



The Center for Civic Engagement Observer

DEMOCRACIES
NEED ENGAGED
CITIZENS

"A different world cannot be built by indifferent people."

-Horace Mann, American education reformer

In The Next Issue:

Day of Dialogue

Get the dish on the CCE's series of events about today's everyday issues.

Multicultural Mixer

Students joined the CCE in their semi-annual mixer, promoting diversity on-campus.

Cold War Series

The CCE invited students to take a glimpse at the past in memory of the 20th anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Fighting for justice in your own backyard

By Christiaan Perez

On September 29, the Center for Civic Engagement in conjunction with Define '09 brought environmental justice advocate Majora Carter to campus to discuss what it means to be environmentally just. She used her experience leading the urban environmental non-profit organization, Sustainable South Bronx, to describe the fight for environmental justice that can occur in our own backyard.

Carter founded Sustainable South Bronx after she saw that the South Bronx took in and handled 40 percent of the city's commercial waste. Her organization initially started out by preventing further *(Continued on Page 2)*

On stage, actors tell tale of the low-wage labor struggle

By Etana Jacobi

Hofstra's Drama and Dance Department opened the eyes of the audience to the plight of the working-class poor in America by use of the stage.

In a play based on Barbara Ehrenreich's book, "Nickel and Dimed, On (Not) Getting By in America," Joan Holden's stage adaptation has illustrated the core lessons of the book: How low-wage labor positions is a real struggle for the lives of millions of Americans who hold these jobs.

Adapted as Nickel and Dimed, the play tells the story of journalist Barbara Ehrenreich and her journey as an undercover reporter living and working among the working-class of America.

The play details her various jobs ranging from a waitress to a Wal-Mart employee. Both moving and informative, Ehrenreich's story calls for the audience member to re-examine what it is they are taking for granted.

"The show made me realize how bad it really is for low-wage workers," said sophomore Dan Mercia. "You know about it, but it really gives you a base to think about and I'm more inclined to help them out." *(Continued on Page 2)*



Photo by David Gordon
Student Chelsea Frati portrays Barbara, a journalist who is tasked with taking on minimum wage jobs.

Diffusing war through dialogue

A Princeton University professor discusses nuclear disarmament and how students can get involved in the discussion.

By George McAleese

Zia Mian, director of the Project on Peace and Security in South Asia at Princeton University, spoke before a crowd of students, faculty, activists and community members on the issues surrounding security and nuclear disarmament in Pakistan and America's War against Terrorism.

The panel, entitled "Toward the Abyss: America, Pakistan and the Bomb," also included Margaret Melkonian of Long Island Alliance for Peaceful Alternatives, John Kaiman, Supervisor of the Town of North Hempstead, and Ebony Roundtree of Soka Gakkai International.

Mian reminded the audience that the topic was grim *(Continued on Page 2)*

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Nuclear war dialogue

(Continued from Page 1) and that the situation in Pakistan and Afghanistan represented the greatest ongoing security threat to the United States.

He illustrated how the presence of nuclear weapons in Pakistan, combined with the country's political instability and safety concerns from the presence of Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters in the country, creates a situation of rapidly escalating danger.

His solution was a call for engagement and activism as a way to fuel the rise of development and democracy and to combat these dangers, over the use of power and force. He concluded that, "Willingness, desire and aspiration to end this danger cannot be overlooked."



By Jessica Mendoza
Princeton Professor Zia Minn
(above) speaks at Hofstra.

A professor discusses the pluses and minuses of the economy

By Anthony Lucci

At a lecture given on Sept. 23, Hofstra University's Robert Guttman told the well-received audience why he believes the recession has "bottomed out."

Guttman, a professor of economics and chairman of the economics department, said that many economic indicators are now pointing in the right direction and that the worst of the economic recession is behind us.

However, he did place caution on the current government policy of using regulatory mechanisms in the financial sector that has tied executive pay to short-term profitability rather than long-term performance.

According to Guttman, executives now make decisions according to how immediately profitable they are. This "short-term" thinking poses a problem for a corporate firms' long-term solvency, or the ability of a firm to meet all of its obligations, because they are usually over-leveraged with risky assets in the long run.

After his lecture, one member of the audience questioned Guttman's Keynesian background, claiming that it distorted his view of the economy. Guttman's was just one view, and the audience member another.

Although it is the job and responsibility of an economist to educate the public on the economy, it is the greater responsibility of the public to listen to an array of experts and form their own opinions on the matter.

Environmental justice (continued)

(Continued from Page 1) influx of trash.

"The [city's] goal was to control [the urban environment] and not necessarily nurture it," Carter said. She explained that what environmental justice advocates have learned is that "If we nurture the environment, the environment will nurture us."

Since the founding of Sustainable South Bronx the organization has developed into a Bronx environmental stewardship, which is sharing in the responsibility of actions that affect the environmental quality.

The organization has helped train unemployed locals on how to weatherize houses, or protect or modify their buildings from natural elements like wind and rain, as well as other forms of environmental renovation.

They have also helped the community build green roofs where plants are planted on roofs in order to provide a more stable temperature for the inhabitants inside, especially by helping the house keep cool in the summer.

In order to create a lasting movement, Carter began making sturdy coalitions of community volunteers. Carter said that environmental justice brings people from diverse backgrounds together which has helped the environmental movement to grow.

National policy is important for environmental justice advocates as the nation and the world approaches the next environmental summit which is in Copenhagen on Dec. 6. Carter said she believes that national policy needs to start with an energy grid, which can help produce energy anywhere in the country and be a benefit for everyone.

Carter said that even if a national standard cannot be set by Copenhagen in December, we can still rely on the actions of local environmental groups to fight for a global standard.

Documentaries Open Dialogue on Contemporary Issues

By Kimberly Chin

Hofstra's Radio, Television and Film Department along with PBS' program Point Of View has collaborated to bring an event to campus that will feature four documentaries from PBS' award-winning documentary series from POV.

Four films will be shown on Thursday evenings throughout the semester and invited guests will come to talk to viewers after the showing. These guests include local, national and international activists and filmmakers who seek to make a difference in everyday lives.

The first documentary of the Hofstra series was on the life of a reformed ex-offender who turned to Islam to find his way. The film, "New Muslim Cool" depicts Hamza Perez's journey and struggle to live as a Muslim in America.

"It isn't up to me to tell you how to be an activist. I'm more of a slactivist," Perez quipped. However, he said, "Activism comes from the heart and from the soul."

The second film that was shown was about the International Criminal Court. "The Reckoning: The Battle for the International Criminal Court" shows that with determination, persistence and an idea that things will be better for the world, justice can be served against all odds.

The film chronicles the inception of the ICC to its most recent cases and its chilling peak when the Court announces the first arrest warrant on a sitting president – Omar al-Bashir in Sudan who was convicted of genocide and numerous human rights violations over his people.

Filmmaker Pamela Yates came to Hofstra to discuss the emergence of the court and what it means to be a part of this documentary.



Photo by OurFuture.org
Urban advocate Majora Carter
visits Hofstra to speak about
environmental justice.