

# NORDSTROM

## Privilege Tax Panel with Venus Williams and Jen Jackson Brown

March 11, 2021

In celebration of Women's History Month and Equal Pay Day on March 24, Venus Williams hosted a roundtable conversation discussing women's empowerment, gender wage inequality, tips on advocating for oneself within an organization and much more. As part of the initiative, our EVP of Nordstrom Product Group, Young Adult and Kids Jen Jackson Brown participated in the panel discussion, highlighting our commitment to women's empowerment, our progress in achieving 100% pay equity and her own personal experience as a leader at Nordstrom. Below are Jen's highlights from the discussion.

**In 2019, Nordstrom carried out a large-scale reevaluation of wages and subsequently was able to achieve 100% pay equity across both gender and race. Why do you think those steps you took at Nordstrom were necessary, how were they successful and do you think all companies can achieve that?**

We believe in equal pay for equal work. I have worked for Nordstrom for 30-years and thinking about if there was ever a time that I was not paid equal for the same job, the truth is I don't know. There wasn't transparency when I started, but now there is, and it forces us to stay true to those values.

If we really respect the people that work for our companies, they deserve to be paid the same, no matter their race or gender. As a company there was never a time we thought this was a bad idea—it's a business imperative. Do I think every company should do it? Yes. We carried this out quickly and efficiently and I'm proud of the way we handled it.

**We have seen more women enter the workplace since the 1980's—that is a relatively short time ago and we are still facing cultural norms and biases on how women are supposed to act. It is important to have conversations around equal pay transparency because it can help other women start those conversations. How do you have those conversation in your workplace and lead at Nordstrom?**

I'm lucky because I work for a company that is mainly comprised of women. It's been so long since I've had that experience of questioning whether I am being paid equally, and I'm hopeful that companies will move towards the place we are.

From my own experience I decided I was just going to be an assertive person and I have encouraged women around me to practice negotiating. They should never just accept less pay; they must ask questions. One of the questions I tell other women to ask their supervisor is, 'can you look me in the eye and tell me I'm getting paid fairly compared to my counterparts?' This encourages the leader to go back and do research and come back with an honest answer.

**How can managers address this issue of pay inequality?**

Since you decided to be a leader, your role is to be completely selfless in advocating for the people that work for you. That would mean escalating to whoever has the authority to make the decision you want them to make. Do not be afraid of the consequences that may bring because it shows your team they can trust you and in turn will work better for you.

Access an extended interview between Jen Jackson Brown and Venus Williams [here](#).