

Coca-Cola: The Happy-time Beverage Made from Blood...by Ameena Mayer

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It is a hot summer day, the kind in which the sunlight splatters upon you like thick slabs of golden lava, running over your face and arms that long for a splash in a sapphire lake. However, you are drowned in the cityscape, the only respite being one of the hundreds of iced beverages available in stores and restaurants. So instead of a lake, you leap into a 7-11 and grab a Coke, salivating at the prospect of the fizzy, sweet liquid gliding in cool, bronze sheets down your throat. Only this time, you notice something a little peculiar about the taste, something sour and rank, like blood. And you think to yourself subconsciously, "It tastes like murder."

Coca-Cola is on a war path against the world's workers and underprivileged. For decades, it has been exploiting resources and people in countries such as Colombia and India, all for profit and corporate control. Colombians, for instance, have been struggling for years to boycott Coke due in part to the company's responsibility for right-wing criminals who kidnap, torture and even murder trade unionists and activists fighting for labour rights. 4000 unionists have lost their lives in recent decades because they were seen as blocking development and investment in Colombia. However, they were fighting for something far more valuable than dollars and cents; over the years, working conditions at bottling plants have been deteriorating at accelerating rates, with only 4% of jobs being permanent and full-time compared with 96% twelve years ago. So while Coke advocates casual, temporary labour, lower wages and poorer working conditions, it also squeezes the blood from those challenging the loss of basic human rights.

The horror story is no less grim in India, where people in over 50 villages are trying to extricate the fangs of the vampire-company from workers' blood and the nation's water. In India, the issue is not so much unionists' rights at bottling plants, but the depletion of a resource already scarce. Coke has been draining villages' water supplies and polluting ground water, so that farmers are unable to produce an adequate crop-yield in the summer months. As in Colombia, right-wing capitalists in India's parliament are suppressing villagers' pleas, allowing a foreign company to lay siege upon its own people for the sake of global militarism. In a nation ridden with poverty and class-division, many are terrified of corporate control of a life-support resource. They envision a future in which Coca-Cola buys India's rivers and lakes, so that indeed, there will be no water for bathing and drinking to relieve one from the discomfort of a scorching summer day.

As bleak as this situation seems, concerned individuals around the world have been taking measures to eradicate Coke's war on the planet and its people. After Coke missed a deadline to assess its practices in India and Colombia, 21 North American universities banned Coke products from their campuses. Moreover, over 6000 Coca-Cola workers are behind the company adopting a human rights policy. And more and more, North Americans, for which the majority of Coke products are created, are realizing that bottled water from Coke-owned companies such as Dasani is hardly any better in quality than tap water

and leads to devastating amounts of pollution due to the plastic and fossil fuels needed to package and deliver it. Indeed, they are realizing that a sugar high and a splash of cold fizziness are merely sensory propaganda for a blood-letting war against the innocent.

So on the next smouldering summer day with no lake in sight, or on your next work break when you want a high and nothing less than a sinful pleasure will do, think about boycotting the happy-time beverage that kills, and feel the cool, sweet rush of empowerment and compassion sweep through your veins. Realize you are facilitating the end of not only this war, but others waged by companies who wish to end their pursuit for profit only when there is nothing left to fight for.