

# University of Toledo's Black Student Union celebrates its heritage

The Black Student Union has provided a safe haven for students to come and feel welcome since it was founded in 1968. Through events and member size, BSU has a strong presence on campus.

"Our numbers have really started to grow. We're now the third largest organization on the campus," said McKayla Pullins, president of BSU.

The goals of the Black Student Union have mainly revolved around retention rates of black students, Pullins said. The organization aims to provide mentorship and guidance to wayward students, in particular, freshmen.

Upperclassmen provide mentorship to newer students through the Freshman Leadership Program, which facilitates the growth of new students, providing them with valuable skills to enable them to become involved in leadership roles later on.

"I was part of the Freshman Leadership Program as a freshman," said Keith Boggs, education director of the Black Student Union. "BSU is the first organization I joined, and I'm still sticking with it. It'll be a part of my future as well."

In honor of Black History Month, Black Student Union is having a BSU month wherein they hold an event every week that is relevant to African-Americans.

"It's important for the African-American students and others to be constantly "woke," meaning knowing what's going on in our country," said Ryah Harrison, vice president of BSU.

On Feb. 1, they hosted "Black Jeopardy," which was organized by the Freshman Leadership Program branch of BSU. The purpose

of the interactive trivia game was to educate students on different aspects of African-American culture.

“In school you don’t really learn much about African-American history besides Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., Malcolm X, people like that, but there’s so much more history than just those people,” Pullins said. “Our goal was to go above and beyond that for Black Jeopardy.”

But they didn’t stop there. BSU also held a lecture-style event in the second week of February, the topic for which was “The Evolution of the N-word.” The lecture was focused on describing how the N-word was used in the past versus how it is used now,” Pullins said.

“It kicked off with a presentation; it turned into a very broad group discussion and a lot of people got involved,” Boggs said.

According to Pullins, BSU is collaborating with the Muslim Student Association to host “Open Mic Storytelling Night” on Feb. 15 at 7 p.m. in the Student Union Auditorium.

“The event is for different cultures to come and tell stories about how they’re feeling today with everything that’s going on,” Pullins said. “I’m excited for it because I want to hear other people’s stories about how they feel or why they’re feeling certain types of ways.”

BSU will hold their 48<sup>th</sup> annual fashion show with the theme “All Around the World,” showcasing fashion from Brazil, Jamaica, India, and Japan. The fashion show will take place Feb. 24 in the Student Union Auditorium.