

Lumen employees celebrate diversity and inclusion



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Why Black History Month Is More Than a Page on the Calendar

There are several ways to recognize Black History Month—from re-examining the contributions of Black Americans to purchasing items from minority-owned businesses. Tracy T. Williams-Cardo – Lead Talent Development Consultant at Lumen Technologies and a member of the Florida chapter for Alliance of Black Technology Professionals (ABTP), the Black employee resource group (ERG) at Lumen – sees an opportunity to transform a single month into something meaningful and personal.

“Black History Month isn’t just 28 days on a calendar or a momentary reaction to the change Black Lives Matter catalyzed last year,” she said. “It’s a mindset that encourages everyone to respect the dignity of human life, despite things like skin color, religion, or cultural background.”

A focus on families

The US has celebrated Black History Month since 1976 when President Gerald Ford called on Americans to “seize the opportunity to honor the too-often neglected accomplishments of Black Americans in every area of endeavor throughout our history.” The Association for the Study of African American Life and History sets the month’s theme each year. This year is the “Black Family: Representation, Identity & Diversity,” focusing on the great diversity among Black families nationwide and how damaging racial stereotypes may be.

Lumen Activation Tech and Florida chapter’s Vice Chair of ABTP Edrick Francis is taking the focus on family to heart.



Tina Dempsey Jones, senior manager, Public Sector Integrated Marketing at Lumen, shares what Black History Month means to her.

“This month is a time to reflect with my wife and young sons on the different figures in the Black community who caused change,” he said. “I want them to know and connect with their culture and know their community’s influence on the world.”

The people of Lumen also take a creative approach to building momentum in their communities and helping each other learn. “During Black History Month, I’m super intentional with my shopping or social platform engagement. I search on Etsy or my Instagram to support small business brands,” explained Williams-Cardo. “I also love podcasts and am a bit of a nerd – my current top three podcasts featuring strong Black women include [*Professional Troublemaker*](#), [*The Great Girlfriends*](#), and [*The Memo*](#).”

A time for celebration and recognition

Lumen has a lot on its plate to celebrate for Black History Month. ABTP is hosting both a discussion with Lumen leaders about diverse career experiences, as well as a discussion with Dr. Keith Mayes of the University of Minnesota. Dr. Mayes will hold an engaging conversation to help reveal and explore Black History Month’s significance. Other ERGs have empathy and belonging discussions on the calendar during February, with an eye toward how to be inclusive as a team and as a company.

“I’m really heartened by the steps Lumen has taken to really listen to Black voices in the workplace,” said Francis. “Supervisors and leaders who don’t identify as Black are taking time to attend our ABTP meetings and listen to our concerns, which they don’t have to do. Black employees are not sitting on the sidelines – we’re shaping how our company works.”

“Lumen does a lot of things right that we should do a better job of publicizing, honestly,” added Williams-Cardo. “Lumen has outstanding conversations within our ERGs that could benefit the community at large. Sharing our ERGs’ insights may also encourage more collaboration and participation throughout the company -- maybe have a space dedicated for 5-10 minutes during an organization’s all hands meeting to get the ball rolling.”

To learn more about Black History Month, visit <https://asalh.org>

To see Chief Diversity and Inclusion Officer at Lumen India Sylvester’s op-ed “Black History Month: We Can and Must Do Better,” please visit <https://news.lumen.com/bhm-lumen-india-sylvester>

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