

Inaugural Address by Alan C. Price
President of Earlham
September 23, 2017

Friends, good afternoon. I was asked to give a shout out to the students of Chicago. Done. I would like to begin my address with some words of gratitude.

Thank you, Stefan. You are a true friend. I cannot imagine what my life would have been if you hadn't suggested that I should come to Earlham College.

Gina, thank you for taking this journey with me. You have been my first lady for 25 years. Thank you for embracing this community and letting this community embrace you.

Thank you, family and friends. My brother and sister are here. High school friends are here. Law school friends are here. Friends from the National Guard are here. And the turnout of Earlham friends is incredible. I am so honored that you are here to support me and support Earlham. Mom and Dad, I know you're listening. I love you.

I'd like to thank all the people who made this Inauguration day and week a truly amazing series of community events. I'd like to thank the folks who take care of this campus and take pride in making this place beautiful. The natural sense of simplicity that surrounds us is the result of care and planning by good, hard working people, most of whom are rarely thanked by the people who live here. Please be sure to thank them.

I'm honored to have Mayor Dave Snow with us for this occasion. I'd like to welcome the residents of Richmond and surrounding towns who have joined us for this occasion. Most of you recognize, as I do, that Earlham needs Richmond and Indiana. Indiana and Richmond need Earlham. There have been times in our history when we have forgotten that basic truth. Mayor Snow and I have not forgotten. The Richmond business community has not forgotten. The social service agencies and cultural institutions of Richmond have not forgotten. The Richmond school system has not forgotten. The other Earlham has always attracted students and faculty who feel called to service and want to make the world a better place. Many of them live out that call to service right here in Wayne County. From Earlham's Bonner Scholars who do community service as an integrated part of their education to the Earlham students who work and shop in Richmond's businesses, Earlham is grateful that we are welcomed and woven into the fabric of this great city. Part of my vision for Earlham's future is that we continue to strengthen this partnership. Together, Earlham and Richmond can create a better College, a better city, and in the process, better graduates who will be more capable leaders because they learned how to change lives, build community, and change the world right here. On this day, I am glad that Earlham and Richmond can celebrate together.

I have special thanks for our volunteer Boards. I see here today members of Earlham's Board of Trustees, the Board of Advisors from the Earlham School of Religion, the Foundation Board, the Alumni Council, and the African American Advisory Board. Most of them are alumni. Some of them are Friends with a Capital "F", in the sense that they are Quaker. All them love Earlham deeply. These Volunteers have pledged to use their wisdom, hard work, and personal financial resources to support Earlham's mission. Throughout my career, I have served on and worked with many Boards. One of the reasons I did not hesitate to accept the calling to be Earlham's president is that I knew these Boards to be thoughtful stewards who take a long-term view based on a historic appreciation of the College.

Great Colleges, like great Cities and great Nations, must work to understand and teach their history and culture so that they can work to build a bold future that will succeed because it is an organic extension of who they are. I'll share an example because it communicates our recent efforts so well. Many of you remember that over the past seven years, with input from these volunteer boards and many members of our community, three consulting firms have worked with three faculty strategic planning teams across two administrations and two presidents and have reached the same wise conclusions about Earlham's future:

The first conclusion is that NOW is the time for Earlham to grow the campus community—not a lot, but a measured amount to 1,400 students and 130 teaching faculty. For those who are fairly new to Earlham, allow me to put this notion of growth in some historic context. Earlham began in 1847 with 45 students. By the year 1890, it had grown to 300 students. We grew to 500 students by 1920. During WWII, enrollment had declined to a low in 1945 of 225 and jumped up to 600 for the fall of 1946. By the fall of 1958 we had reached 900. We fell just short of 1200 in 1974. Since that time, Earlham has fluctuated somewhere in 1,100 to 1,200 range that most of you are familiar with. I can imagine that each jump up felt a little scary. I can imagine that with each jump up there were questions about adding facilities, adding faculty, and adding majors. I can also imagine that Earlham students and faculty might have wondered, "What does this growth really mean?" "Does this mean that Earlham is changing to become something I don't recognize?" "Will this bigger Earlham still be the Earlham I know and love?" Yet, each time Earlham grew larger, Earlham remained Earlham. The Board of Trustees, with courage, and planning, and a leap of faith, took steps to ensure that the College was ready for growth. They supported the construction of new dorms, new classrooms, new offices, new laboratories, and new performance spaces. Although there is more work to be done, the physical campus is ready to support this growth. My vision is that Earlham will remain Earlham only a bit larger so that MORE Earlham students and faculty will allow Earlham to make a bigger difference in the world.

The second wise conclusion was that we must continue to innovate in ways that make Earlham more distinctive and make Earlham graduates more successful in their careers. The Earlham Program for Integrated Collaboration, or EPIC, is an exciting, yet organic innovation that will benefit the college and our graduates.

Earlham has a long history of allowing individuals to design elements of their study and many years of student-faculty research projects, and field work and service projects have been long been integrated into classroom learning. EPIC builds on that history by providing a more comprehensive support for students and faculty to work together across traditional academic disciplines in order to address the world's issues which may not fit in the box of any single department. And the EPIC Advantage is an extension of that holistic approach. It creates a stronger bridge between the rigorous academic experience and a marketable work experience. We have long known that our Quaker, liberal arts education leads to remarkable careers. Now, with the addition of internships and applied research, our graduates can more easily, more successfully, and with more impact make the transition into the worlds of work and graduate schools. What I like most about EPIC is that it builds on strengths we already had, but never quite realized we had, or never quite told the world we had, and made them available to all students—not just a few who were able to navigate the roadblocks when they had ideas beyond the traditional classroom or department. In a very real sense, EPIC has always been a part of Earlham—for some. Now EPIC can be for all of us. Because we are doing a better job of teaching the world what EPIC means, the world will more easily understand and welcome the skills you bring as a graduate. Ultimately, in accordance with our mission as a Quaker liberal arts college, we are integrating broader experience and perspective into our exploration of life of the mind, and in so doing better prepare students to be citizens of a complex world.

The third wise conclusion is that we, meaning all of us, need to focus on making the experience of college life more fun. When I talked to students last winter, I had a sense that Earlham was taking things a little too seriously and needed to let itself have a little more fun. One important element of an Earlham education, for your own health, wellbeing and complete development, is time for fun. This weekend is an opportunity for us to have fun with almost the entire community. (A shout out to the sports teams who are on the road right now. You know I wish you could be here.) There are so many of you now, who have no memory of May Day at the College. It WAS a tradition of fun that many alumni remember fondly. A consensus was reached that the May Day celebration was no longer incapable of welcoming and inspiring the diversity of our community. A tradition was ended. That's ok. What we think of as culturally relevant and fun should evolve over time. My vision for Earlham's future, and my challenge to you, is to discern and develop a new tradition of fun on a grand scale.

Trustees will continue to keep their eyes on the long-term horizon. We know that other buildings must be added. We know that some buildings have reached their end. We know, because you have told us, that the off-campus houses along College Avenue need attention.

They know that the responsibility of stewardship never ends. Again, they do it out of love. I ask you to join me in thanking them with our applause.

I want to acknowledge this incredible faculty from the College, the Earlham School of Religion, and the Graduate Programs in Education. Every student and alumnus can name a professor or administrator who did more than share their passion for a particular discipline. You have led the way in excellent teaching, mentoring, and scholarship. You have taught us how to live by Quaker principles and practices—even if we are not Quaker and especially if we find ourselves in non-Quaker environments. You have modeled how to be human and how to live in community. You have served Richmond and Indiana in countless ways. You have challenged students to see themselves, their worlds and their futures more powerfully. You have taught scientists to write. You have taught economists to sing. You have taught us languages to engage in global conversations. You have taught all of us how to dream more vividly and listen more carefully. You have worked round the clock to keep students safe. You coached a basketball team from your hospital bed because you cannot and will not quit on these students. You are the reason that Earlham is known as a college that changes lives. You are the reason that we want to explore new models of shared governance that will allow Trustee meetings to better integrate faculty perspectives directly into Trustee discussions. The real reason this crowd has gathered is because they love and respect you. I would like to invite everyone present to celebrate you with applause and joyful noise.

As an alumnus, I carry two Earlham's in my heart: one Earlham that is timeless and enduring, and one Earlham that is unique to my time. It can take years to separate the two and realize that Earlham is constantly changing while simultaneously not changing at all. How was it so easy for me to spot that more fun was needed on campus? I listened to current students, I listened to faculty and alumni, plus I listened to the enduring message of the late Dan Kinsey.

Dan Kinsey was a professor of physical education at Earlham from 1959 to 1967. Few now remember that he won the Olympic gold medal for the United States in the high hurdles at the Summer Olympic Games in Paris in 1924. There is a bench, behind Stout Meetinghouse, with words that feel relevant today. It reads, "In memory of Dan Kinsey who endeavored to lead others to wholesome and creative fun, for the sake of fun and what it does for the human spirit." You see, we have placed clues around campus. If you pay attention, you can begin to understand more about the Earlham that is timeless and enduring. If you happen to find the right yearbook, there's a photograph of a much younger me (with hair) on that bench.

Clarence Pickett taught biblical literature at Earlham in the 1920's. He would later leave Earlham to be executive secretary of the American Friends Service Committee. When the Nobel committee recognized the work of Quaker organizations with the Nobel Peace Prize in 1947, Clarence Pickett accepted the prize on behalf of the AFSC. Clarence would also serve on the first National Advisory Council to the Peace Corps. Although his work was specific to his time, I also get that sense that his work was timeless and enduring Earlham work. He could not have foreseen that I would one day serve in the leadership at Peace Corps or that Earlham would become a Peace Corps prep college. However, once you've

been around Earlham long enough you start to think, “of course.” Could Clarence Pickett have imagined that his younger daughter Carolyn, who was born at our own Reid Hospital in 1922, would have a daughter named Debbie (now Debbie Hull), who would graduate Earlham in 1967 and later return to be our current Chair of the Board of Trustees?

When William Cousins arrived in our sociology department in 1966 as Earlham’s first black professor, could he have imagined that one day I might be inaugurated as president or that this community would be this global and this diverse? William’s son, Chris Cousins, remembers growing up on this campus (in the Trueblood preschool) and graduated with the class of 1984, just a few months before I arrived as a freshman. Could he have imagined this day? Chris is here today. Where are you Chris? Thanks for coming! I can tell you this, Chris has a daughter named Krishna Raye who is a high school senior. She’s also here today. You see... next fall, when she shows up for New Student Orientation at Earlham, (and she better show up now that I’ve included her name in this inaugural address) she will be part of this chain of Earlham’s history. History may move slowly, but it moves. Remember, there is an Earlham that is timeless and enduring, and one Earlham that is unique to your time.

What is unique to this time, to this inauguration day? Some may say that what is historically different, visibly different on this day, is the color of my skin. To the extent that this difference inspires you, and brings out the best in you, I will continue to be proud of my heritage. For those of you who know what lies beneath this skin—what the Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. might call “the content of my character,” I hope that also inspires and brings out the best in you.

Others may say that what is historically noteworthy about today’s inauguration is my prior service as an infantry platoon leader and executive officer in the Richmond unit of the Indiana Army National Guard—which makes me the [second] veteran to become president of Earlham.

Editor’s note: Earlham’s 11th President Franklin W. Wallin (1974-83) was the first veteran, having served in the United States Navy.

I will leave it to historians to one day tell the story of which distinctions had the most impact on my time with you. However, my hope is that my deep affinity for Quakerism, my deep affection for our community’s Principles and Practices, and my deep admiration for the Quaker approaches to freedom, peacemaking, social justice, and sustainability that will make the biggest difference.

Now I wish to address the students.

When I was an Earlham student, I didn’t have the deepest appreciation for the history of this place and how special it was. Like a lot of students, I sometimes focused on how Earlham wasn’t perfect or how Earlham sometimes fell short of its

ideals, and I therefor failed to notice how extraordinary this place was. After a career of traveling through much of the country and the world, and after serving in a wide variety of communities and organizations, I have come to appreciate that Earlham is so special that it is almost magical. And the more I learn about Earlham and Earlhamites, the more I am amazed both by what remains constant and by what changes over time. One of the things that remains constant is that students continue to inspire me.

You have inspired me with your character. Some folks say that your generation lacks grit and resilience. I have to tell you, that's not what I see. Last week, I saw a battle on the tennis court where the women's doubles were down 2 to 5. They fought back. They cheered each other on. They stayed positive and went on to win that set 8 to 6 and that made the difference for Earlham to win the match. Some of you may have read about Noah who runs cross-country and trains hard with his friend and teammate Bennie. They demonstrate extraordinary sportsmanship and teamwork. Noah happens to be blind. When you see Noah and Bennie running at top speed through the woods of back campus, you will be amazed. Some of you know the story of Hashem who inspired us last Spring. Hashem grew up in a Palestinian refugee camp and overcome tremendous obstacles to be the first Rhodes Scholar from Earlham in a hundred years and the first ever from Palestine. You may not know that another Earlham student sitting here among us today has set her sights on being the second Rhodes Scholar in a row. You may have heard that our football team hasn't won a game in a while. And you might assume that morale and school spirit might be low with the team. But if you meet these young men, if you see them at practice, if you see them in the classroom, if you see them engaged in their EPIC experiences--you will be inspired by who they are and their EC pride. You can't tell me that this generation lacks grit.

In my opinion, what Earlham students lack is an understanding of why Earlham exists. You don't really know why we brought you here to this place. You don't know why men and women devoted their lives for 170 years to build this place for you. Why? Because this place makes leaders that the world needs.

We live in a world that calls out for leaders who can listen and engage in civil discourse. Let us not forget that we have valuable skills and tools in that arena. We need more people of good faith and good will to work together for the common good. More people are needed who have an education in how to build and rebuild communities. We need more people who know how to strengthen diversity, manage inclusively, and navigate the challenge of collaborating across differences. It is possible that Earlham's diversity may always feel two steps behind where Earlham students want it to be. What is also true is that Earlham's diversity is usually three steps ahead of where the rest of the world is. And the work of taking that diversity and making one community is some of the important work that readies you to create a better world than the one you inherited. It is work that the faculty can do with you but not for you.

Certainly, by the time you leave Earlham and return to the “real world” many of you will begin to understand that you have developed some special abilities that many of your peers lack. These special abilities are not mentioned in the “best college” rankings but they are real. Among them are: the ability to listen in ways that transforms human relationships; a form of x-ray vision that allows you to see pathways to peace where others can only see conflict; an enhanced sense of optimism that allows you to find creative solutions where others see only obstacles; and a sense of humanity that can radiate from you like light. If I ever challenge you to, “share your light with the world,” that’s what I mean.

I believe that if we recommit ourselves to the practice of consensus building and using peaceful methods to resolve conflicts, then we will have done good work together and you will carry in your heart the Earlham that so many of us alumni believe is timeless and enduring. Here’s a bonus suggestion. Whether you are a person of faith, different faith, or no faith, I recommend that you spend some time in Quaker meeting. Just as it would be a shame to live in Paris, France for four years and never visit the Louvre or the Eiffel Tower, it would be a shame to live here for four years and never enjoy such an important experience. You don’t need to be a Quaker to learn and carry the Quaker ethos with you into the world.

Students, you will soon carry two Earlham’s in your heart: one Earlham that is timeless and enduring, and one Earlham that is unique to your time. Remember that this is YOUR college. You may not have realized it in new student orientation. You may not realize it on your graduation day. You may not realize this until many years later, perhaps when your sons and daughters and nieces and nephews start looking at colleges. You might have only been here for one year, like Andy Cecere who studied here in 1942 before joining the Marines, but ONE DAY you will realize that this is YOUR college. When that happens, you will truly realize the benefit of your Earlham education. And you will join hands and do all you can to give back to this college—Not just because it is a worthy and beautiful institution, although it is. But because in this place the world has assembled in passionate pursuit of the most noble ideals—that an educational community can free the mind, open our hearts, give us the skills and tools, and awaken us to hear and follow our calling. There is an Earlham that is timeless and enduring. There is an Earlham that is unique to your time. The part that is unique to your time doesn’t just happen. You have to make it. If you do that. If you hold both Earlhams in your heart, the Earlham that is timeless and enduring, and the Earlham that is unique to your time—because you made it, you WILL have the power and the responsibility to Live in the world as it is AND be able to imagine and create a more just and peaceful world. That is the hope of everyone gathered here today. Thank you.