Jan 31, 1961, University of Utah hosts Martin Luther King

How many of us know that Dr. Martin Luther King gave a speech in the Union Ballroom and that this month marks the 50th anniversary of that visit? The following is adapted from a paper, The Martin Luther King, Jr. Visit to Utah, written in 1996 by Dr. Forrest Crawford, Professor and Assistant to the President for Diversity at Weber State University, recounting this historic visit.

In 1960, Martin Luther King, Jr. was clearly emerging as the point person of the civil rights movement, following the successful boycott of the Montgomery City bus system seeking to end segregation in the city’s transportation system. Dr. King had by contacted by the ASUU executive officers to speak on the importance of integration. This was to be part of the well-known lecture series which had already scheduled noted people such as Al Kapp, the popular cartoonist and anthropologist, Margaret Mead. On January 31, 1961, over 2,000 students and community members, young, old, Black and white, gathered in the Olpin Union Ballroom to hear the young eloquent civil rights preacher from the South.

Upon hearing the news that Dr. King was delayed in

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This column features stories by Student Affairs professionals and students who are willing to share an experience (event, book, speaker, etc) which promoted growth, a change in perspective, an awareness of another, or when some knowledge that was previously missing slipped into place.

Living under the shadow of the U

2 University of Utah students

Imagine having to live two lives. Having to live in two different worlds. Having to hide a part of your reality in order to survive each and every day. This is what we undocumented students have to face in our quotidian lives. We live in two worlds. Our first world is composed of our reality, our truth, our daily experiences, and the fact that we are undocumented students living in this great nation we call home. Our second world is the world in which we need to hide a part of our identity in order to survive. This world is divided into two components: the physical side, and the emotional side. On the physical side there is a see-through wall, a transparent obstacle that allows us to see all the possibilities that are out there for every student, yet it is this same

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wall that prevents us from reaching our full academic potentials. On the other side, we have learned to put on a masquerade to hide part of who we are; we learn to hide our true emotions, and learn to emit emotional responses that help us blend in in our educational lives.

Throughout our educational experiences we have found hope in our dreams. Since a young age we are taught that if we work hard to achieve our goals and if we never give up, we can become anything we want to become in life; however, when our reality comes into play, it shows the truth that we must face as undocumented students. Being an undocumented student at the University of Utah—and at any other higher ed. institution—is living in uncertainty. Every day is a struggle not only because we face the challenges every student at the U faces, but because we have to carry that extra weight on our shoulders of having to live a dual life; a life which we must learn to hide from the people that surround us.

We will not stop until we have reached our dreams, our full potentials, and help to contribute to the communities that have helped us grow.

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ON-GOING
Oct 21, 2010 - Feb 13, 2011
Art Exhibition
Utah Museum of Fine Arts
Trevor Southey: Reconciliation
http://umfa.utah.edu/

Tuesday, January 18, 2011
12:00 Noon
Olpin Student Union Ballroom
MLK Week Presentation *
Reaffirming Equal Opportunity
Dr. Kimberle Crenshaw,
Professor of Law, UCLA

Wednesday, January 19, 2011
10:45am – 12:00 Noon
Hinckley Institute of Politics
Caucus Room, OSH 255
MLK Week Presentation *
Reaffirming Equal Opportunity: Should the Utah Constitution Be Amended?
Panel Discussion

Wednesday, January 19, 2011
12:00 Noon -1:30pm
Parlor A, Union Building
SADC’s Understanding Diversity Series: Threads of Diversity and Social Justice in American Music: Part II
Theresa Martinez, Associate Professor, Department of Sociology and Assistant Vice President for Academic Outreach

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living under the shadow of the U, continued

The DREAM Act. However, to our disappointment, it did not pass. The DREAM Act would have allowed many undocumented youth brought up in this country a path to citizenship for serving the country by either following an educational or military path. Many of these students graduate at the top of their high school class, but their migratory status does not allow them to get the full-rides scholarships any documented student would have.

Our goals and aspirations have not died, and neither has the DREAM Act. We are still hopeful this new year will see our dream and the dream of many undocumented youth become a reality. At a local level, the Utah legislative session will soon begin, and the word is that at least 12 immigration laws have already been written. If any of these proposed laws pass, they will have a direct impact on us, and all of the students in our communities who are only trying to better themselves by obtaining an education. Among these bills, the repeal of instate tuition for undocumented students proposed by Representative Wimmer, and the copycat S.B. 1070 law proposed by Representative Sandstrom, are the bills we’re most fearful about.

We are truthfully thankful for the people who have supported us through our educational journeys. It is because of them that we have made it this far and they understand that our only crime is wanting and getting an education. We will not stop until we have reached our dreams, our full potentials, and help to contribute to the communities that have helped us grow.

Jan 31, 1961, University of Utah hosts Martin Luther King, con’t

Denver and would be an hour late, the question became, “what can we do for an hour?”. One of the student government leaders approached Dr. J. D. Williams, a young U of U professor of political science and scholar of civil rights issues and constitutional law. Dr. Williams, who was expecting to sit as an inconspicuous member of the audience, reluctantly said yes. Little did the students know that Dr. Williams, in fact, had already outlined a speech, titled “Does Three-fifths Equal One?”, but had not yet had the opportunity to test it on an audience. His talk on continuing inequality set the stage for Dr. King who entered the Union just as Dr. Williams finished.

The audience sat attentively when Dr. King forcefully asserted, “I am convinced opponents of segregation are fighting a losing battle. While the reactionary forces are busy crying ‘never’, segregation is gradually crumbling around them.” King’s concluding words, as he emphasized the importance of non-violent methods for bringing about change were, “We must work for first class citizenship, but never use second class methods to attain it.” Following a standing ovation, he answered questions from the audience and then met with community and student leaders. The then ASUU President, John Bennion, recalls how at ease he was, “working the crowd, shaking hands and answering questions. It was as if he was a magnet to people”.

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Jan 31, 1961, U of U hosts Martin Luther King, con’t

“As Dr. King’s departure time grew near, a brief dinner and informal conversation with the student body officers at the airport was a fitting closure to what started out as an evening of awkward ad-libbing to fill program, and moved to a transforming moment when Utah citizens received visionary marching orders that would later affirm his message yielding to several mandates and laws that would make integration (however controversial) a matter of fact by the early 70’s.”

Last Fall, a team of five MBA students looked at a question we had posed, “How do we recruit and retain a diverse staff in Student Affairs?”. As part of their research, a survey was sent to all Student Affairs employees in November, with 158 responding. Next month’s issue will feature the results of this survey but—as a preview—below are staff responses regarding perceptions of the changing climate within Student Affairs.

To what extent is the intercultural climate within your department in the Division of Student Affairs improving or regressing?