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Documentary Screening Brings Baha'i Institute for Higher Education into Focus

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Audience members tweeted the Ayatollah for justice March 13 following a screening of "To Light a Candle" at Lafayette Library. Photo provided

arrive, singly or in pairs, over the course of an entire morning, so as not to attract attention, and would receive the most intensive education under the most primitive of conditions, returning to their towns and villages across the country to read and study.

According to Dr. Tina Edraki, of the Lafayette Baha'i community, instructors and students operate under constant threat of arrest and imprisonment and many languish in prison today.

The campaign "Education is not a Crime," under which the film was shown, seeks to draw attention to BIHE and to the systematic persecution and resilience of the Baha'i community in Iran. It also seeks to expand the network of Western universities that recognize BIHE certificates.

The campaign's website, <http://www.educationisnotacrime.me> asks students to record and submit interviews reflecting on the theme of "Education is not a Crime," and to tweet Ayatollah Khamenei and President Hassan Rouhani, to put them on notice that the world is watching. Several young audience members stayed after the presentation to record their reflections and to tweet authorities in Iran that "#educationisnotacrime." The event was sponsored by Lafayette's Baha'i community.

Approximately 80 people attended the Lafayette Library screening March 13 of journalist Maziar Bahari's new documentary, "To Light a Candle" - a film about Iran's Baha'is and their commitment to spreading knowledge. A panel discussion following the film included scholars Niknaz Aftahi and Fares Hedayati, Baha'i Institute for Higher Education (BIHE) graduates who were accepted into the graduate schools of architecture and engineering, respectively, at UC Berkeley.

After Iranian authorities outlawed higher education for Baha'i youth in 1987, the community formed the BIHE, a highly innovative underground university. With standards so high that over 80 Western graduate schools (including UC) accept their credentials, according to Dr. Farhad Sabetan, moderator of the panel, they also operate as a community, leaving no one behind.

Aftahi and Hedayati described their BIHE experience, recounting how classes were held in living rooms and basements, how they would

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