

Can anything stop the homophobia in the condom industry?

AIDS is a "condom marketer's dream," says John Silverman, president of Ansell Americas, the Sellers of LifeStyles condoms . . .

Time, February 16, 1987

BY JOE DISABATO

Asked what the company's position was toward acknowledging its Gay customers, Kleinman [Susan Kleinman, a public relations representative for Carter-Wallace Corp., manufacturers of Trojan condoms] said that it was "somewhere between a 10 foot pole and recognition."

Gaybeat (Cincinnati), March 1987

Lewis Brenner, senior vp of Ansell-Americas, says the company considers mass media "more efficient." He adds, "The danger, the threat, is in the heterosexual population. Very simply, there are more heterosexuals than homosexuals."

. . . Homosexuals account for 22,460 of the 31,036 reported cases of AIDS in the US . . . More than 12,600 gays have died from AIDS. AIDS transmitted by heterosexual contact . . . accounts for only 1,164 cases, or 4%.

Adweek, March 2, 1987

Have you ever seen an ad from a major condom manufacturer in any gay publication? No? Neither have I. Most people wouldn't believe it, but in the years since AIDS was first diagnosed

in the late '70s, not one major condom manufacturer has seen fit to undertake an advertising outreach to the gay community in the gay media. Not Trojan (which controls 55% of the condom market and is the undisputed industry leader); not Schmid (owner of the Ramses and Sheik brands which account for 39% of the condom market); not Ansell (makers of LifeStyles).

It was reported by *Advertising Age* in separate articles which ran in February and September of last year that the condom industry is now a \$100 million-a-year business and has been growing by 10% a year over the last few years after experiencing a stagnant period in the '60s and '70s when the birth-control pill became popular. The *Village Voice* in New York did a major cover article on condoms in March of last year, indicating that condom distributors in New York and California (the states with the highest number of AIDS cases) report condom sales up anywhere from 25 to 50%. The rise in condom sales is attributed to people's fear of sexually transmitted diseases. Moreover, *Ad Age* reports that the percentage of women buying condoms has increased. A decade ago almost no condoms were purchased by women; as of the September article, the estimate is

that 40% are being purchased by women who fear STD's (and specifically AIDS). The *Village Voice* article mentions gay men prominently, while no mention is made in either *Ad Age* article of purchases by gay men — more evidence of homophobia in the advertising industry.

The *Ad Age* articles do point out that — now that women comprise such a large segment of the condom market — condom ads have for the first time been accepted by many women's magazines, including *Brides*, *Family Circle*, *Mademoiselle*, *Self*, *Vogue*, *Modern Bride*, *Parents*, *Redbook*, and *Working Mother*. And, lest you think that minorities have been forgotten by the condom companies it is also mentioned that condom ads have been accepted by *Essence* and *Ebony*. Now, of course, condom ads have been accepted by local TV stations, the ABC Network, and even by the *New York Times*. But during the last few years, when the general media would not even consider accepting condom ads, the gay media was begging condom companies for this advertising. We were — and still are — refused. While AIDS may be a "condom marketer's dream" it seems that this "dream" still does not include gays. (If only the disease itself were so homophobic!) Ansell's advertising agency was so appalled by this callous statement made by the company's president that they resigned the account last week.

Rivendell Marketing Company has for the past nine years been actively working on Madison Avenue getting major companies to advertise in the gay media. During this time you may have noticed from time to time ads from movie studios, li-

quor companies, and other national mainstream companies appearing in the pages of local gay newspapers. Most of these ads are secured through Rivendell Marketing on behalf of the local gay papers throughout the country. For almost five years now, Rivendell has argued that condom companies have both an economic interest and a moral responsibility (a pretty potent combination) to place educational condom advertising in gay media. These discussions have taken place over the years with Lewis Brenner (formerly in charge of marketing for Trojan, now at Ansell-Americas in charge of marketing for LifeStyles), Brent Gulick (brand manager for Ramses at Schmid), Scott Hoyt (brand manager for Trojan at Carter-Wallace), and Mark Klein (formerly marketing chief at Schmid, now VP of Marketing for Trojan at Carter-Wallace). So far, in spite of all our efforts, there has been no gay advertising, and I have been flatly told that none will be forthcoming from any of these companies in the near future.

In my discussions of this problem with the editors and publishers of various gay newspapers, I have sensed a great deal of anger and frustration over this situation — anger and frustration which the recent appearance of condom advertising in women's magazines and on television has brought into focus. While no one would condemn condom companies for trying to reach the widest audience with safe-sex messages, it is understandable that we as a community might feel that condom companies are using the deaths of thousands of gay men to promote their own economic growth, galvanizing popular and governmental support for airing condom ads on

A SPECIAL APPEAL TO GAY MEN OF COLOR

Some people have the mistaken notion that AIDS is mainly a "white man's disease" — that People of Color aren't much at risk for AIDS.

The statistics prove otherwise. National figures as of Oct. 13, 1986, reveal that Blacks account for 25 percent of all AIDS cases, and Hispanics account for another 14 percent. When looking at the statistics for children affected by this disease, we find that only 19 percent of children with AIDS are white; Black children constitute 59 percent of the cases, and Hispanics another 21 percent.

The AIDS virus does not discriminate on the basis of race, or age, or gender, or sexual orientation.

AIDS can strike anyone who engages in the activities that can spread AIDS — Unsafe Sex or the sharing of IV drug needles.

UNSAFE SEX PRACTICES

Anal Intercourse Without Condom

Rimming

Fisting

Blood Contact

Sharing Sex Toys or Needles

Semen or Urine in Mouth

Vaginal Intercourse Without Condom

The only way we have of limiting this epidemic is through prevention.

If we as a community are going to survive this epidemic, all of us need to eliminate Unsafe Sex and needle-sharing from our gay male lifestyles until a cure or vaccine for AIDS is available.

No one has ever died from the frustration of giving up a few Unsafe Sex practices. Far too many have died of AIDS.

Together, we can stop the spread of this disease.



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Call for more information.

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