

September 10, 2019

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To Brian Cornell, CEO, and the Target Board of Directors,

The American Humanist Association (AHA) together with the thousands of individuals whose signatures appear below, call for the return of the “Humanist Lumbar Throw Pillow” to Target retail locations and its online store. Please find attached to this petition an image of the product.

The American Humanist Association is a national nonprofit advocating progressive values and equality for humanists, atheists, and freethinkers. The AHA promotes a worldview that encourages individuals to live informed and meaningful lives that aspire to the greater good.

When the “Humanist” pillow appeared in Target stores and online, significant numbers of self-identified humanists purchased or attempted to purchase this pillow to bring a sense of recognition and acceptance to their homes and offices. (Stated highlights in the online product description include, “adds a stylish touch to your space” and “features the word ‘Humanist’ for an eye-catching look.”) Within days, however, the pillows were yanked from store shelves and the product page on the Target website disappeared. Consumers were told the pillow had been discontinued and recalled due to “customer feedback,” but no further details were available. We have heard numerous stories of customers who were flatly denied the pillow by Target employees, and in one case a humanist went to pick up his online order and the pillow was handed to him, only to be snatched back after the employee saw the recall alert on a computer screen. This behavior goes against Target’s stated corporate value of “design for all,” and took many humanists from a state of pride and enthusiasm to one of confusion, shame, and anger.

Barring any clear explanation for the product recall, the AHA is left to assume that the removal of this product was based on religiously motivated discrimination. This is especially concerning given the availability of a pillow at Target displaying the proud Christian sentiment: “Raised on Sweet Tea and Jesus,” among other religious home décor products. With nearly a quarter of Americans claiming no religion, how can Target justify silencing a non-religious ethical viewpoint?

Target’s mission to deliver outstanding value, continuous innovation, and exceptional guest experiences can easily be met by reintroducing the “Humanist” throw pillow to Target retail locations, both brick-and-mortar and online. Whether one is good with or without God, treating your customers fairly is the right thing to do.

Sincerely,



Roy Speckhardt
Executive Director
American Humanist Association