

# Blackface in the Fashion Industry

BUF 4700 Contemporary Topics in Fashion

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# The History of Blackface

- Started in the 1830s
- Stereotyping of African American & black people
- African Americans also wore black face when acting



Figure 1: Blackface (CBS News, 2018)

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=>

# The History of Blackface contd.

In 1828, Thomas Dartmouth Rice debuted in blackface as the infamous “ Jim Crow ” which became a hallmark of racial tension in the South and birthed an American stereotype which to this day pervades and can be falsely associated with African Americans internationally.



Figure 2: Jim Crow Character (Wikipedia, n.d.)



Florence Kate Upton’s racist rag doll caricature “Gollywogg” helped popularize and expose blackface to younger audiences across the U.S., Australia, and Europe at the start of the 20th century

Figure 3: Gollywogg Dolls (Ferris State Univeristy, n.d.)

# Gucci Sweater



Figure 4: Gucci Sweater (The Independent, 2019)

- Debuted in February 2019
- Later pulled from online site and stores worldwide
- Depicts the same “classic” features that resemble Jim Crow and the Golliwogg

# Gucci Sweater



Figure 5: Actor in Blackface (Daily Maverick, 2014)

- Dark color similar to blackface images
- Resembles that of a mask with its balaclava design
- Exaggerated bright-colored large lips
- Ill suited and uncalled for in today's society because of its blatant parallelism to 20th century minstrels

# Additional Examples



Figure 6: \$550 Prada Group keychain(HypeBeast, 2018)



Figure 7: Moncler "Malfi 1"  
Collection 2016 (Essemce, 2016)

# Backlash

- Celebrities from 50 Cent to T.I. shared their views on the controversial sweater
- Call for boycott on Gucci products
- As a result, Gucci pulled the sweater from their stores & online stores
- Sweater released during Black History Month (February)



# Social Media

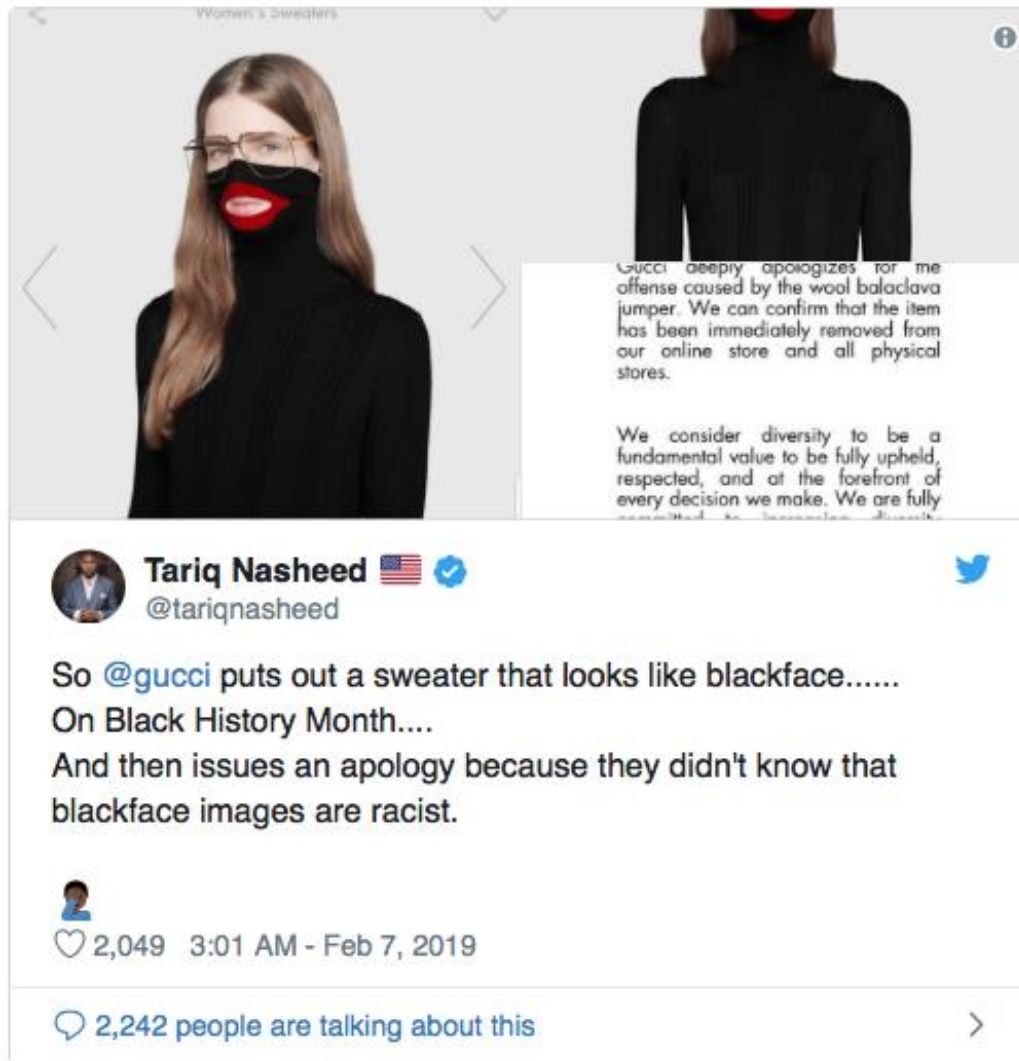
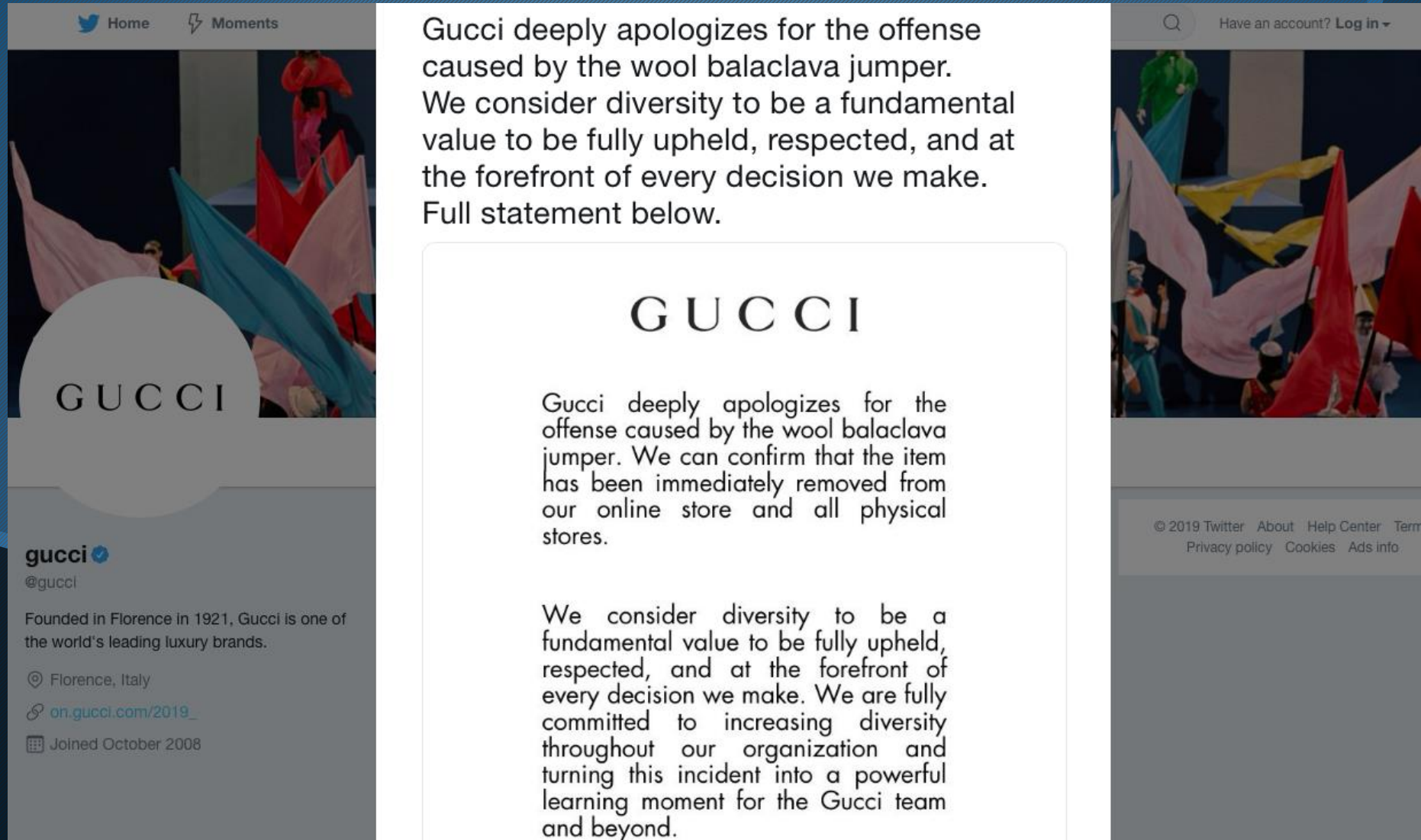


Figure 8: Social Media Post (The Independent, 2019)

# Public Apology



Home Moments

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**GUCCI**

**GUCCI**

**gucci** ✓  
@gucci

Founded in Florence in 1921, Gucci is one of the world's leading luxury brands.

📍 Florence, Italy

[on.gucci.com/2019\\_](#)

📅 Joined October 2008

GUCCI

Gucci deeply apologizes for the offense caused by the wool balaclava jumper. We can confirm that the item has been immediately removed from our online store and all physical stores.

We consider diversity to be a fundamental value to be fully upheld, respected, and at the forefront of every decision we make. We are fully committed to increasing diversity throughout our organization and turning this incident into a powerful learning moment for the Gucci team and beyond.

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Figure 9: Gucci Apology Tweet (Twitter, 2019)

# Conclusion

- Diversity within the brand at all levels
- Create a department that researches imagery and different cultures
- Avoid sending out controversial merchandise at all costs in order to not hurt the brand's image
- The media plays the largest role in global society and what American society allows to be shown will become tied to a racial group without any investigation

# Citation

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Figure 2: Jim Crow Charcter. (n.d.) Retrieved from [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim\\_Crow\\_\(character\)](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jim_Crow_(character))

Figure 3: Ferris State University. The Golliwog Caricature. (n.d.). Retrieved from <https://www.ferris.edu/jimcrow/golliwog/>

Figure 4: Young, S. (2019, February 13). Gucci apologises for selling jumper that 'resembles blackface'. Retrieved from <https://www.independent.co.uk/life-style/fashion/gucci-blackface-sweater-balaclava-apology-reaction-twitter-controversy-a8767101.html>

Figure 5. Merwe, M. V. (2014, September 25). Op-Ed: The grey areas of blackface. Retrieved from <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2014-09-25-op-ed-the-grey-areas-of-blackface/>

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Figure 5. Merwe, M. V. (2014, September 25). Op-Ed: The grey areas of blackface. Retrieved from <https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2014-09-25-op-ed-the-grey-areas-of-blackface/>

Figure 6: Silbert, J. Prada Accessories Recalled Over Blackface Controversy. (2018, December 14). Retrieved from <https://hypebeast.com/2018/12/prada-monkey-otto-toto-pradamalia-racist-blackface-recall>

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