Towards 5.16, Engaging Minority Groups in Climbing

By Ryan Kirchner, Manager, Campus Recreation

This year, I attended the Climbing Wall Association Summit in Loveland, Colorado. The conference had sessions ranging from route setting, gym management, gear demos, and climbing coaching. All had pretty standard names that perfectly described what you were going see, but one title caught my eye. Towards 5.16, Engaging Minority Groups in Climbing by Ryan Gagnon, Ph.D. from Clemson University. 5.16 is a climbing rating that no one has ever climbed before. How is engaging minority groups going to help make it a happen? The presentation outlined the problem today with the lack of underserved/underrepresented groups in climbing, why it is important to engage these groups, and Ryan shared his experience with the RISE climbing program in Atlanta.

Underserved/underrepresented was defined as those who don’t participate or limit participation due to cultural, structural, logistical, physical, intrapersonal, and/or interpersonal constraining. Climbing is a foreign sport to the greater population, especially in our inner cities where minorities can be the majority. There are barriers in place that seem daunting to overcome for underrepresented groups due to lack of knowledge, resources, or acceptance of their peers. By engaging minority groups, we can help break down these barriers to get more individuals climbing. For example, an inner city kid might think that he or she will never rock climb because they don’t live close to the mountains and don’t know that climbing gyms have become more prevalent. Increasing one’s knowledge of the accessibility of climbing gyms could be the barrier that needs to be broken down to for this individual to start climbing.

Competitive climbing is very financially accessible compared to other competitive sport. All one needs to start is a climbing harness, shoes, and a chalk bag. Compared to football or baseball equipment, the startup cost is low. The competitions even are reasonable when compared to the bigger more popular sport tournaments. But why do we need to engage minority groups in climbing?

“The next winner of Wimbledon is a kid in the inner city who has never held a racquet” - McEnroe? Ryan wasn’t sure of the exact origin of the quote, but the message was sent. By engaging groups that are underrepresented, it will advance the sport by reaching a wider pool of competitors advancing the competition. He used the example of Venus and Serena Williams growing up in Compton and developing into world class tennis players. Rock climbing has evolved quite a bit in the last 70 years. In 1949, 5.10 was impossible. In 1993, free climbing El Cap was impossible (Lynn Hill the first person, male or female, to free climb El Cap), and 5.15 was impossible until recently, so why not 5.16!
Eighty years later, anti-Semitic actions are on the rise in the United States. A shooting at a Pittsburgh synagogue in late October was the most violent incident, but cemeteries have been vandalized, and swastikas painted on community centers. Slurs and conspiratorial whispers spread online. Sometimes this rhetoric intersects with the mainstream in parts of American politics.

A recent survey found that “many adults lack basic knowledge” of the Holocaust. The youngest survivors are now in their 70s. As the years since the atrocities of that time pass, and as firsthand survivors grow older, how can the world keep remembering what must never be forgotten?

Recently On NPR

The Realities of Diversity: A Conversation With Maria Hinojosa

We wrap up the Realities of Diversity series with Latina journalist Maria Hinojosa. She joined us to discuss what she’s learned about racism and how to have difficult conversations about race.

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<th>Date</th>
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To register for these upcoming modules, please visit: [http://sadc.utah.edu](http://sadc.utah.edu).

**TED Talks**

**Greening the ghetto**
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**What we’re missing in the debate about immigration**
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Upcoming Events

December 5 @ 11am-12pm
Lean In: Confident Communication
350 SSB [more info]

December 5 @ 12-1pm
Issues & Action Forum: Isolation, Mental Health & the Power of Community, Union Rm 101 [more info]

Until Dec 31
Utah Women in Medicine Exhibit
Eccles Health Sciences Library [more info]

First and Third Tuesdays of Each Month
Video Game Free-For-All
LGBTQ Resource Center Room 409 [more info]

Mondays 3-4pm
LGBTQ+ Support & Empowerment Group
SSB Room 344 [more info and RSVP info]

Every Friday @ 3-5pm
Fabulous Fridays, LGBT Resource Center Room 409

Find More Events:
- http://diversity.utah.edu/events/
- https://www.utah.edu/events/

Upcoming Seminar

Trans Students on Campus

Presenter:
Kari Dockendorff
Doctoral Student
Educational Leadership and Policy

Date: Wednesday, December 5, 2018
Time: 12-1:30pm
Location: Pano East, Union
[more information]

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Marisa Morán Jahn: MIRROR | MASK
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