

Harambee celebrates African-American culture

By Libe Goad
THE BATTALION

In Swahili, Harambee means togetherness. During Texas A&M's International Week, it means that African-American and other minority organizations celebrate the end of Black History Month.

Together, the PanHellenic Council and the MSC Black Awareness Committee are sponsoring the Harambee Festival, which is meant to present a collage of culture to the rest of the University.

At 7 p.m. in Rudder Forum, the Voices of Praise, Prime-Time Posse, National Society of Black Engineers and Greek organizations will explain their groups' purposes and provide a little entertainment.

Tina Harrison, chairwoman of the BAC, said the Harambee festival will be good for a community unaware of the campus' cultural climate.

"People are unreceptive to different cultures right now," Harrison said.

She said the main purpose of the event is to take another step toward unifying the campus through education about the organizations' histories.

The Harambee festival works to unify different ethnic groups, since division among groups happens in almost any circle of organizations.

Kim Matthews, vice president of MSC Student Programs and a senior business ad-

ministration major, said the event helps groups establish a bond by having them meet in the same place.

"It helps them to have a meeting," Matthews said. "They do not have a big presence on this campus."

But the organizations' efforts have been gaining momentum with the help of famous faces.

Last semester, former Black Panther Bobby Seale tried to clear up any myths about the '60s African-American activist organization.

In conjunction with MSC Town Hall, BAC brought Solo, an R&B group to campus. The committee also brought actor John Amos, the Boys Choir of Harlem and a leadership program given by journalist Chuck Stone.

A big push for awareness will be on March 25 when Terry McMillan, author of "Waiting to Exhale," visits for a book signing and a showing of the movie based on her book.

Harrison said the struggles African Americans have gone through have brought their culture together in a way that is unique from other cultures.

"The African-American culture is different from many," she said. "The people have gone through so much."

After slavery ended, the new freedmen set out to find their families.

Harrison said these freedmen began the tradition of African Americans calling each other "brother" and "sister." The honorary titles come from the time when ex-slaves un-

successfully searched for their families and adopted those around them as their own.

"We had to be strong people to survive," Harrison said.

The celebration of Black History Month reminds the community about these struggles and the people who have overcome hardships.

The figure who most easily slips into mind is Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King. From beyond the grave, he continues to make a strong impact, and he is honored across the nation.

But he is one of many who led the way through African-American struggles.

Martin Hodges, BAC director of publications and a sophomore journalism major, said history records the changes made by Harriet Tubman and Frederick Douglass.

"Remembering King is not enough," Hodges said. "The people who marched are just as important."

The purpose of Black History Month is to remember the leaders of the past and highlight the people who are furthering the fight.

This month, different African-American organizations brought KTRK Channel 13 news anchor Melanie Lawson from Houston; a black history Jeopardy; and a book drive.

"Envy Among Us," told about prejudice within the African-American community, and during AIDS Awareness Week, "HIV - Could be You" warned about the AIDS crisis in the community.

Matthews said programs like these have heightened her awareness of the subtle differences between various cultures. After attending a BAC program last year, she said she learned the different ways African Americans relate to each other compared to how people in her own culture do.

"I was the only white person in the audience," she said, "and I learned a lot about the black perspective."

The celebration of reflection and progression will end with organizations joining forces and achieving Harambee.



African-American organizations

National Association of Black Journalists

Founded in January 1989, NABJ is the largest media organization of African Americans in the world.

The group aims to:

1. Strengthen ties with black journalism students and the Bryan-College Station media.
2. Sponsor activities to help members enhance performance and effectiveness.
3. Expand coverage of African Americans in a balanced manner.
4. Encourage the Department of Journalism to appoint black professors and lecturers.

Striving in Society to Achieve Sister Hood (SISTAS)

Founded in Summer 1995, SISTAS encourages African-American women to seek and attain the highest level of achievement emotionally, spiritually, physically and economically through unity guided by love and respect for the members and their and our fellow sisters and brothers.

Black Graduate Students' Association

Founded in 1987, BGSA's purpose is to provide a professional, informative and social network for its membership and to assist in the recruitment and retention of

African-American graduate students and other minorities.

BGSA provides:

1. A forum for guest speakers at monthly meetings.
2. Social gatherings held mid-month
3. Information on fellowships, campus activities, professional opportunities and the status of the African-American graduate student
4. A network for undergraduate and graduate minority students to communicate social, academic, personal and professional concerns.

The National Society of Black Engineers

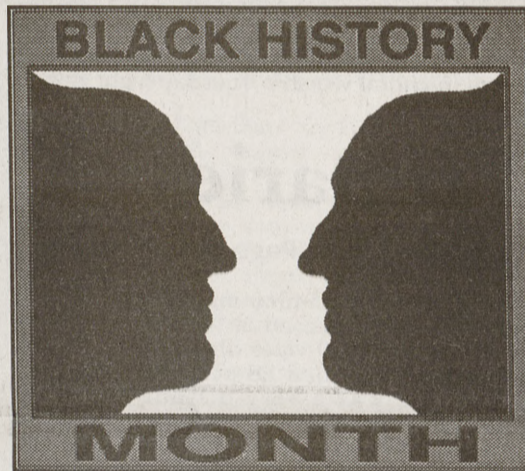
Founded in 1975, NSBE is the largest student-run organization in the nation with over 10,000 members.

NSBE's mission is to increase the number of culturally responsible black engineers, to excel academically, succeed professionally and have a positive impact on the community.

The NSBE torch symbolizes the group's everlasting burning desire to achieve success in competitive society and to affect a positive change on the quality of life for all people.

Southwestern Black Student Leadership Conference

Founded in 1989, SBSLC is held on the third weekend of January each year, uniting over 1,000 students, staff and faculty, nationally renowned speakers and a variety of corporations from throughout the country.



SBSLC's mission is to take the initiative to educate youth and to help them to focus on their futures.

MSC Black Awareness Committee

Founded in 1969, BAC sponsors a variety of programs which educate Texas A&M University and neighboring communities on the culture, history and heritage of African Americans

The BAC focuses on programs which highlight African-American achievements that both challenge and enhance one's values and enhance one's knowledge.

Information courtesy of the National Association of Black Journalists.

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If you have any questions, please call 845-1515.



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