

## Why are Arabs always shown as sheiks, terrorists or belly dancers?' Arab-American groups claim Coke Super Bowl ad is 'racist'

By Reuters Reporter

Arab-American groups have sharply criticized a Coca-Cola Super Bowl ad depicting an Arab walking through the desert with a camel, and one group said it would ask the beverage giant to change it before CBS airs the game on Sunday before an expected audience of more than 100 million U.S. viewers.

Coca-Cola released an online teaser of the commercial last week, showing the Arab walking through a desert. He soon sees cowboys, Las Vegas showgirls and a motley crew fashioned after the marauders of the apocalyptic 'Mad Max' film race by him to reach a gigantic bottle of Coke.

'Why is it that Arabs are always shown as either oil-rich sheiks, terrorists, or belly dancers?' said Warren David, president of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee, or ADC.



Angry: Arab-American groups have sharply criticized a Coca-Cola Super Bowl ad depicting an Arab walking through the desert with a camel



Stereotypes: Arab activists asked, 'Why is it that Arabs are always shown as either oil-rich sheiks, terrorists, or belly dancers?'



Oasis: In the commercial, the man sees a bottle from afar

In its ad, Coke asks viewers to vote online on which characters should win the race. The online site does not allow a vote for the Arab character.

'The Coke commercial for the Super Ball is racist, portraying Arabs as backward and foolish Camel Jockeys, and they have no chance to win in the world,' Imam Ali Siddiqui, president of the Muslim Institute for Interfaith Studies, said in an email.

'What message is Coke sending with this?' asked Abed Ayoub, ADC's director of legal and policy affairs. 'By not including the Arab in the race, it is clear that the Arab is held to a different standard when compared to the other characters in the commercial,' he said.

CBS declined comment. Coca-Cola spokeswoman Lauren Thompson said Coke took a 'cinematic' approach with the ad, employing the characters as a nod to movies of the past.

'Coca-Cola is an inclusive brand enjoyed by all demographics,' she said in an email. 'We illustrate our core values, from fun and refreshment to happiness, inspiration and optimism across all of our marketing communications.'

Fierce: A bevy of Las Vegas showgirls in a bus soon join the race for the refreshment



Howdy: A team of Cowboys compete for the coveted cola



Let's go: A motley crew fashioned after the marauders of the apocalyptic 'Mad Max' also want a taste of the cool soft drink



Disappointment: Once the competing parties arrive, they realize it is just a sign and they continue to race but the Arab character didn't make it to this point because his camel was too slow

Ayoub said ADC intended to contact Coke and CBS Corp on Thursday to 'hopefully start a dialog.'

'I want to know why this happened and how can we fix this if possible before Sunday,' he said.

The ADC garnered attention back in 1992 when it complained that lyrics in the Walt Disney animated film 'Aladdin' were racist.

Ronald Goodstein, professor at the McDonough School of Business at Georgetown University, said he was surprised by the image as well.

# YOU DECIDE THE ENDING OF *Coca-Cola's* BIG GAME AD

Watch and vote for who wins the Coke.



VOTE NOW



COWBOYS



SHOWGIRLS



BADLANDERS

SHARE



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Excluded: Arab activists are upset that the Arab character wasn't included in the final three contenders

'If Coke's vision is to be an arm's distance away from every customer, why would they want to offend the Arab world?' said Goodstein.

Ayoub said the commercial could harm Coke's business with the Arab community.

'Coke should understand and respect their consumers and have a better understanding of the market they are sharing,' he Ayoub.

The company has a large market share in the Middle East and North Africa, he noted, and many convenience stores and other retail outlets in the United States that offer Coke are owned by Arab-Americans.