

# Celebrating Black History Month: Toyota and Lexus Employees Share Their Reflections

February 24, 2023

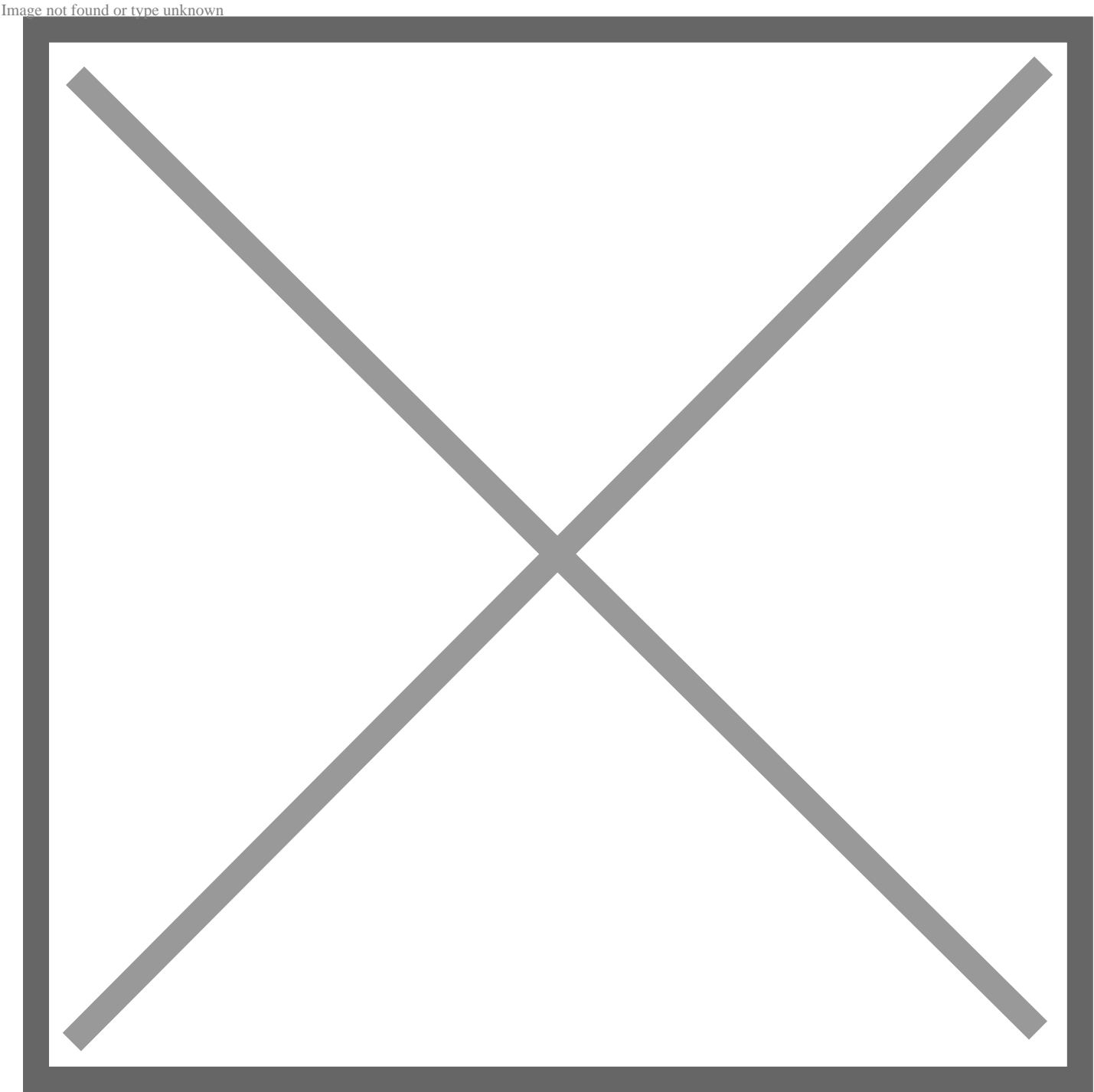
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Black History Month is observed in the United States throughout the month of February and, this year, six Toyota and Lexus employees share what the annual observance means to them.

These individuals reflect on how diversity is celebrated at their employer of choice and how business partnering groups (BPGs) like the African American Collaborative (AAC) help to create welcoming spaces where employees can feel seen, heard, and supported all year long.

Here’s a spotlight on their perspectives:



## **Driving Diversity at Every Turn**

Jovonda Williams started her career with Toyota as part of the New College Graduate rotational program where she worked in the stamping department at the Kentucky manufacturing plant. Today, Williams is a senior engineer of Quality Control, Toyota Motor Manufacturing Kentucky (TMMK) and the AAC North American Advisory Council (NAAC) Chairperson.

In her role as the AAC chairperson, she is most proud of the group's symposium and virtual leadership conference created to help educate and inform members about the company.

“Representation at all levels of the company is a priority and you can see the strategic moves being made to make sure candidates are ready and capable to handle the job,” Williams shared. “Our mission is to continuously recruit, develop, and retain African American talent, while also bridging the gap between African American communities and the corporation through community outreach.”



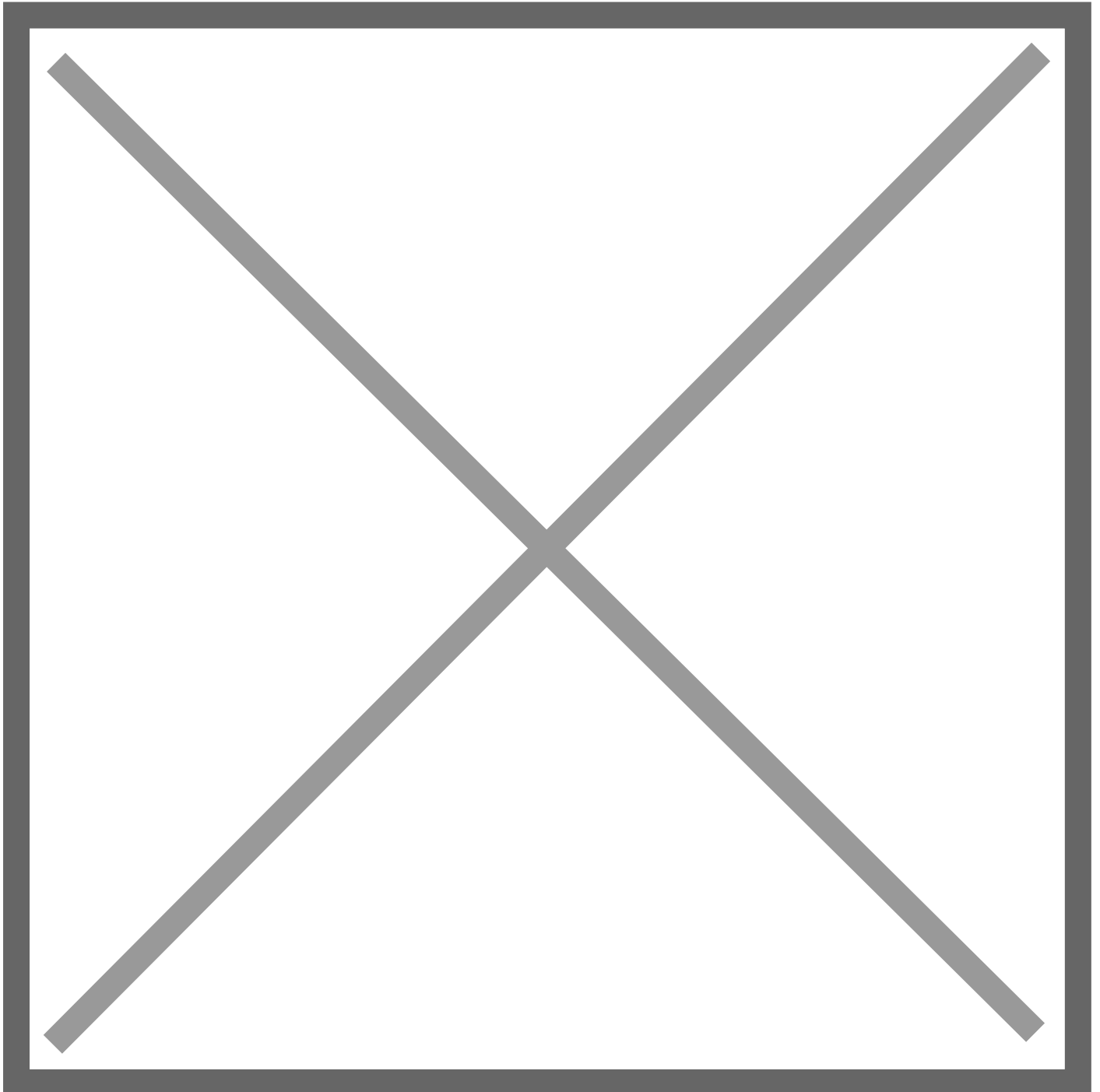
### **Moving Conversations Forward**

Brandon Mosley joined Toyota as a management trainee more than 25 years ago. Brandon has served in various roles and is currently a manager in Dealer Advertising and Media?for Lexus Marketing.

“My favorite part about being a member of AAC is the fact that AAC is very thoughtful and deliberate with subject matter covered at forums throughout the year,” he says. “I feel that AAC shines a strong light on the community and is welcoming to other groups of people.”

For Mosley, Black History Month is a special time to reflect on accomplishments made by African Americans.

“Black history month means amplifying the successes and achievements of African Americans while bringing to surface the challenges endured throughout history that were marginalized or swept under a rug,” says Mosley. “We as a people need to know the great things done by our ancestors and that we can and should leverage our abilities to build up our communities to thrive. Understanding the historic challenges that haunt Black communities today can help others see that there is a true need for equity and therefore collectively find resolutions to move our country forward.”



## **Common Core**

Mia Phillips has spent more than three decades at Toyota — the last three years at Lexus. During her time with the company, Phillips, a senior manager at Lexus Advertising & Media, has served as AAC chair and is an active member. It's been a fruitful journey, she says, and a joy and honor to witness her counterparts excel.

“Seeing team members at all levels of experience and tenure, lead and engage with [internal] audiences and the Black Community, at large. AAC's outreach and support of the communities where [our] offices are located is commendable,” she says.

Phillips also agrees with Toyota's fundamental principles.

“At its core, the values on which the company has been built align with my own — respect for people and continuous improvement,” she says.



## **Representation Matters**

For 20 plus years, Bruce Hines has worked at Toyota across four regional field organizations, two of which were Lexus field offices. With a wide perspective of the organization and now a manager at Lexus Racing & Motorsports, the AAC member underscores the importance of diversity.

“Diversity in leadership is important for a myriad of reasons. First and foremost, having diversity in leadership leads to a greater depth in thought, understanding, and experiences. Employees and prospective employees want the opportunity to relate, and when you have diverse leadership, it provides that sense of connectivity and that relational ability,” Hines says. “Additionally, diversity in leadership lends itself to different perspectives and ideas which can result in innovation and new opportunities. Overall, diversity in leadership leads to greater awareness which can result in positive change in the organization.”

Hines added, “I’m proud to work at Toyota because of the PEOPLE. And lastly, I feel proud to be a part of an organization that CARES – not only about creating the best products and services but CARING about the people who are a part of these products!”





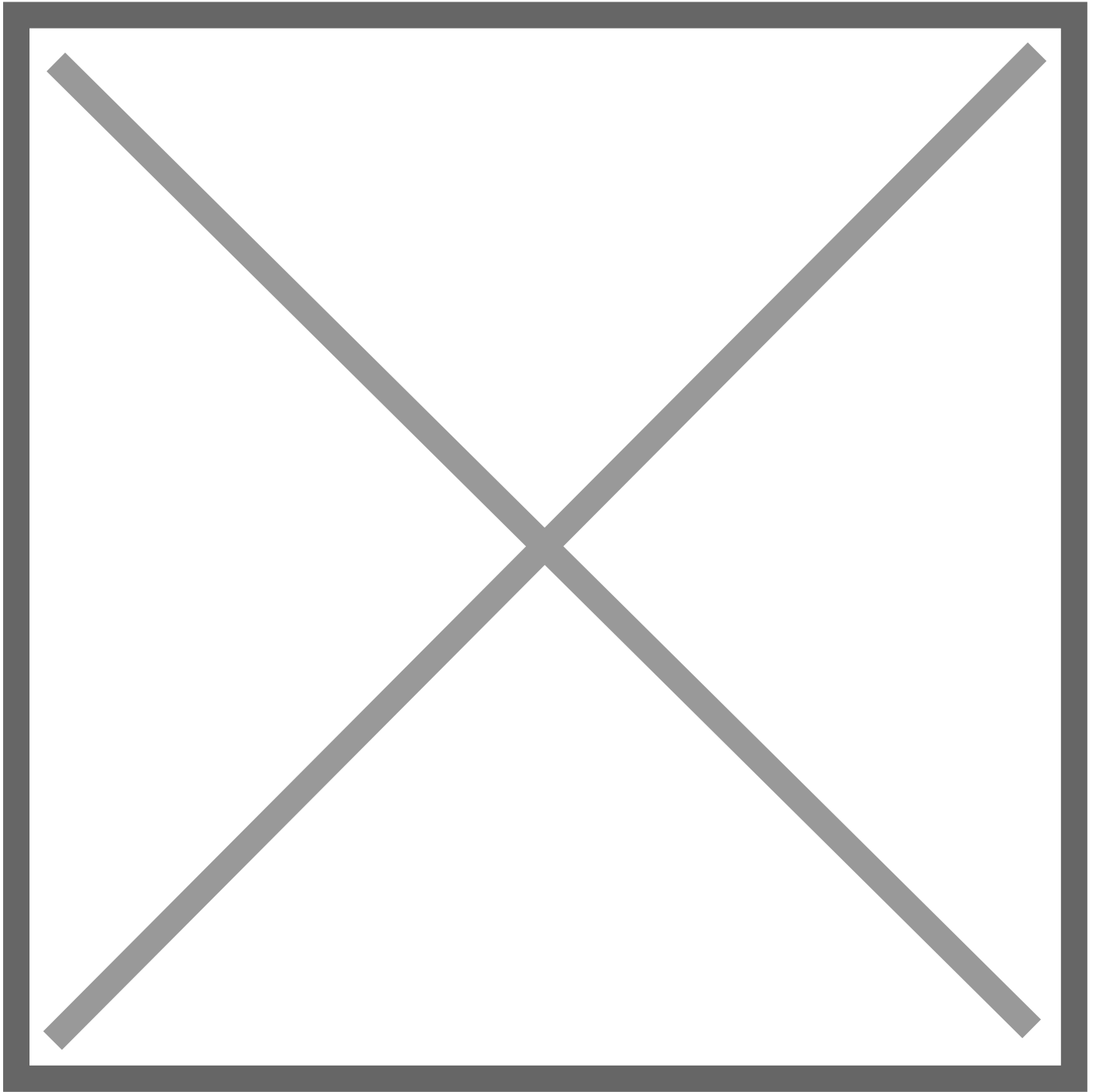
## **Accelerating Growth**

When Belva Bell started her career with Toyota in 2017, she joined as Diversity and Inclusion (D+I) education analyst at the Plano headquarters. Her job was to interact with and support each of the BPGs to help drive team member engagement.

“It’s been an amazing journey seeing how Toyota sets new standards for innovation and quality while also making a positive impact on our teams, communities, and the environment,” she says.

Bell agrees that Black History Month is a reminder that we can all achieve great things.

“I’m inspired by those who came before me, and I’m thankful for the opportunities that come with living in a diverse and inclusive society. So, let’s take this month to honor our history, recognize our differences and make sure everyone has the same access to opportunity. Here’s to celebrating Black History Month,” Bell says.



**Sparking Initiative**

Since 2007, Nicole J. Fortune has worked in various financial roles at Toyota. In addition to her professional journey with the company, Fortune has also served as an AAC member.

“I had the privilege of attending one of the symposiums and was impressed by their focus on development and the support the AAC receives with various allies,” says Fortune, the national manager of Toyota Financial Services and Lexus Financial Services Customer Care. “Every event I have ever attended was very intentionally focused on development, thought-provoking and there were always one or two tangible items that I could take away. The AAC represents excellence to me, and it shows in everything they do.”

Fortune concluded that Black History Month is also an opportunity to remember some of her heroes.

“Black History Month for me is a remembrance and appreciation of the amazing contributions of my heroes that have paved the way for our Civil Rights such as Dr. Martin Luther King and Rosa Parks, the inventors of the mailbox (Phillip Downing), the traffic light (Garrett Morgan), and the clothes dryer (George T. Sampson), those who excelled in business, such as Booker T. Washington, Reginal F. Lewis, John H. Johnson, and much more,” she says.

“It is during this month of remembrance that I am reminded of the greatness of my culture and my duty to continue the legacy of those who paved the way for my success. It also serves as a reminder that my life is not my own, but to be shared in service to others.”