



KICK COKE CAMPAIGN

Vassar College

info: redunlea@vassar.edu

vckickcoke.blogspot.com

kickcoke.org

People Before Brand Loyalty: Remove Coca-Cola from Vassar Now!

October 3, 2007

Meetings
Mondays at
8:30 in the
SAU space
(College
Center 213,
above the
Kiosk)

Coalition of
Amnesty
International,
Greens,
MEChA,
SAU, Vassar
Green Party

Vassar's Kick Coke campaign is a coalition of five VSA organizations (Student Activist Union, Vassar Green Party, MEChA, Greens, and Amnesty International). We believe that Vassar College should hold Coca-Cola responsible for its widespread human rights and environmental abuses around the world, namely the murder of nine union leaders in Coca-Cola's Colombian bottling plants, and the depletion and pollution of water resources in India. Vassar can help hold Coca-Cola responsible for its crimes by joining the 45 other colleges and high schools around the world that have removed Coca-Cola products from their campuses.

By kicking Coke, Vassar College will be sending a message to Coca-Cola, and all other American corporations operating abroad, that the exploitation of labor and the degradation of the environment will not be tolerated. If corporations will exploit the conditions of poor peoples and communities by suppressing labor rights and polluting local environments, they must be held accountable. In joining schools like NYU and Swarthmore, Bard, and Manhattanville; Vassar College can stand in solidarity with Sinaltrainal, the union of Coca-Cola's Colombian bottling plant workers. It has been these very workers in Columbia who have called for an international movement against Coca-Cola's oppressive practices. Vassar College already has a policy prohibiting the sale of sweatshop-produced apparel and tobacco products on campus; why should we be providing Coke with a market for its products?

Coca-Cola is feeling the pressure of the international boycott of its products, a truly grassroots and global movement. For example, they are losing tens of millions of dollars every year in lost sales at Rutgers, the largest school to kick

Coke. Coca-Cola has initiated an aggressive public relations campaign, citing flawed and incomplete "investigations" (that were paid for by Coca-Cola in one instance), to try to dismiss the widespread documentation of its crimes. This documentation has been conducted by the mainstream and independent press and varying human rights and environmental organizations.

If Vassar College has the ability to help people facing repression and exploitation at the expense of no longer having access to one corporation's products on campus, then it should take action that puts people before brand loyalty. Our request of the Vassar administration is to end the sale of all Coca-Cola products on campus, and to replace these with locally produced sodas and juices. While Pepsi is certainly not a perfect company either, it had not been accused of the gross human rights and environmental abuses that Coke has. Our campaign has always advocated for the exclusive sale of local juices and sodas, to support our local and decentralized economy.

Our campaign is not advocating that all Vassar students be forced to stop buying Coca-Cola; there are plenty of opportunities to buy these products elsewhere, from outlets that are not necessarily concerned with the well being of dispossessed people around the world. Our college cannot offer a market to companies that do not respect labor and environmental rights, and we would like to expand your consumer choices at Vassar to a wide variety of local and socially responsible beverages. Please help us in this cause, and show your solidarity with the Sinaltrainal workers, poor communities in India lacking access to clean water, and the other communities that have been exploited by the Coca-Cola Company.

Labor Abuses in Colombia

Coca-Cola has been accused of complicity in and support of the murder of nine union leaders in Coca-Cola's Colombian bottling plants (in Pasto, Carepa, Monteria, and Baranquilla) by paramilitary squads, part of a systematic effort of union busting and repression of Sinaltrainal, the union of Coca-Cola's Colombian bottling plant workers.

States the NYC Fact-Finding Delegation on Coca-Cola in Colombia Final Report, led by Hon. Hiram Monserrate, Councilman, City of NY:

"The company bears responsibility for the human rights crisis affecting its workforce. To date, there have been a total of 179 human rights violations of Coca-Cola's workers, including nine murders. Family members of union activists have been abducted and tortured. Union members have been fired for attending union meetings. The company has pressured workers to resign their union membership and contractual rights, and fired workers who refused to do so...



Most troubling to the delegation were the persistent allegations that paramilitary violence against workers was done with the knowledge of and likely under the direction of company managers. The physical access that paramilitaries have had to Coca-Cola bottling plants is impossible without company knowledge and/or tacit approval...

Coca-Cola's complicity in the situation is deepened by its repeated pattern of bringing criminal charges against union

activists who have spoken out about the company's collusion with paramilitaries. These charges have been dismissed without merit on several occasions...

The company denies any involvement in the threats, assassinations, kidnappings, and other terror tactics, but its failure to protect its workers even on company property, its refusal to investigate persistent allegations of payoffs to paramilitary leaders by plant managers, and its unwillingness to share documentation that might demonstrate otherwise leads the delegation to the conclusion that Coca-Cola is complicit in the human rights abuses of its workers in Colombia."

States Labor and Human Rights: 'The Real Thing' in Colombia, Report to the Human Rights Committee of the American Anthropological Association, by Leslie Gil, American University:

"It is very clear that there is a systematic campaign to destroy Sinaltrainal's ability to defend the labor rights of its constituents. The most dramatic example of the terrorism directed against unionists is the annihilation, in 1996, of the local union in the town of Carepa, and the murder of its president, Isidro Gil, by paramilitaries. Two months prior to the paramilitary attack, workers observed the plant manager, Ariosto Milan Mosquera, meeting with a paramilitary commander in the company cafeteria. They overheard Milan Mosquera say that the paramilitaries would finish off Sinaltrainal and remark that Dorlahome Tuberquia, a union leader whom he had fired but who had been reinstated by court order, should leave the plant or suffer the consequences. Workers then began to receive threats. Sinaltrainal sent letters to both the bottling firm, Bebidas y Alimentos, and Coca-Cola of Colombia informing them of the intimidation. Yet paramilitaries subsequently took control of the plant and forced workers to sign letters of

resignation from the union that were written on the company's computers...

While the Carepa case dramatizes the dangers faced by Colombian Coca-Cola workers and the collusion of the Coca-Cola Company with an illegal armed organization, it is by no means a unique example. There are literally dozens of cases of more recent threats against Coca-Cola laborers in several Colombian cities."

Environmental Abuses in India and Elsewhere

Coca-Cola has been accused of severe environmental abuses, primarily in India, Mexico, El Salvador and Ghana. The company has been accused of overexploitation and pollution of water resources.

States Coca-Cola: The Alternative Report, by War on Want:

"Coca-Cola's operations rely on access to vast supplies of water, as it takes almost three liters of water to make one liter of Coca-Cola. This includes water not only for the beverage itself but also for industrial cleaning and other purposes. In order to satisfy this, Coca-Cola is increasingly taking over aquifers in communities around the world."

States India Resource, "A pattern of abuse has emerged for Coca-Cola's bottling operations in India. Coca-Cola is guilty of: causing severe water shortages in communities across India; polluting groundwater and soil around its bottling facilities; distributing its toxic waste as 'fertilizer' to farmers; [and] selling drinks with high levels of pesticides in India, including DDT- sometimes thirty times higher than EU standards..."

A majority of the community members affected by Coca-Cola's indiscriminate practices are also some of the most marginalized communities in India- indigenous peoples, lower castes,

low-income and agricultural day-laborers.

Water and land is central to agriculture and over 70% of Indians make a living related to agriculture. Water scarcity and polluted soil and water created by Coca-Cola has directly resulted in crop failures- leading to a loss of livelihood for thousands of people in India."

"In 2003, the Central Pollution Control Board (CPCB) of India assessed the sludge at eight Coca-Cola bottling plants, and found them all to contain excessive levels of lead, cadmium or chromium. As a result, the CPCB ordered the Coca-Cola Company in India to treat its waste as industrial hazardous waste, and deal with it accordingly.

The BBC also tested the sludge around the Coca-Cola bottling plant in Plachimada in Kerala in 2003, and found it to be toxic. The Coca-Cola Company was distributing the toxic sludge to farmers as 'fertilizer,' and was ordered by government authorities to stop the practice after the toxicity of the sludge was confirmed. The BBC report found that the toxins from the sludge had polluted the groundwater."



Poughkeepsie May Day Rally, 2007

VC Kick Coke

info: redunlea@vassar.edu

vkickcoke.blogspot.com

kickcoke.org

Other Abuses by Coca-Cola

- A long history of union repression in Turkey, Pakistan, Guatemala, Nicaragua, Russia, and elsewhere (Coca-Cola: The Alternative Report, by War on Want, and Coca Cola and the Unions, by Rosie Walker, Pressureworks)
- Economically benefiting from and using sugar produced by child labor, ages ranging from twelve to sixteen years old, in El Salvador (Human Rights Watch, "Turning a Blind Eye: Hazardous Child Labor in El Salvador's Sugarcane Cultivation")
- Discrimination against female and minority job applicants in the United States (Labor Department's Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs) and discrimination against gay employees in Mexico (international Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission)



**THURSDAY, 11/8/2007,
11:30AM-12:30PM
MAIN CIRCLE**

**RALLY TO KICK COKE
FROM VASSAR'S CAMPUS!**

**MUSIC, SPEAKERS, FUN! BRING A
DRUM OR SIGN WITH YOU!**

**PART OF A NATIONAL DAY OF ACTION
AGAINST COCA-COLA**

**PLEASE DO NOT BUY ANY COKE
PRODUCTS ON CAMPUS THAT DAY
(INCLUDING DASANI, FANTA, MINUTE MAID,
NESTEA, ODWALLA, POWERADE AND SPRITE)**

**AMNESTY INTERNATIONAL, GREENS,
MECHA, SAU, VASSAR GREEN PARTY**

**VCKICKCOKE.BLOGSPOT.COM
INFO: REDUNLEA@VASSAR.EDU**



Corporate Campaign and Killer Coke executive director Ray Rogers speaks at Vassar



Vassar students with Ray Rogers



**Come to our meetings for more information and to
help kick Coke from Vassar College!**

**Mondays at 8:30 in the SAU space
(College Center 213, above the Kiosk)**

Amnesty International, Greens, MEChA, SAU, Vassar Green Party