

MBUSA Presents "Blazing Trails with the Benz Brand"

As part of MBUSA's Black History Month celebration, our Diversity & Inclusion Team hosted, "Blazing Trails with the Benz Brand," a panel of African American trailblazers with a direct connection to the Mercedes-Benz brand discussing their career paths and lessons learned.

Panelists included Jake Jones, Executive Director of Daimler External Affairs; Janet Marzett, Vice President of Operations Americas at MBFS; Charles Moody, Sr., Founder & CEO of C.D. Moody Construction Co.; Jenell Ross, President of Bob Ross Automotive Group; and H. Jerome Russell, President of H.J. Russell Company.

Marzett shared her story of her 37-year career with Mercedes-Benz – a career which started with an entry-level cashier job and eventually led her to the Vice President's office at MBFS.

"I am passionate about diversity and inclusion because I know what it feels like to be without those things – when I first started at MBFS there were no Black female executives," said Marzett. "I decided that I wanted to be the first."

There were many firsts on the panel. Ross shared how her father became the first African American Mercedes-Benz dealer in the world. After her father's untimely death, Ross took over the business and became the first (and still the only) 2nd generation Black female auto dealer in the country.

"It shouldn't be just me," said Ross. "I hope there's someone out there who will join me and that there will be many more of us."

The panelists shared their stories with humor and honesty and all stressed the importance of perseverance in the face of adversity.

"You need to continue to challenge yourself to find out what you are really made of," said Moody. "If you start something you need to see it through and finish it."

Russell agreed saying, "You need to show up and be present in everything that you do."

All of the panelists urged everyone to continue the dialogue that was started today and to be open and honest in their communications.

"To deny color is to deny culture," said Jones. "We don't want to be color-blind – we want to value all of the different parts of our culture."