

**News**

# Despite scandal, VW in Running for Global Sales Crown

Former head of U.S. environmental compliance was arrested this week, and company may pay fines

By **DAVID McHUGH**  
AP Business Writer

FRANKFURT, Germany (AP) — It's ironic: Volkswagen spent 2016 battling a huge scandal over cars it rigged to cheat on emissions tests.

And now stands a decent chance to pass Toyota for the title of world's biggest carmaker for the year.

Booming business in China helped Volkswagen increase its sales to 10.31 million vehicles last year across all its brands, which include Audi, Porsche and Skoda, the

company said Tuesday. That was an increase of 3.8 percent over 2015, when Volkswagen came in second to Toyota. And

**“China is the big equalizer. Diesel plays no role there, so your reputation can't suffer. China today is the center of the automotive world, for Volkswagen as well**

a strong finish to the year in December — 11.8 percent better than the same month the year before — improves the company's chances of moving from No. 2 to No. 1 in global sales.

That Volkswagen is even in the running for top spot seems remarkable considering how terrible the year was on

the legal and image front. The company based in Wolfsburg, Germany, agreed to a \$15 billion settlement for claims from U.S. environmental authorities and owners of 500,000 cars. It faces

investor lawsuits and criminal probes in Germany and the U.S., where a heavy criminal fine is likely. Volkswagen has

admitted to equipping diesel cars with software that turned emission controls on when the vehicle was being tested and off during daily driving.

The scandal news kept

coming this week as Oliver Schmidt, Volkswagen's former head of U.S. environmental compliance, was arrested in Florida and appeared in a Detroit court in prison garb and shackles. Engineer James Liang had earlier pleaded guilty and offered to assist federal law enforcement in their investigation.

Despite all that, huge demand in China may be enough to push Volkswagen past its Japanese rival and Detroit-based General Motors. Neither rival has reported 2016

sales yet. For 2015, Toyota Motor Co. came in first with 10.15 million, Volkswagen was second with 9.93 million, and GM third with 9.8 million.

Volkswagen's improved sales show how crucial China has become for Germany's carmakers, including BMW and Daimler. Of the three, Volkswagen is the most dependent on the Middle Kingdom. It sold 3.98 million cars there last year, more than a third of its total unit sales.

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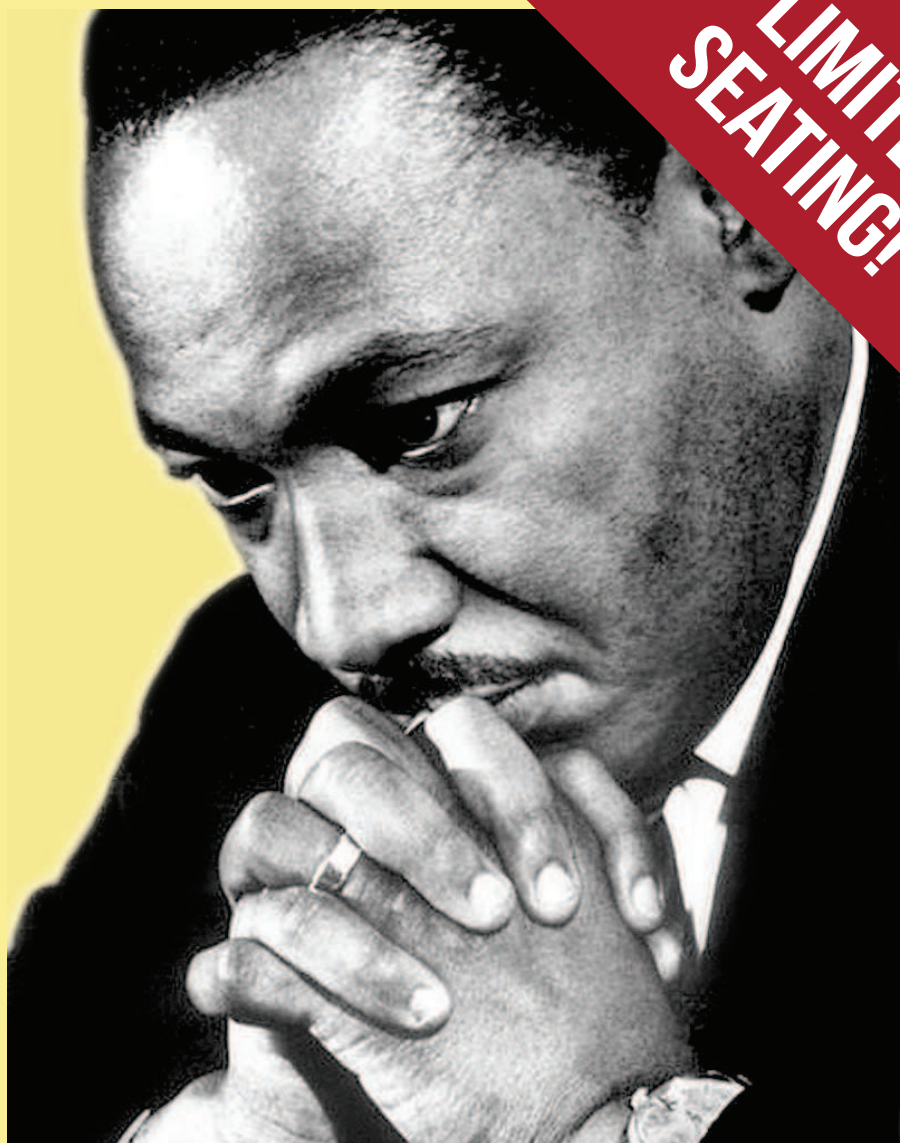
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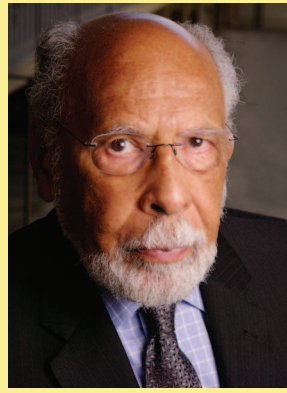
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**KEYNOTE SPEAKER**

**HOWARD MOORE, JR.**

CIVIL RIGHTS ATTORNEY

Attorney Howard Moore, Jr. earned his B.A. degree in 1954 from Morehouse College, and his LL.B. degree from Boston University School in Law. In 1962 he joined the Atlanta law firm of Moore, Alexander and Rindskopf. As one of only 10 black lawyers in Georgia, Moore worked long hours and traveled on Sundays with Vernon Jordan. Moore has represented both Julian Bond (1966) and Angela Davis (1971-1977).



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