

Girl Scouts Respond to Social Media Bonfire

Ronn Torossian, CEO, 5WPR

There was a time in America when a group that staunchly supports empowering women and girls celebrating a woman being appointed to the Supreme Court would have been a no-brainer. That time, for some, is “not right now” or, perhaps, “not all women.” Here’s what happened and how the Girl Scouts of America Public Relations team responded.



The Girl Scouts of America posted the following message on their social media platforms: “Congratulations Amy Coney Barrett on becoming the 5th woman appointed to the Supreme Court since its inception,” along with an image of all the current and former female members of SCOTUS.

Some replied and retweeted with encouragement. Many others, however, came down on the GSA with both hiking boots. The general theme of these critics was that the new Court Appointee, Barrett, “doesn’t represent women well enough” or “in a way that the GSA should celebrate.” Comments similar to this one poured in: “I was a GS for years. I didn’t see your tweet but it’s a pathetic joke to equate all these women in SCOTUS... Time to find a new source of cookies.”

Others even offered unsolicited PR advice, tweeting: “I’m a social media manager and my advice to your social media managers is read the room next time. You owe every GS an apology... There are many ways to uplift and empower girls... This was not it...”

This particular message got some pushback from fans of the GS tweet. One poster who got a lot of attention countering the criticism said, "These are young girls who are learning how to participate in civil society, becoming their own people, and explore their own ideas and beliefs... Not pawns in your political bickering..."

This went on for the better part of the day with both "sides" offering full throated support or condemnation. Then, eventually, the Girl Scouts offered their own response:

"Girls Scouts of the USA is a nonpolitical, nonpartisan organization. We are neither red nor blue, but Girl Scout GREEN. We are here to lift up girls and women. If you would like to debate partisan politics, keep scrolling."

That tone and content served to stoke the fires. Some saw it as an honest, appropriate response. Others saw it as "aggressive" or "combative." So, the arguing continued, leading GSA to offer yet another response:

"Earlier today, we shared a post highlighting the five women who have been appointed to the Supreme Court. It was quickly viewed as a political and partisan statement, which was not our intent. We have removed the post."

Critics declared victory, while continuing to criticize. Meanwhile, fans of the original tweet, who had been defending the Girl Scouts the entire time, felt betrayed. One fan offered this response: "This was a celebratory tweet for girls and women, leadership and success... I'm disappointed with the Girl Scouts for caving and deleting..."

In the end, it appears that the Girl Scouts of America's PR team determined that they had indeed failed to adequately or accurately "read the room." They surely meant well, but that wasn't conveyed in a way that many in the audience were ready to accept. Fair or not, right or not, that was vigorously debated. The truism stands: No matter the intent, you need to

read the room well and tweak the message accordingly.



About the Author: Ronn Torossian is CEO of 5WPR, a leading US PR agency.