



Justice Rising

Grassroots Solutions to Corporate Domination

Progressive Religion vs. Pervasive Corporate Corruption

by Henry Clark and Elizabeth Sholes

The challenge to faith communities is tackling global corporate policies that have decimated regions of the US and Third World.

Elizabeth Sholes, page 2

The political clout of religious reactionaries is not something to be ignored or treated with mere ridicule.

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Protection of people from concentrated wealth lay at the heart of the nation's original 'moral values.'

Peter Laarman, page 4

Corporate powers try to influence mainline churches to change stances on corporate divestment, and to be a partner rather than a critic of the gross accumulation of wealth.

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Corruption and morality dominate public and private discourse. The quest by religion and faith to install conscience as our leading light in an age of overwhelming amoral corporate power is the subject of this *Justice Rising*. We do not deny there is utility in the market. As Adam Smith observed, society does not depend upon the benevolence of the baker to have enough bread to eat—it is the self-interest of the baker which leads him to produce a sufficiency of this commodity.

The problem is that in any market, money is power. Concentration of wealth in the 19th century led to legal manipulations that steadily removed the balance between workers and owners as well as that between producers and consumers. Laws ultimately ceded rights to capital and eroded or removed those for everyone else. Laws made labor a commodity, gave civil rights to corporations but not to workers, and abandoned job creation to the fickle whims of profit demands. After the downturns of the 1970s, accumulation for the few, not the well being of the many, became the corporate norm.

But the evils of 21st century global capitalism have reached a new zenith in the ideology of *market fundamentalism*. This madness has been sold to the public by means of a massive propaganda campaign bankrolled by wealthy neo-conservatives. In this age of mass media, corporate propaganda has succeeded in convincing Americans that everything ought to be for sale. Jobs providing social well-being are sacrificed to create greater private profit. We no longer have a safe supply of good drinking water provided by a public utility. Now we have—at enormously increased cost—bottled water.

Market fundamentalism gives government no right to allocate any economic resource for the common good. In this amoral, corporate model, government is, for all practical purposes, abolished. Governmental agencies which ought to regulate disproportionate corporate power and balance public and private goods are bypassed or eliminated. Legislators in the pockets of lobbyists "earmark"

expenditures and tax breaks for the wealthy while abetting the erosion of rights and supports for those who are either displaced in the quest for ever-cheaper labor or harmed by dangerous working conditions and poorly designed products.

The right-wing ideological offensive has created more than unjust laws, policies and outcomes. The real corruption of our time is not simply the blatant theft of public money by the Abramoffs, DeLays, and Cunninghams inside and outside the beltway, but the wholesale promotion of the proposition that it's a dog-eat-dog world, a zero-sum game—the "I got mine" vision of society. Herein lies the great disconnect of our time: this is Social Darwinism practiced by those who repudiate Darwin in science. Conservative Christians and conservative economics have become strange allies in this world of private salvation and private acquisition run amok.

Although progressive and mainstream Christians as well as non-Christians, outnumber arch-conservatives, the practice of the Social Gospel, in which the presence of the common good is essential, has practically vanished from our national awareness. The work by progressive people of faith has gone on unabated but has been rendered virtually invisible in our national consciousness and public policy. The articles included in this edition of *Justice Rising* are part of the voice of that justice-seeking community of faith that is motivated not by drive for theocracy but by faith principles exercised on behalf of all.



photo: Clergy and Laity United for Economic Justice