

# BSA at UVA

The Black Student Alliance at the University of Virginia

During the 1969 school year, Black Students for Freedom (BSF) was founded in order to represent the political, academic, and social concerns of the Black community at the University of Virginia. In 1974, BSF was renamed the Black Student Alliance (BSA) and has continued to advance the mission of the organization for the past 50 plus years. From advocating for the establishment of the Office of African American Affairs to, more recently, coming together with other student organizations to stand against racism in Charlottesville, BSA has remained a driving force behind Black history at the University and a cornerstone of countless students' UVA experiences.

I have been blessed enough not only to serve as the President of the Black Student Alliance for the past year, but also to have been a part of the BSA family since my very first semester. BSA maintains eight committees: Political Action, Social Cultural, Academic and Career Development, Leadership Development, Special Events, Communications, Finance, and Membership - where I got my start! Each committee, run by a Chair, Vice-Chair, and group of outstanding students, works tirelessly throughout the year to produce events, programming, and resources for the student body.

This year, BSA has hosted at least one event every week, with immense focus placed on building a tight knit and supportive Black community that represents the diversity of all of our constituents'. These events included collaborations with the Queer Student Union and Asian Student Union on Intersectional Queer Brunches, along with co-sponsorships with DREAMers On Grounds and Political Latinxs United for Movement and Action in Society (PLUMAS) on a Know Your Rights workshop. This Black History Month marked the fiftieth anniversary of BSA's annual Black Culture Week, the second week during the school year, after BSA Welcome Week, where Black Student Alliance hosts a different event every day. These events, which included a Black Owned Potluck, discussion on student activism, and screening of Just Mercy at the Violet Crown, easily made this year's Black Culture Week one to remember. In addition, BSA and University Programs Council hosted one of our largest and most memorable events, Free Cyntoia: A Story of Redemption, which featured guest speaker and author, Cyntoia Brown. Some BSA initiatives that may have been overlooked, but are just as meaningful as those aforementioned, include our Membership Committee's involvement in Rake-A-Thon, study sessions, and resumé workshops that have only helped us push one another to achieve greatness.

Three years ago, the Black Student Alliance welcomed me with open arms and I have since obtained new skills and connections that will undoubtedly last a lifetime. BSA was able to use this year to regroup and strengthen the Black community through both intellectual and social endeavors, but I look forward to seeing the organization rekindle its political roots and expand to new horizons in the near future.

The Black Student Alliance is easily one of the best things to come out of the University of Virginia, not only for me or the Black community, but for the entire University at large. It is hard to say where any of us would be without it.



JaVori Warren, College of Arts and Sciences, Class of 2021,  
Studio Art and Politics, [jw3uj@virginia.edu](mailto:jw3uj@virginia.edu)