



ISSU
IRISH SECOND-LEVEL
STUDENTS' UNION

Black History Month:

A Guide to Celebrating
BHM within your School

Black History Month: A Guide to Celebrating BHM within your School

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The Irish Second Level Students' Union

The Irish Second Level Students' Union (ISSU) is the national representative body for school students in the Republic of Ireland. Membership is based on the student council model, and the ISSU aims to provide support, training and assistance to member student councils.

The ISSU was established in 2008, to contribute to the advancement of second-level education of all second-level students in order to improve and enrich the education of each student and to support the involvement of students at all stages of their education so that they achieve their full potential.

The ISSU is run for students, by students.

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First published by Irish Second-Level Students' Union (ISSU), October 2023

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Why do we celebrate Black History Month?

Black History month is an annual holiday, celebrated in October in Ireland and in February in the United States. It was first celebrated in 2010 in Cork to officially honour black culture and heritage. It was held in Cork because the city was the home of a large number of anti-abolition societies in the 19th century.

It is so important that we celebrate black history month because,

- There is still a lot to learn about black history.**
- Black history unites us all**
- Celebrating our differences promotes inclusivity**
- And countless more**

Originally it was created to focus on the contributions of African Americans to the United States but has since spread to other countries such as Ireland, United Kingdom, Germany, Australia and more. It is a time where people commemorate black people and their achievements and contributions throughout history.

It is especially important that students learn about black history month in school so students who are not black have a better understanding and appreciation for the contributions made by Black people. This is an important lesson for students, so they grow up to be accepting and unprejudiced members of society.

During black history month we appreciate black culture which has been instrumental in social movements and activism, fighting against racial injustice and promoting equality, all of things that deserve to be celebrated.

Black History month takes us beyond history books and sheds light on the black people of the past who did not receive the credit they deserved for their contribution to society.

How to celebrate Black History Month in your school

How to celebrate Black History Month in your school

1. Show Off The Colours

The official colours of Black History Month are black, red, yellow, and green, these colours symbolise unity and pride.

Black, which represents the resilient people whose existence as a nation is honoured and affirmed by the existence of celebrations and initiatives such as Black History Month.

Red, which is meant to symbolise the blood of the innocent Black lives that have been taken throughout history

Yellow, which is meant to convey optimism, justice, and equality for everyone

Green, which is used to symbolise Africa's rich greenery and other natural resources.

These four colours for Black History Month offer individuals and groups the opportunity to show solidarity, as well as pride, by paying tribute to and honouring the achievements and history of the Black Irish Community.

As a student council you could hold a non uniform day encouraging students to dress up in these colours. Often when schools hold a non uniform day they collect money to donate to a charitable organisation.

List of charity organisations working to promote equal rights for all people:

1. Amnesty International amnesty.ie
2. Concern Worldwide concern.ie
3. Irish Network Against Racism inar.ie
4. Irish Refugee Council irishrefugeecouncil.ie
5. The Association of Mixed Race Irish mixedraceirish.ie

How to celebrate Black History Month in your school

2. Creative Writing

Using creative writing in schools and storytelling to speak about Black History and the experiences they went through will help students understand the racism, issues surrounding implicit bias and systematic racism, and one way to explore these themes and key events from history is through a proactive and engaged approach such as using creative writing and poetry.

List of creative writing prompts for black history month

Story prompts

What would it have been like being a black student in school in the 1900s?

Imagine being an African American protester in the 1900s

Imagine living as a slave - how would you have felt, if you escaped?....

If I could meet an influential Black person it would be....? I would ask them.....?

Essay Prompts

Biography on a Significant Black Person

Newspaper Report on a Significant event in 1900s

The civil rights movement changed the world because...

Why did people support slavery?

It's important to encourage diversity around the world because...

How to celebrate Black History Month in your school

3. Invite a Guest Speaker

Often, providing a space for group discussion is very beneficial to a students' learning.

Your Student Council could ask a guest speaker to give a workshop to all students over the course of October.

This person might be a representative from an organisation; for example, Black and Irish often send people who come to your school and provide talks tailored to your requests.

These workshops would include information and presentations about Black History, explaining briefly their past. There could be interactive activities like games and quizzes.

Before giving the presentation, the speaker could hold a series of icebreakers to assess the knowledge around black history month and get to know the class.

There could also be time for debates about what can be done for more inclusion of races today.

You could invite a guest facilitator to hold an art session with students to make posters about black history and displaying unity. This is a great way to show support to the Black Irish artists community. A great and easy craft to learn is a lantern to honour Harriet Tubman.

The selection of activities within a workshop should help create awareness and understanding around Black History and provide solidarity to the Black Irish community. Workshops are an amazing way to show black irish students that you recognise their heritage.

For more suggestions for speakers contact equality@issu.ie

How to celebrate Black History Month in your school

4. Black Lives Matter

During the month of October, it is important not to ignore the Black Lives Matter Movement. Black History Month is a living evolving thing. The murder of George Floyd and the Black Lives Matter movement is an example of history in the making and cannot be ignored. October is a good opportunity to look at the wider picture and discuss society's continuous progress and its current barriers in the classroom.

In honour of Black History Month, you could turn your classroom into a museum showcasing the history of the Black Lives Matter Movement. One half of the room could be past events for example the Civil Rights Movement, the Montgomery Bus Boycott, the Martin Luther King "I have a dream" speech. The other half of the room could showcase recent events George Floyd, BLM protests, George Nkencho, police brutality.

Additionally a great way to celebrate Black Lives Matter is through music. Music unites people, breaks down social barriers, bringing people together to enjoy dancing and to be entertained. You might consider organising an all school choir where you sing songs to honour the movement. If you can talk you can sing. Another way to incorporate music into Black History Month is to play music during the school day.

List of recommended songs

- Beyonce feat. Kendrick Lamar, "Freedom
- Stand Up by Cynthia Erivo
- Common feat. John Legend, "Glory"
- Mary J. Blige, "Just Fine"
- I Wish I Knew How It Would Feel To Be Free by Nina Simone
- A Change Is Gonna Come by Sam Cooke

How to celebrate Black History Month in your school

5. A Scavenger Hunt Through Time

An engaging way to celebrate black history month, and delve into the past to honour the rich history of black people and remind students that though we live in the modern day, Black people still suffer injustices even today is; a fun scavenger hunt.

Information sheets could be scattered around a school, and mapped, these sheets would outline information regarding the injustices black people once endured and modern day differences, these could also include achievements and accomplishments black people have contributed to, whether it be in STEM, politics, sports, literature, etc.

The activity could be facilitated in a class of 30 or less, the class is divided into two groups randomly, one group is given a set of riddles as to where they can find these information sheets, while the latter group is given a map where they can easily locate the sheets, both groups unaware of the nature of treatment the other is receiving. The group that was given the map is likely to better succeed in the hunt while the group given the riddles, will find it harder. Regardless of if they have located all sheets before time runs out, each group is given time to revise the information they have gathered, and is asked to create a short presentation to tell their peers what they've learned. Once finished, the facilitator reveals that one group had an advantage over the other.

The objective of the activity is to engage students while providing them with a better understanding of discriminative treatment, disadvantages and obstacles that impeded black people from living the same quality of life as those around them. While still showing them the resilience and contributions they have made to modern day life.

Useful Resources

Podcasts

1. The Black & Irish Podcast: The lived experiences of black and mixed race people living in Ireland through conversations about culture, society and family.
2. Higher Learning with Van Lathan and Rachel Lindsay, This podcast deals with the topic of black culture, politics, and sport
3. The Diversity Gap, Explores the gap between good intentions and good impact as it relates to diversity, inclusion and equity
4. "Intersectionality Matters!" hosted by Kimberlé Crensha

Books

1. The Colour Purple by Alice Walker
2. Kindred, Octavia Butler
3. The Warmth of Other Suns, by Isabel Wilkerson
4. I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings by Maya Angelou
5. Passing by Nella Larsen

Tv Shows and Movies

1. Moesha
2. Dear White People
3. Black Panther: In Search of Wakanda
4. The Princess and the Frog
5. When They See Us

Speeches

I have a dream by Dr. Martin Luther King

Speech by Student Magauta Ntsoeu

Intersectional Speech by Sojourner Truth

For more information contact equality@issu.ie