

# BLACK

Each February, Saint Joseph Prep celebrates Black history and culture. This year, that celebration took place during a community-wide assembly and also permeated classrooms as students and teachers examined issues and shared experiences.

This year's assembly, organized by Mr. Darol Ware, featured a variety of contributions. Student presenters introduced a group of Black authors, including Toni Morrison, Zora Neale Hurston, Ta-Nehisi Coates, and Ralph Ellison, hailing them as unsung heroes for choosing to write about their community and the Black experience.

For **Sherell Jeudi '21**, participating in the presentation meant a lot. "It was an experience that will be in my vault of favorite memories at SJP. I loved seeing everyone who was Black participate, and it was great to see that everything we worked so hard to plan came together and told the powerful history of our people."

Ms. Nia Gipson shared a video from her recent trip to Ghana, specifically footage of her visit to Elmina Castle. Elmina was built by the Portuguese in 1482 and served as a

In the classroom, Ms. Caitlin Charette's history students examined Black-led movements and resistance in the early 19th century. Students read and discussed the impact of the Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass during a Socratic Seminar. Additionally, students studied reactions to Nat Turner's Rebellion and analyzed Sojourner Truth's speech "Ain't I a Woman" in order to understand the relationship between the abolition movement and the women's rights movement.

Ms. Marie-Claire Guidoux used numbers in her Pre-Cal, Calculus, and AP Calculus classes to show how stereotypes about the Black community have been created and perpetuated. "We examined the power that numbers have in creating false stories," she said. "We looked at statistics in the contexts of incarceration rates, rates of expulsion and suspension in schools, and the school to prison pipeline."

After the events of Memorial Day weekend and the death of George Floyd at the hands of Minneapolis police officers, Saint Joseph Prep has worked to continue the conversation on systemic racism in the United States. Mr. Ware and Ms.

# HISTORY

trade settlement before turning into a slave trading post. During the height of the slave trade years, 30,000 enslaved Africans passed through Elmina annually. For Ms. Gipson, standing where her ancestors might have stood was a powerful experience.

Ms. Katie Scorza talked about the 1619 Project, a New York Times initiative examining the consequences of slavery while spotlighting the contributions of Black Americans to our national narrative. The project was launched in 2019 to commemorate the 400th anniversary of the first enslaved Africans arriving in America.

Other participants included **Jackson Savoy '21**, who read an original poem, and Mr. Damian Shiner, who played and sang an African American spiritual.

The assembly concluded with a performance from the SJP Step Team. **Kyasha Ambroise '20** enjoyed taking part, saying, "The Step Team really tried our best to incorporate modern Black culture that people in our generation would relate to. I think it is crucial that we don't forget about the past of African American history, but continue to educate and make others aware of it, as it is still prominent in all of our lives today."

**Black Lives Matter.**

# MATTERS



Members of the Black History Month presentation team pose together following the February assembly. From left to right (back row), Jahcaris Lucien '21, Nelson Bernard '21, Mr. Ware, Jackson Savoy '21, Eric Moussignac '22, (middle row) Ms. Gipson, Sherell Jeudi '21, Naomi Taylor '21, Samantha Desmornes '22, Coralie Daniel '22, Edylene Altidor '23, Joanna Saint-Fleur '21, Damara Andrade '20, Aisha Veras '20, Cherissa Bertrand '20, Angelique Lazard '20, (kneeling) Nataijah King-Whittle '22, Kyasha Ambroise '20.