

WALKING IN THE STEPS OF BLACK WOMEN

A History of the University of Michigan



M | LSA HISTORY
UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN



Center of the Diag

This is where it was announced that Opal Bailey would be the first black homecoming queen of the university. (October 1968)



The Union

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Nu Chapter held a talk at the Michigan Union for the Black female community titled, “The Negro Woman Looks Ahead.” The members of Nu Chapter hosted former executive secretary of the NAACP, Horace White, during Negro History Week. (February 2, 1947)

The Black fraternities and sororities of the university hosted dances for Black students at the Union in the summer. Students from the Jim Crow South came to study at Michigan during the summers because they were not allowed into white universities in their home states. (1940s)



LSA Building

On April 9, 1968, members of the Black Student Union chained themselves inside the Administration Building (LSA Building). They sat for five hours, demanding more financial aid and higher representation in enrollment for Black students. This protest caused the creation of the Center for Afroamerican and African Studies in 1970.



Nickels Arcade

White shop owners refused service to Lenoir Beatrice Smith and her friend at a restaurant located inside Nickels Arcade. Smith’s experience led her to help create the Negro-Caucasian Club—a leftist activist organization. (Fall 1925)



308/309 S. State St.

Shop clerks refused to let Thelma Brooks, a young Black teacher, try on clothing here. UM students affiliated with the Human Rights Commission of Ann Arbor later organized a protest against racist business practices outside the shop. The white owner still refused to change policy or meet with the community.



The Fourth Ward

In 1867, the Fourth Ward was a central residential area. Over time, racist housing and business practices created a segregated neighborhood. Authorities neglected to maintain the area and instead focused on newer districts. Jones Elementary closed as a result. Today, a plan to construct a hotel in the historic district provokes tension.



The League

Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc. Nu Chapter held their first annual scholarship dinner in the League Chapel. (1935)



204 S. State St.

Today it’s Lane Hall—originally it was the college chapter of the YMCA. In 1921, local pastor Lloyd Wallick refused to serve UM student Sara Pelham at the YMCA lunch counter. Pelham tried to voice issues about racism on campus, but the university dismissed the incident and attempted to convince her to stay quiet. Later, UM bought the building and used it for community and campus events. In 1946, it housed Virginia W. Ellis’s musical program, “The Rise and Development of the Negro Spiritual.” Now, it’s the location of the Women’s Studies Department and the Institute for Research on Women and Gender.



Mosher-Jordan Hall

Mosher-Jordan Hall was the first University of Michigan dormitory to allow Black women to live on campus, beginning with writer and socialite Elsie Roxborough. (1930)

THE TOUR

THE DIAG | THE UNION | LSA BUILDING
NICKELS ARCADE | 308/309 S. STATE ST.
204 S. STATE ST. | 116 N. STATE ST.
THE LEAGUE | MOSHER-JORDAN

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