

African American Footwear Forum Reimagined as Black Footwear Forum – Advisory Committee Announced

Forum will continue to foster connectivity, support, and engagement for black footwear industry professionals

Today, the Footwear Distributors and Retailers of America (FDRA) and PENSOLE Lewis College of Business & Design, cofounders of the African American Footwear Forum (AAFF), announced the rebranding of the AAFF to the Black Footwear Forum (BFF) effective immediately. The new name will strengthen and better represent the thousands of black footwear professionals and employees who work, thrive, and create in the footwear industry today.

In addition, the Black Footwear Forum announced the formation of a new BFF Advisory Committee that will provide invaluable guidance and expertise for the organization going forward. The committee members, outlined below, will direct the BFF in issues of community engagement, education, networking, in-person events, and the soon-to-be-established regional BFF chapters slated to take shape this year in key cities nationwide.

BLACK FOOTWEAR FORUM COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Brandis Russell, *Converse*

Dr. D'Wayne Edwards,

PENSOLE Lewis College of Business & Design

Portia Blunt, *Reebok*

David Ballin, *Puma*

LaShae Boone-McCray, *RG Barry Brands*

Jazerai Allen-Lord, Founder, *True to Size Agency*

Kris Wright, *NIKE*

Darla Pires DeGrace, *DeGrace Group Consulting*

Dace Graham, *Target*

Sabria Butler, *FDRA*

“Since the organization’s inception in February 2019, the Black Footwear Forum has served as the key platform for connecting black professionals as they advance the footwear industry.” said Converse executive and FDRA board member Brandis Russell. “As we rebrand and with the establishment of this committee, I am excited to continue our work together in service to those in our dynamic community who drive creativity, architect new product expressions and bring joy to consumers all over the world.”

“This announcement today is the natural next step in the evolution of this vitally important organization.” offered PENSOLE Lewis College of Business & Design President Dr. D'Wayne Edwards. He added “There is much work that still needs to be done for our industry to continue to thrive and succeed and the BFF will play an important role in ensuring that happens. I look forward to strengthening and supporting black and brown footwear employees through the BFF knowing that PENSOLE Lewis will be there every step of the way.”

“The history of the BFF has been one of empowerment, friendship, and action.” said FDRA President and CEO Matt Priest “I am deeply honored that FDRA will continue to play a role in reinforcing the amazing work of the Black Footwear Forum and supporting so many upcoming initiatives that we have in the works. My message to our industry is ‘stay tuned!’”

About FDRA: FDRA is the footwear industry’s voice in Washington. It represents and advocates for nearly 500 companies and brands worldwide, or 95% of total U.S. footwear sales, making it America’s largest and most respected footwear trade association.