address issues of racial equity within the existing structure of the organization. At SDDC, I witnessed firsthand how an organization could be a model for other organizations seeking to make active and instrumental change from within.

My internship with the San Diego Diplomacy Council immersed me into a world for which I have a lot of interest but relatively less experience. I am thoroughly grateful that following the adjournment of my internship, I was gifted a long-term membership to the organization so that I can remain engaged. Additionally, I am honored and humbled to have been nominated by the San Diego Diplomacy Council and selected to participate in Global Ties U.S.’s 2021 Emerging Leaders Program sponsored by the U.S Department of State. This program offers a select group of young citizen diplomats interested in international exchange and diplomacy the opportunity to participate in a year-long professional development and enrichment opportunity.

The need for diplomacy in a variety of shapes and forms is infinite. It is the foundation upon which we understand our differences and seek to find commonalities, transforming dialogue into social impact. From my time at the San Diego Diplomacy Council, I am viewing my hometown through a different lens and recognizing the immense impact we have in effectuating global change.