

NORDSTROM

Honoring AAPI Heritage Month with Geevy Thomas

May 27, 2021

In honor of Asian American and Pacific Islander (AAPI) heritage month, President of Nordstrom Rack Geevy Thomas joined Samantha McDonald with Footwear News as part of a series featuring AAPI retail executives and leaders. Geevy shared his personal and professional experiences as a member of the Indian community, his thoughts on the rise in violence against the Asian community, and Nordstrom's continued commitment to diversity, inclusion and belonging. See highlights from Geevy's remarks below.

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Everyone is experiencing this moment in time differently. People from the Asian community, particularly those from Pacific Islands and China, have been feeling a more direct impact. When we think about allyship, it's all rooted in empathy and allowing people to be themselves. As a leader within a company or in a community, it's up to us to have empathy for each other and not reduce things to very simplistic notions. It's in those ways that we can be there for each other and bring each other up.

We always want to get better and find ways to create a more inclusive environment for employees and customers. Nordstrom has become much more aware of our roles in the communities we serve. In the last two years, we have instituted nine Employee Resource Groups along with our Courageous Conversations initiative to address social challenges. We're also hosting a series of internal conversations with our employees to enable AAPI individuals to share their experiences.

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Growing up I was always the minority and I didn't feel part of an Asian community because it was just me. I felt that way even during early years at Nordstrom. I have been with the company for 39 years and now we have a much more diverse population of employees that work for Nordstrom today. I'm proud to say our workforce is over 60% people of color.

My parents moved from India to the United States in the 50's. Many Indians that moved to the United States around that time assimilated to American culture and left their traditions behind. My parents wanted me to only learn English to ensure I didn't have an accent--they thought an accent might have an impact on my future opportunities. I bring this up because my children have had a different experience in comparison to first-generation immigrants and generations after.

My kids are half-Indian and half-white, and while they don't have much connection to the culture of India, they have felt the weight of belonging--some say they aren't Indian enough and others would say they aren't white enough. While they are aware of the various Indian holidays and traditions, they didn't grow up experiencing them, so the things that shaped their worldview focus around work ethic, education and Christianity.

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For myself and so many others, this year has been about balancing the challenges in our personal lives and watching our children go through this. All of us have been impacted differently--individually and collectively. At Nordstrom, this past year was an opportunity to double down on the things that have been on our agenda for a long time. As a company, we have made overt goals in our leadership to match the communities we serve. Our world is far more diverse and continues to be more diverse, and it's our goal to reflect that throughout the company.

Our CEO Erik Nordstrom and President Chief Brand Officer Pete Nordstrom have been very vocal about the things that are happening in our communities. In the last few years, we've heard from our employees and customers about the importance to be clear on what we stand for. We've long believed diversity makes us better, and we will continue to not only vocalize our beliefs but build a company that reflects those values each day.

Read the full interview with Footwear News [here](#).

For more on our commitments to diversity, inclusion and belonging visit [Nordstrom.com](https://www.nordstrom.com)