



NATIONAL CENTER ON SEXUAL EXPLOITATION

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October 27, 2016

Mr. Doug McMillon
President and CEO
Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.
702 SW 8th Street
Bentonville, AR 72716

RE: Distribution of Pornographic and Sexually Exploitive Materials: *Cosmopolitan*, Jock Sturges Child Nudity Photo Books, etc.

Dear Mr. McMillon:

We are writing to express our grave concern regarding Wal-Mart's distribution and sale of sexually exploitive materials at its stores and via Walmart.com.

Cosmopolitan

We were encouraged by Wal-Mart Stores, Inc.'s, 2015 pledge that it would implement a policy ensuring that *Cosmopolitan* magazine would be covered by blinders to prevent viewing by children. Since then we and our supporters have watched to see how Wal-Mart would implement this policy. Unfortunately, we continue to receive complaints about *Cosmopolitan* found for sale in Walmart checkout lanes across the country, often at eye level of children.

While the material in this publication may not be hardcore pornography, it is nonetheless sexually explicit, degrading, fuels pornified culture, and is harmful to minors, as you apparently know because you announced a policy to restrict its display. Research has shown that people frequently exposed to softcore images become desensitized to them, and are less likely to hold positive views of women.¹ Additional evidence suggests that sexualization contributes to impaired cognitive performance in college-aged women, body dissatisfaction,

1. University of Nottingham, "Soft-core pornography viewers 'unlikely to hold positive attitudes towards women,'" June 15, 2016, <http://www.nottingham.ac.uk/news/pressreleases/2016/june/soft-core-pornography-viewers-unlikely-to-hold-positive-attitudes-towards-women.aspx> (accessed June 22, 2016).

eating disorders, low self-esteem, depressive affect, and even physical health problems in high-school-aged girls and in young women.²

Additionally, three large-scale, longitudinal studies have found that exposure to non-explicit sexual content on television and in other media used by adolescents (i.e. music, movies, and magazines) predicts earlier initiation of sexual behaviors, including intercourse.³

Furthermore, a content analysis of *Cosmopolitan* and *Glamour*⁴ magazines revealed that:

*Sex is portrayed as largely recreational and mechanical and as occurring between genitals, or involving mouths, hands, or anuses. The articles do not talk about sexuality in a context of people having relationships, deciding about safe sex (or not) and doing things with others, going to concerts or out to eat, or engaging in other activities. Thus the portrayal of sex is fundamentally reductionist. In a way sexuality is individualized but the individual is seen as a body made up of organs-seeking-pleasure rather than as a whole-person.*⁵

Other research has shown that *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy*⁶ magazines showed similar concepts about sexuality and women's sexual attractiveness to the audience.⁷ The following highlights of articles published in *Cosmopolitan* within recent months demonstrates both *Cosmo's* reductionist portrayal of sex and its pornified perspective:

- July 2016 – “Acing Your Orals” – presents readers with techniques for “getting ahead at giving head;”
- June 2016 - “I took my boyfriend to a swingers’ resort” – discussing Young Swingers Week, a Florida-based company that arranges orgies, and the so-called “swingers” lifestyle;
- Feb 2016 - “The swing set,” – purports that, “Monogamy is seen as the gold standard, but other relationship models—throuples, quads!—are emerging from the sidelines and shedding their stigma;”
- Oct 2015 – “The Evolution of the Threesome,” – presents group sex as a “fun diversion for committed couples . . . just another option on life’s sexual smorgasbord;”
- Sept 2015 - “I Hired a Hooker with My Husband,” – about a couple who engages in threesomes and travels to Amsterdam to buy sex from a prostituted person complete with descriptions of strap-ons, butt plugs, anal beads, etc.;
- August 2015 – “Long Live the Hand Job” – presents readers with methods to “master the HJ,” as well as a “Love & Sex & Weed,” an article discussing the growing use of marijuana during sex.

² American Psychological Association, “Report of the APA Task Force on the Sexualization of Girls,” 2010, <http://www.apa.org/pi/women/programs/girls/report.aspx> (accessed June 22, 2016).

³ Jane Brown, “X-Rated: Sexual Attitudes and Behaviors Associated with U.S. Early Adolescents’ Exposure to Sexually Explicit Media,” *Communication Research* 36, no. 1 (2009): 129–151.

⁴ We have not requested that *Glamour* be removed from Walmart stores.

⁵ Juanne N. Clarke, “The Paradoxical Portrayal of the Risk of Sexually Transmitted Infections and Sexuality in US Magazines *Glamour* and *Cosmopolitan* 2000–2007,” *Health, Risk & Society* 12, no 6 (2010): 560–574.

⁶ Wal-Mart does not sell *Playboy* magazine in stores.

⁷ Nicole R. Krassa, Joan M. Blauwkamp, and Peggy Wesselink, “Boxing Helena and Corseting Eunice: Sexual Rhetoric in *Cosmopolitan* and *Playboy* Magazine,” *Sex Roles* 44, no. 11/12 (2001): 751–771.

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These and other *Cosmopolitan* issues are also replete with graphic instructions for sexual positions; display and promotion of numerous sex toys; encouragement to incorporate pornography into sexual relationships; discussions on topics such as the health consequences of swallowing semen or choking as a sexual practice; ads which hypersexualize women and men; ads for other *Cosmo* products such as “69 Shades of Cosmo,” a card set featuring sex games (with the “BONUS: Bondage Cord Included!”), and promotion of *Cosmo*’s social media platforms. *Cosmo*’s social media platforms such as its website and Snapchat pages, routinely push pornography and normalize prostitution (see attachments).

We applaud Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., for expressing concern regarding *Cosmopolitan*’s content, and pledging to provide blinders for *Cosmo* covers. However, Wal-Mart has had more than a year to launch and implement its blinder policy, yet this measure is *widely* unenforced. In stores from California, Texas, Florida, Virginia, and Kentucky, we find the policy unenforced. In the rare instances we’ve found it “enforced,” the so-called “blinders” were U-shaped, thus leaving the hypersexualized cover models in full view. The blinders were also not sufficiently opaque to block the coverlines they ostensibly were intended to obscure. In another instance, we found *Cosmopolitan* available at a Walmart checkout lane sealed in plastic, but with a completely transparent plastic wrapper.

Even if the blinders or wrappers used actually accomplished the stated purpose of “blinding” *Cosmo* covers, they would do nothing to curb *Cosmo*’s routine promotion of risky-sexual behaviors to girls and young women, its normalization of forms of commercial sexual exploitation such as pornography and prostitution, its gratuitous and explicit sexual discussions, or its sexual objectification of women and men.

Furthermore, in addition to the hardcopies of *Cosmopolitan* available at Wal-Mart checkout lanes across the country, your company is selling *Cosmo*’s *Let’s Get Naked: 501 Ridiculously Hot Sex Moves*, *69 Shades of Cosmo: The Kinky Sex Games Edition*, *Cosmo’s Playbook for Guys: A Guide to Your Best Sex Ever* and *Cosmo’s Little Big Book of Sex Games* via its online store.

Jock Sturges Child Nudity Photo Books, Child Pornography

We are also shocked to discover that Walmart.com is selling child erotica and publications that many consider to be considered child pornography—photography books with naked pictures of children, even displaying children’s genitals. We are referring to the collection of Jock Sturges photography books. Even the images on covers of some of these publications is very troubling. For example, the topless adolescent girl on the cover of the books *Radiant Identities* and a naked young girl on the cover of *Fanny* are deeply disturbing for their child sexual abuse images (i.e. child pornography) aesthetic. These materials are attractive to pedophiles and Walmart.com should not be marketing them to anyone.

Other Sexually Explicit Material of Concern

We are also alarmed to have discovered books such as *Pimpology* and *The Pimp’s Bible: The Sweet Science of Sin* available on Walmart.com. Despite prevailing stereotypes in popular culture which portray pimping as hip and cool, in fact pimps are violent, serial sexual predators. The federal Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) defines severe forms of trafficking in persons as the recruitment, harboring, transportation, provisioning, and obtaining, patronizing, and soliciting, by means of force, fraud, and coercion, persons for exploitation in the commercial sex trade. This is the

quintessence of what pimps do. By definition, pimps are sex traffickers. Thus, by selling books such as those named above, Walmart is selling sex trafficking “how-to” manuals.

In the book *Pimpology*, Ken Ivy (a.k.a. Pimpin’ Ken) promulgates “the 48 laws of the game.” He writes: “There are only two categories of people: pimps and hoes. You either give orders or you take them.”⁸ He further explains that he utilizes “psychological warfare or Pimpology” to get what he wants, and that this pimpology is “more treacherous than physical abuse.” In the chapter entitled “Prey on the Weak,” Pimpin Ken advises up-and-coming pimps to find and manipulate the frailties of females:

A pimp looks for that weakness, and if it isn’t on the surface, he brings that mother****er out of them . . . Then he uses those weaknesses to his advantage. Weakness is the best trait a person can find in someone they want to control. If you can’t find a weakness, you have to create one. You have to tear someone’s ego down to nothing before they will start looking to you for salvation.⁹

Conclusion and Request

In light of Wal-Mart’s failure to implement and enforce its own standards, and due to the highly, sexually explicit and exploitive nature of the materials discussed above, we are calling on Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., to remove *Cosmopolitan* from its distribution in stores worldwide, for removal of all Jock Sturges publications, and all sex trafficking how-to, pimping and prostitution related material from Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. and Walmart.com. Additionally, we request a complete review and removal from Walmart.com of any other sexually explicit and objectifying material.

We submit that material Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., could and would not display in its executive offices or corporate board rooms without facing a potential sexual harassment suit, is equally inappropriate to sell in your retail locations or online store.

We know Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., is a brand that values and respects its customers. However, the material we have described above is antithetical to Wal-Mart’s previously articulated brand standards, and does not help its customers to “Live better.”

Wal-Mart Stores, Inc., is now faced with an exciting opportunity—the opportunity to join leaders in the fight against sexual exploitation by becoming a retailer which takes the step of removing sexually exploitive and pornographic materials, whether soft or hardcore, from its business model. This is the only step that will effectively deal with content that is harming children and families across the nation.

Major corporations such as Omni Hotels, Marriott International, Hilton Worldwide, Hyatt Hotels Corporation, Overstock.com, and others have eliminated or are eliminating pornography from their business models. Now is the time for Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. to do likewise, and in so doing, take a leadership position among retail corporations.

⁸ Pimpin’ Ken [Ken Ivy] and Karen Hunter, *Pimpology: The 48 Laws of the Game* (New York: Simon Spotlight Entertainment, 2007) 1

⁹ Pimpin’ Ken [Ken Ivy] and Karen Hunter, *ibid.*

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All boys, girls, women, and men have a natural human dignity, and thus a right to live lives free from sexual exploitation. Pornographic imagery is degrading, dehumanizing, exploitive, and a violation of this right. All pornography and sexual exploitation is a serial attack on human dignity, identity, and worth. NCOSE exists to make society aware the full spectrum of sexual exploitation, to equip individuals and families to overcome and protect against its harms, and to advocate that all laws defending the right to be free from sexual exploitation are vigorously enforced. Our nation is now suffering the consequences from widespread distribution of pornography and sexually exploitive materials, and Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. has an historic opportunity to play an important role in stopping it.

Accordingly, we request the opportunity to meet with you and your representatives to discuss how Wal-Mart Stores, Inc. can become of corporate leader in the fight for a world free from sexual exploitation.

Sincerely,



Patrick A. Trueman
President & CEO



Dawn Hawkins
Senior VP & Executive Director