

BSU Plans a Day of Unity and Celebration

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Students will come together Tuesday to honor and reflect upon the countless contributions and accomplishments of African-Americans throughout the ages as they celebrate Black Solidarity Day.

The concept for Black Solidarity Day came from a play by Douglas Turner Ward titled "Day of Absence," according to Simone Hicks, Black Student Union President.

"(The play) illustrated social, political and economical consequences for the nation if black people weren't present," she said.

The first Black Solidarity Day was observed in 1969 and was founded by Dr. Carlos E. Russell, a professor at Brooklyn College. Russell, himself a playwright, author and community activist, enacted the observance on his own campus, but it is now celebrated nationwide.

"This is a day held prior to general elections in which blacks throughout the country abstain from participation in social, political and economic affairs of the nation," Brooklyn College's Web site stated. "By their absence,

blacks and others peacefully oppose racism, and social and civil injustices."

The Black Student Union, however, will commemorate the event on Election Day.

"Since the election does attract media attention, the African Americans who began this celebration wanted to show the political strength in the African-American community," said Hicks.

According to Hicks, UB's Black Solidarity Event will be a day of harmony to demonstrate a rededication to the movement for freedom and justice.

Participants will commemorate the day with a march from the bus stop at Governor's to the Student Union. Marchers, dressed in black, will gather at 10 a.m. and remain in the Student Union until 1 p.m., according to Keisha Etienne, BSU treasurer.

"We are not trying to protest, but instead we are celebrating our accomplishments as members of this society and we are trying to educate our peers," said Hicks.

The day's events are not limited to just the African-Americans on campus, but will incorporate other minority groups as well.

"Historians from our association will be hosting the event but we

will also have tables set up in the Student Union, representing different minority groups on campus because there are a lot of them and we try to include them all on this day," said Hicks.

The UB Step Troupe will provide entertainment as will the African inspired dance group Sankofa!. BSU historians will give speeches and lectures, Hicks said.

According to Hicks, an important goal of BSU is to educate young people on the importance of the vote, and the history of the struggle of African-Americans to obtain that right.

Tuesday's events will spill over into a weeklong celebration. BSU will visit the Zion Dominion Church of God in downtown Buffalo on Wednesday evening to speak to the youth group about community leadership, Hicks said. Events such as this one aim not only to commemorate black achievements of the past, but also to ensure that black people will remain empowered in the future.

"The importance of Black Solidarity Day is the importance of our people as a whole and being able to vote and being able to say proudly that we can celebrate what we have accomplished within our community," said Hicks.