

NEWS RELEASE

Wilfrid Laurier
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Coverage of poverty in the media at issue in panel discussion

Poverty activist and journalists take part in dialogue on journalism and human rights

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BRANTFORD – The founder and spokesperson for the Ontario Coalition Against Poverty (OCAP) will join a local journalist who covers poverty and the media relations officer for a local Aboriginal community on a panel discussing the media’s representation – some say under-representation – of the 1.7 million Canadian households currently living on less than \$20,000 a year.

OCAP’s John Clarke, reporter Bill Dunphy and Dan David will address Laurier Brantford students and the community during the second lecture of a Journalism and Human Rights Speaker Series on Tuesday, February 7 at 12:30 p.m. in the Brant Community Church.

Clarke and OCAP work with low-income people to ease the burden of day-to-day life below the poverty line. Recently, OCAP successfully launched a program in which physicians provide signed forms allowing individuals, who are financially unable to meet their basic daily nutritional requirements, to receive a food supplement.

“The problem of poverty and homelessness is something which we, unfortunately, only see in the media in times of extreme tragedy,” says Sue Ferguson, journalism professor at Laurier Brantford. “Each of the people on the panel is striving to change that way of thinking, and getting their message to future journalists and community leaders is one way to ensure we can make a difference now and in the future.”

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One of the few reporters assigned to a poverty beat, Dunphy has played a large role in bringing poverty issues to the forefront in Hamilton. The front page of the city's daily newspaper, *The Spectator*, was left blank on Saturday, October 29, 2005, except for the following words: "The stories have been removed from this page to remind us that nearly 100,000 children, women and men live in poverty in Hamilton, people whose stories rarely make the front page. We're going to change that."

David, a former news director at the Aboriginal Peoples Television Network and CBC national affairs journalist, is the current media relations officer at Six Nations of the Grand River Territory near Brantford. He will speak to the coverage of poverty among Aboriginal communities, particularly that of the recent emergency evacuation of the Kashechewan First Nation.

This is the second in a three-part lecture series. The final speaker will be Martha Kuwee Kumsa, a former Ethiopian journalist who was jailed for almost a decade. On March 7 at 3 p.m. at the Brant Community Church, she will speak about her journey to freedom and a new life in Canada, as well as offer her perspective on the role of journalism in human rights, both at home and abroad.

For more information about the journalism or human rights and human diversity programs, please visit www.wlu.ca/brantford.