

1072 words/7.4 minutes

Civil Rights Heritage Center Celebration  
Remarks of Michael A. McRobbie  
President, Indiana University  
Civil Rights Heritage Center  
1040 W. Washington  
South Bend, IN  
Tuesday, February 25, 2020  
5:30 p.m.

## 1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTION

Thank you very much, Chancellor Elrod, and good evening to all of you.

I recently had the pleasure of spending time with the chancellor in Seattle, Washington, where, at the annual meeting of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, she was among nine IU faculty members and administrators who were inducted as new fellows of the association. Chancellor Elrod is the first chancellor of an IU regional campus to be inducted into the association, which is the world's largest general scientific society. I know that all of you join me in congratulating Chancellor Elrod on receiving this prestigious honor.

It is a great pleasure to be back in South Bend this evening with all of you as we celebrate IU South Bend's purchase of this building, the former Engman Public Natatorium, the home of the Civil Rights Heritage Center, and the return of Dr. Darryl Heller as the center's director.

And I am very pleased to note that a former member of the Indiana University Board of Trustees is with us this evening. Cora Breckenridge, who was the first African American to serve on the IU Board of Trustees, is here tonight with her husband, Franklin. Would you join me in welcoming them?

## 2. COMMITMENT TO DIVERSITY AND RESPECT FOR THE DIGNITY OF OTHERS ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO A UNIVERSITY'S SUCCESS

As many of you know, this is Indiana University's Bicentennial Year. During this year, across the state of Indiana and around the world, alumni, friends, and members of the university community are celebrating all that Indiana University has achieved in its first two centuries.

During our Bicentennial Year, it is particularly fitting to underscore the fact that the enduring success of a great university, especially a great public institution like Indiana University, is predicated in large part on its commitment to embracing diversity in the broadest sense and its commitment to building a community where respect for the fundamental rights and dignity of all others is one of our cardinal values.

In order to ensure that Indiana University is and remains such a community, it is vitally important that we have programs and institutions that encourage us to reflect upon our past, embolden us to act when these ideals are under threat, and inspire us to work to ensure that our communities continue to embrace these values.

The Civil Rights Heritage Center is just such an institution.

And it works to accomplish these missions in a building that is itself a symbol of the struggle for civil rights. Like the public pools in cities across the nation that were enormously popular in the 1920s, 30s, and 40s, the Engman Natatorium was a vibrant center of community life—but African Americans were barred from using it. Only after a legal battle in the late 1930s were African Americans allowed to swim here at all, but even then, access was extremely limited, and the scourge of segregation remained in place for many more years. The Natatorium is a valuable reminder, in fact, that segregation was not limited to one part of our nation, but could be found everywhere, including northern industrial cities like this one. Thus, it is fitting and appropriate that, in

this space, the Civil Rights Heritage Center now works to preserve and honor the social, cultural, and political contributions of members of underrepresented communities here in South Bend.

### 3. THE CIVIL RIGHTS AND HERITAGE CENTER

The center is also a superb example of the vitally important contributions that IU South Bend and the other regional campuses of Indiana University make to their regions and the communities they serve. IU's regional campuses are increasingly the first choice for some of the state's most outstanding high school students. They also serve as invaluable economic and community development catalysts in their regions, and they play a key role in helping the state achieve its goal of substantially increasing the number of Indiana residents with college degrees.

They are also deeply integrated into the communities they serve, as the Civil Rights Heritage Center illustrates. Through its service and outreach, the center helps to advance IU South Bend's mission of providing an excellent, distinctive education even as it brings together members of the university community and the broader community to contemplate and address issues related to social justice.

Our regional campuses exist because of the dedicated support of members of the communities they serve, and nowhere is this in greater evidence than at IU South Bend.

The South Bend community is to be commended for its collaborative effort—led by the city, the South Bend Heritage Foundation, and IU South Bend—to raise funds to renovate this building, which had fallen into disrepair, and to re-open it in 2010 as the center's home. I also want to commend all of you who continue to support the center's mission through your service and your advocacy for the center's financial security.

#### 4. FOSTERING A DIVERSE, MULTICULTURAL COMMUNITY IN IU'S THIRD CENTURY

As Indiana University enters its third century, we must continue to make every effort to develop the university as a diverse and inclusive multicultural academic community, dedicated to the fundamental rights and dignity of all people. Doing so will make Indiana University a model for higher education, the state of Indiana, and society at large.

It is an enormous challenge.

But on this campus, and in this community, there are many people—and many of them are here tonight—who accept this challenge and who dedicate themselves with passion to making it a reality.

Thank you very much for your commitment to this important work and for all that you do to enhance our common future.

## 5. BICENTENNIAL MEDAL TO ALFRED AND MELANIE SMITH-GUILLAUME

During Indiana University's Bicentennial Year, I have had the great pleasure of presenting the Bicentennial Medal to organizations and individuals who, through their personal, professional, artistic, or philanthropic efforts, have broadened the reach of Indiana University around the state, nation, and world.

Beautifully designed by IU Bloomington faculty member, Professor Jeeyea Kim, the medal's design depicts the interconnectedness of Indiana University with the state of Indiana and the nation and world beyond its borders. The medals incorporate materials salvaged from bells that once rang out from the tower of the Student Building on the Bloomington campus, so each Bicentennial Medal is a lasting piece of Indiana University history.

Alfred and Melanie, in recognition of your many years of dedicated service to IU South Bend and your extensive service to this community—and in recognition of your longstanding support for the Civil Rights Heritage Center and its mission—it is my honor and privilege to present you with the Indiana University Bicentennial Medal.

Congratulations!