

Pepsi ad draws fire

HA, HA, HA. I'm laughing and smiling so no one will think I'm one of those angry, mean, overly aggressive, emasculating black women.

I've been known to be curt and impatient when stressed, but I'm not an eyeroller or a neck-swiveler even when highly provoked. I know black women who fit that stereotype and who readily admit as much, but even they were incensed by the Pepsi MAX commercial that aired during Sunday's Super Bowl.

In that ad, Pepsi not only resurrected the angry black woman, but had her



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hurling a soda can.

In case you missed it, here's the recap: A black woman tries to get her guy to eat better by kicking him, pushing his face in a pie and stuffing his mouth with soap. When she catches him looking at an attractive white female jogger, the black woman's face contorts with rage and she hurls a Pepsi can, which hits the jogger, who falls to the ground. Realizing what she's done, the black woman joins hands with the guy, quietly apologizes to the jogger on the ground, and runs off.

I'm stunned that Pepsi would even think of presenting such an image in 2011. I was saying as much yesterday

during an interview on WURD (900-AM) radio when a caller who identified herself as Jackie from West Philly called in to complain about black women she comes into contact with daily from whom "you just get attitude, just off the top. There are a lot of black women that are guilty" of this angry behavior, she said.

I couldn't just dismiss her because I've seen what she was describing. My friend **Karen E. Quinones Miller** has even written about it in a semi-autobiographical novel, "An Angry Ass Black Woman," to be published by Simon & Schuster later this year.

Miller, who lives in East Mount Airy, says she understands why black women have their attitude.

"They are not having a bad day; they are having a bad life. That's really and truly how I feel. It's because of life circumstances," Miller said. "It's a defense mechanism."

She described working as a secretary and being sent on an assignment that her employer thought was too dangerous for a white female colleague. Miller responded by quoting **Sojourner Truth's** legendary "Ain't I a Woman" speech.

Sophia A. Nelson, who wrote a much-read blog post on *Essence.com* about the Pepsi ad, agreed with Miller. "A lot of black women are tired. We've been playing by all the rules that we've been told to play by, but it's still not enough. You're a good, decent, compassionate, loving woman. You love the Lord and you can't find a man that will love and honor you as a woman should be honored and loved.

"Too many of us are going through this alone. Why are we the work horses? We play by the rules and we still can't crack the glass ceiling," continued Nelson, author of "Black Woman Redefined: Dispelling Myths and Discovering Fulfillment in the Age of Michelle Obama," which is due out later this year.

"When you show up at work with your MBA from Harvard and your St. John suit, the image your colleagues have is, 'She is going to come in here and hit me in the head.' These are the



stereotypes and images that we as black women constantly have to battle.”

Pepsi shouldn't get a pass for perpetuating this stereotype. They just made

a lot of black women angry. And they just might start drinking Coke. ★

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Scene from Pepsi commercial that aired during Super Bowl.