

Oakland University hosts African American History Month festivities

African American Celebration Month – a celebration of the historical and cultural contributions that African Americans have made in the past, present and future -- kicked off Jan. 16 at Oakland University.

“African American Celebration Month is an annual observance of Black History on Oakland University’s campus,” said Denise Thompkins-Jones, retention coordinator for the university’s **Center for Multicultural Initiatives** (CMI). “It’s a series of events designed to highlight the rich history and cultural legacy of African Americans in the past and present.”

This year’s events, which will take place through Feb. 15, include:

- **African American Celebration Month Book Drive – Jan. 16-Feb. 15:** The Book Club at OU will be hosting a book drive for children’s books on the campus of Oakland University. Books will be donated PEACE Academy in Pontiac, Mich. (please no activity books). Drop off locations include the Center for Multicultural Initiatives (104 North Foundation Hall) and the Oakland Center (near the Deans of Students Office, Credit Union, and the Gender and Sexuality Center).
- “Education is...” – **noon-1 p.m. Jan. 18** at the Fireside Lounge at the Oakland Center: This “Hump Day” series hosted by Student Program Board will explore attendees’ knowledge of African American history and historical figures as well as highlight what education means.
- “What Now?” – **11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 23** at the Fireside Lounge at the Oakland Center: Did the Presidential Election leave you with unanswered questions and feelings? Join us as we discuss the value of voting, cultural climate and steps for moving forward.
- **Global Health Lunch N’ Learn – 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 24** in Room 204 at O’Dowd Hall: Guest speaker Ranit Mishori, MD, MHS, FAAFP, an associate professor of family medicine at Georgetown University’s School of Medicine and the director of the Department of Family Medicine’s Global Health Initiatives, will discuss “the physician’s role in human rights.”
- **Black Cinema Movie Night – 6-9 p.m. Jan. 26** in Gold Room C at the Oakland Center: Join us as we show the documentary “13th.” The film highlights the 13th Amendment and the disparity of African-American males within the prison system.
- **MLK Day of Service – 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. Jan. 28:** MLK Day of Service is a volunteer event. We will have over seven different non-profit organizations in Pontiac, Detroit, and the surrounding communities that students can volunteer at. Lunches will be provided to students who attend. Register at www.oakland.edu/csa/volunteer.
- “We Are Our Brothers and Sisters: Teaching Social Justice/Human Rights Through Poetry” – **Noon to 1:30 p.m. Feb. 2** in Room 242 the Kresge Library: Maya Angelou’s writing life provides us with a great lesson in how literature can transform lives. The library plans to screen the documentary “Maya Angelou: And Still I Rise,” a film which celebrates her life as a poet/writer, activist and storyteller.
- “Taste of Africa” – **4-7 p.m. Feb. 3** in the Banquet Rooms at the Oakland Center: Taste of Africa will feature African and African-American cuisine, African drumming and spirituals, spoken word performances, and much more. The event is free and open to the public.
- “The Civil Rights Movement, Freedom Schools and the Transformation of America” – **Noon to 1:30 p.m. Feb. 6** in the Gold Room at the Oakland Center: Guest speaker John W. Hardy was actively involved from high school through college in civil rights activities, voter registration schools and Freedom Schools. He will draw upon his experiences to discuss how the civil rights movement transformed America so that all students can seek and receive a transformative education and be better prepared for the future.



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- Third Annual Black Faculty Research Symposium – **4-6 p.m. Feb. 6** in the Oakland Room at the Oakland Center: Keynote speaker Dr. Witt Dykes, Ph.D., an associate professor of history at Oakland University, will be joined by two School of Education and Human Services Ph.D. candidates who will also give an overview of their African American-focused research study.
- “Brother Outsider” Film Screening and Panel – **Noon to 2 p.m. Feb. 7** in the Gold Room at the Oakland Center, and from **6-8 p.m. Feb. 7** in the Fireside Lounge, also at the Oakland Center: The Gender & Sexuality Center will host a conversation about Bayard Rustin, one of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s closest advisors and the architect of the March on Washington, who was an openly gay man. The GSC will be screening “Brother Outsider,” a film about Rustin’s life, and hosting a speaker to discuss film and its relevancy today.
- Black Lives Matter Panel Discussion – **6-9 p.m. Feb. 8** in the Lake Michigan Room at the Oakland Center: The Black Lives Matter Discussion Panel will feature official Black Lives Matter activists from Lansing, Mich. These individuals, along with other students, will be discussing the current state of our country from the black student’s perspective and how to go about taking action against the hatred and bigotry towards minorities that the country is dealing with.
- Closing Ceremony – **Noon to 1 p.m. Feb. 15** in Gold Rooms A & B at the Oakland Center: Join us as we reflect upon many of the events featured during the 2017 African American Celebration Month and give thanks to the many sponsors and supporters. Light refreshments will be provided.

“This month-long program reflects the CMI’s and OU’s dedication to providing quality cultural events to our student body, as well as the support of our institutions recognition of the importance of diversity and inclusion,” Thompson-Jones said.

According to the CMI, the precursor to African American History Month was created in 1926 in the United States when historian Carter G. Woodson announced the second week of February to be “Negro History Week.” The week was chosen because it coincided with the birthdays of both Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln.

It was expanded from a week to a month in February of 1969 as a result of efforts by the leaders of the Black United Students at Kent State University. The first “African American History Month” celebration occurred at Kent State University in February of 1970.

Six years later, during the bicentennial in 1976, the expansion was officially recognized by the U.S. government, with President Gerald Ford urging Americans to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.”

At Oakland University, African American History Month kicks off each year on Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Day. To learn more, visit <http://www.oakland.edu/cmi/aacm>.