

MEDIA EDUCATION FOUNDATION STUDY GUIDE



NO LOGO

BRANDS, GLOBALIZATION, RESISTANCE
WRITTEN BY JEREMY EARP & DANIELLE DEVEREAUX

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BRANDS, GLOBALIZATION, RESISTANCE

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NOTE TO TEACHERS

This study guide is designed to help you and your students manage and engage the substance and detail of this video. Given that it can be difficult to teach video content – and difficult for students to break down a large amount of streaming visual and audio material – the intention here is to help students slow down and deepen their thinking about the specific issues the video addresses. The guide therefore gives you the option of focusing on one section of the video at a time. After a series of pre-viewing questions, the structure of the guide mirrors the structure of the video, with each of the video's sections accompanied by a series of key summary points, questions, and assignments specific to that section.

Key Points provide a concise and comprehensive summary of each section of the video. They are included to make it easier for you and your students to recall the details of the video during class discussions, and as a reference point for students as they work on assignments.

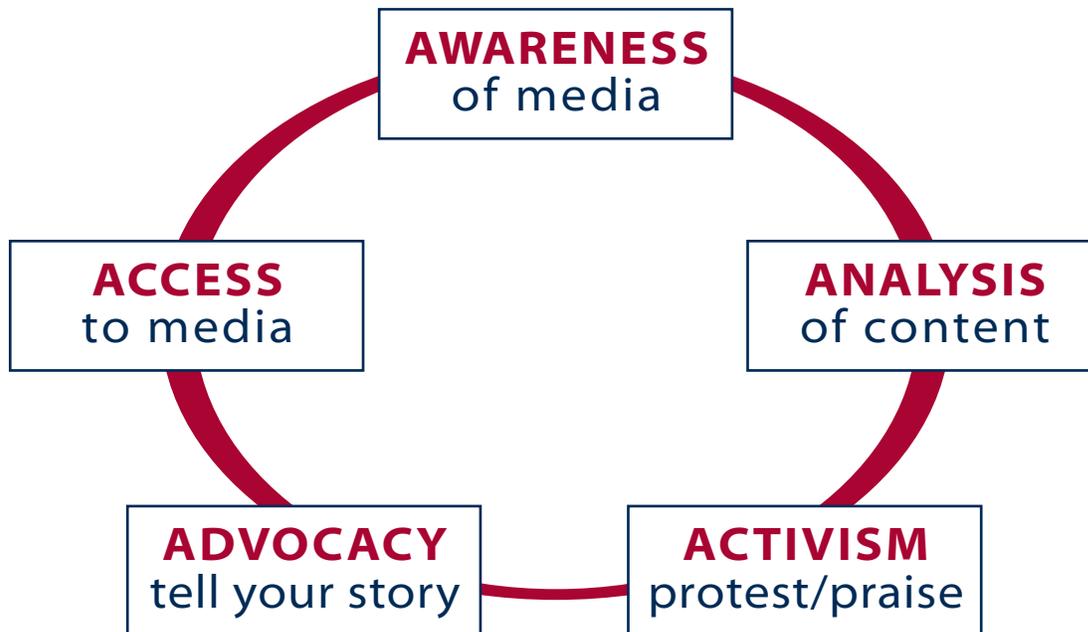
Questions for Discussion & Writing provide a series of questions designed to help you review and clarify material for your students; to encourage students to reflect critically on this material during class discussions; and to prompt and guide their written reactions to the video before and after these discussions. These questions can therefore be used in different ways: as guideposts for class discussion, as a framework for smaller group discussion and presentations, or as self-standing, in-class writing assignments (*i.e. as prompts for “free-writing” or in-class reaction papers in which students are asked to write spontaneously and informally while the video is fresh in their mind*).

Assignments for each section encourage students to engage the video more critically and formally – through research and more structured forms of writing and reflection.

USING THIS VIDEO IN THE CLASSROOM

- » View the video prior to showing it to your students.
- » Review the study guide and choose which exercises you will use with your students.
- » Use the previewing activities to help your students prepare for the ideas presented by the video.
- » Encourage *active listening*. Because the content of this video is likely to elicit emotional responses from the students, it is important that the students engage with each other in ways that ensure everybody has the opportunity both to speak and to be listened to. It is advised that you set guidelines or norms to ways to “actively listen” in advance of classroom discussions. Check out MEF’s handout, *Techniques for Active Listening*. (<http://www.mediaed.org/handouts/pdf/ActiveListening.pdf>)
- » Have the students keep a journal. It will be an effective place for them to explore their own attitudes and opinions and to record their observations about the media.
- » Review and discuss the handout *How to be a Critical Media Viewer*. (<http://www.mediaed.org/handouts/pdf/CriticalViewing.pdf>)
- » Incorporate activism and advocacy into your media literacy study. They are an important part of empowering students.

THE MEDIA LITERACY CIRCLE OF EMPOWERMENT¹



THE MEDIA LITERACY CIRCLE OF EMPOWERMENT EXPLAINED

AWARENESS

Students learn about the pervasiveness of the media in their lives.

ANALYSIS

Students discuss the forms and contents of the media's various messages as well as the intent of most media to persuade an audience.

ACTIVISM

Students develop their own opinions about the negative and positive effects of the media and decide to do something about it – this can be in the form of praise for healthy media, protest of unhealthy media, or development of campaigns to educate others with regard to the media, to change media messages, etc.

ADVOCACY

Students learn how to work with media and use their own media to develop and publicize messages that are healthy, constructive, and all too often ignored by our society.

ACCESS

Students gain access to the media – radio, newspaper, internet, television, etc. – to spread their own message. This in turn leads to further awareness of the media and how it works, which leads to a deeper analysis and so forth.

1. Diagram and explanation adopted from E.D.A.P.'s GO GIRLS! Curriculum, (c) 1999 (<http://www.edap.org/gogirls.html>)

OVERVIEW

Since the mid-1990s, a massive popular movement has developed worldwide to challenge global business practices and the institutions that govern them. In *No Logo*, based on her best-selling book of the same name, Canadian journalist and activist Naomi Klein locates the source of this popular resistance in the expanding and increasingly unchecked power of multinational corporations to shape the course of economic and social life on a global scale.

Klein's search for an organizing principle to make sense of both "globalization" and the backlash against it leads her across a chaotic cultural and economic landscape radically transformed by high-speed, border-defying flows of money, information, and imagery. She finds this principle in the corporate marketing strategy of "lifestyle branding" – a signal change in multinational corporate philosophy from marketing products to marketing people's very sense of identity and reality. Focusing on this new philosophy of the brand is crucial, Klein argues, because it provides a lens through which to understand both the essentially undemocratic character of current trade practices and the essentially democratic character of those working to reform them.

Focusing on branding and its consequences, Klein therefore works both within and beyond the frame of commercial culture. She takes the power of the image seriously, revealing how "there is no aspect of our lives that is not open to being used in the theatre of the brand." But she also moves beyond the allure of commercial theatre to examine what brands and their producers work to keep offstage: unassailable evidence that multinational corporations have built their brand identities at a tremendous cost to community values, the environment, universal human rights, competition, and the very principles of democracy.

No Logo condenses years of research into an accessible tool for understanding the complex forces at work in today's global economy. Appealing to us as citizens, rather than as consumers and spectators, it calls on us to do more than just sit back and watch as multinational corporations re-create the world in the image of their brands. It challenges us instead to break through the hypnotic spell and spectacle of the new branded world – to check the power of multinational corporations and demand global economic and social justice.

PRE-VIEWING EXERCISES

1. What are logos? What is their purpose?
2. What is a brand? Is there a difference between logos and brands?
3. Why do you feel some people like to buy brand-name rather than generic products?
4. Do you ever buy products based on their brand? Why?
5. Do you ever choose not to buy a product because of its brand name? Why?
6. Without looking it up in a dictionary, describe what you think the term “globalization” means. Can you think of any specific examples to illustrate your description of “globalization”?
7. What is the meaning of the term “free trade”? And how might this differ from “fair trade”?

INTRODUCTION

KEY POINTS

- » A new political movement developed in the mid-nineties to challenge the growing power of multinational corporations.
- » Bypassing traditional government channels, this movement took issue with corporate business practices by taking direct aim at corporations themselves.
- » This anti-corporate resistance arose against the backdrop of globalization, responding to new trade policies and increasing corporate consolidation indifferent to national boundaries and traditional ways of thinking about political change and reform.
- » As this fledgling movement took shape, there were as yet no intellectual tools available to make sense of it.
- » It was clear that there was marked and rising anger against multinational corporations like McDonald's, Nike and Shell Oil – but unclear why so many people seemed to be so angry, and why so many young people in particular were suddenly so bold as to go after multinationals directly.
- » As Naomi Klein tried to make sense of this anger and resentment, the corporate management strategy of “lifestyle branding” moved front and center: brands provided a new means for conceptualizing rising anti-corporate resentment and anger, and for organizing and mobilizing a viable reform movement.
- » “Lifestyle branding” refers to a corporate marketing strategy that arose in the 90s when companies decided they needed to shift their thinking about the true nature of what they were selling to remain competitive in the global marketplace.
- » The “lifestyle branding” strategy is based on the belief that sell is not the actual products or commodities it sells – but an idea and a lifestyle: meaning itself.
- » This fundamental shift – from marketing things to marketing meaning – explains why today we see the following: a full-scale corporate assault on the public sphere; wildly creative forms of marketing directed at young people; growing corporate consolidation and therefore shrinking options for consumers despite the promise of more choice and interactivity; and the spread of sweat shops, temporary jobs, and low quality of work.
- » These global forces work to produce no public space, no consumer choice and no real jobs – but they have also produced a countermovement to the brand mentality: a “no logo” spirit of anti-corporate resistance that seeks to recapture public space, public discourse and democracy.

QUESTIONS OF DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. According the video, why did movements arise in the mid-nineties to challenge corporations? What was happening economically in the mid-nineties to inspire such resentment toward corporations?
2. What is a “multinational” corporation?
3. Why, specifically, might the rise of multinational corporations threaten older ways of thinking about nations, the state, and governments?
4. The introduction talks quite a bit about “globalization.” How would you define globalization? How do you think it relates to the kind of large multinational corporations discussed in this section?
5. Klein says that it was difficult at first to make sense of growing resentment to global corporate power in the mid-nineties. How does she go on to explain the source of this difficulty?
6. According to Klein, what was the key to making sense of the rising tide of resentment against corporations? And why was this an important breakthrough in conceptualizing this growing resistance?

INTRODUCTION

- 7.** What was different about this incipient protest movement from past movements? And what accounted for this difference?
- 8.** What is “lifestyle branding”? When did it develop and why?
- 9.** What is the fundamental difference between lifestyle branding and past forms of branding?
- 10.** According to Klein, what are some of the social and economic consequences – globally – of this shift to lifestyle branding? What’s the precise connection she makes between this new kind of branding and changes in the global economic, cultural and political landscape?

KEY POINTS

- » In its simplest form, the process of branding involves marketing a product with a consistent logo, image or mascot that conveys to the consumer a sense of consistency, quality and trust.
- » The importance of branding grew with the rise of mass industrialization and mass transport at the turn of the century because it was a way for businesses to compensate for the distance and anonymity of modern production.
- » These original logos and mascots – often people – were designed to give comfort to consumers by creating surrogate personal relationships that could replace disappearing personal relationships with farmers and shopkeepers.
- » This fairly simple role of the brand is unrecognizable today in an era of “brand tribes” – we have moved from being reassured by brands about the quality of products to a world in which we organize our very identities around brands.
- » A handful of all-American brands – Coca-Cola, Disney, McDonald’s – were the first to understand the effectiveness of selling ideas and lifestyles rather than merely goods.
- » Coke sold peace and love in the 60s; Disney sold the American dream; today Nike continues in this tradition by selling an idea about the nature of sports and its intimate connection to the American Dream; while Virgin has mastered the mass production of individuality and rebellion.
- » One of the most disturbing aspects of this phenomenon is the devaluing of ideas and ideals when they become associated with commercial commodities.
- » Companies experience “epiphanies” about how best to turn our most powerful ideas and ideals into brand content by taking a “quasi-anthropological” approach to marketing.
- » The “quasi-anthropological” approach involves identifying what consumers are feeling, thinking, and experiencing when they consume a product.
- » This new marketing approach differs fundamentally from past approaches in this way: the old approach sought to create associations between desirable lifestyles and products by showing certain kinds of people consuming the product; the new way involves going into the culture and discovering where and how people actually live these lifestyles – in other words, where the brand idea lives independently of the brand or the product.
- » The goal of this new approach is essentially to buy and own the independent ideas and lifestyles you’ve found, and to merge them with the brand.
- » In this way, the strength of a brand is measured by the power it has to stretch and spread across the pop-cultural landscape: for example, the brand gets merged with the spirit of rock and roll through sponsorships of concerts, rock stars wearing the brand, rock bands performing in ads.
- » Continuing with this example, the brand becomes so associated with rock and roll that it assumes its spirit, becomes the rock star itself, full with followers and groupies and the like – while actual rock stars, and the brand’s actual products, are now beside the point.
- » Examples of this phenomenon can be found everywhere: from people wearing Tommy Hilfiger clothes that turn them into walking billboards for the brand, to people actually living inside the brand in the Disney-owned town of Celebration.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. How does Klein explain the most simple and basic forms of branding a product? What was the original purpose of branding products?
2. According to Klein's argument, how would you describe the difference between the way brands look and work today and the way they looked and worked in the early twentieth century? How, specifically, has the purpose and process of branding changed over time? And why, specifically, have they changed over time?
3. What was it about modernization and industrialization that changed branding?
4. What does Klein mean by "brand tribes"? What's new about them in the context of the overall history of branding?
5. How do identity, ideas, ideals, and lifestyle play into today's corporate marketing strategies? And how does this represent a shift from the past?
6. What were the first companies to sell a lifestyle, an idea and an ideal in order to build their brands? What specific associations did each make? Do you feel, looking at these brands all these years later, that these breakthrough companies succeeded in doing what they set out to do? Explain.
7. What does Klein mean by the new "quasi-anthropological" marketing approaches of today? What does this term mean? What, specifically, does this marketing strategy involve? What's its primary goal?
8. How, specifically, does this "quasi-anthropological" approach differ *fundamentally* from past approaches? According to Klein, what are the social and cultural effects of this difference?
9. How do the consequences of this new anthropological approach relate back to Klein's earlier discussion of "brand tribes"? How do Celebration, Florida, and Tommy Hilfiger relate here?
10. Why does Klein say that Celebration, Florida, is the achievement of "brand nirvana"? What ideas and ideals does Celebration tap into? How does the actual advertisement-free look of the town reinforce these ideas and ideals? Do you see any irony in this?

ASSIGNMENTS

1. You have just been made CEO of Company X and it is your job to successfully market Brand X to the consumer. Decide what the idea or lifestyle image of Brand X will be and come up with a strategy detailing how you will market your brand to the world. Who is your target market? How will you grab their attention? (*Remember your brand is going to be the next big thing!*) Write up and/or present your strategy. By the way, what kind of product are you selling? Does it matter?
2. Naomi Klein says that when brands appropriate our ideals to sell products, our ideals get devalued: Starbucks comes to stand in for community, Wal-Mart for family, and human values get used to enhance the monetary value of corporations.

For this assignment, you'll collect some ads, examine whether or not they incorporate values that are important to you, and reflect on the rationale and effectiveness of this marketing strategy.

- » Start by creating a list of the ideals or values that are most meaningful to you.
- » When your list is complete, collect some advertisements. Cut out ads in magazines and newspapers; photograph ads you see in public spaces (billboards, buses, etc.); record ads you see on television – at the very least, if all else fails, write out detailed descriptions of the ads you find.
- » With this list and these examples in hand, write a paper – or prepare a presentation – analyzing how the ads you've collected may or may not appropriate the values that are important to you.
- » Include a discussion of why you think the company in question chose to brand these values. Do you

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think the branding of these values has helped sell their products? Why or why not?

» Finally, discuss whether or not you think that branding the ideals on your list devalues or trivializes them. And be sure to explain why or why not.

3. According to Klein, the way brands *look* and *work* today is very different from the way they *looked* and *worked* in the early twentieth century. For this assignment, you'll be researching and collecting advertisements from the early twentieth century to reflect on the validity of Klein's argument.

» Find some old advertisements, photocopy them, and take notes on what you see being depicted. (Libraries usually carry collections of back-issue magazines and bind them together by year. If not, try looking online.)

» If you find an ad for a brand that still exists, collect present-day advertisements of the same brand. If the brand no longer exists, collect advertisements of a contemporary brand selling a similar type product. As with the old ads, make notes about the ad.

» Now that you have your samples and your notes, prepare a presentation that compares and contrasts the old ads with the new in light of Klein's argument. Make a poster placing the old and new ads side-by-side (on poster board or a large piece of paper). And write up some notes so that you can talk about the similarities and differences you see. Be sure to analyze how the ads work – and be sure to place your analysis within the context of Klein's specific discussion about how advertising has changed over time. What values are appealed to? What type of audience is each aimed at? What do you think is really being sold?

NO CHOICE

KEY POINTS

- » One of the chief casualties in the new branded world is choice: whether we like it or not, ads and brands are everywhere in our face, woven into the very fabric of popular culture and public space.
- » This lack of choice is the realization of a marketing logic governed by the drive to crowd out and eliminate competition: for the giant brands to maintain market share and power, they must saturate space and the senses and eliminate choice.
- » Virtually every aspect of our lives is now subject to aggressive marketing schemes as powerful corporations gobble up meaning, space, time, and every conceivable idea – including political ideas that would otherwise challenge this corporate hegemony – and spit them out as props to advance their brand stories.
- » This colonization of public space poses a threat to the fundamental need in democracy for a protected common area outside of the market where people can relate to each other and exchange ideas and information as citizens rather than as consumers.
- » Malls present a striking example not only of the disappearance of public, democratic space, but also of its replacement by the illusion of a public, democratic gathering space.
- » The virtual town square atmosphere of malls, replete with virtual sidewalks and trees and fountains, belies the essentially tightly-controlled, private and anti-democratic nature of these places: malls are “free” spaces only to the extent that the exercise of free speech within their walls doesn’t clash with the rules of buying and selling.
- » There is nothing new in the idea that corporations, as private entities, censor inconvenient speech and information; what’s new is the scale of this censoring power as giant companies like Walmart exert greater and greater control across a widening expanse of culture and the economy.
- » Walmart’s “family values” brand identity clashes with free speech not only when it decides to cover up magazines that work against its image; more importantly – because of its sheer size and market share – its aesthetic sensibility shapes the kinds of content that get produced in the first place.
- » What we are seeing is a new form of “pre-emptive” corporate censorship: directly linked to the growing scale of these brand empires, the economic power of giant corporations works to shape economic conditions and determine choices before products are even made.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. What is it about the contemporary marketing logic of the big brands that eliminates consumer choice?
2. What other kinds of choice does the enactment of this logic eliminate?
3. Klein talks about how the big brand empires appropriate ideas and ideals to their own advantage. How does this work, according to her explanation? Can you think of your own examples of this phenomenon? What specific ideas, ideals, or rebellious political thought have you seen reduced to mere props in the theatre of the brand?
4. According to Klein, what *specific* threats to democracy are posed by the emergence of global brand empires?
5. What does it say about democracy and the political power of the people if corporations have such immense power to transform even the most threatening challenges to their supremacy into a marketing pitch for their brand? Do you see a way out of this? Do you feel that corporations are always bound to neutralize any counter-strike against the way they do business?
6. How does Klein’s analysis of malls fit within her larger argument in this section about the erosion of choice? What does she say, specifically, about the relationship of mall culture and freedom? What does she say about the rationale behind the way malls are designed?

NO CHOICE

7. In your own opinion, do you think there is a significant qualitative difference between the way people move through and mix in malls versus the way they move through and mix in open street markets and other communal public spaces?
8. What does Klein mean by “corporate censorship”? What is it? And what, according to Klein, is the difference between older forms of corporate censorship and the form it takes today?
9. What does Klein mean, specifically, by “pre-emptive corporate censorship”? Explain how this works using a specific example.
10. Related to this notion of pre-emptive corporate censorship is Klein’s argument that lots of smaller companies are forced to “internalize the Walmart aesthetic.” What does she mean by this? And how does this connect with what she says about corporate censorship? Finally, what is “the Walmart aesthetic anyway”?

ASSIGNMENTS

1. According to Naomi Klein, we cannot simply choose to ignore brands – branding is everywhere. To test her argument, make a list tracking the brands that surround you for an entire day. Starting from the time you wake up, note what brands you see and where you see them. As you compile and review the list, think about how realistic it would be simply to remove these brands from your environment – or, likewise, to remove yourself from their presence. What would doing either of these things require?

Now, given that the title of this section is “No Choice: Brand Bombing,” use your list to write a 1-2 page paper explaining whether or not you agree with Klein that you are “bombed” by brands. Talk about what this might mean, based on your own experience. Try to include responses to the following:

- » What, specifically, did you notice and experience over the course of your one-day study? What kind of ads? What kinds of placement?
- » How did your experience fit with Klein’s argument in this section? (Be specific – about both your experience, and Klein’s argument.)
- » Given all of this, do you think the section title is fitting? Why or why not?

2. Klein uses the example of malls to illustrate how corporations and brands appropriate and privatize public space, and to call attention to the tightly monitored, anti-democratic nature of these spaces. As she points out, you’re welcome in the mall as long as your behavior doesn’t conflict with the baseline goal of its clients – to get you shopping.

This assignment asks you to do some research to respond to this question: *What happens when an individual or a group’s behavior conflicts with a brand?* As discussed in Section II, brands are usually quite happy to see you using their brand – provided you’re using it the “right way” Tommy Hilfiger, for example, is content to have you sport the Tommy Hilfiger name on your underwear. And Nike doesn’t seem to mind when people get the swoosh sign or “Just Do It” tattooed on their bodies or shaved into their hair. But some interesting things can happen to those who use the brand differently.

Use the Internet to research cases in which an individual or group has come in conflict with a brand. The popular media sometimes reports these cases so news archives will also be a helpful place to look. Choose one case on which to write and present a report. Your report should include a synopsis of the case.

As you write up your report, consider the following: Who are the parties involved? What happened? How did the behavior of the individual or group conflict with the brand? What was the outcome? If the outcome has not been resolved, what do you expect it might be? What do you think it should or should have been? Why? of “no choice”?

NO CHOICE

The following links provide examples that might help you get started:

- » www.haidabuckscafe.com/about.htm
- » www.mcspotlight.org/case/index.html

NO JOBS

KEY POINTS

- » Companies used to see their primary role as producing products, then branding them with a corporate identity.
- » What's different now is that companies see their primary role as producing brands, then fulfilling them through products.
- » Key now for companies is to produce a brand identity, an image, and meaning that can be stretched into as many different arenas as possible.
- » The fact that the product now takes a backseat to the brand is clear when you consider a pair of Nike shoes: the shoes may have the Nike swoosh, but Nike didn't make them. They bought them before you did.
- » The new corporate logic works this way: A company like Nike approaches a broker in Hong Kong; the broker tells them which factories will produce shoes for the lowest cost; the contract to make the shoes is then given to a factory in China, or Vietnam, or Indonesia; and these factories themselves then in turn decide they can get a cheaper price and make money by subcontracting.
- » This is the "Nike Paradigm," held up when first tested as the future of the corporate world: a maze of contracted and subcontracted and sub-subcontracted factories designed to make it as cheap as possible to produce the actual product.
- » This new paradigm, set up to lower the cost of production, relies at base on finding the cheapest labor force possible: because a baseline level of product quality must be maintained, companies achieve savings by finding ways to pay – and invest in – workers as little as possible.
- » To keep wages down, companies contract out to workers in parts of the world that have no minimum standards of pay and few public protections against corporate excess – and by setting up tight controls on their workforce: ensuring that workers don't organize for more pay, safer working conditions, and more control over their lives.
- » Goods are produced in what are called export processing zones, industrial parks set up especially to produce goods for the United States, Canada and Europe at the lowest possible cost in order to maximize profit.
- » To assure total control, and undermine any possibility of workers organizing, these "free trade zone factories" are usually walled in and policed by armed guards – and employ a workforce that is young (18-25 on average), almost entirely female (80%), and far from home.
- » The much-heralded claim that globalization will lead to development in poor countries and increases in wages is fundamentally contradicted by the logic and consequences of this global business model: a race to the bottom in which companies compete with one another at the expense of their workers.
- » The Nike example is a case study in this logic of worker abuse: When Nike began buying its shoes, it first dealt with Japanese manufactures; when this became too expensive, Nike started giving contracts to Korea and Taiwan; when workers in these countries successfully fought for a basic standard of living, Nike and companies like Reebok cancelled contracts with factories in these countries and moved onto the Philippines, Vietnam and China – whose governments offered tax holidays, zero tariffs, and guarded factories.
- » A key aspect of brand building is that it costs much more than just the cost of advertising the product: companies make the expensive choice to follow the Nike Paradigm and build their brands, and the money it requires costs workers dearly.
- » Because their hard-won legal right to basic protections and a decent wage are seen as too expensive in this new global business climate, American and European workers become casualties of this paradigm as well.

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- » Job cuts and layoffs have destroyed American and European communities that were built around factories and work, accompanied by a fundamental transformation in the very nature of work in the developed world.
- » Service jobs have come to dominate the American labor landscape: low-paying retail jobs in places like Walmart and the Gap, temp jobs, and so-called “McJobs” – once viewed merely as transitional kinds of jobs – have replaced previously secure forms of work that offered good wages, benefits and more community-connected work.

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. Klein talks about how the traditional relationship between products and brands has been turned upside down. She says there has been a shift from companies seeing their primary role as producing products and branding them with a corporate identity, to producing brands first. What does she mean by this? What examples does she use? Can you think of examples of your own?
2. How do Nike shoes fit into this new approach to branding? Specifically, how does the way Nike shoes are produced reflect this new branding logic?
3. What is the new “Nike Paradigm”? What role do specific contractors and sub-contractors play in this paradigm? What’s Nike’s role? Does Nike actually make their shoes, or do they buy them from others? And what difference does it make?
4. What is the motivation behind subscribing to this new Nike Paradigm? Why are so many companies following it? What are its advantages, from a business perspective?
5. What are the costs of the Nike Paradigm? What are the economic and social costs and consequences produced by this way of doing business – here in the U.S. and around the world?
6. What is the specific connection between the new corporate logic of the brand and wages paid to workers?
7. Why does Klein say that control is essential to the way products get produced for these global brand empires? What forms of control does she talk about?
8. How does Klein’s analysis of the reality of multinational corporate production contradict what has been heralded as the promise of globalization? What, specifically, do people say is the promise of globalization?
9. Why have companies like Nike, Reebok and the Gap moved their production facilities around so much? How has the movement of production facilities affected American workers and American communities?
10. What has been the effect of all of this on the kinds of jobs people have in the U.S. and around the globe?

ASSIGNMENTS

1. In Section II you created a brand. Now write up a strategy detailing how you will cover the costs associated with effectively marketing Brand X – keeping in mind that you’ll need to maintain a good chunk of the market over the long term if your brand is to be the next big thing! Will you have to rely on sweatshop labor as explained by Klein? Are the conditions in which these workers live and work contradictory to the lifestyle image behind your brand? How? Include this discussion as part of your report.
2. Klein argues that brand-based companies are not about products but about brands. To make up for the exorbitant amounts of money they spend on marketing their brand, companies usually pay and invest in workers as little as possible to cut costs and increase profits. A key question is this: *Why would workers stand for this? If it is so bad, why wouldn’t they just organize to better their work and living conditions?*

Do some investigative research. Choose a specific case history to explore and analyze what happens when workers organize to better their lives. Write up a report, or prepare a presentation, describing the case –

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specifically, who was involved and what happened. If possible include some of the workers' own words. And try to address the following: What were their reasons for trying to make change? Did they succeed? Why or why not? And based on all of this, what do you feel is at stake when workers organize for better working conditions?

[See also Naomi Klein's book No Logo: Taking Aim at the Brand Bullies for some possible examples.]

ANTI-CORPORATE ACTIVISM

KEY POINTS

- » When we take a step back and look critically and clearly at some of the brands woven into the very fabric of our culture and everyday lives, a new narrative emerges to counter the one-sided narrative pushed by corporate public relations types.
- » A single shoe now has the power to tell a story about the new economics of the brand: its globally-produced parts linking up into a narrative about the global economy's business models and practices, its disparities, its winners and losers.
- » An unintended result of multinational corporate marketing strategies is that over the past few years the high visibility of brands is being turned against them: we are now witnessing an explosion in brand-based investigative activities, in anti-corporate campaigns that seek to peel back the glowing dream world of the brand image to reveal the dark and unjust labor practices that make these brands possible.
- » The irony in this new surge of activism is that high-profile brands like McDonalds and Starbucks and the Gap find themselves in the uncomfortable position of singing the praises of the free trade and the liberatory power of globalization while at the same time positioning armed guards around their stores during rising protests.
- » While it helps to know whether the companies you do business with have some sense of ethics and justice, holding multinational corporations responsible for how their products are made requires more than just responsible shopping.
- » Forcing change first requires understanding the difference between the rhetoric of "free trade" and the fundamentals of *fair trade*, and then organizing with others to make sure that multinational corporations understand the difference as well – and why it matters.
- » This means joining forces with those who are taking the global trade issue to the doorstep of World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), the institutions whose job it is to write and enforce the rules of global trade.
- » Challenging these institutions means challenging the fundamental logic that determines their policies: specifically, the basic assumption that the rules of trade should be written in the interests of large corporations because what is good for global businesses will eventually benefit people around the world, their environment, democracy and justice.
- » The crucial distinction is this: protesting current trade practices has nothing to do with being anti-trade and everything to do with rejecting the anti-democratic logic that is working to increase profits regardless of the social, political, and environmental costs.
- » This means rejecting also the notion that it is the role of citizens in a democracy to be spectators who simply watch and wait for the corporate vision of corporate elites to deliver democracy and justice.
- » Organized protest against unfair trade and global brand empires therefore organizes itself around the core democratic necessity and goal of protecting and maintaining the public space unfiltered by the market – the "commons" demanded by democracy for true discussion and debate.
- » One way this is happening is by transforming the corporate monologue on the streets into a dialogue through culture jamming, adbusting, billboard liberation and other forms of interruption and parody that send a competing message about how the product being advertised is actually produced.
- » This kind of activism rejects the notion that people should wait to be granted rights that are already enshrined in law, especially the right to be heard: the issue then is not revolve around being for or against trade, but around being for or against democracy.

ANTI-CORPORATE ACTIVISM

QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION & WRITING

1. Klein says that a single Nike shoe can tell us a story about globalization and the new business practices of multinational corporate brands. How? What's the story it tells, and how does this story relate to the overall argument of this video?
2. How has the high visibility of the big brands worked against the corporations that have built them?
3. Klein says you can't change the direction corporations have taken through shopping. What does she mean by this? And what does she say can be done, instead, to hold multinational corporations accountable for their often abominable disregard for human rights, social justice and democracy?
4. Klein makes a distinction between free trade and fair trade. What do you see as the distinction, given the overall analysis presented in this video? How do you think the rhetoric of "free trade" has worked over time to deflect attention from the fundamental issues and principles of fairness that are at stake in the global economy?
5. What is the basic function of the World Trade Organization (WTO), the World Bank, and the International Monetary Fund (IMF)?
6. What does Klein suggest is the basic logic that informs the approach of these institutions to globalization?
7. Why have these institutions been the targets of so many mass protests by students and others over the past few years?
8. Protests against the WTO, World Bank and IMF have brought together a wide cross-section of the population: people concerned about the environment, about labor issues, about education, about health have found themselves joined by a common concern. What might such people and groups have in common when it comes to wanting to reform these institutions?
9. Klein says that challenging the power and practices of global corporations and the brand empires has nothing to do with protesting free trade. What does she mean by this? What are these massive popular movements challenging, if not trade, according to Klein?
10. What are some of the forms of activism around these issues Klein talks about? What are "culture jammers"? "Adbusters"? "Billboard liberators"? What's the strategy behind this kind of activism? What role does irony and parody play in it, and why might this be an effective way to challenge the power of brands?

ASSIGNMENTS

Naomi Klein says that we can each be part of the global movement to question the rhetoric of "free trade" and demand *fair* trade. She suggests that "adbusting" is one creative way to participate.

1. Visit the web site www.adbusters.org/creativeresistance/spoofads.

Browse the spoof ads and choose one that parodies a "real" ad you're familiar with. Then find a copy of the actual – or type of – ad being spoofed. With both copies in hand, compare and contrast the parody and the reality. What are the objectives of each ad? How does the adbusting message differ from the message the real ad seems to be sending?

2. Now it's time to make your own ad.

Option 1: The first step is to decide what type of ad you'd like to create. Some of the ads at www.adbusters.org/creativeresistance/spoofads spoof actual ads, meaning they mimic the style and format of real ads to critique and comment on the brand. See for instance: www.adbusters.org/creativeresistance/spoofads/fashion/nike.

ANTI-CORPORATE ACTIVISM

If this is the type of ad you'd like to create, choose a real ad to spoof and do some research to support the message your ad will send about the brand. For example, the above-mentioned Nike parody depicts a woman running for her life. The ad comments on the difference between Nike's glamorized portrayal of running and the running its factory workers must do when they try to organize for better working conditions.

Before creating your own parody, think about the following: What is the objective of your spoof ad? What commentary about the brand will your ad make? Write up a two-page statement that answers these questions and summarizes how your research into the brand will inform your spoof. For help, see the steps outlined at www.adbusters.org/creativeresistance/spoofads/printad.

Option 2: Some of the ads at www.adbusters.org/creativeresistance/spoofads don't spoof specific ads, but still serve to comment on a specific social issue or concern. See, for example, www.adbusters.org/creativeresistance/spoofads/misc/bump/, where the image of the globe flattened by tire tread marks illustrates the connection between auto use and environmental destruction.

If you'd like to create this kind of ad, choose a social issue that interests you. Do some research into this issue to support your commentary, and write up a short (two-page) paper explaining your rationale. What is the objective of your ad? What commentary does it make?

Next, create your ad. For guidance, see the steps outlined at the website: www.adbusters.org/creativeresistance/spoofads/printad.

3. Once these projects are complete, consider doing one or more of the following to get them seen:
 - » Hold a gallery showing of the class's alternative ads, open to the public.
 - » Post the alternative ads around your school.
 - » Have some or all of the ads featured in the school newspaper.

POST-VIEWING ASSIGNMENTS

1. Read Naomi Klein's essay "Fences of Enclosure, Windows of Possibility" at www.nologo.org/essay.php (or go to www.nologo.org and click on *fences/windows*). Make notes as you read, then complete one or both of the following:

a) In the essay, Klein writes:

In the case of Africa, essentially an entire continent can find itself exiled to the global shadow world, off the map and off the news, appearing only during wartime when its citizens are looked on with suspicion as potential militia members, would-be terrorists or anti-American fanatics. In fact, remarkably few of globalization's fenced-out people turn to violence. Most simply move...

Keeping Klein's fences and windows metaphor in mind, write a paper about how non-Western countries are portrayed in the Western media.

First, choose a country that interests you and do some research on it. As you do, consider the following questions: What types of news stories are available about the country? What issues are covered? How are the citizens of that country portrayed? If the story includes interviews, who is being interviewed? Who is not being interviewed? And in light of all of this, do you think the mainstream media operate like a fence or a window? Explain.

Second, try to find any alternative media outlets (web, print or television) that tell different stories about the country you've researched, or even similar stories with a different perspective. If you succeed, explain how easy or difficult it was to find this information. And consider the following questions: Why do you think this information tends not to be as readily available as it is in mainstream media? And if you cannot find any such alternative information, why do you think that is?

Third, think about Naomi Klein's argument that we can each be part of the global movement towards fair trade. Then brainstorm and include in your paper some ideas about how you might use the media, mainstream or alternative, to be part of that movement.

b) Klein writes:

It is now taken for granted that if world leaders want to get together to discuss a new trade deal, they will need to build a modern-day fortress to protect themselves from public rage, complete with armored tanks, tear gas, water cannons and attack dogs... The "war on terrorism" has become yet another fence to hide behind, used by summit organizers to explain why public shows of dissent just won't be possible this time around or, worse, to draw threatening parallels between legitimate protesters and terrorists bent on destruction.

She goes on to cite examples of protest behavior that we don't often see in the mainstream media. Yes, she explains, there are broken McDonald's windows – but most people use non-destructive ways to communicate their message.

Keeping in mind Klein's fences and windows metaphor, write a paper about how people who protest certain elements of globalization are portrayed in the media. Find examples of mainstream news stories covering an anti-globalization protest. You may choose a large or small protest, or you may choose to look at the coverage of several different protests.

Consider the following: What does Klein say the protesters want? What does she say they are protesting? What does the mainstream media say the protesters want? What does it say they are protesting? Why do you think there is such a disparity?

Is the media acting as a fence or a window? Can you find any alternative media outlets (*web, print or television*) that present a non-mainstream media view of the protest(s)? If you can, was it difficult to find that media source? Why do you think it is not as readily available as the mainstream media? Explain. If you cannot find any, why do you think that is? Explain.

POST-VIEWING ASSIGNMENTS

In the video Naomi Klein says that we can each be part of the global movement towards fair trade. Does the mainstream media portrayal of anti-globalization protesters, people who feel that they are part of that movement, make you feel like you want to or can be part of it? Why or why not? Whose interests are served by making you feel the way you do? Brainstorm and include in your paper some ideas about how you might use the media, mainstream or alternative, to be part of that movement.

2. *The Merchants of Cool*

- a) View the PBS Frontline documentary *The Merchants of Cool*, available online at:
www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool.

The program can be watched online or ordered at:

www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/etc/tapes.html (or via the link “tapes & transcripts”).

And the transcript is available online at:

www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/cool/etc/script.html

Film Synopsis:

The Merchants of Cool reveals how much time and money are invested to research teens as a target market. It follows market researchers on what is called the “cool hunt”. On the hunt, researchers infiltrate teen culture to find out what the cool kids are doing, where they are and what they want. This information is sold to corporations who pay top dollar in the quest to capture the buying power of teens. Staying on top of what is cool is the ultimate goal because being cool sells. No arena of teen culture is left untouched, as even teen rebellion becomes “just another product”. The paradox, as Douglas Rushkoff points out, is that “as soon as marketers discover cool, it stops being cool.” And so the hunters can never stop but must always re-strategize, devising bigger, better and sneakier plans of attack.

b) Assignments:

First: Referring to a particular teen targeted by MTV market researchers, correspondent Douglas Rushkoff says, “Maybe all that research isn’t really about understanding John as a person, it’s about understanding John as a consumer. I mean, they don’t call it human research or people research; they call it market research.”

This assignment asks you to react to Rushkoff’s words. Write a letter addressed to the CEO of one of the “Media Giants” mentioned in the video telling him what you think about how you view you. Include your thoughts on the “cool hunt.”

As you write the letter, consider the following: Do you think market researchers should attempt to infiltrate teen culture to sell products? How might this threaten your autonomy? Should there be lines drawn with respect to just how far they can go? How is being seen as a “consumer” different from being seen as a “citizen”? Do you think consuming is your main role in life? Do the media giants? Is consuming products important to you? What is important to you? If you had one thing to say to the media giants, what would it be? Share your letter with the class.

Second: Using the “cool hunt” as an example, write a short essay exploring Naomi Klein’s assertion that brands are not about selling products but about selling a lifestyle. Douglas Rushkoff says, “As soon as marketers discover cool, it stops being cool.” If what he says is true, will buying products from brands that sell themselves as cool make a teen cooler? Why or why not? In your essay include some discussion about whether or not you think marketing a brand as cool might be considered deceitful.