

# African American Collaborative Celebrates 20 Years at Toyota

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**The History of the African American Collaborative**

The African American Collaborative (AAC) is celebrating a huge milestone: 20 years strong as a Toyota business partnering group (BPG) that highlights inclusion, connections, and engagement.

Since launching in 2002 in Erlanger, Kentucky, the AAC now has 13 chapters and counting in the U.S. with more than 10,000 members.

Key founders who still work for the company include Stacey Turner-Sweet, Katrina Jones Torri Logan, Myron Brown and Phil Ryan.

According to Jovonda Williams, chair for the AAC's North American Advisory Council, the group's mission has remained the same over the years: to continuously recruit, develop and retain African American talent, while also bridging the gap between African American communities and the company through community outreach.

The AAC's vision is to ensure African American team members are represented and recognized at all levels of the company and serve as key contributors to the success of Toyota.



***Symposium Posing*** — *The African American Collaborative was the first BPG at Toyota to host an annual symposium and development conference. They are hosted every other year now.*

Some goals of the AAC over the years have been to:

- Ensure continued alignment to the AAC's mission and vision.
- Enhance development activities for AAC leaders, members and team members who can benefit from the activities.

- Engage local communities through outreach activities that build relationships and affinity with Toyota's brand.
- Encourage growth in participation for AAC membership events and relevant company-wide events through effective planning and communication.

Since 2002, several big initiatives have taken place thanks to the work of AAC members. They include:

- Working with Diversity + Inclusion to create the first business partnering group strategy.
- Partnering with local communities to connect and make an impact, including the "Adopt a Family" and "Hope" initiatives that help community members in need.
- Organizing a symposium and development conference, which was the first of its kind for any Toyota BPG and is held every other year.
- Launching its Tutormate program, where members tutor first grade students for 30 minutes a week. Since the launch in 2018, they've tutored more than 170 students and have seen some students rise four reading levels.
- Offering mentorship sessions and experience maps to allow team members to showcase who they are professionally and personally, building relationships throughout the company.



***Black History Month Celebration*** — *A group of AAC members poses for a picture during Black History Month.*

The AAC has also helped Toyota team members celebrate MLK Day and Black History Month each year with special events and messages, from “Together, We Can’t Wait” to this year’s theme “AAC Mendenhall: Past, Present, Future.”

At one past event, the AAC had Dr. Bernice King, Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.’s daughter, as the keynote speaker. More than 2,000 team members attended.

## **The Big 20<sup>th</sup> Celebration**

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, the AAC was unable to celebrate its 20<sup>th</sup> anniversary in person in 2022, so leaders opted to hold a big event in April 2023 instead.

The event will focus on the past, present and future of the AAC.

Those plans include a leadership luncheon, founders panel, celebration event, special guest speaker Michael Eric Dyson, and a networking reception.