

NORDSTROM

AfroTech 2020: Employee Spotlight

September 14, 2020

Diversity, inclusion and belonging has always been important at Nordstrom, but we know we have a lot of ways to improve as we strive to be a better, more inclusive and anti-racist company. We've done a lot of listening over the past few months and put together [specific goals](#) for how we can improve – including increasing the demographic diversity in our corporate and all leadership positions to better reflect the North American population.

That's why we're so excited to help sponsor AfroTech 2020, one of the largest multicultural tech conferences in the United States, bringing together engineers, venture capitalists, recruiters, technologists and culture enthusiasts from all over the world. While we're looking forward to meeting other Black tech experts during this virtual event, we'd like to introduce the world to a few of our own tech enthusiasts.

Andrew Aluko, Software Engineer



Prior to joining Nordstrom, Andrew spent time as a musician and entrepreneur in his hometown of Austin, Texas. Thanks to a coding bootcamp and the ambition for a new challenge, Andrew and his partner moved to Chicago where he landed a job as a support engineer and later promoted to software engineer on the Personalized Shopping team here at Nordstrom. "I really appreciate Nordstrom's culture of growth and continued learning. Both personally and professionally I would say the desire to learn things I know nothing about inspires me. That is what led me to engineering in the first place and fuels my appetite to level up every day. Basically, I'm saying you want me on your trivia team."

While Andrew would normally be traveling the globe trying new food, COVID-19 has put a bit of a damper on that. Instead, he's pushing his cooking limits, watching lots of soccer and "playing video games with old friends like we are 13 years old on summer break."

Lauren Daniels, Senior Engineer



Lauren followed a non-traditional path into tech and Nordstrom. "My family jokes I was down to astronaut as the



career I haven't tried!" Similar to Andrew, Lauren's sense of curiosity and passion to learn something new led her to coding bootcamp and ultimately a place at Nordstrom, which not only aligns with her passions but her values as well. "At Nordstrom, I've found a company that is actively trying to do better and is willing to get uncomfortable. There is a focus on diversifying our talent pipelines internally and externally."

When away from her desk, you can find Lauren at her local gym powerlifting (or you will once COVID-19 settles down). More recently, she's picked up a love for interior design and has been "geeking out" on the spiritual tradition of the African diaspora.

Parting words of wisdom: "Don't be afraid of the big swings! If you see an opportunity take it, even if you're not sure of how you'll get to the result. Failure is a part of life, ask for help and take the lessons into your next endeavor."

Lemuel Gebreselassie, Senior Engineer



Lemuel describes his family as "the core of my life," so his priority when looking for a career was a healthy work environment. When a friend told him about an opening at Nordstrom, the first question he asked was about Nordstrom's values. "Among the qualities that really inspired me to jump on board was his elaborate depiction of the healthy work environment – especially the spirit of teamwork."

Lemuel has worked in different teams during his time here, but a consistent theme is Nordstrom's values. "I feel that Nordstrom appreciates and creates a conducive environment to be able to exercise my whole self." These values also help him get back to what matters most to him, his family. "Since the day I became a father I have been enjoying every moment I spend with them and feel like there is nothing in the whole world that gives me happiness seeing them grow and happy."



Adebimpe “Bimpe” Onafuwa, Director of Engineering



As the granddaughter of a fabric seller and a farmer, hard work runs in Bimpe’s family. “I spent my summers growing up selling fabric with my grandmother or sewing buttons and edges way into wee hours of the nights during Christmas in my mom’s shop. Making customers feel good is how food made it on our table; looking good is what made me feel respected growing up.” It’s those same customer-centric values that led Bimpe to join Nordstrom. “I am inspired professionally every day as a technologist here at Nordstrom to make our customers look good, feel their best and respected – it is an elemental reminder everyday of what shaped who I am today.”

She’s not the only one in her household with such drive. “Personally, I am inspired by my husband who has had the courage to pursue his passion as an artist and has a PhD in Design.” She’s also motivated by her two sons who embrace pushing the boundaries of race, gender and age.

Parting words of wisdom: “Better today than yesterday is my motto to live by every day.”

Brian Toba, Vice President of Technology



Brian is a self-described nerd who loves tinkering with technology – electronics, robotics, software or music – so it's no surprise that he started his own company, BevyUp, and wound up with a tech career at Nordstrom when the companies integrated. Here, he stays plenty busy in the complex work of technology and retail. "Having products customers want, creating the platforms to sell it and managing the logistics to deliver presents a difficult but exciting challenge."

Brian's success is only possible by being himself at work, which to him means not having to code-switch. "You get to just be who you are without trying to fit on a mold or an idea of what you 'should be like.' You're OK the way you are and you just gotta own it!" His passion for technology extends far beyond retail as he continues to look for ways to make a positive impact on the world. "I understand that we stand on the shoulders of giants, on work that was done hundreds of years ago by great people. I have no clue what the future generations are going to do with our work, but I'm going to make sure those shoulders are as tall as possible."