



Virgil Ablontm
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VAAtm
Advocacy Report
-
February 2021



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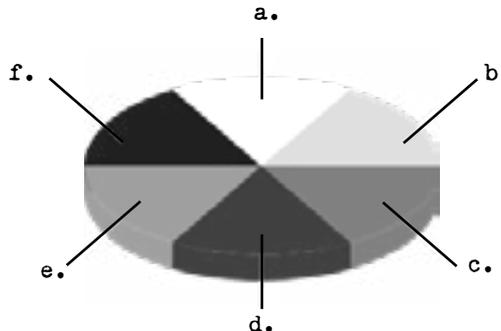
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i. A NOTE FROM VIRGIL

Systemic change starts at the grassroots level, from the collective efforts of people taking action and lifting up their own communities. I'm committed to helping ensure that this social revolution is not just a moment but a movement - and I am holding myself to task. Enter my advocacy report: my ongoing progress in uplifting Black voices and showcasing Black talent and achievement.

With this report, I hope to inspire others to fuel lasting progress in their own communities. With the help of my teams and the brands I work with, I focused on leveraging the tools at my disposal to translate words into action. From fundraising for Black youth education with the Virgil Abloh "Post-Modern" Scholarship Fund to partnering with non-profit change-maker Aleta Clarke for Chicago safe houses, opening new doors for the Black community has always been and always will be the focus of my career.

I truly believe that a multi-layered approach is key to making a lasting difference so, with this in mind, my advocacy takes six main and inter-connected forms:



- a. **Diverse Hiring:** Elevating talented Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in and outside of our industry.
- b. **Donations:** Leveraging the privilege of financial resources to uplift communities in need.
- c. **Corporate Advocacy:** Using my voice within the industry, Louis Vuitton, and Off-White to foster more inclusive environments.
- d. **Leading by Example:** Working hard and acting with compassion so that the younger generation can see people that look like them in places of power.
- e. **Representation:** Driving initiatives that showcase Black, Indigenous, and People of Color role models or use all Black collaborators.
- f. **Promoting Black Talent:** Endorsing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color artists and using my influence to promote their work.

Meaningful progress will require work across each of the six areas. In this moment of reckoning, there is so much more to be done.



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I.

CLASSIFICATION: DIVERSE HIRING

Elevating talented Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in and outside of our industry.

We cannot reach an equitable future without first looking critically at how our own ecosystems help or hinder that growth. An important part of how I continue putting Louis Vuitton and Off-White to task is building teams that more accurately represent the racial and ethnic makeup of our diverse and global consumer base. Because the creatives on my team are such a central part of what keeps those brands growing and evolving, I am so proud to have a platform that allows me to target and hire diverse teams of some of the most talented artists and thinkers to fuel every step of the creative process.



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I.

CLASSIFICATION: DIVERSE HIRING

Elevating talented Black, Indigenous, and People of Color in and outside of our industry.

I.1) OFF-WHITE INTERNSHIP PROGRAM

In 2020, we established at Off-White an ongoing paid internship program in Milan for young Black people who want to build a career in fashion.

The program launched in September and will hire two students per year (one per semester), with the goal to expand further once COVID-related travel restrictions are no longer a barrier. Interns will become part of the core Off-White team to gain exposure to every part of our creative process, including brand content creation, design, and marketing. They will also each be paired with a mentor who will teach them leadership and design skills so they can build successful careers in the fashion industry.



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II.

CLASSIFICATION: DONATION MODEL

Leveraging the privilege of financial resources and time to uplift communities in need

Astoundingly, the price of Black life has always been up for debate in our society - and the murders of George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and too many others bring that fact to the forefront. In response, I doubled down on my fundraising and donations to open doors for Black communities across the country. My initiatives raised over \$1.2 million for causes that are critical to the health and success of Black Americans.



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II.1) THE VIRGIL ABLOH "POST-MODERN" SCHOLARSHIP FUND

I founded the Virgil Abloh "Post-Modern" Scholarship Fund in partnership with the Fashion Scholarship Fund (FSF), the foremost fashion-oriented education and workforce development non-profit in the U.S. "Post-Modern" Scholarship recipients will receive \$5,000 scholarships prior to the commencement of their spring semesters, paid summer internships at various fashion companies including several of my partners, mentorship from fashion industry leaders, and access to FSF career programming and professional development resources. In addition to my own donation, I raised funds from some of my corporate partners evian, Farfetch, Louis Vuitton, and New Guards Group - over \$1 million to date, with more to come as the Fund continues to work for long-term change.



I also had the opportunity to join a roundtable discussion with students from the Fashion Scholarship Fund and Robin Givhan, The Washington Post's Pulitzer Prize-winning fashion critic, to talk about our ideas on race in areas of art, design, and culture. It was really inspiring to hear about everyone's unique experiences and insights, and I look forward to many more discussions.



In October 2020, I also announced that I would join the Governing Board of the FSF. I'm thrilled to ramp up my involvement with them as we work together for long-term change in the industry.

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II.2) HUGSNOSLUGS SNEAKER RAFFLE AND MORE

In July 2020, I joined forces with an inspirational local activist in my hometown of Chicago named Aleta Clarke, to raise more than \$187,000 in two days and awareness for her non-profit, HugsNoSlugs that seeks to eliminate gun violence and poverty. We raffled off a pair of the Off-White x Air Jordan 4 "Sail" sneakers through Chicago shop Notre. Aleta - aka "Englewood Barbie" - is an absolute hero. She has built six safe houses across Chicago to date since opening her first location in May 2020, and she provides food and COVID-19 supplies to those who need it most.



We held another raffle through Notre in October 2020 to raise more than \$44,820.00 in 24 hours, raffling off the Off-White x Air Jordan V in "Sail/Fire Red." All proceeds went to Aleta's initiative Club 51, which provides a full-course meal every night for members of Chicago's unhoused population.

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II.3) I SUPPORT YOUNG BLACK BUSINESSES

On July 31 2020, Off-White announced the launch of the "I Support Young Black Businesses" project, a quarterly fundraising program in support of organizations chosen by my team to support the Black community. Our first quarterly fundraiser sold t-shirt and hoodies for Chicago CRED, which stands for "Create Real Economic Destiny" - an organization focused on reducing gun violence that I've partnered with since 2017 in my home city.



For the second installment of ISYBB, I collaborated with Stussy to design an exclusive tee that reinterprets Stüssy's signature "World Tour" t-shirt, in honor of the company's 40th birthday. The shirt was produced by One Accord which is the same Black-owned screen printing business that helped to launch my career. My goal for this project was to donate a portion of the net proceeds from the sale of the t-shirts to Future of Museums, an organization of Black and Indigenous curators, scholars, arts administrators and more, who are collectively dedicated to ending systemic racism and colonial practices in museums and other art spaces.





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II.4) OFF-WHITE MASKS PROJECT

Off-White masks are part of seasonal collections and brand projects, both as charitable efforts and as opportunities to partner with leading creators that share Off-White's vision and priorities. First, in July 2020, Off-White launched a project with nine creative talents from all over the world to develop a collection of face masks to help fight the spread of COVID-19. These creatives interpreted each mask within the collection through their own aesthetic, giving their personal take. In another initiative, we offered 100 masks to members of the Black community and to cultural stakeholders in Milan and at an international level. Our aim was to amplify the importance of wearing masks while acknowledging the ways that masks have now become a unique creative choice in fashion.



II.

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II.5) DESIGNER YARD SALE

As part of the Designer Yard Sale, an auction to raise money for organizations fighting to end systemic racism, I designed and donated a custom "MARKERAD" chair from my collaboration with IKEA. Proceeds from the chair, which featured my hand-drawn illustrations plus the winner's name, went to the Bail Project and Colloquate. Bail Project works to combat mass incarceration by paying bail for people in need; Colloquate organizes, advocates, and designs for spaces of racial, social, and cultural equity.



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II.6) DIRTY GHETTO KIDS (DGK) COLLABORATION

Off-White has enjoyed an impactful ongoing collaboration with professional skateboarder and Black visionary Stevie Williams of DGK. In July 2020, Stevie and I designed a custom skateboard that was made into 100 limited-edition pieces. The proceeds from the boards were donated to Saved by Skateboarding, the organization that DGK founded to provide skateboards to underprivileged youth as a source of play and community. I have also gifted Stevie a pair of customized Off-White x Nike Rubber Dunks in advance of their launch.



I teamed up again with DGK founder Stevie Williams, as well as the Chill Foundation, to provide 25 custom DGK skateboards, 25 sets of protective gear, and skill and safety lessons to members of two Boys & Girls Clubs in Chicago (the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Club and the Louis L. Valentine Club). The Chill Foundation will teach small groups of members ages 10-18 how to ride the boards and build community through the sport.



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II.7) MERCEDES BENZ X VIRGIL ABLOH | PROJECT GELÄNDEWAGEN 1:3 SCALE MAQUETTE

I collaborated with Mercedes-Benz on Project Geländewagen to inspire young artists, engineers, and designers to question the status quo. We designed a one-of-a-kind maquette that was auctioned through Sotheby's and raised \$160,000 (USD), with all proceeds going to my Post-Modern Scholarship Fund.



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II.8) MOCA FACE MASK

I contributed a design concept to the L.A. Museum of Contemporary Art (MOCA)'s collection of limited-production, artist-designed face masks. 100% of proceeds will support MOCA during the global pandemic. These masks are developed for comfort and ease of wear without sacrificing on safety. My design - "STILL SPEAKS LOUDLY" - encourages us all to speak up and use our voices to enact positive change.





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II.9) CANARY YELLOW x SWING STATE TEES

Through my canary---yellow label, I designed a collection of "Swing State" t-shirts to encourage voter turnout for the 2020 U.S. presidential election - particularly in the 13 battleground states. The shirts are made from five plastic bottles and just .26 pounds of fabric scraps, saving 63 gallons of water in total. 100% of the proceeds from each shirt will be donated to my Post-Modern Scholarship Fund, in support of young Black talent.





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II.10) NOTRE x VIRGIL ABLOH x CLUB 51 LOUVRE WITH CHRISTIE'S AUCTION

I created a custom, one of a kind iteration of the classic 2.8 Jitney handbag, in support of "Bid for the Louvre," in partnership with Christie's auction house. Conceived as a work of art and a collector's item, I drew inspiration from the Louvre Pyramid, honoring the symbolic structure. Auction participants will have the opportunity to take home this special collector's piece, in addition to the privilege of attending one my upcoming Off-White™ runway shows in 2021.





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II.11) DAILY PAPER x SURF GHANA COLLABORATION

I collaborated with Daily Paper and Surf Ghana to produce capsule collections, and through which the sale of these shirts helped raise funds to help to build Ghana's very first skatepark.



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II.12) "YOUNG NIGERIAN WOMEN" STREET SOUK

I collaborated with Iretidayo Zaccheaus in providing "I Support Young Nigerian Women" t-shirts in order to sustain and celebrate Nigeria's largest Streetwear Convention.





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II.13) SUAY AND CLEVELAND CLINIC COLLABORATION

During 2020, I worked on a philanthropic collaboration and initiative with the leading academic medical center Cleveland Clinic, and the Los Angeles-based green production shop Suay with the creation of a new hand wash, hang dry mask. We worked to ensure that all proceeds from the sale of this mask will be directed to support COVID-19-related research at the Cleveland Clinic's Center for Global and Emerging Pathogens.





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III.

CLASSIFICATION: CORPORATE ADVOCACY

Using my voice within the industry, Louis Vuitton, and Off-White to foster more inclusive environments.

Grassroots advocacy begins when we each put ourselves and our ecosystems to task, and every day I work to lead Louis Vuitton and Off-White into a more equitable and inclusive future. Recently, I have further ramped up our joint efforts to advocate for the causes that matter to Black, Indigenous, and People of Color and have leveraged the platform granted by these brands to challenge our entire industry to do better. Together we have initiated programs related to youth outdoor education, promoting use of face masks to stop the spread of COVID, the celebration of diversity within our own teams, and much more.



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III.

CLASSIFICATION: CORPORATE ADVOCACY

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III.1) SHANGHAI FASHION SHOW

The Louis Vuitton menswear fashion show in Shanghai was a moment to bring the Black imagination to life and challenge the luxury fashion status quo. Using a season-less design approach, we used locally-based models and paid tribute to the color scheme of the Ghanaian flag. Behind this show was a remarkable team of primarily Black creators, and I could not be more proud of their work, particularly in a virtual environment. I was also thrilled to feature two of our generation's most important artists, stylist Ibrahim Karama and the inimitable Lauryn Hill. At the end of Lauryn's performance, we announced that Louis Vuitton and I would make a significant charitable donation to the MLH Foundation, with all funds going to Black businesses affected by the pandemic and other hardships.





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III.

CLASSIFICATION: CORPORATE ADVOCACY

Using my voice within the industry, Louis Vuitton, and Off-White to foster more inclusive environments.

III.2) LVMH DIVERSITY PANEL

On June 23, 2020, I participated in LVMH House North America's second company-wide webinar on diversity & inclusion. Hosted by senior leaders including Anish Melwani, LVMH Inc.'s Chairman and CEO, I shared my thoughts and experiences in a far-reaching conversation with LV Learning Manager Leslie Hill and before 2,500 LVMH employees.



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III.3) LUCIEN CLARKE COLLABORATION

For nearly a year, I collaborated with exceptional Palace skateboarder Lucien Clarke to introduce two more "firsts" for Louis Vuitton. In late August 2020, the house signed Lucien Clarke, making him the first Black skater signed to a luxury fashion house. Together we designed Louis Vuitton's first skate shoe, a pro model sneaker available in three colorways, and a signature LV x Palace skate deck.





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III.

CLASSIFICATION: CORPORATE ADVOCACY

Using my voice within the industry, Louis Vuitton, and Off-White to foster more inclusive environments.

III.4) DOVER STREET MARKET'S FEARLESS INITIATIVE FOR POSITIVE IMAGINATION AND INSPIRATIONAL SOLIDARITY – AND TO GET OUT THE VOTE

Inspired by Dover Street Market's hopeful approach to the future, I joined two of its important projects, the **Fearless Initiative** and its partnership with **When We All Vote**, to create custom Off-White screen-printed shirts to both promote optimism and positivity in these uncertain times and to encourage all Americans to get out the vote and exercise our democratic right.



The Fearless Initiative supports healthcare workers in each of the six regions where DSM has a footprint, and all proceeds from my "New World" shirts will go to charities helping these heroes combat the pandemic. I am committed to help in the effort to get out the vote so my efforts do not stop here - see more on this in the next section.

My "Optimism" shirts for DSM with WWAV were sold on DSM's online channels, and 100% of the proceeds from the initiative go to the nonpartisan nonprofit, which works to increase voter participation in the 2020 Presidential election and other forthcoming elections.



III.

CLASSIFICATION: CORPORATE ADVOCACY

Using my voice within the industry, Louis Vuitton, and Off-White to foster more inclusive environments.

III.5) FREE GAME

I launched a new mentorship series, "Free Game," which aims to help young Black designers and those coming from nontraditional backgrounds in the earliest phases of their careers. The platform has free regularly updated resources available to all, including a how-to section, online lectures, and other learning tools about building brands, based on my own career experiences. The goal is to help those that come from the fringe be awarded opportunities usually left for the center - ultimately ensuring that the future of design, art, and culture looks different from the past.

"FREE GAME"



INTRODUCTION

An introduction and an attempt to provide a mass form of mentorship to give information and access to black POC and to all those that are interested - Giving all the ability to consider a step-by-step guide to building their brand based on my past experience.

HOW TO MAKE
A BRAND

as part of Virgil Abloh™ "community service" and "post-modern" mentoring initiative programs.



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III.

CLASSIFICATION: CORPORATE ADVOCACY

Using my voice within the industry, Louis Vuitton, and Off-White to foster more inclusive environments.

III.6) NIKE ICONS

My newest book focuses on my printed matter practice -- archiving, documenting and storytelling through books and ephemera in service of preserving important cultural stories. As an extension of my practice, I had ensured my book ICONS had an initial early release period through select Black-owned bookshops and independent retailers, demonstrating a shared belief in the vitality of print and the importance of local bookstores as hubs of community, culture and civic memory.





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IV.

CLASSIFICATION: LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Working hard and acting with compassion so that the younger generation can see people that look like them in places of power.

Just as I have been inspired to do and be better by the exceptional Black leaders that came before me, I take seriously the importance of being a role model for the next generation of Black youth. With the platforms I have been granted, I remain committed to leading by example, weathering the myriad challenges of being Black in America with optimism, compassion, and focus. A voter registration initiative and the construction of a skate park in Ghana are just two of several avenues through which I've worked to inspire Black youth to believe in themselves and their future.



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IV.

CLASSIFICATION: LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Working hard and acting with compassion so that the younger generation can see people that look like them in places of power.

IV.1) FASHION OUR FUTURE CREATIVE DIRECTION

Through my London-based, Black-led design studio Alaska-Alaska, I created voting-themed merchandise for Fashion Our Future's 2020 initiative to unite voices in the fashion community in order to galvanize the youth vote. I have signed on as the campaign's creative director.





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IV.

CLASSIFICATION: LEADING BY EXAMPLE

Working hard and acting with compassion so that the younger generation can see people that look like them in places of power.

IV.2) METALLIC INC PANEL

As part of a collaboration with Metallic Inc., I participated in a far-reaching and timely discussion on the state of streetwear and the role that Africa plays in its evolution and rebirth. Moderated by Metallic co-founders Grace Ladoja and Alex Sossah, the panel convened leaders from the global streetwear ecosystem to explore Africa's cultural renaissance and its impact on international fashion.





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V.

CLASSIFICATION: REPRESENTATION

Driving initiatives that showcase Black, Indigenous, and People of Color role models or use all Black collaborators.

Much like Leading by Example, making space for Black, Indigenous, and People of Color leaders and collaborators is one of the key ways I am working toward a future where the Black community is represented across all fields. So much of my work revolves around bringing the Black imagination to life, and I am so excited about my recent initiatives that showcase incredible Black role models.



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V.

CLASSIFICATION: REPRESENTATION

Driving initiatives that showcase Black, Indigenous, and People of Color role models or use all Black collaborators.

V.1) NIKE OFF-WHITE™ BLACK SKATE PROGRAM

Off-White and Nike collaborated to bring together a collective of exceptionally talented Black skateboarders who will become the face of future to-be-released Off-White x Nike Rubber Dunks. I work with Nike to constantly find ways to elevate Black talent across design, art and culture, and the Black Skate Program brings this to life.



Myquel Haddox
[@myquel615](#)



Stevie Williams
[@steviewilliams](#)



Ashura Parchment
[@bigashcapone](#)



Zebulon Powell
[@zebpowell](#)



Ebon Turner
[@3eons](#)



Kevin Viemes
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Reem
[@karaemcampbelldotcom](#)





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V.

CLASSIFICATION: REPRESENTATION

Driving initiatives that showcase Black, Indigenous, and People of Color role models or use all Black collaborators.

V.3) EVIAN SUSTAINABILITY PROJECT

As an extension of my Alaska-Alaska collaboration with evian, the "Activate Movement" collection, I launched the Activate Movement Program in July 2020. It is a design competition to uplift and amplify future-driven sustainability initiatives. The young designers who entered the challenge competed for a 50,000 € prize to bring their winning sustainable design solution into fruition. Winner Danielle Elsener, who created a zero-waste design system called "A020," intends to use the grant money to build a learning platform that will help other designers improve their mission towards zero-waste and to promote sustainability in the fashion industry.





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V.

CLASSIFICATION: REPRESENTATION

Driving initiatives that showcase Black, Indigenous, and People of Color role models or use all Black collaborators.

V.4) IN THE BLK

Alaska-Alaska developed the identity for the IN THE BLK collective that was showcased in October 2020. The mission of IN THE BLK is to unify and build solidarity and economic independence for Black individuals in the global fashion industry. The collective is focused on three pillars: Political, Economics, and Innovation.





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VI.

CLASSIFICATION: PROMOTING BLACK TALENT

Endorsing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color artists and using my influence to promote their work.

One of the many joys of leading brands like Louis Vuitton and Off-White is the exposure I get every day to creative minds across the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color artistic community. From Black American musicians and designers to Ghanaian streetwear entrepreneurs, I am humbled by the colorful energy and vibrant spirit behind the Black, Indigenous, and People of Color creatives with whom I collaborate.



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VI.

CLASSIFICATION: PROMOTING BLACK TALENT

Endorsing Black, Indigenous, and People of Color artists and using my influence to promote their work.

VI. 1) AHMAUD ARBERY SONG WITH LUPE FIASCO

Grammy award-winner Lupe Fiasco and I co-wrote a spoken word poem to commemorate the life of the late Ahmaud Arbery, a passionate young athlete stolen from his family and his community simply for jogging while Black. In the piece, titled "SHOES," Lupe raps about what an "Air Ahmaud" sneaker would look like. With this song, we wanted to immortalize Ahmaud and pay tribute to him and the hundreds of Black people murdered for living their lives.