



Advancing women
Advancing transportation
> Atlanta

FEBRUARY NEWSLETTER

CELEBRATING BLACK HISTORY MONTH



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BLACK HISTORY MONTH: CELEBRATING YESTERDAY, TODAY AND THE ROAD AHEAD

BY KRISTIN WINZELER, WTS ATLANTA PRESIDENT

WTS Atlanta celebrated Black History Month with a look at the trailblazers who paved the way in the transportation industry, our members who continue strengthening our industry through the advancement of Black individuals in transportation, and our commitment as an organization to support diversity and inclusion.

We are excited to share conversations with extraordinary individuals serving right here in our local community and making a huge impact to support diversity and inclusion in transportation. And at WTS, we are preparing for an exciting announcement regarding our commitment to this programming throughout the year. Stay tuned for more information coming soon!





BLACK HISTORY IN TRANSPORTATION

Advances Supporting Telecommuting

From the Cornell University Transportation & Delivery Services

Dr. Shirley Jackson (1970s) paved the way for telecommuting and remote work with her theoretical physics experiments, contributing to numerous developments in telecommunications, including the touch-tone telephone, the portable fax, caller ID, call waiting, and the fiber-optic cable.

Jackson is an American physicist and the eighteenth president of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. She is the first Black Woman to have earned a doctorate at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). She is also the second black woman in the US to earn a doctorate in physics.

Link to More History

Chatham Area Transit has produced a custom-designed bus route map featuring six historical landmarks in Chatham County that are significant to Black history and culture.

[Chatham Area Transit in Savannah](#)

The Association of State Highway and Transportation Officials (AASHTO) hosts a Transportation History blog webpage, which this month features articles on African-Americans' contributions to transportation.

[African-American Transportation History](#)

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A CONVERSATION WITH MEMBERS MAKING AN IMPACT

In celebration of Black History Month, we heard from WTS members who are making a significant impact to support the advancement of Black individuals and diversity and inclusion in transportation. Thank you to these female leaders in the transportation industry for sharing your experiences and insights with us.

As we celebrate Black History Month, would you please tell us about your experience with the advancement of Black women and men in the transportation industry?

Stacey Key

State Transportation Board Member District 5

"My personal experience in transportation is with Georgia DOT as a member of the State Transportation Board representing Georgia's Fifth Congressional District. I was elected to this role by the legislature eight years ago, so I can absolutely speak personally on the opportunities for advancement for people of color. At GDOT, there is an intentional focus to promote diversity and inclusion within the organization. While there is always more work to be done, the department's strong proactive recruitment and hiring practices ensure an extremely diverse and highly productive workforce. It's a real pleasure to look around the department and see so many influential and impactful roles held by Black individuals and to see their individual and collective contributions to furthering transportation in our state - which, in turn, positively impacts economic development, the health of our local communities and rural areas, and so much more."



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Joy Rohadfox
CEO and President of Rohadfox



"Rohadfox believes that recruiting African-American individuals is not enough to bring about racial equity in the transportation industry. While figuring out how to get African-American employees in the door is important, we focus on keeping them there and growing into leadership roles. We have made it a practice to identify the talent of our existing resources before recruiting new talent. We also invest in professional development and training and delegate assignments that stretch our employees' abilities, leading to promotion."

How have you seen diversity and inclusion supported in the transportation industry?

Stacey Key

"In my firsthand experience with and oversight of GDOT, that support is probably most apparent in the department's significant efforts to ensure diversity in our contracted workforce through the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise program, or DBE. The GDOT DBE program ensures that minority-owned, woman-owned and veteran-owned businesses are provided with the tools and resources needed to become a registered vendor for the state and for GDOT, and have equal opportunity in competing for state contracts for transportation projects. GDOT certainly complies with state and federal requirements for DBE recruitment but goes above and beyond, providing toolkits, multiple outreach events and even establishing a physical resource center where DBE business owners can go for assistance. In addition, the relationships built through the constant and consistent support offered to DBE firms have provided genuine access to opportunities previously difficult to attain for these firms, because it includes information regarding financial literacy and wealth building, prime contractor business development and project information and expectations for active participation."

Joy Rohadfox

"It is no secret that the transportation industry is drastically underrepresented among women and minorities. Several studies collectively have shown data that indicates women and minorities do not advance at the same rate as their colleagues."

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Heath & Lineback Engineers, Inc.



While we are beginning to see the tide change, our society still has a great deal of bias attributed to the lack of diversity and inclusion in this industry. Rohadfox understands the benefits and the importance of having a diverse workforce. We strive to make diversity a priority by creating a culture where people from all backgrounds feel included."

Please share with us any additional thoughts you have about Black History Month and diversity and inclusion in transportation.

Stacey Key

Quote from Elijah Cummings -

"Our transportation decisions determine much more than where roads or bridges or tunnels or rail lines will be built. They determine the connections and barriers that people will encounter in their daily lives, and thus how hard or easy it will be for people to get where they need and want to go."

Stacey Key

"Transportation is essential to our everyday lives. As we look to grow the transportation industry, it's important to have decision makers who represent the communities they serve. We must strengthen the voices from communities of color and empower them to take a more active role in transportation. Our community is stronger when all our voices are heard."

Joy Rohadfox

"Rohadfox is a second-generation construction/program management firm that was founded by my father, Dr. Ronald Rohadfox, in 1976. He built this company by focusing on improving infrastructure that would create environmental and societal change. His commitment to hard work created unfathomable opportunities that have allowed Rohadfox to leave a global footprint on transportation projects from Mali to Atlanta.

For 20 years, I have had the privilege of leading this firm as the President/CEO. I am proud to say that we have expanded our marketing efforts throughout the country, and we now have 12 profit centers. Our success can be attributed to our core values. We focus on conducting business with honesty and integrity and making a meaningful contribution to the communities that we serve."

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BRIGGINS SELECTED TO FIRST DISTINGUISHED FELLOWS CLASS FOR HERNDON DIRECTORS INSTITUTE

Congratulations to WTS member Rhonda Briggins, Vice President of Transit Services at Jacobs, for becoming a member of the first class of Herndon Directors Institute (HDI) distinguished fellows. HDI trains and places minorities and women on corporate boards where they have traditionally been underrepresented. HDI is backed by the Herndon Foundation, which is partnered with Atlanta Life on this endeavor.



Rhonda also shared her thoughts with us on Black History Month and diversity and inclusion in the transportation industry.

"When talking about the black community in the transportation industry and diversity and inclusion, the list is very long of individuals and organizations that have been on the forefront fighting for this issue for years. The summer of 2020 changed America for ever as we all watched the murder of George Floyd on national TV. It was a turning point that no one in America could deny the unfair treatment and inequity towards blacks in America.

Organizations such as COMTO, Organization of Black Aerospace Professionals, National Society of Black Engineers, WICERS, Supplier and Diversity organizations and so many more were created to bring awareness of the need of the transportation industry to include blacks in business

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opportunities and provide them with a collective voice. These groups have fought for blacks in the transportation industry by demanding promotions on their jobs, demanding opportunities with contracts/ procurement, demanding board representation and diversity on these agency boards and corporate boards, demanding black youth engagement in STEM, and finally promoting black women as leaders in transportation.

If you look at the Montgomery Bus Boycott, you can see for the first time in history the direct impact of the transportation industry on the community. Transportation is the lifeline of a community in so many ways. Transportation can change the quality of life of an individual by providing access to better jobs and opportunities.

So, these heros and sheros in the transportation community for years have been serving as a vehicle to advance this change in the black community. They have provided the transportation to a single mother working several jobs to feed her family. They have allowed a bright student the opportunity to attend a better school to further their education. They have allowed an individual inside a transportation agency to work an entry level position to become a Vice President or even General Manager. I honor and salute all of those individuals from yesterday and today that are still fight for a better tomorrow."

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NEWS AND UPDATES

Members Making News



Congratulations to WTS member Jeffrey Parker, MARTA General Manager and CEO, for being named to Georgia Trend's 100 Most Influential Georgians and to member Ann Hanlon, Executive Director of the Perimeter CIDs, for receiving Georgia Trend's 2021 Notable Georgians recognition. Visit [Georgia Trend](#) to read more.



Moment of Zen

February is Heart Health Awareness Month, and in support of our health, WTS held a virtual yoga series with our fantastic instructor Mamie Mabery. Thank you to Mamie for this wonderful Moment of Zen!

We've heard from the membership that they would like to participate in more events focused on health and wellness, and we look forward to hosting more activities like this in the near future.



Stay tuned for exciting announcements about programs coming up in March!