



The Evolution of Black History Month

Dear Vanderbilt community,

I have many fond memories of Black History Month (BHM) from my adolescent days in Kankakee, Illinois. Our town held an annual BHM showcase that ran every Sunday during February. Additional performances occurred during the week, and every student in the school district came to see the production. The theme typically centered on telling the story of some notable historical figure or moment in Black history, with musical performances and poetry interluding. One of my proudest moments occurred during my junior year of high school. That year, I won the lead role in the BHM showcase focused on Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. I spent months memorizing his speeches and learning every detail of his life. Although I did not win an academy award for my oratorical skills or acting ability, that production (and the many before it) taught me significant lessons about Black history.



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 highlight the contributions and impact of Black history in the overall telling of American history. With the increasing racial consciousness and pride of Black college students in the 1960s, Negro History Week evolved into Black History Month. The month drew more mainstream celebration in 1976 when President Gerald Ford officially recognized Black History Month. Unfortunately, latent consequences of the mainstream recognition of Black History Month included many school districts concentrating their curriculum focused on Black history strictly to February, and often only including a limited number of historical figures and moments.

Recently, as more institutions focus on equity, diversity, inclusion and belonging, celebrations of Black History Month have expanded. Today, Black History Month is a time to reflect on the totality of the Black experience - past, present and future. In addition to paying homage to the history and triumphs of our ancestors, it is equally essential that BHM is used as a time to acknowledge and celebrate Black intersectionality, joy, entrepreneurship, social justice, mental and spiritual well-being, artistic expression and the many other dimensions that comprise the contemporary Black experience. To that end, the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center is incredibly proud and excited about the scope and potential impact of the programs offered as part of the 2022 Vanderbilt Black History Month lineup.

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

Dr. Rosevelt L. Noble

Assistant Dean of Residential Colleges, Director of the Bishop Joseph Johnson Black Cultural Center



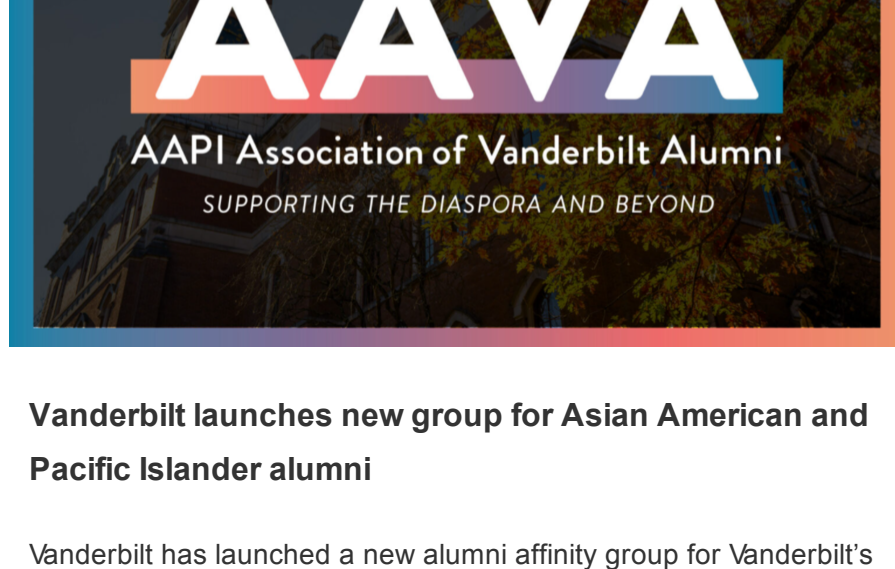
Stephanie Mahnke named director of LGBTQI Life

Stephanie Mahnke, a higher education professional with extensive experience serving the LGBTQIA+ community and marginalized students, has been named director of the K.C. Potter Center and LGBTQI Life at Vanderbilt. [Read More +](#)



Nashville high school to be named after civil rights leader Rev. James Lawson

Nashville's newest public high school will be named in honor of the Rev. James Lawson, a civil rights icon and Vanderbilt University Distinguished Professor, emeritus. [Read More +](#)



Vanderbilt launches new group for Asian American and Pacific Islander alumni

Vanderbilt has launched a new alumni affinity group for Vanderbilt's Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) community, supporting the diaspora and beyond. The AAPI Association of Vanderbilt Alumni (AAVA), launched in January, aims to connect alumni with one another as well as with current students and the broader Vanderbilt community. [Read More +](#)



Women's Center seeks nominations for 2022 awards

The Margaret Cuninggim Women's Center is seeking nominations for its annual awards that recognize and honor Vanderbilt community members for their contributions to the advancement of university women. The deadline to submit nominations is Friday, Feb. 25. [Read More +](#)



iDialogues program accepting applications through Jan. 31

The Student Center for Social Justice and Identity's iDialogues program is a 10-week educational series that creates an opportunity for both undergraduate and graduate students to engage in intergroup dialogue through the lens of social group identity, power dynamics, conflict and community. [Read More +](#)



Mobile vaccine program leaders receive Vanderbilt's Martin Luther King Jr. Award

Assistant Professors of Nursing Christian Ketel and Carrie Plummer have received Vanderbilt's 2022 Martin Luther King Jr. Award for developing and leading the Vanderbilt University School of Nursing/Vanderbilt University Medical Center Mobile Vaccine Program. [Read More +](#)



Vanderbilt University named founding partner in venture fund designed to invest in Black-founded and Black-led health care companies

Vanderbilt University is among the founding investors in Jumpstart Nova, the first venture fund in the United States to invest exclusively in Black-founded and -led companies at the forefront of health care innovation. [Read More +](#)



Vanderbilt joins TSU, Meharry and the Congregational Health and Education Network on \$4M NIH grant to address social factors in health

Sharon Jones, assistant professor of nursing, and David G. Schlundt, associate professor of psychology, are participating in a collaborative research project to address health disparities and advance health equity in Nashville. [Read More +](#)



Vanderbilt University Coffee Equity Lab launches Coffee Equity Design Challenge

Vanderbilt's Coffee Equity Lab has launched the Coffee Equity Design Challenge, in which students and coffee professionals will team up to co-create meaningful innovations for a more equitable and sustainable coffee industry. [Read More +](#)

Get Connected: Upcoming Events

[HR Employee Learning & Engagement experiences for 2022](#)

[1/31: 2022 Law School Martin Luther King Jr. Memorial Lecture](#)

[1/31: Owen Forward: DEI Corporate Leaders Panel](#)

[2/1: Black History Month Kickoff](#)

[2/2: Black and Jewish Solidarity in the Civil Rights Era](#)

[2/5: Chinese New Year Celebration](#)

[2/10: Buy Black Vandy](#)

[2/11: Afro-Latinx in the Academy](#)

[2/12: Harambee Showcase 2022](#)

[2/17: Women in the Academy: Sexual Harassment in the Academy](#)

[3/2: Inclusive Book Group will discuss 'The Vanishing Half'](#)

[Wednesdays: For faculty and staff - Mindful Stretch Break](#)

[COVID-19 vaccination leave available for employees accompanying children to get vaccinated](#)

[For employees and staff - Access televideo counseling services](#)

Continuing the Conversation



[WATCH: MLK Commemorative Event keynote: Poet and author Nikky Finney](#)



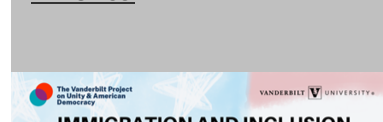
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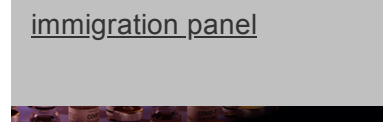
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[WATCH: Author Sasha Issenberg discusses tumultuous legal fight for same-sex marriage in America](#)



[WATCH: Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy hosts immigration panel](#)



[WATCH: Vanderbilt Project on Unity and American Democracy and VUMC present 'Vaccine Hesitancy: The Politics of Public Health in Tennessee'](#)

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Heritage Month

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