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Julius A. Amin

University of Dayton, jamin1@udayton.edu

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Keynote Address

A Dayton, Ohio, Community Casts Two Challenging Questions: Why Does Africa Matter? Why Care about Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis?

Julius A. Amin

Dr. Anderson, thank you for the kind words.

Once more, I welcome all of you to this event.

It is an honor to be here today to speak about the importance of global consciousness and awareness in our community. Certainly, this topic sounds important, even if it also sounds a bit overwhelming. That word *global* can seem intimidating, particularly when even the local challenges us. But this evening I hope to narrow the globe down and speak about Africa, and about the ongoing Anglophone Conflict in Cameroon. My hope is to show how and why the African Continent and Cameroon matter to us in this room and beyond.

Let me start by telling you a few things about myself. I was born and raised in Cameroon, West Africa. It is a small country,

comparable in size to the state of California. Yet it is such a diverse country. Its 25 million inhabitants belong to over 200 ethnic groups speaking over 200 languages. My village in Cameroon is known as Lewoh. In most Sub-Saharan African societies, the village is the bedrock unit of the community. From the village, residents receive their identity, sense of purpose, and direction. The political system is stable and forward-looking, and the social values stress equality and protection for all. Hard work is rewarded. There is a system of ethics in place to ensure morality and social responsibility. It is an all-inclusive community. There is respect for humanity. Visitors and new settlers are welcomed and protected. The village is a strong and vibrant community. It is the culture of the Bantu-speaking people.

Throughout my journey from West Africa to Dayton, Ohio, well-meaning folks have told me that I have done well. I always thank them for the compliment, but I also correct them by stating that my family has done well, and my village has done well. For I know that no matter how far I journey in the life, I will always be part of a group, a family, a community.

My college years were spent in Cameroon at the University of Yaoundé, and then I did my graduate work at West Texas State University and Texas Tech University. At both Texas institutions, I gained a deeper understanding of American culture. There, my involvement in the community enriched my knowledge about American civilization. It was a lesson in diversity, tolerance, and human understanding. It was equally a lesson in the contours of America's racial thought and relations. In fact, my education on both sides of the Atlantic has had an enduring impact on my personal, professional, and social development. My village culture, education, and geographical place imbedded in me the sense of multiple layers and levels of consciousness: village, black, college educated, international, Cameroonian, Cameroonian American, African American, African, and American. My scholarship, teaching, and worldview have been shaped by all those values.

During my tenure within the University of Dayton Community, I have observed closely the intellectual development of hundreds and hundreds and hundreds of students, and I have been a witness to the

emergence of the university into a truly international campus. Our education program here has introduced the campus community to most, if not all, of the critical challenges faced by today's generation: race, gender, environment, climate change, sustainability, war and peace, freedom and responsibility, tolerance and intolerance, and wealth and poverty. As a result, UD students who truly embrace the opportunities and challenges offered them graduate better equipped to participate effectively as citizens and leaders in the global community.

To focus more particularly on the present, however, it is not too much to assert that this is a defining moment here on our campus. It is a time of innovation, ingenuity, and creativity. As a part of its Catholic Marianist Tradition, the University has instituted a series of bold actions and experiments to enhance its mission. There are initiatives in the area of diversity and inclusion, multicultural engagement, gender equity, global awareness, and human rights. University President Eric Spina's challenge to create a "University for the Common Good" serves as the engine room to realize those goals. Benchmarks are in place to assess and ensure the success of these developments.

The University of Dayton's mission is all encompassing. It seeks to educate the whole person: "Spirit, mind, and body." The humanities' disciplines serve as the bedrock foundation in this effort. In those disciplines, students are challenged to think critically about the community and the world in which they live. It is from there that students gain the preparation to achieve the University's institutional learning goals of the Common Academic Program. The humanities are at the root of a well-grounded liberal education. They are vital in our mission to create a global-conscious environment.

Yesterday and today we listened to excellent presentations about the urgency of stepping out of our cultural and historical "bubbles" in order to better understand our wider global community. Those presentations were educational, challenging, and I hope, inspirational. The panelists drew upon their experiences to emphasize the importance of global engagement. Their presentations

underscored the argument that any kind of national fortress mentality is simply no longer tenable.

My focus this evening on Africa's and Cameroon's Anglophone Conflict is a logical prolongation of those presentations. Africa is an old and ancient place, yet generations of people have been mis-educated about the continent—and I must add, this includes Africans themselves. Many have been told that human “civilization” never arrived in Africa, and as a result, the people lack the ability to engage in any complex analysis. In fact, one of the great philosophers of modern times, Georg Wilhelm Friedrich Hegel, dismissed Africa as a wasteland inhabited by “untamed” people. Unfortunately, those ideas became integral to modern thought and have been transmitted from generation to generation.

At the beginning of this semester, I distributed notecards to students in my History of Modern Africa class and asked them to write down adjectives that come to mind when they hear the word *Africa*. What does Africa mean, I asked them? They were told not to write their names on the notecards, and they had about five minutes before I collected their responses.

Through the years I have often assigned this exercise to students. It is an idea that I borrowed from the historian Curtis Keim, who performed this exercise many times and later published a book about the experience entitled *Mistaking Africa: Curiosities and Inventions of the American Mind*. In his book, Keim shared typical adjectives that were used to describe Africa. They included *poor*, *disease*, *backward*, *primitive*, and so on. Occasionally words such as *culture*, *family*, *strong religions*, *trade*, and *kings* have been used.

Well, descriptions from my students this semester and in other semesters mirrored those in Keim's book. I do not believe my students had read the book or were familiar with it, but their responses were not surprising. Those labels are prevalent in the literature, in casual conversations, in jokes, on tv, and everywhere. They are a part of an embedded vocabulary in our society's socio-cultural landscape. This exercise that I give to students helps me to gauge the level of students' knowledge of Africa.

But I also ask them why they will want to take a class on Africa, given all the negatives. Here responses are more varied. Many note that Africa remains a mystery and they thought this was their opportunity to delve into the unknown continent. Occasionally, there will be students thinking about Peace Corps or other forms of service in the African continent after graduation. And of course, there will be those pragmatic students who state that the class fulfilled part of their degree requirements. I always hope for even that one student who will say that they are taking the class because the professor is the most exciting on this campus. It looks like I will be waiting much longer.

Whatever the responses, though, it is always a joy to find a diverse group of students in my class—because it gives me the opportunity to humanize the continent. The renowned political scientist Ali Mazrui often stated that, centuries ago, when Europeans came to Africa, they discovered the mountains, rivers, and vegetation, even named some in their own honor (Lake Victoria, Victoria Falls, etc.), but they never discovered the African people. Therefore, my African history classes introduce students to the creativity, community, and developments of the African people.

However, it will be incorrect for me to stand here and say that Africa is free of those things designated by the adjectives and nouns used by Keim's students and mine. Africa has those vices, but it is problematic to use them as the sole measurement of the continent. The novelist Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie spoke about "The danger of single story" when she warned,

Show a people as one thing, as only one thing over and over again, and that is what they become. ... The single story creates stereotypes, and the problem with stereotypes is not that they are untrue, but they are incomplete. They make one story become the only story.

Observers of Africa usually fail to include in their analyses the different facets of the continent. For example, hospitality, inclusive community, and social responsibility. All three are integral to the

essence of Africa, and yet all three are usually excluded. The Ghanaian philosopher Kwame Gyekye noted,

One of the achievements of our [African] society was the universal hospitality on which [i.e., the members of the community] could rely. ... Hospitality is one of the most sacred and ancient customs of Bantuland and is found everywhere. [Someone] will give his best house and his evening meal to a guest, without the slightest thought that he is doing anything extraordinary.

So then, what is Africa?

In sheer size, Africa is huge—over three times the size of the United States of America. With 54 nations, it is the second largest continent in the world. Its 1.2 billion people belong to hundreds of ethnic groups speaking over 1,000 languages. Africa's complexity is displayed in so many ways. In size alone, the different nations of Africa represent a contrast. For example, Nigeria is three times the size of England, and twice the size of California. Algeria is about three and a half times the size of Texas. But then there are also smaller countries. The Gambia is only 30 miles wide ... and about 300 miles long. So, size itself contributes to complexities.

Africa's history is long and rich. It is the continent of pyramids, of the culture Great Zimbabwe, of the origin of humans, of the agricultural revolution, of the Bantu migration, and of great human community. It was the birthplace of great historical figures: Imhotep, Mansa Musa, King Alfonso, Yaa Asantawaa, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Julius Nyerere, Kwame Nkrumah, Charlotte Maxeke, and Nelson Mandela.

But Africa was impacted by the adverse forces of slavery, conquest, and colonialism. During the Trans-Atlantic Slave Trade, Africa was heavily depopulated. The Slave Trade was, indeed, the largest "forced migration" in human history. It provided part of the capital for the European industrial revolution and resulted in the Black Diaspora whereby people of African descent and their culture

were scattered all over the world. The political, economic, social, and cultural contribution of blacks to global systems are immense.

In addition to its complexity, Africa is home to numerous raw materials and minerals: cocoa, coffee, rubber, palm oil, timber, diamond, gold, and uranium. And then there is coltan. Is everyone familiar with coltan? Eighty percent of the world's coltan, a mineral essential for the software industry, is in the Congo. Cell phones, laptops, play stations, or PX4—all need coltan to work.

Africa has oil too. Need I say more?

The continent's resources remain vital to global industries. For example, China's economy would collapse quickly without the raw materials from Africa. In short, Africa matters. Everyone on this side of the Atlantic is a beneficiary of an aspect of Africa's enormous resources.

Yet, for all the things that Africa provides to the world, the continent is still unable to reconcile its past with the present. It is still haunted by the evils of slavery and colonialism. History helps us to understand how things came to be what they are so that we can capture the present and the shape the future.

While natural disasters such as famine and drought were unavoidable, other problems in Africa have been largely of human creation. There has been the curse of dictators who disguised themselves as saviors of their countries. The journalist Blaine Harden has described them as “the good, the bad, and the greedy.” There are other problems. Obviously, you have heard of destructive wars and genocide in Rwanda, Liberia, Sierra Leone, and Sudan. And there has been radicalism—Boko Haram, the Lord's Resistance Army, or Joseph Kony's movement, among others. These problems dominated headlines when they occurred—and when resolved, other crises and problems emerged in rapid succession. The supply seems endless.

One such began in October 2016. Recent political struggles in Cameroon have engulfed the nation into what is known as the Anglophone Crisis. A peaceful protest started by lawyers and teachers to improve working conditions quickly turned violent.

Cameroon's President Paul Biya responded to the protest with intimidation, arrests, and torture, and voices that called for complete secession of the Anglophone regions from the Republic of Cameroon gained momentum, and created a virtual Ambazonia Republic. They formed a military wing, Ambazonia Self-Defence Force, which attacked and disrupted economic and social services in the region.

The Crisis attracted global attention and headlines. *The Guardian* newspaper has described what is taking place in Cameroon as "genocide." The Conversation likened the crisis to an emerging Rwanda. And in a recent article in *The New York Times*, Imbolo Mbue, author of *Behold the Dreamers*, reflected on the crisis in this way:

Across my part of Cameroon, the violence rages on, and the hopelessness grows. A village in which I lived as a little girl is now deserted. A town in which I spent several formative years is now overrun by criminals taking advantage of the chaos. I watch music videos from my childhood and choke up. "Don't come to Cameroon right now," I've been advised by friends and relatives. I'm taking their advice. I'm staying away for a while even as I dream of the day when our country will truly be ours.

So here today I ask this question: How could a region with so much potential degenerate so quickly into the abyss? Again, history helps in our search for answers.

Typically referred to as "Africa in miniature," Cameroon was annexed first by Germany, and later split into two unequal halves—one half handed to Britain and the other, larger half to France. In 1960 French Cameroon obtained independence, and the following year it reunified with British Southern Cameroons to form the Federal Republic of Cameroon.

Though Cameroon's Anglophone region makes up roughly twenty percent of the country, it produced a significant portion of the country's exports. Despite that, the region was riddled with severe economic and social problems. Anglophones felt cheated out of the

center of power and the nation's economic wealth. The population was mobilized and vowed not to rest until the tide was turned.

Initially, the protestors were not deterred by government forces. Interviews conducted in Cameroon revealed their determination. For example, "You cannot kill an idea with military weapons" was one respondent's answer to a questionnaire, an answer reflecting the opinion of many others. Respondents scorned what they labeled a "military occupation" of the Anglophone regions. Interviewees declared that the protest was against "colonial oppression," "government corruption," "economic injustice," "discrimination," "unemployment," "poverty," and "Biya's nearly forty years reign as president."

By the end of the second year of the crisis it was clear how severe the toll had become. Until a few years ago, Cameroon was a nation on the move. Despite its political, economic, and social problems, the country was peaceful, attracting people from all over the world. For example, the University of Dayton had, for over two decades, run immersion programs in the country. So had the University of South Carolina. Cameroon was also an international center where major conferences, symposia, and cultural activities took place.

Traditionally, Cameroon was among the safest nations to visit on the African continent. Tourists flocked to the nation so they could hike the mountains, hang out on the nation's beaches, visit the rain forest, enjoy the outdoors and the celebrated evening ambience—and and most importantly they had come to enjoy and learn from the people's famous courtesy and communal culture. A visit to the cities of Limbe, Kribi, Kumba, and Buea was revealing of the nation's hospitality. In Bamenda—one cannot miss out on the Saddle Hill Ranch Resort. UD students have been there. Back then, not so long ago, the idea of Cameroon reflected the best of humanity, integrity, and respect. Members of any Cameroon community have a sacred obligation to promote the well-being of others. Extending the hand of friendship is an integral aspect of the culture of Bantu-speaking people.

But the Anglophone conflict is changing that.

The conflict has created a culture of fear and terror in the region. Here is just one story of the plight of a teacher in Bamenda in her late 20s becoming an internally displaced person: A member of the Ambazonia “boys” came to her class disguised as one of the students. He wore the school uniform and sat quietly in the back. At the end of the class, the student approached her with a warning: “Why are you coming to school? You must obey our orders. I know you. ... I know where you live. ... This is the only warning you will get.” It was nerve-racking, she said, more especially as some of her colleagues had already been tortured. For a moment she considered escaping into the bush but decided to get out of the region. “Those boys do not joke,” she said. She packed-up a few belongings, left her child with family, and headed to Douala. She imagined it would be a temporary move, but after two years, she has doubts about returning to Bamenda. She has applied for several jobs but has yet to be invited for a single interview. Her life, she said, has been turned upside down. At times, she cries, noting God will guide her through the hard times.

This teacher’s story—this mother’s story—is not unique. And in addition to the terror, there have been more profound economic consequences. The region’s main agrobusiness facility, the Cameroon Development Corporation, the very heart of the region’s economy, is in ruins. Plantations that once produced palm oil are no longer operational. Workers at banana plantations are brutalized, and rubber processors have been repeatedly attacked. Families that depended on cocoa for their livelihood now face a life of destitution. Horrifying too is how protestors now speak freely about their methods of punishment, including “short sleeve or long sleeve,” a brutal form of punishment and torture used during the Liberian and Sierra Leonean wars. “Short sleeve” was when entire forearm was cut off; “long sleeve” involved chopping off the hand.

A disturbing aspect of the conflict is the gradual erosion of key parts of the people’s culture. Let me give you an example. Funeral celebrations are a significant aspect of Cameroonian culture. But it appears these festivities are disappearing. I’ve heard the stories firsthand. Cameroonians, irrespective of where they reside, typically

prefer their burial sites to be in their villages of origin. Remember I told you about the deep value one's village holds. But not anymore. Increasingly, people are buried anywhere possible.

Another example: Traditional rulers, known for the role they played in things such as conflict resolution and preservation of the people's culture, are escaping from their communities, and in many cases their residences are vandalized. Separatists' forces have struck terror among the people, one effective terror tactic being the kidnapping of a community's rulers. Cameroonians in diaspora do not come home anymore for fear of kidnap. A resident of Buea who had initially supported the protest stated that "we have suffered long enough. ... Amba should leave us alone." That was not a unique situation. Similar stories were repeatedly told.

Responses to questionnaires revealed an overwhelming concern about one negative impact of the Crisis—the impact on the region's youth. One respondent wrote, "Many of these kids have stopped their education especially those whose parents are not financially viable. Many ladies especially in rural areas are becoming premature mothers while boys become thieves, fighters... These kids now bear a foundation of anger, war, misconduct etc." Other respondents reported on youth activities and created a chilling list of "normalized" life: "drugs," "teenage pregnancy," "petit theft," "arm[ed] robbery," "baby mothers," "physical and psychological trauma," "school dropouts," "rebels," "rape," "killings," "prostitution," and "illiteracy." One descriptive term used carries an unforgettable tinge to it, and that word is the word "diabolic." It doesn't take much imagination to see that, with schools closed, what easy targets youths become, either for separatists' recruiters or killings by government forces. So many parents answering the questionnaire lamented the unenviable position in which the conflict put their children.

And there is more. In Anglophone Cameroon communities, daily insults prevail against the most basic services. Take the practical matter of trash collection. It no longer exists. The result? Trash is piling up in the cities. Another gruesome result: corpses can be seen on roadways. Less repulsive but just as punishing: Businesses such

as night clubs, hotels, restaurants that traditionally operated in the evenings have been bankrupted, have vanished. The list of everyday damage and hardship goes on. School buildings remain empty. Refugees and internally displaced persons are nowhere close to returning to their homes. More and more of those who initially supported the protest have come to have a buyer's remorse. A life in terror is not what they had hoped to gain. They long for the life they had in the pre-protest era. Many noted that peace can never be taken for granted.

The overriding question remains—why should people in this room and community care about Cameroon's Anglophone Crisis? I answer this pesky question with three challenging observations.

First, the Anglophone Conflict is a lesson in nightmares because both sides in the conflict have committed gross human rights violations. We here should care on moral grounds. Evil occurs when good men and women look the other way. In the trail of tears that is human history, atrocities increased in severity whenever the world did nothing. Immense human rights abuses are taking place right now—this evening, this hour—in the Anglophone region of Cameroon. The world cannot wait until things reach the magnitude of the Rwanda genocide before intervention. As citizens of UD, as citizens of the U.S., as citizens of the world, we cannot and must not look away in times of gross human rights violations.

Second, there's no doubt that global powers know exactly what's happening in Cameroon. In June 2018, the U.S. Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, Global Human Rights, and International Organizations in Washington, D.C, heard witness testimonies about the graphic nature of hostilities in Cameroon. All these groups and organizations are aware of the recent attack in the Ngarbuh community in the Anglophone region where 13 of the 22 people burned alive were children.

But for the recent condemnation of the Ngarbuh massacre, a cursory glance at the U.S. embassy website in Yaoundé reveals, it's mostly business as usual for the two countries. American citizens are warned to avoid travelling to Cameroon's English-speaking regions—but that's the extent of it.

On its official embassy website, meanwhile, France refers to Cameroon as a “friend” and a “partner.” It calls for “restraint.” Considering how vital the country is to its strategic interests in the West African region, one might expect France to say—or do—more. Even though President Emmanuel Macron of France recently spoke of “intolerable human rights abuses” taking place in Cameroon, he provided no concrete steps on how to address the Anglophone Problem.

China’s actions in this saga have also been extremely frustrating. At the last Forum of China-African Cooperation in Beijing, Cameroon’s President Paul Biya was given the red-carpet treatment. No Chinese leaders, and none from the rest of Africa, made any public statements about the Anglophone crisis.

All of this is extremely vexing given Cameroon’s strategic importance. For many years the U.S. monitored its interest in Equatorial Guinea from Yaoundé. Cameroon and the U.S. are partners in coordinating efforts against Boko Haram and other global terrorist groups.

Cameroon is vital to France’s interest in the West African region. The Anglophone crisis could destabilize the region by snowballing into neighboring countries. And other former French colonies will be watching with interest, noting the European power’s hands-off approach. Though Cameroon is a small country, the Anglophone Crisis can eventually become an enormous global headache and heartache. The lessons of history warn against unchecked aggression, and appeasement. Nations that apply a social justice imperative to their conduct of foreign policy endure as great powers.

China’s policy of non-intervention in another country’s domestic affairs has only strengthened the resolve of continental tyrants. Biya remains one of China’s key allies in the region. Publicly, China’s Premier Li Keqiang has said little about the ongoing Anglophone Crisis. Instead, he’s given more money to Biya’s government and enjoys cordial relations with the longtime leader. It must be noted that China’s policy of non-intervention doesn’t apply when its

interests are threatened. China intervened in Zambia's elections to safeguard its interests there.

Equally, something must be said about the African Union's colossal failure to act. The organization has done little besides calling on the Biya government to negotiate with warring factions. At a moment of maximum need the African Union remains ill-equipped, ill-ready, and ill-willing to take decisive action. The African Union is quickly turning into a fraternal organization in which members get away with whatever they do.

Third, the University of Dayton's involvement in Cameroon spans over two decades. Begun in the mid-1990s, the University of Dayton Cameroon immersion program lasted until 2017, when the Anglophone crisis took a different form. Our students are familiar with many of the areas which form the core of the conflict: Kumba, Buea, Bafut, Ndawara, Tole, Douala, Bamenda, and many more. Former immersion participants are tormented by the ongoing conflict in Cameroon. Many interned at the Kumba District Hospital, which was burned down. They remember many sites that have either been destroyed or abandoned. They are afraid to ask about specific people for fear of the answer they may get. They wonder how a country which gave them so much, and which became a part of them, can so quickly degenerate. So, we here should care because, as we sing in our fight song, "UD, our hearts ring true."

The book *Africa Immersion, American College Students in Cameroon* contains reflections from personal journals and diaries of former immersion participants about the meaning of Cameroon immersion to them. I will read a few of them.

Gretchen Scheidler: "These people have touched my life so strongly over the last month. They've all been so much more than friends or host family members. These people made me one of them. I became a Nnoko Mbele daughter; I was a big sister, a little sister, a daughter, a granddaughter, a cousin, a niece, a neighbor. I cooked their meals, I played their games, I spoke their language, I prayed in their traditions. Theirs became mine. I am now 'Dibo.' I'm 'black

man.' I'm a Gretchen that's different from the one that arrived in Cameroon a month ago."

Kelly Dougherty: "The people of Cameroon...taught me how to live and I am forever indebted to them."

Adrienne Berger: "Cameroon was a "once in a lifetime experience. ... I am so happy and grateful that I was able to be a part of it."

Tiffany Wyatt: "I've gained so much just being around a family who loves and laughs. It has brought me back to reality and back to all the things that really matter. ... The Cameroon immersion program fundamentally changed my life...being in Africa gave me time to sit back and examine the ways in which I act."

Victoria Berthé: "I left Cameroon feeling self-confident, self-assured, and normal."

Kristen Kemp "It was refreshing to be embraced in such a wonderful culture."

Erin Dougherty: "People here will welcome you into their homes, workplaces, and churches everywhere we went. It really did not matter how much or how little they had; they were willing to share with us. They were constantly concerned with our feelings and our needs because we were their guests. ... I think we could definitely learn a lesson from these people."

Joe Weyman: "Going to UD was the best choice I made in the first 18 years of my life. Going on this trip was the best decision I made at UD."

Sarah Spurgeon: “It [the immersion experience] was refreshing. ... [The host family’s] hearts touched my heart. Their faith strengthened my faith. Their voices made me want to shout their words loud and break through the injustice they experienced. If this immersion taught me anything, it is that the interconnectedness of the human race is highly underestimated by its members. Why is it that we view people who live in countries other than our own as ‘different’ and unable to connect with us and us with them? I could refrain from using the cliché ‘we’re all connected,’ but it really is true when it comes down to it. We all laugh at funny things. We grieve. We feel longing. We feel pain. We comfort each other. We sing. We eat. We dream. We live our lives. ... It is only when we stop and think about it that we realize how much really connects us.”

Anna Scott: “[I] wasn’t brought up in a diverse environment. ... I think it is safe to say that the University of Dayton isn’t a very diverse school either. ... I’m so fortunate to have gone through this experience and throw my beliefs for a loop, because I am certainly a better person.”

Emily Petrus (on departure day from Cameroon): “I will never be the same. ... I have loved deeply, laughed hard, cried softly. I have lived and breathed Africa. ... A piece of my heart will surely remain here. ... I must not forget or abandon the ideas and perspective formed by the people who turned my life. I will be better. And remember: ‘No condition is Permanent’.”

Another excerpt describes the experiences of several others:

Emily Teaford used the treatment accorded her in Cameroon to reflect on treatment of minority groups back in the US. As a minority in Cameroon she was not

“marginalized” because she “looked different.” She received special treatment wherever she went. “This is a far cry...from the treatment I have seen of many minorities in my own country.” She emerged from this experience a different person vowing to pay more attention to the way everyone is treated.

Erin Anderson was “treated like a queen.” Yet, as she wrote, “this is not always the case in the United States. ... African Americans, really any minority, are looked down upon and not respected in the way they should. As Americans I think it is important that we are more respectful of all races, everyone deserves the same respect,” she continued.

Anne Gabonay Frank agreed: “I think an interesting reality was being a racial/ethnic minority. ... I drew comparisons to being a racial/ethnic minority in the United States. The attention I received in Cameroon was. ... very positive and welcoming, whereas I am sure that is not the experience for minorities, immigrants, and foreign visitors in the United States.”

For **Katie Eberhard**, the Cameroon experience was a superb crowning of her education at Dayton. “The people of Cameroon taught me what it means to be human, what aspects are universal, and how beautiful diversity can be,” she wrote.

Now, after hearing these comments, you can understand why alumni of immersion and friends of Cameroon are bothered by the Anglophone Crisis. The University of Dayton and alumni of the immersion program can do more. It may require additional pressure on Congressional representatives to do more through government channels. The public library in the City of Kumba is named in honor

of a UD alumni, Anne Gabonay Frank, whose words were among those just quoted. Better communication with the library may inform us about other possibilities. Already, alumni of the immersion program have worked with the K-Town Association of Atlanta to provide medical supplies to the needy in Kumba. There can be better coordination with local leaders and civic groups.

I feel compelled to return to themes of hope, hospitality, and friendship, which I discussed earlier in my talk. The flash points must not deter from the idea of Africa and Cameroon. As a student of history, I can tell you that the Anglophone Conflict will eventually subside. Faculty who participated in the University of Dayton Global Education Program Africa learned much about the African people. The people are reflective, they are hardworking, and they continue to do the best they can with the best they have. It is this spirit of ingenuity which keeps them going. They own businesses, run their educational institutions, run their governments, celebrate victories of their sporting teams, desire their children do well in school, and aspire to be better at whatever they do. They are ordinary human beings doing ordinary things, as do others in other parts of the world. But they are also extraordinary. Global consciousness and awareness challenge previous perceptions of Africa's incapability.

The African experience emboldened immersion and faculty participants. They discovered the African people, became their friends, hung out with them, danced with them, and by so doing they expanded their philosophical horizon of what it means to be human. They learned about themselves—about their strengths and vulnerabilities. Having experienced what and how it feels to be a minority, they gained a new awareness on how to promote diversity and more inclusive communities. They learned to respect difference rather than simply tolerate difference. Everyone is a member of the human family, and therefore entitled to the same human decency and respect. Upon their return, the immersion participants began to serve as a vanguard for global awareness and intercultural education on campus and beyond. Global consciousness is a wave of the future. The experience confirmed to former immersion and Global

Education Seminar Africa participants that “The world is a book and those who do not travel read only one page.”

Africa, indeed, matters.

We here, indeed, care about Cameroon’s Anglophone Crisis.







