

The
Coffee House
Manifesto

You are not a participant. You are not a recipient. You are not one that will benefit from or be protected by the Brand and insignia that clouds your sight. Let me be the first to say to you that you are a natural resource, an expendable commodity; abundantly prevalent, infinitely interchangeable from Brand to corporation to industry. You are an hourly employee. The powerless state that you occupy is not coincidental in nature. Early on in your life you were sold on a dream. A dream that promised you income, status, stability and in it's smallest incarnation autonomy. It was herald as the liberator of people, the equalizer of incomes; the panacea to all social, political and economic woes. The dream was the word and the word was education.

Little did you know that when you received your education that there would be millions like you. Little did you know that tuition would triple, quadruple, quintuple, sextuple in less than two decades. Little did you know that this inflation would eerily coincide with the growth in non-teaching faculty. Little did you know that grants and scholarships would literally be of no avail. Little did you know you would make friends with a bitch of a woman called Sallie Mae, and she would enslave you. Little did you know that a recession was coming; a recession that, in the tail-end of the 1980's Wall Street boom, would require companies to truncate hundreds of thousands of jobs. Little did you know that this temporary fix would become a new methodology for the darlings of Wall Street. Little did you know that those whom had borne the economic responsibility of your upkeep as a minor would not be in a position to give you a leg up in your quest for economic independence. Little did you know that the "newly created" college student credit card programs inhabiting the student unions, cafeterias and mail rooms of colleges and universities would allow you to take on more revolving debt, at a

younger age than any other generation. Little did you know that these payments, along with Sallie Mae's relentless gouging, along with a growing sentiment that you inhabited a generation of lazy, alternative-rock listening who theoristslittle did you know that that would cause you to seek a day job; if for no other reason than to have some income till this economic famine passed.. Eleven years later you found that the numbers of you and your brethren had increased. That you shuffle from customer service job to customer service job in search of income, opportunity and time to devise a plan of escape.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE

I have chosen coffee as my model for I can think of no other symbol more ubiquitous, more hypocritical or more exploitative than that of the corporate coffee shop.

I. Baristas and Managers

Baristas and managers are as diametrically opposed as any two entities could possibly be while still inhabiting the same organizational structure. A cursory look into this relationship would reveal that one is paid by the hour, and the other is salary. An investigative look would reveal that one is tied to daily performance, the other quarterly.

An in depth analysis would reveal that one sides livelihood is built by company performance, and the other is destroyed by the same exact performance. This was not always so. In the distant past of our economic expansion affectionately known as the post war period (W.W.II) there was an unspoken rule, a well understood intention, reward and grooming pattern of management crossover. You have to look no further than your grandparents or any current fortune 500 myth of the mailroom boy that becomes an executive. The hard-working, loyal, tireless employee whose eagerness and never-ending dedication is eventually rewarded with a responsible position in the decision making apparatus. During the aforementioned recession this myth was not only shattered but hopelessly eradicated by C.E.O.'s and C.F.O.'s realization that was not necessarily in a corporation's best interest to have lifelong employees. We became infected with the "new, slicker, slimmer" corporation. This movement was at its best covert and at its worse bold-faced and unapologetic. It is no secret that in today's world corporations only appear large. They in actuality have few full time employees and seek to reduce that number at every opportunity. The easiest way to describe this is second class citizenry. The smaller a workforce is, the easier it is to manipulate and intimidate. In addition the number of benefits that employees can demand and their collective bargaining is seriously decreased. This of course creates a gap in labor. Seasonal increases in volume, spikes in activity and the like could threaten to dismantle the whole system. Enter the part-time employee. The part-time employee is a Godsend for corporate America. Terminating, drastically reducing the scheduled hours of and to a certain extent even the maltreatment of full time employees can land a corporation in the center of a highly publicized class-action suit. Telling a part-timer that it's slow and not to come in does not

arouse any suspicion. And when it does it is often written of as an isolated event of time and place. But to fully understand this relationship and further more that of baristas and managers one must come to see The Third Party. The Third Party is who you cannot see. It is the state government controlling the D.M.V. It is the shareholders influencing the policy decisions. And in coffee it is the non-retail side of the corporation. These are the individuals least able to make the correct decision and most empowered to make any decision. But let us first talk about decisions.

We assume that we are all in this together. That on some level, at some passing of crossing roads we all have agreed to sell coffee. This is a misconception. The barista is concerned with selling coffee. The Third party is concerned with selling the brand. The manager lies somewhere in between. And will lean towards whichever side most directly will achieve his short term goals. This division is no more apparent than when there is a decision to be made. Baristas will sacrifice anything to sell more coffee, especially management's rules and regulation. The Third Party will sacrifice anything to sell the brand, especially barista's jobs and morale. Managers tend to get caught in the crossfire and have to decide what is more important to them, the faith, trust and respect of the hourly workforce or the spoils promised them by The Third Party.

The fundamental difference between baristas and managers is the fundamental difference in how each measures their performance. A barista uses his knowledge, speed and customer service ability to sell more coffee and in turn make himself more valuable to the corporation. This will warrant a pay raise and more responsibility and move him ever so closer to the coveted invitation to join management... or so he thinks. Managers

on the other hand use their expertise in scheduling, soft skill manipulation and anticipation of store performance in relation to the previous two, to single them out among the field of hopefuls at their present management level and warrant their ascension to the next level of the hierarchy. This relationship is irreconcilable; for each manager will manipulate and downright exploit a labor force to accomplish his ambitious objectives. Let me clarify. The manager has been given a finite amount of time to increase store performance. To do so he will grant pay raises, preferential treatment and exemptions of select employees from certain behavior. This is the beginning of what is know as the cycle.

a) The cycle

The cycle is what is affectionately referred as the movement of a store from its present (ill performing) state to one that has been predetermined by The Third Party through 90 day action plans, trimester reforecasting or annual plans. Since uncontrolled growth is the aim of the coffee corporation, this is an ongoing state. Every coffee shop in the world is either in the upward or downward of the cycle. Let me be clear in this statement. A coffee shop could be setting sales records everyday, have exemplary health records and snapshots that are nothing but 100%'s and still be on the downward side because The Third Party expects even more of it and deems it to change. Consequently this is an ongoing state.

As a barista you cannot win this game. For upon helping the manager achieve his goals he will be promoted. The new manager will tell you that it's a great store and he will help to make it greater. He will quickly realize that there is no way to increase store

performance since it is already at such a magnanimous level...unless he could reduce the labor cost. A quick review of the past raises will reveal a slew of unwarranted raise awarded by the exiting manager. This will later manifest itself in questions of loyalty and insubordination. His first move will be to hire people. Under the guise that we need to be prepared for contingencies. These new employees will suddenly start to command a significant portion of hours. As a barista you will read this as a blatant slap in the face. But it is not. What he is doing is trying to reduce the labor coefficient; reducing the hours of the highly paid employees and increasing the hours of the underpaid employees. From this point forward the cycle operates on auto-pilot. Seasoned baristas not only read this as a violation of the promise made by The Third Party through the exiting manager but also see it as a divisive tactic used to single out the older employees. The store quickly separates into us and them factions. Factions that run misinformation among themselves all trying to win this shell game. At this point of the cycle firing/push-outs will occur. The main "trouble makers" will have long been identified and the purpose of the seemingly immediate firings and push-outs (transferring to another store) is to quell the resistance. Understand that it is in the best interest of the manager that this become particularly nasty in nature. The more he can antagonize and cause baristas to act out, the harsher treatment he can get the Third Party to agree to allowing him to perform. Upon completing the "cleansing" cycle the manager makes the consummate slew of promises of raises and preferential treatment to the remaining members and additions and hence the cycle repeats itself.

Baristas and managers can never resolve this issue. The only solution would seemingly be to join management before the "cleansing". While this seems achievable

there are a number of factors that prevent it from being so. If you have survived any number of store turnovers (cycles) you have either been branded as someone who is a trouble maker and needs to eventually be removed from the corporation as a whole (an interesting scenario where an employee accused of ill-performance is sent to a new situation where his new manager is told he is an ill performer and hence the new manager cites this employee on every instance further reinforcing the feelings about this employee) or it is assumed that the employee lacks the necessary characteristics and expertise to be a manager if for no other reason than the employee has yet to exemplify them throughout numerous turnover-cycles. Clearly you can see how the temporary workforce is manipulated strictly for the growth of the Brand. In protest you may scream what about the performance reviews of the employee. Performance reviews are nothing more than a placebo used to placate a temporary workforce. It is not a coincidence that an excellent rating is never received. The corporation will state that that is because there are no perfect employees so no one can ever score in the upper ten percent of the review scale. At best you can never be more than above average; and since I have already demonstrated how managers bend the Third Party's rules to appease the baristas, it is not a huge stretch of logic for a new manager to conclude that any satisfactory ratings was merely given as a token of appreciation and not warranted by performance. It is crucial that you understand how subjective your performance is at any given time. Years of dedication and verifiable service can be exasperated by raising question about the manager that this barista served under. This process is flawless. It allows for the harsh treatment and mud-slinging of any employee at any time. It is a harsh of a regime as Mr. Winston Smith served under and just as confusing. Your life as a barista is an exercise in

doublethink. To think of a promotion is thoughtcrime. These are not illusions and literary examples that I am parading out to show my pedigree...it is the reality of the life that you have in your customer service job.

This whole structure centers around a little known fact of life in the coffee shop. The traits, skills, knowledge and expertise that make you an excellent barista, make you a horrible manager. Baristas need to be very immediate in their concerns (do I have enough whole milk? Is the trash can full?) Managers need to be much more long-term (Have I hired enough people to cover those I will lose when classes begin?) There are of course individuals who are capable of both extremes and who could effortlessly transgress from one to the other. This would result in demolishing the temporary worker structure the Brand has fought so hard to maintain. So to prevent it, it creates an environment where managers are encouraged to be autonomous and freethinking and baristas are encouraged not to be autonomous and not to be freethinking. You need look no further than the instruction manuals and materials used for training. They are written in a language so juvenile, so beneath even grade school graduates that it is insulting to your intelligence. Quite ironic in a country where comprehension and reading ability are always a current debate. This tactic begins the first level of control in the coffee shop.....**do not think for yourself**. As a barista you are chided for problem solving. Attempt to find the whereabouts of missing merchandise, try to find where something is stored once it has been moved. You will quickly be instructed to "please ask". Although it may seem that your manager is being helpful and not wanting you to waste precious time looking for an item, in reality it merely reinforces the widely held belief that baristas lack the intelligence to be anything but baristas. They are "dumbing you up" so that you cannot cross over to

management through your ignorance of store operations or your inability to problem solve.

If you have realized nothing else from this document realize that the only two things you can truly offer your coffee shop, loyalty and expertise, they will hold bitterly against you. Employees whose wages are significantly higher than average, employees knowledgeable about store operations, employees who are loyal to their immediate managers are nothing but a liability to the coffee shop. All of the devices that they employ against you are designed to make you un-promotable at the least and unemployable in the larger scheme (for upon leaving your coffee shop for another you will have to recant this unbelievable story of what happened and if hired you will be put on probation and watched carefully for discipline problems.)

II. Managers and Branded Corporations

This is easily the most volatile of the relationships that I will discuss. The relationship between managers and branded corporations or more accurately stated the role that managers play in the branded corporation, because this is not really a relationship as much as a display of indentured servitude, is one of means, or to use the vernacular a "means to an end". The manager in the branded corporation is the "local affiliate", he's their "home office" or more bluntly their nearest means of corporate control. As distressing as the plight of the barista is, it pails in comparison to that of the manager. The manager has the dubious task of unyielding loyalty to an organization that conspicuously conflicts itself and at times disseminates lies amongst its own workforce simply for the means of the

growth of the Brand. But before an inspection of the quasi-relationship can begin we must first understand the manager.

Almost always the manager is essentially a nice person. Someone that having just met you would bestow the honors of "decent" and "honest". You quickly equivocate them with a favorite TA or mentor if not educator in your past. You have this feeling that they "come from your neck of the woods" and that they have "been there". This is to the credit of the branded corporation for they select individuals that the baristas will respond to. The manager is the first level of contact (line of defense) for the Brand. This needs to be an individual with the capability of holding two drastically differing series of thought in their head at the same time and never let the concern of either clash in their mind or manifest into facial features or body language. Simply stated, you need to be able to hide it. The coffee shop manager will, on an almost daily basis, be required to make decisions that conflict with the manager's own sense of equity and fairness. His ability to repeatedly do this will result in financial reward. His is employed with the brand strictly on a temporary basis. While you will find several managers with lengthy tenures inside these corporations do not read this as a long-term employee. Many branded coffee managers have become quite adept at the cycle and the politics of their occupation and have done quite well for themselves. But their occupation can only be described as the short-term for they still fall prey to the whims of the Third Party and the longer they retain their tenure the greater the Brand's necessity to remove these individuals, for not only are they invalidating the structure of temporary employment by setting dangerous precedents, but they have witnessed enough Third Party actions and Branded control mechanisms to present a formidable ethical, moral and legal opposition. It is crucial to

understand that managers are temporary employees as well. The brand needs the same ability to dispose of them as it does to dispose of baristas, with one crucial difference. Managers do not directly create revenue for the store, whereas a barista does. The baristas do the actual selling and making of things. The baristas, by and large, are doing the dishes, emptying the trash and making trips to the bank. There is a limit to how much the Third Party can do to the baristas at one single time. For too much of a correction starts to seriously hamper the flow of goods out of the store and hence revenue back to the Brand. Yet managers are quite expendable. They can be moved, or terminated quite quickly. Traditionally a lower ranking manager is placed into the store of the manager to be replaced. This individual is always contends that "they are there to aid in the problem and give insight". Initially you will see a small conflict, generally on minor disciplinary matters. The newly arrived manager will suggests harsh and unwarranted action that will spark a debate between himself and the manager that is too be replaced. It is imperative to remember that in every management situation, in every management change someone has had a conversation with the Third Party. Promises have been made and deals have been struck. Since the timeline of action is so short the incoming manager must establish not only his control of the situation (the coffee shop itself) by his loyalty to the Third Party. What better way than the rigorous enforcement of minor rules and regulations and the termination of long ago identified trouble makers or high wage earners. Though it will not be obvious to the manager that he is about to be replaced by his new assistant manager, it will be quite clear to the baristas. Who, having witnessed this several times, begin to realize that they had better make friends with the replacement ,manager or find another job. Consequently there is a major conflict between managers where the

incumbent manager calls the nearest Third Party member (often times the same individual whom had struck the deal with the incoming manager) and demands that this individual be disciplined and removed. It is at this juncture that the manager finds out he has been replaced, new management takes over and the cycle begins yet again.

Managers rarely come right out of school. Rarely are they hired away from other Brands in similar industries (bar/restaurant, fast-food, retail) by offering more money, responsibility or autonomy. Rarely are they exemplary employees looking to stake permanent claims in the Brand and hence corporate America. More often than not the manager is someone in transition. For internal hires they are a key holder that survived. A barista that played the game and won. Graduated from the bloody battle field of the barista, to the clandestine activity of the manager. The internal hire has demonstrated that he can be manipulated by monetary gains and that he understands the political nature of the coffee shop. This individual, for whatever reason, has decided to move up the food chain. And through a series of calculated moves and opportunities where his faith was tested by either not speaking up or looking the other way he won a promotion. It is critically important that this relationship directly results from the would-be's former cooperation. Maybe it was to help monitor the actions of a troublesome barista, a suspected thief or just an employee that the Third Party has deemed expendable. It is this internal conflict of believing whatever the Third Party tells him about someone that he works with on an almost daily basis. This is an individual that the manager has befriended, an individual that the would-be manager does not warn of pending action. Whether or not the disciplinary action is warranted or that the accused infraction has been proven is not of issue. What is of issue is who is willing to follow instruction and who is

not. In any coffee shop there are always several individuals vying for a management spot. Each determined to get results and get to their ultimate goal; which often times is not a life in the corporation yet enough money and autonomy to accomplish their end. Which maybe a down payment on a house, to finish a master's program or to get through a tough economic time like the birth of a child or the repair of a vehicle. External hires are in even more of a predicament. Although some may come from similar and related industries, most do not. Statistically a unusually high number having their previous management job left under suspicious circumstances. The catastrophic growth of the Brand requires an endless supply of managers. Requirements cannot be high, application processes cannot be rigorous because the new store is being built, managers are being promoted and moved to more lucrative situations so the gap must be filled. The word on the street is that they will hire anybody; recovering addicts, individuals with serious cash handling violations of those without any experience whatsoever. Many of the external hires have no customer service experience and often breeze through their training period with little or no knowledge of the products and the line of business. The Third Party reinforces the fact the manager is omniscient and that baristas, if left to their own desires, would never figure out how to open the register let alone order supplies or answer the phone. This does not spell doom for the Branded coffee house for the job of the manager is not to manager but yet to do whatever the Third Party wishes. Who better than the lot of individuals previously described.

The manager finds himself party to bizarre situations where he witnesses several different managers in different stores and at times regions corroborate testimony for what ever the Brand desires. The manager has a haunting feeling that the politics of promotion

are his daily duties. The world of the manager is governed by annual plans that if he surpasses he will receive monetary compensation. Labor hours accrued to his store that at times are unrealistic, but can be increased(sometimes to ludicrous levels) if the manager produces an "A" health grade, or a high-profile store status. Motivating the baristas through whatever means to do the actually leg work of the objectives and to participate in whatever scheme the next nearest Third Party member deems necessary and lucrative. This is assumed by the manager to be a temporary relationship. Six months they tell themselves, till the baby is born. Ironically the decision to join the corporation is what sidetracks the end. Upon their first week of work the managers quickly realize that they are working much more than forty hours, many times closer to sixty. Overwhelmed by the true status of the coffee shop (misleading managers about what is actually going on in a store is a time honored tradition. Not only are managers, by definition of their economic necessity for a salary, not in the position to simply walk away; but they are promised more of a top side if they can make the situation achieve the previously agreed upon goals) many see it as a test of the management abilities and "hunker down" to accomplish the task. This is the beginning of doublethink. Few managers see this as a character flaw of the Brand or a violation of their agreement. An overwhelming number merely view it as an unfortunate situation that they will overcome along with all other tasks. It is this rationalization that allows the Third Party to use the manager to keep the baristas in line. The manager is an overseer. No question about it. And for a group that has sold it's soul in one manner or another to gain the title they are quite resistant. Managers will display empathy and compassion on several instances and often publicly criticize (though not on record) the polices of the coffee shop and the Brand as a whole. But once the large

picture comes into focus. The picture of scarification, meaning that sacrifice is not a question of if, it is a question of when and to whom, managers quickly realize that baristas do not have the financial requirements of managers and are by the nature of their employment (customer service has always had an extremely high turnover rate) nomadic, so the loss of a job is not necessarily catastrophic (barista turnover is ridiculously high anyway and there is enough evidence to support that those who were pushed out would have wound up quitting anyway) so the manager rationalizes this so that he can sleep at night. This system works beautifully, till the Third Party has problem delivering on it's promise of promotion and monetary compensation. This tips the balance of power into the barista's favor. This power is temporary as is all barista power because the members of the barista staff (proletariat) are always in a state of change. Once a change in barista personnel (either by accomplishment of barista goals or by a management push-out) occurs the strength of the remaining baristas is seriously diminished. Initially by the Third Party devoting more resources and personnel to insure that this situation does not repeat itself. To a larger extent the members of the barista staff that remain have been identified either as friend or foe; either way they will be rearranged and thus barista power will evaporate.

It is the inescapable fact that few coffee house managers have long-term goals in the coffee shop and the brand as a whole. It is this tangible piece of information that allows the third party to affect change so rapidly not to mention ruthlessly. The Brand has positioned itself as opportunity for a short term goal. With the economic nature of the manager being identical to the barista, Brands have an endless supply of individuals who are willing to do the dirty work. The fact that these manners and actions may be directly

contrary to the managers personal ethics, morality and opinion is of little importance; because all parties (baristas excluded) see actions as short term and non-typical. Thus allowing for harsh treatment and a measurable loss in rational and ethical decision making under the guise that "this is an isolated situation". The fact that the manager's entire management career is made up of "non-typical" "isolated situations" escapes the manager. This quasi-stable, semi-permanent relationship allows for maximum Third Party control and ridiculous growth. It is the backbone of the corporate coffee shop.

III. Political and Economic Literature

The corporate coffee shop is for all intents and purposes the front lines of the struggle between the multinational company expansion (Brand growth) and the responsibility to and importance of the lives of those who inhabit these corporations (quality of life/work issues).

In a relatively short period of time (decade) corporations have changed their looks, activities and mannerisms. Part of the aforementioned statement should be refuted because corporations as always have had a thirst for revenue. But never have we seen such overzealousness and reckless disregard for individuals in the quest for the almighty dollar. To come fully circumspect are we to blame? How much of our consumption is a media and conglomerate creation and how much is wanton desire? We love new products. We love the ad campaigns and the money back guarantees (their being honored irrelevant, their mere presence assures us that we are the center of economic activity).

Microchips and video games so realistic that they affect your waking reality. But in the same breath we have a hankering that all is not right. That \$150 sneakers named after a famous basketball players are really nice and we love to show our involvement with those images and those feelings, yet fully realizing that many of these products were produced in near slavery conditions by individuals who would have to work for a weeks to afford to purchase them. Disgusted by what we have given birth to; what our rabid/hybrid/Teflon coated form of capitalism has created; how can we be responsible and not lose the perplexing number of choices, high level of quality and price negotiating power? What I am suggesting is that before we attack the corporate coffee shop with blunt instruments we must ask ourselves of how much of this we approve. We love the products and we love the share prices. And while this is in no way, shape or form directly responsible for the conditions of these coffee shops, it does indicate a higher priority that dominates our culture. This paradox, this internal conflict is not easily solved (consider activists and protesters who fly off the handle about eating at fast-food restaurants or wearing name brand clothes all the while having a house full of consumer electronics).

Harsher schools of thought will instruct you that exploitation is always followed by economic growth. While this may be a truth in linear economic thinking it in no way should be construed that the genocide, election tampering and general running amuck in another countries real estate is in the long-run good for the country. Lastly, true economic, political and social change can only truly be affected from within the countries themselves. As harsh, and at times fatal, as working for these companies may be (all positions from third world sub-contractees to underemployed disenfranchised retail associate) there is an endless supply of people willing to fill these positions. In light of

this information we are asked to question "if things are as bad as they are, why do people work there?" "Are these people not motivated or structurally obstructed to finding other work...or are things not as bad as originally purported?"

Before any level of change, be that economic or cerebral, self-inspection must be completed. Only once we have looked at our own demands for consumption and responsibility will we truly able to begin to affect that of the multinationals that divide up the world as we speak.

1). How you are controlled.

The mechanism that controls the actions, thought and to a lesser extent activities of the barista is evident everywhere you look. But instead of looking for one apparatus, one structure or one set of rules, we must look at the environment for that is where the control really takes a foothold. It begins to creep into your daily existence very subtly. It begins with the term used for the first level designation (partner, associate, bookseller, customer service representative). It has a friendly ring. Employee is entirely too harsh for their tastes. While "day-slave" or "whipping boy" would probably be a more accurate term, it would prepare you and warn you of what approaches. The primary tenet in controlling you is stealth. Your inability to clearly see what obstructs your goal and the forces moving against you delay your taking action against it. This is no more evident than in the mission statement. Precisely the part about valuing diversity. It is true that across the board in all markets this is a diverse corporation, at least more than the Brick & Mortar's

that inhabit our past. But when moving to a market level, moving to a district level, looking to a store level we see a vastly different corporation. Stores are predominated by one ethnic group or another. Hiring and firings eerily fall along the lines of race. And while you would be hard pressed to find situations where someone was fired strictly because of the color of their skin, you will not have trouble discerning which minority groups tend to accumulate written and verbal warnings with any kind of frequency. The fact that these individuals come from different communities and different parts of the state and country does not seem to affect who gets a warning and who doesn't. Let us not mince words; there are markets where Asians excel, where women excel, where single mothers excel. But where is the market where all excel? Gender and race cards are played on an almost daily basis. Examine the hiring of a baristas. The corporate coffee shop likes a balance. It likes to reflect what is purported by the Brand on a national and international level, the fact that those individuals don't live anywhere near these stores is inconsequential. Notice how applications are handled. The coffee shop is not primarily concerned with hiring competent employees (evidence would suggest that hiring less-qualified persons makes achievement of the management goals much easier). They are concerned with having a good looking staff. A staff that will get nods from the Third Party and other managers as a whole. Consequently we would need to look at the demographics of the district as a whole. It is not a strange correlation or an accident that people of color are less represented as we move further up the Brand food chain. And let me be clear in this next statement: it is not my belief that this is due to racism. There is not doubt in my mind that race plays a role (how significant is debatable) but not in the manner of yes if white, no if black. It centers more around the interpersonal skills needed

to negotiate the previously stated employee quagmire. Minorities are forced to play head nod and body language games that they are not accustomed to. I am not trying to imply that minorities do not play head games, on the contrary minority interpersonal skills are infinitely more complex than that of the majority, just that they don't play head games with the majority. They have no experience or expertise with much of the non-verbal communication of the decision making apparatus. How does the black manager effectively seek promotion in a market where his body actions are perceived as aggressive? Even more importantly, how is this brought to the manager's attention? Generally it isn't, he will leave the corporation bitter and confused for he never knew what he was being judged on. How does the white barista seeking a key holder position negotiate the all black key holder system? How does he seek entry to a group that will be suspicious of his intentions merely because of race? As farfetched as these examples may seem, they are not. The Brands infatuation with diversity has created an environment where chaos reigns supreme. It is a cycle where the brand overlooks looks a situation until it is utterly out of control and then overcompensates. It is the no action/overreaction that creates this environment. Allegations that no Asian males are being promoted will be refuted as long as possible and then (normally to appease the masses) a slew of promotions occur. Many of which are individuals who would not have won promotions on a normal review process, but due to the Third Party's instructions to placate the baristas, the promotions are given. This manifests itself into a situation where everyone thinks that they have everyone's ear or at least the ability to make things happen. This is primarily due to the Third Party's nearest agent constantly making appearances stating that "anything you need" and "I understand you situation". This is lip-service. When push

comes to shove and all trump cards are pulled we see the usual decision making apparatus rear its head. Whatever will result in growth of the Brand and an increase in revenue will be agreed to, regardless of what promises, handshakes or affidavits stated. One could even argue that the whole process is done merely to make the staff divided thus furthering the Third Party Goals.

A divided staff is a conquered staff

The more we fight, the more we set each other up, the more we get people fired, or pushed out or have promotions denied, the stronger the Brand's control over us becomes. The more infighting the better, the more factions the better. The more time we spend fighting each other, the less time we spend fighting the Brand. The Brand not only encourages dissension, it causes it. The Third Party takes a page from JP Morgan's management text; John Peirpont purposely hired ethnic groups that often fought violently with each other. These workers quickly developed factions and quarreled almost nonstop. This is what presented the greatest challenge for the labor unions attempting to use collective bargaining to improve the plight of the coal miners.

The dissension starts very simply. Usually it is an unwarranted promotion. This is followed by conversations about "the new management apparatus". The key here is that this conversation is only had with certain employees, others are left to their own devices to make whatever conclusions they may. The only purpose of these actions is to destroy whatever unity is present among the barista staff. It is being done so that we become suspicious of each other. Then we will do the dirty work of the managers for them.

It is imperative if we are to have any level of success in collective bargaining that we do not succumb to the Third Party's attempt at dissension.

False promises

If we are not preoccupied with stalling the careers of our fellow barista's, we are preoccupied with achieving whatever goals (read unattainable) have been laid out before us that supposedly lead to promotion. The sad reality is that they often do not. Not because they weren't achieved or that circumstances have changed since the agreement, for the ambitious have a knack for overcoming obstacles to achieve an end. The whole process demonstrates to the Third Party that your behavior can be manipulated on a single promise, on the intention of minced words said by those whom you already suspect as not being entirely trustworthy. The false promise is an exercise in control. They dangle the proverbial carrot in front of our noses. If you lunge once, you will lunge a thousand times. Remember the goal is to preoccupy you, so that you are not aware of the larger scheme afoot. This is no more apparent than in a coffee shop where a plethora of false promises have been made. One would assume that the indigenous populace would be wise to the game and not accept any promises, but the contrary is true. Time and time again you will hear their apparent baristas state "yeah I know. But that's not gonna happen to me because I got him to..." This again like many of the other tenets of the coffee shop, is flawless. The power in the relationship lies in our inability to assess situations as a disenfranchised people. Instead we prefer to attempt to battle the machine one by one, and that is how we fall.

A thirty-something work week

Your inability to be scheduled for forty hours in a week begins the cycle of deficit spending and the check to check consumption patterns that reinforce your disenfranchisement. It is the bedrock of the temporary workforce. They keep you hungry for the hours you need and thankful for the hours you have. The fact that a corporation could become so conspicuous and lucrative and never offer those who actually sell its wares full time employment is ludicrous. Your stores are overstaffed so that no one is too valuable. An eighty hour paycheck is a rarity, so the possibility of baristas actually saving some of the income and improving their lives is an impossibility. Furthermore, the hours situation keeps watchful eyes on the weekly schedule and make the schedule an invaluable tool in creating dissension. The most motivated of you work at several stores; pulling in forty hours weeks, overtime and perks from the Third Party. But you are tired. You work six days a week. You commute to several stores. And you consume. It is not Voo Doo or black magic that equalizes your eighty hour paychecks, it's paying for lunch and other accouterments that you will treat yourself to since you are working so hard. The best way to explain this is to treat it as if the barista had two jobs. A cursory glance at any income list of affluent business people or celebrities will reveal that none have more than one job. The key to economic freedom is not more hours worked, yet more per hour. Of course we now rush to judge, claiming that the barista is in the ideal position because he has one part of the equation already accomplished...or does he? Baristas work less than forty because that's what they are scheduled, it's not their choice. Secondly, there is a

limit to what a coffee shop will pay a barista so upward wage mobility is severely hampered.

The less than forty hour week keeps us tired, occupied and eager to work. The essential precepts for the coffee shop to expand its realm with little or no resistance.

The transfer game

In a fleeting attempt to save your career as a barista and your livelihood in a greater scheme you will attempt to transfer once axioms and protocols of the cycle have taken their toll on you. You will make the request through proper channels and hear infinite number of excuses of why you cannot transfer. They have no replacement for you. The store you wish to transfer to has no vacancies. There aren't enough keys/codes for an additional person in the store you wish to transfer to. Ask yourself one question. How does a corporation that is constantly hiring, constantly opening stores, constantly turning over it's retail staff have no vacancies? Your movements are being restricted so that the Third Party may have time to decide to keep you, fire you or use you as a means to some other end to which you will never have knowledge of. The Third Party seeks to halt the nomadic existence of the barista. For the nomadic existence brings with it knowledge of other situations and experience with the Third Party. Neither of which can be tolerated on a larger scale

The goal is to restrict your movements. This in conjunction with the thirty-something work week and the cycle of coffee shops insures that the Brand will have little if any resistance accomplishing any objective the Third Party sees fit.

The management trainee

This is easily the most dangerous person in the coffee shop. The management trainee is a hired gun. They are unknown to your store, they have the ear of the nearest Third Party member, an agenda known only to them and the Third Party member, they are motivated by money, they have a finite amount of time in the store and more importantly they are seeking opportunities to demonstrate their management expertise, loyalty and the size of their cojones. The coffee shop is a ready made situation. The management trainee enters this situation with carte blanche and a clandestine agenda. This individual will make a series of seemingly bizarre decisions and completely rearrange the store (trainees have a habit of restructuring the store because *they* can't find anything). This individual has one main objective, to impress the Third Party. We are all sacrificial lambs in his eyes. Those of you that have survived many cycles and many managers literally have bounties on your heads that the trainee is all too willing to collect.

Clashes with trainees can never been successful. Even in situations where it is clear to all parties that the trainee was at fault and committed some egregious error or violation of the mission statement he will at most be moved to another store. Managers

do the dirty work and the Third Party will do anything to keep them, even to become hypocrites in thought and action to the barista staff. The current baristas will be soon removed, and then Third Party won't be hypocrites anymore.

The product

It is the most widely available drug in the history of this planet. And while it's form may change from product to product and it purported affects from advertisement to advertisement it is essentially the same drug. Caffeine is a addictive, expensive, behavior modifying drug. A drug that is endorsed by the federal government. A drug that the Branded corporation has intertwined with media savvy, jargon and typography to make it a veritable necessity to everyday life here in the United States as well as many countries abroad. And as a disenfranchised employee of this corporation you must steer clear of it. You are a much better employee in terms of productivity and controllability if you are addicted to caffeine. Why do you think you are given free coffee? Hard-core coffee drinkers have trouble drinking a pound in ten days. You are offered one every seven. The branded coffee corporation's insistence that you taste coffee is the beginning of the addiction. Many of you have been reprimanded for not drinking coffee and not participating in coffee tasting. On several instances Third Party members have tried to make weekly consumption amounts compulsory. Would this be permissible in a pharmacy, bar, cigar shop, gun shop? This is the center piece in making the Branded coffee house central in your life and your mind...**you must not drink the coffee**. If it was up to them, they would pay you in coffee. This movement will not begin unless you clear your head, and to clear your head you must stop them from medicating you. Understand

that I am not necessarily against coffee or caffeine (although how this is legal and other recreational drugs are not baffles me). The model that is the Branded coffee house is one where propaganda and modified behavior are a way of life. The introduction of a highly addictive substance into this scenario can be nothing less than disastrous. It is imperative that you see your coffee shop for what it is. Block out the sounds of some of your favorite musicians playing on the sound system. Read between the lines of company newsletters. Ask questions about people who have disappeared off of the schedule. Make a realistic assessment of the life that you lead in conjunction with the wages you are paid.

2). The myth of things offered

One of the only reasons that you as a barista tolerate this type of work environment and this type of treatment is because the Brand offers things that are scarce in today's economy, health benefits and profit sharing. Both of these instruments are apparitions. Although they would appear to the naked eye to seem like a magnanimous effort of giving back and supporting those who sell their wares, it is in essence another tactic in controlling your actions and placating you about the harshness of your daily life.

Health benefits

The benefits that you have, those deductions that you see on your paycheck, they are not really there. They exist; if you call the 1-800 number I am sure that someone will answer and they will be very polite to you when explaining your coverage. Your manager or your nearest Third Party representative (whichever feels like being your friend today) may even go out of his way to be sure that you do not miss the enrollment period. And since

many of the individuals whom you come into direct contact with do not understand the idiosyncrasies of health care, they are not to blame. Health benefits are yet another empty promise dreamed up by the Third Party. These benefits are the prime defense against attacks that wages are too low. One is quickly reminded that within 60-90 days someone working twenty hours a week qualifies for full benefits. Benefits are the most visible, most revered portion of your compensation, and it is a ruse.

Let us clearly state what is offered by the health benefits. Full medical, dental, eye, prenatal, ob/gyn, short-term and long-term disability not to mention life insurance and the 401K. The typical barista or even manager is a young person. We are not an aggregate of cancer patients, or heart disease victims; there is by and large an intrinsic limit on what will be billed to a healthcare provider by its consumers (baristas). This, used in conjunction with pre-screenings, limits the liability of the corporation. Twenty and thirty-somethings do not have a tendency to be diagnosed with costly and elaborate illnesses. Furthermore, there are limits to emergency room benefits, dental and eye benefits as well as major surgery. So any truly outlying illness is not covered for its duration. Why is this? Most of us are in relatively good shape. Why not insure us for the duration of an illness since so few of us will actually get seriously ill? It is not as if your insurance payments, if benefits are never used, are returned once you leave the corporation. How much revenue is extracted from baristas that never use their benefits? What of prenatal? At the current pay rates could one actually raise a child? The temporary employment is built on people in transition. By definition they will not be able to stay at their barista job for they will need more stability and higher wages since they have another mouth to feed. The question that I am driving at is how much of the benefits

can you actually use? An individual who has been without healthcare for a significant time will not be comforted by the benefit offerings. Any ailments that do not fall under the categories of annual/bi annual checkups are covered at drastically reduce rates (beginning at 50% coverage and reducing from there until the total amount allotted for that benefit is used).

I am not advocating that benefits be abolished. I am not implying that benefits do not help in any way shape or form. I am implying that the benefits available to you are severely reduced from what they are advertised to be. I am implying that your wages are being too depressed to support these benefits. I am implying that in the circumstances where a barista should become seriously ill that there are factored in limits to the health plans ability to heal you. What I am advocating is full disclosure. Enough of the shell games. Have them make a realistic proposal of the benefits they offer versus a non-benefits adjusted wage and allow you to decide. What I am advocating is that there either be more participation in the type of benefits offered and their coverage amounts; or an unadjusted (higher) wage for those who wish not to participate. This tactic is central in the illusion that is created to lull you in to a state of compliance.

Stock Options

So you are a partner. You share in the company's growth in share price because you are given shares. The fact that you do not earn enough to seriously exercise stock options and profit sharing is not lost on them. Again this is a hollow promise. There is one

fundamental reason for stock offerings, stability. Since such a larger number of individuals (employees of the brand) have shares that are allocated to them by the brand and these individuals by definition of their disenfranchisement cannot trade their share and if they do so don't own a significant amount to realize any tangible gains, essentially what you have is a large block of individuals who do not trade, yet hold. This makes the stock price stable since few baristas even follow the market or even understand how to trade their issues. This is a built in stabilizing mechanism. And in recent months you have seen it used. The number of issues per barista and whom is allowed to receive issues have greatly increased. Is this an overall realization that the baristas need income, or is it an attempt to halt or even avert a pending stock price slide. You are the dupe, you are the pawn used to generate income and to protect it. All the while being disenfranchised and lacking the means to save significant portions of your income. The cruelty lies in that health care is such a rarity for so many of us that we flock to it. This Brand use this tactic along with others to prey on your fears and concerns. All of which miraculously steers you towards the Brand. The brand doesn't like you, it doesn't even know you and has no wish to change it's relationship with you. The dizzying growth was extracted from the sweat of your labor and they stood your collective back while doing it. The incomes and livelihood of the barista has been degraded. Management has sought to remove value and experience from every end of the equation all under the guise of making the most for a given or making costs the least for a given, whichever definition suits you. As a barista the ability for you to increase your earnings and job stability are almost non-existent. That is the travesty. Surely somewhere in the Branded universe of icons and celebrity endorsement where mom & pop stores (the back bone of our economy) are eradicated

like economic roaches there are opportunities for income stability. If we are gouged when we shop, unknowingly support slave labor and genocide when we buy goods, witness the transformation of shopping area into corporate playgrounds where co-opting and sponsorship are used to create unending revenue streams, free speech is questioned and censorship is prevalent then does that indicate that all corporations are heartless and conniving? Is this an isolated incidence on the time line, a long lasting trend or a structural change in the way corporations make money?

That is for you to decide

3). Opposition and Identification

These forces must be identified and opposed. The aim of this manifesto is to create a platform for collective bargaining and the free flow of information. We need more communication across this industry and related industries. We need to form watchdog groups to counter the speak and actions of the Brand. The newest development has brought a sense of urgency. You have seen it, some of you have seen used it. It is the automated coffee maker. This machine was brought to us, so humbly I might add, so as to reduce the number of carpel tunnel injuries received on the job. Correct me if I am wrong but the number of barista who have actually either ended their careers early or have lifelong disability from the use of an espresso machine are relatively few. So initially I question the need for this machine and whom it is designed to protect. But we do know two things: automated machines use a lot less product and automated machines are easier

to learn. With one fell swoop the Brand has increased productivity and reduced labor costs. Since there is no need for extremely experienced (read well paid) baristas, turnover can be a continuous state. This is an attempt to not only limit what a barista is paid but how useful they are to the coffee shop. With the dawn of the automated machine we are all expendable. Your wages will decrease and your hours will shorten because you are no longer specialized labor.

We must oppose this. It does not make better tasting coffee, it is not faster to use, nor is it easier to clean. It has reduced a bartender to a clerk whose primary job is to push buttons

Finally I will state the term of demands of this manifesto. How will we come about them? How will we initiate change? Let me take this opportunity to quell the rumors of a customer service revolution. Not only are we too divided and individually issue oriented to have an actual revolution, but what is a revolution? We seem to have become deluded into thinking that there will be hip-hop soundtracks and cool clothing as we tool around in sport utility vehicles and make the man pay. This system that we are employed under wants nothing more than to continually replace us with those who are less knowledgeable and hence demand less in the area of wages. That kept in mind with the fact that once we "storm the Bastille" and burn structures to the ground in customer service defiance we will find that we have nowhere to work and hence will not have accomplished the economic freedom we so eagerly seek. This also applies to strikes. While a full-scale barista walk-out may bring the Third Party to the bargaining table, do

any of use have the resources to not work for several months? Keeping in mind that it presents a perfect opportunity for the Brand to replace us with cheaper labor.

What we want is most respect for the jobs that we do and the money that we make them. Here are our demands:

- 1) A forty hour work week. One that is an achievable goal once a barista has demonstrated a commitment and dedication to a coffee shop.
- 2) Benefits /no benefits adjusted wage option.
- 3) Clearly stated transfer policies with an emphasis on auto-transfer should a manager decide to ignore a situation.
- 4) A free market for baristas. Freedom to freelance to bolster your income.
- 5) Graduated pay scales for lifelong baristas.
- 6) Barista certification program so that skills and standards are consummate with compensation.
- 7) Collective bargaining for all non-management employees.
- 8) Annual review of managers and Third Party by the barista staff. With the barista grade becoming a significant portion of the review grade.
- 9) Adhesion to state and local guidelines for hiring and firing.
- 10) Limits on how many individuals can be removed from a store in a quarter.
- 11) Monetary offerings by the Brand and Third Party to managers for barista activities (merchandise sales, per ticket averages) must also be shared by baristas.
- 12) A standardized system of assessing customer complaints that result in barista discipline.
- 13) Equal enforcement of the mission statement and company values against management.
- 14) All offerings of from managers or Third Party representatives are subject to arbitration should a conflict arise.

If united we can easily achieve these goals. Let us focus on improving the daily lives of us as a collective and not be tempted to make personal career advancement for that will only prolong the cycle.