

Center for the Humanities in an Urban Environment: Annual Report, 2012-2013

Summary of Activities

Academic year 2012-2013 stands out as the most successful, by any standard of measurement, in the Center's history. We sponsored or co-sponsored eighteen lectures, thirteen talkbacks at films or plays, five panels or workshops, and two conferences. Over 2,800 people participated in these thirty-eight events. We again organized the Provost's Life of the Mind lecture, worked with WPBT2 Miami Public Television, Coral Gables Museum, the Vi, GableStage, Coral Gables Art Cinema, and Books & Books, and submitted fifteen grant applications. We co-sponsored events with the Exile Studies Program, and also worked with African and African Diaspora Studies, Women's Studies, Religious Studies, Latin American and Caribbean Center, the Program for Spiritual Studies, and the Cuban Research Institute. We maintained our website with a video archive of Center events, expanded our mailing list, and continued our newsletter. Individuals and groups from the campus and metropolitan community have strongly praised our efforts, and we are justly proud of all that we have accomplished in a short time and with very limited resources. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on these activities.

Featured Series

In AY 2012-2013 the Center presented events in two anchor series—the Business of Medicine and Representations of Violence in the Arts. For both two goals shaped our efforts: We fostered interdisciplinary and inter-community partnerships, and we moved the venues for a number of presentations from the main university campus to locations around the community.

We had four formal events scheduled for the Business of Medicine series. A workshop in August at the College of Medicine featured healthcare leaders from the university and community and focused on dealing with the cost of medical treatments. A month later, Dean John Rock gave an insightful analysis of the impact of the Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act on the healthcare industry. In the spring Dr. Joe Greer continued the series by giving the Provost's Life of the Mind lecture on the moral obligations of caregivers to extend treatment to the indigent. Later in the term there was an informative panel discussion at the Coral Gables Museum, with speakers from the insurance industry and other constituencies commenting on rising costs.

Representations of Violence in the Arts also went well. In the fall, a panel discussion at GableStage featured a director, theater critic, psychologist, and

academic. A month later Stephen DiBenedetto of the University of Miami Drama Department lectured on violence in the theater. In the spring we had a panel discussion at Books & Books featuring a filmmaker, a cinema manager, a director, and an academic. In March Kenneth Johnson of the FIU English Department gave a lecture based on his work on propaganda images archived at the Wolfsonian Museum.

Individual Lectures

We also had several free-standing lectures in the spring that blended sophisticated topics with accessible presentations. In February the Center hosted a talk by Helen Ferre. An award-winning journalist and long time commentator on the Miami political scene, Ms. Ferre applied wide-ranging experiences across the diverse cultural groups that make up the various constituencies of South Florida politics and that so enrich our sense of community in Miami-Dade to insightful examinations of the way elements of the arts and humanities enhance the lives of all of us who live in the area. Ms. Ferre's sense of the political dynamics that moves South Florida life was just the starting point for a penetrating examination of how our sense of community and our sense of art come together in diverse forms across the metropolitan area.

The Center commemorated the end of the academic year in April with Dr. Clement Fatovic delivering the annual Advisory Board Lecture. His talk examined early American debates over the government's role in dealing with economic inequality. These debates reveal that political considerations concerning the distribution of power often outweighed the moral and economic ones that dominate debates over inequality today. This lecture highlighted arguments in favor of minimizing and preventing economic inequality as means of preserving the conditions for republican self-government and freedom.

Cosponsored Events

The Center's very successful partnership FIU's Exile Studies Program also continued in 2012-2013. It featured an extremely successful spring series of events that engaged a broad range of communities on and off campus. It also laid the groundwork for bringing to Miami in the fall of 2014 a major exhibit on German Jewish academic refugees teaching in black universities and colleges.

In early February, fiction writer, memoirist, essayist, documentary filmmaker, and human rights activist, Edwidge Danticat spoke. She is a celebrated Haitian-American writers and the author of a number of highly acclaimed novels, memoirs and collections of essays and short stories, *Krik? Krak!*, *The Farming of Bones*, *The Dew Breaker*, *Brother, I am Dying*, *Create Dangerously: The Immigrant Artist at Work*, among them. She has received the Pushcart Short Story Prize, the National Book Critics Circle Award, The Langston Hughes Medal, the OCM Bocas Prize for Caribbean Literature, and the MacArthur Fellows Program Genius grant. Her lecture reflected on the relationship between art and exile and examined the role a displaced artist plays in modern society.

In late February, Dr. Leon Bottstein, president of Bard College, internationally known educator, composer, conductor, and writer talked about the

university's role as patron of the arts and of artists. Bard has a long tradition of support for artists, particularly those who come from the exile community. Dr. Bottstein's personal experiences with exile, most recently with Romanian writer Norman Manea, gave him unique insights into the way a university fosters and extends the work of exile artists.

The Center was involved in a number of other co-sponsorships as well. These included the SEAS film series on the environment, documentaries presented at the MMC and BBC campuses followed by panel discussions. The Center also participated in talkbacks for the four plays offered this year by the Theater Department. Additionally, last November we cosponsored a conference with African and African Diaspora Studies, we did the same in May with a conference with the Cuban Research Institute. In the spring we cosponsored five events with the Program for Spiritual Studies. Likewise we cosponsored talks with the Philosophy Department, Women's Studies, and Religious Studies

Outreach and Enrichment

On February 28th the Center hosted an all day regional workshop on grant writing for funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. This stood out as a unique opportunity for faculty from institutions across South Florida to have personal exchanges with an experienced NEH staffer who offered invaluable insights into strategies for successful applications. This was the first NEH visit to the area in five years, and it marked the first time that the NEH invited an entity at FIU to serve as a host.

The workshop was conducted by Dr. Claudia Kinkela, Senior Program Officer from the NEH Division of Research. Morning sessions included an overview of NEH programs, strategies for successful proposals, aspects of the evaluative process and related issues. During the afternoon and on the morning of the following day, Dr. Kinkela held a series of meetings with individuals interested in discussing with her the particulars of specific proposals. Participants agreed it was an extremely successful workshop, and it was a singular distinction for the Center to be chosen to host the event at FIU.

The Center also continued its sponsorship of off campus lectures at the Vi in Aventura. Through the work of development officers Paul Landrum and Jan Solomon, we offered three events. Shlomo Dinar talked about the Arab Spring. Nichol Rae discussed the implications of the 2012 national elections. And Oren Steir contrasted public and private perceptions of Anne Frank.

The Center has also made less spectacular but equally insistent efforts to reach out to the local community. The Center has been continually expanding its mailing list, and regularly updates subscribers to Center events. A Center newsletter is published each semester, summarizing what we have done and offering a preview of what is to come.

Partnerships

This year the Center has continued to cultivate several key partnerships with off campus institutions as well as developing new partnerships. Books & Books presented a workshop, publicized our events, and indicated a willingness to offer a range of other events in the future. WPBT2 continues to record all Center events, made available through links on our website's Archives tabs, and sent notices to its constituents of all of our events.

The GableStage, the Coral Gable Museum, and the Coral Gable Art Cinema provided new venues for events, and we hope to continue a strong partnership with each. The FIU Alumni Association, through its mailing list, has also been an invaluable tool for publicizing Center events to alumni in Miami-Dade and around the world.

Grants and Fundraising

Over the year the Center has written several grant proposals to the National Endowment for the Humanities, the National Education Association and to a dozen private foundations. Although there are relatively few funding opportunities as compared with those available to the sciences, we are committed to continuing these efforts.

The Center has also worked with key figures in development, Howard Lipman, Marilyn Emas, Emily Gresham, and Paul Landrum on various initiatives including efforts at the Vi, La Gorce, and with groups and selected potential donors. To facilitate charitable giving, we have become a named destination for donations in the university's Ignite drive.

We continue having 100% of our faculty advisory board contributing to the Center. Further, one of our board members, Dr. Bruce Harvey, made a \$2,000 gift to the Center and gave a commitment for continuing this support on an annual basis. In recognition for this generosity and expression of faith in the Center's work, the annual Advisory Board lecture is now named the Bruce Harvey CHUE Annual Advisory Board Lecture Series.

Plans for Next Year

In the next academic year, we are moving into an even more important phase of our mission: continuing the active involvement of community leaders in bringing aspects of the humanities to the FIU campus and moving into the community in a series of forums and events relating to diverse humanist issues in South Florida. This year, budget constraints prevented an extension of the Director's appointment to cover the summer months. As a result programs like those of previous summers cannot take place and must wait until the new academic year. However, there are already plans for important cooperative projects in academic year 2013-2014.

In cooperation with the Fairchild Gardens and Vizcaya Museum we are offering several workshops on the topic the Beauty of Science. They will be at these off-campus locations and will draw on the resources of both institutions. I also plan on having two formal lectures on the topic at the MMC campus. Dr. James Webb of the Physics Department will speak in the spring on images from the Hubble telescope, and I hope to line up a noted biologist for a fall talk. (The latter arrangements have not been completed, so I do not want to be precipitous in revealing unconfirmed details.)

Another series of panels and lectures, exploring topics on food and culture, will take place next year. A number of faculty have already committed to a range of events. We will follow the same format we use in the Beauty of Science: a workshop and a lecture in the fall and then again in the spring

semesters. We have several possibilities for off campus venues, but since they are not year confirmed I do not wish to elaborate.

As was the case last year, we will remain open to sponsoring additional speaking and panel events as the opportunities arise. The Center currently enjoys a strong cooperative relationship with the Exiles Studies Program, headed by Professor Asher Milbauer. We are working together to establish a summer program for teaching exile literature in high schools, with the hope of offering it in July 2014. We are also in the process of arranging an exhibit mentioned earlier—Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow—which we hope will be installed at the Coral Gables Museum in the fall of 2014.

Finally, we have been also involved in a number of other joint events this year. We have had profitable ties with the FIU Theater Department, the College of Medicine, the Women's Studies Program, AADS, the PSS LACC, the CRI, and Religious Studies. We seek to continue these relationships and foster others both on campus and off campus.

Funding

Internal support for the Center has been longstanding, strong, and widespread. The university's President, Mark B. Rosenberg, and its Provost, Douglas Wartzok, have publicly endorsed CHUE and its mission on a number of occasions. More materially significant, Kenneth Furton, the Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, has provided a long-term financial commitment to maintain the staff of the Center.

Other academic units—departments, schools, and colleges—have come forward with similar gestures of support. The Director of the Center has made personal appeals for financial support to academic leaders, and the results have been most gratifying. The College of Architecture and Art, for example, has just completed its three year commitment of \$5,000/year to the Center. Over the next few weeks, the Director will solicit from the English Department, the History Department, and the Foreign Language Department renewal of their previous donations of \$2,000. Other departments have given according to their abilities, and all contacted have agreed to support CHUE and have shown enthusiasm for the work of the Center. Perhaps most gratifying is the fact that every member of the CHUE Advisory Board and a number of FIU faculty have made financial contributions to the Center. These donations demonstrate the material commitment colleagues are making to the success of the Center by reallocating their own scarce resources.

At the same time, as university resources are cut, the Center also faces constriction. The \$3,300 that had been originally allocated to funding speakers was cut from our budget in 2011 and has not been restored. An extension of the Director's contract to cover the summer was not possible this year. And it is quite possible that subsequent years may bring about more cuts to internal

resources. All of this inhibits our work, particularly global tasks that can only be done when no the day-to-day demands, like managing Center events during the academic year, press for attention. Grant writing and fundraising are two of the most pressing examples of this. The challenge remains to continue strong programing, but this will require a greater commitment of time for both planning and fundraising within and outside the university community. To this end, the Center will continue to apply for grants from funding agencies already identified and from other possible sources, public and private, institutional and individual. We remain optimistic that continuing efforts will produce strong results, but also understand that it will require even greater effort.

Long-Range Plans

As the Center grows, so also will its dependence upon and substance of the community. An ongoing aim is to establish an endowment that will enable even broader engagement. The endowment would support programs featuring new conceptions of how we study the humanities, particularly in involving a broad range of constituencies.

Lecture Series by Academic and Community Figures. We plan to continue and expand the program that already has proven to be so successful, presentations by academic and community figures.

Summer Institutes. To engage the community most fully, we hope to present a series of summer institutes on the FIU campus, specifically in cooperation with the Exiles Studies Program. Topics will include, among others, explorations of how cultural identity shapes concepts of American History, analyses of how social networks affect interpretations of literature and discussions on evolving ethical standards in academic contexts.

Fellowships. We plan to initiate a fellows program to nurture and sustain outstanding research that draws upon the community's understanding of the humanities. Fellows will develop projects not only through independent research but also through monthly meetings at the Center and with designated community groups to share their work and to seek advice on how to proceed.

Research and Travel. We take as a given that understanding of the humanities extends well beyond the Miami metropolitan area, and we wish to foster our community's awareness of humanist work and resources that lay beyond county boundaries. We will offer some support for travel to do research and to present at conferences for faculty, graduate students, and community leaders.

Impact

We are proud of what CHUE has accomplished so far. We have done all this on a tight budget and through the generosity of people and institutions on and off campus. The CAS budget line and direct contributions is not sufficient to finance the more ambitious projects outlined above, let alone allow the

Center to expand its community commitment through new initiatives. We need to develop support beyond the base we have already established.

In the upcoming year, the Center will continue seeking support from the South Florida business community. Our events will increase awareness of the Center's work and provide concrete demonstrations of the good that comes out of supporting such projects and offering the opportunity for direct and indirect solicitation. Just as DLM Logistics has sponsored a single talk, we think it both likely and appropriate for larger firms to undertake more ambitious projects. Moreover, we are seeking partnerships with Miami businesses, like Northern Trust a strong supporter of the Coral Gables Museum, who see the benefit of affiliation with the humanities.

A Final Expression of Thanks

The Center has had a very successful year because of the generosity and enthusiasm of individuals across the campus. Deans Furton, Rae, Casines, and Newman have been unstinting in their support. Our advisory board has provided continuing leadership and guidance. Individuals in CAS—Paul Landrum, Jennifer Gebelein, JoAnn Adkins, Evelyn Perez, Juan Lopez, Hector Junco, and Gild Ruiz—have given invaluable support. Chairs, directors, and deans in the college and across the university have extended generous assistance to our efforts. While many others have generously helped the Center, Professor Asher Milbauer, Director of Graduate Studies in English and of the Exile Studies Program, has provided unstinting support and guidance for the Center's efforts. Much has been accomplished in a short period because so many members of the FIU community have worked to make it come about.

Respectfully submitted,

Michael Patrick Gillespie, Director
Center for the Humanities in an Urban Environment

15 May 2013