



Remarks by

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On the occasion of

The investiture of *doctor honoris causa* upon

**Dr. Gregory Payne**

*Public Diplomacy Leader and*

*Chair of the Communication Studies Department*

Emerson College

Distinguished Rector of Ramon Llull University, President of Emerson College, honored guests, ladies, gentlemen, and friends,

It is my great honor to present the achievements of Dr. James Gregory Payne, whose work we are recognizing by the awarding of an honorary doctorate today, proposed by the Blanquerna School of Communication and International Relations. I will not be sparing in my praise, as Dr. Payne's qualities are manifold and more than deserving of this honor, but I will have to limit the description of his impressive achievements, as we do not have sufficient time to detail each and every one.

In order to provide a framework for his very extensive career, I will first introduce Dr. Payne, and then address each of the qualities which I believe make him more than deserving of the recognition he is receiving today.

In 1977, six years after graduating, James Gregory Payne obtained his doctorate from the University of Illinois for a rhetorical analysis of the interpretations of events that had taken place only seven years previously, in 1970, at Kent University. Within the context of the Vietnam War and during President Nixon's period of office, the Ohio National Guard opened fire on students protesting against the American invasion of Cambodia. Tragically, four students were killed and nine injured, one of whom was permanently paralyzed.

I shall shortly focus on his academic career, but there is a very significant aspect that we should dwell on for a moment, and this is his choice of subject for his doctorate, the

first very clear indication of the importance to Dr. Payne of social **commitment**, above and beyond academic study, which demanded much deeper engagement than that required simply to acquire his doctorate. His commitment was such that one year before obtaining his doctorate he wrote a play based on the events, seen through the eyes of the mother of one of the students who had died. The mother was called Florence and her son, William Knox Schroeder, was 19 years old when hit by a bullet to the chest fired by an officer 116 meters away. The play, entitled “Kent State: A requiem,” has been staged on more than 150 university campuses in the United States and Europe over the last 40 years and was the basis of an award-winning NBC docudrama in 1981. In the same year, Payne published a book on the events called “Mayday: Kent State.” It is evident that he is not a person who abandons issues that fascinate him.

Moreover, there is one thing I would like to stress, as it helps us to understand Dr. Payne’s character more clearly: when he opens a door, he does so in order to cross the threshold; and when he tackles an issue, he does so in order to get right to the heart of the matter.

So it is in the light of this defining approach that we can both review his work in research, communication and education, and assess his contributions to society. It is within the context of his extensive social commitment that his numerous academic articles, the large number of book chapters, and his work as an editor of publications in political communication and grassroots diplomacy— two subjects I will dwell on in due course—take on new meaning.

In view of this approach to life—that we can describe as **commitment with rigor and rigor in commitment**, without fear of contradiction—that we should assess his academic career. Tenured Professor in Communication Studies at Emerson College in Boston since 1983, he has also been guest professor in universities on five continents, and he has made repeated visits to this university. One remarkable aspect of his teaching should be particularly noted: Professor Payne believes that a teaching job is never over. His students know this and it is demonstrated every time he meets up with them wherever they may be in the world, underlining his ongoing and unending commitment to his work.

He has also been invited by the American Department of State to teach in Jordan, Saudi Arabia, Uzbekistan, Turkmenistan, Azerbaijan and Indonesia, and this inevitably ties in with his activity in the field of politics. He has worked closely with the American administration and with the US Democratic Party as a consultant and senior advisor, and, as we shall see in due course, his advice has also been sought by global organizations. On the one hand, he has been very active in the study and analysis of electoral campaigns, and on the other, he has been deeply involved in several campaigns, as is typical of him, such as those of Hillary Clinton and Tom Bradley, about whom he wrote a biography entitled “The Impossible Dream.”

It is as a speechwriter that he has put his hand and his intellectual acuity to shaping the words used by the mayors of Los Angeles and Boston—Tom Bradley and Ray Flynn—and those of Senator Robert Dole, Hillary Clinton and Prince Faisal al Saud. It is clear that he is a person in whom important dignitaries place their absolute trust, as indeed do the most prestigious journalists. For this reason, he has participated as an expert on various media during the majority of American election campaigns since 1988, and his opinion has been sought on numerous occasions by those responsible for reporting on the proceedings of American democracy. His contributions have helped American audiences gain a deeper understanding of the complexities of campaigns.

I mentioned that his advice has been valued both by important American leaders and by global organizations, and I would like to present some examples of these. In 1999, he was responsible for the media campaign during the visit of queen Noor of Jordan to the United States on the occasion of the recognition by UNICEF of her work against anti-personnel mines. It is not unusual for Dr. Payne to be given this level of trust, as his career includes a long list of consultancy work at the highest level. He has advised the Departments of State and of the Treasury, the National Cancer Institute, and the National Center for Environmental Health, as well as important foundations in the US and around the world, almost always on the subjects of risk communication, leadership, communication rhetoric, and always with a global outlook that transcends the borders of his own country.

As a researcher and teacher, Dr. Payne has been praised for his work on health communication and rhetorical analysis in unique contexts, such as during the Ohio massacre or the global reaction to the accidental death in Paris of Diana, Princess of Wales. His works have dealt with key concepts in public relations, such as strategic communication, but we won't do him justice until we mention his most valuable, and pioneering contributions to the notions of public diplomacy and grassroots communication. Though not expressed by him in these words, we may be justified in attributing to him the innovative ideas underlying grassroots diplomacy that refers to a new type of diplomacy that is carried out in the intense relationships between people and organizations beyond or alongside the diplomacy of states.

Payne is a firm advocate of a new diplomacy based on legitimate and shared leaderships, a bottom up citizen-to-citizen diplomacy via associations, NGO's, and educational institutions. In addition, he is deeply convinced of the value of what might be called "cultural diplomacy," that involves cultural events and social activism to communicate ideas and perceptions, and thus includes gastronomy, art, music, and education. This is knowledge over and above domination, understanding as motivation, and difficulty as a challenge. It was with very good reason that he created and directed the Saudi American Exchange as a natural reaction to the 9/11 attacks in New York. It was created in the fall of 2001, and more than a thousand people took part in the trips

and exchanges between two worlds that seemed destined to mutual incomprehension, and hell-bent on attacking each other without any chance of encounter. It seems abundantly clear that only a person with very deep convictions would take on a challenge of this scale.

With similar determination he has conceived, organized, encouraged, programmed and directed numerous courses and seminars on a range of issues, always with the desire to educate new generations in the issues associated with managing human, political and international relations. Dozens of lectures and presentations are evidence of his irrepressible involvement in events of all kinds, from workshops to festivals, in which his contribution has been essential. There are numerous examples of this, but, as we don't have enough time for a comprehensive list, I will describe a particular case which, to an extent, is typical of all. Aware of the perception of crime in northern Mexico—which is not much different to the north of the border though perceived differently—he decided to intervene with a move designed to reach hearts and minds. He promoted a film festival in Rosarito Beach, with which he has close links, in order to contribute another iconic image to the way that this place is viewed, attracting both artists and film fans and providing the town with an opportunity for revival. This is just one case amongst many of his determination to serve the community that has been recognized in many places in the US and around the world.

One of his defining qualities—the capacity to head up complex projects and involve key individuals in order to obtain successful outcomes—has been put to work in another essential area: obtaining donations and funding of all types for all kinds of projects. His work as fund-raiser has been tireless and his successes can be put down to his personality, his persistent charm, his bottomless curiosity, his desire to establish connections, and the natural way he makes possible so much that before seemed impossible.

As you can see, he is an academic and researcher who is also an author, a scriptwriter, an advisor on documentaries and other media, as well as a teacher. Dr. Payne has built up an impressive record of achievements around the world and has been advisor to those at the highest level of government, as a promoter of global projects and as a member of committees and special teams working for the American government. Nevertheless, he has never allowed his teaching to suffer, and has made it a priority to work with young people and train new leaders from around the world.

This was clearly revealed in a conversation he had with Dr. Enric Ordeix published in our faculty magazine in 2018. Dr. Payne said, and I quote, “The main challenge for managing effective global strategic communication is for organizations to be seen as legitimate by the people in the contexts they refer to.” And he went on to explain that organizations that use technology that respects the cultures they relate to by means of messages, strategies and tactics suited to each audience will have greater impact and,

this should be noted, they will contribute to the public good and bring about social change. And I have asked you to note this carefully as this is the key point of the portrait that I wish to draw: in Dr. Payne's opinion—as is implicit in the fragment I have quoted and as he has made abundantly clear on many occasions—the aim of global communication, the aim of diplomacy as he sees it, is none other than to bring about social change and reinforce the public good. In other words, communication strategies only make sense when they are placed at the service of the public, when they are, or are intended to be, a lever for social change.

I think that you now have a very good idea of Dr. Payne's qualities in the fields of teaching and administration as well as in research, consultancy, awareness-raising, and the creation, promotion and management of audacious projects aimed at improving international communication and global communication. There is, however, one aspect that I should draw to your attention that is no less significant. That is the love, affection, and the tremendous interest that this Bostonian has demonstrated for our country and our city. Enamored of Barcelona since his first visit here on the occasion of the 1992 Olympic Games, he has returned to the city again and again and established enduring links and sincere friendships. A good friend to his friends, he has not hesitated to act as an ambassador for Barcelona's approach to transformation and for the city's commitment and enthusiasm for projects and improvements focusing on improving social relations. He has no doubt that the solution to the undeniable conflict between a very large number of Catalans and the Spanish state must be brought about by democratic means. Dialogue is essential and, if it is to be successful, must originate in the recognition of legitimate leaders, the desire to understand "the other", and the ability to win hearts and minds.

His friendship with Catalonia and its capital city includes his intense relationship with this university and, since the days of my predecessor Dr. Miquel Tresserras, with the faculty, and this is a great honor. Payne is co-director of the Global Communication Center, an organization headed up jointly by Emerson College and our faculty, whose aim is to explore new trends in the field of global communication. He is also a member of the advisory board to our Degree in Global Communication Management, which was doubtlessly inspired by him, as was also the case for our Master's degree in the same subject. So we would like to communicate our deep gratitude to him and express with pride the great affection we have for him, both as a person and as a teacher.

The qualities we are paying tribute to with this honorary doctorate must now be more than clear: Dr. Payne has excelled in his research and academic work; he has persevered and has grown in his role as a teacher. He has placed his knowledge at the service of the public good and has pursued the noble aim of improving international relations—particularly in the most difficult times and the most perplexing situations—from the grassroots, from knowledge and interchange, and from the aim of recognizing

“the other” and establishing connections. He demonstrates the ongoing desire to value social organizations, the grassroots of society, while also taking advantages of opportunities for change coming from politics, and supporting leaders concerned with social change and progress. Dr. Payne is a truly strong-willed and tireless individual, and far from settling for merely fulfilling his role as an academic and as a teacher, he has turned this role into the instrument for all his public and private activities.

Convinced that current and future communication must be both ethical and effective while demanding critical thinking, the capacity to analyze, and a close symbiosis between concepts and reality, James Gregory Payne has carried his message throughout the world and we have had the good fortune that he fell in love with Barcelona and decided to make this city—and thereafter our school—one of his cardinal reference points.

Permit me to finish with a necessarily brief sketch of his character. You will remember that his approach to life can be expressed in the—I believe suitable— expression “commitment with rigor and rigor in commitment.” Though inevitably faithful to Aristotelian rhetoric, he has never been afraid of expressing passion, and, where necessary, rage.

He is deeply convinced of the value of family and I have no doubt that this public recognition will above all have prompted memories of his mother, Zulene, and his sister, Janice, both now no longer with us but nevertheless present in his heart.

What I am trying to say is that while today we are paying homage to an instructor, professor, researcher, awareness-raiser, to a professional in the field of communication and international relations, and a person who has inspired new fields of education around the world—such as our degree in Global Communication Management—, it should never be forgotten that we are also paying tribute to a person, for his generous engagement, his determined character, his global commitment, to his large heart, and his tremendous capacity for empathy.

It is for all of these qualities—which are all of a piece—that we have proposed this award of honorary doctorate of Ramon Llull University. Before concluding this eulogy there are two very important issues I should raise, both of which are related to Dr. Payne’s work.

First, I am sure you will all agree with that both Barcelona and Catalonia do well to take care of their friends around the world. It is not easy to earn the passionate attachment of a person with such worthy qualities and such an impressive reputation, and we do well to recognize the affection in which we are held, with both honesty and humility. In a turbulent society that is looking for new ways of understanding itself, in a context in which the very young—so young that they are still at school—lead the protests against climate change, in a world that seems to be abandoning multilateralism for a much more grim reality, bolstered by post-truth and demagogy, in this chaos of national

egos, Barcelona and Catalonia need expert knowledge and friendship more than ever. Let us be clear that this ceremony today cements a new and lasting bond between Blanquerna and the United States. This is grassroots diplomacy; this is the truth borne by knowledge! We can never have too many friendships of this nature and we must know how to appreciate them and maintain them, to support the role that our city and our country should assume, with honesty and humility I repeat, within a framework of global understanding.

Second, I am sure you all agree that Catalonia and Spain are currently in a highly complex predicament. There are more and more points of disagreement and the chance for crucial dialogue seems to have been frittered away. But it is essential for us to return to substantive dialogue, with no red lines. It is unavoidable and it can be done.

In this complex context students in all communication degrees expect from us an attitude that is both ethical and responsible, and which truly embodies the values on which the university is based. And it is in complex situations, in crises and in periods of difficulty, that communication becomes more necessary than ever, and when global strategies are most important. It has been essential to maintain academic rigor and a spirit of freedom during the last two troubled years of protests and inevitable counter-protests. We must now be more rigorous and committed than ever, and I am sure you understand why should we should be more appreciative than ever of the expertise that James Gregory Payne shares with us and the affection he has for us.

It is an honor to recognize it today, with the solemnity due to the honor, and we can only conclude by offering our sincere gratitude.

Many thanks, Dr. Payne, for your expertise and your friendship. We trust that we will be worthy of the honor of your friendship, and we express our thanks for the honor that you do us.

And to all those present, many thanks for your attention and for the feelings that you doubtless share. Today we recognize the rigor, the commitment, the expertise, the worth, and the person. It is always the case—and here I will finish—that in recognizing others that we show ourselves to be who we really are. For that reason, I have no hesitation in sharing my personal impression that with this tribute we also learn to be somewhat better persons. And for that we will always be in your debt.

Many thanks

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