

# The Global Voices: Is U.S. Higher Education Listening?

**Howard A. Berry**

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The voice of the French poet Paul Valery: “The future is no longer what it used to be.”

The voice of a service learner in Mexico: “It is one thing to study abroad and see the sights. It is quite another thing to go beyond visiting tourist status and collaborate within a community.”

The voice of a leading educator: “Students are looking for a way to be present at their own education.”

These voices can help us develop an educational strategy for a profoundly changed world.

A recent publication, *Empire* (Michael Hardt and Antonio Negri, Harvard Univ. Press), offers an important conceptual basis for understanding why and how the world changed well before the events of September 2001. It also suggests the need for a profound rethinking of higher education and its role in this changed world and future. The issue is globalism.

Globalism should not be confused with internationalism. Globalism is both trans-national and supra-national. It bypasses or flows through porous national borders. The concepts of sovereignty, monoculture, and the nation-state are bypassed.

## **The New Reality**

The catalyst for this change was the Cold War. With the end of that bipolar competition there were no major obstacles to a global world. All that was needed was the technology to allow it to happen. That technology appeared, virtually coincidentally, as electronic communication and the Internet.

**The Change:** The first wave of globalism has been economic. Corporate decisions now bypass governments, and business fosters the

spread of global consumer culture. There are three major results of this:

- One is the complexity of what now occurs through the intersection of globalism, nationalism, and culture. The mass migrations of peoples are one major manifestation of this. No longer are there self-contained nations with self-contained cultures. There are very real implications in this for traditional study abroad, intercultural studies, and education in general.
- A second is the economic division of the world. The immense wealth of economic globalism accrues to a comparatively narrow stratum of world society. The result is that most have not participated in this wealth, and the gap between “haves” and “have nots” has been steadily widening within nations and globally.
- A third and crucial result has been the emergence of parallel global movements. As the authors of *Empire* point out, once the advantages of trans- or extra-national pathways are pioneered they can be imitated by other and even darker groups: organized crime, the drug trade, and, as we have recently experienced, terrorism.

**The Missing Voices:** But a voice is missing as these global structures pursue their economic, political, and cultural ends: the voice of those who are not participating in the global prosperity and yet are buffeted by the global economic, political, and cultural global winds. Who speaks for and works with them, opening to them at least a share of the global world and training the leaders who can help them?

**The Call to Higher Education:** Actually, there already exists an institution capable of assuming this role, perhaps the only one. It has bases in virtually every nation. In the main, these bases share a common goal, purpose, and mission. They have reputation and respect. They are in a strategic position to share the thinking and values of future leaders. They are colleges and universities of higher education.

## **A Call to Higher Education**

Is there any content to the many university mission statements claiming to educate the total student and to prepare them for the world they will enter? Of course some universities have not stood aside completely from globalism. But their rush to membership in global society

has been mainly to the economic sector: business internships, MBAs, university/business research affiliations. But what of education for the other realities of globalism?

Can higher education really stand aside from the social and human dimensions of what is happening? Is it possible that it has an obligation, perhaps a mandate, to reconsider deeply what it means to be a fully educated person in a global world? To do so calls for serious and perhaps painful rethinking of the goals and purposes of higher education in a drastically changed world: thinking about ways for higher education to acquire a global voice.

Universities around the world are filled with young people eager to be challenged, impatient to experience the world directly, seeking a way to prove to themselves, and to others, their worth and value. Equally, the world is filled with the needy, those needing help and caring and skills. Is there a way to bring the human resource of university students and human need together? Is there a way to bring higher education into the broader and moral dimensions of the global world?

## **Response of Service-Learning**

Some have seen the way to this connection through service-learning. Through the experience of volunteer service, students go beyond simplistic notions of culture to encounter multidimensional levels of society and the human condition. When linked to intentional and coherent learning, the value of the experience becomes exponential. The service is informed by learning, and the learning acquires depth far beyond the classroom. Students begin to hear the voices previously unheard, the many voices of the culture. They are forced to examine the complexities of social, economic, political, and moral issues and their causes. They move from facts to information, from information to knowledge, and, in at least some cases, from knowledge to wisdom.

International Partnership students, for example, do not just go into another culture, they enter into it, become part of it. They go beyond academic tourism.

But the International Partnership is not alone. As a survey it conducted for the Ford Foundation revealed, colleges and universities around the world are engaging in service-learning as a way of addressing educa-

tional reform, redefining their mission, and connecting themselves, their faculty, and their students to the world community. But this is not enough. The survey also revealed that these efforts are fragmented, lacking coherence, and that institutions are not communicating, often unaware of each other's work

## **Educational Globalism**

Why should we care about all of this? For many reasons, but most immediately because in the global world there is no longer an "inside" and an "outside." The ecology of globalism means that what affects one part ripples through the totality.

Will the creation of global educational ecology through service learning eliminate all ills? No, there is no such panacea. But it can make a difference, and that—after all—is what education is about. It can help generations of young people to be present at their own education. It can develop in them humane leadership. And in so doing it can bring them as leaders to hear and respond to the voices of the unheard.

## Howard A. Berry (1932-2002): Four Tributes

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### **“You Only Get One Chance”**

In 1984, when The International Partnership for Service-Learning was in its infancy, Howard Berry was a full-time tenured professor at SUNY’s Rockland College. I had just become President of the Association of Episcopal Colleges. He and I were acting as co-directors of The partnership and had just begun one of our first programs—in Jamaica. I visited the program, accompanying the first students, but could only stay a few days because of other obligations. Upon return, I called Howard to say that I thought we should give up this crazy dream of ours. “It isn’t responsible,” I reported to him. “I needed to stay longer. If we cannot figure out how to do this full-time, we shouldn’t be doing it at all.” A couple of weeks later Howard called me with the words, “I’ve done it. It’s too late. Don’t argue. The letter is already in the mail.”

“What letter? What have you done?” He had resigned from the college to give full torme to developing international service-learning. “But Howard,” I protested, “there is no money for salaries and no assurance that we can make a go of this.” He replied, “I know. But Linda, you only get one chance in your life to do something really valuable. This is my chance.” And so for the first year he worked without any salary at all, and there were some lean years to follow. But year by year the organization grew, programs were added and in April of 2002, we celebrated our 20th anniversary.

Howard was a visionary who was willing to put himself on the line for what he believed. He was a man of conviction and was prepared to and did act on those convictions, even when there was a price to pay. Since his death, I have received hundreds upon hundreds of messages of condolence from around the world. I knew him to be a man of compassion, but in those letters I have learned of many acts of kindness which he kept from me and others in life. He preached service-learning and he practiced what he preached. His vision and spirit will continue to inform the Partnership for Service-Learning. Ah, that all of us could have a professional friend,

## **Howard Berry**

colleague and collaborator of the depth and character of Howard Berry! I count myself truly privileged, truly blessed to have known and worked with him for so many years.

Linda Chisholm  
President,  
International Partnership for Service-Learning

## **A Man of Vision, Passion**

I was lucky enough not only to be Howard's employee but also his student.

When I was his student on the MA program in International Service Howard flew down to Jamaica, and stayed with us for the first few days as we got acquainted with our new world. He came back a couple of times to check on us and the program. Even though I barely knew him, his passion for Jamaica and the work that he was doing was dear.

After finishing the program I worked for The International Partnership for Service-Learning as the Director of Student Programs and learned from Howard what it took to produce such an extraordinary program. His commitment to the students and to the communities with which he worked dominated everything that he did. He lived his vision for education as a tool to help students and communities grow.

He brought a spark to the field of education and an incomparable perspective as a leader. I will always remember how much he liked to make people smile. He was quirky, with a sense of humor unlike any other.

He was my teacher, and I will miss him dearly.

Daina Stein  
Director of Student Programs,  
International Partnership for Service-Learning  
2000-2001

## **The Issue Was Learning**

Howard was one of the most creative people I've ever known. He also was one of the most exasperating people I've ever known. And that was part of his unique charm. Once, after I had left Rockland Community College, I had an ESL teacher who quit in the middle of the semester. I called Howard, hoping for a contact, for someone I could put in a classroom at 11 a.m. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday. Howard asked me if the issue was teaching or learning. If the issue was learning, then we could consider a plethora of alternatives: some mentored study, some native-speaking conversation partners, some independent study with learning contracts, some classroom instruction. Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 11 was about boxes, not about options for learning. In the 20 years that I knew Howard, he did that again and again. So many times I'd say, "Howard, I don't know whether to do A or B." And he would answer, "What about 5?" I think my brain is bigger because I knew Howard, and for that I will always be grateful.

Martha Merrill  
Visiting Scholar, Indiana University

## **A Mentor, Leader, Friend**

Like many, Howard's passing profoundly touched me. I worked with the Partnership in 1996-1997 as the Coordinator of Student Programs. I was young, fresh out of college, and wanting to make a difference. My work with Linda and Howard is some of the most rewarding and powerful I have ever done. Howard was not a boss—he was a mentor, a leader, a friend. Of all the things I learned from Howard perhaps the greatest was that carrying a passion deep within your heart translates into success and happiness. It did for him and for every life he touched.

Christopher Allieri