

On Friday, January 19, 2007 the Center began the second half of this year's *Conversations at Lunch* series with a discussion led by Nina Siulc of the Vera Institute of Justice, New York. Ms. Siulc described to a group of about twenty Boston College faculty, staff, and students, including the theology department's Ray Helmick, S.J. as well as several of the Post-Deportation Human Rights Project's attorneys, her recent work in the Dominican Republic studying persons deported from the United States owing to criminal offenses. Often marginalized from a society they have had little or no prior exposure to, Ms. Siulc found that, despite preconceived notions of these deported "criminals" held by the greater Dominican society, the deportees, mostly men, were no more likely than other Dominicans to commit crime after their deportation. Most of the deportees Ms. Siulc worked with were convicted of minor drug offenses in the United States, served their time, and then, upon release, found themselves again behind bars, this time in INS detention awaiting permanent deportation. Deportation is a blanket punishment for breaking the law, however minor the offense, for those in the United States without citizenship; compelling reasons to not deport, including family or occupational responsibilities, are not taken into consideration. Described also was the American government's unbending policy of denying deportees reentry into the U.S. despite valid reasons or legal allowances. Ms. Siulc's short overview of her work was followed by questions from the luncheon audience, questions that brought increasing light on the abuses suffered by those deported from the United States for minor criminal offenses.