

spotlight

2020 Issue 1



At the most recent U.N. climate talks, we brought your demands to hold Big Polluters liable for their role in the climate crisis to world governments.

Charting the course toward climate justice

You are demanding Big Polluters pay for decades of deception

"There's no more time to waste. We need to change the status quo and advance real solutions to the climate crisis now."

GIGI KELLETT | MANAGING DIRECTOR

Take action!

Join the global campaign for Big Polluter liability at MakeBigPollutersPay.org

For decades, Big Polluters have managed to avoid accountability for their role in knowingly fueling climate change. They've done so by pouring hundreds of millions of dollars into obstructing any meaningful attempts to address the crisis.

But, with your support, the movement to hold Big Polluters like the fossil fuel industry liable for its decades of deception has grown stronger in recent months.

You are shifting the conversation on climate change to center the historical and deliberate role of Big Polluters in fueling this crisis. You signed petitions, led delegations, and called on your representatives to put the planet and people before profits. And this demand is getting harder to ignore.

In the U.S., attorneys general across several states are opening investigations into and launching lawsuits against Exxon for intentionally deceiving the public on climate change. And on the international front, we delivered your demands to government delegates gathered at December's U.N. climate negotiations in Madrid, Spain. For climate justice activists at the climate talks, the call to Make Big Polluters Pay became a rallying cry.

Thanks to you, we are building the political will necessary to kick Big Polluters out of climate policy and hold them liable. Together, we can change course and secure the real solutions we need for a future in which all can thrive.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Changing the climate narrative together

Dear friend,

I've spoken with many of you about the need to change course when it comes to the climate crisis. As disaster after climate-related disaster strikes, we see increasingly how this moment requires profound changes from all of us.

But it's easy to get stuck there: knowing we must change but not knowing how. And no wonder. The stories that shape our lives about who has power and what is possible—these stories are designed to make us believe we have the power to take individual action, but very little power to change the systems around us. But it's just not true.

That's why at Corporate Accountability we know that we must change the prevalent story about the climate crisis.

To that end, our campaign for fossil fuel industry liability is not simply about holding the industry accountable in court. It's also about transforming the story of the climate crisis: who is responsible, who has the solutions, and what power we actually have to create change, together.

When this becomes clear, the next chapter changes completely.

Rather than treating Big Polluters like important stakeholders, we demand that they are held accountable. We organize, collectively, to shut the door on their influence and to begin implementing solutions that have been developed and led by communities who have been on the front lines of the crisis for decades. With our allies, we create change that is so much larger than our individual choices—we create systemic change, together.

I am grateful to be building power with you toward a world where everyone can thrive.



Onward,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, which appears to read 'Patti Lynn'.

Patti Lynn
Executive Director

Exposing the reality behind corporate spin

You drive the public conversation on corporate abuse worldwide

"We're shifting the balance of power away from corporations and back to people, where it belongs."

SRIRAM MADHUSOODANAN |
DEPUTY CAMPAIGNS DIRECTOR



Nathalie Rengifo Alvarez, senior international policy organizer, speaking to Democracy Now on corporate sponsorship of the latest U.N. climate talks in Madrid, Spain. Photo credit: Anna Vickerstaff.

For decades, corporations across abusive, extractive, and polluting industries have evaded scrutiny for their wrongdoings.

But you make sure that the world knows the truth. From Veolia's role in the Flint water crisis to Exxon's decades of deception, you did not let stories of corporate abuse stray from the main pages of prominent media outlets across the globe—like the Guardian, The New York Times, and Reuters.

Earning hard-hitting media coverage is a critical way we shift power away from corporations and back to people. That's why abusive corporations hate when the media spotlight shines on their abuses. Slick corporate PR just won't cut it anymore: By publicly exposing the truth, you are shifting public opinion on the urgent need to check corporate power and reclaim our democracy.

Read the headlines!

Learn how you are shaping the conversation:

CorporateAccountability.org/BehindCorporateSpin

Q&A

Member spotlight: Jeff Keller

Corporate Accountability member

What inspired you to become involved with Corporate Accountability?

Corporate influence in our democracy is insidious and amoral. I've had trouble coming up with feasible ways to counteract it, but I've been impressed by the fact that your campaigns gain traction in areas where I didn't really think it was possible, namely in separating government policy discussions from corporate influence. It is remarkable work.

Which of our campaigns resonates most with you and why?

The climate campaign, because I see it as vitally contributing to the broader global climate justice movement. By driving a wedge between politicians or

government officials and corporate lobbyists, Corporate Accountability is making it possible for people to influence their elected representatives and move them in a different direction. This in turn is enabling other climate justice efforts to take hold because it softens government resistance to the issue.

What is your hope for the future?

I hope that the pendulum swings back toward the people, and that this movement snowballs before it's too late. However bleak things look, it's important for us to do what we can to make it possible for things to improve. Making real headway on some of the issues of our time will require a great



Photo credit: Binita Mandalia

many people, and we need to be ready to take advantage of opportunities as they arise. That could mean legal or political victories, compelling news stories, anything—we just need to keep up the pressure and keep going.

Cutting Big Tobacco out of the conversation

You set precedents for how corporations should be treated in policymaking spaces



From shareholders' meetings to the International Labor Organization, you are holding the tobacco industry accountable for the public health, human rights, and labor rights abuses it has perpetuated for decades. Pictured: Our team of organizers at last year's Philip Morris International shareholders' meeting in New York.

For many years, Big Tobacco has exploited its partnership with the International Labor Organization (ILO) to delay the enforcement of tobacco control policies and undermine the implementation of the global tobacco treaty that you helped secure in 2003.

In a huge victory for public health and human rights, the ILO recently adopted a decision to end all ties with the tobacco industry by rejecting industry funding for the organization's charitable programs.

This decision closes off one of Big Tobacco's formal avenues of influence into the U.N. system. It's also another example of how

"You're making it possible to counter Big Tobacco's undue influence and protect public health."

MICHÉL LEGENDRE |
ASSOCIATE CAMPAIGN DIRECTOR

you are setting precedents for how corporations should be treated in policymaking spaces. With your ongoing support, we'll continue exposing any attempts by the tobacco industry to sneak its way back into the U.N. system. Together, we are taking on this deadly industry and winning.

Keeping public water systems under community control

You are making it harder for transnational water corporations to privatize our water



Gina Luster, an organizer with Flint Rising, at the 2019 National Water Summit in Abuja, Nigeria. Flint Rising exposed the role that Veolia played in the city's water crisis, tarnishing the corporation's tightly controlled image. Photo credit: Babawale Obayanju, Environmental Rights Action / Friends of the Earth Nigeria.

"Water is an essential human right, and no corporation can take that away from us."

SHAYDA NAFICY | SENIOR PROGRAM DIRECTOR

Late last year, water privatization giants Veolia and Suez abruptly replaced their North America CEOs—hinting at a failure on their part to bring in profits, particularly through water privatization. Their departures signal what could be a turning point for the private water industry in the U.S.

The Suez CEO's departure came on the heels of the corporation's overwhelming defeat in its attempt to privatize the Edison, New Jersey public water system. Under the former Veolia CEO's tenure, the company saw years of headlines about its abuses in Pittsburgh and was forced to abandon one of its flagship contract models (victories you made possible).

And the situation for the new CEOs is no better: Just a few months after the executive shake-up, the Guardian published a groundbreaking exposé on Veolia's role in the Flint water crisis.

The article revealed internal emails showing Veolia's executives discussing the potential for lead in Flint's water over one month before telling the city its water was safe.

It's no wonder that an industry publication recently wrote that water privatization no longer seems to be the focus of Veolia's or Suez's strategic direction for the coming years. When we talk about shifting the cost-benefit ratio for corporations, this is exactly what we mean: creating a climate where these giant water corporations, their investors, and industry analysts understand that trying to privatize people's water is a real business risk for them.

Thanks to you, we are pushing corporations out of the water privatization business and protecting the human right to water.

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Make a monthly gift

Sustain this work to protect human rights, people's lives, and the planet.

Contact Marilyn Willmoth, membership organizing director, at 617.695.2525.

Visit our website at CorporateAccountability.org/get-involved/give-monthly/

Send in the enclosed envelope.

Why monthly giving?

Your gift works faster and more efficiently to make a bigger impact.

You receive insider campaign updates to keep up to date on the influential role you have in creating a more just and equitable world.

It's easy to participate, and you help save resources and expenses.

Thank you for your partnership!



"By getting to the root of the problem, Corporate Accountability helps me think of important issues in a whole new way. Individually, we can do a lot to change our broken system, but we make an even bigger impact when we work together. That's why I give monthly."

BINITA MANDALIA | PHOTOGRAPHER, MONTHLY DONOR, AND VOLUNTEER



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