The Evolution of Black History Month

Dear Vanderbilt community,

The purpose and impact of my hometown production aligned perfectly with the initial vision of Negro History Week as proposed by Dr. Carter G. Woodson back in 1926. Dr. Woodson believed that this time set aside in February should strictly to February, and often only including a limited number of historical figures and moments. Today, Black History Month. The month drew more mainstream celebration in 1976 when President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month. Unfortunately, latent traditions from earlier years still exist, and many school districts concentrating their curriculum focused on Black history solely during February.

A key milestone was reached in 1986 when President Ronald Reagan declared the third week in each month as American Heritage Week, for the purposes of highlighting the cultural heritage of U.S. ethnic minority groups; however, the 1986 declaration specifically excluded Black History Month. The purpose of the month, if not the name, is still often limited to Negro History Week. Black History Month is more than a simple extension of a single month. It is a year-round celebration of the rich cultural legacy of Black Americans who have made significant contributions to the United States' history and progress. In short, Black History Month is a celebration of the unique contributions of Black people to the nation's history, culture, and identity.

In recent years, Black History Month has expanded beyond its traditional focus on the achievements of Black Americans. Organizations and communities have begun to recognize the contributions of Black women, Black LGBTQIA+ individuals, and other underrepresented groups. This shift reflects a growing recognition of the importance of celebrating the diversity of Black experience in America.

We look forward to your support this month. Come curious, leave inspired!

2022 Vanderbilt Black History Month lineup.

3/2: Innovative Conversations: Beyond the Horizon - Exposing the Critical Link Between Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) and Business Excellence
3/1: Owen Forward: DEI Engagement
2/28: Corporate Leaders Panel
2/26: Colors of Creativity: Celebrating Multiculturalism
2/25: Owen Roundtable: The Importance of Effective Lawmaking in American Democracy
2/24: Celebrate Black History Month with a Special Program
2/23: Owen Roundtable: Celebrating MLK and the American Dream
2/21: Oberst Law School Virtual + In-Person Event: Gender and Racial Equity in the Legal Profession
2/20: Oberst Law School Virtual + In-Person Event: Gender and Racial Equity in the Legal Profession: Intersectionality and the Law
2/19: Oberst Law School Virtual + In-Person Event: Gender and Racial Equity in the Legal Profession: Social Justice and the Law
2/16: Owen Roundtable: Same-Sex Marriage in America: How to Be an Ally
2/15: Owen Roundtable: Celebrate Black History Month with a Special Program
2/14: Owen Roundtable: Celebrate Black History Month with a Special Program
2/13: Owen Roundtable: Celebrate Black History Month with a Special Program
2/12: Harambee Showcase - A celebration of African American culture
2/11: Afro-Latinx in the Diaspora: Celebrating Black History Month
2/5: Chinese New Year Celebration
2/2: Black and Jewish Corporate Leaders Panel
1/31: Owen Forward: DEI Engagement
1/29: The Evolution of Black History Month: A look back at the early years of Negro History Week
1/28: Owen Roundtable: The Evolution of the Black Experience
1/27: Owen Roundtable: Celebrate Black History Month with a Special Program
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1/4: Owen Roundtable: Celebrate Black History Month with a Special Program
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We hope you will join us to celebrate Black History Month in 2022. As we commemorate the achievements of Black Americans, let us also commit to ongoing dialogue and action to ensure that their legacies continue to inspire us and guide us toward a more equitable future.