



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on April 6, 2017

## Pepsi in Trouble Over Social Justice Ad That Isn't Left-leaning Enough

With the political climate being as charged as it is, it seems everyone is trying to exploit it, including some of America's favorite brands. Pepsi is now in hot water over an advertisement that capitalized on the increasing popularity of the social justice movement amongst young people but was forced to pull it because it was not progressive enough, according to social-justice warriors.

The controversial ad features model and reality star Kendall Jenner, of the Kardashian family, at a protest modeled to appear like a Black Lives Matter rally. She passes through the crowds and approaches a line of police officers and hands one of them a can of Pepsi. This prompts applause and cheers from the crowd and smiles from the officers. The words "Live Bolder" appear onscreen.

According to Pepsi, the ad's purpose was to show unity and to encourage everyone to peaceably "join the conversation," as signs held by protesters in the ad read.

"This is a global ad that reflects people from different walks of life coming together in a spirit of harmony, and we think that's an important message to convey," a statement from Pepsi on Tuesday read.

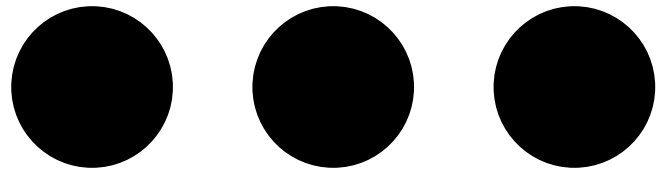
But critics are saying that the ad made light of the Black Lives Matter movement and the efforts of activists hoping to effect change.

"No one is finding joy from Pepsi at a protest," said Elle Hearn, executive director of the Marsha P. Johnson Institute and former organizer for Black Lives Matter. "That's just not the reality of our lives. That's not what it looks like to take bold action."

Others took to Twitter to opine that the ad's portrayal of police officers was too kind. "If I had carried Pepsi I guess I never would've gotten arrested," tweeted activist DeRay McKesson.

Twitter user Maya drew a comparison between a photo of Jenner approaching the police officers to a widely shared photo of [Ieshia Evans](#), a black woman who stood while being charged by riot police last July in Baton Rouge, La. "The best example of white and economic privilege/ignorance I've ever seen," she tweeted.

Hearn too drew the parallel between Jenner and Evans and said it was not a fair comparison because Evans was not trying to make peace with the police, but instead intended to resist them, which





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apparently is the preferable stance, at least to the ad's critics. "It has no relationship to the courage that [Evans] showed," Hearn said, referring to the advertisement. "That woman standing in the middle of the street was not trying to be a peacemaker with the police. She was being defiant. She was actually resisting."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=AfCiV6ysngU?ecver>

The ad drew enough backlash that Pepsi deleted it from its YouTube channel and issued an apology.

A statement on the company's website reads: "Pepsi was trying to project a global message of unity, peace and understanding. Clearly we missed the mark, and we apologize. We did not intend to make light of any serious issue. We are removing the content and halting any further rollout. We also apologize for putting Kendall Jenner in this position."

Once again, the PC police and social-justice warriors are victorious. When a company apologizes for attempting to relay a message of peace and respect toward law enforcement, it's clear that harmony is not on everyone's agenda, but rather advancing a victim narrative and provoking violence in the name of activism.

Of course, this entire issue could have been avoided if Pepsi would have simply steered clear of politics in the first place. While the message may have been a well-intended one, the fact remains that whenever a brand takes a political stance, whichever it may be, it risks snubbing a portion of its patronage.

More often than not, it is left-leaning companies that are marginalizing their conservative customers. This has become all too common as companies aim to be on the right side of social-justice issues and appease the Left, needlessly ostracizing their moderate and conservative customers.

But what those companies did not realize is that conservatives also have enough economic power to inflict damage.

For example, Starbucks' chairman and chief executive Howard Schultz sent an e-mail to his staff following Trump's immigration ban saying he had a "heavy heart" and outlined plans to hire 10,000 refugees over the next five years. His stance prompted calls to #BoycottStarbucks.

Likewise, cereal company Kellogg's announced last November it would be pulling all of its advertising from Breitbart.com, which has 45 million readers, because of concerns over the company's conservative values. Kellogg's announcement resulted in the #DumpKelloggs movement. The #DumpKelloggs petition has been signed by over 450,000 people.

Kellogg's was already in trouble after announcing major cuts, factory closings, and terminations of hundreds of employees. Why would it venture into the political arena and risk losing customers at a time when it needs them most?

According to calculations by Brand Finance's Brand Directory, Kelloggs has dipped from 74th most valuable brand last year to 84th. Industry watchdog Adweek contends that Kellogg's decision to pull advertising from Breitbart is responsible for [sustained damage](#) to the company's brand online.

The National Football League is also experiencing fallout for its venture into politics and its strong left-leaning stance. Last year, it awarded San Francisco 49ers Colin Kaepernick the Len Eshmont Award for being "inspirational and courageous," based on his vocal opposition to the National Anthem. The *Daily Wire* opined, "While the league banned innocuous celebrations and even prevented one player from wearing patriotic cleats in memory of 9/11, it stood firmly behind Kaepernick's anti-American/anti-law



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enforcement protest, even while fans made clear how much it turned them off. And yet when the Dallas Cowboys attempted to place an 'Arm in Arm' decal on their helmets to honor the five officers killed in Dallas, the NFL stopped it."

NFL viewership is slipping and a Rasmussen survey found that 32 percent of adults said they were less likely to watch NFL games because of the National Anthem protests. But will this stop the NFL from pursuing its political agenda?

The best way for companies such as Pepsi, Starbucks, Kellogg's, and the NFL to encourage unity and inclusion is to produce a product that appeals to people from all walks of life. When everyone gathers to enjoy your product, you've achieved your goal without aggressively hoisting your political opinions on your unsuspecting customers. What people want is an escape from politics, not more of it. Provide a forum for that and your company may succeed without the need for apologetic statements.



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