

MLK Week Seeks to Answer ‘What’s Left of the Dream?’

NYU kicked off MLK week with a series of events ranging from a talk with renowned author Roxane Gay to hosting discussions on the impact of housing segregation in New York City.

Anna Zimmerman, Contributing Writer

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poster showcasing MLK Week’s event lineup, including a talk by Roxane Gay that filled up Skirball Center. Photo by Jorene He.

Students and professors lined up around the block in freezing weather, watching on TVs outside of Skirball Center for the Performing Arts for a glimpse of renowned writer Roxane Gay on Thursday. The marquee event had the highest number of RSVPs ever, according to a university administrator.

Nearing the end of the [14th annual MLK week at NYU](#), Gay said that she saw “What’s Left of the Dream?” as a need for a plan to execute justice and take direct action against all types of oppression, whether based on race, gender or otherwise.

NYU School of the Arts Professor Manthia Diawara, who started the Africana Studies Program at NYU and is a renowned writer, filmmaker and cultural critic, received the MLK Jr. Humanitarian Award, given each year to a professor who exemplifies the ideas of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Guest speaker Kimberly Dark kicked off the week by discussing growing income inequality, particularly in the contexts of race and gender on Monday.

In games that asked attendees to visualize steep income inequality, Dark demonstrated how rules governing gender, race and wealth function in the U.S. She showed how people of color are affected by the history of segregated housing in New York City and how women are economically stabilized by being in long-term relationships.

NYU student senior Deborah Alabi, who attended the first talk and volunteered for Dark, felt that she got a lot out of the event.

was super interesting,” Alabi said. “Especially the part about underrepresentation in the media, and how we are intrinsically taught to value some occupations over others as opposed to measuring our jobs against our own work ethic and selves.”

The rest of the week featured an open mic on Tuesday and a seminar on Wednesday, both of which further explored race, gender and wealth in America.

Student organizer at the Center for Multicultural Education and Programs and School of Professional Studies senior Nelson Perez was struck by how MLK week showed NYU’s attempt to highlight issues on campus and have an educational, up-to-date discussion about culture.

The biggest thing for me was how the gender pay gap works, how women might miss promotions or carry a lot more responsibility than men in a relationship,” Perez said. “It’s easy to know it’s a thing but difficult to understand why and how it happens if you don’t study it, so that was great.”

This year’s theme, “What’s Left of the Dream?” was the result of organizers’ discussions around what is happening in our community and our nation, according to Assistant Dean of Student Affairs Jose Ampuero.

Although the theme may differ, Ampuero wrote in an email to WSN that some aspects remain the same from past MLK weeks.

“What always remains in practice is honoring MLK’s legacy by the work we do and how we educate students through the programming week and beyond,” Ampuero said.

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