

The Guardian

Topshop's Philip Green under fire over axing of feminist book display

Store apologises and makes donation to charity after removal of pop-up promotion



The pop-up in Topshop's flagship London store aimed to raise money for the UN charity Girl Up. Photograph: Niklas Halle'N/AFP /Getty Images

Sarah Marsh

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Topshop abruptly cancelled a partnership with the publisher Penguin to promote a collection of feminist writing after the fashion retailer's chairman, Sir Philip Green, saw an in-store pop-up.

The decision prompted the editor of the collection, Scarlett Curtis, to accuse the store of letting down the teenage girls who shop there.

Topshop later apologised and made a £25,000 donation to charity. Asked who was responsible for the display's removal a spokesperson did not respond directly but said that the decision was taken from "a production and creative standpoint".

The controversy first came to light when Penguin Books tweeted to say that a display set up at Topshop's flagship Oxford Street store in London had been taken down hours before it was due to open.

The pop-up event focused on the book *Feminists Don't Wear Pink (And Other Lies)*, curated by Curtis, which was published in partnership with the UN charity Girl Up. The event was to raise money for and awareness of the cause.

Girl Up was founded by the United Nations Foundation in 2010 with the goal of preparing girls for leadership positions.

The Guardian understands that the stall was removed without warning shortly after Green viewed it.

Curtis said: "It was a heartbreaking and shocking act from a powerful man and a true example of why the words in our book are still so needed. The patriarchy is alive and kicking and our entire team was really shaken by what happened. The fact they clothe entire nation of teenage girls but won't support something that fights for their equality is awful and heartbreaking."

The writer also tweeted about the incident using the hashtag #pinknotgreen.

Grace Campbell, the comedian and film-maker who founded the Pink Protest with Curtis, said: "From what I gathered Philip Green saw it and it was taken down ... no one knows what his objection was. What we are taking from it is that the pop-up was ... activist and feminist ... that is probably what he was objecting to."

Campbell said: "He has done this to try and minimise our voices but this is the exact reason this book is being written; women's feminist voices need to be heard and men like Philip Green trying to quieten us and prevent us from being heard."

Actress Thandie Newton also responded to the incident, describing Green as a "loser" and tweeting:

Naomi Colthurst, a commissioning editor at Penguin Random House Children's, said she was upset that the event had been cancelled. "A fairly extraordinary day in the office yesterday when @Topshop decided 'for some reason' they didn't want to host our #FeministsDontWearPink pop-up after all," she wrote.

Green has long been a controversial figure, most notably over his management of BHS. He took more than £580m in dividends, rental payments and interest on loans from the company to help fund a lavish lifestyle before selling the company for £1 to investors who steered it into collapse 12 months later.

This is not the mogul's first clash with Penguin. Earlier this year, the publisher released a biography of Green by Oliver Shah titled *Damaged Goods*. Green, who once described Shah as a "disgusting individual", was reported to have been considering legal action over the book.

In response to the controversy, a Topshop spokesperson said: "Yesterday we made the decision from a production and creative standpoint to retract the *Feminists Don't Wear Pink and Other Lies* pop-up from one of our stores. We are sorry - this in no way reflects our stance on feminism and we will be making a donation of £25,000 to Girl Up. We continue to fully support the sentiment of the book, Scarlett Curtis, feminism and equality."

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