COMM 241: reporting assignment # 3

Hunger: The Ugly Truth

By: Jameka Williams

“Hunger is not about money, but is about power”, repeated Jen Fraley, associate director of leadership and service learning, to a room of 50 Longwood Students at the Annual OxFam Hunger Banquet.

The purpose of the Hunger Banquet is to give students the opportunity to learn about the issue of hunger not only in their community, but in the United States and the rest of the world.

When the attendees arrived at the banquet everyone knew that they would be receiving a meal, but what they were to receive was unknown.

The event is meant to be interactive from start to finish, so the attendees were made to choose their place at the dinner literally by the luck of the draw.

In order to exhibit the fact that some are fortunate enough to live prosperously and some are unfortunate and live in poverty, students lined up to choose from a box rather they would be placed in the low, middle, or high income group.

The low income group was placed on rugs on the floor, and attendees were shocked to learn that 50 percent of the world’s population belonged to this class. Of that 50 percent 2.5 billion people live in poverty with 925 million suffering from hunger, and in the fifteen minutes it took for people to take their places on the rugs 100 children had already died of chronic hunger. When they scooped out their meager meal of rice and water it wasn’t hard to understand why the statistics were as so. Junior, Dowless Rivers, remarked that she even didn’t like rice, but ate it anyway because she was so hungry. To give an even more eye opening experience the low income group were denied eating utensils and many of them broke off a piece of their bowl to avoid eating with their hands.

The middle income group that makes up about 35 percent of the world’s population was seated at a modest looking table. They were scooped a slightly better but still meager meal of rice and beans. Unlike the low income group they were given eating utensils and even had ice cubes to cool their water.

“It’s the hardest table to sit at”, Fraley said of the heavily decorated table that represented the upper class, which makes up 15 percent of the world’s population. Not only was this group being served their food but they were treated to a three course meal, which included iced tea and water, salad and bread, a full entrée, dessert, and the option of to finish dinner with coffee.

To the people forced to eat the bare minimum that doesn’t seem hard at all. But imagine being watched with such scrutiny by people threatening you saying, “you’d better finish all of your food”, being angry when you didn’t or running up to your table to still your salt and pepper shakers.

While the students tried to make others feel guilty about the advantages they had over people, Fraley’s goal was to have people feeling enlightened and empowered.

“My view was that I was in the middle class, but I guess I’m considered the upper middle class because I live in a nice house, and my parents make an ample amount of money”, said Stephanie Alston, a junior, who came to this conclusion after it was said that the average income of the world’s middle class fell somewhere between $789 and $11,599.

Stephanie explained that she realize how little it was because she only considered the United States population and not the world as a whole.

After dinner Fraley gave students the opportunity to get involved in the war on hunger by signing the OxFam pledge to become more proactive in the fight.

Although only about 12 people signed the pledge, Fraley was just excited that more people took the first step by deciding to coming to the banquet.

Word Count: 650