

**WORLD CULTURAL COUNCIL
2017 AWARD CEREMONY
Salutatory Speech Maestro Rafael Estrada
34th World Cultural Council Award Ceremony at Leiden University
Leiden University
Wednesday 8 November 2017
15:00 - 17:00 hrs.
in Pieterskerk
Pieterskerkhof 1a
2311 SL Leiden**

Distinguished President of the World Cultural Council, Sir Colin Blakemore; honorable Rector Magnificus & Chairman of the Executive Board, Leiden University, Professor Carel Stolker; respected authorities of Leiden University; tonight's laureates, the most deserving Professors Omar Yaghi and Russell Hartenberger; your excellencies, visitors from overseas and other parts of the Netherlands, ladies and gentlemen:

I convey my warmest appreciation to the Rector, **Carel Stolker**, and to the faculty and staff of the **Leiden University** for hosting this memorable event. Although one stage of our relationship with the university has been crowned, my wish is that it may continue and thrive in the future.

I extend my deepest admiration and respect to those who have had the vision to grasp the long-term aims of an international organization such as ours, which promotes positive relations among nations and individuals working towards the development of a socially-aware and cooperative mind-set.

The third millennium has begun with social problems that we have all witnessed: terrorism, drug addiction, a breakdown in the international financial system, deep-rooted prejudice, etc. All of these are the upshot of a profound crisis in the very bedrock of society, the ethical system underpinning the social structure. Underlying the economic and social problems, there is a deep crisis of values.

It is men and women of science, educators and artists who have a unique opportunity to take up the challenge of laying the ethical foundations that will bring cohesion to the global society now taking shape. We need to educate today's youth by example, each university, each seat of learning, has the capacity to be a shining light. I think that the answer lies in strengthening people's values and virtues. We do not need intellectuality alone; goodness and the ability to serve others also should be developed.

As educators, we have the right to think that the true and steadfast solution is to prepare the leaders of tomorrow, those who will emerge from our university campuses not only as competent professionals but also as exemplary citizens with a **deep sense of ethics**.

If we want better countries and societies, we must teach the citizens of those countries, of those societies. We must teach them to be better people, better parents and better sons and daughters, who look after the environment and are friends of this planet, respecting animals and all the forms of life on the face of the Earth.

If we want better countries and societies, we must start by improving ourselves. We must strive for high values and behaving consistently with these values. Action speaks louder than words. We should encourage people to be better and live in accordance with their better nature, with the most noble part of their soul.

Throughout the ages, and over the length and breadth of the earth, there have been sages who have bequeathed us with a glorious culture. We are the heirs of all the cultural traditions of mankind. To set down the ethical bases of this new millennium, we should take whatever is good, wherever it comes from, without prejudice of any kind. We have inherited a multifaceted human culture and we should value it to the full.

In my opinion, the best way to be useful to others is to contribute in a real and objective way to the clarification of human consciousness to bring about true understanding between people and nations based on the respect for each person's ideology, religion, race and gender.

As an inspiration for these future leaders, today we have the great privilege of recognizing remarkable individuals who through hard work, persistence and creativity have risen to the top of their professions. The award-winners present today, **Prof. Omar Yaghi** and **Prof. Russell Hartenberger**, are amongst those visionaries who have been able to combine a great heart with a brilliant mind. Individuals of their standing bear faithful witness to the fact that we are making progress.

I wish all those present that success may crown your professional endeavours and that happiness reign in your lives.

Thank you very much.

Maestro Rafael Estrada
Founder and President Emeritus of the WCC