

see the change

An
020
Booklet
On

**Black History
Month**

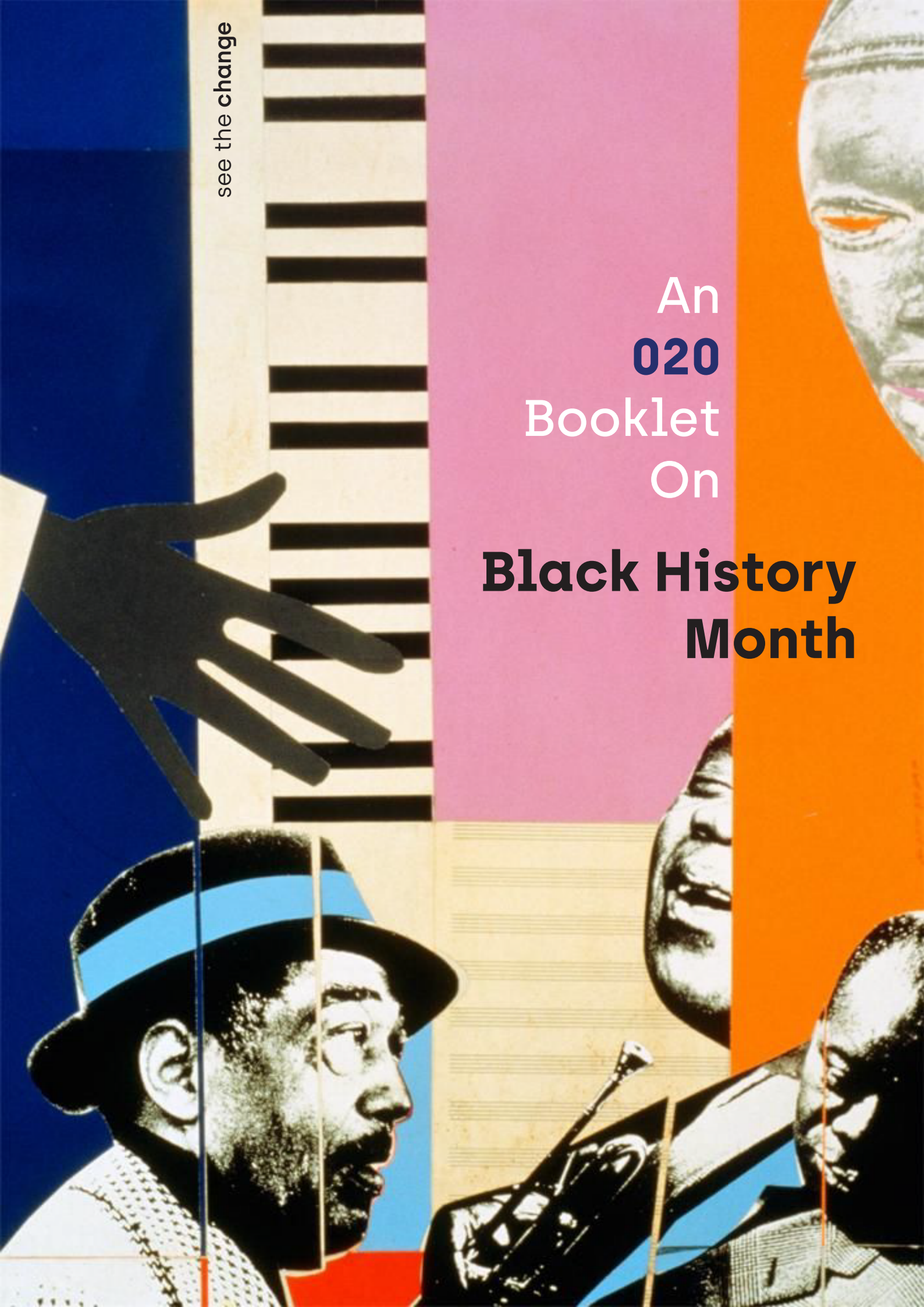


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Introduction

Amsterdam is a city that proudly embraces its history while building towards a progressive future. The city's beautiful old buildings, century-long market traditions, iconic canals, and historical landmarks are contrasted with a fresh, multicultural atmosphere. On top of the international buzz around the city, rooted in the Amsterdam culture is a rich black heritage that should not be overlooked.

Honouring the vast black history in the Netherlands, the country celebrates Black History Month every year in October. The month calls for celebration of black lives and communities, cherishing black achievements of both the past and the present. Alas, issues of racial inequality remain prevalent in society, for which Black History Month is also a month of discussion, protest, and debate. The month serves as a gateway to shed light on the challenges faced by black communities, and to campaign for equal representation, rights, and opportunities for all within Dutch society.

With this booklet, 020 wishes to join the conversation about black representation by shedding light to the historical background, the Black Lives Matter movement, means of activism, and much more. We invite you to browse through the sections of this booklet and celebrate the rich history and achievements of the black community in Amsterdam together with us!

Yours truly,
The 020 team

Historical Context

In order to better understand the subject of this booklet it's first important to know some history and facts about how the concept of 'Black History Month' appeared in the first place.

In 1875—specifically 10 years after slavery in the United States was abolished—Carter G. Woodson was born in the state of Virginia. Getting his PhD in history from Harvard University would eventually lead him to being dubbed "The Father of Black History" by many. This occurred mainly due to the fact that he is the one who started the Association for the Study of [African American] Life and History in 1915, with some like-minded peers. Furthermore, he also founded the Journal of African American History in 1916. Both creations are still active today, and are of great importance for the black community. In 1926, Dr. Woodson initiated what was known as 'Black History Week', which was established in February. A week from this month was chosen based on the birthdays of Frederick Douglass, a renowned

activist, and Abraham Lincoln, who signed the Emancipation Proclamation. This is how for roughly five decades Black History Week has been celebrated in the United States.

This happened up until sometime in the 1970s militants raised the question: why only one week? The question was followed by the main and entirely valid argument that, without a doubt, white people have not only a year, but actually every year to celebrate their history and culture. Given that fact, the black community started to publicly promote and celebrate their own vast culture, sacrifices, and achievements through numerous organised events, exhibitions, speeches, symposia, and artistic performances throughout the whole month of February.

Even though the main focus has been on the United States, the implications of European countries and their colonial past—in which the Netherlands also has its own share—should not be forgotten.

The concept of Black History Month first reached Europe via the United Kingdom in the late 1980s as a result of all the local community activism aimed at combating racism in British society, as well as the Eurocentric narrative of history that dominated the public school system. People of African and Caribbean heritage in the UK decided on the month of October, as February did not hold any historical meaning for them, at least certainly not as much as the Jamaican rebellion led by Paul Bogle on the 11th of October 1865. (<https://www.blackpast.org/global-african-history/bogle-paul-1822-1865/>).

The same month was adopted in the Netherlands since 2010 when Black History Month was officially celebrated and organised for the first time by the Association of Students of African Heritage (ASAH; <https://www.asah-eur.nl/>) in collaboration with the National Institute of Dutch Slavery History and Legacy (NiNsee; <https://www.ninsee.nl/>).

In 2016 this transitioned into what is known as Black Achievement Month (<https://www.blackachievementmonth.nl>) which is organized only by NiNsee. Thus, every October during BAM in the Netherlands there are a variety of events ranging from debates, exhibitions and workshops, to spoken word, theatre, dance, music, and film dedicated to the cultural and historical heritage of the community.

BLM in Today's Context & How to Support the Movement

For many years the BLM movement has consistently resisted oppressive practices and fought for the rights of black people around the world. From micro-aggressions to brawlings to tragic deaths of black people, the world has watched—without a doubt in awe and frustration—the problems that black people face in their lives. For years people have borne witness to unfair discrimination and brutality, and in June of 2020, at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic, the tragic deaths of George Floyd and Breonna Taylor stopped everyone in their tracks. How is it that we are still witnessing people's lives being taken from them based on their skin colour? It felt impossible to remain on the margins and watch.

The BLM movement took its place in the world, uniting people from everywhere to fight for people's lives. Those who hold equality and justice close to their hearts can no longer sit by and witness the suffering of black people at the hands of a flawed and corrupt power

structure. Depending on who you talk to about BLM you will get scoffs and judgement, or a sorrowful nod and understanding, but whatever the reaction it is undeniable that the movement has become a household name. You know exactly what it stands for: fighting for black people and POC's right to a dignified life and equal opportunity.

The Netherlands has a rich history of inequality—what the school textbooks claim to be the prosperous "Golden Age". Why? Because that is when the Netherlands prospered the most from exploiting other nations and peoples. Despite the contributions of black people and POC throughout Dutch history, that contribution is hardly visible. When you walk through the city of Amsterdam you see statues of old Dutch masters from the colonial period proudly proclaiming their grandeur, while at the same time the voices of Dutch black people and POC are silenced or considered acts of violence. This is only one part of what the BLM movement in the Netherlands, specifically

From Zwarte Piet to the lack of an apology to the black community, the Netherlands has many demands it needs to meet according to the BLM movement here. Last year gave the people a chance to speak up about their stories and experience with racism and exclusion in this country. Living in an unequal world already makes it hard to find one's identity, but this movement aims to cultivate the identity of black voices around the globe, so that they can finally be heard and find their rightful place in the world.

If you want to know more about the history of 'blackness' in the Netherlands, we recommend you to check out this link <https://www.blackachievementmonth.nl>. The black community in the Netherlands offers various programmes, exhibitions, and talks. Demonstrate your support by learning more about the country's black people and their contribution. Education is the first step to a revolutionary change.

Discussions About the Black Experience

In today's globalised world many grow up at a crossroads of places and cultures. This context can be quite different for a black individual searching for their identity in the white-dominated Western world. In the following section, two black women—both raised in between cultures and now studying at a university in a Western city—share their thoughts and experiences.

Danielle Adzeley Maxwell-Fraser, 20, is half-Canadian and half-Ghanaian. Born in Canada, she has also lived in Ghana and the Netherlands. She now studies Political Science at the University of Amsterdam whilst minoring in Gender and Sexuality Studies. Though primarily attending international school settings her entire life, Danielle notes they have predominantly been Western and Eurocentric. This has made her extremely critical of her position as a biracial woman. She has channeled her interest in identity politics through joining the Black Student Union in her first year of university, actively participating in protests such as

Black Lives Matter, and joining O20 to work on policies relating to diversity and inclusivity in the school curriculum.

Natalia Kasten, 20, comes from a French-German family and has lived in some of the globe's most international hotspots including Tokyo, New York, and for the majority of her life in Hong Kong. At present she studies Psychology at Loughborough University in the United Kingdom and is working an internship in London. Compared to Hong Kong, where Natalia was the only black person in her academic year, she describes moving to the UK as a positive development in terms of diversity. Yet, there is still a lot to work on. Together with two other black women from her course, Natalia hosts a podcast "The Melanin Matter". The show revolves around their lived experiences ranging from being black in a white-dominated university, to racism, to dating, and more. The podcast can be found on Spotify.

Danielle and Natalia share their thoughts on the black experience, activism and allyship, Black Lives Matter movement, and diverse representation in academia and at the university.



DANIELLE



Activism and the Black Lives Matter Movement

Activism is a very wide spectrum, especially in the interconnected global community we live in today. It can take different shapes and forms and is undeniably part of everyone's lives, even of those who do not actively participate but simply scroll through their Instagram feed. But what is the purpose of activism? And most importantly, what does it accomplish?

First of all, Natalia points out that the way activism is carried on hugely depends on how seriously the issues at stake are taken, which can vary from one place to another. Then, when addressing performative activism she brings up the issue of people who advocate "for show" more than out of genuine interest, saying that "there's a big difference between supporting the movement and doing your work for it without necessarily being obvious to the world and actively going to protests". According to Natalia, what you need to keep in mind with activism is what your

goals are, and you always have to ask yourself if what you are doing is enough. According to Natalia, "performative activism is not always as helpful as it could be. It is definitely one way of showing support but it's not the only way", stressing the importance of educating yourself, actively looking at your own actions, and being there for your black friends—listening to their experiences, and making them feel heard. She also addresses the problematic branding strategy of some companies when it comes to performative activism and showing support: some brands will see activism as their homework, viewing it as a "box they have to check" instead of something to pay genuine attention to.

Danielle shares similar views on performative activism. She starts on a positive note by saying that BLM, especially after the murder of George Floyd, "was very mobilised and became an issue on the political agenda", also adding that it was very symbolic of "how much action matters" looking at all the protests that took

place during the first lockdown in 2020. On the other hand, she thinks that “people need to be more critical and have more accountability” since performative activism is a very big deal today.

The controversy of the Blackout Tuesday, which took place on June 2nd, 2020, is also brought up. Danielle points out how “way more people posted the blackout screen on Instagram in comparison to how many signatures were on the petition for holding the police murdering George Floyd accountable”. At the end of the day, according to both Natalia and Danielle, it is way more relevant that people translate their ideas into action—especially when voting—rather than take part in protests or use social media to advocate only sporadically.

Being an ally

Relating to the abovementioned controversies and performative activism, there are some common misconceptions around showing the right support for the black community.

Therefore, we found it essential to ask Natalia and Danielle about their views on what being an ally truly means, and how you can be one. When asked about the matter, Natalia pointed out that the definition of an ‘ally’ is different for everyone in the black community, and so there is no textbook example to base yourself off of. Therefore, the following statements represent what an ally means for Danielle and Natalia personally.

So, where can you start? Natalia and Danielle both mention the importance of educating yourself on the matter before “coming to the table” to discuss. There are various sources of information on the internet so simply conducting a Google search is a good starting step. Natalia mentions how “it is not a black person’s duty to teach”—having to constantly educate or correct your friends on the issues of race can get overwhelming. Although, both state that in case of confusion it is important that you ask questions to not remain with misunderstandings, as well as

to make sure that what you know is not harmfully wrong information.

Moreover, the essence of what an ally is rests on the idea of being present for your loved ones that are in the black community. In addition to this, one should be open-minded, and as a non-black person try to open your circle of friends to people that come from different ethnicities and backgrounds. In Natalia's view, being an ally also refers to understanding feelings and not always doubting when listening to the experiences being shared, and instead being supportive and showing acceptance.

After doing the research, we should put into practice what we know. To contribute on a bigger scale one could put their money towards causes and businesses that thrive from the experience of being black. As a white ally, one must be aware of the privilege you possess and how white people have always been the majority in positions of power and black people have not. So it is important as a

white person to use that power to give black people a platform for their knowledge, opinions and experiences—to return to them their voice.

What is allyship not about, then? An ally is not someone that chooses to speak on the behalf of the black community instead of hearing them out. Someone that merely makes assumptions instead of asking questions, that has prejudices, or, in the case of BLM, is there only to support a movement and not the cause behind it.

Black Representation at University

Both of the interviewees describe their universities, the University of Amsterdam, and University of Loughborough, as liberal and inclusive for the most part. Yet, they still feel that diversity can be further promoted. Effectively, this concerns the area of teaching and course materials.

For one, Natalia and Danielle both feel that their assigned course readings are mostly written by [straight] white males, which might be problematic when topics such as racism, slavery, and diversity are being discussed. This is partly because there is only one position shown and not the one of the people actually experiencing it. This issue is commonly known as the 'higher education white male template'.

Secondly, similar to the academic papers and articles being read, the pool of teachers, professors, and scholars working at the university is also predominantly white, making the courses themselves lack diversity. Natalia recalls having only one black teacher during her time at university, and she describes how having that teacher made her feel happy and included, as she felt she could relate better. When hiring, institutions should seek to foster diversity, especially in courses where the subject matter touches on the topic.

Therefore, even if efforts towards diversity are being made, the unfortunate reality is that the institutions often remain entrenched in the principles that the university follows, and if the university does not genuinely strive for diversity and inclusion then no amount of effort will make a difference. To facilitate and promote diversity in the educational system, professors and teachers must be more mindful when it comes to the course literature. Additionally, it is crucial to include multiple perspectives in the discussion, especially when it comes to social topics or matters of race and inclusion.

The Black Experience is Different for Everyone

Both Danielle and Natalia touch upon the subject of intersectionality and stress the importance of avoiding generalisation when talking about the black community. In Danielle's words: "In the past black people in a Western world have been described as a big homogeneous ethnic minority group.

But every black experience is different", stressing that issues and day-to-day struggles are subjective and context-dependent. Natalia also addresses the issue of 'colorism' and how you can get different advantages based on "how black you are". Therefore, it is fundamental to keep in mind past mistakes to avoid repeating them when building a more equal society.

Supporting Black-Owned Businesses and Creators in Amsterdam

As several black-owned businesses extract inspiration from the culture itself, supporting black entrepreneurs serves as a direct opportunity to learn about black culture. Besides, buying from black-owned businesses and creators is an efficient way to directly empower and support your local black communities.

In this section, you will find a selection of Amsterdam's black-owned enterprises. While the list represents only a handful of the multitude of entrepreneurs operating in the Amsterdam region, we hope to provide a glance on the interesting options out there. To explore a broader selection of businesses, we recommend checking out the website of We Buy Black, a platform for black business in the Netherlands through which you may browse through a vast spectrum of black-owned stores and enterprises, from mouth hygienists to clothing brands.

Restaurants and cafes

They say that the heart of a culture lies in its cuisine, and luckily Amsterdam offers a variety of interesting restaurants that extract inspiration from various black cultures around the globe.

For an enjoyable dine-in with cocktails "that elevate the senses as well as the spirit", visit [Labyrinth](#) by the edge of Vondelpark. The Cameroonian-born founder Sam Kingue Ebelle has worked in some of the finest bars worldwide. At Labyrinth he shares his passion for mixology all while giving an ode to his Central African heritage. Besides offering some of Amsterdam's best cocktails, Labyrinth greets its visitors with a tasty menu of African-Caribbean soul food to share, including various vegetarian and vegan options. Attend a cocktail workshop, or plan your visit for a Sunday evening to enjoy Labyrinth's weekly live jazz and poetry nights.

If you've been looking for the perfect brunch spot, you can rest your search and head straight over to **Water & Brood** at the corner of Weesperstraat! The place carries a humble name, describing one of the simplest dishes one can enjoy. Quite on the contrary, though, the restaurant serves a rich menu with beautiful plates and generous portions. Founded by two black brothers in 2017 to replace an old bike shop, Water & Brood ingeniously mixes classic New York style brunch with Surinamese kitchen staples straight out of their mother's kitchen. Besides, their St. Martin-born chef Tracy B has infused the menu with her personal addition of island flavours. Try out the fried chicken waffles or opt for a sweeter plate by ordering the buttermilk pancakes. Top the meal off with a tropical pressed juice or a fresh fruity cocktail, and you're good to go about your day!

Amid the bustle of the Albert Cuyp market, you'll find **I Can Do Better**, a vegan health food restaurant and store serving African-Caribbean cuisine with

an interesting backstory. The entrepreneur behind the concept, Ly, stumbled upon the teachings of the Honduran herbalist Dr. Sebi a few years ago whilst being determined to start a healthier lifestyle. The core idea of I Can Do Better lies within non-processed, alkaline foods that feed the body and the soul. Their extensive menu features some classic Surinamese dishes such as roti, pom, and moksi ales with a healthy, plant-based twist. Their dishes are also available for delivery on Thuisbezorgd.

Fashion and lifestyle

The concepts behind black-owned businesses often extend beyond the business venture, therefore learning about their backstory can be vital for understanding the cultural heritage. The Amsterdam-based lifestyle brand **Areaboy** launched by Osborne Steward, a Ghanaian-Dutch multidisciplinary, provides a fitting example of this. The term "areaboy" is used in Nigeria to refer to a member of a loosely organised youth group running the

streets of a city. Fittingly, the concept of Areaboys sprouts from the idea of carefreeness, and the brand prides itself by celebrating youth culture. Additionally, their clothing lines communicate values of unity, strength, and brotherhood. Rocking their youthful designs and unique prints will definitely make you the best-dressed person around the block!

Another Amsterdam-based brand communicating an important vision through its product is the handmade jewellery line [Elena Corolina](#). Every piece of their jewellery is made using freshwater pearls, which are often associated with royalty or seen as a signal of class. Elena Corolina wants to redefine this outdated stigma by showing that pearls can be worn by women and men of all ethnicities. The brand is named after its founder Elena, who was born in the Dominican Republic and moved into the Netherlands when only six years old. Growing up between two cultures, she was taught to proudly embrace her background from a young age. Many years later,

she demonstrates this learning curve through the beautiful and uplifting message of her brand: Royal cannot be defined by race or background, but it is in the way we feel and how we carry ourselves.

[Patta](#), a Dutch streetwear and sneaker brand was launched all the way back in 2004 by Edson Sabajo and Guillaume Schmidt. Since then, the black-owned streetwear brand has reached a cult reputation in the Dutch fashion scene and gained collaborations with many internationally recognised clothing brands. The word "patta" stands for a slang term for shoe, nodding to the Surinamese heritage of the brand's founders. Patta roots for cultural crossover and inspiring collaborations, both of which can be observed in their unique collections. Aside from being a commercial brand, a fixed percentage of the annual sales of Patta is donated to the Patta Foundation. The foundation is an independent non-profit entity that funds projects to encourage young people to be active in their communities, aspire to roles in

leadership, and develop an entrepreneurial mindset.

Another success story about the achievements of black enterprise comes from **Daily Paper**, an Amsterdam-based contemporary fashion and lifestyle brand. The brand was founded in 2012 by Jefferson Osei, Hussein Suleiman, and Abderrahmane Trabsini, three childhood friends who shared their passion for music, creativity, and culture. Since its establishment, Daily Paper has become one of the fastest growing fashion brands in Europe. They are especially recognised for timeless designs for both men and womenswear that reflect the African heritage of their founders. For instance, some of the designs are inspired by the scenery in Somalia and other Sub-Saharan African regions. Though the brand has reached the wide audiences of fashion weeks around the globe, you may visit their original flagship store, which remains on the Bilderdijkstraat in Amsterdam.

Miscellaneous picks

Black-owned enterprises are present in almost every industry. Therefore, when you need to make a purchase, it's a good habit to check if you could support a black-owned business while you're at it.

When your home needs a pinch of fresh décor, check out **Votive Wares**, an Amsterdam-based shop for handcrafted ceramics. According to Leaira, the shop's founder, Votive Wares's self-defined purpose is "to create a virtual space where we can discuss daily rituals and share tips on how we can create peace within our homes and ourselves". Votive Wares offers sleek and timeless designs, which also make for the perfect gift. Leaira's beautiful custom-made pieces, from incense and candle holders, to planters and trays, are available for order on the brand's page on [Etsy](#).

The Natural Nation is a salon and spa specialised in afro-centric styling and hair care for all ages and genders.

Founded by natural hair specialist Anoeska Schmidt and joined by a group of talented black hair stylists and beauticians, The Natural Nation has a 10-year-long experience in treating and styling afro-style hair. The team exerts expertise in styling locs and treating curly and kinky hair, while only using products from brands that utilise natural ingredients. On top of their hairstyling services, the salon offers facial treatments, aromatherapy, and massages. Additionally, their web-shop caters their very own natural mixes for hair treatment.

Concluding Remarks

Black History Month offers a platform for discussion and exploration around black culture and heritage. With this booklet 020 wants to contribute to this exploration by joining the celebration of black lives and achievements, both past and present. The fight for equality is far from over, with the unfortunate day-to-day reality of institutionalised racism and marginalisation still faced by many black individuals. Therefore, in order to make true progress the commitment for educating oneself on black heritage and history has to transcend beyond social media activism, and into active communication and presence.

Moreover, Black History Month provides an opportunity for black people to retain autonomy in the conversation about issues of race without the colonial frame that it is so often placed into. In support of the black community in reclaiming their history, one should listen, be present, and stay open to new perspectives. Since the black experience is vastly different for every individual, it can only open up by broadening your horizons and approaching people with various backgrounds.

We hope that with this booklet we are able to push new perspectives

can only open up by broadening your horizons and approaching people with various backgrounds.

We hope that with this booklet we are able to push new perspectives into the conversation about race and equality. However, we realise that the perspectives and information we provide in this booklet are not all-encompassing. Therefore, in case of any corrections, thoughts, or questions, we encourage you to directly contact us through our Instagram [@020.nl] or our website [www.0-2-0.nl].

Finally, 020 is always looking for new members to join its vision and improve the lives of our fellow students. You may read into our party's values and learn more about the application process through our website.

Let's use this month as a catalyst for active change, and celebrate diversity all while fighting for equal rights and representation!

Sincerely,
The 020 Team

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