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## **Black Entrepreneurs Meet with Investors, Build Connections at Silicon Valley Accelerator Program Pitch Day**

*Cohort to reconvene March 22 during Annual African Diaspora Investment Symposium (ADIS)*

SILICON VALLEY, CA – On January 19, 2023, locally-based nonprofit African Diaspora Network (ADN) partnered with the Silicon Valley Executive Center at Santa Clara University to host a “Pitch Day” and graduation for the second cohort of their Accelerating Black Leadership and Entrepreneurship (ABLE) program at Santa Clara University and online via Zoom.

Representatives of venture capitalists, angel and impact investors, foundations, philanthropists, and financial institutions met with 11 Black entrepreneurs leading impact-oriented businesses across the United States, learned about their work, and explored opportunities to support their ventures. Following this unique opportunity to pitch their companies in a “Shark Tank”-style setting, ABLE entrepreneurs reported a new sense of empowerment and a growing network of support.

“The ABLE program has helped me understand how to communicate my company’s employability skills and development value proposition in a way that appeals to potential investors,” said Jody Mitchell, Founder and CEO of Directed Analytics and part of the 2023 ABLE cohort. “I believe this will enable me to raise the needed capital to build my company.”

Research shows that Black startups receive only 1% of venture capital funding, at least in part because of systemic inequities and unconscious bias. Yet despite historic disadvantages in building wealth and incomes, Black entrepreneurs have created [4.7 million jobs](#) in the last decade alone and Black Americans are the fastest-rising group of entrepreneurs in the United States.

“Black founders and Black people in general haven’t been given the most opportunity, haven’t had things the easiest — employment, healthcare, accessing resources, you name it,” said Andre Peart, CEO of ConConnect and ABLE participant. “Black founders need to understand when you go into venture capitalism, operating a startup, that you need to have that mindset that you’re still underrepresented. You have to go above and beyond if you want to be seen, heard, and respected.”

Recognizing a unique opportunity to match the potential of Black entrepreneurship with Silicon Valley’s spirit of diversity and innovation, ADN successfully launched ABLE, an enterprise accelerator using executive education, mentorship, and networking programs to expand economic pathways and advance

Black entrepreneurial efforts. Now in its second year, the program is focused on supporting Black entrepreneurs leading impact-oriented, for-profit organizations. (See below for a complete list).

“ABLE has forced me to step outside of my comfort zone to go after my dreams. I am more confident in how my business is changing lives one person at a time,” said Victoria Prince, VP, CEO, and Creative Founder of Tori Prince Beauty, LLC. “In addition, I have made valuable connections that I will continue to nurture personally and professionally.”

The second annual ABLE cohort will reconvene at an invitation-only investor forum and workshop during ADN’s annual African Diaspora Investment Symposium on March 22, 2023, at the Computer History Museum in Mountain View, CA. Entrepreneurs, foundations, venture capitalists, and investors are invited to share best practices with the goal of improving the overall success rate of entrepreneurs in the Black community. For more information about how to become a part of this exciting event, email [debra@africandiasporanetwork.org](mailto:debra@africandiasporanetwork.org) or visit the ADN [website](#).

For more information about the ABLE program, please contact [info@africandiasporanetwork.org](mailto:info@africandiasporanetwork.org) or visit the ADN [website](#).

*Meet the 2nd Annual ABLE cohort...*

- Chukwunonso (Chooki) Arinze, Founder, [Kaoshi Inc.](#) (Chicago, IL)
- Emmanuel Brown, Co-Founder, [ChurchSpace](#) (Houston, TX)
- Toby Egbuna, CEO & Co-Founder, [Chezie](#) (Atlanta, GA)
- Tae Lee, Founder, [Never Go Broke](#) (Birmingham, AL)
- Jody T. Mitchell, Founder & CEO, [Directed Analytics](#) (Baton Rouge, LA)
- Michael Olorunninwo, CEO, [GradientFI](#) (Fremont, CA)
- Andre Peart, CEO, [ConConnect](#) (New York, NY)
- Carolyn Pitt, Founder & CEO, [Productions.com](#) (Atlanta, GA)
- Victoria Prince, MPA, LE, LI, CEO & Creative Founder, [Tori Prince Beauty, LLC](#) & Chicago Skin Lab (Chicago, IL)
- Lori White, Founder & CEO, [Vitavate](#) (Diamond Bar, CA)
- Dr. KiMi Wilson, CEO, [Equation 2 Success](#) (Los Angeles, CA)

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## **About African Diaspora Network (ADN)**

Founded in 2010, African Diaspora Network promotes entrepreneurship and economic development on the African continent and in the communities in which we live. ADN brings together Africans on the continent, in the diaspora, and friends of Africa to actualize their full potential, activate their entrepreneurial spirit, and strategically mobilize financial and intellectual resources to ensure a brighter future for the African continent. Learn more at [www.africandiasporanetwork.org](http://www.africandiasporanetwork.org)