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# Diversity & Human Rights

## focus

“An individual has not started living until he can rise above the narrow confines of his individualistic concerns to the broader concerns of all humanity.”

—Martin Luther King, Jr.

### Human Equality Must Stand as a Centerpiece to Democracy

by *Forrest C. Crawford*  
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Of all our human conditions, injustice continues to intertwine itself into a mosaic of cultural life, leaving us to ponder its vexing presence. Since the early origins of our history, European explorers set out to reconcile their new world exposure to the human species they encountered which differed significantly from themselves. Through the prism of colonial determination and justification that manifest destiny affords, scientific thinkers, scholars and leaders of the time sought to demystify these "unusual" human characteristics by classifying indigenous people as sub-human with no redeemable qualities. Once set apart by the experts, whether through biological or sociological determinism, a flood of compelling questions and theoretical assumptions opened the door to unspeakable exploitation, subjugation and stereotyping, giving rise to a litany of human atrocities underscored by the institution of slavery.

If past deeds inform future actions, our current institutional policies and practices suggest that we have much to learn. As a society, our progressive ideologies to bridge gaps of imbalances have been met with perennial complexities that have left us either embattled or fatigued, if not silent. For example, when we've used race to explain one's genetic inferiority, disabling condition, propensity toward impoverishment or pre-destination to high intelligence and achievement, we have yet

to argue away that this social construct has little or nothing to do with any of the above; yet we unjustly apply it vigorously to prove an inevitable faulty position. We all held on to the hope that by the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, we would have situated ourselves in a place where the role of inequitable practices would be fully exposed and understood, thus bridging us toward a more perfect union. But short of a decade into the 21st century, more questions have been raised around school practices creating imbalances, in health care, employment and housing, and hate motivated violence, widening the gulf of our quest for enlightenment as these actions morphs into common functions of our institutions and daily lives.

Fortunately, we have persevered through these ills long enough to witness the fruits of citizens' activism of the past; that today yield transforming results — the election of president Barack Obama is an example. This historic turning point should compel us to revisit with more meaning Langston Hughes' eloquent words that reflect a desire for America to "be the dream that dreamers dream;" for America to "be that great land of love where never kings connive nor tyrants scheme that any man [or woman] be crushed from one above." Hughes concludes by saying, "I want a land where liberty is crowned with no false patriotic wreath, but opportunity is real and life is free, equality is in the air we breathe."



We've truly come a long way from a time where the thin veil of equality was fragile, yet sustained our hopes; to a time where we now see the wisdom in elevating 21st century men and women; to a time that squarely reflects the belief that in order for true democracy to thrive, equality must be seeded firmly at its core.

*This narrative is excerpted and modified from an essay commissioned by the Salt Lake Arts Council's public exhibition commemorating the 50th anniversary of the Utah ACLU.*

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# Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) Program

by Kori Shaw

Utah Community Action Partnership Association

Learn about the Earned Income Tax Credit and how you can get your taxes prepared without cost!

When tax time comes, do you usually pay someone to do your taxes for you?

Do you sometimes get confused about what tax credits you deserve or are eligible for?

Are you confused about the paperwork sent to you in the mail by the Internal Revenue Service? Do you have a fear of the Internal Revenue Service?

The Volunteer Income Tax Assistance (VITA) program is here to help you! The Internal Revenue Service (IRS) trains and certifies volunteers from the community to prepare basic tax returns for households earning \$42,000 or less. VITA helps to distribute all of the tax credits you are eligible for including the Earned Income Tax Credit (EITC). Based on your filing status and number of dependents, you could receive as much as \$4,800 even if you don't owe any taxes! Approximately \$25 million of EITC is left unclaimed in Salt Lake County alone. VITA is here to help you claim the EITC for free!

Sometimes paying someone to prepare your taxes can cost \$200 or more. We want you to save the money or put it towards paying for your basic needs like food,

clothing, gas or even your children's education.

## EITC (or EIC) Eligibility Requirements

- Must have a valid social security number
- Filing status cannot be "married - filing separately"
- Must be a US citizen or resident alien all year
- Cannot have foreign earned income
- Cannot be the qualifying child of another person

To find out if you are eligible for the Earned Income Tax Credit by answering a few basic questions,

Go to:

<http://www.taxhelputah.org/eligibility.aspx>.

## What to bring to your VITA appointment:

- Proof of identification
- Social Security Cards for you, your spouse and dependents and/or a Social Security Number verification letter issued by the Social Security Administration
- Birth dates for you, your spouse and dependents listed on the tax return
- Current year's tax package if you received one

- Wage and earning statement(s) Form W-2, W-2G, 1099-R, from all employers
- Interest and dividend statements from banks (Forms 1099)
- A copy of last year's Federal and State returns if available
- Bank Routing Numbers and Account Numbers for Direct Deposit (voided check or bank statement).
- Total paid for day care provider and the day care provider's tax identifying number (the provider's Social Security Number or the provider's business Employer Identification Number)
- To file taxes electronically on a married filing joint tax return, both spouses must be present to sign the required forms.

VITA sites are located throughout Salt Lake City in community centers such as, Redwood Community Center, Sorenson Unity Center, Northwest Community Center, Boys and Girls Club and more. Spanish speaking volunteers are available.

All you need to do to make an appointment is dial 2-1-1 or 1-888-826-9790 from any phone.

For more information or to volunteer with VITA, go to [www.utahtaxhelp.org](http://www.utahtaxhelp.org).

**Universal Declaration of Human Rights**, Article 21, reads: (2) Everyone has the right of equal access to public service in his country.

## MESSAGE FROM MAYOR RALPH BECKER



Excerpt from State of the City address 2009: Reflecting back over the past year, it's hard to believe that a year ago I was delivering my first State of the City address. We have gone through a lot together, we have so much to do. I am hopeful for a promising year ahead, and draw strength from our community. I encourage you to read more on this at [www.slccgov.com](http://www.slccgov.com).



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