

SHOCKINGLY DIRECT AD SEEKS SHARING OF 'WHITE SPACE'



Ad Agency, Muse Communications, which is headed by Jo Muse, an African-American, has plans to run a commercial that directly and in plain language confronts the subject of diversity in the ad industry. The advertising agency, that is due to be featured on the AMC reality competition series, "The Pitch" plans to show this commercial during the episode. The ad, gets straight to the point, without beating about the bush, or sounding apologetic. Muse Communication has a message, delivered with a punch, and within 30 seconds, it hits you bag on your face. It is aimed to get people talking and should surely achieve its purpose, with its no-nonsense approach. The 30 second long commercial, begins with a confident looking young black woman, walking with a swagger, on a set, surrounded by desk chairs. She begins to talk about advertising, "See any people like me? With chairs at the big table with the power players?" she asks. She then answers her own question saying, "Not many," and continues her proclamation, "They say it's because they can't find us. But they can find us when they want our money." As if inspired by the explicit and bold allegation, she pushes away most of the chairs, creating a sense of emptiness on the set. She then haughtily concludes, "You say you want diversity that you want to do more. And we say to you, advertising should not have this much ... white space." The commercial ends with the Muse Communications logo in the lower right corner of the screen. Muse Communications Chairman and Chief Creative Officer Jo Muse in a release said, "The message is pointed, sharp and focused. The rate of hiring and retention of people of color has always been dismal in the advertising industry. It's time the public felt the outrage of these people who, even now, can't find a job in this business, much less move up to the executive ranks." Mr. Muse said that this ad is not just about race, it goes beyond that, "It is time for the industry to embrace change and look more like the general population. I strongly believe that women agency executives will be critical to improving industry diversity. Currently, women account for 65-70% of all talent in the business. With more female leadership, they will shape the new face of advertising." Muse Communications, Culver City, Calif., will compete in the episode of "The Pitch" that is scheduled to appear on AMC on Sunday night. Facing up to Muse, will be Bozell, an agency in Omaha, for a project from the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation. Muse Communications will be competing with 14 other agencies that have accepted participation in "The Pitch." The format of the show is that two agencies will compete against each other, to complete an assignment that a marketer offers them, exclusively for the show. There is no assurance that the work that wins, or the other work that is produced during the competition will be produced for consumers. The controversial and sensitive issue of diversity on Madison Avenue has been discussed threadbare. Intervention by the New York City Human Rights Commission and many studies have shown that there is an existing bias against people of color and that there are very few of them in the creative ranks of advertising. "AMC is extremely proud of 'The Pitch,' " a spokeswoman at the channel said in a statement that was e-mailed to a reporter, "and will continue to premiere the series at Sundays at 11 p.m.," which is the time slot after "Mad Men."

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