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Lecture tackles overpopulation

U.N. Population Laureate Werner Fornos addressed several issues, including reproductive education

By Cory Eldridge
Freelance Reporter

United Nations Population Laureate Werner Fornos spoke to an audience of 200 Thursday evening about the "problem of overpopulation." The speech was part of Fornos' ongoing lecture series advocating methods to level-off the global population.

Spanish major Paul Lubliner organized the efforts to bring Fornos to the University.

"This is an issue that needs to be addressed more somehow, and bringing Fornos here is one way to get the message out there a little more," he said.

Eradication of female illiteracy was a main point of Fornos' lecture. According to Fornos, women with an eighth-grade education have half as many children as uneducated women.

In addition to a number of other issues, Fornos said access to contraceptives or birth control information was vital to curbing the world's population. These problems occur most often in underdeveloped nations, which typically have high population growth rates, Fornos said.

He cited countries including Bangladesh as a common cases of overpopulation. Bangladesh has a population of 130 million and is the size of Wisconsin, which has a population of only 5.5 million.

Fornos criticized the American government for not doing enough to solve the problem.

"Right now the United States is spending a cup of coffee and a doughnut on reproduction education," he said.

He cited the United States' withdrawal of funding to a United Nations-backed population education program, adding that the United States is currently the only country not funding or participating in the program.

The education program provides information about birth control and free contraceptives to people in underdeveloped countries. Fornos said condoms were the most important contraceptives to slow population growth.

Fornos also criticized religious groups and the Bush administration's push for abstinence as a replacement for condoms and other contraceptives as birth control.

"I have no problem with abstinence education, but I have a problem with bad science that says condoms are bad for your health," he said. "The problem with voodoo religious ideas instead of good science is that it causes death."

"(Overpopulation) may see us committing the ultimate global blunder from which there is no return," Fornos said.

Population is not a problem in the United States, Lubliner said, but is something that will affect the country in the future.

"UO students should learn about this problem so they can help find a solution to it," he said. "We need to look a few generations down the line and see where we're headed."

Cory Eldridge is a freelance reporter for the Emerald.

NEWS BRIEF

Peace Walker will give presentation Saturday

Derek Walker Youngs, who has been walking for peace for the last 18 years, will present a multimedia presentation Saturday at 7:30 p.m. in 110 Willamette.

The 90-minute presentation will include more than 100 images and storytelling from Youngs' walks in Europe, Africa, the Middle East and North America. There will also be a preview of his documentary, "Walking in Israel," where he walked 80 kilometers with a group of other Canadians from the Mediterranean Sea to Jerusalem.

According to a release from the Peace Walker Society, Youngs has walked more than 24,000 kilometers in 17 countries. He has gone from "walking for peace to walking in peace," when he walks without knowing where he will sleep or eat next.

Tickets to the event are a $10 donation and are $5 for students and low-income individuals.

For more information about Youngs or the Peace Walker Society, visit http://www.peacewalker.com. To order advance tickets, contact Maya Lester at 485-7073 or e-mail mayalester@yahoo.com.

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