

TOOLKIT *for*

TRANSFORMATION



**CORPORATE
ACCOUNTABILITY
INTERNATIONAL**

Toolkit for transformation

A guide for challenging the expansion of corporate power and building the corporate accountability movement

Corporate Accountability International

Introduction

March 14, 2017

Hello, friend!

This toolkit is designed for you to use immediately. What follows are seven things you can do right now to challenge corporate influence over our lives and help shape the world we will live in for the better. Whether you're a seasoned organizer or brand new to taking action, we've created this toolkit to give you the tools you need to take effective action to challenge the Trump administration and the expansion of corporate power in your community and beyond and to build anew.

Unbridled display of corporate power

What's become increasingly clear is that Trump's administration and his Cabinet full of millionaires and billionaires (including Rex Tillerson, Betsy DeVos, and Steve Mnuchin) don't believe in the government's role to provide and protect. In fact, they are intent on dismantling many of the programs and regulations that have been put in place to protect our health, well-being, and the environment, while giving transnational corporations even greater license to run amok.

But here's the thing: The Trump administration's agenda is not new and our economic system has been broken for a long time. For decades, a handful of people and corporations have grown enormously wealthy at the expense of the economic and social well-being of the rest of us. It is true that the scale, speed, and impact of Trump's expansion of corporate power are unprecedented. And his administration's extreme use of racism, xenophobia, and sexism to advance its agenda is frightening and absolutely unacceptable. But the hard facts are that we've been on this course for decades, under many White House administrations. The corrosive and dominating influence of global corporations has been at the heart of many of our most pressing problems for many years. Now that influence is laid bare: ExxonMobil is at the helm of our State Department. A former Goldman Sachs banker is in charge of the Treasury. The list goes on.

Building toward transformation, together.

But there's hope. Corporate power has never been more visible— and that makes it ready to be named, shamed, and challenged. And because of outrageous actions by the Trump administration that are putting people and our planet at risk, many, many people like you are

fired up to come together and take action. Together, we can ignite a corporate accountability movement that will challenge the Trump administration's agenda and actions at the rapid-response, day-to-day level. At the same time, we can build a movement together that will transform this society from one where corporate power runs the show to one where the common good and people's rights, well-being, and dignity come first.

This toolkit provides seven things you can do, starting today. Do one, a couple, or all seven. What's important is that you opt-in, say "yes," get connected, and start building toward a better world. The toolkit is designed to provide both inspiration and concrete steps to take forward. We hope you spread this toolkit widely among your friends, families, and networks. We need as many people with us as possible.

Ready? Let's go!

Seven ways to challenge corporate influence over our lives and stand up to the Trump administration

1. Opt in.

Why it matters

Social movements are born when large numbers of people say "Count me in: I am committed to changing the conditions of the world." And this will likely go down in history as one of the more important moments to step up.

Commit to yourself and those close to you that you will engage and take action to make things better.

What to do

- **Stay informed and alert for opportunities to take action.** [Sign up](#) to get email alerts from Corporate Accountability International and other great organizations, such as [Cosecha](#), [ACLU](#), [BLM](#), and [SURJ](#). Regularly check out calendars like this [one](#).
- **Set a goal for how many actions for social justice you will take** in a month, or a week. It could be something as simple as signing a petition to something as involved as organizing a local event. Find a buddy to take action with, and keep yourself accountable by letting them know what your goal is.
- **Keep yourself inspired and motivated.**
 - Print out this [poem](#), or another piece of writing, quote, or art that inspires

you and will continue to motivate you to take action (You can find many other poems [here](#) and [here](#)). Put it by your desk, attach it to your fridge, tape it to your medicine cabinet—wherever you need it the most!

- o Make or follow a playlist of songs to keep you going. Share it with your friends and networks to keep them motivated, too!

2. Be vigilant, alert, and in touch with local officials.

Why it matters

When you struggle under the avalanche of news about the shocking actions of President Trump and his administration, remember the old adage: “All politics is local.”

The truth is local elected officials will be the first line of defense against the Trump administration and its pro-corporate agenda. For example, mayors are often the decision-makers when the private water industry comes to profit off our public water systems. City councils can act to protect their residents from federal, civil, or human rights rollbacks or the barrage of fast food marketing inundating communities. State legislatures are already leading the way in setting renewable energy goals, despite the fossil fuel industry’s opposition. Moreover, when an elected official—at any level—stands up and vocally, vociferously resists the Trump agenda, they help show that this is not normal and inspire others to stand up, too.

What to do

- **Monitor for increasing corporate control in your city or town**—including water privatization.
 - o **Read your local newspaper**, keeping an eye out for stories and examples of water privatization. Key words that indicate possible privatization are “outsourcing,” “efficiency,” “consulting contracts,” and “public-private partnerships.”
 - o **Keep an eye on your city council’s agenda** for privatization issues. Generally, city council meeting schedules and agendas are easily found on your local government’s website.
- **Be in touch with your elected officials.** Find the contact info for your federal, state, and local elected officials [here](#). Call their offices with specific questions or requests to support initiatives important to you. Leave messages, speak with staffers, make your voice heard.
- **Do the same for your judges, district attorney, and state [attorney general](#).** (A simple Google search should turn up judges’ and DAs’ contact information.)

3. Connect with others to share knowledge, ideas, and opportunities for action.

Why it matters

As Naomi Klein [has pointed out](#), part of the Trump administration’s strategy is to keep

us in shock, disoriented, and fearful. When catastrophes happen for which we don't have a narrative, it's easier for corporate forces to come in and shape the narrative in service of their own profit-driven agenda. An important strategy for resisting this "shock and awe" tactic is to find each other, share our ideas, read, listen, connect, and develop our own narrative, together.

What to do

- **Start a reading club** focused on corporate power, democracy, and resistance. Here are some great reads to consider:
 - Naomi Klein, "[This Changes Everything](#)"
 - Rinku Sen, "[Deciding to Lead With Love, Despite an Enraging Political Climate](#)"
 - Rebecca Solnit "[Hope in the Dark: Untold Histories, Wild Possibilities](#)"
 - Saru Jayaraman, "[Forked: A New Standard for American Dining](#)"
 - Gene Sharp, "[From Dictatorship to Democracy](#)"
 - Keeanga-Yamahtta Taylor, "[From #BlackLivesMatter to Black Liberation](#)"
 - **Hold dinner discussions** with like-minded people. Consider inviting folks outside of your inner circle. Your neighbor, your barista, or the person who always seems to be on the same laundromat schedule as you just might have a new perspective or connections to local organizations that you've always wanted to participate in.
 - **Take part in the [#ReadersResist](#) conversation** on Twitter every Friday.
- 4. Start a local chapter of the Corporate Accountability International action league.**

Why it matters

There are inspired, passionate people in your area and around the country who are ready to take action. You can easily turn your weekly get-together with friends, your social-activism-angled book club, or your faith group into a more intentional gathering as a Corporate Accountability International action league chapter. We're stronger when we're working together across movements, issue areas, and experience levels.

What to do

Here are some simple actions your chapter can take together.

- **First, contact us** at actionleague@stopcorporateabuse.org or 617.695.2525 to get connected with our volunteers and organizers who are working with people around the country. Let us know what plans you have in the works so we can support you and share ideas and resources with you. We can also connect you with other people in your area taking similar actions.

- **Write letters to the editor** about issues of corporate accountability that matter to you and your community. See a guide for writing letters [here](#). Some ideas:
 - Exposing Veolia’s role in Flint and/or [Pittsburgh](#).
 - Supporting the [human right to water](#).
 - Exposing the danger of [Trump’s infrastructure plans](#).
 - Supporting Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey for [leading the charge to investigate Exxon Mobil](#).

- **Protect your public water.** As a group, deliver a copy of the [Troubled Waters](#) report to your local water department, city hall, or state legislators and ask them to commit to keeping your water system public.

- **Stop McDonald’s from targeting children.** Organize a delegation to a local McDonald’s franchise to meet with the owner and call on the corporation to end its marketing practice known as [McTeacher’s Nights](#).

- **Support attorneys general investigating Exxon** for decades of deception around climate change.
 - Make a thank-you call to Massachusetts Attorney General Maura Healey for [leading the charge to investigate ExxonMobil](#).
 - Make a thank-you call to New York and California attorneys general to thank them for their leadership in this case as well.
 - Call your attorney general (if you don’t live in MA, NY, or CA), asking them to launch an investigation into what Exxon knew.
 - Organize a visibility event at a local Exxon Mobil gas station.

- **Help advance racial justice by challenging corporate power.** Support the Movement for Black Lives’ [call](#) to end the exploitative privatization of natural resources—including land and water—by urging local elected officials to implement fair development practices.

- **#DefundDAPL.** Take part in the divestment movement, support indigenous rights, and protect our water. This campaign encourages individuals not only to move their money out of banks funding the Dakota Access Pipeline, but also to organize their communities to take collective action to divest.

- **Advance policies that support immigrants** in your community and ensure local agencies do not deport people.

- **Divest from private prisons.** Join the movement to challenge the private prison industry and divest from corporations that profit from incarceration and deny people their human rights.

- **Challenge trade agreements that further expand corporate**

power. President Trump has expressed interest in renegotiating the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA), which resulted in a radical expansion of corporate power and abuse. [Join us](#) as we organize to ensure any renegotiation of NAFTA prioritizes people and the environment over corporate power.

- **Build the movement.** Host a [house party](#) to mobilize action and raise money to build the movement! Movements are built on relationships: people speaking to each other one by one about issues they care about. In our day-to-day, it can be difficult to create space to talk about issues like climate change, economic justice, or why water privatization matters in a big way. Create that space by holding a gathering at your house, at a café, or in a community space to spread the word about the vital importance of challenging corporate power. This is your chance to bring together your friends, family, colleagues, and everyone else to voice your passion for justice and ask them to join you in taking action and giving financially to build a future free of corporate abuse and interference.

5. Escalate.

Why it matters

We can make so much happen when we work together in structured, strategic campaigns. Once you've got momentum with your local group, consider joining campaigns locally, regionally, nationally, and internationally that challenge corporate power and abuse. Your local group can be a part of a growing movement across the country that wields enormous grassroots power—the most effective force to challenge transnational corporations and the agenda of the Trump administration. And as you direct your energy toward building and sustaining more focused campaigns and a longer-term movement, your victories will become bigger and sweeter.

What to do

- **Learn more about Corporate Accountability International's [four campaign areas](#):** water, climate, food, and tobacco.
- **Get strategic.** Many of the actions outlined in section #4 above represent one tactic in a larger strategic campaign plan. Set up a conversation with one of our organizers about focusing on a particular area of interest. They can help you develop a long-term plan as part of a national campaign and set you up with the tools you need to keep up the pressure until you see victory. Contact us at actionleague@stopcorporateabuse.org or 617.695.2525.
- **Get trained.** Sign up for trainings and events organized by us and other groups to deepen your skills as an activist and change-maker.

6. Play a lead role in organizing the People's Climate Movement.

Why it matters

If climate change is an issue that you're passionate about, joining the [People's Climate Movement](#) is one of the best ways to build power right now.

With Exxon Mobil's recent CEO Rex Tillerson as Secretary of State, and a whole slate of climate deniers in the White House, the fossil fuel industry's outsized influence in the U.S. government is at an all-time extreme. We MUST and will turn out in a show of people-power to oppose the industry and the federal government's anti-climate-action agenda and drive forward community-led solutions.

That's exactly what the People's Climate Movement is doing. During Trump's first 100 days of office, there will be actions around the country, culminating on April 29 in Washington, DC. This powerful mobilization brings together a range of social change movements to challenge the Trump agenda and to advance a vision of a sustainable world where everyone's rights are protected and expanded. You can play a lead role in organizing your community to take part in this historic moment.

What to do

- **Sign up to attend the march** if you live within 12 hours of Washington, DC and are able to travel. **Better yet, volunteer to organize a bus!**
- **Join an event** near you that is already happening.
- **Plan a sister march in your area** if there's not one already in the works. Contact us to start planning an event and use our [People's Climate Movement organizing toolkit](#) to kick-start your organizing.
- **Join the corporate accountability action league** to get in touch with other volunteer organizers around the country, ask questions, share best practices, and inspire each other with your plans!

7. Hold on to your vision for the world and your community as you want it to be.

Why it matters

We all know fear can be paralyzing. It can be easy to get caught in a quagmire of panic and hopelessness with each new development that threatens people's lives and promises to roll back progress. But if we lose hope, the opposition wins. Don't let the corporate-dominated media and culture force us to give up hope for a society that works for all people. A society based on values of justice, love, and dignity, where all people—of all races, income levels, genders, sexualities, abilities, religions, and countries of origin—can thrive.

Articulating that vision is an important component of resistance. And a shared vision for a better world has been a cornerstone of social justice movements.

What to do

Take 10 minutes, an hour, an afternoon or evening, to focus your attention on developing and articulating that vision. Maybe you write a manifesto—or a poem. Maybe you write an essay, make a painting, a video, or a bullet-point list.

Some questions to consider as you engage in visioning:

- What gives you hope today?
- What has given you hope in the past?
- How would you sum up the state of society and power today? How did we get here?
- What are the characteristics of the world you want to live in?
- What are the key ingredients and strategies for transforming the world over the next 10 years to be sustainable, just, and democratic?
- If you could move one million people to do one thing, what would it be?

You can also check out [our vision](#) for a more just and sustainable world.

And share yours with us at actionleague@stopcorporateabuse.org.

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