



DIVERSITY:

The New Face of Fashion and Beauty

After the reality check on the fashion and beauty world's exclusionary nature brought diversity firmly to the fore of the conversation last year, it's time to lay out a new road map. The need for inclusion won't wane and conscious consumers won't wait around until brands back their words with real action. From examining the current level of the industry diversity, to making the conversation more inclusive, and exploring best practices to ensure an enduring future, Fairchild Media Group's Diversity Forum dug into the issues to shed some light on the next steps forward on diversity, the new face of fashion and beauty. *For coverage from the forum, see pages 10 to 21.*

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Meghan Markle's Story Could Teach Fashion A Thing About Diversity and Inclusion

While issues around diversity can be difficult for some to grasp or relate to, PVH's Lance LaVergne drew on a current example many can connect with: Meghan Markle. BY LISA LOCKWOOD

With all the conversation about diversity and inclusion within fashion companies this past year, questions such as whether efforts will stick, how companies assess progress and where the industry go from here have been top of mind.

Taking a stock check of where things stand today, CaSandra Diggs, president of the Council of Fashion Designers of America, said, "I think where we are is not where we want to be, of course....I think that for a host of reasons, companies don't always track that information."

Adding to that, while noting the general public can find out more about management diversity on most companies' websites, Lance LaVergne, chief diversity officer and senior vice president for global talent acquisition and associate experience at PVH Corp., said, "It tends to be very homogeneous groupings of people."

For someone who is looking to enter the fashion industry and wants to see opportunities, it can be very disheartening and discouraging, he said, adding that it's incumbent upon companies to figure out how to move the pipeline of talent and develop the more junior-level executives into managerial and leadership ranks. It's also important to think more broadly about talent because there are fungible skill sets in more diverse sectors where the fashion industry can bring people in and change the complexion of an organization.

To accelerate efforts around diversity, Diggs said companies should create sponsorship systems within the business so key leaders can start mentoring and advocating for people who would make good executives. And she also believes fashion should tap other industries, like finance and tech, to recruit talent.

From a designer perspective, Fe Noel, owner, designer and founder of her eponymous lifestyle brand, said the industry needs to market its available opportunities beyond the typical circles.

"I think that we need somehow to be aware of the opportunities that are out there. We don't even know what resources there are and how to get into these institutions because there's no pipeline or road map," she said, noting the need for that to change immediately.

People, herself included, are going at it their own way because of a lack of resources and open doors. "I've been bootstrapping, but it has been really hard and still continues to be hard as we even grow and scale our business."

When it comes to what the CFDA is doing to address diversity within its own organization, Diggs said the diversity of CFDA's membership is reflective of the industry as a whole, though it's taking steps toward advancement both internally and as far as expanding representation across annual award recipients and designer spotlights.

The CFDA started working with luxury brand consultant and advocate Bethann Hardison in 2018 when they cofounded the Designer's Hub, an incubator program for designers of color. CFDA has also supported Harlem's Fashion Row through its Icon 360 program, and worked with the Fashion for All Foundation. They're offering grant programs and giving designers access to Runway360, where they can present fashion shows and designs, and they're also offering mentorship to connect them to other designers and professionals in the industry.

At PVH, there's work to be done on internal diversity, too.

In its 2019 corporate responsibility report, PVH published the representation numbers for the organization. According to LaVergne, roughly two-thirds of the company's staff are women. "As you go up the ladder at PVH, that number holds fairly steady until you get to the most senior levels where you see a slight drop-off. On the race and ethnicity side, they're about 60 percent diverse across the entire population. The decline in representation is a little greater as you move up the ladder."

For its part in making progress, PVH is trying to ensure women occupy seats across the board and are active in every aspect of the business. On the race and ethnicity side, LaVergne said it's about understanding how to advance and accelerate the diversity in the junior and retail side of the business into more senior managerial and leadership roles across the organization.

Noel believes there has been a 180-degree turn in the industry when it comes to a



CaSandra Diggs

focus on diversity and trying to improve representation. The CFDA started trying two years ago to open the doors to designers, she said, and after George Floyd's killing, she thinks companies really moved quickly.

"It can't be a slow and steady process," she said because, at present, the industry doesn't reflect the melting pot we all live in. "But I do think that there are institutions that are committed to really making the change."

In the PVH and CFDA report on the state of diversity, equity and inclusion in fashion, 50 percent of respondents said they have taken action on racial diversity. Forty-one percent, however, haven't taken any action at all.

Asked how the CFDA intends to hold the latter to account, Diggs said the CFDA and other organizations have the responsibility to take action. For its part, CFDA is trying to be more collaborative in its efforts.

The organization collaborated with PVH on the study highlighting the need for awareness around the state of things to adequately articulate a path forward. From that report, CFDA launched its Impact program to identify, connect, nurture and support talented people of color in the industry and provide access to jobs. It is also trying to address the barriers to entry that prevent them from entering the fashion industry. CFDA is building a talent directory with the Creatively job platform, and they'll do mentorship and sponsorship programming. Progress will take time, Diggs said, but taking things step by step will carry the industry forward as long as there are collaborative efforts.

While issues around diversity can be difficult for some to grasp or relate to, LaVergne drew on a current example many can connect with: Meghan Markle.

During the much talked about Oprah Winfrey interview with Prince Harry and Markle, the Duchess of Cambridge spoke about how she was originally welcomed into the royal family with great fanfare, but that didn't last.

"If you listen to her experience, they never did include her and she never felt like she belonged," LaVergne said, noting that it's important to make sure people of color know they belong and are valued for their contribution, that they are part of the fabric of the organization just as anyone else would be. That, he pointed out, was missing for Markle.

To navigate this effectively, companies need to make sure they integrate people into the organization as well as create opportunities for those who are underrepresented to build community within the broader organization, which can take the form of employee or business resource groups.

"If you're not of the majority it can be a challenging experience if you don't find the places for you to connect," LaVergne said. When you can share your experiences, it better connects you to that organization, he said.



Lance LaVergne



Fe Noel

Driving Diversity Forward

In its inclusion and diversity work, PVH is taking a 360-degree approach across its global brands and associates “on the ground.”

Dimensions of diversity are expanding and reinforcing across the fashion and retail industries – and PVH Corp. is positioning itself as an industry leader with an approach to I&D that embraces accountability through the work and voices of its associates on the ground.

For PVH, that approach embodies a sharp focus on aspects of diversity that are crucial to the company. PVH’s Global Inclusion & Diversity Council this year developed nine global commitments that encompass and solidify its I&D pillars – Workplace, Marketplace and Community – to deliver the “greatest impact” for its associates, consumers, and communities.

Its nine company-wide I&D commitments are centered on: inclusive representation across its leadership and SVP-level positions to achieve gender parity and increase total Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) representation at the same tiers, both by 2026; a diverse candidate slate; retention and development, focused on mentoring, resources and tools for women and underrepresented groups; a culture of inclusivity; and accountability.

Its commitments also include establishing a Marketing and Advertising review board to ensure diverse representation in its brand marketing and advertising materials; the launch of a Supplier Diversity program by 2022; and awareness and access for communities by investing \$10 million globally over the next four years, to “amplify awareness and access to opportunities in the fashion industry,” all according to PVH.

Taking a Tailored Approach

PVH is working hard to drive I&D forward on a granular level and keeps the entire industry’s progress top of mind. Randy Cousin, SVP of Product Concepts and the People’s Place Program, Tommy Hilfiger, told WWD, “We are in a world now that is fast and instantaneous. We must listen and learn from each other. It is the best way to move forward as an industry.”

“PVH’s commitment to Listen, Learn, and Act is a fundamental commitment to dismantling the fashion industry’s systemic challenges. Topics of race don’t have to be difficult unless we make them difficult. The work towards equity, inclusion, and diversity has to be continuous and consistent – it’s crucial and will bring us one step closer to the change we all want to see,” Cousins said.

The company leverages various partnerships and collaborations to reach I&D objectives for the brands under its umbrella – and that means taking a unique approach that’s tailored to each brand. For Tommy Hilfiger, part of its mission is focused on the creation of opportunities and support for underrepresented communities in the fashion industry.



A look from Tommy Adaptive.

“Through the Tommy Hilfiger People’s Place Program, we will amplify our mission to create more opportunities and to dedicate resources for underrepresented communities who are so important to the fashion landscape – giving them a true platform for their talent to shine. When we started the People’s Place Program last year, we met with dynamic organizations and thought leaders who were already doing great work to build equity and representation for minority communities in fashion.”

“With our upcoming partnerships, we will create fantastic bespoke programming that will put us on the path of change we want to see in the industry.”

Cousin added that PVH also hopes to “re-articulate the narrative” of collaborations outside of the product space, too. “Our goal is to create programs that can be a blueprint for other brands to follow. There is so much work to be done in building equity for underserved minority communities, so we will share our journey not only with our consumers but with the entire fashion industry, as well.”

Dottie Cannon, Senior Director, Talent Development, Calvin Klein, told WWD that BRAAVE (Building Resources for African American Voices and Empowerment), one of PVH’s Business Resource Groups (BRG), helps hold PVH accountable for I&D.

“BRAAVE has given me a community and support system through which I’ve been able to find my voice. Having a group of people with shared experiences has given me the courage to confront difficult conversations and given me the support to speak about those experiences to the larger organization. Being part of BRAAVE has helped me feel acknowledged and validated.”

Accessible Style

Accessibility is another fundamental facet of diversity for PVH – and its commitment to adaptive apparel makes the case for it. Joy Moon, Director Brand

“Our goal is to create programs that can be a blueprint for other brands to follow.”

Randy Cousin

SVP of Product Concepts and the People’s Place Program, Tommy Hilfiger

Merchandising, Tommy Adaptive, told WWD that its adaptive clothing is meeting the needs of its diverse consumer landscape through accessible style.

“Tommy Hilfiger launched the Tommy Adaptive line in 2017 with the mission of making our classic, American styling accessible to all consumers. Since its inception, we’ve partnered closely with our consumer to understand the specific dressing challenges that people with disabilities face and have created our product with their direct input and feedback.”

Moon said that one in five people in the U.S. has a disability, making it the largest minority group – but one that is oft-overlooked. “We take pride in offering easy magnetic and Velcro closures, magnetic zippers, and thoughtfully designed silhouettes that allow for greater ease of dressing, all while keeping style at the forefront.”

“We’ve also considered the end-to-end consumer journey, ensuring our site is ADA compliant and our packaging is easy-open, again all with input from our consumer. We really couldn’t have made

it this far without them.”

On a global scale, the company remains just as committed to I&D – but adjusts its approach to speak to different audiences. Sabine Kromowidjojo, Senior Director, Inclusion & Diversity, PVH Europe, told WWD, “As a global company, PVH has empowered all of its regions to execute the commitment to I&D regionally, driven by a global I&D strategic framework. We need to understand very well the regional and cultural challenges, and from there create a strategy that supports these regional needs,” she explained.

This included the relaunch of its internal “Let’s Talk” series, which began with a session on racial injustice, specifically on European colonial history and the impact it has on European society today, Kromowidjojo said, noting that, “understanding this regional context is crucial because it acknowledges the differences.”

PVH leverages its partnerships and collaborations to reach I&D objectives and help them speak their consumers’ language. “We have set some really ambitious I&D goals, and we know that in order to achieve them on this journey, we need to tap into partnerships and collaborations. Bringing our I&D commitments to life through partners and collaborations allows us to work alongside expert partners and gives us an opportunity to reach consumers in an authentic, meaningful way.”

This included PVH’s TommyXLewisXHER Spring ‘20 collaboration, which was one of the first times the brand offered gender-neutral styles, and in Europe, Tommy Hilfiger’s recent partnership with Zeekit to pilot a “Model Switch” on Tommy.com, offering consumers an opportunity to see clothing on different-sized models, Kromowidjojo said.

Naturally, initiatives that drive I&D forward for specific brands look a little different. For example, Calvin Klein’s inclusion efforts began in the mid-1990s with the introduction of its gender neutral CK One fragrance, which was the first unisex fragrance to gain popularity and cultural significance in the U.S.

Danielle Lafleur, EVP Head Merchant, Calvin Klein, and co-Executive Sponsor of the Retail I&D Council, told WWD that its associates-first approach builds I&D into the fabric of the company, which “in turn creates a culture that builds a more inclusive product.”

“Ultimately, and importantly, this resonates with our consumer, as an all-inclusive approach is far more authentic than taking a public stance on diversity via marketing alone – although we certainly support diversity through our marketing as our latest Calvin Klein campaign ‘Blank Canvas’ beautifully reminds us.”

Lafleur said that its Retail I&D Council, which launched about a year ago and is focused solely on its store-based associates, began by pausing to commemorate George Floyd with 8 minutes and 46 seconds of silence across its PVH corporate offices and retail stores.

Later, the council went on to sponsor Latin Heritage, Black History, and International Women’s rights initiatives. And in time, the council identified gaps in its employees’ training and development practices, namely the challenges for associates that speak English as a second language, and the identified need for translation of in-store signage.

And today, Lafleur said she is happy to report that its council is expanding. “[The council is] turning into a full Business Resource Group, which will allow for broader participation and even more company support – I feel honored and proud to be a part of the progress.”