



## SPRING AWARENESS EVENT: LEARN. CONNECT. TAKE ACTION

BY WAI "KAT" LAM

As Honors students, we believe that it is important to connect our classroom learning with action. This Spring semester, we at the Honors Student Advisory Committee (HSAC) decided to hold an event that would showcase student research as well as networking and volunteer opportunities. After months of planning, HSAC selected 4 social justice themes for students to research; they were: the rising costs of higher education; mass incarceration and immigration; the environment; and poverty. HSAC members joined one of these research teams, and invited several organizations, including Grow NYC, United for Action and the Commission on Voluntary Service and Action (CVSA), to this endeavor, which culminated in the April 30 "Learn. Connect. Take Action" event. Members of each of the above social justice-themed teams conducted research, created posters, informational flyers and reached out to community organizations related to their topic.

On the day itself, HSAC members Marissa Hernandez and Assane Ndiaye first introduced each social justice team's booth. Immediately after that, there was a screening of a video put together by HSAC members; the video provided information about the four social justice topics. Starting with scenes of students protesting against rising CUNY-wide tuition, the video then transitioned to interviews

with Princeton University professor, Cornel West, who analyzed the mass incarceration of African-Americans in the U.S.; this was followed by actor Esai Manuel Morales' discussion of the four "hatred stereotypes" against Latinos in the Hollywood. The video further explored the environmental and health consequences of hydraulic fracturing, garbage pollution from human activities harking back to the food chain, and possible solutions to the alarming poverty in New York City. When the video ended, the event interactive portion of the event began. (The event video can be viewed at: [youtube.com/user/LaGuardiaHonors](http://youtube.com/user/LaGuardiaHonors))

The social justice teams were at their respective booths discussing their research with students and faculty attendees. This research was conveyed via research posters, artwork, and even food. For instance, the ratio between the chocolate munchkins and the white powdered munchkins at the Mass Incarceration booth was 4:1, representing the actual ratio of black prisoners to white prisoners in the United States. At the Latino Discrimination Awareness table, station leaders demonstrated how Hispanic Americans are perceived in the society via pictures and movie scenarios. At this booth, attendees could sign the petition against SB1070 via the National Council of La Raza. So many signed the petition at the event that the La Paza site crashed momentarily. On the other side of

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## ALUMNI INTERVIEW: TREMINE WRIGHT

BY NELSON DELGADO & OMRI SHAFIR

There he was, a LaGuardia alumni receiving an Honors certificate meant only for current students during last fall's Honors Recognition Dinner. But instead of confusion, there was the happiest of laughter from all who were there. There's no better way to show the positive effect Tremaine Wright brought and still brings to LaGuardia and HSAC even after graduating in Spring 2013. Looking back, he recalled that upon entering the college, his initial intention was to obtain his Associate's degree and transfer to either CUNY's Hunter or Queens College. It didn't cross his mind to ever transfer to a private university like New York University (NYU). His whole perspective on college changed once he encountered HSAC and Dr. Koh. Meeting and getting to know his peers in HSAC motivated him to aim higher, and he began enrolling in Honors courses. As Tremaine describes it, his process of growing within the Honors Program was difficult at first. However, through persistence and hard work, he was able to succeed in the Honors Program and he graduated with an Honors Track certificate (given to Honors students who have completed 4-6 Honors classes).

Tremaine is now studying psychology at NYU as a Community College Transfer Opportunities program scholar, which offers substantial financial and advisement support. When asked about what advice he would give to the large group of students who are looking to transfer, he urged: "Start early! I can't stress that enough. Also be as organized as you can when getting all your applications together." His adjustment in the new setting at NYU was initially difficult for him. "The workload at NYU is nothing like LaGuardia," he noted; "however, the Honors classes prepared me to embrace the challenges that NYU throws at me." Eventually, the academic life for him at NYU has become easier as all his professors have been very approachable. Tremaine now serves as a valued member of HSAC's alumni network, and provides advice to current students on transfer-related matters.



WAIT, THERE'S MORE...



the room, the Environmental Justice station leaders illustrated the process of hydraulic fracturing with a three-dimensional model to clarify the severe damages fracking can cost, and to get signatures for the petition against fracking in New York State. Next to the Fracking group, the Garbage Pollution leaders showed students and faculty how to sort out waste, and thus take real action on a daily basis. Meanwhile, the Poverty Awareness station leaders had

intellectually stimulating discussions about the effectiveness of education on eliminating poverty in NYC. Lastly but not least, the Educational Inequality station defended their stand regarding the recent tuition rise through vivid drawings and a student-led petition.

The attendees' responses gave further meaning to the event title and goals: "Learn. Connect. Take Action." One attendee, Angel, noted, "I am a 44-year old student returning to college after 25 years. It's great to see so many people younger than me so passionate

about real things that are happening in this world. I tell other adults like me: when you go to college, you meet people who actually care. Wake up and go to college!" Honors professor Nicole Lytle was equally impressed by "the passion and knowledge of the booth presenters."

Pictures and videos of the event are available online at [facebook.com/LaGuardiaHonors](https://facebook.com/LaGuardiaHonors). If you interested in community service and leadership opportunities, simply stop by the Honors House (M-222) to visit HSAC!

## THERE AND BACK AGAIN: Trouble in Lovers' Paradise?

BY DAVID CARDONA

Niagara Falls has been a honeymoon destination for five hundred years. Now, the streets of the border town are barren and desolate. Early this April, LaGuardia delegates David Cardona, Jordan Hadani, Wai (Kat) Lam, Xavier Medina, and Honors professor, Dr. Bojana Blagojevic journeyed there and were perplexed to find it in this condition. Passing by abandoned fields and empty industrial buildings, they could not help notice the quiet emptiness. Thinking it reflected the lack of attention local government gave the town, they were shocked to discover the town has been struggling financially for decades. Xavier lamented that the few high-tourist months out of the year cannot hide the struggles that the town is going through. He added that, in contrast to the Canadian side—essentially a miniature Las Vegas—the American side is "still trying to dig itself out of a tough economic situation and severe loss of population." Amid this thought-provoking setting, the LaGuardia delegates joined 500 Honors students at the annual convention of the Northeast Regional Honors Council (NRHC), which represents honors programs from 4- and 2-year colleges in the region. The convention theme was "Standing on the Edge: Challenging Boundaries & Power," and delegates were able to dig deeper into the socio-economic, and cultural histories of this area, especially during "Places as Text," a signature

experiential activity that took place on the second convention day.

In addition to such learning and networking opportunities as "Places as Text," student research lies at the heart of all NRHC conventions. The LaGuardia delegates rose to the occasion while also learning from amazing presentations made by their fellow Honors students from across the region. Jordan presented his research on "Binary Mindsets," using the Israeli and Palestinian conflict as an example. Xavier presented his research on "The Bracero Program," and also competed for one of the two Student Representative positions on the 2015 NRHC Executive Board. Kat presented her alcoholism research at the "Alternative Healthcare Approaches" panel, which exposed her to many like-minded presenters from different states. David presented his research on the invasion of Iraq at the "War: Needs and Justifications" panel. We're proud to have had the opportunity to represent their school and show students from around the country just how hard we work and how passionate we are at LaGuardia.

Postscript: After the NRHC Niagara Falls convention, our Honors Program Director, Dr. Karlyn Koh, was voted in as the Executive Secretary of the NRHC Executive Board. We look forward to serving the many talented Honors students in the Northeast region!

## SPRING FACULTY-STUDENT RESEARCH CHAT



BY JOSHUA ROTBERT

The Honors Program's third Faculty-Student research chat was held in May this semester. This unique opportunity gave students the chance to gain valuable insight into what our Honors instructors are currently researching. This event sought to answer two very important questions for us: what does research mean and how is it done? Faculty presenters provided personal examples to inspire Honors student-scholars about what makes a good research topic, how to begin research, and how it can potentially evolve over time. This semester, Honors faculty members, Dr. Minerva Ahumada-Torres (Philosophy) and Dr. Solomon Kone (Economics), were the research chat guests, and Dr. Karen Miller served as the moderator. In front of a packed audience of Honors students, Dr. Kone first provided detailed information about the process and stages of an economics research project. Then he spoke about his own research on economic theory in developing countries around the world, the mechanisms that form a capitalist

economic structure, and how developing countries are affected by their financial risks in a global economy. Dr. Ahumada-Torres shared with her work on twentieth-century Latin American surrealist literature, and on how the multifaceted nature of ethical problems can be more faithfully resolved using a modern surrealist worldview. After these insightful and thought-provoking presentations, the students had the opportunity to engage the professors with questions. The questions reflected intense interest and thoughtfulness on the part of the audience, and they received insightful answers; all who attended this lecture came away with a sense of possibility. The professors encouraged and inspired the students in the audience by sharing their personal intellectual journeys. One memorable message that we all took away from the research chat was provided by Dr. Ahumada-Torres, who said, "When you feel frustrated and can't find what direction to go with your research, that is when the most interesting and meaningful questions are created. And these questions are what will drive your research."