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Dedication of Patricia Meyers Druger Astronomy Learning Center

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Syracuse University

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Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud

Delivered on Friday, April 3, 2015

Location: Drumlins Country Club Auditorium

Remarks: A Tireless Pursuit: Celebrating the life and legacy of Professor Micere Githae Mugo

The Chancellor was introduced by Associate Professor and Chair of African American Studies, Kishi Animashaun Ducre

Thank you Kishi.

Let me first say that all of us are greatly honored by the presence in Syracuse of Chief Justice Willy Muntunga of Kenya. I join with our President, Barack Obama, and All in the Syracuse community in extending deep support and condolence to the Kenyan people, who endured a terrorist atrocity this week. Chief Justice Muntunga has led a life of dedication to human rights and empowerment. Our thoughts are with you and the Kenyan people.

On behalf of Syracuse University, I want to welcome you. We are glad you are with us to celebrate the tremendous legacy of Professor Mĩcere Gĩthae Mũgo.

I want to thank all of those who made this two-day symposium possible, including:

The Department of African American Studies in the College of Arts and Sciences;

Herb Ruffin, associate professor of African American Studies

Kishi Animashaun Ducre, Associate professor and chair of African American Studies

Horace Campbell, professor of African American Studies

Kheli Willets, executive director of the Community Folk Art Center and Professor of Practice in the Department of African American Studies.

The Africa Initiative; and

The Humanities Council of Syracuse University.

Throughout her storied career, Mĩcere Mũgo's passion has been ignited by her lived experiences. Scholar. Teacher. Activist. Poet. Playwright. Africa's First Female Academic Dean.

As a scholar of orature, she has helped us all to better understand Africa's past and to appreciate its present.

Professor Mũgo's commitment to orature is rooted in her advocacy of African indigenous knowledges, which are critical sites for academic engagement. Professor Mũgo champions the use of knowledge as a change agent for all people, not just people of privilege.

I suspect most of those who came here for the symposium are very familiar with the tremendous global impact Mĩcere has made throughout her career. I want to share with you the deep and lasting impact she has made here at Syracuse.

In 1993, her first year here, Professor Mũgo taught a class in orature. This was a first for Syracuse and one of the first of its kind in the United States. She used song, poetry, dance, and drama to teach lessons on values and ethics pertaining to human rights. That class is now a part of the University's African American Studies core curriculum.

Professor Mũgo is a Meredith Professor for Teaching Excellence. This is a prestigious award at Syracuse University that recognizes outstanding teaching. Here, she has been a teacher-scholar, administrator, and social activist.

She chaired the Department of African American Studies. She was key in launching the Pan African Studies program. She was also the first full-time director of the University's Africa Initiative.

Professor Mũgo was critical in bringing renowned Nobel Prize laureates Wole Soyinka and the late Wangari Maathai to Syracuse. These visits offered our students unparalleled learning opportunities.

Professor Mũgo's work has tremendously strengthened the College of Arts and Sciences. The college is home of the liberal arts at Syracuse. A strong College of Arts and Sciences is crucial in our drive to be a great, thriving, engaged, and diverse international research university.

Professor Mũgo has shown extraordinary steadfastness and grace throughout her professional and personal life experiences. This reflects her philosophy that anything is possible. She has imparted that wisdom upon her students, and upon all of us.

She now joins the ranks of numerous others who have strengthened us with their commitment, dedication, scholarship, and research.

Mĩcere Mũgo has made Syracuse University a better place in her 22 years here. She leaves a lasting legacy. For that, we are deeply grateful.

I doubt that retirement from teaching means Mĩcere will slow down. It means she is on a new journey. She begins this one with the same passion and spirit she has long been known for.

Professor Mĩcere Mũgo: Thank you for your significant contributions to Syracuse University through the years. We wish you well and celebrate a glorious career here.

Thank you.

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