

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

FEBRUARY



HANNAH BRUNS AND KAYLA PROWELL

Hannah Bruns and Kayla Prowell made Vanderbilt history on March 24, 2021 when they became the first all-female and all-Black ticket to win the Vanderbilt Student Government general election. They earned 76.67% of the vote.

Bruns' and Prowell's "It's Our Time" platform aimed to increase equity and inclusion on campus via a five-pronged approach: improving equity, sustainability, safety, community and academics. Goals within this platform included renaming university buildings that reflect the university's complicated history with race and civil rights, as well as adding a cultural studies course requirement for undergraduates. Bruns' and Prowell's office currently oversees the Free Menstrual Products program, which sees to it that 39 dispensers with free menstrual products are placed in women's, men's and gender-neutral bathrooms across campus.

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As a Harvard-trained historian, Carter G. Woodson, like W. E. B. Du Bois before him, believed that truth could not be denied and that reason would prevail over prejudice. His hopes to raise awareness of African Americans' contributions to civilization were realized when he and the organization he founded, the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History, conceived and announced Negro History Week in 1925.

The event was first celebrated during a week in February 1926 that encompassed the birthdays of both Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass. The response was overwhelming: Black history clubs sprang up; teachers demanded materials to instruct their pupils; and

progressive whites, not simply white scholars and philanthropists, stepped forward to endorse the effort.

By the time of Woodson's death in 1950, Negro History Week had become a central part of African American life and substantial progress had been made in bringing more Americans to appreciate the celebration. At mid-century, mayors of cities nationwide issued proclamations noting Negro History Week. The Black Awakening of the 1960s dramatically expanded the consciousness of African Americans about the importance of Black history, and the civil rights movement focused Americans of all colors on the subject of the contributions of African Americans to our history and culture.



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(Excerpt from an essay by Daryl Michael Scott, Howard University. africanamericanhistorymonth.gov. Bruns and Prowell info from <https://vanderbilthustler.com/>. Photo by Meron Kassa, College of Arts and Sciences)

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