

PETA Pulls Ad Featuring Unauthorized Image of Michelle Obama

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Yesterday People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals ("PETA") announced that it will pull ads featuring the likeness of first lady Michelle Obama. The image was used without Michelle Obama's permission and created the impression that she endorses PETA. The ads also featured Oprah Winfrey, Carrie Underwood, and Tyra Banks and began appearing on New Year's Day in subway stations in Washington, DC, and on PETA's van and website.

PETA admitted that it did not have authorization, but thought that the first lady's announcement in June that she had sworn off fur justified including her in the campaign. PETA claims that it is not selling a product (or otherwise using the image for commercial purposes); rather, it is honoring beautiful women who do not wear fur.

As with [Weatherproof's use of President Obama's image](#), PETA's predicament is a good reminder that organizations should evaluate the circumstances before using images of public figures or celebrities in ads. An individual's statement that he or she uses a product (or, in this case, does *not* use a product) may not be a significant basis to use the individual's image or to imply that he or she endorses the product.

