Why Beauty Brands Are at the Forefront of Supporting Black Lives Matter

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In the wake of the death of George Floyd, after a Minneapolis police officer held his knee on Floyd’s neck while he was in custody, and the protests that have ensued, countless brands have taken to social media to publicize their solidarity with the #BlackLivesMatter movement and amplify the voices of black creators.

Beauty brands in particular have stepped up to support the movement. At least 60 brands, such as Augustinus Bader, Glossier and UOMA Beauty, have donated or taken action.

But because of the industry’s dynamics and past, beauty brands are in a unique position—and have a unique responsibility.

“The beauty industry has a moral responsibility, having embedded and perpetuated unrealistic beauty ideals for so long,” said Melanie McShane, senior director of strategy at Siegel+Gale.

Consumers are demanding the industry make an active effort to diversify staff and ensure their activism is more than just a public relations stunt or fleeting trend. This comes from internalizing the messages of racial justice organizations and recognizing the connection between beauty standards and equality.

Correcting social injustices

On Sunday, Glossier became one of the first major brands across all industries to announce it would donate $500,000 to six racial justice organizations, as well as $500,000 in grants to black-owned beauty businesses, to make an impact on its own industry. The brand also created a #BLM Instagram Story highlight with resources on how to take action.

Although making financial donations is a start, many brands have acknowledged that their work is far from over.

On June 2, Nail care company Olive & June announced its plans to donate $10,000 to Color of Change, but founder and CEO Sarah Gibson Tuttle knows she must continue to play a role in the fight for racial justice.

“This is a really important moment in history that is inspiring us to not just donate for one day, but look at all of the aspects of our business and hold ourselves accountable for being a part of the change,” she said. “We will find more ways to highlight resources and amplify voices within the Black community, especially in the beauty and entrepreneur spaces.”

Skin care brand Augustinus Bader donated to Black Lives Matter, the Innocence Project and the NAACP, according to co-founder and CEO Charles Rosier. In May, Augustinus Bader also pledged to donate 12,000 units of its Rich Cream, which retails for $265, to hospitals worldwide in response to Covid-19. Rosier emphasized the importance of not limiting his brand’s donation efforts to one cause in order to cater to the ever-changing needs of consumers.

Brands have also acknowledged that actively supporting these organizations and recognizing the causes that consumers care about is one of the best ways to build community.

“It’s great to see different types of corporations and

industries trying to become more in tune with what is happening in our communities," Rosier said. "The beauty message isn't just about superficiality—it's about connecting with everyone and our community. Just like we are concerned about the spread of Covid, we are also concerned about the spread of racial injustice."

Holding beauty brands accountable

Sharon Chuter, the CEO of UOMA Beauty, took to Instagram Wednesday to demand that over the next 72 hours, other brands disclose the number of Black people they have employed in corporate and leadership roles. She asked that her followers withhold purchases until the information is released.

"You can't tell us that Black Lives Matter publicly, when you don't show us Black Lives Matter within your own homes and within your own organizations," she wrote.

Chuter has created an Instagram account, @pullupforchange, which details statistics on the lack of economic opportunities for members of the Black community and encourages brands to consider their role in perpetuating the problem.

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