

# **Corporate Accountability & Racial Justice**

VIEWERS GUIDE

***We The People***



## Background

This curriculum was developed as part of the Othering & Belonging Institute's Blueprint for Belonging project in partnership with the Sunrise Movement and the Workers Center for Racial Justice.

This viewer's guide includes 1) a link to a short video, 2) video discussion questions, and 3) resources & examples of campaigns that push for corporate accountability. The viewer's guide can be modified for various groups, but it is particularly targeted to young people who are impacted by and/or are concerned with corporate power, racial injustice, environmental injustice or related issues. The guide is intended to foster conversations between movements and bring awareness to the intersection of racial justice and economic justice.

Please note that there may be subsequent revisions.

Version 1: August 20, 2020

## Intended Outcomes

Outcome 1: Participants understand the role that corporations play in racial justice and economic justice and the centrality of the role of government in these struggles.

Outcome 2: Participants can identify at least one contemporary movement that is working to hold corporations accountable.

Outcome 3: Participants are motivated to ground their existing work in an integrated economic and racial justice framework.

## Facilitator Preparation

- 1) watch video
- 2) review discussion questions
- 3) review additional resources ahead of time

**SUGGESTED LENGTH: 45-60 MINUTES**

## Step 1: Introductions

- Facilitator & participants introduce themselves
- Brief review of the agenda

## Step 2: Let's get on the same page! Definitions.

Ask participants about the three concepts outlined below. Ask a few people to share what each of these means to them. If the responses reveal some need for clarity use the definitions below to ensure everyone starts on the same page.

### What is a public good?

A public good is a commodity or service that is provided without profit to all members of society usually by the government. Some examples of public goods include clean air, crosswalks, and street lighting. Public goods have two traits: 1) everyone can access it and therefore market producers can't sell it or make a profit for it and 2) the benefits that accrue to one person do not diminish the amount of benefits left for others.

Source: Kallhoff, "Why Societies need public goods"

### What is racial justice?

Racial justice is the systematic fair treatment of people of all races, resulting in equitable opportunities and outcomes for all. Racial justice—or racial equity—goes beyond “anti-racism.” It is not just the absence of discrimination and inequities, but the presence of deliberate systems and supports to achieve and sustain racial equity through proactive and preventative measures. Racial justice is defined by organization Race Forward as the proactive reinforcement of policies, practices, attitudes and actions that produce equitable power, access, opportunities, treatment, impacts and outcomes for all.

Source: Race Forward, "Race Reporting Guide"

### What is economic justice?

Economic justice is a set of moral and ethical principles for building economic institutions. These institutions determine how each person earns a living, enters into contracts, exchanges goods and services with others, and otherwise produces an independent material foundation for his or her economic sustenance. The ultimate goal of economic justice is to create opportunities for each person to thrive and have a dignified, productive, and creative life. Economic justice is violated by unjust barriers (such as racism) to participation, by monopolies, or by some using their property to harm or exploit others.

Source: Center for Economic and Social Justice "Defining Economic Justice and Social Justice"

### **Step 3: Large group discussion**

Take about 10 minutes to discuss the questions listed below.

1. Based on these definitions and your own experience how is economic justice and racial justice connected?
2. Can we ever achieve racial justice without also achieving economic justice?
3. What are some barriers to achieving economic justice?

### **Step 4: Watch video together**

You can watch the video by clicking [here](#).

### **Step 5: Discussion Questions**

Take about 20-25 minutes to discuss the questions listed below.

1. What stood out to you when watching this video?
2. Was there anything in the film that surprised you? If so, what?
3. What do you think the film reveals about existing issues caused by corporate power?
4. How does corporate influence on government impact workers and Black, indigenous and communities of color?
5. How do corporations gain more power when they play on racist stereotypes?
6. What is the role of corporations in achieving or blocking economic justice?
7. How have corporations stood in the way of racial justice?
8. What did you see in the film that speaks to how you and people across the country can stand up against corporate power and racial injustice?

### **Step 6: What can we do?**

Share a concluding statement similar to the one listed below and tell participants about the campaigns listed on the next page.

We want an economy where all people and ecological systems belong, this means that people and companies have a responsibility to the common good, they are accountable to communities, workers, and the environment. It means fostering an economy where relationships are mutually beneficial and prosperity is widely shared. Our government has given corporations too much power, and unfortunately has often allowed corporations to pay starving wages, no benefits, create dangerous work environments and pollute our environment. We need to push for policies and practices that limit corporations' power and influence.

## Additional Resources

### Campaign Examples

[The Fight for \\$15](#) movement is protesting for higher pay at work, against unsafe working conditions, wage theft, lack of training opportunities, among other unjust practices in the work place. Corporations take advantage of the ridiculously low minimum wage to increase their profits, while making millions. This movement has been successful in increasing the minimum wage to \$15 an hour in seven states. Change is possible if individuals come together to demand justice.

[The Green New Deal](#) is a 10-year plan to mobilize American society to 100% clean and renewable energy by 2030, a guaranteed living wage for anyone who needs one, and a just transition for both workers and frontline communities. The Green New Deal outlines changes that government and corporations need to take to achieve this goal.

[Coalition of Immokalee Workers](#) has done incredible work to improve the work conditions of farmworkers among other vulnerable communities. One major campaign included boycotting Taco Bell, (and later other corporate food companies) that purchased vegetables and fruit in large quantities. Amidst growing pressure, Taco Bell (and later other corporations such as McDonalds and Chipotle) agreed to meet all of CIW's demands to improve wages and working conditions for Florida tomato pickers in its supply chain.

## Video Summary

1. Many wealthy corporations amass their wealth by taking advantage of their workers, the communities they operate in, and the environment.
  2. Corporations, such as oil companies, know that they harm the environment and that this consequently directly harms people, but they continue to do so because they profit, and because they have influenced government to write rules that make it legal.
  3. Corporations rely on support from the public, such as tax breaks and public infrastructure like roads and publicly funded research for their business.
  4. Our ability as a society to hold corporations accountable has been weakened as corporations have co-opted government to allow them to influence elections, benefit from favorable laws, and be considered “people” in court.
  5. The power of corporations over government has made it harder for Black, indigenous and people of color to achieve racial justice, but we can stand against injustice and bring power back to the people.
  6. We need to change the rules so all people can thrive. When communities come together by voting, protesting, pressuring the government and participating in other forms of civic engagement, we can make change.
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