



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR
James Sanders Jr.

Sanders Slams Racist Sweatshirt from H&M

JAMES SANDERS JR. January 9, 2018

The image shows a screenshot of the H&M website. At the top, there are navigation links: LADIES, MEN, KIDS, H&M HOME, SALE, MAGAZINE, and #HM GALLERY. The main product is a green hooded top, priced at £7.99. The product is shown on a young boy and in a separate image. The text on the sweatshirt reads "COOLEST MONKEY IN THE JUNGLE". The description below the product states: "Top in soft, printed sweatshirt fabric with a wrapover hood and ribbing at the cuffs and hem. Soft brushed inside." There are also buttons for "ADD TO SHOPPING BAG" and "FIND IN STORE".

State Senator James Sanders Jr. said:

"I am deeply offended and disheartened that yet another global corporation – H&M – which employees enough people and makes enough money to know better – released an extremely racist advertisement and product, which featured a black child wearing a hooded sweatshirt with the words “coolest monkey in the jungle,” imprinted on it. The monkey animal reference has a deep-rooted history in racial hatred and slurs against people of color, particularly African-Americans.

It boggles the mind that H&M did not have anyone on its marketing team that could have caught this hurtful and careless mistake. The company removed the image from its website on Monday and said it would pull the sweatshirt from its stores worldwide. It also issued an apology.

These mistakes are extremely hurtful to everyone, not just people of color. It perpetuates the idea that this type of ignorance can be erased with a simple apology, H&M is not the first company, and I'm sure it won't be the last, unfortunately, to do this. Last year, Unilever the company that owns Dove made a similar mistake.

Dove posted on Facebook a series of four photos demonstrating a black woman pulling a brown shirt over her head and turning into an ecstatically smiling white woman, implying that black skin is dirty and white skin is clean and therefore is the desired goal.

Two years earlier Dove similarly botched the advertising of its Summer Glow Nourishing Lotion as intended for "Normal to Dark Skin." Since the opposite of normal is abnormal, it left me to wonder whether it was Dove's position that dark skin is abnormal.

Of course, in both instances, Dove apologized, but it did not prevent them from repeating the mistake.

In April 2017, In April, Nivea pulled an ad with the slogan "White is Purity," after it was deemed racially insensitive by many but celebrated by white supremacists.

I want to know what H&M is doing to go beyond an apology to right this wrong. I think it's foolish for any self-respecting person of any color to purchase H&M products until it cleans up its act, and if I was a shareholder I would have questions."

