

Dear Members of the King's Community,

I returned last night from Washington, D.C. where the U.S. Association of Catholic Colleges and Universities was holding its annual General Assembly. As you know, I sit on the Board of this association of Catholic university presidents as the representative of Canadian Catholic universities.

This year's gathering was focused on the long-ago established theme of *Inclusion on Campus: Exploring Diversity as an Expression of God's Grandeur*. In the midst of research presentations and conference keynotes on 'racial justice and Catholic higher education', 'serving the LGBTQ community', and 'building inclusive faculty and administrative leadership on our campuses,' we experienced first-hand the fallout from presidential executive orders that rained down on the capital and the country. As hundreds of attendees responded to email alerts about demonstrations on their home campuses, detentions of their students and faculty at airports and even at the Canadian border (crossing home from the MUN conference at McGill), and as demonstrators filled the streets of the capital, the gravity of these presidential attacks on civil rights and our ability to do what we do as universities with worldwide connections quickly sank in.

I am proud that the ACCU, and our own associations back home (the ACCUC, Universities Canada, and the Canadian Federation for the Humanities and Social Sciences) and our own Prime Minister, responded quickly and appropriately to this unravelling. My response to this particular situation on behalf of our community is posted on the King's home page at <http://www.kings.uwo.ca/about-kings/media-and-communications/newsroom/king-s-opposes-u-s-executive-order/>

And then, we heard about Quebec.

My travel home last night gave me the occasion to reflect upon just how important it remains for all of us at King's to affirm the dignity of all those with whom we work, study and live, and that as educators we have a particular responsibility to reach out to our students and colleagues to model the inclusive community I believe we all expect. If you haven't yet noticed, there are many members of our community who have been deeply impacted by the deterioration of civil discourse unfolding these last months on both sides of the border. In these trying times, we have the opportunity, even the moral obligation, to stand up for what we have long claimed is our College's purpose, to seek truth and to work for justice.

Tomorrow evening (Wednesday), King's will celebrate, yes celebrate, the cultural diversity on our campus at our 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Cultural Festival. I am acutely aware that many from our community and many Canadians will be marking the evening through vigils to the murdered members of the Ste-Foy Muslim community in Quebec. It is precisely because of these developments in the U.S. and in Quebec that we decided to move forward with our Cultural Festival celebration. We will begin our evening event, however, with the acknowledgement of our Muslim sisters and brothers in Quebec who have been victims of this horrible tragedy, this terrorist attack. I hope you will be able to join us at the Cultural Festival, or provide your support through your presence at Victoria Park Wednesday evening. And I hope you will

continue to help King's build a community that celebrates all its members and supports the rich diversity of ideas, faith perspectives and cultures that make us whole.

In peace and solidarity,

*David*

David G. Sylvester, PhD

Principal