

Seeing the flags tonight remind me of the paradox that is our school. On the one hand, each of us is rightly proud of our country and the flag that represents it. In good times and in bad, we feel a connection to the nation that we call "home." We introduce ourselves by name and by country. We stop to look at the screens around campus when we catch news lingering about our country.

On the other hand, we come to UWC because we believe that a global community is possible. We think that if we learn and live together, we will find what we share in common as human beings. We think that we will make progress in understanding each other. We think that we will be able to go beyond our national identities and see things from a global perspective.

How can these two things be possible at the same time--national pride, and a commitment to globalism? If you have been tuned in to the news over this past year, you might believe that national pride and a commitment to globalism cannot go hand in hand.

And yet here we are, waving flags **and** engaging in an experiment in being a global community. Do we know something that others don't? Or are we deluding ourselves?

In the past year, the world has seen a rise in nationalism. This rise has expressed itself in the outcome of national elections. It has exposed deep divides in the body politic, across nations and within them. It has raised questions about how globalization has left some countries and people behind, while other countries and people prosper. It has raised questions about immigration and its effect on national culture. It has exposed strong opinions about boundaries and who should and shouldn't be allowed to cross them.

It is easy to dismiss nationalism along with its companions, isolationism and protectionism. After all, these have been identified as some of the conditions leading up to World War I, and we all know what devastation that caused--immediately and in its aftermath.

But it is also easy to see why nationalism, isolationism and protectionism can be popular. It is a natural human tendency to hold on to what is our own when we believe that there is not enough to go around. It is a natural human tendency to compare how things are in the present to how they were in the past and wish for better times. It is easy to become discouraged when others seem to be getting ahead and we are not.

I recently read JD Vance's 2016 book Hillbilly Elegy. It is a memoir offering a painful look into the white working poor living in Appalachia and other parts of the heartland of the United States. In the book, Vance explores what it means to be left behind and to lose hope that the world has a place for you. He acknowledges that the blame for this situation rests with individuals as well as with policies that make it difficult for whole sections of the country to participate in a prosperous economy. He looks unflinchingly at

the damage of drug and alcohol abuse and the breakdown of the family in a culture under threat. He looks at what it means to be a white male in America who is not privileged, who is not powerful, who is not prosperous.

Many people looked to Vance's book following the election of Donald Trump. They were trying to understand the people who voted for him. They were trying to understand why the nationalist direction he proposed seemed to make people think he could solve their problems.

One thing that came out of this conversation is that when people are left behind, they blame others. When they don't get a job, they think it is because someone else took it from them. When their children get hooked on drugs, they think it is the fault of foreign influence. When their culture is struggling, they think that immigrants who bring their own traditions, expressions, and beliefs are to blame. They think that too much concern is being expressed for minorities--whether ethnic or religious or political.

I am speaking in the context of the United States, but I am sure that all of you recognize these all too human tendencies in the context of your own countries and politics. And this takes me back to the tension between nationalism and a global perspective.

The tension is real. It is rooted deeply in our nature as human beings who are hardwired to survive and to thrive.

But empathy is also part of our nature. We look at others and search for ways that they are like us. We look for what we have in common, and we realize that we all want the same things. We want the dignity that a good job brings. We want our families to be safe. We want access to health care. We want to be recognized and respected for who we are and for what we believe.

So what does this very real tension between nationalism and globalism mean for us at UWC-USA? What place do these beautiful flags have in our experiment with global living? Do we know something others don't, or are we deluded--even if our delusion is a beautiful dream over two years living together here in the Sangre de Cristo mountains?

I don't have the answers. I only know that the questions are real and pressing. They are just underneath the surface of our every interaction with one another, our every choice that affects someone else. They are at the heart of our experiment in learning and living together over this year.

My great hope for us is that we will take full advantage of this experiment: in the classroom and in the dormitories, on the campus community and in the larger Las Vegas community. That we will engage honestly, passionately, and respectfully in conversation and debate around issues where the tension is most apparent. That by living together we will find a place for national pride and global concern in this unlikely and special community.

