

Field notes for transformation



“As people begin to understand, and to experience, just how much neoliberalism has contributed to our current situation, we are here at the ready: you and me and this organization that was born just as neoliberalism was starting to take hold.”

KELLE LOUAILLIER
PRESIDENT

The corporate accountability movement: the essential counterweight to neoliberalism

Dear friend,

I've been speaking with you about neoliberalism's ugly manifestations—unchecked corporate power and crony capitalism—for a long time. We've discussed how power over our economy and policies has moved rapidly from the public sector to the private sector, from people to corporations. And we have acknowledged that more people needed to be talking about this shift and its consequences.

Today, finally, people are discussing neoliberalism—from Comedy Central to today's issue of The New York Times.

As more people experience the failings of our economic system, they are seeking to understand it and unpack the hidden ideologies that drive it. This gives us an unprecedented opportunity to change course as a society. We must seize this moment to mobilize even more people to curb corporate control and create a society where power rests in the hands of people, not transnational corporations.

Our corporate-driven nightmare
Neoliberalism—which dictates that the government needs to stay out of the way of "natural competition"—is simply the most recent ideology behind an economic system that concentrates power and wealth

in the hands of a few. What's notable about neoliberalism is how stealthily its proponents advanced it, which greatly benefited corporate power and thoroughly undermined social justice.

When the economic crisis of the 1970s hit, a well-funded global network of neoliberal political advisors, journalists, and academics in think tanks such as the Heritage Foundation and the Cato Institute were well positioned to advance neoliberalism. Ronald Reagan and Margaret Thatcher enthusiastically took up its tenets, and it has dominated ever since. Neoliberal policies slashed social safety nets and entrenched laws to benefit transnational corporations and the wealthy few.

And we, the people, fell into a corporate-driven, profit-at-any-cost nightmare. We morphed from citizens into consumers, solely defined by our buying and selling power.

Under neoliberalism, it's no wonder that our water is at risk of being sold to the highest bidder. That the private sector is lauded as the best entity to deliver our water. And that cost-cutting shortcuts, which threaten people's health (most often in low-income communities), are seen as a "natural" part of doing business.



As long as neoliberalism has dominated, we have been exposing the harms of corporate power and making change.



No wonder, too, that the fossil fuel industry is seen as a “stakeholder” in climate policy—even though its end goal is continued growth.

Saving lives, ready for action

It took neoliberalism more than 30 years to take hold, and about another 40 years to lead us to where we are today. We are not going to fix this overnight.

As people begin to understand, and to experience, just how much neoliberalism has contributed to our current situation, we are here at the ready: you and me and this organization that was born just as neoliberalism was starting to take hold.

For 40 years we have been educating and organizing to check corporate power—the very heart of neoliberal ideology. For 40 years, we have been waging campaigns where people’s lives are at stake: infants dying of malnutrition brought on by Nestlé’s deadly marketing of infant formula; women and children targeted by Big Tobacco; people in communities whose human right to water is under threat.

And for 40 years we have been achieving victories that weaken corporate power and save lives. Our history shows that when people unite in strategic campaigns and leverage the right pressure points, we create deep systems change.

Leaping forward

As people urgently seek solutions, we are ready with smart strategies that work; strong relationships with other effective grassroots organizations; and unflinching members like you, activists, interns, staff, and board members. With our eye firmly on a vision of a society that puts people first, that cares for our planet, and realizes justice for those who have been oppressed under neoliberalism (and all the other economic ideologies that preceded it).

Today, we must take giant steps forward toward that vision. We must wage campaigns that educate and train people, build power, and demonstrate that change is possible even when fear is abundant and hope is scarce. We must secure changes that protect our most basic resources, like water, and expose and end corporate influence over our lives, as we are doing with the fossil fuel industry.

We must keep short-term, urgent needs in mind while building toward the longer-term goal of transforming our society to be more equitable and sustainable.

It can be a harrowing journey. Thankfully, we are on it together, full of grit, determination, joy, and hope. I am grateful to organize with you.

Onward!

KELLE LOUAILLIER | PRESIDENT

P.S. To bring even more people along, we are launching a new visual identity and visibility campaign in the next few weeks. Keep your eye out for our new look and ways to help spread the news—or email me at kelle@stopcorporateabuse.org to join a virtual briefing on what’s next. ♻️ 🌱

