



In this file photo British model Naomi Campbell presents a creation by Dolce & Gabbana during the men's & women's spring/summer 2019 collection fashion show in Milan.—AFP

Fashion must 'enforce inclusion', says supermodel Naomi Campbell

Supermodel Naomi Campbell said Monday that the fashion industry must start "enforcing inclusion" on the catwalk and beyond. The British-born star, who has been outspoken about the racism she has encountered in the industry, made the comments in a video to open the virus-hit Paris fashion week, which has been forced online. Wearing a T-shirt with the legend, "Phenomenally Black", Campbell said the "time has come to build a more equitable industry with a good form of checks and balances". The lessons of the Black Lives Matter movement must also be applied to fashion, she said. "This is a conversation that is starting now and will last as long as is needed," she added.

"It is up to us and you to start enforcing inclusion of the multitude of identities that compose our countries," Campbell added in a message addressed to the industry's movers and shakers. "It is more now than ever compulsory to include them in a permanent way and not a transient one." Campbell, 50, has never made of secret of the prejudice she faced in her early days on the catwalk, where she was the sole black supermodel in the 1990s.

'Blonde, blue-eye girls sell'

"I may be considered one of the top models in the world, but in no way do I make the same money as any of them," she said at the time. She was not signed by a cosmetics company until 1999. In a famously frank interview around the same time with The Guardian newspaper said that "this business is about selling, and blonde and blue-eyed girls are what sells". "The fight for equality and diversity has been a long fight in society and in the fashion industry," Campbell said in

the video, made for the French fashion and haute couture federation, which runs Paris fashion week. "We still have a long way to go, and the time has come to collectively call the fashion world to task regarding inequality," she added.

In her call to arms Monday, Campbell quoted the late South African leader Nelson Mandela—whom she met several times and greatly admired. "He said that vision without action is merely daydreaming; but vision with action can change the world," she added. Although Paris runway shows are hugely more visibly diverse than they were a decade ago, black designers are still few and far between.

Black designers breaking through

That has not stopped the American Virgil Abloh from becoming one of the hottest designers of the moment, heading up Louis Vuitton menswear as well as his own starry Off-White label. And Olivier Rousteing became the first black designer to run a major Paris house when he took over at Balmain in 2011, aged just 25. He has since put diversity at the heart of the brand. African designers are also now breaking through, with the Cameroonian creator Imane Ayissi—a former model and dancer—showing in the elite Paris couture line-up Tuesday. And Campbell walked the Paris women's catwalk in February to support the young Nigerian designer Kenneth Ize, who was making his debut. Campbell was his "fairy godmother", said the 29-year-old. "Naomi made this happen. She has been part of the journey since day one," he said.—AFP

CHANEL resurrects Lagerfeld's punk princesses

South Sudanese model Adut Akech was the star of Chanel's teeny-weeny Paris haute couture show Tuesday which featured two "punk princesses". Designer Virginie Viard said she drew inspiration from her predecessor Karl Lagerfeld for the one-minute 22-second film, no more than a teaser for its autumn-winter collection. The French designer, who was Lagerfeld's right-hand woman until his death last year, has already signalled that the days of his "pharaonic" extravaganzas are over at the label. But even for her, this was minimalist.

Paris fashion week has been forced online for the first time in its history by the coronavirus, with labels showing short films of their clothes instead. While Viard's collections so far for the iconic French house have been marked by soberness and simplicity, this time she channelled the decadence and "shimmering opulence and jewellery" of the Paris nightclub scene over which Lagerfeld and Yves Saint Laurent presided in the late 1970s. "I was thinking about a punk princess coming out of Le Palace at dawn," she said, referring to a legendary club in the French capital.

"With a taffeta dress, big hair, feathers and lots of jewellery. This collection is more inspired by Karl Lagerfeld than Gabrielle Chanel. Karl would go to Le Palace, he would accompany these very sophisticated and very dressed up women, who were very eccentric too," Viard added.

Tears of joy

French designers Alexis Mabille and Stephane Rolland presented the nearest thing to real fashion shows so far, both using one model to show all their looks, while fellow Parisian label Aganovich created a stop motion film with its garments with artist Erik Madigan. Rolland used the Spanish model Nieves Alvarez, one of Saint Laurent's final muses, to show his black and white collection inspired by pop art. Full of long and lan-

guorous looks, he told AFP he wanted to create "cocoon forms that were protective and generous" as well as glamorous.

But perhaps the day's most poetic offering was from the Japanese designer Yuima Nakazato who instead of teasing a collection, asked people from around the world to send him old white shirts they had been attached to which he then recut and transformed. One Japanese woman gave him her dead mother's shirt, which like a kimono she wanted to hand down to future generations of her family.



French fashion designer Stephane Rolland poses during the shooting of a film designed to replace Haute Couture fashion shows in Paris.

Nakazato talked to each of his clients by video link about the history of their shirt before reimagining it, and then sending it off to them in a box. The designer, who wears his studio white coat throughout the film, said the idea of the charity project, called "Face to Face", was to give people "courage and hope... at a time when our ability to meet people physically is limited". Having drawn out his clients' stories, some were brought to tears by his creations and others were so awed by the "work of art" that they screamed with joy when they opened their box.—AFP



A model presents a creation by French designer Stephane Rolland during the shooting of a film designed to replace Haute Couture fashion shows in Paris.—AFP photos