

Black History Month 2020 at Andrews University

Friday, Jan. 31 through Sat. Feb. 29

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Morgan Medlock, MD, MDiv, MPH, explored the topic of “Origins” for Black History Chapel on Feb. 13 (Photo by Lloyd Martinez, University Communication student photographer)

By: Laura Fierce, University Communication student writer, with contributions from Hannah Gallant, University Communication student writer

From Friday, Jan. 31, through Saturday, Feb. 29, Andrews University celebrated Black History Month with a variety of activities, speakers and events. Black History Month honored—and raised awareness of—the accomplishments of people of African descent.

“I think that our celebration this year under the theme ‘Origins: Chronicling our Journey’ has been a powerful one,” says Michael Nixon, vice president for Diversity & Inclusion. “I think the events have been a wonderful display of what it means to celebrate culture (in this case, the African Diaspora) while also pulling the broader campus community in to learn and be edified in the midst of the celebration. I would like to thank the Black History Month Committee, the

Division of Campus & Student Life, BSCF, BSAS, New Life Fellowship, KASA, the Department of Music, Connect AU, and all of the other campus and community entities that helped play a role in our 2020 celebration.”

Keynote speaker Morgan Medlock, MD, MDiv, MPH, served as the speaker for several key events. She explored the topic of “Origins” for Black History Chapel on Feb. 13, Impact Vespers on Feb. 14, and Celebration Sabbath on Feb. 15 in the Howard Performing Arts Center.

Medlock received her medical degree from Mayo Clinic School of Medicine. She also completed a Master of Divinity at Andrews University and a Master of Public Health from Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health. After completing adult psychiatry training at Massachusetts General Hospital, she matriculated through the Commonwealth Fund/Harvard Medical School Fellowship in Minority Health Policy. During her fellowship year, she completed a practicum project that focused on improving mental healthcare for justice-involved individuals.

Medlock has held a number of leadership roles regionally and nationally. Her expertise in minority health policy has led to the development of academic projects exploring the role of racial bias in mental health practice. As an outgrowth of one of these projects, Morgan was invited to serve as editor of the volume “Racism and Psychiatry: Contemporary Issues and Interventions,” published in October 2018.

At her chapel presentation on Feb. 12, Medlock responded to the letter sent from the student body of Andrews University in 2015 asking the General Conference for an explanation for their allowance and encouragement of segregation to create “ethnic churches.” She cited examples from the Bible including the tower of Babel and the scattering of people to prevent false unity among men; the greatest lie Satan told of humans being “different races” when there is only one, the human race; and that God made a promise to Abraham—a pagan—to bring the Savior of humanity through his seed. Medlock noted that in knowing this, as Christians, we should no longer separate ourselves as we are all God’s creatures who He came to save. She closed her talk, saying, “God’s blessing is too big for one culture, group, or clan... Paul brings change to the hostility toward each other by revealing Jesus’ purpose. Paul says, ‘God has already given His sign.’”

Medlock’s vespers presentation on Feb. 14 was titled “Crisis and Crumbs.” She pointed out that even people in crisis can achieve change. “Though history may forget scandalous people, God does not forget,” Medlock said. “The faces of His movement are made up of people who have gone through all kinds of crisis.

Medlock then told the story of the woman in Matthew 15 who used a crisis in her life as a turning point when she broke social protocol to bring her child to Jesus. The woman tells Jesus that even the dogs are given crumbs from the Master’s table. “She’s saying, ‘God, give me a taste of what is yet future,’” said Medlock. “When you take a crumb from someone who is eternal—just a crumb—it’s enough to handle all your needs.”

In her presentation at New Life on Saturday, Feb. 15, Medlock highlighted the theme “Remember My Praise” taken from Psalms 34. Medlock noted three promises that Jesus makes

in Scripture: in this world you will have trouble, when you experience trouble you will be delivered, and in spite of your trouble, when you walk with God, you will be remembered.

Medlock then turned the focus to David and his example of being a man after God's own heart—despite all David's troubles, he elevated praise. "David left us a legacy of praise, he's remembered as a man after God's own heart. David went through a lot of trouble, yet he left us a legacy of praise... He knew how to praise God in a fashion that no one else has really quite captured... I believe today David is challenging us to praise God, not on our level," Medlock paused pointing toward the heavens, "but His level."

Other Black History Month events included BSCF The Blackout, BSAS Blackventist Praise, Black Spirit Week, and Black Like Me Comedic Story Slam. Dining Services, with BSCF and the Office of Diversity & Inclusion, co-sponsored lunches that gave a taste of some of the best dishes from the African Diaspora.

"Each year, my heart is warmed by the hard work and creativity of our students," says Nixon. "It fills me with pride to see them put on such an amazing calendar of events each year. This celebration has given me the fuel necessary to continue to finish this year on a good note. I was so gratified to see all of the hard work and planning that was put in by those involved come to fruition. I am already excited about next year!"

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