

KRAFT'S BIRACIAL AD LABELED OFFENSIVE, INSENSITIVE AND DEROGATORY



Kraft's Mel the MilkBite mascot has been termed as damaging and racially offensive by a local petition. The human rights petition was launched by Michelle Parrinello-Cason of St. Louis through Change.org lobbying Kraft chief executive officer Irene Rosenfeld. The petition seeks to end Mel's tenure as the brand's talisman. Mel the MilkBite is shown as a bewildered character, who is always perplexed and confused about who he really is. The ad shows him as a half-milk, half-granola product, his parents are shown as a glass of milk and a bowl of granola, whom he confronts with questions like, "You didn't think, did you? You didn't think what life was going to be like for me...Mom, Dad. For your son." The ads chronicle the life of Mel, who in every spot is seen confused about his identity. "Are you milk, are you granola?" Mel asks himself. Naturally the ad has incurred the wrath and anger of human rights advocates, who accused the brand of trivializing multi-racial parentage. "These commercials perpetuate stereotypes that multiracial people are flawed, cannot form their own identities, and will never fit in," the petition read. "In addition, your commercials suggest that parents of multiracial children are irresponsible and are not concerned with their children's well being." The product by itself is non-controversial and nutritious. According to Kraft's MilkBite "combines real milk with whole grain granola and other tasty and nutritious ingredients, providing the same calcium as an 8 oz glass of milk." One does not know what the intentions of the company were in envisioning this ad campaign and why they sought to tap into this stereotype. But it is very difficult not to point fingers at the company and not to look at them shamefully and with distrust. In one ad, Mel compares his personal adversity with the hardships of a fictional character; he is talking about with his friends at a book club. A white guy says, "He spent 30 years in a Siberian Prison!" "Right and I was born in this prison," Mel retorts. If you think that was very insensitive and callous, it was nothing compared to the disgusting, racial overtones filled ad, that shows Mel on a blind date with a white girl. The girl looks at him and asks, "I just have a question ... Your profile says you're milk?" "Uh huh, yup," he stammers "You just look like ... granola," she says with a bemused expression. Embarrassed and humiliated, Mel leaves, she calls after him "Please don't go, I'm ... I'm ... I'm kinda into it." What is the ad trying to convey, we are as confused as Mel. Through the ad the image that they are conveying is that multi-racial children are depressed, overlooked, befuddled, and not accepted by the communities for which they believe they should belong. It is already being labeled as the most offensive ad in recent times. Kraft is responding directly to people who are complaining about the ad, on their Facebook page, but if they do not want to be consigned to the page of advertising infamy, they should consider pulling the "Mel the MilkBite" campaign in its entirety.