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Welcome Address

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Welcome Address

Paul Benson, Provost

Good evening. I join Dr. Amin in welcoming you to this evening's keynote address for the Global Voices Symposium. I am very glad that



Paul Benson

you have joined this webinar and hope that you have been able to participate in other symposium sessions this week.

I want to thank the Alumni Chair in Humanities office and the outstanding campus planning team for their thoughtful work in developing this year's symposium, and I want to thank the cosponsors across campus for their support of these important conversations. Julius Amin deserves particular thanks for his leadership, vision, and relationship building as our Alumni Chair in Humanities.

For those who are new to this symposium, this year's theme returns directly to the theme of the 2016 symposium, which facilitated exploration of race on UD's campus as experienced by students, alumni, faculty, staff, and community members and as informed by scholarship in the humanities and social sciences on the history of race in the United States and in this region of Ohio. The 2016 symposium convened on the doorstep of the beginning of Eric Spina's presidency at UD later that year, the appointment of our

inaugural vice president for diversity and inclusion and the resourcing of that office, and the design of an extended data gathering, listening, and strategic planning process that yielded last year our campus's strategic framework for work on diversity, equity, and inclusion. The 2016 symposium was powerful and, from my perspective, profound in its impact; it was searching, painful at times, and inspiring at times.

We are on a journey as a university to make progress toward genuine inclusion, toward equity in the life of our campus, toward the building of a more welcoming and just educational, intellectual, and residential community that realizes more substantively the guiding values of the Society of Mary, which founded and sponsors the University. This journey is fraught with peril and risk. It is painful; it entails hurt; it will provoke misunderstanding; it will invite resistance; it supplies ample reason for skepticism and distrust. But this journey is what our mission as a university requires of us. The steps in this journey, as uncertain and sometimes misdirected as they may happen to be, can be occasions for renewed hope, for strengthened relationships and more resilient collaboration, for truth telling, for reconciliation, for restorative conversation and critically reflective imagination and agency.

By its very nature, this symposium points us in two directions at once. It asks that we look back—recovering, rethinking, reframing, and honoring histories, experiences, and voices that have been silenced or marginalized in our collective institutional consciousness. This evening's keynote promises to be a valuable part of this project of historical recovery and reenvisioning in the wider context of Catholicism in the United States.

But this is also a forward-facing, future-directed journey, as any journey must be. We are called to form intentions and plans, to make commitments and choices, to listen and consult, to act, and then reflectively assess those aims and actions. As difficult as these conversations and planning processes can be, they are an inherent part of our mission of learning and teaching, discovery and scholarship, community engagement and social transformation. I firmly believe that this is good and essential work to do, even when the stumbling blocks in the way appear to be insurmountable, and I firmly believe that this work will bear fruit, even when the timeline for that harvest proves to be much longer than any of us would want.

Thank you for being part of our journey back into our institutional history, our journey to hear the voices and learn from the experiences of our current students, staff, and faculty, and our searching, struggling journey into the future.

