

## **Ian Blatchford**

### **Chairman of the Board of Governors at De Montfort University**

#### **Citation**

Good afternoon. My name is Ian Blatchford. I am Director of the Science Museum Group, which is the largest group of science museums in the world and includes the Science Museum in London and National Railway Museum in York. We are visited by nearly 6m people each year and the museum in London gets more school visits than any other museum in Britain - so you will not be surprised to learn that I am passionate about people of all ages and backgrounds having access to science and learning.

But I am here today in my capacity as the Chairman of the Board of Governors at De Montfort University. And, in that capacity, I have the enormous privilege today to lead the investiture of Doreen Lawrence, The Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, as Chancellor of De Montfort University.

As the Vice Chancellor has said, the Chancellor should embody the values this university holds dear:

- the importance of education in advancing the public good;
- challenging of conventions to bring about positive change;
- taking pride in the diversity we represent;
- and using the real strength and reach that diversity gives us.

Above all, the Chancellor must have our students (the very essence of what we are) and our students' interests at heart. By raising THEIR aspirations and empowering THEM to raise the aspirations of others, we really make a meaningful contribution to society.

That is what DeMontfort is here to do and those are the values our Chancellor is called on to embody. That is no easy task - but following a nominations process involving staff and students, our choice was someone I am happy to say we already considered part of the DMU family. The announcement that Baroness Lawrence was to be our new Chancellor was greeted with pleasure, pride and excitement right across the campus.

In recognising Baroness Lawrence's powerful impact on British society and history, as we did this time last year when she was made an Honorary Doctor of Laws here at DMU, our institution felt itself honoured by her presence.

On that occasion we hailed her indefatigable fight for justice for her son Stephen, and her determination to reach beyond tragedy and build a living legacy by co-creating the Stephen Lawrence Charitable Trust, with the aim of promoting a positive community legacy in her son's name.

In doing this and much more, our new Chancellor has shown us all the extraordinary potential of one person's courage and determination, and how these qualities can hold to account the highest institutions, and change them so they do fulfil their duties

and responsibilities to the whole of society. Baroness Lawrence is a figure named at one time as the most powerful woman in the country, and identified as a ‘game-changer’ for women fighting for recognition and respect. The Home Secretary called Baroness Lawrence ‘an example to all’.

When she came to DMU 12 months ago, the Baroness graciously took time to speak to students and staff in a question-and-answer session following the formality of the conferment ceremony. All those present in that intimate atmosphere quickly understood a bond had been formed. There was a connection that spoke volumes about Baroness Lawrence’s stature but also her humility.

She shared with us the strength and inspiration she drew from her family. She told us how she found inside herself a voice strong, loud and clear enough to challenge cold, hard authority.

Baroness Lawrence instilled in the students that day how THEY could, and should, work towards whatever future they wanted. ‘You can be whatever you want to be ... whatever it is, whatever you want to do, you should go ahead and try’, she said. And she insisted real success could only ever be achieved when we value ourselves and others. She quietly impressed upon all that they had a duty to stand confidently against racism, inequality and injustice in everything they did.

That sort of confidence is founded most strongly on education. Baroness Lawrence is a passionate advocate for its power to shape and reshape, build and rebuild – lives, communities, society. Her brisk readiness to accept our invitation to become Chancellor came with such swiftness and sureness because this enduring faith in education’s transformative ability is both a tenet of her own life and underpins our scholarly community.

Life at DMU, for staff, students and the wider community, will be improved immeasurably by the Baroness’s involvement. She honours us with this alliance, and by bringing her hard-won wisdom and her influence. In her, we have a Chancellor who is a champion for students, education and social change and – just as importantly, in turbulent and testing times – a strong, robust, friend.

Doreen Lawrence, Baroness Lawrence of Clarendon, it is our great privilege to ask you to step forward and accept from us the symbols and regalia associated with a prestigious role we know you will keep relevant, engaged, far-reaching and effective: that of Chancellor of De Montfort University.