

The People Speak!



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Brother Rice High School

Educates its Community with Public Debate, Film Festival

by Jenny Corum Billman

For three years, Brother Rice High School in Bloomfield Hills, Michigan has demonstrated its commitment to global issues by participating in the Global Debates. This year, the Brother Rice Global Action Debate Team added a new dimension to its local engagement by hosting not only a public debate, but a prominent film festival depicting environmental justice issues from around the world.

To begin, Brother Rice hosted a public debate November 17 in its Media Center. Teams evaluated the proposition, “When it cannot do both, the United Nations should prioritize poverty reduction over combating climate change.” Debates were videotaped and submitted to the United Nations Foundation. A representative from the law firm of Miller Canfield, which helped to sponsor the subsequent film festival for environmental awareness, was among those in attendance.

In addition to the public debate event, The Rice Global Action Debate Team worked to bring *Wild & Scenic on Tour* to the Detroit area. It was the first time that *Wild & Scenic*, the largest environmental film festival in the United States, had been seen in the City of



Detroit and its metro area. The festival was held on December 1, 2009 in one session from 9:45 am to 1:30 pm. As part of the event, the Brother Rice Global Action Debate Team invited over 100 middle school students to Detroit's Burton Theater, where they screened several environmental films and spoke with invited guests. The cornerstone film, *Water Front*, showed the grassroots struggle of the citizens of Highland Park, Michigan as they fought against water-related problems in their city. Highland Park Council Member Chris Woodard introduced *Water Front* and, along with *Water Front* Producer Curtis Smith, held a 30 minute question-and-

answer session with students about the film.

Both the public debate and the film festival encouraged audiences to become aware of local environmental issues and become change agents in their communities. As part of the festival, Rice Global debaters also collected donations to help Stand-Up for Kids. Another *Wild & Scenic Film Festival* is being planned in the spring for the Flint-area students.

This is the third year that the Brother Rice Global Action Debate Team has participated in *The People Speak* Global Debates. Brother Rice was selected as a winner in last year's Global Debates and traveled to New York City for the Youth Leadership Summit July 15-18, 2009.

“The Brother Rice Action team is coming up with creative approaches to combat some of the world's biggest problems,” said Kaitlin Barry, Campus Outreach Director with the United Nations Foundation. “In order to tackle deep-rooted issues such as poverty and climate change, we need to look at them from every angle—the fresh perspective that each school brings is tremendously valuable. We look forward to the actions each student takes to implement real change in their communities.” ■