Rev. Samuel “Billy” Kyles, a witness to MLK’s assassination, visits Chicago State University

(CHICAGO) - The story is well known. Yet 41 years later, the world remains saddened and mystified by the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

One of the men with Dr. King on that fateful day will shed light on those final hours at Chicago State University (CSU).

Rev. Samuel “Billy” Kyles will speak about the King assassination at CSU’s Cordell Reed Student Union Rotunda, Thursday, January 28, 2010, from 12:30 – 2 p.m. A screening of his riveting, Academy Award-nominated, 32-minute documentary, *The Witness from the Balcony of Room 306* will follow Rev. Kyles’ remarks. This event is free and open to the public.

Kyles is actually the last living person to spend time with Martin Luther King, Jr. during his final hour (Rev. Ralph Abernathy, the other person, has since passed). Rev. Kyles and his family were going to host Dr. King and his team at his Memphis home for a meal. Kyles went with King to the Lorraine Motel, where Dr. King was preparing to return to Kyles’ home for that meal. As Rev. Kyles descended the stairs of the motel to the car at 6:01 p.m., on April 4, 1968, he heard a gun blast. A heartbeat later, King was lying on the second floor balcony. Kyles ran to him, but it was too late, as *The Witness* documentary chronicles.

The film, directed by Adam Pertofsky, nominated in 2009 for an Academy Award in the “Documentary Short” category, offers commentary on those chilling hours of Dr. King’s death by a sniper’s bullet. Rev. Kyles, the primary subject of the documentary, takes the audience on a tour of Dr. King’s room (306) and the balcony where the Civil Rights Leader spent his final moments.
Kyles said this about King’s assassination in a recent L.A. Watts Times Newspaper article: “Forty years later, I still have no words for what I felt. I wondered why I was there. I now know I was there to be a witness.”