

The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division.

Reflection:



By Keagan Walker
 Assistant Residential Education

I am a graduate student in the College of Education, but yet a number of distinct experiences remind me that, as a black male in America, I am often feared and perceived to be out of place. For example, my tenure at the University of Utah has been consistently synonymous with an association with intercollegiate athletics or as an “angry black male” caricature. Are you a football player? Have you ever played football? You’re passionate! Your words put people on the defensive! I become disenchanted every time I receive such comments. I assume that the comments are a result of micro-aggressive ignorance. However, during certain points of my life, I can recall perpetuating micro-aggressive acts against other powerless identities. The never ending cycle of structural oppression, which fuels interpersonal oppression, places us

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Diversity, meaning “difference” encompasses a wide range of identities, experiences, and constructs. Under this ideal, it becomes convenient to conflate certain experiences, which does not provide a practical platform to deal with the stark social realities associated with certain identities. As a result, “what’s important” or “which experiences symbolize

all within vulnerable and damaging positions. As individuals interested in the progression of educational equity, employing a nuanced critique of our institutions, personal actions, and thoughts is pivotal if higher education intends to persist within the 21st century multicultural America. My recent experiences have presented a new paradigm within my outlook on diversity discourse with higher education. What is the purpose? Are we effectively serving the most vulnerable student populations and students who have been deemed disposable?

Overall, social justice and diversity initiatives have gained prominent traction within higher education. It is rare to identify institutions of higher education that do not show some form of a symbolic commitment to multiculturalism and diversity. On the surface, diversity symbolism serves as a beneficial purpose. However, multiculturalism and diversity initiatives do have limitations, particularly within the context of higher education. First, it appears difficult to truly give credence to certain experiences and constructs under the guise of diversity.

diversity” is left up to discretion of those with power and cultural capital within the campus environment. Additionally, surface level diversity and multicultural initiatives can be restricted to “understanding different identities” versus

“understanding how structural oppression impacts different identities.” Certain issues have lost significant traction within the movement toward multiculturalism and diversity. For example, race and racism continues to occupy a pernicious place within the American higher education context. However, there appears to be a distinct underlining fear associated with discussions of race. From my experience, if students or campus community members are given the option to promulgate a “diversity” issue, race seems to be immediately excluded from the conversation.

Secondly, surface level multiculturalism and diversity initiatives feed into the fatigue and guilt that some with power and privilege experience. Given “diversity’s” attention to a wide range of issues, it becomes very convenient to discard discussions that one may be uncomfortable with. Statements like “diversity is more than X” can be commonplace within campus environments. While this statement may be accurate on the surface, it’s important to analyze the context of the statement. Has the individual making the statement shown a commitment and willingness to engage on the topic they perceive to be overanalyzed? Furthermore, not effectively employing diversity discourse can lead to individuals disengaging from topics that may be

uncomforting. Challenging students and staff to critically engage with uncomfortable topics can make significant progress in the pursuit towards educational equity. Institutions of higher education must adopt what Sociologist Margaret Anderson refers to as “critical multiculturalism.” This approach places the barbarity of white supremacy, patriarchy, homophobia, transphobia, and other pernicious constructs at the forefront of diversity discourse. It acknowledges the presence of oppression as a permanent fixture within institutions of higher education which fuels the norms and rules of institutional practices.

Overall, structural and curricular diversity serve a beneficial purpose for the mission of institutions. Honoring, understanding, and celebrating the myriad of experiences that are found within the campus environment can contribute to a sense of belonging. However, failing to apply a critical lens to the structural impact of identity contributes to the never ending cycle of the status quo. Understanding “difference” remains as one element of the pursuit toward equity and social progression. Removing structurally oppressive barriers is the underlining challenge for educators and those interested in issues of diversity.

More about Student Voice of Diversity:

This column will provide students an opportunity to voice their perspectives regarding diversity on a personal, academic, or community setting. If you are a student or know of a student that is interested in contributing please contact Kari Ellingson at kellingson@sa.utah.edu for more information!

PURSUIT OF INCLUSION AWARD

In 2008 The Division of Student Affairs at the University of Utah founded a diversity council to address issues of diversity and inclusion related to our work with students. The Student Affairs Diversity Council (SADC) met for the first time in July 2009, and included representatives from each office in the Student Affairs division. This Council helps to identify the needs of each office and seeks to enhance our knowledge and cultural competencies. It is important that our staff functions and interacts competently with our increasingly diverse campus community as we play a significant role in creating a safe and welcoming campus environment for all of our students, staff and faculty.

The purpose of this award is to recognize an individual or a program within a Student Affairs office that strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division and the University community.

Criteria for consideration: Nominations are to be completed and submitted online at <http://sadc.utah.edu/events/award.php>. Additionally, they should include a discussion of how the nominee meets some or all of these criteria:

- 1.Helps to educate professionals within Student Affairs on topics related to diversity;
- 2.Strives to create a platform for dialogue and sharing of information;
- 3.Participates in ongoing diversity related training and dialogue;
- 4.Collaborates with other committees/departments to ensure that inclusion and diversity-related issues are included;
- 5.Works with students to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division and the University community.

PURSUIT OF INCLUSION AWARD cont.

Nominations are invited for the 4th annual Student Affairs Diversity Council Pursuit of Inclusion Award. The purpose of this award is to recognize one individual or departmental program that strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division and the University community.

Eligibility for individuals: All full-time and part-time staff members with at least three years of service within Student Affairs.

Eligibility for programs: All programs aimed at creating inclusivity within a Student Affairs department are eligible for this award.

Nominees should meet one or more of the criteria listed above. The Selection Committee will only consider information provided in the nominating [online form](#), please be thorough in your description of the nominee.

*One award (either individual, programmatic, or departmental) will be given at the holiday luncheon for all Student Affairs employees scheduled for **Tuesday, December 16th**.*

Nominations must be submitted by **November 26, 2014. The Committee will only consider nominations that have been received by the deadline.*

November Diversity Seminar



Dr. Theresa Martinez
Associate Professor, Sociology

"Developing Critical Media Literacy on Issues of Diversity"

Wednesday, November 19
12:00-1:30pm
Union Panorama East (4th Floor)

Upcoming Campus and Community Events

Wednesday, Nov 5

Work-in-Progress Talk with Emily Chiang, 12:00 – 1:00pm Carolyn Tanner Irish Humanities Building, Room 143

Thursday, Nov 6

MUSE Lunchtime Lecture on Justice with Kai Martinez, 12:00 – 1:00pm Union, Den

Tuesday, Nov 11

NOT MY LIFE: THE HUMAN COSTS AND RIGHTS CONSEQUENCES OF TRAFFICKING, 7:00 PM Vieve Gore Concert Hall, Westminster College, 1840 South 1300 East, Salt Lake City, Utah) [[more info](#)]

Thursday, Nov 13

Leadership Workshop: Diversity and Social Justice Case Studies, 4:00pm Union - A. Ray Olpin (UNION) [[more info](#)]

Thursday, Nov 20

Community, Complexity, and Change in Cuba, 12:30 – 1:30pm Orson Spencer Hall (OSH)

For information about these and other events, please visit:
www.events.utah.edu.



For more information and recourses, please visit:
sadc.utah.edu

Debra Daniels, Co-chair Women's Resource Center
Kari Ellingson, Co-chair Student Development
Chris Anderson, Housing & Residential Education
Karen Cone-Uemura, Counseling Center
Stephanie Charles, Financial Aid
Branden Dalley, Union Administration
Kris Fenn, Bennion Center
Marci Healy, Conference & Guest Services
Trisha Jensen, Orientation & Leadership Development
Suzanne Jones, Registrar's Office
Kassy Keen, Center for Student Wellness

Chris Macias, TRIO
Carol MacNicholl, Center for Disability Services
Kai Medina-Martinez, LGBT Center
Susan Miller, Campus Recreation
Sana Muller, ASUU
Duane Padilla, Housing & Residential Education
Rachana Patel, Office of Admissions
Valery Pozo, Career Services
Belinda Otukolo Saltiban, Office of Inclusive Excellence
Kegan Walker, HRE, AREC