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03-04 NEWS

Checkout future events set to happen during Black History Month at NSU and in the Natchitoches area. Also, learn what critical race theory is and what some NSU professors think about the topic.

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Meet Gary Fields, an award-winning journalist and NSU alumn writing for underserved communities. You can also read about I've Got the Recipe! A soul food diner serving comfort food.

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Gary Fields: The power of a pen

By Isabel Juarez RubioArts and Living Editor



Early beginnings

His story began in the small town of Alexandria, Louisiana. Gary Fields was born to a single, teenage mother who later married an enlisted man in the Air Force. His life changed when he traveled the world and had a different life than he ever could've imagined. While abroad, Fields kept the goal to attend college with him no matter where he went.

After his dad retired from the Air Force and his family returned back to his hometown, the college search for Fields began.

Living abroad changed their lives; Fields and his family got to see and interact with many different cultures and people. When they returned to Louisiana, his dad retired from the airforce and the college search started for Fields.

A new beginning

His college journey began at Southern University and A&M College where he received an engineering scholarship, but he quickly realized this was not the path for him and returned to Alexandria.

He attended Louisiana State University of Alexandria and transferred to Northwestern State University of Louisiana two years later. As a student, Fields was active and joined as many organizations as he could including Blue Key Honor Society, Student Union Governing Board - today known as the Student Government Association - and was a member of the Theta Chi Chapter of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc.

"You could participate in so many things because the school was small enough to where you could run for office and people would actually know who you were. Then the time when I was there, there weren't that many Black students, so we all knew each other pretty well and many of them were in various fraternities and sororities. We all just kind of got together and combined our strength," Fields said

He graduated in May 1982 with a bachelor's degree in journalism. He decided to extend his visit in Natchitoches and stayed two more years at NSU to earn a master's degree in English.

Journalism world

Field's career began in Natchitoches as a graduate student when he got a full-time job at the Natchitoches Times as a sports reporter.

He confesses that he was a beginner and had no idea what he was doing but he was able to attend sports events which was something he enjoyed along with writing. While working as a sports reporter he met influential people and was involved sues, Fields was then offered the opportunity to move to Washington D.C. with a

"It was a great way to start. It also allowed me to make my mistakes before I started moving into the more, I don't want to say more serious aspects of journalism, but the somewhat harsher realities of journalism," Fields said. "So I worked in Natchitoches I think for about four years and then I went in and worked for the Shreveport Times."

With his new position at the Shreveport Times, he led coverage in six parishes. He reported on various issues within the school board, military news, city councils and the criminal justice system. He also started to report on bigger issues such as drugs and gang wars.

Due to his coverage of these rising issues, Fields was then offered the opportunity to move to Washington D.C. with a program that allowed him to stay in the metropolitan area for four months and improve his journalistic abilities.

2003.

https://nsutraditions.com/the-collections/long-purple-line/

Gary Fields was inducted into NSU's Long Purple Line Hall of Distinction in

At the end of the program, he decided to stay in Washington D.C. to work for USA Today. Fields eventually $l\ y$ moved







Submitted by Gary Fields.

"I went looking for the people that nobody else sees. If you raise them up, then you are bringing them with you," Gary Fields said.

to the Washington Times and worked as a police reporter but then went back to USA Today for another 10 years before joining The Wall Street Journal in 2000.

"I'm kind of an accidental journalist; what I could always do right was write and look – I've never applied (for a job) until I got to AP. I'd never had to apply for a journalism job. I always just kind of got recruited. The jobs kept finding me instead of me finding jobs," Fields said.

Currently, Fields works as an award-winning journalist for the Associated Press as a democratic reporter. Fields has worked at The Associated Press for 30 years.

Awards

After hard work and many stories later, Fields' work was recognized. He has covered events such as 9/11 earning The Wall Street Journal a Pulitzer Prize in 2002 for Breaking News coverage.

Among his many recognitions he was named a Louisiana Legend by the Louisiana Public Broadcasting Association in 2023. He is also a past winner of the National Association of Black Journalists Journalist of the Year in 1997.

He was inducted into NSU's Long Purple Line Alumni Hall of Distinction in 2003.

Truth

Although getting physical rewards for his hard work is gratifying, Fields confesses that his actual reward is helping others.

"I wanted to actually be the reporter who walked up to talk to people that everybody else walked past and they ignored," Fields said. "If you asked me, 'how do you define your career?' I would say I'm the guy who sees people nobody else sees."

He confesses that he uses his status as a journalist to help those in need, especially those in the Black community.

"Representing the Black community, especially as a journalist, first off, we kind of come with a little natural understanding of some of the challenges that we as Black people face in America that are simply different," Fields said. "Your living experience is just going to be different. You're going to run into different things. I've had a gun on me with police, by police. Unfortunately, several times. That's not something that my coworkers really had to endure. Not that much at least."

Fields wants to help others and educate them on what is going on and use his platform to help those in need.

Being part of a community means knowing what it's like to be in need, he said. Fields' always keeps in mind that even when one person may not have much, someone else may have nothing. Being there to help those in similar situations is part of belonging to that community, he explained.

"That's the responsibility that you have, and that I feel like I have – that I'm always gonna have – as part of the Black community," Fields said. "At the end of this, when God looks at me and says, 'what did you do?' I want to be able to say, 'I did the best that I could, and I never forgot who I was and where I started.""

Along with being a journalist, Fields is a father and a community member who cares and wants to uplift people.

"If I had a creed, it would be you can't measure how successful you are by how

far you come, but who you bring with you. Many people get big in the world and they measure themselves by how far they are from where they started. I don't measure how far I am. I measure by who you bring with you. 'Did you raise anybody with your journey?' Because if not, what's the point," he said.

Last chapter

He confesses that he has and continues to enjoy his career as a journalist, but Fields is looking for the next chapter in his life.

"I don't know what that is yet. I'm waiting for God to kind of actually tell me that one and to point me in that direction," Fields says. "Maybe it's to go and be a school teacher that lets young people know, especially young men know it's okay to actually be smart. Don't be ashamed that you could be intellectual, that you are well spoken and that you have a sense of moral about you and a sense of responsibility about yourself."

The journalism world has provided him with many opportunities to grow and has allowed him to help others grow.

"I always knew that, okay, you are in this fantastic position to turn the lights on in corners of people's lives that they don't normally look at," Fields said. "What if there's a positive despite all the anger and all the other stuff you see in America these days. One thing I can say is whenever I have written about somebody

who needed something or who needed help if you wrote about it and highlighted that story, inevitably, somebody was always going to call them to talk about it later and ask what they needed."

Journalism can be so much more than just politics and reporting on the negative in the world, uplifting and shining light into the dark places is a legacy that Fields is leaving for future journalists.

"I went looking for the people that nobody else sees. If you raise them up, then you are bringing them with you," Fields said.

Advice

From his years of experience as a student at NSU to his professional award-winning journalism career, Fields empowers the next generation of journalists to follow stories they are passionate about.

"Get out and just do things outside of just journalism, but also to use journalism to say, 'hey look, if there's an interesting program or there are people that are struggling," Fields said.

Being a journalist is more than writing; it's being able to change people's lives through writing.

"You are going to try to do the best that you possibly can because you got to keep the faith and the faith is being who you are," Fields said.



Submitted by Gary Fields.
Currently, Fields works as an award-winning journalist for the Associated
Press as a democratic reporter. Fields has worked at The Associated Press for 30 years.

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The Current Sauce is the official student-run newspaper for Northwestern State University. The content and stories within the paper may not necessarily reflect the views of administration, faculty and staff.

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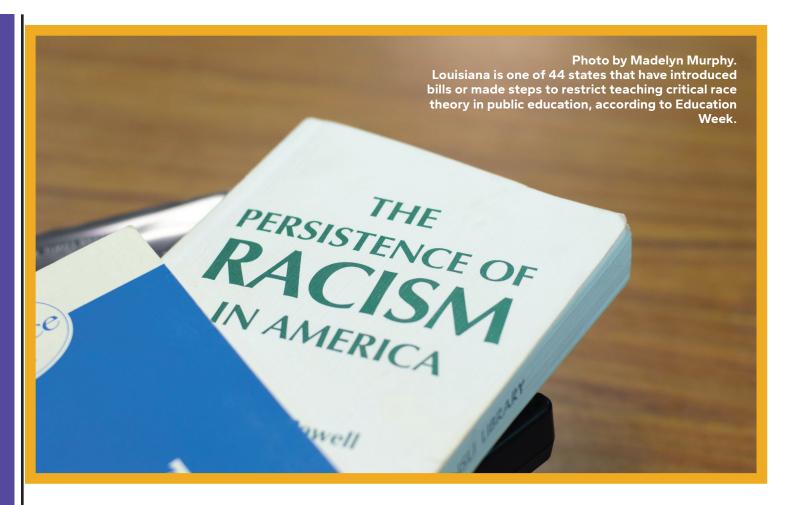
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NSU professors discuss Gov. Landry's critical race theory executive order

By Victoria Rodrigue Reporter

ritical race theory is the idea that racism is systematic in the nation's institutions, specifically maintaining the dominance of white people, according to the 57th Edition Associated Press Stylebook.

Gov. Jeff Landry signed an executive order on Aug. 12, 2024, titled, "Preventing the use of critical race theory in Louisiana's K-12 public education system." He issued the following statement in a press release regarding his decision:

"This executive order is a much-needed sigh of relief for parents and students across our state, especially as kids are heading back to school. Teaching children that they are currently or destined to be oppressed or to be an oppressor based on their race and origin is wrong and has no place in our Louisiana classrooms. I am confident that under Dr. Brumley's leadership our education system will continue to head in the right direction, prioritizing American values and common-sense teachings."

According to the AP Stylebook, critical race theory is not a fixture of K-12 education but has become a catch-all political term for any teaching in schools about race and American history. "Some people take issue with how schools have addressed diversity and inclusion," the book's entry on race states.

Louisiana is one of 44 states that have introduced bills or made steps to restrict teaching critical race theory in public education, according to Education Week.

Jasmine Wise, professor and coordinator of Black Studies and for the Gail Metoyer Jones Center for Inclusion and Diversity at NSU, explained that critical race theory is misunderstood because of the political connections created in the past few years.

"Like most things in America, if something is misunderstood, we begin to make our own definitions. The misunderstanding of CRT is problematic in lieves that history without the ugly parts that people create narratives that can be is a dishonest fantasy and that people divisive instead of taking the time to understand the facts," Wise said.

When it comes to the teaching of critical race theory, Wise explained that it would be beneficial for some high school courses such as Civics, English, World History and American History.

"I don't know if I believe there should be a course dedicated to critical race theory but there should be mention where it naturally fits," Wise said.

Rebecca Riall, assistant professor and coordinator of Pre-Law and Paralegal Studies and American Indian and Indigenous Studies at NSU, explained that teaching truthful information about history and society, including critical race theory when applied, and giving students tools to critically evaluate what they hear is crucial to having well-rounded citizens.

"We don't gain anything by teaching history if we aren't teaching history that is accurate, valid and incorporates experiences of different people. In anthropology, societies are seen as developing as they do because of historical contingencies. We don't understand where society is today if we don't understand those," Riall said.

Riall doesn't think guilt is the message of talking openly about society. She becan learn from history to be proud of not having prejudices against one another.

"Whether we like it or not, race, even though it's not biologically real, is something that is very pervasive in our society. My experience is that students, regardless of their identity, find it empowering to learn about struggles that are common to many groups and how people throughout American history have stood up for justice and equality. That is the best part of America," Riall

While the connotations of Critical Race Theory often prompt a stop on the conversation of race and its history, Wise and Riall explained that teaching the realities and harshness of history can ignite a more fluid and open conversation for all on race.

NSU, Natchitoches community commemorates Black History Month through events

By Heidi Gauthier Reporter





Photo by Lalaina Wood. **NSU Students teach children about** Martin Luther King Jr.'s legacy.

Photo by Katie Grace Rion. Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, Inc. honors Dr. Martin Luther King's legacy by retelling the history of his movement.

orthwestern State University of Louisiana and the Natchitoches community will host numerous events throughout the month of February to commemorate Black History Month including a parade, mobile museum and other programs.

The city of Natchitoches is hosting its third annual Black History Month Parade on Feb. 15. The parade will start at 2 p.m. by the Natchitoches Parish Courthouse and end on Martin Luther King Street. The line up will include floats, dance teams and the grand marshal Latorria Freeman. The Natchitoches native was named grand marshal for her work as an author and publisher of The Real Views Newspaper.

Ty Johnson is spearheading the parade. She is a councilmember for the city and the founder of The Color of My Skin, a racial equality advocacy program.

"The more included the younger generations are, the more they will be active in community events," Johnson said.

Following the parade, a community block party and ceremony honoring Black history will take place at the Ben Johnson Auditorium on Martin Luther King Drive. There will be a car, bike and truck show, vendors, performances and interactive learning throughout the day.

At NSU, the Center for Inclusion and Diversity will host the Black History Month Mobile Museum in the Student Union Ballroom on Feb. 24. This event will showcase history from 1860 to present

Jasmine Wise, coordinator of black studies at NSU and coordinator for the Gail Metoyer Jones Center for Inclusion and Diversity, explained that Americans take for granted the impact that Black history has on American culture.

"It is important to remember Black History Month every year because it had to happen for Black Americans to live the way they do now," Wise said.

Wise is hosting Exploring Legacy on Feb. 25 in the Lucille M. Hendrick Room of the Student Union. "Attendees will be able to talk to historians about freedom colonies and Rosenwald's School and how they shaped Black history," Wise

Carlton Johnson II, junior health and exercise science major, said that these events are important because everyone can always learn more about Black his-

"These events can help individuals better understand the world that we are living in today," Johnson said.

Helping Hands are hosting the Helping student messenger

Hands Black History Program in Magale Recital Hall on Feb. 27, where attendees will learn more about history through speakers and storytelling.

As BHM arrives, events could surface by other organizations to remember and honor the history of Black Americans. Student Support Services (TRiO) and To find out about other events check the



Photo by Jayda Gee: Last year, the CID hosted its first Culture Fest event where Black student organizations showcased their goals and mission.

I've Got the Recipe serves up authentic soul food to Natchitoches

By Rebecca Smith Reporter

n a city known for its rich history and cultural diversity, one soul food diner is quietly making a big impact. I've Got the Recipe, owned by Sheila Dennis, has become a cherished spot for locals.

With recipes passed down through generations and a menu that unites people, this restaurant is more than a place to eat – it's a celebration of heritage and community spirit.

For Dennis, one dish in particular holds a special place in her heart - her mother's cornbread dressing. "People love the cornbread dressing, and that's what I like the most," she said.

This beloved dish, which she often serves with baked chicken or turkey wings, captures the essence of comfort and tradition that defines I've Got the Recipe.

Dennis' journey into the restaurant industry is deeply rooted in her childhood memories of cooking with her grandmother and preparing meals for her church. "It was something I always did," she recalls.

This lifelong passion for cooking inspired her to open her own business, offering a menu filled with soul food delights that resonate with both her family's traditions and her community's tastes.



Photo by Isabel Juarez Rubio. Sheila Dennis opened her soul food diner four years ago.

The name I've Got the Recipe carries special significance. Dennis' daughter named the restaurant as a way to honor her family's rich culinary heritage. With recipes passed down from her mother and grandmother, Dennis' restaurant, including its own name, is a testament to the legacy of love and cooking that defines her family.



Photo by Isabel Juarez Rubio. I've Got the Recipe is open Tuesday through Friday from 10:45 a.m. to 3 p.m.

One of the most remarkable aspects of I've Got the Recipe is its ability to bring people together. Dennis proudly notes that her food appeals to a wide range of customers, going beyond culture and race. "We have different people coming in, and they love the food," she said.

In a time when division seems all too common, Dennis' restaurant stands as a hopeful reminder that there is unity found through food and recipes.

Dennis' commitment to her community goes beyond her restaurant's doors.

"We advertise for other businesses," she explains, pointing to a table filled with business cards and promotional materials.

When asked what advice she would give

to aspiring young restaurateurs, Dennis' message is clear and encouraging: "Follow your dreams. If it's something you want to do, go for it."

Her words serve as a powerful reminder that passion can lead to remarkable achievements.

I've Got the Recipe is open Tuesday through Friday from 10:45 a.m. to 3 p.m. It is located at 621 Bossier St., Natchitoches, La 71457. For those looking for a taste of soul food that brings people together and tells a story, this diner is a must-visit.

And don't forget to stop by and say hello to Sheila Dennis, who embodies the heart and soul of this Natchitoches culinary treasure.



Photo by Isabel Juarez Rubio. For those looking for a taste of soul food that brings people together and tells a story, this diner is a must-visit.



Does Black representation exist within the sports world and its support fields?

By Kallie BourgeoisCopy Editor

ebruary is a cornerstone for students, student-athletes and faculty alike as they celebrate Black history, culture and contributions to both the sports world and society. Whether on the field, the classroom or profession, the lack of Black representation within a wide variety of areas is apparent to many individuals.

Ventric Fletcher, assistant athletic director for student-athlete development, views Black history as a guiding factor in his personal values as a fourth generation historically Black college and university (HBCU) student.

Fletcher heard stories growing up about his grandparents being expelled for marching in the Civil Rights Movement in Atlanta, Georgia. After studying history, political science and the larger social sciences at Southern University and Agricultural and Mechanical College at Baton Rouge, he has a broader understanding of the importance of incorporating Black History Month into his work with student-athletes.

"I use the lessons I've been taught from those who have fought for equality in different areas to guide how I interact with my student-athletes, whether they are Black, White, blue, green or the other," Fletcher said. "Just so that they, one, have an understanding of how to treat people on a personal level, but two, of the importance of the continued fight for equality and equity and justice throughout all that we're doing."

Between pro leagues and college conferences, he explained that intersectionality plays a large part in the sports world. According to the George Washington University Intersectionality Research Institute, "simply put, intersectionality is the concept that all oppression is linked, and people are often disadvantaged by multiple sources of oppression: their race, class, gender identity, sexual orientation and religion, just to name a few."

Fletcher explained that Black History Month is a larger part of student-athlete development, and keeping the significance is important to engage in civic and cultural development, not only within NSU and the Natchitoches community, but on a national scale as well.

"So teaching about individual and collective rights, teaching about more tangible or actionable items like voting rights, the right to protest and the right to gather. The ability to teach about those things, it all stems from early education in those areas," Fletcher said.

Athletics isn't the only field that struggles with diversity, its support fields are also in need of more representation.

According to an article written by American Progress, "White students also lead their black counterparts in a few other important subjects, many of which are in science, technology, engineering, and math fields (STEM). White students are more than twice as likely to graduate with degrees in physical sciences, mathematics and statistics."

Although representation within the science and medical field is increasing, there is still a gap of Black individuals within certain academic programs. Madison Adams, junior nursing major, sees this first-hand in the medical field despite the noteworthy progress that has been made.

"The healthcare workforce does not fully reflect the diversity of the communities it serves," Adams said. "Having more diverse professionals in the medical field is essential not just for cultural competence, but also for creating an inclusive environment that supports everyone."

Joreya Milton, junior biology major, also believes representation and diversity is important amongst the medical field because there are not a lot of minorities in the medical field to begin with.

"I think it's important for people who don't think they can do it or people who are discouraged by the lack of diversity to know they are people like you who did the same thing and made it," Milton said. "I think inspiration is so important for our community."

Milton feels there is a lack of representation in the cardiology field that she hopes to go into after graduating. She explained that Black historical figures



Photo by Kallie Bourgeois.

Ventric Fletcher, assistant athletic director for student-athlete development,
explained the role Black History Month has on athletics.

within the field are less known.

"The first successful open heart surgery was performed by an African American cardiologist named Daniel Hale Williams and not many people know that, which is why I don't think there is enough representation for the Black community," Milton said. "Research the people who paved the way for the Black community and be inspired. Find it in your heart to believe you can and do it because you can, and you are just as important as the next person."

Although the field of athletics is different from the medical field – in terms of it being a performance-based industry that is judged on wins and losses rather than saving lives – it is important to diminish discrimination within both

Fletcher explained that it's vital to recognize personal identity versus identity developed by negative connotations. Addressing and combating stereotypes or biases that minority groups may face is the harsh reality for many individuals. "You're more than who they think you are, so no matter what, as long as you have in your mind the version of yourself that you strive to be, pursue that regardless of what anyone says, regardless of what anyone does, regardless of what obstacle. If it's an obstacle, a few things can happen. You can go over it, you can go under it, you can go around it, get to the goal at some point," Fletcher said.

He explained that, specifically, Black student-athletes becoming in tune with their identity on and off the court is key to overcoming the reality of discrimination. "When you're in sport's mode, the name on the front of a jersey means a little bit more than the name on the back. But when you're in the campus community, the name on the back of the jersey should be at the forefront," Fletcher said. "Be open to learning your why, being able to develop a set of core values that guide you. You may develop a skill set and really invest in academia and community service and campus involvement in the same way that you invest in your sport."

Fletcher stresses the importance of advocating for not just Black student-athletes, but also other minority groups as they run into forms of discrimination. Taking any action, seeking to understand and identify root causes and trying to determine the best course of action as an ally is important when moving forward, Fletcher explains.

"It goes without saying that the minority fight for equality, whether it's a racial fight for equality or a socio-economic fight for equality, or food. Understand why that fight is going on and seek the input of those you're trying to help in order to further their goals, because it's not as cut and dry as it often seems for people," Fletcher said.

The representation and diversity of all students, student-athletes and faculty members within their fields are important factors in overcoming discrimination and past roadblocks the community may face.

Are BHM events at NSU and the Natchitoches area enough to honor the month?



Photo by Madelyn Murphy.

One of the bulletin boards located in the Friedman Student Union.

By Anja Moore Reporter

s the beginning of February approaches, many students and registered student organizations prepare to celebrate Black History Month, a time dedicated to annually acknowledging the accomplishments of Black Americans throughout history.

Typically, Northwestern State University of Louisiana hosts several events for BHM, including movie screenings, music recitals and festivals. There are also events hosted outside of campus by the city of Natchitoches such as a community health fair, memorials for enslaved individuals, genealogy events and a parade.

Although it may seem that there are plenty of events in Natchitoches, some students feel that there is not enough being done to acknowledge BHM.

Keegan Martinez, freshman English major, is currently working to organize the annual BHM event for Louisiana Scholars' College, this year taking the form of a movie night. However, he expressed his dissatisfaction with the lack of acknowledgement regarding BHM events on campus.

"I haven't seen anything about Black History Month. I think the school does more

than Natchitoches would, but I haven't seen anything advertised," Martinez said.

It could be said that while there are several events on campus acknowledging BHM, they are advertised in a way that does not bring enough attention to them. Flyers in Kyser Hall or the Friedman Student Union do advertise the events, but many students do not take the time to look at them and often go unseen. John Dunn, professor of fine arts, believes that events for Black History Month could be better advertised at NSU.

"You have to get campus groups invested in this to help promote. Use your university professors, Greek Council, SGA, faculty senate or administration to help advertise specific events," Dunn said. "Put signage up in the Student Union, cafeterias, academic buildings and dorms. Offer free food or prizes."

Dunn said he wishes that NSU would do more for Black History Month, but also expressed satisfaction with the events that are already being held.

"I like the diverse events sponsored throughout the month: movie screenings, lunch and learns, guest lectures, events for kids at the library," Dunn said. "I especially like kid-friendly events as

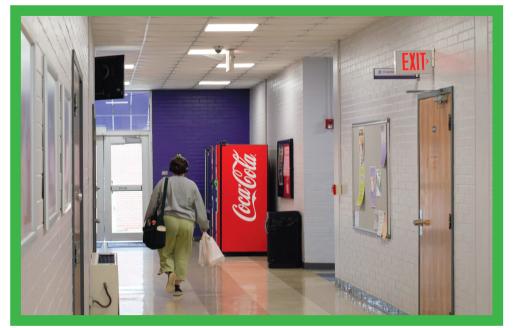


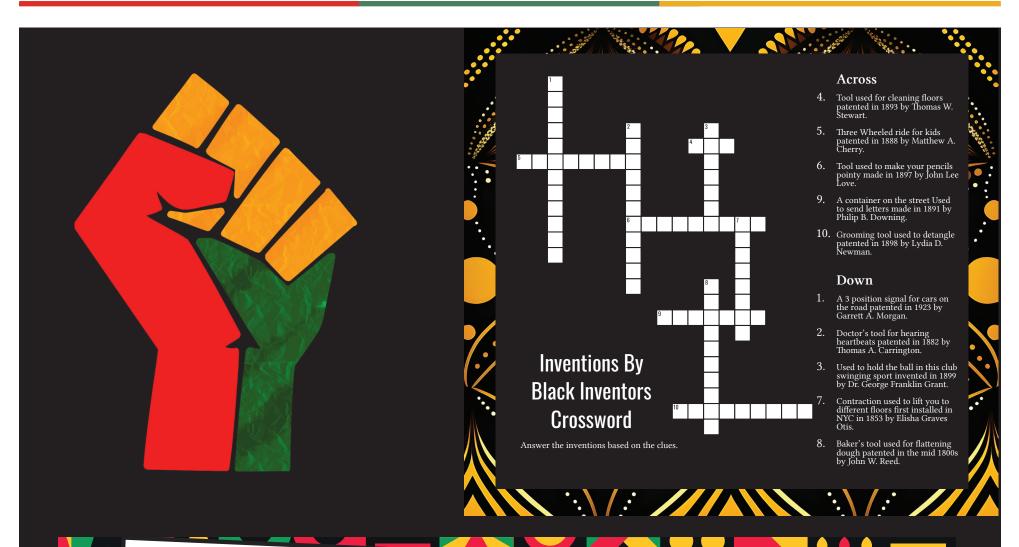
Photo by Madelyn Murphy.
Flyers in Kyser Hall or the Friedman Student Union do advertise the events, but
many students do not take the time to look at them and often go unseen.

a dad of 3 young kids, so I can take my children and we can have good discussions about this topic."

Additionally, Kiara Davis, sophomore English major, feels as though the events on campus focus too heavily on famous Black historical figures and do not leave space for local voices. Davis believes that events for BHM at NSU should feature the accomplishments of students, faculty and well-known historical figures.

"Local people can come in and speak about their personal experiences with living in Louisiana as people of color," Davis said. "There could even be small student events that share different Black cultures." In general, the different social and educational events held at NSU for Black History Month make it clear that the school is committed to its diverse student population. However, the events held here for BHM could be seen as uncreative or redundant, as they are essentially the same each year and focus on the same well-known names.

Martinez and Davis felt as though NSU leaves room to feature well-known historical figures, but local Black voices are often forgotten about. It is important that these names are celebrated, but space could be made for the individuals in our own community that are making an impact every day.



Black History Month Word Search

Words can be found in any direction (including diagonals) and can overlap each other. Use the word bank

D Ν W U Ν M Q G D Ε Q D U D

Word Bank

- 1. Abolition
- 2. Activism
- 3. Amendments 4. Barack Obama
- 5. Civil Rights
- 6. Diversity
- 7. Emancipation
- 8. Equality
- 9. February
- 10. Fredrick Douglas
- 11. Freedom
- 12. Harriet Tubman 13. History
- 14. Integration
- 15. Justice
- 16. Martin Luther King Jr
- 17. Maya Angelou
- 18. Opportunity
- 19. Peace
- 20. Rosa Parks



