

# Quiet Diplomacy

“I want to work for the United Nations,” **Rachel Madenyika '00** told **Judy Harvey '73**, Guilford's director of community learning, when she graduated with degrees in business management and international relations.

A few months later, she was onstage at the United Nations introducing the president of the U.N. General Assembly, Harri Holkeri of Finland, a task she admits made her “a bit nervous.”

Her ambitions earned her an internship with the Quaker United Nations Office, located across the street from the United Nations in New York City.

Founded in 1948, the Quaker U.N. works to abolish war and promote human rights, economic justice and good governance around the world. There are two Quaker U.N. offices, one in New York and one in Geneva, Switzerland.

“The work we follow is human rights issues,” explains Madenyika.

“We try to have off-the-record, informal meetings with diplomats. We discuss issues at a more personal level, which really helps because working in the U.N., they have to go through protocol.”

Madenyika's day is filled with the constant schedule of meetings and stream of documents that come from the U.N. General Assembly. She is also responsible for writing and editing a briefing paper, preparing reports, directing the International Summer Program and working with the New York Non-governmental Organizations (NGO) working group on financing for development and other issues.

Her main project as program assistant has been following the United Nation's 2nd committee focusing on Financing for Development, which involves attending meetings focused on how developed nations and developing nations can assist each other through trade, debt issues, foreign direct investments and other issues on economic and social development.

“It's a pretty interesting debate — the two extremes of the developing countries and the developed nations and all the economic aspects,” says Madenyika. “It's exciting to meet different diplomats from around the world. And I get to use both things that I love — my economic skills and international studies.”

Madenyika has had some practice seeing the world from a different viewpoint. She's traveled to Cuba and England, and moved to the United States from Zimbabwe when she was 17.

“I came to the United States because my sisters were here, and I've always been adventurous. I wanted to travel and experience new things, and I got the opportunity and took it,” she says.

Leaving her parents behind, Madenyika moved to the U.S. and attended Friends Select School in Philadelphia, Pa. Having been raised in a two-denominational household — her father, Ellison, is a Quaker and her mother, Beltinah, is a Methodist — a Quaker high school seemed like a good fit. While in Philadelphia, Madenyika stayed with a close family friend during the week and visited her sisters and guardian, who live in New Jersey, on the weekends.

At Guilford, Madenyika was in the Quaker Leadership Scholars program and was a Bonner Scholar. She volunteered at the Human Service Alliance and was the site coordinator for the Pathways program; experiences she says “helped prepare me for the real world.”

It was a study abroad trip to Guadalajara that “really shaped what I wanted to do in the future,” Madenyika says. “I'm from an African country, spent most of my teen years in the United States, but having an opportunity to step out and look from a different viewpoint, being older and questioning things, ... it was very interesting.”

As her time at the U.N. comes to a close, Madenyika looks forward to the next step on her career path. She will be joining the newly-created International Center for Transitional Justice, also based in New York City. In her new job, Madenyika will assist the center's chief financial officer by handling most of the financial tasks.

Also, she will conduct research about countries that are in transition from war to peace times and create strategies to establish effective truth commissions within them.

Working at the Quaker U.N. has prepared her for this next adventure, and she hopes to return someday.

“Working for an organization like the Quaker U.N. — I've learned a lot,” she says. “At the end of the day, I've moved something forward. I feel good knowing that what I am doing is making a difference.”

