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## Center celebrates black history

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Tufts' Africana Center hosted an evening of dance, music and spoken word on Friday night to kick off Black History Month.

The reception, which was held in Jackson Gym, was the first in a series of events planned for this month that will celebrate African-American history and culture.

"Tonight, we are together to witness history," Katrina Moore, director of the Africana Center, said in her introduction to the approximately 30 people in attendance.

The event featured an exhibition by the local youth dance troupe OrigiNation, which performed a musical theater show entitled "Our History." The troupe combined dance styles and music genres ranging from hip-hop to gospel, jazz and African rhythms, seeking to create the impression that the audience was traveling through time and across borders.

Representatives from ONYX, a Tufts literary publication, followed the performance with a history lesson about the African-American community.

The second part of the show, entitled "A Walk through History," featured portrayals of major African-American figures throughout history. During this section, performers paraded onto the stage in period costumes to portray Rosa Parks, Martin Luther King, Jr. and Madam C. J. Walker.

Apart from giving attendees insight into the community's rich history, the event also served as an opportunity to celebrate the Africana Center's 40th anniversary.

"This reception is actually a double kickoff," Moore said.

Throughout the night, the programming emphasized the rift between a history of slavery and discrimination and the ideas of uniqueness and black pride. "I was not born to be a slave!" an African-American performer said during a slam poetry exhibition.



Dilys Ong / Tufts Daily

The Africana Center kicked off Black History Month exploring black history through dance.

To that end, the performers revived sentiments from the civil rights movement, screaming at various times, "No justice, no peace!," "Civil rights now!" and "Equal education!"

Shaumba-Yandje Dibinga, the executive director of OrigiNation, spoke to the power of performance art, like that featured in the event, to convey a message.

"You can change someone's life in the words you speak and the dances you dance," she said.

Kimberley Madison, a graduate student in bioengineering, was most impressed by the spoken word portion. She had never attended an Africana Center event, but Friday's reception sparked her interest. "It was really great," she said. "I'm going to try and catch the next [one]."

Tufts' Africana Center was founded in 1969 in order to promote diversity and equality and encourage intellectual and cultural awareness. It works with African students from different backgrounds and ethnic affiliations, and throughout the month its members will partner with groups such as the African Student Organization, the Black Men's Group, the Black Women's Collective and the Pan-African Alliance to put on additional programming.

Created in 1926, Black History Month is now celebrated every February in many countries around the world. Moore said, however, that many African-Americans honor their diverse culture every day. "Our history is a daily experience," she said.