

BTBlack is a safe space where our Black and African American teammates can feel seen, accepted and welcomed. We provide the professional, social and emotional support our members need to achieve their goals – both in their careers and in the community.

A space to share and be seen

Co-chair Michael Battle says BTBlack gives its members a chance to stop, breathe and grow together. With members representing all levels of business professionals and attorneys at the firm, the group acts as a sounding board and encourages our Black and African American teammates to be their authentic selves at work. We help members develop a network of supporters and allies across the firm to promote their professional and personal growth.

“Though we are all extremely busy in our jobs, we are passionate about this group and realize how important its success is to the firm as a whole,” said Melanie Mawema, BTBlack member.

Amplifying Black voices at the firm and beyond

BTBlack also serves as a platform to educate teammates on Black culture and advocate for issues that are important to our members – not only during Black History Month and Juneteenth, but year-round.

“When BTBlack members are active participants in the championing of issues that are important to them, it allows them to be more integrated and productive Barnes & Thornburg teammates,” said Elizabeth Underwood, BTBlack member.

We work closely with firm leadership to increase efforts around recruitment, retention and advancement, including outreach and mentorship. For instance, our firm recently partnered with Nextions LLC to conduct a cultural assessment of the experiences of our Black women lawyers. Based on the findings and recommendations from that study, we are building deliberate programming to help ensure the retention and advancement of our Black and African American women lawyers.

A few of our other programs and community conversations:

- Town hall with actor Carl Weathers about how to raise our awareness about racial issues and how to identify and combat systemic racism
- Conversation with a rocket scientist turned changemaker, about innovative strategies for combating systemic inequality
- Roundtable discourse with the vice president and general counsel of Cummins Inc., one of the few Black female general counsels of a Fortune 500 company, and our Black and African American female talent
- Black History Month Pop-Up Market featuring Black-owned businesses
- Discussion with media mogul Byron Allen about the fight for racial equity in media and the importance of Black-owned media companies

For information regarding BTBlack, please contact co-chairs [Trevor Mason](#), [Sarah Odion Esene](#), [Gracie Webb](#), and [Mike Battle](#).

BTBLACK REFLECTIONS



MICHELLE BRADFORD



...there are still many 'firsts' that Black Americans have yet to achieve. Yet, we continue to strive to become more, for ourselves, for our families, and for our country.

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