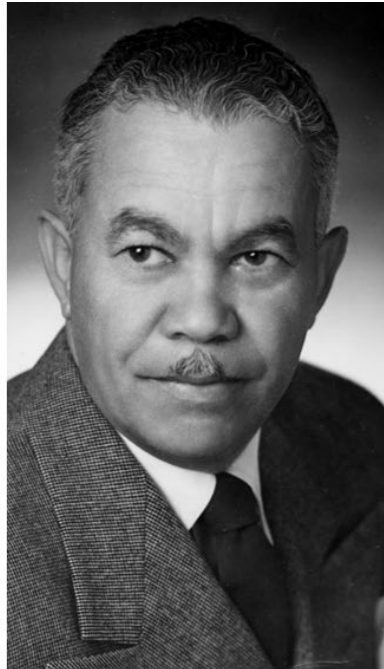


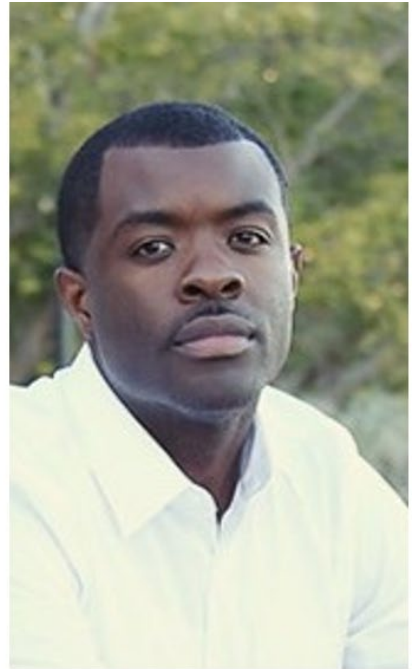
Building Black Culture in Hospitality



James Wormley



Paul Revere Williams



Damon Lawrence

Eliana Levine and
Channing Henry

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As this month marks Black History Month in the US, at PKF hotelexperts, we wanted to take a moment to recognize some historic contributions and success stories of the Black community to the US hotel sector. We believe these pioneers played a meaningful role in the evolving shape of hospitality, an industry we see to be built on the exchange of ideas and cultures, growing in inclusivity each day, and one that still faces a long road ahead.

Until the US Civil Rights Act of 1964, which banned discrimination in public accommodations, Black travelers, guided by The Green Book (memorialized in the 2018 movie of the same name), relied on Black hotel and restaurant owners for a place to stay and dine on their journeys.



Wormley Hotel, c. 1884

One of the best-known hotel owners was James Wormley, who opened and operated the Wormley Hotel, in Washington D.C., in 1871. The hotel famously hosted talks that settled the dispute of the presidential election between Hayes and Tilden in 1876, which became known as the Wormley Conference and eventually led to the end of Federal Reconstruction.



Hotel Theresa

Hotel Theresa, now known as Theresa Towers, was a prominent hotel in NYC located in Harlem that served as an important and lively cultural center for African American life. Known for housing Black celebrities such as Louis Armstrong, Duke Ellington, Muhammad Ali, and Jimi Hendrix, the hotel survived and profited from other hotels that turned away Black guests until it eventually closed in the late 1960's as other establishments began integrating.

On the west coast, Paul Revere Williams (FAIA) was the first African American member and fellow of the American Institute of Architects. Designer of the famous Polo Lounge at the Beverly Hills Hotel in Los Angeles, Paul Williams helped define a classic architectural style that served wealthy, often celebrity, communities in which he was not always welcomed due to his race. He succeeded nonetheless, designing more than 2,500 structures during his 60-year career.



The Polo Lounge at Beverly Hills Hotel

Williams played a role in the design of the Los Angeles International Airport and notable hotels including the Ambassador Hotel and the Beverly Hills Hotel in Los Angeles, the Grenada Hotel in Bogotá, and several others throughout California and Columbia. In 1920, he was appointed to the first Los Angeles City Planning Commission and was posthumously awarded the AIA's Gold Medal in 2017.

Choosing to pay homage to the Black community that helped build the hospitality industry as it stands today is Homage Hospitality, founded and led by Damon Lawrence, a Black entrepreneur with deep experience in the industry. Starting with The Moor in New Orleans, Homage Hospitality’s strategy is to build in cities with untold stories and embrace those narratives throughout its hotels. Homage is committed to promoting and supporting other local and Black-owned businesses within each city. The company has received early funding from the Oak Impact Group, a value-added developer who uses their portfolio to advance initiatives including Black entrepreneurship, urban renewal, and environmental sustainability.

The importance of supporting minority-owned businesses has become ever clearer since the Black Lives Matter movement gained momentum this summer. Lawrence, who cites access to capital as the largest challenge in building a new business, especially as a minority, has seen an emergence of support in these unprecedented times.



The Moor, a Hausotel by Homage Hospitality

In today’s hospitality industry, organizations such as the Black Travel Alliance, the National Society of Minority Hoteliers, and National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators and Developers (NABHOOD) seek to advance and promote diversity and inclusion while lobbying for the continued advancement of underrepresented minorities in the sector.

In celebration of Black History Month, please follow PKF hotelexperts as we publish several articles and interviews to celebrate the Black community’s significant contribution to the hospitality industry. We highlight only a few here, with the acknowledgment that many contributions remain unrecognized.

About PKF hotelexperts

The PKF hotelexperts group, the first fully integrated global advisory firm to serve the hospitality, tourism & leisure and serviced living sectors, traces its roots back to New York in 1927, when William J. Forster (of Pannell Kerr Forster) created the global standard for accounting and benchmarking – the Uniform System of Accounts for the Lodging Industry or USALI – which is still in use today.

Currently, the PKF hotelexperts group has 14 offices worldwide, including Argentina (Buenos Aires), Austria (Vienna), China (Hong Kong, Shanghai), Germany (Berlin – hotelforum), Italy (Milan), South Africa (Cape Town), Turkey (Istanbul), Ukraine (Kiev), United Arab Emirates (Dubai), United Kingdom (London) and the United States (New York, Los Angeles, Miami) with more than 100 consultants providing advisory services including feasibility studies, valuations and appraisals, operator search, project development, asset management, financing and investment, and strategic advice.

In addition, the PKF hotelexperts group includes PKF tourismexperts, focusing on master plans for regional tourism infrastructure, and PKF livingexperts, which advises on serviced living concepts (membership clubs, student and senior living, and serviced residential).

Please feel free to contact us for further information about this article or if we may assist you in any way.



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