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Media Ignore Ford Boycott

As sales plunge and the automaker cuts jobs, the year-long action by a major pro-family group goes unreported.

By Colleen Raezler

Since March 2006, Ford has been the target of a boycott by one of the largest pro-family groups in the country, the American Family Association (AFA). AFA, which opposes Ford's funding of homosexual political groups and advertisements in homosexual-themed magazines, now has an e-alert list of more than 3 million people.

Ford Motor Company sales have fallen in 10 of the last 12 months. The company reported a \$12.7 billion loss in 2006.

A Nexis search reveals that between the day the deficit was announced, Thursday, January 25, 2007, and the following Sunday, January 28, the media carried 653 items in various outlets about Ford's woes. Curiously, none mentioned the boycott. Over the past year, the boycott has garnered little or no coverage in traditional business news reports.

Nearly 700,000 people have signed an on-line pledge to boycott Ford. The Greater Texas Ford Dealers Advertising Fund, a group representing more than 75 Ford dealers in North Texas, sent a letter to Ford in June 2006 urging the company to stop promoting homosexual activism at the risk of offending traditional-minded consumers.

The letter quotes a dealer who explains how Ford is alienating customers: "The folks supporting this boycott are not on the fringe, they are not religious fanatics or persons that typically protest, but are average citizens concerned for the well-being of their families and about an all-American company, like

Timeline of Boycott

May 31, 2005: AFA announces boycott of Ford over the company's promotion of the homosexual lifestyle through its policies, advertising practices and donations to homosexual events.

June 5, 2005: AFA representatives meet with Ford dealers who are concerned about the impact of a boycott.

June 6, 2005: AFA agrees to suspend the boycott for six months.

November 28, 2005: The last of three meetings between AFA and Ford takes place.

November 30, 2005: AFA cancels its boycott of Ford.

December 5, 2005: Ford announces it will no longer advertise in homosexual media, citing business reasons as an explanation. The National Gay and Lesbian Task Force, along with 18 other like-minded groups, issues a statement demanding a meeting with Ford.

December 12, 2005: Ford meets with representatives from gay rights organizations.

December 14, 2005: Ford announces the reinstatement and expansion of advertising in homosexual media in a letter sent to gay and lesbian organizations.

January 10, 2006: AFA sends a letter to Chairman Bill Ford asking him to remove Ford from "involvement in the cultural war." Forty-three other pro-family organization sign on to the letter.

March 13, 2006: AFA and 18 other pro-family organizations launch a boycott of the Ford Motor Company. Other organizations have since joined.

June 23, 2006: The Greater Texas Ford Dealers Advertising Fund, representing 78 Texas Ford dealers, sends a letter to Chairman Bill Ford asking for an end to its advertising strategy aimed at homosexuals.

January 25, 2007: Ford Motor Company reports a 2006 full-year net loss of \$12.7 billion.

Ford advocating a lifestyle that they find objectionable.”

The dealers further explain, “We believe that Ford can and should market to all Americans with transportation needs, but that it should do so without tacitly approving a controversial lifestyle or stance.”

The dealers recognize the impact of this boycott. Why won't Ford?

And in the coverage of Ford's economic woes, why are the media strangely silent about the boycott?

Ford has other problems, such as a growing pension fund and other financial burdens. Ford spends more than \$1,000 per vehicle in worker benefits (as do Daimler-Chrysler and General Motors¹), compared to Toyota's \$215 spent per vehicle for worker benefits². Ford's emphasis on gas-hungry SUV's during a time of high gas prices has also hurt the bottom line. It would be wrong to say Ford's woes are solely because of the boycott, but it's also wrong for the media to ignore the likely ongoing impact of the boycott.

Breakdown of Ford Sales by Month Since the Boycott Began

| | |
|----------------|---------|
| March 2006 | -5 % |
| April 2006 | -7 % |
| May 2006 | -2 % |
| June 2006 | -6.8 % |
| July 2006 | -4.1 % |
| August 2006 | -11.6 % |
| September 2006 | +5 % |
| October 2006 | +8 % |
| November 2006 | -9.7 % |
| December 2006 | -13 % |
| January 2007 | -19 % |
| February 2007 | -13 % |
| March 2007 | - 9 % |

**These figures are in comparison to the same period from the previous year.*

According to financial reports, Ford's net income fell from \$3.0 billion in 2004 to \$1.4 billion in 2005³, before plummeting to a \$12.7 billion net loss in 2006.

A March 2, 2007 *Wall Street Journal* article states that Ford “expects to keep losing money until 2009 because it banked for too long on its sales of trucks and SUV's continuing to thrive. Instead they have begun sliding because of rising oil prices and increased competition.”

But what about Ford's alienating large numbers of customers because of its blatant promotion of homosexual activism? Why don't the media see that as a probable cause for at least some of the slump?

A March 29, 2007 *Newsmax* article reveals that Ford is still refusing to comment on the boycott's impact of the company's deficit.

A letter sent by Joe Laymon, Group Vice-President of Corporate Human Resources, assured gay rights leaders that while Ford “will still support certain events...understand that the business situation will limit the extent of our support in all communities in 2006. [Ford] will continue all of our workplace policies and practices in support of Ford GLOBE members and supporters. That is unchanged.”

Ford's GLOBE (Gay, Lesbian or Bisexual Employees), according to its Web site, "is an organization of salaried, hourly, or retired employees of Ford Motor Company, its subsidiaries and affiliates, and agency contractees who are gay, lesbian, bisexual, or transgendered (glbt) and allies."

The mission of this group is to "foster an inclusive and supportive atmosphere within Ford for glbt (gay, lesbian, bisexual and trans-gendered) persons."

However, Ford did not sponsor the 2007 GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) Media Awards. In a March 10, 2007 *Detroit News* article, Ford spokeswoman Kristen Kinley stated that "advertising and sponsorship decisions for all our brands are strictly driven by business considerations."

The boycott has been conducted under the media radar. Except for early reports of the boycott at the outset, the media, both print and broadcast, have studiously avoided any mention of it.

In business news reports, ABC, CBS and NBC merely regurgitated the reasons listed above to explain the huge continued losses.

ABC's Bill Weir stated on January 25, 2007, "Ford's strength has always been big vehicles. But in an era of expensive gas, bigger is no longer better."

CBS' business correspondent, Anthony Mason, reported the same day that "the biggest cost was laying off nearly half of its hourly workers."

NBC's Tom Costello said the "report looks exceptionally bad because Ford loaded some massive restructuring charges into the fourth quarter."

Later in the same report, Costello said, "Sales of the popular SUVs and F-150 pick-ups slid with higher gas prices. With Toyota posed to overtake Ford in market share, many experts complain their product line is boring."

The "B" word is conspicuously absent from all three news reports.

Calls made to the networks about the absence of boycott references yielded the same response: It is the producers' decisions on what to include in the segments, CMI was told.

It is not as if they do not know the boycott is taking

Who Are the Groups Ford Supports? (In Their Own Words)

- The Human Rights Campaign is an organization dedicated to the civil rights of gays, lesbians, bisexual and trans-gendered. They lobby Congress for GLBT rights and work to educate Americans on GLBT issues. The ultimate goal of this organization is for GLBT people to have equal rights.
- GLAAD (Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation) is dedicated to the 'fair' representation of homosexuality in the media. They view this as a way to end homophobia.
- PFLAG (Parents, Families and Friends of Lesbians and Gays) is also dedicated to advocating for GLBT civil rights, educating the "ill-informed public" on GLBT issues and supporting friends and family of GLBT persons.



WHETHER YOU'RE STARTING A FAMILY
OR CREATING ONE AS YOU GO.

From now until September 30, 2003 when you buy or lease any new Volvo, we will donate \$500 to HRC.

VOLVO
for life

place. The print media and CNN certainly covered the homosexual activists' outcry when Ford announced its decision to pull its Jaguar and Land Rover advertisements from homosexual publications in December 2005, one week after AFA announced the end of a brief, initial boycott.

How Ford Promotes Homosexuality:

- In 2005, the company gave GLAAD up to \$1,000 for every Jaguar or Land Rover purchased or leased that year.
- For years, Volvo has donated \$500 to the Human Rights Campaign when a vehicle is purchased or leased.
- *Corporate Patterns* reports that at least since 1999 the company has been donating hundreds of thousands of dollars to homosexual groups. In 1999, Ford gave \$100,000 to the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission.
- Ford was given a 100% score on last year's Human Rights Campaign's Corporate Equality Index.
- Ford has been an "Emerald Sponsor" of Parents, Families & Friends of Lesbians & Gays (PFLAG), a national organization promoting the homosexual lifestyle including homosexual "marriage."
- Ford hired a D.C. marketing firm to target the gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgender market.
- Ford was an executive sponsor of the 2004 "Out & Equal Workplace Summit Conference." The purpose of this event was to advance the homosexual agenda, including homosexual "marriage," in major corporations.
- Ford has been an annual sponsor of the "Reaching Out MBA Conference" that promotes the education, visibility and networking capabilities of lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender business leaders in the United States and around the globe.

Source: www.boycottford.com

Joe Solmonese, president of the Human Rights Campaign, the largest homosexual pressure group, told *The Washington Post* that, "it looks pretty clear that they [Ford] have bowed to the American Family Association's demands."

Glenda Testone, Regional Media Director for the Gay and Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), told CNN, "It does seem like another attempt by an anti-gay organization to intimidate corporate America into not supporting or not doing business with gays and lesbians. And we know that's just plain wrong."

AFA declined to comment directly to CNN on Ford's decision. No other pro-family organizations were quoted.

Ford met with homosexual activists one week after announcing that it would pull the ads. This story was covered by *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post* and the Associated Press.

As a participant in the meeting, Solmonese told the *Post* that, "we asked them to disavow any relationship with the American Family Association ... As a group, we were pretty united in our extreme disappointment at Ford's willingness to even take a meeting with this right-wing extremist group."

No pro-family groups were quoted in the coverage of this meeting.

Two days after meeting with the homosexual activist groups, Ford reversed its decision and announced that it would not only abandon plans to pull some ads but would begin advertising all of its brands in gay-themed publications.

Stories ran in *The New York Times*, *The Washington Post*, *The San Francisco Chronicle* and the Associated Press, again quoting homosexual activists while ignoring pro-family organizations.

CNN's Kyra Phillips reiterated the activists' accusations of Ford "giving in to the pressure" of the AFA boycott. None of the coverage recognized the irony of homosexual activists complaining about AFA pressuring Ford while they themselves were pressuring the corporation.

AFA announced the reinstatement of its boycott three months later, in March 2006. The reinstatement was covered by *The Washington Post*, *The New York Times* and CNNMoney, and in an AP article that was reprinted in a number of other papers. None of the broadcast TV networks covered it.

The *Post* and the *Times* covered the story in a straightforward manner, supplying the history of the boycott.

AP quoted AFA Chairman Don Wildmon as saying, "Ford has the right to financially support homosexual groups promoting homosexual marriage, but at the same time, consumers have a right not to purchase automobiles made by Ford."

AP also included quotes from the Human Rights Campaign. Brad Luna, spokesman for the group, said "clear trends towards fairness, nondiscrimination, inclusion and acceptance of gays in corporate America are unstoppable."

Groups Supporting AFA's Boycott:

- Center for Reclaiming America
- Citizens for Community Values
- Vision America
- Free Market Foundation
- WIN Family Services
- Liberty Counsel
- CatholicVote.org
- Point of View Radio
- Coalitions for America
- Mayday for Marriage
- RealMarriage.org
- Judeo-Christian Council
- Constituent Vote
- Faith2Action
- Coalition for Marriage and Family
- ConservativeHG.com
- Tradition, Family, Property, Inc.
- National Association of Marriage Enhancement
- VCY America Radio Network
- Illinois Family Institute
- Renew America
- Christian Coalition International (Canada), Inc.
- Truth Tellers
- National Prayer Network
- West Virginia Family Foundation
- Awake America Ministries
- Abiding Truth Ministries
- The Pro-Family Law Center
- Brian Camenker, Dir., Mass Resistance
- Christian Family Coalition
- United States Justice Foundation
- Catholic Citizens of Illinois (CCI)

Source: www.boycottford.com

Ford did nothing to win back pro-family customers in April 2006 when its Board of Directors recommended that its shareholders vote against a proposal to exclude "sexual orientation" from Ford's equal employment enforcement policy.

According to an AP article, Ford's first reaction was to ask the U.S. Securities and Exchange Commission (SEC) to exclude the proposal from its proxy statement because "publicity over changing the policy would hurt sales to gay rights supporters." The request was denied.

A change in the policy would impede the recruitment of quality employees from universities and colleges according to the Board of Directors, which said in the proxy statement, "many...institutions require that

The bottom of this ad says "Jaguar will donate up to \$1,000 to GLAAD for each Jaguar purchased or leased between January 1, 2005 and December 31, 2005."

employers who wish to recruit on their campuses have non-discrimination policies that include non-discrimination based on sexual orientation.”

The shareholders did not approve the policy change. Meanwhile, Ford’s sales continue to fall and the media continue to ignore the boycott.

Article after article repeats the litany: Ford placed too much emphasis on its trucks and SUVs. Restructuring, pensions and health care are expensive. All true.

But perhaps there is another contributing factor. Maybe Ford’s core customers, who have many choices of vehicles, no longer want to fund homosexual activism. Why aren’t the media citing a petition with nearly 700,000 names on it, or the cry for help from 78 Texas Ford dealers?

¹ Porter, Eduardo, “Makers Put Health and Pension Burdens Squarely on the Workers, *The New York Times*, p. C1, available at <http://www.nytimes.com/2006/05/19/automobiles/19auto.html?ex=1305691200&en=88c4a9b0c7347298&ei=5088&partner=rssnyt&emc=rss>.

² Taylor, Alex, “Behind Ford’s Scary \$12.7 Billion Loss, *Fortune*, January 26, 2007, available at http://money.cnn.com/2007/01/26/news/companies/pluggedin_taylor_ford.fortune/index.htm.

³ Ford Files Forms 10-Q and 10-K/A with SEC; Completes Restatement of 2001-2005 Financial Results, PRNewswire, November 14, 2006, available at http://media.ford.com/newsroom/release_display.cfm?release=24771.