CAMPAIGNING FOR DIVERSITY: *WHAT NOT TO DO*

Culture and diversity is important in content strategy and creation, yet the importance of not trying too hard is often overlooked. Companies sometimes make it obvious that they are trying to recognize diversity or open up about significant cultural and social justice issues, a lot of the time making them appear tone deaf. In a society that values inclusivity, brands must be mindful of their marketing and how audiences may perceive it.

An example of a huge marketing fail was Pepsi's collaboration with Kendall Jenner in 2017 for a campaign meant to be against police brutality. The ad, which can be found here, shows Kendall stopping her photo shoot to come between a crowd of cops and protesters to offer one of the police officers a can of Pepsi to end tension between the two groups. As mentioned in an article by **Cukeragency.com**, Pepsi was trying too hard to communicate its diversity where it offends a portion of their audience, also referred to as tokenism. Assuming a can of soda can solve complex societal issues was a huge mistake on their part. Kendall was also a poor choice of influencer for the ad for many reasons; she is a privileged white woman and stays true to what she represents, she has no correlation with what the ad is depicting, and probably has never actually attended a BLM protest.

This is why the article goes on to explain the importance of sincere messaging in marketing for inclusion or diversity. Brand content must be in touch with inclusion and committed to their intentions, and use certain strategies to stay authentic. I had a chance to hear from content creator **Nneka Elliot** who shared her learnings on creating authenticity, sharing that it is so important to not get caught up in trying to appeal to what your audience will like. This goes along with the aforementioned avoidable of "trying too hard" with content because, for example, Pepsi probably made the ad with the intention of appealing to a certain demographic of their audience. The reason they failed to capture the audience in support of BLM and protesters was because they likely got too caught up in it instead of creating a campaign that stays true to them as a company. In the end, their attempts of creating an ad to communicate diversity ended up offending much of their audience.

BY: MIA FISCHER