



"When I See Black": Adobe's Celebration Of Black Creativity

Adobe is a software company that offers creators unique tools for producing and publishing content ranging from graphics, sound, and photography to animation and video. Based in San Jose, California, Adobe partnered with 72andSunny, a global creative company headquartered in Los Angeles, to develop the "[When I See Black](#)" campaign. The campaign is a montage of illustration, photography, fashion and portraiture, and highlights the work of twelve Black creators. It uses personal storytelling, rich visuals, and first-person narration to amplify Black voices and showcase their creative styles. The ad is set to a song by Gregory Porter—a Black American jazz, blues, soul, and gospel singer, songwriter and musician. Its central message—"Black creativity can't be painted in a single stroke"—sets the tone for the entire campaign.

Adobe acknowledges that our worldview is shaped by our lived experiences, personal beliefs, and the stories we share. The company believes that when diverse perspectives are amplified, the world becomes more vibrant and inclusive. As a company that provides tools for creators, Adobe recognizes that not everyone has had equal opportunity to share their perspectives or have their voices heard. In this campaign especially, it stresses the importance of

uplifting the next generation of Black creators and is committed to celebrating and elevating underrepresented voices. Adobe emphasizes that the world benefits from learning from the diverse expressions that make up the Black creative community.

Adobe's [website](#) serves as a central platform for the campaign. The company also partnered with Hulu to feature “When I See Black” on Hulu LIVE programming, and in the recent installment of [Black Stories Presents: Your Attention—Please](#), where host Craig Robinson guides audiences through the lives, ideas, and dreams of a wide-ranging group of Black innovators and creators.

“Seeing creators like yourself, especially for this next generation, is absolutely crucial. We are proud to be celebrating the vibrant spectrum of creativity that exists in the world, because we all benefit when more perspectives are shared.”

—Anne Lewnes, Adobe executive vice president and chief marketing officer.

The central message of Adobe's “When I See Black” campaign—“Black creativity can't be painted in a single stroke”—serves as both a literal and symbolic statement. Culturally, it pushes back against the tendency to generalize or stereotype the Black experience. It acknowledges the vast richness and diversity within the Black community, where identity, heritage, and expression are multifaceted and deeply personal. Socially, the phrase challenges viewers to confront how society often reduces Black culture to rigid tropes or simplified narratives. Instead, Adobe emphasizes that Black voices, styles, and stories are varied and deserve to be seen and celebrated in their full complexity. Creatively, the message honors the individuality of each featured artist. From visual art and design to spoken word and music, the campaign underscores that there is no single “Black aesthetic”—each creator brings a unique

vision shaped by personal experience. In doing so, Adobe not only uplifts Black artists but also educates broader audiences about the importance of nuance in representation.

Adobe strategically distributed the “When I See Black” campaign across digital platforms, including social media and Hulu, to engage younger, tech-savvy audiences. The campaign’s video storytelling and visually-rich content were well aligned for online platforms like [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#), YouTube, and Adobe’s own [website](#), where viewers can explore more about each artist featured. Adobe’s partnership with Hulu brought the ad to Hulu Live programming and was included in the most recent episode of *Black Stories Presents*. Additionally, Adobe also launched a YouTube conversation series called [Create Change](#), which fosters meaningful discussions with diverse creators about identity, storytelling, and creative influence.



Figure 1. Adobe. (2021). Featuring the artwork of Yannis Davy Guibinga, Esther Luntadila, Joshua Kissi and Aurélia Durand. Adobe. <https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2021/02/01/adobe-celebrates-black-history-month>

This ad campaign was carefully designed to reach young Black creatives, aspiring Black artists, current Adobe users, and audiences who value and support diversity in media. By highlighting real stories, focusing on the future, collaboration, and showcasing a broad spectrum of creative work, Adobe connected with individuals who seek inspiration, representation, and

opportunities in creative industries. The campaign also appeals to socially conscious viewers who appreciate brands that prioritize inclusion and uplift underrepresented voices. Through platforms like Hulu, YouTube, and social media, Adobe targets a tech-savvy, visually engaged demographic that values storytelling, culture, and community impact.

This ad campaign was published in English, however, the language and tone used by the voices within the ad was authentic and culturally resonant. Adobe allowed the artists to narrate their own stories in their own voices, which avoided the robotic, overly polished, or performative messaging that often appears in diversity-focused advertising. Instead of speaking for the artists, Adobe gave them the platform to speak as themselves—using their natural speech, rhythm, and style. This approach added credibility and emotional depth, connecting more effectively with the audience and honoring the individuality of each creator’s experience.

“When I see Black, I see power.”

“I see a beautiful canvas.”

“I see that my skin, my color, is a miracle.”

“I see that Black stories create community.”

“I see me mother, sister and friends.”

“I see that Black girls can fly.”

“I see our very being is enough to inspire.”

“I see our legacy in neon lights.”

“I see the future is so bright.”

“I see that nothing moves without Black culture.”

“I see the source of life.”

“When I see Black, I see myself.”

The campaign thoughtfully incorporated cultural elements that resonate deeply within the Black community. One aspect that stands out is the use of Gregory Porter’s gospel-fusion track “*Revival*.” The soulful, uplifting energy of the song enhances the message of creativity, and identity that the campaign aimed to convey. Gospel music has deep roots in African American history and culture, often associated with hope, perseverance, and spiritual strength. Which makes the song a powerful emotional backdrop for this ad. Beyond the soundtrack, the visuals showcased a variety of creative expressions—spoken word, digital art, photography, and fashion—that reflect the rich diversity of Black creators. By focusing on real Black creators and allowing them to represent themselves authentically, the campaign tapped into cultural symbols, values, and artistic traditions in a way that felt genuine rather than tokenizing. These touch points helped foster emotional connection and cultural pride, reinforcing the idea that Black creativity is multifaceted and worthy of celebration.

While there is limited public data on the campaign’s performance, Adobe’s “When I See Black” campaign holds clear cultural significance. By highlighting Black creatives and celebrating diversity, Adobe aligned its brand with values of inclusion, authenticity, and representation. The campaign’s powerful visuals, honest storytelling, and strategic use of digital platforms suggest it was designed not only to reach, but to resonate deeply with audiences who are often overlooked in mainstream advertising. Even without the analytics, the campaign contributes meaningfully to a growing movement within media and advertising to amplify underrepresented voices and promote more nuanced portrayals of the multifaceted Black experiences.

While the “When I See Black” campaign was highly successful for its authenticity and focus on elevating real Black voices, there are still areas where it could have deepened its

impact. The campaign featured twelve Black creators sharing personal reflections on what they see when they “*see Black*,” which gave the ad the emotional weight and sincerity necessary to communicate its message. However, giving the creators more visibility—such as featuring them on camera with their artwork or showing them actively creating using Adobe software—could have made the message even more powerful. This approach would have allowed audiences to not only hear their voices but also witness the diversity of Black artistic expression in real time. Strengthening the visual connection between the richness of Black culture and the creativity that exists within it would have expanded the impact of the campaign. Additionally, while the ad successfully avoided stereotypes, it could have explored more shared cultural values within the Black community, such as family, resilience, community, and ancestry.

Adobe’s “When I See Black” campaign is a compelling example of an advertising campaign that authentically engages with a specific cultural audience. By centering the voices and experiences of Black creators, the campaign elevated underrepresented talent and celebrated the diversity within the Black community. Its central message—“Black creativity can’t be painted in a single stroke”—resonates culturally, socially, and artistically, reminding audiences that artistic expression is never one-size-fits-all. While the campaign succeeded in its emotional impact and use of authentic storytelling, future iterations could further strengthen its impact by visually highlighting the creators. Overall, Adobe’s approach is meaningful and marks a significant step toward greater inclusion and deeper representation in the advertising media landscape.

References

Adobe. (2020). *Adobe film celebrates Black creativity*. Adobe.

<https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2020/10/19/adobe-film-celebrates-black-creativity>

Adobe Communications Team. (2021). *Adobe celebrates Black History Month*. Adobe.

<https://blog.adobe.com/en/publish/2021/02/01/adobe-celebrates-black-history-month>

Caruso, I. (2022). *Adobe when I see Black* [YouTube Video]. YouTube.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=M59rssdUc4A>

Constantine, B. (2020). *Adobe's 'When I See Black' Brings New Black Perspectives to*

ComplexLand. Complex. <https://www.complex.com/pop-culture/a/brandon-constantine/adobe-when-i-see-black-complex-land>

Gianatasio, D. (2020). *Adobe Explores the Black Experience Through the Eyes and Ears of*

Creators. Muse By Clios. <https://musebyclios.com/advertising/adobe-explores-black-experience-through-eyes-and-ears-creators/>

Sherwood, I. (2020). *Adobe's showcase of Black creators turns the artistic gaze inward*. AdAge.

<https://adage.com/creativity/work/adobe-when-i-see-black/2288526/>

Wikipedia. (April 2, 2025). Adobe Inc. Wikipedia. https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adobe_Inc.

Wikipedia. (February 17, 2025). Gregory Porter. Wikipedia.

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregory_Porter