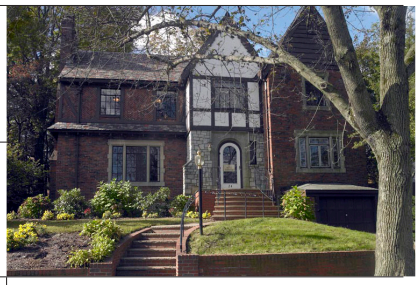
THE
BOISI CENTER REPORT



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FROM THE INTERIM DIRECTOR

Donald Trump's stunning electoral victory last month has shaken the foundation of American politics in ways that will take years, maybe decades, to fully register. The populist anti-establishment sentiment that provided much of his campaign's energy also revealed a deeply troubling resurgence of white nationalism, nativism, and xenophobia. Yet when broken down by religion, this year's vote looked very familiar to other recent election cycles, with majorities of white Protestants and Catholics supporting the Republican candidate, and majorities of Hispanic Catholics, Jews, and the religiously unaffiliated voting for the Democratic candidate.

The complicated politics of race, religion, economics, and philosophy will continue to unfold in the year to come, and the Boisi Center will continue its work to understand them, while also seeking to foster the forms of engaged citizenship that a healthy society requires. We are committed to rigorous, civil, and constructive conversations about religion in public life, in pursuit of the common good of a religiously diverse society. We continue to produce and highlight exceptional scholarship; and we continue to support the university's Jesuit, Catholic commitment to education that shapes minds and souls for the service of others. We feel, that in the current social and political climate, this work is more important than ever, and we invite you to join us.

In the pages that follow you'll see that we have had an extraordinarily busy semester at the Boisi Center, hosting twelve public events and co-sponsoring three others, in addition to fulfilling our usual teaching and research commitments. Space constraints in this newsletter prevent us from fully recounting the conversations that took place at these events, so we have posted articles on our website, along with interview transcripts, bibliographies, audio, video, and photos where available.

Our fall 2016 events covered an array of issues from a range of perspectives, as usual, but in recognition of the needs of the BC community in a time of tense social and political relations, we put special emphasis on themes of student engagement, civility, justice, and the common good. Several of our events focused on racial injustice, past and present; others highlighted work on behalf of vulnerable communities at home and abroad. We convened military, diplomatic, and theological experts to challenge current thinking on just war theory, and we organized a terrific event called "Stories that Move," where world-famous children's book authors joined with USAID officials to help participants write short books for early language learners around the world. We also hosted our first student town hall, with an open conversation about the issues most important to students; we hope to make this a regular feature of our student engagement efforts.

Despite all the activity around here, things aren't the same without founding director Alan Wolfe, who is on research leave this year in advance of his retirement in June. He has left very large shoes to fill. But I am delighted to announce that he will return to campus March 22 to deliver the inaugural Wolfe Lecture on Religion and Public Life—named to honor Alan's leadership in the field and at the Boisi Center.

This spring we are also honored to host a lecture by Melissa Rogers, President Obama's widely respected senior advisor on religion, along with screenings and panel discussions of two new films: a documentary about theologian Reinhold Niebuhr, and Martin Scorsese's latest epic film, "Silence," about a Portuguese Jesuit forced to renounce his faith under extreme duress in seventeenth-century Japan. Our lunch talks this semester will reflect on American Muslims in the Trump era, the ethics of citizenship, and the religion and politics behind international adoptions. Our student engagement efforts in the spring feature a conversation with renowned public radio host Krista Tippett about citizenship and civility, another student town hall event, and a graduate student seminar on the Bible in American political life. And we are working with the Jesuit Institute to host a large multi-day conference on ethics in the university.

As this interim year reaches its mid-point, I have been working with incoming director Mark Massa, S.J. (who begins here July 1) on a strategic plan to take the Boisi Center into its next phase. We will continue this process through 2017, reporting on our progress and plans in this space and others. We value all of you who read this newsletter, attend our events, advise our projects, visit our offices, and otherwise contribute to our efforts. I invite you to reach out to me at erik.owens@bc.edu with your thoughts about our work as we look to the future.

~ Erik Owens

SLAVERY AND THE MAKING OF AMERICAN CAPITALISM

Edward Baptist, professor of history at Cornell University, argued that slavery provided the basis of America's economic development; Martin Summers delivered a response.

On October 4, Cornell University professor Edward E. Baptist spoke about his book *The Half Has Never Been Told: Slavery and the Making of American Capitalism* (Basic Books, 2014) at an event co-sponsored by the Institute for the Liberal Arts, the African and African Diaspora Studies Program, and the Boisi Center. Baptist's work emphasizes the connection between slavery and America's economic success throughout the nation's early history.

From L to R: Erik Owens, Edward Baptist, and Martin Summers; Photo by Suzanne Hevelone

Baptist began his lecture by highlighting the varying factors that shaped the growth of industrial capitalism in the U.S. Baptist explained how autobiographies by slaves and former slaves provide firsthand accounts from the historically neglected perspective of the black slave. Thousands of slaves recounted their experiences; more than two-thousand interviews with enslaved and formerly enslaved individuals uncover where "American capitalism gets some of its distinctive force and character."

In the early-nineteenth century, new technology and machinery in Britain unleashed an era of industrialization that transformed the economy of slavery and the United States. The emergence of a new factory system that made cotton the most sought after commodity in the world market. Enslavers seized control of the market, going from minor players to the dominant supplier of cotton globally.

Baptist noted that if cotton entrepreneurs could not supply the ever-growing demand of that cotton, prices would rise. Therefore enslavers relied on slaves to pick cotton at increasingly high quotas, which literate slaves recorded in ledgers. Enslavers used torture and coercion to increase their slaves' productivity. With each passing year, the average enslaved cotton-picker picked 2% more cotton per work day—a 400% overall productivity growth over the course of the nineteenth century. At the height of the cotton industry, slaves were required to pick anywhere between 100 to 160 pounds of cotton a day.

Against historical treatments of the American South that emphasize the managerial and technical ingenuity of the white enslavers, Baptist maintains that it would be erroneous to ignore the role of enslaved people in the economic growth of the U.S. In short, Baptist emphasized that "the whip, not seeds, helped the cotton industry grow" and that freedom and capitalism often do not go hand in hand.

Professor of history and director of the African and African Diaspora Studies Program at Boston College, Martin Summers, provided a compelling response pointing out that Baptist does not attempt to paint a unified or monolithic image of slavery. Instead, he describes the individual stories and childhoods of former slaves in order to humanize their role and overall contribution to the formation of American capitalism. Summers suggested that Baptist's book could be renamed to "Slavery and the Making of American Culture," as the institution of enslavement and exploitation left a powerful imprint on the church and society as a whole.

www.bc.edu/boisi-baptist

ECONOMY FOR THE COMMON GOOD

Christian Felber, scholar and lecturer, proposed a system of economic and social justice that evaluates businesses based on their promotion of common-good values, rather than by simple profit.

On September 21 the Boisi Center, the Theology Department, the Carroll School of Management, and the Managing for Social Impact interdisciplinary minor, hosted Christian Felber, an internationally acclaimed speaker and lecturer at the Vienna University of Economics and Business. He spoke about the Economy for the Common Good Movement (ECG), a social movement that advocates for an alternative economic model, promoting an "ethical market economy designed to increase the quality of life for all."

Felber explained how ECG is an alternative to capitalism and socialism. It is a system that is based on the values that make human relationships flourish: cooperation, justice, empathy, and dignity, among others. It is an economy that replaces the "selfish values" of predatory capitalism with relationship values that underlie most moral systems. Felber introduced his "common good balance sheet," a report that measures companies based on their preservation of the values listed above. The success of a company should not be determined by how much profit it makes, but rather by the degree to which it contributes to the common good.

www.bc.edu/boisi-felber

BLACK NATURAL LAW

Vincent Lloyd, professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University, discussed his book, Black Natural Law; *Vincent Rougeau and Craig Ford, Jr. delivered responses.*

Vincent Lloyd

Vincent Lloyd, professor of theology and religious studies at Villanova University, spoke at the Boisi Center on September 14. In his recent book, *Black Natural Law* (Oxford, 2016), Lloyd explored the rise of the black natural law tradition through the exemplars of Frederick Douglass, Anna Julia Hooper, W. E. B. Du Bois, and Martin Luther King, Jr. Vincent Rougeau (Dean, BC Law) and Craig Ford Jr. (Theology, PhD Candidate) provided responses to Lloyd's presentation.

Lloyd's work places an epistemic privilege on the black experience, since black people in the U.S. have been and continue to be marginalized. For Lloyd, the theological conception of *imago dei* links together the human condition and an ineffable God. Reason, emotion, and imagination are crucial to this project: by emphasizing experiences, the natural law tradition bridges this epistemic gap. After flourishing for a century, the black natural law tradition lost its religious sophistication in the rhetoric and ideology of black thinkers, most notably U.S. Supreme Court Justice Clarence Thomas and President Barack Obama.

Citing two examples, Rougeau explored how the black natural law tradition may hold appeal for Black Lives Matter activists, as well as supporters of Donald Trump's presidential campaign. Rougeau drew out the implications of Lloyd's work for an international setting and the parallels between the black experience of segregation and the experience of migrants and refugees in the twenty-first century.

Ford appreciated Lloyd's focus on finding meaning in the experiences of marginalized peoples. Ford raised some "curiosities" with Lloyd's narrative of decline, suggesting that Douglass, Cooper, and Du Bois all represent a transcendentalist conception of human nature and distrust of institutions, while King's overtly Christian roots make him the outsider, not Justice Thomas or President Obama.

www.bc.edu/boisi-lloyd

Craig Ford, Jr. and Vincent Rougeau

BOSTON AND IMMIGRATION

Marilynn Johnson spoke on the experiences and impacts of Boston's immigrant populations.

Marilynn Johnson, Boston College professor of history, spoke at the Boisi Center on September 21 on the historic shifts in immigration to Boston. Johnson's book, *The New Bostonians: How Immigrants Have Transformed the Metro Area since the 1960s* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2015), was released on the 50th anniversary of the 1965 Immigration Act. The legislation caused changes in immigration by eliminating quotas and expanding preferences for skilled workers and family members of immigrants in the U.S.

Boston has always been an important portal for immigrants, and established ethnic communities draw new immigrants. Boston witnessed many different waves of immigration over its history; during the nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, largely unskilled workers from Ireland, Italy, China, Russia, and Canada dominated immigration. After the 1965 Immigration Act, the origins of Boston's immigrants shifted to Central and South America and Asia. Immigration shifted from Boston to its suburbs.

Johnson has continued her research beyond *The New Bostonians* online. Her new project, Global Boston (globalboston.bc.edu), was developed to maintain and expand historical accounts of immigrants in Boston and open scholarship on Boston's immigration to a wider community of citizen-scholars. Johnson intends the website to be an ongoing collaborative project that includes students' efforts to understand and analyze historical trends in immigration.

www.bc.edu/boisi-johnson

JUST WAR REVISITED

What does a just war truly entail? General James Dubik, U.S. Army, ret. debated the topic with Reverend J. Bryan Hehir and Ambassador James F. Jeffrey during a panel event.

From L to R: Erik Owens, Gen. James Dubik, Ambassador James Jeffrey, and Rev. J. Bryan Hehir

On October 20, 2016, General James Dubik, U.S. Army, ret., Reverend J. Bryan Hehir, and Ambassador James F. Jeffrey discussed applications of just war theory in the modern age. The panel discussion focused on Dubik's book, *Just War Reconsidered* (University of Kentucky, 2016), which reassesses just war theory and highlights the ethical accountability of political and military leaders not only in initiating wars, but also in strategizing and executing plans in war.

Dubik laid out three elements of just war: ethical cause for entering war, the principle of proportionality (including protection of the innocent during war), and reflection in the aftermath of war. Dubik argued that the traditional interpretation of just war theory tends to alienate military and political leaders from their moral roles. In this model, leaders are responsible for making an ethically informed choice about whether or not to initiate war, but troops bear the responsibility of fighting war ethically. Dubik rejected this approach, claiming that traditional just war theory does not address the moral consequences of war-waging. He emphasized that war is more than just fighting; it involves strategy and decision-making that affects soldiers, civilians, communities, governments, and political relationships before, during, and after war. Dubik also questioned the tendency of theorists to draw a sharp line between military and political leaders. To make just war possible in practice, the military and political perspectives must exist in dialogue, recognizing the moral agency and responsibility of all individuals involved.

James Dubik

Jeffrey praised Dubik for his work, but warned that *Just War Reconsidered* is both "wonderful" and yet "dangerous." Jeffrey, who served in the State Department during George W. Bush's administration, agreed that it is wrong to thoughtlessly waste the lives of citizens, but did not agree that an extensive process of moral decision-making is necessarily the answer. Instead, Jeffrey argued a staunch commitment to moral decision-making can delay action and thereby risk lives in areas of conflict. These practical consequences are time-sensitive and often not worth the risk. Jeffrey concluded that, while it may be helpful to recognize the moral agency of all parties involved in war, in practice it is sometimes more just to act quickly.

Hehir spoke about the religiously based origins of just war theory, explaining that the secular world has adopted the theory and applied it to international law. In the modern world, just war theory has become "public property." Hehir drew attention to the modern tendency to settle moral dilemmas in war based on precedent. For example, following what was once "the great question of the bombings in World War II," cities were established as fair targets in subsequent wars. Hehir argued that, regardless of the changing applications of just war theory, it should be rendered important as an imperative for moral reflection. Without a theory of just war, it is easy to slip into an amoral conception of war and conflict. "In an imperfect world, a structured theory that imposes restraints is absolutely necessary."

After the panelists spoke, the audience raised questions regarding the legitimacy of a government entity declaring an action "just," the accountability of the U.S. government to the international community, and the specific issue of drone warfare. A lively discussion demonstrated the relevance of just war theory and its usefulness in engaging moral questions of war and conflict.

www.bc.edu/boisi-justwarrevisited

GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT AND EDUCATION EFFORTS AT USAID

USAID official Amie Harris spoke about factoring faith into development efforts, then led a writing workshop with children's book authors Peter H. Reynolds and Paul Reynolds.

Amie Harris

On November 14, the Boisi Center welcomed Amie Harris (MCAS, '11), special assistant to the senior advisor for international education at the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID). In her talk "Factoring Faith into Development," Harris drew on her experience at USAID collaborating with faith-based organizations, explaining the unique role that such organizations play in international development. 91% of USAID's funding for other countries comes from partnerships, rather than the federal government. Faith-based partners, which work with some of the most vulnerable and remote populations in the world, are vital since they have local presence and development expertise.

The following day, the Boisi Center and USAID, along with the Lynch School of Education, the Morrissey College of Arts and Sciences, the School of Social Work and the Connell School of Nursing co-sponsored the "Stories that Move: a USAID Book-a-thon." The event provided an opportunity for the BC community to write children's books and upload them to USAID's digital library, made available in multiple languages for young learners around the world. Harris and USAID senior advisor Christie Vilsack began by highlighting USAID's work in education, and discussed BLOOM, translation software developed by its faith-based partners. This new technology allows anyone to design, create, and publish his or her own book in multiple languages for readers around the globe.

The keynote speakers, Peter H. Reynolds and Paul Reynolds (MCAS '82) of FableVision Studios have years of experience writing and creating children's books. Peter is a New York Times best-selling author who has sold over 20 million books, and Paul is CEO of FableVision, a social change agency that combines narrative and media to produce compelling, positive, and relatable stories. The Reynolds brothers encouraged participants to "create bravely" and discussed the creative aspects of the writing process: inspiration, imagination, design, and production.

You can create your own books online too! Check out bc.edu/boisi-bookathon for a video of the event and instructions for uploading your own books for children to the USAID database!

www.bc.edu/boisi-harris
www.bc.edu/boisi-bookathon

Peter H. Reynolds and Paul Reynolds. Photo by Gary Wayne Gilbert, University Communications

EMPOWERING WOMEN IN TANZANIA

Maryknoll lay missioner Liz Mach discussed female genital mutilation and child marriage in Tanzania.

On August 31, Maryknoll lay missioner Liz Mach spoke at the Boisi Center. Mach works alongside the Catholic Church in Tanzania to address gender-based violence. She emphatically stressed that her work was to support local initiatives, not to impose Western values on African people.

Two cultural practices in Tanzania are of great concern, female genital mutilation (FGM) and child marriage. FGM is the partial or total removal of female genitalia and is considered a rite-of-passage in many Tanzanian communities. This interferes with fertility and childbirth and can lead to other medical problems. FGM is practiced both by Muslims and Christians in parts of Tanzania and is a cultural, not a religious, practice. FGM is often a precursor to child marriage. Though FGM and child marriage both are illegal in Tanzania, the laws are difficult to enforce.

Mach noted optimistically that though the Church has encountered some backlash when fighting gender-based violence, their efforts have produced significant results. Awareness and education is leading to cultural change, and opportunities are available for young woman seeking to avoid FGM or child marriages and continue their education.

www.bc.edu/boisi-mach

SPEAK, STAND, SIT OR SCREAM?

BC student leaders Craig Ford, Jr., Najat Goso, Isra Hussain, and Russell Simons began a town hall discussion on politics, socioeconomic issues, and civic involvement in 2016.

From L to R: Erik Owens, Najat Goso, Craig Ford, Jr., Isra Hussain, and Russell Simons

On September 28, the Boisi Center hosted Boston College student leaders Craig Ford, Jr., GSAS '18, Theology (PhD); Najat Goso, MCAS '18, Communications; Isra Hussain, MCAS '17, Psychology; and Russell Simons, MCAS '17, Biology for a Town Hall discussion moderated by Boisi Center interim director, Erik Owens.

Panelists praised Boston College's Jesuit values and culture of social justice, but lamented that many students' experiences at BC includes only transient commitments to service and community engagement. They felt that, in practice, there is a clash between Jesuit values and the values students embody in their personal life. Hussain pointed to the difficulty of being "men and women for others" in everyday life. Goso spoke about the importance of moving beyond the insular "BC bubble" and engaging the larger community and world. Simons pointed out that in order to have real, honest conversation you have to engage with other people in ways that make you uncomfortable, and people generally don't like to be uncomfortable. Conversations like this need to happen in small groups for empathy to grow.

Ford called on the administration and student body to examine the "structurally disadvantaging forces" that face people of color, the LGTBQ community, and women. We need to have "brave and awkward" conversations about white supremacy, heterosexism, and sexism. Ford also spoke about socioeconomic inequality on campus.

Panelists also discussed the prevalence of complacency on campus, and an overall lack of civic engagement. Goso noted that only a small fraction of the student body is receptive to many clubs' and organizations' messages, and that this group tends to be comprised mainly of students of color.

A lively dialogue with the audience followed. Many of the attendees said they would like further town hall events and small group discussions of the issues facing the BC community, hopefully with more student participation. Others echoed the panel, wishing for greater cooperation from university officials in addressing the concerns of students.

www.bc.edu/boisi-townhall

SERVICE LEARNING AT BOSTON COLLEGE

Meghan Sweeney introduced BC's PULSE program and talked about service learning at a luncheon colloquium.

On September 13, the Boisi Center welcomed Meghan Sweeney, associate professor of the practice of theology and the Cooney Family Director of the PULSE Program for Service Learning at BC. PULSE is an undergraduate program that combines academic learning with service work. It seeks to educate undergraduate students about social justice through volunteer placements at one of 55 community partner organizations throughout Boston. PULSE incorporates the works of classical and modern thinkers to discuss themes such as civic virtue and spirituality and relate them to students' service experiences.

Sweeney began the luncheon by describing the importance of service learning in one's educational and personal development. The program reinforces classroom learning by encouraging students to develop a meaningful relationship with people outside of BC. In the greater Boston community, undergraduates experience firsthand socioeconomic and social disparities. There are approximately 500 students currently in the PULSE program; each student is tasked with volunteering eight hours a week at various community partners.

Students are often challenged by their PULSE experiences. PULSE engages these problems through weekly discussion sections that allow participants to reflect on their service placements with their peers. Students learn from the experiences of their classmates. The pairing of academic study with service learning incorporates the theories of great Western thinkers in discussions about volunteerism and service.

www.bc.edu/boisi-sweeney

AN ETHICS FOR THE COMING STORM

The Boisi Center's 16th Annual Prophetic Voices Lecturer, Laurie Zoloth, gave a stirring prophetic call to action regarding climate change.

On October 25, the Boisi Center hosted Laurie Zoloth, Charles McCormick Deering Professor of Teaching Excellence at Northwestern University, for the 16th Annual Prophetic Voices Lecture. During her talk entitled, "An Ethics for the Coming Storm: A Theological Reflection on Climate Change," Zoloth issued a prophetic call to action and called for climate change to be addressed.

Zoloth shared reports from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other institutions to establish the urgency of the problem. She laid out the potential consequences humanity faces if it remains on its environmentally destructive course. She spoke of the international and intergenerational ethical dilemmas surrounding climate change, and how certain staples of capitalism and American life are responsible for the unfolding disaster.

She called upon the BC audience to "interrupt" their lifestyles—to challenge their complacency and comfort, and address the issues that are difficult but important to confront. With her ethics of interruption, Zoloth forcefully made the case that climate change requires making intentional choices that may cause discomfort or require sacrifice. The industrialized first world lifestyle imperils future generations and the poor, who are disproportionately in the crosshairs of climate change.

Using the Hebrew prayer, the *shema* from Deuteronomy 11, Zoloth invited her audience to think about the covenantal relationship of humanity and God found there, and the importance of that covenant on the environment.

Zoloth cited multiple scriptures from the Abrahamic faiths because "climate change undergirds all institutions and texts." She argued that interruption, and ethics of hospitality, can lead to reconsideration and action on the individual level: unthinking consumption and materialism (less travel, a vegetarian diet, or refraining from purchasing or using packaged plastic goods), entering the *polis* (speaking on the issue by voting or civil protest), and really believing in what religion teaches (considering environmental stewardship a fundamental religious obligation).

Zoloth invoked the biblical and koranic narrative of the flood in Genesis to provide a metaphor for how unchanged behavior, ignorance, and destructive lifestyles can lead to catastrophe of biblical proportions. However, Zoloth concluded her lecture on an optimistic note regarding human agency, insisting: "Do not think for a minute that we are powerless."

www.bc.edu/boisi-zoloth

Laurie Zoloth

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For complete information and resources on all of our events, including audio and video recordings, transcripts, interviews, photos, videos, bibliographies and more, visit our website: www.bc.edu/boisi.

Unless otherwise noted, all Boisi Center event photos by Christopher Soldt, MTS Photography.

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SPRING 2017 EVENTS

February 1
5:30pm
Simboli 100
"An American Conscience: The Reinhold Niebuhr Story"
Documentary film screening (50 min) followed by panel discussion with filmmaker **Martin Doblmeier** and scholars **Andrew Finstuen**, **Lisa Sowle Cahill**, **Mark Massa, S.J.**, and **Erik Owens**. Co-sponsored with the History and Theology Departments.

February 15
7pm Fulton 511
Student Town Hall: What Now?
Open forum led by students, for students, about politics, justice, and civic engagement.

February 16
12pm Boisi Center
American Muslims, Trump's Rise, and the Return of an Old Quarrel
David DiPasquale, Boston College * Lunch is served; RSVP required *

February 23
6pm Higgins 300
Religious Freedom, Religious Minorities, and the Common Good
Melissa Rogers, Special Assistant to President Obama; Executive Director, White House Office of Faith-Based Partnerships

March 1
12pm Boisi Center
Save the Children: Religion, Politics and International Adoptions in America
Arissa Oh, Boston College * Lunch is served; RSVP required *

March 22
7pm Fulton 511
The Inaugural Wolfe Lecture on Religion and Public Life
Alan Wolfe, Boston College

March 24
3-7pm
Higgins 300
"Silence": A Film by Martin Scorsese
Film screening (161 min) followed by panel discussion with **Hitomi Omata Rappo**, **Robert Maryks**, and others TBA.
Co-sponsored with the Center for Ignatian Spirituality, the Institute for the Liberal Arts, and the Church in the 21st Century Center.

April 5-7
see website
Toward a Culture of University Ethics
Major conference featuring 20+ scholars, administrators, and journalists, with keynote addresses by **Taylor Branch**, **Ruth Simmons**, and **James Keenan, S.J.** Co-sponsored with the Jesuit Institute and the Institute for the Liberal Arts.

April 11
12pm Boisi Center
The Ethics of Citizenship in the Trump Era
Erik Owens, Boston College * Lunch is served; RSVP required *