



The Glendon Association

a 501(c)(3) California nonprofit corporation

Our mission is to save lives and help people create more meaningful lives by addressing the social problems of suicide, child abuse, violence, and troubled interpersonal relationships.

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February 7, 2007

Ms. Ryndee Carney
c/o General Motors Corporation
300 Renaissance Center
Detroit, MI 48265

Dear Ms. Carney,

I am writing to express grave concern over General Motors's recent commercial that aired during the Super Bowl and continues to be shown on television and the internet. As you are aware, this commercial depicts a robot whose error on the job culminates in his termination, leading him to jump off a bridge thereby ending his life; ultimately, the episode is a figment of the robot's imagination, and he continues his work. Although the point is apparently to illustrate GM's "obsession" with quality, the impact of depicting a suicide in this manner is both irresponsible and destructive.

We understand that it may not have been the intent of General Motors, nor of the advertising agency that produced the commercial, to depict suicide in a callous manner; however, this does not change the reality of the commercial's message—if you make a mistake, you will lose your job and the will to live, with suicide presented as an inherent and accepted outcome.

Unfortunately, there are many people currently suffering from depression and other mental conditions already considering suicide who could be encouraged by your message. Statistically, 1 person commits suicide *every* 40 seconds.

Research shows that individuals who are unemployed are three times more likely to commit suicide (Journal of Affective Disorders, 2006 215-220). In addition, middle-aged men are generally at a higher risk for completing a suicide attempt. These statistics are particularly disconcerting in the context of recent layoffs happening at your company. As past employees of GM fit this at-risk demographic, this ad is not only irresponsible in its implications, but blatantly disrespectful to a population whose past service warrants sensitivity.

We have heard from survivors of suicide who were upset by this commercial due to their loved one's having completed a suicide by jumping off a bridge. Suicide is a serious matter and not appropriate fodder for an advertisement. It is my hope that this letter provides your organization and marketing team with some education and awareness about Suicide and the Media.

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In writing this letter, we seek to emphasize the importance of your acknowledgment of the damaging impacts this kind of commercial can have on individuals who are vulnerable to depression & suicide. Both customers and workers deserve the satisfaction that General Motors takes public safety seriously. We suggest that General Motors strongly consider removing this commercial from the media outlets in which it is currently broadcasting.

My sincere hope is that by communicating, we are able not only to inform you of the damaging impact this commercial could have on its viewers, but also to warn of potential liability issues facing the General Motors Company in light of the dangerous message conveyed in this advertising. I greatly appreciate your careful consideration of this request and look forward to your response. Please contact me at your earliest convenience.

Sincerely,

Jamie Rotnofsky, PhD, CRC, QME
Licensed Clinical Psychologist, CA, NY
Executive Director, The Glendon Association

CC: Rick Wagoner, CEO

Certified Mail to:

300 Renaissance Center
Detroit, MI 48265

Email to:

ryndee.carney@gm.com

rwagoner@gm.com

Enclosed: The Role of the Media, Suicide Prevention

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