Sprite’s Latest Campaign Encourages Black Youth to Vote

With the presidential election one week away, Sprite is encouraging Black and multicultural youth to make their voices heard at the polls.

In a handful of 15-second spots debuting throughout tonight’s BET Hip Hop Awards, six emerging artists explain why voting matters to them and their communities. The individuals featured are photographer Yvette Glasco, illustrator Neka King, fashion designers Blu Boy and Dorothy Lawes and artists Foremost and Sage Guillory.

“We’ve been shown that if you don’t try to change things, they won’t be changed,” Guillory says in his clip.

The ads, created by Wieden+Kennedy New York, are part of a larger initiative titled “Create Your Future,” a nonpartisan push to educate people on voting rights and the electoral process.

Danielle Henry, group director of integrated content for Coca-Cola North America, explained that since Sprite’s purpose is helping multicultural youth make their mark on culture, the most impactful thing the brand can do in the present moment is urge its consumer base to vote in the election.

“That doesn’t mean that Sprite is getting political,” added Henry. “We are encouraging our most valuable audience to engage in the electoral process.”

The marketing campaign is appearing across multiple mediums, including out-of-home and streaming audio. On Oct. 1, Sprite

premiered a 15-second spot informing viewers that they could vote early by mail. A couple weeks later, the Coca-Cola brand introduced a 30-second ad featuring Sprite's six young artists on Spotify and Twitter. The commercial is scheduled to run at the beginning of this evening's BET Hip Hop Awards.

Sprite has a long history of showcasing hip-hop and basketball culture in its campaigns. Commercials have showcased musicians from Kurtis Blow in the 1980s and Missy Elliott in the 1990s to NBA superstars Grant Hill and LeBron James.

This past June, Sprite, like many other brands, donated funds and posted its support of Black Lives Matter. "America has proven its love of Black culture, but now it has to prove its love of Black people," reads a tweet from Sprite's official Twitter account.

"Our strength as a brand is because of the Black community," said Henry. "And it's really important for our community and our most valuable consumers to know that we still see them, we still support them."

In the 2016 presidential election, Black voter turnout decreased for the first time in 20 years, according to the Pew Research Center. Among Black voters, 59.6% cast a ballot that year, dropping from a record high of 66.6% in 2012. Turnout rates for Asian, Hispanic and white voters, meanwhile, either increased or remained the same.

In late June, the Coca-Cola Company told its workforce that Election Day would be a paid holiday for all full-time U.S.-based employees.

Despite emboldening its fans to speak out and express their views on various topics in the past, Sprite has never explicitly advocated for people to vote before. Henry said that with everything that's been happening in 2020 and social media discussions, much of the issues "can be affected by leaning into the electoral process."

According to Henry, Sprite plans to “amp up” the campaign until Election Day.

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