

Gap's Election-Themed Hoodie Fails to Soothe Anxious Americans

Following an inconclusive night of election results, Americans woke this morning to prolonged uncertainty as officials continue to count ballots in several U.S. states where President Donald Trump and former Vice President Joe Biden remain neck-and-neck in the race for the White House.

Throughout Tuesday and today, most brands chose to stay quiet on the topic of the election, with just a small handful of brands entering the social arena with messages of unity and togetherness. Gap, most notably, posted a half red, half blue mashup of its classic branded hoodie on Twitter. "The one thing we know, is that together, we can move forward," the brand wrote.

Gap's post was met with immediate (and almost exclusive) derision, with many users criticizing the brand for a seemingly tone deaf response to such a tense moment. Shortly thereafter, the post was deleted.

"From the start, we have been a brand that bridges the gap between individuals, cultures and generations. The intention of our social media post that featured a red and blue hoodie was to show the power of unity," a Gap Inc. spokesperson told Adweek. "It was just too soon for this message. We remain optimistic that our country will come together to drive positive change for all."

Still, the retailer's tweet has lived on through screenshots, taking on a life of its own as Twitter users ironically meme-ify the post—creating their own takes on the brand's unifying message.

Activewear brand Athleta, which is also owned by the Gap, launched a vaguely election-themed campaign Tuesday called "Women Run." The initial spot highlights a vast array of women's achievements ranging from suffragettes fighting for the vote to the first Black female astronaut, Mae Jemison, to dozens of women and girls running and playing sports. The spot ends with a crowd cheering an empty podium with an American flag as the backdrop, as the words "Women Run the Future" flash across the screen.

Gap wasn't the only brand attempting to ease the stress of the country's divisive political climate with a message of camaraderie, though. Sandwich chain Potbelly tweeted a slightly less controversial message earlier today, saying simply that "we are resilient" and urging everyone to "give yourself some slack today and breathe." Ultimately, Potbelly chose to delete its tweet as well.



Delta CEO Ed Bastian posted an ad on his personal Instagram and LinkedIn accounts Tuesday, though it wasn't circulated on the brand's official accounts or via any paid media. The 60-second spot is simply a collection of calming shots of cities and towns from above, with a voiceover that describes Election Day as a time to "rise above the uncertainty."

Bastian posted the spot with a few words of his own on the platforms, which used air travel as a metaphor for the shared journey Americans are on as a nation. "I have never more strongly believed that we have more in common than the differences that separate us," he wrote.

Meditation app Calm came through as possibly the most appropriate advertising partner during CNN's coverage, which gave viewers a break from the chaos with a 30-second spot of rain falling on leaves. Another notable sponsor of the network's coverage was Sacha Baron Cohen's controversial Borat Subsequent Moviefilm, which was released Oct. 23.

In line with the soothing, all-together-now messaging that most brands leaned on during election week, Johnnie Walker whisky debuted a simple ad last night on MSNBC featuring award-winning musician Brittany Howard singing a rendition of

Roger and Hammerstein's You'll Never Walk Alone. Sophie Kelly, svp of whiskies at the brand's parent company Diageo, called the spot "a celebration of all that unites us."

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