

IMPRESSIONS & REFL3CTIONS 4

Outcome of a Lunch and Seminar on U.S. Elections and the Legitimacy
of Government
at MIT on October 19, 2012

as part of the

RCC/MIT Associate Campus Partnership Program

by Program Participants from Roxbury Community College (RCC)

Edited by: José A. Alicea, Ed. D.

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The following short literary pieces by students, faculty and staff members from Roxbury Community College (RCC) result from a Lunch and Seminar on U.S. Elections and the legitimacy of Government at MIT on October 19, 2012 as part of the RCC/MIT Associate Campus Partnership Program.

RCC/MIT- SPURS* Collaboration

Mission:

To collaborate in a joint program to benefit students, faculty, fellows and scholars of RCC and MIT within the context of the city /regional planning disciplines.

Goals:

1. To expose RCC students to the international/global perspective within their RCC major through meaningful interactions with the SPURS/Humphrey Fellows.
 - RCC's students gain insight into the work of the SPURS/Humphrey Fellows by participating in key lectures, field trips, and social engagements that would support their academic and professional pursuits at RCC.
2. To expose the SPURS/Humphrey Fellows to RCC students and their diverse experiences as American, immigrant and international students within the American higher education system.
 - SPURS/Humphrey Fellows participate in key classroom activities as guest speakers, offer college-wide lectures, as well as provide mentorship in RCC projects related to their field of study. The Fellows can utilize RCC students and faculty as resources when exploring themes related to American planning.
3. To engender an educational environment that attempts to bridge the gap between community colleges and 4-yr. undergraduate/graduate institutions in order to view each other as resources that could further their academic initiatives.

*Special Program in Urban and Regional Studies (SPURS)



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Contributing Writers - Students

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Chowan J Baker
Venisa Dodi
Carolyn J. Forbes
Suleyka Hance
Carl Evans Homicil
Tianyuan Liu
Florise Luc
Kate Makokha
Michael Joseph Ragland II
Stacy Reed
Christian Sandoval
Stacey Sims
Woody Vainqueur



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A Discussion of Perceived Legitimacy in the US Election System

Randy Foote
Roxbury Community College

In response to the question of whether the current US government has the consent of the governed, currently only 22 percent of likely voters say “yes.” The partisan divide is marked: Democrats split evenly, but only 8 percent of Republicans say “yes”. In addition, a majority of registered Republicans believe that Barack Obama was not born in the US, and therefore occupies the Presidency illegally. But 6 years ago, when George Bush, a Republican, was president -- the end number would have been similar, but with opposite splits: with Democrats believing that their government was not legitimate....that Bush had twice stolen the presidential election.

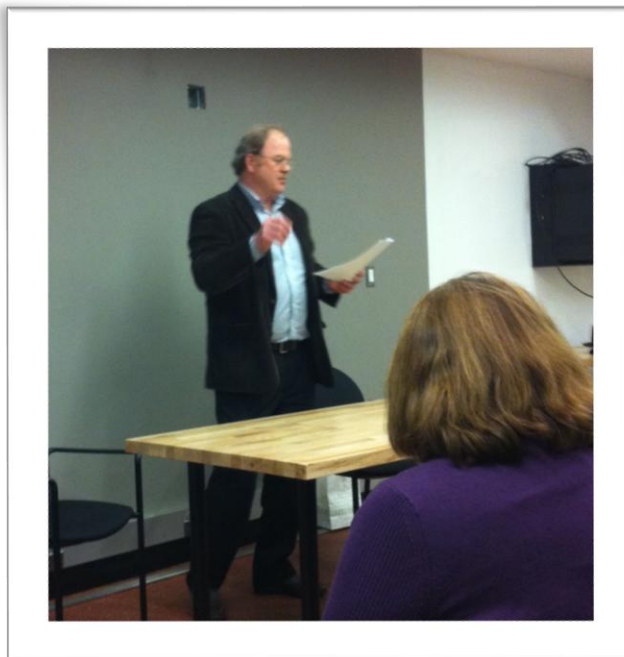
Only one third to one half of adult Americans vote in elections; at the same time many states are currently trying to make it more difficult for citizens to register and vote. Meanwhile, more than \$6 billion dollars will be spent on this round of Federal elections – in a nation where wealth inequality is steadily increasing, and exceeds that of any other developed state.

Much of this public sense of illegitimacy in US elections stems from recent causes: such as the Bush-Gore election of 2000, which was decided by a partisan Supreme Court; from the overwhelming influence of the wealthy in financing both parties; and from the extreme partisanship that has taken hold in the US in the past 20 years.

However it is also worth looking back to the 1960s – the formative years for many current citizens. Within five years, one President, John F. Kennedy was killed while in office, as was his brother, Robert F. Kennedy during his own Presidential campaign, as was the leader of the civil rights movement, Martin Luther King, Jr. And at the end of this period another US President, Richard M. Nixon, was removed from office following exposure of his criminal election practices.

In my discussion I will analyze some of the primary reasons for this disaffection among the American electorate, and at the same time trace my own path from complete alienation from politics to actively campaigning in and teaching about the political process.

There will be time after the talk for questions, and I look forward to a lively discussion with both SPURS Fellows and RCC students, each of whom bring their own distinct perspectives to this topic.



BIO

Randall Foote

RFoote@rcc.mass.edu

I have been involved my entire professional life in construction and in politics. I am a founding partner and CFO of Fort Hill Construction, the largest custom residential builder in California, with branches in Los Angeles, New York and Boston. We have worked with architects such as Michael Graves, Richard Meier, Charles Gwathmey, John Pawson and many others. Fort Hill is currently one of the foremost LEED builders in California, pioneering a number of 'green' construction methods on high-end residences and commercial properties. We have also done historical preservation work in Boston and Los Angeles.

Politically, most recently I managed Howard Dean's Presidential primary campaign for Southern California in 2003-2004, was Southwest US Labor coordinator for the John Kerry campaign in 2004, and did extensive work on Barack Obama's campaign. I have also been involved in environmental activism and advocacy, particularly as regards nuclear waste, marine fisheries and climate change.

Academically, I currently teach Government and Political Science at RCC. I have also had several peer-reviewed articles published on ancient climate change and human evolution.

Education:

St George's School (Newport, RI) '66

Harvard College (Cambridge, MA) '70.

RCC Students Reflect

Sharé-Leigh Arneaud-Bernard

Reflection: MIT/SPURS

Three is a lucky number, they say
 And last Friday
 As I experienced the 3rd MIT/SPURS Meeting at MIT,
 I learnt the true meaning of “Legitimacy.”
 Journeying through the various government
 administrations,
 Kennedy, Reagan, Bush, Obama, Clinton.

MIT/SPURS is a great Partnership,
 Bridging gaps and creating friendships,
 Between countries all across the world,
 That fights for the voices of the unheard.

Through Urban Planning the Program hopes to achieve,
 A better life for both you and me,
 To increase urban stability,
 To provide a structure for those in need,
 Thank You MIT/SPURS,
 For selecting me

Chowan J Baker

Major: Biological Science/Animal Concentration

Being at the RCC/MIT summit was a new and wonderful experience for me. I love to meet fresh faces that are interested in helping spread awareness of the political world to the youth of today. I feel everyone had really great questions they raised during the allotted time frame. If we keep this partnership open with full communication from both sides, I don't see why how it cannot benefit everyone in the long run with endless networking and social possibilities. I am happy to be a part of this epic transaction among students and professors.

Venisa Dodi

I was trying to send you an e_mail but it didn't work.

What I wanted to say in the reflection paper was that: I have learned so much from the meetings we've had so far with MIT. The Fellows have been wonderful in putting together the meetings.

Prof. Foote made me see what really goes on in the election process.



Carolyn J. Forbes
Politics at MIT

The differences of Republicans and Democrats
 We are not different just different colors and we are still one people.
 As the Jamaican Motto says:
 OUT OF MANY, ONE PEOPLE

It was interesting. I like the facts on the different interests Republicans and Democrats take in running their elections. They are interesting but similar.

Personally I was fulfilled with the fact that MIT and RCC could come together and have agreements on the same issues. I also learned a lot more from some foreign Fellows on the different voting policies in their countries. It was educating and brain challenging.

Suleyka Hance
Sent from My iPhone

Among a few we are so many
 Our thoughts and ideas bring about a plenty
 Our many races fill the room
 Oh how our discussions make us bloom
 We all have something rare to share
 And politics although not clear
 At MIT there was something in the air.

Carl Evans Homicil
**A Reflection after Attending a SPURS Fellows' Seminar at RCC:
 MIT-SPURS Summer Internships Interest and Beyond**

Dear Professor,

When I pass by MIT, Massachusetts Institute of Technology, I always say to myself that I would love to attend this school, that it would be a great achievement for me. However, I am always left with the thought that MIT is for people whose parents are rich or that certain people will never attend that school regardless of how much one is motivated, is smart and willing to study and get A's. So I always thought there is no point of trying.

Well, my idea about MIT is now changed after this semester at Roxbury Community College. The collaboration of MIT and RCC, although at its starting point, is one that recognizes that talents can be anywhere in any social class. I do appreciate that MIT has reached out by doing conferences and offered us an opportunity to go beyond and hope for the best. The presentations were very informative and excellent. I hope more students are aware of that open door that could benefit our society as more talents are being pulled wherever they are.

Thank you MIT!



Tianyuan Liu

12/21/12

A Little Thinking after the Political Speech

Professor Foote had a speech at MIT to students, faculty, fellows and scholars of RCC and MIT on Oct. 19. The topic was about US elections. I had some basic sense about US election system before I heard that speech. But I had no idea about the election loopholes and strange events before Prof. Foote said them.

I grew up in P.R. China. I hadn't got involved in any public election activity before I came to the USA. I actually didn't vote for anyone here either because I'm not a US citizen. But, this is the first time I see a real election. It's new to me.

My math and physics teacher Prof. Entemann often let us vote for the answer of a question in class. Ninety percent of the time, the democracy didn't work. He said democracy works only when everybody is smart. It makes some sense to me but I don't fully agree. My opinion is that democracy works when most people have their independent opinions.

To be honest I was sick of open my TV and see advertisements of one party against another with simple verbal attack in 30 seconds. I was sick of the signs outside with "vote no on question 4" written down only. These things only tell people what to do, but not why to do. It's kind of scary actually. If there aren't enough people with curiosity and want to find out what's going on, the party which spends more money campaign will win the election.

The presidential electoral funds in the year 1976 were 67 million dollars. On 2008 it was 1324 million dollars. On 2012 it was 1977 million dollars (Center for Responsive Politics). The electoral funds increased rapidly from 1976-2012. It shouldn't be that much. Politics shouldn't be a money race.

Be curious. Think independently. Be a part of positive energy.

Florise Luc

Urban Economics - MIT SPURS Presentations Review

The MIT-SPURS collaboration with Professor Nasreen Latif was beneficial to my experience in Urban Economics. I attended various presentations about each chapter from transportation to education, environment, housing as well as others. Mr. Muhammad Hanif Gul, from Pakistan, presented transportation and public systems. His presentation versus Boston's MBTA transportation method gave an interesting side-by-side comparison. Learning from other students/fellows from other countries gave me a different insight on the topics we discussed in class.

Because my Urban Economics class had presentations with MIT fellows, it raised the bar for our class. We would have to be prepared to have discussions about different topics. The MIT-SPURS program presentations should be offered again in Urban Economics and perhaps other courses in the future at RCC.

Kate Makokha

Attending the RCC/MIT Luncheon was something that was very life changing and eye opening for me. I had the opportunity to be surrounded by individuals from different cultures and hear their stories.

After I attended I realized what I whole heartedly wanted to do with my life and my career. I want to be submerged in various cultures in the area of diplomacy and be able to expose my peers to cultures all over the world so they can grasp and see the beauty that lies in it.

Michael Joseph Ragland II

Technology has exceeded the human mind so far that in a few more years we will be the ones that are obsolete.

Thank-you

Stacy Reed

It was a very good experience. I especially like the fact that we got to actually attend MIT for this joyous occasion. Never in a million years would I have ever thought MIT and RCC would do anything together. The faculty were nice and welcoming, the students from MIT were polite and the lunch was good.

The lecture was given by a Professor from RCC. I felt he did an awesome job. I would have liked to attend a lecture from a Professor from MIT also. It was nice to hear discussion from people other than Americans. I always wonder what other countries live and think like.



Dear Roxbury Community College Faculty and Spurs Fellows of MIT,

I am writing in regard to relationship your team has shared with the students at Roxbury Community College. I have to say that it was one of the most enlightening experiences that I have ever encountered.

Your program has broadened my ideas about the infrastructure in not only my native land America but all over the world. It was great meeting the Fellows from many parts of the world and getting insight on how we can build a new world and what it takes to do so like funding, marketing and design.

The thing that stood out the most for me with this program is that actual MIT students reached out to RCC students, shared lunch and united for a good common cause that will benefit the world now and in the future.

The relationship also gave hope to the students at RCC that one day they can become students of your prestigious university. For me it says nothing is too farfetched, and that we can achieve our dreams! After all, everyone deserves a better place to work and live...

Thank you

Stacy

**Christian Sandoval
MIT Reflection**

The MIT luncheon was a very insightful luncheon, and also exciting. I love how I got the opportunity to learn so much about other countries' governments, and also the struggle many people in different countries are going through to have the freedom they all deserve. I was so surprised to hear how in Brazil the citizens have to pay a small fee if you don't vote.

It was exciting being around so many educated people in one room and all from many different countries. I found it an honor having so many intriguing people feeding me so much information about different countries' struggles. It goes to show that even though many of us are given information from the news, we are still a little ignorant to much of the outside world from the U.S.

Stacey Sims

In October I went to MIT for a SPURS presentation, one of my favorite topics was about President Obama serving a second term. Gabriela Rembarz said, "black people should unite and work together more because we are strong".

I am utterly excited that I am a student at RCC and was picked to work with the MIT Spurs Department of Urban Studies and Planning. Currently I am working towards my Associates in Biological Science at RCC. I have always wanted to make a difference in my neighborhood and

in the world, I am so grateful that MIT will help me acquire the knowledge about urban development issues around the world.

We had a lot of MIT Spurs guest speakers visit my Urban Economics class and I enjoyed all of their presentations.

Woody Vainqueur
MIT/RCC Reflection

The MIT seminar was truly eye-opening. It was my first glimpse into city planning; the genuine interest in helping communities locally and abroad is inspiring and some of the projects mentioned are what I wish to emulate in the struggling communities where I grew up. The seminar allowed me to talk about--for the first time, a lot of the issues faced in my community. Developing and participating in a collaborative program for the summer would help me combat the most debilitating issues these communities face. Just the idea is truly exciting.

RCC Faculty and Staff Reflect

José A. Alicea, Ed. D.
Associate Dean of Academic
Affairs

Dear Colleagues,

It's that time again.

I'm preparing this semester's edition of *Impressions and REfl3ctions 4*, a compilation of short written submissions by RCC participants at the recent RCC/MIT Partnership

Program event at MIT. Once published, it will be archived at both the RCC and MIT libraries, and it will be available online. The previous three editions are in the RCC library (I'll send you the link, once the librarian sends it to me today).

Your impression/reflection can be in any literary form you choose (a sentence, paragraph, poem, song, short story, among others). **Please send it as a Word document attached to a reply to this email by Friday, Nov. 2nd.**

If you have any questions or suggestions, please reply.

Thanks,

Jose



Randy Foote
Professor of Political Science

Reflections on the RCC/MIT Collaboration

I thought that this luncheon was excellent, and not solely because I was the speaker..... I was very happy to speak on US elections, especially at such a critical moment just prior to Election Day. Most of all I thought we had wonderful attendance and participation by the SPURS Fellows and RCC students. Our outreach at RCC garnered some 30 students and there was a similar number of Fellows.

I was energized by the discussion session afterwards, which reflected the diversity both of MIT Fellows and the RCC students. This diversity is a real strength of this collaboration. This luncheon was the first time that we really had a serious discussion after the presentation, and I hope that we can continue in this manner, in whatever form works best.

I am very excited about this collaboration, which is enriching both our institutions. My thanks to Bish, Jose and Ofer for doing so much over these past months to make this all happen so well. I recall the representative from the US State Dept saying that: of all the Humphrey Programs across the country, this was the one that was accomplishing the most. That is heartening, and still we are only getting started.....much more yet to come....

Nasreen Latif
Professor, Management and social Sciences

RCC/MIT-SPURS Collaboration Year #2

Good start! Great to see so many RCC students at MIT.

For me, my Urban Economics course will be the gateway to the MIT Green Project internship and our Community Development workshop/seminar/course.

As always, I can't wait to host the SPURS fellows' presentation. I am happy to have built that bridge with my classes and beyond, extending throughout the college. My next step will be to develop and build a relationship with the MIT CoLab for future externships and internships.



Alfonsina Minchella
Professor, Management Science Department

Once again I was impressed with this unique collaboration between MIT and RCC which gives our students and faculty the opportunity to participate in discussions with the MIT SPURS fellows from all over the world. This time Professor Randy Foote shared his thoughts on the upcoming elections by recounting what occurred in past elections. Particularly of interest to me were his memories of the Kennedy assassinations as well as that of Martin Luther King. His talk brought me back to where I was when these events unfolded. It was wonderful that both RCC and MIT students were able take part in the discussion that followed his presentation. What a great way to learn about the political process!



Nancy Teel, Ph. D.
Dean of Liberal Arts and Professional Studies

Thanks for the reminder, Jose.

I was struck by the intense interest of everyone in the room during Randy's talk and discussion. Of course with the Presidential election in high gear and the whole world watching, it's not surprising. But I think there was something more going on. I think people were making new connections and re-examining old assumptions. All of us were open, questioning, and listening hard for answers. It was an ideal environment for learning!