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Dean Logan's Blog

MLK Week Events Wrap Up with the “Public Interest Potluck”

Posted by David Logan on 01/24/2012 at 04:25 PM

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. once said, “Life’s most persistent and urgent question is: ‘What are you doing for others?’” Last week we reflected on that question as the Office of Diversity and Outreach, directed by Deborah Johnson, presented the School of Law’s seventh annual Martin Luther King, Jr. Celebration. On Monday, members of the RWU Law community and their families answered the question by joining volunteers from the Rhode Island School of Design, the Mount Hope Learning Center, and the Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Elementary School in Providence, for a MLK Day of Arts and Service. RISD students and staff engaged the elementary students in a series of art projects while RWU Law folks helped to create and assemble a mural of Dr. King in a room filled with great energy and diversity.

Angela Chan, a lawyer with the Asian Law Caucus delivered a powerful keynote address. Her presentation, which was attended by students, faculty, staff, local attorneys, and members of the larger community, highlighted what one civil rights organization and its attorneys are doing for others. Angela presented a sobering picture of the intersection of our nation’s criminal justice and immigration systems, but also spoke about what she and the Asian Law Caucus are doing to protect the civil rights of those caught up in them. Angela described her role as a civil rights attorney, noting that she doesn’t see herself as the person with the power to organize communities to make change but, rather, her power lies in assisting and empowering others by developing legal strategies that compliment community organizing work; performing legal observation to ensure that the rights of those who are fighting injustices are protected; and gathering information to ensure that community organizers have up-to-date policy information. Angela’s comments about why and how she does the work she does (re)energized many folks in the room to take on the often daunting challenge of fighting for civil rights.

Thursday’s unique “Dean’s Movie Night in the Afternoon” screened [Civil Rights and Wrongs: The Fred Korematsu Story](#), about the long fight of Fred Korematsu who challenged the constitutionality of the Japanese American internment during WWII. The film showed what one “ordinary man” and a team of zealous, young lawyers did not only for Korematsu himself, or for a single race of people, but for all Americans. As noted by President Bill Clinton, who awarded Korematsu the Presidential Medal of Freedom “In the long history of our country’s constant search for justice, some names of ordinary citizens stand for millions of souls – Plessy, Brown, Parks. To that distinguished list today we add the name of Fred Korematsu.” After the movie, students got the opportunity to discuss the constitutional ramifications

of the Korematsu case with Professor Diana Hassel and also to see the continuing relevance of the issue of racial profiling in post 9/11 America.

The week wrapped up with a fun event: a "Public Interest Potluck" hosted by Laurie Barron, attended by more than 50 faculty, staff, students, and assorted family and friends of the law school. It was a great wrap-up to a week that reminded us that Dr. King's work is far from finished.

Here are some pictures from the week's events.



Angela Chan delivering her keynote address



Students, faculty, staff and attorneys attend the MLK Celebration Keynote Address



Angela Chan explaining the phases of Secure Communities



BLSA 1L rep, Asia Millette and Kas DeCarvalho,
Thurgood Marshall Law Society President



2L Lipou Laliemthavisay enjoying Angela Chan's keynote address



Angela Chan and RWUSOL alumna, Debbie Gonzalez



Angela Chan with RWUSOL students Tunde Adepegba and Josh Xavier,
and Feinstein Institute Executive Director, Laurie Barron



Angela Chan and Director of Diversity & Outreach, Deborah Johnson



3L and former immigration clinic student, Rosemary Gushiken
and prominent immigration attorney, Roberto Gonzalez



Dean Logan and 1Ls Michael da Cruz and Antonio Viana
discussing Angela Chan's keynote address