CFDA launches diversity-focused Impact initiative

By Robin Driver - February 23, 2021

Inspired by the Black Lives Matter movement, the Council of Fashion Designers of America (CFDA) has announced the launch of Impact, a multi-layered initiative that aims to create opportunities in the fashion industry for historically underrepresented and unsupported communities.
The initiative, which launches with a talent directory powered by job platform Creatively on Friday, February 26, will seek to identify, connect, support and nurture Black and Brown creatives and professionals working in the fashion sector.

Named after the CFDA’s mission “to strengthen the impact of American fashion designers in the global economy,” Impact will work to connect its more than 450 members, as well as fashion companies and institutions, nonprofit and university partners, and a cross-disciplinary network of industry professionals, to jobs, paid internships and freelance opportunities.

The initiative aims to respond to the findings of CFDA’s State of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion report, carried out in collaboration with PVH, which showed that Black employees in the fashion industry feel less prepared for their first job search.

The approach adopted for Impact is intended to function on the individual, company and industry levels. The project will therefore involve a range of different initiatives that seek to support Black and Brown fashion professionals, including open access, group mentoring, industry programming, and community building.

Further to this, CFDA is building a coalition of members and fashion adjacent companies, all of whom are committed to providing both social and economic opportunities for underrepresented communities.

“This work is essential to the future of American fashion, which must be diverse, equitable, and inclusive,” commented CFDA president CaSandra Diggs in a release. “The CFDA is proud to take the lead in this important effort for the industry and beyond.”

Diggs further pointed out that, while the initiative’s first focus will be “on widening talent pipelines and advancing career development for Black and Brown creatives and professionals,” Impact will expand to address other instances of inequality in fashion in the future.

The driving force behind Impact, as well as a number of CFDA’s other diversity initiatives, is the project’s Black Advisory Board. Members include Harper’s Bazaar editor-in-chief Samira Nasr, Netflix chief marketing officer Bozoma Saint John, Stacie Henderson – head of U.S. e-commerce and digital at Tod’s Group – and CFDA member Martin Cooper. Designer Tracy Reese serves as executive board vice chairwoman.

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