

Pick n Pay in the firing line over 'maid' and 'gardener' mugs

NEWSWATCH: A set of mugs engraved with the phrases 'the maid' and 'the gardener' sold at a Pick n Pay store has sparked outrage on social media, with members of the public describing them as offensive and reminiscent of apartheid.



Image credit: [@toni_verna](#) via Twitter

At the heart of the debacle, explains [IOL](#), is that during apartheid South Africa, many white employers didn't want to share utensils with their black workers. Therefore, domestic workers and gardeners often had separate and cheaper utensils allocated to them.

“ In South Africa, domestic labour has a long history of dehumanization and racism attached to it. One method was and still is to deny helpers use of household crockery and cutlery as they were considered unworthy and unhygienic. This labeling encourages that idea.— Jamil F. Khan (@JamilFarouk) [October 30, 2018](#) ”

The Twitter storm ensued on Tuesday after a Pick n Pay shopper spotted the mugs on display at a franchise store in Observatory, Cape Town and publicly alerted the retailer to the issue.

“ hi [@PicknPay](#) these mugs were on the shelf at your obs store. finding them hella problematic. [pic.twitter.com/GuqEEll6Cb](#)— toni toni ton'z (@toni_verna) [October 30, 2018](#) ”

Pick n Pay responded to the tweet describing the sale of the mugs as "completely unacceptable". "We apologise for causing any offence by having these mugs in our store. The mugs were purchased and put on sale by one of our franchisees without our knowledge. We asked the franchisee to remove them immediately, which he has done," Pick n Pay said.

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Myrtle Witbooi, general secretary of the South African Domestic Services and Allied Workers Union, told [Business Insider South Africa](#) that the mugs were "very degrading".

"This takes us back to apartheid when utensils for gardeners and domestic workers were placed outside for (the workers). This takes us back as a people and we demand a public apology from the store," she said.

Franchisee stores are not owned by Pick n Pay and are able to stock certain unique lines. The mugs were removed from the store's shelf on Wednesday and are reportedly not sold at any other Pick n Pay branches.

The public outcry has however continued, with Pick n Pay's management of its franchisees and suppliers being called into question.

“ You don't review products before they go to the shelves at your stores? Was this mug designed at your warehouses? How didn't you know about them before they even reach the shelves?— Azwidozhi Nemuřanzhela (@De_BigLovE) [October 30, 2018](#) ”

South African advocate and former Public Protector Thuli Madonsela weighed in on the matter, calling for an explanation from Pick n Pay and lambasting the general use of "anachronistic" terminology like 'maid'.

“ We do need an explanation from @PicknPay. Withdrawal of the offensive mugs is not enough. It's not just the separation of cups that's questionable, encouraging terminology such as “maids” is as anachronistic as offensive. #SocialJustice <https://t.co/d4LGt4lQlp>— Prof Thuli Madonsela (@ThuliMadonsela3) [October 30, 2018](#) ”

Some other Twitter users considered the public outrage unjustified:

“ No one “came” up with it. It's just a mug- we need to stop looking for things to be upset about. I do all the cleaning at home and would think it was funny if my husband gifted it to me *sense of humour— danika (@danika_I) [October 30, 2018](#) ”

“ If I throw something in the air and you rush to catch it, that's your baby. Nowhere did #PicknPay say those mugs were meant for maids. And nowhere did it say for BLACK maids. But “woke” black tweeps with the perpetual victimhood syndrome made about race.— Joseph Mokobake (@Jozee25) [October 30, 2018](#) ”

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[Pick n Pay store removes mugs for 'maids' after outrage](#)
[Pick n Pay faces backlash over 'maid' and 'gardener' mugs](#)