

Thank you, Charlene.

It's my good fortune to serve as the president of Ball State University, and it's a pleasure to join you for today's dedication of our new Peace Plaza.

[PAUSE]

Our University community has a long and proud history of coming together peacefully to make our voices heard on our campus—a history that took shape in a meaningful and significant way with the founding of our University's Center for Peace and Conflict Studies in 1988.

The center's original goal was to educate our faculty, staff, and students about world conflicts—conflicts that required strategies for peace, including the dangerous nuclear arms race happening at the time between the Soviet Union and the United States.

Today, the center has expanded its focus to examine peacemaking in its many forms, from resolving family conflicts at home to advocating for

public diplomacy through programs and events like this year's inaugural "A Better World" peace conference.

[PAUSE]

Over the years, the sources of conflict and violence in our country and in our world have changed many times. But what remains constant is our University's responsibility to respect, facilitate, and protect the rights of our students to promote peace and inclusiveness on our campus.

We do this by offering programs and events like the one I just mentioned.

We do this through the meditation services we provide and the undergraduate minor we offer in peace and conflict resolution.

And we do this by providing a designated place to gather in remembrance, in reflection, and in tribute to the necessary work of building a world that is more peaceful and more just.

This new Peace Plaza is a tangible demonstration of our commitment to this important work. And today, I am grateful to everyone who played a role in planning this dedication ceremony.

When I think of the purpose of this gathering space, I am reminded of a speech that I heard earlier this year—a speech I reflected upon in August during my Fall Convocation remarks.

The speech was the commencement address delivered earlier this year to the graduating class of Yale Law School. The commencement speaker was Damian Williams, the United States Attorney for the Southern District of New York.

This past year, my son, Geoffrey, served as Mr. William’s special assistant, and he attended the commencement ceremony with his boss that day.

During his speech, Mr. Williams spoke about the need for young people to lead with humanity in the face of adversity, in order to bridge divides.

In his powerful closing statement, Mr. Williams said that this work was important so that, in his own words, “We can see ourselves in each other. And so that we can give grace as freely as we hope to receive it.”

[PAUSE]

To me, these words embody the spirit of our commitment to our enduring values and to our work promoting peace on our campus and in the community.

[PAUSE]

I anticipate this new Peace Plaza will serve as a gathering space for our faculty, staff, and students, but also for our friends and neighbors as well.

In her introductory remarks, Charlene acknowledged our special guests, but I want to express my own gratitude to our elected and city officials who have joined us today, including Mayor Dan Ridenour.

It is now my pleasure to invite Mayor Ridenour to the podium to say a few words of his own.

[EXIT PODIUM]