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## Radical Love

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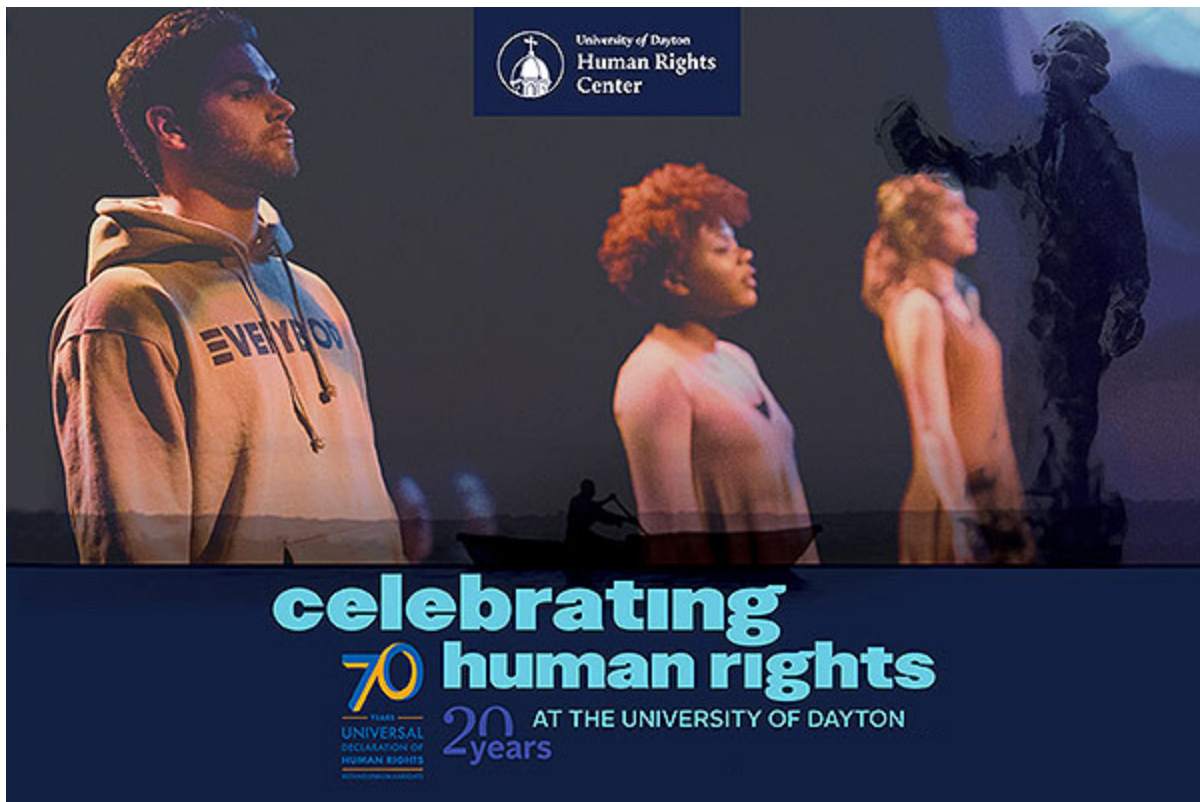
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# Radical Love : University of Dayton, Ohio

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Monday December 10, 2018

## Radical Love

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By Eric F. Spina

Every person deserves dignity. Every person deserves a voice.

When our students advocate for the vulnerable, they become a voice for the voiceless in a world that is not always just. Their stories give me faith in the future. And their mindset is one we want to cultivate in all graduates, no matter their degree.

Deeply committed University of Dayton students — and 200 graduates working around the world as human rights advocates — are the heart and soul of our human rights program, which is celebrating its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary.

In 1998, we put a stake in the ground when we launched one of the nation's very first undergraduate human rights programs. We followed that pioneering move 10 years later with one of the first bachelor's degrees in human rights studies.

Today, through the interdisciplinary research, education, and advocacy work of the UD Human Rights Center, we continue to show why we are a leader in the global human rights community. And, as Shelley Inglis, newly named executive director of the Center notes, we are evolving into “a human rights university” through our campus-wide efforts to become a more sustainable campus; through our efforts to enhance access and affordability for all qualified students; and through a deeper focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is all based on the Marianist charism that insists on the dignity of each individual.

On the 70<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the United Nations’ Universal Declaration of Human Rights, the words and actions of our students strike me as powerful reminders of our Catholic, Marianist mission to educate for service, justice, and peace.

Listen to them and imagine the world of tomorrow:

“I am deeply committed to pursuing justice, equity, and the full and free development of the human personality in each individual,” says Rose Dyar, a senior from Franklin, Michigan. “The human rights studies program and Human Rights Center have created space for me to interact with people on the ground and in the field — from the U.S.-Mexico border to Appalachian Kentucky. I am grateful to have borne witness to the transformative power of relationship-building and the cultivation of radical love.”

Classmate Mary McLoughlin is pursuing a human rights degree because “in a world that seemed broken by atrocity, I wanted to learn repair. A human rights framework offers more than just a condemnation of injustice; it is a commitment to humanity,” says the junior from Long Island, New York.

The experiential learning opportunities for students interested in human rights work are plentiful.

For instance, with professors and classmates, Mary traveled to El Paso, Texas, last summer to conduct interviews about the experience of immigrants at the U.S.-Mexican border as part of the Human Rights Center’s “Moral Courage Project.” At the same time, classmate Maggie Cadman, a junior from Naperville, Illinois, was gaining hands-on human rights research experience in Malawi in southeast Africa. After graduation, she hopes to enter law school and pursue a career in child advocacy. Vanessa Carey, a senior international studies and Spanish major from Athens, Ohio, helped plan the Human Rights Center’s biennial Social Practice of Human Rights Conference last year. She also has interned in London and Washington, D.C., at agencies that work with immigrants.

“To say the least, there have been countless paths that the University of Dayton has provided for me to pursue my passion and pursuit in human rights work,” Vanessa says.

“Why human rights?” she asks. “Because one injustice allows all injustice to be tolerated. It is on all of us to protect the dignity and rights of all persons. Even if it is just one small act at a time. I’m very thankful that my journey here at UD has inspired me to identify these acts and work to promote them every day.”

As the University of Dayton realizes our strategic vision to be *the* University for the Common Good, these students in this signature program are modeling what it means to honor the dignity of all people.

That’s worth celebrating.