

TEMPLETON REPORT

NEWS FROM THE JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

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Big Science in the Big City

Lightning flashed and rain poured on May 31st in Manhattan's Washington Square Park. It was the day of the street fair at the first-ever World Science Festival, but the nasty weather did not stop some 100,000 people from showing up—enough that the NYPD had to close off four extra blocks to traffic. The four-day Festival, which received major funding from the John Templeton Foundation, featured 46 lectures, debates, shows, and other events at 22 different New York City venues, from Greenwich Village to Harlem. Unlike the street fair, most of the events required tickets, and every one of them was sold out.



The World Science Festival is the brainchild of Brian Greene, a professor of physics and mathematics at Columbia University and a leading string theorist, and his wife Tracy Day, a former broadcast journalist and ABC News producer. Greene is the author of the best-selling books *The Elegant Universe* and *The Fabric of the Cosmos*, and he devotes much of his time to science education. To promote the Festival, Greene even sparred with Stephen Colbert on Comedy Central's *The Colbert Report*:

Colbert: Science! What's the big deal? Why's it so great? . . .

Greene: Science is truly everywhere. It tells us why the sky is blue. . . .

Colbert: The sky is blue because it's God's favorite color!

Greene: There are other explanations.



Brian Greene

Appearing on a show like *The Colbert Report*, says Greene, provides him with “an opportunity to mix comedy banter with some real content about how science shapes our attitudes toward the big questions.” The overwhelming response to the World Science Festival shows that “many people are searching for meaning. They want to know why we are here and how we got here. It's wonderful to tap into these age-old questions and give people a sense of where science can take us for answers.”

The Templeton Foundation sponsored the Festival's Big Idea Series, which consisted of five panels:

Echoes from the Beginning: A Journey Through Space and Time. What existed before the Big Bang? Is there an origin of time? Do we live in a multiverse? The panel was moderated by NPR's Ira Flatow and included leading cosmologists Lawrence Krauss, Paul Steinhardt, and Lyman Page, as well as historian of science Helge Kragh.

Invisible Reality: The Wonderful Weirdness of the Quantum World, a discussion of the practical and philosophical implications of the laws governing the smallest constituents of the universe. Moderated by actor Alan Alda, the panel included physicists Brian Greene, Max Tegmark, and Nobel Laureate William Phillips, as well as the physicist-turned-philosopher David Albert.

Faith and Science explored issues at the boundary between science and religion, including what scientists say about their own faith and what science says about spirituality. The panel was moderated by Bill Blakemore of ABC News and featured the Catholic theologian Monsignor Lorenzo Albacete, physicist William Phillips, and the psychologists Paul Bloom and Nina Azari.

Beyond Einstein: In Search of the Ultimate Explanation. As physicists continue their efforts to realize Einstein's dream of a "unified theory," many questions remain about what such a theory might reveal. Historian of science and MacArthur Award-winner Peter Galison and physicists Leonard Susskind, Janna Levin, and Jim Gates participated in a discussion moderated by Nobel Laureate Paul Nurse.

What It Means to Be Human examined how discoveries in fields like physics, anthropology, and genomics are influencing our understanding of human nature. Charlie Rose of PBS had the task of managing ten distinguished panelists, including the philosophers Daniel Dennett and Patricia Churchland, anthropologist Ian Tattersall, geneticist Francis Collins, and the Nobel Laureates Harold Varmus and Paul Nurse.

The *New York Times* praised the World Science Festival as "a new cultural institution" while noting that the JTF-sponsored discussion of "What It Means to Be Human" was "the panel that everyone wanted to be on." The Festival received extensive media coverage, including the *Washington Post*, *Wall Street Journal*, *USA Today*, *Newsweek*, *Scientific American*, *Good Morning America*, *ABC World News Tonight*, and the *BBC World Service*.

Gary Rosen, the Templeton Foundation's chief external affairs officer, praised the inaugural World Science Festival for its ambitious educational aims: "It's a perfect complement to the scientific research we fund. It lets the public experience some of the excitement of exploring the biggest of Big Questions about our universe."

NOTEBOOK

Anti-Slavery Heroes Recognized

At a ceremony in Los Angeles this past Monday, the advocacy group Free the Slaves presented the 2008 Freedom Awards to four remarkable leaders of the international anti-slavery movement. Based in Washington D.C., Free the Slaves is one of the foremost anti-slavery organizations in the world today, working to eradicate slavery and to help former slaves rebuild their lives. The Freedom Awards are underwritten by the Templeton Foundation.

According to Kimon Sargeant, the Foundation's vice president of human sciences, the awards are meant to honor those who "combine the best of two world-changing forces that were central to Sir John Templeton's vision: the power of noble purpose to inspire lives of great significance, and the central importance of enhancing and expanding individual freedom." Sargeant notes that the awards "also honor the memory of Sir John's daughter Anne Templeton Zimmerman, who herself was a dedicated and courageous advocate for ending slavery and promoting religious freedom."



The 2008 Freedom Awards:

- The Harriet Tubman Reintegration Award was given to Anywar Ricky Richards of Uganda. A former child soldier, Richards co-founded Friends of Orphans, which is dedicated to helping child soldiers.
- Amihan Abueva of the Philippines received the William Wilberforce Leadership Award. In 1991, Abueva co-founded ECPAT International (End Child Prostitution, Child Pornography, and Trafficking of Children for Sexual Purposes). Today ECPAT has a presence in more than 70 countries.
- The Brazilian organizations Comissão Pastoral da Terra and Reporter Brasil shared the Harriet Tubman Community Award. Together they have freed thousands from slavery and have harnessed the power of the marketplace to make slaveholding unprofitable.
- James Kofi Annan of Ghana, who was sold into slavery at age 6, received the Frederick Douglass Award. In 2003 Annan started Challenging Heights to empower children to avoid slavery through education.

Barrow Wins Faraday Prize

The Royal Society has announced that the winner of the 2008 Michael Faraday Prize is John D. Barrow of the University of Cambridge. A cosmologist and mathematician and the 2006 Templeton Prize Laureate, Barrow is the author of more than a dozen science books for general readers, including the best-selling *Pi in the Sky* and *Theories of Everything*. The Faraday Prize is the United Kingdom's top award for public science education and is given annually to "the scientist or engineer whose expertise in communicating scientific ideas in lay terms is exemplary." Previous winners include David Attenborough, Harry Kroto, Lewis Wolpert, Susan Greenfield, Richard Dawkins, and Paul Davies.



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Gross Honored by the Queen

JTF grantee Miraca U.M. Gross was honored in June by Queen Elizabeth II with the Order of Australia, the country's highest recognition for outstanding achievement and service. Gross is a professor in the School of Education at the University of New South Wales and director of the university's Gifted Education Research Resource and Information Centre. Her citation for the Order of Australia commended her "service to education as an academic, researcher, and author through the design and delivery of programs and policies for gifted students and their teachers."

Recognized internationally as a leading authority on the education of gifted and talented students, Gross was the author in 2004 of the two-volume Templeton Foundation report titled *A Nation Deceived: How Schools Hold Back America's Brightest Students*. She also edited *Radical Acceleration of Highly Gifted Children: An Annotated Bibliography of International Research*, which was prepared in 2002 with the support of the Foundation.

For more information, write to communications@templeton.org.

JOHN TEMPLETON FOUNDATION

SUPPORTING SCIENCE - INVESTING IN THE BIG QUESTIONS