

# Augustana Winter Traditions: Non-Christmas Traditions

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# INSIDE AUGUSTANA, OUTSIDE THE NORM: WINTER CELEBRATIONS OUTSIDE OF SWEDISH LUTHERAN TRADITIONS

Presenters: Abigail Carus, Alex LaMendola, Mikaela Ferrera

## Introduction

This project was a collaboration between students and faculty, both current and alumni, to achieve a better understanding of winter traditions which don't fit the typical Augustana mold of Lutheran and Swedish traditions. We focused on the traditions Kwanzaa, Hanukkah, and Our Lady Of Guadalupe in hopes of offering a fuller perspective of the more diverse winter traditions on campus. By interviewing faculty and alumni, we gained an insider's perspective as to why these three holidays/traditions were brought to Augustana College. We mostly explored why they're culturally significant to the students, faculty, and community members who already celebrated the tradition, and to the campus of Augustana as a whole.

## Kwanzaa

After many years of civil unrest at Augustana during the late 60s and early 70s, president Thomas Tredway reached out to, then, graduate student John W. Hildreth asking him to be an advisor for the Black Student Union. In December of 1979, Hildreth came up with the idea to bring Kwanzaa to Augustana to unify the black students on campus and give them a better sense of black community. The event also acted as a means of educating people outside of black culture. Even though it was a one day event, Hildreth conducted in depth research on Kwanzaa and African traditions to prepare and keep the event appropriate. <sup>1</sup> Since Hildreth brought Kwanzaa to Augustana, its popularity has fluctuated based on the civil demands of campus life.



John W. Hildreth is currently a professor of music at Augustana. <sup>2</sup>



Black Student Union Sit-in in President Sorensen's office (1972). <sup>3</sup>



A pamphlet from the first ever Kwanzaa at Augustana (1979).

## Hanukkah

Around 2009, former faculty advisor Margi Rogal decided to transform the Jewish Student Organization of Augustana into Hillel, a nationally recognized Jewish student organization, in an attempt to draw more Jewish students to Augustana. Soon after, the group got involved around campus and tried to educate Augustana's students and faculty on their religion. In 2011, Hillel hosted its first Hanukkah celebration where students and faculty were invited to play traditional Jewish games, color, listen to Klezmer music, and light the Menorah. <sup>4</sup> Ever since Rogal left Augustana, Hanukkah slowly disappeared from campus until very recently. In December of 2017, a newly revived Hillel decided to once again host Hanukkah at Augustana.



Menorah from the first ever Hanukkah at Augustana.



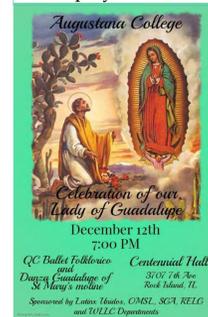
Students play Dreidel at Hanukkah celebration.

## Our Lady Of Guadalupe

Our Lady of Guadalupe is a recent tradition at Augustana, with Greg Aguilar – then director of OMSL – beginning the celebration here in 2012. <sup>5</sup> This tradition began as a way to connect with the Quad Cities' Latino community in a meaningful and spiritual way, and over the years the celebration has adapted to suit the needs of the students participating and attending, with a higher focus on education about the tradition and about the Virgin Mary herself. This tradition has transitioned from being a OMSL event to being put on by Latinos Unidos, with the full transition being implemented in the 2016-2017 academic year under the care of LU president Cindy Morales and LU vice president Lizandra Gomez-Ramirez. <sup>6</sup>



LU actors performing in the play. <sup>7</sup>



Poster for the 2016-2017 school year <sup>8</sup>



Program for the performance <sup>9</sup>



Cast of the play and LU members with La Virgen <sup>10</sup>

## Closing

In conclusion, we have found that Augustana students and faculty have taken action and continue to take action to bring traditions outside of traditional Swedish and Lutheran celebrations, which have been practiced here for decades. The intentions of these events have been to incorporate the growing diversity of campus, unify students of similar religious and cultural backgrounds, and educate the campus as a whole of a diverse range of cultural traditions and celebrations. Although some of these traditions are not as prominent as they once were, we are certain that they will resurge when they are needed, in the same way that they were created at a time when they were needed. Traditions are adaptable and these traditions have grown over time to match the community they are serving.

## Resources Used

1. John W. Hildreth, interview by Mikaela Ferrera, April 17, 2018; Curtis Lawrence, "BSU will host Kwanzaa," *The Observer*, (Rock Island, IL), December 12, 1979, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.
2. "John W. Hildreth," *Augustana College*, April 26, 2018, <https://www.augustana.edu/academics/faculty-directory/john-w-hildreth>.
3. "Black Student Union Sit-in in President Sorensen's office," in C-F03635, 1972, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.
4. Margaret Rogal, interview by Abigail Carus and Mikaela Ferrara, April 23, 2018; Lindsey Hutton, "Jewish Student Organization goes national," *Augustana Observer*, (Rock Island, IL), October 8, 2009, Special Collections, Augustana College, Rock Island, Illinois.
5. Greg Aguilar (Director of Office of Multicultural Student Life, July 2010-Nov 2013), Interviewed by Abigail Carus over the phone, April 26th.
6. Lizandra Gomez-Ramirez (2016/2017 Vice President of Latinos Unidos), Interviewed by Abigail Carus
7. 8. 9. 10. Salazar, Crystal. *Our Lady of Guadalupe*. Latinos Unidos Archives, Augustana College.