

ASSERTING OUR RIGHT TO PROTECT OUR COMMUNITIES

Who decides what happens in the place where YOU live—Community or Corporations?

A grassroots action toolkit for changing the rules and getting what we want!



Photo: Tony Fischer

LETTER FROM THE FILMMAKERS

Greetings!

I hope you enjoyed watching “A Fierce Green Fire”. My fondest dream in making the film is that environmental activists that organize and campaign around key issues will use it. Our team at AFGF has done a lot of outreach and engagement, working with grassroots groups to set up hundreds of screenings all over the country.

My primary mission as a filmmaker is educating and inspiring—but what I really want to do is change the world, by helping create a resilient and just future. So by using our film to organize around community rights, you’re helping to fulfill the film’s true potential.

Thanks so very much.

Mark Kitchell

Mark Kitchell

Producer/Director: mark@afiercegreenfire.com

To learn more about the film, visit www.afiercegreenfire.com



Academy Award nominated filmmaker Mark Kitchell, director of A FIERCE GREEN FIRE, a First Run Features release.

Who we are

Global Exchange is an international human rights organization dedicated to promoting social, economic and environmental justice around the world. We take a holistic approach to creating change and as an education and action resource center, we advance our vision by working to ensure our members and constituents are empowered locally and connected globally to create a just and sustainable world.

Our Work

Global Exchange is tackling some of the most critical issues of our time— from limiting corporate power and greed to oil addiction and global climate change, from the exploitation of the current global economy to the creation of the local living economy. Our campaigns inspire people across the U.S. and around the world to resist injustice, envision alternatives, and take action.

Table of Contents

I. Introduction to Community Rights	4
II. Digging Deeper	6
III. What this means for the environment	8
IV. Case Study: Fracking	10
V. Taking Action: We Can Do This!	12
VI. Changing Unjust Laws: Frequently Asked Questions	15



I. Introduction to Community Rights

Who Makes the Rules Where You Live—Communities or Corporations?

Global Exchange's Community Rights Program assists communities confronted by harmful corporate projects to assert their right to make important decisions that impact them by passing new laws that place the rights of residents (and nature) above the claimed legal "rights" of corporations. At the heart of the Community Rights Program is the belief that asserting our right to create the kind of place we want to live and reining in corporate power is the next evolution of the civil rights movement. Over 160 communities across the United States have already asserted their right to local self-government and stopped unwanted harms. Learn how to join them!

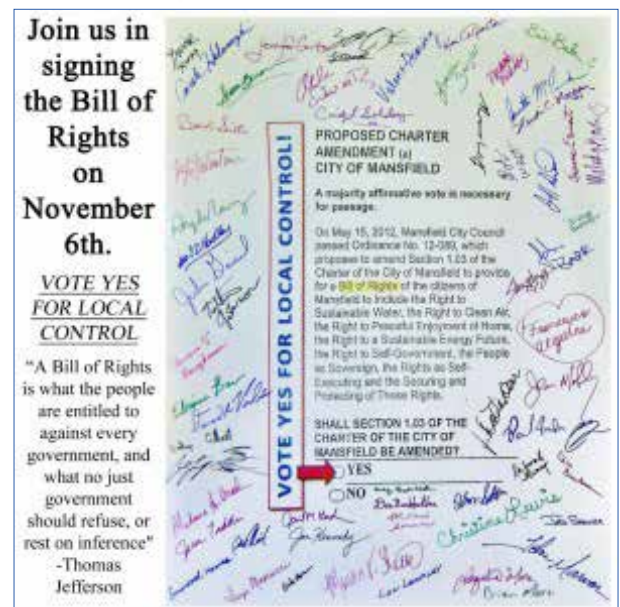
Take, for example, [the town of Mansfield in Ohio](#).

In 2012 this community of 50,000 people was slated to receive toxic frackwater waste from Pennsylvania. Under state law there was little that they could do to stop it, since dumping unwanted fracking chemicals into "injection wells" in Ohio is perfectly legal.

Nevertheless, with little to no money or political power, concerned residents decided if the law denied their right to clean and healthy water, then the law needed to be changed. [They proposed to assert their local right to ban injection wells within town limits](#).

Their campaign caught more than the attention of the local community. Suddenly, a matter of local concern became a major political issue for oil and gas companies and their [Political Action Committees or PACs, which raise money on corporation's behalf](#). Corporate contributors poured in over \$300,000 to pay for TV advertisements and glossy brochures sent through the mail, which were designed to frighten residents into voting against the amendment on the grounds that it would be a "jobs killer".

The majority of Mansfield's residents rejected this hype, reasoning that any jobs related to injection wells would not be as plentiful as promised, and that dumping toxic waste into the town's industrial park seemed more likely to chase away new business than to attract it. [As the town's Mayor put it at the time, "We don't like outsiders telling us what to do."](#) The amendment was passed with 63 percent of the votes cast. Crucially, it subordinates corporations to the concerns of the community by stripping them of their legal "personhood" and other constitutional privileges, and recognizing [the rights of natural ecosystems](#) to be free from frackwater dumping.



Redefining The Problem: WHAT IS THE REAL ISSUE WHERE YOU LIVE?

What is really stopping us from saying NO to the destruction of our Communities?

Whether your community is facing fracking, water withdrawal, industrial development, GMOs, or any unwanted corporate project “X” all of these issues have something fundamental in common — they highlight the SAME underlying problem – someone else is making decisions about the quality of life we enjoy in the places where we live!

We’ve spent a long time becoming experts on one bad thing after another entering our community without our permission. We learn a lot more than we should about “parts per million” of toxins, and organize a lot of bake sales, protests and marches to try to “chase the corporate culprit away” only to have them come back stronger next year, or to have another corporation come in with another disastrous plan—one site fight after another. We can’t keep up, and we can never get ahead.

The biggest threat posed by corporations is not the illegal stuff of headlines. The real danger is what big corporations are empowered to do legally, every day, in every community across the country. From water withdrawal to polluting refineries, toxic sludge spreading, GMOs and more, the corporate few wield the law against our communities, endangering our health, safety and the environment.

State and federal law says that corporations don’t need community permission to drop pesticides overhead, or to site a toxic dump next to the school grounds. So who does decide? For the most part, decisions about our own health safety and welfare are being made by people with very different agendas than communities have. Here are just a few reasons we often feel powerless:

- State agencies issue corporations “permits” to do harm, and state legislatures routinely “[preempt](#)” (usurp) community lawmaking authority on behalf of those corporations.
- When corporate executives decide to site an unwanted project in our communities, its *illegal* for us to say no, because it would be a violation of the corporation’s constitutional “rights.”
- The Commerce Clause of the constitution has the authority to strip local laws passed by communities to protect themselves from harm if they interfere with the interests of business!
- Under an old law called [Dillon’s rule](#) the relationship between the state and the local community is similar to that of a parent and a child – municipalities cannot make decisions for themselves unless the state specifically says so.



II. Digging Deeper

U.S. laws say that corporations have rights, and communities do not.

For the rest of us who can't afford our own [SuperPAC](#), 'corporate personhood' has become shorthand for all that ails our flagging democracy. Amending the Constitution to abolish it and/or repeal Citizens United is certainly a movement gaining steam, and it has created space for casting a critical eye on the [structural defects of our system](#). But if the bull's eye is fixing government in the hands of the people, then it is time to ask: [If the Supreme Court had never granted "personhood" privilege to corporations, would rights of people, communities and nature be protected?](#) Would we have democracy? Would this one fix affect the wide scale change we seek? Truth is, there is far more standing in the way of building sustainable, democratic and just communities than corporate personhood. To dismantle corporate rule we have to look at ALL the tools that the U.S. Constitution provides to the powerful few corporate rulers, enabling them to override the needs of local and state majorities and the natural systems upon which we depend.

What are rights and who has them?

Close your eyes and imagine yourself as property belonging to someone else. That is how the law understood what slaves, women and Native Americans once were. They were seen by the law as lesser beings, and therefore "right-less" (you can open your eyes now). But rights don't come from government; we're all born with rights, (like the right to breathe clean air, or be treated equally). Those laws were unjust, and required movements of people who fought for the law to change, to recognize their already existing rights. And according to the [Declaration of Independence](#), the duty of laws and government is to uphold and protect rights. And when it fails to do so, we must write new laws. Right now, communities are not seen as having rights—our counties and municipalities are seen as local arms of the state, and people living in municipalities are considered merely "tenants." So the question is: if we can't access our rights in the place where we live, where can we? Our rights individually AND collectively as communities, belong to us now and forever.

Corporations have WHAT? A smelly, toxic industrial factory can be built in your community without the consent of residents. Corporations with a deed to a piece of property in your town, and a permit for the factory have the law on their side. If you try to outlaw those activities, you are discriminating against them—violating their right to equal protection under the law. Corporations have rights under the Commerce Clause and Contracts Clause, as well as under the First, Fourth, Fifth, Sixth, and Fourteenth Amendments. They also have limited liability protection (which people don't) that protects corporate decision makers from bearing personal responsibility.

The Constitution puts commerce, well...first. Rather than recognizing rights for labor and nature, the Constitution houses these laws under the Commerce Clause, ensuring that decisions about labor and the environment have the stamp of approval from big business, and helps explain why we forfeit many rights upon entering the workplace, and why mountaintop removal is legal. It's just good business, right? *Corporations and the courts routinely use the ever-expanding powers of the Commerce Clause to strip state and municipal governments of democratically elected laws designed to protect communities and natural systems from harm.* ([For a great history of the Commerce Clause see pages 18-37](#))



So, in closing ...

We are forbidden from saying NO and regulations are not enough. The fate of the environment then rests in the hands of a regulatory system that does more to regulate citizen input than corporate actions. Another way to think about regulations is that they are in a very real sense a permission slip to do a certain amount of harm in the first place! Whether or not the community wants the activity, the state has authorized and legalized it – “project X” is coming, and all we can do is try to limit the damage done.

This isn't to say we haven't protected anything while working on strengthening or enforcing regulatory law. Whatever limits to damage have been achieved in the world have been accomplished by those caring and concerned activists, communities, lawyers and watchdogs who have kept the worst at bay. But taking a step back we must also look at the big picture and finally admit – it's not enough. We've lost too much, and we're going to have to do something different.

It's also important to note how regulatory laws get created in the first place. Often, it is the industry to be regulated that helps create the laws with our lawmakers! Corporations routinely define the amount of harm they anticipate will occur, and the state legalizes that amount of harm. Regulatory agencies issue permits that allow corporations to impose harms on human health and the environment, and protect the corporations from liability to the community and individuals for the legalized harms inflicted.

Often, community members testify at regulatory hearings opposing the permits because they already know that the regulations will not protect them. Regulations do not truly protect us, our communities, or the environment. At best, they slow the rate of destruction while making it perfectly legal to remove the tops of mountains, superheat the earth for oil, or dump toxins in the water. The good news is. We can change this, and pretty fast.

III. What this means for the environment

From climate change, to the disappearance of clean water, to the clear-cutting of forests, to the biggest mass extinction since the Ice Age, the damage to the environment is visible from space.

So how come our laws don't seem to protect nature? (And by the way, we're part of nature, just try going even a day without drinking water and the connection is already clear.) In the eyes of the law nature is property. Think about what it means to be property – it means the law treats everything around us as a human belonging, a “thing” to be dominated and treated however we like.

In this way our laws justify and rationalize our exploitation of the natural world. Nature is seen as a possession or as property, rather than as a system that governs our own wellbeing. The ecosystems that provide us everything we need to live, that is in essence the source of life itself has no legal standing in most courts of law.

The Domination of Nature

Ironically, corporations (which are in fact actual property, legal fictions on paper) are the largest “owners” of nature. But with or without a deed, where whole and healthy ecosystems once stood are now the ravages of a system that sees nature as nothing more than a way to make profit. Take for example the forest where tar sands extraction



is taking place, or in Amazonia, where clear-cutting is happening, or where refineries are located. Now consider that the Constitution doesn't make it illegal to kill the planet. Nature's needs are not addressed in the document. In fact, it encourages and legalizes destruction every day by treating nature or natural systems as owned property with a price.

That's a problem when you realize that nature nourishes all things, including us. As far as business goes, remember that 100 percent of the economy depends on the functions of nature just doing its thing. But the life support systems of this country, continent and planet are not mere things for the property and commerce titans to profiteer, plunder and trash. [Consider natural entities such as a river and all the life it sustains have legal rights to exist and flourish.](#)

Now take the idea of human rights and apply them to ecosystems.

The growing movement for the rights of nature is about changing the way we treat nature in culture and in law, recognizing legal standing for ecosystems to exist, and regenerate their natural cycles. Its not about

recognizing rights for individual rocks or trees, its about keeping an ecosystem whole and healthy. Slaves and women were once considered property, but through massive shifts in law and culture they moved from being “right-less” to being rights-bearing. Legal rights of nature wouldn’t stop business—just the kind that interferes with the existence and vitality of natural systems. Imagine if the Gulf Coast ecosystem had “standing” in a court of law to sue the oil companies for full restoration? Imagine how quickly the way corporations produce energy would change if nature could be seen as having rights? Today Bolivia, Ecuador and dozens of U.S. communities have recognized rights for nature.

Rights of Nature and Fracking:

Welcome to Frackland: <http://www.opendemocracy.net/transformation/shannon-biggs/welcome-to-frackland-does-river-have-right-not-to-be-polluted>

Examples of how our laws “don’t” work for people or nature

EXAMPLE: Pesticides in California are in the hands of the state, exclusively.

Did you know that in California, communities are forbidden from locally banning or regulating the use of pesticides? California law states that no local government “may prohibit or in any way attempt to regulate any matter relating to the registration, sale, transportation, or use of pesticides, and any of these [local] ordinances, laws, or regulations are void and of no force or effect.” This meant that residents of Santa Cruz, CA had no way to protect themselves from the forced aerial pesticide spraying of a new and untested chemical combination for the light brown apple moth (LBAM) in 2007. Hundreds of residents were sickened, and thousands of dead birds washed up on shore as a result of the spraying. [LBAM was soon proven to be of no threat to Californians.](#)

EXAMPLE: GMO’s - The corporate ownership of nature

What could be more fundamental to life than the seed, the source of all new life everywhere? Seeds—and seed saving—are the sacred trust of a food system that has been placed in the hands of generations of small farmers since agriculture began, and the most basic element of a healthy, vibrant and sustainable food system. Today farming is increasingly in the hands of fewer and fewer large corporations, who control what farming looks like and increasingly chose to “own” the seed supply chain by [patenting seeds](#), and through genetic engineering (or modification) of seeds. Today over 80% of commercial seeds are “owned” by just 10 corporations, including Monsanto. Contamination or threat of contamination by genetically modified organisms (GMO’s) is irreversible and can cause the extinction of seed varieties long held as common property by the people and the farmers and growers who developed them, and yet GMOs are perfectly legal.

EXAMPLE: Our garbage is your garbage. By law.

Pennsylvania’s Waste Management Corporation was able to successfully sue the State of Virginia under the [Commerce Clause](#) to overturn a state law which prohibited the importation of out-of-state waste, arguing that the law interfered with the flow of commerce.

EXAMPLE: The Commerce Clause says toxic sludge is good for you

Sludge is everything that goes through the waste cycle from homes, hospitals and industry, and its toxic. So toxic that hundreds of communities have tried to ban or otherwise control the use of it as a legal “fertilizer.” But as long as sludge is considered a “legal agricultural product” there are a slew of laws that forbid communities from stopping it from being spread where they live. Among them is the Commerce Clause, which is used regularly to strip democratically-elected local laws that “interfere with business”.

EXAMPLE: “Corporate Persons” are stealing water

An aquifer is often the primary source of water for an entire town or bioregion—many people depend exclusively on well water from the local aquifer for their needs. A corporation with a deed to property over the aquifer, and an easily attainable permit can dig down and suck the water out right from right under your feet. Banning the corporation from doing it would be a violation of the corporation’s so-called personhood rights to equal protection under the law—even if it means wells run dry or the ground sinks.



EXAMPLE: Coal mining - Takings Clause

The Takings clause in the Fifth Amendment prohibits “private property [from being] taken for public use without just compensation.” Both federal and state governments have the power, through eminent domain, to take a person’s private property as they wish as long as they pay for it. However, what was originally meant to be applied for good, was abused in a way for corporate benefit. Ultimately, the Takings clause prevents communities from stopping harmful projects without compensating mining corporations. Essentially, a corporation can take what would be considered private property from a community as long as they pay for it. Townships in Pennsylvania have had several battles with coal corporations to assert control over coal mining, gas drilling and other businesses.

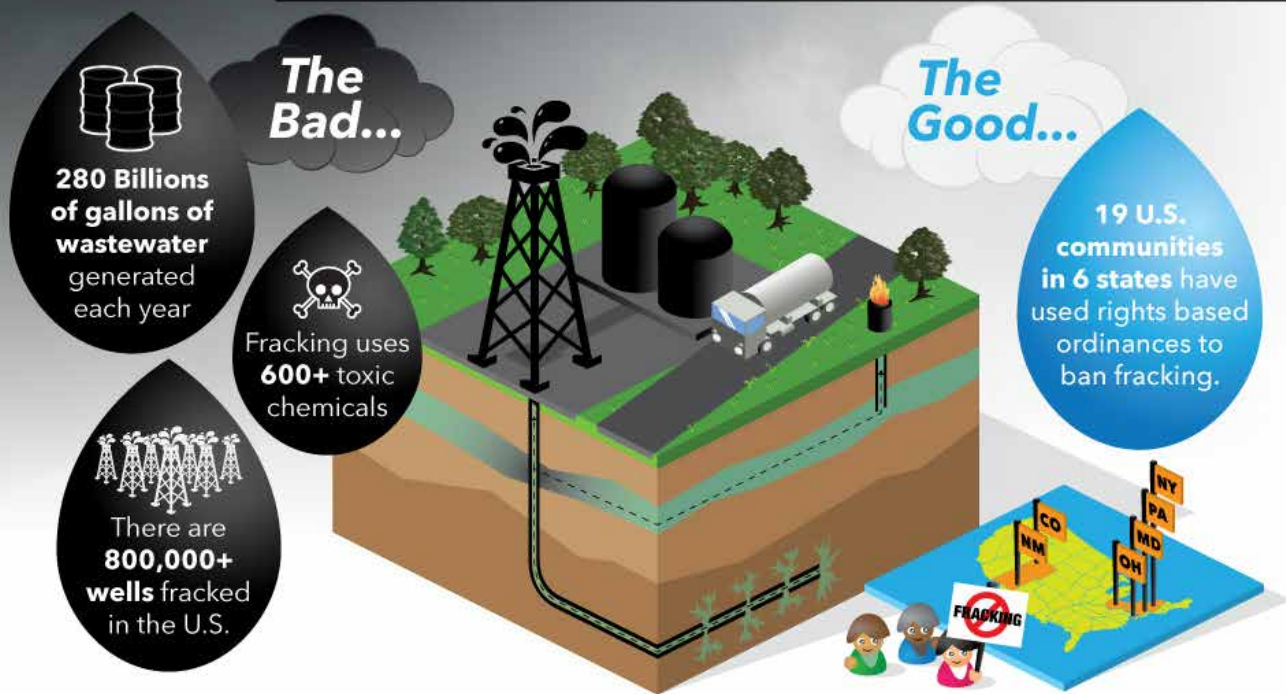
IV. Case Study: Fracking

Hydraulic fracturing (aka fracking) is one of the dirtiest energy production methods on Earth. Fracking is an advanced drilling technique that [injects millions of gallons of water, sand, and toxic chemicals](#) miles underground at pressures high enough to crack hard shale, thus releasing natural gas and oil that has been ‘trapped’ in its fissures. In the USA this technique produces *300,000 barrels* of natural gas each day, and has pushed US oil output to a [25-year high](#). As [this map](#) shows, pretty much everyone in the USA lives downstream from ‘frackland’ and the pollution it creates. [Learn more about the dangers of fracking.](#)



If fracking is so destructive, why are oil and gas companies allowed to override community concerns and site new wells directly in their midst? This question gets to the heart of the matter about the legal rights of nature and of people.

FRACKING Facts



EXAMPLE: The oily truth about The Halliburton “loophole”

With the help the Halliburton corporation (which invented the technology used for modern fracking) fracking was deemed “so safe” it was exempted from federal regulatory oversight including the Clean Drinking Water Act, the Clean Air Act, the Superfund Act and other laws. The fracking corporations are above those laws. [Many states decided to follow the EPA’s lead.](#)

EXAMPLE: The “Secret Sauce” of fracking is none of your business

There are some 600 chemicals used in fracking. On average, [330 tons of these chemicals](#) are used per fracking operation. The fracking fluid is toxic, but the recipe is protected by law as a corporate “trade secret” so even a doctor may not know how to treat an exposure.

EXAMPLE: Permission to frack right under your feet.

Subsurface rights, sometimes called the [mineral estate or ‘split’ estate](#), are often leased or sold to fracking companies in order to drill and dump millions of gallons of toxins below private property and ground water. In most states, these mineral “rights” were sold as long ago as 100 years or more, affording residents no say over what happens under their feet — and sometimes even on their front lawn.



V. TAKING ACTION: WE CAN DO THIS!



Instead of looking at fracking, or water bottling, or development, or any *issue X* as the problem, the community rights model gets to the underlying question: When it comes to *issue X* in our community, who should make the decision the people who must live with it or...someone else? It is time to correct unjust laws that deny our right to decide what happens where

we live, by asserting community rights. Over 160 communities have asserted their right to self govern and made their visions a reality through community organizing!

Your community can do it too, and Global Exchange is here to help. Here is what you'll need to get a campaign started to assert your community's right to decide what happens:

From creating a calendar for an ordinance, to writing the ordinance to training volunteers to creating a media campaign to signature gathering and everything you'll need to know in between, Global Exchange works with communities every step of the way. We are with communities every step of the way in the process with no charges for service. As your primary partners we will guide your community through the process from beginning to victory, assisting with steps, outreach, signature-gathering and more. We partner with CELDF (Community Environmental Legal Defense Fund) who provide legal assistance and answer any questions specific to legal processes to provide communities with a full spectrum of support and services. We are here to answer any questions you have and are ready to help you assert your rights in your community when you are!



Image: Global Exchange and CELDF supporting community team at a city council meeting

Let's talk!

We often begin our work with a phone call from a community member. A resident will contact us because his or her community is facing a proposal for an unwanted project – perhaps a factory farm, fracking, a water bottling plant, or mining operations. From there, we will often visit with community members, conduct an evening presentation, or a community meeting with your group.

Host a Community Rights Training, or a Democracy School

Global Exchange produces ½ day and one day trainings on the community rights model. We offer public presentation and small or large group workshops that can run from 2 hours to all day for free (other than the cost of transportation to/from your community). These trainings are tailor made for your group, depending on size and need.

The Daniel Pennock Democracy School is a stimulating and illuminating weekend course that teaches citizens and activists how to reframe exhausting and often discouraging single issue work (such as opposing toxic dumps, quarries, factory farms, etc.) in a way that we can confront corporate control on a powerful single front: people's constitutional rights. Visit <http://www.celdf.org/what-is-democracy-school> to learn more about hosting a Democracy School in your community. There is a cost to Democracy School though we recommend it as the most comprehensive way to get your team of 15-30 on the same page and ready to go. Contact [Stacey Schmader at CELDF](#) for more information. And, for those with less flexible hours, explore the free [online democracy school videos](#) on your own time!

Are you ready? Let's go!

Once your community partners with Global Exchange, we'll help you with all the things listed below from fundraising planning to outreach, from start to finish!

Committees you'll need (and we'll help you with)!

- ✓ **Fundraising & tracking money:** Our services are free and we have some resources to share like design and copies, but you'll need to do a little fundraising and you'll need to track each dollar. We will help you find your footing.
- ✓ **Outreach and events:** We're not parachuting into your community as the experts—you're the experts on your own quality of life. If you want to develop the best tools for outreach and to create local spokespeople on rights, we bring the experience of hundreds and hundreds of communities who have traveled this road, and will help you find your voice.
- ✓ **Media/framing:** From creating a media plan to writing the perfect OpEd, we're all about changing the conversation in your community away from the single *issue x* toward the powerful frame of "Who Decides? We do!" We help with every aspect.
- ✓ **Volunteer training/signature gathering:** You may already be an expert on gathering petition signatures for the ballot, GREAT. We tailor our training to your needs, and also to ensure that the signature gathering process is not just about meeting your signature quota, but that its a hands-down door-to-door community rights conversation. It's the best organizing there is, and its fun.

- ✓ **Ordinance Committee:** You won't have to write it yourself, but the ideas and vision come from you. Along with our legal partners at CELDF, we will write a rights-based ordinance with your community, and we'll always be there to back it up including in court, if necessary. We're here for the duration.
- ✓ **Timeline (backwards):** As a group, agree on a date that you'd like to see the ordinance passed. Look for the election date around that time and from that date, work backwards to figure out the timeframe for the necessary steps to get to that point. Get/Print out a blank calendar and dedicate it to the campaign. We'll help you with that too.
- ✓ **WHAT ELSE?** We are here to offer you advice and our time and hard work if you're really ready to make change where you live. Just ask us.

Step one: Call us.

For more information on Global Exchange's Community Rights Program, contact Community Rights Program Director, Shannon Biggs.

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Phone: (415) 575-5540

VI. Changing Unjust Laws: Frequently Asked Questions

What is the difference between a local ordinance and a resolution?

An ordinance is a local law. An ordinance can be passed by the governing body (the city council) or for states that offer the initiative process, by a vote of the people. Once passed, the local elected officials must enforce a law. Over 160 communities in several states have passed *rights-based* ordinances to ban harmful corporate presence in their communities.

A resolution is a written motion adopted by the local governing body (like a city council), and demonstrates the will of the people, but does not carry the force of law like an ordinance, though it can instruct the elected officials to do something in particular, like convene a working group, or commission a report, or propose something to state officials.

Who has the authority to decide if the ordinance becomes a law?

We do, from a moral standpoint as well as a legal one. The right to adopt laws to protect our health safety and welfare is unalienable, just like it says in the Declaration of Independence. The purpose of law and government is to uphold and protect rights, though we know from our own history of struggle for women's rights, the abolition of slavery and civil rights, the law fails from time to time. In California, adopting laws through a citizen initiative is recognized in the California Constitution. The process for participating in this form of direct democracy is defined by state law, and that law imposes mandatory requirements on petitioners. Once the people have fulfilled the procedural requirements, mandatory requirements are imposed on the City Council. The Council has no discretion to block the measure based on their opinion of its value or content.

Are rights-based ordinances “illegal and unconstitutional?”

NO – The rights we are asserting not currently recognized, but unalienable rights precede both statutes and constitutions. Unalienable refers to rights cannot be taken from us or given to us, they come to us by virtue of being born. However, rights-based ordinances ARE writing *new* law that challenges existing unjust laws that allow harms to enter our communities against our will.

We can look at the civil rights movement and the lunch counter sit-ins. Those brave youth who took a seat at Woolworth's acted as if their rights mattered, despite laws that denied their right to be served. Their actions DID challenge unjust law. So it is with rights-based ordinances only instead of a sit-in, we're writing law as if we lived in the democracy we seek.

Depriving local self-government may be arguably “legal and constitutional” if we presume that whatever government does is “legitimate”, but the deprivation of fundamental rights today is no more legitimate than the technical legality and constitutionality of slavery under the U.S. Constitution, up until 1868. Just as the abolitionists had the right to oppose slavery, and just as civil rights activists had the right to oppose

‘legal’ racial segregation, and just as women had the right to demand equal right and the authority to vote, we have the right, authority, and duty to challenge current injustices by asserting our rights, using our community government to correct injustices, and codifying those rights and defending them in local law.

What is municipal home rule?

A home rule charter is, in essence, a local constitution. Home rule or in some states including California they’re called “charter cities” is the power of a local city or county to set up its own system of self-government (within limits, which vary from state to state). 43 states allow for home rule. The process for “going” home rule or becoming a charter city often requires the electorate to first vote to become a Home Rule municipality, as well as elect community representatives to draft a new charter. That charter is then brought before voters for their approval. A home rule charter allows communities to amend its governmental organization and powers to suit its needs.

Shouldn’t we ban harmful activities at state level?

In a functioning democracy where our legislators truly represented the will of the people, in a world without lobbyists or interference from wealthy minorities or corporations, working from the state level would be faster way to ban something unsafe or unhealthy. However, the state is currently a big part of the problem. It is the state that “creates” corporations, and instantly imbibes corporations with an arsenal full of federal and state protections and permissions that override local concerns; the state issues the permits, and often lifts decision making from communities. To make a permanent, fundamental change in how decisions get made—and who makes them—we have to start at local level and work our way up.

The good news is, that in many states where rights-based ordinances have been passed, there are groups already hard at work on [rewriting state constitutions](#) to recognize community and nature’s rights. It won’t be won overnight, but things are changing.

Is this just NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)?

We believe in NIMBY and NABY (Not in Anyone’s backyard). There’s nothing wrong with NIMBY, we need to protect our communities, that’s where change starts. Every time a community stands up to pass a rights-based ordinance, it gives another community the “permission” and courage to do the same. We work in a network of communities, never in isolation, and we count on each other because if we’re going to take on the whole system, we can’t do it alone. Rosa Parks took her action alone, but if others hadn’t stood in solidarity with her, we’d have never heard her name, and we might still be living with unjust “separate but equal” laws. In the past several years, over 160 communities have risen up to fight for not just themselves, but everyone’s interests beyond the boundaries of their own communities.

Will we get sued?

We don’t know, but then again, no matter what path communities chose there are no guarantees and no silver bullets in protecting our communities from harm. Anytime we stop corporations from making profits, we run the risk of getting sued. A rights-based ordinance is no “riskier” than any other that bans harmful corporate activities. But working with Global Exchange and our legal partners means that you

have our free organizing and legal support standing behind you, as well as the strength of all the other communities who have engaged in this process. That's real power, and working together we might just change how corporations operate on Main Street.

Is running a community rights campaign expensive? Too slow?

NO – Most communities run their campaigns on a shoestring budget with 100% volunteer work and a few bake sales. The heart of a community rights campaign is that it runs on the foundation of neighbors talking to neighbors; families with the same interest as yours going door-to-door to talk about real issues that directly affect your community. And the frame of “Who decides, us or someone else?” is powerful and engaging.

As for the campaigns running too slow? It depends. If the bulldozers are coming into your community next week, a community-rights approach won't be able to stop them in time. HOWEVER, the fastest way to stop the bulldozers next time, and if you want to stop fighting one assault after the next and the next, we can help you change the rules to be sure that decisions about your community are made BY your community.

Want more information?

Got Community Rights?

<http://www.globalexchange.org/blogs/peopletopeople/2013/01/16/beyond-personhood-why-corporations-love-the-constitution-more-than-you-do/>

Take a look inside a campaign (special report):

<http://www.globalexchange.org/communityrights/rbo/shasta>

4 places that changed the rules on election day:

<http://www.globalexchange.org/blogs/peopletopeople/2012/11/12/this-elections-4-deepest-democracy-victories-you-missed/>

Get a copy of our book: Rights of Nature: contact shannon@globalexchange.org or download selected articles for free: <http://www.globalexchange.org/communityrights/rightsofnature/report>

Follow us on Twitter: [communityrights](#)

Keep up to date by joining the Community Rights list serve:

<http://www.globalexchange.org/getInvolved/lists.html>

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