Meet Brittiney Griffin: Founder of Black Azz Camping

By Susan Griffin Ward



Brittiney Griffin



Family Adventure Paddle on Harrods Creek. Credit: Susan Griffin Ward

Black Azz Camping began when Brittiney Griffin wanted to go camping, but her friends weren't the least bit interested. That didn't stop her, which is not a surprise to anyone who knows Brittiney. Determined, she made plans to go camping by herself but also began spreading the word about her upcoming trip through a hiking group to which she belonged. When all was said and done, 107 people from as far away as California, Oklahoma, and Illinois went camping with Brittiney; 95% of them were first-time campers. This is how the Black Azz Camping (B.A.C.) organization was born. Its mission is, "to make the outdoors accessible to the black community, encourage more representation in outdoor recreation, and create a safe space for our voices."

Brittiney is the first to address the pushback she gets from people who are uncomfortable with the name of her organization. Brittney says, "You know, they think that we are a radical group, but it's about understanding who you are, what your mission is, and standing firm. It's about being invited into places you wouldn't typically be invited into. It's a very bold name, very in-your-face. And I love that, because oftentimes we get timid around the topic of race."

And the organization, according to Brittiney, "is loud and proud," about its goal to dismantle the stereotypes and bridge the gap of Black culture in nature with like-minded individuals. Its core values are based on 3c's: community, culture, and connection.

The mission includes young people. B.A.C. has launched a program called Junior Black Campers, offering programs that cultivate a sense of belonging in nature, self, and conservation particularly for black youth, who have historically been underrepresented in outdoor spaces. Brittiney reports this programming has a focus on social-emotional learning, mentorship, and wellness.

While the mission and goals are serious, the events and programming are fun. So fun that participants might not realize Brittiney and her team have woven into each activity at least one of three ingredients she believes are necessary for each event to be aligned with the mission: education around environmental justice, sustainability, and/or history.

As B.A.C. and Junior Black Campers have grown, their events have expanded to include more than just camping trips. KWA partnered on two such events this year: Hike for History and Commonwealth Splash Family Adventure Paddle.

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On a freezing February day, KWA joined Hike for History participants for a five-mile hike on the Paw Paw trail, crossing the icy waters of Floyds Fork in Turkey Run Park, while stopping at Black history educational stations along the way as part of the celebration of Black history month. Always going the extra mile, Brittney also coordinated a pre-hike yoga stretching class and a post-hike lunch.

On a hot day in June, KWA and B.A.C. partnered on the Family Adventure Paddle on Harrods Creek. For 75% of the participants this was their first time in a kayak or canoe. Brittney noted that in part it is an issue of access, but also a result of Black generational trauma about water. In addition to paddling, naturalist Rev. Lee Payne, Jr., helped the paddlers identify a barred owl in a tree next to the creek, while sharing his vast outdoor knowledge. Paddlers also had an opportunity to learn about the Merriwether House, which is on the National Register of Historic Places, and is believed to be the last remaining structure in an early African American Reconstruction Era settlement. Harry Merriwether, a steamboat captain who was formerly enslaved, built the home in 1891 next to Harrods Creek.

When asked what gives Brittney hope for the future, she doesn't hesitate, "It's our youth. The Young Black Campers program has 70 kids registered, and 25 that have shown up consistently. We meet every Tuesday and Thursday, and we go over social-emotional learning skills, communication skills, and how to cope. We sat down and had a brainstorming session on what they want to do for 2026. They have a say in the program, and they make me so proud and so happy with their intentionality."

To learn more about Brittney and Black Azz Camping visit blackazzcamping.org.



Brittney Griffin on right, Credit: Susan Griffin Ward


Paddlers on Harrods Creek, Credit: John Nation


Hike for History, Credit: Susan Griffin Ward