

Reactionary racism is tired but trendy

Advertisement depicting interracial relationship evokes deplorable sentiments

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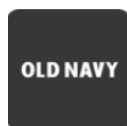
On April 30, Old Navy tweeted a picture of an interracial model family, the black mother smiling at the camera while the white father gives their biracial son a piggyback ride. The ad was posted to promote their Thank You Event. Because I am a product of an interracial marriage, the photo made me happy. Finally, someone who was just like me was getting positively-and accurately-promoted in the media.

That initial happiness, however, was soon replaced with anger as I scrolled through the replies to the store's ad. Twitter users replied to the tweet saying that the ad was "#AntiWhite", "#WhiteGenocide" and "promoting miscegenation," along with more bashing of the models and Old Navy, as well as many claims that they would never shop at the store again.

After I calmed down, I felt upset, hurt and confused. The hate this ad received felt like a twisted personal attack to me. That positive promotion, that accurate representation, has been answered with deplorable racism that is unmistakably alive and kicking in America.

And this isn't the first time something like this has happened. In 2013, Cheerios featured an ad with a black father, white mother and a mixed race daughter, and the ad elicited a ton of backlash from angry white people complaining that the family wasn't all white. And before that, in 2012, McDonald's did an ad featuring an interracial couple getting really excited about a burger, and again, angry people complained that the fast food chain was offending them with the interracial couple.

What astounds me about the negative reactions to ads featuring interracial relationships is the sheer number of them. There is so much hate toward people like my parents, and reading those comments is like being put into a time machine and going back to the '50s. But why? I can't recall any blatantly racist things that have happened to my family or myself up until the past three years or so, and even then, most of my encounters with racism have been in



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Oh, happy day! Our #ThankYouEvent is finally here. Take 30% off your entire purchase: oldnavy.me/1LUMNBd



the past year.

Perhaps the most disturbing aspect of this whole phenomenon is the very real possibility that there is a huge portion of the population that harbors racist views but lies dormant until provoked by an ad or political candidate that expresses their views. Donald Trump—who is constantly in the pub-

lic eye—routinely says these wildly racist, misogynistic and downright absurd things. Some people see him getting away with this, and then believe that they too can be racist and get away with it. And unfortunately, a lot of the time, people do get away with it. After he entered the presidential race in August 2015, there have been repeated

incidents such as the time his supporters violently assaulted a Black Lives Matter protester at his rally, and the time two of his supporters beat a homeless Latino man and quoted Trump as justification for the crime.

But why is it that this racism goes unchecked? Why is it that when Malia Obama got accepted into Harvard, the comment sections of any of the articles covering her acceptance were filled with comments on how she got in because of affirmative action and because she's the president's daughter, but not because she was on TIME's 30 Most Influential Teens of 2015 list or because she is incredibly smart. Why is it that racism seems to be making a comeback in America? I don't want a part two of rampant racism; I want America to be a place where justice is given to the Mike Browns, to the Aiyana Joneses and to the Tamir Rices. I want an America where no one questions why my parents are different colors. I want an America where Old Navy can put up an ad featuring an interracial couple and not get replies saying that when black men date white women, their children have a higher chance of being low achievers (Tell that to my 9-year-old sister, who effortlessly ran six miles in an hour; tell that to my brother, who got into the Kealing magnet and has been making straight A's from the start; tell that to me, a winner of a national journalism award and an all-around cool cat).

So how are we going to end such racism? Many say it isn't possible, that there will always be racist people, and honestly, I agree with that. The rampant racism that has been happening because of political figures like Trump, however, can be diminished, if people speak out against it. That mob mentality of the people in the comment sections can be mirrored with multiple people shutting them down. There are so many times when I'll hear people say, "I would've said something, but I was scared because there were too many other people." But once you speak out, you set that example for other people. I used to be scared to let people know if they said something offensive (and sometimes I still am), but you can reach a point in which telling people the right thing feels more good than daunting. And once that's achieved, I think that blatant racism could be stopped.