

RETAIL

## Nordstrom celebrates Black beauty, power in employee-led campaign

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*Natacha Karambizi, senior project manager at Nordstrom, discusses Black beauty. Image credit: Nordstrom*

By NORA HOWE

U.S. department store chain Nordstrom is commemorating Black History Month with a campaign honoring the multifaceted experience of what it means to be Black.

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The fashion and retail industry has consistently been criticized for its lack of diversity, and companies like **Nordstrom** are beginning to acknowledge how much influence the Black community has on the industry. Recognized in the U.S. during every February since 1976, Black History Month is an annual recognition of the achievements made by Black people and their role in shaping the country.

Celebrating the Black community

In a four-part campaign, Nordstrom explores the joy, beauty and complexity of being Black through the eyes of its own employees.

In one spot, the focus is on the power of family.

"Family is foundation, joy, pride," says Calvin Jenkins, senior designer at Nordstrom, in the video. "It's the chief building block of who we are, as far as our characters and personalities."

*Calvin Jenkins discusses the power of family while playing with a trunk full of clothes with his daughter*

When it comes to celebrating their heritage, Mr. Jenkins tries to incorporate Black culture into his home and his family, looking to past generations for strength and guidance.

In another spot, Black style is portrayed as experimentation and inspiration. According to two Nordstrom employees, it all comes down to self-expression and being true to oneself.

"Breathe life into the way you walk, the way you talk, the way you carry yourself," says Jeremy Johnson, associate marketing manager at Nordstrom, in the film.

From beauty and fashion to music and lifestyle, the Black community continuously inspires creativity, connection and expression.

"Black people and Black culture give inspiration from [their] experience," says Ebony Campbell, stylist at Nordstrom, in the video.

A third video serves as an ode to Black love. A young couple expresses how love is an integral part of their sense of security, defining Black love as safe, protective, complex and strong.

"Knowing I have that support and encouragement at home is huge," says Keyara Murray, engineer at Nordstrom, in the video. "It gives me the confidence to go into the world and be who I am, to show up as my authentic self."

*They describe Black love as complex, yet easy*

In a fourth video, Natacha Karambizi, senior project manager at Nordstrom, discusses Black beauty. She describes her experience coming to the U.S. from Rwanda and witnessing the diversity of beauty within the Black community alone.

"There are all kinds of beauty, shades and ways Black people can look and be beautiful," she says. "If I believe I'm beautiful, if I'm confident, whatever people say doesn't matter."

#### Equity in fashion

Beyond emotional storytelling and compelling film campaigns, consumers expect brands to show they are taking concrete steps in supporting communities that are predominantly underrepresented in the industry.

Last month, Nordstrom celebrated Martin Luther King Jr. with a day of service and listed commitments toward inclusivity and diversity.

It commits to investing \$50 million in communities where it operates by 2025 through corporate philanthropy and doubling charitable giving to nonprofit organizations that promote anti-racism, for a total of approximately \$1 million per year by 2025.

Nordstrom also intends to deliver \$500 million in retail sales from brands owned, operated or designed by Black and/or Latinx individuals by the end of 2025 and increase the representation of Black and Latinx populations by at least 50 percent in people-manager roles at the mid-and senior levels by the end of 2025.

In partnering with the 15 Percent Pledge, Nordstrom intends to grow its purchases from Black-owned or founded businesses by 10 times by the end of 2030 ([see story](#)).

In an effort to elevate Black and Latinx designers, the retailer launched a partnership last year with contemporary Seattle-based artist Cristina Martinez, whose work is founded in amplifying the stories of Black and Brown people.

The collection was inspired by three original artworks created by the artist, each of which encourages individuals to take care of themselves and bloom where they are rooted ([see story](#)).