

'A force to be reckoned with'

Students celebrate Black Solidarity Day with Unity Rally, Black Business Expo

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Students are embracing their culture, their history and highlighting black excellence across campus this week.

The Black Student Union organized events for Black Solidarity Week and celebrated the 52nd Black Solidarity Day with its annual Black Business Expo and Unity Rally Monday. Roughly 40 students marched from the Student Union down the academic spine, carrying signs and chanting "Say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud," "No justice, no peace, no racist police" and "BSU." Carlos Russell started Black Solidarity Day in 1969, bringing African-American communities together on the Monday before Election Day to discuss voting and combating racial inequality.

BSU has celebrated it yearly since.

Olaide Lemoru, a junior sociology and health and human services major, said celebrating black excellence is crucial because of the systemic disadvantages black students face.



VINDHYA BURUGUPALLI / The Spectrum
STUDENTS AT THE UNITY RALLY ON THE ACADEMIC SPINE DURING MONDAY'S BLACK SOLIDARITY DAY.

"The unity of black [people] is very important because we have the odds stacked against us by society, by institutions," Lemoru said. "The only people that are going to support us are ourselves. We have to stick together, help uplift and motivate each other."

Monday's events were only the beginning, as BSU hosted a Family Feud event Tuesday and unity potluck Wednesday, along with various club collaborations including an Afro-Latinx identity discussion with PODER Latinos Unidos. BSU will

host a reparation conversation with the Caribbean Student Association Thursday and a women's appreciation "Brunch N' Vibes" Sunday.

BSU President Florence Ayeni said she hopes the events will spread self-awareness and educate students.

"A lot of our students don't get educated on the history they need to know. Especially within UB, I feel like we still struggle to get these students to really know their history," Ayeni said. "We want to remind

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VINDHYA BURUGUPALLI / The Spectrum
STUDENTS POSE AT THE BLACK BUSINESS EXPO, WHICH WAS A PART OF MONDAY'S BLACK SOLIDARITY DAY EVENT.

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students that they're powerful, they're a force to be reckoned with."

The Black Business Expo gave student entrepreneurs the opportunity to showcase their work in the SU, with a table dedicated to each student's business and products.

Lemoru emphasized the importance of black entrepreneurs and said designers often profit off black culture.

"We're [promoting] black businesses because other businesses steal our culture

and this is a way we can own our culture and put it out for our own groups," Lemoru said. "We want to amplify our culture, to own it and exemplify our roots."

Ayeni said BSU gives students a platform to market themselves and empowers them to use their voice.

"[We're] empowering each other to do better things, to be greater people," Ayeni said. "A lot of people don't have that courage to walk around and march but with BSU they have it. They feel at home."

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VINDHYA BURUGUPALLI / The Spectrum
FLORENCE AYENI, PRESIDENT OF BSU, CHANTS "I'M BLACK AND I'M PROUD," INTO THE MICROPHONE, ENCOURAGING OTHER DEMONSTRATORS TO DO THE SAME.