



HILTON HOTEL FRANCHISEE TRACY PRIGMORE DESCRIBES HER EXPERIENCE WITH “THE HILTON EFFECT” IN CELEBRATION OF HILTON’S 100 YEAR ANNIVERSARY

By Brianna Rhodes

Photo: Tracy Prigmore/Mary Gardella Photography



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The advertisement banner features the Toyota logo and the word "Corolla" on the left. In the center, it says "THE GREATER THAN EVER COROLLA" above a photograph of a silver Toyota Corolla. On the right, there is a red "Learn More" button and a small note: "Prototype shown with options."



For the past 100 years, the Hilton franchise has delivered exceptional guest experiences for travelers around the world.

When Conrad Hilton founded the first hotel on May 31, 1919, in Cisco, Texas, his mission was to “fill the earth with the light and warmth of hospitality.” Now with almost 5,500 hotels, 3 billion guests and nearly 10 million team members later, his company continues to make an impact on the world through what is called The Hilton Effect.

According to Stanford Business professor and The Hilton Effect author, Chip Heath defines, “**The Hilton Effect**” as, “the positive, world-altering impact that Hilton has had, and continues to have, on billions of lives and thousands of communities around the globe – entering new travel markets and bringing people and cultures together to make the world feel smaller, while expanding horizons and opportunities.”

The success of the company’s innovative strategies and entrepreneurial spirit has brought a wide-range of career opportunities for people from various cultures and backgrounds.

Since 2004, Hilton has taken great pride in being the first major hotel company to develop an effective outreach program to educate minority and female entrepreneurs with the knowledge of how to become owners of Hilton properties. They help support and promote ownership

through organizations such as the National Association of Black Hotel Owners, Operators & Developers (NABHOOD).



Photo: Tracy Prigmore/Mary Gardella Photography

Hotel owners, such as Tracy Prigmore have felt the impact of *The Hilton Effect* in her role as a franchisee and as a Black female entrepreneur.

Prigmore was introduced to the hotel ownership business in the early 2000s, becoming interested in commercial real estate after a stay in a Hampton Inn. After leaving a long-time career in the healthcare industry, Prigmore now owns 16 properties in total, including two Hilton Hotels located in Waldorf, MD. and Largo, MD.

“It just came to me like a ton of bricks and that’s where my journey started,” Prigmore said.

Prigmore attended a NABHOOD conference in New Orleans to learn as much as she could about hotel ownership and to network.

“I had the opportunity to go and learn about Hilton and their brand and a little bit about the hotel ownership process,” Prigmore said. “I knew Hilton from being a traveler and I knew hotels because I practically lived in them, but never thought that I could own one.”

Prigmore bought her first Hilton in 2014 through a joint venture and syndication with a group who invested in a DoubleTree by Hilton. She used the opportunity for mentorship and sought a

deeper level of exposure in an effort to ultimately bring people together to invest in their future towards acquired wealth. Although her experiences weren't easy, she walked in faith and was appreciative of the Hilton network for helping her along the way.

"In this journey, you go to these conferences and you see people from the brand and you talk to them about, 'Oh I want to own a hotel or build a hotel,'" she said. "I will tell you I did not receive a lot of warm reception going to conferences. I believe 95 percent of the time I don't believe they took me seriously," Prigmore said, acknowledging that it's a mostly white male-dominated industry.

"But one gentleman from Hilton named John Koshivos attended a NABHOOD conference and he sat down with me in the hospitality suite and took me seriously," she added. "He helped me and talked through hotel ownership and everything. I just felt a warm reception all the way around from that conversation with John to putting my first franchise license application in and everybody in the path was very supportive and helpful."

Empowered by Hilton's support, Prigmore has made it a goal to change the narrative around women and black owners in the hotel industry.

"You need for the people to open the door so we all have an opportunity," Prigmore said. "It's up to us to walk through the door and go on the journey. But many times doors just have not been open to us as people of color and to us as women."

Prigmore mentioned how she met Hilton's president at an NYU investment conference where she was able to double-down on her vision and express her desire to see more people of color and women not only moving up the corporate ladder within the company but specifically, being property owners.

She finds it important for large corporations like Hilton to support Black female entrepreneurs and minorities at conferences like Summit 21 because they are a large part of their consumer base.

"We're really a diverse country and those who are actually making those types of decisions and creating brands need that diverse mindset," Prigmore said. "We don't get diversity if we all look alike and we all think alike. All of us have something to contribute."

As a Hilton owner, Prigmore finds pride in moments like Hilton's sponsorship of the Summit21 Startup Pitch Competition. On Saturday, June 8th, Hilton will honor its 100-year business history and culture of inclusivity by providing the pitch competition winner a supportive head start through the \$10,000 grand prize. The sponsorship is in Hilton's direct effort to support women of color in their entrepreneurship endeavors.

"For 100 years, Hilton has blazed trails on its journey to spread the warmth and light of true hospitality, always seeking out ways to create room for all people to thrive at our hotels and beyond," said Andréa Richardson, Director of Multicultural and Diversity Relations at Hilton. "We are inspired by all of Tracy's great accomplishments, and we look forward to how The

Hilton Effect will provide more opportunities to our Summit21 Pitch Competition winner on their entrepreneurial path.”

“We have great ideas,” Prigmore added. “We have great tenacities, grit and everything, but many times what stands between a great idea and a successful business is capital. That sponsorship is going to go a long way towards helping a woman start her business.”

Prigmore gives credit to The Hilton Effect in playing a role in the development and mission of her real estate investment firm, TLTsolutions. The firm's core objective to empower people to build generational wealth through investing in residential, multifamily and hospitality projects shows an expansion of Conrad Hilton’s foundational goals.

“It was one person who had a vision and started this company,” Prigmore said. “When you look years forward to what it has become, I’m inspired because I feel a commitment to my son and to other little black girls and boys to go out there and take these risks and do this. I feel a commitment to do this because if I do it today, think about what it does for our people in the future.”

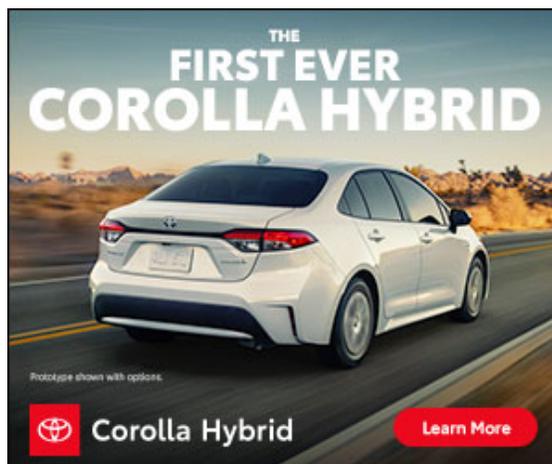
She believes in laying the foundation today for future generations to have a model to look to for entrepreneurship.

“Whatever your passion is, just do that so you can give back to the world,” said Prigmore.

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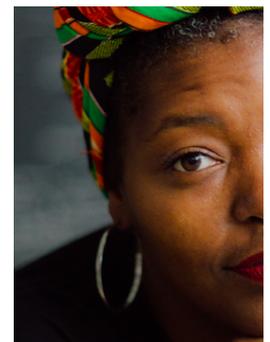
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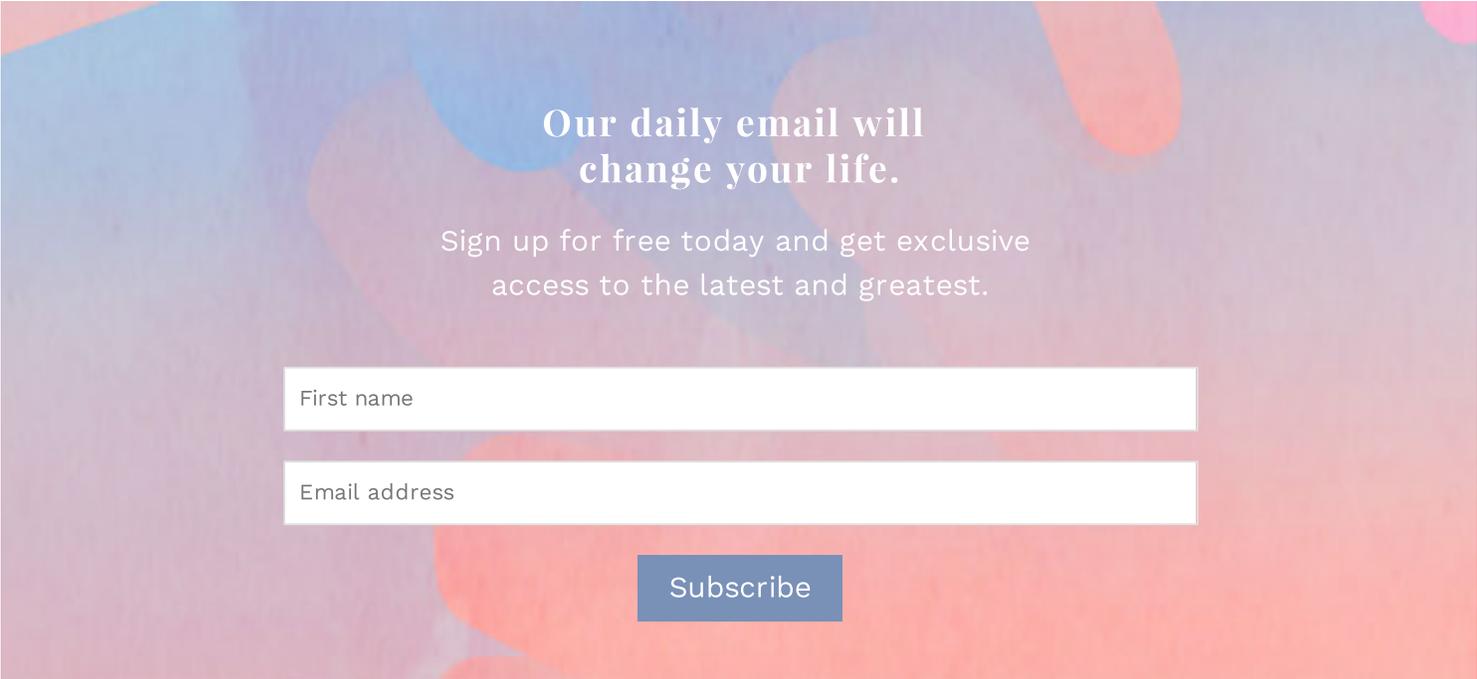
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