



**Press Release: February 23, 2021**

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## **LaQuan Smith Combines Fashion and Activism to Support Florida Rights Restoration Coalition**

*Acclaimed fashion designer LaQuan Smith created an exclusive Levi's® custom-designed dress to #FreeTheVote for Florida's returning citizens*

ORLANDO, FL - Florida Rights Restoration Coalition (FRRC) announced an extension of its partnership with Levi's® and acclaimed fashion designer, LaQuan Smith. Partnering on fashion, democracy and civil liberties, LaQuan designed an exclusive custom dress out of the iconic Levi's® Trucker jacket to raise both awareness and funds in support of Florida Rights Restoration Coalition and its vision for a more inclusive democracy, which includes clemency reform, fair wages and voting rights. By putting people over politics and helping returning citizens remove life-altering barriers, this collaboration highlights the many systemic challenges people with past felony convictions face.

“This is a critical time for our nation and I believe that everyone’s voice should be heard,” said LaQuan Smith. “I use my voice through fashion, and through this special collaboration with Levi's®, I hope to raise awareness about voting rights and ensure that everyone who wants to vote can.”

The fashion mashup is the latest showing of support by Levi Strauss and Co. for FRRC. During the 2020 election season, the company hosted digital conversations with FRRC executive director Desmond Meade and donated to the organization’s fines and fees fund.

“We are appreciative of the many ways Levi's® uses its brand and influence to support our mission. We’re excited to see this piece with LaQuan come to life as fashion and activism merge to help us move our work forward,” Meade said.

Joining in solidarity of this fashion-meets-advocacy collaboration is celebrity model, entrepreneur, and activist, Elisa Johnson. Modeling the all denim trucker-designed dress, Johnson is the official ambassador for The *LaQuan Smith* design. [The dress will be auctioned to raise funds for FRRC’s programs.](#)

“As young people, it is our responsibility to make our voice heard and create a more equitable future for all,” Johnson said. “I am honored to be working with FRRC and Levi's to fight for voter enfranchisement.”

This is a recent undertaking of Levi's® leveraging its brand to encourage participation in democracy. Last year Levi's® launched its #VoteAboutIt campaign with a line of voter-branded clothing to encourage civic engagement. Levi's® also teamed up with Rock the Vote to register voters for the #UseYourVoice Live series on Instagram to spread voter education and increase engagement and more.

Those interested in obtaining this exclusive custom designed dress can place their bid at <https://floridarrc.com/laquan/> from Tuesday, February 23rd to Monday, March 1st at 5:00 pm eastern standard time. Initial bidding will begin at \$3,000.00, and all proceeds from the online silent auction will go directly towards breaking down barriers to reentry for returning citizens and improving access to democracy.

### **About LaQuan Smith**

LaQuan Smith observed his grandmother and a lot of other women role models as a kid. His family sent him to art school in high school, which was a transformative experience. He was denied admission by FIT and Parsons, and struggled to find his way into the industry. He formed an LLC that made “LaQuan Smith 3D leggings” and became known as the “leggings” guy. He modeled them and passed them around, and when celebrities started to wear them, things really took off. LaQuan's distinctive work sparked interest among fashion icons and risk-takers including early supporters Beyoncé, Rihanna, Lady Gaga, and Kim Kardashian. Since its formal debut in 2013, the LaQuan Smith brand has gained acclaim for its endless archive of distinctive garments and details. Smith has cultivated an equally dynamic private-order clientele, who span the globe from Lagos to London.

### **About The Florida Rights Restoration Coalition**

FRRC is a grassroots, membership organization run by Returning Citizens (Formerly Convicted Persons) who are dedicated to ending the disenfranchisement and discrimination against people with convictions and creating a more comprehensive and humane reentry system that will enhance successful reentry, reduce recidivism, and increase public safety. For more information, visit <https://floridarrc.com/>.

### **About Desmond Meade**

As President and Executive Director of FRRC, Desmond Meade is recognized for his work on voting and criminal justice reform issues. Desmond led the FRRC to a historic victory in 2018 with the successful passage of Amendment 4, a grassroots citizen's initiative which restored voting rights to over 1.4 million Floridians with past felony convictions. For more information, visit <https://floridarrc.com/desmond-meade/>.

## **About the Levi's® brand**

The Levi's® brand epitomizes classic American style and effortless cool. Since their invention by Levi Strauss & Co. in 1873, Levi's® jeans have become one of the most recognizable garments of clothing in the world—capturing the imagination and loyalty of people for generations. Today, the Levi's® brand portfolio continues to evolve through a relentless pioneering and innovative spirit that is unparalleled in the apparel industry. Our range of leading jeans wear and accessories are available in more than 110 countries, allowing individuals around the world to express their personal style. For more information about the Levi's® brand, its products and stores, please visit [levi.com](https://www.levi.com).