

Karamjit Singh CBE, Hon LLD

Wednesday 24 July 2024, am

Chancellor

Our honorary graduand this ceremony has had a long and distinguished career in public service, here in the Midlands and nationally. I am delighted to introduce: KARAMJIT SINGH.

Many years ago, in the last century to be precise, as a Phd student looking at labour and migration, I was perusing through the Journal New Community, and came across an article, Pivots and Presents by Denis Brooks and Karamjit Singh, two researchers based at the Industrial Relations Research Unit at the University of Warwick in the early 1970s, a unit that was the precursor to our esteemed business school. I was very curious about who this Karamjit Singh was and as this was the early 1990s, I naively thought that he might be a Professor at one of our Universities. When I finally joined this illustrious institution and began to connect with people in Coventry and the region, Karamjit came to visit me with his father's autobiography, Pioneer: The Life Story of Tara Singh, a really wonderful story of a migrant's life. But what struck me about this title is that where Karamjit's father was a Pioneer, in many, many ways so is he. When I finally managed to stitch together the huge

contribution he's made to public life, I immediately felt that as an institution we needed to honour him and now enough about me!

Karamjit is a great friend to the University, he is a Warwick graduate and from 2007 to 2009 was a member of the University Council – our governing body. By then, he was well established in a career in public service that had already brought him national recognition in the form of a CBE. Throughout his working life, Karamjit has lived in Coventry. From 1984 to 1987, he was Assistant County Clerk for Leicestershire County Council. In 2007, he was appointed an Independent Non-Executive Board Member of the Government Office for the West Midlands, taking the lead role for equality and diversity. From 2014 to 2021, he was Chair of the University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust, delivering high quality medical care to around 1.5 million people; it fell to Karamjit to steer the Trust through the worst period of the Covid Pandemic. His many other national roles include that of UK Electoral Commissioner; Judicial Appointments Ombudsman for Northern Ireland, Social Fund Commissioner for Great Britain and for Northern Ireland and Civil Service Commissioner for GB.

Karamjit's work has prioritised issues of equality, discrimination and disadvantage, and the administration of justice. Whether directly in the

field of racial equality or in investigating police complaints and suspected miscarriages of justice he has maintained a strong ethics in his working life. On top of this distinguished career he has also found time for voluntary work.

He has been a trustee of the Citizenship Foundation, the British Lung Foundation, and the Lloyds TSB Foundation. A true Coventrian, he has not neglected the city of his birth: he chaired the Coventry and Warwickshire NHS Trust and most recently was chair of Culture Change Coventry, working with us and other stakeholders to develop a legacy strategy for the cultural sector following on from the City of Culture Year 2021 He has also served as a trustee of the City's largest Sikh Temple, perhaps his most testing role!

Karamjit's life is one that in the Sikh tradition would be called that of total 'seva' which in his own words translates into a 'personal commitment to make a difference to society'. This is amply demonstrated by his long and successful career and it is a pleasure for us to celebrate his contributions today.

Chancellor: in the name of the Senate, I present to you for admission to the degree of Doctor of Laws, *honoris causa*, KARAMJIT SINGH.