

APPAREL AND ACCESSORIES

Humans of Fashion Foundation aims for safer fashion industry via connection

May 23, 2018



LVMH is among the companies working with Humans of Fashion Foundation. Image credit: Dior

By SARAH JONES

VENICE, Italy The entire fashion ecosystem should work together to combat abuse and harassment in the industry.

Subscribe to **Luxury Daily**
Plus: Just released
State of Luxury 2019 **Save \$246 ▶**

Human of Fashion Foundation is looking to support those working in the industry who have been exploited, connecting them with pro-bono lawyers and allowing them to connect with others to tell their stories via an anonymous platform. During a presentation at the Financial Times Business of Luxury Summit on May 22, the nonprofit shared its plans to create a better work environment for models, assistants, photographers, hair stylists, makeup artists and more.

"Fashion has been a little ahead of this conversation," said Susan Scafidi, founder and academic director of the Fashion Law Institute at **Fordham Law School**. "So while fashion companies have issues to address, we have experience and knowledge to bring to the table."

Support system

While misconduct in the fashion industry is not new, in recent months numerous stories of abuse have emerged.

Humans of Fashion Foundation is open to all members of the industry, from models to assistants.

The group's mobile application enables users to get legal advice and support, such as counseling and groups, since not all who experience abuse wish to take legal action. A community of fashion assistants has more than 14,000 users.

Slated to launch this summer, HOFF's app is designed to be a solution that does not get in the way of fashion's creativity.

Often, individuals who are abused are worried that taking action will lead them to be blacklisted from future jobs. HOFF's anonymity allows fashion employees to gain a support system without fear of an impact to their careers.



Bottega Veneta's spring/summer 2017 runway show featured both men's and women's wear

Beyond the app, HOFF is looking into hosting workshops that would teach individuals how to respond in various scenarios. An education in English is also key, as it enables fashion workers to better communicate.

Often models begin their careers as teenagers, traveling to the United States alone. Agents are not able to be with all of their models at the same time, and so these teens are often left to navigate being in a new city and new industry largely alone.

Providing additional guidance, HOFF has been connecting users who have come to its platform with mentors.

Along with offering support for all positions in the fashion industry, HOFF helps both female and male models. Men also suffer abuses, but they may be ashamed to share their story.

#MeToo era modeling

HOFF works with a number of luxury companies, including Kering and LVMH.

Last year, French luxury conglomerates LVMH and Kering joined forces to create a common charter that determines how the groups will work with fashion models in the future.

The goal is ostensibly to ensure the well being of the models and reflect the values of the luxury brands under their umbrellas. The statement comes a day after [The New York Times ran an article](#) that spelled out several concerns expressed by models, including objectification, sexism, racism and loss of dignity ([see story](#)).

In light of the #MeToo movement and sexual harassment allegations in modeling and Hollywood, media group Cond Nast International has announced behavioral guidelines for its photo shoot partners.

Published Jan. 31 on the British Vogue Web site, Cond Nast's Code of Conduct, effective immediately, is designed to "safeguard the dignity and well-being" of anyone working with the publisher's brands in all operating markets. Cond Nast's Code of Conduct is an update to its 2012 Model Health Initiative ([see story](#)).

While models' issues were often overlooked, today they are gaining tools and support.

"I think it's important for everyone to feel protected," said Kristina Romanova, model and co-founder of [Humans of Fashion Foundation](#).