UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO

Centre for International Experience

February 15, 2011

BLACK HISTORY MONTH

Professor George Elliott Clarke, an award-winning poet, novelist and E.J. Pratt Professor of Canadian Literature at the University of Toronto explains Black History Month.

J.D: Why do we celebrate BHM?

G.E.C: It all began with African American historian Carter G. Woodson, who believed that it was important that all African Americans understand their heritage and that other Americans learn to respect it, to understand that Black people have contributed to human advancement in every way.

Black History Month can also be seen as an expression of a decade long movement, known as the New Negro Movement or the Harlem Renaissance (1917-1928), which strove to establish the idea of a Black person as a modern, thoughtful, conscientious, sophisticated and intellectual person, as opposed to an inferior slave. This was a way to overcome racism, the excuse for slavery and the deprivation of civil rights.

J.D: Why February?

G.E.C.: As a historian, Woodson wanted to recognize former US President, Abraham Lincoln, who is considered a hero among the African Americans for his role in the abolition of slavery, and Frederick Douglass, a former slave, who became one of the leaders of the abolitionist movement. Both of these men were born within a few days in February (Lincoln on February 12 and Douglass on February 14).

From there, it slowly expanded to Black History Month, becoming officially recognized in the United States in 1976.

Left: Dr. Carter G. Woodson
Center: Abraham Lincoln
Right: Frederick Douglass

J.D: When did Canadians start to celebrate BHM?

G.E.C.: In the 1960s and 1970s, Black Canadians started to express more interest in Black pride and achievement. The close proximity of the United States and Canada made it only natural that Black Canadians should be influenced by the African American movement to recognize the achievements and contributions of Blacks. Personally, I think we should be celebrating in August, because the British Empire abolished slavery in August, 1834. Also, Toronto, Montreal, Ottawa and Vancouver all celebrate Caribana in August.

J.D: Would you say celebrating BHM has had positive effects, in the sense that Canadians are now more aware of African-Canadian contributions and achievements?

G.E.C.: In short, yes. (In December 1995) The Parliament of Canada officially recognized February as Black History Month (following a motion introduced by the first Black Canadian woman elected to Parliament, the Honourable Jean Augustine, MP of Etobicoke-Lakeshore). The provincial legislatures of Nova Scotia and Ontario recognize Black History Month. What's important is that it has become understood that this is the month where we're going to hear more about Black history. Teachers and educators, who might otherwise not focus on Black history, would do so in this month. In 2009, Canada Post started issuing stamps in February with images of Black Canadians. There are more people of colour and interracial marriages portrayed in advertising. Corporations and business are also catering more to clients of colour.

Canada Post stamps
February 2009

J.D: What about those who question why we devote just one month to celebrating a people's place in society or those who wonder why we don't celebrate Chinese or Ukrainian History Month?

G.E.C: Let there be Chinese History Month! There are enough months and days in the year to celebrate everyone. In essence, all such efforts are undertaken to ensure that those cultures that would otherwise be overlooked, or that are in fact disempowered, receive greater mass focus on their presence and their achievements. Black History Week was established to counter wide spread anti-Black propaganda. It was deliberate counter propaganda. Despite all of that, Black people still feel they need to struggle for acknowledgment of their historical suffering, respect for their achievement and support for equality.

By Jelena Damjanovic

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INCOME TAX & INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS: INCOME YEAR 2010

Remember that in Canada, the deadline for filing your income tax return is April 30th. Most people can start with this exercise from March 1st, as by that date you should have received all your necessary receipts and T-forms. As an international student, you must complete a return if you received any income through employment in Canada. Even if you did not receive income from a Canadian source, you may benefit by submitting a tax return as you may qualify for certain refundable tax rebates.

CIE has arranged for representatives of Canada Customs and Revenue Agency's International Tax Services Office (ITSO) to conduct workshops to explain the policy and process of filling out your tax return. There will be three **(3) identical sessions** on the following dates with opportunities for questions and answers after each session:

Mar. 2, 2011 – 9:30am to 11:30am
Mar. 2, 2011 – 1:30pm to 3:30pm
Mar. 3, 2011 – 9:30 to 11:30am

You should attend the session that best suits your schedule. All sessions will be held in the Cumberland room and necessary forms will be available.

Some useful websites to consult before attending the session:

- To determine your residency status
- Information about international & non-resident taxes
- Specific information for students

INDIVIDUAL HELP SESSIONS

(First Year Students ONLY)

Student volunteers from the Commerce Program will be available for individual help sessions for first year/first time tax filers (graduate and undergraduate students). First year/first time means this is your first year in Canada as an international student and your first time completing Canadian tax forms. Dates and times for these individual sessions will be posted in the weekly CIE listserv message.

CIE SKI TRIPS

CIE will be hosting four ski trips during reading week.

Dates: February 22, 23, 24 and 25

Cost: $75 per person (includes transportation, one hour lesson, ski rentals and ski lift fees)

Location: Dagmar Ski Resort
1220 Lakeridge Road
Ashburn, ON L0B 1A0

Itinerary

10:00am	Depart from CIE (33 St. George Street)
11:15am	Arrive at Dagmar Ski Resort
6:00pm	Depart from Dagmar Ski Resort
7:15pm	Arrive at CIE (33 St. George Street)

For more information, please visit CIE Events.

INTERNATIONAL WOMEN'S DAY

International Women's Day (8 March) honours the work of the suffragettes, who campaigned for women's right to vote (suffrage). The first International Women's Day event was run in 1911 on March 19, initiated by Clara Zetkin, a German political activist. While attending the second International Conference of Working Women in Copenhagen a year before, she proposed that every year in every country there should be a celebration on the same day - a *Women's Day* - to press for their demands. Over 100 women from 17 countries, representing unions, socialist parties and working women's clubs greeted Zetkin's suggestion with unanimous approval and so International Women's Day was born. In 1913 International Women's Day was transferred to 8 March. Today, International Women's Day celebrates the economic, political and social achievements of women and reminds us of inequities still to be redressed. In some places like China, Russia, Vietnam and Bulgaria, International Women's Day is a national holiday.

Did you know?

- On 19 September 1893 New Zealand became the first country in the world to give women the right to vote.
- In 1918, most Canadian female citizens over 21 were granted the right to vote in federal elections. Quebec granted women the vote in 1940.

TIME TO SPEAK UP ON YOUR UNIVERSITY EXPERIENCE

In the next two months more than 40,000 undergraduate students will be asked to participate in one of two very important surveys: the **National Survey of Student Engagement** (NSSE) and The Globe and Mail's **University Report Card.**

This is the fourth time U of T has participated in NSSE – a survey now used by all Ontario universities to measure the quality of undergraduate education. The results of this survey are used to identify the strengths of a U of T education as well as identify shortcoming and establish priorities for enhancing the undergraduate student experience.

Later in March, the University will participate in a second undergraduate survey – the Globe and Mail's University Report Card. Results from this survey are published in the Globe and Mail and are published in the Globe and Mail and are provided to the University administration to help identify priorities for change.

Students will receive an email from U of T President David Naylor asking them to participate in the survey. If you receive the email, please respond promptly and honestly. Your opinions matter.

OVER 130 YEARS OF THE VARSITY

This year The Varsity celebrates 131 years in publication. Founded in 1880, The Varsity is the second-oldest student newspaper in Canada featuring articles about current events, sports, arts, science, politics and other issues. Articles are written by The Varsity's student staff and other U of T students are encouraged to send in their own submissions. Notable past writers for The Varsity include:

- Michael Ignatieff – Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada
- William Lyon Mackenzie King – 10th Prime Minister of Canada
- Bob Rae – 21st Premier of Ontario

The Varsity is released every Monday and Thursday during the school year and can be picked up from several buildings across all three U of T campuses. For the online version, past issues, or to submit an article, go to The Varsity.

2011: THE YEAR OF THE RABBIT

By Jessica Macalinao

This year on February 3rd, people in Toronto and around the world celebrated Lunar New Year. There are different stories behind its 2000 year-old origins, but Lunar New Year celebrates the end of one harvest year and the beginning of the next. The Lunar New Year falls on a different day each year, depending on the moon cycle. Celebrations begin on the New Year and continue for three to fifteen days, depending on cultural traditions.

Many people refer to Lunar New Year as Chinese New Year, but Lunar New Year is celebrated in many countries including:

- Hong Kong
- Philippines
- Vietnam
- South Korea
- Indonesia
- Singapore
- China
- Mongolia
- Malaysia
- Taiwan
- Japan

Celebrations are held in countries and cities with high Asian populations, like Toronto. Celebrations include fireworks, eating special foods, gift giving, the lion or dragon dances and the Lantern Festival.

Red is a dominant colour during celebrations, because the colour red was said to scare away demons and bring good luck.

The lunar calendar has twelve zodiac signs representing a twelve-year cycle.

- Rat
- Ox
- Tiger
- Rabbit
- Dragon
- Snake
- Horse
- Sheep
- Monkey
- Rooster
- Dog
- Boar

This year we enter the year of the rabbit. Here are some common characteristics for those born in the year of the rabbit.

- Articulate
- Ambitious
- Controlled
- Affectionate
- Cooperative
- Friendly

Rabbits are most compatible with a sheep or boar. They make good lawyers, diplomats and actors.

THE ORIGINS OF VALENTINE'S DAY

The origins of Valentine's Day trace back to the ancient Roman celebration of Lupercalia. Lupercalia was held on February 15 and honoured the gods Lupercus and Faunus, as well as the legendary founders of Rome, Romulus and Remus. In addition to a bountiful feast, it is believed that Lupercalia festivities included the pairing of young women and men. Men would draw women's names from a box, and each couple would be paired until next year's celebration.

While this pairing of couples set the tone for today's holiday, it wasn't called "Valentine's Day" until a priest named Valentine, a romantic at heart, came along. The Emperor at the time, Claudius II, had passed down a decree, forbidding soldiers to marry, believing that soldiers would be distracted and unable to concentrate on fighting if they were married or engaged. Valentine defied the emperor and secretly performed marriage ceremonies. As a result of his defiance, Valentine was put to death on February 14.

After Valentine's death, he was named a saint. As Christianity spread through Rome, the priests moved Lupercalia from February 15 to February 14 and renamed it St. Valentine's Day to honour Saint Valentine.

JD

Heart Idioms

To have a heart of gold
Meaning: To care about other people
Example: Mother Theresa had a heart of gold.

To cross your heart and hope to die
Meaning: To promise (often used by kids)
Example: I will meet you tomorrow, cross my heart and hope to die.

Eat your heart out
Meaning: Used jokingly to make someone jealous
Example: I got free tickets to the hockey game tonight. Eat your heart out!

To have a change of heart
Meaning: To change your mind
Example: I had a change of heart and decided not to go skiing this weekend, because it was too cold.

To be cold-hearted
Meaning: Lacking in sympathy
Example: It was cold-hearted to leave that dog outside for so long in this cold.

VISUAL ART CONTEST AND EXHIBITION

The University of Toronto Multi-Faith Centre is now accepting submissions for the following upcoming juried student exhibition: Faith & Spirituality in Student Life: how students see their spiritual life or journey

First Prize: $300
Second Prize: $150
Third Prize: $75
Deadline for submissions is March 1, 2011.
For rules, submission guidelines and more information please visit the Multi-Faith Centre website.

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DID YOU KNOW?

- In 1979, Toronto became the first municipality in Canada to proclaim Black History Month through efforts of many individuals and organizations such as the Ontario Black History Society.
- On December 18, 2009 the United Nations General Assembly proclaimed the year 2011 to be the International Year for People of African Descent.
- Toronto's Caribana has been billed as North America's largest street festival, frequented by over 1.3 million visitors each year for the festival's final parade.

For those students who wish to explore further the achievements of Black Canadians, Professor Clarke suggests picking up Fil Fraser's book: How the Blacks Created Canada. It contains profiles of notable Black Canadians, such as Austin Clarke, Viola Desmond, Harry Jerome and many others. Additionally, look up Professor Clarke's book: Odysseys Home: Mapping African-Canadian Literature for its rich bibliography.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH EVENTS AROUND THE CITY

Black Star & the Civil Rights Movement – Feb. 16, 6:30pm (free) – Ryerson University, 350 Victoria St.
Witness as Desired – Feb. 20, 3:30pm to 5:30pm (free) – TIFF Bell Lightbox, 350 King St. West
Black History Month at Mackenzie House – Weekends in Feb., 12pm to 5pm (students $2.62) – Mackenzie House, 82 Bond St.
El Anatsui: When I Last Wrote to You About Africa – until Feb. 27, 10am to 5pm (students $21) – ROM
Position As Desired – until Mar. 27, 10am to 5pm (students $21) – ROM