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Introduction: Africa in Our Century

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Introduction: Africa in Our Century

Julius A. Amin

Since 2017, the UD Global Voices Symposium has served our community by presenting stimulating and thought-provoking programs on global awareness and global engagement. This year the symposium proudly presents “Africa in Our Century,” examining the growing importance of this continent for our present and our future. As with past programs, the 2022 symposium draws on the experiences and expertise of individuals from our UD campus and community leaders to discuss activities and initiatives which promote global education and engagement.

Also, this year’s program is particularly important. We are living in an era of the global pandemic, and as such we have all been summoned to rethink several aspects of global engagement. The presentations challenged us not to hold back—to continue to step out of our bubbles and engage the world. This is a time for innovation, creativity, and action. Irrespective of the state of the world, life in the twenty-first century demands that we look beyond our national, geographic, continental, or oceanic boundaries. Notwithstanding the times in which we live, issues which impact humanity are universal. Winston Churchill articulated some of these issues very well when he stated: “All the great things are simple, and many can be expressed in a single word: freedom, justice, honor, duty, mercy, hope.” Whether we live in Africa, America, Europe, Asia, or any other place, those concepts are global—and the presentations have captured that message. We feel grief for the people of Ukraine and of many other parts of the world because flagrant efforts are being made to deprive them of their freedom. We grieve for Cameroon’s Anglophone population, because they are locked in a conflict over

justice. We join the struggle against anti-black racism because racism is a direct challenge to those universal truths.

Speaking at the University of Cape Town almost seventy years ago, Robert Kennedy stated: “Few will have the greatness to bend history; but each of us can work to change a small portion of the events, and in the total of all these acts will be written the history of this generation.” The Global Voices Symposium repeatedly challenges us to do our part.

Organizing a symposium such as this entails collaboration, and yes, we were humbled to have been able to tap into a brain trust here on campus and in the larger community. First, I express my thanks to the planning committee: Joann Mawasha, Maria Vivero, Satang Nabaneh, Martha Hurley, Chris Agnew, Rochonda Nenonene, Furaha Henry-Jones, and Sangita Gosalia. Thank you for all the conversations and patience.

I extend my gratitude to University of Dayton president Dr. Eric Spina, whose vision that we create a “university for the common good” served as the engine room of our efforts. I extend our thanks to Dr. Paul Benson, provost of the University of Dayton, who was present at the creation of the Global Voices Symposium and has been among its chief supporters. We thank you for your support. We thank Dr. Jason Pierce, the former dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, for his consistent support of the initiative. My thanks go to Dr. Amy Anderson, associate provost for global and intercultural affairs and of the center for international programs, who believed in this from the beginning, and has always been supportive. I want to also express my thanks to my former colleague, Dr. Larry Flockerzie, who was instrumental in the creation of Global Voices and has been an invisible part of the planning of all the annual events.

Our gratitude goes out to all the presenters: students, faculty, staff, and our colleagues from the city of Dayton, Miami University, and Sinclair Community College. It was a joy to listen to you. Finally, we want to recognize the faculty, staff, students, and all present for buying into the idea that the University of Dayton and the larger community together make a global space, and therefore we must continue to search for ways to turn that notion into reality.

Ladies and gentlemen, I introduce Dr. Benson, provost of the University of Dayton.