



## YOUTH SUMMIT on CLIMATE CHANGE

More than two years ago, TAC began mentoring a student environmental club at the Boston Latin School. The club, BLS Youth Climate Action Network, has grown to over 500 network members throughout the greater Boston area. In May, TAC hosted the 3rd Annual Youth Summit on Climate Change with over 300 participants enjoying a day filled with fascinating workshops, fun activities and great food. Workshops covered topics ranging from the science of climate change to corporate responsibility to home energy analysis with MIT graduate students teaching a record number of workshops. Plans are already underway for a bigger and better 4th Annual Youth Summit!

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## Technology and Culture Forum at MIT, 2008-09

77 Massachusetts Ave.  
MIT Building W11  
Cambridge, MA 02139  
<http://web.mit.edu/tac>

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# Technology and Culture Forum at MIT

## Annual Report 2008-09



## TAC: The Year in Review

This annual report will be read by many people: professors, business leaders, students, theologians, journalists, researchers. Some live in New England, but many others are scattered around the globe. Regardless of who you are or where you are, I am sure you have had quite a year. The headlines have been full of unexpected news. Most people I know have been swept into deeper study, greater activism, or fuller contemplation as they try to make sense of a world that is changing quickly and think through what it means to live responsibly and well.

What is responsible action in such a time of peril and promise? This year, the Technology and Culture Forum focused its energies on helping the MIT community address this question. The students, faculty, staff, alums, and friends who attended our events found nourishing food for thought, new models for addressing important issues, and peers with whom to continue the conversation in days ahead.

Running through many of our programs this year was a call to acknowledge how deeply implicated we are in the lives of others whom we have never met. We were challenged to spend, research, work, and build in ways that create justice within the multi-layered interdependencies in which we live and move. In her keynote presentation on World AIDS Day 2009, Elizabeth Pisani explained how prejudice and greed are keeping us from shutting down HIV in many regions of the world. At our standing-room-only forum on Food Locavorism, David Pimentel questioned the ethics of purchasing iceberg lettuce that has been trucked across the continent in winter at a time when sixty percent of the world's population is malnourished. In her "Radical Abundance" presentation, community

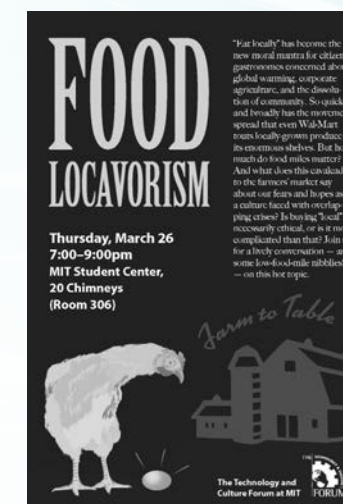
organizer Majora Carter told the story of leading resistance to the building of yet another New York City sewage treatment plant in the South Bronx, a neighborhood with seven-times the average incidence of asthma and twenty percent unemployment.

These are just a few examples from a year of exceptionally inspiring presentations by people who are incarnating the commitment to responsibility for which they are calling. At a time in our history when it is clear that "business as usual" simply will not do, it was deeply moving to see MIT students and others sitting on the edge of their seats, leaning in to catch every word from our presenters. These speakers invigorated the narrative, not only by suggesting new ideas, but by living and working differently—from journalists rejecting the "projectile punditry" that fills the blogosphere and airwaves through committed investigative work, to Hindu

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Elizabeth Pisani



Megan Palmer

## SCIENCE CAFE

In April, the Technology & Culture Forum hosted its first science café! The idea of a science café is to start an inclusive discussion with a scientist in a public setting, usually a bar or coffee shop. Some folks know about the event before hand, some don't, but hopefully all walk away learning some new, innovative science.

In partnership with WGBH's *Nova ScienceNow* and Harvard's *Science in the News*, three science cafes were simultaneously held in different Cambridge pubs on the theme of "Life as we DON'T know it" during the first weekend of the Cambridge Science Festival. TAC hosted a café on Synthetic Biology at the Cambridge Brewing Company, where Dr. Peter Carr described how he and his colleagues are building smart living machines through re-coding of bacterial genomes. Megan Palmer, a graduate student in Biological Engineering and TAC Steering Committee member, moderated a lively conversation that addressed questions ranging from the possible applications of these living tools, to the ethics of 're-engineering' life. It was a fun and informative evening for all, so expect to see more cafes soon! Special thanks to Megan and the Cambridge Brewing Company.



and Christian scholars orienting their lives around a commitment to eradicate poverty.

Speaking of new commitments, TAC plunged into the MIT curriculum this year by offering a semester-long undergraduate seminar on ethics. Entitled “Being, Thinking, Doing (or Not): Ethics and Your Life,” the seminar introduced students to resources that could help them articulate and live their values and convictions. Convened by Philosophy Professor Sally Haslanger and TAC’s Patricia Weinmann, students discussed a wide range of issues, including economic injustice, health care ethics, the ethics of international development work, and global poverty. The seminar was so well-received by the students that we will offer it again next year, along with a second seminar on “Literature and Ethics.”

As always, our best work happens in collaboration. I am particularly thankful this year for our collaborations with the MIT Communications Forum on the programs on the media and the elections; the members of MIT Coalition for the Abolition of Nuclear Weapons for the excellent work we did together on that issue; and Trinity Institute, through which we were able to serve as the Boston gathering site for Radical Abundance: A Theology of Sustainability.

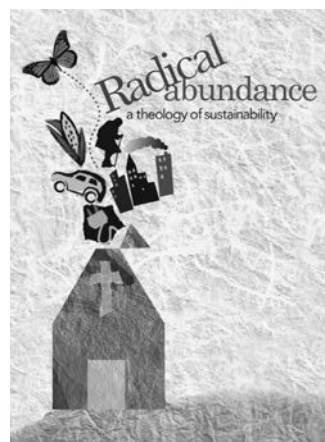
We are grateful for the support of all our contributors, with special thanks going to Campbell Searle for his continuing generosity and to Bill and Betsy Leitch for their deep commitment to TAC.

Finally, please know that I write on behalf of an amazing team. It is such a gift to work alongside Patricia Weinmann, Associate Coordinator, and Christina English, Program Associate, as well as a tremendous steering committee of faculty, students, and alums.

In our 45th year of serving MIT and the world, we are thankful for such meaningful work, for the chance to transform lives, and for the good company of people such as you.

Please be in touch!

*Amy McCreath*



## ETHICS SEMINAR

### Being, Thinking, Doing (Or Not!): Ethics and Your Life

In February 2009, TAC embarked on an exciting new adventure by hosting an undergraduate ethics seminar in cooperation with the MIT Philosophy Department. Professor Sally Haslanger, TAC Steering Committee member, and Patricia Weinmann convened the weekly seminar which introduced the students to the field of ethics. The seminar sought to assist students to build relationships, investigate and solve ethical problems, share resources, and gain skills for clarifying their personal and vocational principles. The seminar met weekly over dinner with guests, representing various disciplines, sharing their expertise. Throughout the semester, students attended at least three pertinent events, wrote reflection papers and presented an oral presentation at the end of the semester, reflecting on insights gained throughout the semester. Guests included Caspar Hare, MIT Philosophy; David Jones, STS; Debra Levy, Harvard University; Richard Parker, Harvard’s Kennedy School; Tiffany Guo, ’09, MIT; Bish Sanyal, MIT Urban Studies and Planning; and Abderrahmane Sissako, MIT Office for the Arts Abramowitz Artist-in-Residence. Very special thanks go to Amy McCreath for her vision, Professor Sally Haslanger for her commitment and enthusiasm, and for their financial support, Nancy and Norman Beecher and Robert Randolph, Chaplain to the Institute.

**The ethics seminar was a great opportunity to take time out of my hectic weekly schedule to share a meal with people with similar interest in learning about our moral obligations and the human condition. By sharing our opinions and learning together, we all grew—as students, citizens, and friends.**

—Catherine Olsson, ’11



Catherine Olsson



## TAC Programs 2008–09

### August 14–17, 2008 THINK OUTSIDE THE BOMB A NATIONAL YOUTH CONFERENCE

A three-day training event for youth activists representing various nuclear abolition organizations and communities from around the country

### September 12, 2008 A SCREENING OF DR. STRANGELOVE

With discussion following the film

Moderator: Jonathan King,  
*Professor of Biology, MIT*

Co-sponsored with the MIT Nuclear Weapons Abolition Initiative and the MIT Lecture Series Committee

### September 25, 2008 THE CAMPAIGN & THE MEDIA: PART 1

Tom Rosenstiel, *Director, Project for Excellence in Journalism*

John Carroll, *Boston University, WGBH-TV*

Ellen Goodman, *Boston Globe*

Moderator: Ellen Hume,  
*Research Director, MIT Center for Future Civic Media*

Co-sponsored with the MIT Communications Forum and the Center for Future Civic Media

### October 3, 2008 7TH ANNUAL INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT FAIR

A showcase of the 50+ groups and programs at MIT offering ways for students to do development-related work (see <http://web.mit.edu/idn/>), sponsored by the MIT International Development Network of which TAC is a founding partner.

### October 22, 2008 US NUCLEAR POLICY: CRITICAL CHOICES—A CONSERVATIVE AND PROGRESSIVE VIEW

Joseph Cirincione, *President of Ploughshares Fund*

Mark Esper, *Executive Vice President, Global Intellectual Property Center, U.S. Chamber of Commerce*

Co-sponsored with the Center for International Studies and the MIT Nuclear Weapons Abolition Initiative

### October 23, 2008 SPIRITUALITY AND POVERTY

Ananta Kumar Giri, *Associate Professor, Madras Institute of Development Studies*

Lallie Lloyd, author of *Eradicating Global Poverty: A Christian Study Guide on the MDGs*



Xaq Frohlich, a TAC Steering Committee member and graduate student in STS, was the organizing force behind the hugely popular locavorism program on March 26. With him are (from left to right) panelists Susanne Freidberg, Steve Johnson and David Pimentel.

### November 13, 2008 THE CAMPAIGN & THE MEDIA: PART 2

Ian Rowe, *Vice President of Strategic Partnerships and Public Affairs for MTV*

Marc Ambinder, *The Atlantic*

Cyrus Krohn, *Republican National Committee*

Moderator: Henry Jenkins,  
*Director of the MIT Comparative Media Studies Program and the Peter de Florez Professor of Humanities*

Co-sponsored with the MIT Communications Forum and the Center for Future Civic Media

### November 16, 2008 MASSACHUSETTS CLIMATE ACTION NETWORK CONFERENCE

A full day of presentations by leaders in industry, academia, and activism (presentations available at <http://massclimateaction.net>)

### December 1, 2008 AIDS: WHEN WILL IT END?

Elizabeth Pisani, author of *The Wisdom of Whores: Bureaucrats, Brothels, and the Business of AIDS*

Respondent: Dr. Galit Alter,  
*Instructor, Partners in AIDS Research Center, Mass General Hospital*

Co-sponsored with the MIT Museum

### January 14, 2009 EXPELLED: FILM AND DISCUSSION ON INTELLIGENT DESIGN & AMERICAN SCHOOLS

Moderator: David Jones,  
*Associate Professor of the History and Culture of Science and Technology at MIT*

### January 30, 2009 THE FUTURE OF INVENTING: AUTOMATED, COLLABORATIVE, AND DISTRIBUTED INVENTING

Robert Plotkin, Esq.

### January 30–31 2009 RADICAL ABUNDANCE: A THEOLOGY OF SUSTAINABILITY

Boston area gathering for the national Trinity Institute annual conference

Majora Carter, *founder of Sustainable South Bronx & MacArthur “Genius” Fellow*

Timothy Gorringer, author of *A Theology of the Built Environment: Justice, Empowerment, Redemption*

David Korten, author of *When Corporations Rule the World* and *The Great Turning: From Empire to Earth Community*

Co-sponsored with the Episcopal Diocese of MA

### February 26, 2009 POLITICS AND POPULAR CULTURE

Johanna Blakley, *Deputy Director Norman Lear Center*

David Carr, *New York Times*

Stephen Duncombe, *New York University*

Moderator: Henry Jenkins,  
*Director of the MIT Comparative Media Studies Program and the Peter de Florez Professor of Humanities*

Co-sponsored with the MIT Communications Forum and the Center for Future Civic Media

### March 13, 2009 CHINESE REFORM AND US-CHINESE RELATIONS IN THE AGE OF OBAMA

A conversation with delegates from the Chinese People’s Association for Peace and Disarmament

Mao Rubai, *Former Chairman of the Energy Committee of the People’s Congress*

Co-sponsored with the MIT Working Group on Science, Technology, and Global Security at STS and the American Friends Service Committee

### March 26, 2009 FOOD LOCAVORISM

David Pimentel, *Professor of Entomology, Cornell University*

Susanne Freidberg, *Associate Professor of Geography, Dartmouth College*

Steve Johnson, *Owner and Executive Chef, Rendezvous Restaurant*

Moderator: Steven Shapin, *Franklin L. Ford Professor of the History of Science, Harvard University*

### April 3, 2009 INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT NIGHT @ MIT

A showcase and social networking event featuring innovations by MIT students, sponsored by the MIT International Development Network of which TAC is a founding partner.

Co-sponsored with the MIT Museum with support from the Office of the Dean of Graduate Education

### April 26, 2009 LIFE AS WE DON’T KNOW IT— SYNTHETIC BIOLOGY: RECODING LIFE

A “science café” gathering, offered as part of a year-long celebration of science in partnership with the Coalition on the Public Understanding of Science (see <http://www.copusproject.org>)

### May 9, 2009 YOUTH SUMMIT ON GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE

A full day of workshops for Boston-area high school students (see <http://www.blsouthcan.org/>)

Co-sponsored with the Boston Latin School Youth Climate Action Network



Caytie Campbell-Orrick, a junior at the Boston Latin School, was one of the many enthusiastic students attending the 3rd Annual Youth Summit on Global Climate Change on May 9, 2009.



TAC representatives Christina English, Amy McCreath, and Patricia Weinmann enjoyed a lively evening of discussion and networking at the International Development Night @ MIT on April 4, 2009 at the MIT Museum.



Susan Murcott, MIT Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, vividly describes her work in clean water technology during the 7th Annual International Development Fair on October 3, 2008.