✗Black Student Union holds annual 'Black Solidarity' rally

Demonstrators rally to raise awareness for racial injustices

Members of UB's Black Student Union participated in a "Black Solidarity" rally on Monday afternoon. The annual rally aims to celebrate black pride and raise awareness about the issues the black community faces.

SPECTRUM
11/9/17

MADDY FOWLER
NEWS EDITOR

Roughly 30 students participated in a "Black Solidarity" rally Monday afternoon as part of UB's Black Student Union's Black Solidarity Week.

The rally started in the Student Union Lobby. From there, students marched through the Academic Spine. Demonstrators chanted "say it loud, I'm black and I'm proud," "no justice, no peace, no racist police" and "this is what democracy looks like." Some students carried signs. One read, "if all lives matter, what's the issue with black lives matter." Another declared, "united we stand."

Nov. 6 is Black Solidarity Day, a national observance that started in 1969. Every year, the day falls on the Monday before Election Day. The day was originally established to encourage political discussion before elections. The day has evolved into an opportunity for education and awareness about the black community and the issues they face, as well as an opportunity to express black pride.

Black Student Union holds annual 'Black Solidarity' rally

UB's Black Student Union celebrates Black Solidarity Day by showcasing and selling products from black owned businesses in the Student Union Lobby. Students traditionally hold a rally after the sales event.

"This is about celebrating being black and being proud," Aykayla Watson, a senior biological sciences major said.

Watson explained the demonstration was intended to be "more of a rally than a protest," and the goal of the rally was to raise awareness about the social injustices black people face in America. These injustices include police brutality, discrimination and racism, according to Watson.

Daniel Edwards, a sophomore exercise science major, said the rally was an example of democracy in action.

"This is about democracy," Edwards said. "We can rally how we want as long it's peaceful. We have a rally every year and it's just tradition to keep fighting."

Edwards said he hoped the rally would raise awareness about the struggles of being a person of color at UB, in addition to celebrating black pride. He hoped the demonstration would help draw attention to the fact that UB's African American Studies department is shrinking.

Jaycee Miller, a sophomore political science and environmental design major, chose to participate in the rally as a way to show solidarity for her friends in BSU. She feels it is important to use her privilege as a white person to show support for the black community and raise awareness about the issues that African Americans face, particularly as white nationalism becomes more prominent in the United States.

"We live in a world where white nationalism is running rampant," Miller said. "White people need to show support for the black community, a community that has suffered atrocities for centuries."

Miller believes the purpose of any protest is to "voice grievances." She feels this rally was especially important and timely in light of the "White Lives Matters" signs that were posted throughout campus on Friday.

"The point of this protest is to raise awareness about these issues and show that we are willing to fight to fix them," Miller said.

email: maddy.fowler@ubspectrum.com