

# NORDSTROM

## Diversity Matters

February 7, 2020



### Celebrating Black History Month

We spoke with three of our executives about building their careers at Nordstrom and what businesses need to do to create a more inclusive environment.

"I've worked in a number of different industries and sectors —usually always the only woman or Black person at the table," says Farrell Redwine, senior vice president of Human Resources at Nordstrom. "It's something that I'm used to —it's not something that I like." Fanya Chandler, president of Nordstrom's Trunk Club, speaks of a similar experience navigating her career as a Black woman: "What I have come to realize is there are not many people who look like me in the corporate world."

But things are changing. "I've seen the evolution of our culture here and feel so proud to be part of this organization," says Beverly Mills, vice president, divisional merchandise manager of Kids' Wear at Nordstrom. "The commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging is so authentic and so real and doesn't feel like it's just the flavor of the month. Ten years ago, we weren't as focused on this, but now it's become more embedded in the fabric of the organization and culture."

We talked with Chandler, Redwine and Mills about what the corporate landscape has been like as Black female execs, how they got to where they are today and their own personal style, as well as what companies can, and need, to do differently to ensure their workforces are inclusive.

### Fanya Chandler President, Trunk Club

While relatively new to her position as president of Trunk Club (our personal styling service), Fanya Chandler is a Nordstrom veteran with 28 years under her belt. She has served as vice president of Customer Experience and, more recently, senior vice president, regional manager of the Southwest region. She began her career at Nordstrom on the sales floor, selling women's activewear.



Do you have any mentors who have helped guide you in your career?

I've had the honor to learn from some amazing leaders at Nordstrom. The first that comes to mind is Gemma Lionello, who currently leads our beauty and accessories business. Gemma is honest and gives it to you straight, which is what you need in a mentor. Recently I've also spent a great deal of time working with Farrell Redwine, and I admire how she navigates the world, her confidence and her authenticity. I consider her a wonderful businesswoman and role model.

**How have you played the part of a mentor?**

Mentorship doesn't have to be formal. We should all extend ourselves whenever possible and to whomever needs it. Be honest, listen to understand and be available. It's also vital to remember mentoring happens daily and is demonstrated by how you treat others around you. I feel a sense of responsibility to be someone who, if another young lady out there in the world says, "Can I?," is able to show that she can.

**What changes need to be made across the corporate workforce, and at Nordstrom specifically?**

We live in a beautifully diverse population, and any business needs to embrace and appreciate how important that is. I'm proud to say Nordstrom is a company that recognizes and celebrates the richness that diversity and culture bring to the business. We should continue to challenge ourselves to be relentless in creating an environment where all people can thrive and bring their whole selves to work and win.

**You have an extensive background in retail. How would you describe your own personal style?**

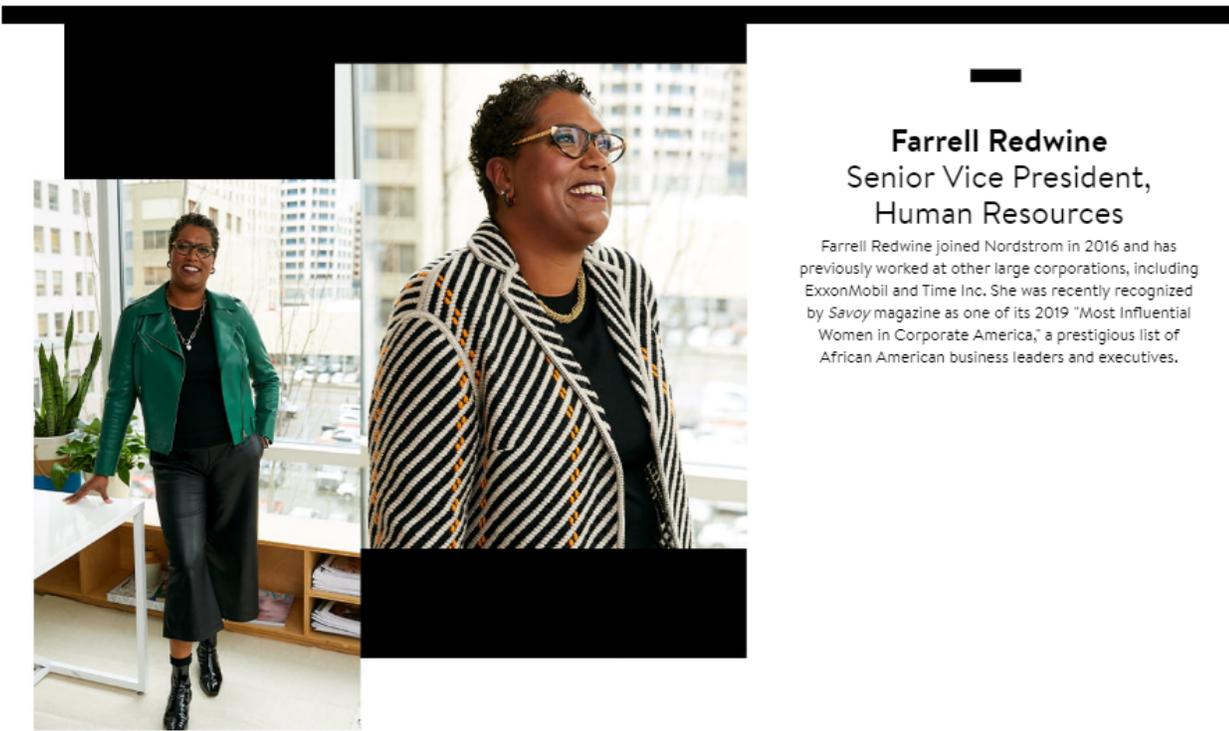
At work, I like to have a sense of sophistication about my style, but I also want to be relevant, with a little bit of sass. At home, I'm "sweatpants chic!"

**What outfit do you feel most confident in?**

I love a great statement blazer and a fantastic pair of heels. A well-fitting blazer and an unexpected heel can take you from boss lady to casual cool by simply styling it for the occasion. I believe that feeling confident in your clothes comes when you make your style your own. Everyone has some sense of style —once they embrace it, their confidence shines through.

**Do you have any advice for other Black women in their careers?**

The advice I'd share is to be confident in yourself and embrace the perspective that your diversity has given you. Remember that your opinion matters, so use your voice and experiences to drive positive change.



**Farrell Redwine**  
Senior Vice President,  
Human Resources

Farrell Redwine joined Nordstrom in 2016 and has previously worked at other large corporations, including ExxonMobil and Time Inc. She was recently recognized by *Savoy* magazine as one of its 2019 "Most Influential Women in Corporate America," a prestigious list of African American business leaders and executives.

**What has your experience been like navigating your career as a Black woman?**

If I had a couple of words that encapsulate my career journey as a Black female and now at an executive level, it would be "the only one." It's not often that I am at a table with others who look like me. It's hard to articulate how that feels, but what it has manifested for me is resiliency and a strong desire to bring others along by serving as a role model for other Black women, being a mentor to many and making career choices where I can remain true to who I am as an individual —my style, personality and values. One of the things I value about Nordstrom is that we are an organization that fosters a culture of belonging, and we are increasingly focused on diverse representation throughout the company.

**What does mentorship mean to you?**

Something I've learned along the way is to build a strong network and support system. Everyone needs allies and truth tellers you can trust and connect with on a personal level. My father was an incredible mentor for me early in my career, and I learned this lesson from him, which has been core to my career journey —and priceless. I have made a conscious effort to pass this sage advice forward wherever I've been able.

**Who is an African American leader that inspires you?**

As I think back over my career, I would say Ann Fudge, a former president at Kraft Foods and former CEO of Young & Rubicam Brands, as well as Ursula Burns, the former CEO of Xerox, who was the first Black female CEO of a Fortune 500 company. They were some of the first Black women to break through the ceiling and take the CEO seat —history makers! I can still remember when their appointments were announced and the conversations I had with my friends and colleagues about the impact it would have across corporate America.

**How is Nordstrom creating a culture of belonging for women of color in the workplace and marketplace?**

I think one big step we've taken is the launch of our Employee Resource Groups. We have seven total, and three that intersect gender and race: the Black Employee Network; AsPIRE, the Asian-Pacific Islander group; and ¡Hola!, the Latinx group. At Nordstrom, we aim to create a culture where every employee, customer and vendor feels a true sense of belonging, and our Employee Resource Groups hold organized events centered on the experiences of women of color and how these identities intersect. Specifically, we partner with women of color employees to get their feedback on our marketing efforts to ensure their voices are represented in an authentic way. Most recently, Nordstrom partnered with Future For Us, a platform dedicated to advancing women of color at work, during their State of Womxn of Color Summit in Seattle, where I joined a panel on how data drives workplace equity.

**Having worked in fashion retail and helping customers feel and look good, how would you describe your own personal style?**

I guess I would say corporate mixed with a street-style urban vibe. I love a good sneaker or handbag, but my taste and style can span the gamut from edgy to conservative. It's more about what makes me feel good, gives me inspiration and represents my personality.

**What are your favorite Nordstrom brands?**

Some of my go-tos are Tibi, Helmut Lang, Stella McCartney, Vince, Lafayette 148, KENZO. I'm also a big fan of Nike Air Force 1s —I've got six or seven pairs —so you could say I sort of collect those. And if Nordstrom has any new designers of color in SPACE, I do try to purchase some of their product and represent up-and-coming designers of color and, in particular, Black designers.

**Do you have advice for other Black women —career or otherwise?**

Believe in yourself and take the seat at the table if it's been given to you—and use your voice to share different insights or perspectives that may not otherwise be represented.

**Beverly Mills**  
Vice President,  
Divisional Merchandise  
Manager,  
Kids' Wear

Beverly Mills has spent over five years at Nordstrom in total. With experience at other major retailers and having worked at Nordstrom twice, Mills has a unique insight into the culture at Nordstrom and has seen firsthand the changes that have been made since she started (the first time!) almost a decade ago.



**What is the**

**proudest moment of your career?**

I think my proudest moment was when I first was promoted to a buyer. I've been in this industry for quite some time, and becoming a buyer is the first big step in retail. While I always thought it was attainable, I thought that it would take a really long time. I had a boss who really believed in me and recognized the value that I brought to the team and took a chance on me. She promoted me. Twenty-plus years later, we're still very good friends —she's still one of my mentors today.

**Do you have any other mentors?**

The person who has been my consistent mentor in my life has been my mom, Carmen Mills. She's a very strong Black woman, and she's always taught me to not be defined by people's perception of who I am and what I can achieve, and to really believe in myself and know that I've earned the right to be wherever I am.

**Who is an African American leader that inspires you?**

The person who comes to mind most immediately is Michelle Obama. I would say that she's not only a role model for African American people and Black women but she's a role model for humanity and teaching people to respect others.

**How is Nordstrom creating a culture of belonging for women of color in the workplace and marketplace?**

What Nordstrom is doing with the program around diversity, inclusion and belonging has been great, and I'm proud to be a part of it. The approach is very authentic; it doesn't just feel strategic —it's embedded in what we want to do. What's been really impressive as well is how much leadership has embraced this strategy and how we're cascading that information through the organization. It's been really exciting to see.

**You work in fashion retail, helping customers feel and look good. How would you describe your own personal style?**

I would say that my personal style is approachable. I like aspirational pieces layered back with more affordable pieces. I'm most comfortable in dresses because they're one of the easiest items to accessorize, and I feel very confident when I wear them. I also have times when I like to wear denim and a top that sparks joy for me. I have a very eclectic style, I would say.

**What are your favorite brands at Nordstrom?**

My favorite brand is GANNI. I love it. Their pieces are so accessible and they're comfortable, and they're very fashion-leading but it's not too out there. I also love rag & bone, DVF and Nordstrom Signature.

**What's something you've learned in your career and how does it apply for other Black women climbing the corporate ladder today?**

Be an active participant in driving your future. Have an objective in mind and a solid, realistic reason why that particular goal was chosen. Formulate a plan, work the plan and own the outcome. Be an advocate for yourself and don't be afraid to self-promote, in a humble way. You'll soon realize that the more you share, the more others will see the value in working alongside you and want to be on your team. Keep your eyes open and stay humble with every success.