

## Perry Ellis boss is a racist homophobe, executive says

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Oscar Feldenkreis

Photo: WireImage

A new lawsuit claims the COO of Perry Ellis International is a racist homophobe who told underlings to make sure there are “no blacks in my ads” or “anyone who looked too gay.”

Oscar Feldenkreis, the son of Perry Ellis International founder, George Feldenkreis, allegedly made the hateful remarks to a gay senior executive, Joseph Cook, 49, who filed the lawsuit in Manhattan federal court Wednesday.

“Mr. Cook has been forced to endure highly offensive homophobic, racial, and ethnic slurs by Mr. Feldenkreis,” the suit claims, adding that Feldenkreis is slated to succeed his father as CEO next year despite his blatantly discriminatory beliefs.

“These include, but are not limited to, admonishing Mr. Cook and his team to make sure there are ‘no blacks in my ads’ or ‘anyone who looked too gay’ and telling Mr. Cook he could easily avoid jury service by ‘telling them you hate n—s and f—s.’”

Cooks also says in the suit that the racism came up when he was working to approve a Lord & Taylor print ad, with an underling comparing a model’s skin tone to a black Crayola crayon, according to the suit.

Cook claims that when he complained about the discrimination, the company retaliated against him with a campaign designed to isolate and exclude him.

“I am deeply saddened as a gay man and someone who has always been proud of who I am no matter my color or sexual orientation that a company executive could be so intolerant of others,” Cook said in a statement provided by his lawyer, Douglas Wigdor.

“I hope this lawsuit will change the views of leadership at Perry Ellis and bring them into the 21st Century.”

The suit names both Feldenkreis and Perry Ellis International as defendants and seeks unspecified damages.

Perry Ellis denied Cook’s claims in a statement.

“Perry Ellis is a company that promotes equal opportunity and a positive working environment. The company is proud of the fact that it is probably one of the most diverse companies in the apparel business following its multi-cultural roots, stemming from Puerto Rico and Cuba,” the statement read.

“Perry Ellis categorically denies any allegations to the contrary. The claims that have been asserted will be vigorously defended against.”