

CILC organizations celebrate Black History Month

Ebony Ball and Soul Food Dinner canceled due to COVID-19 policies

Christopher Wakim, News Editor | February 25, 2021



February is Black History Month, which focuses on celebrating Black culture and the experiences and history of the Black community.

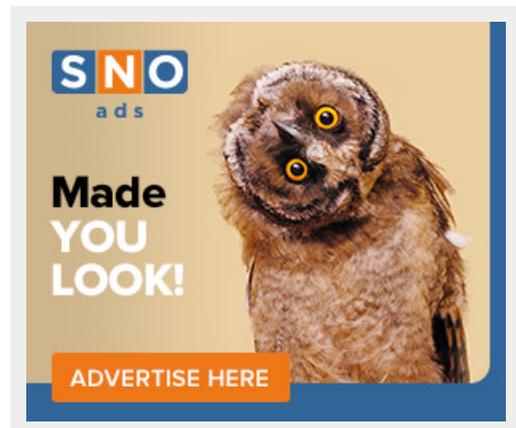
Throughout Black History Month, several student organizations such as Men of Color Advancement Association, Queer People of Color and the Association for the Advancement of Black Culture celebrated the month with guest speakers, polls and movies. These organizations are a part of the institution's Cultural Identity Leadership Coalition.

"CILC is a diversity organization on campus," Aaliyah Coleman, '21, said. "It allows the various groups of people to feel represented on campus — at a (predominately white institution). These clubs allow for the various diverse members of our community to feel welcomed. It reminds that (you) are not the only one in that place ... I am often the only Black woman in my class ... I am sometimes the only Black person in my class. It is nice to have a place to go where my experience will not be viewed as complaining. I deserve to be heard."

Coleman is the senior intern for the IDEAS center as well as a member of several CILC organizations. She is the co-founder of A Ladies Place and a member of Pi Phi chapter of the Zeta Phi Beta Sorority, Inc. She is also the programming coordinator for Young Born Leaders as well as a member of the Minority Association of Pre-Health Students.

Coleman mentioned that being a member of CILC organizations enables students to gain access to additional resources and opportunities while learning about new cultures.

"We do a lot of planning and mentoring," said Angelica Perez-Johnston, Associate Director of



the IDEAS center and advisor for CILC “We help plan multicultural field day during the fall, and cultural and heritage celebrations with our various clubs.”

The IDEAS center partnered with ABC to host two guest speakers, Christine Crowell and Evan Williams, for Black History Month. The pair discussed Black mental health and navigating life as a student of color attending a PWI.

“It’s been challenging this year because of (COVID-19) and not being on campus,” Perez-Johnston said. “Most of the planning has been virtual. We did manage to have a Black mental health panel and awareness of the Black community. ABC does most of the programming and we stand alongside (ABC). It was challenging to do anything else that wasn’t already planned.”

Due to remote instruction occurring during the majority of February, Black History Month was celebrated remotely via social media. MOCAA shared stories of Black figures in history, QPOC shared stories of queer Black figures in history and ABC also hosted an alumni meeting on Feb. 24. ABC utilized Instagram to create a series of questions to movies where students could receive a prize for participating in the events.

“Most of our events were cancelled due to us typically being face-to-face or close,” said Manuel Soares, ’21, President of ABC. “It seemed to be best to have most of our Black History Month events remain virtual.”

ABC cancelled this year’s Soul Food Dinner due to COVID-19 regulations and safety concerns.

“Typically, we would buy the food and prepare it ourselves, but because of the new regulations, we cannot prepare the food ourselves,” Soares said. “We would instead have to have Parkhurst do it for us, which wouldn’t be the same.”

Perez-Johnston explained that, unfortunately, the majority of the traditional Black History Month events had to be cancelled due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Last year was ABCs 50th anniversary,” Perez-Johnston said. “Every year, they host an Ebony Ball. Last year, they did the first ever ABC awards, which recognized Black Excellence, and (hosted) the Soul Food Dinner.”

Soares commented on the low turnout for the Black History Month event as well as general club meetings this year.

“I feel like people are missing out on opportunities,” Soares said. “(ABC has) networking and alumni connections and (our members) are now mostly juniors and seniors. We haven’t seen much turnout from underclassmen – not just us, but CILC organizations in general. We want people to know there are clubs here for people based upon identities, particularly (first-years) coming in.”

About the Writer

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