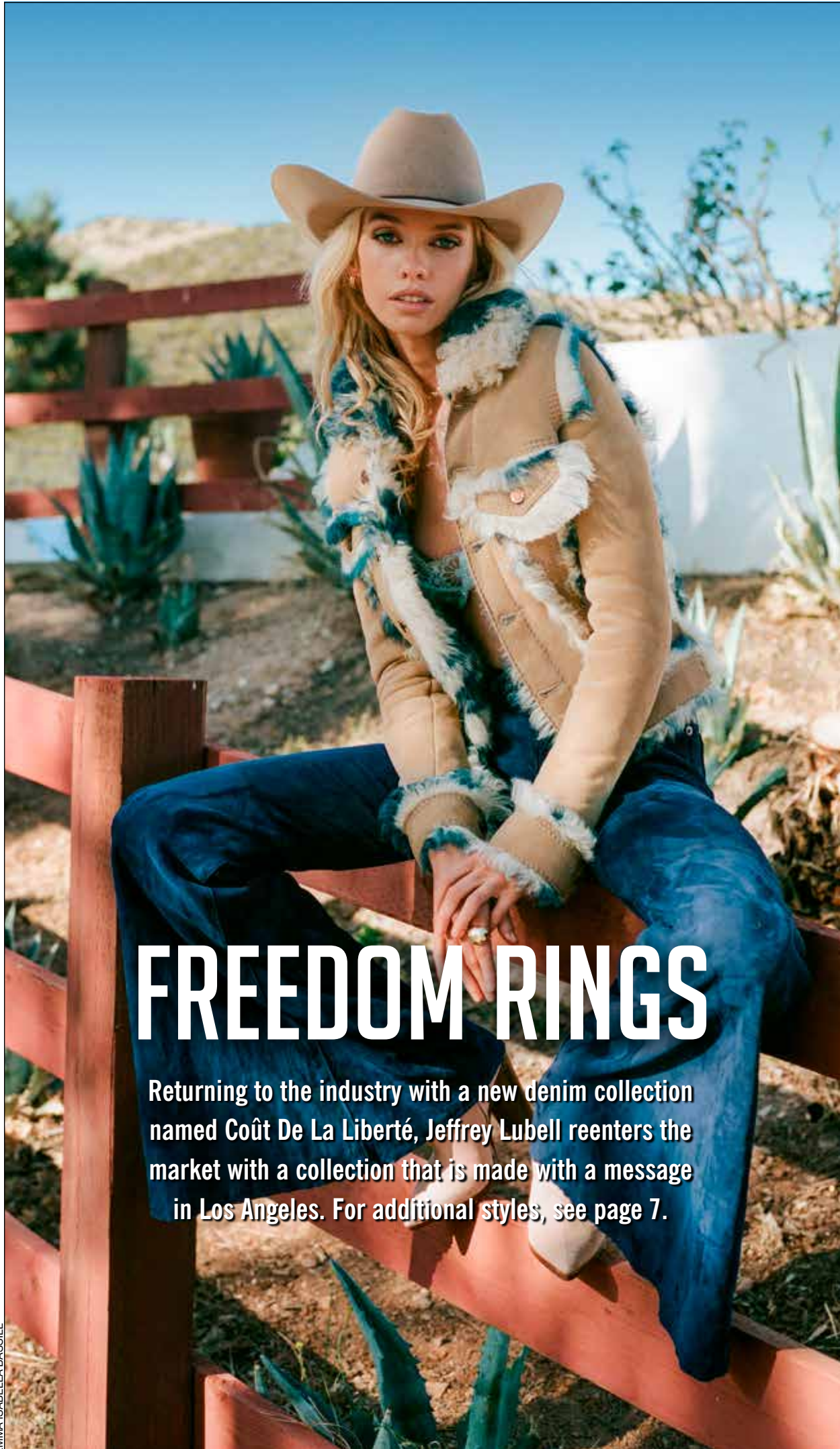


# CALIFORNIA ApparelNews

THE VOICE OF THE INDUSTRY FOR 75 YEARS

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## FREEDOM RINGS

Returning to the industry with a new denim collection named Coût De La Liberté, Jeffrey Lubell reenters the market with a collection that is made with a message in Los Angeles. For additional styles, see page 7.

EMMA ISABELLA BASSILL

### TRADE SHOW REPORT

## L.A. Market Week Blends Traditional Showroom Visits With Digital Meetings

By Andrew Asch and Dorothy Crouch

While the COVID-19 pandemic has slowed retail and trade events in the apparel industry, business seems to be slowly opening up. During the Aug. 2–6 edition of **L.A. Market Week**, buyers visited downtown Los Angeles' Fashion District and logged onto digital platforms. Showrooms at the **Cooper Design Space**, **The New Mart** and the **California Market Center** welcomed buyers to safely shop their lines.

### CMC Uploaded Unveiled

The **California Market Center** introduced "CMC Uploaded," a series of interviews with the building's showrooms, where the colors and the silhouettes of clothing lines were discussed just like a television shopping show. CMC Uploaded  
➔ **L.A. Market** page 3

### MANUFACTURING

## With the Power of One P.O., Everything Can Change for Black-Owned Apparel Businesses

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

One major deal can change everything for a small company, yet it can be more crucial for determining the success of Black-owned businesses and those led by members of underrepresented groups, said Dawaud Muhammad. As the co-owner of a Black-owned printing-and-embroidery company, Muhammad leads **Big Printing Textile Co., LLC**, which is located in the San Francisco Bay Area town of San Leandro, Calif.

A big deal with a major company recently helped Big Printing finance an expansion that Muhammad had been trying to put together for years with bank loans. With proceeds  
➔ **Big Printing Textile** page 9

## INSIDE

Where fashion gets down to business<sup>SM</sup>



2



6

State of the sustainable category ... p. 3

Texworld USA and Apparel Sourcing USA ... p. 8

Tailored Brands ... p. 9

Resource Guide ... p. 10

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## New Name, \$100-Million Remodel Announced for Hollywood & Highland

The new owners of the **Hollywood & Highland** retail and entertainment center recently unveiled a new name, **Ovation**, and details of a \$100-million overhaul to the sprawling complex that dominates the intersection of Hollywood Boulevard and Highland Avenue in Los Angeles amid the Hollywood Walk of Fame.

Prominent design firm **Gensler** will preside over the major renovation effort, which will be wrapped up in late 2021, said Stenn Parton, chief retail officer of **DJM**, a private equity real estate developer that remodeled **Runway Playa Vista** in Los Angeles' Playa Vista section, as well as **Lido Marina Village** in Newport Beach, Calif. DJM also built **Pacific City** retail center in Huntington Beach, Calif.

DJM's partner in the Ovation venture is **GAW Capital USA**, a Hong Kong- and Los Angeles-based private real-estate equity firm. They acquired Hollywood & Highland for an undisclosed amount in August 2019. The transaction did not include the **Dolby Theatre**, located at the western edge of the site. The **Academy Awards** ceremony has most recently been produced at the Dolby.

The remodel will transform the complex's



Ovation rendering

physical layout and architecture, and it will broaden the property's focus. Introduced as a dining, entertainment and retail center, Ovation will introduce 100,000 square feet of creative office space along with 135,000 square feet of retail, 85,000 square feet of dining, 65,000 square feet of entertainment space and 40,000 square feet of event space.

Parton said that Ovation's retail would focus on companies interested in trying new retail concepts. "We are concentrating on

brands that are the best fit and will represent where the future of retail is going. We will be selective in the brands we choose," he said. He also noted that Ovation will be making its debut during a period when news headlines are marked by store closings.

"The market has evolved more quickly than anyone could have predicted," he said. "Partnership is key in today's world. Brands should know that we are as invested in their success as much as they are."

When the Hollywood & Highland retail center was unveiled in November 2001, it featured a bold design and architecture that celebrated the history of the Hollywood film industry and specifically its silent-movie era. Installed at the complex were two big statues of elephants, reproductions of sets that were used in D.W. Griffith's movie "Intolerance." The elephants will be removed from the site during the remodel.

The new look will feature fresh landscaping, enhanced outdoor space and a layout that Parton said would be easier to navigate. He also said that the center would be working with the City of Los Angeles to start developing what he hoped would be the biggest center for public art in the city.—Andrew Asch

## TRADE SHOWS

## Paraiso Miami Beach Announces a Hybrid Digital-Physical Swim Week

**Paraiso Miami Beach** rallied from the cancellation of its July swim week due to COVID-19 by announcing a combination of in-person events and a virtual trade show. This fresh concept will afford opportunities for brands and designers to increase exposure of their Resort 2021 collections.

The new swim events are scheduled to run Aug. 20–23, only a bit more than one month past the previously scheduled **Miami Swim Week** dates and have the full support of the City of Miami Beach. "We understand the priorities and challenges that brands are facing at the moment," said Natalija Dedic



Acacia Resort '20 collection shown during the 2019 edition of Paraiso

Stojanovic, creative director of Paraiso Miami Beach, in a statement. "The fundamental platforms that need to be reactivated for the fast recovery of the fashion system as a whole are trade and marketing platforms."

This new series of events will kick off Aug. 20 with the debut of a swimwear collection by Los Angeles-headquartered designer Claude Kameni of **Lavie by CK**. On Aug. 21, runway shows for the **Agua Bendita** and **Beach Bunny** fashion labels will be produced. On Aug. 22, runway shows for the **Vitamin A** and **Luli Fama** labels are scheduled. The same night, **Fashion Group International** will present special awards. Those honored include Aleksandar Stojanovic, co-founder of Paraiso Miami Beach, and Judy Stein, executive director of the **Swimwear Association of Florida**. On Aug. 23, a fashion show by **Maaji** is scheduled.

Paraiso will partner with fashion technology company **theCxn** to produce virtual showrooms for the virtual marketplace, which will be located at [ParaisoMiamiBeach.com](http://ParaisoMiamiBeach.com). At this virtual show, retailers will be able to schedule appointments and shop collections through brand videos. The events will also feature shoppable runway presentations. Prospective attendees may RSVP to these events; admission will be considered based on capacity.—Andrew Asch

## Inside the Industry

The **Black In Fashion Council** officially launched Aug. 3 as an initiative to drive the advancement of Black professionals in fashion and beauty from entry-level roles to the C suite. Founded by *Teen Vogue* editor-in-chief Lindsay Peoples Wagner and publicist Sandrine Charles, the Black in Fashion Council has assembled a group of apparel and beauty brands, media companies, executives and designers to shift the fashion and beauty industries toward more inclusivity and equitable practices. Partners of the organization include Athleta, Banana Republic, BFA, Brandon Maxwell, Browns, Calvin Klein, Cartier North America, Condé Nast, DePop, Everlane, Fred Segal, Gap, Hill City, Hunt & Gather, Intermix, Janie & Jack, Moda Operandi, Myra Swim, Prabal Gurung, PVH Corp., Stadium Goods, Tamara Mellon, Tiffany & Co., The RealReal, Tommy Hilf and Universal Standard.

Social-media platform **MeSpoke** announced that it had received an official patent from the United States Patent and Trademark Office. Its technology enables users to gain loyalty points by embedding hashtags in their original content that showcases their outfits and allows the sharing of these images and messaging with others who use the platform. Along with hashtags that link to brands shown in the images, MeSpoke's algorithm distributes points to the content owner, according to the level other users have with the hashtags that have been embedded. Points are then used to enjoy brand and retailer promotions, discounts and specials, thereby rewarding users for promoting the brands that receive the complimentary exposure on the MeSpoke site.

**Chipotle Mexican Grill** announced the Aug. 4 launch of Chipotle Goods, a more-responsibly made apparel collection that will be dyed using a formula created from upcycling some of the nearly 300 million avocado pits yielded from its restaurants each year. Offered exclusively to Chipotle Rewards members, the Newport Beach, Calif., company's collection comprises pieces including a jean jacket lined with an avocado-print textile, customizable T-shirts and socks. Five avocado pits are required to create the dye used in making one piece of apparel. Many of the collection's pieces are created by New York City's Loomstate, a responsible manufacturer that has been the restaurant's uniform partner and aligns with its long-standing commitment to Global Organic Textile Standard cotton.

**Revolve Group, Inc.**, the women's apparel e-tailer, announced that former Wet Seal Chief Executive Officer Melanie Cox has joined its board. Currently the founder of MBC Consulting, Cox has also served in executive roles at Urban Outfitters, Gymboree and Scoop NYC. Michal Mente, co-founder and co-CEO of the Cerritos, Calif.-based Revolve, welcomed Cox to the board as she replaces TSG Consumer Managing Director Jennifer Baxter Moser. "Melanie is a proven leader with deep apparel-industry experience," Mente said. "Her experience successfully guiding public and private companies in our industry is a great complement to our already strong board. I am excited to tap into Melanie's breadth of industry knowledge and am confident that her contributions to our board will be invaluable in shaping Revolve's future strategies for growth and unlocking shareholder value."

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# Sustainability Continues to Drive the Apparel Industry

By Dorothy Crouch *Managing Editor*

As bricks-and-mortar businesses slowly open under new COVID-19 safety guidelines, e-commerce popularity has increased. During this time, shoppers gained more freedom to research brand commitment to sustainability, according to Marshal Cohen, chief industry adviser of the data and analytics company **The NPD Group, Inc.**

“We’ve had more time to investigate brands and make decisions. The focus on sustainability has shifted since COVID-19, which is understandable as we navigate our way through what the heck is going on,” Cohen explained. “People have the time to investigate these brands and what they stand for.”

While consumer focus has been on necessities and sustainable goods might have been placed on the back burner, more-responsible goods remain part of the recipe.

In a study performed by technology company **CGS**, which released its “2020 Retail and Sustainability Survey” last month, 51 percent of the 2,000 consumers ages 18–65+ surveyed view sustainability as important. Despite a decline from a 2019 percentage of 68 percent, Paul Magel, president of the business-applications division at CGS, attributes it to rising unemployment during the first half of the year.

“This is, no doubt, an economic factor of the pandemic, given the increased unemployment and underemployment that began in late February,” he said. “Also, the pandemic has caused a shift in priorities for consumers. In such situations as a pandemic, the Maslow hierarchy of needs becomes more important. The physical and emotional safety of consumers will impact the priority of the sustainability movement.”

With new approaches to a post-COVID-19 world, consumers reported that a large portion of their shopping will be performed online. In addition to the 45 percent of those surveyed who will return to shopping in stores, 41 percent will only shop online, and 14 percent will choose curbside pickup, with 56 percent willing to spend up to 25 percent more for sustainable offerings. This trend is good news for sustainable brands and manufacturers.

One such brand is San Francisco-based **Tonlé**, which

produces its garments in an ethically managed facility in Cambodia.

“It was really rough on the whole-sale side. Overall, our e-commerce sales have been doing quite well, but 80 percent of our business is whole-sale,” explained creative director and founder Rachel Faller, who reported that e-commerce doubled while traffic to her site tripled. “We get a lot of people engaging us with questions on social media. People come to us because they know that we are doing things differently.”

Shopping Tonlé products provides a bright spot for consumers, according to Faller. Her customers find a sense of contributing to the greater good by purchasing her pieces, which are made by a small group of sewers who use dead stock, cutaways and smaller scraps to create Tonlé clothing.

“People are looking for something that gives them hope. There is a lot of depressing news. Even within the fashion industry, it’s been negative—how factory workers are being treated and brands not paying, while billionaires are making a lot of money while people are suffering,” Faller said. “With Tonlé and other sustainable brands, it gives you a relief and ability to contribute to something that is positive.”

For New York City’s **Marrakshi Life**, which is handwoven in Northern Africa using local cotton, founder Randall Bachner reveals that while consumers are spending less overall, he sees a push for sustainable goods, particularly in the ethical segment.

“People are more concerned about how things are made and are paying attention to quality as opposed to big manu-



Design from Marrakshi Life Collection 07

factured goods. I believe there is an emphasis on supporting brands with positive values that are focusing on pushing out quality. People are spending less but investing in ethical and sustainable brands that do well and look great,” Bachner said. “Made-to-order sustainable clothes has been a story our audience loves.”

Citing the June 2020 “Organic Industry Survey” by the **Organic Trade Association**, Lori Wyman, the **Global Organic Textile Standard** representative for North America, noted that in 2019 sales of organic food and non-food in the United States totaled a record \$55.1 billion—an increase of 5 percent over 2018. While there might have been a slowdown for some goods during the COVID-19 pandemic, organic-produce sales have risen more than 20 percent during spring 2020, notable trend considering how apparel-production practices tend to follow suit after a large consumer response in the food industry.

“GOTS has had a steady rise in the growth of companies becoming certified over the last four months,” Wyman said. “The spa-goods sector in particular has seen steady growth. I believe it’s due to the nesting instincts people are having as they isolate at home.”

Post-pandemic, Cohen feels that the conversation regarding sustainability—after reverting back slightly—will be able to continue on a path toward a more-responsible industry, yet there will be a change in this discussion.

“A brand no longer needs to tell us what it stands for; a brand has to tell us what it’s doing,” Cohen said. “The consumer has to prove to the brands that this means something to them. Not just another marketing tool.” ●

## TRADE SHOWS

### L.A. Market *Continued from page 1*

was webcast Aug. 3–5 on **Zoom** and moderated by Matthew Mathiasen, the CMC’s manager of buyer and community relations, said Moriah Robinson, the building’s events director.

“We’ve had a great turnout and already seen quite a bit of buyer engagement with some buyers contacting showrooms minutes after their session ended,” Robinson said.

Like other businesses that relied on in-person traffic in the past, the CMC moved toward digital forums to blunt the spread of COVID-19. However, a buyer could still enter the building if an appointment was made with a showroom.

At **Sharon Koshet Sales**, it was also the first time in Koshet’s career that she did not have walk-in traffic during a market. However, Koshet found a lot that was appealing about conducting meetings through **FaceTime** and **Zoom**. The digital meetings were more apt to result in a sale, she said.

“When you are doing FaceTime, you are explaining more,” Koshet said. “They ask more questions.”

One of the retailers taking virtual meetings with Koshet was Eloise Goldberg of the **City Lites** boutique located near Palm Desert, Calif. “With Zoom, there are no interruptions or interference. You can really concentrate,” Goldberg said. “But it’s hard for me to buy online. I’m more of a hands-on kind of person.”

Sundresses have been trending at her store, and face masks are also among the big sellers. Goldberg ordered **Berek** and **Mesmerize** face-mask brands from Koshet.

### Virtual and in-person meetings at the Cooper

At the Cooper Design Space, Marco Lebel turned his **Lebel Fashion Group** showroom into a photography studio for August market. He mounted an **iPad Pro** tablet on a stand and illuminated the showroom with a bright halo light to conduct virtual meetings. Lebel, who marked the fifth anniversary of his showroom business, took in a handful of in-person meetings served market, but running virtual meetings has increasingly served as his mode of doing business.

Virtual meetings take a lot more legwork than in-person meetings and there’s no opportunity for walk-in buyers to see lines such as **Milly**, **Judith & Charles**, **Kasia** and **Black**

**Score**. The buyers who made orders requested **Immediates** or orders that were going to be delivered in 60 to 90 days, Lebel said.

Despite a shift to digital, there is still business to be made with in-person meetings, said Israel Ramirez, owner of the **Siblings Showroom**. He estimated that the number of in-person meetings compared to the June L.A. Market doubled. “There is still a need to go out there and buy,” Ramirez said.

One of the retailers taking an in-person meeting at **Siblings** was **Founded 1912**, a swim-and-beachwear store that is scheduled to open in Manhattan Beach, Calif., in mid-September, said Jennifer Elias, a shop co-founder. The boutique will offer elevated swimwear and beachwear for tourists and also focus on serving local consumers in Manhattan Beach and the surrounding cities in Los Angeles’ South Bay.

Elias said that COVID-19 has compromised the sense of discovery finding new lines during an unplanned visit to a showroom. “Something can look different on video than when you see it in person,” Elias said. “It makes it more challenging, especially with swimsuits and their trims.”

For swim trends, Elias noted a vintage trend in women’s swimwear, especially with the high waists of the 1950s’ pin-up look. “There are a lot of beautiful colors coming out,” she said. “A lot of yellows, pastels and lilacs. Pinks are hot.”

### Staying optimistic at The New Mart

Business at The New Mart saw local buyers in addition to more-distant cities in California and neighboring states.

At the **Arlene Henry Showroom**, Sarah Kirakossian saw buyers from Palm Desert, Calif.; Pasadena, Calif.; and Arizona. Making appointments far in advance wasn’t the standard during this market, she said, noting a quick text from a buyer would be sent prior to arrival. While some buyers visited with a clear idea of the lines they wanted to see, others needed a bit of guidance.

“They’ll say, ‘We want to see **Lisa Todd**’ or they want to see **Staples**,” Kirakossian said, referencing some of the lines she was showing. “They also don’t know what they want due to the shutdown in case it happens again. The people from the desert said business is picking up because the snowbirds didn’t go back to the East Coast after last winter.”

More-fashionable tops were trending during this market as consumers who work from home are still expected to appear business ready for virtual conferences and video meetings. Buyers must also serve customers who are becoming more conscientious regarding the origins of their garments.

Stopping by Arlene Henry, Valerie Forlizzi, the founder and owner of the Simi Valley, Calif.-based **Toscana Moon Boutique**, said that she was happy to see more growth in the domestic side of apparel manufacturing.

“I don’t know if it has to do with the pandemic, but there seems to be influence on local manufacturing and stuff that is made in the U.S.,” Forlizzi said. “I like stumbling upon new companies that are manufacturing in the U.S. Some are a little bit more money, but it’s worth it.”

Catering to all ages with its trendy and bohemian goods, Forlizzi’s store offers price points averaging \$69, with certain members of her clientele prepared to spend a bit more. To find holiday goods and items from new lines for her store, which sells mostly women’s but also men’s accessories and some children’s pieces and lifestyle products, Forlizzi visited the **Rande Cohen** showroom for **PJ Salvage** and **Valerie Hambas**, where she found **Saxx**, **5 Seasons**, **Lynn Girard**, and **Chaser**.

At the **Robert Aruj Showroom**, which specializes in handbag lines such as **Inzi** and **Bevini Modena**, business was going well. Aruj reported a steady stream of customers on the afternoon of Aug. 4, with some visiting from as far away as South Dakota.

“There are a lot of retailers out there who need to be looking at fall. I get reorders on a regular basis,” Aruj said. “They are buying very close to need so they are looking for immediate delivery.”

With non-leather wholesale price points between \$30 and \$50 and leather averaging \$90 to \$95 wholesale, he saw interest in products that offered convenience, such as crossbody bags, totes that aren’t too large, quilted pieces and retro suede-and-leather combinations.

“It’s promising. People are slowly but surely getting ready for fall—conditions allowing. People aren’t sure when to jump in,” Aruj said. “Normally, going into fall people have to go back to school and back to jobs. That isn’t happening the way it did.” ●





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## FASHION RETAIL

### ‘Making the Cut’ Winner Jonny Cota Opens Store to Build New Brand Experience

A few months after his victory on “Making the Cut,” a fashion competition show produced by **Amazon Prime**, Los Angeles designer Jonny Cota opened a new, self-named store on Aug. 1 at the **Row DTLA** campus of retail, dining and creative offices in downtown Los Angeles.

Located on the site of his former multi-brand store, **Cota by Skingraft**, the **Jonny Cota** shop takes the place of the store that shuttered in March due to government orders to close nonessential retail and public places during the first weeks of the COVID-19 pandemic. Select stores at Row DTLA have been reopening since July 20.

Cota and his business partner, brother Chris Cota, wanted to use the store reopening as a vehicle to launch a new chapter of Jonny Cota’s career. The rebrand will retire the nameplate **Skingraft**, which was the moniker of his downtown Los Angeles leather outerwear and accessories brand. It will put all of his fashion ventures under the nameplate of Jonny Cota.

The Jonny Cota store was originally planned to open in May, shortly after “Making the Cut” hosts Tim Gunn and Heidi Klum announced that Cota had won the show’s \$1 million prize after competing against 12 other designers.

“It is a peculiar time,” Cota said of the pandemic. “Pushing anyone to buy anything is tone deaf. But 2020 is our year. We moved slowly and diligently to make this feel not out of step. The precautions are right to share with people in a new and engaging way.”

The 2,000-square-foot store features tools to help customers and staff maintain physical space, such as contactless payment. Cash will not be honored at the store. But like a

traditional boutique experience, the store also features Jonny Cota’s fashions, accessories, signature perfumes and homewares for purchase. Most crucially for Cota, the shop will also serve as a gateway to a virtual experience, he said.

“I never imagined launching my name-sake from home in sweatpants,” he said. “The pandemic has pushed us to prioritize digital, prioritize online, prioritize a customer experience that doesn’t require them coming to the store. Even as we built the physical store, digital is a priority. It’s almost been a blessing. It’s guided us to the future of retail.”

The virtual store, [www.jonnycota.com](http://www.jonnycota.com), was also introduced on Aug. 1. It features videos of installations from artists Adrian Gilliland and David Meanix. These installations are also featured at the physical store. In addition, the website offers videos showing behind-the-scenes, documentary-style video footage from the production of Cota’s editorial campaign for the Metamorphosis collection of **Jonny Cota Studio**, the line that won “Making the Cut.”

Physical retail remains an integral part of the Jonny Cota brand experience. The store will be the exclusive retailer carrying the Metamorphosis collection, which has previously only been available on [Amazon.com](http://Amazon.com).

During his time working within The Cota by Skingraft store, Cota sought to establish a space for experiential retail, a mission on which he is still focused through his fresh venture. “You can come in and there’s no pressure to shop. Come and experience it,” Cota said. “But if you want to shop, you can either make a purchase with our team or make a purchase by scanning barcodes with your phone.”—*Andrew Asch*

## TRADE SHOWS

### Surf Expo Announces Virtual Trade Show After Canceling September Event

Surf and action-sports trade show **Surf Expo** announced that it will cancel its upcoming September event, which was scheduled to run Sept. 10–12 in Orlando, Fla., due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

In a statement posted on the show’s website, [surfexpo.com](http://surfexpo.com), Roy Turner, Surf Expo’s senior vice president, said that the trade show was wary of possibly exposing its attendees to COVID-19. Crowds of more than 25,000 attendees pass through the biannual show, which produces events during September and January. The trade-show producers also had to contend with companies restricting and sometimes banning employee travel.

In place of the in-person show, Surf Expo will introduce the virtual show **Surf Expo Connect**, which is scheduled to launch officially Sept. 16–18. Attendees can register for this new offering at [surfexpo.com](http://surfexpo.com). Turner forecasted that Surf Expo’s inaugural virtual show would have a good turnout. About 5,000 people had already registered to attend the on-site September show, and he thought that a significant number of them would attend the virtual show. Surf Expo Connect also might pick up attendees from people who

weren’t intending to make a trip to Orlando but wanted to order for their stores.

“I’m hearing from retailers that they need product,” Turner said. “We still have the opportunity to connect these retailers and manufacturers and have retailers find new product.”

Surf Expo Connect will offer virtual booths where exhibitors can show product, post catalogs and hold talks through virtual chat, Turner said. It also will offer trade-show programming such as panel discussions and educational seminars.

“We’ll try to bring a sense of community as best as we can, even though we can’t meet face-to-face,” Turner said.

Veteran Surf Expo exhibitor Joel Cooper, chief executive officer of **Lost International**, said that he was interested in the virtual show but that online events lack a key ingredient of in-person shows.

“You get to meet upper-level management,” Cooper said. However, virtual trade shows may be part of a regular show calendar post-pandemic, he added. “This is a new world. You have to be open to everything.”—*Andrew Asch*



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# Banshee Swim Enters the Industry Screaming a Message of Acceptance and Transparency

By Dorothy Crouch Managing Editor

Growing up in Washington state, Amanda Fronckowiak always sewed clothes, aspiring to become a designer, but she didn't know on what category she wanted to focus. Fronckowiak might not have envisioned a swimwear-design future, but that changed during an internship in California prior to her graduation from **Central Washington University**.

"All I did every single day was go to the beach as soon as I could leave my internship. I never realized the whole swimwear culture," she said. "I saw that people have a swimsuit for every day of the week and that there are different types, such as luxury swimwear—I had no idea what luxury swimwear was. Then I found out, and that is when I started sewing my own swimsuits."

It was at this moment that Fronckowiak decided to enter the swimwear category, revealing that she became "obsessed" with it and the California swim culture. Following her graduation in 2017, she relocated to Los Angeles yet soon discovered that climbing through the fashion ranks was not only challenging but near impossible. She was unable to find a job that afforded a living wage, never mind try to establish her own swimwear brand as she had originally planned.

"I was going to come down, gain more fashion experience and by the time I was 30 I wanted to start it," she said. "I got down here and was working for free. Whenever I did get paid jobs in fashion it was severely underpaid, as most people in the fashion industry know."

As she landed day jobs within the local fashion industry, working in different categories from basics to denim, learning the business ropes and cutting her teeth as a young designer, Fronckowiak still needed money to live. She decided to moonlight at an adult-entertainment venue as an exotic dancer. Eventually, she secured a role as an assistant designer with the Irvine, Calif., swimwear brand **L\*Space**—her dream job. While this job was a perfect fit for Fronckowiak's skill set, she still wanted to create her dream brand. **Banshee Swim** was born in 2019 with its first suit shipped in February 2020.



CARIANNE OLDER



HUNTER TAYLOR



LYRIC HEARD



Banshee Swim Vacay 2020 collection

"I wanted my creative freedom again instead of designing for the masses. I wanted to do Banshee, so I fully dedicated all of my time to creating it," she said. "It all happened kind of quickly. I had my first selling season this past Spring. I was able to ship my first suit in February."

This was the time when COVID-19 began to spread throughout the United States, a threat for any business owner. While Fronckowiak was alarmed by the devastation that was playing out, she wisely conserved her financial resources and relied on the gritty determination that had brought her to this point.

"When COVID-19 came so quickly, I was really scared. I was super frugal and didn't put any money toward advertising, holding onto all of my dollars because I didn't know what was going to happen," she said. "Then I just let it rip and put faith in my company, paying for ads, and it all started to pay off."

Available in sizes S-L, with separates retailing for \$70-\$90 and one-pieces for \$180, Banshee Swim can be found at [bansheeswim.co](http://bansheeswim.co). Based upon her life in Los Angeles, the city's swim and beach culture, and her time working in adult entertainment, Fronckowiak created Banshee Swim as an unapologetic approach to swimwear that relies on sheer tops and edgy, playful cuts that celebrate the people who wear them.

"It's the attitude and the feel that I always wanted for my swimwear," she said. "I wanted it to be the anti-swimwear brand. I want to do things that people say can't be done: 'You can't have see-through swimwear,' 'You can't do this.' And I am like, why the f--- not?"

Despite Banshee Swim's commitment to building a community of banshees who are unconcerned with labels, trends, limitations and society's standards of who people should be, Fronckowiak cares deeply about mindful, responsible manufacturing. With her manufacturing partner, the female-owned **BGoD Design Studio**, Fronckowiak has committed to ethical swimsuit making that affords fair wages

in a comfortable environment with a few sewers located in a space only 15 minutes from where she lives in Los Angeles.

"It's a mom-and-pop-run workshop. I work very closely with them," she said. "They are not all the way out in China, it's not a giant warehouse, and we're saving all this energy. I am able to go and see the product being made."

As a mindfully manufactured line, Banshee also relies on the more ecologically sound **Econyl** fabric, which is comprised of recycled nylon that is sourced from landfill and ocean waste. Fronckowiak is committed to sustainability right down to her packaging, which includes compostable garment bags and plant-based tape. In an effort to promote transparency—a priority for Fronckowiak—she also advises her banshees to wash their swimwear using a **Guppy Friend**, the washing bag that combats microplastic waste resulting from laundering apparel made from synthetic textiles.

By forging her own path, Fronckowiak is hopeful to work toward a better fashion industry. While she believes in transparency for her customers, she encourages professionals within the fashion industry to also develop their own styles rather than engaging in a culture of taking ideas from other brands.

"That whole rip-off culture needs to stop. It's preventing us from growing," she said. "Just be a little more passionate about it. Slow it down and make it count." ●

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# True Religion's Jeffrey Lubell Back on the Scene With New Collection

By Andrew Asch *Retail Editor*

After taking a seven-year break from fashion when he left the **True Religion Brand Jeans** label, Jeffrey Lubell is back in the game. He helped make True Religion one of the biggest stars of the premium-denim boom during the first decade of this century. He retired in 2013 and spent the next seven years with his wife, Carrie Stroup, traveling, skiing and raising their three children.

But Lubell may be proof that one never really leaves the fashion industry. In February, he introduced a new fashion brand rooted in denim called **Coût De La Liberté**, which translated from the French means Cost of Freedom. Lubell chose the name as a reminder that people must be vigilant to safeguard their liberty in politically charged times. It's also inspired by taking chances, even when times are tough. It marks the release of his first clothing line since leaving True Religion.

He and Stroup are self-financing the line, which is manufactured in Los Angeles. In February, they introduced it at a **New York Fashion Week** event at the **Crosby Hotel** in Manhattan's SoHo neighborhood. They also exhibited it at **Paris Fashion Week** in March. There, they wrote orders from **Montaigne Market** in Paris and **Jades** in Düsseldorf, Germany. When Lubell and Stroup returned to Los Angeles, they edited the collection to its current line of 70 items for women and 45 items for men.

The Coût team is currently wrapping up work on the website *coutdelaliberte.com*, as well as on advertising and marketing materials for the Fall/Winter 2020 line, which includes an editorial campaign with model Stella Maxwell. It was pho-



EMMA ISABELLA BASSILL



tographed the first week of July on a ranch in Palmdale, Calif. Lubell has not confirmed what shops will sell it in the United States, but he hopes that the pioneering boutique **Maxfield** in West Hollywood, Calif., would be a place that could introduce it in the state.

"My customers are the most exclusive. They're looking for unique styles," he said. "They've seen all the best in the world. If my product is not beyond amazing, I will not be successful."

Most of the fabrics used in the collection are sourced from Italian and Japanese fabric suppliers patronized by some of the world's most acclaimed fashion houses, Lubell said. The inspiration for the line comes from contemporary, eclectic looks of today and the 1970s styles that also influenced True Religion. Some of the denim bottoms feature high waists and flared legs. Other silhouettes include cropped, skinny, boot-cut, gauchito and boyfriend jeans. There's also the Girl Boy, which is a relaxed version of the boyfriend jean.

In addition, the line features denim jackets, denim shirts, overalls, shorts and a variety of other looks including stretch suede leggings, bottoms bearing sequins and a wide flare, velvet pants, and bright-red viscose/corduroy bottoms. Silk shirts play a significant role in the collection. Outerwear is a big deal too. Rabbit and foxtail fur used on the outerwear is sourced from dead stock, Lubell said, not harvested from live animals. Also featured in the line are Mongolian cashmere sweaters and T-shirts made from organic cotton and hemp.

Retail price points range from \$295 to \$795. The most expensive piece in the collection, a fringed, suede motorcycle jacket featuring curly-lamb Sherpa lining, retails for more than \$10,000.

Another mission of Lubell's is to support domestic manufacturing, which has been going through tough times, as has the global fashion industry. "I know this business is going to recover," he said. "It's going to be bigger than it has ever been." ●

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## TRADE-SHOW REPORT

### Texworld USA and Apparel Sourcing USA Develop Efficient Virtual-Trade-Show Formula

By Andrew Asch and Dorothy Crouch

Exchanging its space at New York City's **Javits Center** for a virtual model, **Texworld USA** and **Apparel Sourcing USA** hosted its inaugural digital event July 21–23. Produced by **Messe Frankfurt North America**, the event reported attendance of 4,000. The virtual edition attracted industry professionals from 93 countries, which Jennifer Bacon, show director of fashion and apparel for Messe Frankfurt North America, said was an increase of 20 percent over previous shows for a global presence. In the virtual space, Bacon sought to create an event that still offered an environment similar to an on-site show.

“The biggest challenge that we faced transforming our summer edition into a virtual event was creating the same sense of community as our physical shows,” Bacon said. “We worked very hard to ensure that our platform utilized the AI-powered matchmaking features to assist in meeting the buyers’ sourcing needs as well as including hosted meetups to support connecting and cultivating business relationships.”

**Design Knit Inc.**, a Los Angeles–headquartered textile knitting mill, exhibited new fabrics as well as sustainable textiles, said Pat Tabassi, Design Knit’s product development and marketing manager.

“I didn’t know what to expect. We had nothing to compare it to. Even prepping for the show was a different experience,” she said of her company’s first virtual show. “But this is modern-day exhibiting. We want to be part of that show experience.”

Like other exhibitors, Tabassi and her staff conducted meetings from home offices and occasionally showroom spaces. Photographs of Design Knit products were uploaded to the company’s virtual showroom on the Texworld site. Buyers clicked on thumbnail photos of fabrics to indicate interest. Tabassi and her team promised to send swatches after the show.

“I think that the virtual platform is more accessible,” Tabassi said. She had a meeting with a buyer who said that she wouldn’t have been able to attend the show if it had been in person.

#### Leading local sourcing

Partnering with Texworld USA and Apparel Sourcing USA, **Fashionindex’s** Local Loft connected attendees with fabric and apparel manufacturers who can provide near-shore-sourcing opportunities.

“It’s great because you can meet domestic U.S. suppliers that can produce anywhere from one garment to thousands of garments, and it’s all local within Canada, the U.S. and Mexico,” Max Andrews, Fashionindex’s president, said. “The timeframe, when you’re dealing locally, the speed to market drops dramatically, and it’s so much more sustainable too. Things are not flown by **FedEx** from overseas.”

With sustainable goods rising in demand, according to Andrews, he felt that more emerging designers are looking to start off with an ecologically sound or ethical mission.

“It’s making the producers adjust to it. A lot of these new, young designers come in and they want to be totally correct and sustainable,” Andrews said. “A lot of people coming to market are asking for sustainable, and the designers want to do it. They are coming to terms with it costing more. You’re not going to get a \$2 T-shirt; it will cost \$30 or \$40, but it will last five years.”

These fresh designers who are only beginning to start out are benefiting greatly from the virtual model, according to David Pren-



tice, co-founder and senior vice president of sales and marketing for the Franklin, Tenn.–headquartered **OnPoint Manufacturing**, a loyal devotee of the on-site trade-show model, who was pleased with the virtual platform.

“I think it opened up a different level of potential visitor that a traditional show wouldn’t if it’s in New York. You have to go to New York, get a hotel in New York. If you’re a new designer, new brand or small brand, you’re looking to get things going, and you’ve got a tight budget that is a big wall up,” he said. “For those guys, this was a blessing to go online, research people, set up the video chat.”

While Prentice is hopeful that on-site trade events will eventually return in some capacity, he does foresee a future with virtual components. As a self-described “aggressive trade-show worker,” Prentice and his director of marketing, Carla Antonelli, worked in tandem to establish the same energy in the virtual edition as they have in the past with physical shows.

“There were appointments booked the first day of the show, first morning of the show and first hour of the show. We are still fulfilling inquiries from the show, even though it ended last week. They are coming in this week. You can’t ask for more than that. It’s from people who looked at us but maybe didn’t get to us,” he said. “It gave us the ability to play offense for the first time.”

Exhibitors who run smaller businesses also welcomed the shift to a more-affordable show option. Ben Hostetler is the operations manager of **Mountain Meadow Wool**, a small-scale mill that offers direct-to-ranch, traceable wool in Buffalo, Wyo., a town of 4,000 nestled in the foothills of the Bighorn Mountains.

Hostetler estimated that he would spend more than \$3,000 when he exhibited at trade shows in New York City. He spent about 10 times less to exhibit at the virtual show.

“It was a good first-time correspondence with a lot of potential customers,” he said of his company’s first virtual show.

As the apparel industry continues to navigate the third quarter, Bacon explains that the response from attendees and exhibitors has been positive. While the virtual platform is currently serving a purpose, she looks forward to producing shows on-site one day in the future.

“The virtual platform provides an alternative to our physical event and exists as a complementary tool to sourcing,” she explained. “Exhibitors and attendees alike have been receptive to the new platform and the opportunity to connect and source, but as we all navigate through the new normal we look forward to meeting again as nothing will ever replace face-to-face interactions.” ●

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# Men's Warehouse Parent, Tailored Brands, Files for Chapter 11 Bankruptcy

A string of high-profile bankruptcies caused by the COVID-19 pandemic have been filed, and the latest is **Tailored Brands, Inc.** The Fremont, Calif.-headquartered business is the parent company of fashion retailers **Men's Warehouse**, **Jos. A. Bank**, **Moore's Clothing for Men** and the **K&G Fashion Superstore**.

Tailored Brands filed for a voluntary Chapter 11 bankruptcy in U.S. Bankruptcy Court for the Southern District of Texas, according to a company statement released on Aug. 2. The company anticipates being able to run most of its stores and operations through the restructuring as it had received commitments for \$500 million in debtor-in-possession financing from its credit-facility lenders. It is also able to access a reserve of \$90 million in cash that was previously restricted but will be available to help fund the company's operational and restructuring needs, according to a statement.

Tailored Brands also notified investors that the **New York Stock Exchange** will delist its stock, which was traded under the ticker of TLRD. However, this bankruptcy will help accelerate the company's campaign to streamline its business, which was announced July 21, said Dinesh Lathi, Tailored Brands' president and chief executive officer.

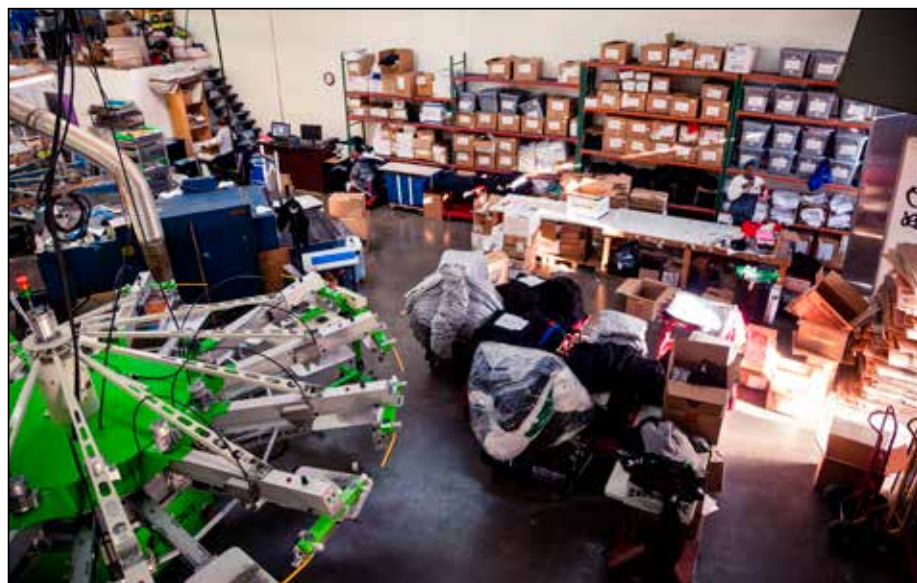
The company will reduce corporate employees and close stores. A July 21 statement noted that Tailored Brands identified up to 500 stores for closure. Lathi forecasted that Tailored Brands would emerge as a leaner, stronger company.

"Reaching an agreement with our lenders represents a critical milestone toward our goal of becoming a stronger company that has the financial and operational flexibility to compete and win in the rapidly evolving retail environment," he said.—*Andrew Asch*



Dinesh Lathi

## MANUFACTURING



### Big Printing Textile *Continued from page 1*

from the deal, which started June 15, Big Printing doubled the size of its facility to more than 12,000 square feet, staff was increased by 25 percent, and new machines were purchased. Muhammad described the deal's transformative strength as "the power of the P.O." A simple purchase order from a group with deep pockets can expand the horizons of a business and help economically develop the community it serves.

Over 20 years, Muhammad and his wife and business partner, Kesney Muhammad, built their business into what they say is one of the biggest Black-owned printing-and-embroidery companies in America. It designs and decorates for more than 100 clothing lines every month. The company focuses on special-effects printing and has worked with streetwear brands such as **Planet of the Grapes**, **BeastMode** and **Dope Era**, based in Oakland, Calif., in addition to merchandise programs for hip-hop musicians. Despite boasting a successful track record as a business, securing loans seemed impossible. The Muhammads felt their growth had been constrained by a lack of access to capital.

Recent studies from the **Federal Reserve Bank** said that Black-owned businesses generally have a tougher time getting bank loans approved. A 2019 study from the Federal Reserve found that 80 percent of white-owned businesses gained approval for some of the funding they sought compared to 76 percent for Asian-owned firms, 65 percent for Hispanic-owned firms and 64 percent for Black-owned firms.

Another Federal Reserve study found that Black-owned firms seeking financing were 7 percent less likely to obtain credit overall. Black-owned firms were 20 percent less likely to do so at large banks and 17 percent less likely to at small banks.

Earlier this year, a bank had denied a loan to Big Printing, and the Muhammads were resigned to more time not being able to expand operations. Then the killing of George Floyd by a Minneapolis policeman put a focus on issues that resonate with the Black community. Big companies wanted to demonstrate that they were allies of the Black Lives Matter movement. They made statements of support on social media, on advertisements and, in the case of one company, T-shirts.

A Fortune 500 company was looking for a Black-owned printer to produce Black Lives Matter solidarity T-shirts for its employees. Big Printing was referred to the Fortune 500 company by the firm's sourcing agency, which found the

printer through trade-show-circuit connections. The company requested that Big Printing sign a nondisclosure agreement so the Muhammads could not identify their new partners.

Through the partnership, Big Printing received an order for 100,000 T-shirts. It was the biggest order of the Muhammads' career, Kesney said. She and her husband had a range of emotions over this deal.

"It was really a gumbo pot of feelings: elated, scared, overjoyed, terrified, accomplished—damn, this could kill us," Dawaud said.



Kesney (left) and Dawaud Muhammad

"The number of shirts, however daunting, was doable for us. The issue was the timing—or lack thereof. We only had 20 days to complete the order, which should take almost two months with our current workload," Kesney said.

They hired temporary workers. They pulled double shifts. They contracted out other jobs that they were working on to nearby small, Black-owned screen printers. Big Printing completed the massive job for 100,000 shirts before the July 6 deadline. Their first major client was pleased. Through this accomplishment, Big Printing was referred for more work to

other departments within the company, Kesney said. It's a big step forward. After years of being excluded, Big Printing was included in a powerful business community, she said.

Access to loans for underrepresented groups is a big issue. The Los Angeles-headquartered nonprofit **Black Design Collective** launched in 2018, in part to help Black entrepreneurs with navigating the always-tough process of financing a project, said TJ Walker, a co-founder of the BDC and teacher at **Los Angeles Trade-Technical College**. He co-founded and serves as a co-owner of the pioneering Black-owned fashion line **Cross Colours**, which grew into one of the most popular brands of the 1990s with its motto, "Clothing Without Prejudice."

The BDC will work with the **California Fashion Association** to produce a group of seminars, including financing sessions for BDC members, scheduled for the fall, Walker said. He said that while bias does play a factor in determining who gets access to loans, there are other factors in play that add more perspectives. One such factor is that it is tough for any new business to get a loan. "Smaller institutions do not have the credit level of companies that are larger," Walker said.

A lot of Black-owned fashion brands forecast that they will make a significant number of sales at independent, Black-owned retailers, Walker added. But banks may be wary of granting a loan to a business that will sell goods to businesses without established credit histories. Walker remembers having problems getting access to loans in the early days of Cross Colours.

"At the beginning, it's hard to get people to believe in a vision," he said. But his early experience was similar to that of Big Printing. One major P.O. can change everything.

At **MAGIC**, the first major trade show where Cross Colours exhibited, the clothing line got a chance to expand because it made more than \$10 million in orders at the show, Walker said. "It changed the way people looked at us. It gave us the power to get loans and the leverage for funding."

Still, there is no denying the power of the P.O., Kesney said. "When a corporation extends a P.O., essentially they are extending an opportunity to partner with you. As their business grows, so does yours as a part of their supply chain," she added. "It is a big corporation's responsibility to promote equity-enhancing policies by bringing small businesses into their supply chain. When that business is Black owned, you narrow the gap of economic injustices and racial disparity in America. It fuels a healthy economy, uplifts our community and is for the overall good of America." ●



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exceed legal requirements and regulations relating to sustainability and social responsibility. In addition to New York, the RH group has now set up its second office and print facility in Los Angeles. This office will function as the west coast product development hub for the U.S. Market and manufactures GRS cert. recycled polyester satin labels, as well as barcode stickers. RHG is not just a manufacturer of garment accessories, we work with our clients across the production process, from design to distribution. Whether creating fresh new ideas with our seasonal collections, or working with a client's own concept, we produce shipping envelopes, hang tags, care labels, woven labels, zipper pullers, tapes and cords, eyelets, press fasteners, jean buttons and rivets, heat transfers, sew on buttons, non-woven bags, metal and plastic and rubber accessories and packaging that is high quality, fit for purpose, functional and adds value to any product. We are the only partner you need for all your garment accessories, variable data and logistic solutions.

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