Fresno State’s African American Programs and Services organized and hosted Welcome Black, an annual event held every fall to welcome the incoming Black freshman and transfer students on Aug. 29.

This year it was held in the Satellite Student Union. Vendors from all over Fresno and the Central Valley came to present information on how their organizations are helping Black people in the Central Valley.

Students are encouraged to sign up for Black clubs and organizations on campus at the event.

“The Welcome Black event was definitely an amazing event,” Nicolas Moore, a third-year pre-psychology student said.

Nicolas said he was especially impressed with the amount of Black men who were tabling at Welcome Black.

“As an African American male, I definitely appreciated seeing different Black men in different fields at the event,” Moore said.

He also spoke about how Welcome Back highlighted different African American resources on campus including Black faculty and staff.

Moore said he was surprised to find out how many Black people held key positions on Fresno State’s campus. Moore said Welcome Black inspired him to be more than just a Fresno State student.

“I can do more, I can be the president of something, I can be the chair of something [and] it gives me hope as a Black man,” Moore said.

By Dessalines Yamoussou

We regularly see billion-dollar blockbuster superhero movies. However, it was a shock to many audiences when Black Panther soared to over $192 million on its opening weekend.

It was the biggest February opening for a movie ever to hit the big screen, and was one of 2018’s highest-grossing films, according to Forbes. It made the director, Ryan Couglar, the highest grossing Black filmmaker ever, according to Time. Unfortunately, with all the accolades for Black Panther there was still an elephant in the room. Black Panther is a comic book hero created by writer Stan Lee and artist Jack Kirby neither of whom are African American. There have not been many blockbuster superhero movies about a Black superhero created by Black people.

Writer and director Randy McKinnon recently confirmed that a “Static Shock” live-action movie is being produced by Warner Brothers and Michael B. Jordan. “Static Shock” is a superhero comic book series created by Milestone comic founders Dwayne McDuffie, Denys Cowan, Michael Davis, and Derek T. Dingle in 1992.

Virgil Hawkins, the main character of “Static Shock,” is a teenager who gains electromagnetic powers in an accident that causes an explosion of “quantum juice,” a mutagen that creates meta humans.

The success of the “Static Shock” comics led the writers to develop a TV series starring iconic voice actor Phil LaMarr as Static Shock. The Static Shock TV series ran for 54 episodes over four seasons between 2000 and 2004. The character became so popular that Warner Brothers hired Dwayne McDuffie to incorporate Static Shock into the Justice League, one of the first times a Black-created superhero was incorporated into a mainstream comic book superhero team.

Fresno State alumnus and avid comic book reader Darell Harvey, spoke about the upcoming Static Shock live action movie. He recalled times in his childhood when he couldn’t read comics about heroes who looked like him.

“Static Shock is one of the first superheroes that excited me because he looked like me,” Harvey said. “He was never a sidekick and had to figure out how to be a superhero on his own.”

By Dessalines Yamoussou
Student Loan Forgiveness

By Rashad Flood

On Aug. 24, 2022, USA Today reported that president Biden announced the cancellation of $10,000 in student loan debt and $20,000 for Pell grant recipients, if the borrower has an income of less than $125,000 as well as household income that is less than $250,000.

More progressive Democrats, however, pushed for a minimum of $50,000 in loan forgiveness, while Democratic economists, like former treasury secretary Larry Summers, feared that debt cancellation could exacerbate 40-year-high inflation.

USA Today reported that members of the GOP accused the plan of being “an elitist ploy to help the rich and punish hard-working Americans who paid off their student loan debts”.

The GOP’s objection to the plan was elaborated on Sept. 14, 2022, where USA Today reported that 22 Republican governors called for the plan to be abandoned, stating “hourly workers will pay off the master’s and doctorate degrees of high salaried lawyers, doctors, and professors... Simply put, your plan rewards the rich and punishes the poor.”

“I would say I’m not too familiar with the actual itself, but from what I’ve heard, it was kinda controversial on social media. You have to fulfill these extraordinary requirements that the majority of college students don’t fulfill,” said Jose Medina, a senior history major.

Medina said that the debt cancellation amount currently large enough may not cover some students’ debts, especially at higher universities.

“From what I heard, the policy gives around $10,000 in loan forgiveness, which is great but it’s not substantial enough. Seems better on paper than in reality,” he said.

“I don’t know too much about it, but if he’s forgiving student loans then I guess it’s a good thing. I’ve been lucky so far, I haven’t had to take out any loans,” said Michael Anthony Brent, a freshman electrical engineering major.

According to educationdata.org, about 59% of Black and African students have between $25,000 and $59,999 in student loan debt one year after graduation, and that student loan debt forgiveness could raise the overall wealth of Black Americans up to 40%.

On Aug. 25, the Fresno Bee reported that Biden’s relief plan would greatly help Fresno State students who have an average debt of $14,000.

Over 60% of Fresno State students receive Pell grants making them eligible for forgiveness up to $20,000, The Collegian reported.

Meet the Staff

Hello, my name is Dessalines Yamoussou and I am the Editor-in-chief of Uhuru Na Umoja. I was born in Fort Hood, TX. My parents were both in the military and shortly after my sister was born, we moved to Washington D.C. where my father was from. I spent the next 19 years growing up in Southeast D.C.

After graduating from high school, I went into the United States Navy, where I served on Naval Air Station Groton Connecticut, which was a submarine base. My next duty station was at Naval Air Station Lemoore, where I was attached to the USS Abraham Lincoln. Once I transitioned out of the U.S. Navy, I wanted to go to school.

I transferred to Fresno State to begin my behavior program in African Studies and I graduated in 2019. I currently am in pursuit of a master’s degree in history.

Hey everyone, My name is Rashad Flood. I have lived most of my life in Monrovia, California and now I am a fourth-year student at Fresno State as a history major. I am an avid gamer and my favorite genres are: RPGs, Beat em’ ups, racing, fighting games, and platformers.
COVID-19 disproportionately impacted Black women’s employment in the U.S., with 2.6% fewer adult Black women employed in January 2022 compared to February 2020, according to the U.S. Department of Labor Blog.

Overall, women only gained 40.3% of jobs in January of this year, while men gained 59.7% of jobs, the U.S. Department of Labor Blog said.

Dealing with constant rejection because of the color of your skin is infuriating, especially when the qualifications of that Black man or woman is exceeding their counterparts. The statistics below will shed some insight with factual evidence that shows how the black community rarely sees successful Black figures in areas of expertise, which is awful.

The importance of seeing thriving Black figures is crucial to the up-and-coming Black generations. As a collective, a change needs to be made.

In recent years, we have been able to see the progression of Black figures, but those numbers are still low. In the recent study, in the U.S Department of Labor Blog, the data collected by Sarah Jane Glynn and Mark Dewolf, in the article, Black Women’s Economic Recovery Continues to Lag.

They reported back in January of 2022, that, “women workers are still down 1.8 million jobs since February.” For the Black males, it was down to “1.1 million jobs.”

The statistics state that this is an issue that is not going to be fixed overnight.

It’s shameful for these Black women and men, who have to deal with these hardships of trying to find a job, with the addition of being deemed not qualified because of their race and gender.

See how Alex Webster, a junior Biochemistry major, feels about the importance of seeing women of color, and how pivotal it is for the younger generations that are to come:

(Uhuru): Why do you think it’s important for young Black girls to see Black figures in higher positions?
Alex: I think that it is important for young black children to see Black figures in higher positions because it’s easy to give up when you feel like you can’t make it. Seeing a Black figure in a position of power makes young people feel like they can be just like them. The children could feel like no matter what they do they will still not be able to become somebody.

(Uhuru): What does it feel like being able to witness Black women defy the odds, and become professionals in their field?
Alex: Seeing a Black woman rise up is empowering. Not many people think a black woman can become somebody. I feel like people have low expectations for black people and seeing a black woman breaking these expectations is amazing.

(Uhuru): Since you are an upperclassman, what advice would you give to freshmen that are nervous about the career field or path they are taking?
Alex: I would advise freshmen to find their passion. Take your time. You don’t need to rush into a career. Take time out to volunteer for at least one week for each profession you might want to do before you make a decision.

(Uhuru): How does it feel witnessing a Black woman attain the goals that she set out to meet?
Alex: It’s great to see a black woman achieve their goals, not many people can do that. And to see a black woman do it, inspires me to do the same.

Observing the effects of this topic from a student’s perspective is enlightening.

Encountering Black figures both males and females, is a necessity, not just for young Black children, but for all races to witness.

For this reason, people of every background need to familiarize themselves with Black figures and get accustomed to the fact that this will be the new normal.
Self-care awareness month

By Dessalines Yamoussou

The month of September is Self-Care Awareness Month. Self-care involves putting personal health first and making decisions that support a healthy lifestyle. Most people are surprised to hear there is more to health than just physical and mental health.

The following are eight components of self-care: physical, psychological, emotional, social, professional, environmental, spiritual and financial. It is important to routinely assess how you are taking care of your overall wellness and make adjustments to benefit your holistic wellbeing.

Additionally, it is important to identify what is not self care. It is not about adding more to your plate and having a to-do list that never gets completed. When practicing self-care, it is vital one prioritizes the individual’s key needs and work on those.

People who regularly engage in healthy self-care practices are less likely to reach burn out as they will have implemented activities to engage in — such as relaxation techniques, exercise, reading and getting a massage — when they are feeling stressed to avoid burnout.

Some people may believe that self-care is synonymous with selfishness. This could not be further from the truth.

When you put your self-care first you are engaging in healthy behaviors that will allow you to be the most helpful to your family, friends, co-workers, and community. This is why flight attendants on airplanes always tell you to secure your own oxygen device in the event of an emergency before helping others. You can not help others when you are struggling yourself.

By increasing our self-care activities this month, and every month, we can see improvements in our holistic wellbeing.

Fresno State students are under an immense amount of stress.

"Self care starts with self awareness," said Dr. Robert Mitchell, medical services director at the Student Health and Counseling Center.

He stressed the importance of knowing family health histories, and getting regular check ups. Self-care is a process that aims to eliminate stress and make you the best version of yourself.

Student of the Month

By Dessalines Yamoussou

Meet Braxton “B Rax” Mitchell, third year transfer student in the graphic design major.

Affectionately known as “B Rax,” Braxton transferred from the College of the Sequoias in Visalia with two AA degrees: one in art history and the other in studio arts.

In his free time Braxton enjoys making content for his youtube channel, “B rax.” On his channel he is currently creating content in the harsh noise and electronic music genre. He also likes to listen to music and watch documentaries. His favorite Documentaries are mental health related or “Scared Straight!” episodes. Braxton has already gotten involved on campus. He has joined the “Barbershop Talks” group of Black males who meet on campus once a week to discuss issues on campus and to build community amongst themselves.

Dr. Raymar Henderson founded “Barbershop Talks,” and teaches in the Master of Science in clinical rehabilitation and mental health counseling program.

Dessalines Yamoussou (DY): “Where are you from originally?”

Braxton Mitchell (BM): “I am from the Hanford area, but I was born in Fresno.”

DY: “How did you like growing up in Hanford?”

BM: “I describe Hanford as the vein of California. Everyone is just passing by.”

DY: “What brought you to Fresno State?”

BM: “It’s close by and it’s like home. I considered Laguna, Stanislaus and Chico. I discussed it with my instructor and he was like, ‘You want to be somewhere close by so you can be with your parents? Try Fresno State.’”

DY: “What advice would you give to a new Transfer Student arriving at Fresno State?”

BM: “I would tell them to keep their head in the game. Don’t worry about what other people think. Just focus on you and look straight forward to the finish line. Don’t worry about other people running by you. This is your goal and my dad always tells me keep your foot on the gas and keep going.”

Meet the Staff

Hello, my name is Zion Sanders, and I am a junior at Fresno State. I enjoy reading, drawing, hanging out with my friends and family and listening to music. My major is biochemistry and a minor in African Studies. I am in the Health Careers Opportunity Program (HCOP) and Office of Black Student Success (OBSS) programs. I aspire to become an anesthesiologist, get my MD and Ph.D.

Angel Langridge has been the adviser for Uhuru na Umoja since 2017. She also works at Fresno State in University Communications.

If you have any questions, comments, ideas, or stories you want to submit, email them to samstewart@mail.fresnostate.edu