

The Mendaciene, Our Era Of Mendacity

"Believe in Something Even If It Means Sacrificing Everything." –30th Anniversary marketing slogan of Nike corporation.

Using a famous and wealthy football player who can't get hired because of his political actions protesting law enforcement, racism and social injustice during the national anthem, Nike has turned what is a professional job loss fighting over a ball into a potentially lucrative marketing and sales campaign. This is hypocritical of Nike, a corporate name and brand synonymous with child sweat shop labor around the world and for jacking up consumer prices on what are otherwise cheaply produced goods often marketed to people in the working class. This hypocrisy is the mendacity that defines our contemporary period, what I call "The Mendaciene," it describes the actions by the media that tells dramatic stories to drive base consumerism instead of providing honest and realistic explanations of our contemporary period that would otherwise reflect our society accurately.

If Nike were telling the truth they would say:

"We're a rapacious capital sluicing corporation appropriating the image of a divisive yet visionary civil rights activist to sell more shoes and shirts at inflated prices to people who care about the issues he raised, creating a false and misleading reality that your shopping, your consumerism, will somehow solve those problems, when in fact, all it will do is enrich us by accumulating your wealth at a faster rate, furthering those social injustice problems through poverty and blind affection to us, your corporate overlords who dress you each morning."

We also understand that because you think something good will come out of all this economic activity that benefits Nike more than it shoes your feet or covers your torsos, you will have done your part in a world where shopping from us is now seen as a moral duty, despite the irony that our brand name is synonymous with sweatshop labor and other such injustices. At the very least, the real effect of all this chicanery is that you will be able to enter retail establishments having been shoed and shirted, an irony we deeply appreciate."

For example, shoe and shirt consumers, people with feet and torsos, a very large segment of society and equally large potential consumer base, are led to believe this very wealthy football player has given up everything. That is patently false, he gave up playing a sport, he did not give up things poor people throughout the nation and rest of the impoverished world give up daily whom his protest supports. This is a depraved irony. The hyperbole that the football star gave something up that is *everything* is a gross misrepresentation of reality for the express purpose of selling more shoes and shirts to people with feet and torsos. To put a fine point on this message, all retail stores require shoes and shirts, so this marketing campaign ensures that the basic needs are met for consumers to purchase items. But it is the figurative aspect of this circumstance more than the literal that matters: we all need clothes *even if it means sacrificing everything*, and Nike is going to make sure you are sacrificed.

Of course, a gross misrepresentation such as this one by Nike misleads consumers, people with feet and torsos, that freedom and justice are achieved by shopping at Nike. Nike is one of the preeminent profit sluicers in the world, directing the flow of capital from hundreds of millions of people into the ever accumulating stores of those very few who own and control the political economy. Phil Knight, Nike's founder, approves of this message, no doubt.

“But the people buying their products, whether they are a millennial or a Gen Z consumer, those consumers want their brands to take visible, social positions, and this is an opportunity for Nike to do just that,” said Matt Powell, quoted in the New York Times.[1] Mr. Powell is a sports industry analyst at the NPD Group, a famous marketing research company. So Nike is the conduit, the vehicle, the corporation that does more than cover torsos and shoe feet, Nike serves as the standard bearer for inadequately clothed persons to be represented in society in the area of civil rights, again a stunning breach of honesty and reality given the synonymy of Nike with sweat shop labor and consumer price gouging of the poor. Nike is now being hailed as daring as the football player who lost his job for protesting persistent injustice in law enforcement during the national anthem by aligning itself with him: to restate the propaganda slogan, Nike *Believes in Corporate Profit Even If It Means Sacrificing Everything*, and that is the only truth in this sordid affair of mendacious marketing.

To illustrate the alternate reality that Nike creates, is this quote from the same article referenced in the above endnote [**emphasis added**]: “Indeed, on social media – **where the nation’s youth live and breathe** – Mr. Kaepernick attracted more than one million responses on Instagram, Facebook and Twitter in the hours after he announced the Nike partnership, according to ListenFirst, a social media analytics company.” All of this living and breathing is in service to the rapacious few who use Nike as their tool, their weapon, to extract the limited finances of the working families: they might just as well be extracting their breath from them. Nike is capitalizing on a social justice cause, and that is why they have appropriated Mr. Kaepernick, an appropriation that is nonetheless a form of slavery.

Nike goes about telling consumers what a famous football player does to fight injustice, no doubt the parallel is to

his success in fighting over the ball, and then convinces consumers to live in a virtual world of costume garb made by the Nike corporation that is itself responsible for the sweat shops and other related injustices. Nike's customers mistakenly believe they are solving their own real problems by doing more of what is causing their problems: they cannot shop their way out of their troubled lives. That all the other media reports on what Nike did as daring or compelling makes matters worse by orders of magnitude and drives home the point that the corporate media seeks to corral us into working and spending to further enrich the global elite folks to whom capitals flows.

If the goats knew what the farmer was up to, then maybe they wouldn't just stand there.

Footnotes:

[1] The New York Times, September 4, 2018, *Nike Returns to Familiar Strategy With Kaepernick Ad Campaign*, by Kevin Draper, Julie Creswell and Sapna Maheshwari.

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