The commemoration of African Heritage Month/Black History Month can be traced back to 1926 when a Harvard-educated Black historian, Carter G. Woodson, founded Negro History Week to recognize the achievements of African Americans. Woodson purposefully chose February, the birthdays of Frederick Douglass and Abraham Lincoln who are both key figures in the emancipation of enslaved Blacks. In 1976, as part of the American Bicentennial celebrations, Negro History Week was expanded to Black History Month.

The contributions of African-Canadians to Canadian society have been acknowledged informally as early as the 1950s. Now in 2020, along with the rest of Canada, we would like to acknowledge and honour the contributions of African-Canadians.

Remember that you can talk to us or e-mail us. We are open to articles, events, or anything about the New College community. If you want to be published in the New Beat March newsletter, email your submission of topic to ncnews@yorku.ca by February 7th, 2020 to be approved, and submission of fully finished article by February 14th, 2020.

Everyone is Welcome!
How did the York University Gospel Choir start, and what inspired its beginning?

The York University Gospel Choir was preceded by a gospel choir club, that was a student run organization "Vessels of Honour", in the early 2000s. According to legend, the chair of the music department was walking with a fellow colleague through Winters College and heard a sound. He asked what that was and he was told “that’s the gospel choir, run by students, for students.” “Do students like that kind of thing?” he asked. “Yes!” was the emphatic response. “Well, we need to find someone to teach it, could you?” the Chair asked his colleague. Soon after Professor Karen Burke was invited and considered teaching/creating York University’s & Canada’s first Gospel Choir course. “I’ve been involved in teaching Gospel music at that time for 20 years. I was teaching at high schools, hosted workshops across the country, and developed a pedagogy that no one really had or knew how to teach.” - Professor Karen Burke.

In 2005 she joined the York University faculty, and went on to create not one but two courses, the other being “History of Gospel Music”. Fun fact: History of Gospel Music, is one of the required courses for York University’s Black Studies Certificate.

Professor Burke’s Gospel Choir course started off with 20 students who thought they were taking a course on jazz. After word spread the following year it spiked to 80 students, with continued interest 15 years on, with the course always being full.

What meaning does the Gospel genre hold in terms of culture, heritage and faith?

“I’ve always been involved in gospel music, and my family has a heritage in gospel music and education. A lot of teachers and pastors in my family tree.” - Professor Burke comes from a long line of musicians and music educators who have found great meaning and joy in their life through the gospel genre, leading her to have a gospel group of her own with her family. However, gospel music is much more than just related to heritage and culture, but it has deep roots in terms of faith. “Gospel music is a huge faith component for me. I’m a Christian, I believe in the message of the Gospel, and I love how it is the meat of the music in gospel. However, what is fascinating is that whatever your faith or culture, everyone loves gospel music and feels a part of it, whether it’s through audience participation, or students coming to audition.” Professor Burke emphasizes that including gospel music in curricula has great “academic worthy substance”. “My goal is to give Canadians access, and prove that there is academic worthy substance in gospel music. We need all genres, sometimes we miss gospel, and that’s unfortunate because we are missing the trunk of the tree. With gospel it’s easier to understand other genres, and you can hear everything, pick up on every key. York University has always been Canada’s leading innovator, therefore it makes sense to have the first gospel music curriculum in the country here.”

What’s the most valuable lesson in music and Gospel as a genre has taught you?

“To expect the unexpected, never underestimate the power of music and its impact on community. Universities need a sense of community, Students come to me and say that taking this course is the one place they can come to in the week and be uplifted.” Professor Burke recalls many occasions where students felt lonely, especially international students and the gospel choir was where they felt welcome. “Gospel music has its roots in the concept of community, because it comes from spirituals, which were created by enslaved Africans, who had a need to create communities when they weren’t allowed to have one. Music became their universal language. Today music is still doing the same job.” The gospel choir is not just a course within four walls, but it also impacts the community by taking their performances off campus as well.

How do you see the York University Gospel Choir contributing to the York community in the next 15 years?

Professor Burke expressed that she is excited about continuing to give access to musical education along with her colleagues but also empower others to do the same. She wants to expand the gospel choir course so it’s not just vocalists gaining a credit, but the instrumentalists too. “Students will come to play for the choir because they want to, but they don’t get a credit. Also, I’m looking out for students interested in conducting gospel choirs, it’s a very unique skill, and I want to give them an opportunity. One of my students went on to be a gospel conductor for the Nova Scotia Mass Choir, and I would like to have more opportunities to train conductors, and see gospel music curricula spread to other universities across Canada. Hopefully, it will be someone else in the next 15 years leading the cause. I don’t want the gospel choir to become a Glee choir, with a focus on the contemporary, not that there’s anything wrong with that, but we also need to shed a light on history.”

You can see the York University Gospel Choir perform “Gospel in the Lounge” on Tuesday, February 4th at 12:30 pm at the Martin Family Lounge.
Tech Doc is a student-run organization at York University. Tech Doc is in place to serve, encourage and help students, technologically and financially, to strive for greatness and achieve success. Tech Doc is an official partner of CompTIA and RBC. Our mission is to provide our members, York University students and community with great services, support, Certificate courses, networking events, workshops, social events, volunteering opportunities, job alerts and other partnered events for free or as close to free as possible.

Hassle-Free Tech Support

Tech Doc strives to help the York U community with the lack of tech support; At York U, an unmatched level of tech support was formed, with Tech Doc. Tech Doc’s Technicians are ready to help the York U community, who can DM us on Instagram, Contact on Tech Doc’s Support Email, or come to Tech Doc’s Office.

Tech Doc provides free tech-support at our office for individuals, but also provides Technicians for events, who can be booked through emailing Tech Doc or DM Tech Doc’s Instagram. Our Technicians will attend the entire event, help prevent and fix technical problems making sure the event runs smoothly.

Tech Doc YorkU’s Info and contact can be found below.
“Black History Month is a time for all Ontarians to look forward to what will be, and to look at our past and our achievements. Becoming the first black MPP in Brampton would not have been possible without the inspiration of the Black leaders that paved the way for me. Let’s celebrate and honour the achievements of generations of great Black Canadians.”

- Kevin Yarde (BA ’90)
MPP Brampton North

To learn more about Kevin and the other featured alumni, visit: alumni@yorku.ca

“Black History for me is Canadian History and it is an opportunity to highlight the many accomplishments and contributions that we have made to build this city, province and country.”

Velma Morgan (BA ’95, BED ’97)
Teacher and Advocate

Velma Morgan is a Teacher and Advocate for gender and cultural diversity in politics. Velma is also Chair of Operation Black Vote Canada. To learn more about Velma and the other featured alumni, visit: alumn@yorku.ca

“The function of education is to teach one to think intensively and to think critically. Intelligence plus character is the goal of true education.”

- Martin Luther King

“Black History Month is a time for us to all to remember the strides that Black people have made—motivating us all to work towards a more inclusive and equal world.”

- Camellia Bryan (BA ’18)
PhD student in Organization Studies at Schulich and recipient of the prestigious Ella Scholarship, studying stigma, diversity and inclusion, and ethics in organizations.

To learn more about Camellia and the other featured alumni, visit: alumni@yorku.ca

“If I do not see myself, how do I know if I matter or exist.”

Anonymous

Michael Eubanks (BA ’93) is the Senior Vice-President and Chief Information Officer of the LCBO, and has more than 25 years of entrepreneurial and technology experience. Michael’s extensive experience also includes past positions as the President of Smart Toronto and Vice President of Information Technology E-commerce and Operations at the Retail Council of Canada.

To learn more about Michael and the other featured alumni, visit: http://alumni@yorku.ca/blackhistorymonth
# New College Events

## February 2020

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### Upcoming New College Events

**Presenter: NIRU AGRAWAL**  
**“DISASTERS—An Interactive Workshop”**  
**Wednesday February 5, 2020**  
3:30pm – 5pm, Harry Crowe Room (Atkinson 109)

**Presenter: LEARNING SKILLS**  
**“CRITICAL THINKING WORKSHOP”**  
**Tuesday February 25, 2020**  
12:30pm – 1:30pm, Harry Crowe Room (Atkinson 109)

**Presenter: STUDENT FINANCIAL SERVICES & ACMAPS**  
**“BUDGET PLANNING WORKSHOP”**  
**Monday February 24, 2020**  
1pm – 2pm, Harry Crowe Room (Atkinson 109)

**Presenter: MARIE-HÉLÈNE BUDWORTH**  
**“JOB SEARCH”**  
**Wednesday February 26, 2020**  
3pm – 4:15pm, Harry Crowe Room (Atkinson 109)
Do you want to write for NEW BEAT?

We are open to articles, events, or anything about the New College community. If you want to be published in the New Beat March newsletter, email your submission to ncnnews@yorku.ca by February 14th, 2020.

Everyone is Welcome!

Contact: Umashankar Keteeswaran
New Beat Editor
ncnews@yorku.ca