

Wednesday, January 20, 2010

African American Celebration Month offers diverse events on campus

By **Katie Land**, news editor

Oakland University is geared up to commemorate the national African American Celebration Month with a series of campus events focused on "Creating the African American Community: Family, Spirituality, Politics & Culture," from Monday, Jan. 18, through Thursday, Feb. 18.

Shaped and maintained by volunteers, OU's AAC celebration boasts a myriad of events, such as the Adanni Omowale African Drum and Dance Ensemble; "Happily Ever After," a documentary about the African American relationship; multiple panel discussions; and a performance by the Dayton Contemporary Dance Company at Varner Recital Hall.

"Each year brings a new type of energy and excitement to OU's campus," said Jonathan Parks, coordinator for pre-college programs and chair of AACM. "We are all looking forward to seeing how the campus reacts to some of our new ideas and fresh thinking. There is a slightly more personal touch this year, and we hope to make it the largest celebration yet."

Serving as this year's keynote speaker is Detroit native Hubert G. Locke, retired professor and Dean Emeritus of the Daniel J. Evans School of Public Affairs at the University of Washington. Locke is an author, a Holocaust scholar, and is considered to be a moral leader and an authority on police and urban affairs. Locke lived in Detroit during the race riots and brings a rich history of the city, Parks said.

Locke's presentation, titled "Celebrating the African-American Community: Case Study," will take place from 11:30 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Tuesday, Feb. 2, in the Oakland Center Banquet Rooms.

Perhaps the largest single event, the Taste of Africa Gala, set for 4-7 p.m. on Friday, Feb. 12, in the Oakland Center Banquet Rooms, provides samples of traditional African fare and entertainment. Event planners anticipate an attendance of 600-800 guests from Oakland and the surrounding community, up from 300 guests just a few years ago.

"The event has been exploding over the past few years," said Bridget Green, assistant director for the Center for Multicultural Initiatives. "The gala is the centerpiece of OU's African American celebration. Student groups will provide a portion of the entertainment with steel drums, stepping, poetry and singing African spirituals."

One of those personal touches comes with the Psychedelic Shack 70's Party set to close out the month from 5-8 p.m. on Thursday, Feb. 18, in the Oakland Center Gold Rooms. Parks hopes this event will draw students, staff and faculty and provide them with a chance to have some fun and see each other in a new light.

The AACM committee is composed of Oakland faculty and staff volunteers and sponsored by Student Programming Board, Public School Academies, University Housing, Government Relations and the University Student Congress.

View the calendar for a complete look at Oakland's AACM events, and visit the Web site at oakland.edu/aacm for more information.

SUMMARY

National African American Celebration Month at OU offers a variety of events and activities from Monday, Jan. 18, through Thursday, Feb. 18.

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