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Global Awareness—The Wave of the Future

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Conclusion: Global Awareness— The Wave of the Future

Julius A. Amin

The 2022 Global Voices Symposium occurred at a momentous time. In addition to the ongoing global pandemic, Russia had unleashed a brutal invasion of Ukraine. The presentations focused on students' perspectives of study abroad, human rights, the role of women, COVID 19, new directions in study abroad, immigrant life, and the increasing importance of Africa. Each speaker brought a unique perspective to the conversation. Repeatedly, speakers spoke about the positive impact of global awareness in their personal and professional development. Given the context in which the Symposium took place, there was renewed attention brought to the impact of the global pandemic and human rights. Maria Vivero convincingly showed how the pandemic helped to raise awareness on the state of "economic inequalities in the United States and around the world." The pandemic, she continued, summons the nation to engage in structural changes designed to uplift the condition of the poor. Satang Nebaneh's presentation built on that theme, arguing that the global pandemic has been impactful. There is an urgent need for human rights education because it helps to create a more just society. Human rights education, she stated, ultimately calls for redistribution of power, adding, "we need to be actively anti-racist, anti-colonial, and anti-oppressive in order to rebalance power."

The global pandemic brought new thinking to the manner in which universities conduct study abroad. As some moved to de-emphasize

travel, others built on existing programs such as Collaborative Online International Learning (COIL). Rochonda Nenonene introduced the “New Directions,” session with significant data showing why Africa matters. Africa, she argues, is a “continent full of promise, rich cultural heritage, blessed with a wealth of natural resources, and poised to become a hub of innovation and progress.” Presentations by Karla Guinigundo, Furaha Henry-Jones, and Sangita Gosalia pointed to opportunities available at their various institutions for education abroad. Global engagement is an essential part of higher education. Sangita argued that “fostering dialogue and intercultural development” are crucial for “building global consciousness and support for institutional goals of diversity, equity, and inclusion.” In addition to Sangita’s argument, Guinigundo stated that her university, Miami, has taken major efforts toward the “diversification of study abroad,” and to find ways to make the experience available to more students.

A particularly important part of the Symposium was the keynote address, where Landry Signe argued that Africa, despite all the apparent and real challenges, offers tremendous opportunities for the global community. Utilizing immense scholarly evidence, combined with charts showing predictions, Signe argues that Africa’s time is at hand. “The pandemic has created unique momentum for engagement with Africa,” he states, adding, “Global partners should seize this momentum to renew their relation with Africa. ... By acting promptly, and forging transformative partnerships aligned with African values, global partners have the opportunity not only to contribute to the transformation of a continent that will make up nearly 40 percent of the world’s population by 2100, but also to build a more prosperous, democratic, secure, and stable world. As mentioned by William Schurz, ‘Borders frequented by trade seldom need soldiers.’”

During the last five years, the global voices symposia have contributed to bringing awareness to critical issues which we face in contemporary times: race and racism, war and peace, wealth and poverty, gender, immigration, and freedom and responsibility. We, the planners of these events, hope that we have encouraged new thinking about responsibility and participation in the global space. We hope that you will continue to find new ways to stimulate global awareness. It is the wave of the future.