



graphic: Matt Wuerker

Remembering Richard Grossman

When Richard Grossman died of cancer on November 22, 2011, he was still searching for the answer to his fundamental question: How do we turn ourselves into sane, self-governing people? A life-long activist and a co-founder of the Program on Corporations, Law and Democracy (POCLAD), he urged us to un-colonize our minds, search out the root causes that allow minority rule by the corporate class, and assert the people's sovereignty to build a true democracy. In the words of a POCLAD colleague: "Richard was a visionary, a teacher, a mentor, an insightful writer, an inspiring speaker, a truth teller, a grappler, and a sharp critic with high standards. Although he posed as a curmudgeon, he was actually a sensitive, warmhearted person with a generous spirit."

His work directly inspired many groups including Democracy Unlimited of Humboldt County, the Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund, Women's International League for Peace and Freedom, Move to Amend, and the Alliance for Democracy (AfD). After attending a Rethinking the Corporation, Rethinking Democracy workshop with Richard Grossman and other members of POCLAD, Ronnie Dugger wrote the 1995 "Call" letter that appeared in *The Nation* magazine and resulted in the founding of the AfD. Several members of POCLAD spoke at the 1996 founding convention of the AfD.

But not all activists easily embraced "The POCLAD Analysis," and some found Grossman's style to be blunt. Established organizations felt attacked when he pointed out that they did not address the core problems causing environmental and civil rights harms. He was just a theorist, some complained, with no plan for action. Instead of marching in the streets, he wanted us to march into law librar-

ies. A prominent activist once told me that an effective leader is one, possibly two steps ahead of the crowd. Grossman was ten steps ahead, too far, he said. But that was before the Supreme Court's decision in *Citizens United*. Many that once dismissed POCLAD's analysis have now seen the light and are working to revoke corporate Constitutional rights.

I was lucky to have benefitted from Richard's special brand of mentoring, which featured huge packages of obscure law cases and out-of-print essays that had been shrunk to barely readable size on a copy machine and scrawled with his own handwritten commentary. At first I could not grasp why I needed to read "Everyman's Constitution," or law review articles from the 1950s. I just wanted some quick, easy answers about how to end corporate personhood. I found no silver bullet in those stacks of papers, but the Grossman curriculum sank in, profoundly changing my world view. I am grateful for our long conversations and the hours spent helping me and others grasp the underpinnings of our Constitutional oppression, the usurpation of our rights as persons, and what will be required for genuine change.

Over the years Grossman's thinking evolved. The 1993 pamphlet he co-authored with Frank Adams, *Taking Care of Business*, mainly focused on charter revocation. Then Grossman and POCLAD moved on to examine corporate Constitutional rights (including personhood, property rights, contracts clause and commerce clause). Later he started the Democracy Schools with Thomas Linzey to train and empower citizens. In his last years he was working on a book. He also recently drafted a four page law titled *An Act to Criminalise Chartered Incorporated Business Enterprises*, which states that "all existing business corporation charters granted by the United States, and all States, shall be null and void." Apparently Richard Grossman is still ten steps ahead of us.

To read the last interview with Richard Grossman with the Corporate Crime Reporter, see www.corporatecrimereporter.com/documents/grossman.pdf

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How do we turn ourselves into sane, self-governing people?

Timeline of Personhood Rights

Jan Edward's 2011 update to her timeline of human and corporate personhood rights is available online at <http://afd-e-news.blogspot.com/2012/01/timeline-of-corporate-personhood.html> in three sizes. This timeline is a great education tool to explain how corporations have used the legal system to gain Constitutional "personhood rights" through court decisions and how people have organized to gain Constitutional rights through amendments.