

## it's hard to hate someone whose story you know: stories of growth and change

*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.*

### making a choice

#### **Cindy Powell**

What on earth can a middle-aged, female, Caucasian, native Utahn possibly have to contribute to a Newsletter devoted to issues surrounding the subject of diversity? I must admit I wondered just that when my Director asked me a couple of years ago if I would like to represent the Student Health Center on the Student Affairs Diversity Council. While I wondered whether or not I would have much to contribute, I knew I had much to learn! That has certainly proved true.

Over the past 2 years, I have listened, observed and learned so much from my fellow committee members, as well as the guest speakers that we have been fortunate to have present in our seminar series. All of these opportunities have given me the



chance to really think about how I can personally incorporate the SADC's Mission statement into my work with students, co-workers and the community at large. That mission is: "The Student Affairs Diversity Counsel strives to cultivate an environment that embraces and promotes the broad scope of diversity within the division." What I do have to contribute is my historical perspective!

Growing up in Utah in the 1960s, I led a pretty sheltered life. When I attended East High School there was one "person of color" in my graduating class. The conversation of race never even came up. Political correctness was a term I neither heard, nor was it practiced by my associates, family, and the society at large. When the Civil Rights Movement images were

being shown on the television in my living room, I watched with great interest and a fair amount of righteous indignation and disbelief. I had no idea why the federal government, with the help of National Guard troops, had to enforce integration. And I was totally stunned at the vitriol being spewed out of the mouths of Caucasian citizens in Southern

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## mission statement

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

*The following article appeared on KUED and can be found at <http://www.kued.org/productions/freedom-riders/?area=freedoms-promise>*

### freedom's promise

While working on Utah's Freedom Riders earlier this year, KUED producer Nancy Green realized that most people today have a romanticized notion of the 1960s Civil Rights movement. "The reality is that it was a tumultuous time," says Green. "We see it as the pinnacle of student activism, thinking that everyone spoke in unison. In reality, it was far more divided."

Her experience got Green thinking about what has happened to student activism today, which led to her follow-up documentary, Freedom's Promise, airing

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## calendar

### **Honoring Langston Hughes, An Evening of American Art, Song, and Poetry**

**Sunday, February 19, at Libby Gardner Hall (free admission)**

Raymond Tymas Jones & Richard Thompson join with Actor/Storyteller Stephen McKinley Henderson and dancer Joseph Blake to celebrate the rich cultural tradition of Hughes' poetry, married to the exacting work of the art song.

*KUED is providing special programming for Black History Month. Here are the highlights:*

### **Underground Railroad: The William Still Story**

Monday, Feb 6 at 9:00pm

### **Independent Lens: Daisy Bates: First Lady of Little Rock**

Tuesday, Feb 7 at 11:00pm

### **Slavery By Any Other Name**

Monday, Feb 13 at 8:00pm

### **Not in Our Town: Class Action**

Monday, Feb 13 at 9:30pm

### **Independent Lens: Black Power Mixtape**

Tuesday, Feb 14 at 11:00pm

### **Utah Freedom Riders**

Wednesday, Feb 15 at 12:30am

### **More Than a Month**

Monday, Feb 21 at 11:00pm

## *choice, con't*

states, aimed at black students about my own age, who were just trying to go to school. Boy, did I take a lot for granted. That moment was when I realized for the first time the privileges that I enjoyed because of the color of my skin. I felt powerless to help in that instance, being so young, and far removed from the deep South, but made a decision in those months that I wanted to help anyone who was being disenfranchised for whatever reason. I remember arguing with my Republican Dad when I was 11 years old, and prayed that John Kennedy would win the Presidential race. I felt personally shattered when, one day in Clayton Junior High, I heard the news he had been shot and killed in Dallas. The image of all my teachers sobbing in the halls as they closed school and sent us home is burned into my brain. I was just 14, and I grew up rapidly over the next week or so, glued to the television. My idealistic view of the world was shattered during a pretty vulnerable time in my adolescence.

I started attending the U in the fall of 1967. In less than one year, Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr., and Robert Kennedy were both assassinated, and I was plunged into a deeper depression over the political situation, as well as the certainty another Kennedy would never attain the highest office in the land. I wasn't even old enough to vote then, but was so disheartened, I didn't really know if I would ever want to. I remember seeing young men burning their draft cards outside the Union building during the

Viet Nam War protest days. I was busy studying in the College of Nursing and remember the awful day that the National Guard started shooting students at Kent State. I can't begin to describe the anger and rage that we of my generation all felt at that moment! How could this be happening in the good old USA?

So what is the point I am trying to make? Simply put, people might make assumptions about me, due to my age, religious affiliation, gender, and status as a lifelong Utahn. There is so much about me you would miss if you made assumptions! I think that I made the decision to advocate for the underdog, and to help where I could during those turbulent times. We are still in those turbulent times, even though the faces and voices have changed with the passing decades. I hope that we will all make it a point to listen to those around us, ask questions to really understand who they are, and what they believe before making assumptions about who they are.

Thanks for being the wonderful, diverse, beautiful group that you all are! It makes coming to work every day so enjoyable. I am always proud to say that I work at the University of Utah, for nearly 21 years.

*Cindy Powell, Nurse Manager,  
University of Utah Student Health  
Center*

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On the third Wednesday of each month from 12:00-1:30, the SADC sponsors a seminar. Put us on the calendar.

**Culture Shock and Intercultural Communication: Working Effectively with International Students**

Chalimar Swain & Emily Edmonston

February 15  
Union Den

Dr. Maria Ledesma  
March 21  
Union Parlor A

Jamie Nabozny  
April 18  
Saltair Room

**Spirituality in the 21st Century**  
Jan Saeed, Westminster College  
May 16  
Union Parlor A

promise, con't

Tuesday, November 8 at 7:00 p.m. on KUED.

"I started looking at what is going on in Utah now," she says. "What's interesting is that we probably have more student activism today. The problem is there are so many issues and so many people clamoring to make their voices heard that activism is not attracting the kind of focused attention it got in the 1960s. Today we have social media, the internet and a thousand different news stories coming at us. How are students navigating that? How are they carrying on the tradition of activism in the 21st century?"

She found that today's students are concerned about immigration, the environment, sexual orientation issues and many other topics regarding discrimination. "At the core of all of it, it's really all about inclusion," concludes Green. "It's a struggle for those who are disenfranchised and underrepresented to find a way to make their voices heard. Activism is a way for people to affect change. It's really about the democratic process."

Getting any traction in the mainstream media has become more difficult. Some students are using social networking, others are using old-school tactics like rallies and marches. Others are saying the answer is to educate younger people about the political process and ways to alter the system. Some are resorting to civil disobedience.

the origins of black history month

The following article by Dr. Daryl Scott appeared in a newsletter from the *Association for the Study of African American Life and History Newsletter*. The complete article can be read at <http://www.asalh.net/blackhistorymonthorigins.html>

The story of Black History Month begins in Chicago during the late summer of 1915. An alumnus of the University of Chicago with many friends in the city, Carter G. Woodson traveled from Washington, D.C. to participate in a national celebration of the fiftieth anniversary of emancipation sponsored by the state of Illinois.

Thousands of African Americans traveled from across the country to see exhibits highlighting the progress their people had made since the destruction of slavery. Awarded a doctorate in Harvard three years earlier, Woodson joined the other exhibitors with a black history display.

student affairs diversity council

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Kajsa Berlin-Kaufusi	Office of International Education
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