



SPRING CONVOCATION

A CENTURY OF BLACK HISTORY COMMEMORATIONS



February 11, 2026 | 10 A.M.
Martin Luther King, Jr. Center Auditorium

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A Century of Black History Commemorations

The year 2026 marks a century of national commemorations of Black history. Dr. Carter Godwin Woodson, George Cleveland Hall, William D. Hartgrove, Jesse E. Moorland, Alexander L. Jackson and James E. Stamps institutionalized the teaching, study, dissemination and commemoration of Black history when they founded the Association for the Study of Negro Life and History on Sept. 9, 1915.

In 1925, when Woodson planned the inaugural weeklong observance of Black history, he could hardly have anticipated the imprint he would leave on the world. From Negro History Week to Black History Month, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History has carried forth this tradition, and the observances have become part of the warp and weft of American culture and increasingly the global community.

For the 100th theme, the founders of Black History Month urge us to explore the impact and meaning of Black history and life commemorations in transforming the status of Black peoples in the modern world. As part of the African diaspora, people of African descent in the United States have viewed their role in history as critical to their own development and to that of the world.

In addition to documenting Black history, Black scholars in the North before the Civil War began marking key milestones in the struggle for freedom and equality. Revealing their connection to the diaspora, they commemorated the Haitian Revolution, the end of the slave trade, and the end of slavery in Jamaica. They marked American emancipation with Watch Night, Jubilee Day, and Juneteenth celebrations. Eventually, they honored the lives of individuals who fought against slavery, most notably Abraham Lincoln and Frederick Douglass.

Arthur A. Schomburg articulated Black people's motivation to recover and share their history with the world: "The American Negro must remake his past in order to make his future." Carter G. Woodson, director of the association, advanced that same commitment to Black history when he established Negro History Week. By focusing public attention on historical findings, he aimed to turn the commemorations into a broad, organized and sustained effort to reshape how Black people saw themselves and how the world saw them.

Year after year, he built Negro History Week into an African American and American cultural institution. He set the themes and provided materials to illustrate the contributions people of African descent made to the movement of history and modern culture. As his contemporary W.E.B. Du Bois said, "He literally made this country ... recognize and celebrate each year a week in which it studied the effect which the American Negro



has had upon the life, thought and action in the United States. I know of no other man who in a lifetime has unaided built up such a national celebration."

Since the passing of the founder, the Association for the Study of African American Life and History has continued his work, making Negro History Week and Black History Month an even more deeply rooted American institution. On Feb. 10, 1976, during the United States Bicentennial, President Gerald R. Ford became the first president to issue a message recognizing Black History Month. Then, in 1986, Congress passed Public Law 99-244, designating February as Black History Month.

These efforts have made February the month when Black history finds its way not simply into the schools of the American nation, but also into cultural heritage sites (museums, archives, libraries, parks, etc.), public squares, workplaces, houses of worship, and homes across the land and across the oceans. These institutions offer sites to discover and learn more about African American history through programming, camps, book displays and exhibitions.

To understand the modern world, especially nations where Black peoples form a significant population, one must grapple with the impact that the public observances have had on the past and the present. This year, as we commemorate the 250th anniversary of United States independence, it is important to tell not only an inclusive history but an accurate one.

[ASALH - The Founders of Black History Month | BLACK HISTORY THEMES](#)

BLACK HISTORY MONTH HIGHLIGHT

Raekwon Conaway

Chief of Staff to U.S. Rep. Kweisi Mfume,
Maryland's 7th Congressional District

Ray Conaway is a native of Baltimore City with deep roots in community engagement and a lifelong passion for public service. Throughout his career, Conaway has served in a range of leadership roles focused on expanding opportunities and delivering direct services to young people and families across Baltimore.

In 2016-17, Conaway was selected as a member of the Baltimore Cohort of Public Allies, where he was assigned to Community Law in Action, a program he had also participated in as a high school student. His leadership and dedication to the organization led to his eventual appointment as interim executive director, where he helped guide the organization's mission and operations.



Conaway currently serves as chief of staff to U.S. Rep. Kweisi Mfume, representing Maryland's 7th Congressional District. In this role, he helps lead the congressman's legislative and district operations, working closely with staff, community leaders and government partners to advance policies that strengthen Baltimore City, Baltimore County and surrounding communities. Prior to this role, Conaway served as district director, overseeing all operations across the congressman's district offices. Conaway graduated from Bowie State University with a Bachelor of Science in Government and from McDaniel College with a Master of Science in Public Administration and Policy.

UNIVERSITY PRESIDENT

Dr. Aminta H. Breaux, Ph.D.

President, Bowie State University

Dr. Aminta H. Breaux, Ph.D. has served as the visionary 10th president of Bowie State University since July 2017, bringing more than 35 years of diverse higher education leadership experience to the position. As president, she is committed to ensuring that every student at Bowie State University develops an entrepreneurial mindset to achieve success in the rapidly changing workplace and communities. Dr. Breaux initiated a university-wide focus to infuse entrepreneurship education across the disciplines which led to the opening of an Entrepreneurship Living Learning Community in fall 2021. She is dedicated to building on the legacy and rich history of Maryland's oldest historically Black university with a strategic focus on ensuring the long-term viability of the institution.

Dr. Breaux is a leading voice in 21st-century education, and because of her extensive knowledge and expertise, she has been tapped to serve in multiple leadership roles. She was appointed to the President's Board of Advisors on Historically Black Colleges and Universities and the Governor Moore's Service Year Advisory Board. She is past chair of the board of directors for the Central Intercollegiate Athletic Association and serves as the chair of the USM Council of University System Presidents.

She has also been recognized with the Educator of the Year Award from the National Council of Negro Women. She received the Trailblazer Award from the Bowie Business Innovation Center, the business accelerator located at Bowie State, in conjunction with Capital One, and the Capital City Chapter Links Inc. Leadership Award.

Throughout her career, Dr. Breaux has demonstrated a passion for ensuring student development and success. Prior to joining Bowie State, Dr. Breaux served as vice president for advancement at Millersville University, where she oversaw fundraising, alumni engagement, event management and external relations. Before that, she was vice president for student affairs at Millersville University.

She holds a bachelor's degree in psychology from Temple University, a master's degree in psychological services in education from the University of Pennsylvania, and a doctorate in counseling psychology from Temple University. She is also a graduate of the Harvard Institute for Executive Management and the American Association for State Colleges and Universities Millennium Leadership Institute.

Dr. Breaux and her husband, Melvin – a former partner of Drinker Biddle & Reath – have three daughters and four grandchildren.



KEYNOTE SPEAKER

Benjamin L. Crump, Esq.

National Civil Rights Attorney

Benjamin L. Crump, Esq. is a nationally recognized civil rights and personal injury attorney whose work advances justice, equity and accountability in communities across the nation. Named to the TIME100 list of the world's most influential people in 2021, Crump has also been recognized by Ebony Magazine's Power 100, The National Trial Lawyers Top 100, and the National Newspaper Publishers Association, which named him Newsmaker of the Year in 2014. He is widely known as "Black America's attorney general."



Crump has represented families in some of the most significant civil rights cases in U.S. history, including those involving Trayvon Martin, Michael Brown, Breonna Taylor, George Floyd, Tyre Nichols and Henrietta Lacks in a landmark medical reparations case. He also represented residents of Flint, Michigan, in litigation related to the city's water crisis, securing a \$626 million settlement on behalf of affected families.

In 2023, St. Thomas University renamed its law school the Benjamin L. Crump College of Law, making him the first practicing Black attorney to receive such an honor. Crump is also an author, educator and producer. He produced "How to Sue the Klan," a documentary highlighting a landmark civil rights case brought by five Black women in Chattanooga, Tennessee, and is the author of "Open Season: Legalized Genocide of Colored People." His career is also chronicled in the Netflix documentary "Civil."

Crump is the founder and principal owner of Ben Crump Law and continues to use the law as a tool to educate, empower and inspire future generations committed to service and social change.

SPRING CONVOCATION 2026

Order of Service

Presiding.....	Paulina Jibodu History and Government
Prelude.....	Billy R. Bennett University Symphonic Band
Posting of Colors.....	Lt. Col. Roger A. Dominique BSU Army ROTC
"The Star-Spangled Banner"	Arranged by Mark Hayes By Francis Scott Key
"Lift Every Voice and Sing"	By James Weldon Johnson and J. Rosamond Johnson Arranged by Brandon Felder Bowie State University Concert Choir
Moment of Centering	Alfred Dixon III Mister Bowie State University
Land Acknowledgment	Aminta H. Breaux, Ph.D. President
Reflections of Carter G. Woodson	William Kent Omega Psi Phi Fraternity, Inc.
Special Performance.....	T3 Musical Theatre Musical Theatre Group
Occasion.....	Dr. Holly Fisher-Hickman Lecturer, History and Government
Official Opening of the Academic Year	Dr. Guy-Alain Amoussou Provost & Vice President of Academic Affairs
Welcome	Chanel Knight Student Government Association, Vice President Mercy Ogutu Graduate Association of Student Public Administrators, President

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Order of Service

Opening Remarks	Aminta H. Breaux, Ph.D. President
Monologue.....	Andrea Newman Miss Bowie State University
Introduction of Speaker	Joshua Looper History and Government
"Just Like Selma" -A Social Justice Hymn.....	By Nolan Williams Jr. Arranged by Brandon Felder, Director Bowie State University Concert Choir
Keynote Address	Benjamin Crump, Esq. Civil Rights Attorney
"New Wade 'N' Water"	By Adolphus Hailstork Arranged by Billy R. Bennett University Symphonic Band
Closing Remarks.....	Arielle Johnson History and Government
The Alma Mater	By Charlotte Robinson Arranged by Brandon Felder Bowie State University Choir
Retiring Of Colors	BSU Army ROTC Lt. Col. Roger A. Dominique
Postlude.....	Billy R. Bennett University Symphonic Band

MUSICAL SELECTIONS

"Lift Every Voice and Sing"

By James Weldon Johnson

Lift every voice and sing
Till earth and heaven ring,
Ring with the harmonies of Liberty;
Let our rejoicing rise
High as the listening skies,
Let it resound loud as the rolling sea.
Sing a song full of the faith that the dark past has taught us,
Sing a song full of the hope that the present has brought us;
Facing the rising sun of our new day begun
Let us march on till victory is won.

God of our weary years,
God of our silent tears,
Thou who has brought us thus far on the way;
Thou who has by Thy might Led us into the light,
Keep us forever in the path, we pray.
Lest our feet stray from the places, our God, where we met Thee,
Lest our hearts drunk with the wine of the world, we forget Thee;
Shadowed beneath Thy hand,
May we forever stand.
True to our God,
True to our native land.

"Alma Mater"

By Charlotte B. Robinson

There's a spot in my heart that never goes cold.
There's a place in my memory that never grows old.
There's a prayer on my lips that I'll ever be true
To God and my country,
To Bowie State, my school.

REFRAIN

Oh, Bowie State, dear Bowie State
May you forever be the flame of faith,
The torch of truth,
To guide the steps of youth.

There's a song in my heart that I'll ever sing
Of the beauties of Bowie State that each season brings.
There's a pledge in my heart that I'll ever keep true
To uphold the standards of Bowie State, my school.

2026 BLACK HISTORY MONTH COMMITTEE

Dr. William Allen, Chair

Kelly Alexander	Brandon Felder	Dr. Keadrick Peters
Regina Ali	Dr. Holly Fisher-Hickman	Sabrina Ram
Billy Bennett	Maggy Francois	Dr. Barbara Smith
Margo Buck-Hurley	Edward Good	Emily Slayton
Dr. Tyesha Burks	Candance Greene	Dr. Otis Thomas
Devin Cash	Dr. Matasha Harris	Jade Ward
Alexus Clanton	Erica Johnson	Annette Wedderburn
Thomasina Boardley	Tanya Jones	Tewodross Williams
DeShaun Douglas	A. Toni Lewis	Dr. Otis Williams
Talisha Dunn-Square	Melissa Morgan	LaTonya Wrenn

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

The Black History Month Committee at Bowie State University, in collaboration with the Department of History and Government, extends its sincere gratitude to all who contributed to the planning and successful execution of this meaningful program.

We are especially thankful to the Department of Fine and Performing Arts and to the dedicated students, faculty and staff whose time, talent and commitment made this event possible.

Our heartfelt appreciation is also extended to the following offices and departments for their invaluable support: the Office of the President; the Office of the Provost and Academic Affairs; the College of Arts and Sciences; the Department of Military Science and Reserve Officer Training Corps; the Department of Communications; Conference and Event Services; the Division of Marketing & Communications; the Department of History and Government, with special recognition to Margo Buck-Hurley from the Department of History and Government; the Staff Council; and the Faculty Senate.

Your collective contributions were essential to the success of this program. We are deeply grateful for your continued commitment to honoring, preserving, and celebrating Black history at Bowie State University.

BLACK HISTORY MONTH FEATURED EVENTS: [Bowiestate.edu/blackhistorymonth](https://bowiestate.edu/blackhistorymonth)



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