

# **Center for the Humanities in an Urban Environment: Annual Report, 2014-2015**

## *Summary of Activities*

April 8<sup>th</sup> of 2015 marks the fourth year since the certification of the Center for the Humanities in an Urban Environment by the Board of Governors of the State University System of Florida. During that time, the Center has worked diligently to facilitate conversations between the South Florida university and metropolitan communities in ongoing examinations of humanist concerns. Over the course of the just completed academic year, the Center continued its strong record of local engagement with national and international issues relating to humanist concerns. Most notable has been the development of strong affiliations within the university and among public and private entities across South Florida. These partnerships have led to a range of diverse events to that have produced gratifying successes.

Before elaborating on specific projects, let me provide an overview of this year's accomplishments: We sponsored or co-sponsored fifteen lectures, four films or plays with talkbacks, ten panels or workshops, and one conference. 2,535 people participated in these events. The Center again worked with off-campus entities including the Coral Gables Museum, the Coral Gables Art Cinema, the GableStage, the Betsy Hotel, Books & Books. On campus, we partnered with the Exile Studies Program, the English Department, the Modern Languages Department, the Theater Department, African and African Diaspora Studies, Women's and Gender Studies, the Religious Studies Department, Sigma Tau Delta, the English Graduate Student Association, the Latin American and Caribbean Center, the Jewish Museum of Florida, the Urban Studios, the Program for Spiritual Studies, the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Architecture and the Arts, the Honors College, the School of the Environment, Arts, and Society, the School of International and Public Affairs, and the Cuban Research Institute. Budget cuts at WPBT, public television Miami, meant that they ceased recording Center events last May. However, this has proven in the long run to be a benefit. We now record all Center events in-house, and we have made an agreement with the FIU Libraries to store our videos, giving us greater control over the material. We still, of course, maintain on our website a page giving access to the video archive of Center events. Other efforts at community outreach continue, including expanding our mailing list, augmenting our newsletter, and maintaining our social media sites.

These efforts have received significant local and national attention. Individuals and groups from the campus and metropolitan community have strongly praised our efforts, and the material responses to specific Center events over academic year 2014-2015—measured through attendance, correspondence, and accounts in various media—attest to the important role CHUE has assumed in forwarding appreciation of the humanities in the university and metropolitan communities. Several Center sponsored events merit particular recognition. Presentations related to the four-month exhibition *Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow* at the Coral Gables Museum received extended local

and national media attention, and the spring panel discussion on Immigration Reform, made up of eminent South Floridians with diverse opinions, was recorded and broadcast by CSPAN.

We are justly proud of these events and of all else that we have accomplished this year. In the following paragraphs, I will elaborate on these activities.

### *Featured Series: Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow*

Every year the Center anchors its schedule through signature programs related by a clearly defined theme. In AY 2014-2015 we featured presentations related to the three month long exhibition at the Coral Gables Museum, *Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow: German Jewish Academics at Predominantly Black American Universities*. The events derived from our association with the exhibition ranged from lectures, panels, workshops, dramatic readings, film screenings, receptions, and of course exhibition tours. Through broad interest in the exhibition, we fostered interdisciplinary and inter-community partnerships with dozens of campus units and a number of prominent Miami organizations. We presented events at venues on campus, in Coral Gables, and on Miami Beach. Both the exhibition and the related events received wide spread coverage in local and national print and electronic media and widespread acclaim across South Florida.

Among the events that the Center cosponsored were lectures by Professor Donald Cunnigen, of the University of Rhode Island, Professor Paul George, of Miami Dade College, and Professor Guy Stern, of Wayne State University. There were also panels on a drama relating to the events memorialized in the exhibition and on the impact of exile among diverse faiths. We also presented a staged reading and three films relating to the topic, all with discussions afterwards. Finally, we presented a day-long workshop at the Coral Gables Museum showing Miami Dade teachers how the exhibition could be integrated into their classroom instruction. (Like all Center events, recordings of these presentations can be found at [humanities.fiu.edu/archives](http://humanities.fiu.edu/archives).)

These events were made possible through the ongoing partnerships established with two dozen campus and community entities. I present a detailed list of these affiliations elsewhere in this report.

### *Individual Lectures*

The Center complemented these core programs with several free-standing lectures presented over the year and blending sophisticated topics with accessible presentations. In September Dr. Sarah Pike, of California State University, Chico, spoke on NeoPaganism. In October Dr. Kenny D. Anthony, Prime Minister of St. Lucia, delivered the Eric Williams Memorial Lecture and Dr. Andrea Seidel, of Florida International University, discussed Sacred Dance. In November Dr. Emily Silverman, of San Jose State University, spoke on Spiritual Resistance. Our own Advisory Board member and SEAS Director, Dr. Evelyn Gaiser, spoke in January on Rising Sea Level. In February Maestro Emilio Sole-Sempere, leader of Amazonia, lectured on Latin Music,

and writer Norman Manea, a participant in the FIU/Betsy Hotel Exile Writer and Scholar in Residence Program, discussed the literature of exile.

### Endowed Lectures

The Center remains grateful to the very generous donors who have endowed two lecture series: the Bobbi Barton Law and Economics Lecture and the Bruce Harvey Advisory Board Lecture. The inaugural Barton Lecture was given in October by Security and Exchange Commissioner Michael Plewawa to an enthusiastic audience in the Law School Auditorium. In another very special event, the Center commemorated the end of the academic year in April with the Bruce Harvey Advisory Board Dinner and Lecture. The annual dinner allows members of the CHUE Advisory Board to invite their brightest students for an evening of food and intellectual exchanges. Following this year's meal, Dr. Asher Milbauer, Professor of English, Director of the Exile Studies Program and Director of the English Graduate Program, recounted some of his experiences as a university student in the Soviet Union in a deeply moving and intensely erudite talk. The students in attendance are always deeply affected by the experience, and this year proved to be no exception.

### Panels

In addition to a series of panels in the fall relating to the Swastika and Jim Crow exhibition, there were several engaging discussions presented during the spring semester. They began in February with an exchange of ideas on issues relating to teaching about the exilic experience. This was complemented by an animated conversation in March between a Cuban-American son and his father who had participated in the Bay of Pigs Invasion. A week later there was a panel, featuring local community leaders and broadcast by CSPAN, discussing problems surrounding immigration reform.

In the spring we also hosted a panel highlighting recent work by FIU authors from the English Department, and we hope to continue this series featuring authors from other university departments. We ended the academic year with a panel set in the Design District—featuring local artists, architects, and realtors—that examined the achievements and challenges experienced by that neighborhood during its most recent period of economic, social, and cultural change.

### Outreach and Enrichment

This year the Center continued its efforts to reach the local community by siting nearly half of its events at venues outside the FIU campus. 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. The Center Director has met with a number of community leads, like Christine Rupp, Mitchell Kaplan, Arva Parks, Dorothy Fields, Monty Trainer, and Joseph Adler, in an ongoing effort to enhance our ties with community institutions. The Director has also been serving on the selection board for

summer youth program grants through the County Office of Cultural Affairs. This has created general good will and has done a great deal to make other humanities institutions in Miami-Dade County aware of the work we are doing.

### Partnerships

This year the Center has continued to cultivate several key partnerships with off campus and community institutions as well as developing new partnerships. We have had strong partnerships in conjunction with events related to the Beyond Swastika and Jim Crow Exhibition in the fall. These included the GableStage, the Coral Gable Museum, The Betsy Hotel, and the Coral Gable Art Cinema. The FIU Alumni Association, through its mailing list, has also been an invaluable partner for publicizing Center events to alumni in Miami-Dade and around the world. Books & Books continues to indicate a willingness to offer a range of other events in the future. Although financial exigencies forced WPBT2 to discontinue recording all Center events, the energetic work of our Program Assistant, Aramis Martinez, has allowed us to continue recording on our own to make recordings available through links on our website's Archives tabs.

The change in recording procedures allowed us to intensify our already strong partnership with the FIU Libraries, host of many of our talks and now repository of our recordings. Over the past year we have also had strong partnerships with the College of Arts and Sciences, the College of Architecture and Art, the Honors College, the School of Environment, Art, and Science, the School of International and Public Affairs, the Exile Studies Program, the English Department, the Program of Spiritual Studies, the Cuban Research Institute, the Latin American and Caribbean Center, the Women's and Gender Studies Program, the African and African Diaspora Program, the Modern Languages Department, the Department of Global and Sociocultural Studies, the Jewish Studies Initiative, the Theater Department, the Urban Studios, the Frost Museum, the Jewish Museum of Florida, Sigma Tau Delta Honors Society, and the English Graduate Student Association.

### Grants and Fundraising

Over the year the Center Director has written several grant proposals to the National Endowment for the Humanities as well as a local grant application to the STEM Institute. In the past we have written proposals to groups like the National Education Association and to private foundations, and I hope to be able to do so again when time permits.

The Center has also worked with key figures in development, Howard Lipman, Marilyn Emas, Karen Wilkening, and Paul Landrum on various initiatives 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, and we have enjoyed particular generosity from individual members like Professor Asher Milbauer. In addition, as mentioned above, we have had several

underwriting gifts. Two years ago, one of our board members, Dr. Bruce Harvey, continues to give a \$2,000 gift to the Center and made a firm commitment for continuing this support on an annual basis. In recognition for this generosity and for his 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. A year ago Professor Jose Gablilondo gave the Center the royalties of his latest textbook, and in recognition we have instituted the Bobbi Barton Lecture Series on Law and Economics to take place each fall. It is our strong hope that the generosity of these colleagues will inspire additional gifts from a range of sources both campus and community.

### *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. The most effective way to achieve this goal is through campus and community partnerships.

The Center has always enjoyed a strong cooperative relationship with the Exiles Studies Program, headed by Professor Asher Milbauer, and with the English Department, Chaired by Professor James Sutton. Long-term cooperative plans include efforts to continue the Betsy Hotel Writers and Scholars in Residence Program and to foster community interest in issues relating to the exilic condition.

The thematically linked lecture and panel series for next year will center on the interconnection of humanist and scientific thinking. To that end we have already begun planning talks and panels with the Theater Department, the School of Music, and the STEM Institute.

We have enjoyed a very productive partnership with the Urban Studios in arranging the panel discussion on the Design District. We hope, for next year, to continue that cooperative work and together to build further community partnerships.

We will, of course, continue to seek out new partners in both campus and metropolitan communities.

### *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. At the same time, to continue existing programs and institute new ones, 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.

*A Final Expression of Thanks*

The Center has had a very successful year because of the generosity and enthusiasm of individuals across the campus. Provost Furton, Vice-President Newman, Deans Heithaus, Cigales, and Anderson have been unstinting in their support as have Schools directors Stack and Gaiser. Our advisory board has provided continuing leadership and guidance. Individuals in CAS—April Bollet, Jennifer Gebelein, JoAnn Adkins, Evelyn Perez, Juan Lopez, Saghira Martin, Hector Junco, and Gilda Ruiz—have offered valuable help. Chairs, directors, and deans in the college and across the university have extended generous assistance to our efforts. Professor James Sutton of English has been particularly helpful. While many others have generously helped the Center, Professor Asher Milbauer, Director of Graduate Studies in English and of the Exile Studies Program, stands out for his 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

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