



bcwAAER

ENGAGING THE **BLACK** COMMUNITY

2023 CLIENT GUIDE



WHAT HAPPENS AT THE INTERSECTION OF RACE AND ONE'S EXPERIENCE AS A MEMBER OF THE BLACK COMMUNITY?

While the experience of being Black in America varies tremendously, there are shared cultural factors that play a role in building community and creating opportunities for Black Americans to advance in the workplace and beyond. These shared cultural experiences — family connections, personal values, religious and spiritual networks — are enriching and can be great sources of strength and support in the Black community.

However, another part of the Black American experience is navigating the racism, discrimination and inequities that have long plagued Black communities. In fact, the nationwide theme for Black History Month 2023 was the Black Resistance, which explored how Black Americans have resisted historic and ongoing oppression, in all forms, to achieve equity and equality. From Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. to Ida B. Wells, Jackie Robinson to Carter G. Woodson, resistance has taken many forms over the decades, and it continues to inspire the movements we see today.

Organizations that support the Black community can learn from pivotal moments in time where Black Americans faced adversity, discrimination, and pain, and used the Black Resistance to create change. The March on Washington led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. and the global movement surrounding the death of George Floyd were key moments (among many others) where not only Black Americans, but all people came together and made their voices heard in protest.

This year, the directive for brands and corporations to continue supporting the Black community remains paramount from every corner of country. In the wake of Black Lives Matter, brands and corporations sought to illustrate their commitment to diversity, equity and inclusion. They did this by promising various actions including making hiring practices more equitable, implementing vendor diversification, investing in DE&I across the organizations, and elevating Black employees into leadership roles. Now, three years later, it's clear not all of these promises were sincere.

While U.S. companies pledged \$50 billion toward racial equity, only \$250 million has been spent toward that specific initiative, according to the firm [Creative Investment Research](#). Brands and corporations must shift from making their DE&I efforts performative to sustainable in order to build long-term relationships with the Black community that can make a meaningful impact. Performance activism is a real and growing problem that is unhelpful at best and at worst detrimental to Black and minority communities. Brand and organizations must do more than plan programming around Black History Month and Juneteenth; they must actually make commitments that propel the Black community and level the playing field of inequity in America. The commitment must be year-round and embedded across the organization, not just during a calendar moment.

It is imperative to amplify the contributions of the Black community across every sector – from activists, policy makers, educators, pioneers, leaders, creators, artists, scientists and more. Black history is a vital part of American history, and as such, the events and people represented in the past will continue to inspire people now and in the future. Brands and corporations must acknowledge this community in strategy development and recognize their contributions to our country.

While the Black community views messages of brand solidarity as important, they are more receptive to organizations that operate with genuine intention and measurable action to impact the wider Black community. As brands and corporations engage the Black community, remember to address the significant issues affecting Black Americans today while celebrating achievements from the community's past. When communication is delivered with intent, originating with purposeful action, brands and corporations will show authentic support and position themselves to develop genuine and long-lasting relationships with the Black community.



DRIVING SUCCESS

3-6-5 DAYS A YEAR

Successful brands and corporations will be the ones that commit to a long-term strategy and go beyond specific moments in time to establish stakeholder trust, brand loyalty and employee engagement from Black communities. While building a diverse and inclusive workforce is core to most business strategies, demonstrating action to create more equitable opportunities for Black people year-round will be critical.

To drive long-term success, brands and corporations should include the following aspects in their strategic communications and organizational strategy to successfully engage the Black community:

- Include Black voices at the table, always
- Acknowledge where your organization is in its DE&I journey
- Increase Black representation in content
- Understand solidarity is not a trend
- Commit beyond Black History Month
- Engage Black audiences in an honest, authentic manner

All of this must be done in an authentic manner that speaks to the Black community and their passion points. According to Nielsen data, Black consumers are much more likely to shop where their dollars count in terms of supporting causes such as racial injustice, equality and food insecurity. Brands that reach and relate to these consumers in an authentic way will convert these consumers into advocates.

This is especially true today, when global brands and corporations play an essential role in consumers' eyes and overall experience. Black people will need to understand how the brands they choose and the companies they work for will support the community for the long-term, beyond black squares of solidarity on Instagram and using #BlackLivesMatter hashtags externally. This requires your organization to go beyond Black History Month and Juneteenth, to understand that solidarity is not a trend but a 365-day commitment to its Black consumers and stakeholders.



ENGAGING BLACK MEDIA

As brands and corporations continue to build relationships with the Black community, it's important to remember the role of Black media within the community and how these outlets shape the Black experience in America. Brands and organizations must build relationships with the Black reporters and producers who are telling stories across media to reach, educate and inform the Black community.

To get your organizations started, the BCW African American Employee Resource (AAER) Group has identified the top 30 Black reporters to pitch, engage and build relationships with this year and beyond.



ABC News: Danielle Long, Entertainment Writer and Producer

AfroTech: Samantha Dorisca, Editor

All Hip Hop: Chuck Creekmur, CEO & Founder

Allure: Gabi Thorne, Associate News Editor

Associated Press: Aaron L. Morrison, National Writer, Race & Ethnicity

Black Enterprise: Jeff McKinney, Contributing Writer

Blavity: Tomas Kassahun, Contributing Writer

Bloomberg: Brentin Mock, News Editor and Writer for Bloomberg CityLab

CBS News: Bonita Sostre, Booking Producer

Complex: Jordan Rose, Music Writer

Essence Magazine: Keyaira Boone, Contributing Writer

Fashionista.com: Andrea Bossi, Beauty & Fashion Writer

Forbes: Janice Gassam Asare, Contributing Writer

Forbes The Culture: Yolando Baruch, Contributing Writer

Fortune: Ruth Umoh, Editor

Fortune RACEAhead: Ellen McGirt, Senior Editor

Good Morning America: Eric Jones, Senior Producer, Race & Culture

HelloBeautiful: Shamika Samuels, Managing Editor

HipHopDX: Jerry Barrow, Head of Content

INSIDER: Keyaira Kelly, Health Editor

Men's Health: Keith Nelson, Senior Entertainment Editor

MSNBC: Malcolm Thomas, Lead Booking Producer, SYMONE

NBC BLK: Char Adams, Race Writer

The Daily Flash: James Alexander, Booking Producer, KSA Entertainment

The Cut: Asia Milia Ware, Lifestyle and Culture Writer

The New York Times: Jordyn Holman, Business Reporter

The Wall Street Journal: Imani Moise, Personal Economics Reporter

The Washington Post: Tracy Jan, Deputy Health and Science Editor

Today.com: Candice Williams, Senior Weekend Editor

Urban Magazine: B'en Moody, Publisher

BCW AAER can facilitate client introductions with any of the above media outlets to help meet your brand and corporations' communication objectives in the year ahead.

KEY MOMENTS IN THE BLACK COMMUNITY

Engaging the Black community year-round enables brands and corporations to show up in the places and spaces that matter most to the Black consumer and Black stakeholder. The below includes holiday and cultural moments that are relevant to the Black experience from Black History Month to Juneteenth, the Atlanta Black PRIDE Weekend and Curlfest, and many more.

Beyond holidays and cultural moments, a robust calendar of upcoming conferences and events has been developed to help brands and corporations determine their investments in the year ahead. All conferences are culturally relevant to the Black community, such as the Black Enterprise Women of Power Summit and Ebony Power 100. In addition to conferences such as the Bloomberg Equality Summit and the Forbes Power Women Summit which have recently over-indexed on amplifying Black and minority voices to address Corporate America's DE&I challenges.

As a result, it's imperative for brands and corporations to review these key moments holistically and determine where to make investments for executive visibility and thought leadership, in addition to general relationship building with Black consumers and stakeholders to move the needle in the Black community.

HOLIDAYS & CULTURAL MOMENTS:

Q1 -

- [Hoorae Pop-Up Events](#) - March
- [Blackout Weekend](#) - March 1-12th

Q2 -

- [National Black Arts Festival](#) - May
- [Afro Latino Festival](#) - June
- [American Black Film Festival](#) - June 14-18th
- [Juneteenth](#) - June 19th

Q3 -

- [National Minority Mental Health Awareness Month](#) - July
- [Broccoli City Festival](#) - July 15-16th
- [Black Business Month](#) - August
- [International Day for People of African Descent](#) - August 31st
- [Atlanta Black PRIDE Weekend](#) - September
- [CurlFest](#) - September
- [Southern Heritage Classic Cultural Celebration](#) - September 7-9th
- [Black Women's Equal Pay Day](#) - September 21st
- [A3C Festival](#) - September 28-30th
- [HBCU Homecoming](#) - October

Q4 -

- [AFROPUNK](#) - November
- [Kwanzaa](#) - December 26th-January 1st

KEY CONFERENCES & EVENTS:

Q1 -

- [PowerToFly's Diversity Reboot Conference](#) - March 6-10th
- [Black Enterprise Women of Power Summit](#) - March 9th
- [Simmon's Institute Women's Leadership Conference](#) - March 14th
- [The Wall Street Journal's Women in the Workplace Forum](#) - March 21st
- [Bloomberg Equality Summit](#) - March 22-23rd

Q2 -

- [Executive Leadership Council \(ELC\) The Power of Women at Work](#) - April 5th
- [D&I Leaders Global Forum](#) - May 16-17th
- [ICAN's Women's Leadership Conference](#) - May 17th
- [Black Women Talk Tech: Roadmap to Billions Conference](#) - May 18-20th
- [Render ATL Technology Conference](#) - May 31st-June 2nd
- [National Coalition of 100 Black Women Conference](#) - June
- [#HIREBLACK Summit](#) - June

Q3 -

- [Essence Festival](#) - June 29th to July 3rd
- [ELC Women's Leadership Forum](#) - July
- [ColorComm 8th Annual Conference](#) - July 26th
- [Martha's Vineyard African American Film Festival \(MVAAFF\)](#) - August 4-12th
- [Ebony's Power 100 Gala](#) - September
- [Revolt Summit](#) - September
- [Power Rising Summit](#) - September
- [Forbes Power Women's Summit](#) - September
- [National Black MBA Association](#) - September 12-16th
- [Grace Hopper Celebration](#) - September 26-29th

Q4 -

- [Fortune's Most Powerful Women Summit](#) - October 9-11th
- [Black Professionals Summit](#) - November
- [AFROTECH Conference](#) - November 1-5th

Reviewer's Note: Conferences are listed by date based on information that is publicly available. Conferences without a specific date are listed based on when the events occurred last year and/or typically occur within the year.

HOW BCW CAN HELP

Communication with intent, originating from purposeful action, is fundamental to showing support, and those who do this right will be able to develop genuine and long-lasting relationships with the Black community.

BCW recommends a year-round approach based on four pillars:

UNDERSTAND AMERICA IS NOW MAJORITY MINORITY.

The U.S. 2020 Census demographics show that we are shifting to an entirely new America, an entirely new General Market, one that isn't accounted for in current approaches to multicultural marketing and one that is inherently culturally diverse and now considered **Polycultural**. To navigate this landscape, companies must make a renewed, continuous effort to understand culture and how it affects everything from your frontline employees to your board of directors in the C-suite.

CONDUCT 3-6-5 ENGAGEMENT WITH THE BLACK COMMUNITY.

Showing a commitment to the community should start with a strong stance around how your organization's business strategy is directly tied to diversity and inclusion, and how that flows throughout every aspect of your business throughout the year. Campaigns that do best are those rooted in long-term allyship. If your commitments are meaningful and real, it will be easy to show your accomplishments

AMPLIFY INTERSECTIONAL BLACK VOICES.

Diverse voices are integral to any engagement. By championing those who live at the intersections of overlapping systems of privilege and oppression, companies and brands can ensure they are advocating for Black voices that are often disproportionately impacted by societal inequalities. Go beyond Black History Month and tell Black stories throughout the year, from intersectional LGBTQ+ stories during Pride Month to Afro-Latina stories in Hispanic Heritage Month.

BUILD THIRD-PARTY CREDIBILITY THROUGH STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS.

Companies taking steps to engage the Black community long-term should consider partnering with groups that are driving change, such as the following:

- [Black Youth Project 100](#)
- [National Black Justice Coalition](#)
- [National Association for the Advancement of Colored People](#)
- [The National Coalition of Black Civic Participation](#)
- [The Social Change Fund United](#)
- [Thurgood Marshall College Fund](#)

For more information and best practices to engage today's Black consumers and stakeholders, please reach out to the following:

- **BCW AAER:** BCW-AAERLeads@bcw-global.com
- **BCW's Polycultural Consulting Team:** Polycultural@bcw-global.com
- **DE&I Consulting:** Carol.Watson@bcw-global.com

