

A CONVERSATION OF UNDERSTANDING

BLACK HISTORY MONTH IN AN ERA OF POLICY PUSHBACK AND ERASURE: From Proclamation to Practice – Celebrating Black History Month When Identity Months Are Under Attack

FEBRUARY 19, 2026

12 PM - 1 PM

youtube.com/live/RAi2FHXjcnk

ABOUT THE SESSION

This session will explore how Black history, heritage, and contributions continue to be challenged and, in some cases, actively diminished in public discourse, federal spaces, and educational policies. Across recent months, debates at both the federal and state levels have centered on efforts that lessen, limit, or remove historical narratives about Black Americans and other marginalized communities from public interpretation. In some instances, historical exhibits and materials that honor iconic Black figures and civil rights achievements have been reconsidered, changed, or scrubbed entirely under broad historical review directives. Other policies have sought limits on curriculum content, which restricts how educators share the rich, nuanced story of Black history and its foundational role in shaping the United States.

Our discussion will include recent developments that illustrate how narratives about Black life, resistance, and triumph have faced erasure or restriction in public spaces and official histories, and the real implications of these decisions for educational equity and collective memory.

This important dialogue will include a conversation with SIU Carbondale Professor, Dr. Pamela Smoot, and SIU graduate student guest, (name will be provided) who is a certified genealogist.



DR. PAMELA SMOOT
*Assistant Professor,
History*
Southern Illinois University
Carbondale



DR. TANDRA TAYLOR
*Interim Director,
Institute for Community
Justice and Racial Equity*
Southern Illinois University
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Conversations of Understanding have become a fixture across the SIU System and on our individual campuses. They are a series of exchanges where students, alumni, faculty, staff, and the broader SIU communities can share their experiences and thoughts on a variety of themes related to antiracism, diversity, equity, and inclusion. We want to be a model for others in higher education and be recognized as a leader in our region and beyond for our work in fostering understanding of relevant contemporary issues.

Students, faculty, and staff across the SIU System are invited to join a live discussion focusing on critical issues regarding equity and justice in our country and what we can and must do to address those issues within the SIU System and beyond. A question-and-answer session will follow where audience participants can participate.

Sponsored by the SIU System President's Office and the SIU System Diversity Advisory Council



Southern Illinois University System

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