



Culture is Currency: Mark Your Calendars for the 2023 Annual Black Footwear Forum in Detroit

The Black Footwear Forum is thrilled to announce its highly anticipated annual event, set to take place September 21–24, 2023, at the Pensole Lewis College of Business & Design (PLC) in Detroit, MI.

This year's forum promises to be an extraordinary gathering, bringing together industry professionals, entrepreneurs, thought leaders, and footwear enthusiasts to celebrate excellence, foster collaboration, and empower the black footwear community.

Founded by the Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America (FDRA) and Pensole Lewis College of Business & Design (PLC) in 2019, the Black Footwear Forum (BFF), has consistently worked to promote diversity, inclusivity, and opportunities within the footwear industry. With each passing year, the forum has grown in size, scope, and influence, solidifying its position as a pivotal platform for change and advancement within the black footwear community.

Under the theme of "Culture is Currency," the 2023 national forum will feature a dynamic lineup of keynote speakers, panel discussions, workshops, and networking opportunities, showcasing the very best of industry leaders, designers, and emerging talent. Through engaging sessions and interactive workshops, participants will have the chance to exchange ideas, learn from industry experts, and gain practical knowledge that will drive personal and professional growth, all while forging lasting connections.

With three full days of programming, the national event promises to be an enriching and inspiring experience for all who attend.

"Last year, BFF brought together the largest collection, little over 400, of the industry's top Black creative legends, veterans and rising stars, to Detroit for 3 days of inspiration, education, networking and fellowship," said PLC President, Dr. D'Wayne Edwards. *"This year we are looking to continue to elevate the BFF community so they know knowledge is our currency and we are the culture of this industry."*

"We are incredibly excited about the National Black Footwear Forum 2023," said Matt Priest, FDRA President & CEO. *"This year's forum will celebrate the achievements of black professionals, entrepreneurs, and designers while providing a supportive platform for collaboration and growth. We believe that by coming together, we can build a stronger, more diverse, and inclusive footwear industry for the future."*

The 2023 Annual Black Footwear Forum (BFF) in Detroit is a free event thanks to corporate partners including adidas, Amazon Music, Bacardi, The Athlete's Foot, Caleres, Designer Brands, NIKE, Puma, Rack Room Shoes, RG Barry Brands, and Wolverine Worldwide.

Registration is now open, and sponsorship opportunities are available for companies wishing to support this groundbreaking event. For more information and updates for the National Black Footwear Forum 2023, please visit blackfootwearforum.com.

To support the Black Footwear Forum and work alongside this program, please contact Sabria Butler at sbutler@fdra.org or Dion Walcott at walcott@pensole.com. Through your partnership with the Black Footwear Forum, you will have the opportunity to be a part of our efforts to empower and support black employees in the footwear industry. Your support will also provide you with valuable benefits such as visibility and exposure at our event and on our podcast, networking opportunities with industry leaders, and access to essential resources and information. We hope you will join us in our mission to increase diversity and equity within the footwear industry. Visit blackfootwearforum.com for more details.



About the Black Footwear Forum: The Black Footwear Forum (BFF) is a program managed in partnership with the Footwear Distributors & Retailers of America (FDRA) and the Pensole Lewis College of Business & Design (PLC). The forum seeks to enhance access, education, and awareness to increase opportunities for Black professionals to influence, lead, and impact the global footwear industry and consumer culture. The forum is intentional in its efforts to make footwear an increasingly diverse industry, one that not only caters to Black consumers but is also well-represented by Black voices and leadership. Learn more: blackfootwearforum.com.

About Pensole Lewis College of Business & Design (PLC): Pensole Lewis College of Business & Design (PLC) is the nation's first-ever Historically Black College/University focused on design. Under the direction of Dr. D'Wayne Edwards, who is also the founder of PENSOLE Design Academy, PLC is the pipeline HBCU for career education and professional development in the product creation industry. We are the culture's creative Northstar, lighting the way forward to new career pathways. As the first HBCU to reopen after closing, we believe in carrying the vision of PENSOLE Academy and the legacy of Lewis College of Business into a better future led by those who prepare for it. In May of 2022, Pensole Lewis College began offering programs across design, sustainability, product marketing, and more, serving young black creatives across industries. Find more: pensolelewiscollege.com.

About FDRA: FDRA is governed and directed by footwear executives and is the only trade organization focused solely on the footwear industry. Serving the full footwear supply chain, it boosts its members' bottom lines through innovative products, training, consulting on footwear design and development, sourcing and compliance, trade and customs, advocacy, and consumer and sales trend analysis for shoe retailers around the world. FDRA supports 500 companies and brands worldwide, representing 95% of the total U.S. footwear industry. Learn more: fdra.org.