Changing the Fate initiative aims to rid Utah State of racial intolerance | Journalism

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Phrases like, “You are too pretty to be gay,” “Why are you brown?” and “You will get the scholarship because you are black” were featured on posters at the Access and Diversity Center on Friday.

Students created posters like these in preparation of a larger event called Changing the Fate at Utah State, which will be held at 11:30 a.m. April 23 in the TSC Auditorium.

Changing the Fate of Utah State will feature a movie about diversity at USU and a guest speaker who will present about microaggression and intolerance. The event will end with a march across campus, said event director Sheree Haggan, a senior majoring in communication studies.

She said the event is for all people who have suffered discrimination for any reason, whether it is race or religion or sexual orientation.

“If you have been discriminated against, come share your story and let us turn it into an event that enlightens people across campus that helps make it a safe place for everybody,” Haggan said.

Haggan said an event like this is important because there is a discrimination problem at USU which stems from all groups of people. There is not a set victim or culprit when it comes to bigotry. Rather, it comes from all groups.

“A lot of times when people are being discriminatory, they do not know what they are saying and they do not know it is hurtful,” Haggan said.

Because discrimination affects everyone, Haggan said she hopes it turns out to be a “big huge event” where everyone connects through the pain of discrimination.

“I want this to be a, ‘I love you and we understand it happens and it causes us some pain, but we are going to let you know so it does not happen again,’” Haggan said.

Shandrea Hickok is a psychology and environmental studies major. Hickok said she sometimes feels like people assume things which can be untrue and hurtful.

“Assuming that someone acts a certain way — that you cannot be friends with someone because of their race or their religion,” Hickok said. “They need to engage themselves with others before they pass judgements.”

Haggan said it is a challenge to teach people about tolerance because each individual is so different and learns differently.

“Because we lack diversity, we do not know how to handle it and we do not know how to have those conversations,” Haggan said. “These conversations should have happened when we were younger.”

Alec Player, a sophomore studying anthropology, said the Access and Diversity Center is a place for those conversations to take place. It provides the opportunity for people to learn about assumptions and judgments because the entire center is passionate about diversity.

“The center is, makes people more aware of diversity,” Player said. “It helps make people more comfortable with it as well as they become exposed to it. It also gives a safe place for diverse students.”

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