

FOOD AND BEVERAGE

## Hennessy taps Nas in continuing celebration of Black excellence

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*In new vignette from Hennessy, Nas pens a letter to his daughter, encouraging the continuation of Black excellence. Image credit: Hennessy*

By KATIE TAMOLA

LVMH-owned Cognac brand Hennessy has tapped Grammy-award-winning rapper and songwriter Nas in a campaign that celebrates Black legacy and excellence.

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The short film, entitled "Dear Destiny," features Nas writing and reading aloud a letter he wrote to his daughter, in which he reflects on the rich history of Black excellence. The vignette highlights Hennessy's Never Stop Never Settle Society which invests and empowers Black entrepreneurs who make lasting impacts on their communities.

"The concept of Black excellence refers to the creativity, ingenuity and dedication that entrepreneurs have had despite the odds and that regardless of those who attempt to marginalize, suppress or omit our efforts, the progress continues," said Kimmie Smith, cofounder and creative director of [Athleisure Mag](#), New York. "We are living during a time where Black excellence takes place across a number of verticals and noting those efforts that are known and unknown is essential.

"I think that Nas providing a history and showcasing how this legacy continues and even highlighting his own daughter speaks to how as a collective Black community, we contribute to this effort," she said. "I think there are positive feelings about this as it is essential to continue to include Black history and Black awareness beyond a designated month or theme."

### Dear Destiny

The vignette begins with Nas, born Nasir bin Olu Dara Jones, sitting at a dining room table. He is writing a letter to his daughter Destiny, as a bottle and glass of Hennessy sit in front of him.

"Dear Destiny, standing still, scared to death, holding you in my hands, I knew," the rapper says in the film. "I wanted you to see something I never saw, feel something our family had never grasped: Black excellence."

### *Dear Destiny examines unfulfilled legacies*

After a closeup of the Hennessy bottle and of Nas, the shot cuts to an old black-and-white television set as the songwriter begins to talk about the Greenwood District in Tulsa, OK, which was popularly known in the early 20th

century as "Black Wall Street".

Black Wall Street in Tulsa was one of the most prosperous African-American communities in the United States in the early twentieth century.

The film then transports viewers to Tulsa in 1921 as Nas describes the 40-acre, 35-block town fueled by the diligent work and prominent success of Black leaders, highlighting footage of Black lawyers, doctors and entrepreneurs.

"The vision of Black Wall Street was intentional," Nas says. "And so was its demise."

The songwriter touches on how in November of 1921, two days of racial violence led to destruction of this community built on Black success and prosperity, as well as the death of more than 300 people.

"A hundred years later, a hundred years strong, Destiny, you know a spirit that powerful could never be held down," Nas says as the camera cuts to a group of five contemporary Black leaders.



*The Never Stop Never Settle Society fund is providing \$1 million dollars to Black entrepreneurs. Image credit: Hennessy*

The group includes David Gross, founder of On Our Own; Tierra Carnagey, founder of Estella Contracting LLC; Rodney Williams, co-founder of LISNR, Christopher Larkin, founder of Christopher Styles Barber Spa; Destiny Jones, founder and CEO of Matic Cosmetics.

Nas then explains that the spirit and leaders of Black excellence, from 1921 to present, do not ever stop nor do they settle. The songwriter then encourages his daughter to always believe in the infinite potential of Black creativity, Black wealth, their potential and their people.

"Wherever Black folks dream, the spirit of Greenwood is there," he says. He encourages Destiny to go out and find fellow Black leaders to dream, create and succeed with.

Hennessy's Never Stop Never Settle Society acceleration fund will provide \$1 million to Black entrepreneurs through \$50,000 high-impact funding awarded to 20 selected applicants who are building their communities. Upon selection, the winners will be featured as the 2021 inaugural members of Hennessy's Never Stop Never Settle Society.

A continued commitment to Black excellence

Hennessy has shown consistent commitment to brand values, including its support of the Black community. The Cognac brand takes pride in celebrating the work and accomplishments of the Black community.

Last year, Hennessy and the Thurgood Marshall College Fund (TMCf) celebrated graduates of Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU) to connect with and build loyalty among future leaders at a time when graduations were cancelled across the United States due to coronavirus-related shutdowns. The brand and nonprofit teamed up to host a virtual graduation after-party to a #ShowMeYourWalk HBCU Edition commencement event livestreamed by Essense Studios featuring commencement speaker, former U.S. president Barack Obama ([see story](#)).

Last September, Hennessy debuted a phase of its Wild Rabbit ad campaign by highlighting the grit and determination of Maurice Ashley, the world's first Black chess grandmaster. Also narrated by Nas, the new 120-second film called "Maurice and The Black Bear School" celebrates Mr. Ashley, who earned his title with force of will and mental mastery ([see story](#)).

Hennessy continues to add to its rich history of celebrating Black excellence.

"In looking at Hennessy specifically, they were the first to begin advertising in magazines like Jet and Ebony as well

as being the first brand to include Black employees in executive positions," Ms. Smith said. "Their work in embracing the consumer as well as including their voices as employees and in advertisements et cetera created a synergy and a support that you also see within music, as a sponsor of the NBA and other areas."

"It is also an interesting interchange when talking about the power of a spirit of a people juxtaposed against the spirit as a Cognac," she said.

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