

**The Company that Taught the World to Sing:  
Coca-Cola, Globalization, and the Cultural Politics of Branding  
in the Twentieth Century**

by

**Laura A. Hymson**

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Doctoral Committee:

Associate Professor, James W. Cook, Chair  
Professor Philip J. Deloria  
Professor Susan J. Douglass  
Professor Penny Von Eschen

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## Introduction

Since the Yankees came to Trinidad \ They got the young girls all goin' mad.  
The young girls say they treat them nice \ Make Trinidad like paradise.  
Drinkin' rum and Coca-Cola \ Go down Point Koo-mah-nah;  
Both mother and daughter \ Workin' for the Yankee dollar.

– The Andrews Sisters, “Rum and Coca-Cola” (1944)

With its infectious calypso rhythms, the Andrew Sisters’ hit song, “Rum and Coca-Cola,” enthralled American audiences during World War II. Nearly 40 years later, Maxine Andrews recalled that the group thought the lyrics were “cute” and that the group “didn't think of what it meant . . . because we weren't as morally open as we are today and so . . . [the meaning of the lyrics] just went over our heads.”<sup>1</sup> The song was popular despite implicit references to alcohol, prostitution, and questionable moral behavior from American soldiers. Some radio stations refused to play the song because it amounted to free advertising for the Coca-Cola Company – which actually had no involvement in creating the song. None of this, however, stopped the song from growing in popularity. During the Andrew Sisters United Service Organizations (USO) tours during World War II (WWII), “Rum and Coca-Cola” was their most requested song. American GIs called it “the national anthem of the GI camps.”<sup>2</sup> The song stayed at number one on *Billboard's*

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<sup>1</sup> “Maxine Andrews interviewed by Jim Harlan” (WNEW-AM Radio, February 1992).

<sup>2</sup> John Sforza, *Swing It!: The Andrews Sisters Story*, 2nd ed. (The University Press of Kentucky, 2004), 71.



U.S. Pop Singles chart for ten weeks in 1945. This calypso hit with racy lyrics became popular with troops on military bases, as well as with civilians on the home front.<sup>3</sup>

Another kind of controversy surrounding the song was reported in a *Time* magazine article later that year. The question was asked: Who really wrote the lyrics and music to “Rum and Coca-Cola”? In fact, a singer named Jeri Sullivan was the first to perform the song in the U.S. Sullivan, in turn, claimed to have picked it up from Morey Amsterdam, a radio comedian who passed through Trinidad as part of a USO camp show. Sullivan, partnering with a music publisher named Leo Feist, got permission from the Coca-Cola Company to publish the song as sheet music, record it, and then perform it live. The *Time* article, however, correctly identified Rupert W. Grant, a calypso singer nicknamed “Lord Invader,” as the person who originally wrote the lyrics in 1943. His song, it turned out, had been copyrighted in Trinidad, and a published booklet containing the lyrics was entered into evidence during the copyright infringement suit that soon ensued. Five years later, Lord Invader won his case.<sup>4</sup>

The original lyrics were slightly different and more explicit than the ones made popular by the Andrews Sisters. Following the line “The young girls say they treat 'em nice,” the Andrews Sisters sang “Make Trinidad like paradise.” Lord Invader, by contrast, ended with a more explicit image: “and they give them a better price.”

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<sup>3</sup> For Billboard statistics, see Joel Whitburn, *Joel Whitburn's Pop Hits 1940-1954: Singles and Albums*, 2nd ed. (Record Research Inc., 2002), 308. Sales figures for the song were published in *Variety* (December 25, 1946), 35. For more on the trio's experiences during their wartime tours, see Sforza, *Swing It!*, 76.

<sup>4</sup> “Coca in Calypso,” *Time*, January 29, 1945. Sullivan and Feist were not concerned about copyright, but rather the rights to the trademarked brand name “Coca-Cola.” For an overview of Invader's career see John Cowley's introduction to the compilation album, “God Made Us All - Lord Invader: The Asch Recordings”. Invader recorded for the Decca music label in Trinidad in 1939 and again in 1940. In 1941 Invader came to New York for the first time and recorded for Decca there. Decca was also the recording label that put out the Andrews Sisters version of the song. Kevin Burke have compiled a complete account of the Rum and Coca-Cola controversy and the lawsuits that followed in “The Rum and Coca-Cola Reader”, n.d., <http://www.rumandcocacolareader.com/RumAndCocaCola/main.html>.

Promiscuity and prostitution, in short, were far clearer in Lord Invader's original version. The song reflected life as he had experienced it on the island. When asked in 1946 about the role of Calypso in Trinidad and his inspiration for the song, Lord Invader explained

Calypso is the folklore of Trinidad, a style of poetry, telling about current events in song. Back home . . . I was traveling on a bus, someplace they call Point Cumana, a bathing resort, and I happened to see the G.I.s in the American social invasion in the West Indies, Trinidad. You know the girls used to get the candies and stuff like that, and they go to the canteens with the boys and so on, have fun. So I noticed since the G.I.s came over there . . . They drink rum, and they like Coca-Cola as a chaser, so I studied that as an idea of a song, and Morey Amsterdam had the nerve to say that he composed that song back here.<sup>5</sup>

Lord Invader's memory of the "social invasion" of the GIs in Trinidad spoke to the American military occupation that began in 1940. Three years later, approximately 20,000 "Yankee soldiers" were stationed in Trinidad, a major operation that reshaped life on the island, including a local economy that catered to the troops and provided them with Rum and Coca-Cola and Trinidadian women.<sup>6</sup>

My dissertation examines the twofold process embedded in this long-forgotten episode: first, how Coca-Cola found its way to foreign markets like Trinidad; and second how images of Coca-Cola's global circulation became increasingly pervasive in

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<sup>5</sup> Lord Invader, "People's Songs, Inc., 'Calypso at Midnight'" (presented at the The Midnight Special, Town Hall (New York, NY), December 21, 1946), [http://www.rumandcocacolareader.com/RumAndCocaCola/Town\\_Hall.html](http://www.rumandcocacolareader.com/RumAndCocaCola/Town_Hall.html).

<sup>6</sup> Lt. Robert A. Johnston and Capt. James C. Shultz, Jr., "Unpublished Manuscript: History of the Trinidad Sector and Base Command", 1947, Center for Military History, United States Army, Washington, D.C.; Stetson Conn, Rose C. Engelman, and Byron Fairchild, "The Caribbean in Wartime," in *Guarding the United States and its Outposts* (Washington, D.C.: Center for Military History, United States Army, 2000), <http://www.history.army.mil/html/books/004/4-2/index.html>. Additionally, Cynthia H. Enloe has insightfully written about the connection between nationalism, militarism, and masculinity. She also provides important feminist analysis of the economic and social forces that drive mothers and daughters, like the pair referenced in "Rum and Coca-Cola," to military bases for work and play. In particular the chapter "Base Women" in *Bananas, Beaches and Bases: Making Feminist Sense of International Politics* (University of California Press, 2000), 65-92. See also: *Maneuvers: The International Politics of Militarizing Women's Lives*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2000); Catherine A. Lutz, *Homefront: A Military City and the American Twentieth Century* (Beacon Press, 2002); Barbara Ehrenreich and Arlie Russell Hochschild, *Global Woman: Nannies, Maids, and Sex Workers in the New Economy*, 1st ed. (Holt Paperbacks, 2004).

American mass culture. The project is organized around the central question of what it meant for Coca-Cola, a corporation whose early roots extended backward to the late nineteenth-century soda fountains of the U.S. South, to re-invent itself as an explicitly “global” brand. The 1940 controversy surrounding “Rum and Coca-Cola” is instructive because it draws together three major themes from my project. Most obviously, it demonstrates the core conviction of Coca-Cola executives that the drink would be universally welcomed and celebrated abroad, a conviction which fueled a massive corporate restructuring and global expansion during the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. It also points to the crucial fact that Coca-Cola’s historical path to “globalization” included indirect and direct aid from the U.S. nation-state, often in ways that provided the Company with major competitive advantages. Finally, this song helps us to see that the larger process of Coca-Cola’s global expansion regularly involved native workers and consumers in developing countries abroad, as well as the ongoing problem of race. Here, in short, is the far-flung creation story of one of America’s earliest and most dominant global brands, a story that necessarily includes local histories on multiple continents, numerous forms of federal policy-making, and key innovations in mass culture that surrounded the corporate expansion.

Coca-Cola’s global expansion, it is important to note, coincided directly with the advances of U.S. imperialism. In 1897, the Company began shipping its drink to Hawaii, marking the first time it was sold in the tropics and the year that President William McKinley signed the Treaty of Annexation of Hawaii. Another key watershed was the Spanish-American War in 1898, which opened an even wider pathway for Coca-Cola’s global ambitions. Businessmen and missionaries followed in the wake of America’s

imperial conquests, and Coca-Cola Company president, Asa Candler, benefitted on both levels. On the advice of his brother, a Methodist missionary, he invested his money and exported the drink to Cuba, a country which fell under U.S. control as part of the Platt Amendment.<sup>7</sup>

Coca-Cola's availability in Trinidad was made possible by the Company's presence in Cuba. During the Spanish-American war, the "Cuba Libre" was invented, a mixture of Coca-Cola, white rum, and lime juice. In 1919, Ernest Canning, an entrepreneur from Surrey, England, collected empty bottles and purchased syrup from a wholesaler in Cuba without a formal contract. These were the first bottles of Coca-Cola to appear in Trinidad. Seven years later, Robert W. Woodruff, Coca-Cola's next president, established a "Foreign Department" to build the infrastructure for the first stages of global expansion. Similar to the U.S. State Department, its mission was to serve as a liaison between Coca-Cola and foreign governments and businesses. This new department used formal diplomatic channels and local business networks to partner with entrepreneurs interested in bottling and selling Coca-Cola. A franchise system was established early on: first, domestically through soda fountains, and then through bottlers in the U.S. and abroad. The parent company retained the secret recipe and was solely

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<sup>7</sup> Sydney Mintz's work on sugar powerfully argues that it was basic to the creation of a global market. His work has been crucial to commodity-chain analyses of globalization. By tracing backwards from how sweetness (in all its forms, sugar, honey, etc.) got to the tables of Western industrial societies, his work illuminates a triangular trade of slaves, sugar, and all of its byproducts. For more on American annexation of Hawaii, see: Sally Engle Merry, *Colonizing Hawai'i* (Princeton University Press, 1999); Tom Coffman, *Nation Within: The History of the American Occupation of Hawaii*, 2nd ed. (Koa Books, 2009); Helena G. Allen, *The Betrayal of Liliuokalani: Last Queen of Hawaii 1838-1917* (Mutual Publishing, 1991). There has been increasing attention to U.S. military bases as outposts of empire, see Chalmers Johnson, *The Sorrows of Empire: Militarism, Secrecy, and the End of the Republic*. (New York: Metropolitan Book, 2004), C.T. Sandars, *America's Overseas Garrisons: The Leasehold Empire*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000); Mark Gillem, *America Town: Building the Outposts of Empire*. (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2007); Catherine A. Lutz, ed., *The Bases of Empire: The Global Struggle Against U.S. Military Posts*. (New York: New York University Press, 2009); Maria Hohn and Seungsook

responsible for producing the syrup. In 1940, Canning signed a bottling contract with the Foreign Department. Three years later, U.S. troops descended on the island, quickly driving up annual sales from 1,000 to 100,000 cases.<sup>8</sup>

Coca-Cola in Trinidad is an important part of the story, but Lord Invader's song also revolved around the "Yankee dollar" and the "social invasion" of American GIs. As representatives of American empire, U.S. troops replaced British colonial rule. Once the U.S. entered World War II, there was a dramatically increased presence of American soldiers on military bases around the world, a demographic shift with enormous implications for the history of Coca-Cola. A final route to global expansion was the establishment of mutually-beneficial policy initiatives between the U.S. military and the Coca-Cola Company. A series of military contracts exempted the Company from wartime rations and taxes. Coca-cola manufactured ammunitions for the military and was chosen to become the exclusive soft drink supplier to the U.S. Armed Forces. The "social invasion" that brought soft drinks, Yankee dollars, and U.S. troops to Trinidad was one jointly carried out by a powerful and wealthy U.S. government in close collaboration with the Coca-Cola Company.

Their interests, however, were not always the same. Coca-Cola served its shareholders and operated in the market to turn a profit. It had a stake in the health and promotion of national policies, but a far greater interest in its own success and survival. Using the Coca-Cola Company as an illustrative example, Michael Denning has raised this point:

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Moon, eds., *Over There: Living with the U.S. Military Empire from World War Two to the Present*. (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010).

<sup>8</sup> Coca-Cola Export Company report, "Coca-Cola Overseas", December 1952, Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

For if the cultural industries cross borders in search of new buyers, the state cultural apparatuses continue to create citizens (as well as “aliens,” non citizens) and to produce a “people,” a nationalized people made up of various ethnicized and racial fractions. This sector of culture not only has *not* globalized but is built on the constant reiteration of the notion of a national culture. If Coca-Cola dreams of teaching the world to sing in perfect harmony, the US public schools open their day with the pledge of allegiance to the flag of the United States of America.<sup>9</sup>

Denning reminds us here that not all sectors of mass culture have been globalized. At first glance, his example suggests a divergence of interests between the reification of national cultures versus the rise of global markets. This seeming divergence, however, arises from the different sources of power that fuel corporations and nation-states. Coca-Cola expanded its profits as a multinational corporation, but it was never strictly an export business; it used its alignment with the military to expand its global infrastructure. Coca-Cola partnered with foreign business owners to insert its brand into multiple national economies and cultures. Its alignment with the U.S. federal government did not lead Coca-Cola to market its product in strictly national, or nationalistic, terms. The “people” and mode of sociability Coca-Cola put at the center of its wartime advertising reflected a corporate desire to shape a global market and culture defined, above all, not by strict national allegiances, but by a shared interest in U.S. products and lifestyle.

Coca-Cola, in short, sought to cultivate a big-tent brand that would be recognizable and appealing around the world. Globalization includes a multitude of localities that make up the global sphere. The mid-20<sup>th</sup> century political slogan, “Think Global, Act Local” is also a useful framing device for understanding the corporate

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<sup>9</sup> Michael Denning, “So-Called Cultural Histories: Culture in an Age of One World” (presented at the The State of Cultural History Conference in Honor of Lawrence Levine, George Mason University, September 17, 2005). See also, Michael Cox, *Banal Nationalism*, 1st ed. (Sage Publications Ltd, 1995); Kevin J. Brehony and Naz Rassool, *Nationalisms Old and New* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1999); Liah Greenfeld, *The Spirit of Capitalism: Nationalism and Economic Growth* (Harvard University Press, 2003).

process of globalization.<sup>10</sup> Roland Robertson, for example, has recently pushed against our conventional tendencies to treat the global and local in zero sum terms, arguing instead for their ongoing mutual imbrication. He adopts the term “glocal” from 1980s Japanese business models to suggest a more complex hybrid process. Robertson argues that glocalization is, in more straightforwardly economic terms, micromarketing: the tailoring and advertising of goods and services on a global or near-global basis to increasingly differentiated local and particular markets . . . [glocalization] involves the construction of increasingly differentiated consumers, the ‘invention’ of ‘consumer traditions.’”<sup>11</sup>

Glocalization evolved from marketing practices that addressed a hegemonic national public and those that differentiated between various groups of consumers. I track these three overlapping stages of development in Coca-Cola’s American advertising before, during, and after WWII. The Company’s first advertisements addressed the national market with images of white American consumers. There was no basic change to this strategy until World War II, when Coca-Cola began to include images of foreign consumers with white Americans in its magazine ads. These depictions of differentiated war-time markets and foreign consumers predates Robertson’s model by almost half a century, helping us to see the longer historical roots of “glocalization.” Another important stage of mass marketing emerged after the war. In 1950, Coca-Cola began marketing its

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<sup>10</sup> This slogan is most often a call to action by environmentalists. It urges people to take action in their communities for the benefit of the Earth – it recognizes that we share one planet and its limited resources. More generally it stands in as a common recognition of global interconnection and in this way it also provides an opportunity to examine the local/global divide.

<sup>11</sup> Roland Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” in *Global Modernities* (London: Sage Publications, 1995), 28-29. See also Stuart Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity,” in *Culture, Globalization and teh World-System*, ed. E.D. King (London: Macmillian, 1991); Arjun Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy,” in *Global Culture*, ed. M. Featherstone (London: Sage Publications, 1990), 295-310.

product to African Americans. What we now call "segmented marketing," the targeting of consumers on the basis of race (or any other group identity), was a Cold War-era practice that increasingly recognized minority consumers, but also reinforced social differences.<sup>12</sup>

Coca-Cola's image as an explicitly "global" corporation was most visible and widely-celebrated when different people, in different parts of the world, shared in a mass cultural experience built around its brand. The best example of this is Coca-Cola's landmark "Hilltop" television commercial of 1971, which featured a chorus of young people from around the world singing "I'd like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company . . . I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony." Coca-Cola did not simply market itself to the various nations and cultures captured in this imagery; more ambitiously, it created an explicitly "diverse" mass market of consumers traversing distinct cultures. In actual fact, then, its global image *depended* on the national cultures to which Denning referred. Representations of far-reaching diversity, the very chorus of locals in the global sphere, constituted the central proof that Coca-Cola *was* global in its U.S. advertising and marketing campaigns.<sup>13</sup>

"Rum and Coca-Cola" helps us to see these transnational circuits in action. It is not just that a Trinidadian singer wrote a song about the effects of American militarism

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<sup>12</sup> The emergence of market segmentation during the 1950s and 1960s has been well documented and explained by Lizabeth Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic: The Politics of Mass Consumption in Postwar America* (Vintage, 2003), 259, 309; Thomas Frank, *The Conquest of Cool: Business Culture, Counterculture, and the Rise of Hip Consumerism*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 1998), 23-25; David Harvey, *The Condition of Postmodernity: An Enquiry into the Origins of Cultural Change* (Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 287, 285; Jason Chambers, *Madison Avenue and the Color Line: African Americans in the Advertising Industry* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2007); Richard S. Tedlow, *New and Improved: The Story of Mass Marketing in America* (Boston: Harvard Business School Press, 1996).

<sup>13</sup> For more on the concept that diversity sells in the market, see Paul Gilroy, *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture beyond the Color Line*, illustrated edition. (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2002); Robertson, "Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity."; William M. O'Barr,



and Coca-Cola on island life; it is that the song derived its popularity from an American mass audience that was appealed to by an American singing group. There was a kind of pleasure and fascination with American brands (like Coca-Cola) and American citizens (in this case, GI's) interacting with foreign peoples and cultures. The rich combination of strangeness and familiarity, domestic icons and foreign markets, seem to have struck a powerful series of chords. In much the same way, my dissertation attempts to work in multiple registers, not only tracking the economic and political foundations for Coca-Cola's global expansion, but also its manifold forms of image-making – the newsletters, speeches, ads, and marketing principles that attempted to reinvent Coca-Cola as an increasingly cosmopolitan, global product.

What made this especially challenging, of course, was Coca-Cola's much older, domestic history, the company's long-running efforts to position itself as integral to an "American Way of Life." Significantly, these efforts did not simply end with the turn to global expansion during the 1930s. At roughly the same moment, Coke's popular pastoral print ads of small town family life were designed and painted by artist Normal Rockwell, famous for his scenes of bedrock American values and traditions on the cover of *The Saturday Evening Post*. For much of the next half century, Coca-Cola continued to associate its drink with the simple pleasures of an idealized American lifestyle: the small-town sociability of the soda fountain; children playing outdoors on summer afternoons; white, middle-class families gathered together on the porch or at the kitchen table. These popular images were essential to the company's growing hegemony – and market share – over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup>- century, yet Coca-Cola simultaneously created multiple

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*Culture And The Ad: Exploring Otherness In The World Of Advertising* (Westview Press, 1994); Clifford Geertz, "The Uses of Diversity," *Michigan Quarterly* 5, no. 1 (1986).

advertising campaigns with images of their product and consumers abroad. Two major examples were the “global high-sign” print campaign between 1943-45, which featured American GIs drinking Coke in neutral and allied countries, and the “Hilltop” television spot of 1971. As we shall see, the timing of these campaigns was significant. How and why the Company created these innovative advertisements reveals a strategic blending of American and global identities that popularized Coca-Cola in every market it touched.

My dissertation is not a traditional corporate history of Coca-Cola, of which there are many. The Company published a commemorative account of its first 100 years, but perhaps its most popular historical record resides in the popular tourist attraction and museum, the “World of Coca-Cola,” located in Atlanta, Georgia.<sup>14</sup> A selection of key events, artifacts, and displays of advertising campaigns are celebrated in each. However, these corporate endeavors do not provide unbiased or complete histories. The most thorough account is, *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola: The Definitive History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company that Makes It*, by Mark Pendergrast. This book, and others, documents the invention of the drink, its secret recipe, the succession of executive leadership, as well as controversies over the drink’s negative effects on health, discriminatory and exploitative labor practices, as well as its rivalry with the Pepsi-Cola Company.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> To mark 100 years in business, Coca-Cola published a glossy oversized coffee table book. See, Anne Hoy, *Coca-Cola: the First Hundred Years* (Atlanta: Coca-Cola Company, 1986). The Company’s museum, the *World of Coca-Cola*, opened on May 24, 2007. This popular tourist attraction charges an admission fee and tells the story of the Coca-Cola brand within the confines of the building’s 60,000 square feet. One of the most popular attractions is the tasting station that offers samples of 60 of the Company’s beverages that are sold around the world.

<sup>15</sup> Mark Pendergrast, *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola: The Definitive History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company That Makes It*, Enlarged 2nd. (Basic Books, 2000). For additional comprehensive histories of the Coca-Cola Company and the Company’s first two presidents, see E. J. Jr. Kahn, *The Big Drink, The Story of Coca-Cola*, First Printing. (Random House, 1960); Pat Watters, *Coca-Cola: An Illustrated History*, 1st ed. (Doubleday, 1978); Frederick Allen, *Secret Formula: How Brilliant Marketing*

Rather than striving for a comprehensive corporate genealogy, I have intentionally left out numerous people, events, and details. My specific focus, rather, is on key moments that either facilitated or encumbered Coca-Cola's global expansion. I examine the experiences of American Coca-Cola employees on their mission to establish and foster foreign bottling plants. Additionally, advertising images that self-consciously represented the brand as global are of interest to me. On the subject of Coca-Cola's international appeal, my work overlaps with one notable exception to the vast body of literature about the Company. Reinhold Wagnleitner's *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria after the Second World War* focuses on the role that American popular culture played in the political and economic reconstruction of democratic Austria. His work is not exclusively about Coca-Cola but the drink takes center stage next to rock 'n' roll as a prime example of Americanization.<sup>16</sup>

Similar to Wagnleitner, I highlight the mutually-beneficial relationship between the U.S. government and the Coca-Cola Company. Particularly in the context of the Cold War, the spread of American popular culture was in the best interest of the U.S. nation

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*and Relentless Salesmanship Made Coca-Cola the Best-Known Product in the World*, 1st ed. (HarperCollins Publishers, 1994); Kathryn W. Kemp, *God's Capitalist: Asa Candler* (Mercer University Press, 2002); Charles Newton Elliott, *Mr. Anonymous: Robert W. Woodruff of Coca-Cola* (Cherokee Pub, 1982). For collections and analysis of Coca-Cola's advertising and place in visual culture, see Chris H. Beyer, *Coca-Cola Girls: An Advertising Art History* (Collectors Press, 2000); Watters, *Coca-Cola*; H. Applegate, *Coca-Cola Its Vehicles in Photographs 1930-1969: Photographs from the Archives Department of the Coca-Cola Company* (Iconografix, Inc., 1996); V. Dennis Wrynn, *Coke Goes to War*, 1st ed. (Pictorial Histories Publishing Company, 1996). For the rivalry between Coca-Cola and Pepsi, see Dennis Barton, *Cola Wars* (IUniverse, 2002); J.C. Louis and Harvey Z. Yazijian, *The Cola Wars: The Story of the Global Battle Between the Coca-Cola Company and PepsiCo, Inc.*, 1st ed. (Everest House, 1980); Roger Enrico and Jesse Kornbluth, *The Other Guy Blinked and other Dispatches from the Cola Wars* (Bantam, 1987). Recent histories of Coca-Cola have emphasized the modern era of leadership, under Robert Goizueta, and the multinational operations of the Coca-Cola Company, post-1980. See Constance L. Hays, *The Real Thing: Truth and Power at the Coca-Cola Company* (Random House Trade Paperbacks, 2005); Michael Blanding, *The Coke Machine: The Dirty Truth Behind the World's Favorite Soft Drink* (Avery, 2010); Mark Thomas, *Belching Out the Devil: Global Adventures with Coca-Cola*, 1st ed. (Nation Books, 2009).

<sup>16</sup> Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria After the Second World War* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1994).

state. For this reason, the State Department supported Coca-Cola's infiltration behind the Iron Curtain during the 1960s – a subject I cover in chapter five. However, my work is not solely about the process of Americanization. Instead, I am interested in how Coca-Cola constructed a brand that is both American *and* global.

Central to my story is WWII, a pivotal event in Coca-Cola's global expansion. Over the previous 40 years, the Company had made great strides in exporting small quantities of Coca-Cola to additional foreign markets. By 1940, however, the Company needed an entirely new strategy to boost its image and sales internationally. The war provided a remarkable opportunity. In 1941 and 1942, the company signed two extraordinary military contracts, the first to manufacture ammunitions in the U.S. and the second to travel abroad with American troops--with the express purpose of bottling Coca-Cola on the spot for them. This state/corporate alliance brought Coca-Cola unprecedented attention and acclaim. In the U.S., Coca-Cola was considered patriotic for its willingness to re-direct its energies to the war effort by creating a subsidiary Company (Brecon Loading) to manufacture ammunition. The result was a major promotional coup, one in which Coca-Cola became an American favorite which had put the Country first.

The second contract came about after Woodruff pledged to supply American troops around the world with bottles of Coca-Cola for no more than five cents apiece. This pledge was made possible by a request from General Dwight Eisenhower, a big fan of the drink who was stationed in North Africa. In response, the War Department sponsored the so-called Technical Observers (TO) program to deploy Coca-Cola employees directly within traveling military units. These "TOs" traveled at the expense of the U.S. military and were aided in the creation of bottling operations in neutral and

allied countries that did not already produce Coca-Cola (or in some cases could not because of the disruptions of war). In this way, Coca-Cola TOs were part of the U.S. invasions across Europe, the Pacific, Latin America, the Middle East, and China. By 1950, Coca-Cola's federally-sponsored global campaign had reached the point that it was now singled out and applauded in a *Time* magazine cover story as an exemplar of U.S. corporate expansionism.

Coca-Cola's WWII military contracts, and international expansion during and immediately after the war, have been addressed in other histories of the Company. However, mine is the first to include source material from *TO Digest*, an internal Company newsletter that compiled dispatches from TOs who were stationed abroad. I use this source to document the places where new bottling plants were constructed, as well as the workers whose labor made the production of Coca-Cola possible. Moreover, I use this newsletter to reconstruct the day-to-day life and work of TOs who were sent abroad to serve the troops. The TOs observations also record the challenges they faced when encountering new environments and a diverse range of foreign people.

The history of Coca-Cola was never simply one of universal public acclaim. Here again, the decidedly mixed messages of "Rum and Coca-Cola" are instructive. In stark contrast to the massive global profits enjoyed by Canning and Coca-Cola, Lord Invader sang about more tragic local consequences: "A couple got married one afternoon \ and was to go to Mayaroon on a honeymoon \ that very night the wife went with a Yankee lad \ and the stupid husband went staring mad \ Inspector Jory did a good job \ At St. James he raided a recreation club \ They was carrying on the club as a brothel \ The condition in which he found the girls I cannot tell." In this view, Coca-Cola bottling plants and U.S.

military bases constituted the historical engines of globalization, dramatically reshaping the island's domestic economy and social life. Yet the combination of Rum and Coca-Cola, soldiers, and dollars proved a dangerous and destructive mix.

The social divisions that accompanied Coca-Cola's global expansion were not only those between nations. Tens of thousands of American GI's who were stationed abroad during WWII served in segregated units. Despite the fact that this was a war waged against fascism--in the name of democracy and equality-- the twin realities of racism and segregation were essential parts of both the U.S. Armed Forces and American mass culture. While Coca-Cola was being exported to much of the world's non-white populations, African Americans in the U.S. lived under Jim Crow laws across the South that prevented them from buying or drinking Coca-Cola alongside white Americans. On more than one occasion, African Americans boycotted the drink because of unfair hiring practices at Coca-Cola plants in cities like Atlanta, New York, and Chicago.

Moreover, despite the fact that African Americans represented 15 million consumers in the domestic soft drink market, they did not appear in Coca-Cola's advertisements until the second half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Because of Coca-Cola's strong association with Atlanta, GA, the so-called capitol of the "New South" and Coke's longstanding world headquarters, African American protests challenged the Company to take a stand for racial equality in 1953. This was a key turning point in Coca-Cola's corporate policies and marketing practices. Demands for integrated advertising were not entirely met, but the ongoing threat of black boycotts—and especially, bad international publicity – led Coca-Cola to increasingly market its drink directly to African Americans

and find creative ways of “integrating” its advertising without alienating white consumers.

### **Some Central Concepts**

In what follows here, I draw upon political, business, and diplomatic history, as well as the history of the U.S. civil rights movement and the Cold War to provide a more dynamic and multidimensional view of globalization. Too often, studies of globalization have maintained a somewhat narrow focus on one or another of its constituent components: from corporate and federal policy-making to the novel forms of cultural hybridity, labor, and circulation that followed in the policies’ wakes. Such approaches fail to see how the historical archives regularly cut across these conventionally separate categories and ultimately reveal a complex layering of perspectives, power dynamics, and consequences.

Coca-Cola was invented in the 1880s, an era of U.S. History marked by the rise and consolidation of corporate power. Coca-Cola was a leader in the field of branding and distribution to national markets during the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Storekeepers offered new assortments of pre-packaged and brand name items to an increasingly “national” array of distribution networks, demographics, and publics. From its start, Coca-Cola worked hard to connect its iconic red and white script logo with a reputation of high quality. The Coca-Cola Company not only developed an iconic American brand name and mass commodity; it also instilled confidence in consumers

across the country that Coca-Cola would taste the same wherever it was purchased. These strategies were quickly adapted for the purposes of foreign expansion.<sup>17</sup>

Global expansion was not an invention of the late 19<sup>th</sup>-century, and Coca-Cola's early ambitions for foreign markets cannot be viewed against a blank historical slate. From the earliest moments of colonial conquest and the Atlantic slave trade, the world was increasingly bound together by commercial markets. But it's also true that the late 19<sup>th</sup> century was an era of rapidly increasing corporate power. There is a well-established literature on the rise of corporations in U.S. history.<sup>18</sup> Alfred D. Chandler's seminal work on the revolutions in production and distribution; transportation and communication; and the integration of mass production provides a framework for understanding the paths that the managerial leadership of the Coca-Cola Company took in its early expansion.<sup>19</sup> More generally, business historians have marked 1890 as a pivotal moment for the trend of American corporate expansion into foreign markets. The depression of the 1870s, and its resulting overproduction of consumer goods, was arguably the key catalyst that moved

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<sup>17</sup> For key works on the history of the American mass market and consumer culture, see Susan Strasser, Charles McGovern, and Matthias Judt, *Getting and Spending: European and American Consumer Societies in the Twentieth Century* (Cambridge University Press, 1998); Susan Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed: The Making of the American Mass Market* (Smithsonian, 1989); Tedlow, *New and Improved: The Story of Mass Marketing in America*; David Blanke, *Sowing the American Dream: How Consumer Culture took Root in the Rural Midwest* (Ohio University Press, 2000); Richard Wightman Fox and T. J. Jackson Lears, *The Culture of Consumption: Critical Essays in American History 1880-1980* (Pantheon, 1983); Thomas L. Haskell and Richard F. Teichgraeber III, *The Culture of the Market: Historical Essays* (Cambridge University Press, 1996).

<sup>18</sup> See, for example, Alfred D. Chandler, *Strategy and Structure: Chapters in the History of the American Industrial Enterprise* (The MIT Press, 1969); Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, 1st ed. (Hill and Wang, 2007); Olivier Zunz, *Making America Corporate, 1870-1920* (University Of Chicago Press, 1992); Louis P. Galambos, *The Rise Of The Corporate Commonwealth* (Basic Books, 1989).

<sup>19</sup> Chandler, *Strategy and Structure*; Alfred D. Chandler Jr., *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Belknap Press, 1993).



American businesses overseas in search of new outlets for excess inventory and continued profits.<sup>20</sup> Many American industries followed this trajectory.

More specifically, though, the Coca-Cola Company exported its drink to sites of U.S. imperialism and military occupation at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. Coca-Cola experienced early success in Cuba and Panama in 1906; bottling plants in Hawaii, Puerto Rico, and the Philippines followed soon thereafter. Rather than heavy industries such as iron and steel, which fit the standard model of overproduction, Coca-Cola's international expansion most closely followed the example of Singer Sewing Machine. Singer had expanded into Europe as early as the Civil War and Reconstruction. And like Singer, Coca-Cola developed foreign relationships based on market research that tested where its product would be best received. Both companies established local branch offices and partnered with local business owners to produce and sell their products.<sup>21</sup>

In 1926, Coca-Cola created the infrastructure for a global network of operations with its Foreign Department. This was a period of continued growth through mass production. During the two decades following the creation of the Foreign Department, Coca-Cola's international expansion steadily developed. In many respects, WWII, and the post-1945 era of globalization, when the U.S. rose to dominance in the context of the Cold War, constituted the key period when Coca-Cola became a global corporation that attained worldwide recognition for its efficiency, reach, and influence.

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<sup>20</sup> William A. Williams, *The Tragedy of American Diplomacy*, New edition. (W.W. Norton & Co., 2009); Walter Lafeber, *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898*, 35th ed. (Cornell University Press, 1998); William H. Becker, "American Manufactuerers and Foriegn Markets, 1870-1900: Business Historians and the 'New Economic Determinists'," *The Business History Review* 47, no. 4 (Winter 1973): 466-481.

<sup>21</sup> Robert Bruce Davies, *Peacefully Working to Conquer the World: Singer Sewing Machines in Foreign Markets, 1854-1920* (Arno Press, 1976).

Three useful theoretical concepts provide a framework for my analysis: corporate capitalism, globalization, and cosmopolitanism. The first of these, corporate capitalism, names the prevalence of large corporations that has often dominated ostensibly “free” market economies. A major anti-capitalist critique of corporate capitalism focuses on the undue influence corporations have over government policy, including the policies of regulatory agencies.<sup>22</sup> Notably, these criticisms have also come from more than one U.S. president, including Thomas Jefferson, who first warned the American public, in 1816, about monied corporations “which dare challenge our government.” In 1938, Franklin D. Roosevelt cautioned that the liberty of a democracy was threatened by corporate power, especially in light of the fact that “one-tenth of 1 percent” of corporations “owned 52 percent of the assets of all of them.” Finally (and most famously), there is Eisenhower’s 1961 farewell speech to the American people, in which he cautioned against the “unwarranted influence” of the “military industrial complex.” “We must never,” he warned, “let the weight of this combination endanger our liberties or democratic processes.”<sup>23</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> David Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism: A Theory of Uneven Geographical Development*, 1st ed. (Verso, 2006); Charles Perrow, *Organizing America: Wealth, Power, and the Origins of Corporate Capitalism* (Princeton University Press, 2005); Theodore H. Moran, “Foreign Expansion as an ‘Institutional Necessity’ for U.S. Corporate Capitalism: The Search for a Radical Model,” *World Politics* 25, no. 3 (April 1, 1973): 369-386; David F. Noble, *America by Design: Science, Technology, and the Rise of Corporate Capitalism* (Oxford University Press US, 1979). For arguments about the legal status of corporations and the threat that corporate capitalism poses to democracy, see Naomi Klein, *Fences and Windows: Dispatches from the Front Lines of the Globalization Debate*, First Edition. (Picador, 2002); Mark Achbar and Jennifer Abbott, *The Corporation*, Documentary, 2003; Naomi Klein, *The Shock Doctrine: The Rise of Disaster Capitalism*, 1st ed. (Picador, 2008); Michael Moore, *Capitalism: A Love Story*, Documentary, 2009; Noam Chomsky and Robert W. McChesney, *Profit Over People: Neoliberalism & Global Order* (Seven Stories Press, 2003).

<sup>23</sup> Thomas Jefferson, “Letter from Thomas Jefferson to George Logan, November 12, 1816,” in *The Works of Thomas Jefferson*, vol. 12, Federal Edition (New York and London: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1904); Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Appendix A: Message from the President of the United States Transmitting Recommendations Relative to the Strengthening and Enforcement of Anti-trust Laws,” *The American Economic Review* 32, no. 2 (June 1942): 119-128; “Industry: Anti-Monopoly,” *Time*, May 9, 1938; Dwight D. Eisenhower, “Farewell Radio and Television Address to the American People”, January 17, 1961, Public Papers of the Presidents, Dwight D. Eisenhower.

Corporate dominance and the concentration of wealth in a small number of large corporations are the familiar hallmarks of corporate capitalism. Over the course of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, this trend has spread globally, as corporations have become increasingly multinational. In this way, an ever-larger global economy has displaced nation-states and national economies as the central scholarly focus for historical examinations of wealth and power. The global economic sphere includes international production, trade, investment, and consumption. Yet corporate power and influence are not solely relegated to politics and the economy. Coca-Cola is a prime example of a global brand that has been imprinted on local cultures. Its catchy advertising campaigns do not simply reflect culture; they shape it. For instance, in 1931 a Company artist rendered a jolly image of Santa Claus, with a red and white suit and a white beard, for an advertising campaign that has since become the dominant image of Santa Claus around much of the globe. This power to shape culture and public opinion is what elevated Coca-Cola to its dominant position in the market.<sup>24</sup>

There has been an uneasy and often unexplored relationship between business history and cultural history. In the case of Coca-Cola, however, commerce and culture are two components of the same historical drama—a drama which is woefully incomplete when considered from only one or the other perspective. At base, commerce and culture are each about power dynamics and social relationships – relationships between citizens and the state; corporations and regulatory agencies, employers and workers; businesses

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<sup>24</sup> According to the Coca-Cola Company's "Coke Lore" document on Santa, Sundblum found his inspiration from Clement Clark Moore's 1822 poem "A Visit from St. Nicholas" (commonly called "Twas the Night Before Christmas"). Moore's description of St. Nick led to an image of Santa that was warm, friendly, pleasantly plump, and human. Sundblum also created the iconic image for the Quaker Oats man in 1957. For more on Sundblum's Santa Claus, see James B. Twitchell, *Adcult USA* (Columbia University Press, 1996); William J. Federer, *There Really Is a Santa Claus* (Amerisearch, Inc., 2002); Val R. Berryman, "Coca-Cola Santa Claus," *Michigan History*, no. November/December (1995).

and consumers. This complex chain of subjects, questions, and motors cannot easily be divided into two distinctive histories, two separate modes of questioning. My approach here, rather, is to focus on the reciprocal relationships between commerce and culture, to consider how Coca-Cola expertly utilized these interlocking forces to the tremendous benefit of the Company.<sup>25</sup>

My work bridges the divide between social and cultural history, two subfields that have been sharply contrasted against each other. For example, historians William H. Sewell, Jr. and Geoff Eley characterize the social history of the 1960s into the 1980s as attending to the materiality of everyday life, class, and society. In their separate descriptions about the “cultural turn” that began in the 1990s, they point their criticism at cultural historians who have taken a purely discursive approach to history. They are especially wary of those they feel have abandoned critical analysis of social and economic structures in favor of culture and representation. Neither Sewell nor Eley argue that cultural history must be devoid of social history’s sharper analysis.<sup>26</sup> Yet, I argue that there are a small number of major scholarly voices, such as Raymond Williams, Jackson Lears, Richard Ohmann, and Michael Denning, who provide instructive

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<sup>25</sup> I include my work in a growing body of scholarship that combines commerce and culture in historical analysis. See, for example, Walter Johnson, *Soul by Soul: Life Inside the Antebellum Slave Market* (Harvard University Press, 2001); Roland Marchand, *Creating the Corporate Soul: The Rise of Public Relations and Corporate Imagery in American Big Business*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2001); Lendol Calder, *Financing the American Dream: A Cultural History of Consumer Credit* (Princeton University Press, 2001); Regina Lee Blaszczyk, *Imagining Consumers: Design and Innovation from Wedgwood to Corning* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2002); Pamela Walker Laird, *Pull: Networking and Success since Benjamin Franklin* (Harvard University Press, 2006); Sarah E. Igo, *The Averaged American: Surveys, Citizens, and the Making of a Mass Public* (Harvard University Press, 2008); Philip Scranton and Janet F. Davidson, *The Business of Tourism: Place, Faith, and History* (University of Pennsylvania Press, 2009); Bethany Moreton, *To Serve God and Wal-Mart: The Making of Christian Free Enterprise* (Harvard University Press, 2010).

<sup>26</sup> William H. Sewell Jr, *Logics of History: Social Theory and Social Transformation* (University Of Chicago Press, 2005); Geoff Eley, *A Crooked Line: From Cultural History to the History of Society* (University of Michigan Press, 2005). See also, “The Profane and Imperfect World of Historiography,” AHR Forum on Geoff Eley’s *A Crooked Line*, *American Historical Review*, 113, 2 (April 2008), 425-37.

examples of how to effectively combine commerce and culture.<sup>27</sup> I have used their work as models for my own. In my study of globalization, I focus on the material, institutional, and global dimensions of capitalism. I also give weight to the powerful forces of ideology, culture, and representation in my analysis.

Much of the vast historiography on corporate capitalism focuses on branding and advertising. One might argue, in fact, that advertising has been the primary place where business history and cultural history have converged.<sup>28</sup> In what follows here, I try to approach Coca-Cola's advertisements on multiple levels. First and foremost, I unpack these ads for their images of freedom and pleasure: the specific stories they told about Coke's centrality for an "American way of life." But I also try to read them with a critical eye for their embedded corporate meanings. In many instances, the Company's ads reveal not only its shifting self-perceptions, but also its swelling ambitions for how it wanted to be perceived and marketed around the globe. These ambitions, I argue, were inextricably connected to questions of race, gender, and nation—many of which force us to rethink the very terrain of "Americanization." Why, I ask, did Coca-Cola turn to images of American G.I.s sharing Cokes with smiling foreigners? These images of foreign sharing across racial lines did not circulate separately from domestic ideals, prejudices, and

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<sup>27</sup> Raymond Williams, *Culture and Society 1780-1950* (Columbia University Press, 1983); Jackson Lears, *Fables Of Abundance: A Cultural History Of Advertising In America* (Basic Books, 1995); Richard Malin Ohmann, *Selling Culture: Magazines, Markets, and Class at the Turn of the Century* (Verso, 1996); Michael Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds* (Verso, 2004).

<sup>28</sup> For examples of classic texts on advertising and business history and culture, see: Russell Lynes, *The Tastemakers* (New York: Harper, 1954); Raymond Williams, "Advertising: the Magic System," in *Problems in Materialism and Culture* (London: Verso, 1980), 170-195; Stephen R. Fox, *Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators*, 1st ed. (William Morrow & Co, 1984); Stuart Ewen, *Captains of Consciousness: Advertising and the Social Roots of the Consumer Culture* (Basic Books, 1976); Daniel Pope, *The Making of Modern Advertising*, 1st ed. (Basic Books, 1983); Michael Schudson, *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion: Its Dubious Impact on American Society* (Basic Books, 1986); Lears, *Fables Of Abundance*; Roland Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream: Making Way for Modernity, 1920-1940* (University of California Press, 1986); Pamela Walker Laird, *Advertising Progress: American Business and the Rise of Consumer Marketing* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2001).

contexts. The fact that foreigners who lived beyond Eastern Europe were in the ads at all, and that they were depicted as friends smiling sharply contrasted with uncertain or negative perceptions white middle-class Americans had about racial difference, as well as foreign people and places.

My second key concept, globalization, encompasses the international flow of goods, people, capital, and ideas. In recent years, this subject has become a major focus of scholarship in multiple disciplines, as well as among growing numbers of commentators far beyond the academy – from corporate stakeholders who profit from globalization to the more critical work of writers and filmmakers of the “left.” Part of what is so compelling about globalization is the notion that the world seems to be “shrinking,” that people are more closely connected than ever before. The availability of Coca-Cola around the world has sometimes been hailed as an example of this process, in so far as Coca-Cola provides a familiar sight and commercial touchstone for many foreign travelers. Broadly speaking, the ubiquity of global brands makes unknown spaces, no matter how far away, resemble “home.” At the same time, though, this macro-level process has been aggressively criticized for its impacts on the local cultures of a diverse range of people.<sup>29</sup>

The process of globalization, most notably the spread of corporate capitalism around the world, has been regularly supported by the U.S. nation state. There is now a large body of work that uses an international approach to U.S. history and explores the

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<sup>29</sup> Joseph A. Camilleri and Jim Falk, *End of Sovereignty?: The Politics of a Shrinking and Fragmenting World* (Edward Elgar Pub, 1992); Thomas L. Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree* (Macmillan, 2000); John Allen and Chris Hamnett, *A Shrinking World?: Global Unevenness and Inequality*, First Edition. (OUP Oxford, 1995); Barber, *Jihad Vs Mcworld: How Globalism and Tribalism are RE Shaping the World*, 1st ed. (Ballantine Books Inc., 1996); Tyler Cowen, *Creative Destruction: How Globalization Is Changing the World's Cultures* (Princeton University Press, 2004); Pico Iyer, *The Global Soul: Jet Lag, Shopping Malls, and the Search for Home* (Vintage, 2001).

expansion of U.S. power during the so-called “American Century.” Critiques of American Empire include examinations of hard and soft power – otherwise known as military aggression and cultural imperialism. Despite this, an explicit focus on the role of corporations has been largely left out of analysis. As we shall see, the Coca-Cola Company and the U.S. nation-state profited from the strength of the U.S. national economy and the creation of new markets around the world. The history of global expansion for American corporations like Coca-Cola benefited from American power, and therefore, I highlight the reciprocal and complex connection between U.S. empire and corporate expansion.<sup>30</sup>

The border crossings inherent in globalization necessitate the writing of its history in broadly expansive terms. Corporations, however, regularly operate – simultaneously – in a variety of local markets, a pattern which suggests that the study of globalization needs to balance business infrastructures and policy-making in more conventional national contexts against the transnational movements of capital, goods, and people. Tracking Coca-Cola’s domestic and international operations helps demonstrate the ways that U.S. history is international history as well. Eric Foner writes that the “institutions, processes, and values that have shaped American history – from capitalism to political democracy, slavery, and consumer culture – arose out of global processes and can only be understood in an international context.”<sup>31</sup> Coca-Cola’s deep American roots, of course, should not be overlooked. The Company remained headquartered in Atlanta and operated

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<sup>30</sup> For more on Henry Luce’s ‘American Century’, see the special issue of *Diplomatic History* devoted to its reevaluation in light of attempts in the field to turn against U.S. exceptionalism, *Diplomatic History* 23, no. 2, (Spring, 1999). See also, Alan Brinkley’s, *The Publisher: Henry Luce and His American Century*. (New York: Knopf, 2010). For more on “soft power,” see Joseph S. Nye Jr, *Soft Power: The Means To Success In World Politics* (PublicAffairs, 2005); Inderjeet Parmar and Michael Cox, *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy: Theoretical, Historical and Contemporary Perspectives*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 2010).

as one of the nation's largest, wealthiest, and most familiar corporations. By tracing the history of Coca-Cola's global expansion through American participation in two World Wars, the civil rights movement, and the Cold War, my work makes some of the complex global processes, to which Foner refers, visible.

An additional limitation in much of the current scholarship is the absence of race as a central category of analysis. American racial politics shaped Coca-Cola's domestic marketing strategies and its path towards global expansion at every turn. In light of this, any study of globalization during the 20<sup>th</sup> century must connect the corporate impulse towards global expansion with ongoing patterns of segregation and emergent campaigns for civil rights. Specifically, I try to overlay a domestic culture of segregation and discrimination in the US with Coca-Cola's growing investments in marketing its products to racially and culturally diverse publics in different parts of the world. To understand how the Company negotiated these tensions, I look to "the long civil rights movement" which included African American radical, anti-colonial, and pro-capitalist forms of activism that began in the decades before WWII and extended into the Cold War era.<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup> Eric Foner, "American Freedom in a Global Age," *The American Historical Review* 106, no. 1 (February 2001), <http://www.historycooperative.org.proxy.lib.umich.edu/journals/ahr/106.1/ah000001.html>.

<sup>32</sup> For examples of key works on empire, race, and international perspectives on "the long civil rights movement," see Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Cornell University Press, 1997); Amy Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture* (Harvard University Press, 2005); Lisa Lowe et al., *The Politics of Culture in the Shadow of Capital* (Duke University Press Books, 1997); Thomas Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line: American Race Relations in the Global Arena* (Harvard University Press, 2003); Mary L. Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights: Race and the Image of American Democracy* (Princeton University Press, 2002); Christian G. Appy, *Cold War Constructions: The Political Culture of United States Imperialism, 1945-1966* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2000); Mary A. Renda, *Taking Haiti: Military Occupation and the Culture of U.S. Imperialism, 1915-1940* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2001); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Laura Briggs, *Reproducing Empire: Race, Sex, Science, and U.S. Imperialism in Puerto Rico*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2002); Nikhil Pal Singh, *Black Is a Country: Race and the Unfinished Struggle for Democracy* (Harvard University Press, 2005); Catherine Ceniza Choy, *Empire of Care: Nursing and Migration in Filipino American History*, 1st ed. (Duke University Press Books, 2003); Paul A. Kramer, *The Blood of Government: Race, Empire, the United States, and the Philippines* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Michel Gobat, *Confronting the American Dream:*



When it comes to race, shifting paradigms did not simply follow in the wake of globalization; they have been a part of the process all along. Race has dynamically shaped and reflected global processes. My third and final concept of cosmopolitanism addresses the specific values attached to differences that included race, culture, and nation, among others. The term derives from the Greek word *cosmos* (world) and *polis* (city, people, citizenry), and was widely used by ancient philosophers to describe a universal love of humankind, regardless of nation. In my own work, I raise a basic question: If the U.S. was not interested in embracing its own brown skinned people, why was Coca-Cola so deeply interested in representing itself as a vehicle of cosmopolitanism in much of its American advertising? What, in other words, were the ideological and cultural benefits of this dramatically circumscribed corporate cosmopolitanism?<sup>33</sup>

I characterize the Coca-Cola Company as a self-consciously cosmopolitan corporation, and those who worked to connect “the world” *through* Coca-Cola, as cosmopolites. This latter category included the large numbers of businessmen who traveled the world to seek out new customers and in turn incorporated “the world” within the ads that they created. In many cases, of course, the corporate mission to expand globally, and connect the world’s people through U.S. consumerism, did not necessarily or even inevitably include the view that all people were equal. That said, cosmopolitanism and globalization are complex processes that cannot be wholly vilified

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*Nicaragua under U.S. Imperial Rule* (Duke University Press Books, 2005); Melani McAlister, *Epic Encounters : Culture, Media, and U.S. Interests in the Middle East since 1945*, 2nd ed. (University of California Press, 2005); Justin Hart, “Making Democracy Safe for the World: Race, Propoganda, and the Transformaion of U.S. Foreign Policy during World War II,” *The Pacific Historical Review* 73, no. 1 (February 2004): 49-84.

<sup>33</sup> For a notable exception to this rule, see Kamari Maxine Clarke et al., *Globalization and Race: Transformations in the Cultural Production of Blackness* (Duke University Press Books, 2006). What makes this volume distinctive is not an explicit attention to the role of commerce, but rather its examination

or applauded. For better or worse, this ongoing process of global interconnection is with us to stay and continues to take on diverse forms. But for all of these reasons, it seems critically important to develop a deeper understanding of the shifting historical tides of globalization, as well as the corporate cosmopolitanism which has often served as one of its primary ideological engines.<sup>34</sup>

### Chapter Outlines

My chapters proceed chronologically from 1885 to 1971. Chapter One, “The Drink that Makes the Whole World Kin,” begins with the invention of Coca-Cola and follows the Company through the succession of three different leaders – an introduction necessary to understand the branding strategies that turned this soda fountain favorite into an American soft drink distributed first nationally, and then internationally. In addition to tracking the shifting forms of branding, this first chapter establishes how U.S. empire directly and indirectly aided Coca-Cola in its international expansion. Specifically, it

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of how a globalized world has increasingly shaped new meanings and cultures of blackness in multiple contexts.

<sup>34</sup> For key works on cosmopolitanism over the past century, see Randolph Bourne, “Trans-National America,” *Atlantic Monthly*, no. 118 (July 1916): 86-97; David A. Hollinger, *Postethnic America: Beyond Multiculturalism* (Basic Books, 1995); Pheng Cheah, Bruce Robbins, and Social Text Collective, *Cosmopolitics: Thinking and Feeling Beyond the Nation* (University of Minnesota Press, 1998); U. Hannerz and M. Featherstone, “Cosmopolitans and Locals in World Culture,” in *Global Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 1990); Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.”; Gilroy, *Against Race*; Ross Posnock, *Color and Culture: Black Writers and the Making of the Modern Intellectual* (Harvard University Press, 2000); Simon Gikandi, “Race and Cosmopolitanism,” *American Literary History* 14, no. 3 (2002): 593-615; Steven Vertovec and Robin Cohen, *Conceiving Cosmopolitanism: Theory, Context, and Practice* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2003); Charles Bright and Michael Geyer, “Where in the World is America? The History of the United States in a Global Age,” in *Rethinking American History in a Global Age*, ed. Thomas Bender (University of California Press, 2002); Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*; Kwame Anthony Appiah, *Cosmopolitanism: Ethics in a World of Strangers* (W. W. Norton & Company, 2007).

profiles the cooperative relationship between Coca-Cola and the U.S. nation-state that implemented policies that favored corporate expansion.

The next two chapters examine Coca-Cola's extraordinary partnership with the U.S. military during WWII. Chapter Two, "The Pause that Refreshes," focuses on mid-level employees from the Coca-Cola Company who were given quasi-military status to supply the drink to troops on military bases and along the multiple fronts of the war. The experiences of these "Technical Observers" (or "TOs"), vividly documented in personal letters and company newsletters, provide a unique window for examining the logistical processes, interpersonal relationships, and personal attitudes entrenched in mid-20<sup>th</sup>-century globalization. Chapter Three, "The Global High-Sign," explores the wartime advertising campaign that intentionally mirrored the TO's observations around the world. The "Global High-Sign" ads constructed an image of a world that regularly welcomed American people and products. These two chapters pay close attention to the descriptions and representations of foreign workers and consumers, especially in relationship to Coca-Cola and the Americans who shared it with them.

Chapter Four, "The Color Line in the Cola Line," brings the narrative back home to the U.S. and juxtaposes the multiple conflicts that surfaced when doing business with racially and culturally diverse countries against a backdrop of domestic racial tensions and growing activism. In this chapter, I interrogate Coca-Cola's decision to develop the "Negro market" in 1950. In so doing, I especially highlight the work of Moss Kendrix, an African American public relations specialist hired by Coca-Cola to turn African Americans into loyal customers.

Finally, Chapter Five, “I’d Like to Buy the World a Coke,” follows the continued challenges from the civil rights movement in the overlapping context of the Cold War, and puts Coca-Cola’s “Hilltop” television commercial from 1971 into its more specific historical context. The chart topping song written for this commercial captures Coca-Cola’s fully-developed and self-conscious corporate cosmopolitanism. I explore the veracity of Coca-Cola’s claim that it was a unifying force within or beyond the market. In so doing, I trace the ways that Coca-Cola succeeded in becoming an American global brand by advertising itself as being everywhere and nowhere in the world at the end of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.

Ultimately, Coca-Cola’s history and advertising illustrate some of the ways in which 20th-century globalization simultaneously promoted a shared global culture, racial hierarchies, and patriotic American nationalism. I argue that the history of globalization must be rewritten to include the ways that American corporations have focused on race and culture abroad—often, in direct relation to an explicit evasion of race (and racial exclusions) at home. The international marketing campaign that fostered these patterns began with the Company’s very first branding strategy, one in which Coca-Cola emerged as a “sociable” drink best enjoyed and shared at the soda fountain. By 1926, the company began to define this sociability in explicit relation to foreign expansion, promoting its iconic product as “the drink that made the whole world kin.” How the Coca-Cola Company simultaneously marketed itself as both quintessentially “American” and “global” is the story of the following chapter.

## Chapter One

### **“The Drink that Makes the Whole World Kin”: Global Expansion and Alignment of the Coca-Cola Company and the U.S. Nation State**

We consider the contract offered us by the War Department as a tribute to the organizing, constructive, and administrative ability of our company. We consider it a privilege to serve. We will give the job our best efforts.

– Robert W. Woodruff (1941)

The Coca-Cola Company, founded in 1886, manufactured just one product. It was first marketed as a patent medicine to cure a variety of ailments. This singular focus on one product and one brand was the key to its success. But, in 1941, the U.S. government approached Coca-Cola with an offer that would forever change the course of the its history. During WWII, the government offered the soft drink Company a \$14 million contract to load gunpowder into bags for use in heavy artillery.<sup>1</sup>

The move from the manufacture of a soft drink to the production of ammunition was a non sequitur. Coca-Cola had no experience manufacturing ammunition, and would earn little to no profit. Coca-Cola did not seek out this contract; rather, the government handpicked the Company for the job. The Coca-Cola Company’s skill in developing, manufacturing, marketing, and distributing a product caught the attention of the U.S. government. The War Department issued the following statement: “Several companies

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<sup>1</sup> Coca-Cola signed a \$14,394,000 contract with the War Department in 1941. Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES, “\$14,394,000 Awarded for Plant,” *New York Times*, February 21, 1941; “Coca-Cola Firm Given Task of Operating Defense Plant,” *The Atlanta Constitution*, February 21, 1941; “Investors’ Guide,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, July 21, 1942; “Defense Contracts,” *Wall Street Journal*, March 11, 1941.

have asked for this contract. We are requesting the Coca-Cola Company take it because we want a job of production, and our investigation has shown that no company in the country has a better record of production than the Coca-Cola Company.”<sup>2</sup>

The War Department’s contract offer to Coca-Cola was a noteworthy example of corporate support for American involvement in the war. Declining would have cast the Company as a “recalcitrant industry,”<sup>3</sup> one which was unwilling to support the U.S. during the war. Not wanting to risk public castigation or create hostility with the government, the president of the Coca-Cola Company, Robert W. Woodruff, chose to accept the contract and be seen as a company eager to serve its country.<sup>4</sup>

Because Coca-Cola viewed the War Department contract as an offer it could not gracefully refuse, the contract signified the start of a reciprocal relationship between Coca-Cola and the U.S. government. Instead of competing national and corporate interests, the contract created a mutually beneficial alliance which aided both parties. Not surprisingly, Coca-Cola capitalized on this patriotic service in its public relations and advertising to win favor with American consumers. In fact, the ammunition contract of 1941 led to the rise of the Coca-Cola Company as a global force.

How did a company that sold a semi-medicinal drink become a global brand with a production record so impressive that the U.S. War Department awarded it a munitions contract? To answer to this question we need to turn to the three men responsible for branding the drink and charting the course towards expansion during the Company’s first 50 years: John S. Pemberton, Asa G. Candler, and Robert W. Woodruff. Their visions of

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<sup>2</sup> “Coca-Cola Firm Given Task of Operating Defense Plant.”

<sup>3</sup> Memo from Ben Oehlert to Robert Woodruff, January 8, 1941, Frederick Allen Research Files, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>4</sup> Press statement prepared for Robert Woodruff, February 8, 1941, Frederick Allen Research Files, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

future success were different but they shared the belief that everyone who tasted it would embrace Coca-Cola and they worked to put the soft drink into as many hands as possible. Pemberton invented the drink in 1886 and created its original branding and advertising strategy. After Candler purchased the Company in 1887, he pursued national distribution by training a sales team who traveled to promote and sell Coca-Cola across the country. Candler's approach was effective in the U.S. and he took steps towards testing these strategies internationally, but it was his successor, Woodruff, who created the first Foreign Department within the Company in 1926.

Yet, even before WWII and a formal alliance between Coca-Cola and the U.S. government, the Company relied on the U.S. government's reputation, relationships, and international presence to aid them in expansion. The first glasses of Coca-Cola sold internationally were in Canada, Hawaii, and Mexico in 1897.<sup>5</sup> After the turn of the century, the Company established bottling plants across North America, the Caribbean, and the Pacific and the drink was sold in greater quantities.<sup>6</sup> Candler and Woodruff pursued international expansion with an eye towards proximity and each country's relationship to the U.S. government. Coca-Cola benefited from America's Empire building at the turn of the century through U.S. military presence and protection abroad. In order to understand national and corporate expansion, it is crucial to examine the correlation between Coca-Cola's first foreign bottling operations and American troops stationed on bases after U.S. military interventions in Hawaii, Cuba, Puerto Rico,

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<sup>5</sup> In order, bottling plants in Cuba and Panama were established in 1906, Hawaii in 1907, Puerto Rico in 1909, and the Philippines in 1912. "Chronological Listing: Countries with Coca-Cola Bottling Operations and Year Introduced 1906 through April, 1969," June 27, 1969. Box 6, Item No. 11, Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>6</sup> Asa Candler hired a representative in Havana who was in charge of building up the fountain business in Cuba and Puerto Rico. He also reported that Coca-Cola had sold 1,000 gallons of the drink in the Caribbean. "1897 Annual Report," January 11, 1900. Box 6, Item No. 11, Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Panama, the Philippines, and Guam. The American troops, missionaries, and businessmen overseas were loyal Coca-Cola customers who helped open up new markets. In 1926, the Company's Foreign Department recognized that international operations required diplomacy and negotiation with foreign governments. The Department functioned similarly to the U.S. State Department, and in fact, Coca-Cola recruited State Department employees, knowing their international reputation and connections would help when working to establish bottling plants abroad.

In this chapter, I argue that Coca-Cola relied on the U.S. government to become a global brand that symbolized an "American Way of Life." By following the flag after America's first forays into imperialism and making ammunitions during WWII, Coca-Cola was seen domestically as a government-endorsed "American" drink – a drink with a global presence and an American character that differentiated it from its competition. Put another way, Coca-Cola became *global* by first becoming quintessentially *American*. It was Coca-Cola's popularity and efficient production record that distinguished it and resulted in a military contract. The reciprocity between the Company and the government had cultural implications as well. Both the government and the corporation infused the brand with patriotic meaning that came to symbolize America.

Coca-Cola grew from a local business serving its product from drugstore soda fountains in Atlanta, Georgia to a national brand enjoyed across the country, and finally, to a global commodity recognized around the world. The primary focus of this chapter is the multifaceted process of branding, mass marketing, and distribution practices the company used to become ubiquitous during the first half of the twentieth century. This



close examination of business practices will also highlight the ways that the U.S. nation-state directly and indirectly aided the expansion of the Coca-Cola Company.

### **An Invigorating Brew: The Invention of Dr. John Stith Pemberton's Coca-Cola**

In order to understand how Coca-Cola became a quintessential American drink, it is first necessary to examine its evolution from a patent medicine that contained cocaine and alcohol, reportedly boosted virility, to a wholesome drug-free soft drink with broader marketing appeal. The history of the Coca-Cola Company began with a chemist in Columbus, Georgia who had a solid reputation for manufacturing pharmaceuticals and saw an opportunity in the growing market of patent medicines to develop his own

product. During the mid-nineteenth century, the majority of advertisements in newspapers were for these so-called medicines. The only requirement for selling these concoctions, by mail or in drugstores, was a patent. They were not

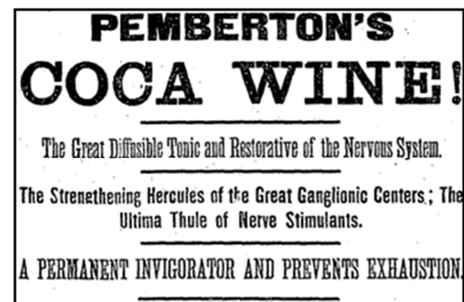


Figure 1-1: Pemberton's Coca Wine!

regulated, proven effective, or standardized from bottle to bottle.<sup>7</sup> Like most patent medicines, Dr. John Stith Pemberton's most popular products claimed to treat and cure a wide range of ailments.

In 1885, Pemberton concocted a coca wine, which he marketed as a nerve tonic in newspapers across the south and southwest.<sup>8</sup> The basic recipe was wine plus cocaine, but

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<sup>7</sup> Michael Schudson, *Advertising, the Uneasy Persuasion: It's Dubious Impact on American Society* (New York: Basic Books, 1984), 164. For more on patent medicines see James Young Harvey, *The Toadstool Millionaires: A Social History of Patent Medicines in America before Federal Regulation* (Princeton, N.J.: Princeton University Press, 1961)

<sup>8</sup> The first coca wine, "Vin Mariani," was a mixture of Bordeaux wine and coca leaves. French chemist Angelo Mariani invented the drink, which was popular in Europe. Many chemists in Europe and the United

Pemberton's brew included wine, coca (which yields cocaine), kola nut extract (a source of caffeine), and the damiana herb (a reputed cure for impotence).<sup>9</sup> This new recipe was the precursor to Coca-Cola. It quickly became popular in the city of Columbus and the larger city of Atlanta, less than two hours away. Lengthy newspaper ads of roughly 2,000 words described effects of the main ingredients in Pemberton's Coca Wine. Versions of this ad ran in newspapers across the southern half of the country as far west as Colorado. Pemberton was a chemist but he was also a businessman. He advertised his product out of state in newspaper's to attract new customers across the south and southwest. New regional and transcontinental railroad lines made interstate sales and national branding possible in the decades following the Civil War and Reconstruction.<sup>10</sup> Montgomery Ward introduced consumers to the mail-order business over a decade before Pemberton devised his advertising strategy.<sup>11</sup> Pemberton's small company found its place in the newly industrialized economy where consumers were primed to order directly from companies far away from their local, and most often rural, communities.

One advertisement Pemberton placed in newspapers ran beneath the headline "Pemberton's Coca Wine!" In the ad, a French physician was quoted as saying, "under the influence of Coca, it seems as if new strength is gradually introduced into our system,

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States produced their own brands of coca wine. See Steven B. Karch, *A Brief History of Cocaine: From Inca Monarchs to Cali Cartels: 500 Years of Cocaine Dealing* (CRC Press, 2006), 32.

<sup>9</sup> Pemberton's print advertisements ran in the following newspapers, among others: "Pemberton's French Wine Coca: , The Worlds Great Nerve Tonic," *Southwestern Christian Advocate* (New Orleans, LA, September 24, 1885); "Pemberton's Coca Wine!," *Rocky Mountain News (Denver, CO)*, December 6, 1885; "Pemberton's Coca Wine," *Atlanta Journal*, June 15, 1885; "French Wine Coca: Great Promoter of Health and Longevity," *The Sun* (Baltimore, Maryland, June 17, 1885); "French Wine Coca, Great Promoter of Health and Longevity," *Macon Telegraph* (Macon, Georgia, May 23, 1885).

<sup>10</sup> Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*; Chandler, *The Visible Hand*; William R. Leach, *Land of Desire: Merchants, Power, and the Rise of a New American Culture*, 1st ed. (Vintage, 1994); David Haward Bain, *Empire Express: Building the First Transcontinental Railroad*, Later Printing. (Penguin (Non-Classics), 2000); Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nothing Like It In the World: The Men Who Built the Transcontinental Railroad 1863-1869*, 1st ed. (Simon & Schuster, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Blanke, *Sowing the American dream*; Strasser, McGovern, and Judt, *Getting and spending*.

like water in a sponge.”<sup>12</sup> On this basis, Pemberton made a persuasive claim that his coca wine produced a radically increased strength and vigor.

Pemberton also marketed his coca wine as a brain tonic and claimed it would benefit manual laborers whose work required physical endurance, as well as those doing intellectual labor. For people who needed sustained concentration in their line of work, the ad promised that the tonic was “a most effective and elegant remedy in all cases of general debility, whether the cause be from malpractice, over-indulgence, overwork or study.” The intellectuals listed as potential beneficiaries included “professional men, students and all literary workers.” After drinking the brain tonic, they would be able to “exert themselves far beyond the natural enduring power.” Additionally, the “activity of the mind when under its influence is greatly increased, and the clearness and brilliancy of its action enhanced beyond conception.”<sup>13</sup> Indeed, the cocaine and caffeine in the beverage would keep all those drinking it alert and energized; there is no question that those suffering from mental or physical exhaustion would find relief.

Additionally, Pemberton claimed his tonic was a remedy for ailments related to digestion and the nervous system. In particular his ads singled out businessmen as a group susceptible to digestive trouble because of stress or time spent traveling. More generally, “disorders of digestion, diseases of the Liver and Lungs, Debility of the Nervous System, Palsy, Paralysis, and prostration of the system from Malarial or Blood Poison” were listed as conditions that Coca Wine could relieve. In short, the list included nearly all diseases and disorders normally treated by drugstore pharmacists.

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<sup>12</sup> “Pemberton’s Coca Wine” *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, CO), December 06, 1885, p. 16, col. D.

<sup>13</sup> *Ibid.*

Pemberton's Coca Wine targeted men as the primary consumers. As advertised, women would have had little use for this tonic even if they were not explicitly discouraged from drinking it. The vast majority of women in the 19<sup>th</sup> century were not encouraged to engage in strenuous physical activity, pursue advanced degrees, enter the world of business, or work as literary laborers, which negated the possibility that these categories included women. A similar question surfaces within the context of prohibition. Was Coca Wine an appropriate drink for respectable women? There were higher standards for morality and virtue for women – specifically women in Atlanta, which was one of the first cities in Georgia to enact prohibition in 1886.<sup>14</sup> Apart from questionable ingredients like cocaine and caffeine that would come under scrutiny in later years, during the last few decades of the 19<sup>th</sup> century many considered alcohol consumption improper and immoral. During the 10 years before the appearance of this ad in 1885, the city of Atlanta debated the issue of prohibition with women at the forefront of the temperance movement.<sup>15</sup>

Perhaps with this in mind, Pemberton's ad stated that Coca Wine was safe and appropriate for even "the most delicate females and children." This was the only direct mention of women in the ad. The inclusion of women and children indicated a belief that both had weaker constitutions than men. The ad did not forbid nor discourage women and children from drinking Coca Wine, but they were not the intended consumers. There was

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<sup>14</sup> Ian Tyrrell, *Woman's World/Woman's Empire: The Woman's Christian Temperance Union in International Perspective, 1880-1930* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1991); Carol Mattingly PhD, *Well-Tempered Women: Nineteenth-Century Temperance Rhetoric*, 1st ed. (Southern Illinois University Press, 2000); Ann Short Chirhart, *Georgia Women: Their Lives and Times, Volume 1*, 1st ed. (University of Georgia Press, 2009).

<sup>15</sup> "Atlanta's Sensation: A Desperate Battle on the Prohibition Question" *The News and Observer* (Raleigh, NC), November 22, 1885. One hundred thirty-seven counties had already instituted prohibition. It was the 15 largest cities, including Atlanta, where influential businesses that benefited from the sale of alcohol sustained an expensive opposition campaign.

no regulation of patent medicines when Pemberton issued this disclaimer. A claim that a product was suitable for the most vulnerable populations assured the public that it was safe and reputable.

If it was not already clear that men would be the greatest beneficiaries of the health benefits Coca Wine could offer, two full paragraphs of additional claims were devoted to the uses of damiana, an indigenous Mexican herb used since 1600 to enhance virility. The ad cited Dr. Caldwell, of Baltimore, as saying that damiana was “certainly wonderful in its action in many cases” and often produced “remarkable cures.” Damiana, he noted, was “the most reliable aphrodisiac nervine known to medical science.”<sup>16</sup> The drink promised not only a boost in energy but also a cure impotence and suggested it could enhance male sexual pleasure.

With the support of a small majority, Atlanta became a dry city in 1886.<sup>17</sup> Coca Wine was no longer available within city limits. Forced to alter his recipe and remove all traces of alcohol, Pemberton substituted sugar syrup for the wine that had formerly sweetened his brew. Supporters of prohibition now had an alcohol-free version of his drink that took on a new image as being wholesome and healthy. A second key difference from Coca Wine was that Pemberton sold his non-alcoholic drink as concentrated syrup mixed with a shot of cold carbonated water at drugstore soda fountains. To differentiate

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<sup>16</sup> “Pemberton’s Coca Wine” *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, CO), December 6, 1885, p. 16, col. D.

<sup>17</sup> “A Remarkable Campaign: Review of the Contest on the Prohibition Question in Atlanta, GA,” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 22, 1885, Issue 47 edition; “Atlanta Votes No on the Question of Prohibition,” *The News and Observer*, (Raleigh, NC), November 27, 1887, Issue 124 edition, sec. Col C; “Gleeful Henry Grady: Prohibition in Atlanta and Fulton County, Ga., Defeated by a Small Majority,” *The Daily Inter Ocean* (Chicago, IL), November 27, 1887, Volume XVI, Issue 246 edition; “Now that the battle is over and prohibition is defeated in Atlanta, Editor Howell, of the Atlanta Constitution, thus explains the cause in a telegram to the New York World,” *Rocky Mountain News* (Denver, CO), December 3, 1887, sec. Col A; “Prohibition in Atlanta: Both Sides Claiming Victory in the Election to Take Place To-Day,” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 27, 1887, Issue 4 edition, sec. Col E; “Prohibition Wins: It is Carried by a Very Small Majority in Atlanta, GA,” *The Milwaukee Sentinel*, November 27, 1885; “The Prohibition campaign in Atlanta, Ga, is breaking up the color line in politics,” *Boston Daily Advertiser*, October 30, 1886, Issue 105 edition.

this new beverage from Coca Wine, he turned to his bookkeeper Frank Robinson, who came up with the name “Coca-Cola” and scripted the famous logo.<sup>18</sup> The moniker shed wine from its title, and of course, was a descriptive alliteration that named the two key ingredients.

Although Pemberton continued to market Coca-Cola for its medicinal value, ads now emphasized its flavor. The label on syrup jugs read as follows:

This ‘intellectual beverage’ and Temperance Drink makes not only a delicious, exhilarating, refreshing and invigorating Beverage (dispensed from the soda water fountain or in other carbonated beverages), but a valuable Brain Tonic and a cure for all nervous affections... The peculiar flavor of Coca-Cola delights every palate; it is dispensed from the soda fountain in the same manner as any fruit syrups.<sup>19</sup>

Pemberton advertised Coca-Cola as a patent medicine and continued to promote it as a cure for many of the same maladies – sick headaches, indigestion, neuralgia, hysteria, mental and physical exhaustion, and melancholia. Gone, however, were mentions of damiana, impotence, and male sexual performance. This was Georgia’s temperance beverage and its image and description slowly transformed from a patent medicine to a medicinal aphrodisiac, and eventually towards a soft drink.

After prohibition ended in 1887, Pemberton resumed making Coca Wine, which was his big seller. He sold it at a rate of 720 bottles a day. However, he saw potential in his non-alcoholic version, Coca-Cola. He increased his meager advertising budget and spent \$73.96 that year which ended up being more than the \$50 he made at year’s end

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<sup>18</sup> Bateman and Schaeffer, “Script Coca-Cola: The First Hundred Years,” *Cola Call* (February 1986): 6-7, 11-12.

<sup>19</sup> Pat Waters, *Coca-Cola: An Illustrated History* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1978), 19.

selling Coca-Cola syrup.<sup>20</sup> In this way, Coca-Cola was born and would long outlast and outsell Pemberton's Coca Wine.

A long-time morphine addict in poor health, Pemberton was in need of cash. In 1887, Pemberton sold what he believed would become a very popular drink and lucrative business for a relatively small initial outlay. The chain of title is unclear but the triumphant buyer was Asa Griggs Candler, another "prescriptionist" who manufactured patent medicines in his wholesale and retail pharmacy.<sup>21</sup> Although Pemberton died in 1888 and did not live long enough to see Coca-Cola become a profitable and nationally recognizable brand, he entrusted his secret recipe to a man who would succeed in making his drink a household name.

### **Branding Candler's Ambition: Advertising and Sales for National Distribution**

Candler believed in the twin virtues of capitalism and religion, which informed his ambitions to bring Coca-Cola around the country and then around the world. He bought the Coca-Cola Company because the tonic cured his frequent headaches, and of equal importance, he thought it was a delicious drink. With the right marketing, Candler believed, he could sell it as something other than a medicine. He believed people everywhere would buy it for its good taste alone, and he was right. In his final year with the company, Pemberton had sold 1,049 gallons of syrup. Candler, in his first year as

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<sup>20</sup> Watters, *Coca-Cola*, 18.

<sup>21</sup> When asked in court, Asa Candler testified that he acquired control of the company in 1887 but stated that he did not know "whether or not I had bought it at the time." For more on the other interested parties to the company and the sale final transfer of power to Candler see Mark Pendergrast, *For God, Country and Coca-Cola: The Unauthorized History of the Great American Soft Drink and the Company that Makes It* (New York: Collier Books, 1993), 36-49; Frederick Allen, *Secret Formula: How Brilliant Marketing and Relentless Salesmanship Made Coca-Cola the Best-Known Product in the World* (New York: Harper Business, 1994), and Kemp, *GOD'S CAPITALIST*.

president in 1888, sold 9,000 gallons. Just two years after purchasing the company, Candler increased marketing efforts and syrup sales by almost 1,000 percent. Pemberton may have invented Coca-Cola, but Candler made it profitable.

Branding proved to be the key to his success. He wanted people to fall in love with the taste of Coca-Cola, but in a market with a growing number of colas, he needed to cultivate discerning customers who would not accept substitution at their local soda fountains. During the second half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, shopkeepers introduced pre-packaged, brand-name goods to customers for the very first time. Americans were making fewer items at home and buying more, while a radical change was underway at the stores where they shopped. This shift was not an easy one; shoppers had to be convinced that brand name goods, like Coca-Cola, were somehow better than the unbranded goods they were accustomed to seeing in local stores. Previously, shopkeepers sold goods by type and levels of quality, which correlated to prices, set by local shopkeepers.<sup>22</sup> The customer rarely knew the manufacturer by name; they put their trust in retailers whom they knew personally. Local shopkeepers selected products and negotiated prices directly with companies. Customers who asked for a cola got whichever cola was in stock. Candler's task was to convince people to order Coca-Cola by name to ensure shopkeepers purchased it from the Company and served it to loyal customers. With a proliferation of consumer goods in the marketplace, differentiating one brand from another was necessary.

In order to create positive brand name recognition, Candler had to ensure standardization of Coca-Cola. Goods identified by their brand names not only revealed

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<sup>22</sup> Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*; Tedlow, *New and Improved: The Story of Mass Marketing in America*; Glenn & Livesay Porter Harold C., *Merchants and Manufacturers Studies in the Changing Structure of Nineteenth-Cent* (Baltimore, MD Johns Hopkins U.P, 1971); Laird, *Advertising Progress*.



the manufacturer but shifted responsibility for quality from shopkeepers to companies. A brand name product sold in one store had to live up to the same standard of quality in stores elsewhere. Coca-Cola was one among hundreds of other patent medicines that made similar curative claims. It was not the only soft drink at soda fountains. To take this popular southern brand national, Candler had to provide the same taste to soda fountain customers everywhere. He also had to devise a strategy to convert Coca-Cola's image as a medicine to a soda fountain drink that everyone could enjoy. He had a catchy brand name and a fancy script logo but branding and standardization took substantial time and money.

Candler's first step towards developing a unified national brand was to assemble a sales team to represent Coca-Cola and introduce it to soda shops in different regions of the country. Candler hired his nephew, Samuel Candler Dobbs, as the Company's first sales and advertising manager in 1891. Dobbs was responsible for creating and placing Coca-Cola's print advertisements in newspapers, magazines, and religious publications. He also selected and trained the initial sales team of three men who worked across the South selling and promoting Coca-Cola. The following year at the Company's first annual meeting, Candler and Dobbs increased their capital investment in this department and added an advertising budget of \$11,401.<sup>23</sup> However, they understood that sales and advertising were joint projects that needed to work in tandem to create desire for the product and familiarity with the brand. Neither salesmen nor advertisements alone would

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<sup>23</sup> Samuel Candler Dobbs believed advertising was a crucial aspect of branding. Candler and Dobbs hired the Massengale Advertising Agency of Atlanta. Dobbs welcomed the change that left him free to focus on sales and marketing. The advertising budget skyrocketed in the years that followed. By 1901 the advertising budget increased to \$100,000. In 1906, the D'Arcy advertising firm took over the bulk of the Coca-Cola account. Massengale continued to promote the drink in religious publications. By 1911, the Company spent \$1 million on advertising. Watters, *Coca-Cola*, 44, 88-91.

be enough to accomplish this. In an address titled “The Relationship Existing Between the Advertising and Sales Department,” Dobbs made this point to the members of the Kansas City Advertising Club in 1909. He persuasively argued that businesses expected too much from advertising:

Advertising has a selling force – a propelling force, but it isn’t the perpetual motion of commerce – *not yet*. To lay out a good large advertising appropriation without following it up with a vigorous selling campaign reminds me of a shell loaded with heavy charge of shot and a small load of power – it makes a good big noise, but doesn’t go anywhere, and doesn’t do any good when it gets there... [You need to] back that up with an energetic and efficient sales force.<sup>24</sup>

A coordinated effort between sales and advertising was how Coca-Cola increased sales and built a loyal base of customers. Salesmen spoke one-on-one with shopkeepers to sell syrup, but also taught them how to mix the drink properly and distributed promotional materials. Dobbs understood the relationship between salesmen and advertisers as analogous to the one between diagnostician and doctor. During the same address, he issued the following instructions:

First carefully study your patient, its needs, its ailments. This can best be done by a well organized, intelligent sales force, not a bunch of order takers, but salesmen who can reflect from the field the actual conditions as they exist. The sales force should be the consulting diagnostician. Then you, as the skilled doctor of business ills, can apply the remedy. It may require the drastic dose of 400 line copy; E.O.D. in the daily press, backed up with such local treatment as bill boards, street car cards and painted displays, and then may come to the necessity of a course of constitutional treatment in form of a general magazine tonic and on through the entire realm of business therapies.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>24</sup> Samuel C. Dobbs, “The Relationship Existing Between the Advertising and Sales Department. An Address by Samuel C. Dobbs, Advertising Manager of Coca-Cola, Before the Fourth Annual Meeting of Kansas City Advertising Club, January 11, 1909,” *Advertisers Magazine*, “A Magazine for Business-Men who advertise”, February 1909, 13..

<sup>25</sup> *Ibid.*

In essence, the sales force collected market research that led to customized advertising campaigns that meet the needs of different local and regional markets.

This organized effort by Dobbs at the turn of the century reflected a larger shift in the way that companies sold and distributed goods. Coca-Cola salesmen were equipped to sell and promote their product to shopkeepers and customers. Placing the drink in stores was not enough. Salesmen taught shopkeepers how to mix the drink, made sure it was always served cold, and spoke to as many customers as they could to encourage people to try Coca-Cola. The Company could not afford to leave it up to individual shopkeepers to entice people to try the drink and encourage repeat customers. Salesmen needed to reach store owners and consumers directly in order to secure their position in the soft drink market.

One strategy used by Candler and Dobbs was to offer retail stores a risk-free trial of Coca-Cola. Salesmen in the area sold the store syrup at a reduced price and then distributed free sample

tickets liberally in town. Each ticket granted one free serving of the drink per customer.

Printed on the back of cards like this one, was written: “This card is worth 5 cents. It pays for 1 glass of Coca-Cola, which cures your Headache, or wonderfully refreshes you when exhausted.” The store’s owner could redeem the tickets for their full value from the Company to make a guaranteed profit. Moreover, free samples helped to create loyal



Figure 1-2: Drink Ticket

customers who would return to stores and ask for Coca-Cola by name. Customer demand drove retail orders because samples let the drink sell itself.

Additional Coca-Cola advertising efforts during the late 19<sup>th</sup> century included outdoor posters, painted walls, soda fountain urns, clocks, serving tray and calendars. The sales team often gave storeowners free promotional merchandise with purchases of syrup or to customers for drink purchases. Clocks like the one below, which were gifts from the company that hung in soda fountains, provided the time while advertising the product. Around the clock face is written, “Coca-Cola - The Ideal Brain Tonic” and below “Delightful Beverage. Specific for Headaches. Relieves Mental and Physical Exhaustion.” Gifts like this one were good investments for the company. Storeowners permanently displayed them because of they were functional and they exposed shoppers to the Company logo. The more often people saw images of Coca-Cola the more likely they were to try it.

Gifts for the home achieved the same goal. The tin serving tray was created in 1895 and featured model and actress Hilda Clark, who was the first person hired to represent Coca-Cola in advertising. In the image, she sits at a table decorated with flowers drinking a glass of Coca-Cola. The slogan “Delicious and Refreshing” was hand painted beside her face. Clark represented respectable glamour. Candler wanted the brand to connote wholesomeness. It was not only a curative drink or delightful beverage, it was a drink that the most delicate and refined women could enjoy. It was suitable for the whole family. Moreover, the drink was not only attainable for people of Clark’s stature; working class people could afford it. In gifting instead of selling items like this serving



Figure 1--3: Promotional Serving Tray and Wall Clock

tray, Coca-Cola's promotional items were used by people entertaining guests in their homes. In this way, the Company recognized white middle and upper-class women as consumers and the primary shoppers for their families – converting women to loyal customers would mean winning over families.<sup>26</sup> The costs of these items were little, compared with the value gained in brand recognition.

Salesman could not reach people everywhere. Key to the success of branding was advertising. However, local newspapers posed a similar problem for salesmen – there was no easy way to reach people across states and around the country. What helped make Candler and Dobbs successful in their endeavor was the rise of the first national newspapers, magazines, and department stores that preceded their efforts. As Richard Ohmann argues, the last fifteen years of the 19<sup>th</sup> century saw the rise of national

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<sup>26</sup> Lori Anne Loeb, *Consuming Angels: Advertising and Victorian Women* (Oxford University Press, USA, 1994); Nan Enstad, *Ladies of Labor, Girls of Adventure* (Columbia University Press, 1999); Kathy Peiss, *Hope in a Jar: The Making of America's Beauty Culture* (Holt Paperbacks, 1999); Kristin L. Hoganson, *Consumers' Imperium: The Global Production of American Domesticity, 1865-1920* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2007); Janice Williams Rutherford, *Selling Mrs. Consumer: Christine Frederick and the Rise of Household Efficiency* (University of Georgia Press, 2003); Maggie Andrews and Mary Talbot, *All the World and Her Husband: Women in the 20th Century Consumer Culture* (Continuum, 2000); Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era*, 20th ed. (Basic Books, 2008).

newspapers and magazines. The simultaneity of readers reading the same stories, at the same time, helped to create a mass culture. A shared concept of *the* news emerged.<sup>27</sup>

In these new national publications, consumers became familiar with brand name goods and chain stores through advertising. These ads were written in a friendly and informal tone that simulated the personable interaction that salesmen had with customers. National marketing was tied to this revolution in national print culture.<sup>28</sup> Coca-Cola's sales team had access to these publications and nationally run advertisements played a role in publicizing the brand and assuring customers that the drink would have the same high quality and taste everywhere it was sold.

National distribution was Candler's first goal for the Coca-Cola Company. He incorporated the company in 1892 and sold the majority of the capital stock worth \$100,000 to family members who supported him and his ambition.<sup>29</sup> The Company manufactured syrup and sold it by the gallon to drugstores for individual retail sale. Drugstores were vital social centers in most cities and towns. The soda fountain became a popular American institution in 1830, and Candler believed that Coca-Cola would remain deeply rooted there. He thought little of the possibilities of bottling, and measured success and profit in syrup sales alone.

Candler established the first syrup-manufacturing plant outside of Atlanta in Dallas, Texas in 1894. Production in different regions throughout the country meant quicker and less expensive shipping costs across the geographically vast U.S. market. This additional plant was the beginning of a growing and efficient distribution system.

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<sup>27</sup> Ohmann, *Selling culture*.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, 75-77.

<sup>29</sup> Incorporation helped to legally protect and consolidate the interests of the Company. The \$100,000 raised through the sale of stocks was invested in the expansion of manufacturing equipment and advertising.

Soon after establishing two more plants – one in Chicago and the other in Los Angeles – Candler claimed victory in 1895. He announced to stockholders: “Coca-Cola is now sold and drunk in every state and territory in the United States.”<sup>30</sup> National distribution was big news. Not only did it translate to increased brand recognition and increased sales across the country, but in the first full year of national distribution, Coca Cola surpassed the 100,000 gallon mark.<sup>31</sup>

Candler viewed this increase in syrup sales as a direct path to success and a sign that further expansion and profit was on the horizon. However, where he foresaw domestic expansion at soda fountains, others saw even greater potential for consumption with the addition of bottling the drink. It made the drink portable and allowed consumers to leave the confines of the soda fountain. Bottling was not a new phenomenon, soda water had been hand filled in cork-topped bottles in the U.S. since 1835. However, Candler believed Coca-Cola was a social experience that was best enjoyed from the fountain, mixed up cold and fresh right on the spot. He did not imagine that anything much would come of a bottling endeavor. For that reason, he granted bottling rights to Benjamin Franklin Thomas and Joseph Brown Whitehead in 1899.

After signing the contract, Candler chided them by saying, “if you boys fail in this undertaking, don’t come back to cry on my shoulder, because I have very little confidence in this bottling business.”<sup>32</sup> He was certain of one thing: he would not absorb any financial burden of failure. The only expense he agreed to assume was advertising. If anything, he anticipated that their fledgling enterprise would generate a modest amount

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<sup>30</sup> Watters, *Coca-Cola*, 19.

<sup>31</sup> In 1896, 117,636 gallons were sold. This was reported in the Grand Consolidated sales sheet, Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>32</sup> Pendergrast, 74.

of increased syrup sales for the company. The contract included an initial fixed rate for syrup at the starting price of \$1 per gallon. Candler remained focused on the sales of syrup. In 1899, Coca Cola sold 281,055 gallons of syrup for the gross price of \$393,477. This figure represented an increase of over 3,000 percent from 1890, when the company had sold 8,855 gallons.<sup>33</sup>

The bottling of Coca-Cola proved increasingly successful over time. After it became clear that bottling could preserve the integrity of the drink, and as refrigerators became a common household appliance, the company fought and eventually won back bottling rights piecemeal. Yet the initial divide between syrup production and bottling proved to be incredibly important to the way the company did business. This landmark contract agreement restructured the company and gave rise to a large franchise system that proved both efficient and cost effective. Coca-Cola retained the secret of the syrup recipe and kept a hold on syrup production. It controlled branding and large-scale advertising campaigns, but left additional local advertising efforts to the discretion of bottlers and retailers.

### **Ask for It By Name: Safeguarding the Coca-Cola Brand with Trademark Protection**

Greater than the question of bottles versus fountains was the need to introduce the drink and the brand to a national consumer audience. Candler incorporated the company in 1892.<sup>34</sup> In 1893, “Coca-Cola” was registered and trademarked in the U.S. Patent Office to protect the company’s interest against similar carbonated beverages that started to

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<sup>33</sup> As referenced in an internal company document titled, “The Coca-Cola Company: Grand Consolidated.” Emory University, Robert W. Woodruff Library - MARBL. Coca-Cola Collection: Box No. 22, Item No. 32.

<sup>34</sup> “A Chronological History,” Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.



appear at soda fountains. But in addition to protecting the brand, Coca-Cola needed to create desire: not only a taste for the product but a lifestyle associated with it. The Coca-Cola Company had to make advertising and marketing choices about whether to market the drink for its medicinal qualities or for its taste and place at soda fountains. If Coca-Cola was not promoted to consumers as a remedy for illness, it had to be sold on the value of the drink as a leisure to be enjoyed in a social context. A non-alcoholic drink could be marketed as a refreshment to be consumed by men, women, and children alike. Branding was also a crucial tactic in eliminating the effects of price competition. Loyal consumers would ask for the product by name and not settle for imitations or different brands, regardless of cost.

In 1878, the first Trademark Association was formed to protect American companies' valuable property in brand names and products.<sup>35</sup> In 1905, Congress passed legislation making trademarks prima facie evidence of ownership. Coca-Cola's lawyer, Harold Hirsch, re-registered its trademark under a proviso giving legal status to any trademark in constant use for 10 years.<sup>36</sup> Unlike copyrights and patents, trademarks did not expire.

The company needed to ensure that soda fountains were not passing off cheaper imitations of the drink to unsuspecting customers who asked for the drink by brand name. Coca-Cola had to be vigilant and stake a legal claim. In 1911, Coca-Cola officers appraised their trademark at \$5 million.<sup>37</sup> The recipe was protected by the fact that it remained a secret known only to a select few top executives. The name had already been

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<sup>35</sup> Ibid., 44.

<sup>36</sup> Pendergrast, *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola*, 104.

<sup>37</sup> Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*, 47; Waldon Fawcett, "Trade-marks That Have Been Denied Registration," *Printer's Ink* (May 12, 1912): 351.

trademarked, but in 1914 the company also acquired the patent for the distinctive “hobbleskirt” bottle shape and design. They protected their unique flavor, name, and logo to ensure that the drink and its package remained distinct in the minds of consumers. For three decades, Hirsch led an impressively successful campaign of bringing lawsuits against competitors and imitators who infringed upon the name or packaging of Coca-Cola’s product. Trademark law was a new and expanding field. Hirsch filed an average of one case each week; the sheer volume of his work set the precedent for much of modern trademark law.<sup>38</sup> In protecting its product, Coca-Cola legally secured the company’s existence and future.

### **The Routes (and Roots) of American Empire and Methodist Missionary Network**

The last decade of the nineteenth century saw the maturing of a corporation that looked first throughout the country and next across oceans to the rest of the world. Not long after Coca-Cola had become a nationally recognized brand, it moved into overseas markets, starting with a select few foreign cities. Candler proudly announced in the company’s 1899 annual report that “Coca-Cola is now sold... in some of the cities in Canada, and in the city of Honolulu” and that “arrangements are on foot for its introduction into the Republic of Mexico.” He confidently proclaimed that “wherever there are people and soda fountains, Coca-Cola will, by its now universally acknowledged merit, win its way quickly to the front rank of popularity.”<sup>39</sup> His

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<sup>38</sup> Harold Hirsch Address to the Coca-Cola Bottlers Convention, March 7, 1923, Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. See also: Thomas J. McCarthy, *Trademarks and Unfair Competition*, (Rochester, N.Y.: Lawyers Co-operative Publishing Co., 1973).

<sup>39</sup> The Coca-Cola Company, *Annual Report to the Stockholders for the Year 1899*, (Atlanta: The Coca-Cola Company).

confidence rested solely on his belief that Coca-Cola had a universal appeal that customers best enjoyed at soda fountains. In his view, the social aspect of sharing the drink with friends and family was part of what made soda fountains and Coca-Cola appealing. Expansion was not inevitable, but Candler and Company stockholders believed that Coca-Cola would appeal to every market it was introduced to, both domestic and international.

Second to national distribution, which Candler viewed as inevitable, he set his sights on international expansion. In 1897, he assembled his board of directors and said, “we have not lagged in our efforts to go into all the world, teaching that Coca-Cola is the article, par excellence, for the health and good feeling of all people.”<sup>40</sup> Earlier that year, Candler’s son Howard had traveled to Vancouver, Canada and discovered that merchants had purchased syrup in Seattle. They were serving it in soda fountain there, which was an effortless step towards international sales for the Company. That same year, Candler shipped negligible amounts of the drink to London, Berlin, Honolulu. It was also for sale in Puerto Rico, Cuba, and Jamaica.<sup>41</sup> This led Candler to suggest to his sons that he enlist their help by going to “important places” to plot a strategy for sales in Europe and Asia. In a letter to Howard, he wrote, “together we must map out for great conquests.”<sup>42</sup> International expansion captivated Candler’s attention.

Asa Candler was a pious Methodist, whose religious beliefs and sense of Christian stewardship guided his success, and for which, he believed, his reward was virtue and wealth. His statement to the board reflected his belief that wealth was not an

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<sup>40</sup> Asa Candler, *Fifth Annual Report of the Coca-Cola Company, 1903*, Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>41</sup> Smith Clayton, “The Story of Coca-Cola,” *Atlanta Constitution* (November 20, 1914).

<sup>42</sup> Letter from Asa Candler to Howard Candler 1902, Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

end but a means to transform the world. He was charitable at home but believed it was the Company's responsibility to introduce the world's people to Christianity, commerce, and Coca-Cola. His spiritual advisor was his brother Warren who was a Methodist Episcopal Bishop who was also a published author whose religious views are documented in his books. In the *Great Revivals and the Great Republic*, published in 1904, Warren wrote that the "missionary enterprise must go in advance of international commerce to secure justice in trade and safety for the merchantmen."<sup>43</sup> The Candler brothers saw the imperialist, missionary, and capitalist goals of the U.S. government, Christianity, and the Coca-Cola Company as interdependent.

To achieve this, Coca-Cola followed the flag. More specifically, Asa Candler's missionary brother Warren followed the flag and Candler followed him. American imperialism during the Spanish-American War in 1898 opened up new outlets for U.S. influence and business to the south. Bishop Candler had traveled to China, Korea, and Mexico but spent most of his time in Cuba, where he went soon after the war's end. He described it as "our nearest, neediest, ripest missionary field."<sup>44</sup> Asa shared his belief that it was essential for missionaries to disseminate the Protestant gospel and the "virtues of industrial harmony." Asa funded his brother's missionary projects and invested in the project of outreach and expansion for the Coca-Cola Company by hiring José Parejo, a wine merchant, whose task it was to sell syrup wholesale for use in soda fountains on the island.

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<sup>43</sup> Warren A. Candler, *Great Revivals and the Great Republic* (Nashville: Publishing House of the Methodist Episcopal Church, 1904).

<sup>44</sup> Alfred M. Pierce, *Giant Against the Sky: The Life of Bishop Warren Asin Candler* (New York: Abingdon-Cokesbury Press, 1943), 99.

Rapid plans for expansion put Coca-Cola in good company. Many American companies underwent great change and growth during this period. The eminent business historian Alfred Chandler credited expansion to the rise of a late 19<sup>th</sup>-century “managerial capitalism” that created a tiered system of management to oversee the production, distribution, and sale of manufactured goods from raw materials to the ultimate sale to consumers.<sup>45</sup> In contrast to Adam Smith’s argument about “the invisible hand of the market,” which cited economic growth as an inevitable benefit of self-interested business transactions, Chandler argued that skilled corporate managers played a direct role in the profitability of businesses and larger economic growth. Coca-Cola was led by a strong team of executives that managed legal counsel, advertising, government relations, the acquisition of raw materials, labor, and sales.

Business historians pinpoint 1890 as a major turning point for the trend of American corporations’ expansion into foreign markets. These scholars mark the end of the depression of the 1870s and its resulting overproduction of consumer goods as the catalyst that moved American business overseas in search of new outlets for excess inventory and continued profits. Two of the most compelling arguments come from William Appleton Williams and Walter Lefebvre, who state that the overproduction of consumer goods was the reason businesses sought out new foreign markets. Lefebvre, in particular, carefully argues that the lack of domestic demand led to the shift. Consumer

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<sup>45</sup> Alfred Chandler, *The Visible Hand: The Managerial Revolution in American Business* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University, 1977), 6.

goods were received favorably in the U.S. market, consumers were buying, but production outpaced demand.<sup>46</sup>

Counter to this argument, which has been echoed in much of the literature, William Becker argues that an understanding of overproduction and lack of domestic demand alone is an insufficient explanation for foreign expansion. He suggests instead that economic advantages propelled American goods abroad, where they received a favorable consumer response. These advantages included the positive reputations attached to American businesses and American goods, as well as the benefit of patents and innovations. World consumers were attracted to the brands and products being brought across seas.<sup>47</sup> Together these arguments frame the state of industry under which American companies operated at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

In the context of these arguments about foreign expansion, Coca-Cola was a young company just beginning to build up national demand and increase regional syrup production levels. The company had not yet experienced overproduction or an excess of inventory. In Asa Candler's first year as president of the company, he managed to increase sales from 50 gallons to 1,049 gallons, and by 1890 reached 9,000 gallons.<sup>48</sup> By the turn of the century, the company was still finding its footing with more efficient production and more effective advertising strategies. Coca-Cola was selling more of its product each year. The trend of expansion for some companies came from a surplus of goods and lack of domestic demand, while Coca-Cola followed this trend without ever

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<sup>46</sup> See William Appleton Williams *Tragedy of American Diplomacy* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 1988) and Walter LeFeber *The New Empire: An Interpretation of American Expansion, 1860-1898* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1998).

<sup>47</sup> William H. Becker, "American Manufacturers and Foreign Markets, 1870-1900: Business Historians and the "New Economic Determinists" *The Business History Review*, Vol. 47, No. 4 (Winter 1973), 466-481.

<sup>48</sup> Watters, *Coca-Cola*, 18.

facing the frustration of excess supply and few buyers. The company was also the beneficiary of the positive image of American brands built up overseas. With patent in hand, it was poised and ready to introduce Coca-Cola's unique flavor to new foreign markets.

Coca-Cola's story is not a story of firsts. This was not the first American business of this kind, but the Company had the benefit of American companies' successes to learn from as it took steps towards becoming an international brand. One instructive counter example is the Singer Sewing Machine Company, which managed to expand successfully into foreign markets during the post-bellum period without government assistance. Rather than viewing sales abroad as a safety valve for surplus goods as many companies at the time did, Singer expanded with the intent of creating new and permanent markets.<sup>49</sup> Without the benefit of government contacts Singer created its own internal organization that was more beneficial to the company than any government agency could have been in assessing the thresholds of the market and the intricacies of licensing and operation in foreign nations.

In 1867, Singer opened its first factory in Europe, one of the earliest such American enterprises on the continent.<sup>50</sup> By the end of the century, Singer's increasing foreign sales and European investors set the industry standard. The company gathered raw materials from different locations around the world based on the lowest costs available and chose locations for factories where labor was cheapest and most convenient for accessing target markets. These strategic choices made Singer's one of the first American-owned multinational production systems; it was an enterprise that used parts

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<sup>49</sup> Davies, 45.

<sup>50</sup> Ibid., 17.

from New Jersey and Scotland to produce sewing machines for rapidly growing markets in Europe. As one Singer executive noted at the time, the company seemed to be “peacefully working to conquer the world.”<sup>51</sup>

Significantly, this model was not contingent upon government assistance, but on private innovation in horizontal and vertical integration. By the 1890s, however, support and aid from the U.S. government helped American companies use this model to enter more and more markets around the world.<sup>52</sup> As Emily Rosenberg argues, from 1890 until WWI, the state helped promote private expansion by providing assistance to export or invest overseas. Help included aid from the Navy, government-bargained protective tariffs, the adoption of the gold standard, and the Federal Reserve Act.<sup>53</sup> Under Candler’s leadership during the last decade of the nineteenth century, Coca-Cola took its first steps out of the U.S. and capitalized on this type of aid.

The 1890s proved pivotal for the history of Coca-Cola in another respect: namely, the way its recipe came under scrutiny as progressive reformists responded to the more exploitative sides of rapid economic and social growth. Since the invention of Coca-Cola, there had been suspicions that certain of its key components—alcohol, coca, and caffeine—were harmful or intoxicating. One of its key critics, Dr. Harvey Washington Wiley, a reformer of the progressive era, targeted the company, causing them serious aggravation during the first two decades of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. A former head of the U.S. Bureau of Chemistry, Wiley created the “poison squad” in 1902, a group of 12 men who

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<sup>51</sup> Davies, 20.

<sup>52</sup> The Coca-Cola Company was not alone in their advantageous alignment with the U.S. military. Wrigley’s Gum, Hershey’s Chocolate, and the Mars Company’s M&Ms were given exemptions from sugar rations during the war.

<sup>53</sup> For more on “The Promotional State” see Emily Rosenberg’s, *Spreading the American Dream: American Economic & Cultural Expansion 1890-1945* (Hill and Wang, 1982).



tested food additives to see if they were toxic.<sup>54</sup> In 1906, building on the mainstream success of Upton Sinclair's *The Jungle*, which had caused a stir about the lack of regulation on the unsanitary and appalling conditions of the meat packing industry, and with the support of President Theodore Roosevelt, Wiley helped pass the Pure Food and Drug Act, which later led to the Food and Drug Administration. This challenge from Washington is a prime example of tension that surfaced between national and corporate interests.

Although no one had pointed the finger at Coca-Cola for unsanitary practices, Wiley took aim at trace amounts of alcohol and cocaine in the drink. In 1907, the accusation of intoxicating levels of alcohol present in the drink led the U.S. War Department to ban the sale of the drink at canteens and army bases.<sup>55</sup> Wiley's men were unable to substantiate this claim, or find a detectable amount of cocaine, so the "poison squad" shifted its focus to the drink's caffeine levels.<sup>56</sup> Overall, this increased amount of government regulation spelled trouble for the company. All such challenges regarding the safety of ingredients resulted in time and money spent to defend the brand and preserve the recipe of the drink.

Government regulation and interference did not end there. In 1916, the company faced allegations from the Federal Trade Commission. The Commission was created two years earlier to enforce the Clayton Antitrust Act, which bolstered former antitrust laws by protecting consumers and competition by cracking down on anticompetitive practices. Coca-Cola was charged with refusing to sell to dealers who handled competitors' soft

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<sup>54</sup> Pendergrast, 108.

<sup>55</sup> Frederick Allen, 49.

<sup>56</sup> In 1891, Candler had removed nearly all cocaine content from the drink to appease critics. He left just enough to satisfy the Trademark Association, which required them to use the products listed in their brand name, but not enough to be detectable to product testers who might deem it unwholesome.

drinks, slandering the character and business of competitors, launching malicious lawsuits against the competition, and shutting off the supply of bottle caps, among other accusations.<sup>57</sup> These charges were characteristic of new and more regulated climate for U.S. corporations.

The balance of power shifted at the turn of the twentieth century towards a more adversarial relationship between the government and businesses like Coca-Cola. Business and economic historians Louis Galambos and Joseph Pratt have categorized the period 1901-1930 as the era of “corporate commonwealth.” Created during U.S. involvement in WWI, this was an era of accommodation in which power was shared between big business, big government, and big labor.<sup>58</sup> This corporate commonwealth represented a shift in the relationship between big business and government from the time of the robber barons who made their fortunes from steel, iron, and railroads. During that early period, business was unregulated and supported by a relatively financially weak government, but by the turn of the century, the general public was growing frustrated at big trusts gaining in wealth while workers fell on hard times. This led to the introduction of more regulation and a new balance of power.

The shift towards the “corporate commonwealth” and its shared power and more activist government, continued into WWI. The U.S. entered the war on April 6, 1917, a move which almost immediately impacted businesses and citizens. To raise revenue during the war, Congress levied a soda tax of 10 percent.<sup>59</sup> The issue of taxation, specifically during times of war, serves as a second example of growing tension within the alliance between the government and corporations. While Coca-Cola met this

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<sup>57</sup> Pendergrast, 126.

<sup>58</sup> Galambos, *The Rise Of The Corporate Commonwealth*, 40-41.

<sup>59</sup> *Ibid.*, 130.

requirement by passing the tax onto bottlers, another tax on sugar directly affected and hurt the company in terms of production and profits. There was less sugar available and the sugar that was available was sold at a higher cost, which increased the total expense to manufacture syrup. These tax-generated shifts in production cost were less easily passed onto bottlers, who had signed contracts that locked in flat rates for syrup purchases. On top of the tax, the government requested that soft drink manufacturers halve their output, and Coca-Cola did just that. Without the supply of sugar necessary, Coke generated its product at a level far below demand. In 1917, the company increased its sale of syrup by two million gallons only to watch it fall back the following year due to new rationing programs. However, the demand during the war did not falter, and when the rations were lifted, the company was able to meet demand once more.

Sales in gallons continued to increase each year, and the company's fortunes were bolstered by the rise of national prohibition and the Volstead Act. This piece of progressive era legislation, far from being detrimental to the Coca-Cola Company, boosted sales for a product that had been marketed as a temperance drink. Prohibition of all alcoholic beverages began on January 16, 1920. In response, the company pushed the sugary beverage with a caffeine kick as a wholesome alternative. With little alcohol available in bars or at home, Coca-Cola was poised and ready to fill the gap at soda fountains and in bottles for those looking for a cold, refreshing, and invigorating drink.

### **The Woodruff Years: Corporate Diplomacy and Secular Global Expansion**

The prospect of increased sales during prohibition enticed new interest in the Coca-Cola Company. The Candler family had done well in their expansion of the

company, and after 30 years of service, Asa Candler willingly stepped down in 1919. His children then sold most of their shares to a group of investors led by Ernest Woodruff, a member of another prominent family in Atlanta. His son, Robert W. Woodruff, became the president of the Company in 1923 and lived on in the Company's history as its most influential president. Woodruff knew the Candler family well – in fact, he was a Sunday school student of Candler's – but he was not particularly religious in his later life.

Woodruff took the helm with the primary goal to increase foreign expansion.

In the year before his appointment, the company invested three million dollars in the creation of bottling plants across Europe, but Woodruff saw great potential in other world markets as well.<sup>60</sup> He created Coca-Cola's Foreign Department in 1926 and placed executives in Europe, Central America, and China. Later that year, Woodruff himself went on a three-month trip through South America working to establish political and business connections that could help in creating bottling franchises.<sup>61</sup> He made a point of personally traveling to different parts of the world to scout out their potential as markets. His long-term plan anticipated low profits in new foreign markets that would grow over time. Woodruff recognized that an initial loss of profit would not be a failure for the company, but could serve as good public relations for the universal appeal of Coca-Cola during the years before they established a real hold on sales around the world.

Woodruff's desire to brand the Company with as an international corporation led to the Coca-Cola's presence at the Olympic Games held in Amsterdam in 1928. This strategic involvement with the Olympics helped link its goals of international

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<sup>60</sup> The Coca-Cola Company, *Annual Report to the Stockholders for the Year 1921*, (Atlanta: The Coca-Cola Company). Candler said "We believe the foreign field should be occupied by direct representation, owning plants, manufacturing and bottling our own product."

<sup>61</sup> New Countries: Curacao, Java, Trinidad, Jamaica, England, Scotland, Ireland, Norway, Denmark, Hong Kong, Peru, Bolivia, Chili, Switzerland, Austria, New Zealand, and South Africa.

sportsmanship and cooperation to Coca-Cola's American brand. In Amsterdam, one thousand cases of Coca-Cola were shipped with the U.S. Olympic Team. Coca-Cola vendors sold the drink from kiosks around the Olympic Stadium. The connection to the Olympics grew through the years with sponsorship and an increased advertising presence. Woodruff made quick work of moving the Company in new directions. He broke out of Candler's network of missionary programs and connections and sought out new connections with business leaders abroad and foreign officials who could help usher Coca-Cola into new markets.

One example of this policy shift was an announcement that ran in an 1929 special edition of *Red Barrel*, the company's monthly magazine for bottlers. It claimed that:

... few Americans realize that Coca-Cola is now found within the bull fight arenas of sunny Spain and Mexico, at the Olympic Games Stadium below the dykes of Holland, atop the Eiffel Tower above "Gay Paree," on the holy pagoda in distant Burma, and beside the Coliseum of historic Rome. For many years Coca-Cola has become a national institution of the United States with widespread popularity throughout Canada and Cuba. But during the past three years it has been extended beyond national borders and its sales are now international in scope. At present Coca-Cola is sold in seventy-eight countries.<sup>62</sup>

This internal company publication announced that Coca-Cola had become a "global" corporation, that it was no longer a national institution alone but was becoming an international enterprise sold in 78 countries and bottled in 27. For Woodruff, and the company, this new international or "global" scope included all countries where the drink was being sold, no matter how small the volume.<sup>63</sup> Increasing volume in existing markets, and expanding into new ones, became the task the Foreign Department.

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<sup>62</sup> *Red Barrel*, 1929.

<sup>63</sup> Coke sought out existing bottling operations in countries to bottle the drink for them. For instance, The United Fruit Company bottled the drink in Guatemala.

The Great Depression of the 1930s hit hard, but the Coca-Cola Company understood the principle of keeping the cost of the drink low regardless of where the economic tide turned. The company had seen a number of smaller depressions come and go and understood that even when money was tight, people still found a way to pay a nickel for a treat every now and then. Yet the Depression soured the public's opinion of big business, as economic downturns often do. The coming World War at the turn of the next decade would restore the public's faith and restore a positive relationship between business and government. For the Coca-Cola Company, WWII was a game-changer.

Coca-Cola paid close attention in 1939, when Nazi Germany invaded Poland and President Franklin D. Roosevelt shifted the country to a wartime economy. Roosevelt could offer limited support to the Allied Powers fighting in Europe. He struggled against the growth of U.S. isolationism and non-interventionism that followed America's costly involvement in WWI and resisted all new involvement in foreign conflicts. In particular, Congress signed the first in a series of Neutrality Acts into law in 1935. These laws prohibited the sale of weapons and forbade all loans from being issued to countries at war. However, Roosevelt and his State Department were able to amend a "cash and carry" provision to the Neutrality Act of 1937. This provision allowed the President to sell materials and supplies to belligerents as long as they were able to pay in cash and transport the goods on their own ships across the Atlantic. Under Roosevelt's leadership, the U.S. supported and supplied the Allied Powers in the war effort long before Congress issued a declaration of war following the attack on Pearl Harbor.

Roosevelt directed an increase in U.S. military production as early as 1937, and this marked a renewal of a close relationship between big business and the government.

The conversion of private industry into wartime manufacture included the Coca-Cola Company when in 1941 the War Department offered them a \$14 million munitions contract. At a meeting with the press, Undersecretary Robert Patterson issued the following statement:

This is an example of the government policy to use in national defense the managerial ability of successful industrial organizations... Several companies have asked for this contract. We are requesting the Coca-Cola Company take it because we want a job of production, and our investigation has shown that no company in the country has a better record of production than the Coca-Cola Company. It is production we want and your management can supply it.

Coca-Cola accepted the contract. They built and managed an artillery powder bag loading plant in Childersburg, Alabama. In response to Patterson's statement, Woodruff replied, "Undersecretary Patterson's statement covers the case... We can do the job or we would not have taken it. The contract has been signed and the best efforts of the subsidiary company are at the disposal of the federal authorities."<sup>64</sup> Through the Brecon Loading Plant, the company engaged in management services, trained personnel, and operated artillery and munitions bag loading in conjunction with a smokeless powder plant built by the DuPont Company.

The Brecon Loading Plant was a prime example of Coca-Cola entering into a relationship with the Government that was initially one-sided; the Company received nothing upfront for their service. They took the contract to appease the Government. The Company neither volunteered for, nor wanted the contract. They knew that manufacturing ammunition would be a distraction from their central mission. However, Ben Oehlert, a former employee at the State Department, who worked in Washington,

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<sup>64</sup> *Atlanta Constitution* (February 21, 1941).

D.C. as Coca-Cola's liaison with the Government, cautioned against refusing the contract. In a letter to Woodruff, he explained that that Company "agreed to do it because they thought they could do it and because they saw no graceful way to get out of it." He described a meeting he had with Brigadier General L.H. Campbell Jr., Chief of Facilities for the Army, and his aides, and explained that "they rather pointedly called my attention to the possibilities which might result from our classification as a recalcitrant industry if we should refuse." With a perceived threat such as this from the U.S. Government, Coca-Cola could not continue to focus solely on wartime soft drink sales at home and abroad.

Oehlert saw Brecon Loading as an opportunity to cultivate a positive relationship with the Government. He hoped for reciprocity. At his urging, Woodruff not only accepted the contract and the terms that went along with it, but also offered that Coca-Cola would wave all profits that might accrue from the enterprise. Beyond this public gesture, Oehlert and other top Company executives oversaw production. The government recognized the plant's skillful management and efficiency with its highest awards.<sup>65</sup> Brecon opened the door for cooperation during WWII, when Coca-Cola and the Government formed a strategic alliance.

## **Conclusion**

During the 1890's, Coca-Cola established itself as a wholesome American brand that its loyal customers could enjoy in glasses at soda fountains or in bottles at home. Their sales and advertising team cultivated strong markets throughout the country. After

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<sup>65</sup> "Coca-Cola Unit Gets 'E'," *Wall Street Journal*, n.d., March 22, 1943 edition; "E' Given to Coosa Plant," *New York Times*, March 24, 1943; "They Win Production Pins," *Atlanta Daily World*, June 20, 1943; "Honored for War Effort," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 26, 1943; "Praised for Dousing Fire in Powder Plant," *The Chicago Defender*, February 5, 1944.



outselling competitors at soda fountains in the U.S., Coca-Cola became increasingly available at soda fountains and stores in select cities around the world. The struggle was not only one of winning over loyal customers but of navigating a path towards international expansion. The Company took its first steps out of the country with Candler's missionary zeal and Woodruff's pragmatic creation of an internal Foreign Department. In markets where Woodruff and his staff in the Foreign Department saw potential for sales, they sought out local businessmen with bottling operations. In locations where there were no bottling operations, the Company recruited local entrepreneurs with money to invest. In either case, Coca-Cola produced the syrup and the advertising.

Beyond this, acquiring bottling rights required training from the Company to ensure standardization of the product, its marketing and sales techniques. At the start of WWII, there were Coca-Cola bottling operations in 44 countries around the world. True to Woodruff's long-term international goal, sales were slow but steady. Woodruff believed that his first step towards international success was to make inroads into as many countries as possible, even if it meant the Company initially lost money in the endeavor. American customers living abroad accounted for much of the sales in foreign countries. It would take time to increase sales and native demand. Coca-Cola needed an innovative and increased strategy to boost sales and reach more consumers. WWII threatened to interrupt the Company's international progress, but eventually it provided the opportunity for exactly the kind of boost it needed.

Embedded in Coca-Cola's history of branding and distribution was a longer trajectory of cooperative relationships between the U.S. government and the Company.

Concessions to the government were necessary. For citizens asked to make sacrifices, wars are detrimental, but for businesses, war creates new opportunities. The Coca-Cola Company established the Brecon Bag Loading Co. before the U.S. declared war or committed troops in WWII. Coca-Cola not only met and filled the demands of the military contract; they were honored for their service and efficiency in manufacturing. Oehlert had believed that cooperating with the military would be beneficial for the Company and hoped that the time would come when the Government would return the favor. The opportunity presented itself on the morning of December 7, 1941. The Japanese attack on the U.S. Naval Base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii, radically changed American interests in the war. When America sent troops to defend their country and support their Allies, Oehlert recognized the opportunity he had been waiting for and advised Woodruff accordingly. Following Brecon Loading, an unprecedented new contract between the Coca-Cola Company and the U.S. Military would bring Coca-Cola to more places in the world and helped it achieve international recognition.

## Chapter Two

### “The Pause that Refreshes:”

#### Coca-Cola’s Technical Observer Program Boosts Energy and Morale Around the World in the U.S. Armed Forces, 1942-1948

On early convoy request shipment three million bottled Coca-Cola (filled) and complete equipment for bottling, washing, capping same quantity twice monthly . . . Preference as to equipment is 10 separate machines for installation in different localities, each complete for bottling twenty thousand bottles per day. . . Estimate ship tons initial shipment 5 thousand. Ship without displacing other military cargo.

– General Dwight D. Eisenhower (June 29, 1943)

A lot of water has run over the dam – or shall we put it – Many a “Coke” has gone down the hatch, since *Digest* Number VII took shape. Since that edition came off our assembly line, we’ve said adieu to World War II. With this, our first “postwar communiqué” we hail the invasion of Technical Observers for Coca-Cola in the far reaches of the world!

– *TO Digest*, Vol. 1, No. VIII (1945)

On December 8, 1941, President Franklin Delano Roosevelt addressed a joint session of Congress describing the Japanese bombing of the United States naval base on Pearl Harbor in Hawaii as “a day that would live in infamy.” Soon after Roosevelt finished his speech, Congress declared war on Japan. Three days later, the other two Axis powers, Germany and Italy, declared war on the United States and again, Congress responded by declaring war against them. A lesser known event in this series of

declarations took place one day later when Coca-Cola's president, Robert W. Woodruff, issued a statement in support of U.S. entry into WWII. On December 12, 1941, he declared that "every man in uniform gets a bottle of Coca-Cola for five cents, wherever he is and no matter what the cost to our Company."<sup>1</sup> Woodruff's pledge to supply every American soldier around the world a bottle of Coca-Cola was a generous patriotic gesture, but more importantly, it was a brilliant strategy for increased global expansion.

In order to make Woodruff's pledge possible, the Company needed to find a way to transport Coca-Cola across the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans amidst a world war. Additionally, it had to secure enough sugar to maintain a high level of production despite wartime rationing. The Company needed the cooperation of the U.S. government and it had to convince the military that Coca-Cola was an essential wartime item that would boost troop energy and morale. Coca-Cola executives made some headway but the Company got the help it needed from from a loyal Coca-Cola drinker who was also Woodruff's friend and golf partner - General Dwight D. Eisenhower. Eisenhower, stationed in North Africa, requested the drink, leading to an exclusive military contract with the Coca-Cola Company.<sup>2</sup>

The contract granted Coca-Cola space on Navy ships and Air Force planes. To avoid criticism that Coca-Cola was occupying precious cargo space, concentrated syrup was shipped instead of pre-filled bottles. Even more extraordinary than an exclusive military contract was the creation of a military program that deployed 248 Coca-Cola employees to serve the troops. These civilians were granted military rank and were

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<sup>1</sup> Coca-Cola Company, *The Coca-Cola Company: An Illustrated Profile of a Worldwide Company* (Coca-Cola Company, 1974).

<sup>2</sup> Cablegram sent from General Dwight Eisenhower to High Command Headquarters in Washington, D.C., June 29, 1943, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

officially called “Technical Observers” (TOs).<sup>3</sup> They were attached to specific units and sent to parts of the world without sufficient bottling capability. TOs targeted areas on the front lines in Europe, where Axis powers had bombed factories or bottling facilities were not otherwise operational. TOs were also sent to developing nations where Coca-Cola was not produced locally. In these cases, the TOs relied on help from U.S. soldiers to assemble machinery, secure clean water, and safeguard the location.<sup>4</sup> Apart from the labor of the military, the local population was often hired to produce Coca-Cola.

Empire is driven by materials and markets, and the TO program is an example of U.S. empire in the service of corporate capitalist expansion.<sup>5</sup> Yet materials and markets are not the only factors that direct the path of imperialism and capitalism. Racism and nationalism underpin these processes as well.<sup>6</sup> The genealogy of this argument can be traced back to W.E.B. Du Bois, who in 1906 critiqued the 20<sup>th</sup> century problem of the *global* color line. Du Bois wrote that “the tendency for great nations of the day is territorial, political, and economic expansion, but in every case this has brought them in contact with darker peoples . . . The policy of expansion, then, simply means world problems of the Color Line.”<sup>7</sup> The problem to which Du Bois referred was racial justification for inequality around the world.

Coca-Cola’s TOs, upon encountering native populations in areas outside of industrialized cities, trained them to become low-ranking workers for the Company.

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<sup>3</sup> Ron Antonio, “Coca-Cola and the War Years,” ed. Stephen Gibbs and Jean Gibbs, *Cola Call* 9, no. 7 (1983): 4-6.

<sup>4</sup> It is worth noting, here, that despite the fact that TOs traveled with the troops, some of which on or near the frontlines, they were not issued or allowed to carry weapons.

<sup>5</sup> Walter LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750* (New York: W.W. Norton & Co., 1989).

<sup>6</sup> Cedric J. Robinson, *Black Marxism: The Making of the Black Radical Tradition* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 9.

<sup>7</sup> William Edward Burghardt Du Bois, “The Color Line Belts the World,” in *W.E.B. Du Bois on Asia: Crossing the World Color Line*, ed. Bill Mullen and Cathryn Watson (Univ. Press of Mississippi, 2005), 33.

Cedric J. Robinson's term "racial capitalism" provides an important historical understanding of this organizing principal of capitalism that requires the absorption and organization of a hierarchical racialized workforce.<sup>8</sup> The TO program brought white Americans, working for the Coca-Cola Company, into contact with non-white natives who were recruited as workers. As agents of global capitalism, the TOs were the bearers of modernity and industrialization. It is clear in the TO dispatches that in addition to the project of expansion they were also engaged in the simultaneous process of race making.<sup>9</sup> TOs remarked on the racial signifiers of skin color, hair texture, clothing, as well as their ease or difficulty in implementing codes of hygiene and successfully motivating workers to be quick and efficient. Most often these remarks were accompanied by cultural and racial comparisons between foreign populations and African American and Latin American populations who were more familiar to an American audience. These relationships revealed an uneven power dynamic that included the impulse to catalog workers from different parts of the world within a distinctively American racial hierarchy.

Coca-Cola's alignment with the U.S. military during WWII constituted a pivotal moment in the ongoing process of global expansion. The TOs were the front line in the process of wartime globalization. During the war, Coca-Cola established as many

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<sup>8</sup> For more on the "racial capitalism" and the vital connection between racism and nationalism, see Robinson, *Black Marxism*; Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class*, First English language edition. (Verso, 1991); David Kazanjian, "Mercantile Exchanges, Mercantilist Enclosures: Racial Capitalism in the Black Mariner Narratives of Venture Smith and John Jea," *CR: The New Centennial Review* 3, no. 1 (Spring 2003): 147-178; Howard Winant, *The World Is a Ghetto: Race and Democracy Since World War II* (Basic Books, 2002); David Harvey, *The New Imperialism* (Oxford University Press, USA, 2005); Manning Marable and Vanessa Agard-Jones, *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line* (Palgrave Macmillan, 2008).

<sup>9</sup> Leith Mullings defines race making as "the construction of race as a way to rationalize global inequalities" in "Racialization from Below," in *Transnational Blackness: Navigating the Global Color Line*, The Critical Black Studies Series (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2008), 11.

bottling plants overseas as it had domestically. TOs constructed a global infrastructure that positioned the Company in many new locations around the world. Eventually, the troops came home, but Coca-Cola as product stayed. In this chapter, I examine how Coca-Cola redefined its relationship with the U.S. government over the course of the war, ultimately achieving a privileged status and virtual monopoly. The TO program actualized the specific policies and institutional mechanisms through which this status was implemented and transformed into new production systems and markets. Beyond this, documentation of their wartime experiences provide a glimpse into the commercial and interpersonal relationships that TOs established with local populations – a process which revealed collateral, consequences, and racial tensions.

### **Morale Food: Making Coca-Cola as an Essential Military Item**

Woodruff established Coca-Cola's Foreign Department in 1926 sending ambassadors of the Company to Europe, Central American, and China. The following year, Woodruff spent three months traveling through South America assessing out the potential and limits of the market.<sup>10</sup> Four years later, despite the Depression, the Company continued to see increased profits and the Coca-Cola Export Corporation was born. This new branch of the Company was dedicated to foreign expansion and oversaw copyright and trademark protection; employed a large staff who obtained licenses for foreign operation; secured outlets for distribution; and sought local bottlers. The Export Corporation thrived during the 1920's and throughout the Depression. Local bottlers and

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<sup>10</sup> Travel itinerary for Robert Woodruff, 1947, Robert W. Woodruff Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

American businessmen overseas who produced and sold the drink made steady profits that filtered back to Coca-Cola.<sup>11</sup>

In 1940, the Export Corporation got a big boost with the strategic appointment of James A. Farley, a former Deputy Superintendent of Public Works, Secretary of the New York State Democratic Party, and Postmaster General. As Chairman of the Board of Directors for the Coca-Cola Export Corporation, he oversaw promotion of sales abroad.<sup>12</sup> In an interview, Woodruff quipped that “Farley’s quite a fellow. I don’t care where he goes – Spain, England, wherever, he’s entertained by the government. He still keeps up all those political connections.”<sup>13</sup> Well-known, well-liked, and well-respected by world leaders, Farley’s professional connections were a valuable asset to the Company. Farley traveled the world meeting with government officials to smooth the way for Coca-Cola to gain access to new world markets and get press attention for its efforts.

Between WWI and WWII, the Company undertook an aggressive expansion campaign but the Second World War cut into their progress. When asked about the effect that a second world war might have on the Company, Vice-President Arthur A. Acklin said that, “[t]he output of the Coca-Cola Company, which has been more than doubled since 1936, will by necessity be interrupted by war-time restrictions affecting the use of basic materials, as was the case in the last war.”<sup>14</sup> Sugar, a key ingredient for syrup production, was in limited supply during WWI due to government rations. Acklin and others assumed that a similar restriction on sugar use for civilian consumption would be

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Aliber, *The New International Money Game*, 7th ed. (Palgrave Macmillan, 2011), 250-251.

<sup>12</sup> “Farley Will Take A Coca-Cola Post: Retiring Postmaster General to Become Chairman of Export Corporation Sept. 1,” *The New York Times*, August 11, 1940, 3.

<sup>13</sup> E. J. Kahn, Jr. interview with Robert W. Woodruff, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>14</sup> “COCA-COLA CUTS OUTPUT,” *New York Times*, April 13, 1942, 23.



enforced in the coming war as well. Additionally, excise taxes and a drop in production and sales across Europe seemed an inevitable hindrance. If the Coca-Cola Company wanted to avoid a wartime interruption in sales and expansion, it needed a new plan.

The division of the Company overseeing wartime strategy was located in Washington, D.C. These executives zeroed in on regulation and taxation. In addition to Woodruff and Farley, who had strong relationships with influential government officials, Ben H. Oehlert, a former lawyer for the State Department who joined Coca-Cola in 1938 as Assistant Counsel, was Coca-Cola's most important lobbyist. Oehlert started in his new position just as war broke out in Europe. He was quick to recognize the challenges and opportunities the war would bring. He looked to WWI to learn from the impact of previous wartime rations, and most important, he looked forward to ways the Company could position itself to profit, if not during, then soon after the war's end.<sup>15</sup>

Like Acklin, Oehlert directed his attention to the availability of sugar. It seemed inevitable that the diversion of resources to wartime production would limit sugar supplies for domestic consumption. Without a steady and reliable sugar supply, it would be impossible to sustain the Company's current level of syrup production. Although Oehlert did not know the scale, length, or level of participation the U.S. would face in the war, he was certain of two things. First, the war would impact business, and second, aligning with the government was the best way to turn the war to the Company's advantage.

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<sup>15</sup> For a thorough account of Coca-Cola's lobbying efforts to secure an exemption from sugar rationing during WWII, see Christina J. Hostetter, "Sugar Allies: How Hershey and Coca-Cola Used Government Contracts and Sugar Exemptions to Elude Sugar Rationing Regulations" (Master's Thesis, University of Maryland, 2004).

The price of sugar fluctuated often and to save money, the Company purchased it in large quantities whenever the price dropped. Because of this practice, Coca-Cola had a sizeable reserve, or surplus, of sugar that could be used in the event of a sharp increase in price or even wartime rations. However, Oehlert was quick to advise Acklin and Woodruff that if rationing were to begin, the Company should offer to sell its sugar cheaply to the government well before being asked or rations took effect.<sup>16</sup> Skilled in the arts of diplomacy and overt bartering, he hoped the Company would receive government favors and positive public opinion in exchange for its supply of sugar.

In addition to sugar, Oehlert wanted to deepen the connection between the Company and the military as a means of goodwill and support for the war. In case the government increased regulations and imposed higher business taxes, Oehlert wanted Coca-Cola to be in the best possible position to lobby for an exemption. Specifically, it occurred to him that the best way around rations was an exemption from them. Oehlert believed the Company would be able to capitalize on the popularity of the drink among military personnel by arguing for Coca-Cola's status as an "essential" item of war, which should be included in the rations prioritized and supplied to service members. War Department classification would shield the Company from restrictions and possibly even result in a government contract to supply the troops.

At stake in Oehlert's campaign to align the drink with the military were continued profits, increased esteem, and a rise in customer loyalty during and after the war. He had a precedent upon which to draw his argument that Coca-Cola boosted energy and morale. Oehlert brought back Coca-Cola's 1929 tagline, "The Pause that Refreshes," and set out

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<sup>16</sup> Memo from Ben Oehlert to Robert Woodruff, December 12, 1941, Ben H. Oehlert Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Library, Emory University.

to prove it true. Oehlert collaborated with Ralph Hayes, a fellow Washington lobbyist and former aide to Secretary of War Newton Baker. Together the men worked to gather information and supporting data to convince Woodruff.

Hayes did the initial leg-work and circulated an eight page memo internally on September 25, 1941. Entitled “Soft Drinks in War,” the memo argued that carbonated, sweet beverages, such as Coke, played a vital role for soldiers. The primary contention was that constant exercising and exertion of a huge amount of energy would produce men who are “more or less constantly thirsty.” In addition, Hayes argued, drinks with high sugar content supply increased caloric energy with good taste and low cost. In other words, rest periods that included the consumption of sugar would energize soldiers and keep them alert and in good spirits.<sup>17</sup>

Hayes provided evidence from a number of sources to support the argument that Coca-Cola would benefit the troops. Among them was a dispatch from Washington to the *New York Times* reporting that the ounce of chocolate contained in Type “C” canned field rations would be replaced by five hard candies of assorted flavors: “The idea behind the change is to provide tempting tid-bits so that the consumption of sugar between meals may be employed to revive the energy of marching men.”<sup>18</sup> Oehlert and Hayes argued that Coca-Cola would make the troops even more energized and effective. The Army already recognized the benefits of sugar intake between meals in the troop’s diet. Adding Coca-Cola to the strict food allowance given to the troops would enhance this military strategy.

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<sup>17</sup> Memorandum RE: Soft Drink in War prepared by Ralph Hayes, September 1941, Robert W. Woodruff Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Books Library, Emory University.

<sup>18</sup> “Hard Candy to Replace Field Ration Chocolate. Special to THE NEW YORK TIMES,” *The New York Times*, September 3, 1941, 9.

Hayes' memo also extensively cited labor publications. In particular, it referenced an issue of *Industrial Canada* which claimed that “[w]orkers need frequent rest pauses during which it should be easy to obtain refreshments likely to restore their physical and mental vigor.” A similar sentiment that specifically named Coca-Cola was included from the journal *Modern Industry* stating that “[i]f a man can leave his work for a minute or two, smoke a cigarette, drink a bottle of “coke,” or eat a candy bar, relax – he’ll do a better job, run less risk of accidents.” These ideas supported the assertion previously used by Coca-Cola that workers required a rest in order to work efficiently throughout the day.<sup>19</sup>

After receiving “Soft Drinks at War,” Oehlert sent Woodruff a follow-up memo referencing Hayes’ research and the feedback from others in the Company. Oehlert agreed about the messaging, and subsequently urged Woodruff to inform Coca-Cola’s public relations staff that the Company was “willing and prepared to spend a million-and-a-half dollars in newspaper advertising to put across its underlying concepts.”<sup>20</sup> Oehlert also wanted to ensure that medical physicians’ opinions of the drink were included. He incorporated a particularly persuasive statement by the late Senator Royal Samuel Copeland, a former Commissioner of Health of New York City, a medical doctor, and the Father of the Federal Food, Drug, and Cosmetic Act. In speaking of carbonated beverages in the past, Copeland had argued: “They are refreshing and delicious drinks. They set off a meal and are more acceptable frequently than plain water, and from a health standpoint

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<sup>19</sup> Press kit prepared by the Coca-Cola Company, “Importance of the Rest-Pause in Maximum War Effort,” 1942, Ben H. Oehlert Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>20</sup>“Memo from Ben H. Oehlert to Robert W. Woodruff”, September 24, 1941, Ben H. Oehlert Papers, Manuscript, Archive, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

these beverages are wholesome.”<sup>21</sup> An endorsement of soft drinks as “wholesome” by someone so well known to the government and medical community was an important step in convincing outsiders that the drink would benefit the troops’ well-being. After gathering support for his idea, Oehlert pushed Woodruff to do everything possible to bring his argument to a wider audience.

Woodruff had already begun to recognize that the war might provide new opportunities for the Company. He saw the potential of the drink’s popularity among servicemen. In the spring of 1941, an American reporter in London sent a cable to Coca-Cola’s New York office that said, “We, members of the associated press, cannot get coca-cola anymore. Terrible situation for Americans covering battle of Britain. Know you can help. Regards.”<sup>22</sup> Woodruff joined Oehlert in thinking that Coca-Cola could serve as “morale food” and a product understood as necessary to the war effort. Yet, this statement was made without the advice of the Export Corporation and without a clear plan of how the Company would pull it off.

The wheels were set in motion in the spring of 1942 when James Farley and the lobbying branch of the Company in Washington secured the Company an exemption from sugar rations for Coca-Cola supplied to U.S. soldiers at military bases at home or abroad.<sup>23</sup> The first offshore shipment to a military base was an order for 17,000 cases requested through the War Department to go to Reykjavik, Iceland. American troops

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<sup>21</sup> Memo from Ben Oehlert to Robert Woodruff, September 24, 1941, Ben H. Oehlert Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>22</sup> Telegram to Woodruff, Atlanta, GA, 1941. Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>23</sup> Letter from Ben Oehlert to P. B. Bacon, March 16, 1942, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. In addition to Coca-Cola, Wrigley’s Chewing Gum and Hershey’s Chocolate were exempt from sugar rations when supplying the products to the troops. For more on companies exempt from sugar rationing during WWII, see John Morton Blum, *V Was for Victory: Politics and American Culture During World War II* (Mariner Books, 1977), 108.

were sent there in September 1941 to guard an important airbase that is the halfway point between New York and Moscow on the Great Circle air route that connected these Allied cities. Just over one month after the attack on Pearl Harbor, an engineer from Coca-Cola named Albert Davis, who spoke no Icelandic, was sent to Reykjavik with a bottling unit. By May, the bottling plant was up and running and a new contract was signed with a leading Icelandic businessman to oversee the operation and sales.<sup>24</sup>

Oehlert, who had been in full support of Woodruff's pledge, was encouraged by the reception the drink received by the War Department and an Icelandic population introduced to it for the first time. Yet, Oehlert believed the Company could do more to show its support. He wrote another memo to Woodruff and requested that a discounted rate be offered to the military as an extra incentive for them to place orders. If Coca-Cola was to be sold at a fixed rate of a nickel, and cases were sold at 60 or 70 cents each, there would be a profit to the military. Oehlert reiterated that goodwill was good business. Forgoing profits during the war was an investment in a deepening consumer base that would secure increases in future profits. Oehlert urged Woodruff to follow-up on the pledge he had made to supply the troops by calling the President directly to offer the Company's help in the war effort. This was a unique opportunity and Woodruff took his advice.<sup>25</sup>

In a series of memos from the early 1940's, Oehlert directed Woodruff toward a new wartime strategy for the Coca-Cola Company, one in which a number of arguments about health benefits laid the groundwork for a markedly different corporate/government

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<sup>24</sup> Hunter Bell, Unpublished Manuscript, "From Iceland . . . to Iran," *The History of Coca-Cola*, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>25</sup> "Memo from Ben Oehlert to Robert Woodruff", December 12, 1941, Ben H. Oehlert Papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

partnership. Oehlert persistently argued that the Company should do everything possible to closely align itself to the government. In a June 1943 memo to Woodruff, Oehlert made clear the incredible benefits that could come from the war:

I believe that the greatest long-range opportunity which The Coca-Cola Company has ever had lies in the combination of circumstances that we have a capable and efficient export set up and that the government is exporting millions of American troops.

A proper attitude toward supplying Coca-Cola to those troops wherever they go can do us more good, both domestically and abroad, than could a generation of effort and millions spent in advertising and merchandising. . .

When the troops come back they will spend the rest of their lives in conscious or unconscious contemplation of their lives and experiences in the armed forces abroad.

Simultaneously, the widespread use of Coca-Cola by those troops abroad will place the product and its trade-mark in unprecedented position with the civilian population of the countries in which those troops move and act. I hope and plead that The Coca-Cola Company, more than it ever has before, will strain every resource to get and keep all of this Army business which it possibly can and that in so doing it will forget completely all questions of immediate profits and will see to it that Coca-Cola is supplied in adequate quantities all over the world to the troops regardless of cost.<sup>26</sup>

Oehlert was certain that even if Coca-Cola made no profit during the war, long-term benefits would surface when the war ended and the troops came home. He imagined Coca-Cola as a global brand that would be elevated and held in great esteem for its patriotic service. The patriotic link, in turn, would strengthen loyalty to the Coca-Cola Company from those who found comfort in that small reminder of home when serving their country. Oehlert was convinced that a greater profit would come later in terms of

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<sup>26</sup> Memo from Ben Oehlert to Robert Woodruff, June 13, 1942, Ben H. Oehlert Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

domestic sales and international expansion. He knew that Coca-Cola could not buy the publicity and exposure it would receive during the war. Surely, this was worth whatever the cost to the Company in the short run.

Oehlert had a vested interest when he served on official government advisory committees, including the Soft Drink Industry Committee and the Industrial Sugar Uses and Industrial Food Advisory Committee of the War Food Administration, as well as the Soft Drink Advisory Committee of the Office of Price Administration. In June 1943, Oehlert wrote a letter to Marvin Jones in the newly created War Food Administration, and argued that Coca-Cola should be considered an essential item. “Domestic exchanges,” he suggested, “will not be entitled to any preferential treatment over civilian enterprises except for those items deemed essential to soldier morale which will be defined as including confections, soft drinks, ice cream, tobacco products, essential toilet articles and equipment cleaning kits, and materials.”<sup>27</sup> Oehlert wanted to make clear to Jones that unless Coca-Cola was granted the status of an essential item, domestic military exchanges selling the drink to troops would face shortages just like the general public. He continued to rest his argument on troop morale and physical stamina to further convince Jones that Coca-Cola was beneficial. Sugar rations were inevitable in the domestic civilian market, but restrictions would be lifted if sugar were deemed necessary for the production of food supplies included in troop rations. In other words, Coca-Cola would be able to purchase as much sugar as needed to supply the troops. Coca-Cola’s designation as an essential item would go beyond occasional military requests for the drink. It would direct the War Department to make Coca-Cola standard issue in the

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<sup>27</sup> Letter from Ben Oehlert to Marvin Jones, Washington D.C., August 9, 1943, Ben H. Oehlert Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.



soldiers' daily rations. An alignment with the military would allow the Company increased access to sugar, continued sales, and access to overseas wartime markets. It would alleviate the slowdown in sales otherwise expected due to the war.

The next step in Oehlert's campaign was to create a more polished version of Hayes's memo "Soft Drinks in War" that he named the "Importance of the Rest-Pause in Maximum War Effort." Widely circulated to members of the press, the War Department, and Congress, it was a clear statement of Oehlert's objective with the evidence to back it up. The tone was urgent, emphasizing the heavy toll and burden of war. Naming fatigue as a threat and enemy to workers, it linked together the benefits of rest and sugar to industrial and military labor alike. The document opened with the assertion that "the grim and ruthless laboratory of War brings new and cogent evidence reaffirming the importance and significance of this relationship between fatigue, rest-pauses, refreshment and work-output."<sup>28</sup> The document cited a physiologist published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* who wrote, "We cannot win the war with work alone. Work demands rest, good food and wholesome recreation, which implies physical and mental fitness." This, in turn, was followed by page after page of newspaper articles, selected quotations, and letters from industrial and military leaders supporting the benefit of "the pause that refreshes."<sup>29</sup>

Oehlert's promotional piece reminded readers that "[a] nation at war strains forward in productive effort in a new tempo of *must*... In times like these Coca-Cola is doing a necessary job for workers – putting its shoulder to the wheel in factory, farm, workshop,

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<sup>28</sup> "Importance of the Rest-Pause in Maximum War Effort," 1942, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. This document was circulated as patriotic promotional literature. The booklet was decorated with stars around the border and there was a patriotic eagle centered below the title.

<sup>29</sup> Ibid.

office and at home – bringing welcome refreshment to the doers of things.” Above and beyond the benefits of sugar and rest, the document emphasized Coca-Cola’s efforts to work alongside the government and join the ranks of those who are American in nationality and spirit. The document closed with a tribute to uniquely American tastes: “In these days of all-out war effort, Americans turn to their sparkling beverage as naturally as the English turn to their cup of tea and the South Americans to their coffee. They have found that relaxation plus a refreshing drink doubles the value of a rest-pause...sends them back to work cheered and strengthened.”<sup>30</sup>

Coca-Cola actively looked to strengthen its relationship with the military but the result it wanted came from the War Department’s affirmative response to General Eisenhower’s request for Coca-Cola Oran, Algeria in North Africa, and the larger Mediterranean region where American troops were stationed. His War Department cablegram was originally classified as a Top Secret communication. In 1942, Eisenhower requested his favorite soft drink, which in turn, led to an exclusively military contract for Coca-Cola.<sup>31</sup>

The War Department published guidelines for this contract in Circular No. 51 on February 4, 1944 by order of The Secretary of War, G.C. Marshall, Chief of Staff:

1. In order to save space on shipping arrangements will be made whenever possible to prepare and bottle the drink in local establishments at maximum efficiency.
2. When the above is not possible a requisition must be made through the appropriate port of embarkation on The Quarter Master General [the staff officer in charge of supplies for the whole army] for equipment and supplies.
3. Bottling for overseas command can be done by the manufacturer of the beverage, by a local firm, or by an Army exchange.
4. To establish new plants requisitions must state the name or description of the drink, equipment necessary, and initial quantities of bottling supplies, who

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<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Eisenhower’s cablegram requesting Coca-Cola was re-classified and released in 1966.

will operate the plant, whether a new plant is being built or an existing one expanded, in whose care equipment must be shipped, and wherever possible property should be labeled as from manufacturer or local firm.

5. Request should indicate the period for which supplies are required and the contact info for bottler.
6. When equipment or supplies are shipped Quartermaster Corps property funds received in payment for sales will be turned over the local disbursing officer.<sup>32</sup>

Marshall's guidelines were significant because he specified that officers could order brand name goods that could be produced by the manufacturer, a local firm, or by an Army exchange. Allowing Coca-Cola to establish new plants and oversee production gave rise to an unprecedented military program that blurred the lines between public and private business operations.

Not surprisingly, Pepsi registered a formal complaint that this practice would give Coca-Cola a monopoly but Marshall's order prevailed in allowing this practice. Pepsi is an example of companies that were not able to use the war as a vehicle for foreign expansion or even continued domestic expansion. However, this did not mean that it halted production during the war or even conceded victory over Coca-Cola's monopoly on military bases. Pepsi did not have a contract with the military but it did sponsor three large Serviceman Centers, in New York, Washington, D.C., and San Francisco. Servicemen were served free Pepsi and cheap food. Additionally, soldiers could shower, get their pants pressed, and even send recorded and written messages home. Pepsi was able to stay visible among the troops stationed in the U.S. but without a military contract they were left out of the action overseas.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>32</sup> War Department Circular No. 5, 1, issued by order of The Secretary of War, G.C. Marshall, Chief of Staff, February 4, 1944, Ben H. Oehlert Papers, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>33</sup> For more on Pepsi during WWII, see Allen, *Secret Formula*, 255; Pendergrast, *For God, Country, and Coca-Cola*, 205; "Pepsi-Cola's Walter Mack," *Fortune*, November 1947; "Cola Climax," *Business Week*, November 27, 1943, 90; E. J. Jr. Kahn, "More Bounce to the Ounce," *New Yorker*, July 1, 1950, 43-44.

The War Department sent Coca-Cola engineer, Albert Thombforde, on a high priority military plane with bottling units that were made available for military purposes only. TO Thombforde's first mission was to establish a bottling plant in Oran, Algeria before the first of the year. Oran was the Army's principal port of entry into North Africa and Thombforde succeeded slightly ahead of schedule. Coca-Cola was ready for the active troops and the wounded in hospitals in North Africa by Christmas that year. Additionally, Thombforde worked through the holiday and established a second bottling plant in Naples that served American G.I.s in Italy.<sup>34</sup>

### **Hail, the Invasion of Technical Observers: Coca-Cola Join the U.S. Armed Forces**

A total of 248 TOs were sent overseas by the Coca-Cola Company. Together they created 63 plants around the world and served over five billion bottles of Coke by the war's end. The number of new plants was a direct correlation to the Company's continued success. The TO program doubled the number of overseas plants during the three years it was in effect. New plants were established in Africa, Europe, Asia, and the South Pacific.<sup>35</sup>

The military issued uniforms to TOs uniforms that were identical to those given to soldiers. What distinguished them were the initials "TO" on one shoulder and bars on the other that represented an assigned rank based on their Coca-Cola salary. Each TO was attached to a military unit. One great distinction between the TOs and the G.I.s was that

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<sup>34</sup> Hunter Bell, "Unpublished Manuscript, History of Coca-Cola", n.d., Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>35</sup> During the war bottling plants were established in Adak in the Aleutian Islands; Cairo, Accra, Tripoli, Oman, Algiers and Casablanca in Africa; in Australia and New Zealand; throughout France, Italy, Germany and Austria; in Calcutta, Chabua, Delhi, and Ledo in India; on Okinawa, Kobe, and Yokahama in the Japanese Islands; throughout the South Pacific in the Admiralty Islands, the Marianas, New Guinea, and the Philippines; in the Persian Gulf; and in Natal and Recife in Brazil. Ibid.

TOs remained civilians during the war. Before they were admitted into the program they had to appeal for an exemption from the Draft Board and after they were accepted they were deployed without weapons. All were witnesses to the war from the vantage point of the troops, but even those stationed on the frontlines were prohibited from taking an active role in the war. Their title, in short, was descriptive; they were sent as observers to the war who provided technical assistance in bottling Coca-Cola.<sup>36</sup>

The differing experiences of TOs were captured in periodic letters sent back to the Company. A compilation of these dispatches were printed in a newsletter that came to be known as “*TO Digest*” that was distributed to TOs and Coca-Cola Company employees.<sup>37</sup> The writings of TOs chronicled the conditions of war, success in production, and observations about the locations and locals they encountered. Some spoke to each other regularly on the phone and others were close enough to visit, but TOs stationed in remote locations especially appreciated the *Digest*. Their observations and reflections captured in the *Digest* are particularly helpful in providing a glimpse into what globalization looked like on the ground, for it was the TOs who were first responsible for the creation of new bottling plants and infiltrating untouched markets.

In most cases, the first dispatch from each TO depicted the journey taken in reaching their unit, remarks on their surroundings, and their initial efforts to establish production. These men, all civilians, were sent overseas on military ships and aircrafts and were expected to begin their work upon reaching their destinations, in very

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<sup>36</sup> TO Paul Madden recounted his experience getting permission from the Draft Board to join the Technical Observer program. He said, “When I was first approached on the idea I guess I was a little old for the army to come get me. But I had to go to the Draft Board and get permission. It was not too difficult but it took a little while.” Madden’s experience as a TO was recorded in an interview with Hunter Bell, March 2, 1966, Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>37</sup> The first edition was called *ETO Digest*. The “E” stood for Europe, but eventually TOs were dispatched to the Pacific and their experiences were included too, which led to dropping the “E” in the title.

unfamiliar settings. Despite their lack of basic training, they were also expected to fall in line abiding by strict military discipline alongside the troops.

In letters sent to Coca-Cola headquarters, the vast majority of the TOs expressed respect for and pride in the American Armed Forces. TO Don Cowan wrote, for example, “Have finally settled here on the island of Sardinia where I am operating a plant. Have been in several of our operations in North Africa and Italy, and believe me all of the boys are doing an excellent job and I am certainly mighty proud to be connected with them.”<sup>38</sup> Cowan was impressed by the skill and efficiency of the different military units he encountered on his tour through the Mediterranean.

Joe Heffner similarly wrote from the Philippines, “we are learning firsthand what some of the boys are going through. When you witness some of the hardships they endure, you can more readily appreciate why every consideration must be given to them first.”<sup>39</sup> Apart from the difficulties that rations posed to business and the imposition to consumers back home, the firsthand observation of hardships faced by the troops humbled many TOs, which caused them to feel that the G.I.s deserved every comfort and consideration possible. The TOs were representatives of Coca-Cola who believed that serving the troops would not only create loyal customers but made life during wartime a little bit more bearable.

Many TO dispatches emphasized the immense pleasure of handing over ice cold Coca-Colas to soldiers who had not seen one since leaving home. This satisfaction, and

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<sup>38</sup> *TO Digest*, Don Cowan, Sardinia, July 11, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>39</sup> *T.O Digest*, Joe Heffner, Philippines, February 11, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

the interaction with the troops, proved to be emotionally moving, again and again. TO Jim Parham in New Guinea wrote that:

The fellows in the Admiralty Islands hadn't seen ice or tasted any kind of cold drink from six months to a year or more. After spending 12 years with the Coca-Cola Co. this was a treat really appreciated by the representatives to place a machine in operation for the first cold drinks to the men. The expressions: "I can't believe it; the home folks haven't really forgotten us." "This is the first one since we left San Francisco." "Haven't had a Coke in fourteen months." "This one tastes better than the last one."<sup>40</sup>

Coca-Cola became an emblem of First World technological comforts. According to the TOs, it was gratitude from the troops that made the job worthwhile, especially to those stationed along the front lines. Dozens of TO accounts echoed this sentiment.

But it was not just the sweet taste of Coca-Cola that brought back fond memories of home. Coca-Cola was also a visual symbol and a brand with broader visceral meaning. In New Guinea, George J. Ross wrote of the reactions a hand-painted Coca-Cola sign elicited on the base where he was stationed:

I installed a make-shift carbonator at the officers' club here on the base and then requested permission to put a sign over the Coke bar, not as an advertisement, but as a morale builder... I was very much interested to their reaction and remarks as to what they would say. Standing close to one Colonel I overheard him say, 'This is the first time in 32 months here that it seems like home. That sign just does something to you.'<sup>41</sup>

This reaction, of course, to Coca-Cola was what Oehlert hoped to sell to the military.

Over time Coca-Cola was being inextricably linked with home and the U.S. in the minds of the G.I.s who served in WWII. The literal attachment of TOs and Coca-Cola to the military further solidified these links.

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<sup>40</sup> *TO Digest*, Jim Parham, New Guinea, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>41</sup> *T. O. Digest*, George J. Ross, New Guinea, November 19, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Beyond the gratification of providing a comfort in the form of Coca-Cola to the troops, TOs also wrote about serving those who were injured as a particularly heartwarming experience. TO Herb Lyers stationed in London remembered “one poor devil not too long ago with one leg and one arm gone, had given up – until the nurse asked him if he wanted a “Coca-Cola.” He told the nurse not to kid him – that only at home could he get such a thing. When he really did get a drink he cried like a baby because it reminded him so much of home.”<sup>42</sup> In this way Coca-Cola became much more than a novelty or the simple pleasure of a cool sweet drink.

Perhaps because it seemed the least they could do for those who had sacrificed so much in the war, TOs placed continued emphasis on the recipients who were injured. TO Gene Braendle in New Guinea wrote:

It would do your heart good to see those lined up at the various Post Exchanges. This is especially true at the many fifteen hundred bed hospitals scattered throughout this entire theatre of operations. Men on crutches, in wheel chairs, men with bandaged hands, some who cannot see – all lined up by the hundreds to get their Cokes. It makes you feel all tied up inside and long for just one more carbonator, one piece of stainless steel, one roll of block tin tubing – anything that you can safely mix water and CO2 to give these fellows what they want.<sup>43</sup>

Supplying bottles of Coke to those who were injured was particularly important because it emphasized Coca-Cola’s ability to boost the morale of the soldiers most in need. By delivering a small piece of home or a familiar comfort in a time of danger, the TOs redefined the meaning and impact of the Coca-Cola they served the troops.

In these examples about the experiences and satisfaction of serving the troops, TOs wrote to a wider audience than each other. Their audience included Coca-Cola

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<sup>42</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Herb Lyers, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>43</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Gene Braendle, New Guinea, October 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.



employees who were not part of the TO program and their American families who were also avid readers of the *Digest*. For example, TO Braendle wrote that he was humbled by the gratitude from the troops; he wrote that “it would do your heart good,” addressing the reader who had not witnessed such bravery and delight from wounded soldiers receiving bottles of Coca-Cola. These sentimental reflections from TOs captured their patriotic support for the war and paid homage to the sacrifice that soldiers made for their country. It is noteworthy that there are dozens of similar dispatches from TOs who wanted to share their experience of bringing Coca-Cola to the troops far from home with a wider American civilian public.

Yet the TOs sentimentality did more than patriotically celebrate the troops and Coca-Cola. Read against the grain, TOs reflections justified the fact that the military privileged the Coca-Cola Company and financially underwrote its global expansion. The TOs dispatches placed them in locations that their American audience might not have known much about. The *Digest* provided access to the TOs personal experiences but also served as a map of where in the world American G.I.s were stationed and fighting. The TOs sentimental and patriotic representations of the troops painted U.S. wartime occupation in terms of gratitude and bravery. Therefore, evidence that the TOs and Coca-Cola were appreciated by American G.I.s and part of a greater good erased any possibility that Coca-Cola and American soldiers were not welcomed everywhere with open arms. This evidence of appreciation and goodwill also justified occupation and corporate global expansion.

The affiliation between Coca-Cola and the military meant that the troops were not the only ones who faced hardships. TOs were often housed alongside troops, ate military

rations, and suffered through the same extreme weather conditions. Tongue-in-cheek, Phil Rubenstein wrote from New Guinea:

At present we're experiencing a severe drought – it hasn't rained for the last two hours. The best method to use on this island is to jump into a large mud-hole upon arising in the A.M., roll around for five minutes (fully dressed, of course), stick your head into the mud – and then get out. In this way we can eliminate trying to dodge mud the balance of the day, and walking becomes much less troublesome. "Beautiful Pacific Islands!" – Isn't that the way the brochures used to read?"<sup>44</sup>

The reference to travel brochures is telling. Many of the men knew little of the places where they were sent, especially in the Pacific. And it was not just the rain and mud that TOs encountered; often heat was a problem.

Sam Holden, also stationed in New Guinea, wrote: "From my observations the glamour of the tropics is just something that one reads about in travel books and romantic novels – well, maybe it's here but I can't see it. The temperature today was 140 F. in the sun. When I return home I am going to sit in a butcher's icebox to see how it feels to be cool again – you think I'm kidding?"<sup>45</sup> These comments reveal some of the ideas stemming from popular assumptions that traveled with TOs – assumptions that were quickly shattered. They had a job to do regardless of heat, cold, rain, or snow, and were often ill equipped for the conditions they faced. Ed McGlade in Tripolitania wrote this of the cold: "Brooks Bros. said we wouldn't need woolen clothes for the Middle East. They had better revise their lists."<sup>46</sup> In many respects, though, the weather was the least of their problems.

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<sup>44</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Phil Rubenstein, New Guinea, July 25, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>45</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Sam Holden, New Guinea, March 25, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>46</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Ed McGlade, Tripolitania, January 1, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

TOs signed up with a sense of adventure and loyalty to the Company but also with the knowledge that they could find themselves in danger. On August 30, 1944, Paul Bacon, stationed in Paris, wrote: “This place is infested with snipers. I came thru with the first messenger jeep. Five of us with machine guns, pistols, and things. It was non-stop. I had half a ration can of chopped ham and eggs the only food in 34 hours.”<sup>47</sup> TOs, like Bacon, stationed near the frontlines, traveled with the troops in order to provide the beverage where and when they could. They kept the same schedules and faced the same dangers. Without guns or military training, this assignment could be stressful and scary. On his arrival in London, Lyers reported that he “had three near misses the first twelve hours there.” He went on to write: I’ve since become more or less used to bombers crashing around me and had one Lancaster last fall let go with nine one thousand pounders just two hundred yards away.”<sup>48</sup> Lyers was more fortunate than some of the other TOs sent abroad.

Over the course of the war, three TOs were killed in plane crashes heading to, or returning from, assignments. Jake Sutton was the first to lose his life. He died in a plane crash on February 23, 1945, returning to Cairo from an inspections tour of the plants in Khartoum and Asmara. He was buried with full military honors in the American Military Cemetery in Khartoum. In response to this tragic event, the board of directors at Coca-Cola released the following statement: “He has performed a great patriotic service to our country and has proved himself true to the best traditions and spirit in The Coca-Cola

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<sup>47</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Paul Bacon, Paris, August 30, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>48</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Herb Lyers, London, February 18, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

Company.”<sup>49</sup> Sutton was honored as an American patriot and as a Coca-Cola employee. His loss was devastating to the Company. Many Company employees who had enlisted or were drafted into service lost their lives in the line of duty, but it was an especially difficult losing a TO who was a civilian and an active Company employee.

The reports of experiences from TOs were not all somber or filled with tales of hardship, however. Many TOs lived comfortably and enjoyed their assignment. The TOs in Oran, Algeria wrote: “. . . but for the fact we know there is a war on, one would think we were on a pleasure trip.”<sup>50</sup> A similar dispatch from TO McGlade in Tripolitania reported that despite the war, he was living in “luxurious conditions in a beautifully clean city on the beach in a villa commandeered by the British with a living room, dining room, library, breakfast room, three bedrooms, three bathrooms, and servant quarters in the basement.”<sup>51</sup>

Much of the difference in wartime experiences stemmed from where TOs were stationed. Especially for those in outposts and bases away from the frontlines, there were hardships but few dangers. In fact, some felt there was little to do once the plants were fully operational. Stationed on the Admiralty Isles, R.J. Cook wrote, “[l]ife on the base is quite dull, with nothing much to do except to sit around the officer’s club and have a few drinks.”<sup>52</sup> With time to spare in India, Sydney W. McCabe wrote, “I have had a chance to

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<sup>49</sup> *TO Digest*, Vol. 1, No. 4, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>50</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Arthur McCash, Pat O’Maley, and Jim Salter, Oran, June 14, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>51</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Ed McGlade, Tripolitania, January 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>52</sup> *T. O. Digest*, R.J. Cook, Admiralty Isles, January 29, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

do some hunting. I have so far gotten a nice buck with a fair set of antler.”<sup>53</sup> This juxtaposition of hunting for sport against the brutality of war is striking. While some confronted death and destruction as daily reminders of their efforts to support the troops, others in parallel circumstances were far removed from the atrocities of war, with food enough to eat and an ample supply of soft and hard drink. Days could be divided between work and play. Cumulative experiences of TOs, such as Cook and McGlade, reflected a great many contrasts between a life of war versus one of peace, safety versus danger, the realm of business versus the realm of military, and last but not least, the sphere of American power versus that of native labor.

### **Racial Capitalism and Native Labor**

Labor was a prominent theme in the *Digest*. The TO’s were sent overseas to assemble the machinery to manufacture and bottle Coca-Cola –a hard job given the limited supplies they had on hand and the varying conditions the encountered. It was this work that brought them into contact with the native populations the Company hired to help with production. The contact that TOs had with local workers, who were culturally and often racially different than they were, was rife with tension and frustration.

The TOs mission was to secure sites for bottling by either converting existing local plants or assembling machinery and supplies that were provided by the U.S. military. In some cases, they had access to fully operational bottling and ice cream plants that were easily converted to the task of bottling and cooling the drink. Yet some TOs were not so fortunate, as Paul Madden wrote from “somewhere in New Guinea:” “We

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<sup>53</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Sydney W. McCabe, India, October 30, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

have all become a bunch of traders and scroungers; money is no good except for incidentals and gambling, so you trade for anything you want. It was by such means, plus a little legitimate stealing, that all the fittings for the plant were obtained.”<sup>54</sup> In war, of course, machine parts were not always easy to come by. Systems of stores and purchase were not always available and in many locations the black market was the best or only way to procure what was needed. To get the work done, Coca-Cola men regularly traded, stole, and most importantly, secured help from the military and sought out a native supply of labor for the actual production.

The troops provided extraordinary help when they could spare the time because of their eagerness for the drink. Jim Salter, for example, noted that “[t]he G.I.s over on this side of the water appreciate their ‘Coca-Cola.’ You can really see that when they find out a plant is going to be installed around their vicinity. You have all kinds of offers of help from them. They seem to be as anxious to get the plants into operation as we are.”<sup>55</sup>

Help from the military generally included construction of plants, procurement of parts, and repair of broken machinery. Syd Williams in Recife, Brazil wrote about the help he received from the Navy repair shop that built and repaired a list of items he requested all with good humor. He wrote: “We have certainly gotten the finest cooperation from the Army in every way and it is a pleasure to work with them.”<sup>56</sup>

Braendle wrote again from New Guinea: “We are happy to state that as yet, we haven’t been stopped cold but we have run around in plenty of circles to get the job done. The

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<sup>54</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Paul Madden, New Guinea, August 21, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>55</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Jim Slater, August 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>56</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Syd Williams, Recife, February 6, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

one most important thing in our favor is the fact that everyone from the Base Commander down to the lowly private are vitally concerned in the Coke situation and go all out to help us all the possibly can.”<sup>57</sup> Such support from the military was necessary to keep a steady output of Coca-Cola flowing. This cooperation between military and business often allowed bottling plants to take hold in new and unlikely places that were made permanent and flourished after the war.

Beyond the additional support provided by military assistance, TOs nevertheless required a full-time workforce in locations that could support a fully operational plant. By the end of the war, some plants ran 24 hours a day. To sustain that level of output, TOs needed full-time workers and turned to the local population. This posed a number of difficulties, including the fact that many of the TOs did not speak the local language. For instance, Bill Lawo in Cairo wrote, “We are beginning to get on to the Arabic language now, but it was pretty tough at first. We got an Arabic-English book and could make them understand us perfectly but we couldn’t understand them when they answered us, so we threw the book away and learned the hard way.”<sup>58</sup> Communication required interpreters. Another TO in the Middle East, Watt Lovett, wrote “Of course, I can’t talk with them but I can point like hell. They usually know what I mean. My interpreter, a 14-year old red-headed kid, speaks English, French, Arabic, Italian, and Spanish. He calls himself Coca-Cola, Jr.”<sup>59</sup> Even those stationed in France, Spain, and Italy reported

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<sup>57</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Gene Braendle, New Guinea, August 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>58</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Bill Lawo, Cairo August, 28, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>59</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Watt Lovett, Tunis, August 13, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

difficulties with the languages. The language barriers were profound, but beyond language there was also a cultural divide in the labor force they employed.

In their writings about the local workforce, the team of white TOs frequently mentioned cultural and racial differences. Workers were allowed a ration of free Coca-Cola each day, which made them the first test cases in new markets for sales after the war. But in the meantime, local workers produced Coca-Cola exclusively for American G.I.s. The War Department strictly enforced the sale of Coca-Cola in military outlets. This meant that the TOs did not cultivate relationships with local people as customers, only as workers. The TOs observations and opinions provide an on-the-ground look at some of the tensions that surfaced in the exchange of goods and services. While not all TOs regarded native laborers in the same way, there is definitely a pattern of opinions remarking on the native laborer's "laziness," "poor hygiene," and "childlike" wonder at the technology needed for bottling operations.

One example, regarding Arab workers in Cairo, was sent in by Bill Lawo:

To begin with – we have about 40 natives employed and they are constant source of both laughs and headaches. In the beginning they were very shy of the machinery and now they are very intrigued by it and their childlike love for turning switches off and on without warning is going to make the Arab death rate go way up, if it doesn't stop damned soon. Our next problem was to initiate them into the mysteries of taking a daily shower, both before and after finishing work.<sup>60</sup>

Lawo's description and condescension captured an important tension. The "childlike" Arabs, after all, were also future Coca-Cola customers. The corporate mission was global expansion and a wide embrace of the world's people when it came to encouraging new consumer sales and increasing profit. However, interpersonally, TOs exported their

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<sup>60</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Bill Lawo, Cairo August 28, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.



American cultural biases with the drink. Lawo's paternalistic concern for Arab worker's safety and his criticism of their hygiene was not limited to the Middle East.

There were also complaints about the French worker's slow acclimation to American standards of cleanliness and sanitation. TO John T. Lane wrote the following:

[They] are adapting themselves to operating our machines and to doing things the American way. The novelty of the size and speed of the machinery is starting to wear off and their curiosity is subsiding... We were a little dubious as to the success we would have in making them realize the importance of cleanliness, but this afternoon, as we came through the bottling plants, we noticed one of the employees hosing down the floor, and, lo and behold, if he didn't have a piece of blocked pipe, left over from our syrup line, shoved in the end of his water hose to make the floor washing sanitary! So I guess we are succeeding.<sup>61</sup>

In Lane's reference of the "American way," he targeted the underlying mission of the program, that of disciplining a foreign workforce while simultaneously creating loyal customers. An American standard for cleanliness was as important as familiarity with American industrial technology. The TOs measured local workers against themselves, a highly skilled workforce of white Americans. Their observations were not neutral; they did not see groups of workers who failed to meet their standards as their equals.

Similar in content was a post from New Guinea by TO Sam Holden. His racialized take on native labor, while derogatory, recognized that these local workers were tomorrow's consumers, even as that very idea seemed laughable to him at the time.

He wrote:

Let me tell you of an amusing incident that happened yesterday. A Fuzzy-Wuzzy native was passing by the plant... I offered him a drink of "Coca-Cola." At first he was a little skeptical and reluctant but after a little persuasion he sniffed at it, stuck his tongue in it and then drank it down rather fast. Then the fun began. He belched, the gas went up his nose and brought tears to his eyes. He was a scared

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<sup>61</sup> *T. O. Digest*, John T. Lane, Paris, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

native for a few minutes. So now it can be said that we have sampled and opened up a new outlet – the Fuzzy-Wuzzy market.<sup>62</sup>

Holden's pejorative nickname for the native people he encountered, which referred to the texture of their hair, signaled that the people of New Guinea were visibly different. The local man at the center of Holden's story, who was scared or alarmed by the tickling sensation of drinking a carbonated beverage too quickly, was described as primitive. In this example, Coca-Cola stood in as the symbol of a technologically advanced American society. What seemed to amuse Holden most was the fact that these culturally and racially primitive people represented a new outlet for Coca-Cola.

By Underwood, the TO who served in remote New Britain in Papua, New Guinea, wrote in a more serious tone on the topic of reaching this new market: "I haven't seen many future "Coca-Cola" drinkers at either place except our own Army boys."<sup>63</sup> In the eyes of the TOs this new market was one that needed first to be indoctrinated into the industrialized world of consumer goods and mass marketing. At times, the *Digest* reads like posts by missionaries marveling at the backwardness of the people that they are encountering and saving.<sup>64</sup> TO accounts narrated locals' bewilderment at the machinery and the carbonation in the drink, as if in the locals were stepping out of a primitive wilderness and into a modern world previously unknown to them.

Yet, it was not a simple cross-cultural comparison between the white American TOs and the local workers they encountered in the Middle East and the Pacific. The TOs were escorted to their posts by a segregated U.S. military and had firsthand experience of

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<sup>62</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Sam Holden, New Guinea, March 10, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>63</sup> *T. O. Digest*, By Underwood, New Britain, August 3, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>64</sup> Clare Pettitt, *Dr. Livingstone, I Presume?: Missionaries, Journalists, Explorers, and Empire* (Harvard University Press, 2007).

the racial hierarchy that structured the American workforce. Few TOs were well-travelled. For many, the only knowledge they had of different cultures was from exposure to the ethnic immigrant communities they had encountered in the US. The comparisons that TOs made were not only to themselves but along ethnic and racial lines that they familiar from home. TOs referenced American racial stereotypes as a kind of short-hand to describe the workers they encountered to the *Digest's* audience at home.<sup>65</sup>

In a telling example from Tripolitania, McGlade wrote that the TOs "...have had all the cooperation possible from the local people and from the Army." But he went on to complain that "the locals have the habit of doing everything "domain" (tomorrow). In this they are all kin of our Mexicans on the west coast."<sup>66</sup> This comparison made clear that dealings with Middle- Eastern people were similar to dealing with Mexicans and Mexican Americans. Old stereotypes that connected a specific race with laziness were now transplanted onto the foreign people McGlade encountered. His comparison was loaded with racial meanings and consequences. TOs exported and deployed American racial hierarchies. These observations worked to clearly establish that Arabs and Mexicans alike are not white and therefore not equal to, or as capable as, white workers.

Between 1943 and 1945, the *Digest* published accounts that represented the geographical diverse range of locations where TOs served the troops. There was also a diverse range of experiences from TOs on the frontlines and those who were stationed in locations far from battle. Similarly, there was representation from TOs stationed in

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<sup>65</sup> For scholarship on the American racial mindset in the 1940s and the challenges to that mindset during WWII, see Ronald Takaki, *Double Victory: A Multicultural History of America in World War II* (Back Bay Books, 2001); Winant, *The World Is a Ghetto*; Beth L. Bailey and David Farber, *The First Strange Place: Race and Sex in World War II Hawaii* (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1994).

<sup>66</sup> *T. O. Digest*, McGlade, Tripolitania, January 1, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

technically advanced countries and those stationed in developing countries. The one area in which TO observations were singular in nature was the descriptions of local workers and potential consumers. Dozens of negative comparisons were made between local populations. At times, TOs noted improvements; in the case of French workers it was reported that they were adapting to American standards of hygiene. Yet, overall, TO's remarks were less constructive, especially when the workers in question were marked as non-white. For example, the TO in Sardinia wrote that workers "didn't know what cleanliness was and it seemed like everyone tried to get dirtier than the next person." In Tunis, the TO boasted: "Every once in a while I give them a bar of soap and have the water hose turned on them. Otherwise they start to smell like that well known goat."<sup>67</sup> This is not to say that TOs never worked together harmoniously with local workers. But it is noteworthy that either TOs did not record such interactions or the editors of the *Digest* did not publish them.

The fact that TOs participated in the larger racializing process of global capitalism did not distract from their mission to establish bottling plants in new countries and regions of the world. In fact, this race making helped them identify and organize the local workforces. In this way, the TOs as managers did their job efficiently and effectively. At the end of the war when the troops went home the TOs stayed. As Dick Foster in Saipan put it: "The greatest news that has happened out this way since my last letter was V-J Day...August 15, when it all became official, all work on the island stopped, except the Coca-Cola plant."<sup>68</sup> For Coca-Cola, the real work was just beginning. TOs imported the

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<sup>67</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Don Cowan, Sardinia, July 11, 1944 and Watt Lovett, Tunis, August 13, 1944, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

<sup>68</sup> *T. O. Digest*, Dick Foster, Saipan, September 5, 1945, Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

machinery and supplies they needed to increase foreign output. Now that the war was over, and U.S. military restrictions were lifted, the civilian population could be targeted as consumers.

The coincidence of new plant openings with Allied victories helped make Coca-Cola synonymous with freedom. Six weeks after D-day in 1944, a new Coca-Cola bottling plant was up and running in Brussels, Belgium. Similarly, Company men followed the Army into Berlin soon after V-E day and established a plant. In the Pacific theater, five plants were established in Japan after V-J Day and the bombing of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. Coca-Cola's entry into foreign markets, in other words, was virtually simultaneous with military advances. The TOs and their equipment were transported on military vehicles and at the military's expense. At the end of WWII, Coca-Cola returned to the civilian marketplace a patriotic drink now linked with victory and freedom.

## **Conclusion**

The TO program ran for six years and its ending coincided with the creation of a new Coca-Cola publication. In June 1948, *Coca-Cola Overseas* replaced *TO Digest* with an inaugural issue that featured a speech by J.F. Curtis, Executive Vice President of the Coca-Cola Export Corporation, at the Convention of Coca-Cola Bottlers in March of that same year. In his speech, Curtis recounted the story of the three billion drinks that were supplied to the American Armed Forces overseas. More importantly, he updated the Company on Coca-Cola's reach around the world. In 1947 the Company added 76 new

bottlers in 28 countries. The Company had offices in 46 countries and a total of 354 bottlers outside of the U.S.

After wartime shortages of machinery and materials were alleviated, expansion and sales climbed quickly. Curtis argued that Coca-Cola's success was due to the universality of the drink:

One problem these new bottlers will not have is getting their public to accept our product. We believe that the acceptability of Coca-Cola anywhere on the face of the earth has already been amply proved. We see this proof in the per capitās of Iceland with her Norsemen, of China with her Mongolians, of the Philippines with her Malaysians, of the Pacific Islands with their Micronesians, of Mexico with her Peons, of South America with her white, Indian and negro population, and Egypt with her followers of Mohammed. When we measure our volume against the per capita income of the masses of Mexico, Egypt, the Philippines, and of China, we must conclude that purchasing power does not hinder the sale of our product. Consumer acceptance of Coca-Cola and a profitable sales volume are assured wherever we go not matter what the country's climate or its purchasing power.<sup>69</sup>

The postwar gains were impressive. These new markets were introduced to the drink because of the TO program that established bottling plants through a military sponsored program that financially backed the Company's expansion. There is no way of telling if Coca-Cola might have achieved this privileged status as an American favorite and a global brand on its own so soon after the war, or how long and at what cost it might have taken the Company to achieve such an incredible level of sales and profit.

Yet what is even more compelling in the remarks above is that Curtis not only listed people by nationality, but went further to break down the world's people into distinct racial and religious groups within those nationalities. Curtis argued that despite the divisions between and within countries, people around the world embraced Coca-Cola. This was the same process of race making that was documented in *TO Digest*. TOs

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<sup>69</sup> J.F. Curtis, "The Overseas Story," *Coca-Cola Overseas*, June 1948.

did not simply note national and cultural differences, they engaged in racial comparison and categorization. Regardless of Coca-Cola's ultimate goal to sell its drink to everyone who could afford it, the process of globalization mapped the world based on race and cheap pliable sources of labor.<sup>70</sup>

Coca-Cola's military contract, and support from the U.S. government, helped launch the Company as profitable and recognizable global brand. The expansion of U.S. empire meant the spread of the free market economy and corporate capitalism. The relationship between the government and Coca-Cola that began in WWII with a munitions contract expanded to include exemption from sugar rations and a military contract to supply and serve the Armed Forces around the world. This close relationship had long lasting effects. Coca-Cola profited from its patriotic image in the U.S. and the global connotation with freedom enjoyed after the Allies' victory. At the end of 1948, Coca-Cola earned a net profit of over \$35 million, which was over a 20% increase from 1941. This increase is even more impressive because it was earned during wartime.<sup>71</sup>

Ultimately, though, Coca-Cola's global success was not only represented in numbers that this success was also visually represented in iconic imagery and in Coca-Cola's print advertisements. The TOs made their way around the world as ambassadors for Coca-Cola. They embodied Woodruff's dream to unite the world through Coca-Cola and make the Company not only a national favorite but a profitable, international one.

But just as the TOs described the places where they were stationed, similar visual

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<sup>70</sup> For more on global divisions based on race and nation, see R. J. Johnston, Peter J. Taylor, and Michael Watts, *Geographies of Global Change: Remapping the World*, 2nd ed. (Wiley-Blackwell, 2002); Samir Amin, *Capitalism in the Age of Globalization: The Management of Contemporary Society* (Zed Books, 1997); Mike Featherstone, *Global Culture: Nationalism, Globalization and Modernity: A Theory Culture and Society Special Issue*, 1st ed. (Sage Publications, 1990); Richard J. Barnett, *Global Dreams: Imperial Corporations and the New World Order* (Touchstone, 1995); Jan Knippers Black, *Inequity in the Global Village: Recycled Rhetoric and Disposable People* (Kumarian Press, 1999).

<sup>71</sup> Coca-Cola's annual reports for 1941 and 1948.

depictions and sentiments of patriotic duty and global connection were deployed in Coca-Cola's new advertising campaign for American audiences. The Coca-Cola Company launched a new WWII campaign that reflected the TOs experiences that ran with the tagline "the global high-sign": Coca-Cola has been a globe-trotter "since way back when."



## Chapter Three

### **“The Global High-Sign”: Constructing a Global and Local Market in Coca-Cola’s Domestic Wartime Advertising, 1943-1945**

During WWII, the Coca-Cola Company created a series of 29 ads that ran primarily on the back covers of *Life* and *National Geographic* magazine between 1943 and 1945. In place of the longstanding slogan, “Delicious and Refreshing,” a new slogan, “the global high-sign,” took its place in the iconic red circle and beside a tall glass or bottle of Coca-Cola. To the left of the logo, in smaller sized text, it read: “*Our fighting men meet up with Coca-Cola many places overseas, where it’s bottled on the spot. Coca-Cola has been a globe-trotter “since way back when.”*” This was an implicit reference to both the TO program and Coca-Cola’s longer history of global expansion.

“The high-sign,” a slang term that originated in the U.S. during the late nineteenth century, referred to a gesture of recognition or signaled membership in a group. This term evolved to include an expanded meaning after the 1920s that signaled the coast was clear, or there was no danger. Akin to waving hello or a secret handshake, a high-sign was a welcoming, friendly gesture, and a fitting way for Coke to represent their brand.

The global high-sign series was created for Coca-Cola by the D’Arcy Advertising agency which represented Coca-Cola from 1907-1955. The global high-sign ad series was not the only that circulated during WWII. Other campaigns created by Coca-Cola overlapped during the war and included uniformed soldiers but never foreign people.

Slogans for other wartime ads included: “Take off Refreshed” (1940); “Pause . . . Go Refreshed” (1941), which added golden wings to the logo that were similar to the ones military pilots wore; “Quality Carries On” (1942), which referred to a promise to deliver the same quality despite the scarcity of sugar in the world market; “Coca-Cola Goes Along” (1942); and, “That Extra Something . . . you can spot it every time” (1943), which included images of American military personnel in uniform in addition to American civilians working in defense industries in each ad.

The theme for the high sign series was: Coke = Friendship. Each ad adhered to a template that included an artist’s rendering of American soldiers. The majority, 19 of the 29 ads, featured American soldiers sharing the drink with foreign people outside of the continental U.S. An additional alteration of Coca-Cola’s logo was the transformation of the solid red circle into a two dimensional red globe that highlighted the segment of the hemisphere where the country in the ad was located. One typical ad from the series showed two Americans in Brussels, Belgium interacting with local residents in the city square. Written above the image it says: “Da’s na fijn, zunne! (SAY, THAT’S GREAT)... Have a Coke,” and below, it says “... a friendly American custom lands in Brussels.” In many ads, the first half of the phrase was written in the native language or slang common to each particular location or context. The second half of the phrase, “Have a Coke” or “Have a Coca-Cola,” followed an equal sign or ellipse that was meant to signal a translation – not a literal translation but one that reflected the meaning behind the “friendly” gesture of offering someone a Coke.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The other ten ads depicted American soldiers, and civilians who worked in wartime industries, in military camps, shipyards, battle ships, and home front images of soda fountains and domestic family scenes.

The global high-sign campaign was a patriotic wartime series, similar to previous and concurrently running ads, but this one coincided with the U.S. entry into WWII and Woodruff's pledge to supply American troops with bottles of Coca-Cola for a nickel. Moreover, this particular patriotic series utilized an earlier theme of friendship and sharing at the soda fountain that was at the core of Coca-Cola's strategy for national and international expansion. This mid-century variation paid homage to the heroic men and women who served in the U.S. military. The corporate and interpersonal gesture of



Fig 3-1: Brussels, 1945

introducing and sharing Coca-Cola with others played off the international context of war. The global high-sign ads were the first to target an American consumer public with representations of foreign people. This marked the creation of a global image for Coca-Cola.

The images used in the global high-sign series did not come entirely from artists' imaginations. Indeed these ads, and the sentiment

embedded in them, in many respects reflected the experiences and observations compiled in *TO Digest*. It was not common knowledge that Coca-Cola sent more than 248 TOs to bottle the drink for American troops, nor was *TO Digest* published for a public audience. The focus of the series was not the TOs or the military contract that created the program – instead the ads publicized the availability of Coca-Cola everywhere American troops were stationed. More to the point, the Americans who were represented in the ads were figured as soldiers, not employees of the Coca-Cola Company. The ads depicted organic acts of sharing. Coca-Cola symbolized friendship and bottles of Coca-Cola were vehicles for forging new friendships with foreign military personnel and civilians.

This message of friendship was transparent in the ads. Less obvious was Coca-Cola's rationale for choosing WWII as the appropriate moment to leverage its global expansion as a selling point to American consumers. It was a calculated decision to identify specific countries, to visually represent foreign people, and to incorporate examples of foreign languages and cultures. Advertising, in this sense, was a kind of corporate communication with consumer publics, and these ads helped teach Americans where in the world "global" expansion was taking place. By this, I mean the literal locations where Coca-Cola, and other multinational companies, were making and selling products. These ads also represented the role of the Company and America in a globally interconnected world of corporate capitalism in the mid-twentieth century. This was illustrated and explained geographically, from an American viewpoint that delineated which parts of the world were industrialized and modern versus those that were developing and pre-modern. It was a crude educational endeavor that more than anything else served the interests of the Coca-Cola Company.

## Advertising

Advertising sells more than consumer goods, it is embedded with ideology. Starting in the late 1920s, advertising sold images of satisfaction and happiness. This lifestyle advertising, or trend of “dramatic realism” in ads, conveyed the idea that consumers could obtain satisfaction and happiness by purchasing specific brand name products.<sup>2</sup> Wartime advertising, in particular, sold American values and propaganda as well as American products. During WWII, patriotic advertising functioned as a kind of nationalist propaganda that had an intrinsic tie to an esteemed free market capitalist system. Against the backdrop of a war against fascism, heroic American soldiers fought for freedom, democracy, and most importantly, the American way of life. More than anything, Americans valued their freedom to make choices at the ballot box and the stores where they shopped. Advertising captured these values and then some.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> For more on lifestyle advertising, see Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 22-68; Stuart Ewen and Elizabeth Ewen, *Channels of Desire: Mass Images and the Shaping of American Consciousness* (U of Minnesota Press, 1992); Basil G. Englis and Michael R. Solomon, “To Be and Not to Be: Lifestyle Imagery, Reference Groups, and ‘The Clustering of America’,” *Journal of Advertising* 24, no. 1 (April 1, 1995): 13-28; David Bell and Joanne Hollows, *Historicizing Lifestyle: Mediating Taste, Consumption and Identity From the 1900s to 1970s* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2006).

<sup>3</sup> For more on patriotism, wartime propaganda, and nationalism in advertising, see Reinhold Wagneitner and Elaine Tyler May, eds., “Advertising: The Commodification of American Icons of Freedom,” in *Here, There, Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of Popular Culture* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 273-287; Charles F. McGovern, *Sold American: Consumption and Citizenship, 1890-1945* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2006); Paul Gilroy, “Hitler Wore Khakis: Icons, Propoganda, and Aethetic Politics,” in *Against Race: Imagining Political Culture Beyond the Color Line* (Cambridge: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, n.d.); D. Young, “Sacrifice, consumption, and the American way of life: Advertising and domestic propaganda during World War II,” *The Communication Review* 8, no. 1 (2005): 27–52; M. Honey, *Creating Rosie the Riveter: Class, Gender, and Propaganda during World War II* (Univ of Massachusetts Pr, 1984); S. Vaughn, “Holding Fast the Inner Lines: Democracy, Nationalism, and the Committee on Public Information” (1980); P. Frosh, “Penetrating Markets, Fortifying Fences: Advertising, Consumption, and Violent National Conflict,” *Public Culture* 19, no. 3 (October 2007): 461-482; Derya. Ozkan and Robert John Foster, “Consumer Citizenship, Nationalism, and Neoliberal Globalization in Turkey: The Advertising Launch of Cola Turka,” *Advertising & Society Review* 6, no. 3 (2005), [http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.umich.edu/journals/advertising\\_and\\_society\\_review/v006/6.3ozkan\\_foster.ht](http://muse.jhu.edu.proxy.lib.umich.edu/journals/advertising_and_society_review/v006/6.3ozkan_foster.ht)

In order to influence individual consumers to purchase specific products, advertisers imbued brands with meaning and value. This was an interactive process that required the participation of consumers. Ads must call out, or hail, the audiences they address. This call and response is an intrinsic part of advertising. Other modes of address do this as well, but advertising is distinct in that its success depends on connecting with people in order to persuade them. Familiar cultural references, images, and ideas are chosen to resonate with consumers who do not spend time looking at ads. Therefore, recognition in advertising must be immediate. Ads target specific groups: white women who enjoy making pancakes for their family and appreciate the time-saving convenience of a boxed mix; African American men who smoke cigarettes and like jazz; patriotic citizens who like soda and want to support American troops and the war effort. The advertising industry capitalizes on these identities by connecting specific products with particular groups of people and lifestyles.<sup>4</sup>

The values that are ascribed to particular brands and the juxtaposition of people and products reveal social dynamics of power. Cultural anthropologist William O’Barr argues that, “the representations of foreigners and other categories of outsiders who appear in advertisements provide paradigms for relations between members of advertising’s intended audience and those defined as outside it. These paradigms constitute an ideological guide for relations between the self and others, between us and them.” Advertisements depict not only products but also people in relation to one another, to the product depicted, and to the potential consumer. An important factor in

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ml; Julio Moreno, *Yankee don’t go home!: Mexican nationalism, American business culture, and the shaping of modern Mexico, 1920-1950* (UNC Press Books, 2003); Featherstone, *Global Culture*.

<sup>4</sup>Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses (Notes towards an Investigation),” in *Lenin and Philosophy, and Other Essays* (New York: New York Left Books, 1971), 173-174; Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Zone Books, 2005), chap. Introduction-3.

reading advertisements is recognizing those relationships. A critical reader might ask: whose image is used to sell the product and am I meant to identify with the people represented? Who is the target audience? How are women, people of color, and foreigners represented? Are they being targeted as potential customers or has their image been appropriated to sell a product that is not meant for their use? These relationships do not have to be overtly stated, but can be implied.<sup>5</sup>

During WWII, white American consumers who saw the global high-sign campaign were meant to identify with the white American soldiers drinking Coca-Cola. Identification with other Americans created a sense of belonging to the group understood as a wartime “us.” “We” are a nation that enjoyed the American way of life and stood united to defend it, against all others who were represented in these ads as a friendly welcoming “them.” Advertising works by reification, reiteration, and redefinition. Ads do not simply reflect the world; they create new identities, values, and meanings. In this way, ads do not speak to an already formed “us,” or group of Americans that understand themselves as inherently different from a separate group understood as “them.” Advertising images help construct these groups as separate and different in the context of an interaction or relationship. The act of identifying and dis-identifying is a core component of nation building, and in this larger process, visual culture plays a significant

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<sup>5</sup> O’Barr, *Culture And The Ad*, 2, 12. Examples of scholarship that deal with the issue of asymmetrical power dynamics in advertising include, Anne McClintock, *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender, and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1995); Anandi Ramamurthy, *Imperial Persuaders: Images of Africa and Asia in British Advertising* (Manchester University Press, 2003); Elsie Salem Manganaro, “When Foreign Sells: Exotica in American TV Ads in the Eighties and Nineties,” in *Advertising and Culture*, ed. Mary Cross (Praeger, 1996), 136; Marilyn Maness Mehaffy, “Advertising Race/Raceing Advertising: The Feminine Consumer(-Nation), 1876-1900,” *Signs* 23, no. 1 (Autumn 1997); Lauren Berlant, “National Brands/National Body: Imitation of Life,” in *Comparative American Identities: Race, Sex, and Nationality in the Modern Text* (New York: Routledge, 1991), 110-140; A.J. Cortese, *Provocateur: Images of Women and Minorities in Advertising* (Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 1999).

role. Shawn Michelle Smith, a historian of photography, has argued “visual culture is not a mere reflection of an imagined community, but one of the sites in which narratives of belonging are produced and propelled.” Advertising, in other words, relies on narratives of belonging and the process of identification. For an ad to work, the consumers must be able to see themselves in the ad, or imagine that they could literally buy into the lifestyle being depicted and sold.<sup>6</sup>

To understand how consumers encounter such messages, it is important to consider ad placement. Two popular magazines featured the global high-sign series: *Life*, an oversized weekly that featured current news and events with bold headlines and photographic covers, and *National Geographic*, an undersized monthly which brought vivid photographs and articles about exotic peoples and landscapes to its readers on smooth glossy pages. The stories and photographs published by these two magazines contributed to what American readers knew about current events, faraway places, foreign people, and Americans in the context of the nation and world.<sup>7</sup>

The iconic covers and feature stories in both magazines powerfully framed how Americans viewed past and current events. The content was filtered through the lens of highly charged power dynamics that crossed the divides of race, gender, and nation. One might argue that all magazines raise such issues, but *National Geographic* was and is unique in providing an educational and photojournalistic format that allows Americans to

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<sup>6</sup> Shawn Michelle Smith, “Photographing the ‘American Negro’: Nation, Race, and Photography at the Paris Exhibition of 1900,” in *With Other Eyes: Looking at Race and Gender in Visual Culture*, ed. Lisa Bloom (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1999), 59; Judith Williamson, *Decoding Advertisements* (Marion Boyars Publishers Ltd, 1994), 13.

<sup>7</sup> Wendy Kozol, *Life’s America: Family and Nation in Postwar Photojournalism* (Temple University Press, 1994); Erika Lee Doss, *Looking at Life Magazine* (Smithsonian Institution Press, 2001); Catherine A. Lutz and Jane L. Collins, *Reading National Geographic* (University Of Chicago Press, 1993); Tamar Y. Rothenberg, *Presenting America’s World: Strategies of Innocence in National Geographic Magazine, 1888-1945* (Ashgate Publishing, Ltd., 2007).



be armchair explorers of the world. *Life*, by contrast, provided reporting and photography that explored the terrain of U.S. national politics and culture. The issues of ad placement within these magazines is crucial to understanding the ideology or meanings embedded within them. The ads were an integral part of the magazines in which they were published. Both contributed to a broader realm of American mass culture that brought images of the world beyond U.S. borders into view.

Yet, it is important to remember that the world portrayed in these ads was not presented in the same photojournalistic style as the magazines that published them. Most often, the magazines contained brilliant photography, both on the cover and to illustrate the articles. In contrast, the images in the global high-sign campaign were artists' renditions in oil on canvas rather than photographs. The magazine aimed to objectively educate the American public, but the ads had a different purpose. They were meant to increase sales around the world. Even though the magazines and ads belonged to the same discursive sphere of print media that contributed towards one larger understanding of the world, they were created separately, and with different intentions.

The ads provided readers a glimpse into an ongoing scene that was staged and already in progress. Unlike Coca-Cola ads from past decades that included people posed with the drink against a white or uncluttered background, artists working in the 1930s and '40s started to create ads that portrayed real-life situations to which consumers could directly connect. People were depicted in kitchens, at soda shops, in the street, and at work. Many of these images seemed staged in the manner of a personal photo, as if the person behind the camera had interrupted a scene to say "smile," and those being photographed had momentarily frozen and turned towards the camera. At their best, these

ads portrayed scenes from everyday life, but with an enhanced view that included flawless smiles and colorful landscapes.

The global high-sign ads brought depictions of American G.I.s at home and abroad into focus, not through the lens of a camera but through pencil and paint at the hand of an artist. These ads stand in sharp contrast to the breathtaking photos that graced the pages of the magazines that published them. The ad images were detailed and contained people and objects in the background, not only those posed at the center of the image. Roland Marchand, a preeminent scholar of advertising and business culture, called this genre “social tableau” advertising because it depicts commonplace settings that enhance the scenes through “brilliance of imagery and intensity of focus.” The effect of this style is to make what appears to be everyday activities seem extraordinary. This distillation of ordinary experience allows consumers to connect instantly, and easily imagine themselves in place of the people in ads. The ads resemble their own lives, only better, a future life possible through the purchase of Coca-Cola.<sup>8</sup>

Of course, this begs the question of why paintings instead of photographs? In her work on magazine images, Carolyn Kitch argues that pictorial illustrations imply ideals, whereas photographs document reality itself, the “truth.”<sup>9</sup> The global high-sign series did not illustrate reality so much as a sanitized and idealized version of events during the war. They captured scenes of leisure, and of kind of peaceful world harmony, over and against the reality of war outside of the illustrations. With a primary purpose of increasing sales,

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<sup>8</sup> Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, 166; John Berger, *Ways of Seeing: Based on the BBC Television Series* (Penguin (Non-Classics), 1990).

<sup>9</sup> Carolyn Kitch, *The Girl on the Magazine Cover: The Origins of Visual Stereotypes in American Mass Media* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 95.

the people represented were full of smiles and were placed in pleasing scenes that always included cold and appealing Coca-Cola.

Prior to this campaign, Coca-Cola employed well-established artists like Norman Rockwell and Haddon Sundblum whose artwork was recognizable to the mainstream public. Their work was idyllic, sentimental, and nostalgic. It captured qualities and values associated with the “best” of American life and culture. Sundblum is perhaps best known for one particular Coca-Cola ad – a 1930s representation of Santa Claus as a plump, rosy cheeked, benevolent character with a long white beard who wore a red and white suit. This image drew from a literary description of St. Nick, but became the dominant image of Santa Claus in American popular culture and abroad in France among other places, where it is still used in Coca-Cola ads today.<sup>10</sup>

These two artists, among others working in similar styles, were beloved because their styles captured the nostalgia for America before industrialization drew people to big cities and disrupted the stability of nuclear families. Their artwork included anti-modernist scenes of untouched landscapes and intimate relationships. This was a nostalgia that longed to return to a society structured on “simple pleasures” that were largely defined by white middle class families striving for the American dream.

In the late nineteenth and early twentieth-century, a middle-class emerged in the U.S. that had disposable income and access to an increasing number of goods for sale. This expanded consumer marketplace, in combination with a greater number of women

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<sup>10</sup> According to the Coca-Cola Company, Sundblum found his inspiration from Clement Clark Moore’s 1822 poem “A Visit from St. Nicholas” (commonly called “T’was the Night Before Christmas”). Moore’s description of St. Nick led to an image of Santa that was warm, friendly, pleasantly plump, and human. He also went on to create the iconic image for the Quaker Oats man in 1957, <[http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/heritage/cokelore\\_santa.html](http://www.thecoca-colacompany.com/heritage/cokelore_santa.html)>. For more on Sundblum’s Santa Claus, see Twitchell, *Adcult USA*; Federer, *There Really Is a Santa Claus*; Val R. Berryman, “Coca-Cola Santa Claus.”

entering the workforce, led to a growing anxiety about the stability of the nuclear family and an emphasis on the moral education of children. The home had previously been the primary site of production and shifted into a space for consumption. In reaction to this, white middle-class Anglo-Saxons in particular, wanted to distinguish themselves from poor immigrants who went outside of the home for communal sources of public entertainment and from the upper-class who spent excessive amounts of money in ostentatious shows of wealth. Middle-class notions of respectability and morality sought to stabilize family life through a fine balance of spending on culture, refinement, and betterment that included books, education, tailored clothes, home ownership, and charity. These were all things that set the middle-class apart and brought the family together in the home. These values became all the more important in the context of a Depression and the WWII that further destabilized family life.<sup>11</sup>

It is not surprising that Rockwell was an artist for the Coca-Cola Company. He was a commercial illustrator working in the regional style that was especially popular during the 1930s. This style rejected glamorized city life and modern technology in favor of small town scenes and lives. His illustrations were often featured on the cover of *Life* and the *Saturday Evening Post*.<sup>12</sup> Rockwell's artistic style fit well with the company's image of Coca-Cola as quintessentially an "American" drink.<sup>13</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> Ohmann, *Selling culture*; Daniel Horowitz, *Anxieties of Affluence: Critiques of American Consumer Culture, 1939-1979* (University of Massachusetts Press, 2005); Daniel Horowitz, "Frugality or Comfort: Middle-Class Styles of Life in the Early Twentieth Century," *American Quarterly* 37, no. 2 (Summer 1985): 239-259; May, *Homeward Bound*; Marina Moskowitz, *Standard of Living: The Measure of the Middle Class in Modern America* (JHU Press, 2004); Stuart M. Blumin, *The Emergence of the Middle Class: Social Experience in the American City, 1760-1900* (Cambridge University Press, 1989).

<sup>12</sup> Maureen Hart Hennessey et al., *Norman Rockwell* (High Museum of Art, 1999).

<sup>13</sup> For more on regionalism in American art, see Grant Wood, *Revolt against the City* (Iowa City Ia.: Clio Press, 1935); William Graebner, "Norman Rockwell and American Mass Culture: The Crisis of Representation in the Great Depression," *Prospects* 22 (1997): 323-356; Michael Clapper, "Thomas Kinkade's Romantic Landscape," *American Art* 20, no. 2 (Summer 2006): 76-99; Francis V O'Connor, *The*

In addition to the commercial work he did, Rockwell was well known for his famous “Four Freedoms” paintings that illustrated the freedoms President Franklin D. Roosevelt outlined in his 1941 speech. Instead of playing off the fear of fascism, Rockwell created comforting images illustrated details of American life he deemed worth protecting. The paintings were published on the cover of the *Saturday Evening Post* in March-April 1943 and helped build popular support for U.S. entry into WWII.<sup>14</sup> The global high-sign series was similar in style and provided a glimpse of idealized white mainstream American life that focused on scenes of sharing and cooperation understood as natural and uncomplicated. Rockwell was not hired to work on this campaign but the artists who did followed the styles and motifs of Rockwell’s commercial and public art projects.<sup>15</sup>

Rockwell was not the only artist who crossed over from commercial work to create government sponsored wartime propaganda. In the past, propaganda in the U.S. garnered mixed reactions and carried negative connotation. This did not lead to the discontinuation of direct propaganda but to a desire to prevent the perception that the American government used propaganda to manipulate and influence its citizenry.<sup>16</sup> The first propaganda campaigns created during WWII came from the Office of War Information that was created in 1942. By the end of that year, it formed an alliance with

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*1930s: Notes on the Transition from Social to Individual Scale in the Art of the Depression Era* (Prestel, 1993); Mariea Caudill, *The American Scene: Urban and Rural Regionalists of the '30s and '40s*, n.d.; William E Leuchtenburg, *Art in the Great Depression* (Chapel Hill (usa): University of North Carolina Press, 2000).

<sup>14</sup> Robert Hughes, “The Empire of Signs,” in *American Visions: The Epic History of Art in America* (Alfred A. Knopf, 1997), 508-509; Tricia Wright, “The Depression and World War II,” in *American Art and Artists* (HarperCollins Publishers, 2007), 122-123.

<sup>15</sup> Not all of the artists signed their names to the work they did on the global high-sign series, among those that did were Herman Price, Dean Cornwell, K. Stahl, Louis Bouche and Harold Sundblum.

<sup>16</sup> Propaganda became associated with fascism and did not seem to sit well with the notion of democracy and freedom of choice. The Smith-Mundt Act of 1948 eventually made an official delineation and policy for overseas propaganda and domestic information campaigns. The legislation prevented the distribution official propaganda intended for foreign audiences within the United States.

the brand new War Advertising Council, which was an independent agency and received no government funding. Advertising agents from dozens of agencies came together out of a shared interest to keep their industry alive during the war.

The Council was a private organization that functioned as a semi-public institution in its collaboration with numerous government offices.<sup>17</sup> During their first year of operation, it launched ad campaigns to encourage the public to buy war bonds and support the war. It circulated the slogan “Loose Lips Sink Ships” to protect national security. It also encouraged women to enter the workforce with the well-known “We Can Do it!” ad that featured Rosie the Riveter. The Council’s work was assigned to a rotating list of private ad agencies that volunteered time and resources to the project at hand. The council did not retain a permanent staff. This meant that some of the same advertising agents worked simultaneously on commercial and public service campaigns and this meant considerable crossover in message and style.

Coke’s WWII ad campaign portrayed life as Americans might have hoped it was. The global high-sign series suggested that happiness, friendship, and freedom abounded during WWII, even far away from home. These ads were sanitized war scenes, almost entirely devoid of fighting or conflict. They included pictures of heroic and happy American soldiers spending time with locals and at home with friends and family. They depicted American troops bringing freedom to the world and also Coca-Cola. The series selected and distorted the subjects it represented. The presumption was that people preferred idealized images and that positive imagery would evoke positive feelings. This

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<sup>17</sup> The Council worked most closely with the Office of War Information but was also commissioned by other offices as well, most notably the Department of Treasury’s War Finance Agency in support of their war bond campaign. Other offices included the Army, Navy, FBI, and War Manpower Commission.

was the ultimate goal of the campaign – to build positive associations with Coca-Cola and create loyal American customers.<sup>18</sup>

The Brussels high-sign ad exemplifies this point. Here, uniformed soldiers emerge out of a jeep holding bottles of Coke. There are no weapons in sight. The scene revolves around the drink and not the war. In the image, Coke has the power to spark friendships among strangers, across cultures, and even across language barriers. The G.I.s share Coke with the people in the forefront of the scene and they are welcomed by the Belgians. Patriotic ads like this brought home images of the world that depicted a sentimental view of where loved ones in the Armed Forces were stationed. Brussels is portrayed with tall buildings, a monument at the center of the square, and friendly people. A kinship is represented with this Allied foreign nation that generated a sense of friendliness and well-being. Coca-Cola hoped this kinship and a larger sense of patriotism would create brand loyalty and boost the sales with American troops and civilians after the war was over.

### **Domestic Images and Imagination**

In the global high-sign ad set in Belgium, the only indicator that war has broken out across Europe is the presence of American soldiers. Their presence was a welcomed one which brought Coca-Cola to Belgians who perhaps had not experienced it before. Interestingly, it is the visiting soldiers who host the scene. Engaged in conversation and dispensing Coca-Cola, the Belgians on the periphery of the image seem drawn to the Americans and are grateful for their hospitality.

Images of the “domestic” realm can function within advertising as a helpmate of empire, capitalism, and by extension, globalization. Domesticity often connotes separate

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<sup>18</sup> Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*, xvii.

gendered spheres, but upon closer examination, any image signifying the domestic realm is included. In *Tender Violence*, Laura Wexler argues that “[t]he domestic realm can be figured as well by a battleship as by a nursery if that battleship... is known to be on a mission to redraw and then patrol the nation’s boundaries.”<sup>19</sup> The concept of domesticity is not bound to the private realm, women, or national boundaries. In this way, images of American troops’ hospitality, sociability, and leisure in the global high-sign ads are domestic images.

Coca-Cola’s advertising captures the American military in their off time, that is, in “domestic time.” The violence of war is masked not in the act of hiding but by the very act of exposure. The series featured soldiers in uniform, but always smiling, always relaxing, always enjoying Coca-Cola. The American troops in Brussels were not fighting but relaxing and exploring the city. It leaves little room to question the political attitudes of foreigners in cities around the world who found themselves occupied by foreign powers. This strategic method of advertising did more than sell soda; it brought home fictional images and perceptions of wartime life abroad that illustrated and narrated the international scene, even if inaccurately, and helped obscure the maneuverings of empire and corporate capitalist expansion. As Amy Kaplan aptly notes, it is about “consolidating domestic cultures and negotiating an intranational domain.”<sup>20</sup> Even if the work of national and corporate expansion takes place elsewhere, overseas, it is equally important to understand how visual culture captures these domestic scenes and brings them home, functioning as commercial illustrations of foreign policy and globalization.

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<sup>19</sup> Laura Wexler, *Tender Violence: Domestic Visions in an Age of U.S. Imperialism* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2000), 31.

<sup>20</sup> Kaplan, *The Anarchy of Empire in the Making of U.S. Culture*, 14.



## Friendliness and freedom

In the collective American imagination during WWII, foreigners posed a threat at home and abroad. Yet, Coca-Cola ads during these years carried a tone of warmth and benevolence. The Coca-Cola Company acted out of a belief that it was doing other countries a favor by bringing them Coke. The bubbly drink was marketed as a method of



Figure 3.2: Alaska, 1943

bridging the gap between cultures and peoples.

The first global high-sign ad portrayed American G.I.s in Alaska with the headline “Have a ‘Coke’ = Welcome, Friends \ . . . or how to get along in Alaska.”

The ads in the series mapped where American troops were during WWII. Alaska was an organized territory of the U.S. until it became a state in 1959.

This vast territory was

strategically located on the Pacific

and was an important steppingstone for the transport of Lend-Lease supplies to the Soviet Union. In June of 1942, Japanese bombers attacked the remote Aleutian islands of Kiska and Attu. The U.S. feared the Japanese would stage an aerial attack against the West Coast from those islands. In response, an American military base was established on

Adak Island and an attack was launched against the Japanese by air and sea. It took over a year, but in August of 1943 American and Canadian troops regained control of Alaska.<sup>21</sup>

In the Alaska ad, Coca-Cola transforms from a product into a symbol of friendship. The American G.I. holds out a bottle of Coke as he crouches down to eye level with two boys. An older man standing next to them smiles as he holds up and examines his bottle of Coke. The text beneath the image says,

The American soldier in Alaska meets up with many things that remind him of home. One of them is Coca-Cola. *Have a "Coke"* says he to a stranger, and in one simple gesture he has made a friend. In three words he has said, "You and I understand each other." *The pause that refreshes* works as well in the Yukon as it does in Youngtown. From Atlanta to the Seven Seas, Coca-Cola has become the high-sign between kindly-minded strangers, the symbol of a friendly way of living.

The message embedded in the ad is that these American soldiers have nothing to fear in Alaska. The only clue signaling that the soldiers are there because of WWII is the fact that these men are far from home, among strangers. In fact, 4,000 American soldiers were killed defending Alaska from the Japanese. However, the greatest negative consequence to American troops referenced in the ad is homesickness. In response, two important reminders of home are focal points in the image: baseball and Coca-Cola. Additionally, at the bottom of the ad, it says: "*Next to mothers, wives, sweethearts and letters from home, one thing our soldiers overseas mention most is Coca-Cola. So you'll be delighted to know they frequently find it – bottled on the spot – in over 35 Allied and neutral nations*

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<sup>21</sup> For more on this "forgotten war," the details of which remain largely undocumented, see Galen Roger Perras, *Stepping Stones to Nowhere: The Aleutian Islands, Alaska, and American Military Strategy, 1867-1945* (Naval Institute Press, 2003); Brian Garfield, *The Thousand-Mile War: World War II in Alaska and the Aleutians* (University of Alaska Press, 1995); Tom Putnam, *Red White Black & Blue*, Documentary (Rainstorm Entertainment, 2007).

*'round the globe.'*" The ad comforts and reassures American consumers that Coca-Cola is there with the troops who are making friends and getting along in Alaska.

The native Alaskan people were the first foreigners to appear in Coca-Cola's American advertising. These dark haired people were represented as kind strangers and a distinct group, visually marked by their clothes and facial features. There is no reference to the languages spoken in Alaska, but the ad claims that the only language needed in this social interaction are the three words "Have a 'Coke,'" which conveys friendship and a larger mutual understanding. In the ad, Coca-Cola means peace and friendship from "Atlanta to the Seven Seas." Notably, it is the G.I. who offers Coke. According to the rubric of this ad, the gesture means "Welcome, Friends." It is the native Alaskans who are being welcomed to their own territory and home by the American G.I.s on the military base. Their smiling faces register appreciation. And from the scoreboard behind them, the two teams are playing a spirited game of baseball, the score of which is 16 for the Yanks, 7 for the Yukon Dodgers. The introduction of the native Alaskan population to the American public reveals an uneven power dynamic. Alaska was a U.S. territory but the native people were not American citizens. The scene depicted a non-threatening cultural exchange with which U.S. consumers could identify.

There was no room for tension or resentment from the native Alaskan people in this ad. The only sentiments reflected in the image are friendship and gratitude. In her work on representations of foreigners in advertising, Elsie Manganaro argues that attractive images of foreigners do two things: they mask deeply held fears of isolationist Americans and contribute to the narrative of expansion that is evident in many ads.<sup>22</sup> The

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<sup>22</sup> Elsie Salem Manganaro, "When Foreign Sells: Exotica in American TV Ads in the Eighties and Nineties," 14.

history of U.S. isolationism stretched back to its founding and was marked by official policies like the Monroe Doctrine of 1823, its reluctant entry into WWI, and the Congressional refusal to endorse the League of Nations. Americans, in short, were skeptical of entanglement with other nations since that might pull the country into war and hamper free domestic or international actions. Here, by contrast, foreigners were introduced into Coca-Cola's advertising to represent Coca-Cola's global expansion as an appealing extension of American power and influence.

The painted smiles of the native people and the affirmative language of "friendliness" in the Alaskan image helped to erase the expansion of U.S. empire and the spread of corporate capitalism. The global high-sign campaign tells a story of U.S. expansion wherein the country went only where invited and never overstayed its welcome. That expansion was less an active pursuit than an inevitable result of history. This is embodied by the interpersonal social interaction between Americans and foreigners in the global high-sign series. The drink was marketed to American consumers as a quintessential American drink that Americans benevolently shared with grateful people around the world.<sup>23</sup>

This type of foreign imagery in advertising appealed to an imperialist nationalism that appropriated images of foreigners and racialized "others." Paul Gilroy argues that the "visual culture of advertising and commodity consumption . . . conducted the official memory of the imperial mission into the smallest crevices of everyday life. Empire had ceased to be exclusively "out there." It came home, and thus "internalized," it conditioned social and cultural life in the heart of the imperial system. This ad campaign, brought the war, as well as imperial and corporate conquest, home. It did so not with

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<sup>23</sup> Ann Laura Stoler, *Haunted by empire* (Duke University Press, 2006), 24; Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 52.

representations of violence, but with domestic images of a nearly exclusive representation of young, white soldiers who looked like the boy next door and were welcomed with open arms around the world. These images helped construct a distorted perception of reality.<sup>24</sup>

Many Americans with limited knowledge of other parts of the world relied on representations of foreign places and foreign people in these ads. Visually, the ads provided information about the landscape, climate, culture, and people. Added context was provided by text at the bottom of the ad that labeled each nation featured in the series as neutral and an ally of the U.S. during WWII. Greater context or educational context was beyond the purview of corporate advertisements where the goal remained to sell a product. Regardless, the absence of aggression, hostility, or violence in the images helped to create an erasure of America's imperial and corporate conquest in the national collective memory. The images that most illustrate this point are those that featured colonized nations and sites of U.S. military occupation.

Another ad featured a scene in the city of Leyte in the Philippines after the U.S. had regained control of the island from Japan in 1945.<sup>25</sup>

Step right up, amigos... Have a Coke / ...Yank friendliness comes back to Leyte Naturally Filipinos thrilled when their Yankee comrades-in-arms came back to the Philippines. Freedom came back with them. Fair play took the place of fear. But also they brought back the old sense of friendliness that America stands for. You find it quickly expressed in the simple phrase *Have a Coke*. There's no easier or warmer way to say *Relax and be yourself*. Everywhere *the pause that refreshes* with ice-cold Coca-Cola has become a symbol of good will – an everyday example of how Yankee friendliness follows the flag around the globe.

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<sup>24</sup> Gilroy, *Against Race*, 13. Additionally, Anne McClintock frames advertising as a technology of discipline and dispossession. In her work on British imperial advertising during the nineteenth century, she argued that, “[t]he myth of commodities beaching on native shores, there to be welcomed by awestruck natives, wipes out from memory the long and intricate history of African resistance to Europe and colonization.” See, “Chapter 5: Soft-Soaping Empire,” in *Imperial Leather*, 145.

<sup>25</sup> Other ads included Hawaii, Panama, New Zealand, and Brazil.

The ad uses Coca-Cola as a tangible symbol of the U.S. and defines the shared values of the country and the Company as friendliness, freedom, and fair play. By claiming the drink as a symbol of “good will,” Coca-Cola played up the idea that the brand was a kind of social capital for the nation that helped to broker a positive relationship between nations that was marked by

benevolence and friendliness.

In the ad, there is also a doubled nostalgia, for the post-1898 era of U.S. imperialism and the friendliness found at American soda fountains. An extension of this nostalgia is the oxymoron of imperial

friendliness, or perhaps this is not an oxymoron at all but instead two complementary concepts working together in

the imperial and corporate mission of expansion.



Figure 3.3: Leyte, Philippines, 1945

The Leyte scene takes place underneath a thatched roof where two soldiers offer tin cups of Coca-Cola from a green khaki colored dispenser to a Filipino man and woman standing between them. The woman wears a cross around her neck. They are not depicted

as primitive or unsophisticated but instead as Christian, modest, and “civilized.” Coca-Cola is offered but neither has accepted yet.

The meaning of friendship and freedom that was attached to Coca-Cola in its advertising was inextricably connected to consumerism and leisure. As the concept of American freedom traveled discursively during WWII, it functioned simultaneously in Coca-Cola advertising on two distinct levels. First, Coca-Cola was linked to leisure through the idea that it was something to enjoy while relaxing with friends and family. And second, in the global high-sign ads, the literal pause for refreshment was taken by soldiers who were taking a break from their service in the military. In military slang, Coca-Cola was often enjoyed during authorized breaks from a combat area to reduce the effects of stress and fatigue known as R&R, which stood for rest and recuperation or relaxation.<sup>26</sup>

In both civilian life and the military, Coca-Cola was often represented as a pause one should take from more serious business to enjoy the simple pleasures of life. This cold, sweet, and bubbly drink was a symbol of American values and democratic principles. It also seemed to symbolize a free market economy that offered consumers a choice between competing brand name products. However, this notion of competition was a fiction during WWII because Coca-Cola’s exclusive military contract and governmental exceptions on sugar rations that made it nearly impossible for competitors to compete. Coca-Cola functioned as a monopoly during this time. There are many

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<sup>26</sup> Rob Kroes, “Advertising: The Commodification of American Icons of Freedom,” in *Here, There, Everywhere: The Foreign Politics of Popular Culture* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 2000), 276; Blum, *V Was for Victory*.

competing definitions of what constitutes freedom, but the freedom referenced in these ads was not political freedom or liberty but a conflation of consumerism and leisure.<sup>27</sup>

To return to the example of Leyte, Filipinos were not only free from Japanese rule; they were free to be “themselves.” This freedom to “relax” lay in stark relief to military occupation. In 1945, when this ad was created, the American troops did indeed liberate the Filipino people from the Japanese. However, set in a larger context, these liberators were also colonial overlords of the nation. Instead of recognizing a democratic Philippine Republic following the Spanish-American War in 1898, the U.S. purchased the colony from Spain and then fought against Filipino revolutionaries for three years before taking control of the island. The man serving up the drinks is an American soldier with the right and military might to enforce “democratic rule” with state sanctioned violence. Nearly all of the ads in this series have soldiers in uniform serving the drinks. The soldier at the fountain, most importantly understood as the person sharing and introducing Coca-Cola, was a member of the U.S. Armed Forces.

Noticeably absent are the TOs who were sent by the Coca-Cola Company and the U.S. Military who were sent there to serve the American troops. If Coca-Cola represents freedom, it was the military that brought this political and consumer freedom around the world during WWII. The Coca-Cola Company is absent as an active figure in the ads. Yankee friendliness (i.e., Coke) follows the American flag around the globe like

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<sup>27</sup> When discussing the term freedom in the context of WWII, it can be understood as the American version of democracy, freedom from fascism, and call to mind Roosevelt’s Four Freedoms speech. Much work in philosophy, political science, and psychology has been done to parse out various definitions of the term “freedom.” In contemplating the usage of the term myself, the divide between the notion of positive liberty, which implies having the power and resources to fulfill ones potential, and negative liberty, which suggests a freedom from interference from other people, has proven useful. Another way to understand this divide is in the distinction between *freedom from* something and *the freedom to* do something. The American Dream implies that everyone has an opportunity to succeed and pursue happiness within the confines of the law, even when this is not a reality. Together, these competing notions of freedom, as understood in political context and in the arena of consumerism, inform a wider definition of the term.



capitalist missionaries pushing this American consumer product. However, this omission significantly alters the historical narrative described in the previous chapter in two ways: First, by making American troops the friendly Yankees who brought Coca-Cola to foreign people, it masked that they were there to defend American territories and defeat fascist imperial regimes in Germany, Italy, and Japan; second, the absence of TOs, who worked to establish bottling plants that served postwar global expansion, erased the idea that Coca-Cola benefited from an alignment with the military and masked the local labor that produced the drink. The global high-sign series exploited the Company's patriotism without highlighting any self-interest on the part of the U.S. nation-state or the Coca-Cola Company in its participation during WII.

### **Gender, Race, and Nation in the Global High-Sign Series**

Overwhelmingly, the subjects of the global high-sign ad series were white American soldiers. Adhering to the template of Coke = friendship, these white American soldiers were portrayed actively sharing Coca-Cola with American civilians or foreign men and women. The men and women on the other side of the equation passively welcomed the troops and Coca-Cola. In particular, the juxtaposition of white American men with women and racially distinct foreigners of both sexes reveals a hierarchically ranked global social status that placed white men on top. However, not all of the recipients of Coca-Cola were represented as being equal to one another. Patterns develop across the ads, but each one individually narrates a unique social interaction that is specific to the place and the people featured.

Women were the main focus of Coca-Cola ads during the 1930s and decades prior. An important shift accompanied the transition from Coca-Cola being marketed as a

patent medicine to a soft drink at the turn of the twentieth-century. Under Asa Candler's leadership, respectable looking older white women and wholesome looking young white women took center stage in ads. These women were central to marketing the drink to both men and women. This shift was interrupted by wartime ads like the ones in the global high-sign series.<sup>28</sup>

Although men played only secondary roles in ads before and after WWII, the ads of the global high-sign campaign reversed the gender imbalance. The ads focused on Americans who worked in wartime industries, as well as those who served in the Armed Forces. Uniformed men were featured in every ad but only two ads included women in uniform. For the most part, women played incidental roles in the ads as kindly old women, mothers, or pretty bystanders who welcomed the attention of male American soldiers. War, as depicted by the Coca-Cola Company, in short, was a male world.

Tellingly, in the one ad in the high-sign series that focuses on women, the italicized text at the bottom is not altered; it still references the "*fighting men*" who "*meet up with Coca-Cola many places overseas.*" Yet, this image explicitly highlights the role that women played in the military and on the home front during WWII. At the forefront of the image, two women in uniform sit at a table drinking glasses of Coke. The location is not made clear but the ad claims that sharing a Coke "is a happy custom that's spreading 'round the globe." Although women were a minority in the military, over 80,000 women served in the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES) program during WWII. Additionally, the "soda jerk" in the background is a woman. Both in soda fountains and the ads, the serving Coca-Cola was a man's job. The context of sharing is another difference in this ad.

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<sup>28</sup> Beyer, *Coca-Cola Girls*, 14.

In this homosocial world of military bonding, the women at the table and the men at the counter appear under the headline “Have a Coca-Cola = You’re my kind.” Continued in the text below, it says: “Over tinkling glasses of ice-cold “Coke,” minds meet and hearts are closer together.” The woman on the left, dressed in a Navy uniform, looks longingly at a photograph of a sailor, presumably meant to be her boyfriend or husband. The picture of the sailor works to dispel any confusion that the scene depicts something other than two female friends sharing a Coke. The hearts that grow closer together belong to the Navy WAVE and her absent sailor.

This ad is an exception to the global high-sign series in that the “allies” who “enjoy a friendly pause” in the image are a Navy WAVE and the Marine with whom she is sitting. The women share in the experience of drinking Coca-Cola and military



Figure 3.4: You’re my kind, 1944

service. Despite their uniforms or contributions to the war effort, the women conform to stereotypes of women. They commiserate over love and longing. The inclusion of women in war reflects a more complex reality and demonstrates that they were part of the international spread of the U.S. military and Coca-Cola during WWII. These ads were not

created to counter American attitudes; on the contrary, when it came to gender norms, they reinforced them.



Figure 3.5: Brazil, 1944

An example of one of the more sexualized images of women in the series is an ad set in Brazil, which was the only South American country to send troops to fight in WWII. Brazil remained neutral in the war until the beginning of 1942 when it agreed to allow the creation of U.S. air bases in the cities of Bahia, Pernambuco, and Rio Grande do Norte. In response, German U-Boats targeted Brazil, and in turn, a Brazilian Expeditionary Force was established to

fight alongside the Allied Forces on the Atlantic Ocean and in Italy. The scene depicts our Brazilian allies on the beach, with the heading “Esta p’ra mim (THIS IS FOR ME) . . . Have a Coke \ . . . *or how to be buddies in Brazil.*” The woman wears a swimsuit, an image common in American Coca-Cola ads. Only this time, the Brazilian woman is attracting the attention of two American sailors on “shore leave” at Copacabana beach.

The reader’s eye is drawn to the left side of the image where the woman is standing with one leg on either side of an inflatable tube while she ties a knot at the end. She straddles a large phallic water toy with a smile on her face and her eyes directed at the sailors. There’s a bottle of Coca-Cola stuck into the sand by her feet. The Brazilian

man beside her, also wearing a small swimsuit, holds up his bottle of Coke in a friendly gesture towards the sailors who are fully dressed in their uniforms. One crouches down to take a picture of the ocean and the other lies in the sand. Far off in the distance, on the right side of the image, there is a Coca-Cola vendor serving up the drink to beach goers. The text below reads: “Those three words speak the language of friendliness straight from the heart. They say *I like the cut of your jib – let’s get to know each other better.*” The image draws American consumers into a vision of the world that includes beautiful women and inviting beaches that are welcoming to American visitors.

Women were not central to the campaign, but they were not absent or forgotten; rather, images of them were used strategically and often. Representations of women in Coca-Cola advertisements are multiple and contradictory at best. Women are seen playing a cast of characters including soldier, mother, wife, and the young sexually available single woman. Most often, women and girls serve as non-threatening symbols of peace and innocence, as well as objects of flirtation. The presence of women defuses the violence of war. Although in the realities of war, women military personnel and civilians were killed, they were not on the frontlines of battle. Their “patriotic friendship” established a space of leisure in the ads.

A different reading of the “friendship” depicted in the ads is a “friendly imperialism,” in that the U.S. established its presence in increasing number of locations around the world. Or perhaps it was a “friendly globalization,” in that Coca-Cola was a force of modernization that is welcomed everywhere it went. There is a contradictory meaning inherent in the “friendship” depicted in Coca-Cola’s advertising that is created in the juxtapositions, between war and peace, protection and aggression, friendship and

subjugation. The fantasy of friendly expansion and aggression that led to, and enforced, peace is a thread that runs through all of the ads.<sup>29</sup>

Coca-Cola's depiction of American Armed Forces abroad captured moments of leisure and relaxation, never active battle scenes or wounded soldiers. Instead, images of handsome men in uniform who are always smiling and relaxing displace reminders of why the troops were abroad, and images of our allies replaced those of our enemies. It is not made clear which soldiers and which ads were on the frontlines and which were stationed abroad on military bases far from battle. Empires and foreign markets are not only seized by military force; they are maintained by it as well. Imperial nationalism in advertising is produced through the identification with the military as a noble and patriotic service of protection and strength, first and foremost in times of war but also in times of "peace." Gilroy reminds us that "imperial propaganda . . . reinvented the idea of military adventure as a potent source of romance, pleasure, and fantasy even while administrations of the colonies were rewriting the rules of practical soldiery."<sup>30</sup>

The militaristic imagery in the ads during WWII valorized the U.S. Armed Forces and glamorized the soldiers in service. Images of men in uniform embodied youthfulness and an unblemished masculinity. The soldiers exuded boyish charm and good looks. But most importantly, they were clean, well-groomed, able-bodied men. None were covered with the dirt of war, wore bandages, or showed missing limbs. In selling American patriotism, "friendliness," and freedom, the integrity of the American body remained intact. America as a nation embodied by soldiers off at war was a powerful image. These

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<sup>29</sup> For more on imperial aggression as a "peace that keeps the peace," see Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 33.

<sup>30</sup> Gilroy, *Against Race*, 141.

images were cloaked in the trappings of good-natured friendship that brandished a smile to the rest of the world.

In the years leading up to the WWII, shifting meanings of masculinity and masculine anxiety crossed the lines of race and class and they were shored up with the American intervention in the war. Masculinity was defined as patriotic masculinity and service to country. Men proved useful to the war effort by either serving their country in the Armed Forces or by industrial work on the home front. But the dominant representation of GIs in Coca-Cola's advertising was not hyper-masculine. Instead, the fighting men appeared lean and clean-shaven; on the whole they looked like late adolescent young men. In many of the ads, the only clear indicator of exactly who the Americans were was their lack of facial and body hair and their nearly identical sculpted white bodies.

These men were depicted as not only soldiers relaxing but as devoted and caring sons, boyfriends, husbands, and fathers of young children. In part, the national obsession with providing the troops an ample supply of affordable Coca-Cola was invested in the domestic images of the men. Coca-Cola was sent overseas to ward away homesickness so the troops could concentrate on the task at hand. The troops were depicted as innocent and young which helped mask the fact that they were capable of violence. The image of military masculinity was bound up with the contradictory images of strength and innocence, or perhaps, friendship and aggression.<sup>31</sup>

Native men, by contrast, were not part of the masculinity depicted. Women were one category of "friends" in the ad series and native men were a second. Again, native men were not represented as equals to each other. For instance, Chinese fighter pilots

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<sup>31</sup> Wexler, *Tender Violence*, 35.

were depicted as skilled Allied soldiers but, in contrast, the Maoris' of New Zealand and the indigenous people of the Admiralty Islands were depicted as awestruck primitives who were inexperienced in the technologies of war or industrialization. In illustrating these native men and their varied roles in relationship to the American soldiers, a tension emerged in the innocent theme of friendship that suggested a modicum of social equality and the goal of global expansion. Much of this tension arose from the meanings attached to the racial and cultural differences illustrated in the series.

The ads indicate that Coca-Cola was widely available to the civilians in the countries portrayed in the global high-sign series, but this was not the case. The U.S. Military directive, as we have seen, prohibited non-U.S. consumption and mandated that the entire supply of the drink be reserved for American troops. *TO Digest* recorded instances when Coca-Cola was shared with Allied forces and the civilian workers at bottling plants, but not to a wider consumer public. The ads made no mention of TOs at all, and despite the fact that the details surrounding Coca-Cola's WWII travels were not accurately represented, the *TO Digest* serves as an important comparative touchstone when it comes to the representation of the foreign men in non-Western and Third World nations. The American artists who illustrated the ads created images rich with detail – full of mountainous, pastoral, beachside, and jungle landscapes. The varying states of dress and un-dress provided information about the climate and temperature. Equal focus was given to the racial and cultural differences which were illustrated and signified by skin color, dress, language, and props. The TOs descriptions of the landscapes and the people who they encountered were mirrored by the visual images in the global high-sign ads.



In the descriptive formats in the *Digest* and the ads, albeit with different audiences and purposes, a color coded racial difference was de-emphasized in favor of cultural differences that were represented in a variety of ways. American racism is a hierarchical system of privilege and discrimination that historically defines race through a complex combination of skin color, religion, and perceived, fixed matters of culture in contrast to a privileged white American identity. These ads introduced American consumers to parts of the world, with which they might not have been previously familiar, in a non-threatening way. Sameness was emphasized over difference. As a marketing tool, the global high-sign ads sought to highlight a world connected by Coca-Cola, one that elevated Americans as the bearers of freedom. In this context, cultural differences were depicted as insignificant obstacles that the friendly gesture of sharing Coca-Cola could easily conquer.<sup>32</sup>

Non-threatening representations of the world and foreign people allowed Americans to simultaneously adopt a national identity and a separate global consumer identity as drinkers of Coca-Cola. The ads addressed an American consumer public. The text at the bottom of every ad used possessive language, like “our fighting men,” to establish that the American troops in the ads represented the American readers who saw them. Similarly, in ads like the one showing Chinese fighter pilots, the heading reads, “Have a ‘Coke’ = Good winds have blown you here . . . a way to say ‘We are friends’ to the Chinese.” The “we,” here, refers to the American nation and public who are “friends”

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<sup>32</sup> For more on “cultural racism” and the historical shifting landscape of racism configured through a fixed perception of culture, see Henry A. Giroux, “Living Dangerously: Identity Politics and the New Cultural Racism,” in *Between Borders: Pedagogy and the Politics of Cultural Studies*, ed. Henry A. Giroux and Peter McLaren (Psychology Press, 1994), 29-55; Frantz Fanon, *Black Skin, White Masks* (Grove Press, 1967); George M. Fredrickson, *Racism: A Short History* (Princeton University Press, 2002); Michael Omi and Howard Winant, *Racial formation in the United States: from the 1960s to the 1990s* (Psychology Press, 1994); Les Black and John Solomos, *Theories of Race and Racism: A Reader* (Psychology Press, 2000).

or allies with the Chinese. Yet, the text of many ads refers to a separate global consumer identity shared between “friendly-minded people” with the same tastes and values around the world – albeit a global consumer culture defined by American tastes and values. For instance, in a 1944 ad depicting a soldier who has returned home, it says: “Yes, around the globe, Coca-Cola, stands for the pause that refreshes, – has become a symbol of our way of living.” The series reinforces an American identity and a shared global consumer identity that Americans need not adapt to; instead, Coca-Cola means to others what it does to Americans.

Skin color was the dominant maker of difference in only one example, the ad set in the Admiralty Islands. In the rest of the ads, regardless of where the white American soldiers were depicted – Brazil, Panama, New Zealand, or the American South – the skin color of the white soldiers looks bronzed by the sun and there is hardly any difference between their skin and the muted darker shades of the non-white people who shared their Cokes. Despite this, the images contain American bias and signifiers of racial difference. Viewed one next to the other, the foreigners can be clearly distinguished from Americans and therefore difference was an important element within the ads; however, these visual differences marking nationality and culture were more often than not tempered with markers and gestures of sameness.

Because the ads addressed a white American consumer public, the core paradox between Coca-Cola’s corporate mission to expand internationally and the reality of American workers’ ethnocentrism and racism when stationed abroad is apparent in the visual representations of foreign people and places in the global high-sign series. Many of

the harshly defined differences that were attributed to unlikeable foreigners in *TO Digest* were represented in the ads in far softer cultural terms and smiling faces.

In the three ads seen side-by-side here, cultural differences are visually represented through native dress, architecture, and the presence or absence of technology and mechanized modes of transportation. In the first ad, two Panamanians wearing straw hats drink bottles of Coke with the G.I.s. The young boy riding the mule carries roosters, perhaps to barter for bottles of Coke or on the way to market. The Panama Canal has been an important strategic waterway connecting the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans since its completion in 1914. American troops heightened their presence along the canal for the duration of the war. In the background of the image there is a U.S. Army Post Exchange (PX) boat delivering cases of Coca-Cola to the troops stationed there. In the scene depicted, the man and young boy smile with their Cokes. The sign of racial difference here is not skin color. The artist makes no distinguishable difference in the skin colors of the tan Americans and Panamanians. But Americans not accustomed to traveling by mule would pick up on the slower pace of the country and the hut with thatched roof to interpret the differences between the men.

The *TO Digest*, by contrast, included a harsh description of Panama's Mexican neighbors to the northwest. In describing the native population in Tripolitania, Libya, TO McGlade made a comparative reference to "our Mexicans on the west coast" who would have been more familiar to his American audience than the Libyan people. He referred to the Mexican and Libyan propensity for "laziness" and their habit of "of doing everything 'domain' (tomorrow)."<sup>33</sup> McGlade's stereotypical comparison crossed nationality and

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<sup>33</sup> *T. O. Digest*, McGlade, Tripolitania, January 1, 1945. Mark Pendergrast Collection, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Books Library, Emory University.

culture in his characterization of the workers he encountered. If Mexicans were similar to Libyans then both groups were different from white workers like McGlade. Borders and passports made clear the fact that Mexico and Panama were separate countries, but in an American context Latin American was understood as a regional ethno-racial block. Immigrants from most of Latin America were classified as Hispanic or Latino within the American racial rubric. For this reason, a comparison between Mexicans and Panamanians did not require a far stretch of the American imagination. However, there is no overt representation of laziness in the global high-sign ad. In fact, foreigners are depicted as idealized consumers not workers. Panamanians were friends, allies, and Coca-Cola drinkers.



Figure 3.6: Panama, China, and New Zealand, 1943-1944

In the second ad, American aviators are seen with a Chinese fighter pilot. The group stands in front of the Chinese aircraft that has a telltale shark's mouth painted on its nose and is marked with bullet holes. Difference is marked on the smiling Chinese pilot by his facial features. Here, again, sameness is emphasized over difference. All the

men are skilled pilots and enthusiastic Coke drinkers. Above all, they are friends and allies in the context of WWII. This was an important message for an American public which needed instruction on the fact that America stood by the Chinese against Japanese imperial aggression before and during the war.

Finally, the third ad that includes a Maori man in New Zealand represents a different way of life – again, one that was not represented by darker skin but the style of dress that the aboriginal man wears. This New Zealand native wears only a sarong and his bare chest reveals a large tattoo. The intricately adorned structure behind him resembles the decorated canoe at his feet. Difference is clear here. Yet, the gesture of sameness over difference is perhaps made most clear in this ad. The American G.I. on the left opens his shirt to reveal his own large tattoo – almost as if to say to make the point that although this foreign man and culture looks radically different at first glance but that American also have tattoos, and this makes it okay. The overarching message seems to be that the Maori people, as well as other foreign people, are not so different as to bar Americans a global consumer marketplace where Coca-Cola connects them and highlights commonalities.

The focus on cultural difference begins to erode, however, when a different Pacific Island population to the northwest, with dark skin is introduced to the series. The skin color of the indigenous men of the Admiralty is the darkest of all the foreign groups depicted in the ad series. The one example where racial differences are not softened or bridged is an ad portraying the Admiralty Isles, which is part of the Bismarck Archipelago off of the northeastern coast of Papua New Guinea. The islands are covered in rainforest and are the least populated province in the region. Here, blackness represents

not only a different race but also a primitive culture. They are represented as primitive people and a pre-modern society. Additionally, they are the only group where no apparent sameness is made visible, and they are the only ones not drinking or being



Figure 3.7: Admiralty Isles, 1945

Douglas MacArthur, American troops took control of the island and built a large military base from where other military campaigns in the Pacific were launched. The PX on the Admiralty base is depicted in the background of the ad. However, the G.I.s occupy more than half of the image. The ad was designed to draw the reader into the scene from the bottom left hand corner, almost as if the reader is part of the scene, standing behind the man whose muscular back we see so prominently. White American readers might have

offered Coke. In areas of the world like the tribal regions of New Zealand and Papua New Guinea, that had little contact with the broad global political, cultural, and commercial transformations that were accelerating the pace of global development in the postwar era, Coca-Cola represented not only globalization but modernization.

In 1942, Japanese troops occupied the island, and in 1944, under the command of General

easily identified with the troops who are encountering the dark-skinned men who appear to have just emerged from the jungle. Wearing feathered headdresses and carrying drums, they enter the scene from the right side of the image. The trees in the background are thickest on the right side of the page and fade out as your eye moves left. The prominence of the tank suggests that the troops have arrived to the scene in this vehicle. As the American men move from the left side of the page towards the right, or from the light into the tree-covered darkness, the troops come bearing technology and Coca-Cola, but are seen sharing only the former.

The troops pose near the tank, but the action and focus in the interaction is on the walkie-talkies. The tank serves as a prop and the implied mode of transportation for the troops rather than an ominous threat capable of destruction and violence. The Americans drink their Cokes with wide smiles and watch as the men of the Admiralty Isles with wide eyes marvel over the strange piece of equipment being demonstrated. The headline, “Now you’re talking . . . Have a Coca-Cola” reinforces the focus on the walkie-talkie. This is a scene of contact between the “modern” and the “primitive.” The imagined scene is reminiscent of what Mary Louise Pratt calls a “contact zone” where people of different cultures meet in “highly asymmetrical relations.”<sup>34</sup> American GIs wield the power of American imperialism: military armament, private capitalist enterprise, and cultural commodities.

It cannot go unmentioned that this image reads almost like an exact precursor for the 1980 film, *The Gods Must be Crazy* that was promoted with a tagline claiming “[t]he critics are raving, the natives are restless...and the laughter is non-stop!” The film was set

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<sup>34</sup> Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Studies in Travel Writing and Transculturation*, 1st ed. (Routledge, 1992), 4.

in Botswana and South Africa, was a story about a man named Xi, who is a Sho of the Kalahari Desert whose tribe had no modern knowledge and little access to the world beyond. They were a happy tribe until the day when a Coke bottle was thrown out of a small airplane and fell to the ground unbroken. They puzzle over its origin and its purpose, never having seen anything like it before. The Sho go as far as to question whether it was sent by the gods. This same bewilderment is represented in this ad in the face of modern technology. In the ad this all takes place within the moment of contact but in the film, the Coke bottle introduces jealousy, anger, greed, and the concept of private property to the tribe. All of those previously unknown emotions and behaviors led Xi to leave his home in order to destroy the bottle and restore order. This journey brings him into contact, with Westerners for the very first time, an additional encounter with the modern world that was not entirely positive.

However, the global high-sign ads depicted a range of international local markets where Coke was sold and included a hierarchical spectrum between the setting of the American soda fountain, where white consumers congregated, to the remote Admiralty Isles that were home to its dark-skinned indigenous population. Racial diversity around the world was tempered in these ads that targeted the mainstream American public with muted skin colors and softer cultural markers of difference. The highly charged dynamic of American race relations was side-stepped by erasing skin color as a barrier for social interaction and consumption. The ads sold friendly images of patriotic globalization to an American public which got to see itself portrayed, for its own viewing pleasure, as the world's arbiters of good taste and a prime example of freedom in both the political sphere and the market.



## **Conclusion**

The global high-sign series marked a shift in Coca-Cola's advertising strategy. Previous ads claimed a global presence, but did not include foreign places or people. WWII presented the Company with two unique military contracts, but also a context that allowed for patriotic and nationalistic representations of Coke in the world. The ads built positive associations between the American G.I.s who served their country and the Coca-Cola Company who brought them a reminder of home.

Additionally, the global high-sign series constructed the idea that Coca-Cola and the Americans who delivered it were welcomed with open arms everywhere they went. The ads also suggested that Americans maintained a privileged place in the world. The ideology embedded in the ads reveal Coca-Cola's cosmopolitan sensibilities and American racial prejudices. The series includes a hierarchical set of relationships between the American troops and the foreigners depicted.

These ads must be read within the context of U.S. race relations during WWII. Significantly, foreign consumers appeared in American ads before African Americans consumers did. Back home, the Company feared that marketing Coca-Cola to African Americans would alienate white southerners. But this, too, was about to change in carefully circumscribed ways.

## Chapter Four

### **The Color Line in the Cola Line: Coca-Cola's Post-War Pursuit of the Negro Market**

All during the war our white folks talked loud and long, day and night, in public and on the radio, about democracy, freedom, the democratic rights of free people, liberty, the right of the ballot, the right to govern oneself, the democratic way. And we colored folks have practically none of it yet right here in our U.S.A. Hundreds of books and thousands of editorials have been written about democracy in the last ten years, and how good it is. And on our problem – the Race Problem – thousands of surveys have been finished and completed. Millions of resolutions have been passed by this body and that church, this convention and that union. Reports have been drawn up. Words have flowed on paper, on the air, and out of speakers' mouths. Even the President has delivered a Civil Rights message to Congress. And still I can't get a coca cola at the corner drug store because I am colored.

–Langston Hughes (1948)

In 1951, Coca-Cola started advertising to African American consumers for the very first time. International and domestic market pressure helped drive this decision. Current and potential consumers at home and abroad wanted to see Coca-Cola's marketing practices match the images of inclusive internationalism promoted with the brand. The Company hired an African American WWII veteran named Moss H. Kendrix to design an advertising campaign aimed at attracting the large, lucrative, and brand-loyal market of African American consumers. Kendrix, a liberal, pro-capitalist, civil rights activist, believed that holding the U.S. accountable to its own democratic and free market values would help topple Jim Crow.

In order to create a Cold War era advertising campaign aimed at African Americans in the U.S. South, Coca-Cola navigated three major tensions. First, Coca-Cola had to make sure that its racist policies and practices did not tarnish its international image as a symbol of the U.S.A., or the democracy, freedom, and consumerism that it represented. Second, domestically, it had to appeal to two groups of consumers that had diametrically opposed ideas about what it meant to drink Coca-Cola. The Company wanted to continue to appeal to racist whites, whose identities as consumers had been historically constructed in contradistinction to the identities of African American workers. At the same time, Coca-Cola sought to expand its market to capture African American consumers, who were alienated by ads that featured white drinkers and black servants. Third, Kendrick himself was the embodiment of tensions within the nascent civil rights movement; tensions between liberal and radical African Americans who believed that the solution to American racism lay in very different places – in radical anti-colonial and anti-capitalist revolution, or in liberal, democratic, and free market capitalism. Kendrick used Coca-Cola for his agenda, while at the same time the Company chose him to counter more revolutionary or violent protests for civil rights.

Finally, there was another parallel tension. At the same time the same time that the government deployed a segregated military to fight for “democracy” abroad during the Cold War, Coca-Cola employed a segregated workforce and constructed a segregated marketplace as it “fought” for a wider domestic market – one that could include blacks without alienating whites. During World War II, African American soldiers experienced the rampant hypocrisy of fighting a war against fascism and inequality as part of segregated units and returning to civilian life subjected to Jim Crow laws. Allied troops

and foreign people around the world witnessed their unequal treatment in the U.S. Armed Forces and heard stories about the racial violence in the American South. The U.S. State Department deployed public relations campaigns designed to protect a positive national image and promote its foreign affairs agenda. Yet, those campaigns could not erase the fact that African Americans were fighting and dying for a country in which they were treated as second-class citizens. The Double Victory campaign signaled a struggle against racial inequality in the U.S. and echoed the campaign for victory against the Axis powers being waged around the world. Langston Hughes wrote eloquently that a V-A(merica) Day was needed as much as V-E(urope) and V-J(apan) Days. No matter how often and clearly American presidents and members of Congress spoke about the promises of democracy, there was a brutal reality to confront: skin color remained a barrier to full participation in civil society. Segregation and racial violence were a stain on the American fabric of democracy.<sup>1</sup>

Hughes' specific reference to Coca-Cola in his example of the commonplace indignity of segregation and racism cannot be overlooked. Empty rhetoric about the democratic rights of free people did not alleviate the conditions of segregation. In fact, this kind of rhetoric called into question the circumscribed freedom of African Americans and highlighted their restricted mobility within segregated spaces. Hughes' critique here, and elsewhere, pointed to the fact that capitalism was inextricably tied up with imperialism abroad and racism at home.<sup>2</sup> It did not matter that Coca-Cola had not

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<sup>1</sup> Langston Hughes, "Our White Folks, So?," *The Chicago Defender*, March 27, 1948, 14. For more on the Double-V campaign, see Eric Lott, "Double V, Double-Time: Bebop's Politics of Style," *Callaloo*, no. 36 (Summer 1988): 597-605; From the pages of the *Militant* newspaper, *Fighting Racism in World War II*, 1st ed. (Pathfinder Press, 2001); Glenda Elizabeth Gilmore, *Defying Dixie: The Radical Roots of Civil Rights, 1919-1950*, Reprint. (W. W. Norton & Company, 2009); Takaki, *Double Victory*.

<sup>2</sup> Langston Hughes, "Brazenness of Empire: From Here to Yonder," *The Chicago Defender*, January 27, 1945.

established or implemented policies that governed which consumers could buy and consume its product in stores and restaurants. What mattered was that its global headquarters was located in the southern city of Atlanta, Georgia, where the executive leadership held positions of power and influence but took no stand against racism within the Company or the South. Furthermore, Coca-Cola was sold over Jim Crow's segregated counters across the region: in glasses at soda fountains and in bottles at gas stations and grocery stores. Coke was tied to public spaces and the putatively free domains of lifestyle, consumption, and global commerce and therefore attracted heightened attention as a cultural icon of segregation.

By the 1950s, a disconnect grew between the corporate cosmopolitan rhetoric to embrace new people in new markets abroad and the reality of more localized segregation. Even as the Coca-Cola Company followed U.S. troops around the world in order to find new markets where they might inculcate brand loyalty, they deliberately ignored African American consumers in the U.S. This did not go unnoticed. Foreign consumers concerned about American racism and domestic consumers angry about Jim Crow both pointed out that Coca-Cola's international marketing strategies emphasized cross-cultural "sharing" but never represented black and white Americans sharing a Coke.

Particular lifestyles and images were being sold in these ads. The rise of segmented marketing after WWII was a particular "problem" for racial segregation because it built new markets across and between different demographic groups. Yet because Coke so thoroughly exemplified an "American way of life," it also became a loaded mass cultural symbol in the context of civil rights. The inclusion of African

Americans into Coca-Cola's consumer public challenged the very boundaries of national culture and its implicit and unmarked whiteness.

### **Absence & Erasure: Constructing Consumer Identities and the Negro Market**

In the decades leading up to and directly after the turn of the twentieth century, mass-produced goods were being advertised and sold across the country. It became increasingly common for people to purchase brand name goods rather than make them at home or purchase them from local craftsmen. Creating trust in brand names and pre-packaged products went hand in hand with the basic purpose of advertising: to create the desire to consume. The construction of a consumer identity was critical to this process, as representations invited consumers to imagine themselves as somehow bettered by the product.<sup>3</sup> Advertising images suggested which item should be purchased, but also which brand, and who should do the buying. During the nineteenth and early twentieth century, the vast majority of consumers represented in ads, and instructed of their role within the marketplace, were white people of both sexes and all ages.

The construction of white consumer identities was made possible by the inclusion and juxtaposition of African Americans who were no longer slaves but domestic servants and wage laborers.<sup>4</sup> Ads during this period illustrate the tensions within American culture

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<sup>3</sup>Strasser, *Satisfaction Guaranteed*.; Lizabeth Cohen, *Making a New Deal: Industrial Workers in Chicago, 1919-1939*, 2nd ed. (Cambridge University Press, 2008). Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*. Cohen's work on African-American labor activism in Chicago during the 1920's and 1930's, and her subsequent work on consumer identity provide a strong argument for a shifting identity, specifically for African Americans but also white Americans as well, from worker to consumer. She argues that a consumer identity and participation in commercial life offered the potential for the creation of an independent and valued identity for marginalized groups (Lizabeth Cohen *Making A New Deal* and *A Consumers Republic*); See also: McGovern, *Sold American*.

<sup>4</sup>Robin Kelley's work on African American worker's organized and unorganized postwar participation in boycotts powerfully illustrates the ways working-class identity lead strongly into the decades following the

that surfaced from an unwillingness to recognize African Americans as both workers and as consumers. In ads, they served as foils in sharp contrast with white consumers, visually differing in the color of their skin but also, as an extension of racial identity, in their relationship to products and people. As they were represented, African Americans were not sophisticated and informed shoppers and were only depicted as workers without the means or desire to consume products. It was this impossibility in visual imagery that helped to create an opposing white consumer identity.

The flipside of this process was the construction of new African American identities in advertising and popular culture. The representation of African Americans drew from stereotypes that circulated during the post-reconstruction era of the late nineteenth century and created new ones that reflected the social roles of African Americans in the twentieth century. The stereotypes in early advertising drew from the minstrel show tradition. Starting in the 1840s, the minstrel show was a widely popular form of entertainment for white audiences. Both African Americans and white men in blackface performed exaggerated and often grotesque representations of blackness through song, dance, and comedic skits.<sup>5</sup> Many of these stereotypes that lived on the stage worked their way into the public's consciousness in advertising as well.

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war when African Americans rebel not only as workers but as consumers on systems of transportation. Robin D. G. Kelley, *Race Rebels : Culture, Politics, and the Black Working Class* (Free Press, 1996).

<sup>5</sup> The stock characters in minstrel shows were clownish, lazy, superstitious, cowardly, and lascivious characters, who stole, lied, and spoke in broken English. The black women were portrayed as mannish and matronly "mammies" who took care of white children and tended white households; or they were "jezebels," sexually provocative young women. For more on African American and white minstrel characters and the meanings of their performances see: Robert C. Toll, *Blacking Up: The Minstrel Show in Nineteenth-Century America* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1974); Dale Cockrell, *Demons of Disorder: Early Blackface Minstrels and Their World* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997); Eric Lott, *Love and Theft: Blackface Minstrelsy and the American Working Class* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1993); William J. Mahar, *Behind the Burnt Cork Mask: Early Blackface Minstrelsy and Antebellum American Popular Culture* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1999); W.T. Lhamon, Jr., *Raising Cain: Blackface Performance from Jim Crow to Hip Hop* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1998).

One way that consumers learned their varying places within the market was through the depiction of unequal social relationships between people of different races in advertising. Advertising reflected the ideals of Jim Crow segregation; it reproduced them and remade them in the process. The abstract meanings attached to the colors white and black were a common theme embedded in the juxtaposition of people of different races. The color white was linked with purity, civility, and cleanliness.<sup>6</sup> In contrast, black was linked with dirt, impurity, and savagery. This was a common theme in soap advertisements.<sup>7</sup> One example, among many, can be seen in washing powder ads by the N.K. Fairbank's company that featured the trademarked "Gold Dust Twins."<sup>8</sup> What started as a minstrel show act became an iconic brand name in advertising.<sup>9</sup> The Gold Dust Twins represented both dirt and domestic labor. In the case of cleaning products, consumption relieved the buyer of the hard work of scrubbing with water alone. Its 1909 tagline, "If you have been a slave to housework, let the Gold Dust Twins relieve you of your back-breaking burden," targeted white women and maintained the idea that African

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<sup>6</sup> For more on the meanings of blackness and whiteness see: Gilroy, *Against Race*; Jan Nederveen Pieterse, *White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture* (Yale University Press, 1995); Jo-Ann Morgan, "Mammy the Huckster: Selling the Old South for the New Century," *American Art* 9, no. 1 (1995): 87-116; Berlant, "National Brands/National Body: Imitation of Life."

<sup>7</sup> For more on the meaning of blackness and difference in advertising see: Chapter 5, "Soft Soaping Empire," in McClintock, *Imperial Leather*; William M. O'Barr, *Culture And The Ad: Exploring Otherness In The World Of Advertising* (Westview Press, 1994); Mehaffy, "Advertising Race/Raceing Advertising: The Feminine Consumer(-Nation), 1876-1900.," Marilyn Kern-Foxworth, *Aunt Jemima, Uncle Ben, and Rastus: Blacks in Advertising, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow* (Praeger Paperback, 1994).

<sup>8</sup> Grace Elizabeth Hale, *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1940*, illustrated edition. (Vintage, 1999), 163.

<sup>9</sup> As was the case with the Gold Dust Twins, the iconography drew from minstrel shows racial types. Note on the origin of the Gold Dust Twins and minstrel show roots before washing powder ads? The box was gold in color and originally showed to black skinned children surrounded by gold coins. They wore only red fringed loin cloths/skirts. The company made the powder from 1897-1930. The Gold Dust Twins were two black children, named Goldie and Dustie, who were first pictured on Gold Dust boxes in 1902. The twins were drawn by E.W. Kemble, who worked for the Chicago Daily Graphic newspaper. The drawings supposedly were based on two young boys named Tim Moore and Romeo Washburn, who were part of a 1900 Vaudeville act called "Cora Mitchell and Her Gold Dust Twins."

[www.newstimes.com/default/article/Antiques-Collectibles-Is-it-a-bench-or-a-218675.php](http://www.newstimes.com/default/article/Antiques-Collectibles-Is-it-a-bench-or-a-218675.php)



Americans were the authority on cleaning and best suited for that type of work.<sup>10</sup> In the context of slavery and post-slavery segregation, darker skinned people were always understood as those best suited for manual work. Consumption, on the other hand, was most effectively linked with leisure or relaxation, and powerfully laid claim to happiness more generally. Consumption, then, was the domain of whites. These ads helped to maintain racial stereotypes, but, they also worked to construct images of an ideal white consumer who deserved leisure and the good things in life, as well as counter images of Black people who existed only to make leisure possible for whites.

Early Coca-Cola ads published across the country appealed to white consumers who were alternatively figure as men hard at work and in need of refreshment; as genteel middle-class women with weak constitutions and discerning taste; as wives and mothers who shopped for their families; and as children who desired the sweet treat of an ice cold Coca-Cola. African Americans were not included in Coca-Cola ads as people who might enjoy and appreciate the product. In addition to the Company's domestic focus, there was an increasing amount of attention and investment in developing new consumer markets internationally. Yet, there was no effort to acknowledge African American consumers or increase their rate of consumption through direct marketing campaigns.

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<sup>10</sup> This ad was published in *The Pittsburgh Press* (Monday Evening, March 15, 1909), p. 11.

In the relatively few instances when African Americans were featured in Coca-Cola's advertisements during the first half of the twentieth century, they were represented as workers in subservient roles; as maids, butlers, or drivers. Leisure and relaxation were key for a company that had long used the slogans "Refresh Yourself" and "The Pause that Refreshes."<sup>11</sup> The Coca-Cola brand did not simply reflect American tastes and values; it helped to produce the image of an idealized white America. This ad, published



Figure 4-1: Refresh Yourself, 1925

in *The Ladies' Home Journal* in 1925, was a prime example.<sup>12</sup> A common element of the Company's advertising was the representation of African American servants who attended to white Coca-Cola drinkers. Here we see an African American maid who is watching a young white girl bring her grandmother a bottle of Coca-Cola and an empty glass on a tray. All three wear white; the girl's white dress that blends into the light color of her skin,

her grandmothers white ruffled collar that matches her white hair, and finally the maid's white waist apron, cuffs, collar and hat, all of which are contrasted against the black of

<sup>11</sup> The word refresh first surfaced in Coca-Cola ads in 1887 with the slogan, "Delicious! Refreshing! Invigorating! Exhilarating!" In 1904 it was shortened to, "Delicious and refreshing." The slogan depicted in the ads seen here, "Refresh Yourself" was created in 1924.

<sup>12</sup> The earliest Coca-Cola ad I have found that includes an African American person is from 1907. It showed an African American servant pushing a "rolling chair" in Atlantic City. The ad included the slogan, "Delicious! Cooling! Refreshing!" The ad featuring here with the young girl, her grandmother, and the African American maid was from the February 1925 issue of *The Ladies' Home Journal*.

her dress, the black piano behind her, and the color of her skin. The maid smiles but appears anxious with her arms in the air and hands open. She is ready to spring into action and catch the tray if it falls. The reader knows that the maid's reason for worry is that the child is not suited or trained to serve.

The relationship here is clear: black women's labor makes the white women's leisure and gentility possible. The text at the bottom of the image says: "Refreshment Time: How Delightful to Have Coca-Cola Ready at Home." The maid is marked visually by her uniform and the color of her skin. The reader is meant to find identify with the older white woman waiting for her Coca-Cola. Labor and consumption are racially marked in this ad. To be refreshed was to be at rest, which here was a privilege of whiteness. The maid's labor made it possible for the drink to be ready at home and it was not intended for her refreshment. The presence of an African American woman working helps to construct a consumer identity for the white woman in the image and, by extension for the white women who saw this ad in popular magazines.

A second ad published in 1924 in *The Literary Digest* depicted an African American porter serving two businessmen. Unlike consumer products meant for cleaning or beauty products meant to enhance femininity and accentuated domesticity, Coca-Cola was marketed across gender lines to white men as well. This masculine ad included three men: two white men seated in a lounge and one African American porter serving them. In this ad, the men's suits suggested that they were sitting down for a meeting. The text accompanying the image, "Refresh Yourself," commands these male consumers to take a break and take the time to enjoy Coca-Cola. In these parallel ads, the relationship depicted is between an African American servant worker and two white consumers. At



Figure 4-1: Refresh Yourself, 1924

the center of both images, and central to the company's marketing campaign were white consumers and, of course, the bottles of Coca-Cola.

It was not until the WWII era that research and recognition of the Negro Market surfaced in advertising trade journals and could be measured in the volume of ad placements in newspapers. This recognition came most convincingly in 1945 from research sponsored by the Urban League and the Research Company of America.<sup>13</sup> Two crucial

points surfaced: first and foremost, African Americans loyally purchased brand name items in greater percentage than their white counterparts, and they represented a largely untapped market of 15 million people. African Americans were more loyal to brand names because they offered an assurance of quality. African Americans were no longer at the mercy of store keepers, who previously had control over the quality of goods available to them, before standardization in brand name goods was offered in the late nineteenth century. Thus, African Americans sought out brand names because they guaranteed equality of product – no longer were the products they consumed of lower quality than those available to whites. African American consumers were quick and happy to respond to advertising that recognized them as consumers rather than workers,

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<sup>13</sup> The findings of this research were published in over 158 Negro Newspapers. See, "One Hundred Fifty Eight Negro Newspapers Study Racial Market," *Printer's Ink* (August 23, 1946): 98; Dwight E. Brooks, "In Their Own Words: Advertisers' Construction of an African American Consumer Market, the World War II Era," *Howard Journal of Communications* 6, no. 1 (1995): 38. "One hundred fifty eight Negro newspapers study racial market" *Printer's Ink* (August 23, 1946), 98. Note to Dwight E. Brooks *In Their Own Words*, p. 38.

and adopted loyalty to a brand in response.<sup>14</sup> Top on the lists of do's and don'ts for companies that wished to increase sales in the Negro market was to remove racist imagery and text that would offend African Americans, and to target ads specifically that represented them, like whites, as consumers.<sup>15</sup>

Second, the African American market was estimated to include 15 million people and represented the income of fourteen states.<sup>16</sup> The individuals who sold and promoted the Negro market were men like Moss Kendrix, who had a background and stake in the success of Negro newspapers and publishing associations.<sup>17</sup> Central to his work was convincing companies that a Negro market existed and could be developed. Companies also needed convincing that the Negro press was a legitimate space to reach consumers. The selling of ad space in the Negro press, and the creation of ads specifically for African Americans, had the potential to improve the image of African Americans in advertising and represented a profit that would help keep newspapers and magazines written by and for African Americans in business. By appealing to African Americans in the Negro press, they could also keep their new race-conscious ads hidden from white consumers, who rarely read black publications.

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<sup>14</sup> Brooks, "In Their Own Words," 45. As Brooks points out, *Tide* magazine published the article, "Selling the Negro Market" in 1951 by a Black sales manager who claimed that Blacks had an affinity for name brands and a strong desire for quality goods, as well as an "almost unnatural attempt to gain recognition." Brooks argued that the journal saw no need to explain the similar inclination among Whites. Beyond attention to the desire for quality products and the desire to be seen as equal to Whites who also purchased brand name products as status symbols, recognition itself is powerful. White consumers were long accustomed to seeing themselves represented in advertising. Blacks were seen as childlike in the satisfaction they received in seeing themselves portrayed as consumers but for White people, there was little novelty in representation or the recognition as a productive member of society with the power to purchase status.

<sup>15</sup> "Advice on the Negro," *Business Week* (April 1940): 47-58.; D.J. Sullivan, "Don't do this - if you want to sell your products to Negroes!," *Sales Management* (March 1, 1943): 46, 48, 50.

<sup>16</sup> "The forgotten 15,000,000," *Sponsor* (October 10, 1959): 24-25, 54-55; "The forgotten 15,000,000," *Sponsor* (October 24, 1959): 30-54.

<sup>17</sup> Another example of an African American influential in the Negro Press was John H. Johnson, the editor of *Ebony* magazine, who coured companies to buy ad space in his magazine.

Historians have assumed that the integration of African Americans in advertising did not take place until the 1960s and 1970s.<sup>18</sup> Yet these studies overlook the ad campaigns that companies successfully deployed in the Negro press beginning in the mid-1940s. Postwar consumer culture included the rise of market segmentation. The separate targeting of specific groups of consumers based on race, gender, and class recognized American diversity in ways that had not wholly been strategized before, but this segmentation also further standardized and strengthened social differences. Ads created for African Americans were placed in magazines and newspapers that Coke hoped only they would see. This tension was created by the deeply entrenched culture of segregation. In the 1950s, Coca-Cola ads did not include people of different races drinking Coke together. Yet, even ads depicting African Americans consuming the drink posed a challenge to white consumer claims to the realm of consumption and the role of Coca-Cola as a fixture in the “American way of life.”<sup>19</sup>

In spite of the promise of 15 million especially loyal Coke consumers, there was corporate reluctance to target the Negro market. While 15 million consumers were too many to ignore; especially when they represented \$4.8 – \$10 million, a sum that was equivalent to the total income of more than fourteen states, the added cost of appealing to

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<sup>18</sup> It was not until the 1960s and 1970s that ads began featuring African American and white consumers together in ads, or even African Americans alone in ads in mainstream (white) publications. For more on integrated advertising, see Ewen, *Captains of consciousness*; John W. Gould, Norman B. Sigband, and Cyril E. Zoerner, “Black Consumer Reactions to ‘Integrated’ Advertising: An Exploratory Study,” *The Journal of Marketing* 34, no. 3 (July 1, 1970): 20-26; Arnold M. Barban, “The Dilemma of ‘Integrated’ Advertising,” *The Journal of Business* 42, no. 4 (October 1, 1969): 477-496; C.E. Block, “White Backlash to Negro Ads: Fact or Fantasy?,” *Journalism Quarterly* 49 (1972): 258-262.

<sup>19</sup> For more on race, consumerism, and the rise of market segmentation, see, Cohen, *A Consumers’ Republic*; Frank, *The Conquest of Cool*; Laird, *Advertising Progress*; Hale, *Making Whiteness*; Kathy M. Newman, “The Forgotten Fifteen Million: Black Radio, the ‘Negro Market’ and the Civil Rights Movement,” *Radical History Review* 76 (2000): 115-135; Felicia Kornbluh, “Black Buying Power: Welfare Rights, Consumerism, and Northern Protest,” in *Freedom North: Black Freedom Struggles Outside the South, 1940-1980*, ed. Jeanne Theoharis and Komozi Woodard (199-222: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003).

a “specialized” market frustrated some companies.<sup>20</sup> It would take hard work to change people’s attitudes and remove racist imagery in advertising and it might require that they hire some African Americans to craft appealing and effective representations of African American consumers. Race marked an otherness in American culture that manifested itself in the discriminatory treatment of African Americans. Coke could not simply start running the ads it had already developed in the Negro press, because those ads either explicitly insulted African Americans by placing them in service to white consumers, or implicitly insulted them by only featuring whites at leisure. So companies like Coke would have to design whole new ad campaigns to tap into the African American market, which was expensive and perhaps vexing for white executives who wanted mainly to ignore racism or who were racist themselves. This frustration led many companies to abandon the project altogether. It was argued that companies overlooked the fact that they were “dealing with a class or foreign market (the Negro is both).”<sup>21</sup> African Americans constituted a separate category in the market during the 1940s and 1950s.

Notably in 1963, companies that were considered early pioneers in the recognition of the Negro market were profiled by an international trade journal of the soft drink industry. The Coca-Cola Company was applauded for “doing ‘missionary’ work in the market during the late thirties and early forties,” when “Coca-Cola recognized the Negro market to be a highly competitive one and intensified its efforts to encourage and aid bottlers in seeking out Negro customers.”<sup>22</sup> This characterization of Coca-Cola’s outreach into the Negro market as “missionary work” likened their efforts to religious or political

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<sup>20</sup> This was written in a sidebar from Philip Salisbury, *Sales Management* executive editor, titled “Why This Article is Important” in Sullivan, “Don’t do this - if you want to sell your products to Negroes!”. 48.

<sup>21</sup> “Negro Markets,” *Tide* (March 14, 1946): 86-87.

<sup>22</sup> “Coca-Cola: The Negro Market,” *The National Bottlers Gazette (The International Magazine of the Soft Drink Industry)* (February 1963).

undertakings overseas to convert foreign groups to a new ideological position. African Americans were American citizens who were already consumers; in fact they were ideal brand name shoppers. They were not strangers to the modern marketplace; instead it was companies and advertisers who would have to learn how to adapt and recognize them.

Although their absence in advertising suggested otherwise, African Americans drank Coca-Cola. But, it was not a clear favorite. When African Americans were not being insulted in advertising they were often ignored. They could not relate to the numerous ads that depicted white consumers drinking Coca-Cola at soda fountains. Soda fountains were segregated spaces where their presence and consumption was prohibited, and African Americans often found it difficult to secure jobs at local bottling plants or as salesmen, even in their own neighborhoods. Coca-Cola was not the only soft-drink company on the market. Other companies appealed to African Americans. Nehi fruit flavored sodas, which later purchased R.C. Cola, and Joe Louis Punch, a short lived cola company backed by the popular African-American boxer, were well stocked in small African American markets.<sup>23</sup> These drinks appealed to African American consumers with advertising campaigns that stressed its low cost and value. Additionally, pictures of Joe Louis wearing his boxing gloves appealed to African Americans who had few role models and little recognition in advertising. Much of the original appeal of Pepsi was promoted in their ads that boasted “twice as much” as the nickel price of a soft drink. In each bottle there were twelve ounces, not six like a bottle of Coca-Cola. Pepsi Company President Walter Mack pursued African American customers and recognized the

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<sup>23</sup> For more on the African American soft-drink market ad Joe Louis Punch, see: “A Negro Integrates His Markets,” *Business Week* (May 18, 1968), 94; “Joe Louis Punch,” *Tide* (August 23, 1946), 20-21; “Supersalesman Joe Louis Pushes Joe Louis Punch,” *Advertising Age* (August 20, 1948), 1, 41; “Joe Louis Punch Boosts Sales, Ads to Dozen Markets,” *Advertising Age* (September 29, 1947), 28.



economic value of diversity by hiring a three member African American sales team. In 1947, after the war ended, he hired Edward F. Boyd, a former singer and actor working then for the National Urban League in New York, to create the new division.<sup>24</sup> This all-black sales division included twelve members who were given a budget for advertising and promotional tools. This put Pepsi years ahead of Coca-Cola in terms of its investment into the Negro Market. When Coca-Cola was finally persuaded to recognize the potential in the Negro market, they put their faith in one man, Moss H. Kendrix.

### **Moss Kendrix Rises to Prominence through Persuasion**

Coca-Cola followed on Pepsi's heels and expanded its reach to African-American consumers. Coca-Cola could not afford to let Pepsi gain on them in the American market. By the 1930s it became difficult for Coca-Cola to ignore African American labor disputes that resulted in boycotts. Additionally, the emerging field of market research began to track African American spending patterns. Social scientists quantified the size and spending power of the African American consumer market.<sup>25</sup> The company ultimately decided it could not afford to continue ignoring the Negro market. In 1945, Moss H.

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<sup>24</sup> Stephanie Capparell, "How Pepsi Opened Door to Diversity: A 1940s All-Black Team Targeted a New Market And Broke a Barrier," *Wall Street Journal*, January 9, 2007; Stephanie Capparell, *The Real Pepsi Challenge: How One Pioneering Company Broke Color Barriers in 1940s American Business* (Free Press, 2008), Louis and Yazijian, *The Cola Wars*. It should be noted that during the years 1940-1951, Pepsi-Cola President Walter Mack initiated this African American sales team and national marketing outreach campaign. He understood that the Negro Market meant more money for Pepsi if they could find ways to win over new loyal consumers. However, similar to many other company executives, he was cautious to publicize these efforts and only advertised in the Negro press. He also was wary of the image the company had earned from its appeal among African Americans. At a bottlers' convention in New York in 1949, Mack told the bottlers, "We're going to have to give Pepsi a little more status, a little more class – in other words, we're going to have to develop a way whereby it will no longer be known as a nigger drink." He apologized to his African American salesmen present but his meaning was clear. After his tenure as president, Alfred Steele, a former Coca-Cola executive, replaced him and fired Mr. Boyd and dispersed the all-black sales team to offices around the company. Like the company he came from, Steele focused Pepsi on international sales rather than domestic outreach to minorities.

<sup>25</sup> For more on the market research, see Igo, *The Averaged American*.

Kendrix, an African American public relations specialist, pitched an idea to the Coca-Cola Company for an advertising and public relations campaign targeting the Negro Market. The Company's chairman of the board of directors, Harrison Jones, told him that the timing was wrong.<sup>26</sup> Coca-Cola was focused on serving the troops, and the war dictated scarcity and rations in the domestic market. The Company advised Kendrix to make his pitch again after the war ended. He did, and after continued appeals he was hired on retainer in 1951. Kendrix turned his original pitch into the Company's first direct marketing campaign that targeted African Americans.

The timing of the decision to include African Americans in Coca-Cola's advertising cannot be explained by the Company's calculated desire for increased profit alone. The potential for increased sales in this segment of the market was not new. The Company, however, wanted to have its cake and eat it too. The risk of alienating white consumers by associating the drink with African Americans deterred Coke from cashing in on this market. The decision to include African Americans in Coca-Cola advertising is attributable to the threats of losing African American consumer dollars to boycotts and competing soft drinks, as well as the fear that any association with racial discrimination in the international press would tarnish their image and hurt foreign sales.

Moss Kendrix's work for the Coca-Cola Company began in the early years of what historians call "the long civil rights movement" and "the Cold War civil rights era," periodizations which have expanded and enriched traditional depictions of the civil rights

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<sup>26</sup> Moss H. Kendrix, "Letter from Moss H. Kendrix to Mr. William Hobbs, Pres. of the Coca-Cola Export Corporation", March 11, 1946, Folder: Moss Kendrix Agreement with Coca-Cola, Alexandria, V.A., Alexandria Black History Museum, The Moss H. Kendrix Collection.

movement as a 1960s-era American phenomenon.<sup>27</sup> Longer views of the movement, including this chapter, include its origins and aftermath, as well as global connections. Such scholarship has focused on the overlap between domestic antiracist activism and foreign policies aimed at international diplomacy and anticommunism that forced the hand of the U.S. government to take action on civil rights legislation.<sup>28</sup> This chapter flags Moss Kendrix's liberal democratic and capitalist consumer perspective, along with more radical anti-colonial and entrepreneurial perspectives, which emerged between the 1930s and 1950s, as critical early decades of the civil rights movement.

Kendrix's alignment with a growing cadre of African American critics of racism, as well as corporate interests and capitalist markets, made him a compelling expert for Coca-Cola to hire in this context. In his pursuit to develop the Negro market, Kendrix sought to reconcile the dilemma that racism posed in the lives of African Americans and to the Coca-Cola Company. He believed the inclusion of African Americans in

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<sup>27</sup> Jacquelyn Dowd Hall's "The Long Civil Rights Movement and the Political Uses of the Past" (March 2005).

<sup>28</sup> For the literature on "Cold War Civil Rights" see: Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*; Renee Romano, "No Diplomatic Immunity: African Diplomats, the State Department, and Civil Rights, 1961-1964," *The Journal of American History* 87 (2000): 546-579.; and the symposium on "African Americans and U.S. Foreign Relations," in *Diplomatic History*, 20 (1996), 531-650, including articles by Carol Anderson, "From Hope to Disillusion: African Americans, the United Nations, and the Struggle for Human Rights, 1944-47," 531-563"; Helen Lavelle and Scott Lucas, "The American Way: Edith Sampson, the NAACP, and African American Identity in the Cold War," 565-590; and Michael L. Krenn, "Unfinished Business: Segregation and U.S. Diplomacy at the 1958 World's Fair," 591-612. Brenda Gayle (ed.) Plummer, *Window on Freedom: Race, Civil Rights, and Foreign Affairs, 1945-1988* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2003). Some scholars, among whom I include myself, whose archival research illustrates that the U.S. concerns over domestic race problems, and its impact on international opinions of the U.S., as well as, how that might get in the way of the most speedy headway for American capitalism in newly opened up spaces of market penetration, suggests that the timeline can be moved back before WWII. Works on earlier black radicalism and civil rights activism is in part what has led to the need for a longer view of the civil rights movement. For examples of scholarship arguing for an earlier periodization, see: Penny M. Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World: Jazz Ambassadors Play the Cold War* (Harvard University Press, 2006); Hart, "Making Democracy Safe for the World: Race, Propoganda, and the Transformaion of U.S. Foreign Policy during World War II."; Penny M. Von Eschen, *Race Against Empire: Black Americans and Anticolonialism, 1937-1957* (Cornell University Press, 1997); Brenda Gayle Plummer, *Rising Wind: Black Americans and U.S. Foreign Affairs, 1935-1960* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1996); Plummer, *Window on Freedom*; Gerald Horne, "Race From Power: U.S. Foreign Policy and the General Crisis of 'White Supremacy'," *Diplomatic History* 23 (1999): 437-461.

advertising was one step in the direction of racial equality. Moss Kendrix closely resembled Booker T. Washington in his politics and belief that African American economic prosperity and positive representations in advertising and culture would lead to racial equality.

Kendrix was the first African American public relations and advertising executive hired by Coca-Cola. He was hired to work full time for the Company as a consultant. Coca-Cola became the cornerstone of his PR firm called “The Moss Kendrix Organization.” His work with Coca-Cola brought him accolades. He not only designed advertisements and sponsored outreach programs, but he worked to create an image of corporate responsibility and caring in the African American community. He believed that African Americans and Coca-Cola could help each other achieve their goals. Simply stated, more loyal consumers meant more money for the Company. For African Americans, proof that African Americans were reliable consumers would lead to the recognition that they were responsible citizens and valuable workers. Kendrix created positive representations of African Americans in Coca-Cola’s advertising. A PR man through and through, Kendrix believed that favorable public opinion was won over in the media and his efforts would contribute to a more favorable public opinion of African Americans. Representing them as Americans who drank Coke, had leisure time, and believed in free market capitalism would suggest that African Americans were the equals of whites, not their subservient inferiors.

Kendrix’s personal life and professional career positioned him well to work at the Coca-Cola Company. He was born in Atlanta, GA in 1917. He attended Morehouse College, a private, all-male, historically black college in the city where he was born. As

an undergraduate, he was the editor of the student newspaper, the *Maroon Tiger*. Additionally, he co-founded the Delta Phi Delta Intercollegiate Journalistic Society.<sup>29</sup> In 1939, as the director of national projects for Delta Phi Delta Kendrix, he created the annually observed, “National Negro Newspaper Week,” with V. Trenton Hubbs and Bernard Milton Jones. He expanded on this idea on his own during the year after he graduated to bring it to national attention. His career in communications took off soon after he graduated. In 1943, the National Negro Press Association, founded three years earlier, took over National Negro Press Week from its founders. Kendrix remained involved but the event was later renamed Black Press Week. The goal was to promote a favorable opinion of the press while rallying aid and recognition for worthy publications and individuals.<sup>30</sup>

Being drafted into the military put many careers on hold. However, for Kendrix, the war provided a unique opportunity that expanded his communications experience. Drafted in 1941, Kendrix worked for the Treasury Department in the War Finance Office (WFO). His role was to promote the sale of war bonds across the U.S., with a particular focus on African Americans. He utilized his connections to publish the articles he wrote in the Negro press and routinely appeared on radio shows on the CBS network.

Additionally, Kendrix organized public appearances across the country for African-American celebrities. It was in this role that he developed a broader base in public relations and communications. His task was selling the war, and war bonds, to African Americans. This was accomplished by the use of celebrities who served as

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<sup>29</sup> Personal history and records about Moss H. Kendrix can be found in , n.d., Alexandria, V.A., Alexandria Black History Museum, The Moss H. Kendrix Collection.

<sup>30</sup> See Nina Mjagkij, *Organizing Black America: an encyclopedia of African American associations* (Taylor & Francis, 2001), 476.

appealing patriotic role models. Duke Ellington, the masterful jazz pianist, and Kendrix's favorite celebrity spokesperson, had toured internationally for USO camp shows sponsored by the Nation War Fund. His work with the WFO, to promote war bonds, allowed him to stick closer to home and was intertwined with his domestic tour schedule. During the spring of 1945 until fall 1946, Ellington did a weekly radio series called "Your Saturday Date with the Duke." His music appealed to white and black audiences and between songs he read pitches to encourage listeners to buy war bonds. Ellington and Kendrix worked together as representatives of the U.S. military and larger U.S. government, yet both understood their complex identities as African Americans. Ellington articulated this eloquently, using the metaphor of musical dissonance to explain his understanding of his place in American life. "That's the Negro life. Hear that chord. That's us. Dissonance is our way of life in America. We are something apart, yet an integral part."<sup>31</sup> Both men saw African Americans as an integral part of the nation and were outspoken on issues of racial inequality. For Kendrix, working on the war bond campaign provided him the opportunity to hone his skills as a public relations specialist in the Negro market. This was also great training for facing the inevitable tensions that racism created in American life, and his experiences with Jim Crow during and after the war stuck with him.

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<sup>31</sup> Ben Burns, "Off The Book Shelf," *The Chicago Defender (National edition)*, January 26, 1946; "Duke Ellington On Bond Program," *The Chicago Defender (National edition)*, June 2, 1945; "Negro Artists Score Overseas," *The Chicago Defender (National edition)*, August 11, 1945; Dave Nathan, "Duke Ellington Orchestra | The Treasury Shows, Vol. 1", n.d., <http://www.allaboutjazz.com/php/article.php?id=7219>; David Brent Johnson, "Duke Ellington: the Treasury Shows, April 1945 | Night Lights Classic Jazz - WFIU Public Radio", n.d., <http://indianapublicmedia.org/nightlights/duke-ellington-the-treasury-shows-april-1945/>. Much has been written on the State Department sponsored jazz tours during the cold war era, most notably Von Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*.

Kendrix crafted appeals to African Americans at a time when discrimination and racism ran through the military and the industries that supported it. Unlike many on the frontlines during the war, Kendrix's wartime experience was largely unique. He was a witness to segregation in the military, but was selected as a spokesman to promote support for the war among African Americans – who were surely just as aware as he was of the racism in the military. At a time when WWII had pushed many towards a greater radicalism, Kendrix developed a critique of racism that was tempered by liberal democratic sentiment. The trick of wartime public relations for Kendrix would be to counter the absence and maligned presence of African Americans in his outreach. A growing number of African Americans spoke out and wrote about their experiences fighting a war against intolerance and fascism abroad while suffering the indignities of racism at home. African American service in previous wars had also ignited post-war campaigns for racial equality.<sup>32</sup> A spark that ignited a WWII iteration was a letter to the editor of the African-American *Pittsburgh Courier* on January 31, 1942, by James G. Thompson entitled, "Should I Sacrifice to Live 'Half American?'"

This letter ignited a Double Victory campaign that was waged primarily in the Black Press. Two weeks later the *Courier* released the following statement, above the masthead:

Last week, without any public announcement or fanfare, the editors of The Courier introduced its war slogan- a double "V" for a double victory to colored America. We did this advisedly because we wanted to test the response and popularity of such a slogan with our readers. The response has been overwhelming. Our office has been inundated with hundreds of telegrams and letters of congratulations proving that without any explanation, this slogan represents the true battle cry of colored America... in our fight for freedom we wage a two-pronged attack against our enslavers at home and those abroad who

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<sup>32</sup> For a notable example of African American response in the Black Press after WWI, see W.E.B. Du Bois, "Returning Soldiers," *The Crisis*, May 1919, XVIII edition, 13.

would enslave us. WE HAVE A STAKE IN THIS FIGHT.... WE ARE AMERICANS TOO!”<sup>33</sup>

The Double V campaign powerfully documented responses to the hypocrisy embedded in American democratic society. More to the point, it was argued that war-time service should guarantee post-war equality.

Kendrix remained closely connected to the Negro press and adopted the Double V campaign theme in observance of the fourth annual Negro Newspaper Week. In a radio address by Kendrix, aired on Atlanta’s WSB radio station, he called attention to the theme of observance, “The Negro Press and America’s War Efforts.” “When we have beaten the enemy to his knees,” he noted, “as this we shall, and America turns its attention toward the building of a great post war society free of the ills which dominate the civilized world, the Negro press will be on hand working for those things which shall spell progress for America, working for those things which must spell progress for America’s Negro population.”<sup>34</sup> On the same day over CBS airwaves, Percival Prattis, executive editor of the *Pittsburgh Courier*, more forcefully argued that the, “Negro

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<sup>33</sup> The *Pittsburgh Courier* was established in 1907 and at its height had a national circulation of almost 200,000. By the 1930's it was one of the top selling black newspapers in the country--as widely read as The Chicago Defender and The Afro-American. The newspaper sought to empower African American economically and politically. Articles protested misrepresentations of African Americans in the mainstream media and most notably launched the Double V campaign during WWII. Additionally, The Courier was one of the few black newspapers to provide coverage of news in Africa as the continent moved towards independence. For more on the *The Courier* and its influence, see Buni, Andrew, *Robert L. Vann of The Pittsburgh Courier: Politics and Black Journalism* (University of Pittsburgh Press, 1974); Washburn, Patrick S. *A Question of Sedition: The Federal Government's Investigation of the Black Press During World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1986); Eagles, Charles W. "Two Double V's: Jonathan Daniels, FDR, and Race Relations during World War II." *North Carolina Historical Review* 1982, 59 (3): 252-270.

<sup>34</sup> The call sign for WSB radio station is “Welcome South, Brother.” Founded by the Atlanta Journal newspaper in 1922, it was the South’s first radio station. WSB became an NBC affiliate in 1927. The station included weekly black musicians starting in 1923. For more on black performers the radio, see Barbara Dianne Savage, *Broadcasting Freedom: Radio, War, and the Politics of Race, 1938-1948* (UNC Press Books, 1999); William Barlow, *Voice Over: The Making of Black Radio* (Temple University Press, 1999); William Barlow, “Black Music on Radio during the Jazz Age,” *African American Review* 29 (1995); William Randle, “Black Entertainers on Radio, 1920-1930,” *The Black Perspective in Music* 5, no. 1 (April 1, 1977): 67-74. “Negro Newspaper Week is Underway,” *Atlanta Daily World* (March 2, 1942), p. 1.



press... shall continue to assail the ancient evils at home to the end that American Negroes may fully participate in all America's war effort and that they may be among those first to raise and wave the flag of victory." For Prattis, the Double V campaign was an opportunity for African Americans to show their patriotism, through a commitment to the war effort and their belief that American democracy could rid itself of the ancient evils of racial inequality and extend its freedoms equally to all citizens. Kendrix and Prattis articulated the ways that the Negro press would play a part in the Double V campaign but did not stress more radical anticolonial and anti-capitalist sentiments.

Kendrix consistently used his role in the media to call attention to racial discrimination and Jim Crow culture everywhere he encountered it. Yet, he saw a potential in using the Negro Market as a tool to gain the support of the government and the business community. As generations of African Americans before him had done, he connected economic advancement with the civil rights agenda. For Kendrix, civil rights progress was one and the same with his work in the Negro press and public relations. One example of his wartime campaign for the WFO an article entitled, "Kendrix Tells Thrilling Story of T. Sgt. Joyner Buying \$17,000 W. Bond." In this story he profiled T. Sgt. Joyner, who owned two luncheonettes and a beauty salon in Harlem, NY, before he was inducted into the Armed Forces in August, 1942. It was a story of African American patriotism. Joyner not only served his country in the 9<sup>th</sup> Air Cargo Resupply Squadron stationed in Lawson Field, Georgia, but had purchased a very large amount of war bonds, the last installment during the 6<sup>th</sup> War Loan Drive. He was quoted in the article as having said, "I'm only sorry I haven't a million dollars to invest in bonds."<sup>35</sup> The story was about

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<sup>35</sup> "Kendrix Tells Thrilling Story of T. Sgt. Joyner Buying \$17,000 W. Bond." *Atlanta Daily World* (December 20, 1944), p. 5.

African American support of the war and direct investment in the nation - through patriotic sacrifice in the military and financial investment in the national economy. It emphasized consumerism and purchasing power. War bonds offered a guaranteed return on investment. Selling war bonds to African Americans during WWII required a patriotism that imagined equality would come to the United States at the war's end, or perhaps soon after in some alternate future. Kendrix's goal here was to garner support for this type of patriotism among African Americans who might follow Joyner's example. More to the point, it would send a message to the War Finance Department, the larger U.S. Military, and the nation, that African Americans were invested in the nation and would put their money where their mouth was. He hoped their good citizenship and patriotic purchasing would be rewarded with equality and fairness.

In 1944, the year Kendrix completed his military service, he founded his PR firm. He was able to leverage his work with the Negro Press and his skill in defining and reaching the Negro Market. His company motto was, "What the Public Thinks Matters." He believed it was a necessity to manage public opinion in order for his kind of progressive reforms to unfold alongside profit in the consumer marketplace. In addition to launching his firm and seeking out corporate clients, Kendrix developed a public persona as well. He hosted a weekly radio program called "Profiles of our Times" on WWDC and wrote an editorial column in the *Atlanta Daily World* called "Kendrix Komments," which covered issues related to the media and race relations.

In both venues, he urged corporate awareness of the Negro consumer market and also for recognition of its untapped potential as a skilled and unskilled workforce. He continued to publically support the Negro press and presented arguments for why big

business and African Americans needed it. Again, he pitched his argument to two separate audiences. For business, he focused on the value of the multimillion dollar Negro market that could be accessed by purchasing ad space. In his passionate address to African-American readers he wrote, “The nickels, dimes and fifteen cents, which you pay for the Negro newspaper, increases your stock in this organ for the promotion of full democracy.”<sup>36</sup> He continually worked to expand the reach and influence of the Negro Press.

More broadly, Kendrix Komments was “written about the world in which he lives” and the column ran for the duration of 1951. He reflected on his experiences with racism riding on Jim Crow train cars. The tone of his writing was informal, it was often written to reflect his personal sentiments. On one occasion, Kendrix on a train car headed to Washington, D.C. had a physical altercation with a white man. He asked his readers, “Does my ‘attacker’ know that there is a war in Korea?” He sums up the shocking humiliation he faced and wrote, “The ‘other’ man had resented my placing myself at ‘his’ table, [and] stood up for his ‘supremacy.’”<sup>37</sup> He documented his travels as a businessman, which constantly exposed him to Jim Crow in southern cities. In addition to train cars, he wrote about his good and bad experience in airports. He brought to light a “special” service tax levied on Negro travelers who were not welcome to eat in airport restaurants, sleep in nearby hotels, or use regular airport transportation. This often meant paying out of pocket for transportation farther away from the airport or suffering the indignity of being told that Negroes had to eat in the baggage room. His columns reflected current events and many were set against the background of American soldiers,

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<sup>36</sup> Moss H. Kendrix, “Kendrix Komments: You Need the Negro Press,” *Atlanta Daily World*, January 21, 1951, 2.

<sup>37</sup> Moss H. Kendrix, “Kendrix Komments:,” *Atlanta Daily World*, February 1, 1951, 4.

of all colors, fighting in Korea. A former aide to the Legislative-Federal Relations Division of the National Education Association, he wrote about inequality in education and pleading for African Americans to run for positions on the school board to improve Negro schools. His reflections on business and culture, as they related to race and inequality, were broad and sweeping. He wrote as a patriotic African American who believed in the promise of the democratic system, that the broken system of American democracy could be, and must be, fixed.

To further this argument he extended the Double V campaign, waged but not won during WWII, which resonated during the Korean War as well. He wrote powerfully and passionately on this topic:

Yet we practice not without our national bounds the noble belief to which we give exaltation. We must focus these sins of our nation upon its people. We are in an Age of Emergency at the mid-point of a Century of Crisis... We must give emphasis and reaffirmation to our inherent belief that democracy is good enough for everybody, and that the democracy which we champion, like Christianity, is unexpendable. We must enlist the forces of good in this campaign. With them, we must strive to bring democracy to all the peoples of the earth, and we shall, with the Will of God, achieve this universal goal. Democracy, like Christianity, will not bow to Communism, Fascism, or any other "ism."... We must work to assure the rights of citizenship and the protection of law for everyone within our national bounds. All persons must be given the rights to vote and have that vote counted... We must strive for a national atmosphere in which there will be equality of work, opportunity, educational advantage, and freedom of movement... 'Battle Cry for '51 – Democracy for All.'<sup>38</sup>

While writing about the "sins of our nation" during an "Age of Emergency at the mid-point of a Century of Crisis," Kendrix simultaneously pledged unwavering support for the American democratic process and promise. He equated Democracy with Christianity as manifest destiny.

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<sup>38</sup> Ibid.Kendrix, "Kendrix Komments:".

Kendrix, like many African American leaders in the Cold War era, accepted anticommunism and focused on domestic race relations instead of linking African and Asian decolonization struggles with their own – a more radical approach. No longer was there a call for the reallocation of global resources; instead the Cold War’s bipolar view of the world dominated their politics. In *Race Against Empire*, Penny Von Eschen argues that by the 1950’s “the mass politics of the earlier anticolonial alliances had been superseded by a middle-class politics of symbolism and federal patronage.”<sup>39</sup> Cold War liberalism took the place of an anticolonialism that called for an end to imperialism and restraints on American corporate power. It was recognized by African American leaders and members of the State Department that African Americans could serve as important ambassadors for American democracy abroad. African American leaders traded their critiques of U.S. foreign policy for representation in government agencies. Kendrix fell in among these African American leaders, which included members of the NAACP. He believed representation in government, media, and locally in school boards constituted progress and bring about social change. They decided to work from within the system rather than trying to change it completely. Kendrix was in a relative position of power at the WFO during WWII and used it to represent and recognize African Americans in his campaign to sell war bonds. In his public life he could write persuasively about race relations but did so adhering to a liberal anticommunist mindset. Professionally, he went to work on behalf of corporate interests, there believing again that representation meant progress. For Kendrix, the vision of progress and equality meant acceptance into the nation and by white Americans who held positions of power in politics and business.

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<sup>39</sup> Eschen, *Race Against Empire*, 148. See also: Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*; Plummer, *Rising Wind*.

Kendrix believed that through their improved image as reliable and respectable citizens and consumers, improvement that could be measured and would be noticed in society, African Americans would be granted entrance into new jobs and better favor by white society. Among his the professional memberships, he belonged to the National Negro Business League, which he described as “but one of the many organizations originated or fostered by the Tuskegee schoolmaster, Booker T. Washington.”<sup>40</sup> Like Washington, he believed that hard work, good citizenship, and material prosperity would lead to white acceptance in the corporate world and that acceptance would trickle down. Kendrix saw his role in this as helping to better the image of African Americans in advertising and in turn better their public opinion in American society. His moral outrage at racism, as a professional middle-class businessman, who bumped up against Jim Crow’s barriers to his continued success, fueled his writings on racism and his commitment to working for equality within the corporate capitalist system.

Kendrix positioned himself against Communism to assert the potential of equality and full citizenship in democracy. In one edition of *Kendrix Komments* he wrote, “Democracy must be made to work here if the spread of communism is to be halted abroad... Cultivation of friendships on the behalf of democracy is of the worthiest of worthy causes.”<sup>41</sup> Racial equality was a precondition to spreading democracy abroad and conversely to stop the spread of communism at home. In response to “Big Ben,” who was

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<sup>40</sup> Kendrix, “Kendrix Komments;” 4. Famously Booker T. Washington’s views are captured in his address, “The Atlanta Exposition Address.” Washington, Booker T. *Up from Slavery: An Autobiography*. New York: Doubleday, Page, 1901.

<sup>41</sup> At a NAACP conference in Atlanta, Dr. Bond focused on the Negro role in counter-acting Iron Curtain propaganda to make sure Third World people did not see the U.S. as insincere. He advocated for full citizenship rights for Negroes. Moss H. Kendrix, “Kendrix Komments,” *Atlanta Daily World*, April 10, 1951.

found guilty as a communist in the U.S., Kendrix continued to write about the contradictory possibilities in democracy:

At the most, democracy is in its purest sense but a dream, and the ideal, as are most dreams, are unattainable. On the negative ledger, democracy is shot through with inconsistencies. Even as a theory, it is contradictory. But in its contradictions, it affords an expression that makes possible an attitude and action that can assure something closer to what democracy offers – the ideal is at least approachable. Governments, other than democratic form, do not offer this hope... Despite it all, democracy is in the making.<sup>42</sup>

Kendrix remained loyal to the idea that democracy was possible. Democracy might be flawed in its current incarnation in the U.S., but his hope was strong enough to sustain his faith in the nation.

The same year that WWII ended, Kendrix reached for a new professional goal. A native Georgian from Atlanta, Kendrix was quite familiar with the Coca-Cola Company. He understood its domestic challenges when it came to race relations and the Negro market. The Company had never made much of an effort to court African American consumers. The greatest challenge would be to sincerely reach out to blacks without offending or alienated white consumers. As a public relations specialist, Kendrix knew what the Company was up against as a southern company linked to Jim Crow segregation and racial violence. The job of a good public relations specialist was to figure out how to protect the brand from these damaging kinds of stories and associations.

In the decade before WWII, the Negro press had reported on a series of racially motivated assaults on African American men who were either drinking or selling Coca-Cola. These kinds of news stories were the public relations problems that Kendrix would have to manage if Coke was going to expand into the African American market. One

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<sup>42</sup> Moss H. Kendrix, "Kendrix Comments," *Atlanta Daily World*, August 12, 1951.

incident that revolved around the purchase and consumption of Coca-Cola occurred in 1931 in Raleigh, N.C. The victim was C.C. Spaulding, president of the N.C. Mutual Life Insurance Company, who was brutally assaulted by a white soda dispenser who became incensed after Spaulding did not quickly and quietly take his Coca-Cola outside. His attacker was fined only fifteen dollars.<sup>43</sup> Coca-Cola was a literal symbol of racial division that some white people were willing to come to blows over. Jim Crow was about race, not class or professional status. It did not matter who the individual African American victims were. What mattered was that Coca-Cola was a symbol of separation in parts of America that supported the social order and white supremacy that segregation maintained.

The victim of a second incident involved an African American filling station attendant in Savannah, GA. In this case, a white police officer asked the attendant to give him a bottle of Coca-Cola even though he did not have money to pay. The attendant refused and the police officer shot him in the arm.<sup>44</sup> These kinds of stories in newspapers that targeted African American readers regularly placed Coca-Cola at the center of disputes over consumption in public space. The Coca-Cola Company did not directly play a role in the defining of Jim Crow or its enforcement, but their product was a persuasive consumer item and thus its consumption was subject to local laws and cultural restrictions wherever it was sold. The problem for the Company was that their brand name was linked repeatedly in the press with acts of violence and racial intolerance. From a public relations standpoint, this was a serious problem.

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<sup>43</sup> “Beat Spaulding: N.C. Ins. Head Assaulted By Dixie Clerk,” *Afro-American*, August 8, 1931, 1; “Getting Into the Air: North Carolina on Trial,” *Afro-American*, August 15, 1931, 6; “C.C. Speaulding’s Attacker Only Fined \$15,” *Afro-American*, August 15, 1931, 1.

<sup>44</sup> “Refused to Give Him Drink, Man Shot By Officer,” *Atlanta Daily World*, November 23, 1938, 1.



The Coca-Cola Company was a southern company and their drink was a regional favorite. They did not publicly endorse or condemn segregation and racial violence.<sup>45</sup> Grace Elizabeth Hale astutely illustrates how during the period 1890-1940 racial identities were re-created. It was in the spaces created by consumer culture where segregation could most easily be challenged. If white consumers had learned in advertising that consumption was visibly marked as white, they experienced a disjuncture when encountering middle-class African Americans who could afford to travel on the same train cars, watch movies in the same theaters, and eat in the same restaurants. Hale argues that, “[t]he answer to the problem of consumption in the South, then, was segregation.”<sup>46</sup> Segregation provided a physical and visual racial hierarchy and separation in public spaces. Coca-Cola was a southern company and a popular brand name item across the South. It was also a consumer item that, for the most part, was bought and consumed in public. Coca-Cola was an affordable luxury that highlighted who had the power to lay claim to leisure and consumption in public space and who had the freedom to move easily within it. For this reason, the Coca-Cola brand was implicated in segregation’s racial inequality in episodes in which violence erupted.

The humiliations and dangers of Jim Crow segregation were publicized in the Negro press. One typical story involved a young African-American couple at a local soda fountain in the South who could not order Coca-Cola. Their humiliation stemmed not only from the fact that they could only request water to beat the heat that evening, but that they had to sip their water while standing in front of the white audience, seated at the counter, who carefully watched that they did not step out of place. The narrative was told

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<sup>45</sup> Hale, *Making Whiteness*, 7.

<sup>46</sup> *Ibid.*, 169.

from the perspective of the young man, who was powerless to shield his date from the dangers that surfaced when crossing over into spaces designated as white only.

Unmanned by racism, he was frustrated even in his attempts to consume. A second story, which reported the indignities of Jim Crow and implicated Coca-Cola, featured a soda fountain in Columbus, OH where whites and blacks sat together at the counter. There, however, the racial hierarchy was preserved by serving African Americans in glasses marked specifically for their hands and mouths only, as if race was a contagious pathogen.<sup>47</sup> Numerous stories named Coca-Cola at the center of humiliating or violent incidents that began with the simple act or desire to buy a Coca-Cola. For this reason, the drink itself was linked powerfully to the cruelties and illogic of segregation.

Kendrix had firsthand knowledge of segregation from living in Atlanta, GA and the greater Washington, D.C. area. Having also had a professional interest in Negro newspapers, he would have been familiar with news stories that implicated Coca-Cola with Jim Crow. Kendrix marketed The Moss H. Kendrix Organization as a public relations firm that could help big corporations, like Coca-Cola, which needed to change the public's opinion of their brand. Given his professional and personal experiences, it is not surprising that he believed he would be the right person to develop the Negro Market for the Coca-Cola Company. Moss Kendrix was on a mission to gain recognition and access for African Americans in the consumer marketplace and in American society. He was a strong proponent of the idea that racial equality could be achieved in part through the power of consumption and the positive representations in popular culture. He

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<sup>47</sup> Jesse O. Tomas, "Below the Mason-Dixon Line," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, October 3, 1931, 16; Lewis Theophilus, "Harlem Sketch," *New York Amsterdam News*, June 28, 1933, 16.

believed in the power of capitalism and public opinion in both his professional and political life.

### **African American Labor Disputes and Consumer Boycotts**

The neglect of African Americans consumer power and potential in direct advertising and marketing campaigns was mirrored in Coca-Cola's hiring practices. The parent company was responsible for national advertising in newspapers and magazines. The choices and strategies came from executives in the corporation. However, their structure of making syrup and controlling the brand, but leaving bottling and distribution to individually owned bottling companies, meant that Coca-Cola, the parent company, was not directly responsible for any decisions about production and distribution by bottling companies. Advertising and hiring practices became the target for protests and boycotts, both nationally and in local markets. The structure of the company allowed the parent company to side-step some of the blame for hiring practices, but ultimately, as creators of the brand they were the perennial protectors of it. When African Americans boycotted Coca-Cola, they made little distinction between the parent company and the bottlers. This was an function of a good branding strategy. Coca-Cola was an increasingly international brand. In order to win over loyal customers they needed to convince consumers that Coca-Cola was the same no matter where it was bottled or sold. For the parent company, in this instance, selling a unified brand came with the cost and burden of being held responsible for the actions of local bottlers who were separate corporate entities. During boycotts in response to hiring practices, African Americans did not purchase the drink, because few to none of a particular local bottling company's

employees were African American. Yet this meant that the overall profits for both branches of the company were reduced. Of perhaps greater importance, the value of the brand name was in jeopardy, and above all that was what Coca-Cola was selling. This division in the Coca-Cola Company presented itself as problematic numerous times during the middle of the twentieth century.

Before the war, in 1935, boycotts brought attention to the Coca-Cola Company's refusal to take a stand against racial violence and injustice in the south where they were headquartered, as well as the unfair employment practices at Coca-Cola bottling plants. In one instance, the editor of the *Chicago World* pointed his finger at southern "big business" for the discrimination against Negroes in the south and the north. His accusation came after the lynching of two African American men in Mississippi, and his response called for a boycott of watermelons imported into Chicago from Mississippi but also urged Negroes to refrain from buying Coca-Cola. He said, "This newspaper also maintains that such concerns as the Coca Cola Company, which get upwards of \$10,000,000 per year from the sale of Coca Cola to colored people of the north, could bring so much pressure to bear upon the law makers of Georgia that lynching would soon be a thing of the past in that state."<sup>48</sup> The parent company's inaction on issues of lynching and discrimination in the state where they had the most political influence was not the only matter that brought the brand negative press. Two months later, another Chicago boycott was called against the Coca-Cola Bottling Company after it was learned that two African American men who worked on delivery wagons were fired and replaced by white men. The Retail Clerks Union, which included bartenders, maids, waiters, and waitresses, went into action. Union members were instructed not to handle Coca-Cola or to reduce

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<sup>48</sup> "Urges Watermelon, Coca Cola Boycott," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, July 27, 1935, A3.

their orders. After 609 cases were turned back in one day the Company put the men back to work and it suggested that more African Americans would be hired thereafter.<sup>49</sup> Here again the connection was made between the amount of money spent by African Americans on Coca-Cola and the Company's treatment and support of these workers and consumers. Another example of this typical call for a boycott that targeted unfair employment practices occurred in 1940, in Rock Hill, S.C. There again, the local bottling company replaced Negro workers with whites.<sup>50</sup> Fifty-five Negro businesses, and an unreported number of consumers, held strong on the boycott.<sup>51</sup> African American consumer spending power was effectively used as leverage against the companies that profited from black consumers, yet took no stand against Jim Crow or in hiring African Americans to work in the neighborhoods and cities where they lived and shopped. Boycotts of Coca-Cola during the 1930's, 40's, and 50's, were part of the origins of the liberal impulse of the civil rights movement. Resistance to the negative image of African Americans in consumer and labor markets swelled. The effective strategy of boycotts that concretely demonstrated the economic and collective power that African Americans held in greater context of their disenfranchisement and relative economic inequality resonated long after black consumers began to buy Coke or bus tickets again.

In 1950, the National Fair Play Committee (NFPC) called for a boycott of Coca-Cola. This particular boycott highlighted political and economic connections in organized resistance. The head of NFPC, Municipal Court Justice Charles E. Toney, retired from

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<sup>49</sup> "Coca Cola Runs Into Real Snag On Labor Policy," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, September 14, 1935, 2. African American's were reported to count for up to \$3,500,000 spending on Coca-Cola annually in Chicago. Chicago was a key destination for southern blacks during the Great Migration. See, James R. Grossman, *Land of Hope: Chicago, Black Southerners, and the Great Migration* (University Of Chicago Press, 1991).

<sup>50</sup> "Continue Coca Cola Boycott," *The Pittsburgh Courier*, April 27, 1940, 23; "Afro Visitors," *Afro-American*, May 4, 1940, 11.

<sup>51</sup> "Continue Coca Cola Boycott," 23.

his position and made it clear that he would devote himself full-time to the campaign. Herbert L. Bruce, executive secretary of NFPC, issued the following statement: “We have launched this boycott on behalf of the people living and working in Harlem, but it is our hope that the little Harlems in every major city in America will give us the support we will need to win the victory we seek.”<sup>52</sup> The boycott was called in direct response to a speech given by the Chairman of Coca-Cola’s Export Company, James A. Farley who was a former Democratic National Chairman and Post Master General. In his address to the Florida Chamber of Commerce he called upon President Truman to drop the fight for civil rights legislation in the interest of party and national unity. Mr. Farley urged that the controversial intra-party issue be jettisoned, that “to threaten the South with drastic Federal legislation is the last way to approach these problems. When we review the history of the past year, we see clearly that most of the problems raised by the so-called civil rights program are gradually and peacefully being solved right here in the South.” Farley’s suggestion to Truman, to forget the Civil Rights Movement,<sup>53</sup> was criticized widely in the Negro press.<sup>54</sup> “Giving the civil rights problem back to the Southerners for settlement is like asking a confirmed crook to draft a law against burglary.”<sup>55</sup> In addition to the fact that his comments were meant to unify whites in the party, to the exclusion of African Americans, Farley spoke these words as a current employee of the Coca-Cola Company. At the time he held no official political position, elected or appointed. Still, he

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<sup>52</sup> “Fair Play Committee Boycotts Coca-Cola,” *Atlanta Daily World*, December 30, 1950, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Truman stated during his 1948 campaign to a Southern Congressman, “I don’t believe in this thing (civil rights) any more than you do but we need it in order to win” The *New York Amsterdam News* article argued that his position in 1950 was that of Farley’s, and he would not be unwilling to drop the whole program “down the drain.”

<sup>54</sup> “Jim Farley to the Rescue,” *Pittsburgh Courier*, December 2, 1950, sec. col. 1, 20; “Says Jim Farley,” *Chicago Defender*, December 2, 1950, sec. Col. 1, 6; “Farley Denies Bias; Says Civil Rights Bill Not Practical,” *New York Amsterdam News*, December 2, 1950, sec. Col. 6, 1.

<sup>55</sup> “Says Jim Farley,” 6.

was supported in these statements by Gov. Strom Thurmond, of South Carolina. Coca-Cola hired him to head the Export Company because of his political connections, domestic and international, but speaking his own opinions on matters of race relations in this instance reflected poorly on the Company.

In addition to his position in the NFPC, Bruce was a small business owner and the first African American elected as a Democratic district and Tammany Hall leader in New York City. He argued effectively that when a group is politically hindered it is also blocked economically. He continued:

We discovered that the Coca-Cola Company of New York does not hire a single Negro salesman, distributor, clerk, or stenographer. We linked that ugly fact to Mr. Farley's speech and concluded that, when a Jim Farley tells a group of employers in Florida that fair play and the fight for justice should be abandoned because the South is threatened, he was simply reflecting the attitude of the company which employs him.<sup>56</sup>

Bruce linked Farley's comments on civil rights legislation powerfully to the fact that the Coca-Cola Company of New York had discriminatory hiring practices. The boycott was taken seriously because besides the potential to financially impact the local bottling company it might have tarnished Coca-Cola's image, let alone the image of the Democratic Party, in the eyes of African Americans. It did not matter if the top tier of executives at the Coca-Cola Company personally and privately felt that the promise of full citizenship rights and equality should be extended to African Americans. What spoke louder were hiring and advertising practices of the company and the words of company

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<sup>56</sup> "Fair Play Committee Boycotts Coca-Cola," 1; Albert Barnett, "Hail the New Year! What Are The Portents for 1951?," *Chicago Defender*, December 30, 1950, sec. col. 6, 18.

representatives that reverberated in the Black and mainstream press. African Americans were excluded and devalued as laborers and consumers.<sup>57</sup>

### **Targeting Negro Youth: The Coca-Cola Proposal**

Kendrix's original proposal for a new Negro marketing strategy for Coca-Cola made reference to the "important consumer outlet" comprised of fourteen million people in the Negro market. Advertisements would be placed in the Negro press, in accordance with the advertising policies of the Coca-Cola Company, and when possible local bottlers cooperated in ad campaigns. Jackie Robinson was selected as the main African American spokesman for the Company in this new advertising strategy. Robinson had a mass celebrity and broad cultural appeal as the first African American baseball player in Major League Baseball. Famous and prominent African Americans would be used to promote products to a Negro market. It continued to be true that the newspapers and magazines that made up the Negro press were read primarily by Negro people, and for this reason, the proposal was to insert new ads that exclusively featured African Americans into these publications. Not included in the proposal were interracial ads or African American ads in popular magazines that addressed a majority white consumer audience. It was Kendrix's hope that he could help improve the image of all Negro people, so as to be seen as upstanding students, workers, celebrities, and consumers through outreach campaigns sponsored by the Coca-Cola Company. The larger proposal was structured around three components: advertising, sales promotions, and public relations.

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<sup>57</sup> The boycotts over Coca-Cola position on racism in the U.S. and employment practices raged on through the 1950s into the 1960s. The Black press continued to be at the forefront of publicizing these boycotts and protests involving Coca-Cola, as well as numerous other companies.



Robinson would serve as the cornerstone of Kendrix's proposal because he would appeal across racial lines.

This plan is built around the current popularity of Jackie Robinson, Brooklyn Dodger first baseman and the first Negro to enter modern organized baseball... The name, Jackie Robinson, is one known and highly praised by Negro youths throughout the nation... In 1947, Robinson was recipient of several honors in testimony to his athletic ability and good sportsmanship. He was named baseball's "rookie of the year" and, in a nationwide poll, he was voted second among the ten most popular personalities of the nation. He was listed second to Bing Crosby and above such persons as Frank Sinatra and Generals Eisenhower and MacArthur.

The inclusion of his rank in the nationwide poll about popular personalities that put him second to Bing Crosby and above Sinatra, Eisenhower, and MacArthur, served as proof that white consumers would not only accept him, but also like him.

Sales promotions were aimed at finding new ways to introduce people to products. Advertisements in newspapers and magazines would only reach those who read those publications. Print ads were limited in the ways they could describe the product and the ways a product might make a consumer feel. However, Coca-Cola's sales promotions gave consumers a risk-free taste. Many of Kendrix's programs targeted young people because he believed the way to create loyal customers was to influence children and instill them with positive associations with the brand and the product so that they might continue to choose that brand through the course of their lives.

Kendrix knew samples were not enough. He outlined three specific programs he had in mind for Coca-Cola. The first was the "Jackie Robinson Bat Boy and Girl, Good Citizen Corps." The second was the, "Who are America's 12 Leading Negro Citizens" contest and subsequent ad series. The third was a Coca-Cola scholarship contest for high-school seniors. Each one of these campaigns promoted models of good citizenship, leadership, and scholarship. Educational achievement, community engagement, and

economic success underlined the campaign. With his mission to promote the product and make more money for Coca-Cola, he also worked to convince all companies that the Negro market was made up of hard-working citizens with money to spend. The sales promotions were central to this mission. They had the potential to create new young consumers, but also provide opportunities to encourage these young people to apply themselves in their studies and be ambitious in their goals. Jackie Robinson would set the example. Coca-Cola would help fund the lucky few who stood out. The Jackie Robinson Bat Boy and Girl, Good Citizenship Corps was open to children fourteen and younger. Children could gain access to the club after submitting brief slogans for good citizenship. Membership included a badge with Robinson's picture, a certificate, signed by Robinson that would carry the great athlete's "do's and don't's" of good citizenship, and a seal crediting The Coca-Cola Company for the sponsorship of the project.

But ad placement was not enough for Moss Kendrix. His goal was to reach as many new consumers as possible. Public relations, or the management of public opinion, requires spreading information about products and promotions. But it also calls for a more concerted effort to sway people in their opinions about specific brands and products. In many respects, Kendrix's role in the Company was as a Negro specialist and ambassador. Not only did he bring his personal experience as an African American to the work he did for the company; he also came equipped with creative and market research talent. Additionally, Kendrix represented the Company at public events; talking to other African Americans was part of his job description. In addition to his work with young

people, he traveled to business conferences, fraternity meetings, women's groups, and churches.<sup>58</sup>

### **The Color Line in the Cola Line: Coca-Cola and the Culture of Segregation**

Managing public opinion meant much more than creating positive associations in consumer's minds with the product for sale. It also meant intervening in crisis moments and crafting messaging to communicate on behalf of clients. When the brand attracted negative publicity, with regards to race relations, it was Kendrix's job to respond and craft persuasive messaging to smooth over the trouble. Case in point was a well publicized incident that involved Coca-Cola vending machines in some southern cities

that were either labeled "white customers only!" or had two separate sides labeled "colored" and "white." Word spread fast after *The Southern Patriot*, official publication of the Southern Conference Education Fund, Inc. (SCEF) ran the story. It was picked up by the NAACP and photos were published in *The Crisis* over the summer. This news story, of what was being heralded by Walter White, the



Figure 4-0-2: White Customers Only!

President of the NAACP, as "the first time we have seen Jim Crow mechanized" spread not only across the country in various news sources, but was reported to have traveled

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<sup>58</sup> Kendrix went to churches, business conventions, fraternity events, and meetings of local community school boards and community based organizations.

overseas as well.<sup>59</sup> The story with an accompanying photo was published in a New Delhi, India, newspaper, under a caption reading, “The American Way of Life.”<sup>60</sup> Stories of African Americans boycotting the drink domestically periodically circulated in the news, but this story was not over a local labor dispute. This was a story which threatened to tarnish the brand’s image as a global company.

The first Coca-Cola representative to respond to the story was James Farley. As the chairman of the Coca-Cola Export Corporation, the international implications were clear to him. The vending machines were brought to his attention in a letter from Walter White, the NAACP president. White captured the spirit of the Double V campaign in his commentary: “Imagine what must be the feelings of a Negro veteran returning from fighting Communist aggression in Korea to face a Jim Crow Coca Cola machine.”<sup>61</sup> The vending machine was a symbol of technological advancement, and in this case the machine posed a greater insult than the traditionally regulated indoor and outdoor public spaces of consumption. The vending machine did not represent progress but an impersonal institutionalized segregation white store owners seemed to project into the future. Farley, who had already stumbled over race relations issues, responded that the offending vending machines would be “withdrawn.”<sup>62</sup> He issued further statements that explained that Coca-Cola did not maintain the vending machines, which were not owned and operated by the Company and therefore it was not company policy to restrict by consumption by race in any state.

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<sup>59</sup> “Jimcrow Coca Cola Machines To Be Removed,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 15, 1953, 7.

<sup>60</sup> Moss Kendrix was quoted in the *Courier* article as expressing concern of the international circulation of the “jim crow vending machine” photograph that first appeared in *The Crisis*. “Racial Gadgets on Coke Machines ‘Down South’ Are Water Fountains,” *The Courier*, August 22, 1953, 17; “Coca-Cola Machine Controversy Still On,” *New York Amsterdam News*, August 29, 1953, 5.

<sup>61</sup> “Jimcrow Coca Cola Machines To Be Removed,” 7.

<sup>62</sup> “Jim-Crow Coke Machines Will Be Moved,” *The Courier*, August 8, 1953, 18.

In his capacity as public relations specialist for the Coca-Cola Company, Kendrix was next to comment in the press. He claimed that “the entire Coca-Cola industry have been on the receiving end of an unfortunate misrepresentation.”<sup>63</sup> He explained that the misrepresentation occurred in the publication of the particular photograph of a Coca-Cola vending machine that was attached to a water fountain that used the vending machine as a cooler. His larger argument in this story was that “the slanted misrepresentations of organs publishing the picture have aided the foes of democracy abroad, the most unfortunate circumstances being that this misrepresentation has been sparked mostly by the organs of organizations which apparently function in the interest of the American way of life.” Kendrix comes down firmly on the side of corporate interests in his treatment of this scandal in the press. Farley gave no explanation for why these vending machines appeared to be labeled white and colored only; he focused on the removal of the machines. Kendrix, in contrast, explained it was not Coca-Cola who operated the vending machines or the water fountains. Beyond this fact, he argued that it was also never the case that the Coca-Cola machines were segregated but that the water fountains were. In either case, Coca-Cola was not at fault and the reputation of the Company should not be tarnished. It is clear that Kendrix was not defending segregation but was blaming organizations like the NAACP and SCEF, who otherwise “function in the interest of the American way of life,” but in this instance maligned an innocent company and fueled the fire of America’s enemies who were opposed to democracy. In taking sides, and privileging his belief that racial progress would come from the bolstering support of African American consumers, Kendrix allowed the Coca-Cola Company to avoid taking a stand on segregation in relation to this controversy. In this instance, the distance

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<sup>63</sup> “Racial Gadgets on Coke Machines ‘Down South’ Are Water Fountains,” 17.

between himself and more radical members of the NAACP and the Negro press is startling and apparent.

This was a story that would not go away for Coca-Cola. Seven years later a similar story surfaced, but this time in Jackson, TN set the stage for the controversy.<sup>64</sup>

Kendrix maintained a file on this issue. The issue took center stage with a similar photograph of a vending machine with a “White Only” picture. The dean of Lane College in Memphis was arrested and fined for photographing the sign.<sup>65</sup> Kendrix’s public statement on this story was as follows:

To say the least, it is unfortunate that Bottlers of Coca-Cola in areas other than Jackson, Tennessee, should reap the adverse results of the story, while in all sincerity, I would question the blame that might be placed upon the bottler for Coca-Cola in Jackson who does not own the equipment, which by Mr. Dombrowski’s admission, has been the property of the Jackson sporting goods outfit “for about 14 years.” We are grateful that you contacted us on this matter, while I am terribly sorry that circumstances dictated that you had to use the story and photo there in Philadelphia, it happens that your Coca-Cola Bottling Company is one of the most positive operations that I know. You are aware of the fact that Coca-Cola generally is working very hard to do a worthwhile job in the Negro market, throughout the US and wherever Coca-Cola is sold, MHK For The Coca-Cola Company.<sup>66</sup>

Again, Kendrix rebuffs blame for the greater Coca-Cola Company and for the local bottlers. He maintains that the company is doing “a worthwhile job in the Negro market.” Although it was Kendrix’s belief that what was good for the Coca-Cola Company would eventually be good for African Americans, his unwavering defense of Coca-Cola made his rhetoric on democracy ring hollow. The little that Coca-Cola had done for African Americans did not seem worth the perpetuation of segregation. African Americans were

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<sup>64</sup> “Jimcrow Coca Cola Machines To Be Removed.”

<sup>65</sup> “White Only” Pix Draws \$15 Fine,” *Chicago Defender*, January 21, 1961. Articles also ran in the *Herald Dispatch, Los Angeles*, “Photographed Coca Cola Vending Machine, Fined,” 1/19/1961; *Philadelphia Independent* 1/21/1961; Baltimore MD Afro American newspapers, “White Only soft drink box in Tenn,” 1/24/1961; *Florida Sun* 1/28/1961; The *Chicago Defender* 1/21/1961, *New York Amsterdam News* 2/18/1961.

<sup>66</sup> “But No Word From Coke Execs,” *Philadelphia Independent*, February 2, 1961.

consumers, and in return for the increase in profits that they represented, on behalf of Coca-Cola, Kendrix told them that there was nothing that they could do since it was not technically the Company but the bottler to blame.

For many, Farley's declaration that the machines would be removed was not enough. Additionally, Kendrix's attempt to mitigate the controversy by sidestepping the issue and placing blame on the retailers did not quell the outrage of many African Americans who refused to distinguish between the Company and local retailers who operated the vending machines. The argument was that if Coca-Cola had the resources to pressure the retailers to remove the machines or the sign attached to them, then the Company could do more to take a stand against Jim Crow everywhere it lived. Dr. James A. Drombrowski, director of the SCEF, stated, "As things stand now I do not think Coca-Cola has done enough in this direction to convince a world – or national – audience that there is not a color line in the Cola line."<sup>67</sup> Both spokesmen for the Company failed to address the true problem: Coca-Cola was implicated in America's culture of Southern segregation and would be held accountable by a national and world audience.

Kendrix believed in a Civil Rights campaign that would work within the system. The Negro people would prove themselves good citizens and consumers worthy of the respect of companies and the government. He remained committed to the promises of American democracy despite the hypocrisy of racial inequality. He wrote with outrage about his treatment on a Jim Crow train car, about the treatment of black soldiers and civilians during the Korean war, and appealed to blacks living in the south, those living in Mississippi in particular, to stay in the south because with the "With the coming of greater political participation on the part of the Negro, a better economy for the state,

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<sup>67</sup> "Coca-Cola Machine Controversy Still On," 5.

those Negroes who will stay will be able to demand, and will get, a better life. They will help solve whatever problems Mississippi owns.”<sup>68</sup> He believed that change was coming, that it was inevitable but his was a view of civil rights and equality that would be delivered from governments and business – not one that would be fought for and won by African American protest. Through political and economic participation, equality was sure to come to the south and the north. However, this was not in opposition to his role as spokesman and Negro specialist for the Coca-Cola Company. He defended them against accusations of racism. He was able to provide an explanation for the specific allegations, but ignored the larger complaints that even if the Company was not directly responsible, ultimately that meant that they did nothing about the larger problem of segregation or American race relations. Inaction was unacceptable.

Many in the black community felt that Kendrix was not doing enough. In an article called “Moss Kendrix Hustles Coke on Slick Tip,” the author argued that Kendrix started out with “for free” columns in negro papers with the promise that soon he would be able to deliver advertising dollars from his big corporate accounts but after much talk from Kendrix that things were in the works and that “something big is about to break,” he writes that “This attitude by Kendrix may be the reason why he is being viewed with increasing suspicion by Negro community weekly newspapers and why his word has practically lost its value.”<sup>69</sup> He did not often receive such criticism publicly, but in stories like the Jim Crow vending machine articles, he came out against the NAACP’s call for a boycott in favor of defending his client. This was a smart business move, but one that ultimately cost him some credibility and earned him some criticism from African

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<sup>68</sup> Kendrix, “Kendrix Komments:,” 4; “Kendrix Komments,” *Atlanta Daily World*, February 11, 1951, 4; “Kendrix Komments,” *Atlanta Daily World*, November 25, 1951, 4.

<sup>69</sup> *Militant Voice of the People. Negroes must control their own community*, April 18, 1959, 1.



Americans. Kendrix may have believed that eventually he could persuade companies to advertise to Negroes in the Negro Press, bringing advertising dollars to the publications and an improved image of Negroes in advertising, but not everyone shared the optimism that change would come eventually.

### **African Americans in Coca-Cola's Print Advertising**

The advertising campaigns Kendrix helped to create reflected an African American middle-class that was represented as almost identical to their white counterparts. He stuck closely to the advertising strategy of Coca-Cola and left a lasting impression at the Company. His work succeeded in including African Americans in the mainstream marketing strategies and this resulted in the recognition of African Americans as a substantial portion of Coke's domestic profit. The Company could not continue to operate under the assumption that African Americans would keep buying their product if the Coca-Cola ads ignored or maligned their reputation in the mainstream press.

During the 1950s Moss Kendrix created ads that were virtually identical in staging and costuming, and the only discernable difference is the skin color of the models represented in the ads. This strategy in advertising, although it reflected a positive image of the men and women that made up the Negro market, assimilated them visually into the category of middle-class white womanhood and manhood. Difference is almost entirely erased, and thus the economic and social realities of racism were elided. The women wear the same outfits and are posed in exactly the same way. This allowed for some representations that were progressive and strove to expand notions of beauty and class

character. Others were less threatening to the status quo, trying not to offend and placed African Americans within a recognizable point of reference. Even the types of magazines where the ads were placed were similar, for example, *Life* and *Ebony* magazine were both glossy publications with similarly classed audiences.

In one classic example, from 1955, two almost identical ads were published. In one the model is white. The word “Coke” is written across the page and she sits atop of the “K” and leans back to rest her right hand on the “C.” In her left hand she holds up a bottle of Coca-Cola. The slogan for this ad was “Fifty million times a day at home, at work or while at play There’s Nothing like a Coke.” Simultaneously, an ad with the same logo ran in *Ebony* magazine, except in that ad, the model was African American. She is posed in the same way, seated atop of the word Coke and beside the same slogan.



Figure 4-0-3: There's Nothing Like a Coke

This campaign was a small change in advertising that represented a much larger shift in the way the Company understood its consumer base and the way it represented racial groups. This type of mirroring in advertising, with different racial figures

continued through the 50s into the 60s. For Kendrix, this inclusion represented the positive recognition and inclusion he set out to achieve. He continued to use African American sports figures and celebrities in ads, especially those people that would appeal across racial lines. However, there is one example that diverged from his usual selection

of African American models that fit the wholesome mold for which Coca-Cola was famous.

In 1962, Kendrix created a calendar, similar to those circulated by local bottlers in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century, which featured a different wholesome looking woman on each month's page. Significantly, the models chosen were very dark-skinned African American women. The calendars were important to a broader understanding of the ways Kendrix translated Coca-Cola's successful marketing to white consumers for the Negro market he was hired to reach. The women who were chosen each represented a different African nation through the "crowning" of her as a beauty queen. For instance, a smiling Miss Ghana wearing her sash was featured as one month in the 1962 calendar.<sup>70</sup> Choosing African women instead of Negro/African-American women was a move to cultivate Black pride. The women had dark skin but additionally notable were their natural, un-straightened, hair styles. Kendrix provided Negro consumers something they never had access to before. He was issuing corporate sponsored promotional materials that reflected an image of beauty outside of the one most often seen and celebrated in American culture. The images hoped to draw on a shared African heritage and identity that was beautiful and diverse. This marketing material refused the current images that distorted black identities and maligned black features; instead it celebrated black identity with the potential to see the Coca-Cola Company as endorsing these images that were radically different than the previous images that Coca-Cola ran.

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<sup>70</sup> "1962 Calendar, 'Coca-Cola has more for you'", n.d., The Moss H. Kendrix Collection, Alexandria Black History Museum.

Moss Kendrix continued working for the Coca-Cola Company as a Public Relations specialist until the early 1970s.<sup>71</sup> His focus remained on inclusive advertising featuring African Americans. He was asked numerous times for his opinion on who were appropriate African American athletes, musicians, actors, and models would best represent the African American consumer in advertising. He steered the company through protest and boycotts, but ultimately the mark that he left was in helping to develop market segmentation that allowed for the representation of middle-class and famous African Americans in advertising that circulated in publications that were made by and for African Americans. This was certainly new and perhaps an important contribution to the improved image of African Americans in advertising. However, representation alone did not bring about meaningful change and racial equality. Kendrix believed the capitalist marketplace held the possibility for racial progress. However, legal protections and civil rights gains were earned in American society after African Americans used their collective power as consumers who held the power of the purse. Equal rights were not benevolently granted.

## **Conclusion**

During WWII, the Coca-Cola Company fixated on new markets overseas without any investment into marketing to African Americans or hiring them as workers. Corporate leadership was interested in boosting sales abroad, regardless of the race or culture of consumers. They used this internationalist marketing campaign to appeal to American consumers at home, as well, making Coke an integral part of international corporate and national relations. However, what was happening in the U.S. was a

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<sup>71</sup> Moss H. Kendrix died in 1989.

different story. The U.S. government faced a parallel predicament. African Americans were not alone in their outrage over the deep-seated hypocrisy of a nation who fought against tyranny and fascism but neglected to look at its own broken form of democracy. The Cold War pitted the U.S. against communism and the Soviet Union. A virulent anti-communist climate in the U.S. led to a foreign policy of containment. What was at stake was the future of decolonized African and Asian nations. U.S. attempts to install democratic governments and free market economies came without commitments to ending racism abroad or at home. Focused decidedly on foreign affairs, segregation and racial violence in the U.S. remained unchecked. However, this posed a problem for a U.S. that was globally ambitious. The skin that covered the hearts and minds of the peoples in play during the Cold War clearly marked them as non-white, and therefore inferior, in the context of U.S. racial politics. This race was for the hearts and minds of newly sovereign people, but of equal importance, it was a race to open up new markets to American corporations. Segregation and racial violence across the American South did not go unnoticed by people in the developing world who were privy to propaganda from the U.S. and the Soviet Union. The U.S., and the Coca-Cola Company, had to respond and did respond, if for no other reason than fear of the consequences of inaction.

For more than half of a century the Coca-Cola Company counted on African Americans as consumers but ignored them in their marketing strategies. In the Company's early advertisements, images of African Americans perpetuated stereotypes and shaped a white privileged consumer identity. Beyond the realm of advertising, the Company took no official stand against lynching in Atlanta, GA or anywhere else in the south. They allowed independent bottling companies to dictate policies of discrimination

against African Americans in employment practices. However, after WWII limited change did come to the Coca-Cola Company. African Americans were recognized as an important segment of the consuming public and were therefore targeted by advertisements.

Change came in reaction to a combined domestic pressure and an international consciousness about their reputation as a company that was headquartered in the American South. Even more valuable than the secret formula to the drink, the branded image and identity of the Company is what bred loyalty and won over new customers. Coca-Cola was popular across the country, so popular that a great many of the protests from the 1930s through the 1950s revolved around challenges to Jim Crow and racial discrimination in the public spaces where people shopped, ate, and worked. Boycotters were aware of their own consumer power as well as the world stage upon which they could highlight American racism – including in Coke’s marketing and hiring. The Company was indirectly linked to indignities that African Americans faced selling, buying, and drinking Coca-Cola under the auspices of Jim Crow. The Company could not separate itself from the independent bottling companies that manufactured and distributed the drink.

With one foot rooted in the U.S. and the other reaching overseas to develop international sales, Coca-Cola did not confront segregation or racism until it had to. Faced with boycotts that would diminish sales and a tarnished international reputation, the Company followed a larger trend that saw a financial benefit to courting African American consumers in ways that did little to directly challenge white racism. This untapped market included more than fifteen million people that represented anywhere up

to ten million dollars in sales annually. With little more investment or risk than hiring Moss Kendrix, who served as an African American expert and liberal capitalist ambassador to African American consumers, the Company took its first steps towards developing this new domestic segment of the U.S. market. The Company realized it could no longer afford to be inhospitable to African Americans.

## Chapter Five

### **“I’d Like to Buy the World a Coke”: Corporate Cosmopolitanism in the Global Marketplace, 1950-1971**

I began to see a bottle of Coca-Cola as more than a drink... [it was] a tiny bit of commonality between all peoples, a universally liked formula... I could see and hear a song that treated the whole world as if it were a person – a person the singer would like to help and get to know.

– Bill Backer (1993)

In 1950, Robert W. Woodruff, former Coca-Cola Company president and current chairman of the Executive Committee, stated the following in an interview: “We’re not selling the world short, we’re playing the world long. We decided that we would live with the world and that the world would survive, that it must survive, as a decent place to live in.”<sup>1</sup> To sell short in the stock market is to bet against your investment, believing that it will fail or depreciate in value – representing a desire to make money quickly and walk away. Woodruff expressed Coca-Cola’s aspiration for long-term investment in the world based on his belief that the world would benefit and that the Company would prosper. His high-minded tone suggested that Coca-Cola was powerful enough to assert its will around the world and would use that power for good.

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<sup>1</sup> “The Sun Never Sets on Cacoala,” *Time*, May 15, 1950.



This chapter covers the period between 1950 and 1971, from the Cold War through the civil rights era.<sup>2</sup> During the same year that Woodruff asserted Coca-Cola's international authority, the U.S. entered the Korean War to aid the democratic government in the south against the Soviet-backed government in the north. The capitalist United States and the communist Soviet Union competed for influence over the world's markets and peoples. As evident from Woodruff's remarks, democratically-elected politicians and the countries that they represented were not the only ones who had a major stake in the spread of freedom and democracy. For Coca-Cola, the real threat of communism was closing a global free market economy. This was a lesson learned after the Cuban Revolution in 1959, when Fidel Castro nationalized all privately owned foreign and domestic industries, including five Coca-Cola plants. Coca-Cola would lose big if the Soviet Union and communism won the war.<sup>3</sup>

On the home front, Coca-Cola continued to build its national brand by reinforcing its connection to the much celebrated American way of life. It did this through its advertising and sponsorship of popular radio and television programs like *Ozzie and Harriet* and the *Mickey Mouse Club* during the 1950s. The strategy worked well with white consumers, but mainstream popular culture excluded African Americans, as well as all other non-white Americans, during the middle of the twentieth century. The growing civil rights movement gained national and international attention. The international

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<sup>2</sup> I have adopted the term Cold War/civil rights from Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*. Both powerfully argue for the study of the Cold War and civil rights movement together because of the ways that race was a national security issue that was central to the spread and defense of American democracy.

<sup>3</sup> "U.S. Banks, Soft Drink Concerns, Other Companies Are Still Operating in Cuba," *Wall Street Journal*, August 9, 1960; "Cuban Seizures Spur Business Pleas to the U.S.," *The Washington Post*, August 8, 1960; "Cuba Warns U.S. of 'Waterloo'," *The Washington Post*, August 8, 1960; "Cuba Tells OAS Red Aid Is Welcome," *The Washington Post*, August 7, 1960; "Cuba Grabs 166 More U.S. Firms," *The Washington Post*, October 26, 1960; Staff Reporter, "Coca-Cola Says Seizure Of Its Assets in Cuba Will Cost It \$24,000,000," *Wall Street Journal*, November 29, 1960.

spotlight placed on American racial inequality made civil rights an intrinsic part of the Cold War. The 1960 student sit-in to protest segregation at a Woolworth's lunch counter, for example, and subsequent demands to racially integrate Coca-Cola's advertising were the kind of negative publicity that Coca-Cola wanted to keep from its international consumers.<sup>4</sup>

One way in which Coca-Cola was recognized as a quintessential and powerful American brand and an international authority was through its role in two iconic Cold War films from the 1960s: Billy Wilder's *I, 2, 3* and Stanley Kubrick's *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Bomb*. Precisely because Coca-Cola was a powerful and influential American multinational corporation, it was targeted by the civil rights movement and singled out in Cold War films. In the films and reality, the narrative of expansion behind the Iron Curtain for Coca-Cola meant addressing the Company's American-ness before going behind the Iron Curtain. Woodruff, in particular, did not want to alienate his favorable relationships with key government officials, so he sought permission from the State Department before establishing its first bottling plant in communist Bulgaria in 1967.<sup>5</sup> The Cold War was a war over hearts and minds, and the State Department not only granted permission but recognized that Coca-Cola's sweet

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<sup>4</sup> Michael Wallace, "Mickey Mouse History: Portraying the Past at Disney World," *Radical History Review* 1985, no. 32 (1985): 33; Steven Watts, *The Magic Kingdom: Walt Disney and the American Way of Life* (University of Missouri Press, 2002); J. R. Holmes, "The Wizardry of Ozzie: Breaking Character In Early Television," *The Journal of Popular Culture* 23, no. 2 (1989): 93–102; W. M. O'Barr, "The Rise and Fall of the TV Commercial," *Advertising & Society Review* 11, no. 2 (2010); Karal Ann Marling, *As Seen on TV: The Visual Culture of Everyday Life in the 1950s* (Harvard University Press, 1996); Lynn Spigel, *Make Room for TV: Television and the Family Ideal in Postwar America*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 1992).

<sup>5</sup> "Coke Profits to Help the Kremlin's Pals," *New York Daily News*, January 23, 197AD; "The Thaw That Refreshes," *Time*, December 3, 1965; "Coke's Formula: Keep the Image Fresh," *Business Week*, April 25, 1970.

taste would have an easier time winning people over than American diplomats and propaganda.

Within the context of the nexus of interconnections between the Cold War and civil rights politics, Coca-Cola created one of its most famous commercials. In 1971, a new commercial debuted on television. It featured young people from around the world, gathered peacefully on a hilltop, singing together. The chorus of singers visually represented the world's peoples with traditional costumes from their native countries. Together, they sang: "I'd like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony. I'd like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company." Building on the premise of musical harmony the message was clear: Coca-Cola brought people together, despite their differences. The Company received more than 100,000 letters praising the commercial, including thousands of requests for sheet music. It was so popular that an extended version of the song, without direct reference to Coke, was recorded and reached the top ten on the popular music charts.<sup>6</sup>

The hilltop commercial did three things: it leveraged Coca-Cola's global reach as a promise of peace and unity to American consumers in a way that made them feel good about Coke and about being American; it disavowed continuing racial unrest and the international fears of nuclear war and communism; and it contributed to the new era of multiculturalism that emerged in the 1980-1990s by tapping into Americans' wish for peace and desire to embrace diversity.<sup>7</sup> The hilltop commercial echoed Woodruff's

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<sup>6</sup> Hoy, *Coca-Cola: the First Hundred Years*; Bill Backer, *The Care and Feeding of Ideas* (Crown, 1993).

<sup>7</sup> As David Hollinger argues, the meaning of multiculturalism in the 1980-1990s was vague. This historical movement of multiculturalism "speaks compellingly to the anxieties and aspirations of a distinctive historical moment." I agree with Hollinger that there was not a fixed definition of multiculturalism. It encompassed representations and "celebrations" of racial, cultural, and religious diversity. It countered an exclusionary American culture but within the context of a larger social and political backlash to the civil rights movement, multiculturalism failed to deliver further equality. In particular, I am interested in the

remarks: Coke had gone out into the world and stayed. It not only stayed, but brought American values like consumerism to the world.

Yet the national and international politics of the 1950s and 1960s challenged the racial status quo in American culture and threatened the global sphere of influence that benefited American capitalism. As a marketing response to the pressures of the civil rights movement and the Cold War, the hilltop commercial obscured the demand for an inclusive diversity in advertising and the divisive politics of Cold War containment with an abstract message about unity. The hilltop message was appealing in part because it promised that peace and equality, which were not for sale in the marketplace, could still be made possible by a combination of Coke and American optimism.

The commercial also reflected the development of the global-high sign's cosmopolitan self-imagery at the end of the century. Coca-Cola operated in more than 100 countries around the world. Bill Backer, the commercial's lead creative director, saw Coca-Cola as "a tiny bit of commonality between all peoples." He wanted to represent Coke as a uniting force in the world. The imagery and concept embedded in the commercial contributed to the trend of multicultural representation in popular culture during the late 1960s and 1970s in the U.S. Whether it was called universalism, cosmopolitanism, or multiculturalism, this was a superficial embrace and representation of difference that was a commercialized version of the era's progressive movements for equality and international cooperation. Coca-Cola focused on an abstract,

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representations of diversity that were visual and circulated in popular culture. I argue that Coca-Cola's hilltop campaign was a precursor to this cultural movement. The Company created a powerful corporate multicultural ad had a deep impact on American and global culture. See: Hollinger, *Postethnic America*; D. Rieff, "Multiculturalism's Silent Partner: It's the Economy, Stupid," *Harper's*, 1993; Katharyne Mitchell, "Multiculturalism, or the United Colors of Capitalism," *Antipode* 25, no. 4 (October 1993): 263-294; Joan W. Scott, "Multiculturalism and the Politics of Identity," *October* 61 (July 1, 1992): 12-19; Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee and Stephen Linstead, "Globalization, Multiculturalism and Other Fictions: Colonialism for the New Millennium?," *Organization* 8, no. 4 (November 1, 2001): 683 -722.

indistinguishable representation of race and culture abroad in order to avoid taking a stand on global politics or race-relations at home.

### **“The Sun Never Sets on Cacoala:” Coca-Cola’s Success in the 1950s**

In order to understand Coca-Cola’s shifting internationalism it is necessary to consider how the Cold War redefined the terms of American corporate capitalism. This requires attention to an earlier period of governmental policy. At the end of WWII, the U.S. emerged in a powerful position, politically and economically. Across Europe, countries were devastated from seven years of fighting, and military spending left little money to rebuild war torn cities. African and Asian countries, formerly governed by strong empires, were rapidly decolonized and became unstable. The U.S. government was poised and ready to exert its strength. President Harry S. Truman implemented the Truman Doctrine in March 1947, which gave a statement of support and \$400 million to Turkey and Greece. Truman pledged the U.S. would “support free peoples who are resisting attempted subjugation by armed minorities or by outside pressures.”<sup>8</sup> The Truman Doctrine’s most long-lasting message was anti-communism, which led toward the U.S. policy of containment. Truman’s speech and the implementation of this new policy signaled the start of the Cold War.<sup>9</sup>

Another post-war policy was the Marshall Plan, a State Department plan to rebuild and modernize European countries between 1947 and 1951. The Marshall Plan

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<sup>8</sup> Harry S. Truman, “Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey: The Truman Doctrine”, March 12, 1947, <http://www.trumanlibrary.org/publicpapers/index.php?pid=2189&st=&st1=>

<sup>9</sup> LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750*, 453-455; J. William Fulbright, *The Crippled Giant* (New York, 1972), 2-24.

was a key piece in contextualizing the growth of transnational corporate power during the Cold War. The Soviet Union refused any aid.

As historian Walter LaFeber argues, the bigger question for Truman was how to save Western Europe not from the Soviets but from starvation. Western Europe had been an important export region for American goods. The Marshall Plan was the answer to this problem, which offered security via capitalism rather than military aid. The U.S. spent \$13 billion dollars of aid to rebuild, strengthen, and modernize European cities. The Marshall Plan recognized the important connection between foreign policy and industrial productivity, which was considered the most important source of national power.<sup>10</sup> Strengthening Western European industries restored jobs in these countries, and in turn established a place for U.S. corporations to sell their goods. This plan set the stage for private U.S. investment in Europe as well.<sup>11</sup>

This convergence of the U.S. foreign policy of containment and government support of capitalism was good for businesses. Coca-Cola emerged from WWII primed and ready to dig deeper into the Allied countries where they had established wartime

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<sup>10</sup> From LaFeber, *The American Age: United States Foreign Policy at Home and Abroad since 1750*, 443.: "Foreign policies real problems, Acheson once observed, were not "a lot of abstract notions," but involved "what you do – these business transactions, credit through central banks, food things... - all this makes foreign policy." He wrote that "industrial productivity" formed the most important source of national power." He constantly warned in 1944-1945 that Americans either had to find open markets and liberal international trade or they would find themselves again facing the economic horrors of the 1930s." See also, Dean Acheson, *Power and Diplomacy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1958), p. 29, Michael H. Hunt, *The American Ascendancy: How the United States Gained and Wielded Global Dominance*. (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2007), 3, Melvyn Leffler, *A Preponderance of Power: National Security, the Truman Administration, and the Cold War*. (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), Robert Latham, *The Liberal Moment: Modernity, Security, and the Making of Postwar International Order*. (New York: Columbia University Press, 1997), Frank Ninkovich, *Modernity and Power: A History of the Domino Theory in the Twentieth Century*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1994).

<sup>11</sup> Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*; Greg Behrman, *The Most Noble Adventure: The Marshall Plan and How America Helped Rebuild Europe*, Reprint. (Free Press, 2008); Michael J. Hogan, *The Marshall Plan: America, Britain and the Reconstruction of Western Europe, 1947-1952* (Cambridge University Press, 1989); Nicolaus Mills, *Winning the Peace: The Marshall Plan and America's Coming of Age as a Superpower* (Wiley, 2008).

bottling plants. Without sugar rations or restrictions on where and to whom they could sell their product, Coca-Cola was one of several private U.S. corporations that invested in Europe. Coca-Cola continued to believe that the future of their company would be built in overseas markets and within regional and local economies abroad. Notably in 1948, after the Marshall Plan was implemented and after sugar rations were lifted, the total gross profit of the Coca-Cola Company climbed above \$100 million dollars for the first time. It made almost \$126 million dollars that year and convened its first international convention of Coca-Cola bottlers that included 5,000 U.S. representatives, as well as representatives from forty-two other countries around the world.<sup>12</sup>

In the three decades following WWII, Coca-Cola was celebrated as a great American success story – an inspiration to all American companies and consumers, and evidence that international security through capitalism was working. As a quintessential *American* drink – and a profitable and expanding global corporation, Coke was a poster child for the core theories behind the Marshall Plan. The Company had claimed an international sphere of operations since the 1920s but growing popularity meant they were finding new corners of the world and selling more Coca-Cola than ever before. Coca-Cola had grown during WWII through its attachment to U.S. military units in allied countries. In the decades that followed, it took root and expanded into a greater number of countries than ever before.

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<sup>12</sup> The Coca-Cola Company, *Annual Report to the Stockholders for the Year 1948* (Atlanta: The Coca-Cola Company), 4. Gross net profit was \$99,249,439.

Coca-Cola was not alone in its confidence that international sales were significant and growing. The American press celebrated its success. On May 15, 1950, Coca-Cola became the first commercial product featured on the cover of *Time* magazine. Woodruff declined having his picture on the cover. In his place was a smiling cartoon-type illustration of the Company's red logo holding up a Coke to the lips of a personified Earth. Beneath the image were the words, "World & Friend. Love that piaster, that lira, that tickey, and that American Way of Life."<sup>13</sup> This strange image depicted Coca-Cola as larger than the Earth, a child-like being with no arms being cradled and bottle-fed by the Company. Inside the magazine the featured article was titled, "The Sun Never Sets On Cacoola," which celebrated the Company's global presence and international reach – an American capitalist influence that never slept. The article was a glowing review of the Company as a successful model for American corporate global expansion. It made the case that Coca-Cola was the "sublimated essence of all America stands for" and that its success was "also simpler, sharper evidence than the Marshall Plan or a Voice of America broadcast that the U.S. has gone out into the world to stay." The article, and the cover, expressed a kind of mainstream belief that Coca-Cola was leading the way in American corporate globalization.



Figure 5-1: World as Friend

The article contained three important themes: Coca-Cola was a quintessentially American brand, the world *wanted* Coca-Cola, and Coca-Cola's success should be attributed to its highly organized system of management – that, too, a

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<sup>13</sup> These are all currencies. The piaster was used in Italy; the lira in Mediterranean countries, including Malta, Israel, Egypt, and the Ottoman Empire; and the tickey in South Africa.



tribute to American greatness. The first theme was made plain by the first section heading: “The Essence of America.” It was explained that Coke was everywhere; it was “strangely anomalous, somewhat like reading Dick Tracy in French or seeing a Japanese actor made up to look like Abraham Lincoln.”<sup>14</sup> What was strange was to see pieces of culture, especially ones so closely tied to the national culture, adopted by others in different countries and translated into their cultures. The article heralded “Coke’s peaceful-near-conquest of the world.” World domination was a theme for American companies in this era of globalization, as it also was for the U.S., which hoped to win over the world to democracy and free-market capitalism in the Cold War. Coke’s conquest of new markets was part of what made it so decidedly American in character – as well as what made it important to Americans’ self-image as a rising power for good (and goods) in the world.

In the *Time* article, “globalization” meant sales and popularity in countries around the world. Yet, it was not just profits that were highlighted. The Company was applauded for contributing to world progress. Here emerged the second theme: the world *wanted* Coca-Cola and also invited the Company into their markets for the positive effects of American commerce. The establishment of new bottling plants, the article explained, would bring “refrigeration to sweltering one-ox towns,” and this meant the introduction of new technology, jobs, and a higher standard of living. In this view, Coca-Cola promised a new and secure future for expanding American influence that would not require violence and war but a “soft power” defined influence through global culture.

This story, in other words, was not about a Company that had managed to shake off its U.S. citizenship to become nation-less. Instead it was a story of what America

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<sup>14</sup> “The Sun Never Sets on Cacoola,” 1.

could offer the world. Coca-Cola was “not a product of the vast natural resources of the land, but of the American genius for business organization.” What Americans had to offer the world was a highly organized system of capitalism, which purportedly offered modernization, uplift, and prosperity. *Time* wrote about the Company’s overlapping mission with the government but applauded its divergent strategy and ultimately its effectiveness. Coca-Cola, the article explained, “is not a missionary in the sense, for example, that the Voice of America is. Except in the sense that it is for free trade everywhere it is not specifically trying to spread the American way of life.” This sentence asserted that what was most important about America was capitalism (as the counterpoint to communism). The implication was that Coca-Cola was successfully spreading the American way of life precisely because its explicit interest was economic and not political. Coca-Cola wanted to convert the world’s people into loyal Coca-Cola drinkers and therefore took a softer and less explicitly political approach than the Voice of America. As a stealth form of anti-communism or pro-Americanism, Coke could profit from its American-ness divorced from national governance or military policy.<sup>15</sup>

In a world that desired Coke, France was singled out as an especially exciting example of a new market. France resisted cultural imperialism of all sorts, the author noted, but it crumbled in the face of Coke’s seductive lure. It also pointed to Germany, where citizens rejoiced at the return of Coke after WWII ended. And finally, it pointed to Egypt where “the natives” affectionately called the drink “Cacoola.” In South America,

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<sup>15</sup> For more on soft power and cultural imperialism, see: Jr, *Soft Power*; Parmar and Cox, *Soft Power and US Foreign Policy*; Rosenberg, *Spreading the American Dream*; Reinhold Wagnleitner and Elaine Tyler May, “Here, There and Everywhere”: *The Foreign Politics of American Popular Culture*, 1st ed. (Salzburg, 2000); Reinhold Wagnleitner, *Coca-Colonization and the Cold War: The Cultural Mission of the United States in Austria After the Second World War* (The University of North Carolina Press, 1994); Victoria de Grazia, *Irresistible Empire: America’s Advance through Twentieth-Century Europe* (Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, 2006).

Africa, and the Pacific Islands Coca-Cola signed bottling contracts with local business owners. In these exotic locales, residents enjoyed the drink and benefited from the creation of new jobs at bottling plants and the modernization that came along with it.

The third and final theme in the article was the highly organized system in place to train local bottlers around the world. It outlined the ways that Coca-Cola standardized the drink, including water purification and bottle sterilization, as well as how it centrally organized and planned advertising and marketing techniques, and strategies of salesmanship. While local bottlers were free to make the Company money, it was clear they were not alone in the world. The parent company was looking over their shoulder; after all, the standards and success accomplished in America was being exported along with gallons of syrup.

### **And now a word from our sponsor: Coca-Cola on TV and in American Culture**

*Time* magazine placed Coca-Cola on its cover after it was popular with American consumers. If it was surprising to see what looked like a Coca-Cola advertisement on the cover of *Time* magazine, it was not surprising to Americans that it was being celebrated for its success. Coke's material and international success had already been a part of Coca-Cola's domestic advertising campaigns. It was linked with wholesome mainstream American life. If Americans doubted this, they only had to turn to the Company's radio and television sponsorships.<sup>16</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> Coca-Cola first sponsored radio programs in 1930, with '*Coca-Cola Top Notchers*', a weekly, live (then later for syndication), 30 minute Sports/Variety show, which aired on Wednesday nights over the NBC 'Red' Network. They also sponsored "Coke Time with Eddie Fisher," which tried to popularize the hip nickname "Coke," in favor of Coca-Cola, during the 1950s and "The Edgar Bergen and Charlie McCarthy Show."

Television became central to the creation of a national American culture during the 1950s. Sponsoring a television program was a popular way for companies to advertise their brand and ride on the tails of a show's success. One of Coca-Cola's first hit television sponsorships was *The Adventures of Ozzie and Harriet*, a sit-com that featured the real Nelson family. The show aired on the ABC television network from 1952 to 1956. The show became synonymous with the idealized 1950s American family life. The Nelson's were a white middle-class nuclear family. Ozzie went off to work each day and his wife, Harriet, stayed home to take care of the house and their two young sons. By association, Coca-Cola connected its brand to the values promoted in the show that were valued but quickly disappearing.<sup>17</sup>

An average of three Coke commercials aired during each episode, in addition to product placements embedded into the show. One example of an embedded ad included featured a scene with the Nelson brothers. It started with Ricky Nelson seated at a soda fountain counter. The product placement was overt; the soda jerk turned on the radio and a Coca-Cola jingle began to play: "ZING. Only Coca-Cola gives you that refreshing new feeling. Coca-Cola refreshes best!" His brother, David, sat at the counter and Ricky said "That new song for Coca-Cola's great isn't it?" After a bit of banter, the camera zoomed in on an empty Coca-Cola glass being filled by the dispenser. At the end of the scene an announcer's voice said, "For that refreshing new feeling, do as Ricky Nelson does," and then Ricky looked into the camera and said, "Have a Coke." Endorsements like that were

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<sup>17</sup> Spiegel, *Make Room for TV*; Marling, *As Seen on TV*; Mary Caputi, *A Kinder, Gentler America: Melancholia and the Mythical 1950s* (U of Minnesota Press, 2005); Stephanie Coontz, *The Way We Never Were: American Families And The Nostalgia Trap* (Basic Books, 2000); Joanne Meyerowitz, *Not June Cleaver: Women and Gender in Postwar America, 1945-1960* (Temple University Press, 1994).

meant to appeal to younger viewers who were fans of the show and of Ricky Nelson, a popular singer-songwriter outside of the show.

Another commercial embedded in the show's storyline featured the Nelsons hosting a barbeque in their backyard. Ozzie tended the grill and cooked steaks to order for each of his guests. The audience watched as he stuck nametags in each steak based on how long they cooked. As he carried the food over to the table a voiceover explained his foolproof serving plan to the audience. Upon delivery, however, everyone realized the steaks were mixed-up and exchanged their plates across the table. The announcer's voice returned and said: "Here is a foolproof idea to spark any party, inside or out, serve ice cold Coca-Cola, because everybody, everywhere, anytime loves Coke." The camera returned to a conversation between Ozzie and Harriet after their guests have left. Ozzie suggested that from now on he take care of serving Coca-Cola and Harriet serve the steaks. She replied: "Not on your life. Parties are more fun when you do the cooking. Here – have a Coke and cheer up." Ozzie replied, "That's the best idea yet." At the core of the show was an emphasis on family life, traditional gender roles, and moral values. Coca-Cola fit into this theme with suggestions from Ozzie, speaking as the head of the household, about the refreshing taste of Coca-Cola after cleaning out the garage or mowing the lawn on a hot day. Harriet was often featured in the kitchen, the room in the house that was most certainly her domain, where she gave women cooking tips and suggestions of when to serve ice-cold Coke.

A second successful sponsorship was Coke's support of *The Mickey Mouse Club*, a campaign that grew out of a partnership with the Disney Company. On Christmas Day, 1950, The Coca-Cola Company sponsored Disney's first appearance on television with a

special called “One Hour in Wonderland.” A few years later, Coca-Cola sponsored *The Mickey Mouse Club*, which was produced by Walt Disney Productions and aired on ABC in 1955-1957. The series was a variety show for children, which included a newsreel, a cartoon, and a narrative storyline, as well as music, talent, and comedy segments. A show like *Ozzie and Harriet* was viewed by families. Disney’s audience was children. *The Mickey Mouse Club* show featured a familiar rotating cast of teenagers and the show’s appeal with children helped boost Coca-Cola’s image with its young television audience. Coca-Cola solidified its place within mainstream popular American youth culture by targeting children and teens on *The Mickey Mouse Club* program.

Coke was fully integrated into the American culture of Cold War consumption. The Cold War was not only an arms race with the Soviet Union but also a competition and comparison of lifestyle and standards of living. The Kitchen Debate over competing economic systems between U.S. Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev at the opening of the American National Exhibition at Sokolniki Park in Moscow on July 24, 1959 exemplified this cultural contest. As part of the exhibition, a “typical” American house was built and filled with labor-saving and recreational devices meant to represent the bounty of the capitalist consumer market. Coke was synonymous with that lifestyle.<sup>18</sup>

On television, Coke’s sponsorships allied it with wholesome television programming that applauded traditional values of nuclear families. Product placements on the *Ozzie & Harriet Show* put Coke right next to the convenience of electric

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<sup>18</sup> May, *Homeward Bound*; Susan L. Carruthers, “Not Like the US? Europeans and the Spread of American Culture,” *International Affairs* 74, no. 4 (October 1998): 883-892; Marling, *As Seen on TV*; John W. Lerner, “Judging the Kitchen Debate,” *OAH Magazine of History* 2, no. 1 (July 1, 1986): 25-27; Peter Davenport, *Unforgettable: Images That Have Changed Our Lives* (Chronicle Books, 2003).

appliances in superior American kitchens used by stay-at-home moms like Harriet Nelson. The charming, jovial child stars on *The Mickey Mouse Club* showcased Coke's place in the nation's future.

But if Coca-Cola was a super cola like the USA was a super-power, it needed a competitor. Its major national cola competition was the Pepsi-Cola Company. In fact, President Richard Nixon was a former Pepsi employee who had first applied to work for Coca-Cola but was turned down for the job. This helps explain the famous exchange during the Kitchen Debate when Nixon gets Khrushchev to publicly try Pepsi. The photo was captioned in the U.S. as "Khrushchev Gets Sociable." Despite its featured role in the Kitchen Debate, Pepsi was not America's favorite at the time. Among the many soft-drinks available, Pepsi only represented 23 percent of sales; Coca-Cola was in the lead with 40 percent of sales.<sup>19</sup>

Although Coca-Cola led the pack, Pepsi was the first to go behind the Iron Curtain to increase international sales. Coca-Cola was led by Woodruff, who had taken a seat at the head of the Board and appointed a series of new presidents to replace him. Woodruff and Coca-Cola were committed to their image as an American brand before ever chancing a tainted image through sales in communist countries.

### **The Communist Threat: Coca-Cola's Cold War Anxiety and Representation in Film**

A mixture of Cold War fear, anxiety, and patriotism permeated American culture. Capitalism and communism, as represented in propaganda, mainstream news coverage, television, and film were two world systems that could not co-exist. Countries and people

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<sup>19</sup> "The Famous Debate in Close-Up Pictures," *Life*, August 3, 1959; "Encounter," *Newsweek*, August 3, 1959; Fawn M. Brodie, *Richard Nixon*, Second Edition. (W.W. Norton & Company, 1981), 385.

around the world chose sides and assessed the world's super powers, and super corporations that had become increasingly powerful, politically, and economically. At stake were American values, such as family, private property, consumerism, and freedom. During the 1950s and 1960s, films mirrored real life themes of good versus evil, power and corruption, increased militarism and nuclear war, and anti-communist hysteria. However, Coca-Cola executives were anxious. The communist threat they feared most was the closing of the free market, and in turn its ability to maintain and increase profits internationally.<sup>20</sup>

The Cuban Revolution of 1959 provided cause for Coca-Cola's fear of communism's expansion. Once in power, Premier Fidel Castro began nationalizing privately owned domestic and foreign companies across all industries. On August 7, 1960 he seized U.S. properties that totaled \$750 million.<sup>21</sup> The seized companies came under the ownership and operation of the Cuban government. Coca-Cola established its first bottling plant in Cuba in 1906 and the Company's plants which had been spared in that round of seizures were now vulnerable.<sup>22</sup> Castro explained that the seizures were attributable to the "economic aggression" of the United States. He boldly stated, "Cuba does not consider itself tied to the United States by any obligation and... does not feel itself tied to the warlike merry-go-round of the United States." He further denied that the

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<sup>20</sup> For more on Cold War anxiety and culture, see: May, *Homeward Bound*; Christina Klein, *Cold War Orientalism: Asia in the Middlebrow Imagination, 1945-1961* (University of California Press, 2003); Walter L. Hixson, *Parting the Curtain: Propaganda, Culture, and the Cold War, 1945-1961* (Palgrave Macmillan, 1997); K.A. Cuordileone, *Manhood and American Political Culture in the Cold War* (Routledge, 2004); Stephen J. Whitfield, *The Culture of the Cold War*, 2nd ed. (The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996); Peter J. Kuznick and James Gilbert, eds., *Rethinking Cold War Culture* (Smithsonian Books, 2010); Cynthia H. Enloe, *The morning after: sexual politics at the end of the Cold War* (University of California Press, 1993); Appy, *Cold War Constructions*; Margot Canaday, *The Straight State: Sexuality and Citizenship in Twentieth-Century America* (Princeton University Press, 2009).

<sup>21</sup> "Castro Forces Carry Out Seizure of U.S. Properties," *The New York Times*, August 8, 1960, 1; "U.S. Banks, Soft Drink Concerns, Other Companies Are Still Operating in Cuba," B1.

<sup>22</sup> "Chronological Listing of Countries with Coca-Cola Bottling Operations," Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.



Monroe Doctrine was relevant and asserted that Cuba would accept with gratitude the aid and support of the militarily superior Soviet Union.<sup>23</sup> Specifically, President Dwight Eisenhower's reduction of Cuba's sugar quota in the United States by 700,000 tons, earlier that year, was deemed an aggressive act which greatly damaged the Cuban economy.<sup>24</sup> The Cuban government explained that "the abolition of private business could be attributed to the selfish and anti-national practices of individual businessmen who had failed to adapt themselves to the reality of the revolution of our fatherland."<sup>25</sup> Castro's Cuba would not abide corporate greed or corporations that did not fairly contribute to the Cuban State. The U.S. responded by enacting a Cuban embargo that exempted food and medical supplies. Castro retaliated with further seizures of U.S. held properties and businesses.<sup>26</sup>

Pepsi's bottling plant was seized, along with dozens of others, in the first wave of nationalized businesses.<sup>27</sup> Coca-Cola was reported to be safe after a second round of seizures on October 15, following the Cuban embargo.<sup>28</sup> It was assumed that their product was tied too closely to Cuban culture. The popular drink, "Cuba Libre" (Free Cuba) was made from Bacardi rum, Coca-Cola, and lime juice. The Cuban market had

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<sup>23</sup> "Castro Forces Carry Out Seizure of U.S. Properties," 2; "Cuba Tells OAS Red Aid Is Welcome," A5; "Cuba Warns U.S. of 'Waterloo'," A4.

<sup>24</sup> "Castro Forces Carry Out Seizure of U.S. Properties," 1. The Soviet Union purchased this new excess of sugar, but the United States purchased sugar at two cents above the world market price paid by the Soviets. Cuban sugar was exported but at a much cheaper rate and the majority was purchased with lesser valued currencies.

<sup>25</sup> "382 Firms Grabbed, 20 With Ties to U.S.: All Banks Except 2 Are Placed Under State," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 15, 1960, 1.

<sup>26</sup> R. Hart Phillips, "Havana Retaliates," *The New York Times*, October 26, 1960, 1, 19. See also: Max Frankel, *High Noon in the Cold War: Kennedy, Khrushchev, and the Cuban Missile Crisis* (Presidio Press, 2004); Van Gosse, *Where the Boys Are: Cuba, Cold War America, and the Making of a New Left* (Verso, 1993); Lars Schoultz, *That Infernal Little Cuban Republic: The United States and the Cuban Revolution* (The University of North Carolina Press, 2011).

<sup>27</sup> "U.S. Banks, Soft Drink Concerns, Other Companies Are Still Operating in Cuba," 7.

<sup>28</sup> "Castro Kills Capitalism!," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 15, 1960, B1. Other surviving U.S. companies includes: F.W. Woolworth, Sears Roebuck, and B.F. Goodrich Rubber Company.

long been a profitable one. Its net profit in Cuba in 1959 totaled \$33.5 million. Because syrup had to be imported from the U.S. in order to bottle Coke, the Company hoped it would be spared. However, on October 25, 1960, another 166 U.S. firms were seized and Coca-Cola was among them.<sup>29</sup> The Company reported the seizure of five Cuban bottling plants, and all of their assets in Cuba, which totaled \$2.4 million.<sup>30</sup> Communism posed a very real threat to capitalism in general and to American corporations like Coca-Cola specifically.

Elsewhere in the news were reports of the continued success and expansion of the Coca-Cola Company. Coca-Cola president, Lee Talley, announced record sales and the creation of 20 new bottling plants during 1960, bringing the total of plants outside of the U.S. to 684 in 110 countries. The newest plants were in Frankenthal, Germany; Upington, South Africa; Nerang, Australia; Campinas, Brazil; Choluteca, Honduras; and Gisborne, New Zealand.<sup>31</sup>

In the articles covering Coca-Cola's international expansion at different points during 1960, Coca-Cola was called "American in origin as apple pie." It was further argued that Coca-Cola had "established itself as a national product in each of the countries where it is produced and sold," and that the drink was "popular in many lands not particularly friendly to Americans politically." In American newspaper articles, Coca-Cola was routinely described as an exceptional American product. Its presence in 110

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<sup>29</sup> "Cuba Grabs 166 More U.S. Firms," 1; Phillips, "Havana Retaliates," 19.

<sup>30</sup> "Coca-Cola Co.," *The New York Times*, November 11, 1960, 61; Staff Reporter, "Coca-Cola Says Seizure Of Its Assets in Cuba Will Cost It \$24,000,000," 30.

<sup>31</sup> James J. Nagle, "Coca-Cola Export Taking No Pauses: Foreign Plants Are Opened at Rate of One a Month," *The New York Times*, June 31, 1960, 4; "Note Big Hike In Coke Sales," *Chicago Defender*, October 5, 1960; Wall Street Journal Staff Reporter, "Coca-Cola Sees Sales Record in 1960 If Rate of Growth Continues," *The Wall Street Journal*, September 20, 1960.

countries was cited as proof that Coca-Cola, and in turn the U.S., was welcome around the world, even during the Cold War.

Roy Jones, executive vice president of Coca-Cola Export explained: “Our policy in doing business in foreign lands is to be sure that sound contributions are made towards the welfare of the country which bottles the product. The plants authorized are generally owned, financed and managed locally, as they are in America.”<sup>32</sup> This statement countered those from Castro, who claimed that Coca-Cola, and other American companies whose assets were seized, were greedy capitalist examples of companies that exported profits and exploited local markets.

This celebration of Coca-Cola’s continued growth and increase in profit continued to be news when the political climate in Cuba heated up. Corporate and public fears swelled during the first two years of the 1960s. President John F. Kennedy’s Bay of Pigs Invasion failed to overthrow the Cuban government in 1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis, fueled by the Soviet supported creation of military bases in Cuba with nuclear capability, greatly increased tensions. The U.S. was closer than ever before to nuclear war. The representation of anti-communism, the fear of nuclear war, and the exceptional position of power that Coca-Cola held internationally was echoed in the films created during that decade. Two separate classic Cold War films, *One, Two, Three* and *Dr. Strangelove: Or How I Stopped Worrying and Learned to Love the Bomb* – neither commissioned by Coca-Cola – used the Company to represent American power and the hysteria of anti-communism.

During the previous decade, Hollywood films had come under the scrutiny of the House Un-American Activities Commission to ensure the favorable depiction of America

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<sup>32</sup> Staff Reporter, “Coca-Cola Says Seizure Of Its Assets in Cuba Will Cost It \$24,000,000.”

and democracy, and of course the denigration of all things communist and Russian. Hollywood was affected through the blacklisting of screen writers, who had written scripts with content that was deemed subversive or were accused of belonging to communist organizations. Films that resonated with the late nineteenth century populist and urban progressive themes of distrust and anger towards expanding big business were now unacceptable. After WWII, businesses had grown into large complex multinational corporations. The 1950s was an era not only marked by large corporations, but by America's Cold War dependence on them to stand as a capitalist barricade against the ideology of communism. Films that portrayed the wealthy, bankers, big business, or industrialists as villains were considered akin to outright support of communism.

During the 1950s, many films featured corporations and businessmen as the central characters in narrative plotlines. Corporations were bigger than ever before and the work that made so many wealthy was not clear to many. These were not people who worked with their hands and built things.<sup>33</sup> The suit was their uniform and they disappeared into big buildings to ride elevators and shuffle papers. There was public skepticism about their work which was addressed in films that sought to reassure the public that the men guiding big complex corporations could be trusted. Examples of this genre were: *Sabrina* (1954), *Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (1956), *Will Success Spoil Rock Hunter* (1957), and *The Apartment* (1960).

During the 1960s, the genre of Cold War satire was created including a number of prominent films that featured the Coca-Cola Company. First was Billy Wilder's 1961

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<sup>33</sup> David Horowitz, *Corporations and the Cold War* (Monthly Review Press, 1969); Thomas Doherty, *Cold War, Cool Medium: Television, McCarthyism, and American Culture* (Columbia University Press, 2003); Sloan Wilson, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, 4th ed. (Da Capo Press, 2002); Vance Packard and Daniel Horowitz, *American Social Classes in the 1950s: Selections from Vance Packard's The Status Seekers*, First Edition. (Bedford/St. Martin's, 1995); Marchand, *Advertising the American Dream*.

film *One, Two, Three*, starring James Cagney. Cagney plays an American Coca-Cola executive named C.R. MacNamara, known as Mac to his friends. Stationed in West Berlin, Mac aspires to become head of European operations based in London. To get ahead, Mac tries to negotiate a trade agreement to bring Coke into the Russian market. The plot thickens when he is asked to host his boss's daughter, Scarlett Hazeltine, during a two-week visit from Atlanta. Scarlett is a spoiled 17-year-old who likes to have a good time. On Mr. and Mrs. Hazeltine's journey to Berlin to retrieve their daughter, Mac also learns that Scarlett has married Otto Ludwig Piffl, an East German Communist. Worried the marriage would ruin his career, Mac tries to get rid of Otto and have the marriage annulled. But Scarlett is pregnant and so Mac attempts to make him respectable in the eyes of Mac's boss and Otto's new father-in-law.<sup>34</sup>

Most obviously, this film makes light of the Cold War competition between capitalism and communism. Coca-Cola stands in place of the United States as capitalism's ambassador to West Berlin. One of the more famous lines in the film reflects Mac's, and in turn Coca-Cola's, global ambition to spread their drink far behind the Iron Curtain into Russia. Speaking to Mr. Hazeltine, and referring to world domination, Mac says, "Napoleon blew it, Hitler blew it, but Coca-Cola's gonna pull it off." At the end of the film, he is baffled and deflated to hear that his boss has no interest in selling Coca-Cola to Russians. Hazeltine remarks, "I wouldn't touch the Russians with a ten-foot pole. And I don't want anything to do with the Poles either." Wilder pokes fun at Coca-Cola along with an almost irrational fear and hatred of communists and communist countries.

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<sup>34</sup> Charles Maland, "Dr. Strangelove (1964): Nightmare Comedy and the Ideology of Liberal Consensus," *American Quarterly* 31, no. 5 (December 1, 1979): 697-717; Margot A. Henriksen, *Dr. Strangelove's America: Society and Culture in the Atomic Age* (University of California Press, 1997); Richard Armstrong, *Billy Wilder, American Film Realist* (McFarland, 2005); Ed Sikov, *Laughing Hysterically: American Screen Comedy of the 1950s* (Columbia University Press, 1996).

In the film, not even a multinational American corporation will have anything to do with communists. All the while, the bigger joke is about the corporate dream of world domination. Napoleon and Hitler would be no match for Mac's efforts in the name of the Coca-Cola Company.

The second Cold War classic that featured Coca-Cola was Stanley Kubrick's 1964 film, *Dr. Strangelove or: How I learned to Stop Worrying and Love the Bomb*. In this film, U.S. Air Force General Jack Ripper goes crazy and sends his bomber wing to destroy the U.S.S.R. He suspects that the communists are conspiring to pollute the "precious bodily fluids" of the American people. The Soviet ambassador informs the U.S. president that a nuclear strike on the U.S.S.R. will trigger a "Doomsday Machine," which will destroy all plant and animal life on Earth. Peter Sellers portrays the three men who might avert this tragedy: British Group Captain Lionel Mandrake, the only person with access to the Gen. Ripper; U.S. President Merkin Muffley, whose best attempts to divert disaster depend on placating a drunken Soviet Premier; and the former Nazi genius Dr. Strangelove, who concludes that "such a device would not be a practical deterrent for reasons which at this moment must be all too obvious." Driving the story were the questions of whether the bombers will be stopped, or if Gen. Jack Ripper might succeed in setting off the nuclear chain of events that would destroy the entire world.

Once again, Kubrick presents Coca-Cola as the quintessential American company that has grown incredibly powerful through its wealth and ubiquitous global presence. A prime example of this is when Mandrake desperately calls the President to warn him but the operator refuses to place the call. He needs \$.55 but he does not have it. He asks Guano, the soldier guarding him, who does not believe his story and wants to take him

into custody. Mandrake insists he must make this call but he is \$.20 short. This, in turn, leads to a conversation about Coke:

*Mandrake:* That Coca-Cola machine, I want you to shoot the lock off it. There may be some change in there.

*Guano:* That's private property.

*Mandrake:* Colonel, can you possibly imagine what is going to happen to you, your frame, outlook, way of life and everything, when they learn that you have obstructed a telephone call to the President of the United States? Can you imagine? Shoot it off! Shoot! With the gun! That's what the bullets are for, you twit!

*Guano:* Ok. I'm gonna get your money for you. But if you don't get the President of the Unites States on that phone, you know what's going to happen to you?

*Mandrake:* What?

*Guano:* You're going to have to answer to the Coca-Cola Company.

The implicit question here, of course, is about power: who had more, big business or big government?

It is no coincidence that Coca-Cola was chosen as the all-powerful American corporation that loomed large in these contests between capitalism and communism. By the time these films were made, Coca-Cola was global in scope and context; it operated across national borders but did not transcend the nation of its origin. One factor that made it American was the executive leadership, headed by Woodruff, who steered the company through its Cold War expansion. It was his reticence in particular that slowed the Company's expansion behind the Iron Curtain. He relished the status of Coca-Cola as a quintessential American brand. It was in the company's best interest to simultaneously promote its American and global identity. They could be an American brand, headquartered in Atlanta, Georgia or they could shift focus to stories about modernization and job-creation through local bottlers in an increasing number of countries around the world. They were simultaneously local and global. This shifting of focus is typical of the

multinational trend of twentieth century globalization. This combination was a powerful and profitable one.

Indeed, this issue of Coca-Cola's American-ness, and its loyalty to the American nation and way of life was in fact corporate policy when it came to selling its product behind the Iron Curtain. Woodruff, like Mr. Hazeltine in *One, Two, Three*, initially had no interest in selling Coke to communists. He enjoyed relationships with many U.S. elected officials and was both a capitalist and an anti-communist to the core. Coca-Cola was profitable and popular in the U.S. and he was wary of pursuing new markets behind the Iron Curtain. Likewise, Premier Khrushchev had no interest in allowing Coca-Cola into Russia and had repeatedly avoided and refused American soft drinks whenever offered. In a full-length article published in the *New York Times* called "Cold-Drink War: Kvass vs. Coke," the Russian soft drink "Kvass" was revealed as the Russian answer to Coke. British author Anthony Carthew investigated national soft drinks around the world to assess what could be learned about the countries that made and promoted them, as well as the people who drank them. He half-heartedly joked that "the pushing of colas has had some nasty side effects." "Many Europeans," he noted, "genuinely believe that the object held aloft by the Statue of Liberty is a Coke bottle. More important, the stuff has become synonymous with ham-handed overselling of the American Way of Life, summed up in the cruel but brilliant word 'Coca-Colonization.'"<sup>35</sup> Coke, in other words, was much more than a soft drink. In this view, countries where there was an authorized Coca-Cola plant helped to map the broader geo-political landscape.

Pepsi, on the other hand, had not staked their brand on an American way of life and its leadership chased profits into markets that Coca-Cola had so far avoided. In 1965,

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<sup>35</sup> Andrew Carthew, "Cold-Drink War: Kvass vs. Coke," *The New York Times*, July 12, 1964, SM21.



Donald M. Kendall, president of the Pepsi-Cola Company, gave a press conference where he announced that 40 percent of its soft drink profits from overseas business. More importantly, Kendall announced he was in negotiations with four eastern European countries. Pepsi would supply concentrate from one of its western European plants to a state-owned soft drink bottler. When Kendall was asked if other soft drink companies were also in negotiations, he confirmed that some were but would not name names. According to the article, however, both Coke and Pepsi were in negotiations with Bulgaria and Romania.<sup>36</sup>

Internally, Coca-Cola's president Paul Austin supported expansion behind the Iron Curtain. Even James Farley, former Postmaster General and Chairman of the Coca-Cola Export Company, and a strong supporter of anti-communism, felt it was a good idea. For if Coca-Cola did not chase these markets, Pepsi surely would. So in a way, capitalism conquered anti-communism and infiltrated communist countries in one fell swoop. It was Woodruff who needed convincing. Before negotiating any new bottling operations, Boisfeuillet Jones, an assistant to Woodruff, called W. Averell Harriman, Department of State, Ambassador at Large, to inquire if he had "any objection to the Coca-Cola Company making a deal with the Soviet Government for the bottling and distribution of Coca-Cola in the Soviet Union. In a memo to Secretary of State Dean Rusk, Harriman wrote that he had consulted Under Secretary Rostow, who agreed:

there could be no objection to this arrangement, and, in fact, it would have value in forwarding the President's policy on bridge-building. We recalled the fact that the Coca-Cola Company had been held out by Soviet propaganda as the agent of American imperialism in the underdeveloped countries. I called Mr. Jones this

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<sup>36</sup> James Smith, "Iron Curtain Countries Next for American Soft Drink Makers," *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 4, 1965. See also: Bob Stoddard, *Pepsi: 100 Years.*, 1st ed. (General Publishing Group, 1997); Roger Enrico, *The Other Guy Blinked: How Pepsi Won the Cola Wars* (Bantam, 1986); Aviad Meitar, *An Unimaginable Journey: How Pepsi Beat the Odds in Romania* (BookSurge Publishing, 2010).

morning and informed him that there was no objection to Coca-Cola Company's concluding this agreement, and, in fact it would be considered in the national interest... The whole thing sounds a bit unnatural and I wouldn't want to underwrite that the deal will come off.<sup>37</sup>

Soon after, true to earlier rumors in the press, a Coca-Cola bottling plant was established in Bulgaria. Romania, Czechoslovakia, and Yugoslavia soon followed.

This memo suggests that the representations of Coke on the silver screen were prescient: the Company was considering its global position and a possible backlash if the U.S. public were to learn it was operating behind the Iron Curtain. Further, the State Department believed it would be in "the national interest" for Coke to do so as an ambassador of America. Despite the fact that it seemed a bit "unnatural" to Harriman to imagine the American Coca-Cola Company making a deal with communist Russia, Coca-Cola forged ahead and operated with the blessing of the U.S. government. The Cold War was a war to win over the hearts and minds of the world's people. It was believed that Coke could win people over through their taste buds and the Company's soft selling propaganda. Internationally, the Cold War shaped the ways that Coca-Cola operated in the world and the ways it represented itself to the American consumer public.

### **Cracks in Coca-Cola's Image: The Demands of the Civil Rights Movement**

Lee Talley directly followed Woodruff as Company president, and faced head on the dual challenges of domestic racial protest in the U.S. and the threats to global capitalism that stemmed from the Cold War internationally. It was not only the simultaneity of the civil rights movement and the Cold War, but the fact that they overlapped and shaped each other. American racial politics was not simply relegated to

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<sup>37</sup> W. Averell Harriman, "Memorandum for the Secretary, January 3, 1967," W. Averell Harriman Papers, Box 499, Folder 7, Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

the national stage; it was relevant internationally as part of a global conversation about equality and freedom in the context of Third World decolonization and the Cold War.

Civil rights, therefore, belonged to a larger international history.<sup>38</sup>

During a speech in 1957, the year before he was elected president of the Company Talley said:

A man who holds himself out as the head of a business which seeks the patronage of all men- rich and poor, black and white, yellow and brown, Christians, Moslems[sic], Buddhists, and Jews – must be devoid of racial prejudice and religious bigotry... [The Americans who run Coca-Cola in Africa must have,] a genuine respect for and willingness to get along with and understand Negroes.<sup>39</sup>

Talley was the first to so clearly articulate the central problem that race posed to the Company. Although Talley presided over the Company after Moss Kendrix had been hired to advertise to African Americans, advertisements featuring African American consumers were mostly still invisible to white consumers and were never racially integrated. It was clear that Coca-Cola wanted to continue to profit from African American sales, but it failed to make a convincing commitment to African Americans in their struggle for equal rights. In order to be seen as truly international, and as a Company that embraced people of color, and more generally all of the world's people, the policy of neutrality in local politics was not enough; it had to learn to respectfully recognize

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<sup>38</sup> For more on the ways that race and civil rights was international see Dudziak, *Cold War Civil Rights*; Borstelmann, *The Cold War and the Color Line*. I agree with Borstelmann that “the issue of race is one of several that can illuminate the ways in which American history in the second half of the twentieth century was also international history.” For Coca-Cola, the fear and threat of negative publicity internationally was a powerful motivating force that often led to changes in policy regarding the treatment of people of color and representations of them in advertisements and as workers. See also: Plummer, *Window on Freedom*; Plummer, *Rising Wind*; Eschen, *Race Against Empire*; Eschen, *Satchmo Blows Up the World*; Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Detente* (Harvard University Press, 2005); Gerald Horne, *Black and Red: W.E.B. DuBois and the Afro-American Response to the Cold War, 1944-1963* (State Univ of New York Pr, 1986); Horne, “Race From Power: U.S. Foreign Policy and the General Crisis of ‘White Supremacy’.”

<sup>39</sup> Lee Talley, *Untitled Speech* (1957), Coca-Cola Collection, Manuscripts, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

difference in the consumer and labor markets. American racism was not acceptable or profitable at home; nor was the exportation of American racism with American products.

In the long struggle for Civil Rights, the Sixties was a challenging decade for the Coca-Cola Company. The Company profited from its marketing strategy as a quintessential American brand, yet African American consumers were no longer willing to ignore a mass culture that openly excluded and discriminated against them. The 1960s civil rights movement continued to challenge Jim Crow segregation. This struggle was fought in public spaces where citizens were also consumers. African Americans fought for the same freedom of mobility and consumption as white citizen consumers.<sup>40</sup> As Lizabeth Cohen has argued, the “firm connection between citizenship and consumption presented African Americans with new opportunities for fighting the discrimination in public places that had so angered them during wartime.”<sup>41</sup> Coca-Cola was a multinational company balancing its identity as both an American and global brand. It was not only the global component of its identity that posed problems; the civil rights movement fought against the continued white washing and hypocrisy of inequality within American society.

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<sup>40</sup> Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*, 166; Lawrence B. Glickman, *Consumer Society in American History: A Reader* (Cornell University Press, 1999); Lawrence B. Glickman, *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America*, 1st ed. (University Of Chicago Press, 2009); Robert Weems, *Desegregating the Dollar: African American Consumerism in the Twentieth Century* (NYU Press, 1998); Hale, *Making Whiteness*.

<sup>41</sup> Cohen, *A Consumers' Republic*.

Protests continued to connect Coca-Cola to the problems of Jim Crow. On February 1, 1960, an African American student-led protest grabbed the attention of the domestic and international press. Four students from North Carolina Agricultural and Technical College, a historically black college, sat in at a segregated Woolworth's lunch counter in the city of Greensboro. Seats were reserved for white customers only. The students expected to be refused service at the lunch counter, they were usually forced to stand and eat. As planned, on that day, these four students sat and stayed at the lunch counter after being refused service. The students staged a sit-in that lasted five days, and



Figure 5-2: Greensboro Four, 1960

at its end included over 300 students. The protest that started in Woolworth's ignited over 100 student-led protests to desegregate commercial spaces in the following year.<sup>42</sup> These students positioned themselves at the center of angry white mobs, on the front lines of

Jim Crow segregation. The lunch counter represented a particularly salient social space for young people and a historically important site for Coca-Cola, where the drink originated and was still most often consumed.

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<sup>42</sup> William Henry Chafe, *Civilities and civil rights: Greensboro, North Carolina, and the Black struggle for freedom* (Oxford University Press US, 1981), 71; Miles Wolff, *Lunch at the 5 & 10*, Rev Exp Su. (Ivan R Dee, 1990); Sasha Torres, *Black, White, and in Color: Television and Black Civil Rights* (Princeton University Press, 2003); Terry H. Anderson, *The Movement and The Sixties: Protest in America from Greensboro to Wounded Knee* (Oxford University Press, 1996); Charles W. McKinney Jr, *Greater Freedom: The Evolution of the Civil Rights Struggle in Wilson, North Carolina* (University Press of America, 2010).

The most famous photographs of the four students seated included multiple images of Coca-Cola. Most notably, in the photograph above, there is a Coca-Cola clock hanging on the wall in front of young men. Photographs from other angles included the Coke dispenser. Coca-Cola was thus not only linked to lunch counters in the mind of American consumers, it was visually present at the site of protests in the photographs that circulated in newspapers. Dignity and justice might have been the students' larger goal, but the focus and vehicles of their protests were seats at the lunch counter, hamburgers, and Coca-Cola.<sup>43</sup>

The same year that Martin Luther King, Jr. delivered his "I Have a Dream" speech at the Lincoln Memorial, Clarence Funnye, program director of the Congress for Racial Equality (CORE), wrote a letter to Paul Austin, Coca-Cola's current president, demanding that African Americans appear in mainstream television and print advertisements for Coke. "[W]e are appealing to you," Funnye explained, "on a moral basis,"<sup>44</sup> but his letter also warned that if their demands were not met, "selective purchasing committees" would force the Company's hands. The threat was an African American boycott of Coca-Cola until the Company integrated its advertising. African Americans did not want to destroy Coca-Cola. Rather, they wanted the company's respect and recognition of their purchasing power. Austin was thus faced with the same dilemma that had surfaced in the previous decade. The Company wanted to appease and appeal to African American consumers but it did not want to alienate white southern customers with integrated ads. Austin responded with creative suggestions to put off

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<sup>43</sup> Vincent Harding, Robin D. G. Kelley, and Earl Lewis, *We changed the world: African Americans, 1945-1970* (Oxford University Press US, 1997), 78.

<sup>44</sup> Letter from Clarence Funnye to J. P. Austin, September 5, 1963, Sibley Papers, Box 3, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University. .

CORE's demands. He suggested ads that included both whites and blacks but not in a scene where they shared a Coke at the same table. He agreed to create integrated print ads but wanted them to run only in magazines like *Ebony*. He hoped that others would begin circulating integrated ads in the mainstream soon, so the Company would not stand out. Austin recognized that he could not chance further angering CORE or African American consumers. They were a market too large to ignore, and the risk of negative press nationally and internationally was too great.<sup>45</sup>

The first integrated television commercial aired in 1969. Austin's suggestion was taken and the ad opened with a shot of Manhattan with black and white teenagers playing basketball together. The camera then panned away to peaceful shots from across the country and ended with the slogan "It's the Real Thing." In this commercial, Coca-Cola avoids depicting a racially integrated crowd drinking Coke together. It does not reflect the turbulent decade that was filled with protests and racial strife. Rather, there is a kind of shared masculinity through sport that made these integrated scenes innocent of any sexual threat (so often the charge leveled at integrationists), as well as "All-American" overtones by virtue of their apparently "fair" and "democratic" appeals to playful competition. Coca-Cola continued to advertise itself as American during the most important decade of the Civil Rights Movement. The student sit-ins and CORE's demand for representation were answered, although not substantively or satisfyingly, by a commercial at the end of the decade.

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<sup>45</sup> J. Paul Austin, "Memorandum to File," September 10, 1963, Sibley Papers, Box 3, Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

## **I'd Like to Buy the World a Coke: Using Race Abroad to Avoid Dealing with Race at Home**

It is within these contexts of the Cold War and the civil rights movement that Coke's shifting strategies for advertising at the turn of a new decade can be analyzed. In 1969, Coca-Cola and its advertising agency, McCann-Erickson, ended their long running "Things Go Better With Coke" campaign and replaced it with a new campaign with the slogan "It's the Real Thing." Two years later, Bill Backer, the creative director on the Coca-Cola account for McCann-Erickson, came up with an idea for a new Coca-Cola commercial that became one of the most famous of all time. Backer thought up the concept on his way to London to meet up with Billy Davis, a successful African American songwriter and Motown producer from Detroit, and with Roger Cook, a native from Bristol, England, who like Davis, worked as a songwriter working for McCann-Erickson. In his self-congratulatory book *The Care and Feeding of Ideas*, Backer describes a long layover due to fog during which he witnessed formerly irate passengers sitting together drinking bottles of Coca-Cola and laughing together. He wrote:

In that moment... [I] began to see a bottle of Coca-Cola as more than a drink... [I] began to see the familiar words, "Let's have a Coke," as... actually a subtle way of saying, "Let's keep each other company for a little while." And [I] knew they were being said all over the world as [I] sat there in Ireland. So that was the basic idea: to see Coke not as it was originally designed to be – a liquid refresher – but as a tiny bit of commonality between all peoples, a universally liked formula that would help to keep them company for a few minutes.

As a consumable item, Coke was a sweet caffeinated soft drink meant to refresh. However, the Company had long since cultivated the brand as a consumer item that was meant to be shared, first at soda fountains and later in bottles. The brand sold refreshment and sociability. Backer tapped into this long, layered history of meaning. The fact that while sitting in Ireland Backer called to mind the image of people saying "Let's have a



Coke,” all over the world, was an effect of Coca-Cola’s successful branding strategy. Key to this memory was the fact that traveling abroad brought into sharp relief the fact that Coca-Cola was beloved around the world. WWII ads for the Company had already circulated the image of international consumption; with albeit very different power dynamics. American advertising reflected a world with the same tastes as Americans – a world improved by its exposure to superior American tastes, which the world quickly adopted.

Together these three men - two white, one African American, two American, and one Englishman – took the one-line scribbled on a napkin and turned it into a jingle. Backer had written: I’d like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company. Backer wanted the song to be one that “treated the whole world as if it were a person – a person the singer would like to help and get to know.” The lyrics they wrote were:

I’d like to buy the world a home and furnish it with love,  
Grow apple trees and honey bees, and snow white turtle doves.  
I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony,  
I’d like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company.  
[Repeat the last two lines, and in the background:]  
It’s the real thing, Coke is what the world wants today.

The lyrics spoke to a cultural moment when the youth in America, and also other parts of the world, were responding through social movements to domestic and international inequalities. This included the turbulent U.S. civil rights movement but also the Cold War’s threats of nuclear weapons and protests against the Vietnam War. Peace and love was an appealing alternative to the harsh realities and violent images of protest and war. The folksong images of “apple trees, honey bees, and snow white turtle doves” were designed to appeal to British and American youth cultures that valued nature and understood flowering trees as an image of peace. Backer’s team, in other words,

succeeded in creating a commercial that represented abstract ideas that resonated across the era's youth cultures, and more importantly, did not alienate anyone with more direct references to politics. Rather than addressing the unrest of the past decade, the ad seemed to solve unrest with images of international harmony, materialized by the act of sharing a Coke.

In the ad, buying the world a Coke was an act of compassion. The compassionate act quieted discord in the world. The gesture of keeping someone company, and togetherness, was awarded the potential power to bring peace to individuals and the world. And of course, this gesture over a bottle of Coke was welcomed with a smile. Coke brought people together across differences. Following the lines about home, love, trees, bees, and so forth, a bottle of Coke added to a list represented as simple, essential, and even natural. Yet teaching the world to sing, and then keeping it company, were actions that the singer would enact as one person with one bottle. This was the individual actor that Backer originally imagined in this song. He envisioned the lyrics sung to a world treated as one person, "a person the singer would like to help and get to know better." This idea is the key to the ad's underlying meaning. The world, addressed as one individual person, was someone who needed help. The singer, in turn, was a compassionate person somehow untouched by the world's problems.

A closer look reveals a white American or British singer at the center of the ad. This relationship sets up an "us" and "them" dichotomy in the world. There are those who need help and those who are benevolent helpers. More concretely, the singer is also a "teacher" instructing students around the world to sing in harmony. This is a representation of connection with the world, but not on equal terms. It suggests that out

there are people waiting to be saved; people who need to be delivered into peace. Somewhat paradoxically, then, this was very much a Cold War ad, a war over competing ideologies that continued to play out in formerly colonized parts of the world. In name, this was a war to bring freedom and democracy, and last but certainly not least a free market economy. The Cold War was led by the U.S. and its allies to save the world from the influence of communist Russia. Without any mention specifically of world events, then, this commercial suggests that the answers to the era's problems are in fact simple. The world wants saving and is divided by those in need and those ready to help through loose national affiliations and strong brand loyalties.

In February of 1971, a second version of the song was recorded by the popular British-based pop group, the New Seekers.<sup>46</sup> However, as a radio commercial it was a flop. Listeners did not respond or even seem to like it much. Worse, bottling companies disliked it and refused to spend money to place it on radio stations. Backer, Davis, and Cook, had to either accept its demise or think of something new. They decided to change the format and give the song a different life, one that visually illustrated the message. At this point, Coca-Cola and McCann-Erickson, gave Backer's team \$250,000, which at the time was one of the largest budgets ever to film a commercial. They believed in the message of the song and that it would be well received if presented in a better format.

The song was brought to life with a suggestion from McCann-Erickson that the commercial be a "First Chorus of the World," including a large crowd of young people dressed in clothing that represented their nationalities on a green hillside. There were a

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<sup>46</sup> The Seekers were a successful Australian band in the 1960s. After they disbanded, band member Keith Potger put together The New Seekers in 1969. Over the next few years, band members included Laurie Heath, Chris Barrington, Marty Kristian, Eve Graham, and Sally Graham (no relation to Eve Graham), Lyn Paul, Peter Doyle, and Paul Layton.

number of mishaps that required filming the commercial in two locations and with three different groups of actors. The location was moved from the rainy cliffs of Dover along England's southern coast, to the more temperate climate of Rome, Italy. A youth choir in England had originally been chosen to star as extras in the commercial, but as time and money were running out, the size of the chorus in the commercial was scaled back. To replace the ranks of the real student chorus of 12,000 selected in England for the original plan, the team searched for 500 replacements, first at schools and hostels, and finally by



Figure 5-3: Hilltop Commercial - Still Frame Image No. 1, 1971

contacting the foreign embassies in Rome and drawing from local residents. Forty principal actors between the ages of 15 and 19 were chosen to star in the commercial; these were the people that the camera zoomed in to find and follow. Sticking with the concept of one woman “singing,”<sup>47</sup> and then panning out to the larger crowd, the female lead was the most important casting decision. Her face was the first thing audiences would see. The team found their lead walking through the streets pushing a stroller. Her name was Linda Neary and she was a British governess living in Rome. She was white, with blonde hair and blue eyes. She became the face of that one person that Backer imagined. The team believed only a woman could embody the message of world

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<sup>47</sup> The actors in the commercial were lip-syncing but the right female lead was necessary. Billy Davis conducted the chorus in the commercial to ensure that their lips would sync up to the vocal track provided by the New Seekers.

harmony, on the radio or on TV. Peace and unity, in this view, were genuinely feminine characteristics and Neary was perfect for the part.

The commercial starts with her alone and then the camera works its way down the first two lines of the crowd that was arranged into the shape of a triangle on the hill. Cameras were positioned on the ground and in a helicopter to get aerial shots. The principal actors, lip-synching, were dressed to reflect different nationalities. Clearly visible in the commercial is a Latino man, an Indian woman, two African men and one African woman, one Japanese woman, and one white man in a suit. Everyone holds bottles of Coke. If one fiction embedded in the ad is that the shared consumption of a soft-drink alone could bring about peace, a second was about the reality and significance of difference represented in the commercial. The actors were not necessarily



Figure 5-4: Hilltop Commercial - Still Frame Image No. 2, 1971

citizens of the countries that they represented; they were wearing costumes quite different from the clothing they wore in their respective locales. Their dress and their racially marked bodies were important signifiers of difference, signaling culture, much as a flag would signal nationalism. Culture, in this schema, stood in as an easier barrier to cross. It is one that globalization has an easier time crossing over, especially, in markets. Borders are policed with guns, but culture and cultural commodity rarely are.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>48</sup> Gilroy, *Against Race*; O'Barr, *Culture And The Ad*; Ramamurthy, *Imperial persuaders*; McGovern, *Sold American*.

Citizenship, moreover, was written and displayed on the body. Panning through the crowd, one gets the sense this was international even if the national costumes and ethnic and racial identities are occasionally hard to place. The selection of actors and costumes was deliberately designed to be abstract. It is hard, and perhaps beside the point, to locate and identify the American and British citizens in the crowd. There is no easily identifiable American costume in the commercial. There are white people wearing non-descript clothing and one man wearing a suit, but these people could be from England, France, Germany, or many other parts of the world. Whiteness serves as an unmarked benevolent identity. The female lead, Linda Neary, is British but the audience would have no way to know this. Those with the darkest skin colors were dressed in telling prints and styles from Africa. There is no one person who might lend themselves to the idea that he or she was African American. It was impossible then for the viewer to single out what might be an African American man positioned too closely to a white American woman. For that matter, there was no way of identifying any people within a given nation that did not visually match a country's dominant phenotype or a putative national dress. As an international crowd, this was a fictitious, imagined world of easily identifiable people. It was a world whose racial and ethnic conflicts did not exist within homogenous nations and a heterogeneous "world chorus" of consumers.

Beyond this simplification and smoothing over of intranational difference, Coca-Cola's statement of unity and harmony privileged international difference over the differences that it had been dealing with for decades back home in the United States. Indeed, in much the same way that Coca-Cola tried to appeal to African Americans in segregated ads that did not circulate among white media or publics in the 1950s, the 1970

hilltop campaign was a benign, indirect, and delayed response to the demands made by the civil rights movement to integrate ads. This commercial celebrated the world's diversity. It was successful because it did not specifically engage with the local politics of race or war. Moving into the 1970s, Coca-Cola continued to emphasize the global in place of the local in its advertising. The violence inherent in the policing of Jim Crow segregation was erased in the easy juxtaposition of men with dark skin positioned next to white, fair skinned women with blonde hair and blue eyes. On this hilltop, out of place and out of time, racism seems not to exist at all, anywhere. This imaginary world was distant and flattened, made possible through the movements of free markets.

In reality, of course, Coca-Cola's experiences and challenges were more complex. Cuba was a very real reminder that the free market could disappear. The Cold War more generally posed a problem for the Company. Woodruff was a staunch anti-communist and was reluctant to do business with communist countries out of loyalty to the U.S. The Company was forced to confront American nationalism within its executive ranks. Communists drank soft drinks too and if Coca-Cola was not interested in selling to them, Pepsi would dominate that segment of the international market. Similarly, advertising a global branding in America during the Cold War required a delicate balance that did not focus on parts of the world that were considered enemies to the nation. It was no more acceptable to include representation of communists than it was to include African Americans. Coca-Cola avoided flaring up American anti-communism and tense issues of race relations by keeping diversity an abstract idea or fantasy.

The commercial ends with scrolling text that reads: "On a hilltop in Italy/We assembled young people/From all over the world.../To bring you this message/From

Coca-Cola Bottlers/All over the world. It's the real thing. Coke." The message was crafted by the parent company and supported by bottlers who operated semi-independently in different countries around the world. It was the international group of bottlers that stand in to represent an additional internationalism or globalism. The Company itself contained this global and local division – they could not be pulled apart and separated. Moreover, the creation of a global brand and corporation required multiple local markets and cultures. Roland Robertson describes this process as “glocalization” – one that “involves the construction of increasingly differentiated consumers, the ‘invention’ of ‘consumer traditions.’”<sup>49</sup> The commercial constructs not only Coca-Cola as a global brand but the local market cultures of the bottlers and the actors on the hill.

Coca-Cola's approach to globalization, in other words, relied on a world connected through free market economies that allowed for international products to be adopted into different cultures. It relied on local operation and global branding. Arjun Appadurai uses the term “deterritorialization” to describe the disjuncture of culture and place. The flow of capital, people, and ideas in globalization have separated the direct connection between the places where national identities and cultures had been rooted, to allow for a new combination and flow of labor. People move for jobs elsewhere, and most importantly, money is invested internationally and transnational corporations can follow resources (e.g. workers and natural resources) around the world. This movement forced a change in analyzing the places affected by globalization. Technology and global capitalism put an emphasis on the global and the local, which may have formerly been understood as the metropole and the periphery.

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<sup>49</sup> Robertson, “Glocalization: Time-Space and Homogeneity-Heterogeneity,” 28-29. See also Hall, “The Local and the Global: Globalization and Ethnicity.”; Appadurai, “Disjuncture and Difference in the Global Cultural Economy.”



As Benedict Anderson convincingly argues, the nation is an imagined place of connection between people. It is an “imagined community” because people who will never meet and are quite different from one another are brought together under a national affiliation that binds them together and often requires their sacrifice in the service of that nation (for example, through military service). For Anderson, one crucial piece of this imagining is print culture, or what he has called print capitalism. The production and circulation of printed material allowed for communication across populations spread across vast geographic spaces. Advertising addresses people, sometimes as citizens but always as consumers. As a transnational corporation, Coca-Cola attempted to identify and address people as a connected group of international consumers. However, in this commercial it is the representation of community. It was a commercial meant to create a community that did not otherwise exist. Coke imagined itself, a Utopian world, and its ideal place in that utopia in this commercial – it was bringing this ideal into imagined being. This should not be confused with real unity or international community.

The hilltop ad is an example of what Appadurai calls “the mutual politics of mutual effort of sameness and difference to cannibalize one another and thus to proclaim their successful hijacking of the twin Enlightenment ideas of the triumphantly universal and the resiliently particular.”<sup>50</sup> At first glance, what viewers see in the ad is a vision of sameness. Debuted first in England and then in America, white consumers could identify with the wholesome looking woman, who looked off into the distance and sang, “I’d like to buy the world a home and furnish it with love,” before the music began and the crowd joined her. To identify with the lead singer is to identify as the individual actor in the song. As the camera moves away from her this notion of difference is introduced. The

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<sup>50</sup> Appadurai, p. 308.

world is visually represented by the young people in their national costumes. Yet as the commercial continues and the lyrics are woven into a narrative the ultimate message returns again to one about overcoming differences. This message is about sameness across differences, which suggests that all across the world people of different nationalities want the same thing.<sup>51</sup> Despite their differences, they want peace, harmony, and above all in this commercial message, they want Coca-Cola.

In fact, the actors express these desires together as one chorus singing harmoniously in English. It is reminiscent of the story of the Tower of Babel, from the Book of Genesis: everyone in the world together as one people, speaking the same universal language. Sung in their native languages, the cacophony would have represented the turn in the Old Testament story when separate languages were created to divide, separate, and scatter people around the world. No one would be able to understand what anyone else was saying. But in English, made into a universal language of the market, the song allows for communication and togetherness. In the Bible story and the commercial, the divisions between people do not run very deep. The divisions are physical and linguistic, which stand in as culture and nationality, but underneath lies a universal humanity. This overlay of sameness and difference can also be understood in market terms as the global versus the local. Or as Appadurai reminds us in the terms of the Enlightenment, this is a divide between the universal and the particular. Young people represent citizens transcending a world of conflict in their particular geo-political locations and are represented here to have found a shared imagined space as consumers. The young consumers and the Company that sells them Coke, represent a cosmopolitan

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<sup>51</sup> According to Coke, the world wanted peace and Coke and not necessarily in that order!

sentiment: a worldliness and world citizenship that is abstracted and imaginary, but most important, idealistic, and appealing.

The market, in short, has become a de-territorialized space; it is everywhere and nowhere. The flow of global capital, of people, machines, images, and ideas has blurred the lines of affiliation. Coca-Cola helped to create an early iteration of a multiculturalism or corporate cosmopolitanism that followed this global flow and moveable system of affiliation; it was no longer rooted to national physical spaces. Paul Gilroy wrote that “the glamour of difference sells well.”<sup>52</sup> He has argued that privatized multicultural commerce has tamed difference. It has been tamed in order to sell. The hilltop ad illustrates this point. Difference here was commodified. It is being sold and therefore tamed to avoid alienating potential consumers. Abstracted difference eclipses the conflicts brought on by differences of national affiliation, ethnicity, race, sex, and ideology.

Appadurai’s reworking of Marx’s famous view of the “commodity fetish” is useful here as well. He suggests that a new fetishism has been replaced in a world now seen as “one, large, interactive system, composed of many complex sub-systems.” He argued that it has been replaced by two mutually supportive descendants, the first, a “production fetishism,” and the second, a “fetishism of the consumer.”<sup>53</sup> Product fetishism is attention to the ways that production is local. The spectacle of local control masks how power and profit circulates back transnationally to multinational corporations. What was celebrated in *Time* magazine was Coca-Cola’s genius in handing over production to local businesses who run bottling plants and control their own workforce. Not only does this relieve Coca-Cola of the burden of responsibility when there are local

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<sup>52</sup> Gilroy, *Against Race*, 250.

<sup>53</sup> Appadurai, p. 306.

labor conflicts, it hides the driving forces behind the production process that benefits the larger parent company that owned the brand and retained the rights to manufacture the syrup, which is the essence of Coke. The “fetishization” of the consumer is illustrated through advertising that promotes consumer agency and freedom but it is limited to consumer choice not action. Coke represents itself as global and local depending when it suits them.

The hilltop commercial succeeded in connecting to a wide audience. Within six months, bottlers receive over 100,000 letters and the Company received thousands more. It resonated with a consumer public who wrote in support of the ad’s message and their love for the song. People wanted sheet music. They called radio stations asking to have the jingle played – despite the fact that it was not a completed song.<sup>54</sup> Because of the positive reaction, Backer was urged and given permission to alter the lyrics a bit and create a full length radio version. After the lyrics “I’d like to teach the world to sing in perfect harmony,” he swapped the words “I’d like to buy the world a Coke and keep it company” with “I’d like to hold it in my arms and keep it company.” It was recorded first by a group that called themselves the Hilltop Singers and then shortly after by the New Seekers who the Company had first called on to record the song for the radio commercials. It was a hit. At one point, both versions of the song were listed on the

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<sup>54</sup> Hoy, *Coca-Cola: the First Hundred Years*, 134. Most letters were directed to the Coca-Cola Company and were never made public. Far fewer responses were sent in and published in newspapers during the time period. Examples of positive responses to the “hit” commercial in local newspapers include: Lynn Taylor, “Coke’s New Ad - It’s the Real Thing,” *Chicago Daily Tribune*, October 4, 1971, sec. 3; Dane Lanken, “It’s the real thing... on the hit parade,” *The Montreal Gazette*, January 29, 1972; Philip H. Dougherty, “Advertising: A Burnett Victory; Coca-Cola Tries to Lift Morale,” *The New York Times*, July 5, 1974; Judy Klemesrud, “Yes, She Watched the Whole Thing; She Watched the Whole Thing,” *The New York Times*, June 17, 1973.

American pop charts. The New Seekers version was in the top 10 and the Hilltop Singers version was in the number 13 spot.<sup>55</sup>

## Conclusion

[Advertising is] a world language – the Esperanto of world business... we used to be an American company with branches abroad. Today we're a multi-national business.

– Paul Austin (1963)

Americans liked this song in part because it depicted them as the bearers of “their” Coke to the world in need of a savior and without the luxuries of American life. Through an emphasis in the Cold War context of the American way of life, Coca-Cola was branded and understood, as evident in *Time* magazine, that they were quintessentially American and global. America loved Coca-Cola and so did the world. Perhaps the transitive property suggested that in turn the world loved America. This was a view of the world coming together willingly that emphasized sameness and perhaps even celebrated distant, far-off international difference. This difference was mirrored in the composition of the American population but was detached from the threat of restructuring society towards equality and inclusion. Instead of giving people rights, they were given Coke, and in turn they would give the Company their business.

The hilltop commercial fits within a larger spectrum of corporate marketing approaches that also included local segmented marketing. An example of this, are ads that represent and target African American consumers. These multiple marketing

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<sup>55</sup> Other songs at the top of the Billboard pop music chart that year included: Roberta Flacks “The First Time Ever I saw Your Face,” Don McLean’s “American Pie,” Bill Withers’ “Lean on Me,” and The Staple Sisters, “I’ll Take You There.”

approaches circulate simultaneously. Globalization and global marketing were never simple or singular processes. This means that while the hilltop commercial aired on television there were also print ads circulating that features white consumers in national mainstream magazines like *Life*, African American consumers in *Ebony*. Additionally, it is worth noting that Coca-Cola retained a single big tent brand even as it moved towards a more diverse and segmented view of the world and its markets. The hilltop campaign represents one moment – and model – in the longer history of global branding.

The study of globalization engages the perceived divide between the local and the global – that distance between “here” and “there” provides rich fodder for analysis. In my work, the corporate impulse to seek out and embrace the world’s people stands in sharp juxtaposition with a corporate unwillingness to embrace difference at home in the U.S. It raises the question: Why is difference “over there” more accessible and appealing than difference “here” at home? Racial difference is central to globalization’s global/local dichotomy. Corporate cosmopolitanism suggests that the only color that matters to business is green but I argue that the “global” is often used locally to ignore and perpetuate racism and the realities of racial difference in the market.

## Conclusion

### Coca-Cola's Global Impact: 1886-1971 and Beyond

During the 85 years that Coca-Cola had been in business leading up to 1971, it expanded its sales around the world and created a global brand identity. Coca-Cola's sales and earnings reached an all-time high. Its net profit increased 14 percent and totaled \$147 million. Yet, in 1971 the Company was looking to the future and building on their increased profits and international success. In 2010, the Coca-Cola brand was valued at over \$70 billion.<sup>1</sup> The Company sold over 3,300 different beverages in over 200 countries around the world. Its global reach earned it \$11.8 billion in net income.<sup>2</sup>

Coca-Cola celebrates its 125<sup>th</sup> anniversary in 2011. An additional milestone has already been conferred during this year. On March 17, Beverage-Digest released its 2010 annual report that ranks brands in the soft-drink industry.<sup>3</sup> They announced that the Pepsi brand dropped to the number three slot behind Coke and Diet Coke. Advertising Age reported:

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<sup>1</sup> As calculated by Interbrand in the "Best Global Brands 2010" report.

<sup>2</sup> As reported in the Coca-Cola Company Full Year Earnings Release for 2010. Coca-Cola's net revenue was \$35 billion and its net income was \$11.8 billion. Additionally, the company has more than 92,800 employees worldwide.

<sup>3</sup> John Sicher, ed., "Special Issue: Top-1- CSD Results for 2010," *Beverage-Digest: The Beverage Industry's Leading Information Resource for Breaking News, Analysis, and Data* 59, no. 5 (March 17, 2011): 1; Hank Cardello, "Cola Wars: Pepsi is Number Three, and That's a Good Thing," *The Atlantic*, March 29, 2011, <http://www.theatlantic.com/life/archive/2011/03/cola-wars-pepsi-is-number-three-and-thats-a-good-thing/73155/>; Natalie Zmuda, "How Pepsi Blinked, Fell Behind Diet Coke," *Advertising Age* (March 21, 2011), <http://adage.com/article/news/pepsi-blinked-fell-diet-coke/149496/>.

Pepsi lost the cola war last week. . . [it is] unclear whether it will stay down for long. But this much seems certain: Pepsi blinked. Its flagship, the perennial No. 2 to brand Coke, dropped to the No. 3 slot as it was surpassed by Diet Coke. As a result, for the first time in two decades, PepsiCo ceded the soft-drink category's two leading share positions to its legendary rival.<sup>4</sup>

The Coca-Cola Company established global dominance in the soft-drink industry during the twentieth century. The Cola Wars, most heatedly fought between rivals Coca-Cola and Pepsi-Cola, began in the race to capture the communist and third world markets not yet dominated by Coke during the Cold War. In 1975, Pepsi devised a new marketing strategy to compete with Coke in the American market. The “Pepsi-Challenge,” which was blind taste tests between the two soft-drinks, launched an intense competition for the number one slot in the industry.<sup>5</sup> Coca-Cola succeeded in part due to diversification during the last quarter of the twentieth century, but most certainly with an unflinching continuation of its branding strategy that appeals to young and old alike in the American and global market.

Coca-Cola’s history after 1971 pushed beyond the scope of my project but what follows here is an examination of selected moments from the cultural history of globalization that evolved after Coca-Cola’s marketing success with the hilltop commercial. This illustrates the longer range applicability of my study, and explores how the advancement of corporate capitalism, globalization, and cosmopolitanism examined across the previous five chapters, provides a foundation for understanding these concepts within and outside of Coca-Cola's history extending into the beginning of the twenty-first century.

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<sup>4</sup> Zmuda, “How Pepsi Blinkered, Fell Behind Diet Coke.”

<sup>5</sup> For more on the Cola Wars, see: Louis and Yazijian, *The Cola Wars*; Enrico and Kornbluth, *The Other Guy Blinkered and other Dispatches from the Cola Wars*; Barton, *Cola Wars*; Allen, *Secret Formula*.



Corporate capitalism – the dominance and concentration of wealth in a small number of corporations – spread along the network of American empire but did not solely rely on it. At the turn of the twentieth century, Coca-Cola’s first routes for foreign export were to America’s established trading partners: Cuba, Mexico, Canada, and England. Subsequent expansion correlated with sites of U.S. military occupation that secured a market for Coca-Cola. In 1926, Coca-Cola’s Foreign Department was created to scout out additional sites for expansion. Coca-Cola’s two military contracts during WWII made rapid expansion financially feasible and logistically manageable. However, Coca-Cola continued its successful course towards global distribution after the war ended. It capitalized on the Technical Observer program, which built a vast international infrastructure and produced more demand in the world market.

For large American firms, three eras of globalization overlapped within the twentieth century. The first era of domestic overproduction in the 1890s led corporations to export excess goods to foreign markets. The second, epitomized by the Coca-Cola Company, did not export goods but sought out foreign markets to locally produce and sell its product. Finally, an extension of this was a shift to multinational production in the 1970s, marked by a disjuncture between where goods were produced and sold. Technological advancements led corporations to follow cheap labor and high profit margins around the world. This separation of production and sales within national economies had a great effect on commerce and culture in the U.S.<sup>6</sup>

Coca-Cola did not change its business practices after 1971, but there was a larger political and economic turn in the formation of corporate capitalism and globalization.

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<sup>6</sup> Friedman, *The Lexus and the Olive Tree*; Harvey, *Spaces of Global Capitalism*; Mary E. Frederickson, *Looking South: Race, Gender, and the Transformation of Labor from Reconstruction to Globalization*, First. (University Press of Florida, 2011); Denning, *Culture in the Age of Three Worlds*.

An era of neoliberalism emerged that touted free markets, free trade, and the free flow of capital as a system that would yield the greatest social, political, and economic good. Coca-Cola already operated under this premise in the construction of its infrastructure, global network of local bottlers, and branding strategies. Corporations advocated for and benefited from the rise of neoliberalism.<sup>7</sup> Neoliberal trends in globalization led to the deindustrialization of the U.S. economy. The American economy transformed from an industrial economy towards a service industry economy. Jobs disappeared in major cities like Detroit, Cleveland, and Pittsburgh and local economies collapsed under the pressures of massive unemployment.<sup>8</sup>

The Coca-Company did not contribute to American deindustrialization. However, this fact did not shield Coca-Cola from international scrutiny over its production practices as a multinational corporation. In the 1980s and 1990s media attention shifted from the devastating effects of deindustrialization in the national economy to focus on the affects that corporate globalization and outsourcing had on other the third world economies where many multinational companies subcontracted out their manufacturing.

Nike is often used as a prime example of a multinational corporation that employs intellectual laborers at its American corporate headquarters but exclusively relies on an international labor force to manufacture its products. The activist movement has accused Nike of using sweatshop labor and engaging in numerous illegal labor practices, as well

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<sup>7</sup> David Harvey, *A Brief History of Neoliberalism*, 1st ed. (Oxford University Press, USA, 2007); Chomsky and McChesney, *Profit Over People*; Stephen Gill, "Globalisation, Market Civilisation, and Disciplinary Neoliberalism," *Millennium: Journal of International Studies* 24, no. 3 (1995): 399-423; David J. Roberts and Minelle Mahtani, "Neoliberalizing Race, Racing Neoliberalism: Placing 'Race' in Neoliberal Discourses," *Antipode* 42, no. 2 (March 2010): 248-257.

<sup>8</sup> For more on deindustrialization, see: Guian A. McKee, *The Problem of Jobs: Liberalism, Race, and Deindustrialization in Philadelphia* (University Of Chicago Press, 2008); Barry Bluestone and Bennett Harrison, *The Deindustrialization of America: Plant Closings, Community Abandonment, and the Dismantling of Basic Industry* (Basic Books (Short Disc), 1984); Steven High and David W. Lewis, *Corporate Wasteland: The Landscape and Memory of Deindustrialization* (ILR Press, 2007).

as other financial corporate abuses. Nike and Coca-Cola are similar in that they are profitable global brands that invest a great deal of money into marketing strategies. Both also sign contracts with local business owners to produce their products. However, an important difference between the companies is the process of distribution. The vast majority of Nikes factories are in China, South Korea, and Vietnam. Products manufactured in these locations are sold all over the world. Coca-Cola bottlers, by contrast, distribute their products locally or regionally. In other words, American consumers drink bottles of Coke that were produced by American workers. Its networks of local owners and local workers have brought Coca-Cola goodwill.<sup>9</sup>

However, a global campaign against Coca-Cola emerged in response to human rights violations and corruption in bottling plants in Columbia, China, and the Philippines. The complaints against the Company include their inaction in the face of harassment, and in a smaller number of cases, the murder of workers who tried to unionize. In India, Coca-Cola and Pepsi bottling plants have depleted and polluted scarce public groundwater that is vital to farming. And in Mexico, there are multiple cases pending regarding Coca-Cola bottlers violation of Mexico's profit sharing laws. However, holding multinational corporations like Coca-Cola accountable for these crimes is difficult. The parent Company evades liability when abuses take place in privately owned bottling plants. It is hard to prove instances when Coca-Cola encouraged or approved of these crimes. The very separation between the global corporation and the

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<sup>9</sup> For more on Nike and globalization, see: Walter LaFeber, *Michael Jordan and the New Global Capitalism, New and Expanded Edition*, Expanded. (W. W. Norton & Company, 2002); Stephen Papson, *Nike Culture: The Sign of the Swoosh*, 1st ed. (Sage Publications Ltd, 1999); Cynthia Enloe, *The Curious Feminist: Searching for Women in a New Age of Empire*, 1st ed. (University of California Press, 2004); Michael James Clancy, *Sweating the Swoosh: Nike, the Globalization of Sneakers, and the Question of Sweatshop Labor* (Institute for the Study of Diplomacy, School of Foreign Service, Georgetown University, 2000).

local bottlers has protected the brand and avoid actively working to ensure that all Coca-Cola employees are treated fairly.<sup>10</sup>

This is where the story doubles-back and connects to the crucial mid-point of the twentieth century when Coca-Cola first encountered threats of boycotts and allegations that independently owned Coca-Cola bottlers, and in turn, the Company was discriminating against African Americans. In response to prejudicial labor practices in northeastern cities and Jim Crow vending machines in southern ones, Moss Kendrix, an African American public relations executive for the Company, insisted that Coca-Cola was not at fault; only the private bottlers and retail owners were to blame. In much the same way that African American consumers did not accept that the powerful and wealthy Coca-Cola Company could do nothing to counter the bottlers' practices or Jim Crow segregation, there was a similar global refusal to accept the Company's excuses in the late twentieth century.

Corporate capitalism and globalization incorporate a capitalist system that is inherently exploitative. Corporations in the twentieth century learned how to lower costs and raise profits by choosing regional sites that offered cheap labor, low rates of taxation, and few corporate regulations. As W.E.B. Du Bois and Cedric J. Robinson argued, the pattern of this tiered system of low-wage workers and corporate wealth is not blind to racial differences.<sup>11</sup> Developing nations continue to be underdeveloped as a result of consequences of corporate globalization. Until this point, these issues have only narrowly

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<sup>10</sup> Two examples of Coca-Cola employees campaigns against the Coca-Cola Company include: "Campaign to Stop Killer Coke", n.d., <http://killercoke.org/>; "Coca Cola Campaign In The Philippines", n.d., <http://cocacolaphilippines.weebly.com/>; Thomas, *Belching Out the Devil*; Blanding, *The Coke Machine*.

<sup>11</sup> Bois, "The Color Line Belts the World."; Robinson, *Black Marxism*; Kazanjian, "Mercantile Exchanges, Mercantilist Enclosures: Racial Capitalism in the Black Mariner Narratives of Venture Smith and John Jea."

been addressed by activist pressure, media attention, and corporate social responsibility campaigns that charitably re-direct profits into local communities instead of addressing the key issues of violation and abuse.

In addition to corporate globalization's impact on national economies and local workers, corporate connections to empire pose a threat to democratic society. In mapping a history of the ways that corporate expansion and wealth crossed over into the domain of the U.S. Military, the State Department, and American popular culture, Coca-Cola is an extraordinary example of an American corporation that established itself as a quintessential American brand that used WWII patriotic alignment with the U.S. Military to deepen its identity in order to further expand its international operation. Increased scholarly attention must be paid to the relationship between corporate and state power, as well as the ways both shape national and global cultures.

President Eisenhower warned the nation about the Military Industrial Complex in 1961 and his concerns deserve continued attention and research. Halliburton, an oilfield service corporation that began contracting with the military during WWII, provides a compelling example. Most notably, in 2003 after the Iraq war began, its undue influence in the government and its financial impropriety made headlines. Corporations that align with the military, individual politicians and government agencies that are intended to regulate business practice, often leads to corruption. The notion that there is a divide between the public and private sectors of society is a misrepresentation – these divides are porous at best.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>12</sup> Dan Briody, *The Halliburton Agenda: The Politics of Oil and Money* (Wiley, 2005); Pratap Chatterjee, *Halliburton's Army: How a Well-Connected Texas Oil Company Revolutionized the Way America Makes War*, 1st ed. (Nation Books, 2009); Erik Eckholm, "Army Contract Official Critical of Halliburton Pact Is Demoted," *The New York Times*, August 29, 2005, sec. International / Middle East,

A second fascinating example of this murky divide lies in the long history of government employees leaving Washington to work in the private sector, and vice versa. Individuals like Ben Oehlert, who had worked in the State Department, and James Farley, a former Post Master General and Chairman of the Democratic National Committee, were employed by the Coca-Cola Company to utilize their political skills and government contacts to the Company's advantage. The reverse is true as well. A timely example of cross-pollination between the private and public sector occurred one month after the September 11<sup>th</sup> attack on the World Trade Center. At a time when national security and the "war on terror" had been heightened by President George W. Bush, Charlotte Beers was hired in October of 2001 to the post of Under Secretary for Public Diplomacy and Public Affairs. She had no previous government or diplomacy experience.<sup>13</sup>

At the height of her career, Charlotte Beers was known as "the most powerful woman in advertising." She was a former CEO of J. Walter Thompson and Ogilvy & Mathers advertising agencies. She was hired President George W. Bush to re-brand America in the Middle East. It was decided that the reason why "they" hated "us", was a

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[http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/29/international/middleeast/29halliburton.html?\\_r=1](http://www.nytimes.com/2005/08/29/international/middleeast/29halliburton.html?_r=1); Chalmers Johnson, "America's Empire of Bases," *Common Dreams*, January 15, 2008,

<http://www.commondreams.org/views04/0115-08.htm>.

<sup>13</sup> For more on Charlotte Beers, see: Alexander Cockburn and Jeffrey St. Clair, "War Pimps: A Confidence Game on Iraq," *CounterPunch*, August 16, 2003, <http://www.counterpunch.org/stclair08162003.html>; Norman Solomon, *War Made Easy: How Presidents and Pundits Keep Spinning Us to Death* (Wiley, 2005); "The War for Muslim Hearts and Minds," *Time*, November 6, 2001, <http://www.time.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/time/nation/article/0,8599,183272,00.html>; Frank Rich, *The Greatest Story Ever Sold: The Decline and Fall of Truth in Bush's America* (Penguin (Non-Classics), 2007); "Selling America, Bob Garfield interview with Charlotte Beers," *On the Media* (WNYC, March 26, 2004), [http://www.onthemedialibrary.org/yore/transcripts/transcripts\\_032604\\_selling.html](http://www.onthemedialibrary.org/yore/transcripts/transcripts_032604_selling.html); Steven R. Weisman, "Powell Aide Quits Position Promoting U.S.," *The New York Times*, March 4, 2003, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/04/international/middleeast/04BEEER.html?pagewanted=print>; David Stout, "Official Hired to Improve U.S. Image Resigns," *The New York Times*, March 3, 2003, sec. International, <http://www.nytimes.com/2003/03/03/international/03CND-BEERS.html?ex=1230094800&en=dc7ffa770e3532f9&ei=5070>; "My Country Is Not A Brand: Observatory: Design Observer", n.d., <http://observatory.designobserver.com/feature/my-country-is-not-a-brand/2707/>; "Can Charlotte Beers Sell Uncle Sam?," *Time*, November 14, 2001, <http://www.time.com.proxy.lib.umich.edu/time/nation/article/0,8599,184536,00.html>.

public relations problem, one that perhaps could be helped by a massive PR campaign. Beers designed such a campaign, called “Shared Values” that was implemented by the U.S. State Department to combat anti-American sentiment in Arab countries.

While it may be disconcerting to think that one of the first responses by the U.S. was to hire a savvy advertising executive to shape public opinion in the Middle East without making changes to foreign policy, this brings into focus the power of branding and its commercial and political uses. The tools used to expand the influence of American empire are often the same tools necessary to carry out corporate expansion through globalization. A similar effort by Coca-Cola the Coca-Cola Company was made in its global high-sign ad series. The smiling faces of foreigners sharing Coke with American soldiers was supposed to influence American’s opinions about foreign people in much the same way Beers attempted to influence Arab opinions about Americans. Of course, the desired results were quite different.

The process of global branding and cosmopolitan marketing is a main theme of my dissertation. Coca-Cola used images of international diversity, like the inclusion of people of various skin colors and native dress in the Hilltop commercial, to create positive associations with the brand in order to avoid meeting the demand for integrated advertising or confront racism in America head on. Corporate cosmopolitan marketing practices, like this one that celebrated diversity were not equivalent to taking action against oppression. That Coca-Cola did not take action was especially egregious because African Americans were a significant portion of the soft-drink market and because the Company profited off of its commodification of diversity in advertising. From a cultural

and economic perspective, the twentieth century consumer marketplace valued images of international diversity and blackness but not third-world and black people.

This distance between representation and reality can be located in a Coca-Cola commercial paying tribute to Black History Month that aired during the 2007 Superbowl. The 30 second ad featured a black “heritage timeline” from 1909-1963. It included five key moments in African American history and achievement. Against a stark white background, Coca-Cola bottles of the sizes and shapes that circulated during the corresponding years appeared one by one alongside of red text. The first was: “North Pole, 1909 \ A black man is on top of the world.” This was a reference to Matthew Henson, the first explorer to reach the North Pole. What followed was:

Tuskegee, 1941 \ Pilots prove heroism has no color  
Brooklyn, 1947 \ Baseball shows us courage, it’s #42  
Montgomery, 1955 \ Woman remains seated. And stands for justice  
DC, 1963 \ A man inspires a nation to dream together  
Coca-Cola Celebrates Black History  
Especially Today

Notably, the heritage timeline ends in 1963 and leaves the last line to stand in for any further achievement or African American heroes – or worse, it suggests that the civil rights era accomplished its goals and the movement, along with racism, is a thing of the past.

The timeline correlates African American achievements with Coca-Cola’s history, told through the evolving iconic bottle, as if to say: Coke was there. This suggests not only Coca-Cola’s presence throughout history, but also that it actively supported the fight for racial equality. As documented in the previous chapters, Coca-Cola was not at the forefront of its industry when it came to hiring African-American employees or marketing its drink to African-American consumers. Coca-Cola was a part of the culture



of segregation and the Company did its best to avoid the problem of American racism. It succumbed after the fear that Pepsi could corner this segment of the market that it claimed more of the market share. Coca-Cola put out fires as they arose in the form of boycotts and negative publicity; it never took a public stand in support of civil rights activists. Rewriting this piece of history is a similar marketing strategy that commodified social change, racial harmony, and erases the Company's history of being complicit in Jim Crow segregation and racism.

Coca-Cola has expanded its marketing practices to include Latin-American and Asian-American consumers and international consumers. However, Coca-Cola has not modified its advertising messages much over the years. Its original message of sociability and sharing has evolved from Americans sharing the drink with each other at the soda fountain to the world sharing Coca-Cola together. The Hilltop campaign has been re-made four times since it first debuted including a Christmas rendition in 1977; an alternate version in 1984; a Hilltop reunion with the original cast in 1990; and an update of the song sung by G-Love and Special Sauce in 2005 set on a rooftop in Philadelphia, with the new lyrics, "I'd like to teach the world to Chill."

Coca-Cola spun this idea into a second similarly themed commercial called "General Assembly" or "Tomorrow's People" that debuted in 1987. It was filmed first in Liverpool, England in St. George's Hall. It was then filmed with nineteen different soloists for 19 different local markets that included the Philippines, Spain, Greece, Korea, Peru. In each version, the camera focuses on a young female soloist who sang, "I am the future of the world \ I am the hope of my nation \ I am tomorrow's people \ I am the new inspiration \ Please let there be for you and for me a tomorrow \ If we all can agree there

will be sweet harmony tomorrow.” The soloist is then joined by a large multiracial crowd of young teens. Yet again, in local markets around the world Coca-Cola struck just the right hopeful and non-specific chord. The commercial re-instilled the Company’s cosmopolitan sentiment in Coca-Cola’s advertising. These commercials belong to cultural moments in which they were produced but continue to resonate. Ripples of Coca-Cola’s advertising ideas carried over into the next century.

Although world peace and racial harmony were arguably made commercially famous by Coca-Cola, the message was adopted by other corporations and a larger multicultural movement that began in the late 1970s and gained momentum in the 1980s. Benetton, a global fashion brand based in Italy, built its brand around colorful clothing. Quite famously, and sensationally, photographer Oliviero Toscani created a new image, slogan, and store name in 1984: “United Colors of Benetton.” Toscani’s ads featured children of different races dressed in a rainbow of different colored Benetton clothing. Unlike Coca-Cola’s ads, the product was not always visible. However, in Toscani’s early ads for Benetton, the overall message was almost identical. “All over the world Benetton stands for colorful sportswear, multiculturalism, world peace, racial harmony.”<sup>14</sup>

The following year, traces of the hilltop commercial could be seen in a global pop culture phenomenon that debuted in 1985. Michael Jackson and Lionel Richie wrote the lyrics and music, and a star-studded multiracial cast of musicians came together to record the song and music video, “We are the World.” The proceeds have totaled over \$63 million through United Support of Artists for Africa (USA for Africa) and it has

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<sup>14</sup> For more on Benetton’s advertising campaign, see: Henry A. Giroux, “Consuming Social Change: The ‘United Colors of Benetton,’” *Cultural Critique*, no. 26 (Winter -1994 1993): 5-32; Sa Tinic, “United Colors and Untied Meanings: Benetton and the Commodification of Social Issues,” *Journal of Communication* 47, no. 3 (September 1997): 3-25.

invested and distributed the money in short and long-term relief for Africa. The multiracial chorus singing about world harmony, peace, and the power to bring people together through the purchase of a consumer item harkens back to Coca-Cola's hilltop campaign.

The hilltop commercial built on Coca-Cola's international success and spoke to a cultural moment rife with the tensions of American race relations and the Cold War. The commercial created positive imagery of a consumerism that delivered peace, racial harmony, and international connection. Bolstering the imagery of these ideas was the reality of corporate alliance with the U.S. nation-state and shrewd business practices that limited liability and increased profits. This was a business model and a cultural phenomenon that other business and cultural workers sought to replicate.

Corporate capitalism, globalization, and cosmopolitanism are strong forces with widely felt economic, political, and cultural ramifications. In writing this particular history of twentieth century globalization, I follow the Coca-Cola Company around the world and focus on the consequences, tensions, and benefits that affected American workers and consumers. This critical history answers not only how global brands and markets were created, but how representations and realities of this global interconnection affect us all.

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