

SLAVE SNEAKER'S CATCH ADIDAS ON WRONG FOOT



Following widespread condemnation and criticism Adidas has abandoned plans to release their latest sneakers that were scheduled hit to stores in August. The sneakers had bright orange “bracelets” that fit around the wearers' ankles. A sales tagline for the shoes, designed by Jeremy Scott, read: “Got a sneaker game so hot you lock your kicks to your ankles?” The ad evoked a hostile response, with many message boards and blogs, saying that the “bracelets” were akin to the shackles worn by black slaves in 19th century America. Moreover, they were similar to the shackles used to restrain prisoners even today. Rev. Jesse Jackson a popular leader in the Black community said: “The attempt to commercialize and make popular more than 200 years of human degradation, where blacks were considered three-fifths human by our Constitution is offensive, appalling and insensitive.” Just Facebook attracted more than two thousands responses with users saying calling the design “offensive”, “ignorant”, chastising the company for having “sunk to new lows” and labeling the shoes “slavewear”. Unaware that the backlash was not a passing phase, Adidas attempted to defend their design saying, “The design of the JS Roundhouse Mids is about nothing more than the designer, Jeremy Scott’s, outrageous and unique take on fashion and has nothing to do with slavery. Jeremy Scott is renowned as a designer whose style is quirky and lighthearted, and his previous shoe designs for Adidas Originals have, for example, included panda heads and Mickey Mouse. Any suggestion that this is linked to slavery is untruthful.” However, the extent of the backlash and probably fearing legal harassment the company has made a U-turn and recalled the shoes. In a new statement a company spokesperson said, “The design of the JS Roundhouse Mid is nothing more than the designer Jeremy Scott’s outrageous and unique take on fashion and has nothing to do with slavery. Since the shoe debuted on our Facebook page ahead of its market release in August, Adidas has received both favorable and critical feedback. We apologize if people are offended by the design and we are withdrawing our plans to make them available in the marketplace.” The company has also removed the picture of the sneakers from the Adidas Originals Facebook page, which had evoked an incisive retort from a Facebook user, Kay Tee who commented: “It’s offensive and inappropriate in many ways. Not to mention ugly.” Others responses suggested that, even though Adidas claims that their shoes are so hot that you have to chain them on to you, but corporate business have a responsibility that they would do well to observe. Another said, that in the name of fashion, corporates attempt to get away with the most outrageous products, “How would a Jewish person feel if Nike decided to have a shoe with a swastika on it and tried to claim it was OK in the name of fashion?” he asked. Dr. Boyce Watkins, a Professor at Syracuse University Writing for Your Black World, said that “I am offended by these shoes because there is nothing funny about the prison industrial complex, which is the most genocidal thing to happen to the black family since slavery itself.” “Shackles... the stuff that our ancestors wore for 400 years while experiencing the most horrific atrocities imaginable, most of which were never documented in the history books and kept away from you in the educational system, all so you would be willing to put shackles on your ankles today and not be so sensitive about it.” He was also critical of those who felt that he was over-reacting and said, “There is always a group of negroes who are more than happy to resubmit themselves to slavery. It would be pertinent to point out that Facebook received nearly 38,000 likes on Facebook but that was not enough to embolden Adidas from canceling the shoes.