

Audrey's society whirl



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The Fragrance Foundation host Connections networking brunch in Harlem

By Audrey J. Bernard

HARLEM, NEW YORK – The sweet smell of scents permeated the atmosphere at Harlem's iconic restaurant Melba's on Harlem's famed Restaurant Row at Frederick Douglass Boulevard where The Fragrance Foundation (TFF) hosted an intimate gathering of some 40 industry leaders, including brand owners, designers, media, influencers and style makers to celebrate New York Fashion Week and learn the latest on #FragranceForwardTFF, the sweeping industry-wide initiative dedicated to advancing diversity, equity and inclusion throughout the fragrance industry, at every level.

Linda G. Levy, President of TFF, greeted and welcomed these movers & shakers to the reception where they noshed on Melba's scrumptious morsels of delight and sampled delicious signature libations as they engaged in a lively exchange of ideas and shared insights on the latest fragrance trends for the season. Levy was on fire as she passionately spoke about her commitment to inclusivity in "fragrance forward" exclaiming, "It is time for us to connect! This city is on fire and TFF is about connecting people and engaging in dialogue about diversity."

Her exuberance fired up guests to take The Pledge for

Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. Levy then introduced brand owners Chris Collins, founder, World of Chris Collins; Teri Johnson of the Harlem Candle Company; and Francisco Costa, whose award-winning beauty line Costa Brazil is elevating the standards of sustainability in the industry. Buoyed by Levy's contagious enthusiasm, the three brand owners delivered exciting remarks and anecdotal experiences about their brands and their commitment to Connections in their businesses. After, guests gathered in the dining area for a soul food brunch fit for fashion royalty.

Themed around the concept of Connections, "The Fragrance Foundation is unwaveringly committed to advancement industry diversity, equity and inclusion," said Levy. "We do this by creating connections, fostering connections and inspiring connections to amplify new and emerging brands – and the incredible talent behind them. We are delighted to present what we hope is a landmark event celebrating the creativity and excellence of BIPOC brands, in Harlem, the heart of New York City."

Launched in fall 2022, #FragranceForwardTFF, is now considered an industry standard-bearer in, providing real-time opportunities in the areas of mentorship, recruit-

ment and career development as well as scholarship and education. In less than one year, #FragranceForwardTFF: created the first-ever fragrance diversity scholarship program at FIT, providing \$100,000 annually to deserving undergraduate and graduate students; launched Scents of Success, a career development workshop series at Spelman College and will roll out to other HBCUs Minority Serving Institutions; and presented a groundbreaking webinar on industry perspectives featuring diverse leaders from LVMH, the Phluid Project, World of Chris Collins and Givaudan with over 3,000 participants and; galvanized the industry (including TFF's 100+ members) to take – and commit – to the #FragranceForwardTFF DEI pledge that calls for a commitment to being "fragrance forward" in hiring practices, advancement opportunities, mentorship, recruitment and inclusivity.

"#FragranceForwardTFF is an ongoing investment in the future of the industry, allowing us to drive conversation around DEI into action," added Sharné Jackson, Spelman College alumna and TFF's Senior Director, Events, Education and Give Back. "Through this unprecedented pillar of support, we are creating opportunities for more diverse students to pursue their passion for fragrance through rigorous



(L-R) Linda G. Levy, Chris Collins, Avril Graham, Francisco Costa

academic opportunities and access to jobs, information, mentors and much more."

New York-1 News anchor Cheryl Wills reported directly from the event as part of the network's official New York Fashion Week coverage, while also celebrating 30 years of broadcasting. The event was conceived and managed by TFF's AOR Finn Partners, with the team led by Helen Shelton, Global Chief Diversity Officer and head of DEI strategy. Notables in attendance included: television personality Dahiana Perez, designer and artist Rebecca Moses, Ambassador Digital's Musa Jackson, Elle's Kathleen Hou, WWD's Noor Lobad; Ama Kwarteng from Coveteur; Pat Stevenson, publisher of the Harlem News Group, the New York Beacon's Audrey J. Bernard, influencers Tiff Benson and Rosa Chang Crespo, author and fashion editor

Walter Greene; El Diario's Liseth Perez Almeida, Avril Graham, Harper's Bazaar US, award-winning journalist Jacklyn Monk, TelevisaUnivision's María del Pilar Casal, Fashions Week's Maya Litovsky and Anne Raso, and InStyle's Pia Velasco.

The Fragrance Foundation executive team was also on hand, including Sharné Jackson, Spelman College alumna and Senior Director, Events, Education and Give Back, and Christina Iwasko, Senior Director, Membership, Awards and Administration. The event was conceived and managed by TFF's AOR Finn Partners, with the team led by Helen Shelton, Global Chief Diversity Officer and head of DEI strategy. Guests departed with fabulous swag bags containing gifts from each brand owner. (Photos by Rob Kim/Getty Images for TFF).



(L-R) Dahiana Perez, Linda G. Levy, Francisco Costa, Maria del Pilar Casal



Musa Jackson, Teri Johnson



Pat Stevenson, Sharné Jackson



Linda G. Levy, Cheryl Wills



Linda G. Levy, Sharné Jackson,



Christina Iwasko, Sharné Jackson



Linda G. Levy, Chris Collins



(L-R) Teri Johnson, Chris Collins, Terrence Pratt