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Editor's Note

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EDITOR'S NOTE

In the Spring of each year, the Institute for Global Citizenship sponsors the Macalester Civic Forum. The goal of the Forum is to provide the Macalester community with an annual opportunity to explore the "big" normative issues related to civic life, leadership, and engagement in early 21st-century America. In the inaugural year, 2007, the Forum focused on a number of questions that we considered to be foundational to such an endeavor: (a) how should we conceptualize "global citizenship" and (b) what are the key issues pertaining to the theory and practice of global citizenship in the contemporary era? These questions were addressed by the College's President, Provost, Dean for the Study of Race and Ethnicity, Dean of the Institute for Global Citizenship, and Chaplain, as well as three distinguished scholars focusing on specific issues related to global citizenship on each of its three spatial scales (local, national, transnational).

This year we introduced what we expect will be the standard format for all future Civic Forums: (1) a keynote address delivered by a noted scholar or public intellectual (with responses from Macalester faculty or alumni); (2) a series of commissioned student papers (with responses from Macalester faculty); and (3) a series of student-organized events related to the theme of the Forum. We also sharpened the focus, exploring the intersection of the concepts of "citizenship" (broadly construed) and the "environment." Our goal was to address the following profound questions:

- How should we think about our civic obligations to the environment?
- How, and to what extent, can concepts such as "environmental citizenship," the "Green state" and "environmental justice" help us understand and address issues of environmental responsibility and sustainability facing the United States today?
- How might we envision a post-liberal state in the U.S. that embodies the moral values of "ecological stewardship" and "Green democracy"?

These questions were addressed by our keynote speaker, the distinguished environmental historian Donald Worster, as well as by a number of Macalester students and faculty members. They were also the focus of a "*café scientifique*" that preceded the Forum as well as a

student-organized "continuing the conversation" session that followed it. Our expectation was that this series of events would challenge and inspire members of the Macalester community to think seriously about the civic dimension of environmental issues. Given the quality of the essays assembled in this volume, we believe that this expectation was met—indeed, exceeded. We hope that you find them as insightful and inspiring as did the faculty, staff, and students who heard them when first presented at the College in early 2008.

Next year, the Forum will focus on the issue of "Religion in American Public Life." The guiding question will be: What is the proper role of religion in the "public square" of an increasingly diverse early 21st-century America? We have invited Dr. Linel Cady, the Franca Oreffice Dean's Distinguished Professor of Religious Studies and Director of the Arizona State University's Center for the Study of Religion and Conflict, to provide us with an overview of the salient normative issues related to religion in American civic life. We have also commissioned four students, representing a variety of academic disciplines, to explore elements of this question from the perspective of evangelical Christianity, Islam, and secularism. In the best tradition of the liberal arts, we anticipate that the Third Annual Macalester Civic Forum will involve a lively and edifying exchange of ideas that will ultimately help our students decide for themselves if, when, and in what ways religion should shape the purposes, institutions, and ethical underpinnings of civic life in contemporary America.