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Provost Remarks: Global Voices Symposium

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II. Provost Remarks: Global Voices Symposium

Paul Benson, Professor and Provost of the University of Dayton

Good evening. It is wonderful to see all of you here in what feels like an especially busy week of special events on campus, and in addition to the usual pressures of beginning a new semester just last week.

I am delighted with the theme of this week's humanities symposium and very thankful to the organizers and presenters who have made this an important occasion in the intellectual life of the University. We owe particular thanks to Dr. Julius Amin, our Alumni Chair in the Humanities, who envisioned this symposium in part as a natural successor to the deeply meaningful symposium that we convened in 2016 on race in the history and culture of the University. This symposium occupies a significant place in this year's work to map and assess the efficacy of campus diversity and inclusion initiatives.

Because we are all eager to get to our keynote speaker's remarks tonight, I will comment only briefly on just one dimension of our work on internationalization and intercultural inclusion at UD—a conceptual dimension that may seem quite abstract, but one that should inform our learning and teaching, our scholarship, and our daily lived experience on campus.

Our studies of and engagements with global matters—people and practices, languages and histories, values and geographies—should not be regarded merely as a kind of overlay upon or supplement to whatever we might be inclined to think of as “our own,” as local, as domestic, as home. *Our home is the world, the entire world*—past, present, and future—in all of its dazzling multiplicity and variety. Whatever risks might attach to a naïve cosmopolitanism that undervalues the significance of our particular, localized practices, meanings, and relationships, it is essential for us to acknowledge, to explore, and embrace all of those global, inter- and transnational currents that have contributed to who we are, here and now. We are—each of us—products of cross-cultural and inter-cultural influences and mixings, patterns of migration, amalgams of heterogeneous cultural folkways. We are all mongrels, as it were, constructing and reconstructing identities out of the multifarious, unpredictable, often conflict-laden and accidental intersections that occasion our being here and now, in Dayton, Ohio.

As we listen to and reflect upon “global voices” in this symposium, it is imperative that we acknowledge that all of our voices, in some significant ways, originate from elsewhere. We all must look more clearly and critically into the otherness, the alien-ness, the differences that dwell deep within us. For we cannot begin to fathom who we are as persons until we examine and appreciate the wonderfully rich and diverse streams of human life and culture that have formed us, that make the world our home.

So, the University of Dayton community is committed to listening to and learning from, to welcoming and including global voices, in part, because our own voices are to be found there. International and intercultural study and exploration—as difficult and challenging and complicating as they can be—are not optional for us.

Thank you again for participating in this symposium.