

Young apologizes for his ethnic slurs, quits Wal-Mart post: Remarks angered Arab, Jewish and Korean leaders

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Longtime civil rights leader Andrew Young has angered Arab, Jewish and Korean leaders for saying that “Mom and Pop” store owners from these three communities had “ripped off” poor urban districts for decades by overcharging them.

Young, a 74-year-old ordained minister of the United Church of Christ, a former mayor of Atlanta and United Nations ambassador, and onetime colleague of the late Martin Luther King Jr., has since apologized for the remarks, which forced him August 17 to resign a post with Working Families for Wal-Mart promoting the retail store chain.

In an interview with the *Los Angeles Sentinel*, a weekly newspaper with mostly African-American readers, Young acknowledged that Wal-Mart is often held responsible for smaller stores closing down.

But he defended Wal-Mart’s presence in poor neighborhoods, saying that smaller retailers “have been overcharging us, selling us stale bread and bad meat and wilted vegetables. And they sold out and moved to Florida. I think they’ve ripped off our communities enough.

“First it was Jews, then it was Koreans and now it’s Arabs; very few black people own these stores.”

Wal-Mart officials repudiated the remarks, which were in turn sharply criticized by leaders from the communities to which he referred.

Abraham Foxman, head of the Anti-Defamation League, a Jewish organization, described Young’s comments as “offensive, hurtful and shameful.”

The *New York Times* quoted Khaled Lamada, ex-president of the Arab Muslim American Federation, as saying that the statements were “not fair” and that they “shame” the Muslim community; and Margaret Fung, of the Asian American Legal Defense and Education Fund, as saying, “Andrew Young should know better than to resort to derogatory ethnic stereotypes about Korean store owners in black neighborhoods.” -*Religion News Service*