

# West Elm Partners With 15 Percent Pledge to Add More Black-Owned Brands

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West Elm has become the third retailer to partner with the 15 Percent Pledge campaign, promising to stock at least 15% Black-owned brands in its stores.

The first major retailer to take the pledge in June was Sephora, followed by Rent the Runway later that month.

In a statement on Wednesday, West Elm laid out a three-point plan to diversify not just its supply chain, but also the company itself. The chain of home goods stores promised to “increase West Elm’s design” collaborations with Black designers, artists and Black-owned brands to a minimum of 15% of total” and also increase the number of Black creatives partnering with its West Elm Local platform to 15%.

The Brooklyn-based retailer also pledged to “increase the share of Black employees within West Elm’s corporate workforce to a minimum of 15%, as well as strengthening the retail-to-corporate pipeline.”

“We are determined to use our purchasing power to create economic empowerment for Black-owned businesses, artists and designers,” said West Elm president Alex Bellos in the statement. “We look forward to working with the 15 Percent Pledge to ensure our commitments make an immediate and sustained impact.”

Aurora James, founder of the 15 Percent Pledge, told Adweek that her team worked with the home goods retailer to assess the best way for the company to reach benchmarks. When James

launched the campaign in the beginning of June, her goal was to have major retailers stock Black-owned brands to match the roughly 15% of the U.S. population made up by Black Americans.

When Sephora signed on in early June, it took the unusual step of revealing just how few Black-owned companies were in its supply chain. Out of the 290 beauty brands currently stocked at Sephora, just 7 are Black-owned. The company told Adweek, “we can and will be doing more.”

Rent the Runway joined the campaign on June 23, committing not just to stocking shelves with 15% Black-owned brands, but also promising that “a minimum of 15% of freelance creative talent will be Black from here on out. This includes stylists, photographers, models, influencers” and more, according to the campaign’s Instagram announcement that day.

“Rent the Runway is one of the biggest wholesale purchasers of fashion and accessories brands, so we are very excited that they have committed to the 15 Percent Pledge,” James said.

West Elm and its parent company Williams-Sonoma, Inc. did not respond to requests for comment, including requests for data on how many Black-owned brands it currently stocks.

The initial targets of the 15 Percent Pledge were four major retailers: Target, Sephora, Shopbop and Whole Foods. James said those four stores have the Black community to thank for a large share of profits, and should ensure that the community is included sufficiently in supply chains so that the economic relationship flows in both directions.

“Many Black people choose to spend their money with these retailers; they are set up in our communities, and their sponsored posts are targeted to us,” James told Adweek in June. “If they value our money, it is time to value us as well and show us that we are represented.”

With this week’s announcement, the 15 Percent Pledge has now

ensured that Black-owned companies in three major sectors—beauty, fashion, and furniture and home goods—will gain both exposure and millions of dollars in collective income. The campaign has expanded its approach beyond the initial “big four” U.S. retailers, publicly asking Kroger, Walmart, Ulta Beauty and Nordstrom to join the campaign. It also recently called out Canadian retailers Hudson Bay, Ssense, Holt Renfrew and Indigo, asking them to “support brands that are representative of the diverse Canadian population.”

When asked about the silence on the part of the other brands such as Target and Whole Foods, that were the campaign’s initial partnership goals, James said, “We have been having some very productive conversations with other major brands and we are excited to make more announcements in the coming months.”

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