Social Justice Week Kicks off at RWU

Public Affairs, Roger Williams University
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Programming to focus on myriad issues of inequality from race to healthcare and elder justice

October 14, 2014 | Public Affairs Staff

BRISTOL, R.I. – Training a lens on the serious problems affecting society, Social Justice Week 2014 at Roger Williams University raises awareness of unfair conditions with the goal of inciting students to awaken the advocate within and create change.

Through civil discourse, diversity training, activist performances, and thought-provoking documentaries, Social Justice Week – from Tuesday, Oct. 14 to Wednesday, Oct. 22 – will explore the legacy of slavery and civil rights, and raise awareness of less-examined issues of elder justice and how diminished access to health care produces inequality.

Organized by Laura D’Amore and Autumn Quezada-Grant, professors of history and American studies, the annual series offers the chance to see how social justice issues touch everyone. Through interactive activities and accessing resources to become involved, they hope that all campus members – students, faculty and staff – recognize and do their part to make the world a better place.

“We’re hoping to spark dialogue and inspire students to become involved by organizing events that engage in activism or join a club dealing with these issues – like RWU’s FIMRC or Habitat for Humanity chapters, or SAFE – and explore them more thoroughly” D’Amore says. “We have a lot of great groups that explore multiculturalism, diversity and service, and so many opportunities for involvement, whether students want to do it small or big.”
Quezada-Grant adds: “We want them to care about the community – from local to global – and find themselves as an integral part of making change happen. These activities have proven useful in inspiring our students to volunteer and aspire to jobs that really impact society.”

With a multitude of interesting events (a full schedule is available at the end of this article), here’s a look at some of the major highlights.

Interested in going behind the scenes of international genocide trials? Erin Gallagher – director of the Physicians for Human Rights’ investigation team and former investigator with the International Criminal Tribunal who participated in the trials of former Yugoslavian war criminals – will discuss how international crimes are researched, adjudicated and prosecuted on Tuesday, Oct. 14 at 3:30 p.m. in the Mary Teft White Cultural Center.

Growing older in America shouldn’t be fraught with exploitation – experts in law, psychology and elder abuse investigation will share their perspectives alongside an elder justice advocate in a panel discussion on Wednesday, Oct. 15 at 5 p.m. in the Feinstein College of Arts & Sciences Building, Room 157. Organized by Philip C. Marshall – a panelist, professor of historic preservation at Roger Williams, and grandson of Brooke Astor, beloved high-society philanthropist and victim of elder abuse – the panel will discuss ways to confront this serious issue.

If you thought the inequalities engendered by slavery were wrapped up in a neat bow with the advancements of the Civil Rights era in the late 1960s, The Tracing Center has some news for you. Via two provocative events The Tracing Center – a nonprofit dedicated to illuminating America’s legacy of racism – will spark a dialogue on the national history of the racial divide, stemming from slavery, with and then bring it down to the local with a window into an 18th century Bristol family’s trade in slavery. “From Emancipation to Equality: The Unfinished Business of Civil War and Civil Rights,” a multimedia presentation and program exploring our nation’s racial progress, will be held on Thursday, Oct. 16 at 7 p.m. in the School of Law, Appellate Court Room 283. A screening of the documentary Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North will be held on Friday, Oct. 17 at 2 p.m. in the School of Law, room 262.

**Tuesday, October 14**

“International Crimes Tribunal Investigations” with Erin Gallagher from Physicians for Human Rights at 3:30 p.m. in the Mary Teft White Cultural Center.

**Wednesday, October 15**

Screening of Amistad at 6:30 p.m. in the Mary Teft White Cultural Center.

Panel discussion on Elder Justice at 5 p.m. in the Feinstein College of Arts & Sciences Building, Room 157.

**Thursday, October 16**

“From Emancipation to Equality: The Unfinished Business of Civil War and Civil Rights” with James DeWolf Perry of The Tracing Center at 7 p.m. in the School of Law, Appellate Court Room 283.
Friday, October 17

“Proposition (Truth Value): Equality,” an original dance choreographed and performed by RWU dance majors, at 4 p.m. in the Global Heritage Hall Atrium.

*Traces of the Trade: A Story from the Deep North* with Kristin Gallas, director of interpretation and outreach from The Tracing Center.

Saturday, October 18

New England American Studies Association Conference exploring the theme of “Emancipations: Legacies, Lineages & Limits” from 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. in the School of Law. Open to the RWU campus community and members of the public who reserve a space in advance.

Monday, October 20

“Unnatural Causes: Is Inequality Making Us Sick?” at 4 p.m. in the Feinstein College of Arts & Sciences Building, room 157. This program features a documentary exploring the relationship between health and wealth in America.

Tuesday, October 21

“Do College Students Have a Responsibility to Do Social Justice Activism?” – a discussion led by Sustained Dialogue, at 5 p.m. in Feinstein College of Arts & Sciences Building, room 157.

Wednesday, October 22

“Reclaim the Thunder: Words, Music & Social Change” with Taina Asili at 5 p.m. in the Global Heritage Hall Atrium.

“Rebel Music! (How’s This?)” – a spoken-word performance by Taina Asili at 7 p.m. in the Global Heritage Hall Atrium.