THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING
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• THIS YOUNG WHALE DIED WITH 88 POUNDS OF PLASTIC IN ITS STOMACH
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

GREENPEACE & UK SCIENTISTS FIND MICROPLASTIC IN ALL TURTLES
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• SCIENTISTS: MORE PLASTIC IN OCEANS THAN FISH BY 2050

• A TON OF PLASTIC ON EARTH FOR EVERY PERSON LIVING ON IT – 7.7 BILLION PEOPLE!

• NEW STUDY INDICATES WE MAY BE BREATHING MICRO- AND NANOPLASTICS, WITH CURRENTLY UNKNOWN HEALTH RISKS
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• SO WHICH IS IT? ARE PLASTICS A BOON OR A BANE? BOTH?

• PLASTICS THEMSELVES NOT THE PROBLEM

• THE PROBLEMS ARE HOW PLASTICS ARE MADE AND USED, LACK OF PLANNING FOR CONSEQUENCES, AND PUBLIC PERCEPTION
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• SO: HOW TO FIX THE PROBLEM?

• TO ANSWER THAT, ANSWER THIS: HOW DID SINGLE-USE PLASTICS BECOME SUCH A PROBLEM?

• THE ANSWER LIES IN THE HISTORY OF PLASTICS
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• PLASTICS INVENTED 1869 BY JOHN WESLEY HYATT; IVORY BILLIARD BALL SUBSTITUTE
  • IRONICALLY, MADE FROM CELLULOSE; PETROLEUM CAME MUCH LATER

• WWII RAMPED UP PRODUCTION; THINGS LIKE NYLON & PLEXIGLAS WERE IMPORTANT TO WAR EFFORT

• IN THE ‘50’S, PLASTICS MANUFACTURE AND DIVERSITY BOOMED; “THROWAWAY LIVING” PROMISED AS FREEDOM FROM BURDEN OF HOUSEHOLD CHORES

• WITH ALL THIS, ADVERTISING BECAME KEY, AND PLASTICS INDUSTRY KNEW THIS
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• 1953: AMERICAN CAN CO. & OWENS-ILLINOIS GLASS, FOLLOWED SOON BY COCA-COLA, ANHEUSER-BUSCH, PHILLIP MORRIS, DIXIE CUP AND OTHERS, CREATE “KEEP AMERICA BEAUTIFUL” (KAB)

• A NON-PROFIT, KAB’S STATED MISSION WAS, AND IS, TO EDUCATE AND ENCOURAGE ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP BY THE PUBLIC

• FOCUSES ON LITTERING, RECYCLING, COMMUNITY BEAUTIFICATION . . . AND POWERFUL ADS

• GAVE US POP CULTURE STAPLES LIKE “LITTERBUG,” “EVERY LITTER BIT HURTS,” AND IN 1961, “SUSAN SPOTLESS,” WHO KEPT AFTER HER PARENTS TO NOT LITTER
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• BUT BY 1971, THE ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT & GROWING POLLUTION CONCERNS WERE NOT LIMITED TO JUST LITTERING

• EXPECTATIONS OF PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY WERE GROWING

• THIS LED TO ONE OF THE MOST BRILLIANT ADS EVER CREATED, COURTESY OF KAB & THE AD COUNCIL – “THE CRYING INDIAN”
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GET INVOLVED NOW. POLLUTION HURTS ALL OF US.

You can help by becoming a community volunteer. Write: Keep America Beautiful, Inc. 99 Park Avenue, New York, New York 10016 A Public Service of Transit Advertising & The Advertising Council. 

People start pollution. People can stop it.
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• INDELIBLE, SUBTLE THEMES AND IMAGERY

• PADDLING OUT OF THE IDYLLIC PAST INTO THE FRENZIED PRESENT

• PLAYED ON NATIONAL GUILT OVER TREATMENT OF NATIVE AMERICANS

• NOW, IT’S THE SINS OF THROWAWAY SOCIETY!

• AND ESPECIALLY, AMERICAN INDIVIDUALISM, SELF-RELIANCE AND SELF-DETERMINISM WILL SAVE THE DAY
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• BUT IN FACT, IT WAS ALL MANIPULATION

• INDIAN WAS ITALIAN-AMERICAN ESPERA DE CORTI; PLAYED INDIANS IN REAL LIFE AND ON SCREEN

• POPULAR ZEITGEIST SYMPATHIZING WITH INDIANS HAD NEVER BEEN HIGHER
  • “LITTLE BIG MAN” IN 1970

• ALCATRAZ OCCUPATION AT THE VERY MOMENT AD PREMIERED
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• WHAT BROUGHT THE AD ON? BY 1971, INDUSTRY FEARED, NOT EMBRACED, ENVIRONMENTAL VALUES

• DESPITE APPEARANCES, KAB NEVER EMBRACED ENVIRONMENTALISM. ITS 1953 BIRTH WAS DUE TO VERMONT “BEVERAGE CONTAINER LAW” OUTLAWING NON-REFILLABLE CONTAINERS

  • SINGLE-USE PACKAGES MORE PROFITABLE THAN INDUSTRY RESPONSIBILITY TO RECYCLE/CLEAN/REUSE

  • KAB TOOK AIM AT THE LEGISLATION; LASTED JUST 4 YEARS, THEN LAPSED

• BUT BY APRIL 22, 1970, FIRST EARTH DAY, INDUSTRY WAS AGAIN CONCERNED:

  • ENVIRONMENTAL PROTESTS FOCUSED ON THROWAWAY CONTAINERS, PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY FOR THEIR PROLIFERATION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• ALSO SCARY TO INDUSTRY: NEW “BOTTLE BILLS” REQUIRING DRINKS IN REUSABLE CONTAINERS, WITH A SMALL DEPOSIT REFUNDED ON RETURN

• OREGON FIRST, 1971; IN 10 STATES NOW WITH SUCH LAWS, 60% RECOVERY RATE V. 24% IN OTHER STATES

• KAB FOUGHT BOTTLE BILLS FOR YEARS; 1989-94, BEVERAGE INDUSTRY SPENT $14M TO DEFEAT NATIONAL BB

• SLYLY PROMOTED INDIVIDUALISM; CALLED BB SUPPORTERS “COMMUNISTS”
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• BUT IN FACT, THROWAWAYS CAUSED INCREASES IN:

  • THE LITTER KAB “OPPOSED;” NATURAL RESOURCE MINING; POLLUTION; AND SOLID WASTE

• UNTIL “BOTTLE BILLS” OPPOSITION REVEALED, KAB DECEIT WORKED WELL; SUPPORTED
  BY MAINSTREAM ENVIRONMENTAL, LIKE AUDUBON SOCIETY AND SIERRA CLUB

• DECEIT PARTLY ENABLED BY INDUSTRY LEADERS BEHIND KAB KEEPING THEIR
  INVOLVEMENT QUIET, AND LETTING NON-PROFIT KAB APPEAR DISINTERESTED
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• SO WHAT WAS THE REAL GOAL OF KAB, AND INDUSTRY LEADERS BEHIND IT?

• PUT ENVIRONMENTAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PRODUCTS ON PUBLIC, WHILE SIMULTANEously CULTIVATE TRUST WITHIN ENVIRONMENTAL MOVEMENT

• LET INDIVIDUALS BELIEVE THEIR EVERYDAY DECISIONS CAN FIX POLLUTION, WHICH HAS NOTHING TO DO WITH POWER, POLITICS OR PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

• HEATHER ROGERS (“GREEN GONE WRONG: HOW OUR ECONOMY IS UNDERMINING THE ENVIRONMENTAL REVOLUTION”): 1ST CORPORATE GREENWASHING FRONT
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• AND HAS THIS STRATEGY WORKED?

• YES!!
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• EXAMPLE: EARTH DAY: PRESS COVERAGE OFFERS SYSTEMIC PROBLEMS AS INDIVIDUALS’ RESPONSIBILITY

• 2019 EARTHDAY.ORG WEBSITE HINTS AT PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY BUT EMPHASIZES INDIVIDUAL ACTION

• INDUSTRY LARGELY AVOIDS LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY FOR PLASTICS

• PLASTIC BAG REGULATION (NOTE RECENT WASHINGTON EFFORT), BOTTLE BILLS, AND AVOIDING FOCUS ON INCREASING PRODUCTION OF PLASTIC
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• AND AVOIDS LITIGATION – BUT OTHER UNSAFE PRODUCTS TREATED DIFFERENT, LIKE ALCOHOL AND CIGARETTES

• PRODUCT DEFECT CLAIMS; IS SOMETHING THAT POLLUTES AND KILLS NOT INHERENTLY DEFECTIVE?

• SAD TO SAY, RECYCLING AND GREEN CONSUMERISM MAY BE THERAPEUTIC FOR THE MASSES, BUT THEY DON’T ADDRESS LACK OF PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY
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AND CAMPAIGNS TOUTING INDIVIDUAL RESPONSIBILITY CONTINUE TODAY

• NEW KAB CAMPAIGN: ASSURE BOTTLES/BOXES BEAUTIFULLY REINCARNATED, AFTER RECYCLING

• AMERICAN PROGRESSIVE BAG ALLIANCE SUCCESSFULLY FIGHTS BAG BILLS:
  • FOUNDED 2005 IN AMERICAN CHEMISTRY COUNCIL, A MULTI-INDUSTRY TRADE GROUP
  • “PROACTIVELY PROMOTES PRODUCT LINES AND . . . [DEFENDS] AGAINST BAG BANS AND TAXES”
  • FAVORS STATE PRE-EMPTION BILLS, AND INDIVIDUALS’ RIGHT TO CHOOSE
  • MASSIVE COORDINATION TO FIGHT BAG BILLS AND FEES
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• KAB WEBSITE STRESSES INDIVIDUAL EFFORT: “END LITTERING IMPROVE RECYCLING BEAUTIFY COMMUNITIES”

• GOOD GOALS YES, BUT TURNED AGAINST US TO HIDE INDUSTRY RESPONSIBILITY

• WHY? PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY HURTS BOTTOM LINE AND INHIBITS GROWTH

• AND PLASTICS INDUSTRY IS ALL ABOUT PROFIT AND GROWTH
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• PLASTICS GROWTH: GLOBAL PRODUCTION OF PLASTIC RESINS & FIBERS GREW FROM 2M METRIC TONS IN 1950 TO >400M METRIC TONS IN 2015

• ABOUT HALF OF THAT FROM 2002 TO 2015

• FEW MAN-MADE MATERIALS GREW FASTER; STEEL AND CEMENT NOTABLE EXCEPTIONS

  • BUT THEY’RE IN CONSTRUCTION, LAST FOR YEARS; LARGEST PLASTICS MARKET IS PACKAGING – USE ONCE THEN DISCARD

• HALF OF ALL PLASTICS ARE WASTE WITHIN 4 YEARS OF USE
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• AND HUGE GROWTH COMING, PER 2015 AMERICAN CHEMISTRY COUNCIL REPORT: “THE RISING COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE OF U.S. PLASTICS”

• ACC IN WASH., D.C.; MANY MEMBERS, INCLUDING WHO’S WHO OF PLASTICS, CHEMICAL, AND PETROCHEMICAL COMPANIES
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• ACC REPORT: NATURAL GAS FRACKED FROM SHALE MAKES U.S. PLASTIC RESINS WAY CHEAPER THAN OIL-BASED FEEDSTOCKS

• 2010 – 2020: >$130B OF CHEMICAL MANUFACTURING CAPACITY INVESTMENT

• 461,800 NEW DIRECT, INDIRECT, AND PAYROLL-INDUCED JOBS

• NET PLASTIC RESIN EXPORTS WILL TRIPLE BETWEEN 2014-2030
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• BUT ACC REPORT MENTIONS NOTHING ABOUT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT

• WELL, ONE MIGHT SAY, ITS FOCUS IS ECONOMIC AND JOBS ORIENTED

• BUT ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT AND REGULATORY COMPLIANCE AFFECT THE ECONOMY:
  • COMMUNITIES HURT BY NATURAL GAS FRACKING
  • B’S TONS CO2 FROM EXTRACTION; 15% GLOBAL CARBON BUDGET BY 2050
  • HEALTH IMPACTS OF MICRO- AND NANOPLASTICS IN THE ATMOSPHERE
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE SUPPORTS A “CIRCULAR PLASTICS ECONOMY” – A CLOSED LOOP – MANUFACTURE/USE/RECYCLE/REUSE – NO “LEAKING” OUT

• BUT REQUIRES IMPROVED ECONOMICS/TECHNOLOGY, REPLACING SINGLE-USE PLASTICS WITH SAFER OPTIONS, AND EVENTUALLY ELIMINATING FOSSIL FUEL PLASTICS

• ALL BAD NEWS FOR PETROCHEMICAL COMPANIES, WHO RELY EVER MORE ON PLASTICS-PROFITS

• IN FACT, A SHELL EXECUTIVE RECENTLY ACKNOWLEDGED THAT “INVESTING IN CHEMICALS IS PART OF OUR STRATEGY TO THRIVE THROUGH THE ENERGY TRANSITION”
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• BUT ACCORDING TO CENTER FOR INTERNATIONAL ENVIRONMENTAL LAW, 2017:

  • THIS BOOM “WILL PERPETUATE A FOSSIL FUEL ECONOMY THAT UNDERPINS BOTH THE CLIMATE CRISIS AND THE PLASTICS CRISIS, WHILE IMPACTING FRONTLINE COMMUNITIES AND THE WIDER PUBLIC AT EVERY STAGE OF ITS TOXIC LIFECYCLE.”

• SO CERTAINLY SEEMS REASONABLE THAT ACC REPORT SHOULD MENTION ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS, DOESN’T IT?
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• ZERO MENTION OF ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT SPEAKS VOLUMES ABOUT THE INDUSTRY, AND ITS CONFIDENCE IN CONTROL OF THE MESSAGE THAT IT IS NOT RESPONSIBLE

• IF WE ARE TO HAVE ANY CHANCE TO AVOID A PLASTIC PLANET:

THIS MUST CHANGE
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• BUT HOW? RECYCLING DOESN’T WORK (EVEN WITHOUT CHINA ISSUES):

  • BY 2015, 6.3B TONS OF GLOBAL PLASTIC WASTE ACCUMULATED: 9% RECYCLED; 12% INCINERATED; 79% IN LANDFILLS OR ENVIRONMENT

• MOST OCEAN PLASTICS ARE FROM COUNTRIES WITH POOR RECYCLING PROGRAMS/INFRASTRUCTURE; U.S. RECYCLING HAS LITTLE EFFECT
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• SO WHAT TO DO? THINK DIFFERENT! (APOLOGIES TO APPLE)

• TURN KAB’S “REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE” INSIDE OUT: REFUSE, REDUCE, REUSE, RECYCLE

• WE SHOULD REFUSE PLASTIC PRODUCTS AS MUCH AS HUMANLY POSSIBLE, AND START EDUCATING OURSELVES RIGHT NOW ON ALTERNATIVES, WHILE ALSO REDUCING, REUSING AND RECYLING
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• BUT IN ADDITION, THE PLASTICS INDUSTRY SHOULD:

  • REFUSE TO AVOID RESPONSIBILITY FOR GLOBAL CONSEQUENCES

  • REDUCE PLASTICS WHEN OTHER MATERIALS ARE AVAILABLE

  • REUSE AND RECYCLE ALL PLASTICS AT INDUSTRIAL LEVEL
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• TALL ORDER? PARADIGM SHIFT? YES. BUT U.S. PLASTICS INDUSTRY AGREES WITH MOST OF IT.

• ON 2/20/19, ACC PLASTICS DIV. ANNOUNCED TWO AMBITIOUS “CIRCULAR ECONOMY” GOALS:
  • 100% OF PLASTICS PACKAGING RE-USED, RECYCLED, RECOVERED BY 2040
  • 100% RECYCLABLE OR RECOVERABLE BY 2030

• GOALS SOUND GOOD – ACC SAYS “WE BELIEVE THEY’RE ACHIEVABLE” – BUT CAN THEY AND EXPANSION CO-EXIST, OR IS THIS MORE GREEN-WASHING?
THE TRUTH ABOUT PLASTICS ADVERTISING

• STILL, THESE GOALS DO ACKNOWLEDGE THE PROBLEM. CAN WE HOLD INDUSTRY TO THEIR WORDS?

• LET PRODUCERS KNOW THAT WE KNOW ABOUT THESE GOALS
• SEEK TO SPEED THE GOALS UP
• POINT OUT CONTRADICTION WITH EXPANSION
• CALL FOR GREATER PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY

• OKAY, BUT HOW DO WE DO ALL THIS?
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• REFUSE PLASTICS, LET PRODUCERS KNOW YOU’RE DOING IT, AND EDUCATE
  
  • HIT THEM IN POCKETBOOK; NOTHING WORKS BETTER THAN THE POWER OF THE PURSE
  
• WRITE/EMAIL/PHONE/TALK TO:
  
  • FEDERAL/STATE LEGISLATORS TO TAX OR BAN SINGLE-USE PLASTICS, AND SLOW INDUSTRY EXPANSION
  • PLASTICS MANUFACTURERS TO STOP EXPANSION, AND MAKE CIRCULAR PLASTICS ECONOMY A REALITY
  • PLASTICS BOTTLERS AND BAGGERS TO AVOID PLASTICS AND USE SAFE SUBSTITUTES
  
• OPPOSE FACILITIES AND OPERATIONS EXPANSION BY PLASTICS PRODUCERS
  
• WRITE/EMAIL/PHONE, AND TALK TO LOCAL GROCERS AND BUSINESSES ON HOW TO REDUCE PLASTICS
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• LOCAL LEGISLATORS CONTACT INFO IS HERE

• GET ACTIVIST! JOIN SIERRA CLUB, ZERO WASTE WASHINGTON, GREENPEACE, OR OTHERS!
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• #PRODUCER RESPONSIBILITY
• #PLANETNOTPLASTIC