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11-2-2018

### Remembrance Scholar Convocation

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*Syracuse University*

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#### Recommended Citation

Syverud, Kent, "Remembrance Scholar Convocation" (2018). *Chancellor's Office (2004 - 2013)*. 196.  
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# Syracuse University

Remarks by Chancellor Kent Syverud  
Delivered on Friday, November 2, 2018  
Location: Hendricks Chapel  
Remarks: Remembrance Scholars Convocation

*The Chancellor was introduced by Headmaster, Lockerbie Academy,  
Brian Asher*

Thank you, Brian.

I extend a warm welcome on behalf of all of Syracuse University to all our guests here today – to all our Remembrance and Lockerbie Scholars, to all those who are here to honor them today, to all the families and friends of those lost on Pan Am Flight 103 and on the ground, to all of our honored guests from Scotland, and to everyone who joins us to remember.

I feel very acutely Syracuse University's responsibility to remember and honor the individuals who lost their lives on December 21, 1988. It has been thirty years. In one sense, that is not so long a time. Those who rode their bikes here to Syracuse to mark 30 years started at Edinburgh Castle, which Secretary of State Mundell told us this week is more than 400 years old. Scotland is really old. This University is about to celebrate its sesquicentennial, its 150th birthday, and no one now living was present at its founding. This Chapel has stood for 89 years, and virtually all of our 250,000 living alumni have passed through it. So thirty years is in some ways just a heartbeat compared to the age of old institutions.

And yet almost none of our current Remembrance and Lockerbie scholars were alive on December 21, 1988. In that sense, what we remember today, for most of our current Syracuse University students, is ancient history – it happened beyond their living memory, as did everything in the

last century, including the Vietnam War and the end of World War I, one hundred years ago next week.

When things are old, and when institutions are old, change is hard. When you are around old traditions, old institutions, and old customs, it is so comforting, so reassuring, and so tempting to cling to exactly what was done before, to how it was done before – it is so comforting at times not even to ask why.

Here is concrete illustration. A couple of years ago, a group of students, faculty, and staff at this University thought hard and recommended that we start acknowledging the Onondaga nation at public University events. The result is the acknowledgement you just heard at the beginning of this ceremony, which also occurs at lectures, graduations, and even at football games. We acknowledge with respect the Onondaga Nation, the indigenous people on whose ancestral lands Syracuse University now stands.

That was a change at this very old institution, and a change to very old ceremonies like Commencement and Convocation. Shortly after it happened, I was stopped by an old gentleman, an alumnus, in a concourse of our Dome during a basketball game. He wanted to know why we were doing this, why we had to change everything including the old ceremonies that meant so much to him as a Syracuse University graduate. I was not quick with a response.

But now I know what I should have said. I know because I have now seen five remembrance convocations and gotten to know hundreds of Remembrance and Lockerbie scholars. Now I understand that remembering the past is not inconsistent with change. If you take the time to study the past – the people, their values and aspirations, their hopes and dreams – then even in old institutions you can manage well the inevitable change that our world involves. If you know your past, you can make a change that is consistent with the people and values that came before.

That is why these Remembrance and Lockerbie scholars have been doing for thirty years – understanding the people affected by an act of terror and violence and hate, thinking hard about how those people might have grown and changed over a lifetime, and paying forward their values and dreams in a new world, in a new millennium that those who were lost were not permitted to enjoy.

What should I have said to that gentleman troubled by our acknowledgment of the Onondaga nation? I should have said, you should not be troubled. You and all of us have been saying essentially the same thing since 1895. You do it every time you sing the alma mater. The first sentence of our alma mater is: Come on, many of you know it: “Where the vale of the Onondaga meets the eastern sky, proudly stands our alma mater on her hilltop high.” See – it says our alma mater stands on the ancestral lands of the Onondaga, and you, beloved alumnus, have been singing it since you came here in 1930. That is our history and we respectfully celebrate it.

My point is this. It has been thirty years. Much changed in the world. Syracuse and Lockerbie have changed. For one thing, we have grown together in countless ways, thanks to the work of many of you who are here today. This work of Remembrance is not a calcified, frozen ceremony never to be altered. It is a living, breathing, evolving testimony, a network of decent people who take the trouble to learn the values and life and hope and dreams of those we lost – and who then triumph, here in the United States and in Scotland and around the world, by building something new and better – by acting forward positively in concrete remembrance. We are changing consistent with the values of Scotland, Syracuse University, and the people on that plane and on the ground.

It is in that spirit that Colin Dorrance and his colleagues did something completely new and for a purpose. They got hundreds of us to participate

in a cycle from Lockerbie to Syracuse. And they raised funds for what Lockerbie needs now, in 2018, which is better mental health services.

In that same spirit, we should all ask ourselves, at Syracuse University, what we can do now in remembrance that is acting forward consistent with the values and history of those we lost. That is what you scholars have been doing this year, I know. But it is a responsibility, not just of the Remembrance Scholars and Lockerbie scholars, but of all of us here at Syracuse University.

To discharge that responsibility, last month students, faculty, staff, and alumni from our University community travelled to Lockerbie. The trip included four current Syracuse University students Abigail Ilizirov (College of Arts and Sciences), Patrick Linehan (College of Arts and Sciences), Reilly Riordan (Falk College of Sport and Human Dynamics), and Caitlin Sanders (the College of Engineering and Computer Science). It included Linda Euto (IVMF Staff Member).

They listened to countless folks in Lockerbie and came back here to report what they learned. I talked today about their recommendations with Brian Asher the new headmaster of Lockerbie Academy and J'an Andrews, Lockerbie Trustee and Chair of the Lockerbie Community Council. Because of our students' counsel, we at SU are considering recommendations on how to act forward to strengthen our relationship with Lockerbie in new and meaningful ways.

The recommendations include:

1. Getting current students to travel to Lockerbie every year to build relationships and to recruit students to the Lockerbie Scholar program;
2. Enhancing the Lockerbie Scholarship program from its current one year so as to enable scholars who so desire and who meet

appropriate criteria to continue on for a four year Syracuse University degree.

3. Getting Syracuse University to draw on all its people, programs and strengths to help in the work of enhancing mental health counseling services in the town of Lockerbie. This could be through an internship, a visiting professorship, or other means.

Syracuse University is committed to our partnership with Lockerbie and to acting forward in remembrance. I am grateful for these recommendations and for all who are providing counsel. I look forward to change in two old places: Syracuse and Lockerbie. I look forward to change in remembrance of those we lost and in hope for a better future together.

To our current Remembrance and Lockerbie scholars: Congratulations on this great honor and responsibility. You are the best of our institutions, and our hope for change and a better world. You are young in spirit, as were those we lost. May you thrive in their name, and never forget where they and where you have come from.

Thank you.

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