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Local radio celebrates Black History Month

Avani Chhaya News staff writer

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Tagged with: Abraham Lincoln, Campus, Frederick Douglass, Illinois, Joanna Mirowska, Mardi Gras Day, Ollie Watts Davis, Quiana Green, Rory James, Sam Britten, WBCP radio station

Printer Friendly

In the 20 years since its founding, WBCP, Central Illinois' first and only black-owned, independent radio station has played a valuable role in keeping the community's pride and fueling a sense of black history.



Sam Britten, station coordinator and engineer for WBCP radio, checks the audio sound levels at WBCP radio station on Monday. WBCP is Central Illinois' first and only black-owned, independent radio station. The theme of this year's Black History Month focuses on carnival traditions throughout the world.

While this time of the year is dedicated to Black History Month, groups around the community are hoping to reflect on the larger significance the tradition offers.

Events on campus are designed to promote pride in African Americans through the use of a Mardi Gras theme, said Rory James, director of the Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center. He added that February was chosen as the month for this long-standing tradition because it acknowledges the birthdays of



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Quiana Green, sales account executive of WBCP in Champaign, said despite the emphasis on being African American, she wants University students to use the radio station as an outlet available to learn about being an entrepreneur. She added that she wants everybody to get the experience of being involved in an independent media resource.

"It's important for people to know that Black History Month is not in the past. Black history is everyday, all the time," Green said. "I think it feels good to know that things are presently happening. It gives black history a different dynamic."

The theme of this year's Black History Month focuses on carnival traditions throughout the world. It was chosen because carnivals are prevalent in countries with people of African descent, he added.

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James said he wants University students to learn about African American culture, the history of the people and the achievements of African Americans who have contributed to this country.

"I would just love for students ... to find out more," he said. "Just to get a greater scope and understanding of the diversity of people of African descent and people throughout the diaspora."

James said the University and surrounding communities have a larger purpose to fill beyond coming to the events on campus.

"It's our responsibility and our charge for other departments to get in this also," James said. "It should be a community effort."

Ollie Watts Davis, professor of music and conductor of the University's Black Chorus, said the month should be celebrated on this campus and in the larger national context.

"Black Americans have made tremendous contributions to this country," Davis said. "We are committed to the study and the performance of (music) of black Americans. As is our mission and purpose — the musical contribution of African Americans."

Davis said students must take the opportunity to celebrate the diversity offered on campus by cultivating an appreciation of cultures and backgrounds.

"I think Illinois is an inclusive University," she said. "It celebrates the diversity because it recognizes that we're stronger because of that diversity."

Green added that it is important to emphasize that the radio station is black-owned.

"It shows that minorities are capable of owning things like big business," Green said. "It does give a voice to the minorities in Champaign."

She added that she would like to see the community around the radio station become more involved.

"We just want to leave a legacy in the community," she said. "It's a very important landmark."

Green said the best part of her day is around 3 p.m., when everybody trickles into the radio station and tons of laughter can be heard throughout.

"(It is) 20 years of memories trying to keep the station together," she added. "We just want the station to be full of life."

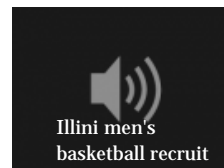
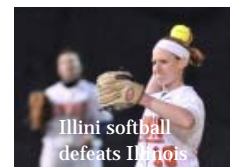
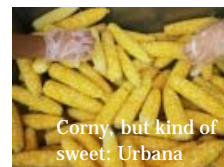
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