April 1, 2013

Countdown to Riverside City College's 100th Anniversary

On April 4, 1968, 45 years ago this week, Reverend Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. died. The clergyman and civil rights activist was assassinated in Memphis Tennessee. This act resonated across the United States including the campus of Riverside City College. Below is a photo of the front page of the April 12, 1968 “Tiger Times” student newspaper.

A memorial service in Dr. King’s honor was held at RCC on Tuesday April 9, 1968. Tom Johnson (Vice President Academic affairs, Professor of English and Humanities 1958-1997) wrote a poem entitled “A Special Kind of Knight”. It was read by Allan O. Kirkpatrick (Associate Professor of Sociology and Psychology 1961-1991). Dr. A. H. Graham, an African-American Dentist from the community read his tribute to Dr. King entitled “Brother King”. The service was coordinated by the RCC Black Student Union. Musical selections were played by Curtis Rivers on saxophone, accompanied by Darrell Clayborn on piano. A recording was played of Dr. King’s famous “I Have A Dream” speech given on August 28, 1963 at the Lincoln Memorial during the “March on Washington
for Jobs and Freedom”, 50 years ago this year. At the conclusion of the speech, the audience rose, joined hands and sang the Civil Rights anthem “We Shall Overcome”.

As reported in past “Countdowns” RCC purchased the campus of Riverside Poly High School in the mid-1960s. The old Poly High buildings were razed and RCC constructed new buildings including the Life and Physical Science buildings, the Student Center, Bookstore, Planetarium and Library. By September of 1968, the Library was ready for use. Even before it opened, the RCCD Board of Trustees had agreed to name the new Library after Martin Luther King Jr. Trustee Joseph Aguilar (RCCD Board Member 1964-1979) made the motion on July 9, 1968. At the time he said that it was a “unique opportunity to do a lot for Riverside and for the memory of one who was very special to educational institutions”. By 2003, the Library had outgrown the building and moved to the new Digital Library and Learning Resources Center (which celebrates its 10th anniversary this year). By 2005 the old Library building had been repurposed and rededicated as the “Martin Luther King Jr. Teaching/Learning Center”. The top photo below (from the June 1969 “RCC Reports” District publication) shows the dedication of the Martin Luther King Jr. Library. The lower two photos are of the rededication of the building on August 31, 2005 and the plaque unveiled that day.

Mounted on the wall next to the interior stairwell is an oil painting by Riverside self-taught artist Karl R. Marshall. The work, entitled “Martin Luther King, Jr.’s Dream”, depicts various scenes of the Civil Rights leader’s life. The below left photo is of the artist Marshall and the below right photo is of his painting that is part of the permanent art collection of RCC.
It is 2 years and 49 weeks until RCC’s 100th Anniversary on March 13, 2016.

Due to RCC’s Spring Recess, “Countdown” will be on a one-week hiatus. The next “Countdown” will appear on Monday April 15th, 2013.

The Riverside City College Instructional Media Center is bringing you this five year countdown to RCC’s 100th Anniversary. Our intention is to give everyone a weekly glance at the many people and events that have been a part of the college.

Our thanks go to the RCC Digital Library Archives and the District’s Office of Strategic Communications and Relations for allowing us to use their photo and newspaper collections. Thanks as well to all of the RCC students and Faculty Advisors that were a part of the yearbook and newspaper staffs. Thanks also to Tom Johnson and Gilbert Jimenez who wrote “the book” about RCC’s history. “Riverside City College 1916-1981- A 65 Year History” is available in the RCC Digital Library.

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