



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

James Sanders Jr.

## Senator James Sanders Jr. Slams Dove for Racist Facebook Post / Ad

JAMES SANDERS JR. October 11, 2017



Dove Needs To Wash Out Its Mouth With Soap Until It Can Clean Up Its Act

By: NYS Senator James Sanders Jr.

Here we go again. Dove, a company that produces products aimed at supposedly improving the look and condition of skin has besmirched black people about their skin with racist advertising.

Dove posted on Facebook a series of four photos demonstrating a black woman pulling a

brown shirt over her head and turning into a smiling white woman looking smug with satisfaction. It seemed to imply that with Dove products one could change their skin color as easily as removing a shirt. The problem is it equates black skin with something dirty, something that needs to be cleaned and made better, and that black people want to be white.

The company later tweeted that it had “missed the mark,” and the ad has since been removed.

If this were the first time Dove had made such a mistake maybe we could attribute it to a careless PR team, but it is not. In fact, about 2 years ago, I took the company to task over the racist labeling of one of its products – Summer Glow Nourishing Lotion. On the bottle, it stated that the product was intended for “Normal to Dark Skin.” Since the opposite of normal is abnormal, I wondered whether it was Dove’s position that dark skin is abnormal.

So I sent a letter of outreach to Unilever, which is Dove’s parent company to express my outrage and propose they offer scholarships to young people of color, who were preparing for careers in the marketing field so that Dove could avoid making such mistakes in the future. An apology is simply not enough. It wasn’t then and it isn’t now. If they would have offered the scholarships, I told them I would publicly thank them on the senate floor for this act of good faith.

They did not take me up on my offer, but they should have, then maybe this continuing pattern of racism may have been averted.

In Unilever’s response letter to me following the Summer Glow fiasco, it assured me that “Dove is committed to creating a world where beauty is a source of confidence, not anxiety, for women and girls everywhere.” And yet, here we are again, in a situation way worse than

before where Dove equates dark skin with something that is unclean. At least with Nourishing Glow they blamed the error on a label language mix-up with their foreign team.

Dove claims it has spent \$19 million on a Self-Esteem Project that it launched in 2004, which it says aims to “help the next generation of women grow up feeling happy and confident about the way they look.” Maybe they should be using some of that money to make sure they have a diverse and racially sensitive corporate leadership team.

I recently reached out to Unilever again regarding the Facebook skin change post, mainly to try and find out how this could have happened after the company promised to be more careful and to find out what they were going to do (beyond an apology) to make things right for all the people they hurt. I have not heard back from them yet.

I think it's foolish for any self-respecting person of any color to use Dove products until the company cleans up its act, and if I was a shareholder I would have questions.