

Social justice author discusses global issues

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A small group of students and professors gathered in the Hodges Library Auditorium on Wednesday night to hear social rights activist and professor of political science at Eckerd College, Dr. William Felice, discuss the pressing issues of social rights and justices in a global setting.

In his book, "The Global New Deal," Felice discusses how the current injustices at work in the world today can be easily combatted. He believes that these are "needless sufferings" that could be prevented through existing policies, such as the 20/20 policy and the Tobin Tax, being put to practice in the U.S. and around the world.

Felice began Wednesday night's session by quoting screenplay writer and playwright Tony Kushner, who most recently wrote the script for Oscar front-runner "Lincoln."

"The great question before us is: Are we doomed? The great question before us is: Can we change? In time? ... and theory? How are we to proceed without theory? What systems of thought have these reformers to present to this mad swirling planetary disorganization, to the inevident welter of fact, event, phenomenon, calamity?" he asked the small audience.

Felice has been researching and studying these issues for nearly 20 years. He said that it was during his college career when he first became concerned about issues of social rights and justice.

"Traveling in Latin America and seeing how poverty stricken it was really had an impact on me," he said, adding that he wondered if the "desperation I saw could be alleviated."

He shared the statistics concerning poverty, explaining that the majority of the world does not have the privileged socioeconomic circumstances that are experienced in America. Even among the poorest in America, they are still wealthier than the majority of the world's population. Felice sees a dire need to develop theoretical concepts to alleviate these needless, preventable sufferings. He made it clear that it is not good enough to answer a poverty stricken world by imposing American culture, tradition and ideals upon them.

"What have you to offer in its place? Market incentives? American cheeseburgers? Watered down ... makeshift capitalism?" he said, returning again to the words of Kushner.

Felice's arguments resonated with Temple Duke, freshman in economics and global studies. She said she genuinely enjoyed the lecture and wished more students had been there to hear what Felice had to say. She found the issues he discussed to be relevant not only to her but to any college student.

"Though I have not yet read his book, I would really like to obtain a copy," she said. "It appears to offer some detailed solutions to urgent global problems and I would love to learn more about specific policies designed to alleviate the greatest infringements on human rights."

She went on to say that she would recommend the book to people who "refuse to accept the world the way it currently is, full of poverty, suffering and inequality. Instead, I would challenge my fellow students to pick up a copy and see what possibilities there are for incredible and powerful change in this imperfect world of ours."

Concerning social injustice issues, namely poverty, Felice said he suspects that all people, regardless of political leaning, want to end the world's destitution. His book's intention is to empower his readers to do so.

"I hope that they react by saying that there are doable policy options forward, that there is no reason to remain so wired in cynicism that we cannot put forward a vision to end needless suffering," Felice said. "I think change happens first through the vision and if the book can help people to see that, then it has served its purpose."