

## Remarks on retirement

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I thank the amazing staff of the Center for Bioethics for organizing this event. The Center's staff and faculty, past and present, have been wonderful colleagues over the years. No one could have asked for better.

Let me introduce my family who keeps me sane: wife Joline, daughters Erica and Esme, son/brother Dara and his wife Sam and my grandchildren Stephanie, Serena, and AJ, my brother Henry and his wife Vicky.

Many thanks to students, colleagues, and friends who have put up with my years of cranky insistence that bioethics must venture outside the walls of Academic Health Centers to speak on behalf of marginalized and silenced people including those without access to affordable health care, prisoners and enemies, nursing home residents and refugees.

Bioethics is not scholastic theorizing. It is about our ethos—how we live.

Friends and family told me not to lecture on grand ideas today. Please thank them after I am done. They insisted that you would want to hear what I will do after retirement. How odd. We shall see.

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No one who reveres Universities ever really leaves. I set out as an itinerant emeritus carrying a backpack stuffed with University' values and tools.

- The practice of medicine has been my liberal arts education. Intimate moments with those in profound despair schooled me. Medicine took me to the White House to work on the cause of universal health care. It forced me to kneel in silent uselessness in a thatch hut beside grass mat of a bride, dead from a swallow of her wedding mushroom soup. It took me to a town carpeted with a hundred and fifty thousand bodies and told me to find words and skills to help the living somehow begin again. It called me to testify against the brutal ritual of tying people up in nursing homes, against a South African doctor war criminal and then against torture by my own country's doctors. Medicine's liberal arts curriculum astonishes me.

- My University backpack contains tools for learning and reasoning. It contains a spinning compass that has aimed my pursuits for four decades. I learned how to use Prometheus's flint to kindle the tinder of experiences to warm those who were cold from neglect and to cast light so that others might see a path to help those whom I could not reach.
- Career and curiosity took me to more than eighty countries. I have seen wonders and I have learned patience--sometimes at the same time. My independence was oddly shaped when a plane failed to arrive and I had to walk alone a second eighty miles around majestic Annapurna, sleeping in farmers' huts along a medieval trade route back to civilization. In every country, I have found lovely people once I learned how to simply sit still. I will wander some more in retirement: Costa Rica and Ghana this year, perhaps Zanzibar and the Republic of Georgia next spring.

Ironically, as my time gets shorter, I appreciate how life is wasted by speed. My wife's father was the most wonderful grandfather. He played with our kids for hours moving at the speed of a slow Loris. Kids thrive on slow love. I want to learn that kind of grand-parenting. I learned perennial gardening; every plant is a long-term relationship that stretches over cycles of seasons. Long evenings on the front porch with Joline, wine, food and dogs are more peaceful than the metered time in any spa.

Finally, I retire to resistance. This is a time when every University value is being profaned. Truth, science, logic and learning are assailed. Myths are idolized over the presentation of our glorious but flawed history. The duty to welcome *all* people, to break bread with them, and to talk with them and ultimately to learn with them, is jeered.

Retirement cannot insulate me from the assault on the values that heat the core of Universities. My colleagues, immigrant friends and my future travels are all endangered. Coarsened discourse corrodes the written and dramatic arts and journalism. Anti-science endangers health, the bees fertilizing plants in my garden and even the biosphere.

Every person here has a vital stake in these values. None of us may retreat or retire as these core values are mocked. For the sake of our neighbors, our liberties, this planet and peace, each of us must forthrightly stand for learning, logic and science, justice and welcome.

Thank you all.