
Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood

Al Gore, Global Warming, and the Association of National Advertisers

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Within 24 hours of being awarded the 2007 Nobel Peace Prize for his work on global warming, Al Gore spoke at the Association of National Advertisers' annual Masters of Marketing Conference. It was a great opportunity to get at one major source of environmental destruction—America's addiction to consumption. It was his chance to confront a major industry whose dedication to promoting gas guzzling SUVs, plastic toys, excess packaging—and materialistic values—is a direct threat to Gore's mission to save the planet.

But Gore didn't even mention global warming in his speech. He wasn't there to promote the health of the planet. He was there to promote advertising—to help marketers better manipulate consumers and to spread the gospel about a marketing strategy embraced by Current TV, his Cable station for 18 to 24 year olds. On Current TV, advertisers get young viewers to immerse themselves in brands by creating their own ads for sponsors like L'Oreal, Sony, T-Mobile, and Toyota. Current TV's latest call for consumer generated advertising is for Drambuie—and remember, its target audience includes underage drinkers.

Hypocrisy is the norm in corporate advertising. Unilever promotes positive body image for girls with one brand, while its other brands sell diet aids and skin whitening cream. Ronald McDonald goes into schools to teach healthy life styles while selling junk food. But shouldn't we expect more from a Nobel Peace Prize Winner? Al Gore can either try to stop global warming, or make a kinder, gentler world for advertisers. He can't do both.

Susan Linn is co-founder and Director, Campaign for a Commercial-Free Childhood and the author of *Consuming Kids: The Hostile Takeover of Childhood*.