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Jeans video sparks race and genetics debate – 4th August 2025

Level 4

A video from the jeans maker American Eagle has created a storm. Social media users say the company's use of the words "jeans" and "genes" in a video is racist. The company's new jeans video stars 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 line: "Sydney Sweeney has great jeans."

Critics of the ad say the wordplay is eugenic. Eugenics is a theory that suggests humanity can be improved by focusing on "desirable" genes. The critics say Ms Sweeney is white, blue-eyed, and blonde. A former Fox News host called the criticism a "leftist meltdown". The White House called it an overreaction, and that attacking the ad was "cancel culture run amok". American Eagle says its ad "is and always was about the jeans."

Level 5

A video from the fashion retailer American Eagle has created controversy over its use of the words "jeans" and "genes". Social media users are claiming the video is racist. The company produced the video for its new jeans. The video stars 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 line: "Sydney Sweeney has great jeans." American Eagle said the play on words was part of its ad campaign.

Many people criticized the wordplay for being eugenic. Eugenics is a debunked theory that posits that humanity can be improved by focusing on "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". A former Fox News host called the criticism a "leftist meltdown". The U.S. Vice President called it an overreaction. 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."

Level 6

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."