

Faculty Address
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I am honored to have been chosen by you as an outstanding teacher this year. This award, I hope, means that I have touched some of your lives. I trust many of you know that you have also touched mine. I am more aware than ever how deeply I have been shaped by you, your dreams, and your questions—questions that are both troubled and hopeful. You and your predecessors are partly responsible for the current direction of both my scholarship and teaching, engaged in questions of inequalities in the global economic system and the ways in which these are linked to our environmental crisis.

There are two things that I treasure about universities in general and this one, Xavier University, in particular. The first is that a priority is placed on human connection, on students interacting with faculty. In the classroom, ideally, we create something unique, a community dedicated to working together toward learning and growth. The second is that, while each of us is here for reasons tied to the market economy (many of you as tuition-payers and we as receivers of salary), what we do on an hour-to-hour basis is driven by values and goals that have little to do with immediate or material economic benefit. Such behavior is a beacon in the darkness. My deepest desire for our world and what I believe is necessary for a sustainable future is for each of us to put our economic values in proper perspective and start making decisions based on the value of people and places, not just money and the things it buys.

One way to begin valuing people and places is by becoming true citizens or working on public goals with others in our communities. For political theorist Benjamin Barber and many others, citizens operate in strong contrast to consumers. Consumers are defined largely by their relationship to our hypercapitalist economy. Barber states, “Consumers are everywhere failed [adults]..., rendered juvenile and grasping by a culture of infantilism that refuses to let them grow up. The civic calling coaxes boys and girls into maturation and then into citizenship.” In working together, we not only strengthen our communities and nations but also our individual souls, while simultaneously decreasing the hold that consumption has on us. Political scientist Robert Putnam has noted “the kind of social capital that is generated by common civic work and voluntary civic activity ... is bridging capital—capital that links people together.” (Barber, *Consumed*) Only together can we change the systems that have created for so many a less than humane existence and brought us to the brink of ecological collapse.

But because our lives are deeply intertwined with those in communities far away, whether they be the coalfields of Appalachia or the coffee fields of Kenya, we need more than just national citizenship. Some call for “‘glocal citizenship,’ “an identity that begins in the neighborhood but spirals out to encompass ever expanding circles of civic diversity and cultural difference that eventually bridge nation-states as well.” It is a citizenship that recognizes that local connections are important and tied to global events and problems. (Barber, *Consumed*)

Let me explain in more personal terms what ‘glocal citizenship’ might look like. One person who has deeply influenced me is my maternal grandfather, a

Methodist minister. Though he died in 1989, he is still very much a living force in my life, largely because of his practice of glocal citizenship. In my mind's eye, he sits at a cardboard table in comfortable clothes. His hair is tousled. It is nice, wavy hair that might look tousled even after a comb, but often had not had such attention. And both his hair and his clothes convey a soul absorbed in other-worldly concerns. And, this meant to a significant extent, not as much concern for his granddaughter as I might have liked. That he loved me, I had no doubt; that he thought his energies needed to be directed beyond my own self and needs was not in doubt, either. What is he doing at this table, you might ask? Well, first of all, you need to know that the table is in our house, it has been erected for him upon his arrival. Technically, he is on vacation. But, few of us would recognize any activity that matched such a term. For, there he sat for hours—reading, writing letters to the editor, to his colleagues and friends, and planning events, particularly focused on ending the arms race. Vacation was not even an attractive concept because he loved his work. And this work included hours nurturing plants and acres of orange grove in his southern Florida home. He was so real, so connected to his orange grove, his trees, religious understanding, and peace. And, this, I think, is the key to glocal citizenship, a rootedness and dependence on a particular ecosystem while maintaining a passionate connection to one or more global issues.

We must settle down, as my grandfather finally did, to learn to love an ecosystem, its particular set of flora and fauna, and to learn what sustainable resources such a place might yield, in the form of food we can eat, fibers we can use, and aesthetic beauty it can nurture. Wendell Berry poignantly portrays in his

writings what we have lost and are losing as a nation and as humans, when we willy-nilly chase jobs and better lives across our country and globe. Yes, we need experiences outside of our own culture and neighborhood, but if they come at the expense of any sense of social capital or local ecology, then, they are, in the end, only detrimental. For such flitting about assumes that what humans create is more important than the Earth upon which all creation, both human-constructed and soil-dependent, rests. Wendell Berry writes, “We have been wrong. We must change our lives, so that it will be possible to live by the contrary assumption that what is good for the world will be good for us. And that requires that we make the effort to know the world and learn what is good for it. We must learn to co-operate in its processes, and to yield to its limits. But even more important, we must learn to acknowledge that the creation is full of mystery; we will never entirely understand it. We must abandon arrogance and stand in awe.”

My grandfather was the first person I knew who thought of himself as a steward of his small part of the earth and a citizen of the world and did not hesitate to share those passions—both their joys and deep sorrows—with everyone with whom he came into contact. My grandfather was my first hero. As I see it, one of the most counter-cultural, and thus, humane, things that we can do is to learn from those moral giants with whom we each come into contact. Our consumer-driven society wants us to identify with athletes, pop musicians and television stars whose lives only intersect ours remotely. But, in order to become citizens active in the world, we need people with whom we interact in the flesh—people like my grandfather who walked in the halls of the United Nations trying to be a force for

peace but who was also an overnight companion to a lovingly transplanted banyan tree struggling to survive a rare freezing night in central Florida. Our heroes need to be “real”--people with warts, inconsistencies and frailties, for they teach us the choices we have before us and the pitfalls and consequences of each. As Terry Tempest Williams has said, “The human heart is the first home of democracy.” And it is in this home and between human hearts that connections must be made. Our learning together is a testimony to this.

When I was your age, it took a trip across the Atlantic and to several countries in East Africa to make me realize the deep value of such connections, for much of our society is devoid of them. When I first went to Tanzania to do my dissertation fieldwork in Ufipa, one of the first people I met was the front desk clerk at a small hotel in Sumbawanga. She asked, with surprise, what I was doing there, alone. I said that I was there to do research and would be living in Chala, 40 miles north. Her jaw dropped and Irena said, “That’s where I live.” Within minutes of arriving in the regional capital, I was being woven into a social network. When I left a few days later, Irena handed me an envelope with money in it, money representing a month’s wages, entrusting me to carry this large sum to her mother, a woman whom I had never met. In Chala, I was grateful for the small task of having to find Irena Kang’ombe’s mother. I went down to the small market place and within minutes, Verana Sallya, a middle-aged shoe saleswoman, greeted me and said she could take me to Irena’s mother. I followed Verana as we wove in and out of pathways between sun-dried brick houses. In return for delivering the money and visiting their home, Irena’s mother gave me a basket full of peanuts. Verana then

took me around the village and introduced me to members of the community. Everywhere she took me, with few exceptions, a member of the household would explain his or her connection to Verana in words along these lines, Verana's mother's uncle's wife and my grandfather "wametoka tumbo hili moja" they came from one stomach; or they had the same mother.

I was being introduced to the community of Chala, while at the same time Verana was being introduced to me as an integral member of the community and, in particular, as a child of someone who, in turn, had a myriad of connections to others. So it was that within days of arriving in Ufipa and hours of arriving in Chala that I had social connections, and as it would turn out, familial connections. Such connections were the sinews of the local economy. Thus, each day, I was expected to greet every person I came across for the first time with a multiple-question greeting and to answer such greetings in return. The greeting varied by the age of the person in relation to me, by the time of day, and whether or not I had seen the person previously that day. "How did you sleep? How did you wake up? How is your family? How are others you know? How is your work? What have you eaten? These would be some of the first questions, followed by others tailored to the person's circumstances. The questions were an essential component of the village economy, as they helped people know who was ill, aging, traveling, and brewing beer (almost as important as social connections and certainly not able to be enjoyed without them). I agree with world historian, William McNeill that, despite the historical tendency of ever-widening webs of human contact that has marked our existence

for thousands of years, we all need face-to-face communities, like those our predecessors belonged to. Virtual communities simply will not do.

Thanks to my grandfather, Verana Sallya, Wendell Berry, and a whole host of heroes remaining unnamed, I have found as Robert Frost wrote in his well-known poem, "The Road Not Taken" that 'way leads on to way'. One small action in the face of seemingly unbeatable odds leads to others; friendships develop, ideas are exchanged, and energy is multiplied. Life becomes blessedly rich. Thus, my hope and wish is that 'way leads on to way' for you on the road less traveled. But there is no need to go it alone. Seek out mentors, heroes, friends and allies who support your actions. Invest in social capital, and the Jesuit 'whole person'. Love the place where you live, make it as beautiful and healthy as possible, and stand in awe of its majesty. Such investment does not cost money but will remit dividends for a lifetime.