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Wal-Mart To Apologize For Ad in Newspaper

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Saturday, May 14, 2005; Page E01
<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/content/article/2005/05/13/AR2005051301423.html>

Wal-Mart Stores Inc. said yesterday that it made a "terrible" mistake in approving a recent newspaper advertisement that equated a proposed Arizona zoning ordinance with Nazi book-burning.

The full-page advertisement included a 1933 photo of people throwing books on a pyre at Berlin's Opernplatz. It was run as part of a campaign against a Flagstaff ballot proposal that would restrict Wal-Mart from expanding a local store to include a grocery.

The accompanying text read "Should we let government tell us what we can read? Of course not . . . So why should we allow local government to limit where we shop?" The bottom of the advertisement announced that the ad was "Paid for by Protect Flagstaff's Future-Major Funding by Wal-Mart (Bentonville, AR)."

The ad, which ran May 8 in the Arizona Daily Sun, was "reviewed and approved by Wal-Mart, but we did not know what the photo was from. We obviously should have asked more questions," said Daphne Moore, Wal-Mart's director of community affairs. She said the company will also issue a letter of apology to the Arizona Anti-Defamation League.

The ADL, members of Congress and the United Food and Commercial Workers International Union criticized the company for the advertisement.

"It's not the imagery itself. It trivializes the Nazis and what they did. And to try to attach that imagery to a municipal election goes beyond distasteful," said Bill Straus, Arizona regional director for the ADL.

[...]

Staff writer Michael Barbaro contributed to this report.

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