

Abercrombie shirts spark controversy, protests

NATIONAL: Officials from the clothing company apologized for the T-shirts, saying they didn't intend any bias or harm

A controversial new line of Abercrombie & Fitch T-shirts bearing stereotypical slogans and images of Asian Americans has incited a public outcry from Asian American communities on college campuses nationwide.

The T-shirts depict caricatures with slanted eyes, conical hats and slogans such as "Wong Brothers Laundry Service: Two Wongs Can Make It White." Another features an image of the Buddha along with the slogan, "Buddha Bash — Get Your Buddha On the Floor."

The shirts have met with protest by Asian American student organizations at schools from San Francisco to Boston, even after the T-shirts were pulled from store shelves and the company's Web site Thursday after Abercrombie received a flood of complaints.

On Thursday, the San Jose Mercury News reported that Abercrombie & Fitch received about 60 telephone complaints Wednesday, many of them from Stanford students.

Later that day, the company announced it would pull the T-shirts from all of its 300-plus stores — just one week after they first went on sale. All but one T-shirt have been pulled from the Web site.

Protesters say the images perpetuate stereotypes and racist depictions of Asians. National Asian advocacy groups as well as college students responded soon after the first shirts arrived on the shelves last week, flooding Abercrombie & Fitch with angry calls and boycotting some West Coast stores.

On Thursday more than 20 Stanford students participated in a rally in front of the Abercrombie & Fitch store in San Francisco, organized by the Chinatown Community Development Center. About 200 people were present.

Coordinated efforts among Asian student groups from several colleges resulted in protests Saturday in front of company stores in Cambridge, Mass., San Francisco, Providence, R.I., and Ohio, where the company is based.

An Asian student group at Columbia University Law School spearheaded a national boycott of Abercrombie last weekend and held a drive to collect company products to return.

Though the company already has recalled the shirts and apologized to the public, many Asian American groups plan to continue protests.

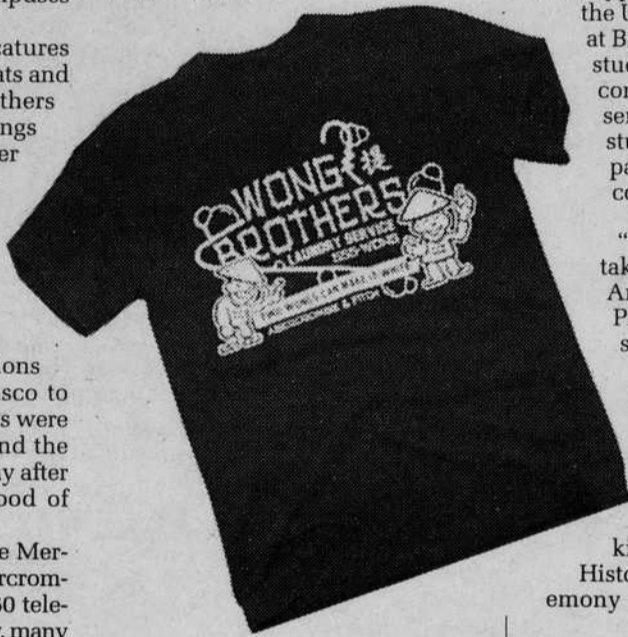
Bethany Li, a junior majoring in history at Amherst College in Massachusetts, has been organizing coordinated protests in San Francisco, Ohio and Boston through NAASCon, the National Asian American Students Conference.

NAASCon kicked off its National Student Week of Action on Saturday and is planning rallies for the

rest of this week in cities across the country. The organization originally had planned a National Student Day of Action, but expanded it to a week and planned rallies in response to the shirts.

When Li and her organization first learned of the shirts, they were shocked, she said.

"Of course, the immediate reaction was outrage," she said. "What



CAMPUS: APASU members plan to discuss the issue at their opening ceremony for Asian History Month

Students at many major universities are voicing their disapproval of a new line of Abercrombie & Fitch T-shirts with stereotypical Asian themes. At the University of California at Berkeley, almost 1,000 students protested the company and are also sending a petition urging students to call the company and voice their concerns.

"A lot of action is being taken," Berkeley Asian American Association President Vincent Chang said.

But student reaction here at the University has been quiet so far.

Members of the University's Asian-Pacific American Student Union are kicking off the Asian History Month opening ceremony at 4 p.m. Friday in the

EMU Amphitheater. A combination of planning these events and many members of APASU not finding out about the controversy until late last week or early this week led to their delayed response, according to APASU historian Ma Vang.

She said APASU representatives will inform the audience at the end of the ceremony about the situation and what can be done to help. From there, students are marching down Thirteenth Street in celebration of Asian History Month. Vang said they plan to wear T-shirts with the Abercrombie & Fitch initials crossed out on the front of the shirt.

They are also handing out fliers about the situation and how they think the company has discriminated against Asians, APASU Co-Director Jeanice Chieng said.

"We will be writing letters asking for people to support our cause," Chieng said.

Washington State University Asian Pacific American Student Coalition co-chairman Tim Yep said his group has similarly focused its energy more this month

on a celebration of Asian Pacific American Heritage Month. Although they did not promote students to take action, he said they made sure Asian students were kept aware.

"There was a message sent out to Asian students communicating what others are doing," he said. Yep said this problem is nothing new, and many students stopped supporting the store long before this became an issue.

"A lot of people feel it's stupid and they've never supported Abercrombie & Fitch in the past," he said. "Their ads cater to mainstream consumers versus being sensitive to particular cultures," he said.

Representatives from the Eugene's Valley River Center store referred all questions — including if they even carried the shirts — to the Abercrombie & Fitch customer service office, which sent calls to the company's public relations office. No one in the public relations department was available for comment. But a few students have been seen on campus wearing the shirts.

— Robin Weber

was Abercrombie thinking?"

Li said she hopes the National Student Week of Action will promote awareness and encourage offended consumers to boycott the offending retailer.

Abercrombie & Fitch, however, has maintained that the shirt designs were not meant to be taken seriously.

In an official statement, Abercrombie & Fitch responded to the situation by saying, "It is not and never has been our intention to offend anyone."

Abercrombie spokesman Hampton Carney said the logo T-shirts were designed with "the sole purpose of adding humor and levity to our fashion line," and added that other shirts also poke fun at taxi drivers, Britons and foreign waitresses.

"We thought everyone would love them, especially the Asian community," he told Reuters.

Carney also told the Associated Press that the company is "very, very, very sorry."

The controversy has created a demand for the T-shirts among some consumers. Though no longer available in stores, the shirts have since resurfaced on ebay.com, where recent bids have exceeded \$200.

This is not the first time that the marketing of Abercrombie & Fitch, a casual clothing store, has been widely criticized. Catalogues featuring semi-nude models have also sparked controversy. And in 1998, a catalog spread featuring alcoholic drink recipes drew the ire of Mothers Against Drunk Driving. Just a few months ago, the company came under criticism from Christian and women's rights groups for featuring overly suggestive poses in its advertisements.

— From U-WIRE reports

University of Oregon InterSEXTions 2002 *The Queer Body*

April 23

Mapping the Journey of Identity, Politics & Culture

4:00-6:00 PM Rogue Room, EMU

April 24

Being a Sexual Minority as a Child

12:00-1:30 PM Ben Linder, EMU

Fatphobia Issues in the Queer Community

6:00-7:30 PM Rogue Room, EMU

April 25

Queer Men's Access to Health Care

6:00-7:00 pm Owyhee Room, EMU

April 27

Loren Cameron - artist and photographer

Slide presentation about transsexuality

8:00 PM Willamette Room 100

All events are FREE and open to the Public.



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"BIG INTERVIEW
PSYCHE-OUT"

I'm so nervous! I have a big interview next week, and I have no idea what they'll ask...

You should go to the Career Center! They have workshops that can help!



They have regular workshops every Thursday on interviews, networking, job search, and resumé writing.

And how, oh wise one, is that supposed to help me?



You don't get it. I already have an interview with the company. I wish I were psychic so I'd know what to expect!

Well, E.D.G.E. workshops feature real recruiters who can give you insights into what they're looking for in an interview!



Ah ha! All I have to do is "psyche" myself up to go to the Career Center, right?

You got it! If the workshops don't fit in your schedule, make an appointment with a counselor!

