

NONPROFITS

## Chanel partners with Pharrell to launch entrepreneurial mentorship initiative

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*Pharrell's Black Ambition aims to strengthen the pipeline of talented Black and Latinx entrepreneurs. Image credit: Black Ambition*

By NORA HOWE

French fashion house Chanel is working towards closing the opportunity and wealth gap with its support of the Black Ambition initiative, the nonprofit led by music producer Pharrell Williams.

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Founded in 2020 by Mr. Williams, a longtime friend of Chanel, Black Ambition invests capital and resources in startups founded by Black and Latinx entrepreneurs. In support of the initiative, the French brand has launched a mentorship program to nurture emerging talent through access to knowledge and opportunities from industry-leading experts.

*Quote - coming*

Black Ambition

Mentorship is a founding principle of the initiative's mission, and is an integral factor in the success of the next generation of Black and Latinx entrepreneurs.

To celebrate the mentorship program, editor in chief of *Harper's Bazaar* Samira Nasr spoke with female leaders about resilience and determination, mentorship, building culture and community and the importance of self-confidence and clarity of vision.

"Black and Brown people, and women in particular, do not have a stake in what they make and are not taught, societally or culturally, to have equity in the things that they build," said actor, entrepreneur and producer Tracee Ellis Ross during the panel. "I have been on this journey of trying to understand how you take a dream out of your heart and mind and pull it up into the atmosphere."

*Chanel and Pharrell present "Women Who Lead" discussion*

Cofounder and CEO of fashion brand **Good American** Emma Grede touched on the importance of self worth, addressing that the most empowering thing one can do for themselves is wake up each day and say, "I am going to bet on me."

She also addressed the myth of finding success overnight. Often, people do not show the full journey towards success; instead, they focus on the highs and neglect to remind people of the lows.

"Resilience is something that, as an entrepreneur, you build over a long amount of time, and that comes from getting a lot of things really wrong," Ms. Grede said.

Echoing this notion of confidence and resilience, Natalie Massenet, cofounder and partner of **Imaginary Ventures** and founder of retailer Net-A-Porter, focused on the power of ideas.

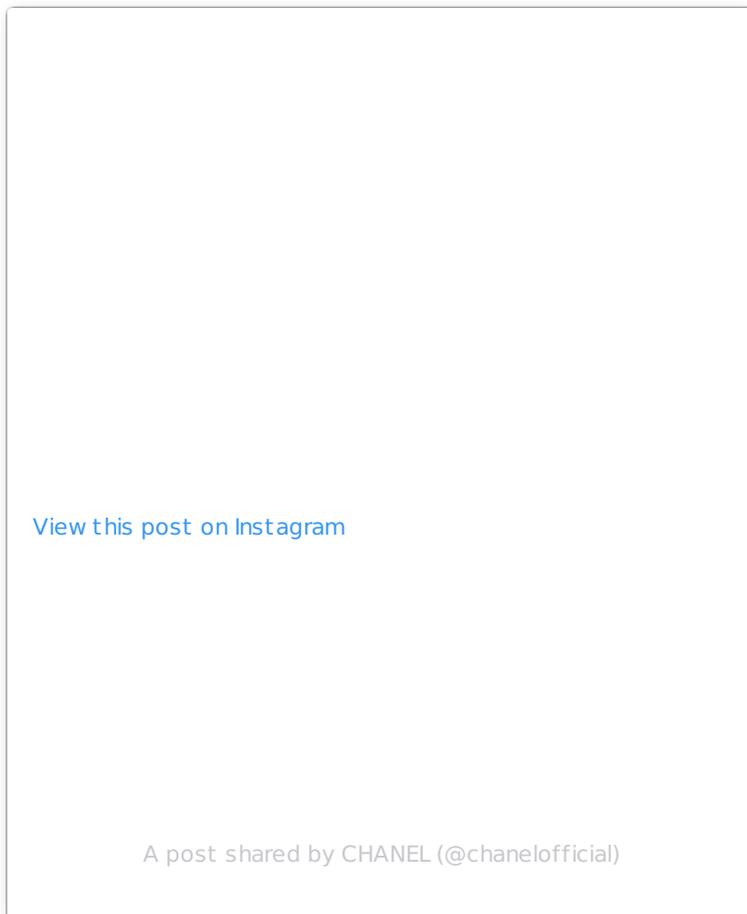
"When I started, I did not have any business experience," Ms. Massenet said. "All I had was the idea that I wanted to shop online and it did not exist.

"If you have an idea, you should never believe that just because it doesn't exist, it can't exist," she said.

When it comes to cultivating a culture of diversity and inclusion in the workplace, the panelists agreed that diversifying the decision-making table is key.

"All of us have our own versions of privilege, and that's a blind spot," Ms. Ross said. "The more diverse that table is, the more this experience looks like our world, and the better we all will be.

"Diversity, equity and inclusion is not about sales," she said. "It's about the love of humanity."



Edith Cooper, cofounder of mentorship service **Medley** and the first woman of color to make partner at investment banking firm **Goldman Sachs**, defined a leader as someone who owns the responsibility of creating an environment in their organization where everyone can perform to their potential.

After the murder of George Floyd last year and the global acceleration of the Black Lives Matter movement, more emphasis is being placed on social responsibility, diversity and inclusion as people and businesses work to address and combat systemic racism.

Standing up for Black lives

More than ever, consumers are demanding higher diversity standards from brands, as well as full transparency. Brands have responded with philanthropic initiatives and have used their consumer-facing platforms to promote inclusive messaging.

British department store chain Selfridges invited its team members to share their thoughts on how the company has

changed its business since the murder of Mr. Floyd, and subsequent racial reckoning, one year ago. In June 2020, Selfridges prompted employees to suggest ways the company could effectively and appropriately support diversity and inclusion.

One year later, the same employees were asked to share their thoughts on the progress Selfridges has made since the events of 2020, and what it can do to continue driving positive change. Across the board, the team members in the film believed that Selfridges has made progress, specifically in its willingness to engage in difficult conversations surrounding racism and discrimination ([see story](#)).

In September 2020, Italian fashion house Gucci's Chime for Change gender-equality initiative partnered with the African American Policy Forum to debut a special edition of its Chime Zine that advances a gender-inclusive narrative in the movement for Black lives.

Led by guest editor Kimberl Crenshaw, the issue of the Chime Zine featured the voices of Black women and called on the global community to join AAPF in their #SayHerName campaign ([see story](#)).

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