The Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture strives to promote racial understanding, build community, and foster an appreciation for and increase knowledge of Black people, history, culture, and vast contributions of people of the African Diaspora.

**HISTORY**

- **1963**
  - The first five Black undergraduates enroll at Duke University

- **1969**
  - Students first call for the creation of a Black Cultural Center

- **1977**
  - Mary Lou Williams becomes Duke's first Artist-in-Residence

- **1983**
  - The Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture is established

**NAMESAKE**

The Center was named to honor jazz great Mary Lou Williams (b. Atlanta, GA 8 May 1910: Durham, NC - 28 May 1981), pianist, composer, teacher, humanitarian, and Duke’s first Artist-in-Residence from 1977 until her death. She is remembered as one whose musical and spiritual contributions were singular and profound.

**VENUE**

The 'Mary Lou', as students affectionately call it, is one of those sweet spots on campus with a vintage luxe cultural aesthetic. In addition to staff offices, there is a gallery, multimedia lending library, conference room, and multipurpose room with a kitchen and media center.

**WHY A BLACK CULTURAL CENTER?**

While there are many good reasons for a Center for Black Culture, six seem to most directly inform what is done at Duke. The Mary Lou Williams Center for Black Culture:

- Offers assistance with identity development
- Assists with leadership skills development and philanthropic sensibilities
- Cultivates an understanding of the importance of community building at Duke and beyond
- Provides an opportunity for cultural exploration, artistic expression and jazz appreciation
- Promotes the production of scholarship and intellectual engagement
- Enriches the entire educational experience
BE SEBA
Symbol of affluence, power, abundance, plenty, togetherness & unity

NEA ONINIM NO SUA A OHU
Symbol of knowledge, life-long education & continued quest for knowledge

WABA AWA
Symbol of hardness, toughness & perseverance

BE EMBRACE.
BE AMBITIOUS.

BE REFLECTIVE.
BE CULTURED.

BE SOCIAL.

BE URBANE.

BE EMPOWERED.

BE EXTRAORDINARY.

BE CONSCIOUS.

WE SEEK TO BE A HUB FOR INFORMATION AND ACTIVITIES RELATED TO BLACK STUDENTS, ALUMNI, AND OTHER BLACK MEMBERS OF THE DUKE COMMUNITY.

We welcome all who seek to engage with and be empowered by a greater understanding of the Black experience.

https://studentaffairs.duke.edu/mlw