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Why the Symposium on Global Voices Remains Relevant in Campus and Local Community Discourse

*Joann Wright Mawasha; Furaha Henry-Jones;
Ernesto Velasquez; Bernard Jones Jr.*

In this session, panelists addressed the question of relevance and importance of global awareness on college campuses and beyond.

They approached the topic through different disciplinary and professional lenses as they discussed a wide array of experiences.

Their presentations more fully humanized the impact of global awareness and raised questions and challenges that were vital to the overall symposium conversation.

Joann Wright Mawasha

Good afternoon. My name is Joann Wright Mawasha, and I am the Deputy Director at the Dayton Human Relations Council. The HRC was created in 1962 to protect and enforce the civil rights of our residents through protections against discrimination around housing, employment, accommodations, and credit card transactions. We also ensure that a percentage of every contract awarded by the city is allocated to women, minorities, and small businesses. We also are committed to ensuring that the relationship between the

community and police remains civil and open. And finally, we welcome immigrants and refugees from all over the world through our Welcome Dayton program. We attempt to integrate the incoming immigrants and refugees into the receiving community through intercultural exchanges in employment, education, culture and arts, and government and justice.

I think this symposium on Global voices continues to remain relevant on campus and local community discourse. I believe that building community is necessary. Global engagement, at its essence, is about committing to meaningful relationships with partners in other parts of the world. On a local level, it means committing to meaningful relationships within our community with different people from different communities. How that would look for me is university students, faculty, and staff going into the communities in which they live, play, pray, and work and providing outreach in their respective fields. It means that at every table I sit at, I speak to social justice and mental health issues that impact polices, funding, and action needed to improve our world and engage our communities.

This engagement should be more than just theories; it should be an engagement on a practical level. It represents a movement beyond the mechanics of carrying out more traditional, campus-based international activities and implies dedication to a deeper and more prolonged commitment to partnerships—locally , nationally, and internationally—for mutual benefit.

Among the many types of global ventures, the most basic and most common are relatively small-scale collaborations, often spearheaded by faculty. However, if we want to continue to foster a sense of inclusion and belonging, we need to go deeper.

That's something I'm always thinking about in the work that we do. I am continually thinking on ways to make whichever space that I am in more accessible to everyone. I am always looking for where and how people gather, who is at the table, who is not at the table, and why not. I am thinking about ways in which the voiceless and most vulnerable in our communities can be given a voice to speak their truth. Universally, however, I am thinking how do we create and build spaces so that people feel welcomed?

My goal is to always deepen and broaden the conversations that continue to shift our preconceived notions of what is normal or acceptable and how we engage with others who may be different than ourselves. I do this on a global level, national level, state level, local level, and even in my home.

So, representation is really important to me. As a woman of color from the Caribbean, as a clinical psychologist, as a researcher, as a mother, wife, and daughter—in all of my multiple identities—representation is extremely important. The message that I spread is that people come from all walks of life and they bring their experiences, all of which are to be valued.

I want people to begin to understand that there are broader global issues that impact us in our local communities. My role, therefore, is to foster a sense of creativity and curiosity in the work that we do and in the people that we work with, so that they can begin to understand the connectivity of the world we now live in, and so that they do their part in their respective fields to expand the dialogue and move into action.

I recently met Eddie Koen, who is the new CEO of the Urban League of Greater SW Ohio. He said something that has stuck with me. He said meaningful change comes as a result of the *proximity* of our relationships and how we *concretize love*. To me, this means that concretizing love must move to become action, as opposed to just thinking about what that means. And you know, this will look and feel differently for everyone. However, if we all move in the same direction, towards the goal of reaching out and helping each other in concrete ways, I believe that it will make a difference in the lives of the people we serve as well as in the communities in which we live, play, pray, work, and gather. Therefore, if we want change that is lasting and sustaining, we will have to slow down, build relationships, and work on issues that impact us all.

Furaha Henry-Jones

I met a woman fairly recently who—when we were introduced—refused to say my name. This is not a wholly unusual experience for

me. My name is not in English, and many speakers of only one language feel a little fear when they hear it—fear they’ll say the wrong thing and possibly insult me. Plain old fear of being wrong. It’s one of many normal, very human responses when encountering something outside of our regular experiences. I get that. So normally I am very gentle and I say, “It’s okay. It’s fu-ra-ha.” The person repeats it, and whether they say it perfectly or not, I say, “Beautiful.” I believe these tiny encounters with linguistic difference can maybe translate into tiny openings of the mind. The person then often sets about happily practicing my name and often I wish they would stop because I know that when I see them again in a week, they’ll proudly exclaim, “Hi, Furaha, how are you?” And I will ask myself, “Oh my goodness, is this man’s name Bob? Mike? Geesh. Or is this Susan or Jennifer?”

So, I met this woman and upon our introduction she says, “I’m never going to say that.” I started my little spiel. “It’s not too bad ... fu-ra-ha.” She responded with an indignant, “I am never going to say that. It’s too different.” Now that—that was beyond insulting. It was infuriating. You. You are so different, I refuse to acknowledge you.

Though this Symposium has been in existence for years and I live locally, this is my first time attending, and so when I was invited to speak to the question “Why does the Symposium on Global Voices Remain Relevant on Campus and in the Local Community?” initially I thought, “I must read the previous symposium publications to learn more about earlier dialogues and panels, and I need to research what is happening in the local community related to the issues and ideas raised, and I probably should consult with some of my UD contacts to learn more about their campus and their overall efforts to promote global consciousness and inclusion. But then I met the woman who refused to say my name.

And I realized that from where I sit, which is typically a classroom over on West Third St. at Sinclair Community College, the symposium is more than relevant—it is necessary—because it provides a dedicated time and location for our community to listen, learn, and share with others who appreciate and understand the value of ideas and actions like internationalizing curriculum or studying

abroad. Like an annual check-up, it provides a designated time for us to take the pulse of the community as it relates to raising global consciousness.

The walls of my institution are porous. What is happening in the community directly and immediately affects our students, and they bring that right into the classroom, into advising, into financial aid, into the library. This includes all of our students—from those born in the United States to immigrants and international students. Unlike educational institutions where students work, eat, sleep, pray, and play on or near campus, my students are often navigating a variety of worlds in one day. This is not to say UD students are not navigating worlds—I was an undergraduate who lived on campus and so I understand that transformative experience. But it is a very different thing to learn new ideas about the world in your, say, sociology or African, Asian, Latin American Literature course than it is to go immediately to work, where your abrasive co-worker wants the president to build that wall, or than it is to go home to your tender and loving wife—who refuses to say someone’s name because it is too different.

Sinclair was founded by a Scottish immigrant, David A. Sinclair, who stated, “Find the Need and Endeavor to Meet It.” This has become our motto and is the driver of the work we do. My colleague, historian Faheem Curtis-Khidr and I saw a need for community college students to travel outside of the Miami Valley, outside of Ohio, outside of the United States and go to Africa, specifically South Africa. Sinclair has had successful short-term study abroad programs to South America, Europe, and Asia, but there had not been any study abroad trips to Africa. Why was that? I believe it is primarily because the systems and policies were not in place to assist faculty to facilitate the creation of study abroad programs until the last few years. Prior to creating an International Education Office and hiring a director, Sinclair study abroad programs were usually created and led by faculty or staff who had the networks in place to make it happen. But I also believe the broader community’s spoken and unspoken questions probably had some influence on the lack of a set program: Why do community college students need to travel

internationally? How will this help them get a job? Is this somehow going to be a misuse of our money? What does Africa offer us anyway? I believe those questions had influence.

We looked around us and we saw a need. We saw African American students who had little understanding of this piece of their heritage, and they replaced knowledge with romantic ideals of Africa or ugly distortions. We saw non-Black students who also had hurtful misperceptions or stereotypes. And we saw our African students, mostly new immigrants trying to make new lives while facing stereotypes in and outside of the classroom. We believed our students would be strengthened and opened up by short-term study in Durban, South Africa, just as we were when we first travelled there. We believed it would make them better citizens, better human beings.

Fortunately, with the creation of the International Education Office, a Global Exploration Award was created, which allows faculty to propose an idea for their own study in another country so they can create related curriculum, either for use in their regular courses at Sinclair or, like Faheem and I did, to plan a study abroad opportunity. In 2017 we travelled to Durban in conjunction with Dr. Jennifer Subban's Wright Lead Program at Wright State University. We wanted our program, The Ubuntu South Africa Study Abroad Program, to be a transformative experience for community college students—one that would cause them to return home and work for positive changes within their own lives, families, and communities. We want them to always remember that they are part of a picture larger than just Dayton, Ohio. And that local and global are not disparate things on opposite ends of a spectrum.

In Durban, they learn how South African leaders have worked for social change and they study the parallels between South African and U.S. history. Students spend the majority of their time in Durban, a coastal city in eastern South Africa's KwaZulu-Natal province. The city is in part known for being an epicenter of revolutionary ideas for social change, as both Gandhi (the leader of India's independence movement against British colonial rule) and John Langalibele Dube (the first president of the organization that

became the African National Congress) spent time there. Through lectures and first-hand experiences, students broaden their understanding of the nature, depth, and history of intercultural exchange between the United States, South Africa, and India.

At the root of what we do is the idea that our students are the eyes and ears of their communities. While in Africa they are representing their families and friends and neighborhoods, and when they return they are the storytellers and disseminators of new knowledge in their worlds. They are conduits. They are bridges. They are humans who understand that what happens in their houses or on their streets is not and never has been separate from what happens in the rest of the world. And our program is just one piece of Sinclair's developing internationalization plans.

What does any of this have to do with the woman who refused to say my name? Her refusal is one symptom of the closed mindset of Americans who, despite the fact that their lives are highly influenced by globalization, refuse to listen and learn from global voices. But I guarantee you, if that woman doesn't become a Sinclair student at some point in her life, she has family and friends who are or will be. My hope is that as we at Sinclair promote internationalization throughout the college, one of those Sinclair family members or friends will begin to challenge her fear, maybe even influence a paradigm shift ... maybe even get her to say "fu-ra-ha" one day. Which, by the way, means Happiness.

In closing, I'd like to share a quote from "Global is Not the Opposite of Local: Advocacy for Community College International Education" by Rosalind Latiner Raby and Edward J. Valeau:

Regardless of intent, rationale, or application, international education has always been part of the US community college because there has always been a need for students to deal with cross-border and global agendas. Yet, despite increasing public attention, the number of international programs has not grown appreciably in the last few decades and the field has not advanced beyond a negligible level. Consistently, research finds that the predominant issue

preventing community college students from gaining international literacy skills is not a lack of student interest, but lack of institutionalization that truncates access to programmatic options. We suggest that at the core lies the incorrect belief that there is a diametrical connection between local and global. (16)

Thank you for listening, and I hope to see you again at next year's annual check-up.

Work Cited

Latiner Raby, Rosalind, and Edward J. Valeau. "Global is Not the Opposite of Local: Advocacy for Community College International Education" *International Education at Community Colleges: Themes, Practices, and Case Studies*. Palgrave Macmillan Ltd., 2016.

Ernesto Velasquez

I appreciate Dr. Julius Amin's invitation for me to speak on the global voices panel he organized for the Spring 2020 semester at the University of Dayton. He has created a venue for myself and the other presenters to offer critical contributions to the way global matters get framed and articulated in academic circles and campus discourses. I submit these brief, sketchy remarks in this local context with the hope that the University of Dayton develops a deeper critical reflexivity with respect to what seems as normal, standard procedure and best practices, and what passes as post-cultural. I hope these remarks urge you to begin asking what it could mean for the University of Dayton to decolonize itself. What does it mean for you to be a colonized intellectual? What could it mean for you to begin the struggle towards decolonizing your mind, knowledge, neighborhood, cities, and wider world? Is it possible to think beyond Western European rationality? Part of what it means to take

colonization seriously is to acknowledge that there is a crisis of knowledge and reason.

One symptom of not registering the gravity of the crisis of knowledge is to assume there is none. Crisis of knowledge? Just looking at the technologies we have available and the developments in science suggest otherwise. It might seem we need more of this kind of knowledge, that perhaps the knowledge emerging from STEM programs can solve the contemporary problems we face. But to think so would be problematic in part because it does not acknowledge that those disciplinary formations are not post-cultural but rather presuppose a political ontology that involves a set of binaries—man/nature, mind/body, etc.—and practices that end up designing human beings and environments in a culturally specific way. We should not be surprised to find that headphones, cell phones, laptops, and streaming on tablets are technologies that inscribe in us the values of efficiency and hyper-individualism. Does it matter that we listen to music played live in the street with people as opposed to our wireless Bluetooth headphones? Another symptom that the crisis of knowledge is not registered is there is too much enchantment with the rhetoric of Euro-modernity such that there is a tendency to celebrate or affirm things that actually are indicators of decadence. We went from “Christianize or I kill you” in the 16th century, to “civilize or I kill you” in the 18th and 19th centuries, to “develop or I kill you” in the 20th century, to more recently “democratize or I kill you.”

Our panel focused on one question. Why do global voices matter? This question presupposes that there are global voices and that this fact can have some kind of valence. But what really are global voices?

During a philosophy department meeting, the topic of how we could build a more diversified curriculum came up. A senior faculty member, now retired and who shall remain nameless, was baffled at such a question and said, “Why do we have to diversify philosophy? We teach a diversity of views. We teach Plato, Aristotle, Locke, Hume, and Kant.” For this tenured full professor, ignorant of the liberation struggles from which the invocation of such a concept

emerges, simply meant different Western European philosophical perspectives. This professor's view of diversity is not original. In his 1867 inaugural address at St. Andrews, J.S. Mill argued for a Eurocentric notion of diversity to ground a liberal education; one in which people should learn Latin and Greek, as opposed to other barbarian languages, and Western European thought because any deep thought worthy of human significance was nowhere else to be found in the world. It is old hat within some feminist and critical race discourses to indicate the exclusion, silencing, and explicitly racist and sexist views of non-white-male others throughout the history of Western European philosophy.

Outside of these kinds of critical intellectual currents, the traditional, often rehearsed Eurocentric narrative of the history of philosophy—as proceeding along a linear developmental track through the ancient, medieval, renaissance, modern, 18th and 19th century and contemporary periods—still predominates to function as the unquestioned background in many philosophy courses and introduction to philosophy books. This is not simply unique to philosophy but to all the disciplines—the natural sciences, social sciences, and humanities—and in the professional schools. The latter often function as applications of Western European theory to various domains in society—the economic, political, and cultural (if we follow the contentious 18th century way carving up the social into these three hard and sharp spheres). So Eurocentric epistemology is alive and well. It continues to thrive through the westernized university which houses it and continually reproduces it, and past, present, and future generations consume it throughout the planet. We in the Americas have had a 500-year steady diet of this kind of knowledge production and practices for at least since the first westernized universities were transplanted from Europe to the Caribbean during the Spanish colonization of the Americas. The University of Santo Domingo, the first westernized university in the western hemisphere, was established in 1538 in the Caribbean. The University of Mexico, the first westernized university in North America, was established in 1551. The University of San Marcos, the first westernized university in the Americas, was founded in 1551.

These historical colonial considerations help us to begin to denaturalize school and not take for granted that we operate within simply universities. When it is said, “I go to university X” or “My major is philosophy or chemistry or history or ethnic studies or biology or economics,” we simultaneously and uncritically perform an erasure of the colonial context from which we are situated and normalize the idea that the university is post-cultural and its epistemological foundations are based on a post-cultural/ethnicity binary. In order to situate ourselves—faculty, students, staff, and administrators—in a more accurate, historically and ethically responsible fashion, we should be aware of the university as a culturally particular global structure of power. We should think of curriculum, programming, campus culture, and institutional mission within this context. How do these observations about the pervasiveness of a parochial intellectual discourse and the westernized university relate to the significance of global voices?

The problem with the litany of philosophers invoked by the senior faculty member was not simply that he was operating with a Eurocentric notion of diversity and was ignorant of an extensive, minimally five-hundred-year intellectual tradition of racist and sexist thought that is not typically part of a doctoral student’s comprehensive exams in philosophy. We are talking about past, present, and future generations of westernized universities actively producing graduates with minted Ph.D.s in hand at the same time perpetuating ignorance about people of color and women—their epistemologies. Their methods and theories are espoused from a decontextualized, disembodied perspective such that their claims pass as universally applicable to everyone on the planet, even if the people in other places had different languages, histories, experiences, cosmologies, and philosophies. Here you have global voices in the sense of voices that are taken to represent all of humanity and are disseminated and consumed on planetary scale by means of the westernized university that houses an epistemology whose foundations and standards of excellence are fundamentally Eurocentric. Local European history is not world history. If this is one way of indicating the meaning of “global voices,” then the

question why do global voices matter becomes complicated. The fact that global voices matter is the problem. A second sense in which global voices are articulated is in what I will dub the Benetton model internationalist sense. In this view there is demographic racial/sexual diversity, but the thinking, underlying historical narratives, categories, theoretical dispositions, epistemic practices, framing of problems and solutions are all enunciated from a Western European epistemology. This performs many functions, one of which involves a framing in which the global South has the problems and the West has the solutions. International students become westernized elites who function as expert mediators between the West and the rest. In this context, the westernized university (which should not be confused with a Western university) operates as a manager of the modern/colonial world system. Philosophical reflection on five hundred years of Western-European and more recent U.S. coloniality leads me to think it is misleading to think we live in a new context of globalization. It is also mystifying to appeal to the notion of global citizenship as a way of having us learn lessons from the past and become more responsible if that notion is a globalized extension of the concept of citizenship. The latter is rife with problems, not simply because of its faulty underlying conception of rationality, which presupposes a transcendence of social identities—race, gender, sex, class, etc.—but also because it is conceived as non-relational. With respect to conceptual interventions, it is descriptively inadequate to think with the category of globalization because it enables us to say misleading things like, “Let’s talk about the benefits of globalization.” What are the benefits of genocides/epistemicides and the destruction of major civilizations on the planet? That is a strange question. Instead of thinking in terms of globalization, we should think in terms of the modern/colonial world-system. Instead of thinking in terms of global citizenship, we should think more in terms of cultural citizenship.

Bernard Jones Jr.

Greetings, my fellow UD family. It is great to return to campus as an alumnus; I do miss the great memories made here as a student. My name is Bernard Jones Jr. I am a Daytonian who graduated from Dayton Early College Academy (DECA), UD, and then from The Master's Seminary in Los Angeles. I have recently moved back after living out west for seven years.

I want to provide personal testimony on “Why Global Voices Remain Relevant in Campus and Local Community Discourse.” My goal is to provide a practical perspective on how to effectively contribute ideas, values, and solutions in the global economy. It is first learning how to become a global citizen. Whether we accept or deny having a global mindset, it is essential that we become more aware of how to gain access and explore our global citizenship.

Before I was able to study and travel abroad, I was passionately serving in various leadership capacities locally with the Fitz Center, Student Government Executive Board, Multi-Ethnic Engagement Center, BATU, Ebony Heritage Singers, and other local organizations. As a Daytonian, I was an advocate for the Dayton community because I understood the needs, disparities, and plans that existed. When I was introduced to the University’s mission, resources, and plans to impact the Dayton community, I sought to build synergy among students, faculty, staff, and administration. I was able to visualize a bridge of community transformation that existed between the Greater Dayton Community and the Bubble of UD. Both worlds offered opportunities, resources, and value to each other’s ability to enhance life experiences of learning. My goal was to link with a variety of career and service-learning opportunities that would help them build a Greater Dayton Community.

This vision to be a local leader was shared with some of my dormmates as we talked about changing the world as we saw it to be. We understood the need for us to gain a global perspective of what that meant. This led us to seek out UD’s cultural immersion opportunities. We were on our way to becoming world change agents. I share this story because nearly every person has a desire to

be in an immersion program or to study abroad; however, obstacles or disbelief can become barriers. This happened to us, especially because we were minorities from working-class backgrounds. My white dormmate and I were excited about the opportunity, but when we found out that it cost nearly \$3,500 each to go, we both knew right away that our families could not aid us financially to go. After we found out the cost, we were outside in the middle of campus, and he said to me, “Well, I guess that’s it—there’s there’s no way I can go, I can barely pay for college.” I thought the same, but I did not let this hurdle dictate my destiny.

I made a life-changing decision that day. I knew my reasons for pursuing the African experience were to reunite with my cultural roots and heritage, explore beyond the borders of the U.S., and understand international community development. I believe that when I heard my pastor talk about his journey in Africa, and when I saw his pictures, he was affirmed that one day I would go too. I believed it was a possibility. I also strongly believe that those who have traveled abroad must share their stories and must encourage and mentor other students along the path of applying for funding and support to explore their global citizenship.

So, I searched and discovered a funding opportunity for initiatives like this on campus. I wasn’t sure if I was going to receive it, but I submitted my essay application. Later that sophomore spring semester, I became the recipient of the Learn, Lead, and Serve Award. This even happened again when I was a senior; I received the Daniel J. Curran and Claire M. Renzetti Scholarship that let me to go to African a second time, this time on my own.

The global experience in Africa transformed my identity and shifted my appreciation for others and how I understood the world. Many other students possess a desire to study or immerse themselves in foreign countries; however, they struggle to believe they can afford the experience to venture abroad. This opportunity for students enhances their understanding of what it means to be a global citizen, but it is often dismissed, discouraged, or neglected. As a student who overcame these obstacles, I asked my peers why is this so? I discovered students are intimidated or are simply misinformed

because of their lack of awareness on how to optimize available resource, or how to use global travel planning, instead identifying with their peers and not cultivating relationships that will mentor them through the process to study abroad.

I share this because there was a time when our cultural immersion group went to visit an African international school, IRIC. It was interesting to see that UD students were astonished and somewhat intimidated by how educated the Africans were. When invited to discuss issues of globalization, democracy, international relations, and much more, some of the UD students were not interested in going because their foundation knowledge on these issues was not strong.

I laughed at how the students responded after the visit. They mentioned how they did not want to look stupid, ignorant, or uneducated in front of the African students. It was interesting that the students had a lot of opinions on life in Cameroon but were nervous to share them openly with the students who are from there. Some of the American students also displayed an inability to offer an analysis of America's role in the world. This visit to IRIC shattered their misconceptions of African inferiority and intellectually challenged African students. This visit forced the students into realizing our shortcomings as Americans.

This is an example of how American and African students were able to engage and resolve stereotypes and misconceptions they had received through the biases of education, entertainment, news, and politics. Global voices are essential for our social, cultural, and economic development with the world around us. A global voice becomes relevant when we become vulnerable, when we become active listeners, and when we participate in experiences that teach and reshape our humanity. This is when we are able to dismantle the cultural barriers and misconceptions of one another.

Cultural competency is the key to becoming a competent citizen and a more effective and efficient professional, which ultimately leads us to generate holistic learning communities. Then we are able to develop best practices that increase productivity and quality performance in our everyday interactions. Humanity has the ability

to reach greater learning and more creative capacities when individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds are engaged, working collectively, and building meaningful relationships. In order to increase students' capacity for building communities, there must be a direct link to increasing their learning and interactions among leaders and other peer students who represent different cultural backgrounds.

Students are left behind when they are not challenged to engage socially with others who are different from them or outside of their race. I have worked with White students, and they have expressed their frustration not being able to connect with African Americans or other cultural groups when it comes to building relationships to impact communities because of what they have learned negatively or because of what have not been taught about the other. We must take advantage of every occasion to learn and build a consensus from global voices in order to understand how we are to evolve in our humanity.

This kind of global solidarity leads to the sustainable development of peoples. It can be cultivated through transparent and authentic connections people.. When we take a deeper look into ourselves and understand that those we help can also help us in areas of our lives that have never been touched before. Global solidarity is a tool for the UD and Dayton community to serve populations that are reducing inequality and social injustice in the world.

Institutions are often designed in such a way that they don't serve everyone equally. Unfortunately, privileged levels of learning such as studying abroad are being hoarded by the fortunate and kept from the unprivileged, both in terms of higher education and access to capital. An inclusive society must provide fair and equitable access to its historically excluded groups. Let's work on this—together.



