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**ACROSS THE POND, ACROSS THE ACADEMY, AND
ACROSS TOWN: BRINGING TOGETHER COMMUNITIES
AND UNIVERSITIES AROUND SHARED GOALS**

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INTRODUCTION

This symposium issue of the *Maryland Journal of Race, Religion, Gender & Class* is devoted in part to articles developed from a unique convergence of community activists and scholars from both sides of the Atlantic that took place in Baltimore on October 24, 2017.¹ The event, called “RISING Baltimore: Managing Tensions in Communities,” was convened by the University of Maryland, Baltimore (UMB) and Coventry University in England to provide an interdisciplinary forum to share community engagement strategies with a focus on the relationship between universities and their neighboring communities.²

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¹ *Rising Baltimore: Managing Tensions in Communities*, RISING GLOBAL PEACE FORUM, <http://rising.org/rising-baltimore/> (last visited Oct. 9, 2018).

² *Id.*

The driving conceptual force behind the symposium was the growing acknowledgment among academics, community leaders, and politicians that we must sometimes look beyond our own borders for solutions to domestic concerns.³ While this approach may be heralded as a new innovation in social change, borrowing new ways of doing things from outsiders is a “hallmark of our species and therefore just as old.”⁴ Nonetheless, in modern history, the United States (U.S.) has not looked outside its borders for new ways to improve health and community well-being and, for the greater part of the twentieth century, new ideas primarily flowed outward from the U.S. through development and global health efforts focused on communities in low-resourced countries.⁵ However, as the world becomes more global and the value of other nations’ practices becomes better known, there is growing awareness that communities across the globe face similar challenges and that many have developed effective interventions that could create transformative change in U.S. communities.⁶

This new focus on reciprocal sharing of information across cultures and countries has grown up alongside the innovation movement that has been embraced by the global health and development fields over the last 20 years.⁷ Innovation is defined by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) as “a new solution with the transformative ability to accelerate impact” that involves “new social and business models or policy, creative financing mechanisms, or path-breaking improvements in delivering essential services and products” to reach “sustained, scalable solutions to the world’s complex problems.”⁸ The path to finding new solutions has taken researchers outside the U.S. to other high-income countries that share economic and social commonalities, and also to low-resourced countries that often act as good laboratories for low cost/high impact innovations developed out of necessity.⁹

³ See Virginia Rowthorn, *Global/Local: What Does It Mean for Global Health Educators and How Do We Do It?*, 81 ANNALS GLOBAL HEALTH 593, 594–95 (2015) (noting that the traditional international focus of global health must be tied to the needs of domestic communities).

⁴ Virginia Rowthorn et al., *Legal and Regulatory Barriers to Reverse Innovation*, 82 ANNALS GLOBAL HEALTH 991, 992 (2016).

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ Virginia Rowthorn et al., *Global to Local: Methods and Models*, 82 ANNALS GLOBAL HEALTH 951, 951 (2016).

⁷ Cristina Redko et al., *Exploring the Significance of Bidirectional Learning for Global Health Education*, 82 ANNALS GLOBAL HEALTH 955, 955–56 (2016) (defining the sharing of information as “bidirectional learning”).

⁸ U.S. AGENCY FOR INT’L DEV., A CALL FOR INNOVATION IN INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT (JULY 14, 2015), <https://www.usaid.gov/ffd3/innovation>.

⁹ See generally C.K. PRAHALAD & M.S. KRISHNAN, *NEW AGE OF INNOVATION: DRIVING CO-CREATED VALUE THROUGH GLOBAL NETWORKS* 1–2 (2008) (assessing innovation in other

Looking to resource-poor countries for ideas is often called “reverse innovation”¹⁰ or “frugal innovation,”¹¹ both of which are considered ways to enable countries on both sides of the income divide to “cocreate affordable and sustainable . . . solutions that benefit everyone.”¹² Institutions of higher education, including UMB and Coventry University, are embracing the innovation movement and “adopting powerful new models to erode the boundaries of historically siloed disciplinary thinking and empower new levels of discovery” by creating degree programs and learning facilities focused on innovation and entrepreneurship.¹³

These two university efforts, one focused outwardly across the globe and the other focused close to home on university neighbors has been called “global/local”¹⁴ or, as some adroitly argue, a timely and proper articulation of “global” in its full sense, i.e., one that includes U.S. communities.¹⁵ The RISING Baltimore symposium was an outgrowth of UMB’s efforts to link—conceptually and in practice—the international work of the university with the needs of Baltimore communities.¹⁶

The symposium was based on the famous RISING Global Peace Forum held in Coventry and was the first to be held in the U.S.¹⁷ The RISING forums bring together global leaders and advocates working for peace in communities around the world.¹⁸ The forums are typically focused around a particular theme and, given the interest of both UMB and Coventry University in community-engaged research in urban settings, the purpose of the symposium in Baltimore was to consider tensions that exist between communities and universities in urban settings

countries, including India, to evaluate the link between innovation and value creation in different contexts).

¹⁰ VIJAY GOVINDARAJAN & CHRIS TRIMBLE, *REVERSE INNOVATION: CREATE FAR FROM HOME, WIN EVERYWHERE* 4–5 (Harvard Bus. Review Press) (2012).

¹¹ Navi Radjou, *Frugal Innovation: The Engine of Sustainable Development*, in *THE INNOVATION COUNTDOWN 2030 REPORT* 1, 4 (PATH, 2015).

¹² *Id.*

¹³ Brad Lukanic, *The Next Hot Trend on Campus: Creating Innovation*, FAST CO. (Feb. 25, 2015), <https://www.fastcompany.com/3042566/the-next-hot-trend-on-campus-creating-innovation>.

¹⁴ *Id.* at 595.

¹⁵ *Id.* at 595, 597 (noting that a “global” approach includes attention to “local, regional, national, and international” levels).

¹⁶ See RISING GLOBAL PEACE FORUM, *supra* note 1; Rowthorn, *supra* note 3, at 594.

¹⁷ RISING GLOBAL PEACE FORUM, *supra* note 1.

¹⁸ *About Rising Global Peace Forum*, RISING GLOBAL PEACE FORUM, <https://rising.org/about/> (last visited October 2, 2018).

and to share examples of successful partnerships and collaboration.¹⁹ Community members from West Baltimore, where UMB sits, also participated in the conference to share their thoughts about the appropriate role of the university in the community, challenges in this area, and hopes for future collaboration.²⁰

The theme of research was threaded through the comments and the discussions at the symposium. On one hand, research is the coin of the university realm – highly prized and necessary to meet the knowledge generation mandate of universities. On the other hand, research is often inflexible as to design and outcomes, and not geared to community participation. In fact, one of the most significant areas of tension between community members and universities is the notion that research is conducted by the faculty “on” the community rather than “with” the community. Symposium participants suggested that research should be reconceived as an endeavor with community at its center, with local people trained as community researchers or citizen social scientists, and with community members as producers of outcomes, experts in their own lives, and competent solvers of their own challenges.²¹

The substantive topics addressed by speakers at the symposium included how lessons from armed conflicts such as the Northern Ireland crisis can inform efforts to build cohesion in a deeply divided society; the importance of including faith leaders in discussions of community/university relationships; how to support citizen-driven innovation; successful long-term models of university/community engagement; and alternative approaches to reducing exposure and exploitation of vulnerable young people.²²

¹⁹ RISING GLOBAL PEACE FORUM, *supra* note 1.

²⁰ *Id.*

²¹ See RISING Global Peace Forum, *Rising Baltimore: Lord John Alderdice – Building Cohesion in Deeply Divided Societies*, YOUTUBE (Dec. 21, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O15DdwCT7vU> (documenting the keynote address at the symposium); see also RISING Global Peace Forum Channel, YOUTUBE, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYdovEOKijrqU9KfP0NuAPA/videos> (providing an archive of symposia videos by RISING Global Peace Forum).

²² See RISING Global Peace Forum, *Rising Baltimore: Lord John Alderdice – Building Cohesion in Deeply Divided Societies*, YOUTUBE (Dec. 21, 2017), <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=O15DdwCT7vU> (documenting the keynote address at the symposium); see also RISING Global Peace Forum Channel, YOUTUBE, <https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCYdovEOKijrqU9KfP0NuAPA/videos> (providing an archive of symposia videos by RISING Global Peace Forum).

Five symposium participants developed their comments into four essays for this symposium issue of the journal. In his essay, “A New Role for Anchor Universities: Embracing a Rhetoric of Reconciliation,”²³ Flavius Lilly uses a reference to Charles Dickens novel “A Tale of Two Cities” to reflect on the complex identity of Baltimore, a city mired in inequality, divided by race and class, and embroiled in social tension.²⁴ His essay is a clarion call to universities, as important anchor institutions, to meet their social and moral responsibility to reduce tension and to engage in a process of reconciliation with community members where all parties are accorded equal status, privileges and opportunities.²⁵

Moving from Lilly’s broad framework for how universities and community can move forward in mutuality and respect, faculty members Mike Hardy and Harris Beider from the Coventry University Centre for Trust, Peace and Social Relations share research underway at their university that concretely documents the need for a new approach to engaging diverse communities.²⁶ The research they describe in “Cultivating Peaceful Relations Where Difference Matters” calls for a change in the way that migration and diversity are discussed, debated and managed.²⁷ The article notes that many of the challenges of diversity and change are more often now defined and manifested in a locality, specific to complex and sometimes unique sets of relationships between non-state actors, government and communities.²⁸ Given the challenges that local government faces in terms of resources, credibility and scope, it is important that value is seen in drawing in stakeholders, including representatives from higher education and business, which have often been peripheral to these critical debates.²⁹

Amy Ramirez also elaborates on the theme of migration and community in her essay “Local Assets: Leveraging Student Diversity in Local and Global Community Engagement” by suggesting an approach to improved community/university partnerships that is hiding in plain

²³ Flavius Lilly, *A New Role for Anchor Universities: Embracing a Rhetoric of Reconciliation*, 18 U. MD. L.J. RACE RELIG. GENDER & CLASS 304 (2018).

²⁴ *Id.* at 306.

²⁵ *Id.* at 324.

²⁶ Mike Hardy & Harris Beider, *Cultivating Peaceful Relations Where Difference Matters*, 18 U. MD. L.J. RACE RELIG. GENDER & CLASS 324 (2018).

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.* at 326.

²⁹ *Id.* at 344.

sight – the university’s international student population.³⁰ She points out that, historically, public universities in the U.S. have defined the people and communities they serve as those primarily located in their region or state.³¹ International migration and trade have created diverse local ecosystems in which local concerns often have global dimensions.³² Ramirez describes ways to engage international populations in community engagement programs that meet the needs of local communities and provide the unique opportunity to infuse communities with new approaches to important problems at home.³³

In his second essay, Flavius Lilly, along with Jennifer Owens and Alexander Riehm, provides a concrete solution to stimulate growth in poor communities. Their essay, “Social Innovation Microgrants as Catalysts to Community Development in Economically Marginalized Urban Communities,” recommends small awards of less than \$2,000 as a novel way to stimulate public participation in activities that lead to innovation and progress in distressed communities.³⁴ The purpose of these grants is to enable recipients to quickly deliver a visible improvement soon after a project has launched, and to demonstrate plausibility, scalability, and that change is possible.³⁵

The new focus on global innovation brings with it the promise of novel research opportunities, exciting international partnerships, and transformative experiences for students, but it does not come without a cost. Universities need to ensure that daily life on campus does not become disconnected from our home cities and commit to ensuring that everything the university does internationally has a beneficial and direct impact on local communities. Bringing that impact back home involves being on the lookout for commonalities across the globe – even when they might not be immediately obvious. As the President of UMB, Dr. Jay Perman, noted at the opening of the RISING Baltimore symposium:

³⁰ Amy B. Ramirez, *Local Assets: Leveraging Student Diversity in Local and Global Community Engagement*, 18 U. MD. L.J. RACE RELIG. GENDER & CLASS 346 (2018).

³¹ *Id.*

³² *Id.* at 347.

³³ *Id.* at 350.

³⁴ Jennifer Owens et al., *Social Innovation Microgrants as Catalysts to Community Development in Economically Marginalized Urban Communities*, 18 U. MD. L.J. RACE RELIG. GENDER & CLASS 352 (2018).

³⁵ *Id.*

Where we in Baltimore might talk about civil rights and social justice and community engagement, our colleagues in Coventry might talk of trust and peace and reconciliation. But vocabulary aside, our similarities are too similar to ignore.³⁶

The articles in this symposium issue acknowledge that the world is a laboratory of good ideas for those who can't ignore the common humanity we share with our neighbors near and far, and for those whose eyes are open to new ideas wherever they arise.

³⁶ Laura Lee, *Belfast to Baltimore: Sharing Community Strategies*, UMB NEWS (Oct. 26, 2017), <https://www.umaryland.edu/news/archived-news/october-2017/newspresreleaseshottopics/belfast-to-baltimore-sharing-community-engagement-strategies-across-border.php>.