

## Learning, Training and Lobbying to End Corporate Rule

*Move to Amend National Leadership Summit, June 8-11*

*by Greg Coleridge*

Interest, energy and organized effort to end corporate rule has dramatically increased since POCLAD formed over 20 years ago. When Richard Grossman and Ward Morehouse gathered a few frustrated labor, environmental, peace and other activists together in various living rooms on Cape Cod in the mid 1990's, the number of people in the entire country aware of and dedicated to abolishing constitutionally-anointed "rights" of corporations to hijack public policies and define cultures wasn't much larger than the dozen in those living rooms.

Terms like "corporate constitutional rights" and "corporate personhood" weren't just alien to the general public, but to virtually every social change activist. The mindset that *We the People* should be in charge of entities like corporations was largely beyond comprehension. Using state-granted corporate charters to define and limit corporate actions, revoking charters for corporations which acted "ultra vires" (beyond their granted authority), and/or amending the U.S. Constitution to abolish corporate constitutional rights appeared on no agendas of two-hour or even two-day long activist group strategy meetings or retreats.

In short, as we in POCLAD often said, "our minds had been colonized," filled with wrong

assumptions about what to think and not to think regarding the rights and powers of corporations, as well as what was possible and achievable by activists committed to real democracy.

Two subsequent decades worth of widening and deepening corporate assaults on people, communities and the planet; growing awareness that "traditional" Democracy 101 methods to create justice, peace, and sustainability via elections, lobbying, symbolic protests, etc. produced, at best, only minor improvements; an increasingly pro-corporate leaning Supreme Court churning out pro-corporate decisions; and dogged organizing by activists committed to building a democracy movement increased the pace of awareness and dedication to fundamental change.

The 2010 *Citizens United vs FEC* decision extended the rights of corporations and the super wealthy to contribute/invest in elections. It triggered a rethinking of how to comprehend, feel, react and confront the growing power of corporations (and the super wealthy) over the people's right to decide. POCLAD's years of research and outreach, along with that of several allied groups, unquestionably helped ground many people across the country in this new way of thinking and framing their work.

Several new groups formed in

response to *Citizens United* decision while some existing "good government" organizations expanded their agenda. Most of these organizations, however, aren't committed to building an authentic democracy movement that will, among other goals, take on entrenched corporate rule.

Some of the groups exploit *Citizens United* to raise money to elect progressive politicians (as well as some politicians to collect signatures and donations for their own re-election campaigns). Other groups nibble around the edges of the case by trying to pass laws requiring transparency of political donations, but not to overturn the decision. A few groups call for a constitutional amendment that would overturn *Citizens United*, but nothing more — as if our nation was a beacon of authentic democracy before the 2010 decision. Still other efforts call for a constitutional amendment that would more fundamentally reverse the 1976 Supreme Court decision equating money as speech, but ignores illegitimate corporate constitutional rights.

Finally, there are the "bait and switch" tactics used by some who rhetorically call for a constitutional amendment addressing corporate constitutional rights but their vague interim proposals steer away from those very rights.

Move to Amend (MTA) is the

organization most consistent with POCLAD in its analysis of the problem and its commitment (as well as capacity) to build an independent grassroots movement to abolish all corporate constitutional rights, rights intended for natural persons only. It also seeks to end the equally bizarre doctrine that money is politically equivalent to speech.

MTA allies with other grassroots organizations as part of a larger democracy movement. The coalition works in solidarity with oppressed constituencies and communities victimized by corporate plunder and plutocratic policies. MTA doesn't play around with bait and switch tactics. It is direct and clear: only a constitutional amendment abolishing corporate constitutional rights and money defined as free speech is a path toward putting *We the People's* in charge of our corporate creations and the decisions that define our neighborhoods, cities, states and nation.

### MTA National Leadership Summit

No movement, however, will succeed merely by having what they consider are the best solutions to the worst problems. Its adherents must be motivated, skilled and experienced. The upcoming Move to Amend National Leadership Summit is a place for existing and new MTA supporters to become motivated, learn necessary organizing skills, and gain valuable experience in building real power to affect real change.

This second Summit (the first was held in 2016) will take place June 8-11 at Trinity University in Washington, D.C. You don't have to be connected to Move to Amend or a seasoned organizer to attend. The Summit will include practical

trainings and skill building and culminate in a National Lobby Day in which attendees will hit the halls of Congress urging our representatives to co-sponsor the *We The People Amendment*, <https://movetoamend.org/wethepeopleamendment>. There will also be plenty of time for networking and community building.

National radio host, author and political commentator Thom Hartmann will be the keynote speaker. Leaders representing allied grassroots organizations will speak and serve on panels.

Among the proposed working sessions during the event are the following:

- Recruiting & Engaging Volunteers
- Resolutions & Ballot Initiatives
- Effective Online Engagement
- Starting a Move to Amend Group
- Lobbying Effectively as a Move to Amend Organizer
- Public Speaking as Organizing
- Recruiting & Engaging Volunteers
- Pledge to Amend 2018

Special emphasis is being directed at making the conference affordable for everyone, especially to young activists. Toward that end, as with the 2016 Leadership Summit, POCLAD has made a \$2500 contribution for a "Richard Grossman and Ward Morehouse Youth Scholarship Fund." We feel this is a way to both carry on the memory and work of POCLAD and its co-founders and to support young activists dedicated to ending corporate rule and creating authentic democracy. A notice about the scholarship fund with a short bio of both Richard and Ward will appear in the Summit program.

More information about the Leadership Summit, including how to register, can be found at <https://movetoamend.org/summit>

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**By What Authority** (ISSN: 524-1106) is published by the Program on Corporations, Law & Democracy. The title is English for *quo warranto*, a legal phrase that questions illegitimate exercise of privilege and power. We the people and our federal and state officials have long been giving giant business corporations illegitimate authority. Today, a minority directing giant corporations and backed by police, courts, and the military, define our culture, govern our nation and plunder the earth. **By What Authority** reflects an unabashed assertion of the right of the sovereign people to govern themselves.

POCLAD is a group of 7 people instigating democratic conversations and actions that contest the authority of corporations to govern. Our analysis evolves through historical and legal research, writing, public speaking and working with organizations to develop new strategies that assert people's rights over property interests.

**BWA** is a tool for democracy proponents to rethink and reframe their work. To that end we encourage readers to engage us with comments, questions and suggestions.

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