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Diversity & Human Rights

focus

Multi-Media Performance by Chicago Troupe to Kick Off Sexual Assault Awareness Month Salt Lake City on April 4 By Heather Stringfellow, Director Rape Recovery Center

Two sisters in college. One a victim of rape — twice. The other haunted by the brutality of her sister’s story. Together, to heal from the violence, they created what became “SOARS: Story of a Rape Survivor.”

Salamishah Tillet, who eventually completed her Ph.D. at Harvard, was hesitant when her sister, Scheherazade, approached her about an assignment in her social documentary photography class at Rutgers University: to choose a person or event and spend five months photographing the subject. So, “under the auspices of art,” Salamishah agreed to allow her sister to photograph and record her healing process. Scheherazade recalls:

It was through this five-month journey, in which I followed her to therapy and meditation, documented her burgeoning anti-rape activism, and watched her negotiate dating and starting new romantic and sexual relationships, that I found my voice . . . I realized that I could use photography to break the codes of silence around Salamishah’s rape and ultimately help her and myself heal.

Later, using Scheherazade’s photographs and Salamishah’s poetry as the foundation, the sisters developed a

“full-scale violence education and survivor-healing program, comprised of a 90-minute theatrical performance, a slide show and photography exhibition, and art therapy and social documentary workshops.” Based in Chicago, and now under the auspices of their own non-profit organization, A Long Walk Home, Inc., the SOARS troupe travels around the country to promote its message about the healing power of art for survivors—especially those from underserved populations.

From the very beginning of this project, I realized that I had to address the fact that many victims of color are less likely to seek help from traditional social service agencies, such as the police, domestic violence shelters, and psychotherapists. Whether it is because of a lack of knowledge of the service providers; cultural stigmas regarding seeking help; fear of being unfairly treated by the judicial system; or culturally-insensitive victim advocates, victims of color are more likely to seek out alternative remedies such as the church, substance addiction programs, and hospitals. SOARS addresses these disparities by providing services that are culturally and racially diverse.

The goal is not to replace existing social service agencies, but to



bridge the gap between underserved survivors and traditional resources. The SOARS theatrical performance will be presented in Salt Lake City on Friday, April 4, 2008, at 7 pm at the Rose Wagner Center for Performing Arts. Sponsored by the Rape Recovery Center, Utah Coalition Against Sexual Assault, U of U Women’s Resource Center, and Zions Bank, the performance is free and open to the public. It documents Salamishah’s journey from rape victim to survivor. Through photographs, modern and West African dance, spoken word, music, and oral testimonies, the performance features a diverse cast of professional artists and musicians who help to educate the public about the impact and aftermath of sexual assault.

All quotes are from “Using Art to Break Silence,” by Scheherazade and Salamishah Tillet, published in *The Resource: Newsletter of the National Sexual Violence Resource Center*, Fall/Winter 2004.





Shedding Light on a Shadowy Issue: the policy history of driver identification laws for unauthorized residents

by Julie Stewart, Assistant Professor of Sociology and Ken Jameson, Professor of Economics University of Utah

Nationally, immigration has inspired controversy and confusion. Utah – not ordinarily considered a trailblazer on immigration policy – has a policy history the nation could learn from. In 1999, Utah Governor Michael Leavitt signed into law House Bill 36, Driver Identification Law. HB 36 provided legal identification for unauthorized residents – provided they had an official tax-paying status verified by the Internal Revenue Service – that would allow them to drive legally, to acquire car insurance, to open bank accounts and to engage in a range of consumer activities.

Unauthorized residents were living, working and driving in Utah already, so the legislation’s rationale was simple: It was a public safety measure. In the words of Police Officer James Washington, “A valid driver license, insurance, proper registration ... that’s what we want everyone to have.” HB 36 passed with little discussion or opposition. Between 1999 and 2002, nearly 50,000 people registered for this type of identification, with few public objections or complaints. It is our sense that this identification enhanced public safety while adding considerable revenue to the local economy. However, by 2003 the tide had turned and opposition to the program was growing. Opponents claimed that it contributed to document falsification, criminality, even terrorism.

The first fear was based largely on the arrest of 13 “mostly Spanish speaking individuals” in St. George who had tried to obtain driver’s licenses with false documents. This arrest became easy fodder for immigration opponents, who have long claimed that Latinos commit crimes at higher rates than Caucasians. However, the data do not support this. According to Sergeant Craig Harding, a police department spokesman, Latinos comprise only eight to nine percent of arrests, while their overall state representation is approximately 11 percent.

But, by 2004, anti-immigration factions insured that the repeal of the driver license law was on the legislative agenda. When it looked like the repeal would be successful in 2005, a compromise measure was passed. This essentially revoked the driver’s license and its use for state identification and replaced it with a “driver privilege card (DPC),” valid only for driving and obtaining car insurance. The law also increased the documentation required to obtain a DPC, including proof of Utah residence. Even this pared-down policy has faced opposition every legislative session. And this year was no different.

House Bill 239, sponsored by Rep. Glenn A. Donnelson, R- North Ogden, would have repealed the law that allows undocumented immigrants to get driving privilege cards. It also stipulated that all DPCs would expire this year. HB 239 passed with a vote of 39-35 in the House, but ultimately died in the Senate due to a rearguard effort. As we reflect on this policy history and plan for the future, it may be useful to remember a few facts. On virtually every measure, Utah’s driver’s license policy has been successful in providing unauthorized residents with rights and enhancing public safety. According to a recent state audit of driver privilege cardholders, 76 percent had car insurance, compared to a control group’s 81 percent. Between 1999 and 2007, HB 36 allowed for nearly 73,000 people to obtain driver’s licenses or DPCs. Without proper driver identification, one cannot legally obtain car insurance, so repealing this law would put driver privilege cardholders – as well as all of the drivers who surround them – at risk. These facts may help put to rest some of the fears that have perennially driven anti-immigration legislation in Utah.

OFFICE OF DIVERSITY & HUMAN RIGHTS SURVEY

The Office of Diversity & Human Rights is conducting a survey from March 31-April 30, 2008 among diverse communities. With your help we look forward to receiving feedback from the various diverse groups in Salt Lake City. It is critical to our success to know what personal experiences diverse groups have had and expectations they envision for city government. For that reason, we hope the survey will provide us with meaning feedback in order to develop objectives suited to meet the needs of specific populations. Click below to appropriate link. Deadline: April 30, 2008

- English*
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB227MAB378PQ>
- Spanish*
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB227MACJ79LF>
- Bosnian*
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB227MADK7A8L>
- Russian*
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB227MADA7A34>
- Traditional Chinese*
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB227MACX79UD>
- Simplified Chinese*
<http://www.zoomerang.com/Survey/?p=WEB227MAD379WT>



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