

Exploring Black History Near Toyota's U.S. Manufacturing Locations

February 11, 2022

Image not found or type unknown



It's no secret that the U.S. is full of unique stories and history. One of the best ways to uncover these stories can happen on a road trip to a nearby city or across the country.

In this guide, Toyota underscores its commitment to diversity by exploring the significant African American history near the cities its manufacturing plants call home.

1. **San Antonio, TX**

Near Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Texas, [Ellis Alley](#), which was developed in the late 1860s and '70s, is a 0.7-acre enclave of six buildings that were the first African American settlement in San Antonio. Guests can walk the 25-foot-wide properties planted with live oaks and historic lampposts and visit 214 Chestnut St. to see the painted tile mural "Founding Mothers" by Jacqui Dorsey.

Visitors will also find the **Samuel and Lilian Sutton Home** nearby. The single-story ranch-style home built in 1896 is where prominent African Americans barred from downtown hotels stayed until the end of segregation. Some famous guests included Booker T. Washington, George Washington Carver and W.E.B. Du Bois.

2. **Plano, TX**

Road-trippers can take a short drive from Toyota Motor North America Headquarters in Plano to Dallas to visit the [African American Museum](#), which is sponsored by Toyota, founded in 1974 by Dr. Harry Robinson, who still serves as director and chief executive officer. The museum boasts an impressive collection of more than 150 paintings and sculptures and more than 200 African artifacts, as well as archival collections of photographs, documents, and other items that highlight the history and culture of African Americans in Texas and across the country.

3. **Buffalo, WV**

About an hour southwest of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, West Virginia in Buffalo is Huntington where visitors will find the [Dr. Carter G. Woodson Statue](#), erected in 1995. Woodson, the "Father of Black History," was the second African American to graduate with a Ph.D. from Harvard University (after W.E.B. Du Bois); he founded Negro History Week in 1926, which later expanded to Black History Month.

A few hours south of Buffalo, in Kimball, West Virginia, the [World War I Memorial](#) stands. It's a Classical Revival-style building constructed to honor African American veterans of World War I. Guests can take a tour and peruse the trophy room, with its wartime memorabilia and plaques dedicated to Black veterans.

4. **Troy, MO**

It's an hour drive from Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Missouri in Troy to St. Louis where visitors will find the [National Blues Museum](#), an institution dedicated to celebrating the genre, which originated in the Deep South by African Americans. Blues later laid the groundwork for virtually every other genre of American music, including country, rock 'n' roll and jazz.

Once in the Gateway City, guests can meander through the **George Washington Carver Garden** at the [Missouri Botanical Garden](#), a 1.5-acre agricultural landscape with a reflecting pool and a life-size bronze statue of Carver by Tina Allen.

5. **Jackson, TN**

Just an hour west of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Tennessee in Jackson is Henning where visitors will find Alex Haley's boyhood home — now the [Alex Haley Museum and Interpretive Center](#). It's the place where

the famed author of “Roots: The Saga of an American Family” and “The Autobiography of Malcolm X” was born, raised and buried, and, inside, the home is restored to look as it did in 1921, when Haley was born.

A must-stop on any Black history road trip is the [National Civil Rights Museum](#) in Memphis, Tennessee, an hour and a half southwest of Jackson. The museum sits on four acres and is built around what used to be the Lorraine Motel where Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. was assassinated in 1968. Historical exhibits lead visitors on a civil rights journey from the 17th century United States to the present.

Also in Memphis, is the [Slave Haven Underground Railroad Museum](#), which was once a stop on the Underground Railroad itself. Guests are invited to descend into the dark chambers beneath the museum where enslaved people once hid and experience a small piece of the journey so many Black people took toward freedom.

And, about two hours in the opposite direction, in Nashville, Tennessee, is the [National Museum of African American Music](#). Guests can learn more about the the many music genres created, influenced, and inspired by African Americans. The museum’s exhibits and collections share the story of the American soundtrack by integrating history and interactive technology to bring the musicians of the past into the present.

6. Huntsville, AL

Home to both Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Alabama and Mazda Toyota Manufacturing, Huntsville was the site of significant civil rights action. In 1962, Dr. Sonnie Hereford III and Dr. John Cashin planned a sit-in that made national news and helped lead to the desegregation of Huntsville’s school system — the first to do so in the state. Learn about that moment in Huntsville’s civil rights history and much more by taking the [SceneThat Civil Rights Walking Tour](#), which starts in the Medical District and ends along the Church Street Corridor.

Also in Huntsville, visitors will find [Councill High Memorial Park](#), which sits at the location of the city’s first public school for African Americans. It was founded by Dr. William H. Councill, who was also the founder of Alabama’s A&M University, a historically Black, land-grant university in the city. Less than 10 minutes’ away from the park sits the [Buffalo Soldiers’ Memorial](#), which commemorates the two cavalry and two infantry regiments made up of African American soldiers who served in the United States Army following the Civil War.

About an hour and a half from Huntsville is Birmingham where visitors can find the famous [Birmingham Civil Rights District](#) (half of which is now a U.S. national monument). The district is home to the [Birmingham Civil Rights Institute](#), a museum that depicts the history of the Civil Rights Movement, the [16th Street Baptist Church](#), a site that was tragically bombed by the Ku Klux Klan in 1963 and has since become a National Historic Landmark, and the **Carver Theatre**, which features the Alabama Jazz Hall of Fame.

7. Georgetown, KY

In Frankfort, Kentucky lies the **Green Hill Cemetery**, about 25 minutes west of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Kentucky in Georgetown. The cemetery is home to a 10-foot-tall monument dedicated to Kentucky’s United States Colored Troops (USCTs). The monument names 140 USCTs from Kentucky who battled Confederate troops and helped win the Civil War.

About an hour’s drive west of TMMK lands tourists in Louisville where the [Roots 101 African American Museum](#) resides. Visitors can experience a combination of cultural, historical and artistic exhibits that illustrate the achievements of African Americans and participate in educational activities for the whole family.

A little over an hour east of Georgetown, in Maysville, visitors will find the [Birthplace Cabin of Charles Young](#), who was the first African American colonel in the U.S. Army.

8. Blue Springs, MS

It's under an hour's drive west of Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Mississippi in Blue Springs to Oxford where the University of Mississippi hosts the [Center for the Study of Southern Culture](#), an educational institution with exhibits depicting the culture and folklore of the American South.

A bit further west of Blue Springs in Clarksdale, home of blues greats like Muddy Waters and Robert Johnson, is the [Delta Blues Museum](#). Inside the museum, visitors will find Muddy Waters' cabin, which was taken apart and reconstructed on the premises, as well as permanent and rotating exhibits that celebrate the land where blues was born.

A three-hour drive south — that's well worth it — brings road trippers to Jackson, Mississippi where the [Mississippi Civil Rights Museum](#) (MCRM) is located. The MCRM is sponsored by Toyota and includes a Toyota Gallery which contains seven thematic galleries encircling a central gallery. The eight interactive galleries detail Black Mississippians' fight for equality, and at the center of the galleries is the "This Little Light of Mine" space where a sculpture at the heart of the room glows and music plays louder with every additional visitor who gathers near it.

9. Princeton, IN

In Princeton, which is home to Toyota Motor Manufacturing, Indiana, sits [Lyles Station](#), an early Black rural settlement named after one of its first settlers, Joshua Lyles. Guests are invited to visit the **Lyles Consolidated School**, which today, is a living history museum and community center where visitors can experience what life was like in a school room from the late 19th to early 20th centuries. In 1999, the former school was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

10. Long Beach, CA

In Los Angeles, just 25 miles north of the TABC, Inc. plant in Long Beach, is the little-known [African American Firefighters Museum](#) where visitors can learn the long history of African American firefighters in Southern California. Among other resources for Black history in LA is the [California African American Museum](#), which includes a permanent collection of over 5,000 objects from the 1800s to today. Drivers can complete their trips at [Eso Won Books](#), a Black-owned independent bookstore that has been serving the community since 1987 and was awarded 2021's Bookstore of the Year by Publisher's Weekly.

