

A Sermon on Appreciating Aunt Jemima

Sermon by Rev. Minister Angela Smith of COPE for February 21st, 2021 (and beyond)

In the 1930s, Anna Harrington, a black woman, began portraying the much beloved Aunt Jemima and became the face of the syrup and mixes featuring her prior to the discontinuation of the logo on grounds it promotes inequality. Source: <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/aunt-jemima-brand-will-change-name-remove-image-quaker-says-n1231260> In 1934, a film starring Louise Beavers and Claudette Colbert titled "Imitation of Life" was released. Beavers starred as Delilah Johnson and Colbert as Beatrice Pullman. Both were widowed and raising children on their own. The two women, Delilah a woman of color, and Pullman a European American, joined forces, talents, and strengths to create a boxed pancake mix for mass market after starting as two independent women in joint entrepreneurship. Delilah's daughter could pass as "white" (as do I and many others with multi-cultural heritage). Delilah could not and did not pass for "white". The film is revolutionary and a must see. The remake with Lana Turner is trash and should be destroyed saving the only version to the archives as the 1934 version. If you want to watch the propagandist evil version, go with the Lana Turner one.

In the 1934 version, Beavers' Delilah is the beautiful face featured on the boxed mix that goes to market. Every time I see the Aunt Jemima logo I'm reminded of Louise Beavers and feel empowered as a woman of multi-cultural heritage to be resourceful and embrace the entrepreneurial spirit of the USA. And, I understand people unfamiliar with that film or how the logo in light of that film supports independent entrepreneurial pursuits regardless of heritage or gender may find it offensive as a result of their own ignorance and perception based on assumed hate rather than love and support of equality which is what I think of when I see the Aunt Jemima logo from the 1930s through today.

If the name and logo must be changed, I implore Quaker Oats Company to seek some licensing deal with the 1934 studio to use the characters of Delilah Johnson and Beatrice Pullman, or just Johnson because it was her recipe but Pullman's connections in the film as the new faces and branding for Aunt Jemima to promote gender equality and respect for diversity. If that can't be accomplished, I'd like the Aunt Jemima logo to stay as it is with the same branding because to me it has always been inspirational in believing women can do it regardless of heritage with a little faith in each other and willingness to work together.

Kitchens are still dominated by men. Some say men make better chefs. (Source: <https://www.bbc.com/news/uk-wales-45486646>) Women can cook and bake. Apparently bakeries are male-dominated too. See: <https://bakeryinfo.co.uk/issues/why-does-the-bakery-trade-remain-so-male-dominated/626433.article> So, I believe to promote equality even if fictional characters must be employed with reference to a classic film that is inspirational for everyone, keep the current Aunt Jemima logo, put the actual baker who is responsible for the recipe with his/her name and likeness for the branding, or go with Delilah and Beatrice. [If the 19th century "Minstrel" was intended to depict the actual baker and/or was a depiction of said baker representative of the actual brains behind this recipe, then the identity of the person featured responsible for the recipe should be the

brand name and be approved by whomever owns the rights to use the name or likeness. If the original recipe was created by a woman only known as Aunt Jemima, then it should be the brand name or else it disrespects the history and the woman behind the brand. Anna Harrington may be a biographical picture honoring the original with the updated logo from the 1930s when "Imitation of Life" was released. Respect and honor the history and if Aunt Jemima is responsible for the recipe, she should continue to receive credit for it on the packaging.]

If not, that's fine. I can always watch the film. But, when I'm walking down grocery aisles and see Aunt Jemima my first thought is of "Imitation of Life" and I think how great it was that Beatrice and Delilah found each other and worked together to create a baking mix everyone loves. If I see another cookie-cutter Barbie (European standard of "beauty") regardless of heritage on any packaging that will piss me off more than if you returned the logo to the Minstrel version from the 1890s. It will piss me off at least as much I guarantee you that.

Starting to wonder why my opinion on this should matter as just one consumer who likes the product? If so and you are an activist, #KarmicBoomerang and how does it feel? To the extent you could give a shit about anything I've said above which is all sincere and that is one of my all time favorite films, expect that's how others feel about your cause who haven't been indoctrinated by your propaganda or forced to adopt or at least pretend to adopt your opinion and point of view regardless of matter at hand.

I do sincerely hope that Quaker Oats Company will take my suggestion under advisement and consider the Beatrice and Delilah packaging idea. I'd love that and I wouldn't miss the current one that reminds me of Delilah at all if Beatrice and Delilah replaced it unless there is a real Aunt Jemima and it is her recipe, then keep Aunt Jemima. [Does Quaker have the documentation in their archives or a museum somewhere that reveals the identity and history of the real Aunt Jemima? If so, that should be on the box.]

You really should watch "Imitation of Life" starring Louise Beavers and Claudette Colbert (and the real "Baby Jane" as Colbert's daughter) before providing feedback on this sermon. If after watching that, you honestly disagree with my suggestion for the logo/branding update, that's your right and it is okay as long as you remember we are equal so it is okay if I disagree with you by continuing to hold the position stated above. And, the government is a referee, look what we've done to it?! In God We Trust.

For those interested in starting #TaoFu Self-Defense Exercises, please see <https://www.cope.church/taofu.htm> and begin at any time.

There are opportunities to send messages, receive mystery bonus blessings, and more with or without donating available now on our "Pass the Basket" page at <https://www.cope.church/basket.htm> . Thank You.

"And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free." John 8:32 KJV Willful blindness is an abomination.

COPE accepts Feedback, critical and complimentary. Learn more at <https://www.cope.church/feedback.htm> . For the sake of keeping myself and others humble, a sense of humor is welcome on all sides.

For More About COPE and the HEAL Mission, see:

<https://www.cope.church> and <https://www.heal-online.org>