

POWERFUL IDEAS,
PRACTICAL ACTIONS

yes!

SPRING 2012

*We're The People:
Undoing Citizens United*

"Good" Corporations Take Over

*The People's Media:
Keeping the
Internet Free*

Bold Win Against Big Oil

Poet, rancher, and activist
Ben Gotschall of citizen group Bold
Nebraska

We Can End Corporate Rule

9 Best Strategies to Put
People Back in Charge



8 WAYS TO

DE-CORPORATIZE

YOUR MONEY



How to Put People Back in Charge

MOST AMERICANS KNOW we've got problems with corporate power. Eighty-six percent say Wall Street and its lobbyists have too much influence in Washington, D.C., and 80 percent oppose *Citizens United*, the Supreme Court ruling that opened the floodgates to corporate campaign contributions.

But how do we change that when corporations have so much wealth with which to protect their privileges?

The YES! editorial team set out to answer that question by searching out the best strategies for rebuilding our tattered democracy and putting We the People in charge. This is an especially critical question at a time when corporate power is at the root of so many of the crises our world is facing. Among them:

- Wall Street banks insist on deregulation and then continue to engage in practices that brought on a financial collapse that threw millions of Americans into poverty.
- Agribusiness demands taxpayer subsidies for foods that make us sick; for farming practices that destroy rivers, soils, the climate, and the oceans; and for trade practices that cause hunger at home and abroad.
- Private prison corporations press for laws that boost prison populations.
- Health insurance and drug companies squeeze families, employers, and governments for premiums and out-of-pocket costs while they deliver fewer and fewer benefits.
- The corporate 1 percent invests in an army of lobbyists and in massive campaign contributions, and gets a payoff in policies that boost its share of the nation's wealth while moving a middle-class way of life out of reach of millions.

The result of having government cater to big corporations? Joblessness. A poverty rate that has gone up 27 percent since 2006. Insolvent state and local governments and school districts. Deferred repairs. Cutbacks in services for struggling families.

Meanwhile solutions—like a World

War II-scale response to climate change (which could create millions of jobs)—are blocked by the powerful fossil fuel lobby.

There are plenty of caring, compassionate people working for corporations. But an ownership structure that puts return on investment above all else means money and power trump the common good.

So what prospect do We the People have of getting our government to work for all of us, instead of for corporations and Wall Street?

Some say such a shift is out of reach. But many said the same thing about apartheid in South Africa. In hindsight, apartheid's fall was inevitable: The legitimacy of the system crumbled years before the structures of white rule collapsed. It was harming too many for the benefit of too few, and anti-apartheid activists in South Africa and around the world were tenacious and principled.

Likewise, the legitimacy of rule by giant corporations and Wall Street banks is crumbling. This system also harms many and benefits few. And around the world, people's movements are rising up and demanding change.

It won't be easy or fast to take on the power of corporations. But the Occupy movement opened up the conversation, and thousands more are now demanding change on issues like "corporate personhood" and money in politics, using strategies that range from constitutional amendments to street theater. This edition of YES! brings you our pick of nine strategies that work. In the end, though, we need to transform corporations so that doing good—for communities and ecosystems, not just for shareholders—becomes part of the corporate DNA. In her wrap-up piece, Marjorie Kelly shows us how that could be done. Enjoy!

Sarah van Gelder
Executive Editor



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How to End Corporate Rule



PHOTO BY STEPHEN O'BYRNE

THE MISSION OF YES!

is to support you in building a just and sustainable world. In each issue we focus on a different theme through these lenses:

NEW VISIONS

Solving today's big problems will take more than a quick fix. These authors offer clarity about the roots of our problems and visions of a better way.

WORLD & COMMUNITY

New models that foster justice and real prosperity, and sustain the Earth's living systems. How can we bring these models to life and put them to work?

THE POWER OF ONE

Stories of people who find their courage, open their hearts, and discover what it means to be human in today's world.

BREAKING OPEN

Humor, storytelling, and the arts—taking you into unexpected spaces where business-as-usual breaks open into new possibilities.

I8

Rights Are For *Real* People

Where the infamous *Citizens United* Supreme Court decision came from and how to overturn it. *By Jeffrey D. Clements*

- 21 :: Just the Facts: Lobbying's Big Payoff
- 23 :: Who's Taking On *Citizens United*?

24

People Power Stopped the Big Oil Pipeline

By Madeline Ostrander

- 26 :: Nurses Fight for Tax Justice
- 27 :: Single-Payer Success

28

Revoke Their Charters

... and other legal tools to hold corporations accountable to our laws. *By Robert Weissman*

33

The People's Media

Keeping freedom of speech alive on the Internet. *By Joseph Torres*

39

Hey Banks! Watch Us Move Our Millions

Cities, churches, and universities take their money away from Wall Street. *By Rebecca Leisher*

30

"Social Security is Broke" and Other Scare Tactics

Three things everybody knows—and why they're wrong. *By Lisa Graves*

- 32 :: Hot Coffee. *By Doug Pibel*

42

The Importance of Being Sassy

How Occupiers, pranksters, and artists speak louder than money.

By Sven Eberlein



PHOTO BY ZANE SELVANS

46

Can There Be “Good” Corporations?

Instead of fighting corporations, reinvent them. When companies are owned by workers and the community—instead of Wall Street financiers—everything changes.

By Marjorie Kelly

36

How Boulder Freed Its Electric Company

Citizens take over the power in a bid to kick coal. By Valerie Schloredt

38

Four Ways to Flex Our Electoral Muscles

What we can do right now to strengthen our democracy.

By Brooke Jarvis

40

8 Ways to De-Corporatize Your Money

Debit or credit? How to keep your money out of corporate clutches.



Ben Gotschall, energy director of the citizen group Bold Nebraska, celebrates the news of the Keystone XL pipeline victory. Photographed by Alex Matzke for YES! Magazine.

OTHER FEATURES

I2

Why Thinking Like an Ecosystem Might Save the World

By Frances Moore Lappé



PHOTO BY PAUL DUNN FOR YES! MAGAZINE

54

Rising Sea Levels: The View From a Canoe

A traditional Hawaiian voyaging canoe will soon circle the Earth, bringing a new generation deep awareness of the climate crisis. By Sena Christian

1 FROM THE EDITOR

4 READERS FORUM

6 SIGNS OF LIFE :: A million sign for Walker recall, youth sue the U.S. on climate, Occupy convention in Orlando

9 PEOPLE WE LOVE

10 COMMENTARY :: Occupy the ballot? Van Jones says yes. Nathan Schneider says not so fast.

16 THE PAGE THAT COUNTS

50 FROM THE PUBLISHER :: You make YES! happen

58 YES! BUT HOW? :: Tips for green pet care

60 IN REVIEW :: Grace Boggs' The Next American Revolution, Starhawk's The Empowerment Manual

READERS FORUM

Tell us. Send your response to an article or an issue theme, or send us your own story. Write to 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110 or to editors@yesmagazine.org. Or comment online at yesmagazine.org



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and environmental publications, would address the One Problem that affects all others: overpopulation. Earth cannot support this load. To ignore overpopulation is to doom us all. You notice it is already starting to fight back. Please connect the dots.

KATHRYNA LEE
Skull Valley, Ariz.

All Americans

I notice that your magazine frequently uses the words “America” and “United States” interchangeably.

Referring to the United States as “America” is often experienced by Latin Americans as alienating, since they consider themselves to be fully “American” too. I would challenge YES! to come up with creative ways to refer to our country in print (such as “U.S. Americans,” “U.S. citizens,” “U.S. residents,” “U.S. people,” or “people in the U.S.”) without inadvertently excluding people like Brazilians, Dominicans, and Mexicans from the “America” that they belong to and love.

LAURA JORDAN
Flint, Mich.

Keeping Hope Alive

Thank you, thank you for YES! magazine. So many appalling things are happening at great

speed, evidently everywhere—the enticements to despair are endless. YES! reminds me of the goodness, dedication, and ingenuity also at work all over the world (and WHY aren’t major media covering it?). It’s a lifeline to keeping hope alive.

MARGARET DYSON-COBB
Lexington, Va.

Global and Personal

Thank you for providing a wonderful magazine that is political yet optimistic, intelligent yet accessible, global and personal.

AMY BOYD
Swannanoa, N.C.

Homepage

You all rock! We just changed our homepage to the YES! website, and it feels so much better.

AUTUMN WOODWARD
Western North Carolina

Moving Forward

YES! supports in a generous way the most important moves forward in our badly crippled society. As a retired educator and expert on educational issues, I think countering the devastating attack on public education (as YES! does) couldn’t be more important.

DICK ROBERTS
Altadena, Calif.

Solar Warrior

The Henry Red Cloud profile (Winter 2012) is such an encouraging article. Native Americans living on reservations are uniquely poised to flourish under the new economic paradigm. They’ve got their intentional communities in place with a strong cultural infrastructure and can now move forward with ushering in the green revolution. This is what many of us are trying to envision in our own lives.

ROXANNE PETERSON
Ogden, Utah

Indigenous Updates

I am gifting people I love with subscriptions to this magazine because every month I read articles in YES! about topics I care about, topics that could

turn humanity back from its race to the edge of extinction.

Thank you especially for indigenous news. My sister and I made a second visit to the Glen Cove site (Signs of Life, Fall 2011) over Thanksgiving and were dismayed to find the encampment gone, bulldozers and chain link fencing instead. Today I found the article with an update on the agreement between the people and the city of Vallejo, which was very welcome news.

LISA SAVAGE
Solon, Maine

Overpopulated Earth

Why is overpopulation such a taboo with everyone, even progressives?

I wish that YES!, along with other progressive, evolved,

Supporting Veterans

Several of my friends have mentioned to me just lately that they are so glad I gave them a subscription to YES! Magazine, as they had never heard of it before and are really enjoying it—of course, I renewed their gift subscriptions! My way of spreading the word is to give a three-year gift subscription to every library in my area, wherever I am living.

The way we treat our veterans is appalling—is now and ever has been. My brother is a Vietnam vet, and his stories are so sad. And the issue is never addressed, to my unending sadness and frustration. I was delighted to be able to

help in some small way when I read Dean Paton's article ("Military Resistance A Strong Brew," Winter 2012), which touched me personally. I went on the Coffee Strong website and saw that a computer was on their wish list. I was able to provide them with a new laptop and software almost immediately—it was so nice to be able to make this gesture—you have no idea what pleasure it gave me. I think it's small groups of people who band together who do the most good in this world, and I believe that YES! encourages that kind of small group enterprise.

JANE G. FISTERE
Whitehall, Pa.

Spring 2012 Issue 61

yes!

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YES! (ISSN 1089-6651) is published quarterly for \$24 per year by the Positive Futures Network at 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110-2870. Periodicals postage paid at Seattle, WA and at additional mailing offices. **POSTMASTER:** send address changes to YES! 284 Madrona Way NE, Suite 116, Bainbridge Island, WA 98110-2870. **SUBSCRIPTIONS:** \$24 per year. **CALL:** 800/937-4451; 206/842-0216 **FAX:** 206/842-5208 **WEBSITE:** www.yesmagazine.org **EMAIL:** yes@yesmagazine.org



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Newsstand circulation: Disticor Magazine Distribution Services, Attn: Dave Kasza, 905/619-6565, dkasza@disticor.com

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MORE ON THE END OF CORPORATE RULE

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A people's history of Robin Hood (and why we still need him today)

Keeping it clean: Maine's fight for fair elections



Video: From Walmart to Washington, D.C., creative disruption



Photo Essay: California welcomes a new kind of corporation

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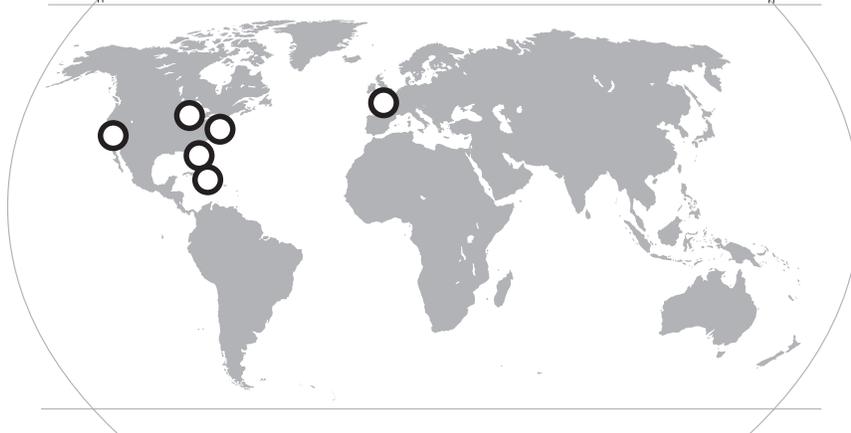
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Signs of Life

SMALL STORIES ABOUT BIG CHANGE



DEMOCRACY

1 Million in Wisconsin Want Walker Recall

Wisconsin residents delivered petitions for the recall of Gov. Scott Walker to the Government Accountability Board in Madison, Wisc., in January. Recall advocates needed 540,000 signatures; they turned in petitions signed by more than a million voters—showing the people of Wisconsin haven't forgotten what led to the

“Wisconsin Uprising” a year ago, in February 2011.

Soon after taking office, Walker began enacting an unexpected and sweeping austerity agenda influenced by the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) and the Koch brothers. When he introduced anti-labor legislation that would severely limit the collective bargaining rights of public employees, protesters flooded the state capitol building in a mass protest occupation to put workers' rights back on the agenda. “Wisconsin,” as the protest came to be known,

united ordinary Americans in the fight for accountability and fairness, and invigorated supporters across the country. When the bill was finally passed, protesters carried resistance to the next stage: the electoral recall process.

Grassroots groups created a coalition, United Wisconsin, expressly for the purpose of recalling Walker. They initiated the recall petitions and recruited 30,000 volunteers who gathered signatures throughout the dark of winter—from mid-November to mid-January—in streets and shopping malls.

The volunteers also netted 845,000 signatures on petitions to recall Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch, and more than they needed to begin recall elections for four Republican state senators, including Majority Leader Scott Fitzgerald, a key figure in implementing the anti-labor legislation.

Elections will be scheduled once the Government Accountability Board verifies the petitions. Walker and his allies will then have to campaign for their positions all over again—although they could lodge legal challenges that would delay the elections.

Democrats Kathleen Falk and Sen. Tim Cullen have already declared their intention to run against Walker. It may be a tough battle—only two other gubernatorial recall efforts have ever been successful, and Walker has already raised \$4.5 million for his recall campaign. But last summer, two Democrats won senate recall elections in Wisconsin, encouraging for those who hope a decisive rejection of Walker's anti-labor agenda could have national repercussions. —Valerie Schloredt. Reporting by Jennifer Kaye and Lindsay Kucera.



PHOTO BY MARTIN SAUNDERS PHOTOGRAPHY

At least 30,000 came to the Wisconsin Capitol on Nov. 19 to begin the process of collecting signatures to recall Gov. Scott Walker. On Jan. 17, the group United Wisconsin turned in more than a million signatures.

ALSO

Efforts are under way to recall Gov. Rick Snyder (R-Mich.), Rep. Denny Rehberg (R-Mont.),

“IMAGINE A WORLD WITHOUT FREE KNOWLEDGE.”

— The editors of Wikipedia

The collaboratively edited website displayed this message on Jan. 18, when it went dark in protest against SOPA and PIPA, proposed anti-piracy laws that could allow corporations to shut down the free flow of information on the internet.

👍 Several co-sponsors of the SOPA and PIPA bills withdrew their support after Wikipedia, Reddit, and about 10,000 other websites blacked out their homepages in protest. Sen. Marco Rubio (R-Fla.) withdrew as a co-sponsor of the Protect IP Act in the Senate. Reps. Lee Terry (R-Neb.) and Ben Quayle (R-Ariz.) pulled their names from the companion House bill, the Stop Online Piracy Act.



Sen. Max Baucus (D-Mont.), and Sen. Jonathan Tester (D-Mont.).

FOOD

Organic Farmers Take Monsanto to Court

A group of more than 300,000 organic farmers, led by the Organic Seed Growers and Trade Association (OSGATA), is seeking legal protection from the biotechnology company Monsanto. Over the past decade, Monsanto has filed 144 patent infringement lawsuits against American farmers and settled another 700 out of court for undisclosed amounts. Many of these farmers broke patent law unintentionally, by raising crops that were contaminated by adjacent genetically engineered (GE) fields. OSGATA is challenging Monsanto's seed patents and seeking protection from further patent infringement lawsuits.

Monsanto puts the responsibility on farmers of non-GE crops to protect themselves from contamination by leaving a fallow buffer zone at the edge of their fields. But crops like canola and corn are wind pollinated, and proprietary genetic material can be carried for miles. As a result, some organic farmers

find themselves unwittingly and unwillingly growing GE crops, which cannot legally be sold as organic. Many organic farmers whose fields have become contaminated subsequently find themselves accused of patent infringement.

Lawyers from the Public Patent Foundation (PUBPAT), a nonprofit legal services organization, are representing OSGATA to question the validity of Monsanto's patents. While earlier challenges to Monsanto's patents have proven unsuccessful, PUBPAT is taking a new angle on the argument. Precedent was set 170 years ago in a court ruling that declared it illegal to patent inventions that are harmful to humans. PUBPAT is relying on several scientific studies to show that Monsanto's GE crops are detrimental, not only to the environment, but also to the people who consume them, and therefore should never have been granted patents in the first place.

Monsanto has petitioned the courts for dismissal of the case, but OSGATA isn't backing down.

— April Dávila

April Dávila's blog: "A Month Without Monsanto" at yesmagazine.org/no-monsanto

ALSO

Rural farmers joined Occupy Wall Street for the Farmers'

March in early December. Members of the two groups found common ground in the growing demand for food that's not produced by corporations.

Farmers traveled to New York City to march in solidarity with 500 Occupiers, community gardeners, and food justice activists. The march began at the La Plaza community garden and ended at Zuccotti Park with a seed swap between urban and rural farmers.

"The corporate control of our government and our economy ... is directly related to the corporate dominance of big agriculture and the quality of food that you are getting," said organic farmer and activist Jim Gerritsen, who is leading a lawsuit against agriculture giant Monsanto [see above].

—Jennifer Kaye

OCCUPY

Florida "People's Convention" Writes Legislative Plan

👍 In early December, representatives from 17 of Florida's Occupy sites, including Tampa, Miami, St. Petersburg, and Tallahassee, gathered in Orlando's City Hall for "The People's Convention," the first meeting to unite Occupiers from

around the state. The goal of the convention was to allow discussion about how Occupy groups could best move forward together.

Attendees drafted "The People's Plan" for desired changes through legislation: a guaranteed living wage, increased state funding for education, and more public transportation. A group of about 50 protesters marched to the state capitol in Tallahassee on Jan. 10, the first day of the Florida legislative session, to present the plan to legislators. But when the group arrived, they were barred from the visitor's gallery. They plan to try again during the next legislative session in April.

Attendees say the People's Convention was a positive development and hope it will spark a trend of coordination among Occupy groups within states.—Jennifer Kaye

ALSO

An Interstate Occupy Solidarity Social Forum is planned for mid-February in Olympia, Wash. Organizers expect participants from Occupy Wall Street, as well as Occupy protesters from Denver, Chicago, Oakland, Washington, D.C., and other major metropolitan sites.

"This is a chance for trainings and meetings that can help



TEDX SAN DIEGO PHOTO

Alec Loorz, leader of Kids vs. Global Warming, filed a lawsuit, citing the public trust doctrine, against the federal government for stalling on meaningful climate legislation.

Alec Loorz: Why I'm taking the government to court
yesmagazine.org/loorz

make the collective stronger and weave together strands of the movement into a cohesive fabric," said Bruce Wilkinson, Occupy Olympia member.

HUMAN RIGHTS

Ten Years of GTMO

Human rights advocates marked a grim anniversary on Jan. 11,

2012, a decade after the U.S. government opened the Guantanamo Bay prison facility in Cuba. A statement from Human Rights Watch said "Although at one time we could blame President George W. Bush's unilateral assertions of unchecked executive power for the abuses there, the continuing problem that is Guantanamo today is shared by all three government branches." Members of Human Rights

Watch and other groups, such as Witness Against Torture and Amnesty International, gathered at Lafayette Park across from the White House to voice their dismay over the Obama administration's abandoned promise to close the facility. Many protesters wore the iconic orange Guantanamo jumpsuits and black hoods to dramatize the plight of the prisoners, who face indefinite detention without trial and the threat of torture. Their placards made the message clear: "Close GTMO Now." —*Lindsay Kucera*

Europe Bans Export of Death Penalty Drugs

In response to recommendations from a 2010 Amnesty International report, the European Commission has banned the export of drugs used for execution by lethal injection in the United States. "The decision today contributes to the wider EU efforts to abolish the death penalty worldwide," said Catherine Ashton, vice president of the commission, in a press release.

The European Commission added eight barbiturates to its list of goods subject to export control restrictions. Two of these, sodium thiopental and pentobarbital, are used in all the states that perform execution by lethal injection.

The only U.S. manufacturer of sodium thiopental, Illinois-based Hospira, ceased production of the drug in January 2012. Hospira was unable to guarantee Italian authorities that the sodium thiopental made at its Italian factory wouldn't be used in executions.

Death penalty states with a shortage of sodium thiopental and pentobarbital may find a way to continue lethal injections

by using other sedatives not on the EC's list, but the commission is prepared for this.

Next year the EC will consider additions to the drug export bans, according to Ashton. —*Jennifer Kaye*

ENVIRONMENT

Kids Use Public Trust Doctrine in Climate Lawsuit

Seven teenagers set a new precedent for environmental action in May 2011 by suing the federal government for not taking measures against climate change. They claim that the government's policies regarding climate change are squandering natural resources.

The young plaintiffs, led by 17-year-old Alec Loorz, filed a total of 10 suits against the federal government and individual states under the public trust doctrine, a legal principle derived from English Common Law which holds that the government is responsible for protecting resources—like water and wilderness—in trust for the public and future generations.

The legal action is supported by a coalition of groups called the iMatter Youth Council, which is petitioning the government for a 6 percent reduction in global CO₂ each year, an emissions cap at 2011 levels, and the reforestation of compromised ecosystems.

The preliminary injunction hearing was originally slated to be held in December 2011, but has been moved from San Francisco to Washington, D.C., at the request of the federal government. A new date for the hearing has yet to be announced.

—*Lindsay Kucera*



OCCUPY UC DAVIS *Whose university?*

Freshman Ian Lee had an intense first quarter at the University of California, Davis, when he joined campus protests against tuition hikes. At a peaceful sit-down demonstration to protect the UC Davis Occupy encampment, Lee and other students were pepper-sprayed at close range by campus police.

A video of the event got national attention. But Lee says “The Occupy movement isn’t about me, or the others who got sprayed ... It’s about coming together to fight austerity.”

Occupy UC Davis protesters demonstrated that solidarity when their friends were pepper-sprayed. “Whose university?” they asked, “Our university!” They used the “human mic” to convince police to leave the area.

In the following days, the students demanded accountability from the police, regents, and Chancellor Linda Katehi. They displayed moral authority in their use of nonviolence throughout, and moved forward the national discussion about police use of force and the rights of protesters.



JENNIFER REAL *Protecting clean water*

“We all need water to live, that’s the bottom line,” says Jennifer Real. She knows that truth all too well—her mother-in-law died from exposure to toxins in contaminated water. That’s why PTA-mom-turned-activist Real is leading the fight against plans for toxic waste storage near her home in Montgomery County, Texas.

The site Texcom Gulf Disposal plans to use for the waste injection wells is an old oil field. It has fissures and corroded well casings that could leak industrial waste into the Gulf Coast Aquifer—which supplies water for people in 54 counties.

The permit for drilling has been granted, but after a five-year campaign to save their water supply, Real and her neighbors aren’t about to give up. They plan to appeal the decision.

“She is very much engaged in doing what’s right for the community and the long-term needs of our children and grandchildren,” says fellow activist Karen Darcy. “We call her a mom on a mission.”



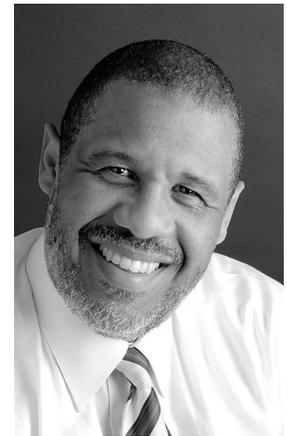
JULIANA ROTICH *Map app for crises*

Juliana Rotich was born in Kenya, studied in the United States and had a business career in IT. “I was your typical geek in Chicago,” she said in a TED lecture. When Rotich was in Kenya for a vacation in 2007, violence broke out following the contested election of Mwai Kibaki. Rotich and her colleagues quickly set up a Web app to help people share information and avoid the violence.

That app, Ushahidi, makes it easy to upload information to an interactive map. It has since proved valuable in crisis management—it was used by both aid agencies and survivors after the Haitian earthquake. Ushahidi is open-source, works on the Web and mobile devices, and is constantly being adapted by its users.

Rotich says maintaining it is sometimes “like trying to fix a plane as it is flying.”

Rotich is now focused on the application of IT to sustainable African development. She’s one of the world’s leading women in technology, and a senior TED fellow.



JAMES BELL *Real justice for youth*

James Bell knows there is something wrong with the juvenile justice system. During 23 years as a lawyer representing young defendants, Bell saw the manifestation of a disturbing statistic: More than 70 percent of incarcerated youth are ethnic minorities.

“There’s just no way that teenagers of color are so much more criminogenic than white teenagers,” says Bell, “so there’s got to be something else going on.”

Bell decided to focus on reforming the system, and emerged as a compelling public advocate for poor youth and youth of color. In 2001, he founded the W. Haywood Burns Institute, named for the famed civil rights lawyer. The institute collects data and works with local courts, probation, and community groups to develop policies to reduce rates of youth detention. The solutions vary from court procedures to family counseling.

“These kids have strengths, and we have to find them,” says Bell, “not just process them.”

COMMENTARY :: Van Jones

NOW, LET'S OCCUPY THE BALLOT

The protests of 2011—from Wisconsin to Wall Street—finally tore off the gag of silence about corruption and economic inequality in our country.

But the pundits at FOX “News” are not wrong when they say that our movement is nowhere near as powerful as the Tea Party movement—at least not yet. That is in part because the Tea Partiers used the momentum from their protests to seize a piece of institutional power through elections.

Today there are Tea Party caucuses in Congress. There are Tea Party-sponsored presidential debates. The actual “tea parties” are no longer well-attended. But the movement is still in a position to continue implementing its draconian agenda.

Candidate Barack Obama also successfully converted rising frustration and activist energy into an electoral triumph in 2008. But thus far, Occupy Wall Street has not tried to occupy the institutions of established, formal political power (e.g., elections and political parties).

This omission is not by accident. Rather than getting caught up in electioneering, Occupy is choosing to focus on the hard, risky, and often-thankless work of direct action protest. They are building their own community, presence, and power through participatory democracy. They fear that too much entanglement with the existing system would kill their independence, idealism, and chutzpah.

Theirs is a sensible stance, as far as it goes. Larger movements often need a bright spearhead, propelled by pure ideals that are untarnished by the exigencies of ordinary politics.

But the question remains: What about the rest of us? There are tens of millions of people who never slept outside in a tent—but who still want a better economy. During election season, all eyes turn to politics. How do we ensure that the interests and ideas of the 99 percent are represented in the campaigns and in the established halls of power?

Protest alone won't move the needle. D.C. is still “pre-Occupied.” The occupation of Wall Street may be over. What never ended was the occupation by Wall Street of our nation's capitol: Their hordes of lobbyists have taken over the place.

Unless we simultaneously work to fix the political process, even our best neighborhood efforts, protests, and



Van Jones



Nathan Schneider

How to ask candidates questions that make a difference yesmagazine.org/vote

entrepreneurial innovations won't work.

If we take elections seriously, we can:

1. Support candidates for local office from this movement. Progressive Majority, New Organizing Institute, Rebuild The Dream, Campaign for America's Future, and the Working Families Party are working overtime on this front.
2. Back local ballot measures to tax wealth and create work—or to otherwise advance the interests of the 99 percent. Groups like the Campaign for Community Change are exploring this territory.
3. Challenge all candidates to publicly oppose the *Citizens United* decision, which lets corporations buy our electoral process.

While reaching for our hopes in 2008, we hit our heads on a ceiling. Now the backlashers want to tear the floor out from under us as well. We can't let them. We cannot get everything we want in the voting booth. But—if we don't vote smart—we can lose everything we have there. Let's continue to protest peacefully—and occupy some ballot boxes, along the way. **y**

Van Jones is a long-time activist, former White House adviser, and co-founder of Rebuild the Dream.

THE CHALLENGE THE MOVEMENT FACES NOW IS TO CONVINCING THE AMERICAN PEOPLE THAT, **WHILE ELECTIONS DO MATTER, THEY DON'T MATTER NEARLY ENOUGH**, AND THAT'S THE PROBLEM.



COMMENTARY :: *Nathan Schneider*

CHANGE NOW, VOTE LATER

There was a joke told during one of the warm-up actions the week before Occupy Wall Street began, across the street from the Stock Exchange: “How many politicians does it take to change a lightbulb?” None of the tourists watching hazarded a guess. The answer? “Politicians don’t change anything!”

It’s this kind of thinking that drove a few hundred protesters to transform the political discourse with their bodies last September by taking and holding a small park in downtown New York. But it’s also why the Occupy movement, at least in the short term, looks to be a good thing for someone like Mitt Romney—a man beautifully suited to play the role of law-and-order technocrat on behalf of the “silent majority,” and thereby to benefit from an election year noisy with unrest. Just think of the effect of the Greek and Spanish Occupation-based movements last year, whose agitations fragmented the Left and put the

right wing in office. Or think of 1968 in the United States.

There’s another thing the Greeks and Spaniards have in common with the kids who made Occupy Wall Street happen, many of whom cheerfully knocked on doors and sparred with their parents on President Obama’s behalf in 2008 (as did I): They’ve learned that no matter which candidate you elect, the global financial system is going to find a way to stick it to you. Many in the movement think that the answers are not primarily to be found by joining a political machine already bought off by the corporate establishment. The answers lie in building a network of international solidarity and action that will push on all fronts for a truly democratic global politics and economy.

One of the things that made occupied Zuccotti Park such a refreshing place is that it was full of political conversations that had nothing to do with the personal foibles of elected officials or our various professional candidates. Rather, they were about the kinds of things that the Occupiers actually wanted for themselves and their communities—necessities of life and fairness, mostly—and how, then and there, they could start making it happen.

The challenge the movement faces now is to convince the American people that, while elections do matter, they don’t matter nearly enough, and that’s the problem. Until politicians figure out how to serve human needs rather than corporate profits, they can’t be allowed to claim legitimacy. At a recent all-afternoon, long-term Occupy Wall Street planning session, I heard exactly one sentence that was devoted to the elections. The gist of it was: Incumbent, brace yourself—protests at both conventions and voter noncooperation.

Of course, if the Occupy movement ultimately wants to defeat the kind of shameless corporate personhood-ization that goes largely unchallenged in government, it will have to show its power at the ballot box as well as in the streets. But the surest way to loosen the corporate death grip on both Democrats and Republicans is to make stands for justice on specific issues by mobilizing people to take back what’s theirs. It will need to occupy the narrative this election year, showing the country that while politicians on their own won’t change much of anything, courageous and organized people can. 🔊

Nathan Schneider is an editor of WagingNonviolence.org. He has written about the Occupy movement for *Harper’s Magazine* and *The Nation*, as well as for YES! Magazine’s book *This Changes Everything*.

Think Like an Ecosystem,
and You Just Might Save the World

Free Your (Eco)Mind



AN ECO-MIND THINKS ...

Less about quantities and more about qualities.

Less about fixed things and more about
the ever-changing relationships that form them.

Less about limits and more about alignment.

Less about what and more about why.

Less about loss and more about possibility.

Frances Moore Lappé

GRADUALLY IT'S DAWNED ON ME: We humans are creatures of the mind. We perceive the world according to our core, often unacknowledged, assumptions. They determine, literally, what we can see and what we cannot. Nothing so wrong with that, perhaps—except that, in this crucial do-or-die moment, we're stuck with a mental map that is life-destroying.

And the premise of this map is lack—not enough of anything, from energy to food to parking spots; not enough goods and not enough goodness. In such a world, we come to believe, it's compete or die. The popular British writer Philip Pullman says, “we evolved to suit a way of life which is acquisitive, territorial, and combative” and that “we have to overcome millions of years of evolution” to make the changes we need to avoid global catastrophe.

If I believed that, I'd feel utterly hopeless. How can we align with the needs of the natural world if we first have to change basic human nature?

Fortunately, we don't have to. A new way of seeing that is opening up to us can form a more life-serving mental map. I call it “eco-mind”—looking at the world through the lens of ecology. This worldview recognizes that we, no less than any other organism, live in relation to everything else. As the visionary German physicist Hans-Peter Dürr puts it, “There are no parts, only participants.”

As part of this shift, breakthroughs in a range of disciplines are confirming what we already know about ourselves, if we stop and think about it: That humans are complex creatures and what we do—from raising children to caring for elders to sharing with our neighbors—exhibits at least as much natural tendency to cooperate as to compete.

The view that our species is basically brutal defies the evidence: “There is a very tiny handful of incidences of conflict and possible warfare before 10,000 years ago,” says archaeologist Jonathan Haas of the Field Museum in Chicago, “and those are very much the exception.” Our species has a vastly longer experience evolving in close-knit communities, knowing our lives depended on one another. The result is at least six inherent traits we can foster,

once we learn to navigate the world with the map of eco-mind.

1 Cooperation

It turns out that cooperating and co-creating explain our evolutionary success just as much as competition does. No wonder neuroscientists using fMRI scans discovered that when human beings cooperate, our brains' pleasure centers are as stimulated as when we eat chocolate!

And what were the evolutionary pressures that turned us into cooperators?

In her 2009 book *Mothers and Others*, University of California, Davis, anthropologist Sarah Blaffer Hrdy challenged the accepted belief that our penchant for cooperation emerged through bonding to fight our neighbors. No, she says. Over most of the 200,000 years we've been around, there were simply too few of us to warrant fighting over territory. Instead, our capacity for cooperation evolved in response to our unique breeding culture.

While other primates generally don't trust others to care for their infants, humans have long turned to aunts, grandmas, and friends to help care for their babies from birth. With these “helpers,” children have the “luxury of growing up slowly, building stronger

bodies, better immune systems, and in some cases bigger brains,” Hrdy surmises.

It is this capacity for cooperation, honed through shared child rearing, that most distinguishes *Homo sapiens*, claims Hrdy.

2 Empathy

Cooperation is made possible by empathy, and it, too, seems to be a capacity deeply carved into us. We see a hint of early empathy in the finding that babies cry at the sound of other babies crying but rarely at a recording of their own cries.

In the 1990s, Italian scientists first discovered what many now see as a cellular foundation of empathy: “mirror neurons” in our brains. When we are only observing another's actions, it turns out, these neurons fire as if we were actually performing the observed actions ourselves. Evidence grows that mirror neurons respond to emotional states as well as actions.

A study in *Science* in 2008 reported that we actually get greater pleasure from giving than receiving. Given what we are learning about our cooperative, empathetic capacities, it should be no surprise that psychologists estimate that, on average, more than 80 percent of happiness comes from relationships, health, spiritual life, friends, and work fulfillment. Only 7 percent is about money.

3 Fairness

Fairness lives within most of us, for we learned long ago that injustice destroys community—the bonds of trust on which our individual survival depends.

Plus, fairness seems to make us feel good, even when at our own expense, *Nature* reported in 2010. In a simple experiment, pairs of young men were given \$30 apiece, while one in each pair got a \$50 bonus. The brain's

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HUMAN BEINGS ARE CREATURES OF MEANING, SEEKING **WAYS TO GIVE OUR DAYS VALUE** BEYOND ENSURING OUR OWN SURVIVAL.



»reward center responded in those who got the bonus. No surprise. The surprise came when those lucky men were asked to imagine how they would feel if they got another bonus, or if the next bonus went to their partners. The second scenario, the one reducing inequality, was the one that lit up the brain's pleasure center.

4 Efficacy

Could our species have made it this far if we were essentially couch potatoes, shoppers, and whiners? I don't think so. We are doers. Our need to "make a dent" in the wider world is so great, argued social philosopher Erich Fromm, that we should toss out René Descartes' theorem, "I think, therefore I am," and replace it with: "I am, because I effect."

The trait seems to show up even in tiny babies. Three-month-olds respond with pleasure to a moving mobile. But a study shows that they "prefer to look at [a] ... mobile they can influence themselves," writes Professor Alison Gopnik in *The Philosophical Baby*. Plus, "they smile and coo at it more too." For Gopnik, the finding suggests that

even the youngest among us enjoy making things happen and seeing the consequences.

In a widely known experiment carried out in the 1970s, Harvard psychologists Ellen Langer and Judith Rodin divided nursing home residents into two groups. In one, residents had choices as to where to receive visitors and when to watch movies; they were also given houseplants to care for. Residents in the second group did not have these choices.

After a year and a half, the Harvard investigators found that fewer than half as many residents in the more engaged group had died. Langer attributes the stunning difference to the enhanced "mindfulness" of those making more choices. I see the outcome differently. For me, the longer lives of those responsible for themselves and their plants affirm that we thrive when we feel we have power.

5 Meaning

Human beings are creatures of meaning, seeking ways to give our days value beyond ensuring our own survival. The prominence of religion certainly attests to this need. But even the private act of voting may express this need, it dawned on me recently. Rationally, I can easily see that my single vote isn't likely to decide anything. But entering the voting booth, I feel a quiet sense of pride welling up because I know I'm playing my part in a larger human drama—protecting a democratic ideal by my act.

6 Imagination, Creativity, and Attraction to Change

In *The Philosophical Baby*, Gopnik writes: "More than any other creature,

human beings are able to change. ... What neuroscientists call plasticity—the ability to change in light of experience—is the key to human nature at every level from brains to minds to societies." The great evolutionary advantage of human beings is our ability to escape the constraints of instinct, Gopnik reminds us.

Both "using tools and making plans ... depend on anticipating future possibilities," and we can see these "abilities emerging even in babies who can't talk yet."

Human beings' unique capacity for imagination ends this list because—coupled with our plasticity—it is what enables us to envision and make the changes we must in order to draw forth the other five essential qualities. And it is this imaginative self that takes pleasure in the challenge.

But if we're so great . . .

If humans are all the above, then why in the world do we mindlessly participate every day in a social ecology that generates so much destruction and misery for so many?

For me, answering that question starts with acknowledging that the six magnificent traits above are only part of being human. But history, as well as laboratory experiments in which we are the guinea pigs, reveals that most of us have every bit as much ability to be competitive, selfish, and even horribly cruel.

So, given those potentials, why are we choosing the traits that are getting us, and the rest of life on the planet, in such trouble? And what will it take to bring out those six strong traits and use them to change where we're headed?

Here's where the eco-mind comes to the rescue.

Seeing with an eco-mind means fully appreciating the power of



United States for at least three decades. And within our culture's mental map, it all feels inevitable. Our empathy and enjoyment in cooperation, our deep sensitivity to fairness, and our need for meaning, efficacy, and creativity—all are stifled in societies where power is tightly held and opportunities shut off for so many.

For me, it's no surprise, then, that scholars uncover a "strong relationship" between the extent of economic inequality and mental illness across countries. This mismatch between the things we know bring out the best in us and the cultures we live in helps

With this understanding, opportunities to be effective appear everywhere: We can build citizen movements, replacing "privately held government" with elections and governance accountable to citizens. And we can rebuild our own mental maps by doing the hard work of actively nurturing our own positive proclivities rather than taking them for granted. Just one specific example: When students at the University of California, Santa Cruz, decided to launch a student-organized sustainability course, collaborating with the administration in order to green their campus, they realized their

WE NEED TO **REVERSE THOSE THREE DANGEROUS TRENDS** AND, INSTEAD, DISPERSE POWER, ENHANCE TRANSPARENCY, AND FOSTER MUTUAL ACCOUNTABILITY.

context—including conditions we ourselves create—to determine the qualities we express. So the question for humanity seems relatively straightforward:

Which social rules and norms have proven to bring out the worst in humans, and which bring forth the best while protecting us from the worst?

Here's my take. At least three conditions have been shown over our long history to elicit the worst in us:

1. Extreme power inequalities. From historical oppression to today's unprecedented economic disparity.
2. Secrecy, which allows us to evade accountability—as occurred when the financial industry, operating without transparency and public oversight, brought the global economy to its knees.
3. Scapegoating, where we create "the other" to blame, whether it's kids crying "he did it" on a playground or citizens at a town meeting shouting down a congressperson.

All three negatives seem to arise with ferocity in cultures premised on lack, where continuous rivalry is presumed. Sadly, each has been on the rise in the

me understand why depression has become a global pandemic.

With an eco-mind we stay focused on the social ecology we ourselves are creating that denies us the best in our species' own nature. Knowing all this about ourselves, our challenge seems clear: We need to reverse those three dangerous trends and, instead, disperse power, enhance transparency, and foster mutual accountability. In the process, we will create a culture of alignment with nature in which human needs are met in ways that dissolve the presumption of lack.

The key is what I call "Living Democracy," which consists not only of accountable forms of governance but also of a daily practice: a set of values—among them inclusion, fairness, and mutual accountability—that infuse everything we do in daily life. It is living what Oxford physiologist Denis Noble observes about biological systems in his book *The Music of Life*: "There are not privileged components telling the rest what to do. There is rather a form of democracy [involving] every element at all levels." The interaction of those components, Noble says, creates the shape of life.

success would depend in large measure on how well they practiced what I call the "arts of democracy"—such people skills as active listening, mediation, negotiation, and creative conflict. They got training, stuck with it, and their course has spread to other University of California campuses, touching the lives of thousands.

With an eco-mind, we know that if we're all connected, we're all implicated. We look bravely at our nature and realize we don't have to cajole others to be "better." Whew.

Instead, we can get on with creating social rules and norms proven to elicit the best in us—which is plenty. We then have a chance of making this century's planetary turnaround an epic struggle for life so vivid and compelling that it satisfies our deep needs for connection, fairness, and meaning. ♻️



Frances Moore Lappé is author of the legendary best seller *Diet for a Small Planet*, and many other books. She is co-founder of the Small Planet Institute and is a contributing editor for YES! Magazine. This article draws on material from her latest book, *Eco-Mind*, Nation Books, 2011.

Percentage of 5,006 Occupy Wall Street protesters surveyed who identified politically as Independent: **70.2**¹

Percentage of U.S. registered voters identified as Independent: **35**²

Percentage of U.S. Congress identified as Independent: **.004**³

Estimated average student debt of 2011 college graduates: **\$27,200**⁴

Percentage of 2011 college graduates moving back into their parents' house: **85**⁵

Pounds of leaves that end up bagged in landfills each year: **8 million**

Percentage of all necessary nutrients trees can glean from decomposing leaves: **50 to 80**⁶

Estimated number of barrels of oil recoverable from Alberta's tar sand deposits: **171.3 billion**⁷

Gallons of water required to extract all recoverable barrels: **2.7 trillion**⁸

Years that 2.7 trillion gallons could supply Seattle with potable water: **57**⁹

Pounds of recyclable office paper thrown into landfills in 2005: **42 million**

In 2009: **26 million**¹⁰

Percentage by which the value of the minimum wage has increased since 1990: **21**

Percentage by which the cost of living has increased since 1990: **67**¹¹

Effective tax rate Warren Buffet, the second richest man in the United States, paid in 2010: **17.4**

Average effective tax rate paid by his staff members in 2010: **36**¹²

Average number of text messages sent or received per day by adults ages 18–24: **109.5**

By adults ages 45–54: **14**¹³

Percentage of Facebook users ages 18–34 who check their account before getting out of bed in the morning: **28**¹⁴

Number of American adults unemployed and seeking work in October 2011: **13.9 million**

Number of job openings: **3.3 million**¹⁵

Estimated miles driven by Walmart's truck fleet in 2011: **700 million**¹⁶

Gallons of diesel fuel consumed, based on the 6.3 miles per gallon average for diesel freight trucks: **111.1 million**¹⁷

Gallons of oil leaked into the Gulf of Mexico from BP's 2010 oil spill: **205.8 million**¹⁸

Complete citations at yesmagazine.org/ptc

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9 Strategies to End Corporate Rule

Corporate power is behind the politics of climate denial, Wall Street bailouts, union busting, and media consolidation, to name just a few. And policies advocated by the 1 percent are bankrupting the middle class. But real people have power, too. Here are some of their most successful strategies:



18

1. Amend the constitution to end corporate personhood and put real people in charge.



24

2. Dive into grassroots campaigns. *People power stops big oil and wins single-payer health care.*



28

3. Hold corporations accountable to our laws. 4. Get past the propaganda. Truth telling. Myth busting ...



33

5. Support indie media and keep the internet free. *People's voices keep free speech alive on the Web.*



36

6. Protect the commons. *Boulder citizens take over their utility to get the green power they've wanted.*



38

7. Vote. Protect our democracy. *How to keep elections clean. 8. Make your dollars matter.* *Why big investors are moving their money, too.*



40

How to De-Corporatize Your Money. *Put your cash to work doing the right thing.*



42

9. Get Creative to Raise Awareness. *Pranks, songs, art, and mic checks that get the message across.*



46

The Good Corporation. *How to reinvent corporations so that they do good, naturally.*



We're The People

Undoing *Citizens United*

Jeffrey D. Clements

TWO YEARS AGO, THE U.S. SUPREME COURT DECIDED that Americans cannot prevent corporations from spending unlimited money to control elections, politicians, and policy. In *Citizens United v. Federal Election Commission*, the court ignored the fact that corporations are creations of state law with government-derived advantages and labeled them, in the words of Justice Anthony Kennedy, “voices,” “speakers,” and yes, a “disadvantaged person or class.” In this Wonderland, corporations are people, corporate money is “speech,” and laws restricting corporate political spending violate the First Amendment.

Nearly 80 percent of the public opposes the holding in *Citizens United* and supports a constitutional amendment to reverse the decision, according to multiple polls. If Americans so clearly oppose the fabrication of “corporate people” who can use the Constitution to strike down the real people’s laws, how did the folly of *Citizens United* ever happen?

In fact, the case is the result of a well-funded and organized 30-year campaign to establish corporate constitutional rights as a means to trump democratic laws. Indeed, *Citizens United* is more like a victory parade for this campaign than a stumble or simple mistake of the Court.

Above, portraits from the Occupy Wall Street movement by New York photographer Joseph O. Holmes. See his photo essay: “We’re the People”

YesMagazine.org/holmes





1

Amend the Constitution to prohibit corporate personhood.

The Effect of *Citizens United*

The *Citizens United* decision killed the federal Bipartisan Campaign Reform Act (also known as the McCain-Feingold law). The Court reversed a century of law and overruled one of its own decisions from just six years earlier, which had affirmed our right to keep corporations out of politics. In the wake of *Citizens United*, corporations can spend unlimited money in every federal, state, and local election in the country.

This challenges the very premise of American government. Can a government based on the will of equal, sovereign human beings co-exist with a government based on unregulated corporate spending? Unlikely.

Walmart alone had revenues of \$421 billion in 2010. The largest 100 corporations had combined revenues of \$13.1 trillion and profits of \$605 billion in the 2008 election cycle. According to opensecrets.org, total spending on federal campaigns in 2008 was about \$5.3 billion. Diversion of just 2 percent of corporate profits into that election cycle would have represented more than twice the money that was actually spent. That kind of money would utterly dominate elections and

policy-making.

And the domination is well under way. In November 2010, the first election after *Citizens United*, hundreds of millions of dollars flowed into campaigns across the country, with no requirement that the source be disclosed. Politicians who had failed to do corporate bidding, whether on health care, energy, or financial reform, were bombarded with negative ads funded by corporate front groups such as the U.S. Chamber of Commerce, various political action committees, and other anonymously funded organizations—including *Citizens United*, the lobbying group whose lawsuit led to the *Citizens United* case. The 2012 election looks to be much worse.

The long campaign to expand the “rights” of corporations—particularly the “free speech” right to spend money on lobbying and campaigns and to veto public interest laws—has had effects we can see all around us: Corporate-friendly trade and tax policies have moved jobs overseas, destroyed our manufacturing capacity, produced vast wage and income inequality, and gutted local economies and communities. Control of our energy policy by global fossil fuel corporations and

unregulated corporate lobbying, even for weapons the Pentagon doesn’t want, leads to endless war in the Middle East and uncontrolled military spending. Deregulation has led to sprawl, loss of wilderness and open land, and accelerated environmental crises. The health of Americans is secondary to layers of taxpayer subsidies and preferential treatment for corporate food giants and coal and utility corporations, resulting in epidemic-level rates of obesity, asthma, and type 2 diabetes. As corporations more blatantly buy politicians and legislation, and block or strike down laws that would protect people, Americans, unsurprisingly, become more cynical about politics and government. Government of the people is replaced by government of the corporations.

Where *Citizens United* Came From

The roots of *Citizens United* reach back 40 years. By the end of the 1960s, Americans had become increasingly aware that corporations were using our rivers, air, oceans, and land as sewers and dumps, taking the profits and leaving most people and communities with the costs. In April 1970, 20 million Americans of every >>

» age and political viewpoint went into the streets and public spaces on the first Earth Day to insist on a better balance between corporations and people, between an extraction economy and nature.

Consider how American democracy responded then. With a Republican president and bipartisan support, Congress enacted:

The Clean Water Act

The Federal Water Pollution Control Amendments

The Clean Air Act Extension

The Toxic Substances Control Act

The Safe Drinking Water Act

The Eastern Wilderness Act

The Surface Mining Control and Reclamation Act

The Endangered Species Act

The Marine Mammal Protection Act

The Resource Recovery Act

The first Fuel Economy Standards for cars

The corporatist theology says only “the market” can fix big problems. But the market did not achieve the remarkable transformation following the first Earth Day. We did this by acting as citizens in a republic.

Not everyone celebrated the results. Lewis Powell, a corporate lawyer from Richmond, Va., guided some of the biggest corporations on the planet in launching a counterattack. A former president of the American Bar Association, Powell served on the boards of directors of more than a dozen international corporations, including tobacco giant Philip Morris, Inc. In preparation for strategy discussions within the U.S. Chamber of Commerce and among corporate leaders, on Aug. 23, 1971 Powell prepared what the Chamber would call “The Powell Memo.”

Powell titled his memo “Attack on American Free Enterprise System.” He explained the problem: “No thoughtful person can question that the American economic system is under broad attack.” And he had a solution: Corporate leaders must use an “activist-minded Supreme Court” and

other opportunities to shape “social, economic, and political change” to the advantage of corporations. “Strength,” he explained, “lies in organization, in careful long-range planning and implementation, in consistency of action over an indefinite period of years.”

As counsel to the cigarette industry and as a Philip Morris director, Powell already had begun testing the radical idea of corporate “speech” rights under the Constitution. In the late ’60s, Powell sued the United States on behalf of cigarette corporations, arguing that the government’s assertion that cigarettes caused death was “controversial” and “not proved.” Therefore, argued Powell, cigarette corporations had a “free speech” right to “equal time” to say what they wanted about cigarettes. Powell was laughed out of court. Yet, with the execution of the plan he laid out for the Chamber of Commerce, he went on to win far more than he might have expected.

Less than six months after the secret Powell Memo went to the Chamber, President Richard Nixon nominated Powell for the Supreme Court. The Senate voted 89-1 to confirm the nomination.

Powell might well have faced tougher questions had Americans known of his Chamber of Commerce memo. What did Powell mean by “activist-minded Supreme Court”? What sort of “social, economic, and political change” did he think the Court should foster? No one asked because no one knew; Powell and the Chamber did not disclose the memo.

With Powell on the Court, corporations got to work implementing his plan. Philip Morris and other corporations funded a host of new “legal foundations” in every corner of the country, among them the National Chamber Litigation Center, and the Pacific, Mid-Atlantic, Mid-America, Great Plains, Washington, Northeastern, New England, and Southeastern Legal Foundations.

Corporations and these foundations filed litigation in every forum

available. They argued that laws across the country violated corporate “rights”; they equated corporate deregulation with “liberty.” They did not describe corporations for what they are—powerful legal entities created by state laws and given special advantages from the state. Instead, they invented a new language—the one that turned up years later in *Citizens United*: Corporations were “persons,” “speakers,” “voices,” and “protectors of our freedoms.” The lawyers demanded “the right of corporations to be heard” and “rights of corporations to speak out.” Discrimination against “the corporate character of the speaker” must end!

Building Corporate Rights

This insistent campaign—carried out both in the courts and in the forum of public opinion—sought to redefine the role of corporations in American society. We no longer should view corporations as economic tools, useful but potentially dangerous. We no longer should be concerned that corporations might leverage massive economic power into harmful political power, or trample the public interest for the profit of the few. Instead, we should think of corporations as pillars of liberty, institutions for Americans to trust, protectors of our freedoms against “bad” government.

The first victory for the corporate rights campaign came in 1978, with a corporate attack on Massachusetts’ election laws in a case called *First National Bank of Boston v. Bellotti*. Gillette Corporation, the Bank of Boston, and Digital Equipment Corporation filed a lawsuit challenging a state law banning corporate political spending in citizen referendum ballots. Conservative leaders of the large corporations wished to go beyond spending their own money to defeat a progressive income tax vote that year; they wanted to use unlimited corporate funds, too.

After losing in the Massachusetts courts, the corporations took their claim all the way to the U.S. Supreme Court. There they found a sympathetic

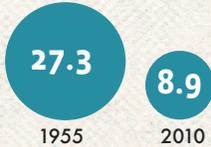
Just the Facts

Doug Pibel

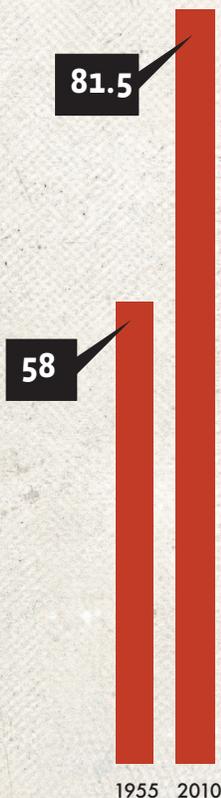
1

**More than ever,
people pay more in taxes
than corporations do.**

Corporate taxes as
a percentage
of federal revenue:



Individual income
and payroll taxes as a percentage
of federal revenue:



2

**But we tax corporate
income at 35%, the highest
in the world, right?
Not really.**

280 "Fortune 400" companies showed profits every year from 2008 to 2010. Of those:
About one-quarter paid more than 30%
About one-quarter paid less than 10%

Average tax rate?

18.5

(That's what a human being pays on
\$60,000 in taxable income.)

3

**And some of the
wealthiest corporations
pay no taxes at all.
They even get money back.**

29

corporations
from 2008 to 2010 paid

0

in taxes
and received refunds totaling

\$10.6 billion



General Electric was the champion. It made a \$10.5 billion profit. At the statutory 35% rate, it would have paid about \$3.7 billion in taxes. Instead, it got refunds of \$4.7 billion. That's a total tax subsidy of \$8.4 billion dollars.



Also paying no taxes, 2008–2010:
Verizon made \$32.8 billion in profit and got \$951 million in refunds.
Wells Fargo made \$49.4 billion and got \$681 million in refunds.
Boeing made \$9.7 billion and got \$177.6 million in refunds.

4

Lobbying. The best investment around.

10,000%

For its tax subsidy of \$8.4 billion, General Electric spent \$84.4 million on lobbying: a 100-to-1 return on investment.

22,000%

In 2004, Congress was considering a one-time-only "repatriation holiday" law. 93 companies spent a total of \$282.7 million lobbying for the bill, which allowed corporations to bring billions of dollars home from overseas accounts, but to pay income tax on only 15 percent of the money. The law passed, and the corporations that lobbied saved \$88.6 billion. That's a 220-to-1 return on investment.

And the "one time only"? They're now lobbying to do it again.

Sources: U.S. PIRG, Citizens for Tax Justice, ourfiscalsecurity.org, Raquel Alexander, et al.
Illustration by Brad Kayal

YES! MAGAZINE GRAPHIC 2012

IF WE BELIEVE THE SUPREME COURT HAS GOTTEN IT WRONG, WE CAN OVERRULE IT BY AMENDING THE CONSTITUTION.

» audience led by Justice Powell. Powell cast the deciding vote in the 5–4 decision and wrote the Court’s opinion, despite strong dissenting views from Justice William Rehnquist—one of the Court’s most conservative members—and others. Powell declared that “corporations are persons” and “speakers,” and corporate money is “speech” under the First Amendment. For the first time in 200 years of American history, corporations had launched a successful constitutional attack on laws regulating corporate spending in elections.

The emboldened corporate power campaign next attacked energy and environmental laws. In a 1980 case called *Central Hudson Gas & Electric Corporation v. Public Service Corporation of New York*, utility corporations and the chorus of corporate legal foundations challenged a New York law prohibiting utility corporations from promoting energy consumption in a time of energy shortage. Despite New York’s policy of energy conservation, the utility corporations won “corporate speech” rights, and the Court struck down New York’s law. Once again, Justice Powell wrote the decision.

The corporate attack on government and the public interest continued year after year. Between 1978 and 1984, Justice Powell wrote four groundbreaking “corporate rights” decisions. A narrow majority of the Supreme Court now accepted the mantra that “corporations are persons” and corporate “voices” must be free. Energy, tobacco, pharmaceutical, and banking corporations all successfully claimed speech rights to invalidate the people’s laws.

The newly minted corporate rights doctrine has even swept away our right to know whether the milk, cheese, and ice cream that we buy comes from cows treated with Monsanto’s genetically modified bovine drugs. Every major democracy in the world has

banned recombinant bovine growth hormone. Yet in the United States, despite widespread citizen opposition, the Food & Drug Administration waved Monsanto through. Then, when Vermont had the temerity to enact disclosure requirements so people buying dairy products could know whether their food came from cows treated with Monsanto’s drug, the corporate lawyers sued. Once again, the federal courts said corporations have “speech” rights, this time the right “not to speak.” The court struck down Vermont’s law.

With corporations as “speakers,” and truckloads of corporate cash as beneficial “speech,” Washington and state capitals became corporate playgrounds. Between 1998 and 2010, the Chamber of Commerce alone spent \$739 million on lobbying. Pharmaceutical and health care corporations spent more than \$2 billion on lobbying in the same period, and military contractors more than \$400 million. GE Corporation (\$237 million), AT&T (\$162 million), and ExxonMobil (\$151 million) all joined the lobby-fest. Legislation (and inaction) tilted in favor of big corporations, and the connection between elected representatives and the people was severed.

Citizens United is the finishing touch on the three-decade campaign of organized corporate radicalism inspired by Lewis Powell. If, as the majority of Americans believe, the corporate takeover of our government is not acceptable, the work to take it back must be as relentless, determined, and long-term as the corporate campaign itself.

Recovering the Promise of Earth Day

In April 1970 Americans joined their voices to reclaim the water, air, land, and forests that belong to all of us. We reclaimed government of, for, and by the people. Now, the Supreme Court says that the voices of flesh-and-blood

humans are no more important than the “voices” of legal fictions called corporations. If the corporate voices, in the form of millions of dollars, speak louder than the human voices of citizens, then we must have government of the corporations, not of the people. Five justices, though, do not have the last word.

If we believe the Supreme Court has gotten it wrong, we can overrule it by amending the Constitution. That is what Americans have always done when the Supreme Court goes off the rails, and when fundamental questions of our republican democracy need to be addressed once and for all. Racial discrimination is illegal; women can vote; we elect U.S. senators; poll tax barriers to voting are illegal; 18-, 19-, and 20-year-olds have the right to vote; and we have a progressive income tax. All of those resulted from successful constitutional amendment campaigns, many of them to overturn Supreme Court cases to the contrary.

Some of those campaigns—the 18-year-old vote, for instance—were short. Others, such as women’s suffrage, took decades. None of them were easy or for the faint-hearted. constitutional amendments require support from two-thirds of Congress, and ratification by three-fourths of the states. They require a national movement that both builds and reflects a consensus, regardless of political party, about what we must do to be true to the promise of liberty and democracy. After *Citizens United*, we now have this great challenge, this great opportunity.

Citizens United, and the response of Americans across the political spectrum to the raw assertion of corporate power, has ignited a national movement. A large, diverse, and effective campaign for a “People’s Rights Amendment,” a 28th Amendment to our Constitution to overturn corporate



PHOTO BY JON BLACK FOR YES! MAGAZINE

A rally at the Supreme Court marked the second anniversary of the *Citizens United* decision and called for a constitutional amendment.

rights and restore the Bill of Rights for people, is growing rapidly.

Congress is now considering at least 10 different constitutional amendment proposals to reverse *Citizens United* and renew democracy. Cities as big as Los Angeles and New York and towns as small as those in New England that govern by open town meetings have passed resolutions that condemn *Citizens United* and call for a constitutional amendment to overturn it. State legislators, state attorneys general, lawyers, and law professors from Montana to Massachusetts, Maine to New Mexico, are challenging *Citizens United* directly and pushing for the 28th Amendment. More than 1,000 business leaders have joined the movement and more are doing so every day. And everywhere, people are standing up—and occupying—to defend what belongs to all of us and to take responsibility once again to ensure that corporations serve the people, rather than the other way around. **Y**

Jeffrey D. Clements, co-founder of Free Speech for People, has served as assistant attorney general and chief of the Public Protection & Advocacy Bureau in the office of the Massachusetts attorney general.

This article was adapted by the author from his new book *Corporations Are Not People*, Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc., 2012.

Who's Working to Reverse *Citizens United*?

The day the Supreme Court handed down its opinion in *Citizens United v. FEC*, Free Speech for People and Move to Amend launched their campaigns for a constitutional amendment to overturn the ruling. They've gathered thousands of petition signatures and made hundreds of public speeches and media appearances.

Those groups have been joined by many others. Here's where the action is on reclaiming the Constitution for human beings.

United For the People. This newly formed umbrella organization lists more than 50 groups that have united under the banner of demanding a constitutional amendment to restore the promise of democracy in the United States. In addition to links to all the cooperating organizations, the group's website provides a list of events, resources, and tools. united4thepeople.org

Congress. In the two years since the decision, senators and representatives have introduced 18 resolutions calling for amendments to overturn *Citizens United*.

Cities. From Los Angeles to Duluth, Minn. from Portland, Maine, to Portland, Ore., more than 30 city councils have passed resolutions calling for constitutional amendments. In Boulder, Colo., and Missoula, Mont., the city councils have put ballot measures before residents. For model resolutions to use in your town, go to united4thepeople.org/faq.html.

Courts. The Montana State Supreme Court in December 2011 upheld a 1912 state law banning corporate campaign contributions. Most legal observers expect the case to be reversed by the U.S. Supreme Court.

KEYSTONE XL PIPELINE

A Bold Win Against
Big Oil

Madeline Ostrander

In modern life, a David versus Goliath conflict rarely ends as neatly as the story—especially when the Goliath is a \$7 billion energy project backed by major oil-industry multinationals.

But this year, a broad coalition of environmental activists, citizens from conservative ranch and farm communities, Obama supporters, and celebrities (such as Daryl Hannah, Julia Louis-Dreyfus, and Mark Ruffalo) shot down the Keystone XL pipeline. The proposed 1,700-mile pipeline would have carried unrefined oil bitumen to the Gulf of Mexico from the tar sands of Alberta. In late summer, in one of the largest civil disobedience actions in the environmental movement's history, more than 1,200 pipeline opponents got arrested in front of the White House. In the fall, President Barack Obama faced anti-pipeline protesters at stops along his re-election fundraising tour. And several thousand people surrounded the White House at a protest in November, including some major Obama campaign donors.

After months of such pressure, the administration changed course. The State Department announced in November that it would delay a decision on the pipeline until after the 2012 election. Republicans forced matters by attaching a rider to the payroll tax cut extension that required Obama to rule on the pipeline by February. The American Petroleum Institute warned he'd face "huge political consequences" if he didn't approve Keystone XL. But Obama had already felt enough heat from his base. In January, the verdict was "no"—though TransCanada, the Canadian company that would build the pipeline,

A man wearing a black cowboy hat, a black jacket, and blue jeans stands in the snow in front of a red corrugated metal building. He is holding a large white protest sign that reads "WINDMILLS NOT OIL SPILLS." with a wind turbine icon and the website "BoldNebraska.org".

Ben Gotschall of Bold Nebraska: "A lot of people have come to the conclusion that leaders are ... not going to take action, and it's up to the citizens to make them do what is right."

**2**

Dive into grassroots campaigns.

is invited to propose a new route, and at time of press, Republicans are pursuing legislative means to take the decision out of the administration's hands.

Still, the activists' win is monumental. Oil giants such as ExxonMobil, Koch Industries, and Royal Dutch Shell have major investments in Alberta. According to ThinkProgress.org, oil and energy companies spent about 37 times as much on lobbying on Keystone XL as the citizen groups that opposed it.

Moreover, administration officials have close ties to TransCanada. The company's top lobbyist was once a Hillary Clinton campaign staffer, and this fall, Obama hired a former TransCanada lobbyist for his re-election team. The State Department ran the project through cursory environmental review, which it outsourced to a company that listed TransCanada among its clients. In mid-October, 70 percent of the *National Journal's* "energy insiders" thought Obama would approve the pipeline by year's end.

But then activists and citizens intervened. In the six states that the pipeline would cross, communities grew angry that a Canadian company wanted to seize their land—their frustration drew them to unlikely partnerships with local environmental groups. In Nebraska, rural landowners, concerned citizens, and the state farmers union formed a coalition with advocacy groups and environmentalists to fight the pipeline. Prominent NASA scientist James Hansen also took notice: He observed that Canada's tar sands were the second largest carbon reserve in the world. He called Keystone XL "game over" for the planet.

His assessment alarmed activist Bill McKibben, founder of 350.org. McKibben led the coalition to fight the pipeline. The oil industry had money and influence, but activists had their own weapons—voting power, legal rights (which allowed them to sue over concerns that the project violated endangered species protections), and the power of numbers. They had a good (and true) story, with something for everyone. Tar sands mining not only has a massive carbon footprint; it is a show-stopping environmental disaster that guzzles city-sized portions of water, annihilates forests, and leaves behind carcinogens and a decimated landscape.

And a pipeline full of corrosive, toxic tar-sands bitumen is risky business for small communities that rely on irrigation and untreated well water. A major oil spill in the Yellowstone River and a pipeline rupture near Kalamazoo, Mich., left communities doubtful of claims that TransCanada could safely pump bitumen across major rivers and groundwater supplies. The Nebraska Legislature held a special session to pass new environmental regulations in response to heated public debate and polls that showed significant opposition to the pipeline.

"The most precious asset we have out here is our

groundwater supply. We don't take the Ogallala Aquifer for granted," said Allen Schreiber, a Nebraska Republican who has been active in the anti-pipeline campaign. "And I think TransCanada has this attitude that we're a bunch of ignorant rubes out here—we won't know any better."

The activists focused on the idea that one man—President Obama—had the capacity to halt the pipeline. And the activists made the most of the power of media coverage. Friends of the Earth and other watchdog groups investigated TransCanada and sent the results to the national media, which aired reports on, for instance, incriminating email interactions full of praise, party invitations, and emoticons that suggested State Department insiders were cheering on company lobbyists.

"We know that the money talks, and we see closed-door meetings between TransCanada officials and our [state] lawmakers," said Ben Gotschall, a fourth-generation rancher and one of the lead organizers for Bold Nebraska, a citizens' group that spearheaded an anti-pipeline campaign in the state. "A lot of people have come to the conclusion that leaders are not going to lead. They're not going to take action, and it's up to the citizens to make them do what is right."

Obama's rejection of Keystone XL is, of course, not the end of the road for the anti-pipeline movement forged over the last year. At its best, it could be the beginning of a new chapter in the environmental movement—one that is more populist and cross-partisan, that confronts corporate power head-on, that knows better how to capture and leverage media attention, and that engages citizens in ever more courageous and creative acts of civil disobedience and street protest.

These strategies could set the tone for more climate change struggles to come. According to James Hansen's predictions, the world has only a few years to begin changing its fossil-fuel-burning ways before greenhouse-gas concentrations in the atmosphere are too high to avoid catastrophic global consequences, such as large-scale water and food shortages. But transforming the energy economy will require not merely facing down the fossil-fuel industry but removing its chokehold on government.

As Bill McKibben wrote to his supporters, "Blocking one pipeline was never going to stop global warming—but it is a real start, one of the first times in the two-decade fight over climate change when the fossil fuel lobby has actually lost."

The victory reminds the movement that it's possible to win, even against improbable odds. 🗳️

Madeline Ostrander is senior editor of YES! Magazine.

✂️ Bill McKibben: Why we should be hopeful yesmagazine.org/mckibben-talk

TAXING WALL STREET

Nurses Mobilize For a Dose of Financial Justice



PHOTO BY FLICKR/SJSEEM

Sarah Anderson

By now, nurses in bright red scrubs are a familiar sight at rallies in Washington, D.C., New York City, and at Occupy protests around the country. National Nurses United (NNU), a union representing registered nurses, is a major, visible force in the growing movements challenging corporate power.

Several months before the birth of the Occupy movement, they were already mobilizing thousands of their members to speak out against Wall Street. One of their key demands is a financial transaction tax: a small fee on each trade of stocks, derivatives, bonds, and other financial instruments, which could generate massive revenues while discouraging high-frequency speculative trading.

This may surprise some Americans whose image of the nursing profession has been formed by TV medical dramas. (Wikipedia lists 70 such programs in the United States and Canada since the 1950s.) The *General Hospital* drama queens aside, TV nurses haven't been completely lacking in the social justice department. *ER*'s Carol Hathaway shielded her nursing staff from pompous M.D.s. "Hot Lips" Houlihan became a fighter for women's rights in

the male world of the M*A*S*H hospital tent. But do you recall a single scene in which nurses took to the streets, much less took on a force like Wall Street?

NNU Executive Director Rose Anne DeMoro says there's a simple reason registered nurses have embraced a "Tax Wall Street" campaign: "The big banks, investment firms, and other financial institutions, which ruined the economy with trillion-dollar trades on people's homes and pensions and similar reckless gambling, should pay for the recovery."

NNU members have gotten an up-close view of just how ruined our economy really is from hospital bed-sides, where they are seeing increases in stress-induced ailments, as well as from first aid stations they set up at Occupy encampments. Their impression is that the vast majority of protesters do not have health insurance, and those who visited their first aid stations frequently said it was the first time they'd talked to a health care provider in years. Nurse activist Maureen Cruise says, "Many of them were comforted just to have nurses pay attention to them and have their basic worth as human beings affirmed."

At rallies, the union's placards play on the idea of a sick economy with the slogan "Heal America—Tax Wall Street."

In November 2011, NNU sent a delegation to France to join international allies, including nurses from other countries, to push world leaders gathered for the G-20 summit to take action on the issue. The debate over financial transactions taxes is much more advanced in Europe, where it is often dubbed a "Robin Hood Tax."

Europe is ahead on this issue in part because of more than 13 years of work by the grassroots group ATTAC—the Association for the Taxation of financial Transactions and Aid to Citizens. Founded in response to a call from the editor of *Le Monde diplomatique*, the group now has chapters in 40 countries. During their time in France, the NNU delegation attended a massive rally organized by ATTAC France and labor and other groups.

Under pressure from increasingly broad-based activist coalitions, French President Nicolas Sarkozy and German Chancellor Angela Merkel have become strong supporters, and there is a distinct possibility of some grouping of European countries adopting such taxes in 2012.

As the notion of taxing Wall Street has moved into the center of international policy debates, the supporter list has grown to include an impressive array of big shots, including Bill Gates, the pope, Al Gore, Bishop Desmond Tutu, European Commission President José Manuel Barroso, former U.N. Secretary-General Kofi Annan, and the archbishop of Canterbury.

These signs of progress should help build momentum in the United States. The Obama administration is not yet on board, but under the spotlight of the election campaign, the president may reconsider his position on

an issue that has tremendous populist appeal.

Without grassroots pressure, however, without members of Congress hearing from their own constituents, it's hard to imagine breaking through the polarized gridlock in Washington, D.C. That's why NNU's commitment to building a movement around a Wall Street tax is so critical.

Like Clara Barton, Florence Nightingale, and other pioneering activist nurses, they appear to have no fear of the frontlines. And as policymakers are coming to realize, nurses can be very hard to dismiss.

Bonnie Castillo, a registered nurse and California legislative director for NNU, told me a story about one Capitol Hill lobby visit that would've made sassy "Hot Lips" Houlihan proud: "A member of Congress told our group to lower our expectations about the financial transactions tax. And one of our nurses replied, 'Is that what you'd like to hear from us when we're prepping you for surgery?'"

Sarah Anderson directs the Global Economy Project at the Institute for Policy Studies in Washington, D.C.

A people's history of Robin Hood (and why we still need him today)
yesmagazine.org/robin-hood

SINGLE-PAYER HEALTH CARE

Vermont Shows How to Cover Everyone

Amy Gluckman

The activists who celebrated the passage of Act 48 in Vermont last May will be the first to tell you that there is still a long road ahead. It may be six years before universal, single-payer health care will be fully implemented in the state. That's plenty of time for likely opponents, including the insurance and pharmaceutical industries, to marshal their forces and try to stop it. But the progress in Vermont has bolstered single-payer campaigns in 20-plus states around the country, and successes elsewhere may in turn help sustain Vermont's reform campaign.

Single-payer, or "Medicare for all," is universal health care coverage with the government as insurer. (It's not "socialized medicine" as in the United Kingdom, where the government runs hospitals and employs doctors directly.)

President Barack Obama's big push for national health care reform in 2009–2010 left single-payer off the table.

Reform took a different path in Vermont. In 2010, the state hired a Harvard economist to recommend a cost-conscious system of universal coverage. The result, unveiled in early 2011, was a single-payer plan to be run by an independent, quasi-governmental board, with private insurers' role limited to contracts for claims processing and other administrative tasks.

In the meantime, Vermonters elected a strong single-payer supporter, Peter Shumlin, for governor. But the state had seen good single-payer plans and supportive governors before (think Howard Dean). One difference this time around was a huge popular mobilization. As the legislature deliberated, supporters of single-payer turned out in large numbers, including a "People's Team" clad in bright red T-shirts that became a fixture at the State House. The Vermont Workers Center, which had been working to build grassroots support on the issue for two decades, can take a lot of the credit. "It would be a shame," the center's James Haslam emphasized, "if the lesson people took from Vermont was that the win here was all about having ... a sympathetic governor."

Progressive Party State Rep. Chris Pearson says organizing was critical to convincing "nervous Democrats" to support Act 48, and notes that the campaign also benefited from Vermont's progressive political climate. Vermont Businesses for Social Responsibility, an influential alternative to the Chamber of Commerce, supported single payer. Vermont's Blue Cross Blue Shield, the largest insurer in the state and one of the few "Blues" that is still a nonprofit, did not mount an anti-reform campaign. And the presence of the Progressive Party itself made a difference. "While our numbers are small—five out of 150 in the House—our unwavering support for single payer has pulled the debate to the left the way you see the Tea Party pull the debate to the right," Pearson says. He also claims the Progressive Party influenced the Democrats' choice of Shumlin in 2010 by promising not to run a Progressive gubernatorial candidate so long as the Democrats nominated a strong single-payer advocate.

The work of implementation is now under way. The Green Mountain Care Board is holding public meetings around the state as it begins designing the new system and proposing how to finance it. Ironically, meeting the mandates of the federal Affordable Care Act will represent a detour on Vermont's road to universal coverage.

Heavy national players opposed to single-payer haven't been active in Vermont yet, at least not openly. Fierce battles probably lie ahead, but the single-payer camp can already claim one victory. Fletcher Allen Health Care, a nonprofit hospital, wanted to sell five dialysis units to a private corporation, Bio-Medical Applications. Single-payer advocates saw this as a step backward, fought hard to prevent the sale—and won.

Amy Gluckman is a freelance writer and former co-editor of *Dollars & Sense* magazine.

**3**

Hold corporations accountable to our laws.

Special Weapons For Fighting Giants

A Legal Arsenal For Ordinary People: Debarment, Charter Revocation, and Civil Litigation

Robert Weissman

THE LAST FEW YEARS have seen a series of corporate catastrophes, for which the perpetrator companies have escaped any meaningful accountability. Big banks and giant Wall Street firms tricked and ripped off homeowners and investors, and crashed the national and global economy. BP's reckless operations poisoned the Gulf of Mexico in one of the worst oil disasters in history. Massey Energy's cost-cutting led to the Upper Big Branch coal mine collapse that killed 29 workers.

There have been virtually no criminal prosecutions for Wall Street wrongdoing related to the crash, and precious few civil actions. Criminal charges are likely to be filed against BP, but the company already has been granted new permits to drill for oil in the Gulf. Massey Energy—now owned by Alpha Natural Resources—was forced to pay \$200 million in penalties but avoided any criminal prosecution.

This history notwithstanding, We the People, and our government

representatives, do have the power to hold companies accountable for the wrongs they commit. The challenge is to mobilize sufficient political pressure to demand that available tools be used and new mechanisms of accountability be created.

One powerful way to hold companies accountable is through debarment—denying corporate wrongdoers the right to obtain government contracts. Almost every major company does significant business with the government, so debarment is a penalty with teeth. Similarly, federal, state, and local governments should deny other government benefits to corporate criminals and wrongdoers. Denying BP the right to drill in the Gulf is a penalty that would sting. Drug companies that can't sell to Medicare, Medicaid, and the Veteran's Administration are deprived of more than a third of their market. The Federal Communications Commission has the authority to deny broadcast licenses to media

corporations that do not exhibit "good character." Federal and state governments do frequently debar companies, but typically only smaller firms that engage in massive fraud or operate as criminal enterprises.

A second tool to discipline corporate wrongdoers is charter revocation. Establishing a new corporation requires that a state government grant a charter to operate. (This is typically a perfunctory requirement, as evidenced by the state of Virginia's grant of a charter to Licensed to Kill, Inc., a company whose articles of incorporation state that it will engage in "manufactur[ing] and marketing of tobacco products in a way that each year kills over 400,000 Americans and 4.5 million other persons worldwide.") State governments have the right to revoke charters from companies that do not serve the public interest. Free Speech for People has petitioned Delaware to revoke the charter of Massey Energy. Charter revocation effectively



RAINFOREST ACTION NETWORK PHOTO

Anti-coal photographer and activist Mark Schmerling brought his photo of Massey Energy's destruction of Kayford Mountain to an EPA hearing in Philadelphia. Delaware Attorney General Joseph R. "Beau" Biden is being urged to decharter Massey because of the company's reckless history.

that victims may recover, limiting punitive damages, and forcing victims out of the civil justice system (real courts) and into arbitration tribunals biased to favor giant corporations.

In recent years, organizations like EarthRights International and the Center for Constitutional Rights have innovated new ways to hold corporations accountable in U.S. courts for harms perpetrated overseas, relying especially on a law passed in 1789 called the Alien Tort Claims Act. The U.S. Chamber of Commerce has responded with a campaign to foreclose such litigation.

In addition to using these and other corporate accountability tools already at our disposal, we need more. Among other things, we need to significantly strengthen the penalties for corporate endangerment of people's lives and well-being. In many instances, there is no criminal penalty applicable for recklessly putting consumers' or workers' lives at risk by knowingly selling dangerous pharmaceuticals or defective cars or by exposing workers to deadly toxic chemicals or other hazards. A law that would make it a felony to recklessly endanger consumers or workers,

CHARTER REVOCATION EFFECTIVELY CONSTITUTES THE DEATH PENALTY FOR A CORPORATION. EVEN OCCASIONAL USE WOULD BE A MAJOR DETERRENT TO CORPORATE WRONGDOING.

constitutes the death penalty for a corporation. Even occasional use against large corporations would be a major deterrent to corporate wrongdoing.

A third form of control on corporate wrongdoing is civil litigation. Lawsuits against corporate wrongdoers not only afford victims an opportunity to receive some compensation for the harms they have suffered, they work to strip corporations of ill-gotten gains. The civil justice system is a vital deterrent to corporate misconduct, because it means corporations will at least sometimes be forced to pay for

the harms they cause. And lawsuits provide direct justice to victims of corporate wrongdoing, without the need to persuade government officials to act. In many ways, the U.S. civil justice system is the most important form of corporate accountability we have.

It's for exactly these reasons that corporations have worked for decades to undermine the functioning of the civil justice system, making it harder to file cases, interfering with the ability of victims to join together in class actions, making it harder for victims to obtain evidence, capping the damages

with stiff fines and sanctions for companies and jail time for responsible corporate management, would make our world safer and restrain corporate misconduct.

We live in a time of massive disparity between penalties for street criminals and corporate wrongdoers. Corporations, which claim all the rights of "persons," are subjected to much weaker punishments than real people. It doesn't have to be. 🗳️

Robert Weissman is president of Public Citizen, a consumer advocacy and corporate accountability organization based in Washington, D.C.

“SOCIAL SECURITY
IS BROKE” AND OTHER
SCARE TACTICS



PHOTO BY STEPHEN O'BYRNE

A demonstrator at Occupy Wall Street shows how corporations talk. Their “speech,” Lisa Graves says, has left us believing a lot of things that aren’t true.

3 Things Everybody Knows, and Why They’re Wrong

Lisa Graves

Winston Churchill reportedly said, “A lie gets halfway around the world before the truth has a chance to put its pants on.” That was before corporations had perfected the art of public relations, investing millions of dollars in PR campaigns to advance their commercial and political interests.

The fact is, there are a number of things most people know are true—except they’re not. That’s the result of well-planned, well-funded, long-term propaganda campaigns designed to make people believe things that are

against their own best interests.

One relatively new example is the climate denial industry, which is funded by some of the richest corporations and CEOs on the planet to protect their profits from regulations that would address climate change. Although it’s one of the biggest threats we have ever faced, an increasing number of Americans believe there is widespread disagreement in the scientific community about climate change.

But that’s not true—there is actually widespread scientific agreement on climate, and a few dissenters, most

paid in some way by the oil industry. Millions of dollars have been spent to create the appearance of disagreement, including deployment of so-called experts and even TV meteorologists to repeat talking points favored by big oil.

In the past year, the Internet and social media have brought together social movements across the globe, and there are signs that, in this new information age, people are breaking through the fog of corporate disinformation. But some of the “facts” have been repeated for so many years that a lot of people still think they are true.

**“Social Security Is Broke”***—The Cass City Chronicle
(Jan. 22, 1976)*

For more than 30 years, opponents of Social Security have peddled this lie.

The roots of the efforts to attack Social Security run deep in the far right. They include CEOs such as Fred Koch, who promoted the John Birch Society’s red-scare-era smears that such New Deal reforms were “socialist” or “communist.” In the 1970s, Fred’s sons, Charles and David, inherited his billions—and his ideas. Charles began funding think tanks to develop arguments for dismantling Social Security.

David ran for vice president on the 1980 Libertarian ticket with a platform that included privatizing Social Security. Since then he’s spent millions on groups to push disinformation about Social Security and promote an array of sophisticated corporate propaganda. The donations of Koch Industries and others to groups like the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC) that promote claims that Social Security is going broke have paid off. Also, as detailed in SourceWatch, billionaire Peter Peterson has pledged a billion dollars to attacking Social Security. And, guess what? Almost all the current crop of GOP presidential candidates have called Social Security a scam.

The truth is that Social Security wasn’t broke in 1976, and it’s not broke today. According to trusted actuaries, in about 25 years Social Security could face a shortfall—a gap that would allow it to pay most but not all of the earned benefits—unless it’s fixed.

One easy solution is to apply Social Security taxes to all earned income. Under the current system, any wages over the first \$106,800 are exempt from Social Security withholding. If we close this loophole soon, the potential shortfall would be solved. Only about 6 percent of Americans earn that much

and removing this exemption would help ensure that the other 94 percent have the protection of this basic social safety net for decades to come.

Tort Reform “Creates Jobs”*—Wisconsin Gov. Scott Walker, ALEC alum*

The first controversial bill Gov. Walker signed into law last year wasn’t his union-busting effort but a “tort reform” package he claimed would “create jobs.” This omnibus bill, which included numerous items that echo “model” bills from the ALEC bill factory, was rushed through so fast most folks barely had time to read it. But the U.S. Chamber of Commerce immediately applauded the bill and so did ALEC. Such legislation is on the wish list of the global corporations funding these groups and many politicians.

Tort reform is a made-up phrase that really means changing the rules for Americans killed or injured by corporations or other defendants. It’s been making its way through states across the country based on claims that it will create jobs, protect access to medical care, and bring down insurance rates.

But legal changes like those in Wisconsin make it harder for Americans to hold a company or careless physician responsible for all the damages caused by their negligence. Such changes make it harder for juries to punish companies to help deter egregious and deadly corporate acts.

Such bills are often pushed based on claims that corporations fear getting “unfairly” sued. But changes like those in Wisconsin have nothing to do with frivolous lawsuits. Caps on damages, for example, apply only after a jury of American citizens has heard the facts and found the company was responsible for the harm.

Plus, there is no conclusive evidence that these changes to the law create

jobs. In Wisconsin, for example, Walker claimed his tort reforms and other changes would create 250,000 new private-sector jobs, but the state ended last year with five months in a row of job losses.

The reality is that surveys of local businesses about what would lead them to hire more people reveal that the answer is more sales, not less litigation. In Wisconsin, for example, in a survey of state businesses about what would improve business, tort reform was dead last.

Tort reform is just more of the race to the bottom, pitting state against state to protect their citizens the least. The reality is that ALEC and the U.S. Chamber are bankrolled by global corporations trying to pay American workers the least, provide workers the fewest rights and benefits, and compensate as little as possible for consumers who are injured.

Lives and livelihoods are the real costs of tort reform, which is being sold through calculated corporate disinformation.

We Need the Keystone XL Pipeline for Our “Jobs and National Security”—Jack Gerard, CEO of the American Petroleum Institute

The richest industry on the planet is putting money behind claims that controversial energy projects, from natural gas fracking to the Keystone XL pipeline, are essential to our national security. Americans are vulnerable to such claims as gas prices rise in response to another round of saber-rattling in the Middle East.

People have been bombarded with corporate-backed claims that national security demands immediate approval of the controversial Keystone XL pipeline connecting the Alberta, Canada, tar sands to the Gulf Coast in Texas. But the claims are misleading. »

Who Really Gets Burned With Tort Reform?



A long-running propaganda campaign has convinced a large segment of the U.S. population that “tort reform”—limiting damage awards, making it harder to sue, and limiting access to courts—is good for all of us.

It’s been a simple, two-part attack: Threaten access to health care (“Doctors are quitting, because of the cost of malpractice lawsuits”) and play on moral outrage (“Undeserving people get millions through frivolous lawsuits”).

We’ve heard that we have to clamp down on the runaway results produced by ambulance-chasing attorneys.

The movie *Hot Coffee* looks at the reality.

The title refers to the infamous Stella

Liebeck case. You know the one: A lady spills McDonald’s coffee in her lap, then cashes in for millions. Crazy, right?

Once you’ve watched the movie, you may not think so. Her burns were third-degree and required skin grafts. McDonald’s had faced 700 claims for similar burns before Liebeck’s claim. All she originally asked for was the cost of medical treatment. And the jury’s award of \$2.7 million? The judge reduced it to \$480,000, even though he found the company’s behavior willful and reckless.

The movie also reveals the real-world effects of tort reform.

A family in Nebraska discovers that caps on damages mean that their son, brain-damaged at birth, will not have his care paid for by the person who caused the injury (or her insurer). Instead, once they’ve run through the amount provided under the state’s cap on damages and through the family’s own resources, his care will be provided by taxpayers.

A young woman finds that she can’t sue her employer—Halliburton—even after she was raped when the company failed to provide her with safe housing while she worked in Iraq. The company forced her to sign a mandatory arbitration clause—another variety of tort reform—when she was hired. And the company got to pick the arbitrator who would hear her claim. Her case was so shocking that it led to a federal law restoring the right to sue for her and others like her.

The line is that there’s an epidemic of frivolous lawsuits. If that’s the case, then why are we still talking about Stella Liebeck 20 years later? If we’re living in a world of foolish tort claims, why can’t they come up with a case—many cases—every year?

The truth is, tort reform isn’t about protecting ordinary people. It’s about protecting the profits of the people and corporations who cause injuries—and saving their insurers some money, to boot.—*Doug Pibel*

Watch the film trailer for *Hot Coffee* yesmagazine.org/hot-coffee

First, the crude oil from the dirty tar sands extraction process comes from Canada, not the United States, so the oil does not belong to the American people. The oil is not Canada’s either. Rights to it have been sold to multinational companies whose interest is the highest price.

Second, take a look at the map of the proposed pipeline. Its target is the refinery world of Port Arthur, Texas, which is focused on exporting oil via the Gulf of Mexico. Refiners in Texas on board to process tar sands crude include Royal Dutch Shell, the Saudi government, and the French oil company Total. A Texas company, Valero, which operates in a “Foreign Trade Zone” in Port Arthur, which limits customs duties, has pitched investors on exporting the diesel from tar sands crude while importing gas to America.

Don’t believe the corporate propaganda on jobs either. In an earlier

phase of the pipeline in South Dakota, almost 90 percent of the 2,500 jobs were filled by workers not from that state, and most of the jobs were low-wage and temporary, according to testimony from TransCanada, the pipeline’s developer.

To Tell the Truth ...

These are just a few examples. If you want to find out more on these issues and corporate PR techniques, check out our research and resources at PRWatch.org, SourceWatch.org, and ALECexposed.org.

Despite the gloomy picture of the success of some of these propaganda campaigns, there is hope. The Keystone XL pipeline looked like a done deal. But demonstrations at the White House led by 350.org that resulted in 1,253 arrests, combined with citizen outcry in the heartland states the pipeline would cross, resulted in denial of

the permit to build. The day after the Obama administration announced that decision, a group of politicians held a press conference. You guessed it: They said that stopping the pipeline threatened jobs and national security.

And, as economist Dean Baker points out, for all the hostile rhetoric over the years, Social Security is undamaged so far, although this guaranteed pension is difficult to live on alone, since it has not been fully funded by including all wages in withholding over the years.

We’re up against big, rich opponents. But at least if you know the truth, the next time you hear someone say, “Social Security is broke,” you can say, “No it’s not.” And even explain why. 🗣️

Lisa Graves is executive director of the Center for Media and Democracy and publisher of PRWatch, SourceWatch, BanksterUSA, and ALECexposed.org.



5

Support independent media and keep the Internet free.



Independent media: With a laptop and a webcam, protesters at Occupy Seattle broadcast a live feed to the Internet.

PHOTO BY MIK NEI

The People's Media

Public interest groups have waged a spirited campaign to prevent a corporate takeover of the Internet

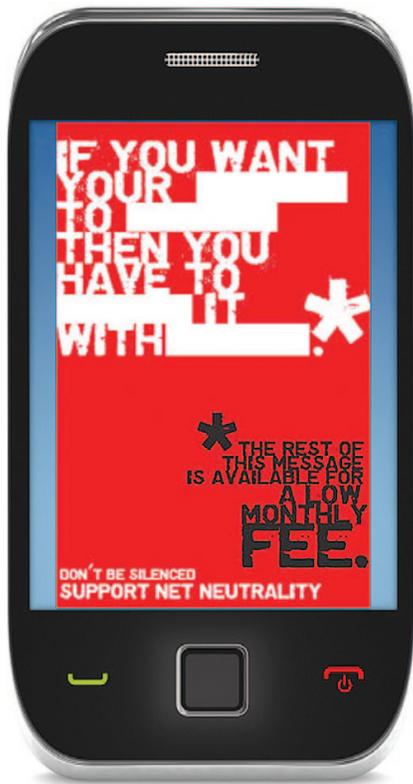
Joseph Torres

AT&T SPARED NO EXPENSE in 2011 when it sought government approval of its \$39 billion deal to acquire T-Mobile. The merger would have created a duopoly, leaving AT&T and Verizon in control of nearly 80 percent of the wireless market.

AT&T would then have been able to set higher prices, at a cost to people on modest incomes who depend on their cell phones to connect with work, family, and the details of modern life.

The poor and people of color would have been hard-hit. The National Hispanic Media Coalition, for example, said the merger would increase the cost of wireless services for Latinos. And the Center for Media Justice noted that the merger would have resulted in “fewer options and higher prices” for people of color, who disproportionately depend on access to the Internet through mobile devices.

Knowing there would be opposition >>



Amplifying the People's Voices

How did a giant corporation like AT&T fail to win approval of its merger?

Much of it had to do with nonprofit organizations like Free Press, the largest media reform group in the country (and my employer). Despite having only a fraction of AT&T's vast resources, these groups effectively mobilized public opposition to the merger. They took advantage of mistakes AT&T made, and tapped into growing concern about corporate wrongdoing.

"Fortunately, there were public advocates out there who refused to accept that this was a done deal just because AT&T was involved," said Free Press President and CEO Craig Aaron.

A coalition of public interest groups and wireless companies—including Public Knowledge, the New America Foundation's Open Technology Initiative, the Future of Music Coalition, the Media Access Project, Sprint and Cricket—worked to block the merger.

Boston Globe and *The New York Times* questioned whether other civil rights groups and nonprofits supported the merger because of their close financial ties to AT&T.

"The embarrassment for AT&T, already seeing its merger beginning to teeter for various other reasons, only helped to escalate the problems, bringing attention to how the company was buying off civil rights groups," wrote journalist Michelangelo Signorile.

AT&T's true motives for pursuing the merger were revealed in August, when the company mistakenly released unredacted confidential documents it filed with the FCC. The information revealed the company had rejected a plan to build out its 4G network to serve 97 percent of the population at a cost of \$3.8 billion. It wasn't profitable enough to make that investment. Instead, AT&T decided it was better business to spend \$39 billion—10 times as much—to take out a competitor.

This undermined AT&T's main pub-

THE GOVERNMENT'S REJECTION OF THE AT&T/T-MOBILE DEAL IS AN IMPORTANT REMINDER THAT THE LITTLE GUY CAN WIN IN WASHINGTON.

» to this deal, AT&T began doling out money in Washington, D.C. The company spent \$16 million on lobbying during the first nine months of 2011 in its drive to pass the merger, dished out \$2 million in campaign contributions to both Democratic and Republican members of Congress, and spent \$40 million on advertisements promoting the deal.

So it wasn't surprising to see many Wall Street analysts predict that the merger would sail to approval.

But the establishment was wrong. Despite AT&T's massive political influence, the Department of Justice filed an antitrust lawsuit in August to block the merger. Days before Thanksgiving, the FCC announced its opposition. By Christmas, the deal was dead.

Several groups pored over confidential filings that AT&T submitted to the FCC and found that AT&T misrepresented the merger's benefits, including the statement that it would create 96,000 new jobs.

AT&T also boasted about its support from well-established nonprofit and civil rights organizations.

But gay journalists and bloggers like John Aravosis and Dan Savage played a key role in exposing AT&T's corporate influence over nonprofit groups supporting the merger, like the Gay & Lesbian Alliance Against Defamation (GLAAD), which received \$50,000 in donations from AT&T.

The GLAAD controversy prompted other journalists to take a closer look at the merger. Editorials in *The*

public argument for seeking approval of the merger—that it needed to acquire T-Mobile to build out its 4G network.

These blunders, as well as a growing national dissatisfaction with corporate influence over politics, magnified public support for groups working against the merger. Free Press submitted more than 100,000 signatures from its members, joined by more than 50,000 members of ColorOfChange.org, all calling on the FCC to block the takeover.

Protecting Media Diversity

The government's rejection of the AT&T/T-Mobile deal is an important reminder that the little guy can win in Washington. And the fight for a just cause is possible only with a broad

PASSAGE OF NET NEUTRALITY RULES PROTECTING WIRED INTERNET USERS REPRESENTS A VICTORY THAT LIKELY WOULD NOT HAVE OCCURRED IF THE PUBLIC HAD NOT DEMANDED INTERNET FREEDOM.

base of public support.

That kind of support, for example, has been critical in pushing back attempts to loosen media ownership rules. Indeed, there are few media policy issues that galvanize as much widespread public opposition as media consolidation.

People understand that greater corporate control over our media system means that big media companies will place maximizing profit over making sure the news and informational needs of local communities are met. It means the public can expect more infotainment in their daily paper or on their local newscast rather than news that informs them about their community and the world they live in.

In 2003, the Bush administration's FCC proposed massive deregulation that would have allowed big media companies to get even bigger. Nearly 3 million people contacted the FCC and Congress with 99 percent of them opposed. The FCC approved relaxing ownership rules anyway, but in 2004 a federal appeals court overturned that decision.

In 2007, the Bush FCC attempted, once again, to relax ownership rules. But last July, the same court that rejected the 2003 rules threw the new ones out, too.

Despite the struggle to prevent further consolidation, the commission still hasn't learned its lesson. Just before Christmas, the Obama FCC introduced essentially the same rule to lift the cross-ownership ban that Democrats—including then-Senator Obama—rejected in 2007 during the Bush Administration. Free Press and other organizations are mobilizing activists to protect—and strengthen—existing ownership limits.

Protecting Net Neutrality

Public interest groups and media justice organizations have also waged a spirited campaign to prevent a corporate takeover of the Internet. Free Press' SavetheInternet.com coalition has more than 2 million net neutrality supporters who have called on the government to protect our right to communicate freely online.

Companies like AT&T and Comcast want the power to interfere with Web traffic so they can decide which sites and applications go fast and which go slow. And the cable and phone companies, along with their trade association, spend about \$70 million annually on lobbying to achieve their ambition.

During his 2008 presidential campaign, Obama said he would take a back seat to no one in his support of net neutrality. But his FCC chairman, Julius Genachowski, took a back seat to AT&T in December 2010, when he brokered a compromise with the telecom giant to strip most network neutrality protections for wireless users.

The agency's net neutrality rules, which went into effect in November 2011, created two Internets, by providing protection for wired users but omitting most protections for people connecting via wireless devices like smartphones. The rules open the door to discriminatory behavior from internet service providers.

While this compromise was a setback, the passage of net neutrality rules protecting wired Internet users still represents a victory that likely would not have occurred if the public had not demanded Internet freedom.

Yet this partial victory is still under attack. Verizon and MetroPCS are suing the FCC to have the new rules thrown out. Last year, Republican

lawmakers passed a measure in the House to overturn the net neutrality rules, but public outcry helped defeat the measure in the Senate.

Better Media, Better Democracy

The public interest community and media justice organizations continue to fight for policies that will create a more democratic media system. We need policies that decentralize control of our media system and allow the voices of ordinary people to be heard rather than giving greater power to corporate gatekeepers.

This is critically important for people of color. We have seen the damage caused to our communities when other people tell our stories—they often get it wrong.

Our victories on AT&T and net neutrality come at a time when the Occupy movement is challenging the conventional wisdom that we can't stand up to corporations. For too long, many people have felt hopeless about the prospect of holding politicians and lawmakers accountable and making them serve the interests of everyday people.

But the structural issues that allowed corporations to run roughshod over our economy and media system won't change unless people organize and work together to fight back and be heard.

Their voices can make a difference.

Just ask AT&T. 

Joseph Torres, senior external affairs director at Free Press, is co-author, with Juan Gonzalez, of *News for All the People: The Epic Story of Race and the American Media*.

 How we can win the worldwide struggle for Internet freedom
yesmagazine.org/net-freedom

Boulder's Local Power

Running Their Own Utility Means Sun and Wind Energy Instead of Coal



Valerie Schloredt

The city of Boulder, Colo., has won the right to take its power supply—and carbon emissions—away from corporate control. The change for Boulder came in November when voters passed two ballot measures that allow the city to begin the process of forming its own municipal power utility.

The city's current electricity supplier, Xcel Energy, is a large corporation that sources more than 60 percent of its power from coal. Colorado climate activists tried for years to persuade Xcel to transition from coal to renewables, arguing that the state's plains, mountains, and 300 days of annual sunshine

give it abundant potential for the development of wind and solar power. But they found Xcel's take-up of renewables was frustratingly slow. Xcel is investing \$400 million in its coal-powered plants, and its plans for renewables stops at just 30 percent in 2020, with no further increase until 2028.

Boulder has long cherished the goal of becoming a leader in tackling climate change. In 2002, the city council passed the Kyoto Resolution on reducing greenhouse gas emissions. In 2006, residents voted for the nation's first city carbon tax to achieve those targets.

"Municipalization"—the legal process whereby the city would form its own utility company—has been on the table since 2004. When Xcel countered with the offer of an ambitious city-wide smart grid in 2008, Boulder accepted. But Xcel and its partners didn't do a cost-benefit analysis prior to starting the project, and the portion of the costs consumers would pay rose from a projected \$15.3 million to (at last count) \$44.8 million.

Meanwhile, the corporation's reliance on coal affected its use of wind power. Coal plants can't be switched on and off as the wind blows. So when



6

Protect the commons from private interests.



PHOTOS BY ZANE SELVANS

The Boulder-Denver “Power Past Fossil Fuels” bike ride in September served also as a rally for the local utility initiative.

At right, Boulder residents plant sunflowers at the gates of the Valmont coal plant, which is scheduled to close.

there was more electricity generated than needed to meet consumer demand, Xcel would curtail its wind power purchases in favor of selling power from its own coal plants.

As Xcel’s 20-year franchise with Boulder came due for renewal, city officials were increasingly skeptical about the corporation’s willingness to meet their clean energy goals. Analysis showed a municipal utility could

work, while prioritizing climate change action over profits to shareholders. In 2011, the city drafted two ballots for voter approval: Ballot Issue 2B would increase the utility occupation tax to fund the planning process. Ballot Issue 2C would authorize the city to form the utility and issue bonds to buy the distribution system—providing that the new municipal utility’s rates would be equal to or less than Xcel’s.

Thus began a closely fought battle between corporate money and grassroots activism. Xcel financed a “vote no” campaign to the tune of nearly \$1 million, buying extensive (and some said, misleading) advertising and hiring door-to-door canvassers.

One development that climate activists found particularly galling was when Leslie Glustrom, research director for climate group Clean Energy Action, was banned from carrying out her watchdog role at the Public Utility Commission—which regulates Xcel.

But the “yes” campaign for 2B and 2C drew on Boulder’s strengths—it’s a college town populated with progressives and technical experts, a hub for clean energy start-ups and atmospheric research. The campaign support group, RenewablesYes, was able to assemble an impressive and all-volunteer “Citizen Technical Team” who worked out a model that used solar, wind, and electricity use data to analyze Boulder’s electricity mix. Then they publicized their analysis—that a local energy utility could reduce the city’s carbon emissions by 66 percent, increase its use of renewables to 40 percent, and keep rates the same as, or lower than, those charged by Xcel.

The list of endorsements for 2B and 2C grew, and eventually included dozens of elected officials, a roster of businesses, three local newspapers, and over 1,000 residents. Political

action organization New Era Colorado put additional vitality into the effort by mobilizing young people, who worked phone banks and pounded the pavement to counter Xcel’s advertising.

The ballot measures passed by a whisker—a major victory given that the corporation outspent the grassroots campaign 10 to 1. Ken Regelson, a leader in the campaign, thinks that community organizing tipped the balance. Personal contacts with voters, he says, “are worth more than a utility can spend.”

Municipal utilities aren’t the untested experiments Xcel’s “vote no” campaign made them out to be—there are more than 2,000 public utilities serving 46 million customers in the United States. While some of these utilities are in small or rural markets, Boulder is a big, growing market—it generates at least \$100 million in annual revenue for Xcel. The revolutionary potential of Boulder’s ballots is that producing renewable energy for a municipal utility could keep millions of dollars in the local economy instead of exporting them to the headquarters of an investor-held company.

Boulder officials estimate it will take three to five years to create the power and light utility. Climate change activists working on the plan hope it will be a successful model for other cities. “Everything we are doing,” says Ken Regelson, “we plan on sharing as widely as possible ... there are lots of lessons to learn and share.” As Boulder works out the details, other cities are watching. They may already be planning to “go Boulder,” ditch the corporation, and take control of their own local power. 🗳️

Valerie Schloredt is associate editor at YES!

John Farrell, Institute for Local Self-Reliance, contributed to this story.



7

Vote. Build a strong democracy and put progressive leaders in office.

The Supreme Court’s decision in *Citizens United* revealed just how thoroughly the American people (people, I should clarify, in the traditional sense) have lost control over our own democracy. But it’s far from the only way that corporations now circumvent true democratic decision-making. There are lots of other problems that need fixing—and that can be fixed now, at the state and local level, without waiting for a constitutional amendment. —*Brooke Jarvis*

4 Ways to Flex Our Electoral Muscles



DISCLOSURE

Citizens United effectively removed the limits that state and federal laws had placed on how much money corporations and other groups can spend to influence elections—but it didn’t dispute the constitutionality of laws that mandate disclosing how that money is spent. In the six months immediately after *Citizens United* was handed down, 10 states responded by passing laws requiring more transparency—disclosure of how much money outside groups are spending, what they’re spending it on, and so forth. The California Legislature is currently debating the strongest disclosure law to date: It would require that all political ads show the logos of their three largest funders (not PACs, but the originating corporations) on the ads themselves.



CLEAN ELECTIONS

In Maine, only 20 percent of candidates accept private campaign contributions. Instead, qualifying candidates (candidates who receive a certain number of \$5 contributions from voters) finance their campaigns through the state’s Clean Elections Fund. The results? Lack of wealth doesn’t keep people from running for office; candidates are insulated from the influence of corporate special interests; they spend more time talking to voters and less time fundraising than in other states. The cost? Less than \$2 per taxpayer.

Similar systems are in use in Arizona, Connecticut, and a number of other states. A federal system has been repeatedly introduced in Congress, including a 2007 bill co-sponsored by then-Senator Barack Obama.



Inside Maine’s fight for clean elections yesmagazine.org/maine



CITIZEN JURIES

Since the Progressive Era, citizens’ initiatives have been a way for regular people to propose laws, bypassing elected officials by putting proposals directly to the electorate. But first, deep-pocketed corporate entities with a stake in the outcome have their chance to sway voters; ordinary citizens rarely have the money to counter. To make sure voters have access to unbiased information about what they’re voting on, a new Oregon law creates juries of randomly selected citizens whose job is to learn the issues, study the proposed legislation, and separate fact from fiction. Their findings are then mailed to the homes of registered voters.

Citizen juries have also been used, though unofficially, to help voters sift through information in gubernatorial and senate races in Pennsylvania and Minnesota.



RECALLS

What can citizens do when elected officials stand up for corporations at their expense? In a number of states, they’ve recently turned to recall elections. In the last year, citizens have engineered the recall of Wisconsin officials who passed the anti-union Budget Repair Bill (a recall against Gov. Scott Walker and Lt. Gov. Rebecca Kleefisch is pending); a Michigan state representative who supported a similar bill; and the Arizona state senator who sponsored the draconian anti-immigrant bill SB 1070 (which was written with the help of the private prison industry).

Nineteen states currently allow citizen recalls of state officials (Illinois became the latest, in 2010); at least 26 allow recalls of local officials.



Now For the Big Money

Cities, Churches, and Colleges Take Steps to Move Their Millions Home



PHOTO BY JONATHAN CLARK

Rebecca Leisher

SINCE THE BIG CORPORATE BANKS crashed the economy in 2008, they've been rewarded with bailouts, tax breaks, and bonuses, while American workers lose jobs and homes. Little wonder that many Americans—and now, institutions and local governments—have been closing their accounts at big corporate banks and transferring their money to community banks and credit unions. The idea is to send a strong message about responsibility to government and Wall Street, while supporting institutions that genuinely stimulate local economies.

Bank Transfer Day was publicized over five weeks, largely through social networks. In that period, credit unions received an estimated \$4.5 billion in new deposits transferred from banks,

according to the Credit Union National Association.

Encouraged by the popularity of the “Move Your Money” campaign, citizens are calling for institutions to be accountable and “Move Our Money.” A number of schools, churches, and local governments across the country are transferring large sums, or at least considering it, in what looks like the beginning of a broad movement to invest in local economies instead of Wall Street.

Last year the city of San Jose moved nearly \$1 billion from Bank of America because of the bank's high record of home foreclosures. City Council members linked foreclosures to lost tax revenues and cuts to jobs and services, and urged other U.S. cities to follow San Jose's example. More recently, in November 2011, the Seattle City Council responded to the Occupy movement by unanimously passing a resolution to review its banking and investment practices “to ensure that public funds are invested in responsible financial institutions that support our community.” Officials in Portland, Ore., Los Angeles, and New York City are discussing proposals that address how and where city funds are invested. Massachusetts launched the Small Business Banking Partnership initiative last year to leverage small business loans and has already deposited \$106 million in state reserve funds into community banks.

Student activists and the Responsible Endowments Coalition are urging colleges and universities—some of which have assets comparable to those of a town or city—to move at least

a portion of their endowments from Wall Street. The Peralta Community Colleges District in California, with an annual budget of \$140 million, has done just that. The district's board of trustees voted unanimously in November to move its assets into community banks and credit unions.

Churches and faith organizations are moving their money too. Congregations in the California interfaith coalition LA Voice vowed to divest \$2 million from Wells Fargo and Bank of America, ending a 200-year relationship with the big banks. The Most Holy Trinity Catholic Church in East San Jose, Calif., pulled \$3 million out of Bank of America and reinvested the funds into Micro Branch, a division of Self-Help Federal Credit Union designed to assist underserved communities.

Moving money is most effective where banking practices and investments are transparent. Oregon Banks Local represents small business, family farms, and community banks. It offers a website tool that ranks local banks and credit unions on criteria like headquarters location, jobs created, and extent of local investment to show which financial institutions truly serve local communities.

“People from all walks of life are angry at the banks,” says Ilana Berger, co-director of The New Bottom Line, a national campaign that promotes moving money from Wall Street. But the broad appeal of this grassroots movement toward financial reform is based on more than anger or strategy. “It's a way to move our money to follow our values,” says Berger. “It's an opportunity to really protest against the banks, but also a way to show what we want them to be.”

Rebecca Leisher is a freelance writer and former YES! intern.

One San Jose church left Bank of America—and took \$3 million with them yesmagazine.org/most



The Importance of Being Sassy



9

Get creative to raise awareness.

SINCE LONG BEFORE ABBIE HOFFMAN dropped dollar bills over the New York Stock Exchange—unleashing hilarity as Wall Street traders scurried to gather up cash—humor has been a potent political weapon. It can expose the absurdities and inequities of consumer society. It doesn't need big bucks to be effective or contagious—Occupy has shown that creativity and imagination can be powerful enough to build a national movement. And the Internet and social networking can allow a well-orchestrated prank to reach millions in minutes. Want to use your wit to confront corporate power? Here are creative and inspiring examples.—*Sven Eberlein*

Truth in Advertising

Corporations may try to influence our perceptions through advertising, but who's to say activists can't give their messages a little editing? San Francisco's Billboard Liberation Front has been "improving" ads for clients ranging from Wachovia Bank to McDonald's for more than 30 years. One recent campaign helped telecommunications giant AT&T refine its message from an obtuse "AT&T works in more places, like Chilondoscov" (Chicago, London, Moscow, get it?) to the more discerning "AT&T works in more places, like NSA Headquarters."

"Not only were we helping NSA cut through the cumbersome red tape of the FISA system, we were also helping our customers by handing over their emails and phone records to the government," read a statement to press from James Croppy, designated by the Billboard Liberation Front as the "AT&T vice president of homeland security."

Other activists have fought back by getting their own ad space. Canadian artist Franke James launched a crowd-funded ad campaign on bus shelters throughout Ottawa, using her visual essays to call out the Harper administration's coddling of dirty oil industries. "It's a great way to



PHOTOS FROM REVEREND BILLY

➤ Reverend Billy delivers mountaintop mud—and entertaining political theater—to Chase Bank lobbies. Chase has “financed 80 percent of the mountaintop removal strip mining in Appalachia,” Reverend Billy said.

change the conversation from consuming stuff to making positive social change happen,” says James.

Mobbing the Lobby

The mall, the bank lobby, the retail store—the spaces where ordinary people interact with corporations—are ideal locations for political theater that raises awareness.

Reverend Billy and his “Church of Stop Shopping” are a band of activists on a mission to draw attention to the problems of consumerism. Two years ago, they decided to hold their Easter Sunday service at JPMorgan Chase’s Astor Place branch in Manhattan.

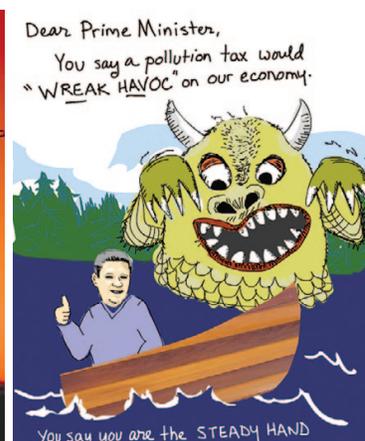
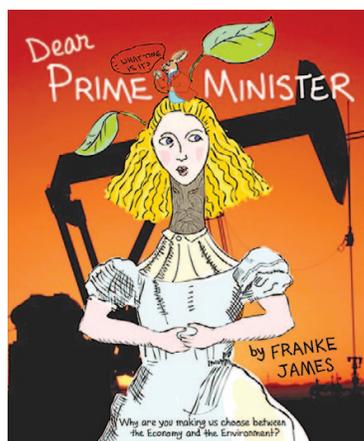
“This is a call to bring the earth back to the bank that has financed 80 percent of the mountaintop removal strip-mining in Appalachia,” announced Reverend Billy.

Armed with soil sent by activists from West Virginia’s Coal

River Valley, they built a little mountain sculpture in front of the ATMs, singing, “There’s a mountain in my lobby!”

Two months later, Chase announced that it would subject all mountaintop removal financing to more extensive review and revealed that it was no longer serving coal company Massey Energy. The Reverend doesn’t claim credit, but he believes the church’s 18-branch campaign may have been “the mosquito in [Chase’s] tent.”

Similarly, in August 2010, a progressive group called the Backbone Campaign used the floor of a Target retail store to stage a flash mob—and draw attention to the *Citizens United* Supreme Court ruling that lets corporations give unlimited campaign contributions. (Target gave \$150,000 to the anti-gay, anti-worker candidate for governor of Minnesota.) On a quiet day inside a Seattle Target branch, a group of ordinary-looking people standing beside ➤



➤ Artist Franke James designs art and ads addressed to Canada’s prime minister.



“I’M DRIVING TO MEET SOMEONE FOR BREAKFAST ... AND I’M LIKE, THE HELL WITH IT, I’M RUNNING MY CORPORATION FOR CONGRESS.”

» shopping carts broke into song and dance as a brass band played the 1980s hit “People are People”—with new words and the catchy chorus line, “Target ain’t people, so why should it be / allowed to play around with our democracy?”

The 5-minute, GLEE-style dance party got some of the other shoppers visibly animated and shaking their booties. The YouTube video of the event, created by Agit-Pop Communications, went viral, with over 1.5 million hits.

Running for Office as a “Corporate Person”

The absurdity of the legal precedent that says corporations are people is hard to ignore. Eric Hensal decided to mock corporate personhood by testing out whether a corporation could run for office. The Murray Hill Inc. for Congress campaign began with a proposal written on a napkin at a Tastee Diner. “I’m driving to meet someone for breakfast one morning, the *Citizens United* decision comes on, and I’m like, the hell with it, I’m running my corporation for Congress,” says Hensal, owner of the small, Silver Spring, Md., public relations company.

“Murray Hill Inc. for Congress puts a boring subject like campaign finance on a human scale,” says Hensal. “People laugh, but they appreciate the underlying truth behind it.”

Impersonating a Corporation

Enbridge, an oil company with a long record of spills, planning a pipeline more than 700 miles long through pristine British Columbia wilderness—what could possibly go wrong? Enter the Yes Men’s “MyHairCares” campaign, a flurry of fake press releases under the Enbridge name asking more than 1,000 salons across Canada to collect hair to mop up the oil giant’s future spills.

For years, Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno, a.k.a. The Yes Men, have been drawing attention to corporate abuses by pretending to be corporate spokesmen. The Yes Lab for Creative Activism’s new “project wizard” allows



PHOTO BY JOHNNY NGUYEN

» Occupy Our Homes helps homeowners stand up to banks and sends protesters to camp out at the homes of people facing eviction or foreclosure.

anyone to cook up the next prank. “Nothing we do is rocket science,” says Bichlbaum. “After coming up with a funny project idea, it’s just a matter of applying elbow grease and connecting with the right people.”

Mic Check

“Mic check?” someone shouts. “MIC CHECK!” the crowd echoes, almost in unison. After the New York police banned the use of electronic amplification in Zuccotti Park, necessity compelled the first Occupiers to prove that the power of a crowd was enough to amplify the messages of the 99 percent. The simple human microphone has come to signify the Occupy movement’s resilience and adaptability. Now, this cheeky “technology” has become a tool for disrupting business as usual with righteous rants. A crowd begins an almost unstoppable call and repeat. They overpower a luncheon at the U.S. Chamber of Commerce



PHOTOS FROM OCCUPY GEORGE

> Money talks. Occupy George’s graphic artists highlight who has the wealth in the United States—and who doesn’t—then send those dollars back into circulation.

or interrupt Black Friday sales at Walmart to announce to shoppers that “Walmart could fire its employees for the mere mention of forming a workers’ union.”

Disorder in the Court

What can match the legal power of corporations? At a courthouse in Brooklyn, a simple song was enough to drown out the proceedings. In October 2011, members of Organizing for Occupation (O4O), a group of New York City residents formed to respond to the housing crisis, disrupted

a foreclosure auction with a song written specially for the arbiter of (in)justice. “Mrs. Auctioneer,” they sang, sadly and beautifully, “all the people here are asking you to hold all the sales right now. We’re hoping to survive, but we don’t know how.” While the singers got escorted out of the courtroom in plastic handcuffs after half an hour, their heroic anthem apparently reached the hearts of potential buyers, and according to reports in *Village Voice*, only one of the three buildings set to be auctioned that day was sold. **v**

Sven Eberlein is a freelance writer living in San Francisco, with roots in Germany. He blogs at svenworld.com.



PHOTO BY SASHA KIMEL

> University of Michigan Board of Regents meeting is interrupted by students’ “human mic”: “You value funding start-ups instead of students. We are here to reclaim the university. We reject your vision.”

Workers Leading an Ownership Revolution

THE GOOD CORP

CEO OF SORTS: George Siemon of Organic Valley



George Siemon calls himself Organic Valley's "C-E-I-E-I-O." An organic farmer himself, he leads the \$700 million cooperative of small dairy and egg farmers with a commitment to sustainability.

ORGANIC VALLEY PHOTO

PORATION

Marjorie Kelly

Our economic system is profoundly broken. To anyone paying attention, that much is clear. But what's less clear is this: Our approach to fixing the economy is broken as well. The whole notion of "fighting corporate power" arises from an underlying belief that there is no alternative to capitalism as we know it. Starting from the insight that capitalism has become virtually a universal economy, we conclude that our best hope is to regulate corporations and work for countervailing powers like unions. But then we've lost before we begin. We've defined ourselves as marginal and powerless.

There is another approach. It's bubbling up all around us in the form of economic alternatives like cooperatives, employee-owned firms, social enterprises, and community land trusts. We don't recognize that these represent a coherent, workable alternative to capitalism, for two reasons.

First, we haven't acknowledged what unites them. Second, we don't have a name for this seemingly disparate batch of alternatives.

Ownership unites them. That's the reason that these different models represent change that goes deep. It's the reason this change is fundamental, enduring, and real. This transformation doesn't depend on the legislative or presidential whims of a particular hour, but is instead a permanent shift in the underlying architecture of economic power.

The alternatives emerging in our time represent an unsung ownership

revolution. This revolution is about broadening economic power from the few to the many and redefining the purpose of economic activity. The aim isn't to endlessly grow gross domestic product or to create wealth for a financial elite, but to generate the conditions for the flourishing of life.

Here we confront the second consideration—the need for a name. We can call this new economy the generative economy. The word generative is from the Greek *ge*; it's the same root form found in the word Gaia and means "the carrying on of life." The generative economy is one whose fundamental architecture tends to create beneficial rather than harmful outcomes. It has a built-in tendency to be socially fair and ecologically sustainable.

Options like worker ownership and cooperatives not only spread wealth but ensure that owners are local, hence more likely to care about local ecological impacts. And they allow enterprises to reject the growth imperative endangering the biosphere. Generative enterprise does not answer to the demands of the finance system, which locks publicly traded companies into a growth path in order to keep stock prices inflated.

In writing the book, *Owning Our Future: The Emerging Ownership Revolution*, I've been traveling around and visiting places where this new economy is bubbling up. Here's some of the good news I have to share: Generative ownership isn't just about small, local, founder-run companies. It's possible to keep the soul of these companies alive even at large scale, and long after the founder is gone.

Founded on Fairness

Consider, for example, the John Lewis Partnership (JLP) in England. It's the largest department store chain in the country, with 35 department stores and 272 Waitrose grocery stores. Revenues of this company are more than \$11.5 billion. If placed into the Fortune 500 list of the largest U.S. corporations, JLP would settle in around 212—a little higher than Starbucks. It's 100 percent owned by its employees.

The John Lewis Partnership is built around the value of fairness. The founder, John Spedan Lewis, who created its democratic structure about a century ago, believed that traditional ownership was unfair because dividends paid to shareholders for doing nothing were obscene when workers barely earned subsistence wages. The stated purpose of the company he created is to serve the happiness of its employees, or, as the company calls them, partners.

To see if this firm was real, I flew to London and visited a few of its stores—including a Waitrose grocery store. I met a butcher at the meat counter wearing a white linen fedora, a crisp white shirt beneath a green-striped apron, and a bow tie. The hats were required, he explained. But wearing a tie every day was his choice. "I just feel more dressed," he told me. People notice touches like that at Waitrose, where pay raises are given for performance, including such things as "being a tidy person," John said. He told me about his sister, Carol, who also worked at Waitrose and had just been diagnosed with cancer. "They've been really good," he said, referring

»

EMPLOYEES IN THIS FIRM ARE **NOT A COUNTERVAILING POWER**.
THEY'RE NOT LEGALLY OUTSIDE THE FIRM, NEGOTIATING WITH IT.
THEY ARE THE FIRM.



PHOTO FROM JLP

Each year, the John Lewis Partnership distributes a portion of its profits to employees. Last year, employees got a bonus of 18 percent of their regular salaries, about nine weeks pay.

» to the company. “There’s a budget set aside for people like this. She’s been off for three months, and they’re holding her job.”

When employees at Waitrose and other JLP stores face a family emergency, they can seek a grant or loan from the Committee for Financial Assistance. That committee, composed of and elected by employees, controls the special budget John referred to and makes decisions outside the chain of management. Help from that fund—plus the commitment to hold Carol’s job—took “the money side of worries away,” John said.

I also visited the company’s Peter Jones department store, entering through an arched doorway with the legend inscribed in stone, “Here is Partnership on the scale of modern industry.” There I encountered a mid-level manager named Harry Goonewardene, who served on the Partnership Council, an elected body of employees that works alongside the board of directors.

“How did you get on the council?” I

asked him. “Did you campaign?”

“Very much so,” he said. “I stood at the door and grabbed people, told them, ‘Hi, this is who I am.’” He carried himself as a city councilmember might, calmly, with an air of dignity that was almost arresting. He was impeccably dressed in a dark suit and had dark olive skin—he is from Sri Lanka, I was later told. He lacked that harried, pinched sense one often sees among floor managers at other retailers. A meeting of the Partnership Council would be held soon, he told me, during which an adjustment to the pension scheme would be discussed.

Each year, the company contributes to pension accounts a sum not far below employees’ annual pay; employees aren’t required to contribute anything. However, they are not eligible until they have completed three years of work, and people were concerned about that. “A committee has been looking at this, and we’ll take it back to constituents and present a plan,” he said. By “constituents,” he meant the workers.

John and Harry are among the 76,500 employee-owners of the John Lewis Partnership. If the ultimate prerequisite of being an owner is the right to pocket some of the profit left after the bills are paid, then these employees are genuine owners. Each year, after the firm sets aside a portion of profits for reinvestment in the business, the remainder—generally between 40 and 60 percent of profit—is distributed to employees. One clerk named Emma told me her recent bonus was 2,000 pounds [U.S. \$3,264]. “I spent some on a holiday in the Canary Islands,” she told me. “It was my first holiday in four years.”

Every employee at JLP, from shop clerk to the chairman, gets a bonus representing the same percentage of individual pay. As one manager told me, “In the worst year, it’s 8 percent, in the best year, 24 percent” of salary. Last year, the annual figure was announced with fanfare on the floor of the company’s store on Oxford Street, where a partner held up a poster reading “18%,” and employees clapped and cheered. That bonus amounted to about nine weeks pay.

Here we begin to see what is revolutionary about the John Lewis Partnership. Employees in this firm are not a countervailing power. They’re not legally outside the firm, negotiating with it. They are the firm.

From shareholders to stakeholders

This concept represents a kind of revolution akin to the shift from monarchy to democracy. In the American Revolution, the founding generation didn’t attempt to regulate or restrain monarchy. They created a new source of political power and sovereignty that they controlled themselves. The revolution they began is one that we are in a position to finish today. That previous generation democratized the political

aspect of sovereignty. But our politics and economy are so intertwined that imbalances in wealth and ownership have eroded our political democracy. To fix this, we need to democratize the economic aspect of sovereignty.

Today the ruling oligarch in our economy is capital. Only capital has the right to vote inside most companies, and only capital has a claim on profits. Serving capital—maximizing returns for absentee shareholders—is the goal of publicly traded companies.

In the generative economy, ownership is rooted instead in the hands of stakeholders connected to the life of the enterprise. In some cases, these are employees. They can also be com-

chemical-free food. Investors in the firm's preferred stock benefit from dependable rates of return. Farming communities benefit from the return of vitality that flows from farmers' prosperity.

Through enterprises like these, we can begin to grasp the principles that we could use to create a generative economy:

1. There is an alternative to capitalism. This is the heresy that the keepers of the temple do not wish us to utter. It is possible to organize a large, sophisticated, modern economy that tends toward fair and just outcomes, benefits the many rather than the few, and enables an enduring human presence

seem eternal. But as economist Joseph Schumpeter observed, creative destruction is ever present in capitalism. In industrialized nations, an estimated 15 percent of jobs are destroyed every year, and new jobs replace them. It's the same with companies. Hypothetically, a new economy comes into existence every seven years. In the long run, battling the dinosaurs of today may be less important than getting the next economy into the right kinds of ownership.

We can't get where we need to go by starting with corporations and asking how to restrain them, regulate them, or rein them in. We need to start with life, with human life and the life of the planet, and ask: How do we generate

THERE IS AN **ALTERNATIVE TO CAPITALISM**. THIS IS THE HERESY THAT THE KEEPERS OF THE TEMPLE DO NOT WISH US TO UTTER.

munity members, as with municipally owned electric plants and wind installations. In the case of credit unions, the depositors are the owners.

With a farmer-owned cooperative like Organic Valley—a Wisconsin firm with more than \$700 million in revenue—the owners are the suppliers, the people who produce the organic milk, cheese, and eggs that the company distributes. While the purpose of JLP is to serve employee happiness, the purpose of Organic Valley is to save the family farm. Both JLP and Organic Valley share certain ownership design patterns: a combination of rooted ownership and a mission that is not about maximizing profits but serving the needs of life. Protecting and enhancing the biosphere is integral to Organic Valley's operations, since it deals only in organic products. The company helps its new farmers through the rigorous process of going organic, which means company growth translates into wider restoration of soils and watersheds.

There are many other benefits the company produces. Farmers benefit from healthy income. Employees benefit from stable jobs and rewarding work. Customers benefit from

on a flourishing Earth.

2. Getting there is not only about regulation but about emergence. As organizational change theorist Margaret Wheatley writes, "emergence" refers to what happens when local actions spring up and connect through networks. Without warning, emergent phenomena can occur, such as the rise of the organic food movement. Such movements rely not on central leadership but on shared vision.

3. The generative economy is not a legal exercise but the embodiment of an emerging value system. Companies in the generative economy are built around values; the John Lewis Partnership's core value is fairness, while Organic Valley's core values are sustainability and community.

4. Generative values become enduring through the social architecture of ownership. The generative economy is built on a foundation of stakeholder ownership designed to generate and preserve real wealth—resources held and shared by our communities and the ecosystems we live in. These enterprises don't have absentee ownership shares trading in a casino economy, but ownership held in human hands.

Today's major corporations may

the conditions for life's flourishing? Will we continue to rely on ownership architectures organized around growth and maximum income for the few? Or can we shift to new ownership models organized around keeping this planet and all its inhabitants thriving?

Our greatest challenge lies in the realm of imagination and ideas. Imagine, for example, if the energy aroused by Occupy Wall Street were channeled into achievable strategies that supported ownership alternatives. Such strategies could include the Move Your Money campaign to shift bank deposits to cooperative and community banks or a push for major legislation to advance employee ownership (an alternative favored by both left and right). Imagine if campaigns like these were unified as a single movement for a generative economy. We might create an unstoppable force—a movement less about regulating corporations as they are and more about building living enterprises as we want them to be. **Y**

Marjorie Kelly is a fellow with the Tellus Institute in Boston and director of ownership strategy with Cutting Edge Capital. Her new book, *Owning Our Future: The Emerging Ownership Revolution*, will be published in June 2012 by Berrett-Koehler Publishers. Photo Essay: California welcomes a new kind of corporation yesmagazine.org/b-corps

Just the Facts

Doug Pibel

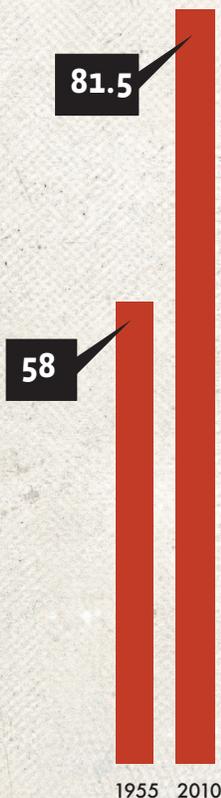
1

**More than ever,
people pay more in taxes
than corporations do.**

Corporate taxes as
a percentage
of federal revenue:



Individual income
and payroll taxes as a percentage
of federal revenue:



2

**But we tax corporate
income at 35%, the highest
in the world, right?
Not really.**

280 "Fortune 400" companies showed profits every year from 2008 to 2010. Of those:
About one-quarter paid more than 30%
About one-quarter paid less than 10%

Average tax rate?

18.5

(That's what a human being pays on
\$60,000 in taxable income.)

3

**And some of the
wealthiest corporations
pay no taxes at all.
They even get money back.**

29

corporations
from 2008 to 2010 paid

0

in taxes
and received refunds totaling

\$10.6 billion



General Electric was the champion. It made a \$10.5 billion profit. At the statutory 35% rate, it would have paid about \$3.7 billion in taxes. Instead, it got refunds of \$4.7 billion. That's a total tax subsidy of \$8.4 billion dollars.



Also paying no taxes, 2008–2010:
Verizon made \$32.8 billion in profit and got \$951 million in refunds.
Wells Fargo made \$49.4 billion and got \$681 million in refunds.
Boeing made \$9.7 billion and got \$177.6 million in refunds.

4

Lobbying. The best investment around.

10,000%

For its tax subsidy of \$8.4 billion, General Electric spent \$84.4 million on lobbying: a 100-to-1 return on investment.

22,000%

In 2004, Congress was considering a one-time-only "repatriation holiday" law. 93 companies spent a total of \$282.7 million lobbying for the bill, which allowed corporations to bring billions of dollars home from overseas accounts, but to pay income tax on only 15 percent of the money. The law passed, and the corporations that lobbied saved \$88.6 billion. That's a 220-to-1 return on investment.

And the "one time only"? They're now lobbying to do it again.

Sources: U.S. PIRG, Citizens for Tax Justice, ourfiscalsecurity.org, Raquel Alexander, et al.
Illustration by Brad Kayal

YES! MAGAZINE GRAPHIC 2012

FROM THE PUBLISHER



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Fran Korten, Publisher

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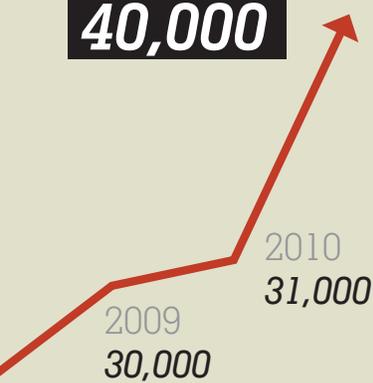
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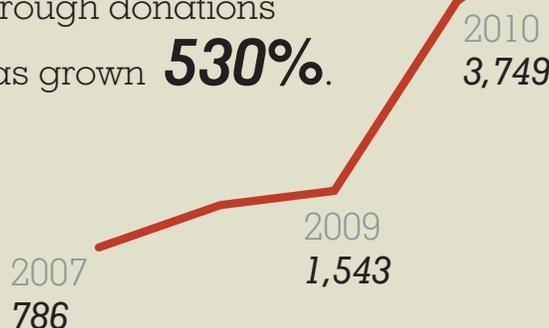
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PHOTO BY TAYLOR BOGER

Kids play under the 62-foot double hull of Hokule'a off Kailua.

Rising Sea Levels

The View From a Canoe



Decades ago, the legendary journey of the open-ocean canoe Hokule'a revealed secrets of Hawai'i's past and sparked pride in native culture. Now, a voyage around the world offers a new generation lessons about Earth's uncertain future.

Sena Christian

Haanani Kane rises from the hulls of Hokule'a, the legendary double-hulled Hawaiian canoe. She stretches her back, stiff from squatting in the tight space where she's been sanding fiberglass. She removes her protective gear and scrunches up her face. "It gets so sticky," says the 24-year-old. The old Hawaiian proverb *komo mai kau mapuna hoe* means "dip your paddle in" or join the effort, and Kane is one of a dozen volunteers gathered on this warm August evening at the Marine Education Training Center outside downtown Honolulu to restore a boat that rewrote history.

In 1976, Hokule'a's voyage to Tahiti helped prove that ancient Polynesians were not drifters who accidentally discovered the Hawaiian Islands, but expert navigators. The boat launched a cultural revival in Hawai'i. But when she was dry-docked last year on O'ahu and stripped down to her shell, she was rotten from sailing 140,000 nautical miles.

Kane is part of a group called *Kapu Na Keiki*—meaning "to hold the children sacred"—young voyagers who are now helping repair and restore Hokule'a with the hope of taking her on a four-year worldwide journey beginning in 2013.

A handsome middle-aged man in mismatched flip-flop sandals, a torn polo shirt, and cuffed jeans surveys the volunteers' work. This is Nainoa Thompson, who was part of Hokule'a's first crew and, in 1980, became the first Hawaiian on record in hundreds of years to navigate a voyaging canoe using traditional wayfaring, relying on the ocean swells, waves, sun, moon, stars, and seabirds to cross the open seas. Thompson's lifelong work has been to demonstrate to Hawaiians how vital, resilient, and strong their traditions are.

Now as the generation originally shaped by Hokule'a grows older, Thompson sees the 2013 journey as an important step to help Hawai'i's youth define their identity and face threats to Hawaiian culture and economy,

such as climate change. Thompson believes Hawai'i can become a model for sustainability and the canoe can serve as a classroom for examining climate change. He says his organization, the Polynesian Voyaging Society, has mandated that 40 percent of the worldwide crew be under the age of 30.

Thompson is both exacting and ambitious with his young crew because he knows what a powerful force wayfaring has been in his life and for Hawaiian culture.

Hokule'a's Lessons

In 1973, artist Herb Kane, anthropologist Dr. Ben Finney, and researcher Tommy Holmes set out to show that ancient Polynesians were skilled sailors and knowledgeable navigators who purposefully explored and settled small bodies of land, including the most isolated archipelago on Earth, the Hawaiian Islands.

They designed Hokule'a and named her after the "Star of Gladness"—Arcurus in Western astronomy—a guiding zenith star that helps sailors find Hawai'i. They formed the Polynesian Voyaging Society and developed a training program to test the abilities of hundreds of people who hoped to be part of Hokule'a's 2,400-mile inaugural voyage from Maui to Tahiti. Mau Piailug, a master navigator from the tiny Micronesian atoll of Satawal, would be at the helm. They selected 24 additional men and women, including Thompson, who would join the return crew, which would fly to Tahiti and sail the canoe back to Hawai'i.

Thompson had spent all his life on the ocean, fishing as a child in east Honolulu and paddling outrigger canoes in Waikiki after graduating high school. Hokule'a merged the fractured elements of Thompson's life: his love of the ocean, his heritage, his culture. He sensed this voyage would be deeply important.

The crew set off from Maui on May 1, 1976, and arrived in Tahiti 34 days later. Thousands of Tahitians greeted



PHOTO BY SENA CHRISTIAN

Kapu Na Keiki members Haunani Kane and Jason Patterson prepare one of the Polynesian Voyaging Society's canoes for a short sail with high school students in August.

Hokule'a and dozens of children swam out to board the vessel on its arrival. The canoe's return to Hawai'i prompted celebrations and major media coverage.

The 1976 voyage touched off a movement to revive Hawaiian culture and played a key role in the Hawaiian Renaissance as people learned about their ancestors' accomplishments. Over the next several years, public schools began requiring the teaching of Hawaiian art, hula, lifestyle, and geography. Native communities founded language immersion schools to revive the Hawaiian language.

Meanwhile, Hokule'a's first journey stirred renewed interest in sailing and wayfaring. Mau Piailug returned to Micronesia, and the Polynesian Voyaging Society attempted to learn wayfaring on their own by reading and experimenting. But in 1978, tragedy forced them to re-examine their methods. A big-wave surfer named Eddie Aikau joined Hokule'a's crew, >>



PHOTO BY COLE ALLEN

Volunteers work on refurbishing Hokule'a while the canoe is dry-docked at the Marine Education Training Center in Honolulu.

» and in March of that year, the voyagers attempted another sail to Tahiti. But Hokule'a capsized.

Aikau insisted on paddling for help. He strung some oranges around his neck, grabbed a portable strobe light, tied a life jacket around his waist, and set off. By midnight, the U.S. Coast Guard had rescued his friends after a pilot saw flares and requested aid. Aikau was never found.

The death of a beloved crewmember taught the Polynesian Voyaging Society something: They needed skills that could not merely be reconstructed from books. Thompson traveled to Micronesia to ask Piailug to teach him traditional wayfaring. Piailug agreed but not without a fight. At the age of 1, he had been chosen by his grandfather to become a sailor and he was sailing by age 5. He told the crew—who were in their 20s—they were too old and if they wanted someone to learn they should send their sons.

Eventually, Piailug relented. The crew spent two years studying under Piailug, learning how the navigator looks for the position of the sun and stars and observes wind directions and swell patterns, which have different heights, lengths, shapes, and speeds

that alter the course of a canoe.

Since their studies with Piailug, not one member of Hokule'a's crew has been lost at sea. In 1980, Piailug's training allowed Thompson to lead Hokule'a on a successful voyage to Tahiti and back—and the crew became the first Hawaiians in generations to regain the traditional knowledge of navigating the oceans over long distances. In speeches since then, Thompson has credited wayfaring with renewing native Hawaiian pride.

The deep sense of cultural dignity, the capacity to envision what lies ahead, the connection with the natural world—these will be essential skills as Hawai'i faces an uncertain economic and ecological future. That's why Thompson feels it is so important to pass on navigation skills to the young members of Kapu Na Keiki.

Thompson came up with the idea for the 2013 worldwide voyage after Hokule'a's 1992 trip to the Cook Islands. As he journeyed home, he spoke by satellite phone with NASA astronaut and Hawaiian native Lacy Veach, who was orbiting Earth on a space shuttle. Thompson invited the astronaut to join the crew on a sail. The astronaut told Thompson of looking

out of the space shuttle over Hawai'i.

"He saw the islands and the planet in one vision—that planet Earth was just an island like Hawai'i, in an ocean of space, and that we needed to take care of them both if the planet was to remain a life-giving home for humanity," Thompson says in a statement for the Polynesian Voyaging Society.

Thompson and his father later discussed how native Hawaiian knowledge and values had enabled islanders to care for their land and seas for nearly 2,000 years. Through careful management of natural resources, Hawai'i sustained a large, thriving, self-sufficient population until the arrival of Western explorers. The men felt they should share those values with the world.

For Thompson, getting to the deepest levels of navigation means looking inside himself and visualizing his own journey. He trusts his ancestors to show him the way in the hardest of times. He knows that sometimes when out at sea he will understand how to respond to a situation without knowing why. These are the intangible lessons he must pass on to future navigators and the lessons he hopes all young Hawaiians learn. Hokule'a shaped and defined the lives of its older crew members, and Thompson believes it can do the same for their children.

"We want to give them the canoe and help them with their dreams, not ours," Thompson says.

Making Connections

Kaina Holomalia dropped out of high school to "screw around," influenced by the drugs and alcohol around him—until he met Nainoa Thompson a decade ago and enrolled in the Myron B. Thompson Academy, a charter school where students learn math and science while sailing canoes. He soon joined Hokule'a's crew.

In 2009, Holomalia went on one of Hokule'a's roughest sails. Rain poured down. Clouds covered the sun and stars. Eighteen-foot swells lashed the canoe.

"It was a big lesson of how deep are

you connected?” Holomalua, now 27, says. “When you cannot see the stars, you go into a different way of navigation from feeling, from heart.”

In a brief clearing, navigator Bruce Blankenfeld spotted the position of two stars and visualized the whole astronomical map in his head. They arrived at their destination safely.

“We broke everything we could’ve broken and repaired it. We got hurt and mended each other,” says Holomalua, a robust man who wears his hair in a ponytail and is now a captain. “I’ve had a hard life. These canoes got me out of it. The values and love we share, our bond on the canoe is what makes these canoes *voyaging* canoes. On these canoes, you find fate, hope, and love.”

Fate because they’re living out what

master’s thesis on this topic.

“This is very important because most of Hawai‘i’s coastal areas are characterized not only by large, flat, coastal plains but also by high populations,” Kane says. “Many of the coastal areas also hold high cultural and ecological significance.”

Scientists predict global sea level will rise a meter or more by the end of this century, drowning coastal communities such as Waikiki, displacing residents, and threatening the tourism industry. As fossil fuels become increasingly more expensive and difficult to extract, and as unpredictable weather disrupts global food and agriculture production, Hawai‘i will need to become more self-reliant. Hawai‘i currently imports 90 percent of its food, according to several recent reports.

worldwide voyage and to identify the culturally, educationally, and environmentally important sites they’ll visit in 2013. Thompson used to handwrite the sail plans. Now, the crew relies on a hybrid of traditional and modern methods.

“This is our young influence,” Kamalu says, pointing to her computer.

Like the other members of Kapu Na Keiki, Kamalu is committed to sustainable energy. The 25-year-old college student studies mechanical engineering and is considering a career in renewable energy. For now she often expresses her passion for sustainability by clearing trash from the beach or swimming a mile out into the water to snag a floating piece of garbage.

During the worldwide voyage, Hokule‘a’s crew will share curriculum

“I’VE HAD A HARD LIFE. THESE CANOES GOT ME OUT OF IT. **THE VALUES AND LOVE WE SHARE**, OUR BOND ON THE CANOE IS WHAT MAKES THESE CANOES *VOYAGING* CANOES.”

their ancestors taught them, hope for Hawai‘i’s future, and love for those onboard. When you are surrounded by nothing but water, Holomalua says, you take care of each other no matter what.

“We are always trying to figure out how to live forever,” he says. “A way to live forever is when you pass away and what you’ve taught lives on through your students. We had great leaders; now we’re losing a lot of them. It’s time for us to step up.”

Although Holomalua is only a few years older than the youth of Kapu Na Keiki, they see him as a mentor who can teach them about navigating whatever challenges lie ahead. The youth seek his guidance, although their own challenges may differ.

Kapu Na Keiki also works together to confront more than personal struggles. Member Haunani Kane, for instance, directs her focus to the threat of rising sea-level, which she considers the biggest threat facing her island home. She attends the University of Hawai‘i and is writing her

As part of Kapu Na Keiki, Kane encourages people to change their behaviors for the sake of the islands’ future. She helps lead schoolchildren on short sails, teaching them about trade winds and how to make a star compass.

“We have been looking at how we can use the canoe to address the issues of sustainability and climate change,” she says. “Sailing on a canoe with limited supplies and provisions forces everyone to be sustainable and conserve food, water, and other resources. You really get a better appreciation for those things.”

Kane hopes to be part of the crew that sails around the world.

The Journey Ahead

As the handful of young voyagers work in the dry dock and the sun sets over the Pacific Ocean, Lehua Kamalu of Kapu Na Keiki works on her laptop computer, using Google Earth to plan statewide sails in 2012. The group is using these trips to prepare for the

about conservation, coral reef ecology, and native plants with educators they meet in places like Australia, the Galapagos Islands, and Rapa Nui. They are discussing how to make the journey itself more sustainable—for instance, using an escort vessel that has the capability to sail or run on solar-powered engines.

Volunteers, including those from Kapu Na Keiki, have logged some 15,000 hours refurbishing Hokule‘a since September 2010. Kane returns weekly to sand fiberglass.

“I am not too sure if it is because of voyaging or if it’s just who we are, but I know that we all really value our culture, our family, our land, and our ocean,” Kane says as Hokule‘a’s repairs near completion. “I hope our generation is able to give our children a better Hawai‘i than what we have today.”



Sena Christian is a writer and newspaper reporter. A Sacramento native, she writes about social justice, feminism, green living, and youth.

YES! But How?



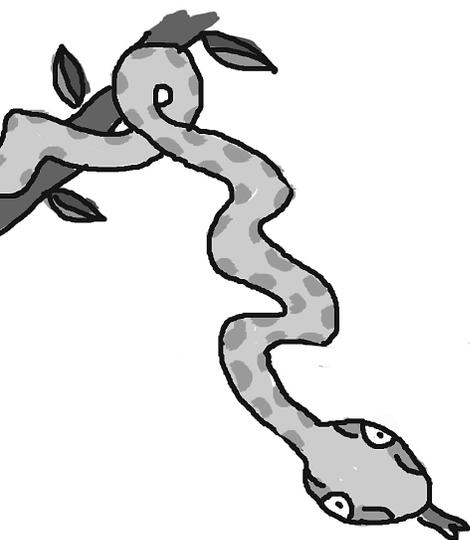
Green Pet Care

Jennifer Kaye and Lindsay Kucera

1

THE PERFECTLY SUSTAINABLE PET

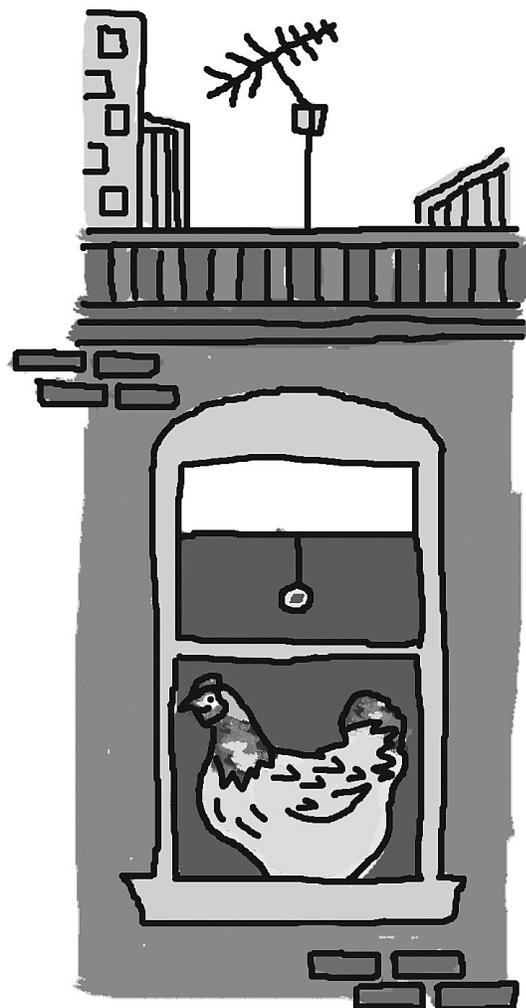
Whether kept on a farm or a city rooftop, chickens are the most sustainable pets. They love hunting for garden slugs, and they're walking composters that will transform kitchen scraps into glorious fertilizer—and a bounty of eggs. If you buy young chicks, make sure they're hens—unless you want roosters crowing at dawn and irate neighbors. To raise a tame chicken, get it used to human contact by keeping your hand near the feed while it eats, and holding it regularly. You might end up with a friendly lap chicken rather than a lap dog.



2

LOW-COST VET CARE

The Humane Society recommends a pet insurance plan to help meet the cost of unexpected veterinary treatment. The website also lists organizations in all 50 states that offer free or low-cost animal health services, including spay/neuter clinics. Local vet schools may also offer low-cost clinics. Go to humanesociety.org, avma.org.

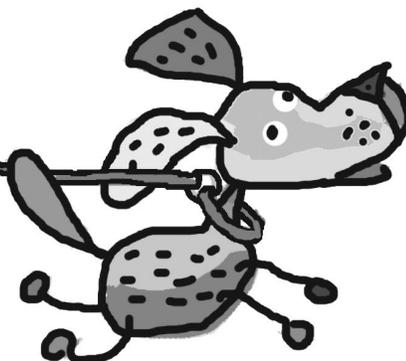


Exotic pets that escape or are released into a foreign habitat can wreak havoc on native species. For example, efforts to restore the Florida Everglades are undermined by a population of 150,000 Burmese pythons—the result of owners releasing pet snakes into the wild. Florida wildlife officials hold amnesty days where owners can drop off exotic creatures, no questions asked.

3

ADOPT A MUTT

Puppy farms aren't green, and neither is the fact that 4 million stray cats and dogs are put down each year. Why not adopt a lovable mutt instead of buying a purebred?



4

FLEA-FREE HOME

A flea infestation is misery, but commercial “bug bombs” fill your home with potentially hazardous organophosphates. Try controlling the local flea population by using a combination of non-toxic methods. Grooming your dog, cat, or rabbit regularly with a flea comb is a good start. As the fleas are caught in the comb, deposit them in soapy water to prevent them jumping back onto your pet.

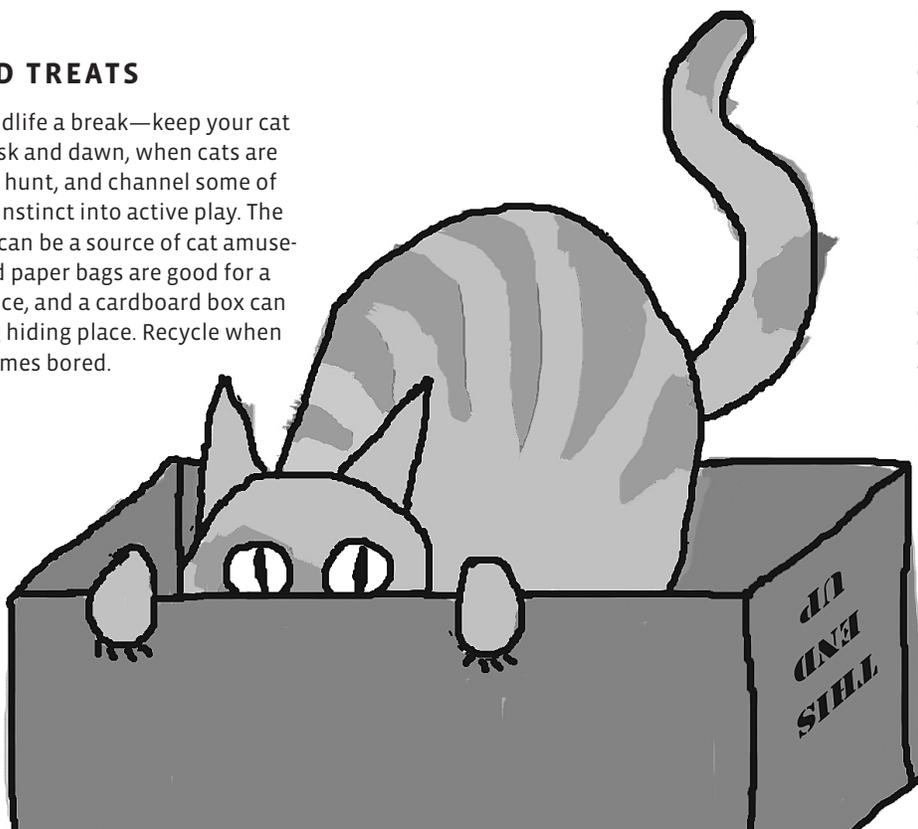
Fleas lay their eggs in the environment rather than on the animal, so cleaning up

dust, debris, and pet hair will also help. Wash pet bedding and vacuum every five days, and get the vacuum bag out of the house before those tiny flea eggs hatch. You can freeze or burn the bag contents to destroy the eggs. Using a wet vac with slightly soapy water is an efficient way to capture both stray fleas and eggs. “Natural” or “food grade” diatomaceous earth (not the kind used in swimming pool filters) is safe to use in areas that can't be reached by a mop or vacuum—the fine powder dehydrates fleas.

5

TOYS AND TREATS

Give small wildlife a break—keep your cat indoors at dusk and dawn, when cats are most likely to hunt, and channel some of that hunting instinct into active play. The recycling bin can be a source of cat amusement. Twisted paper bags are good for a game of pounce, and a cardboard box can be an alluring hiding place. Recycle when your cat becomes bored.



6

WASTE NOT

Leaving dog or cat waste where pets drop it might seem like a natural alternative to putting it in a plastic bag and dumping it in a landfill, but harmful bacteria from pet waste may seep into local groundwater, be swept away in rainwater runoff or, if flushed, survive sewage treatment and eventually contaminate streams, lakes, or bays. Some pet owners compost pet waste in a miniature outdoor septic tank. For cats, make sure you're using litter made from materials that can be easily composted—such as corn, wheat, or recycled newspaper, rather than unsustainable clay.

In Alaska, where dog sledding is the official state sport, owners are advised to compost dog waste from their kennels for the least environmental impact. An excellent guide published by the USDA gives clear instructions on building simple pet waste compost bins, and the conditions to create high temperatures for efficient composting—even in the cold Alaskan climate. Find it at ak.nrcs.usda.gov/compost.html.



PHOTO BY ERIC SEALS FOR YES! MAGAZINE

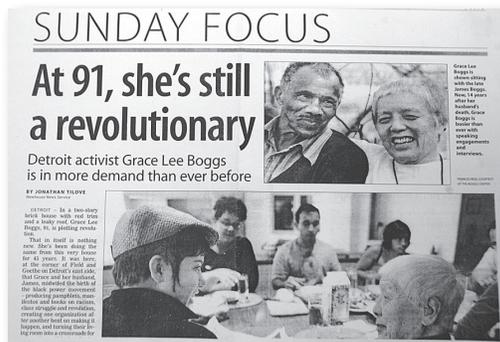
A Revolution Within

GRACE BOGGS GIVES US
A HANDBOOK FOR TRANSFORMATION,
FROM VICTIMS TO
EMPOWERED CITIZENS

REVIEWED BY LARRY GABRIEL

There are few human beings who have the cultural depth, breadth, and perspective of 96-year-old Grace Lee Boggs. Born during World War I to Chinese immigrant parents, she has lived through the Great Depression, World War II, and the Civil Rights, anti-war, women's, gay rights, and disability dignity movements, then 9/11 and the Afghanistan and Iraq wars. She effectively transformed herself into an African American through her marriage to black autoworker Jimmy Boggs and her immersion in the Detroit community over the past 60 years. Much of her new book, *The Next American Revolution*, reads as her philosophical autobiography, charting how experience shaped her political ideas, using the first person and the collective "we" grounded in her community activism.

Co-author Scott Kurashige, the award-winning author of *The Shifting Grounds of Race: Black and Japanese Americans in the Making of Multiethnic Los Angeles*, collaborated as an editor, shaping the book



At her home in Detroit, Grace Boggs is surrounded by reminders of her days fighting for social justice alongside her husband Jimmy Boggs.



The Next American Revolution: Sustainable Activism for the Twenty-First Century

GRACE LEE BOGGS AND SCOTT KURASHIGE

University of California Press,
2011, 224 pages, \$24.95

by combing through an archive of Boggs-written articles, pamphlets, speeches, and correspondence. His introduction gives perspective for the ensuing narrative.

Nearly a century ago, Detroit was the high-technology capital of the world. In the 1930s and 1940s it was the vanguard of organized labor. By the 1960s the Motor City exported Motown music, and 20 years later pulled off the same trick with techno. Today, Detroit is arguably the most devastated post-industrial community in America. If you pay attention to the mainstream media, pretty much all that is left of Detroit is crime-ridden, Rust Belt woe—with a big helping of divisive racial posturing.

Boggs and Kurashige agree that Detroit's days as the world's industrial giant are over. That's pretty much the end of their concord with conventional perspectives. They describe a transformation of vision and perspective going on in Detroit that is much more than a matter of rhetorical jiu jitsu. And they put it in historical perspective:

"We are in the midst of a cultural transition as far-reaching as that from hunting and gathering to agriculture

11,000 years ago and from agriculture to industry 3,000 years ago."

Their view is that the struggle now is about what direction the world will take from here. To make that direction positive for the majority of people, nothing less than revolution is necessary. Not a violent takeover of the political-economic state, but rather a revolution in our ways of thinking and acting on a personal and community level, a transformation from victims to empowered citizens.

TNAR is partly a celebration of the sort of democratic community movements the authors see emerging as a critical force for creating the new Detroit, a new United States, and indeed a new world. They cite a number of organizations as evidence, like the Detroit Coalition Against Police Brutality. Led by a former Black Panther, it pushes for police accountability and works to reduce policing by resolving neighborhood conflicts. The Beloved Communities Center in Greensboro, N.C., is another. It uses truth and reconciliation to heal the community, where five racial-justice marchers were killed in 1979. An international example is Mexico's Zapatistas, who defied NAFTA in favor of development grounded in their own culture and needs.

There are points where *TNAR* strays toward cataloguing what might be considered modest community achievements. But part of the "Why?" of the book is to show how these components weave together into a nontraditional, nonhierarchical force that defies efforts to control the stumbling world economy through political and military domination.

There are lessons here for activists that make this slim volume a handbook for personal, and therefore social, transformation. That, more than anything, is the revolution that Boggs seeks. 🗣️

Larry Gabriel, a Detroit-based writer, musician and activist, has edited and written for the *Metro Times*, *UAW Solidarity*, and the *Detroit Free Press*.

Excerpt: "How Sustainable Activism Saved Detroit"
yesmagazine/seeds-of-hope

YES! PICKS :: Musical inspiration while putting out this issue



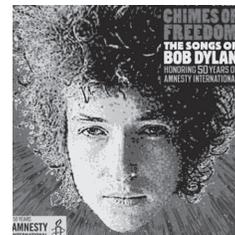
Peace Love Ukulele

"If everyone played the ukulele, the world would be a better place," says **Jake Shimabukuro**. He gives a surprising dignity to "Bohemian Rhapsody." And the world really needs this one last version of "Hallelujah."



Monsters of Folk

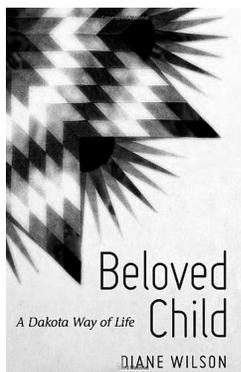
Quartet of standout singer-songwriters **Jim James, Conor Oberst, Mike Moggis, and M. Ward**. This is a rich blend, and they all take turns at lead vocals. Oberst's distinctive voice is the album's North Star ("Ahead of the Curve"). He shines better here than with Bright Eyes.



Chimes of Freedom

Eighty (!) artists interpret **Bob Dylan** to benefit Amnesty International. Favorites: a bouncy "You Ain't Goin' Nowhere" from **Brett Dennen** and **Diana Krall's** elegant version of "Simple Twist of Fate" on piano.

🎵 Have a listen at
yesmagazine.org/music



Beloved Child

DIANE WILSON

MHS Press, 2011, 224 pages, \$24.95

REVIEWED BY KRIS KOLB

Here are some cold facts facing American Indians today: Native teens have the highest dropout rate in public schools—and the highest suicide rate in the nation. Native Americans die from alcoholism at a rate six times greater than average, and diabetes kills natives at a rate three times higher. In Minnesota—part of the traditional lands of the Dakota people—35 percent of natives live below the poverty line.

Dakota author Diane Wilson traces what she calls the “soul wound” of her people back through 150 years of genocide—the government policies that tore families apart and people away from their land, and silenced their language and culture. The violence, addiction, depression, and despair so pervasive in Dakota communities today are forms of the disease of historical trauma. In the midst of this, she asks, how do you raise beloved children and break the cycle of self-destruction in native communities?

Wilson interviews several Dakota leaders who bring resilience and fierce hope to healing their communities, beginning with the children. These different leaders—an artist, a spiritual leader, home-schooling parents, a boarding school survivor, an impoverished elderly woman raising

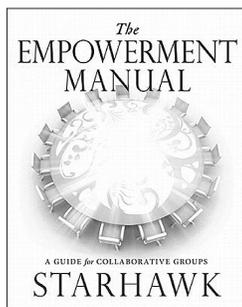
her grandson—teach by reclaiming Dakota traditions and language. But Wilson finds a common foundation to this transformative work: First, you must heal yourself.

The book is at its best when Wilson narrates how the healing happens. It begins with taking care of yourself—finding compassion for yourself, respecting yourself, valuing yourself.

“As parents, we all struggle with the legacies within our families that we have inherited, and in that struggle we pass on some portion of those legacies to our children,” Wilson says. “But if we do transformative work in our lifetime, then we may have the opportunity to give our grandchildren the benefit of what we have learned and to make amends with our children.”

Beloved Child is history and manifesto, but even more, it’s a guide and inspiration for all of us working every day to heal ourselves—and to raise our own beloved children.

Kris Kolb is a freelance writer living in Seattle.



The Empowerment Manual

STARHAWK

New Society Publishers, 2011, 288 pages, \$24.95

REVIEWED BY OLIVIA ROSANE

One of the original Occupy Wall Street organizers, Marina Sitrin, told me she hopes the movement will expand by going local, as people organize general assemblies in their schools and workplaces. She may be onto something: In the past month, my coworkers have begun meeting

at a local bar under the banner of Workers for a Democratic Workplace, and my church has relaunched its social justice committee. So veteran activist and writer Starhawk has her finger on the pulse with the publication of *The Empowerment Manual*, a warm-hearted, straightforward guide for creating and sustaining collaborative groups.

Starhawk defines a collaborative group as one “based on shared power and the inherent worth and value of each member.” She’s something of an expert on the topic. Since joining the blockade of the Diablo Canyon nuclear power plant in 1981, she has participated in many decentralized groups, including the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle and Reclaiming, a Pagan communities network. Her experienced voice is a major strength of *The Empowerment Manual*, assuring new activists that the problems they face have been worked through before.

Each chapter takes an element of group work (creating a shared vision, distributing power, communication, dealing with conflict) and breaks it down with the help of exercises such as brainstorming sessions, role-plays, and discussion guides. Woven throughout is the story of Rootbound Ecovillage, a fictional collaborative housing experiment in the Bay Area with group dynamics that will be familiar to most readers, despite the California New Age cultural trappings. Starhawk’s basic recommendations—that groups eschewing a formal power structure find ways to attach influence to responsibility instead of unearned privilege and that conflicts be addressed directly, respectfully, and in person—are clear and wise. Whether you’re starting a new group or strengthening an existing one, *The Empowerment Manual* is a valuable tool.

Olivia Rosane is a writer living in New York.

Excerpt: “6 Ways to Empower Others”
yesmagazine.org/starhawk

FILM ::

The Koch Brothers Exposed

Brave New Films, Robert Greenwald, 2011.



GREENPEACE PHOTO

“The Kochtopus” is what some call Charles and David Koch’s widespread, many-tentacled funding effort to shrink the federal government. Their efforts to suppress voters, dismantle public schools, and get rid of the Environmental Protection Agency and Social Security are systematically revealed in *The Koch Brothers Exposed*, a low-budget but sharply focused series by new media company Brave New Films.

The 13 short films illustrate how the lives of struggling Americans are worsened by the Kochs’ drive for profit and political power. One film, for example, connects an epidemic of cancer in a neighborhood of Crossett, Ark., to the channel of steaming, black goo floating into town from the Koch Industries-owned Georgia Pacific plant.

The Kochs lobby by giving millions to nonprofits that use the money—frequently via pseudo-grassroots organizations with innocuous names—to benefit the overarching Koch political agenda. Here’s how it works: According to one film in the series, Koch Industries gave \$28.4 million to think tanks that advocated raising the Social Security retirement age. That’s not a popular policy with older voters, but the Kochs also gave more than \$1 million to the American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC), a group working to pass laws that require voters to have state-issued photo identification. Critics say that would make voting more difficult for the elderly, students, and minorities.

Although the Kochs have doled out millions to politicians, think tanks, and anyone else who could help them undo American democracy over the past 10 years, they were relatively unknown until recently. Jane Mayer clarified their role as funders of the Tea Party in an August 2010 *New Yorker* article. They got more coverage during the Wisconsin protests when it became clear that Gov. Scott Walker was enacting the Koch/ALEC agenda.

Koch Brothers Exposed takes this reporting to a new level, bridging the gaps between investigative journalism, documentary, and activism. These short (two to 12 minute) films, designed for viral circulation through Facebook and other social media, are in an open-ended format that the filmmakers can update as necessary. Judging from the series so far, ongoing reports like these are an effective way of showing just how much influence the super-rich can have on our democracy.

Oliver Lazenby is a freelance journalist and farm laborer living in Washington state.

Bill Cunningham New York

Zeitgeist Films, 2010, 84 minutes.

Bicycling around the city with his camera, 80-something Bill Cunningham balances between worlds—snapping street style by day, elite soirees by night, producing photos that celebrate street kids, drag queens, and heiresses equally.

“Those who seek beauty will find it,” he says. Touching and exhilarating.

The Edge of Dreaming

Amy Hardie, 2009, 72 minutes.

Filmmaker Amy Hardie’s perfect life with her family in the Scottish countryside is disturbed by dreams that seem prophetic—or are they? She investigates, through psychotherapy, art, neuroscience, and shamanism. A gorgeous autobiographical meditation on life, death, love, and dreams.

Watch film trailers at
yesmagazine.org/61films



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