

Not all's sweet in cocoa industry: Off

CATHERINE SCOTT
News Writer

The second lecturer of this year's Revolutionary Speaker Series, Carol Off spoke to an attentive audience on 13 November at the Myer Horowitz Theatre about her most recent book, *Bitter Chocolate: Exploring the Dark Side of the World's Most Seductive Sweet*.

Off, a Canadian journalist and host of "As It Happens" on CBC, has done investigative and sometimes controversial journalism for years, and she was on campus Monday night to discuss her latest story: the use of child slave labour in the cocoa industry.

"I just want [everyone] to know what's going on," Off stated simply.

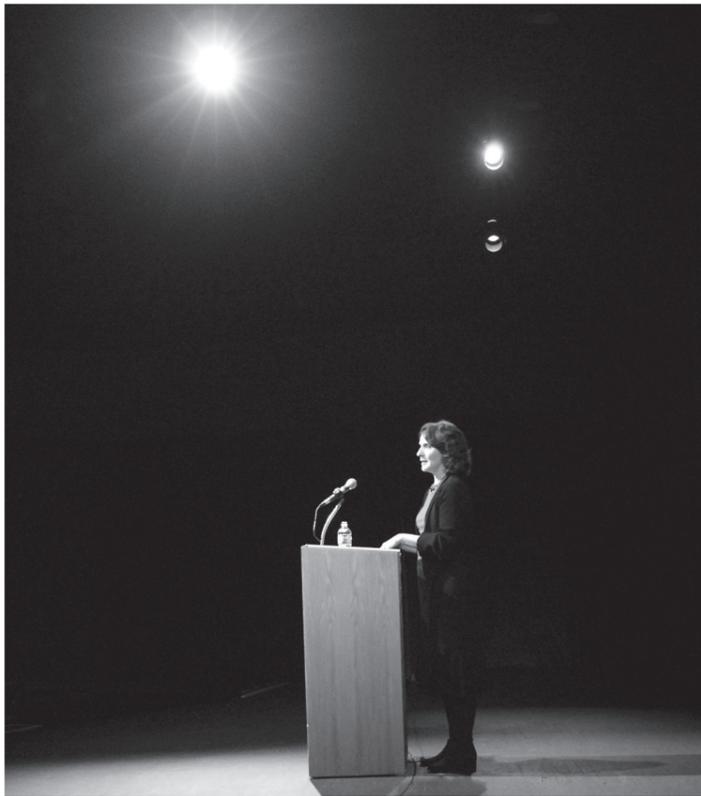
Every time Off looks at a chocolate bar, she says she sees the faces of child slaves. However, she doesn't want to ruin anyone's enjoyment of chocolate, she just wants to raise awareness.

As part of her research, Off interviewed several cocoa farmers and children who worked on farms in Africa, particularly in the Ivory Coast. Off found that, just as most North American children know little about where and how that chocolate bar was made, African children don't know what happens to the fruits of their labour.

"It's unthinkable ... [that African children] don't even know what we do with [the cocoa bean]," Off said with incredulity.

Off then spoke of the history of the chocolate bar. She told the audience about Milton Hershey, who started the well-known chocolate company to democratize chocolate; because, until just about the 20th century, chocolate wasn't widely available for the masses—only the wealthy Europeans had access to it.

"Only elites consumed [a liquid chocolate]," Off explained. According to Off, Hershey was one of the first men to make a five-cent chocolate bar.



ASHLEY SCARLETT

COCOA CORRUPTION Slave labour leaves a bad taste in Carol Off's mouth.

His employees were treated very well and with respect, but the cocoa he used came from slave labour.

"[Except, at that time] slavery was officially outlawed, which was replaced by an 'indentured labour system,'" Off said.

She also mentioned the Cadbury family, who were considered very revolutionary (they strongly opposed King Leopold's presence in the Congo). They knowingly got their cocoa from Angolan slaves, who worked so hard they were dying in the fields, Off said in her speech.

Off related the story of Henry Nevison, a well-respected journalist, who exposed the two sides to Cadbury chocolate. Before the situa-

tion could be looked into any further, Cadbury moved their operations to Ghana, where conditions were slightly better.

Today, however, Off explained that consumers have the option of buying fair trade chocolate. While this kind of chocolate may be more expensive, she says that the extra price is well worth it.

"[As consumers], we want cheap goods and we don't always face [the reality]," Off noted.

Finally, she encouraged citizen action as another option.

"I believe that we have more power as citizens than as consumers ... we need to pressure big chocolate ... this is unacceptable," she concluded.

Other medical myths may exist: Wilson

BOOMERS • CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

Fast, who has researched the costs associated with taking on care responsibilities for family members and friends outside of the formal system, noted there are other drivers of costs in the health-care system that are far more problematic than population aging—a sentiment echoed by spokesmen for Alberta Health and Wellness, Howard May, who pointed to factors such as extraordinarily expensive medical technologies and drug treatment.

Since the release of her research, Wilson said there has been an enormous amount of interest from government, other researchers across Canada, health-care planners and hospitals administrators asking her to share her report.

"People are planning to kind of duplicate this study across Canada to see [whether] this also happening in [their] province," Wilson explained, noting previously held American studies aren't relevant to apply to Canada's

very different health-care system.

And while Wilson's data was limited to Alberta, she suspects the results are similar to what would be found in any mid-sized-to-large Canadian hospital.

Wilson also noted that her research may shed light on to how easy it is to have myths driving policy changes, and explained most health-care data is left unanalyzed.

"We could have many other myths out there about who's using health-care," Wilson concluded.

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