

AAFA Builds 49th American Image Awards, Announcing Exemplary Honorees

The American Apparel & Footwear Association announces an inspirational slate of honorees for its 2025 American Image Awards this spring, Tues, April 29, in NYC.

NEW YORK CITY, NY, UNITED STATES, January 14, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The [American Apparel & Footwear Association](#) announces an inspirational slate of honorees for its [2025 American Image Awards](#) this spring, Tuesday,

April 29, in NYC. Celebrating innovative partnerships and visionary leadership across the fashion landscape, this prestigious event spotlights visionaries across all sectors of the apparel and footwear industry, including design, manufacturing, and retail – and the full product lifecycle.



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*Steve Lamar, President & CEO,
AAFA*

A distinguished group of individuals and organizations who have made significant contributions across the fashion industry and in communities around the world, the 2025 honorees include: Target as Retailer of the Year; American Textile Company as Company of the Year; Ulla Johnson as Designer of the Year; Dr. D'Wayne Edwards, President, Pensole Lewis College as Fashion Maverick; Apparel Impact Institute as Eco-Steward of the Year; and Katherine Gold, GoldBug, as Trailblazer.

RETAILER OF THE YEAR-

Target

Founded in 1962 and headquartered in Minneapolis, Target is one of the largest retailers in the United States. Committed to helping families discover the joy of everyday life, Target has made a significant mark on the apparel and footwear industry as a leader and visionary. With its curated

apparel and accessories assortment of national brand favorites, expertly designed owned brands and industry-leading partnerships, Target has become synonymous with delivering quality style at an incredible value. For 25 years, Target has democratized fashion by partnering with nearly 200 of the biggest and most respected names in the fashion industry to bring consumers the latest trends, styles, designers and brands they may not have heard of or had access to.

COMPANY OF THE YEAR-

American Textile Company, accepted by Lance Rutenberg, President and CEO

Family-owned and operated for 100 years, American Textile Company's products are sold in leading retailers across North America and globally. Supporting healthy living with products designed to improve sleep quality, ATC is profoundly committed to leveraging global supply chains, regional partnerships, and domestic innovation. With a keen focus on sustainable operations and a business that supports well-paying U.S. jobs, the company is headquartered in Duquesne, PA with operations in Salt Lake City, UT; Dallas, TX; Tifton, GA; Central America, and Asia.

DESIGNER OF THE YEAR-

Ulla Johnson

Anchored in creating transportive, emboldening collections crafted with integrity, Ulla Johnson is the essence of what it means to be an American designer in the 21st century. With a focus on



The 2025 American Image Award Honorees



Council of Fashion Designers of America Logo

authenticity, beauty, and empowering those that wear the collections, Ulla Johnson has never wavered on her steadfast attention to the details of construction that have become her hallmark, basing each of her collections on a foundation of natural fibers, beautiful finishing, and ease of fit and form. An American designer and owner of the eponymous clothing brand, Johnson is dedicated to investing in her supply chain, working with artisans and craftspeople across the globe including Peru, Kenya, India to Uruguay with a focus on uplifting, celebrating, and sustaining traditional craft in often female-led rural communities. Johnson's philanthropic work is focused on support of women's advocacy, social justice, the preservation of craft, and environmental conservation.

FASHION MAVERICK-

Dr. D'Wayne Edwards, President, Pensole Lewis College

Throughout his illustrious career, Dr. D'Wayne Edwards' mission has been to leave the industry better than he found it and to make the conversation around diversity a non-issue. Holding over 50 patents and having designed more than 500 footwear styles for iconic athletes and recording artists such as Michael Jordan, Derek Jeter, Carmelo Anthony, Tupac, Notorious B.I.G and Nas. In 2010, Edwards founded PENSOLE, the first academy in the United States dedicated solely to footwear design. The academy has placed over 500 alumni in positions at major companies like Nike, Adidas, New Balance, Puma, Vans, Timberland, The North Face, JORDAN, COACH, and Zenga.

Realizing his dream of establishing the first Black-owned footwear factory in the United States, Edwards launched JEMS by PENSOLE. One of his most significant achievements is acquiring Detroit's closed HBCU and merging it with his academy to reopen the nation's first and only design focused HBCU, Pensole Lewis College (PLC), where he serves as president. PLC is the first HBCU to reopen after closing. In 2022, Fast Company recognized PLC as one of the world's most innovative design companies. Today, the HBCU has placed over 800 students into careers and has partnerships with companies like Target, Carhartt, Pepsico, NBA, Logitech, Foot Locker, and GM.

ECO-STEWARD OF THE YEAR-

Apparel Impact Institute, accepted by Lewis Perkins, President and CEO

Apparel Impact Institute (Aii) was launched in 2017 to identify, fund, scale, and measure the apparel and footwear industry's proven environmental impact solutions. Since its founding, Aii has worked with over 55 global brand and retail partners, engaged with over 1,200 facilities, and achieved reductions of over 6.5Mt CO2e over the useful life. President Lewis Perkins's passion for sustainability and non-profit work has included strategic roles with organizations such as The Clean Air Campaign, 360i, and USWeb/CKS. He is an Ashoka and C&A Foundation Strategy Thought Partner for social entrepreneurs, a 2016 and 2017 member of the H&M Global Change

Award Expert Panel, was a Design Mentor for the CFDA Design Initiative–Eco Design Challenge Accelerator and the IDEO & Ellen MacArthur Foundation’s New Plastics Economy “Circular Design Competition.” Perkins has also been a participant of the World Economic Forum Global Future Council on Consumption.

TRAILBLAZER-

Katherine Gold, GoldBug

GoldBug designs and manufactures high-quality products that families trust for their everyday needs, from baby gear to essential accessories for babies and young children. At the helm is Katherine Gold — whose entrepreneurial spirit and commitment to empowering women has shaped the company’s success. Katherine’s leadership has transformed GoldBug into one of the most prominent leaders in the industry, known for their innovative and thoughtful products and long-standing licensing partnerships. Giving back is a cornerstone of GoldBug’s philosophy, and Katherine exemplifies this through her dedication to philanthropy, advocacy, and global partnerships. Her primary philanthropic focus is on maternal health, an issue close to her heart and one that is central to GoldBug’s mission and enduring belief in the power of business to drive positive social change.

The 2025 American Image Awards gala – taking place at Gotham Hall in New York City on Monday, April 29, 2025. The [Council of Fashion Designers of America](#) (CFDA) Foundation is the event’s longstanding charitable beneficiary.

“As we approach a half of century of hosting the American Image Awards, I am proud to reflect on the breadth, innovation, and reach of this industry, as well as the individuals who drive it. Collectively and individually, this year’s honorees have forged a legacy of accomplishment, inclusion, and empowerment, which will be vital as we tackle pressing challenges in such areas as supply chain flexibility, talent and mentorship, healthy communities, industry accountability, and global sustainability. We are excited to celebrate the next generation of designers, manufacturers, supply chain partners, and circularity pioneers,” shares Steve Lamar, President and CEO, AAFA

“The longevity of the AAFA-CFDA Foundation partnership — now in our ninth year — allows us to inspire our unique membership to align on and amplify future-focused impact year-over-year,” said Steven Kolb, CEO, CFDA. “Thank you to AAFA for another year of partnership and investment.”

Full details about the honorees and gala, including how to participate, can be found at www.americanimageawards.org. #AmericanImageAwards

ABOUT THE AMERICAN APPAREL & FOOTWEAR ASSOCIATION:

The American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) The American Apparel & Footwear Association (AAFA) is the national trade association representing apparel, footwear and other sewn products companies, and their suppliers, which compete in the global market. Representing more than 1,100 world famous name brands, AAFA is the trusted public policy and political voice of the apparel and footwear industry, its management and shareholders, its more than 3.5 million U.S. workers, and its contribution of more than \$509 billion in annual U.S. retail sales. AAFA drives progress on three key priorities: Brand Protection; Supply Chain & Sourcing; and Trade, Logistics, & Manufacturing. AAFA approaches this work through the lens of purpose-driven leadership in a manner that supports each member's ability to build and sustain inclusive and diverse cultures, meet and advance ESG goals, and draw upon the latest technology.

ABOUT THE AMERICAN IMAGE AWARDS:

Owned and operated by AAFA for 49 years, AAFA's American Image Awards has been honoring those who have exemplified leadership, excellence, and outstanding achievement in all sectors of the apparel and footwear industry.

ABOUT THE CFDA FOUNDATION:

The Council of Fashion Designers of America, Inc. (CFDA) is a not-for-profit trade association, whose membership consists of America's foremost apparel, jewelry, and accessory designers. The CFDA Foundation is a separate not-for-profit organization, which was created to raise funds for charity and industry activities. Through innovative partnerships with brands, retailers, and CFDA designers, the Foundation is able to leverage fashion and effectively generate awareness and funds for these charitable causes.

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