

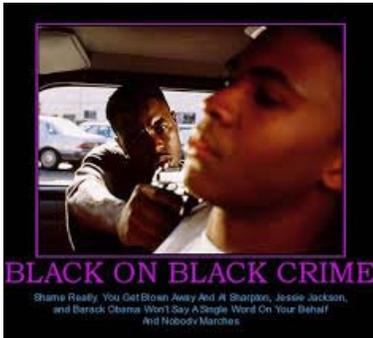


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A new and powerful documentary asks an important national question:

**If Dr. Martin Luther King were alive today, what would he say and do about the widespread, self-inflicted violence devastating America's minority communities?**

Silicon Valley is no exception. Nineteen-year-old Kimberley Joyce Estrada Chico, a San Jose State nursing student, recently became the 30th homicide victim in San Jose in 2013. Sadly her tragic death, the result of an unfortunate downtown shooting near campus, is the latest of many incidents included in an eye-opening and powerful new documentary produced by summer multimedia journalism students at San Jose State University.

As part of the commemoration of the 50th anniversary of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s famous *I Have A Dream* speech at the March on Washington on Aug. 28, 1963, these SJSU students recently completed a 30-minute video called, "A Dream Fulfilled? A Dream Deferred?" It examines up close the growing emotional and personal toll taken by senseless shootings and killings in the Bay Area, ironically just miles away from where problem-solving and troubleshooting in global technology are celebrated by the nation.

Against the backdrop of high unemployment, gang and gun violence, disproportionate numbers of incarcerations among African-Americans and Hispanic-Americans, these advanced journalism students peered beyond daily headlines and grim statistics and were embedded in Bay Area urban communities as part of a unique civic engagement learning opportunity.

"We deconstructed the past and reconstructed and re-imagined the present by focusing the lens on the future, so 50 years from now, journalism students aren't looking at the 100th anniversary of the March on Washington and discovering that our nation has not moved forward," said Michael Cheers, SJSU photojournalism professor, who led the students.

Seven students made up the production team, which included reporters, videographers, photojournalists, video editors and a Web designer.

In January 2009, Cheers, who is also an award-winning documentary filmmaker, took 10 SJSU journalism students on a cross-country multimedia reporting trip through the landmarks of the Civil Rights Movement in the South as part of their preparation for covering the inauguration of President Barack Obama in Washington, D.C. They produced a documentary, a photography exhibition, website and a magazine, *44 Years to the 44th President*.

Justin Allegri was an undergraduate student on that trip. In this extraordinary "Dream" project, Allegri, now a graduate student in the School of Journalism and Mass Communications, and Bob Rucker, JMC director and former CNN Correspondent, served as associate producers.

The students interviewed Bay Area senior citizens, business people, elected officials and barbershop customers. They also covered prayer vigils and peace rallies. At the heart of the 30-minute documentary are two San Jose families struggling to heal emotionally after the loss of their loved ones to gang violence. The documentary also discusses solutions with community leaders and stakeholders at the San Jose Job Corps Center.

"This convergence media project involved many complex moving parts," Cheers said. "During the academic year it's a challenge for the instructor and the students to engage in community-based long-form visual storytelling. In eight weeks I believe we accomplished something the School and the university will be proud of. I wanted the students to have an experience that was bigger than ourselves. The only ego that was present during production was the project. San Jose and other Bay Area voices are part of this national conversation that's gripping communities across the country.

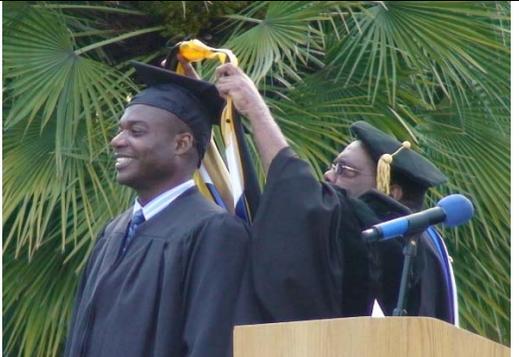
"An added plus was the group's diversity — Black, White, Indian, Hispanic, Asian and Pacific Islander," Cheers said. "My hope is that the students had a life-changing experience."

Bob Rucker, the first African-American journalist to lead the prestigious SJSU School of Journalism and Mass Communications, said this unique summer project was something long overdue. "Dr. King knew journalists had a responsibility to tell it like it is, and help society face and respond to timely, important and sensitive issues," Rucker said. "We are known for preparing 21<sup>st</sup> century journalism students to cover the realities of time, and not to be afraid to address what's going on in a candid, thorough, fair and responsible way."

A photography exhibition, "Pain to Power, Disgrace to Amazing Grace, Darkness to Light," featuring portraits of Bay Area youths re-imagining iconic Civil Rights moments, and the documentary will go on display inside the King Collection (Third Floor) Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Library, Aug. 23 through Sept. 1. The photography exhibition will then be displayed at the School of Journalism and Mass Communications (Dwight Bentel Hall).

An interactive "Dream" project link will be hosted on the JMC website in September.

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