

September 2015

Volume 9, Issue 1

Individual Highlights

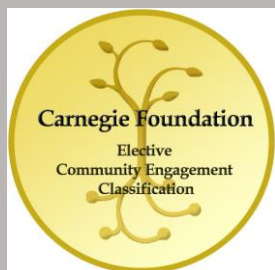
Lunchtime Talks 2

Constitution Day 3

President's Higher
 Education Community
 Service Honor Roll
 Member With
 Distinction



Carnegie Foundation
 Elective Classification in
 Community Engagement



Economic Inequality Initiative: Pathways to Opportunity in Cortland County Features "Democracy Wall"



The Democracy Wall on display at a recent ADA (American Disability Act) celebration.

"What do we owe each other?"

"What would Cortland look like if there were real equality?"

These are questions recently posed to community members on a "Democracy Wall" that is sponsored by the Economic Inequality Initiative: Pathways to Opportunity in Cortland County.

The Democracy Wall is a lightweight blackboard inscribed with a question about inequality. The wall is two feet high and approximately 7.5 feet (90 inches) long. A brief instruction sheet is displayed with the wall, along with a bucket of rainbow-colored chalk. People viewing the wall are invited to consider the question posed and to inscribe their own thoughtful response. The intention of the wall is to facilitate a community dialog about democracy and economic inequality.

The wall was recently featured at the Access to Independence celebration of the 25th Anniversary of the passage of the American Disability Act (ADA), and in the offices of Cortland County Community Action Program (CAPCO). It will be featured at other locations and events throughout the year.

Some thoughts written by people in response to the question 'What do we owe each other?' were the words "equality," "dignity," "family," "faith," "fairness," and "patience," and phrases such as 'The Golden Rule' and "Be there with hugs and love." Those responding to the question on the wall at CAPCO, 'What would Cortland look like with real equality?' wrote, "no one hungry," "wouldn't need food pantries," "living wage jobs," "housing," and smiley faces, which we assume means that people would be happy!

A second democracy wall currently hangs on the front of Main Street SUNY Cortland, located at the Beard building at 9 Main Street. The initial question posed is "What do we owe each other?" but different questions will be tendered over the next few weeks. We welcome all who pass to give serious thought to the question(s) posed and to write their thoughtful response on the wall.

The Economic Inequality Initiative is the first joint project for the American Democracy Project (ADP) and The Democracy Commitment (TDC) national civic action series. SUNY Cortland is one of just 30 campuses nationwide invited to participate. SUNY Cortland has been involved in the ADP since its inception in 2003

Economic Inequality Initiative Hosts Lunchtime Talks

What does economic inequality look like? How has it changed over the years? What factors are impacting the Cortland community? A diverse representation of the community has come together to facilitate a dialog about these and other questions concerning inequality and democracy, by hosting informative and thought-provoking speakers monthly.

The talks are open to the public and are sponsored by the Economic Inequality Initiative: Pathways to Opportunity in Cortland County group, which has been participating in the American Democracy Project's Economic Inequality Initiative since December of 2014. SUNY Cortland is one of just 30 campuses nationwide invited to participate.

Comprised of approximately 60 participants from the Cortland community and SUNY campus, the group comes together to study the relationships among economic inequality, public policy, economic opportunity, social mobility, and civic engagement.

The group began hosting Lunchtime Talks at Main Street SUNY Cortland, at 9 Main Street, in June. Craig Little, SUNY Cortland Distinguish Service Professor of Sociology/Anthropology, was the first speaker; and led a stimulating discussion titled "Pathways to Opportunity in Cortland County: A Presentation and Conversation."

The presentation concentrated on a picture of where Cortland County stands relative to surrounding counties and New York State in terms of inequality and opportunities for its citizens, especially its young people. Following the presentation, participants discussed the information and ideas shared.

Little's presentation addressed the



Professor Craig Little expounds on the dramatic increase in income disparity since 1979.

dramatic increase in income disparity since 1979. From 1943 to 1979, the bottom 20% of American's families saw an income rise of 116%; the middle income population realized a 111% rise, and the top 5% enjoyed 86% growth – a somewhat equitable distribution of wealth. But from 1979 to 2009 the bottom 20% saw a 7.4% **decline** in income while the top 5% **grew** by 72.7%, resulting in an extreme widening the income gap. Little noted that America has the most unequal distribution of wealth and income of any developed country in the world.

Lindy Glennon's presentation in July, titled "From Poverty to Opportunity: Faces of Poverty in Cortland County," honed in more on the impact of economic inequality in New York and the Cortland community. She is the Executive Director of Cortland County Community Action (CAPCO) and Chair of the Cortland Hunger Coalition.

Glennon shared some facts, like, the NYS average daily SNAP benefit (food stamps) is \$4.89 per person, per day. That is just a \$1.63 per meal. Partly as a result, the U.S. Department of Agriculture estimates that one in four children, or 23.3%, live in households struggling with hunger. Glennon explained that hunger and food

SUNY Cortland Commemorates Constitution Day Speaker Scheduled for September 17

SUNY Cortland and the Institute for Civic Engagement will commemorate Constitution Day on September 17, with a special presentation by Brandon Metroka, an expert on the Supreme Court and free speech. Metroka, a Ph.D. Candidate in Political Science at the Maxwell School of Citizenship and Public Affairs at Syracuse University, will speak on “The Roberts Court at Ten: Reconstituting Free Expression?” at 4:30 in the Jacobus Lounge of Brockway Hall. The talk is free and open to the public.

Metroka will speak about the ongoing scholarly debate concerning the nature of the Supreme Court’s record on freedom of speech. Metroka’s presentation examines multiple causes for the Court’s enforcement of the First Amendment in several high-profile cases, while rejecting free expression claims in a slim majority of all decisions. He will lead a discussion regarding the limits of the First Amendment’s guarantee of free expression as articulated by the modern Court.

Constitution Day is celebrated in recognition of the anniversary of the signing of the U.S. Constitution on Sept. 17, 1787, as well as the rights of all citizens, whether they are born in the U.S. or have earned citizenship through the naturalization process.

Metroka has taught courses on “American National Government and Free Speech in America” at SUNY Oswego and at Syracuse University. Metroka’s dissertation, *Reconstituting Free Speech: Law and Politics at the Roberts Court*, evaluated the effects of ideology, judicial methodologies, and legal doctrines on contemporary free expression decisions. He also served in the U.S. Army National Guard, completing two combat tours in Iraq.

The Constitution Day talk is sponsored by the College’s Institute for Civic Engagement. For more information, contact Cynthia Guy, the community innovation coordinator for the Institute for Civic Engagement, at 753-4271 or cynthia.guy@cortland.edu

(Democracy Wall continued from page 1)

Approximately 60 people are participating in the initiative, which includes community members and representatives from community agencies, as well as SUNY Cortland faculty, staff, and students.

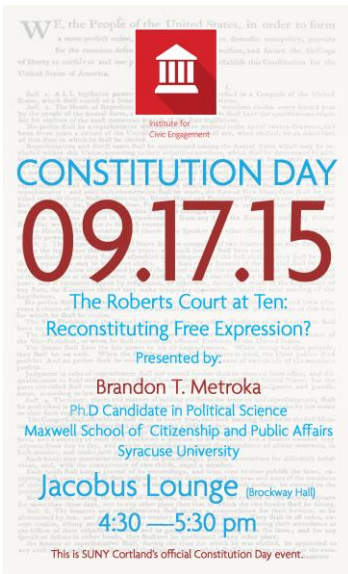
The goal of the initiative is to bring together the area’s campus and community members to study the relationships among economic inequality, public policy, economic opportunity, social mobility, and civic engagement. The project will engage participants in community-based research and education while at the same time promoting civic learning, action, and empowerment to address issues pertaining to economic inequality.

The democracy wall is an effort to welcome the entire community to recognize and understand how issues of

inequality impact our community and our nation, and to ultimately develop solutions to address them. The focused goals of the group are to understand, educate, and advocate.

The group holds meetings and sponsors informative lunchtime talks monthly (see page 2), and it plans to hold several events to embrace and inspire diverse members of the community to get involved. For more information on the local initiative visit: <http://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/adp-economic-inequality-initiative/>

Anyone interested in participating in the Economic Inequality Initiative: Pathways to Opportunity in Cortland County or acquiring more information about it or the Democracy Wall should contact Cyndi Guy at cynthia.guy@cortland.edu or 753-4271.



Contact Information

Mary McGuire, Director.
(607) 753-48061 or
Mary.McGuire@cortland.edu

John Suarez: Office of Service Learning Coordinator.
(607) 753-4391 or
John.Suarez@cortland.edu

Cynthia Guy: Community Innovation Program Coordinator.
(607) 753-4271 or
Cynthia.Guy@cortland.edu

Sponsors

The Office of the President
The Office of the Provost
The Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
The Cortland Fund
The Cortland College Foundation
The Division of Institutional Advancement
Bringing Theory to Practice

Connect with us!

/GetInvolvedCortland

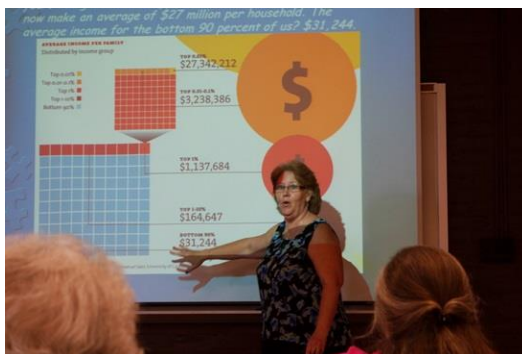
@CortlandICE

/CortlandICE
cortland.edu/get-involved

(Lunchtime Talks continued from page 2)

insecurity hurts educational performance and health outcomes, which can result in persistent learning difficulties.

Another startling reality is that 14.3% of the population in Cortland County lives in poverty, but in families with a female head of household, that number climbs to 30.5%.

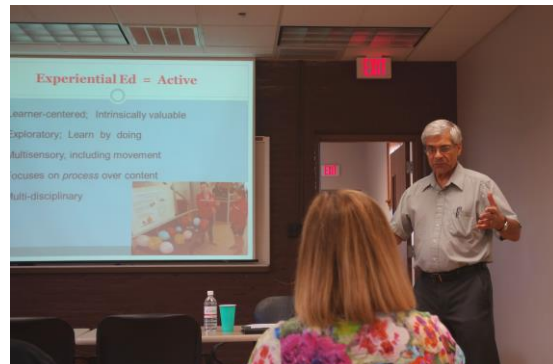


Lindy Glennon discusses the growing income gap between the wealthy and the poor.

Glennon also cited the inordinate growth in income disparity with a graph showing that a huge share of the nation's economic growth over the past 30 years has gone to the top one-hundredth of one percent, who now make an average of **\$27 million** per household. The average income for the bottom 90 percent is just **\$31,244**.

In August, John Suarez, Service-Learning Coordinator with the Institute for Civic Engagement at SUNY Cortland, claimed that experiential education can strengthen children's academic success, which can improve children's chances at economic mobility. His presentation was titled "Teaching Methodology and Economic Inequality: Experiential learning: Hands-on = Heart & Head in," which stimulated a lot of discussion among attendees.

Suarez asserts that "experiential leaning," such as internships and service-learning, can improve student success in the K-12 classroom because such "hands on" learning engages



John Suarez explains the characteristics of experiential education at his presentation in August

students' emotions, which motivates them to learn. Also, students' communication, problem-solving, and critical-thinking skills improve. Suarez cited examples of "critical pedagogy," a kind of experiential learning in which children's projects can improve their neighborhoods.

The next two Lunchtime talks are scheduled; On September 25, the Cortland Hunger Coalition will present at 9 Main Street from noon-1 pm and on October 20, Cornell Cooperative Extension will speak about their programs and about the impact of agriculture in Cortland County.

For more information, or to present a lunchtime talk, please contact Cyndi Guy at cynthia.guy@cortland.edu or call 753-4271. Talks are usually scheduled for the 3rd or 4th Tuesday of the month. To access any of the presentations go to: <http://www2.cortland.edu/programs/civic-engagement/adp-economic-inequality-initiative/resources.dot>

Save the Date

September 17 – Constitution Day
Brandon Metroka speaks: 4:30-5:30 in the Jacobus Lounge of Brockway Hall

September 22 - The Cross-Cultural Miscommunication Panel Discussion
5:00-6:30 in Corey Union's Fireplace Lounge

Both events are sponsored by the Institute for Civic Engagement