

FREE

NATIVE SUN

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UNITING & ENLIGHTENING THE COMMUNITY

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DRIVING INTO THE FUTURE

BLACK AUTO MANUFACTURERS

Charles Patterson

Courageous, innovative, and ambitious can be used to describe Charles Richardson Patterson, the first African American auto manufacturer.

Following his escape from slavery, Patterson worked as a blacksmith in Ohio. He would later utilize his blacksmithing skills to start a carriage-building business that would later drive him and his sons to enter the automotive industry.

Patterson went into business with his son Frederick, who was the first African American to play on Ohio State University's football team.

C.R. Patterson & Sons produced about 150 hand-built roadsters in two styles between 1915 and 1918. Greenfield-Patterson automobiles sold for between \$685 and \$850 and were marketed as being "sensibly priced (with) every convenience and every luxury known to car manufacturers."

The cars were reportedly described as being "beautiful" and "well-made."

Unfortunately, the Pattersons were unable to compete with Henry Ford's Model T cars that were factory-built vehicles that were being produced faster and at a lower price.

Using his creative genius, Patterson turned to producing buses and trucks. He lined up contracts with several school districts. The company closed two generations later with Patterson's grandchildren behind the wheel. The Great Depression caused the manufacturer to cease operations in 1939.

While Patterson paved the road to black-owned auto manufacturing, it would take nearly 100 years for others to travel down that path. Today, there are reportedly four black-owned auto manufacturers in the world.

Apostle Dr. Ing Kwadwo Safo is the founder and the chairman of the Kantanka Group, the largest local technology conglomerate in Ghana. The company partnered with a Chinese company to produce high quality cars driven in Ghana.

Chief Dr. Innocent Ifediaso Chukwuma is the first to mass-produce cars in Nigeria. They manufacture luxury minibuses and trucks at an affordable price and that corresponds to the needs of an average car user.

A team of students and staff (Prof. Sandy Stevens Tickodri-Togboa and Mr. Paul Isaac Musasizi) at Makerere University started the Kiira Motors Corporation in Uganda in 200. The students attended the Vehicle Design Summit (VDS), a Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) initiative, with the goal of designing and producing the Vision 200 - a 5-passenger plug-in hybrid electric vehicle targeting the Indian market. Today the company produces electric hybrid cars with the support of the Ugandan government. The Kiira EV Smack is a cost-effective car that can be powered by either electricity or diesel.

In 2018, Derek Bailey founded Derek Automotive Technologies, Inc. The Atlanta-based company is believed to be the first company to develop, patent, and commercialize a near-zero emission gas-to-electric generator, powered by artificial intelligence, to provide, in-vehicle, level-3 fast-charging for electric vehicles. T

Bailey admires Patterson's work in automotive.

"I think he would be proud. He'll probably go over my car and help me to make some improvements. The man was a master craftsman. I'm not. He'll probably be proud as he criticizes my car," Bailey said.

Meanwhile, Bailey and others are traveling down the same road as Patterson and are picking up his traits, courage, innovative, and ambitious, along the way.

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