

Preparing Leaders for Tomorrow  
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Good afternoon, I thank you for your warm welcome and gracious words. Governor Mark Dayton, Senator Amy Klobuchar, Representative Betty McCollum, Mayor Chris Coleman--you make me proud to be a part of the great state of Minnesota. I thank you for sharing this day with me. I appreciate and thank you for your work.

Bishop Ough (O), thank you and I thank the Methodist community for their continued support for Hamline University's mission, students, and community.

John, Ben, and Eric—thank you. I am pleased and honored to work with you.

I have been blessed to know and work with some incredible people—among them are Dr. Ruth Simmons and Dr. Tom Sullivan. I reserve special recognition for my mentor, my friend, my family--Dr. Edmund Gordon. When I was a young and eager post-doctoral fellow at Yale University trying to figure out how I fit and who would listen to my ideas—he gifted me with a place among a group of established and upcoming scholars. We would meet and discuss ideas. More importantly, he pushed us to be relevant, to connect our work to things that mattered. Ed, there are no words that can fully describe all that you

mean to and have done for me, I am eternally grateful to you and, to Susan.

I have many long-time and loyal friends here with me today; we met at Yale, conference for developmental psychologists, Brown, UVM, ACE, AACTE, CADREI, AERA, APA, and the list goes on. We have shared much and have more to share. Thank you for always standing with me and giving me yet another place and way to share my ideas, plans, and so much more.

I thank my Minnesota Private College Council colleagues for being here with me today. I have learned, in a very short period of time, just how committed you are to our students. We share the same hopes and dreams for our students. We work each day to ensure that they all have an opportunity to learn, to grow, to discover what is possible for them--to grab that ring as they go round on life's merry-go-round. I thank the delegates who are here, and I thank Linda, Chuck, and Jerry—past presidents of Hamline.

My family has been and is the rock upon which I stand. My husband, Robert Biral is my partner, listener, and constructive critic. He reminds me when I want to say no why I need to say yes. He is on this incredible journey with me and I am lucky to have him at my side. My son, David, is amazing. He understands my need to do, what I do, and encourages me to stay the course. He always says he is proud of me, but my pride in him far outnumbers the number of lakes in Minnesota. Bob and David, I love you.

My mom and dad died many years ago. While they were able to walk some of the way along the road my academic journey has taken

me, this is a day I am sure they would have wanted to see and I would have been moved to have them here. My parents believed in all their children; they wanted a future for us that they knew they might never personally experience. Their active involvement in the Civil rights Movement and my father's service as the secretary of the local NAACP serve as reminders to my brothers and sisters, my son David, my niece Katrina, and my grand niece Kamille of the life they were trying to make possible for us. I learned from them that, no matter what life threw my way, what obstacles were placed in my way, that I was a part of a democracy, a civil society and to never take for granted what that means. They told me all the time that I could, I should, I must—to step forward, be a part of things bigger than me, even when others were stepping backwards or I wanted to as well; to speak up, when the urge was to remain silent because to be silent meant that I was giving my voice and rights to another. And, through their deeds more than words, they taught me that I could not fully be free to appreciate the notion of liberty—to be free within society to live my life and choose how to behave and think--if I remained silent.

I owe them more than they ever knew; as well do my brothers and sisters, who I know identify with what I have said about our mom and dad. My family and friends from near and far are here with me today.

And, to you, my Hamline family—Bob Klas, the chairman of the Board, trustees all, faculty, staff, and students, I thank you for opening your arms and welcoming me into your community and for believing in and trusting me to do what will continue to make us a strong leader in the higher education community, a committed partner with the

Methodist church, and a good neighbor to our community partners. I am humbled by your support and embrace of me as a person, a scholar, and a leader. I feel your embrace and will do all I can to ensure your respect and trust forever remains strong. We are in this together.

I am honored to serve as the 20<sup>th</sup> president of Hamline University, the first African-American and the second woman. The words of John Wesley, the founder and leader of the Methodist church, best describe what is expected of a member of the Hamline community. We recite these words on a regular basis. Wesley said,

Do all *the good* you can,

By all *the means* you can,

In all *the ways* you can,

In all *the places* you can,

At all *the times* you can,

To all *the people* you can as long *as ever* you can.

As these words apply to Hamline University, I interpret Wesley's words to mean that it is our duty to be exemplars of civic engagement and to prepare our students to do both the work that is vital to our overall economic outlook and to the moral fiber of our nation. In Wesley's words, do all the good you can do. Higher education must be a major player in socializing students to be productive and contributing members of a civil society—which includes the world of work and society as a whole. In Wesley's words, do good by all the means and ways you can.

This idea of higher education as having both an academic and civic reason for existing is not new. In 1802, then President Joseph McKeen of

Bowdoin College stated, “literary institutions are founded and endowed for the common good.” He further argues that higher education institutions have a responsibility to help in [cultivating and improving the mental powers of students for the benefit of society].

Higher education, when presented this way, is purposeful in ways that extend beyond the individual. Higher education benefits the other as well as the self.

Still others have made similar observations. Charles William Eliot, a past president of Harvard University spoke the following words in 1880 to Harvard students—words that are etched on the gates of Dexter Hall, “Enter to grow in wisdom. Depart to serve better thy country and thy kind.” The purpose of higher education, for Eliot, is societal—to prepare our students to use the knowledge they gain to generate new knowledge and then use that knowledge to contribute, to do, and to behave in a particular manner. We in higher education have an obligation and a responsibility to prepare our students for all that it means to be part of a democratic society, to be civically engaged. In Wesley’s words, in all the places you can, to all the people you can.

However, the purpose of higher education, as I have described, is becoming increasingly difficult as the focus moves to outcomes--how much money our graduates make one to 10 years after completion of their degree rather than how our graduates contribute to local and global economies through their work and through their engagement in the community. Yes, it is true that business and engineering graduates earn more upon completion of their degrees than some liberal arts and education students. But, it does not necessarily follow that their overall

contribution to society is greater. Is the value of an educator diminished because the starting salaries are lower than one would like or the earnings of a philosophy graduate are deferred due to the continuation of his or her education so as to move into the professoriate ranks or the English major who struggles for many years before they write that great novel? I think not, for if we have done the job we should, as Eliot articulated and others like Woodrow Wilson stated, "It is the object of learning, not only to satisfy the curiosity and perfect the spirits of ordinary men, but also to advance civilization." W.E.B. Du Bois in *The Souls of Black Folk*, also writes, "The function of the university is not simply to teach bread-winning, or to furnish teachers for the public schools, or to be a centre of polite society; it is, above all else, to be the organ of that fine adjustment between real-life and the growing knowledge of life, an adjustment which forms the secret of civilization."

As Eliot, Wilson, and Du Bois powerfully articulate, the function of the university or college is to prepare students by exposing them to knowledge and helping them learn how to apply what they have learned. Another function, of the university, not divorced from knowledge sharing, is to prepare students to be contributing members of a democratic and civil society. Yet as David Mathews of the Kettering Foundation, argues this is a daunting task because we are a nation of "citizenless democracy" where the trend is to be "sideline citizens."

At Hamline University, we are not "sideline citizens." Our students are civically engaged. They are involved in organizing and leading efforts that impact the lives of young people in St. Paul, traveling the country during the January term to help struggling communities

become more sustainable, serving as student mentors to new students, and ambassadors for Hamline. We, as part of our mission, prepare students to be leaders.

In sum, we help them appreciate the value of being a part of a community that shares more than a border with the surrounding St. Paul community. As we say at Hamline University, we prepare leaders for tomorrow's future.

In my relatively short period of time on campus, I have come to love the people and the community—a community that is vital, teeming with scholars, dedicated staff, and extraordinary students. Hamline is about people. Hamline is about community. Hamline is about doing all that we can, whenever we can, for as long as we can--for someone else. We value relationships.

Those who know me well know that I too value relationships. I too believe that we must exercise our liberty in ways that benefit society. Many years ago, I started what I called Research Apprenticeship Program, or as we called it, RAP—a catchy title, as I am sure you'll agree, for high school students in Rhode Island. I brought high school students to Brown University and taught them how to be researchers. Although they learned how to identify problems, develop, conduct, and present research, they also learned how to exercise their liberty, by being part of a “community” of learners, and the importance of seeing themselves as part of a bigger whole. They got a better understanding of the American Dream and how they might participate in its reality.

We do something similar here at Hamline with our first year seminar program. We begin to socialize our students into what it means

to be a Piper, to be a part of the Hamline community, from day one. Each first year seminar or FYSEM community has a specific topic that is studied and explored, including connecting what is learned to opportunities around the St. Paul community.

The Hamline University Center for Global Environmental Educational is a demonstration of how to connect knowledge and civic engagement, of a university working as part of the community. The Center is an example of Peter Levine's notion of doing. Levine proposes that organizers are central in order for democracy and civic engagement to become a critical force. In the case of the Center, it works to "foster environmental literacy and stewardship in citizens of all ages" around water conservation. The work of those at the Center is predicated on the notion knowledge gained from experience is necessary as the way to best benefit society. An underlying principle of the work of the Center is the notion of care. They care, so they do. The work we do at Hamline University allows students and other members of our community to understand and appreciate why care is important. In my opinion, care is the essence of social justice. We educate our students on how to take advantage of the fact that they have liberty, which for me means the ability to freely participate, the ability to be civically engaged to enjoy democracy, to enjoy all that comes with being a citizen.

To repeat, we at Hamline University are not now nor will ever be "sideline citizens." We are a part of the various communities—local, state, national, and global--in which we are located. While we cannot fully control ratings, rankings, and other such national measures, we can control how we educate the next generation of leaders. We can



continue to prepare leaders for tomorrow. Leaders who understand, appreciate, and act as good citizens--who have the ability to think about what needs to be done—because they have knowledge, know how to generate new knowledge, to develop plans or strategies, organize others to assume agency, to be not only part of the plan, but act on it.

In his book, entitled *Bowling Alone*, Robert Putnam suggests, “There is a decline in ‘bridging capital’” or more explicitly, a decline in the willingness to work across differences. Putnam contends that there is a societal wariness of people and ideas that are different from what we believe or have been taught. The operative word here is taught. If the wariness or fear of difference is due to what we know or don’t know, then higher education needs to step into the bridge in a more effective manner. It is not enough for us to admit students who come from different backgrounds, put them in the dorms to live together, and expect them to embrace each other. Social psychologists showed long ago, in research on the impact of desegregation on cross-racial relationships, that proximity is not enough. Conclusions pointed to the fact that we must be just as deliberate about our students’ social education, as we deliberate about their academic education.

Those of you who know me know that I have dedicated my life to making sure that others are able to experience what so many of us enjoyed as undergraduate, graduate, and students enrolled in our professional schools—high quality educational opportunities that impart knowledge, engage the mind, and encourage the generation of new knowledge. I am a member of the Hamline University community because this university believes as I do—it believes and acts in ways

that show we are committed to ensuring that *all* of our students experience learning to the highest degree, that they understand and know how to use the knowledge they gain to do good in both their workplace and the various communities in which they live, and that they know how to lead when it is expected of them and to follow when they should, especially as it benefits the collective good.

Wesley believed as I do, that liberty is an essential component of community, of relationships, of democracy. He, through his every day actions, acted in ways that belies the notion that there is self without the other. When we do well for others, we benefit the whole.

So, let me reiterate who we are and what we do at Hamline University. We prepare leaders for tomorrow by opening up the world of ideas to our students and providing opportunities to learn what is possible and how to act on those possibilities. We encourage, through our teaching, writing, and high impact practices, that each of us matters. We provide a space for social cohesion—a place to discuss ideas, to form key civic relationships, to learn to lead. We value intellectual curiosity, social justice, civic engagement, inclusion, and participation. In essence, we prepare future leaders who embrace social excellence.

Although today is, ostensibly, to celebrate new leadership of Hamline University, to me it is a day to celebrate the communities that we share and the important role played by those of us in higher education in enriching the social fabric that holds us together. It is a day to celebrate our students, our faculty, our staff, our board, and our community.

I am honored to be the 20<sup>th</sup> president of Hamline University and promise to care for, respect, and work hard on behalf of our community. I am humbled by your presence here today and thank you. I end by reminding each of us to do as Wesley encouraged:

Do all the good you can, by all the means you can, in all the ways you can, in all the places you can, at all the times you can, to all the people you can as long as ever you can.

Thank you.