

President of Perry Ellis doesn't want 'blacks or anyone who looks too gay' in ads, exec claims in lawsuit

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Racism and homophobia is in style at the highest levels of high-end clothing line Perry Ellis, a new lawsuit charges. A gay executive at the pricey apparel company alleges in papers filed in Manhattan Federal Court that the president, Oscar Feldenkreis, shamelessly keeps gay and black people out of promotional material.



Oscar Feldenkreis is expected to succeed his father George as CEO.

Senior exec Joseph Cook, 49, says that Feldenkreis — who is expected to succeed his father, George, as CEO — told him in 2013 to make sure there are “no blacks in my ads” and that he “did not want anyone who looked too gay.” Cook, who earns \$300,000 a year, said that in June Feldenkreis advised him he could get out of jury duty by “telling them you hate ni----s and f--s,” papers charge.

“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 released through his attorney, Douglas Wigdor.

After raising concerns about these discriminatory practices, Cook's suit charges, he was "frozen out" of having any role at the company.

Cook said the company — which is named after its gay founder — is plagued by nepotism that makes complaining about improper conduct a daunting task.

He said Feldenkreis's daughter Erica, who works as a brand director, said, "My dad doesn't like having black guys in his ads, or anyone who looks too gay." The company, through its counsel Gordon & Rees, said it "categorically denies" the allegations.

"The company is proud of the fact that it is probably one of the most diverse companies in the apparel business," the lawyers said.