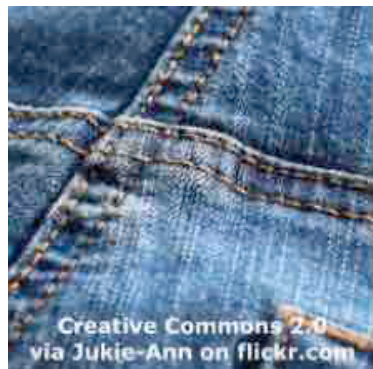


Jeans video sparks race and genetics debate

4th August 2025



A video from a U.S. fashion retailer has created controversy over its use of the words "jeans" (as in denim) and "genes" (as in genetics). Social media is alight with claims the video is racist. The company, American Eagle,

produced the video for its new line of clothes. The video stars denim-clad actress Sydney Sweeney. She tells the camera: "Genes are passed down from parents to offspring, often determining traits like hair colour, personality and even eye colour. My jeans are blue." The video closes with the tagline: "Sydney Sweeney has great jeans." American Eagle said the play on words was part of its ad campaign's "provocative language". It said the words were definitely going to "push buttons".

Many people have criticized the wordplay for having eugenic undertones. Eugenics is a debunked theory that posits that humanity can be improved by encouraging people with certain genes to reproduce, to increase the occurrence of "desirable" racial traits. Critics of the ad highlight the fact that Ms Sweeney is white, blue-eyed, and blonde. They suggest her looks are really "great genes". Former Fox News host Megyn Kelly called the criticism a "leftist meltdown". U.S. Vice President JD Vance called it an overreaction. Meanwhile, the White House communications director said attacking the ad was "cancel culture run amok". American Eagle says its ad "is and always was about the jeans."

Sources: [usatoday.com](https://www.usatoday.com) / [apnews.com](https://www.apnews.com) / [vox.com](https://www.vox.com)

Writing

Controversial ads are good as they make us think and debate. Discuss.

Chat

Talk about these words from the article.

video / fashion retailer / controversy / jeans / genes / denim / eye colour / campaign / wordplay / humanity / eugenics / racial traits / criticism / overreaction / cancel culture

True / False

- 1) A company wants to call Demin jeans "genes". T / F
- 2) An actress in an ad said jeans are passed down through generations. T / F
- 3) The ad said the actress had great genes. T / F
- 4) The jeans company understood its ad might provoke discussion. T / F
- 5) People on social media said the ad encouraged genetic engineering. T / F
- 6) Critics of the ad objected to a white, blonde-haired woman being in it. T / F
- 7) The US vice-president said people were overreacting to the ad. T / F
- 8) The jeans company said the ad was only about jeans. T / F

Synonym Match

(The words in **bold** are from the news article.)

- | | |
|-----------------------|--------------------|
| 1. retailer | a. suggestions |
| 2. controversy | b. characteristics |
| 3. offspring | c. manifestation |
| 4. traits | d. offensive |
| 5. provocative | e. condemnation |
| 6. undertones | f. debate |
| 7. debunked | g. out of control |
| 8. occurrence | h. store |
| 9. criticism | i. disproved |
| 10. run amok | j. children |

Discussion – Student A

- a) What do you think of jeans?
- b) Why are jeans so popular?
- c) What's your favourite jeans ad?
- d) What do you think of the jeans-genes controversy?
- e) Why do people think the video might be racist?
- f) What do you think the future of genetics will be like?
- g) Why might people think the ad's tagline might be provocative?
- h) When was the last time someone pushed your buttons?

Phrase Match

1. a U.S. fashion
 2. Social media is alight
 3. from parents to
 4. determining traits
 5. part of its ad campaign's provocative
 6. criticized the wordplay for having
 7. Eugenics is a debunked
 8. encouraging people with certain genes
 9. Kelly called the criticism a
 10. the ad was cancel culture run
- a. to reproduce
 - b. offspring
 - c. "leftist meltdown"
 - d. with claims
 - e. eugenic undertones
 - f. language
 - g. retailer
 - h. amok
 - i. like hair colour
 - j. theory

Discussion – Student B

- a) What do you think about what you read?
- b) What do you know about genes?
- c) What do you know about eugenics?
- d) Why do people think there is a most desirable way of looking?
- e) What do you know about cancel culture?
- f) What's the best jeans brand?
- g) How important are jeans to you?
- h) What questions would you like to ask the CEO of American Eagle?

Spelling

1. created oervytncors
2. algtih with claims the video is racist
3. denim-dlca actress Sydney Sweeney
4. passed down from parents to oirgfpfns
5. determining satrti like hair colour
6. its ad campaign's vtpveicaoor language
7. having inugcee undertones
8. a budkdene theory
9. reproduce, to increase the rocreccneu
10. Kelly called the criticism a istleft meltdown
11. JD Vance called it an eovctonarier
12. cancel culture run omak

Answers – Synonym Match

1. h	2. f	3. j	4. b	5. d
6. a	7. i	8. c	9. e	10. g

Comprehension Questions

Listen to / read the news article. Answer these questions.
(Answers are on p. 27 of the 27-page PDF.)

1.	What does the article say the jeans ad created?
2.	What did the company make the ad for?
3.	What does the ad say are passed down through the generations?
4.	What does the ad say the actress has?
5.	What did the company say language in its ad would push?
6.	What did critics criticize the ad for having?
7.	What did the article say Eugenics was as a theory?
8.	What did a former Fox News host call the criticism of the ad?
9.	What did the White House say had happened to cancel culture?
10.	What did the fashion company say the ad was always about?

Speaking – Essential fashion

Rank these with your partner. Put the most necessary things at the top. Change partners often and share your rankings.

- Jeans
- White T-shirts
- Leather jacket
- Sneakers
- Sunglasses
- Hoodie
- Baseball cap
- A backpack

Answers – True False

1	F	2	F	3	F	4	T	5	F	6	T	7	T	8	T
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Answers to Phrase Match and Spelling are in the text.