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Conclusion: The Forward March of Global Consciousness

Julius Amin

The 2019 Global Voices Symposium lived up to its hype. It was educational, informative, and enriching. It attracted onto the University of Dayton campus people from out of the state of Ohio and the larger Dayton community. Speakers were passionate about their topics and captivated the audience. All were engaged.

Community leaders spoke about their journey into the culture of global consciousness, discussed challenges faced by immigrants, and explained initiatives put in place to alleviate those problems. Monica Harris, coordinator of Welcome Dayton presented at the opening session. As a young student, she spent four months in South Africa and the experience was transformative. It was after that when she began to think seriously about the diverse and multicultural nature of the global community. Her perspective was forever altered, and she will pursue a career in assisting others understand the complex nature of the world and its people. Despite the differences and complexity, everyone, she notes, is bound together by the human family to which all belong. Eugenie Kirenga, another presenter, arrived in Dayton from Rwanda and, along with colleagues including Martha Rodriguez, spoke about efforts made by the Welcome Dayton organization to alleviate problems faced by new immigrants. Those challenges include the inability to speak English, poverty, and

isolation. Speakers called on conference attendees to be involved in the work to make the City of Dayton more immigrant friendly. Consistent with the theme of the conference, Cyril Ibe spoke about *Good Evening Africa*, a program designed to bring up-to-date events about Africa to the community. Africa is among the most misrepresented places on earth, and Ibe's program helps to humanize the continent and its people.

An important part of the symposium dealt with student experiences and global consciousness. Traditionally, the University of Dayton sent students to different parts of the world for either study abroad or immersion programs. While current students spoke about their experiences, alumni delved into how developing global awareness impacted their lives. Jeana Adams, Mary Smith-Custer, and Bryan Borodkin spoke about the impact of immersion trips to the Caribbean and Asia on their educations and worldviews. The trips challenged them to step out of their comfort zones and embrace other cultures and peoples. It was exciting, they stated. Their perspective of the global community was forever altered.

Equally important was the alumni session, whose presenters were: Justin Forzano, Clementine Bigha, Matt Joseph, Christine Vehar Jutte, and Kwyn Townsend Riley. Each spoke about how they became involved with global issues and the benefits of the experience. The train of international awareness has left the station, and there is no turning back, they stated. In a very interdependent world, each one must become involved, they continued. They came to global consciousness through different career paths. Justin, for example, majored in civil engineering, and after immersion experiences in Cameroon decided to go into global development after graduation. Today, he runs a non-governmental organization which uses soccer to teach young people life skills. Clementine majored in human rights and devotes her time speaking-up against injustice. Christine's foreign experience in India led to the formation of Engineers in Technical Humanitarian Opportunities of Service Learning (ETHOS), an engineering organization which sends students to different parts of the world to do service. ETHOS is currently an integrated part of the School of Engineering program.

Matt's work with Kosovo was impactful, and he is currently a leading voice in the City of Dayton on issues of global awareness. Kwyn's African-immersion experience was both enriching and transformative. A novelist and activist, her foreign experience expanded her perspective and worldview. Those stories were captivating and pointed to the endless possibilities offered as a result of global encounter. Their stories revealed what can be achieved when students are given the opportunity to have a global experience.

A particularly significant part of the presentation was Nwando Achebe's keynote address, "Making Sense of Global Awareness on American College Campuses: Women's History in the African Tradition." The speech was the right one at the right time on the right topic. For too long, African women have been misrepresented as passive, docile, and submissive. The African woman, Nwando stated, was depicted as "completely subjugated...enslaved," and weighed down by "superficial knowledge of the African cultural and social institutions of bride-price, polygamy, and, more recently, female circumcision." Her speech was a point-by-point implosion of those stereotypes. Beginning from ancient times to the present, African women, she continued, have always held "leadership roles." In more recent times, significant number of women serve in parliament in various African nations. In fact, the nation of Rwanda, where women hold 61.3 percent of the parliamentary seats, ranks number one in the world among countries in which women occupy the most seats in the legislature. African women always contributed to development. She challenged armchair scholars who continue to caricature the life and times of women in the continent. It is time to give African women a voice in their own story, she noted.

The Global Voices Symposium is built on the excitement that global awareness brings on college campuses and the larger community. Following this year's symposium, people began asking what we have in store for next year—and that was revealing. The Global Voices Symposium is rapidly becoming a part of campus culture, and increasingly our campus is taking its rightful place as one which genuinely promotes global consciousness. It is the wave of the future.