

Hadiya Faheem
Sanjib Dutta

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Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Initiatives at Levi Strauss & Co.: Are They Enough?

“Diversity, equity, and inclusion has never been easy, it’s historically been underfunded, under-resourced, and underprioritized. While the exact conditions may have evolved, challenges are challenges, and as we’ve done before, we will find ways to continue to strive for equity, inclusion, and equality.”¹

– Elizabeth A. Morrison, chief diversity, inclusion, and belonging officer at Levi Strauss & Co., December 2022

“At the end of the day, your biggest differentiator is going to be: Do you have the best talent? So, doubling down on talent is critical. And so, the large investors, BlackRock, Fidelity, the guys that are long-term investors and companies, want to know what you are doing on diversity and inclusion, and what you are doing to drive engagement with employees.”²

– Charles V. Bergh, CEO and president of Levi Strauss & Co., July 2022

In November 2020, American clothing company Levi Strauss & Co. (LS&Co.) named Elizabeth A. Morrison as its new chief diversity, inclusion and belonging officer. Morrison came on board after the company realized that it was not as diverse and inclusive as it needed to be. LS&Co found that very few Black employees were holding corporate level or executive positions.^{3,4}

LS&Co. had been an advocate of hiring employees from diverse backgrounds ever since the company opened a desegregatedⁱ factory in Blackstone, Virginia, in 1960. This integration of White and Black employees was a milestone for the company, accomplished four years before the 1964 passage of the U.S. Civil Rights Act.ⁱⁱ Over the years, the company provided equal employment opportunities and recruited more

ⁱ Desegregation refers to ending the policy or practice of segregating people based on their race.

ⁱⁱ The Civil Rights Act prohibits discrimination based on race, sex, national origin, color, and religion.

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