



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on January 28, 2019

Coca-Cola Pulls Out of Super Bowl; Will Air Pre-Game Ad Focused on Unity Instead

Coca-Cola surprised consumers when it announced it will not run advertisements during the Super Bowl on February 3. Instead, it will air a commercial featuring a message during the pre-game show just before the National Anthem.

The 60-second advertisement will be focused on unity and diversity, common themes in Coca-Cola commercials. This particular commercial will be created by ad agency Wieden + Kennedy and will feature original animated characters to show that Coke is for everyone, *Variety* reports.



"We have a long history of using the country's biggest advertising stage to share a message of unity and positivity, especially at times when our nation feels divided," said Stuart Kronauge, senior vice president of marketing for Coca-Cola North America and president of its business unit. "This year, we decided to place our ad just before the national anthem as Americans come together in their living rooms to remind everyone that 'together is beautiful.'"

The commercial is reportedly inspired by a famous Andy Warhol quote from 1975 that will close the advertisement: "We all have different hearts and hands; heads holding various views. Don't you see? Different is beautiful. And, together is beautiful, too."

Coca-Cola executives have claimed that the advertisement's message is meant to be apolitical and is not inspired by today's politics but rather is a continuation of values long held by the company.

"These values are enduring for Coca-Cola, and in fact, we have talked about these values very overtly over the course of the history of the brand," Brynn Bardacke, vice president of content and creative excellence, told *USA Today Sports*.

But another executive tipped the company's hand in an e-mailed statement to the *Atlanta Journal-Constitution*. According to Coke marketing executive Jennifer Healan, this year's commercial, "within the context of what's happening in our country today, felt best suited to a pre-game spot, setting the stage with an optimistic message of unity."

It's unclear why Coca-Cola has made the decision to opt out of Super Bowl game time commercials after more than a decade of TV spots within the game window. Could it have something to do with the Super Bowl protests led by left-wing celebrities who claim that NFL owners have colluded to keep former 49ers quarterback Colin Kaepernick out of the league because of his kneeling protests during the National Anthem? To show solidarity with the sub-par quarterback, celebrities such as Rihanna and Amy Schumer have announced that they will not be performing during the halftime show or featured in any commercials that air during the big game. Coca-Cola executives have emphasized the importance of airing the commercial just before the National Anthem. And is it a coincidence that Wieden + Kennedy



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is the same agency that made Nike's ad last year starring Kaepernick, according to *Ad Age*?

The Daily Caller notes that the cost to air Super Bowl commercials this year is obscene, ranging from \$5.1 to \$5.3 million as opposed to pre-game rates which run from hundreds of thousands to a few million dollars, depending on the proximity to the start of the game. Perhaps Coca-Cola was looking to be fiscally conservative this year, but the decision is certainly a strange one considering this year's Super Bowl is in Atlanta, home to Coca-Cola.

Coca-Cola's decision is also a peculiar one since its main competitor, PepsiCo, will not only be sponsoring the Super Bowl halftime show, but plans to run ads for a variety of its drinks throughout the game. *Variety* notes that Coca-Cola's decision may keep it out of consideration when critics review this year's Super Bowl ad roster.

The Coca-Cola Foundation has also announced that it will be making a \$1 million donation to the National Center for Civil and Human Rights to allow for free admission to the center through the end of February. Adult admission to the center is \$19.99 plus taxes.

"It is our pleasure to provide a grant to the national center to host some of the visitors who will be in Atlanta" for the Super Bowl, said Helen Price, vice president, global community affairs, and president of the Coca-Cola Foundation. "So the \$1 million grant will allow the center to host at least 50,000 visitors."

According to the center's interim chief executive officer Brian Tolleson, the donation will help the center to share "Atlanta's story and civil and human rights stories with visitors to the Super Bowl and beyond."

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