A breathtaking experience in Atlantic College

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UNITED World College is a college that encourages big ideas and service to humanity. It teaches students international and cultural understanding, personal and mutual responsibility and respect. Personally, I have acquired a sense of pragmatic idealism that does not shy away at the enormity of a challenge. In Atlantic College there are lots of activities, groups and clubs. One such group is Amnesty International, where we campaign for international human rights. The purpose of Amnesty International is to compare the actual practice of human rights to the internationally accepted standards and demand compliance where these standards are not being respected.

In mid November last year, we planned to carry out a demonstration in Cardiff as a part of our activities about the wall of in Israel-Palestine. Initially, the thought of doing demonstrations scared me, as I had never done anything like it before in my life. But my experience in AC has taught me to challenge myself. I wanted to make a difference by creating awareness among the people of Cardiff about the wall and make them sign the petition against the wall, so I went forward with it. We intended to draw attention by making a human wall in the middle of a busy street, with checkpoints guarded by students representing the Israeli army. Normal civilians would be allowed to go through the checkpoints but not the Palestinians. I was quite nervous in the beginning since I had to play the role of a Palestinian who had to pass through the checkpoint to get to the other side. So there I was, in a cold and rainy afternoon in Cardiff, shouting and tussling with the Israeli soldiers to let me through to the other side as people nearby stood and observed. The experience was truly overwhelming. Before this I could never picture myself standing in the middle of a busy street, wearing all black, shouting and demonstrating. I was always a very shy person before coming to Atlantic College, yet I did my best to show all the people how harshly the Palestinians are treated, and how the wall is disrupting their daily life. I was getting more confident as time passed by and I saw more and more people signing the petition. But then the police arrived and my heart skipped a bit. The police officer tried to break off the wall, but we argued that we were not disrupting public, and that peaceful demonstrations are legal as long as we do not harm anyone in the process. We finally managed to convince the police officer that we knew what we were doing. The police acknowledged our courage and let us continue our demonstration. I changed my role and went to people with petition and informed them about the wall and the situation in Palestine and Israel. I was really surprised at how little these people knew about what was going on in another part of this world.

At the end of the day we managed to get more than 1300 petitions signed! It was a great achievement for me because I crossed the boundaries of my fear and shyness to do something quite significant. Atlantic College, in these ways, injects a sense of responsibility into the students, and the best part about it was that students organized the whole thing! This proves that student initiative is a very big part in the life of an Atlantic College student.





