

MLK Day to be celebrated on SIUE campus

Fighting against social injustices through faith, productive conversations, remembering those who died in honor of civil rights and looking toward the future are topics of conversation on this week's special hour-long edition of Segue on WSIE 88.7 The Sound at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville.

SIUE Chancellor Dr. Randy Pembroke hosts the show honoring of the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. holiday, including segments with Pastor Steve Jackson of Mount Joy Missionary Baptist Church; Venessa Brown, PhD, associate chancellor and chief diversity officer; Sarah Laux, assistant director of community engagement in the SIUE Kimmel Student Involvement Center; and Andrea Keller, assistant director for campus life at SIUE.

Originally from Madison, Ill., Jackson was ordained as a minister in 1997 and has served as pastor of Mount Joy Missionary Baptist Church ever since.

Through the involvement of the church's parishioners, as well as the rich history that the congregation holds, Jackson serves his community by leading services and spreading messages of inclusion, acceptance

and diversity.

"I've been told that a group of former slaves started the church," Jackson says. "They wanted a place to come, so they could worship and find people of like mind to worship with them. They maintained it since 1865."

Jackson and his congregation welcome SIUE students who have been without a church after moving to attend school with their Watch Care program.

The effects of King's teachings and work with social justice have had a profound impact upon Jackson. King's lessons, as well as other triumphs and tribulations of the civil rights movement, will be recognized throughout the month of February at Mount Joy.

"He didn't preach or teach hatred," he says. "He didn't teach violence and those kind of things, because they're not effective, anyway. He taught about loving people and nonviolent resistance. The thought that he did it, and the fact that it cost him his life, to have the courage to do it in that manner is very impressive to me."

Brown earned a PhD from Clark Atlanta University in 1994. She

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also serves as a tenured faculty member and professor in the SIUE Department of Social Work.

During the past three years, SIUE's Office of Institutional Diversity and Inclusion has held a Black Lives Matter Conference. Initially a response to the death of Michael Brown in Ferguson, the event has led to the Diversity Strategic Plan Summit. Transforming from a chance for students to voice their concerns about social justice and civil rights, the summit works to maintain a dialogue between students' concerns and creating strategies to aid in solving those issues.

"We are working really hard to live our values at SIUE and to build a campus environment where everybody feels welcome," Brown says, "The way we do that is to have conversations, and I think the Black Lives Matters Conferences really sparked something in us to say, 'let's keep the dialogue going.'"

Pembroke and Brown extend the invitation to SIUE students, faculty and staff, as well as members of the

community, to attend the Diversity Strategic Plan Summit, which will take place from 8-11:30 a.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 18, in the Meridian



Brown and Pembroke

Ballroom of the Morris University Center.

Immediately following the summit, the 34th Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Birthday Celebration Luncheon will take place in the Meridian Ballroom. Laux, who is in her sixth year at SIUE, shares her excitement for the annual event.

"We're excited to have such a longstanding program on campus," Laux says, "The luncheon started in 1983. It was initially designed to recognize and celebrate the life and legacy of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.

We also recognize and reward outstanding SIUE students and faculty, community leaders and local high school students."

Laux describes the nomination process and the importance of relating King's messages and ideals into everyday life.

"We really tried to connect the current events in our region and our nation to King's quotes, his letters, his teachings, and things that we've learned from his ideals," she says. "How can we come together as a community to be reflective of our role in addressing the social injustices that he fought for?"

King's messages resonate with Pembroke, as well.

"I've been doing some reading and thinking about some quotes from Dr. King," Pembroke says. "Particularly his emphasis on helping other individuals and to be looking around the world and thinking about what you can do to make it a better place."

"It seemed like it was a theme he kept coming back to, being aware of your surroundings. As you probably know, the mission for SIUE is about shaping a changing world."

The opportunity for engagement and education does not stop after the

holiday. February marks the annual celebration of African-American history at SIUE during Black History Month.

Andrea Keller earned both her undergraduate and graduate degrees from SIUE. She is a member of Gamma Phi Omega International Sorority and held several positions in SIUE's chapter as an undergrad.

"I think when people think 'history,' they always think of the past," Keller says, "That's not just what this month is about. Yes, it's about learning, recognizing and bringing to light things that have happened in the past, but it's also about what we can do for the future."

During the month of February, the Campus Activities Board will present a variety of activities, including educational, cultural and social programming. Students and those wishing to attend those events can look forward to the possibility of earning some prizes, as well as gaining priceless knowledge by attending.

Be sure to tune in to WISE 88.7 FM at 9 a.m. every Sunday as weekly guests discuss issues on SIUE's campus.

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