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Strategies of Narrative Disclosure in the Rhetoric of Anti-Corporate Campaigns

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STRATEGIES OF NARRATIVE DISCLOSURE
IN THE RHETORIC OF ANTI-CORPORATE CAMPAIGNS

by

RICHARD ALEXANDER HERDER

Under the Direction of Dr. Michael Bruner

ABSTRACT

In the years following World War II social activists learned to refine rhetorical techniques for gaining the attention of the new global mass media and developed anti-corporate campaigns to convince some of the world's largest companies to concede to their demands. Despite these developments, rhetorical critics have tended to overlook anti-corporate campaigns as objects of study in their own right. One can account for the remarkable success of anti-corporate campaigns by understanding how activists have practiced prospective narrative disclosure, a calculated rhetorical wager that, through the public circulation of stories and texts disclosing problematic

practices and answerable decision makers, activists can influence the policies and practices of prominent corporations. In support of this thesis, I provide case studies of two anti-corporate campaigns: the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union vs. J. P. Stevens (1976 – 1980) and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers vs. Taco Bell (2001—2005). Each campaign represents a typology of practice within prospective narrative disclosure: *martial* (instrumental emphasis) and confrontation/alliance (popular, constitutive emphasis) respectively. The former is more likely to spark defensive responses and public backlash, and the latter is more likely to sway entire market sectors and produce lasting changes in the de facto corporate social responsibility standards of global markets.

INDEX WORDS: Rhetoric, Disclosure, Narrative, Storytelling, Kairos, Carnivalesque, Grotesque realism, Activism, Corporations, Anti-corporate campaign, Corporate campaign, J. P. Stevens, Taco Bell, Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, ACTWU, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, CIW, Slavery, Social movements

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A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of

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IN THE RHETORIC OF ANTI-CORPORATE CAMPAIGNS

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DEDICATION

To my wife Marsha, our three children and their spouses, our grandchildren, my parents, and friends who have gathered on “the porch” over the years.

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Chapter 1: Anti-Corporate Campaigns and Corporate Power

“Corporations are the new public sphere.”
Stanley Deetz¹

This dissertation began as an attempt to understand a conundrum. How is it that a group of marginalized farmworkers, the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW), was able to convince the world’s largest fast food corporation to heed their call to make substantial changes to its purchasing policies? In the interest of full disclosure, I should explain that my curiosity about the CIW’s accomplishments was driven by academic interests to be sure, but also by personal interests. I once taught high school English in Immokalee, the South Florida community that is home to the CIW. I later learned that a former student, whom I taught several years later in another school in the area, had been convicted of participating in a human-trafficking ring the CIW had worked to expose.² When I first read about the CIW’s campaign against Taco Bell I dismissed it as a quixotic enterprise – farmworkers tilting at windmills. When one of my daughters later told me she would be supporting the CIW’s Taco Bell boycott, I shrugged off her actions as naïve optimism. It was not until Taco Bell and its parent company Yum! Brands signed an agreement with the CIW in 2005 that I became seriously interested in understanding the coalition’s accomplishments and those of other activists who determined to challenge the progress of corporate power.

By way of explanation, the CIW’s victory came at a felicitous time; I had been taking graduate classes where I had been learning about critical theory and the subtle, pervasive

¹ Stanley Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization* (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1992), 348.

² My former student’s name is Herman Covarrubias, and I first learned of his involvement through a story published in the *Naples Daily News* about a human-trafficking operation run by two brothers named Abel and Bacilio Cuello. According to the story, “The brothers and Covarrubias trapped workers with threats of calling immigration and physical violence if they left the [Cuellos’] camp. One worker said Covarrubias told him he’d shoot him and leave him in the groves when he complained about carrying heavy tomato pails.” Janine Zeitlin, “Slavery: Collier County’s Connection: Modern-Day Slavery Reaches from Immokalee Farm Fields to Prostitution in Golden Gate,” *Naples Daily News*, January 29, 2006.

intrusions of corporate discourse into daily life. In this context I began to think more carefully and seriously about what the CIW had accomplished and how improbable it all seemed. As someone who had worked for several years in Immokalee, Florida, I was familiar with the ramshackle, overcrowded housing where many of the farmworkers who make up the CIW live. In an age when the economic power of many corporations rivals that of the state, the accomplishments of these farmworkers struck me as almost unimaginable. Yet there was no denying what they had done. In just over three years, they had rallied thousands of supporters across the nation to call on Taco Bell to commit to eradicating slavery from the commercial tomato fields of South Florida. In the end, company management saw things the CIW's way. On a warm spring day in Louisville, Kentucky in 2005, Jonathan Blum of YUM! Brands shook hands with Lucas Benitez of the CIW to signify an end to the campaign. Blum used the event to call on other companies in the fast food industry to follow his company's lead by working with the CIW to improve wages and working conditions in commercial agriculture.³

As it turned out, the Taco Bell agreement was but the most dramatic recent example in a broader trend. As I began to read more about anti-corporate activism, I encountered scores of other campaigns, beginning with the great Civil Rights Movements of the twentieth century and continuing to the present day, in which seemingly marginalized groups had overcome improbable odds in order to garner surprising concessions from prominent corporations.⁴ I eventually came to realize that the campaigns I had been reviewing constituted an important but largely understudied class of rhetorical practices. No previous studies had treated the rhetoric of anti-corporate campaigns as a subject *sui generis*, distinct from that of other types of social

3 In his speech that day, Blum told the crowd, "human rights are universal and we hope others [in the fast food industry] will follow our company's lead." Evelyn Nieves, "Accord with Tomato Pickers Ends Boycott of Taco Bell," *Washington Post*, March 9, 2005.

4 Examples include the "sit-ins" at Woolworth's counters across the nation and the United Farm Workers grape boycotts of the 1970s. I discuss these events and others in more detail in chapter three.

movement campaigns related to ecology, globalization, and human rights. By treating anti-corporate campaigns as a distinct rhetorical typology, I concluded, a dissertation length study could help to reinvigorate stalled debates over the nature of activist campaigns and contribute to newer discussions regarding the role of public decorum and kairos (strategic timing) in activist campaigns.⁵

I eventually surveyed more than 170 anti-corporate campaigns over the last four decades.⁶ Some of these actions, like the Taco Bell campaign, appeared to be unqualified success stories in which activist groups overcame long odds in order to convince management to modify their corporate practices in some significant and unexpected way. In other instances, activists either failed in their attempts to extract concessions from management or, despite earning important concessions, sparked counter mobilization from opposing interests within the executive corps at other companies or in the broader public sphere.

This initial survey, in turn, prompted me to formulate two guiding questions for my dissertation research. First, I was interested to know what accounted for the ability of activist organizations to convince prominent corporations to accede to their demands. Second, I wanted

5 Specifically, the recent history of anti-corporate campaigns radically problematizes longstanding assumptions in the rhetorical literature about the need for authoritative “top-down” leadership in social movement campaigns. Any such assumptions fail to account for the egalitarian decision-making practices and inter-organizational resource sharing that characterize many recent campaigns, including those sponsored by the CIW and the “community campaigns” that have been sponsored by organizations with well-established organizational hierarchies such as the United Steel Workers and the Service Employees International Union. Nevertheless, the argument Herbert Simons and his co-authors present regarding the need for top-down leadership in movement campaigns has remained largely unchallenged for two decades. Peter K. Bsumek, “Kairos: Time to Get Down to it (Should Have Been Done Long Time Ago),” *Environmental Communication* 2, no. 1 (March 2008), 84; William J. Kinsella et al., “Narratives, Rhetorical Genres, and Environmental Conflict: Responses to Schwarze’s ‘Environmental Melodrama.’” *Environmental Communication* 2, no. 1 (March 2008), 79; Steven Schwarze, “Environmental Melodrama,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 3 (2006), 257; Steven Schwarze, “Environmental Melodrama: Explorations and Extensions,” *Environmental Communication* 2, no. 1 (March 2008), 106; Herbert W. Simons, James W. Chesebro, and C. Jack Orr, “A Movement Perspective on the 1972 Presidential Election,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 59, no. 2 (1973), 168; Herbert W. Simons, Elizabeth W. Mechling, and Howard N. Schreier, “The Functions of Human Communication in Mobilizing from the Ground Up: The Rhetoric of Social Movements,” in *Handbook of Rhetorical and Communication Theory* (Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1984), 794.

6 I provide a list of these campaigns in Appendix A.

to know which modes of rhetorical persuasion in anti-corporate campaigns were more likely to yield progressive changes in the de facto corporate social responsibility (CSR) standards of global markets. In an effort to seek answers to these questions, I conducted case studies of two of the best known anti-corporate campaigns of our time: the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) campaign against the J. P. Stevens Company (1976 – 1980; hereafter the Stevens campaign) and the CIW’s campaign against Taco Bell and its parent company Yum! Brands (2001 – 2005; hereafter the Taco Bell campaign).

The Stevens campaign is recognized as one of the earliest and most widely emulated anti-corporate campaigns of the modern era.⁷ It was the final chapter in a protracted labor dispute between ACTWU and J. P. Stevens which, in defiance of the NLRB (National Labor Relations Board), had steadfastly refused to recognize union contracts at ten of its textile factories in the American South. The leader of the Stevens campaign and the person who is widely credited with developing its innovative and aggressive strategies was a young labor activist named Ray Rogers who has subsequently worked as a professional consultant on dozens of other campaigns to the present day. The Stevens campaign has often been described as an expensive, carefully researched, “power on power” event in which the union confronted the corporation on several fronts simultaneously.⁸ It featured the strategic shifting of union retirement funds to place economic pressure on management, damaging revelations in the public media about racist and

⁷ Kate Bronfenbrenner and Tom Juravich, “The Evolution of Strategic and Coordinated Bargaining Campaigns in the 1990s: The Steelworkers’ Experience,” in *Rekindling the Movement*, ed. Lowell Turner, Harry C. Katz, and Richard W. Hurd (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 218.

James A. Hodges, “J. P. Stevens and the Union Struggle for the South,” *Race, Class, and Community in Southern Labor History*, ed. Gary Fink (Tuscaloosa, AL: University of Alabama Press, 2003), 53-66; Jarol Manheim, *The Death of a Thousand Cuts: Corporate Campaigns and the Attack on the Corporation* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2001), 56; Timothy J. Minchin, “J. P. Stevens Campaign,” in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 709; Timothy J. Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign and the Struggle to Organize the South, 1963 - 1980* (Gainesville, FL: University of Florida Press, 2005), 179-184.

⁸ Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 53-55; Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 122. See Appendix B for outtakes from promotional fliers produced by Corporate Campaigns, Inc. in which they provide graphic illustrations of power on power campaign strategies.

sexist employment policies at J. P. Stevens' factories, and the resignation under public pressure of prominent members of the company's board of directors. Four decades later the Stevens campaign remains controversial and influential. Many other activist groups, especially in the 1980s and 90s, attempted to duplicate its confrontational strategies and tactics, often with mixed results.⁹

Like the Stevens campaign, the Taco Bell campaign was based in the rural American South. In 1999 the CIW, a Southwest Florida farmworkers cooperative, set out to convince a multinational fast food company to pay one penny more per pound for tomatoes with the extra funds being paid directly to Florida farmworkers, a group of people whose average wages had remained frozen since the 1970s. Remarkably, the plan worked – in part because the coalition knew something management did not: some of the tomatoes being sold to Taco Bell had been picked by slave labor. During the campaign, the CIW and their allies employed a wide variety of protest tactics including a hunger strike, boycotts on college campuses, and speeches at shareholder meetings. The campaign began to turn in favor of the workers when news media began to publish stories about the coalition's dramatic investigations into human trafficking in Florida agriculture.¹⁰ In a series of subsequent campaigns the CIW has convinced several other

9 Prominent examples of campaigns that emulated strategies of the Stevens campaign during this period include the Airline Pilots Association strike against Transamerica Airlines in 1984-85 (failed to produce a labor contract and company dissolved a year later); the United Food and Commercial Workers P-9 campaign against Hormel Foods from 1985-86 (ended with union being tossed out); The United Paperworkers' International Union strike against International Paper (failed to overcome a company lock out of union workers); and Greenpeace's "Brent Spar Campaign" in 1995 (convinced Shell Oil to dismantle an oil storage facility on shore instead of sinking it in the North Sea). For other examples see the list of martial campaigns in Appendix A.

Grant Jordan, *Shell, Greenpeace and Brent Spar* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2001); Peter Kellman, *Divided We Fall: The Story of the Paperworkers' Union and the Future of Labor* (Lanham, Maryland: Apex Press, 2004), 174; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 315, 323, 342; Scott McCartney, "West German-Owned Chemical Plant in Louisiana Called 'Bhopal on the Bayou,'" *Los Angeles Times*, November 9, 1986.

10 Evelyn Nieves, "Fla. Tomato Pickers Still Reap 'Harvest of Shame': Boycott Helps Raise Awareness of Plight," *Washington Post*, February 28, 2005.

prominent companies (including McDonald's, Burger King, Whole Foods supermarkets, and Subway) to sign onto their "Campaign for Fair Food."¹¹

The two campaigns were similar in several important respects but differed significantly in their long-term impact on the attitudes and practices of corporate decision makers. The similarities are easy to recognize. Both were labor oriented campaigns focused on controversial business practices in small towns in the rural American South and targeted companies whose main offices were located in metropolitan centers (New York City and Los Angeles respectively).¹² Both campaigns also generated considerable attention from national and international media, attracted large followings on college campuses, and garnered the endorsements of prominent celebrities as well as organizations representing other human rights causes.¹³ And both campaigns featured the public circulation of stories and texts featuring carnivalesque inversion and grotesque realism. In the Stevens campaign the stories and texts featured tangible evidence of workplace injuries, racism, and sexism – all of which served to problematize the company's efforts to position itself in public memory as one of the nation's premier purveyors of fine linens and textiles. In the CIW campaign, the farmworkers and their allies used public protests, internet postings, and undercover investigations of commercial farming operations to disclose harsh working conditions, poverty-level wages, and modern day slavery.

At the same time, one can recognize striking differences between how the two campaigns planned and operated their campaigns, how they viewed campaign strategies, and how they were

¹¹ Amy Bennett Williams, "Museum Highlights Modern-Day Slavery Problem in Florida," *Miami Herald*, March 7, 2010.

¹² John Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor and the Dark Side of the New Global Economy* (New York: Random House, 2007), 29; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens! The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 15.

¹³ See Appendix G for a list of prominent individuals and organizations that endorsed the CIW's Taco Bell campaign. Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 73; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens! The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 1-8, 92.

received by public audiences. First, in stark contrast to the decision-making practices of the Stevens campaign, where Rogers and a handful of other union leaders were responsible for all major strategy decisions, the CIW practiced a form of cooperative decision-making in which rank and file members were encouraged to participate at every juncture.¹⁴ Second, unlike the Stevens campaign, which was conceived as a one-time action against a single company, the Taco Bell campaign was conceived from the beginning as the first of a long series of protest actions aimed at changing attitudes and business practices in corporate agriculture. Third, public audiences – to say the least – responded with ambivalence to the Stevens campaign. On the one hand, the campaign generated considerable public sympathy at the time for female and minority textile workers.¹⁵ Several scholars have argued, in fact, that ACTWU's aggressive tactics fueled public skepticism of labor unions and alienated management teams at other corporations who feared they could be the target of future actions.¹⁶ By contrast, the Taco Bell campaign did not produce a large scale public backlash and in the years following the campaign a whole series of companies the CIW has targeted have issued public statements endorsing its cause.¹⁷ In summary, the two campaigns were sufficiently similar to allow me to make detailed comparisons, but sufficiently different to allow me to draw reasonable conclusions about their rhetorical strategies.

After extensive study of both campaigns (a process that included an in-person interview with Ray Rogers and an extended review of campaign-related news stories, internal campaign documents, pamphlets, web pages, and other texts), I concluded one could attribute the success

14 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 24-25.

15 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens! The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 90-110 passim.

16 Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, "The Evolution," 218; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 57-58; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens! The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 182.

17 John Lantigua, "McDonald's Agrees to Increase Pay for Workers Who Harvest Its Tomatoes," *Palm Beach Post*, April 10, 2007; Andrew Martin, "Burger King Grants Raise to Pickers," *New York Times*, May 24, 2008; Elaine Walker, "Subway to Pay More for Tomatoes," *Miami Herald*, December 2, 2008.

of each campaign to their practice of what I am calling prospective narrative disclosure. In simplest terms, prospective narrative disclosure refers to a calculated rhetorical wager that, through the timely circulation of stories and texts disclosing problematic practices and answerable decision makers, activists can influence the policies and practices of prominent corporations.¹⁸ Moreover, I concluded that prospective narrative disclosure can produce a range of responses running from public sympathy to public backlash and that, with this in mind, one can think of the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns as representing overlapping typologies of practice. For its part, the Stevens campaign constitutes a paradigmatic instance of a “martial” campaign characterized by a distinct emphasis on labor strikes, boycotts, governmental lobbying and other instrumental actions. As the name suggests, activist groups that sponsor anti-corporate campaigns of this type often speak in militaristic terms, in the sense that they typically frame a targeted corporation in melodramatic fashion as a dangerous enemy that must be prevented from perpetuating some egregious harm. Consistent with this orientation, groups that sponsor martial campaigns focus on extracting specific concessions from management, while downplaying any attempts to change management attitudes over the long-term.

By contrast, the Taco Bell campaign represents a two-part “confrontation/alliance” pattern characterized by an initial confrontation in which activists attempt to demonstrate management’s culpability in some egregious practice, followed by intensive efforts to convince them to renounce the offensive behavior and endorse the activists’ cause. Those who plan campaigns conforming to this latter pattern set long-term goals of changing the attitudes of management and the policies of companies across entire market sectors. My research suggests

¹⁸ In using the term “answerability” I am thinking of Bakhtin’s argument that “The individual must become answerable through and through: all of his constituent moments must not only fit next to each other in the temporal sequence of his life, but must also interpenetrate each other in the unity of guilt and answerability.” Mikhail Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability: Early Philosophical Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Vadim Liapunov and Kenneth Brostrom (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1990), 2.

that, although either style of campaign can yield important concessions from corporate management, the latter is more likely to produce lasting changes in the daily business practices of targeted companies and in the de facto corporate social responsibility standards of global markets.

Regardless of the typology of action they employ, activist groups that adopt prospective narrative disclosure strategies make several implicit assumptions about multinational corporations and the global markets in which they operate. First, by the closing decades of the twentieth century corporations had insinuated themselves into nearly every corner of private life and the public sphere.¹⁹ Anti-corporate activists understand that despite the ubiquity of their presence, corporations typically invest considerable time and money in practices that obscure lines of ethical accountability. More to the point, they operate on the tacit assumption that public relations strategies, limited liability laws, and sprawling global supply chains now serve to occlude decision-making practices and prevent public audiences from determining who within a corporate matrix ought to be held accountable for any given policy or action. Second, they understand that in many instances speaking the truth in the public sphere regarding the material conditions of production requires considerable bravery. The basest forms of coercion often thrive on privacy, and in the globalized public sphere indefensible practices flourish in the remote reaches of global supply networks, well beyond the view of many executives and most investors. Third, they understand that corporations are thoroughly dialogic organizations embedded in dialogic social contexts.²⁰ That is, although management invariably expends considerable time

19 Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization*, 13-14; Naomi Klein, *No Logo: No Space, No Choice, No Jobs* (New York: Picador, 2009), 37.

20 I am thinking here of Mikhail Bakhtin's definition of dialogism as "the characteristic epistemological mode of a world dominated by heteroglossia [radical, centrifugal plurivocality at all levels of human discourse]. Mikhail Bakhtin, *The Dialogic Imagination: Four Essays*, ed. Michael Holquist, trans. Vadim Liapunov and Kenneth Brostrom (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1982), 426.

and money in order to maintain centripetal (monovocal and centralizing) control of organizational discourse, these efforts can never be entirely successful. They can never fully contain the countervailing, centrifugal (plurivocal and decentralizing) force of heteroglossia – the radical plurivocality that persists at all levels of human discourse.²¹ In the present context, the most important implication of this situation is that activists tend to view the plurivocal complexity of organizational discourse as working in their favor. By setting credible stories and texts into public circulation, they can sometimes destabilize corporate discourse and challenge the fundamental integrity of centripetal corporate narratives. In the contemporary era the rapid diffusion of new communication technologies has accelerated this process by opening new channels for storytelling circulation around the globe. Fourth, anti-corporate activists understand that business executives go home. Activists have sometimes taken advantage of this obvious truth by critiquing the actions of corporations, not only according to the ethical standards of global markets, but also by those of the local communities where managers live with their families.

Finally, this last point highlights the crucial importance of kairos and decorum in anti-corporate protest campaigns. That is, anti-corporate activists of all stripes understand that if they are to check the advancement of corporate power, then they must time their actions carefully in order to take advantage of fleeting vulnerabilities. Social decorum represents the most predictable and consequential of these vulnerabilities. The first duty of corporate executives is often held out to be the delivery of substantial, predictable returns on investments to stockholders. However, the recent history of anti-corporate protest suggests that most executives recognize a closely related but less explicit obligation to defend the public reputations of their companies, communities, and families. In practice this means that many of these executives are

²¹ Ibid, 272.

highly vulnerable to charges of personal or professional hypocrisy. Whether or not any given campaign succeeds or fails in its attempts to change market practices turns on the ability of activists to level these sorts of accusations without, at the same time, alienating their corporate opponents and prompting a counterproductive backlash in the public sphere.

Overview of Chapters

The anti-corporate campaign strategies and tactics I describe in this dissertation participate in an iconoclastic rhetorical tradition that pre-dates Socrates. Nevertheless, they were developed by people intent on responding to a relatively recent political development: the emergence of business corporations as cosmopolitan institutions. Given the ubiquity of their presence, it is easy to forget that multinational corporations such as McDonalds, Wal-Mart, and ExxonMobil are, from a historical perspective, relative newcomers to the global market place. It was not until the middle decades of the nineteenth century that the United States, England, and other nations began to issue large numbers of charters for general business corporations. And yet, in the space of one and one-half centuries they have proliferated to the point that they have now become a predictable feature of daily life under globalization. In his work *Frankenstein, Incorporated*, I. Maurice Wormser proposed a vivid metaphor to describe these new institutions. In doing so he underscored the importance of limiting the influence of corporations while, at the same time, channeling their energies to serve the interests of civil society. Wormser wrote his book in 1931 (a time, not unlike today, when the world was still reeling from the effects of investment scandals), and he deserves to be quoted at length:

We are all familiar with Mrs. Shelly's thrilling tale of Frankenstein, the modern Prometheus, who artificially created and vitalized a monster which became the terror of "all living things" and threatened the security and well-being of mankind [*sic*]. The fable is not without its application to the corporate business organization of to-day. Corporations are not natural living persons, but artificial beings, *corpa ficta*. They are created by the nation or state, which endows them with distinct personality in the eye of

the law, special privileges and comprehensive powers. Frankenstein's creature developed into a deadly menace to his creator. The nation and the state must curb certain grave and vicious abuses in their corporate offspring.²²

The argument of the passage is straightforward. Wormser was not advocating that corporations ought not to exist. Rather, he was asking his audience to recall that corporations are a product of human ingenuity, and as such their actions are amenable to human modification and control.²³

An anti-corporate campaign represents just that: an attempt to use rhetorics of disclosure to make a corporation more democratically accountable for its actions. Anti-corporate activists employ these strategies to draw the attention of public audiences to little known policies and practices, thereby problematizing a company's public relations narratives. I coined the phrase "prospective narrative disclosure" to describe these rhetorical practices. In chapter two I describe this concept in considerable detail and consider how it comports with ancient rhetorics of popular disclosure as well as contemporary discussions on subjects including corporate hegemony, the rhetoric of social movements, kairos, narrative theory, and globalization. As part of this discussion, I also review a compensatory rhetoric of concealment featuring the global distribution of highly-produced public relations and advertising narratives that often gloss over disturbing contradictions in corporate practice.

In chapter three I trace a brief history of the birth and evolution of corporations and of anti-corporate campaigns. The chapter begins with a review of two famous episodes from the early decades of the Industrial Revolution: the Luddite Rebellion and the abolitionist

22 I. Maurice Wormser, *Frankenstein, Incorporated* (New York: McGraw-Hill, 1931). v.

23 In place of "human ingenuity," I could just as easily have written "social imagination," a phrase coined in the 1950s by the sociologist C. Wright Mills to describe the human capacity to reflect critically on individual behavior and social taxonomies. The philosopher Charles Taylor has expanded our understanding of social imagination by describing the "social imaginary" as "that common understanding that makes possible common practices and a widely shared sense of legitimacy." By the end of the twentieth century corporations had, in effect, assumed a prominent position in the cosmopolitan social imaginary. C. Wright Mills, *The Sociological Imagination* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 5; Charles Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 23.

movement's successful campaign to end the slave trade in the British Empire. I argue that the two movements anticipate the martial and confrontation/alliance typologies as exemplified by the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns respectively. I then trace representative instances of these contrasting patterns across the better part of two centuries in which corporations emerged as institutions whose economic and political power rivaled that of many political states, and activists began to discover rhetorical techniques for disclosing egregious contradictions between what corporations said in public and how they actually conducted business on a daily basis in the global marketplace.

With this theoretical and historic groundwork in place, in chapters four and five I conduct a more detailed review of the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns and defend them as representative instances of the martial and confrontation/alliance typologies. Each chapter begins with a brief history of the campaign and is followed by a detailed, critical interrogation of several key incidents. In chapter four I focus primarily on the union's use of advanced research techniques to profile the corporation and its financial relationships, and on the public circulation of stories and texts featuring carnivalesque and grotesque themes. I follow a similar pattern in chapter five by reviewing the CIW's use of *encuentras* (community discussions in which they discussed research and laid plans for the campaign), slavery investigations, and indigenous theatrical performances featuring political inversion and grotesque realism.

In chapter six I conclude by revisiting the research questions and summarizing my findings and by reviewing how the two case studies exemplify prospective narrative disclosure and its two related typologies of practice. The implication of this research project, I argue, is that while there can be no doubt regarding the power and reach of corporations, by adapting ancient rhetorics of disclosure to the exigencies of global markets, activists have reminded the world that

they need not shy away from challenging multinational corporations. They are, after all, human creations.

Chapter 2: Rhetorics of Disappearance and Disclosure

“My soul is rent, to wretchedness ensnared
By men, by gods, whom I will now disclose.”
Euripides¹

“[B]usinesses have begun to fabricate their own simulacra of credibility.”
Michel de Certeau²

In an era when multinational corporations have learned to master rhetorics of disappearance, anti-corporate activists have become students of a compensatory rhetoric of disclosure. On the one hand, multinational corporations have been expanding their operations to geographically remote locations around the globe where they can gain access to low cost labor and are less likely to face governmental scrutiny. On the other hand, activists have been refining rhetorical strategies for disclosing disturbing discrepancies between the public discourse of prominent corporations and the actual conditions of industrial production in clandestine locations within company supply chains. By making these sorts of carefully timed disclosures activists have aimed to shame corporate decision makers in the public sphere, thereby convincing them to modify their daily market practices in significant ways. On scores of occasions in recent decades, activist groups have used these sorts of techniques to extract surprising concessions from some of the world’s best known companies, even when such actions had no discernible effect on corporate profitability.

In this chapter I provide a more thorough accounting of prospective narrative disclosure and locate the practice in relation to contemporary literature on anti-corporate activism and a plebian tradition of rhetorical disclosure. The description of prospective narrative disclosure I advance diverges from previous work in rhetoric studies by treating anti-corporate campaigns as an object of study in their own right and by providing a more comprehensive account of how

1 Euripides, *Ion*, trans. Robert Potter (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004), 46.

2 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 180.

anti-corporate activists have refined ancient rhetorical practices in order to challenge how some of the world's most prominent corporations conduct business on a daily basis. To date, most rhetorical scholars with an interest in anti-corporate activism have taken either a broad view by studying anti-corporate globalization protests as an international movement or have taken a narrower view by focusing on particular protest themes such as environmentalism or women's rights.³ My work takes a middle path by using contrasting case studies of two prominent campaigns in order to draw conclusions about global trends in anti-corporate activism and about how corporations and markets have responded to contrasting typologies of practice in anti-corporate campaigns.

This is not to say that my study charts an entirely new course. To the contrary, it responds to contemporary work in rhetoric studies and in other disciplines about the role of kairos, decorum, and storytelling in anti-corporate activism and about how contemporary anti-corporate activists have learned from those who have gone before. In the first instance one can point to the work of the authors who have written of kairos (here defined as the careful timing of actions) in the context of anti-corporate activism. In that regard one can think of Steven Schwarze, Peter Bsumek, and others who have called for scholarship on the role of kairos in environmental

3 Examples of the former include M. Lane Bruner's essay on the anti-corporate globalization movement at the dawn of the new millennium; Phyllis Ryder's study of an emergent public at World Bank protests; and Kevin DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples's article on the WTO protests in Seattle, in which they argue for the "public screen" as an extension of the public sphere. Examples of the latter include: Kathryn Olson and G. Thomas Goodnight's study of oppositional argumentation in relation to protests against the fur industry; and Phaedra Pezzullo's work on "toxic tourism" protests. M. Lane Bruner, "Global Governance and the Critical Public," *Rhetoric & Public Affairs* 6, no. 4 (2003), 687-708; Kevin Michael DeLuca and Jennifer Peeples, "From Public Sphere to Public Screen: Democracy, Activism, and the 'Violence' of Seattle," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 19, no. 2 (2002), 125-151; Kathryn M. Olson and G. Thomas Goodnight, "Entanglements of Consumption, Cruelty, Privacy, and Fashion: The Social Controversy over Fur," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80, no. 3 (1994), 249-276; Phaedra C. Pezzullo, "Touring 'Cancer Alley,' Louisiana: Performances of Community and Memory for Environmental Justice," *Text & Performance Quarterly* 23, no. 3 (2003), 226-252; Phyllis Mentzell Ryder, "In(ter)ventions of Global Democracy: An Analysis of the Rhetorics of the A-16 World Bank/IMF Protests in Washington, DC," *Rhetoric Review* 25, no. 4 (2006), 408-426.

protests, including environmentally oriented anti-corporate campaigns.⁴ The notion of kairos as strategic timing is important as well in Dana Cloud's recent work on dissident unionism at Boeing Corporation and in the sociologist Marshall Ganz' study of the United Farm Workers under Cesar Chavez.⁵ Yet other authors have advocated a more expanded conception of kairotic action in anti-corporate campaigns. J. Blake Scott, for example, looks at the pharmaceutical industry's difficulties in evaluating the "indeterminate risks" attendant to anti-corporate globalization protests.⁶ In a study of the primary works of Adam Smith and Milton Friedman, Paul Turpin argues that public decorum (a traditional foil for rhetorical kairos) has come to serve a constitutive function in market economies.⁷ I extend on the work of all these authors by providing detailed case studies of anti-corporate activists who demonstrate an intuitive knack for recognizing the right moment to say "the wrong thing" in order to disclose self-serving erasures in the public narratives of corporations and answerable individuals in board rooms and in the broader public sphere.

In doing so, my work also draws upon the work of authors in a variety of fields who have stressed the importance of public storytelling, risk taking, and carnivalesque inversion in market-based activism. The sociologist Francesca Polletta, for instance, has documented the crucial role of public storytelling and metonymy (using the name of one item or concept in place of another, with which it is closely associated) in the ultimate success of the Student Nonviolent

4 Peter K. Bsumek, "Kairos," 84; Kinsella et al., "Narratives, Rhetorical Genres, and Environmental Conflict," 79; Steven Schwarze, "Environmental Melodrama," *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 257; Schwarze, "Environmental Melodrama: Explorations," 106.

5 Dana Cloud, "Corporate Social Responsibility as Oxymoron: Universalization and Exploitation at Boeing," in *The Debate over Corporate Social Responsibility*, ed. Steve May, George Cheney, and Juliet Roper (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007); Marshall Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins: Leadership, Organization, and Strategy in the California Farm Worker Movement* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2009), 9.

6 J. Blake Scott, "Kairos as Indeterminate Risk Management: The Pharmaceutical Industry's Response to Bioterrorism," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 92, no. 2 (May 2006), 115-143.

7 Paul Bruce Turpin, "Liberal Political Economy and Justice: Character and Decorum in the Economic Arguments of Adam Smith and Milton Friedman" (Ph.D. diss., University of Southern California, 2005), 15-16.

Coordinating Committee's "sit-in" protests against the Woolworth's variety store chain in the 1960s.⁸ Critical management scholar David Boje has produced several provocative works about storytelling circulation in organizational contexts.⁹ Boje is, perhaps, best known for coining the term "antenarrative" to refer to "the fragmented, non-linear, incoherent, collective, unplotted and pre-narrative speculation, a bet."¹⁰ And M. Lane Bruner has documented how, in the World Trade Organization (WTO) protests in Seattle and in several other politically charged contexts protestors have been able to use carnivalesque inversion and humor to open spaces in which they could articulate incisive critiques of political order.¹¹ Prospective narrative disclosure extends upon the work of these authors by locating the rhetoric of anti-corporate activism in relation to an ancient tradition of rhetorical disclosure, the core components of which are kairotic resistance, decisive timing, and centrifugal storytelling circulation.

This rhetorical tradition can be traced to pre-Socratic times in Western culture and has analogues in the discursive traditions of indigenous cultures around the world. I coined the phrase "prospective narrative disclosure" to describe how anti-corporate globalization activists have adapted ancient techniques of rhetorical disclosure for use in contemporary anti-corporate campaigns. As my use of the word "adapted" implies, the single most important difference between the age old iconoclastic traditions I will describe momentarily and the rhetorical

8 Polletta's account of SNCC's efforts to forge a metonymic linkage between African American civil rights organizations and white dominated unions recalls Ernesto Laclau's discussion of the role of "equivalential logic" in the formation of popular demands that I discuss later in this chapter. Ganz, *Why David Sometimes Wins*, 9; Francesca Polletta *It was Like a Fever: Storytelling in Protest and Politics* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 56.

9 See for example: David Boje, *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research* (London: Sage, 2001); David Boje, *Storytelling Organization* (London: Sage, 2008); David Boje, editor. *Storytelling and the Future of Organizations: An Antenarrative Handbook* (New York: Routledge, 2011).

10 I have argued elsewhere for the similarities between Boje's account of antenarrative speculation and traditional conceptions of rhetorical kairos. Boje, *Narrative Methods*, 1; Richard Herder, "Well-Timed Stories: Rhetorical Kairos and Antenarrative Theory," in *Storytelling and the Future of Organizations: An Antenarrative Handbook*, ed. David Boje (New York: Routledge, 2010), 347-365.

11 M. Lane Bruner, "Carnavalesque Protest and the Humorless State," *Text & Performance Quarterly* 25, no. 2 (2005), 147.

strategies and tactics of contemporary anti-corporate activists is that in the contemporary era anti-corporate globalization activists have gained access to a wide variety of new communication technologies. This development, I argue, has helped to make the world a more talkative and peripatetic place and, in the process, afforded activists with important new opportunities for setting credible stories in public circulation and challenging the policies and practices of multinational corporations.

My defense of this thesis begins with an extended definition of prospective narrative disclosure in which I explain how anti-corporate globalization activists have adapted these ancient techniques to address contemporary exigencies. This section includes a point by point comparison of activist campaign strategies with the activism response strategies of corporations. Following that I consider how prospective narrative disclosure comports with contemporary debates regarding the transformative potential of social protest. This section, in turn, sets the stage for a review of the relationship of prospective narrative disclosure to the evolution of CSR standards in global markets.

Defining Prospective Narrative Disclosure

One can think of prospective narrative disclosure as a rhetorical wager involving the carefully timed, storytelling disclosure of egregious and systematic harms (harsh working conditions, environmental degradation, sexism, and the like) and answerable decision makers. In this context the word “prospective,” refers to kairotic (timely and strategic) actions aimed, in the short term, at convincing corporate decision makers to make specific, substantive changes in the way their organizations conduct business and, over the long-term, at shifting market perceptions of what counts as ethical behavior in daily commerce.¹² I am using the term “narrative” in a dialogic sense to refer to the centripetal discourse of multinational corporations and to the

¹² Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 2.

centrifugal storytelling practices of activists in contemporary anti-corporate campaigns. The phrase “narrative disclosure,” therefore, retains this double meaning in that it refers to the actions of corporate spokespersons who disseminate official organizational narratives as well as iconoclastic storytellers who disclose disturbing events that are often occluded by official corporate discourse. In practice, activist storytelling involves the staging of public protests and the distribution of texts featuring carnivalesque inversion and “grotesque realism.”¹³ By using these methods, activists have oftentimes managed to set stories about things like harsh working conditions or industrial pollution into public circulation where they can problematize corporate narratives and even cohere into a set of public demands for a corporation to cooperate with activists by modifying their practices.

Ancient Rhetoric and Contemporary Markets

Prospective narrative disclosure can be located squarely within an ancient and increasingly well-documented tradition of tactical resistance and satiric discourse that can be traced back as far as the pre-Socratic figure of Corax who, along with his student Tisias, is often held out as a founding figure of rhetoric. The name Corax means raven or crow, and early Greco/Roman myths contain numerous accounts of a garrulous and impious raven prone to questioning the pronouncements of Apollo, the god of truth and light.¹⁴ Like the bird from which he took his name, the rhetorician Corax was renowned for making iconoclastic arguments. In keeping with this, he also developed a reputation for teaching his students how to make weaker arguments seem like the better arguments.¹⁵

13 Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, trans. Hélène Iswolsky (Bloomington, IN: University of Indiana Press, 1984), 19.

14 Stephen Olbrys Gencarella, “The Myth of Rhetoric: Korax and the Art of Pollution,” *Rhetoric Society Quarterly* 37, no. 3 (2007), 261.

15 George A. Kennedy, *A New History of Classical Rhetoric* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1994), 11.

Studies of these early traditions leave little doubt concerning their impious and democratic orientation. Janet Atwill, for example, gives a nuanced description of a pre-Socratic rhetoric characterized by an overriding concern with “power, cunning intelligence, and time” and featuring “the arts of resistance and transformation.”¹⁶ Deborah Hawhee reads this same tradition from the perspective of gymnasiums and athletic competitions by arguing for the importance of embodied performance and kairotic resistance in the work of Isocrates and his predecessors.¹⁷ Stephen Gencarella stresses the skeptical orientation of early rhetorical traditions in a study of early religious myths featuring the impious Corax.¹⁸ Daniel Boyarin has recently argued for a connection between the rhetorical inversions of Corax and the later tradition of Menippean satire: the writing of book length, prose works featuring satiric commentaries on manners and ideas.¹⁹ One of the most important qualities of the Menippean satire is its plurivocality, the incorporation of a range of idiosyncratic dialects, voices, and perspectives.²⁰ Menippean satire, in fact, anticipates the political inversions and grotesque themes that became the defining characteristics of the medieval carnivalesque. As Bakhtin argues, in both traditions, people feel free to “crudely degrade, to turn inside out the lofty aspects of the world.”²¹

These iconoclastic rhetorical practices are certainly not limited to the Western tradition. One finds evidence of similar rhetorical traditions in ancient literatures from around the world. American Indians have long told tales of Kokopelli, a trickster character who, like Corax, is a

16 Janet Atwill, *Rhetoric Reclaimed: Aristotle and the Liberal Arts Tradition*. (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998) 60, 52.

17 Deborah Hawhee, *Bodily Arts: Rhetoric and Athletics in Ancient Greece* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2005), 6.

18 Gencarella, “The Myth of Rhetoric,” 268.

19 Daniel Boyarin, *Socrates and the Fat Rabbis* (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 2009), 26-27, 44-45.

20 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 26.

21 Ibid.

master of social inversion.²² Cognates of these trickster characters appear in African, Chinese, and Norse folklore where their impious (and often ribald) actions serve to disclose hypocrisies and produce dramatic social reversals.²³

As these few examples suggest, the techniques of Corax and other calculating storytellers of his kind have remained important in any context where people develop an interest in challenging “the exorbitant claim that *a certain kind* of production (real enough, but not the only kind) can set out to produce history by ‘informing’ the whole of a country.”²⁴ For critical theorist Michele de Certeau, in fact, the rhetorical traditions I have been reviewing to this point contain the primary tools marginalized people have employed throughout history to challenge dominant powers and, at times, produce lasting changes in social attitudes and practices. For present purposes, the most relevant section of de Certeau’s analysis features memory, storytelling, *kairos* (timing and placement), and *mētis* (tactical cleverness).²⁵

Memory in this context serves as a discursive resource marginalized people can draw upon in their efforts to challenge the politics of the present.²⁶ In the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns, for example, workers told stories that drew upon their personal experiences with workplace injuries, sexism, and even slavery in order to mount potent challenges to corporate power. For de Certeau, this type of storytelling is not merely an orderly reflection of the past. Rather, it is a plurivocal process in which iconoclastic, idiosyncratic experiences are set into public circulation where they can disrupt dominant narratives and cohere into public demands.

22 Ekkehart Malotki, *Kokopelli: The Making of an Icon* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2004), 10.

23 Esther Clinton, “The Trickster, Various Motifs,” in *Archetypes and Motifs in Folklore and Literature: A Handbook*, ed. Jane Garry and Hasan M. El-Shamy (New York: M. E. Sharpe, 2005), 472-473.

24 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 167.

25 Ibid, 82.

26 As Janet Atwill has argued, “if memory *can* make a difference, the *necessary* character of fate is put into question.” Atwill, *Rhetoric Reclaimed*, 118.

Kairos is a pivotal term in de Certeau's account of popular resistance where he uses it to refer to an embodied sensibility shared by experienced storytellers who (like professional dancers or military combatants) have learned to execute daring moves in order to capitalize on fleeting opportunities.²⁷ This mode of storytelling action rejects a chronological view of time as a regimented, mechanical march that cannot be interrupted in favor of a kairotic conception of time in which human actors can, through the use of carefully timed dramatic disclosures, disrupt the forward progression of linear time in order to open space for critical reflection.²⁸ For this reason, the arts of "antidiscipline" emphasize kairos instead of its semantic cousin to prepon, social decorum.²⁹ That is, they reject the notion that the very same discourse rules that have governed the past should serve as an unimpeachable guide for how discourse should occur in the present and future.

Finally, these three themes converge in *mētis*, which in this instance counts as "a principle of economy: obtain the maximum number of effects from the minimum force."³⁰ *Mētis*, therefore, "counts on an accumulated time, which is in its favor, to overcome a hostile composition of place."³¹ This patient rhetoric assumes an embodied familiarity with the prevailing sensibilities of social decorum among the privileged elite.³² No one knows more than the servants how forks, plates, and dinner guests must be arranged for any given occasion in the master's house. When afforded this level of intimacy, those who have been effectively erased as subjects from dominant narratives are in a position to present testimonies about their experience

27 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 81.

28 Organizational studies scholar Barbara Czarniawska makes a similar point when she writes, "Whereas Chronos measures time in mechanical intervals, Kairos jumps and slows down, omits long periods and dwells on others." Barbara Czarniawska, "On Time, Space, and Action Nets," *Organization* 11, no. 6 (2004), 775.

29 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xv.

30 Ibid, 82.

31 Ibid.

32 I am thinking here of Deborah Hawhee's description of a set of "bodily arts" that can be difficult for a rhetor to describe but which are born of long and intimate association with context. Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*, 70.

of material discipline which, if recounted in a timely and compelling manner, stand a reasonable chance of tripping up the powerful when they least expect it.

For the purposes of this study, two dimensions of this description of *mētis* are of special importance. First, it assumes a moment of sudden disclosure, a moment where concrete memories of oppression are revealed in public spaces. As de Certeau explains:

This schema can be found in any number of stories. It is, as it were, their *minimal unit*. It can take a comic form in the memory that, at just the right moment, reverses a situation. In the exchange, “But ... you must be my father!” “Good God, my daughter!,” we see a pirouette due to the return of a time that the ...[dominant] characters did not know about. There is a whodunit form in which the past, by coming back overturns an established hierarchical order: “*He* must be the murder then!”³³

In this passage tactical disclosure emerges as an irreducible element in the ancient arts of plebian antidiscipline. But rhetorical disclosure cannot happen at just any time. “The occasion is taken advantage of, not created.”³⁴ Marginalized rhetors, in other words, have traditionally been forced to persevere until “just the right” moment when action is possible and even then they must appropriate the language and aesthetic sensibilities of the hierarchical order.

All four of these rhetorical practices (the strategic uses of memory, storytelling, *kairos*, and *mētis*) have emerged as crucial components of prospective narrative disclosure in anti-corporate campaigns. With the advent of globalized news media and the rapid international diffusion of digital technologies, some marginalized people have been afforded unprecedented opportunities for smuggling their stories into the public sphere where they can be critically examined by public audiences. Horrific working conditions, to be sure, continue apace in many far flung corners of the world. Nevertheless, those who live and work in proximity to these environments may now have access to local news media, cell phones, and Internet portals. As a result their voices have, in effect, become more difficult to erase.

33 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 85.

34 Ibid, 86.

This description of anti-corporate activists as practitioners of the ancient art of storytelling disclosure both confirms and complicates what is known about market-based activism from other sources. In the next section of the chapter I develop this claim in some detail by, first, tracing a basic three step pattern in the rhetorical practices of contemporary anti-corporate campaigns, and then describing a corresponding set of rhetorical defense strategies on the part of corporations.

Basic Rhetorical Patterns in Anti-Corporate Campaigns

Current literature from a variety of fields on anti-corporate activism provides a consistent picture of anti-corporate campaigns as beginning with a localized rejection of little-known corporate practices – as when factory workers demand a labor contract or when someone discovers a company has been quietly profiting from practices harmful to the environment – and eventually cohering into an organized, strategic campaign.³⁵ The campaign begins in earnest when activists begin a period of intensive research (or “power analysis”) of a corporate target to identify erasures and contradictions in corporate discourse.³⁶ Put another way, they conduct a thoroughgoing analysis of a company, looking for inconsistencies between words and deeds that could be exploited in a public campaign. Following this they develop strategies and tactics for gaining and leveraging the attention of public media. They then implement these strategies, all

35 Ray Rogers confirmed to me that this pattern is consistent with the campaigns he has worked on over the last thirty years. Raymond Rogers, interview by author, digital recording, New York, New York, January 24, 2009.

36 Manheim uses the phrase “power analysis,” but the process has become better known as “power mapping.” Business scholar Charles Perry confirms the importance of this type of research in the early stages of anti-corporate campaigns. The *DFA Manual* distributed by the activist organization Democracy for America is but one of many possible examples of texts where activists describe how to use these sorts of research techniques to develop detailed profiles of corporations and identify gaps and inconsistencies that could be used as the basis for a sustained campaign. For more information see Appendix C where I provide a list of activist training materials and professional campaign consultants. Matthew Blizek, *DFA Training Manual* (Burlington, VT: Democracy for America, 2008), 150; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 9; Charles R. Perry, *Union Corporate Campaigns* (Philadelphia: Industrial Research Unit, Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, 1987), 9.

the while adapting to new exigencies as they arise.³⁷ As I explain in more detail shortly, one can trace a related three stage process in the response strategies of corporations.

Anti-Corporate Campaign Strategies

By comparing the descriptions of activist campaigns I found in contemporary literature with the scores of campaigns listed in Appendix A, I was able to craft a generalized model of an anti-corporate campaign as a three stage event, beginning with the *mapping of corporate vulnerabilities*, moving on to *strategy development*, and culminating in a moment of public *rhetorical disclosure* accompanied by the presentation of an explicit or de facto demand [see chart below].³⁸ The last stage of the process is also the moment when disturbing stories and the demands of the campaign are set in public circulation. One can trace a parallel three stage pattern in the campaign-related discourse of multinational corporations beginning with the *mapping of vulnerabilities* to anti-corporate activism and continuing on to include the development of *strategic inoculation* techniques and strategies of *rhetorical closure*. In reviewing these contrasting processes, it may be useful to keep in mind that they constitute recent iterations of ancient rhetorical practices aimed at political resistance and social control.

Activist	Corporate
1. Mapping of corporate vulnerabilities	1. Mapping of vulnerabilities to activist campaigns
2. Strategy development	2. Strategic inoculation
3. Rhetorical disclosure (prompts storytelling circulation)	3. Rhetorical closure

³⁷ This pattern is consistent with descriptions of campaigns against corporations in the works of political scientist Jarol Manheim, sociologist James Jasper, and labor scholars, Charles Perry, Kate Bronfenbrenner, and Tom Juravich. Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, “The Evolution,” 218; James M. Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest: Culture, Biography, and Creativity in Social Movements* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1997), 115; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 63; Perry, *Union Corporate Campaigns*, 5.

³⁸ Minchin. *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 75-89 passim; Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, “The Evolution,” 218; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 191-211 passim.

“Mapping of corporate vulnerabilities” refers here to the research phase of an anti-corporate campaign. It is characterized by a distinct interest in discovery of what Aristotle termed inartistic or *atechnical* proofs – “pre-existing” things not subject to modification by the rhetor, including, “witnesses, testimony of slaves taken under torture, contracts and suchlike.”³⁹ In the context of anti-corporate campaigns the discovery of *atechnical* proofs is directly related to the discovery and mapping of gaps and contradictions in company discourse and in the tracing of lines of responsibility for perceived transgressions of ethical standards. In this stage of an anti-corporate campaign, activist groups typically expend considerable time and energy locating material evidence and first person testimonies to warrant their claims.⁴⁰ The research process sometimes begins as a quest for an appropriate corporate target; sometimes the group already has a corporation in mind.⁴¹ Either way, the goal is to map several types of discourse in a corporation in order to uncover one or more performative contradictions that could be used to sustain a full-scale anti-corporate campaign. In union sponsored campaigns, more often than not, this has meant hiring private researchers and investigators at considerable expense to construct detailed financial and demographic profiles of a company and its management team.⁴²

Campaign research can involve a wide range of activities including evaluating financial statements, studying advertising themes, documenting supply chain practices, and so on.

Sometimes this work is done by professional accountants, academic researchers, or private

39 Aristotle, *On Rhetoric: A Theory of Civic Discourse*, trans. George Kennedy (New York: Oxford University Press, 1991), 37.

40 Manheim argues this sort of “power structure research” is one of the defining traits of contemporary anti-corporate activism. Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, xv, 6.

41 The CIW, for instance, settled on Taco Bell Corporation as a target for their first national campaign only after considerable research and discussion. Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 24-25.

42 Labor unions, for example, ultimately spent more than thirty-million dollars in their attempt to unionize textile factories in the American South, the majority of it on the research intensive Stevens campaign. Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, “The Evolution,” 218; Jarol B. Manheim, *Biz-War and the Out-of-Power Elite: The Progressive Left Attack on the Corporation* (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2004), 16-17; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 6-7; Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 111-126 passim.

investigators.⁴³ Often as not activist groups supplement these formal research techniques with more informal research practices, primarily by gathering and verifying stories from those who have direct experience with the controversial behaviors.⁴⁴ With the advent of Internet technologies, research has become easier and less expensive. In fact, one of the reasons there have been so many new campaigns in the last decade or so is that it has become easier for activist groups to do their own research or share the task – in *pro bono* fashion – with other organizations working on related causes.⁴⁵ Professional researchers and consultants have not gone away, but those who plan campaigns tend to consult them only for the more difficult and time consuming tasks.⁴⁶

In the “strategy development” phase of an anti-corporate campaign one moves from an *atechnical* emphasis on the discovery of physical and documentary proofs to an *entechnical* emphasis on discovering appropriate rhetorical strategies and tactics.⁴⁷ It is at this juncture where the “prospective” dimension of prospective narrative disclosure comes most clearly into view. Regardless of their preferred manner of public protest, activist groups that sponsor anti-corporate campaigns have demonstrated a consistent knack for catching management off guard by disclosing disconcerting information at inconvenient times, thus forcing them to speak about matters they had not expected at times not of their own choosing. Put another way, strategy

43 The National Labor Committee regularly uses confidential informants and even digs through garbage dumps to gather information on international sweatshops. Andrew Ross, *No Sweat* (London: Verso, 1997), 51; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 7-10.

44 Elly Leary, “Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell,” *Monthly Review* 57, no. 5 (2005).

45 Prominent examples of organizations that collaborate with activists to provide training services include the Midwest Academy (publishes the highly influential training manual *Organizing for Social Change* and hosts activism training seminars), Training for Change (provides consulting and training for nonviolent activism), and Ray Rogers Corporate Campaigns, Inc. (provides fee for service and pro bono research and consulting services). For information on other organizations offering similar services see Appendix C. Kim Bobo, Jackie Kendall, and Steve Max, *Organizing for Social Change* (Santa Ana, CA: Seven Locks Press, 2010); Rogers, interview by author; Training for Change, “About Us,” www.trainingforchange.org/about_us (accessed December 1, 2011).

46 Manheim provides a comprehensive discussion of how anti-corporate activists have learned to use the Internet to share resources and expertise for the planning of campaigns. Manheim, *Biz-War*, 161.

47 Aristotle, *On Rhetoric*, 37.

development in anti-corporate campaigns is tantamount to the crafting of “rhetorical situations” to which corporations will feel obligated to respond.⁴⁸ To plan an anti-corporate campaign is to develop strategies for hailing a corporation and those associated with it as certain types of people (e.g., as people willing to profit from racism, slavery, or pollution).⁴⁹ The goal is to make sure the charges stick, i.e., to insure that those targeted will find it difficult to avoid being interpolated as transgressors.

Strategies and tactics, then, can be thought of as varieties of kairotic (or prospective) action. Consistent with this observation, every anti-corporate campaign has a strategy in the traditional sense, by which I mean they determine a goal and subdivide it into tactics. On a day-to-day basis one finds a distinct emphasis on tactics and especially on improvised responses to sudden exigencies. This is consistent with the ancient association of kairos and mētis with plebian resistance, embodied knowledge, and intuitive action.⁵⁰ In practice this tactical orientation often works to the advantage of anti-corporate campaigns, enabling them to make up for a lack of economic and professional resources. This is especially true when they can speak with clarity and authority on a moment’s notice regarding issues with which they are intimately familiar. While corporate PR staffs take their time to research a situation and craft measured responses, nimble activists can often beat them to the microphones and gain a tactical advantage.⁵¹

48 Lloyd F. Bitzer, “The Rhetorical Situation,” *Philosophy and Rhetoric* 1, no. 1 (1968), 1.

49 Louis Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” in *Lenin and Philosophy and Other Essays* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 2001), 173.

50 I develop this claim in greater detail in a chapter in David Boje’s edited collection *Storytelling and the Future of Organizations*. Atwill, *Rhetoric Reclaimed*, 57-60; Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*, 70; Herder, “Well-Timed Stories”; Phillip Sipiora, “Introduction: The Ancient Concept of Kairos,” in *Rhetoric and Kairos: Essays in History, Theory, and Practice*, ed. Phillip Sipiora and James Baumlin (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 2002), 6.

51 Kenneth Gergen and Diana Whitney contend that global markets have become more “polyphonic” due to the international proliferation of new communication technologies. One result of this development is that multinational corporations have been experiencing increasing difficulties in monitoring and controlling internal and

The final thing to emphasize in relation to strategy is discursive appropriation. One of the ways in which activists are able to respond quickly to exigencies and compensate for a mismatch in financial resources is by operating as bricoleurs who adapt materials from varied sources within the ideational and material economies and turn them to their own purposes. Examples of this include the staging of public relations style news conferences and the use of carnivalesque parodies of corporate discourse and practices. Charles Kernaghan of the National Labor Committee provided a memorable example of the former practice when he called a professional looking press conference on the steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City to announce his organization had just purchased crucifixes manufactured in horrific sweatshops in China from the church bookstore.⁵²

I found numerous instances of carnivalesque practices in the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns, where activists often served up satiric caricatures of corporate executives and grotesque images of injured workers. For example, as I will explain in more detail later, union pamphlets from the Stevens campaigns often featured images and language borrowed from corporate publications, quite often paired with graphic images of injured workers.⁵³

Appropriation of themes and images borrowed from corporate discourse was even more obvious

external communication processes. J. Blake Scott extends this argument to the context of anti-corporate protest by documenting a "boomerang effect" in which corporations are finding it difficult to defend egregious inconsistencies in how they conduct business in various geographic locations around the world. Kenneth J. Gergen and Diana Whitney, "Technologies of Representation in the Global Corporation: Power and Polyphony," in *Postmodern Management and Organization Theory*, ed. David M. Boje, Robert P. Gephart, and Tojo Joseph Thatchenkery (London: Sage, 1996), 331; Scott, "Kairos as Indeterminate Risk Management," 129.

⁵² John Sullivan, "Labor Group Says St. Patrick's Sells Sweatshop Goods," *New York Times*, November 21, 2007.

⁵³ The most obvious example is a series of ACTWU campaign pamphlets, one of which I reproduce in Appendix D, entitled "What's Under the Covers?" The cover of each featured a close-up photograph of a bed that bore an unmistakable resemblance to a well-known image from a J. P. Stevens promotional campaign. The interior pages of the pamphlets featured disturbing images and stories about work related injuries and discrimination. Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "What's Under the Covers? Danger on the Job at J. P. Stevens," undated campaign pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; J. P. Stevens and Company, "J. P. Stevens Today," undated company pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, 7.

in the Taco Bell campaign where protestors often carried signs featuring slogans such as “Taco Hell” and “*¡No Quiero Taco Bell!*” – a play on the company’s well known advertising theme “*¡Yo Quiero Taco Bell!*” (I want Taco Bell!).⁵⁴ In recent years activists have sometimes built entire campaigns around these sorts of satiric parodies of corporate advertising themes. Recent examples include slogans such as “Victoria’s Dirty Secret,” “Murder King,” “Kentucky Fried Cruelty,” “McLibel,” and “Frankenbucks.”⁵⁵ Each of these phrases conforms to the same pattern of prying loose words and phrases from corporate advertising campaigns and pairing them with jarring words and phrases designed to highlight what an activist group sees as ugly contradictions in corporate practices.

As the last few examples suggest, the third stage of prospective narrative disclosure (“rhetorical disclosure”) is actually a culminating moment of disclosure within an anti-corporate protest event when activists place *atechnical* evidence of egregious corporate practices in dialectical tension with contradictory elements of the company’s public discourse. The practice is consistent with Kenneth Burke’s description of “planned incongruity.”⁵⁶ That is, by placing the official public narratives of corporations in dialectical tension with living stories, activist groups are practicing a variety of Burkean “perspective by incongruity.”⁵⁷ Thus, by coining the phrase “Kentucky Fried Cruelty,” PETA places the name of a popular fast food chicken restaurant in dialectical tension with the concept of animal cruelty.

54 Dave Wielenga, “Taco Hell,” *OC Weekly*, September 27, 2001; Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Let Freedom Ring... Boycott the Bell!” www.ciw-online.org/CIW%20hunger_strike_site/hunger_strike_daily_report.html (accessed July 1, 2011).

55 ForestEthics “What is Victoria’s Secret?” www.victoriadirtysecret.net (accessed July 1, 2011); Organic Consumers Association, “OCA Declares Victory in its ‘Frankenbucks’ Campaign,” www.organicconsumers.org/starbucks/index.cfm (accessed November 2, 2010); People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, “PETA’s Campaign against KFC,” www.kentuckyfriedcruelty.com (accessed November 2, 2010); People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, “Victory: PETA Wins ‘Murder King’ Campaign!” www.peta.org/about/learn-about-peta/murderking.aspx (accessed July 1, 2011); Bill Talen, “Reverend Billy’s Starbucks Invasion: The Church of Stop Shopping Takes a Stand,” *Utne Reader*, October 9, 2007, www.utne.com/archives/ReverendBillysStarbucksInvasion.aspx (accessed July 1, 2011).

56 Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 308, 313.

57 Ibid, 308.

Nor is this rhetorical pattern limited to the appropriation of corporate advertising themes. When anti-corporate campaigns are well researched and carefully planned, they culminate in moments of planned incongruity in which activists present audiences with radically divergent accounts of corporate behavior. These are moments when pre-existing narrative taxonomies fade into the background and an activist and a corporate executive can interact temporarily as rhetorical peers. In these culminating moments in anti-corporate campaigns fundamental shifts in attitudes, memory, and meaning become possible. This is true in part because the moment of public, narrative disclosure also marks the beginning of storytelling circulation. It also helps to explain why activists are wont to repeat the same claims in multiple venues. They are attempting to “jump start” a process of centrifugal, discursive circulation capable of destabilizing corporate narratives and cohering into popular demands for substantive changes in corporate practice. It is a long-term rhetorical strategy that requires considerable persistence, and patience. In a testament to its potential, many of the world’s best known corporations now invest considerable time and resources into figuring out how to turn back activist campaigns.

Corporate Defense Strategies

On the few occasions when business executives have spoken on record about their experiences with anti-corporate campaigns, they have tended to emphasize their frustrations in dealing with a prolonged conflict over which they have little control as well as their fears about how an activist campaign might affect their company’s public standing.⁵⁸ As David Vogel explains, despite the “lack of evidence indicating that ‘bad’ behavior reduces profitability or

⁵⁸ For an example, see the testimony of Jonathan Blum, former CEO of Taco Bell Corporation before the Senate HELP Committee and David Vogel’s brief account of how executives at Dow Chemical worried aloud about how protests against their sale of Napalm might do long-term damage to their company’s public reputation. Blum, “Testimony of Jonathan Blum;” David Vogel, “Tracing the American Roots of the Political Consumerism Movement,” in *Politics, Products, and Markets: Exploring Political Consumerism Past and Present*, ed. Michele Micheletti, Andreas Follesdal, and Dietlind Stolle (New Brunswick, NJ: Transaction, 2004), 91.

harms other measures of corporate performance, many companies remain concerned about the potential for long-term harm to their reputations.”⁵⁹ This interest in public integrity helps to explain the remarkable growth over the last few decades in the number of companies with publicly available CSR policies – a trend that parallels the growth in the number of headline grabbing anti-corporate campaigns.⁶⁰ Anti-corporate activists have learned to create rhetorical exigencies to which corporations have been forced to respond. It is important to note, however, that because anti-corporate activism typically represents a nominal threat to short term profitability, management teams (whatever their concerns regarding reputational integrity) are prone to underestimating their chances of becoming the target of a high profile anti-corporate campaign.⁶¹ In other words, though nearly all multinational corporations now have strategies in place for responding to activist campaigns, most companies remain highly vulnerable to activist initiatives, primarily because, on a daily basis, managers are obligated to attend to more pressing matters.⁶² Executive bonuses, after all, are predicated on economic performance, not on the ability to anticipate anti-corporate campaigns.

I am using the phrase “mapping of vulnerabilities” to refer to the research phase of a corporate response strategy. Most corporations, like the organizations that sponsor campaigns against them, prepare for anti-corporate campaigns by surveying the social field in a prospective

59 David Vogel, *The Market for Virtue: The Potential and Limits of Corporate Social Responsibility* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution Press, 2006), 46.

60 For a thoroughgoing discussion of the relationship between activism and corporate social responsibility see David Vogel’s *The Market for Virtue*. Joel Bakan, *The Corporation: The Pathological Pursuit of Profit and Power* (New York: Free Press, 2005) 28; Vogel, *The Market for Virtue*, 2.

61 Karl E. Weick, *Sensemaking in Organizations* (London: Sage, 1995), 2.

62 As an example of the global interest in activism response strategies among multinational corporations, the prominent public relations firm Weber Shandwick recently won an award for its new “social crisis simulator,” Firebell. The simulator stages mock crises in which a company’s reputation comes under attack from activists on social media sites like Facebook, YouTube, and Twitter. “Weber Shandwick Wins Best Use of Social Media and PR Innovation of the Year at 2011 PRWeek Awards,” *PR Week*, March 11, 2011.

manner with an eye toward developing strategies for future action.⁶³ Many corporations farm this work out to specialty legal or public relations firms that provide issue-specific research and strategy consultation services.⁶⁴ As one might expect, the hiring of these sorts of consultants is more common in union-sponsored campaigns where management can anticipate with reasonable accuracy when they might have to respond to a campaign.⁶⁵ Still, risk assessments related to anti-corporate activism are common in all global markets regardless of the issue and are viewed as an important first step in developing proactive response strategies. In the jargon of public relations specialists, activism response strategies are a subset of “crisis communication.”⁶⁶

The phrases “strategic inoculation” and “rhetorical closure” refer to efforts to render a company less vulnerable to activist campaigns and to restore the integrity of corporate narratives in the aftermath of any such campaign. As with medical and computer inoculations, activism-related inoculation and rhetorical closure strategies serve to disrupt a process in its earliest stages before it can pose a serious risk to the integrity of a company’s organizational narratives.⁶⁷ These strategies can be grouped into two categories: geographic and proactive. The first class of actions includes things like moving manufacturing operations to a “right to work” state (as J. P. Stevens

63 The Public Relations consultant Denise Deegan gives detailed recommendations for corporations interested in researching and monitoring activist groups. Denise Deegan, *Managing Activism: A Guide to Dealing with Activists and Pressure Groups* (New York: Kogan Page, 2001).

64 Some public relations firms have long experience in helping corporations develop activism response strategies. One of the most prominent examples is Burson-Marsteller, which assisted Dow Chemical in developing a response to protestors during the Viet Nam War. Other high profile firms that provide activism response services for multinational corporations include: Davies Public Affairs, Bonner and Associates Restructuring Associates, and the Lukaszewski Group. Joshua Karliner, *The Corporate Planet: Ecology and Politics in the Age of Globalization* (San Francisco: Sierra Club Books, 1997) 183-184.

65 Jarol B. Manheim, *Strategy in Information and Influence Campaigns: How Policy Advocates, Social Movements, Insurgent Groups, Corporations, Governments and Others Get What They Want* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 153.

66 As public relations scholar Robert Heath explains, “Major theories have developed to understand, manage, and mitigate the impact of risk [to businesses and non-profit organizations]. It is a rationale for activism, government intervention, and corporate social responsibility.” Robert L. Heath, “Introduction: Defining the Beast and De-Marginalizing Key Publics,” in *The Handbook of Crisis Communication*, ed. W. Timothy Coombs and Sherry J. Holladay (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 2010), 10.

67 For a discussion of corporate inoculation strategies see: Manheim, *Strategy in Information and Influence Campaigns*, 163.

began doing in the middle decades of the twentieth century) or contracting with vendors in geographically remote locations with lax labor standards.⁶⁸ The defensive logic of these sorts of geographic moves is not difficult to discern. It is more difficult to hold companies accountable for things that happen in isolated locations within sprawling supply networks.⁶⁹

Second, by proactive strategies I mean a wide variety of actions designed to coopt activist campaigns before they can gain traction in the public arena. Some of these strategies are clandestine and controversial and, for that reason, can be difficult to track. Some are more mundane and fall within the category of what public relations professionals call “reputation management.” The former, more clandestine, strategies include things like “astroturf” campaigns, undercover investigations, and Internet monitoring/sleuthing activities. The astroturf campaign (also known as a “stealth” or “undercover” marketing campaign) is the most common of these practices. It is a strategy for mimicking grass roots activism by disguising a business initiative as a popular movement.⁷⁰

Since this is where corporate and activist campaigns most resemble one another, one brief example may help to illustrate how in some market sectors companies have attempted to co-opt activist strategies. The Center for Consumer Freedom (CCF) is the largest and best known sponsor of market-oriented astroturf campaigns.⁷¹ CCF manages dozens of websites with names such as activistcash.com (provides hard-bitten profiles of anti-corporate organizations),

68 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 15.

69 As David Vogel explains, “It is not uncommon for some of the most hazardous jobs to be shifted further down the supply chain or into the informal sector to avoid international scrutiny.” Vogel, *The Market for Virtue*, 90.

70 Legal scholar Joel Bakan provides a caustic review of “undercover marketing” campaigns in his popular book, *The Corporation*. Bakan, *The Corporation*, 111.

71 A large percentage of astroturf campaigns target governmental actors. The conservative political action group Freedom Works, for example, is said to have planned several of the “spontaneous” Tea Party protests in opposition to the Obama administration’s proposed health care reforms in the fall of 2009. Dennis W. Johnson, *Campaigning in the Twenty-First Century: A Whole New Ballgame?* (New York: Routledge, 2011), 64; Earl Wyszog and Robert Perrucci, *New Class Society: Goodbye American Dream?* (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2008), 235.

sweetscam.com (defends high fructose corn syrup) and Petakills.com (accuses People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, PETA, of hypocrisy).⁷² The titles capture the edgy/critical tone of many anti-corporate campaigns, but there are obvious differences.

In the usual order of things, a social movement spawns an activist campaign which then puts up a website and produces campaign literature. The CCF reverses this process by creating websites and TV ads in search of popular audiences. Even more telling, legitimate grassroots activism depends on generating news coverage through the staging of protest events. Anti-corporate activists nearly always lack the resources to pay for TV and radio promotions. This, of course, explains why they have traditionally placed so much emphasis on carnivalesque parodies. Flamboyant and melodramatic performances are more likely to attract news cameras and, as a result, generate free publicity. In an age of corporate sponsored public spectacles, anti-corporate activists have had to learn to stage public spectacles of their own.

Undoubtedly the most controversial of the proactive inoculation strategies involve the hiring of private investigators to track activist behaviors (online and otherwise) and even infiltrate activist organizations. Reliable data is difficult to come by, but there are said to be “hundreds of multinational security organizations, which operate with less regulation than the spooks [i.e., government spies] themselves.”⁷³ Nor is this a new development. Pinkerton spies were hired to infiltrate unions as early as the 1850s and corporate espionage of all sorts has been widely practiced since WWII.⁷⁴ In one of the most egregious instances of this type of spying,

⁷² The title of the petakills.com website mimics the “planned incongruity” of several PETA websites such as kentuckyfriedcruelty.com and petsmartcruelty.com. Center for Consumer Freedom, “What is Consumer Freedom?” www.consumerfreedom.com/ (accessed July 1, 2011).

⁷³ Paul Demko, “Corporate Spooks: Private Security Contractors Infiltrate Social Justice Organizations,” *Utne Reader*, February, 2009, www.utne.com/Politics/Corporate-Spooks-Private-Security-Contractors-Blackwater-Spies-Infiltrate-Activist-Organizations.aspx (accessed July 1, 2011).

⁷⁴ Jennifer Luff, “Labor Spies,” in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*, ed. Eric Arnesen (London: Routledge, 2006), 1312 -1315; Kirby, Jason, “Corporate Espionage Is Big Business,” *Macleans*, July 2, 2007.

FBI informants reportedly infiltrated ACTWU during the years of the Stevens campaign.⁷⁵ More recently, corporations have been caught spying on PETA, the CIW, Wal-Mart Watch, and *The New York Times*.⁷⁶ The use of corporate espionage tactics against anti-corporate activists and journalists marks a disturbing trend, but it is not altogether surprising given the increased number of anti-corporate campaigns in recent years.

As far as I can determine, most corporations do not employ corporate espionage, if for no other reason, because of the risk to their reputations if they get caught. In that regard, the experience of Burger King Corporation is instructive. In 2007 the CIW learned that Burger King executives had, among other things, hired a local detective agency to conduct an undercover investigation of their organization.⁷⁷ The CIW responded by contacting local media outlets, and when the story gained national attention Burger King issued a swift apology and conceded the campaign in short order. If corporate management is sometimes reluctant to be viewed as an easy mark for activists, they are even more reluctant to be viewed as crooks.⁷⁸

By far the most commonly used inoculation strategies involve the hiring of reputation management specialists who provide advice on everything from the crafting of CSR policies to the sponsoring of charitable activities. Reputation management strategies tend to be comprehensive and complex, but they operate according to the crisp utilitarian logic of social

⁷⁵ Signe Waller, *Love and Revolution: A Political Memoir* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 105.

⁷⁶ Michael Barbaro, "A New Twist on Snooping at Wal-Mart," *New York Times*, April 21, 2007; Demko, "Corporate Spooks"; "Judge Sanctions Ringling Bros. Circus Owner in Animal-Rights Spy Suit," *The America's Intelligence Wire*, December 9, 2005; Eric Schlosser, "Burger With a Side of Spies," *New York Times*, May 7, 2008; "Wal-Mart Spies on Wal-Mart Watch Employees," *Wal-Mart Watch*, April 4, 2007, walmartwatch.org/press/wal-mart-spies-on-wal-mart-watch-employees/ (accessed August 1, 2011).

⁷⁷ The spying incident was actually the first of several embarrassing events that preceded Burger King's sudden decision to cooperate with the CIW. On the same day the company announced it had fired the private security agency it had hired to spy on the CIW it also announced the firing of its executive vice president. It seems the VP had used his daughter's e-mail account to post insulting comments about the CIW online. Katrina vanden Heuvel, "Paraphrase This: How High Did This Scheme Go?" *The New Republic*, May 14, 2008; Amy Bennett Williams, "Burger King Fires Two for Posts about Farmworkers," *Fort Myers News Press*, May 14, 2008.

⁷⁸ In the jargon of those who provide advice to corporations on how to respond to activist campaigns, certain members of Burger King's management team failed to abide by the maxim: "Do not do what you would not want to be seen doing." Deegan, *Managing Activism*, 31.

exchange theory.⁷⁹ More to the point, reputation management assumes corporations with longstanding reputations as good corporate citizens are, on balance, less likely to find themselves the targets of anti-corporate campaigns and more likely to rebound from any events that might be corrosive to their public reputations. In other words, companies that adopt reputation management strategies aim to achieve a high degree of rhetorical closure.

In practice this typically means companies use charitable donations to shore up what they see as vulnerabilities in their public reputations. McDonald's, for example (which has had an inconsistent but highly profitable relationship with the African American community), sponsors the website 365Black.com featuring the slogan "Deeply rooted in the Community." And ExxonMobil, which was responsible for the disastrous Exxon Valdez oil spill, regularly sponsors environmental initiatives.⁸⁰ These two examples are of crucial importance to an understanding of prospective narrative disclosure. Memory is the indispensable well-spring of storytelling disclosure, and when a corporation is able to exercise precise and comprehensive control over how a community recalls its own history, anti-corporate campaigns become impossible.

Finally, although corporations are often seen as bulwarks of stability and predictability, it can be very difficult to predict precisely how any one company will respond once it becomes the target of a high profile anti-corporate campaign. Some companies have attempted simply to ignore campaigns.⁸¹ Others have fought back by filing civil suits or leveling aggressive

79 George C. Homans, "Social Behavior as Exchange," *American Journal of Sociology* 63, no. 6 (1958), 598.

80 Max Boas and Steve Chain, *Big Mac: The Unauthorized Story of McDonald's* (New York: Dutton, 1976), 181; ExxonMobil Corporation, "ExxonMobil Environmental Policy," www.exxonmobil.com/Corporate/community_ccr_envpolicy.aspx (accessed July 1, 2011); McDonald's Corporation, "What is 365Black?" www.365black.com/365black/whatis.jsp (accessed August 1, 2011).

81 The Nestle Corporation, for example, largely ignored activist campaigns for nearly two decades before they finally agreed to address concerns about their practice of marketing infant formula in developing nations. Linda Spedding, *The Due Diligence Handbook: Corporate Governance, Risk Management, and Business Planning* (Burlington, MA: CIMA Publishing, 2009), 260.

countercharges.⁸² Yet others have issued blanket denials in an attempt to minimize or deflect criticism.⁸³ A very few cooperate with little fanfare.⁸⁴ The companies that fare best (i.e., by minimizing damage to their reputations and finances) are not necessarily the ones where management makes the fewest mistakes. They are the companies which, once the dust has settled, can make a credible claim to having acted in the public interest. Wal-Mart, for example, which spends millions every year on philanthropy, has a highly developed strategic CSR policy and yet they remain a favorite target for activist campaigns – not because they are the world’s largest retailer (although that doesn’t help), but because they have a well-established reputation for driving hard bargains with vendors and for lax monitoring of labor standards in their international supply chains.⁸⁵ By contrast, in the Taco Bell campaign corporate managers made several regrettable statements about the CIW, but they were able to minimize damage to the company’s reputation (and, arguably spin the event to their advantage) by earning the trust of the coalition and working actively to advance its cause.⁸⁶ To use a cliché, Taco Bell and YUM!

82 Examples of companies that have responded to activist campaigns by filing law suits include Bayou Steel Corporation, which filed a RICO suit against the United Steel Workers in 1996; Continental Airlines, which used a Chapter 11 bankruptcy proceeding to void a labor agreement with the Airline Pilots Association in 1883, and Adam’s Mark Hotel, which sued the NAACP after the civil rights organization sponsored a national boycott of the hotel chain for what they viewed as discriminatory business practices. “Adam’s Mark Hotel Sues NAACP over Boycott,” Associated Press, August 3, 2001; Spedding, *The Due Diligence Handbook*, 313, 317.

83 To consider but one of many possible examples, when two shareholders at the annual meeting of the discount retailer Costco accused the company of destroying historic murals and trashing greenspace in order to build a retail outlet in Mexico, “CEO Jim Sinegal and Board Chairman Jeff Brotman issued a *blanket denial* and declared the matter closed [emphasis added].” Campaign for Labor Rights, “Mexico Controversy Dominates Costco Meeting,” *CLR Monthly Index*, January, 2003, <http://clrlabor.org/alerts/2003/Feb08-Index.htm> (accessed December 1, 2011).

84 The Subway restaurant chain and the food service company Bon Appétit, for example, appear to have put up very little resistance to the CIW’s proposed penny-per-pound standard. Bon Appétit Management Company, “The CIW Agreement,” www.bamco.com/sustainable-food-service/ciw-agreement (accessed July 1, 2011); Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “And then there was one...Sodexo ‘lone holdout’ among major foodservice companies,” June 30, 2020, www.ciw-online.org/may09-sep10archive.html (accessed August 1, 2011); “Subway to Pay More for Tomatoes,” *Miami Herald*, December 2, 2008.

85 “CSR Profile of Walmart Stores, Inc.,” *CSR Wire*, 2010, www.csrwire.com/members/12774-Walmart-Stores-Inc- (accessed December 1, 2010).

86 In the fall of 2007 when the CIW’s campaign against Burger King Corporation appeared to have stalled, Blum wrote a personal email to the company’s CEO urging him to cooperate with the coalition. He allowed the CIW to reprint an extended portion of the message on their website. Jonathan Blum, “From an Email to Steve Grover,

Brands have earned a degree of “street credibility” among some activists. Wal-Mart, despite spending millions more, has not.

Unpacking Prospective Narrative Disclosure

To this point I have been concerned with defining prospective narrative disclosure, locating it within historical contexts, and providing examples drawn from applied contexts. In the balance of this chapter I give a more fully-developed and theoretical account of its core concepts, beginning with a discussion of the ways in which corporations often hide unethical practices and how activists have learned to reveal those same “disappearance strategies.” Toward that end, this section begins with a discussion of the “aesthetics of disappearance,” which in this context refers to systematic techniques for obscuring the ugliest aspects of industrial production.⁸⁷ I then provide a more thorough review of how contemporary activists have demonstrated parrhesia (rhetorical bravery) by adapting traditional storytelling practices (e.g., carnivalesque performances paired with grotesque realism) to the exigencies of the global marketplace in order to lay open corporate practices for public, critical interrogation.⁸⁸

Naomi Klein’s book *No Logo*, published shortly after the 1999 WTO protests in Seattle, has come to be seen as something like a manifesto for the anti-corporate globalization movement.⁸⁹ In the book Klein executes a “double gesture” in keeping with de Certeau’s “recipe” for critical analysis: “[F]irst, *cut out*; then *turn over*. First an ‘ethnological’ isolation; then a logical inversion.”⁹⁰ Her first move is to explain how multinational corporations have spent billions developing branding strategies to insinuate their products into virtually every

Vice President for Compliance, Burger King,” October 12, 2007, Coalition of Immokalee Workers, www.ciw-online.org/BK_response.html (accessed, December 1, 2010).

87 Paul Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, trans. Jonathan Crary (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 1991), 83.

88 Michel Foucault, *Fearless Speech* (Los Angeles: Semiotext(e), 2001), 12.

89 Klein, *No Logo*.

90 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 63.

aspect of daily life. Some of the more compelling examples she provides of this sort of behavior concern public elementary classrooms where “today’s lesson was building a Nike sneaker” and where homework included designing new ads for Snapple, Pepsi, or Burger King products.⁹¹ Once she has isolated these and other branding strategies, Klein then proceeds to turn them over to reveal an ugly history of corporate misdeeds. This section of the book includes harrowing accounts of some of the most notorious events in the recent history of global markets, including the Triangle Shirtwaist factory fire; the suppression of anti-corporate protests in the oil fields of Nigeria through military force; virtual slavery in Nike factories in Indonesia; and the poisoning of water, air, and soil in minority and low income neighborhoods.⁹² Klein’s graphic accounts of these events suggest that not a few of the world’s best known corporations have something to hide and have invested considerable time and energy into finding ways to convince public audiences to look the other way.

Klein’s critique of the advancement of corporate power is more pragmatic than theoretical. Nonetheless, there are important similarities between the arguments she levels in *No Logo* and the work of academic critics such as Stanley Deetz and Paul Virilio who have written of the subtle intrusion of the corporate presence into daily life. For his part, Deetz has provided the most widely cited formulation of the so-called “corporate colonization” thesis.⁹³ Borrowing from Jürgen Habermas’ conception of the colonization of the “life world” by a functional “system world,” he describes a cosmopolitan order in which corporate managerial discourse has come to exert significant influence over the daily discourse practices of media, family, education,

91 Klein, *No Logo*, 126.

92 Ibid, 357, 363, 374.

93 Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization*.

and the state.⁹⁴ Deetz's argument leans heavily upon Michel Foucault's account of "discursive formations" – that is dispersed and systematically connected discourse rules that govern how ideas emerge, who has presumption to speak, what sorts of concepts can develop, and what sorts of strategies can be used for social transformation.⁹⁵ That corporate colonization progresses according to subtle and often unspoken discourse rules helps to explain the ephemeral nature of corporate power when compared to the overt authority of political states. That is, unlike authorities in the governmental sector who are expected to justify their actions in terms of their effects on individual liberties, corporations participate in a more diffuse network of disciplinary power. And although corporations nearly always present a kinder, more beckoning face than state bureaucracies, they can be no less controlling.⁹⁶

The subtlety and near invisibility of corporate power also emerges as an important theme in Virilio's work on the "aesthetics of disappearance." Two aspects of Virilio's critique are germane to a study of the rhetoric of anti-corporate activism: the dissemination of hypervisual fictions and the systematic programing of "accidents."⁹⁷ Regarding the former, Virilio argues that by divorcing imagery from geography, advertising and public relations professionals have produced a tantalizing world of images only loosely tethered to material locations. Entities such as Ronald McDonald or the enormous "rock" featured in Prudential Insurance advertisements are ubiquitous and local at the same time. The global dissemination of these appealing simulacra

94 Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization*; Jürgen Habermas, *The Theory of Communicative Action: Volume One: Reason and the Rationalization of Society* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1985), 82-84.

95 Carole Blair, "The Statement: Foundation of Foucault's Historical Criticism.," *Western Journal of Speech Communication*: 51, no. 4 (Fall 1987), 365-366; Foucault, *The Archaeology of Knowledge*, (New York: Pantheon, 1972), 70.

96 Michel Foucault, *The Birth of Biopolitics: Lectures at the College de France, 1978-1979*, (New York: Picador, 2010), 114.

97 Paul Virilio, "Is the Author Dead? An Interview with Paul Virilio," in *The Virilio Reader*, ed. James Der Derian (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 20-21; Paul Virilio *The Original Accident*, trans. Julie Rose (Malden, MA: Polity Press, 2007), 91.

lends an aura of substance to the advertising and public relations campaigns to which they are attached. What is more, the rapid proliferation of these fictive images militates against recognition of any gaps and contradictions in the hyper-visual matrix of global advertising.⁹⁸ Virilio discusses this theme in relation to the human struggle with “picnolepsy” – the tendency to overlook ubiquitous gaps in daily phenomenal experience.⁹⁹ The frantic proliferation of tantalizing images in global mass media, in other words, obscures what might otherwise be recognized as disturbing inconsistencies and elisions in market discourse.

The second mode of disappearance involves the systematic programming of “accidents,” that is, industrial “catastrophes” and “disasters.”¹⁰⁰ As Virilio explains, the rapid and exponential expansion of knowledge has had a remarkable effect on conceptions of human subjectivity, necessitating new techniques for hiding the true costs of industrial progress.¹⁰¹ To understand why this is, it is important to understand that those who design modern day machinery (whether mechanical or otherwise) do so with an eye toward diffusing violence across networks – in other words, for insuring the “delocalization of all accidents.”¹⁰² The implication is that some significant level of risk is planned into all modern day social and ideological systems including highways, departments of war, and public markets. If that fact seems unremarkable, that is precisely the point. When public audiences learn about remote, dispersed violence they may express some level of benign sympathy for those who have been harmed, but they are unlikely to prompt consumers to take to the streets in protest. As theologian William Cavanaugh has argued, “We hear rumors that our shoes are made by Chinese children and other exploited laborers, but

98 Virilio, *The Aesthetics of Disappearance*, 70-71.

99 Ibid, 19.

100 Virilio, *The Original Accident*, 5.

101 Ibid, 17.

102 Paul Virilio, “Continental Drift,” in *The Virilio Reader*, ed. James Der Derian (Malden, MA: Blackwell, 1998), 183.

we have no idea how we could begin to resist.”¹⁰³ In other words, when public audiences have no idea how to respond to dispersed violence they are likely to toss up their hands and dismiss the entire problem as irresolvable.

To be clear, neither Cavanaugh nor Virilio is claiming that the systematic dispersal of violence can be avoided entirely. Rather, they are highlighting the danger of allowing the logic of the systematic dispersal of accidents to develop unchallenged to the point where “a general impression of powerlessness and incoherence predominates in our minds.”¹⁰⁴ Put another way, they are wrestling with the problem of how to galvanize public audiences to challenge diffused violence and faceless decision makers in a world where people continue to purchase their sneakers at big box retailers because any violence attached to such products seems either entirely natural (like tornadoes – regrettable but unavoidable acts of God) or as impossibly abstract and diffused.

Of course, the perception that consumers and investors are incapable of seeing past corporate strategies and engaging in critical rhetorical action is just that: a perception. Virilio explains why this is so in a passage where he cites Aristotle’s argument that ‘the accident reveals the substance.’¹⁰⁵ If Aristotle is correct, he posits, it means that “‘substance’ is equally [an] invention of the ‘accident.’” In the context of anti-corporate activism the implication is that to discover a sweatshop factory, a chemical dump, or an instance of human slavery is to uncover an opportunity for disturbing regnant assumptions about global markets and for jump starting critical conversations about the true price of the cheap goods on retail store shelves.

103 William T. Cavanaugh, *Being Consumed: Economics and Christian Desire* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 2008), 1-2.

104 Paul Valéry, as cited in, Paul Virilio, “Forward: The Museum of Accidents,” *Unknown Quantity: Fondation Cartier pour L’Art Contemporain*, www.onoci.net/virilio/pages_uk/virilio/avertissement (accessed July 1, 2011).

105 Virilio, *The Original Accident*, 5.

Deetz and Virilio's arguments about the subtle intrusions of corporate power raise at least two questions of critical importance to anti-corporate globalization activists. That is, who should be held answerable for corporate behaviors? And, how do those people who labor in the remote reaches of corporate supply networks speak out against local despots who are able to silence dissent through the use of blunt violence? The first question recalls Deirdre McCloskey's wry observation: "Do I believe in good capitalists? My answer is like the old joke, 'Do I believe in infant baptism?' Goodness, I've *seen* it!"¹⁰⁶ The lesson here is simply that corporate executives make easy scapegoats, and one must take care to avoid jumping to conclusions regarding any given manager's culpability in perpetuating harms. In many instances, to be sure, ethical culpability seems a foregone conclusion. There can be little doubt, for example, that Robert T. Stevens and the executive management team at J. P. Stevens knew about racism, sexism, and industrial accidents in their company's southern textile factories, and that they simply chose to look the other way.¹⁰⁷ Even more disturbing, when management teams at other companies across the nation saw how much money J. P. Stevens had saved by defying the NLRB and cracking down on union activism, many of them began to follow their example by taking belligerent stands in violation of federal law.¹⁰⁸ That much acknowledged, two decades later, one encounters a very different situation in the CIW's campaign against Taco Bell where the executive management team appeared genuinely surprised when presented with evidence of human trafficking in their company's food supply chain.¹⁰⁹ This should not be taken to mean that Taco Bell executives were not ethically responsible for their role in perpetuating human-trafficking.

106 Deirdre McCloskey. *The Bourgeois Virtues*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2006), 479.

107 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 14-15.

108 Ibid, 182.

109 Blum, "Testimony of Jonathan Blum - Chief Public Affairs Officer, Senior Vice President, YUM! Brands, Inc. to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Hearing on Ending Abuses and Improving Working Conditions for Tomato Workers," Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: United States Senate, April 4, 2008.

Still, it is difficult to argue that someone like Jonathan Blum, the former CEO of Taco Bell who eventually advocated endorsing the CIW's cause, was just as responsible for perpetuating social harms as was someone like Robert T. Stevens. The truth of the matter is that the Taco Bell campaign actually raises a set of difficult questions regarding the assigning of ethical responsibility when bad things happen in global markets. This is because corporate supply networks have become so extraordinarily complex (systematically, legally, and financially) that even those charged with managing them often cannot speak with precision regarding labor and environmental practices several tiers down.¹¹⁰ No doubt, in many instances this is by design. That is, one tangible advantage of supply chain complexity is that it affords management a significant measure of plausible deniability.

Of course, from the perspectives of those who work in the remote reaches of these networks, it hardly matters whether top-level management is hard-hearted or clueless. The results are the same, and, even in the twenty-first century, the people who jumpstart anti-corporate campaigns often do so at risk to their public reputations, and even their own lives. Because of this, in many instances the single greatest challenge activists face is in figuring out how to side-step belligerent local authorities in order to smuggle their arguments into the public sphere. This was certainly the case with ACTWU and the CIW in their campaigns against J. P. Stevens and Taco Bell. The history of both campaigns confirms the relevance of Michel Foucault's work on brave speech (*parrhesia*) to the study of anti-corporate campaigns.¹¹¹ That is, many anti-corporate activists understand that by speaking the truth about the material conditions of industrial production, they run a substantial risk of being fired, blacklisted, or worse. For this reason, those

110 David Vogel, for instance, reports that "When the European clothing retailer C&A began its monitoring system, it took the firm four years just to identify all of the factories that were producing its clothes. And this inventory excluded the agricultural sector that supplies the raw materials to its products, a dimension of production that is beyond the scope of virtually every manufacturing code." Vogel, *The Market for Virtue*, 90.

111 Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 12.

who would speak truth to power within the darkest regions of the global economy must not only be brave, they must be inventive. Any discussion of rhetorical invention, however, moves the conversation from the realm of discipline to the realm of antidiscipline – and to a more in depth consideration of matters pertaining to strategic resistance.

Activists who would challenge the dominant strategies of corporate powers find themselves on the horns of two dilemmas when engaging in rhetorical disclosure in anti-corporate campaigns. The first involves a dialectical tension between fearless speech and figurative speech in the context of civic debates in the public sphere. The second involves a dynamic tension Paul Ricoeur has described that exists between a hermeneutic of suspicion and the sincere proclamation of kerygma (defensible truth claims). In the first instance the concern is with striking a balance between making credible, compelling arguments on the one hand and staging dramatic protest events that will attract the attention of public audiences and public media on the other. In the second it is with calibrating campaign strategies so as to encourage people to read the discourse of any given corporation with suspicion while at the same time limiting the chances that opposing parties might begin to read activist discourse with the same critical eye.

Regarding the former dilemma, as Foucault explains, “in parrhesia, the speaker makes [things] manifestly clear... showing [his or her audience] as directly as possible what he [sic] actually believes.”¹¹² The “parrhesiastes” (brave speaker), in other words shuns the use of any rhetorical figures that might obscure the plain meaning of her/his words. Rhetorical bravery is important in this context since, as I explain in more detail in chapters four and five, people who speak out against corporate misdeeds sometimes do so at risk to their own lives and/or livelihoods. Clarity is important in these situations, for the obvious reason that the people who

112 Ibid.

are speaking expect to be believed and are aiming to change the material conditions of daily practice in global markets. In situations where activists are speaking out against situated harms, imprecise language can be counterproductive. It risks damaging the credibility of the campaign and crushing any chance at reform. Furthermore, the emphasis on sober, unadorned arguments in anti-corporate campaigns complies with Habermas' "norms of action" for debates in the public sphere.¹¹³ For example, one finds evidence of activists attempting to engage in this sort of serious argumentation in the dozens of meticulously documented studies published by groups such as the National Labor Committee and the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility where they detail sweatshop labor conditions in far-flung corners of the global marketplace.¹¹⁴

The dilemma these and other groups face when attempting to disclose evidence of corporate misbehavior is with gaining an initial hearing in the public sphere. Carnavalesque storytelling and strategic action campaigns (two of the defining gestures of anti-corporate activism) clearly fall short of the standards for reasoned and dispassionate discourse in a Habermasian view of the public sphere. But they attract crowds and cameras, thereby affording activists with an unconventional route into serious public debates about the ethical standard of the global marketplace.

Activists must tread a similar tightrope in relation to the latter dilemma relating to suspicion and belief. Those who sponsor anti-corporate campaigns aim, at a minimum, to convince public audiences to read the discourse of targeted corporations with a skeptical eye. Or, from a Nietzschean perspective, one could say they are asking them to critically interrogate the

¹¹³ Habermas, *Theory of Communicative Action*, 190.

¹¹⁴ The NLC regularly publishes research reports on corporate practices on its organizational web site. The ICCRC does so through its publication *The Corporate Examiner*. See, for example: David Batstone, et al., "Of Human Bondage: Globalization's Darkest Secret," *The Corporate Examiner* 36, no.4-5 (2008); Institute for Global Labour and Human Rights, "Reports," www.globallabourrights.org/reports (accessed August 1, 2011).

corporation's history in order to expose disturbing inconsistencies.¹¹⁵ At the same time, these same activists are expecting audiences to embrace anti-corporate campaign discourse as legitimate on face: as unadorned kerygma (truth). The success or failure of any given anti-corporate campaign turns on the ability of activists to achieve both of these ends at the same time. It is at this juncture, where the martial and confrontation/alliance typologies become important. By adopting the more aggressive strategies such as labor strikes or occupations of facilities, activists may improve their odds of gaining short term concessions from management, but they also increase their chances of alienating some audiences and providing them with incentives for reading activist claims in a highly skeptical manner.¹¹⁶

At the same time, if they rely more heavily on storytelling disclosure and carnivalesque inversion (as happens in confrontation/alliance campaigns), they run another sort of risk. I am referring here to the apathy and paralysis that can set in when people encounter overwhelming information about diffused violence. Stephen Browne provides a concise description of the situation in an article in which he analyzes the abolitionist Theodore Weld's graphic descriptions of the violence of slavery (lynching, rape, floggings, and the like): "Sentimentalism extends no further than its own response."¹¹⁷ Extreme pathos, in other words, can produce paradoxical results. When people are presented with graphic accounts of violence they may express shock or

115 Friedrich Nietzsche, "On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life," in *Nietzsche: Untimely Meditations*, ed. Daniel Breazeale, trans. R. J. Hollingdale (New York: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 75.

116 Jasper, *The Art of Moral Protest*, 317.

117 Kim Witte reached a similar conclusion in relation to so-called "fear appeals" in public health campaigns. According to Witte, health campaigns featuring those sorts of appeals (E.g., "This is your brain on drugs!") fail to improve health related attitudes and behaviors and, in fact, are more likely to alienate audiences and produce counter-productive results. This is primarily because these campaigns are narrowly focused on eliciting fear and ignore the need for providing positive alternatives. Witte found that audiences exposed to fear appeals in isolation were prone to discount or even ridicule the public health messages. But when fear appeals were combined with positive, health-related suggestions, audiences were less likely to discount the messages and were more likely to claim they were considering or even heeding the advice they had been given. Stephen Browne, "Like Gory Spectres': Representing Evil in Theodore Weld's *American Slavery as It Is*," *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 80, no. 3 (1994), 278; Kim Witte, "Putting the Fear Back into Fear Appeals: The Extended Parallel Processing Model," *Communication Monographs* 59 (1992), 329.

sympathy, but because they have no idea how to rectify what seems like an overwhelming situation, they may simply shrug their shoulders and walk away. In confrontation/alliance campaigns activists often attempt to work around this paradox by pairing melodrama and pragmatism. That is, they not only confront audiences with egregious accounts of systematic violence, they provide consumers and/or management with palatable and pragmatic alternatives, such as signing a petition, making a small donation, or, in the case of the CIW, paying one penny more per pound for tomatoes. In the campaigns I reviewed for this study, when activist groups were able to strike this sort of delicate kairotic balance between storytelling confrontation and pragmatic alternatives, they were much more likely to convince multiple corporations to concede to their demands.¹¹⁸

What can be said about both of the rhetorical dilemmas I have been discussing (parrhesia/figurative speech and suspicion/kerygma) is that if activists are to achieve their stated goals of altering corporate practices and changing the ethical standard of global markets they must become adept at balancing competing interests and exigencies. In other words, they must be able to tell credible stories in the public sphere in order to attract the attention of news media, thus enabling them to mobilize public audiences to support their cause; and, if that were not enough, at every step they must calibrate their strategies so as to mitigate opportunities for conservative counter-readings and counter-mobilization.

118 Examples include campaigns sponsored by the Dogwood Alliance (convinced companies such as Staples, Bowater, and Georgia Pacific to improve their forestry practices); Stop the Traffik (at least twenty-one corporations have endorsed their anti-slavery campaign); and the Organic Consumers Association (convinced dairies, restaurants, and prominent retailers including Starbucks and Kroger to stop selling milk containing bovine growth hormone). Dogwood Alliance, "Campaigns," www.dogwoodalliance.org/campaigns/ (accessed December 1, 2011); Organic Consumers Association, "A Decade of Consumer Pressure Is Driving Monsanto's Bovine Growth Hormone off the Market," www.organicconsumers.org/articles/article_14008.cfm (accessed December 1, 2011); Stop the Traffik, "Corporate Endorsements," www.stopthetraffik.org/about/who/corporate.aspx (accessed December 1, 2011).

None of this is entirely new. As I explained earlier, marginalized rhetors have a well-established history of mediating these sorts of tensions in order to gain hearings in the public square. One could speak of “calibrated strategies” or *kairos* and *metis*. The difference is primarily a matter of word choice. Similarly, one could speak of carnivalesque protests featuring grotesque realism or studied violations of social decorum. Practically speaking, the former is a more specific instance of the latter. With these distinctions in mind, in the balance of this section I provide a more fully-developed account of how anti-corporate globalization activists have used traditional storytelling techniques to mount potent challenges to corporate power.

As Hayden White has argued, narrative constitutes a uniquely pervasive and powerful mode of rhetorical persuasion in human discourse.¹¹⁹ We are *homo narrans*, creatures for whom “oral narrative, or what we call storytelling in everyday speech, is as much around us as the air we breathe.”¹²⁰ In other words, by pairing an intuitive mode of human rhetorical persuasion (storytelling) with theatrical protest performances, anti-corporate activists can speak with boldness and clarity while at the same time increasing their odds of attracting and mobilizing public support. My task in the next few pages is to review these claims in greater detail in order to demonstrate how activists can overcome the *kairotic* dilemmas I just described and position themselves to influence the trajectory of CSR practices in the global marketplace. To that end, I begin by placing storytelling resistance in theoretical context and proceed from there to relate storytelling to carnivalesque inversion and to describe a contest between monovocal narrative control and plurivocal storytelling resistance in the contemporary global marketplace.

119 Hayden White, *The Content of the Form: Narrative Discourse and Historical Representation* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1990), 1.

120 John D. Niles, *Homo Narrans: The Poetics and Anthropology of Oral Literature*. (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1999), 1.

To begin, one can find numerous accounts of the contest between narrative control and storytelling resistance in contemporary academic literature, including works by Jacques Derrida, Jean-François Lyotard, Paulo Freire, and Michel de Certeau. Of these authors, Derrida provides the most radical account by describing story as “recit,” that is, a storytelling “space that will never be closed,” and narration as an authoritarian demand – a terrorizing attempt to “force a narrative out of a narrator.”¹²¹ Lyotard echoes this sentiment when he writes of the gradual eclipse of “metanarratives” in the postmodern era, and when he claims “the little narrative [*petit recit*]” remains the quintessential form of imaginative invention.”¹²² Freire recognized a similar set of patterns in contemporary public education, which he came to view as “suffering from narration sickness” and as dominated by a “necrophilic” interest in narrative control.¹²³ Of this group, de Certeau provides the most fully-developed discussion of these issues by describing a perpetual contest between dominant “strategies” on the one hand and popular “tactics” on the other.¹²⁴ For de Certeau, “Storytime” (the patient art of allowing communal memories to accumulate and gain force until the ideal moment of action) is a central tactic in the rhetorics of popular resistance in daily life.¹²⁵

David Boje is the best known of several contemporary authors who have focused on the tension between story and narrative in the discourse of organizational management and global markets.¹²⁶ Multinational corporations, he argues, have a demonstrated interest in exerting

121 Jacques Derrida, “Living On,” in *Deconstruction and Criticism*, ed. Harold Bloom (New York: Seabury Press, 2004), 71.

122 Jean-François Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition: A Report on Knowledge* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1984), 60.

123 Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York: Continuum, 2000) 71, 77.

124 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix.

125 Ibid, 77.

126 The texts listed here are but a small sampling of a burgeoning literature on narrative theory and Bakhtinian dialogism in management studies: David Barry and Michael Elmes, “Strategy Retold: Toward a Narrative View of Strategic Discourse,” *The Academy of Management Review* 22, no. 2 (1997): 429-452; Boje,

narrative control over popular storytelling and “spend billions on story technology, hiring spin talent, increasingly appropriating *our living stories*... then selling them back to us to shape... ‘reality.’”¹²⁷ Boje’s work is important at this juncture, not only because of his focus on corporations and markets, but because in his work on storytelling resistance he demonstrates the relevance of a range of Bakhtinian concepts including heteroglossia (radical plurivocality); the dialogic interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces in discourse; and grotesque realism for the study of anti-corporate activism.¹²⁸ At this juncture I want to follow Boje’s lead by focusing briefly on two of Bakhtin’s primary themes (dialogism and the carnivalesque) in order to demonstrate how activists have learned how to combine fearless speech, public storytelling, and carnivalesque protest performances without eroding their public credibility or rhetorical impact.

Regarding the former concept (dialogism), according to Bakhtin one encounters a perpetual contest between monovocal, homogenizing authority (i.e., centripetal forces) and plurivocal, decentralizing, resistance (i.e., centrifugal forces) in all language systems (and by extension, all cultures).¹²⁹ For present purposes, the important point is that corporations have a vested interest in maintaining narrative control of their organizations and in closing down any gaps or contradictions in their public discourse. Anti-corporate activists maintain an opposing interest in using public storytelling to disclose egregious gaps and contradictions in the discourse practices and daily business procedures of the corporations they target.

To get a sense of how this dynamic can play out in applied contexts, I want to consider a brief example: the publication of official corporate “histories” on company web pages. In recent

Storytelling and the Future of Organizations; Gergen and Whitney, “Technologies of Representation in the Global Corporation,” 354.

¹²⁷ David Boje, “Spin,” in *The Sage Handbook of New Approaches in Management and Organization*, eds. David Barry and Hans Hansen (London: Sage, 2008), 203.

¹²⁸ David Boje, *Narrative Methods for Organizational and Communication Research*, 4; David Boje, “Regenerating Ronald McDonald with the Method of Grotesque Realism,” *Business Research Yearbook* 11 (2004):752-756; Boje, *Storytelling Organization*, 27.

¹²⁹ Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 272.

years “our history” links have appeared on the web pages of companies as diverse as McDonald’s, Dow Chemical, AT&T, and Whole Foods.¹³⁰ The narratives on these web pages tend to follow a progression that echoes the most familiar narratives of economic liberalism. Through hard work and determination, middle class entrepreneurs overcome daunting barriers to establish global enterprises. These are seamless narratives in which corporate actors progress steadily forward from one victory to another.

The defining gesture of these texts is erasure; that is, the authors consistently eliminate discomfiting aspects of company histories. Concrete examples of this strategy are not difficult to find in the official histories that many prominent corporations now feature on their company websites. McDonald’s, as I explained earlier, says nothing about its troubled history with the African American community; Wal-Mart does not mention its troubles with labor unions or Chinese sweatshops; Dow Chemical is similarly quiet in relation to Napalm and the Vietnam War; and New York Life fails to mention how it profited from slavery in the nineteenth century and from racial discrimination in the twentieth.¹³¹

These histories operate according to a highly predictable, metonymic logic. On this point I am thinking specifically about Kenneth Burke’s definition of metonymy as an attempt “to convey some incorporeal or intangible state in terms of the corporeal or tangible,” as when a flag stands in for patriotism or a military tank stands in for war. In the sanitized histories one finds on

130 AT&T Corporation, “The History of AT&T,” att.com, www.corp.att.com/history/ (accessed December 1, 2010); Dow Chemical Company, “Our Company,” Dow.com, www.dow.com/about/aboutdow/history/1890s.htm. (accessed December 1, 2010); McDonald’s Corporation, “McDonald’s History: Travel Through Time with Us,” McDonalds.com, www.aboutmcdonalds.com/mcd/our_company/mcd_history.html (accessed December 1, 2010); Whole Foods Markets, “Company History,” Wholefoodsmarkets.com, www.wholefoodsmarket.com/company/history.php. (accessed December 1, 2010).

131 Dow Chemical Company, “Our Company,” McDonald’s Corporation, “McDonald’s History,” New York Life Corporation, “A Company of Firsts,” www.newyorklife.com/nyl/v/index.jsp?contentId=12002&vgnextoid=4b6dce94229d2210a2b3019d221024301cacRCRD. (accessed December 1, 2010); Wal-Mart Corporation, “History: The Birth of Discount Retailing,” walmartstores.com/aboutus/297.aspx. (accessed December 1, 2010).

corporate websites, ambitious young entrepreneurs (nearly always white males), copies of antiquated print advertisements, and steady profit streams stand in for the “intangible” principles of economic liberalism. When reading this type of corporate history one enters a highly predictable space in which the logic of rational self-interest and economic autonomy are taken as self-evident.

The utter predictability of these histories and the metonymic homogeneity of the landscapes signal that the companies in question are attempting to exert precise, monovocal control over their organizational narratives. As Hayden White has observed, the dominance of metonymy in any discursive economy is symptomatic of a conservative political order, a place where normative rules operate implicitly rather than explicitly and where social change tends to happen very slowly according to a natural rhythm.¹³² In a metonymic landscape, the past and the future can blend seamlessly together into a perpetual (and simulacral) present tense.¹³³

One of the primary goals of any anti-corporate campaign is to disrupt this narrative terrain by disclosing the sorts of information that does not appear in the public relations versions of corporate histories. From a grammatical perspective such disruptive actions operate in the subjunctive mood, which is to say they are concerned with “contingent, hypothetical, or prospective event[s].”¹³⁴ Put another way, the goal of an anti-corporate campaign is to disseminate “critical” histories that transcend the limits of the present and introduce unforeseen

132 Hayden White. *Metahistory: The Historical Imagination in Nineteenth-Century Europe*. (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 35.

133 As de Certeau has observed, “The ‘proper’ is a victory of space over time,” which in this context means that those powerful few who are in a position to control what counts as “proper” discourse in their organizations and in entire sectors of the global marketplace have discovered techniques for slowing the progression of time to the point where the future begins to look like little more than a redecorated past. De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xix.

134 “Subjunctive,” *OED Online*, Oxford University Press. oed.com/view/Entry/192731?redirectedFrom=subjunctive (accessed February 1, 2011).

possibilities.¹³⁵ If they are to accomplish this goal, activists must be able to think strategically in order to select the precise mode of discourse and the precise moment in time when accumulated memories stand the greatest chance of breaking through the sedimented present.¹³⁶ In more classical terms, in making strategic decisions they must demonstrate an intuitive mastery of *kairos* and *mētis* (timing and cleverness) born of intimate familiarity with context. As Deborah Hawhee has observed, at the intersection of *kairos* with *mētis*, “*chronos* measures duration while *kairos* marks force.”¹³⁷ As this implies, kairotic storytime tactics operate on the assumption that if one waits long enough, dominant strategies will always reveal a weakness – some gap in the armor that can afford the disempowered a fleeting but significant opportunity. When marginalized rhetors exploit these sorts of opportunities proficiently, sudden inversions of attitudes and expectations become possible. “The structure of the miracle has a similar form.”¹³⁸

Anti-corporate activists accomplish these things through storytelling action, that is, they draw upon the resources of memory in order to place disturbing stories and texts into public circulation at opportune times in carefully selected locations. In this way activists have sometimes been able to force prominent companies to speak more honestly about their own histories and to commit to making substantive reforms to their quotidian practices. One of the reasons this has happened is because plurivocal storytelling practices take advantage of the centrifugal, decentralizing potential inherent to all discursive economies. Storytelling, in other words, is a felicitous tool for anti-corporate activism because stories are centrifugal by nature. They are good travelers.¹³⁹ Once released into the public sphere, stories that catch the attention of public audiences or shock public sensibilities get repeated, and in the process become linked

135 Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” 67.

136 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 80.

137 Hawhee, *Bodily Arts*, 66.

138 Ibid, 85.

139 Boje, *Storytelling Organization*, 2.

up to other content. Along the way these stories create counterpublics – discursive communities that come together in relation to the circulation of texts.¹⁴⁰ In this instance the “texts” are stories that disclose secretive, disturbing dimensions of quotidian corporate practices.

If they are to set these sorts of storytelling forces in motion, anti-corporate activists must be able to gain access to the public sphere and attract the attention of public media. In some campaigns gaining access to the public sphere becomes a problem of the first order. In the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns, for example, activists had to discover ways of slipping evidence of their experiences past local tyrants (factory managers and small town authorities in the former campaign and brutal slave holders in the latter) so they could recount their stories to more sympathetic audiences in other places. As I explain next, in both campaigns carnivalesque modes of discourse provided them with an effective set of rhetorical tools for addressing these difficulties.

I am using the word carnivalesque in this context to refer to a set of aesthetic sensibilities in keeping with the satiric social reversals and grotesque images that have characterized the European, pre-Lenten carnival tradition and certain non-Western performance traditions such as Mexican *carpa* theatre performances.¹⁴¹ In regard to the former, Bakhtin notes describes the European carnival as “a consecration of inequality [in which] a special form of free and familiar contact reigned among people who were usually divided by the barriers of caste, property, and profession, and age.”¹⁴² On most occasions, peasants and royalty alike respected the rigid

140 Michael Warner has proposed a view of counterpublics as “diffuse networks of talk.” Michael Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics* (Cambridge: Zone Books, 2005), 56.

141 *Carpa* (tent) theatre performances featuring comedy sketches and political parody participate in a rich, indigenous Chicana/o performance tradition which, although it borrows from carnival and shares many of the same aesthetic elements, has an independent history. As I explain in chapter four, the theatrical street protests the CIW staged during the Taco Bell campaign and in several subsequent anti-corporate campaigns have been strongly influenced by the Chicano/a performance tradition. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 10; W. B. Worthen, “Staging América: The Subject of History in Chicano/a Theatre,” *Theatre Journal* 49, no. 2 (May, 1997), 102.

142 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World*, 10.

parameters of the medieval social order; but, for a precious few days of the year (most prominently during the lead-up to the Lenten season), a commoner could parade around dressed as a bawdy king, princess, or Pope.¹⁴³ As this implies, the human body was of special importance during these performances, in the sense that a community wide fascination with grotesque imagery (explicit descriptions of body parts, bodily functions as well wounded and dismembered bodies) served to lower all that was noble, immaterial, and abstract in the normal order of things to a common level.¹⁴⁴ For Bakhtin these popular modes of grotesque realism served to debase and regenerate the social system by introducing the possibility of a “more just social and economic order, a new truth.”¹⁴⁵

The spirit or carnivalesque inversion and grotesque realism lives on in the garish costumes and extreme caricatures one encounters in the literature and protest actions of many anti-corporate campaigns. Like their predecessors in medieval carnivals, many of the people who inspire anti-corporate campaigns must negotiate a rigid social order on a daily basis. By appropriating carnivalesque techniques, they are able to subvert these social taxonomies temporarily in order to disclose secretive practices and contest arbitrary privileges.

None of this matters, to be sure, if local authorities manage to silence carnivalesque rhetors through direct coercion. I use the word “local” in this context because, as I explained earlier, in the global economy of the new millennium, corporations have developed sophisticated legal and organizational techniques for occluding controversial practices and deflecting torts. Toxic waste dumps, sweat shops, and slavery? These things have not disappeared from the human scene, but they have become less visible. More to the point, in many instances they have

¹⁴³ As Bakhtin explains, carnival performances were not restricted solely to the Lenten season, but could crop up at other times of the year as well, sometimes in relation to church holidays such as Corpus Christi. Ibid, 229, 343.

¹⁴⁴ Ibid, 304, 354.

¹⁴⁵ Ibid, 81.

been relegated to remote terrains on the fringe of corporate supply chains where local contractors are under intense pressure to contain costs and deliver consumer goods for the world economy according to tight schedules.¹⁴⁶

In discussing these bleak terrains, I want to reflect on M. Lane Bruner's observation that "[d]espite the long and generally humorless history of statecraft, it is nevertheless the case that institutional forms of oppression have sometimes been defeated, transformed, or at least temporarily checked by carnivalesque protests, at least when conditions are favorable. Unfortunately, conditions are rarely favorable."¹⁴⁷ The crucial point of this passage is that carnivalesque protests have transformative potential, if for no other reason because it is more difficult to arrest protestors dressed as clowns or elves (or, as happened in the WTO protests, turtles) than those who are not.¹⁴⁸ That is, in societies with a healthy tolerance for irony, carnivalesque humor affords a modicum of protection against institutional oppression – enough at least to make it easier for protestors to articulate their critiques and/or pronounce their demands. The important caveat in this argument is that some political orders are so utterly intolerant of dissent they can be counted as "humorless states" – places where "the singing and dancing elf can simply be taken away at night and dropped into the ocean with weights on his or her feet."¹⁴⁹ And yet, even under these sorts of oppressive conditions, determined activists sometimes discover avenues for expressing their concerns through carnivalesque dissent.

This description of humorless states can be extended as well to include "humorless terrains" of industrial production – geographic zones (including, as we shall see, certain

146 As Naomi Klein has argued, companies that operate primarily on the remote fringes of the global economy are effectively invisible and "unbrandable." As a result consumers and protest groups find it more difficult to hold them accountable for misdeeds. Klein, *No Logo*, 234.

147 Bruner, "Carnivalesque Protest and the Humorless State," 137.

148 Ibid, 147.

149 Ibid, 149.

commercial farm fields in South Florida and some U. S. textile factories in the 1970s) where disclosing the truth about daily working conditions could get a person fired or even killed. Fortunately, not all industrial terrains are equally humorless and, as I will explain in considerable detail in later chapters, even in bleak, isolated factories and farm fields, people can sometimes slow the progress of institutional discipline through carnivalesque parody and disclosure of grotesque aspects of industrial production.

One of the ways they have achieved this is by articulating carnivalesque critiques from alternative terrains. The key distinction here is that, as scholars such as Arjun Appadurai and Homi Bhabha have recently made clear, under globalization the relationship between social order and physical geography has become increasingly tenuous.¹⁵⁰ This hardly means geographic location has become irrelevant, but it does mean the global dissemination of communication technologies and the rapid expansion of public transportation systems have rendered political boundaries increasingly permeable and arbitrary. As globalization has progressed, dissidents have learned to lob satiric critiques into humorless gulags from the safety of more tolerant terrains where these same activists are more likely to find receptive audiences for their critiques of corporate policy. A company might get by with intimidating workers, firing minorities, or dumping toxic chemicals into rivers when such actions are restricted to remote corners of the global marketplace. But these sorts of practices can be difficult to defend when costumed protestors disclose them in the streets of Manhattan, Los Angeles, or London. By shifting the terrain of the conflict, activists have learned they can engage in humorous dissent while at the same time decreasing the threat of direct reprisal and increasing their chances of being noticed by global media. In an era when the public screen has become an extension of the public sphere,

¹⁵⁰ Arjun Appadurai, *Modernity At Large: Cultural Dimensions of Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1996), 3; Bhabha, Homi. *The Location of Culture* (London: Routledge, 1994), 169.

employing carnivalesque humor makes strategic sense because cameras are attracted to spectacles.¹⁵¹ And once the cameras are present, activists have an opportunity to speak frankly about secretive practices in isolated locations. That is, by playing the role of the carnival clown, they can create opportunities for assuming the role of the “parrhesiastes” (fearless speaker) in the globalized public sphere.¹⁵²

This view, one might add, is in keeping with the recent work of scholars such as Michael Gardiner, Ken Hirschkop, and John Michael Roberts, who have advocated for Bakhtinian dialogism and carnivalesque modes of discourse as a supplement to Habermas’ conception of the public sphere.¹⁵³ These authors recognize value in a Habermasian conception of public discourse but seek to open it up to include spaces where those who have been silenced are encouraged to speak, and where rational and performative modes of discourse can co-exist in agonistic tension. If these practices are to yield changes in the ethical standards of global markets, they must generate storytelling circulation without prompting counter-mobilization. It is to these topics I turn next.

When activists lay out plans for anti-corporate campaigns, they must learn to calibrate their strategies and tactics in order to articulate defensible arguments and avoid the extremes of conservative backlash and public apathy. If they are to achieve their ultimate goal of influencing markets over the long-term, they must also be able to mobilize a diverse range of audiences to align with their cause so as to give management the sense that their current practices may be fundamentally out of step with public, ethical sensibilities.

151 Deluca and Peeples, “From Public Sphere to Public Screen,” 128.

152 Foucault, *Fearless Speech*, 13.

153 Michael E. Gardiner, “Wild Publics and Grotesque Symposiums: Habermas and Bakhtin on Dialogue, Everyday Life, and the Public Sphere,” in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 28-48; Ken Hirschkop, “Justice and Drama: On Bakhtin as a Complement to Habermas,” in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere*, ed. Nick Crossley and John Michael Roberts (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 49-66; John Michael Roberts, “John Stuart Mill, Free Speech and the Public Sphere: a Bakhtinian Critique,” in *After Habermas: New Perspectives on the Public Sphere* (Oxford: Wiley-Blackwell, 2004), 67-87.

This view of social change assumes that although corporations are powerful institutions with enormous resources, they are run by human beings who, under the right circumstances, are susceptible to humanitarian appeals, public sentiment, and the “language of praise and blame.”¹⁵⁴ Put another way, if – as Deirdre McCloskey insists – the global economy is rhetorically constructed, then financial resources might turn out to be less important than one might expect.¹⁵⁵ The claim has history on its side. As Richard Rorty has observed, “The emergence of the human rights culture seems to owe nothing to increased moral knowledge and everything to hearing sad and sentimental stories.”¹⁵⁶ If Rorty is right (and I believe he is) this means the dissemination of timely stories about shocking contradictions in corporate narratives may represent our best hope for shifting the de facto CSR standards of global markets over the long-term.

In his work *On Populist Reason* Ernesto Laclau provides a way of thinking about how the public circulation of stories and texts can yield the sorts of popular demands Rorty assumes and how those demands can sometimes fracture and spin out of control.¹⁵⁷ In regard to the former possibility, I am thinking of Laclau’s description of the role of “equivalential chains” in the formation of popular demands.¹⁵⁸ In this process, a single, resolute demand can come to stand for several others that become linked together via a process of equivalential reasoning. Thus, in English and American abolitionism the signifier “slavery” came to serve as the organizing term for a whole set of demands pertaining to temperance, women’s suffrage, and the early labor

154 Turpin, “Liberal Political Economy and Justice,” 15-16.

155 McCloskey makes the point succinctly when she writes “economists are poets,” and again when she claims “No one has so far seen a literal demand curve floating in the sky above Manhattan. It’s a metaphor.” Deirdre McCloskey, *If You’re So Smart: The Narrative of Economic Expertise* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), 1; Deirdre N. McCloskey, *The Rhetoric of Economics* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 1998), 12.

156 Richard Rorty, “Human Rights, Rationality, and Sentimentality,” in *On Human Rights: The Oxford Amnesty Lectures 1993*, ed. Stephen Shute and Susan L. Hurley (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 118-119.

157 Ernest Laclau, *On Populist Reason* (London: Verso, 2005), 130-131.

158 Ibid.

movement.¹⁵⁹ As abolitionist stories and texts circulated in centrifugal fashion among widely dispersed communities they helped to establish metonymic links between related demands and contributed to the destabilization of abstract, transcendental signifiers connected to things like patrimony, colonialism, and industrialization.¹⁶⁰

For those in positions of authority within hegemonic orders (e.g., corporate executives and financiers) the dialogic proliferation of these sorts of demands can often seem disorienting and alien. This is because equivalential chains challenge the limits of the social imaginary by disclosing the arbitrary nature of current political orders. Or, as Laclau writes, “the wild logic of emptying the signifiers of universality through the expansion of the equivalential chains means that no fixing and particular limitation on the sliding of the signified under the signifier is going to be permanently assured.”¹⁶¹ As with Burke’s description of planned incongruity, in other words, once signifiers have become radically disturbed they can never be realigned in precisely the same way, and the future can never again look exactly like the past.¹⁶²

None of this should lead one to adopt a naïve view of popular change, primarily because this same process of the formation of equivalential chains and the emergence of popular demands can occur (counter-intuitively) on the conservative end of the political spectrum and against the

159 J.R. Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery: The Mobilisation of Public Opinion against the Slave Trade 1787-1807* (London: Routledge, 1998), 96; Ellen Carol DuBois, *Feminism and Suffrage: The Emergence of an Independent Women’s Movement in America, 1848-1869* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1978), 32-33.

160 Manheim provides a web chart that references the CIW in which he details the financial relationships among a large number of activist organizations. While these relationships are of undoubted importance, the more important relationships in this context are more clearly ideological. For example, dozens of activist organizations participated in a CIW sponsored workshop in Miami in 2007, including representatives from several churches and a synagogue, as well as the National Network for Immigrant and Minority Rights, the Grassroots Global Justice Alliance, Domestic Workers United, The Southwest Workers Union, the Nashville Homeless Power Project, Service Employees International Union, and Agricultural Missions, Inc. Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Our World, Our Rights Conference,” www.ciw-online.org/2007_BK_March/event_details.html#conference (accessed August 1, 2011); Manheim, *Biz-War*, 42.

161 Ernesto Laclau, *Emancipation(S)* (London: Verso, 1996), 55.

162 Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 308, 313.

interests of anti-corporate activism.¹⁶³ Even more worrisome, when this happens the competing demand can sometimes disrupt the original (activist) process and subsume some of the secondary demands that had been part of its equivalential chain. On this point Laclau gives the example of how, “the defence of the ‘small man’ against power ceases to be associated to a left discourse, as in the American New Deal, and becomes linked to the ‘moral majority.’”¹⁶⁴ In an anti-corporate campaign, then, success or failure turns on the ability of an activist group to set highly credible stories of egregious practices in public circulation in ways that galvanize a diverse, durable coalition of audiences, all of whom embrace the key demand of the campaign as resonant with their own interests.

Prospective Narrative Disclosure in Global Context

By way of summary, I have argued that anti-corporate activists have learned to adapt ancient rhetorical techniques of storytelling disclosure to influence the behaviors of multinational corporations and the trajectory of CSR standards in global markets. I coined the phrase prospective narrative disclosure to describe this process, and defined it as referring to the practice of using intensive research and kairotic storytelling strategies to disclose egregious contradictions between corporate discourse and situated practice and, in so doing, disrupt the narrative coherence of corporate discourses. Corporations have responded to these strategies by developing sophisticated techniques of their own for fending off activist critiques and defending the long-term integrity of their public reputations.

From a Bakhtinian perspective, the contest between corporate strategists and their activist opponents can be described as representing the dialogic interplay of centripetal and centrifugal forces. One can recognize the centripetal dimension of corporate discourse in Paul Virilio’s

¹⁶³ Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 131.

¹⁶⁴ Ibid.

argument that global supply networks and the proliferation of advertising fictions are representative instances of a contemporary aesthetics of disappearance. Both authors provide useful analytic tools for understanding the narrative control strategies of multinational corporations and why it is that they would be willing to invest millions in order to exercise precise control over their organizational discourse and turn back activist campaigns.

Despite obvious disparities in economic resources, anti-corporate activists have found ways of disrupting the centripetal cohesion of corporate discourse in order to disclose contradictions and challenge market practices. Their prospective narrative disclosure strategies are centrifugal in the sense that they involve setting plurivocal, iconoclastic stories about corporate misbehavior in public circulation. For such strategies to be effective activists must demonstrate considerable kairotic savvy. They must learn how to sidestep local tyrants in order to smuggle stories into the public sphere. Then they must learn how to deliver unimpeachable assessments of corporate practices while at the same time attracting news cameras and sparking public discussions. This latter situation helps to explain the prevalence of carnivalesque and grotesque themes in anti-corporate discourse. Photographs of injured bodies and garish caricatures of CEO's may not conform to Habermasian discourse standards, but they can enable activists to gain a hearing in the public sphere.

Any such actions, however, must be carefully calibrated so that they do not invite undue public suspicion of activist claims. This distinction is of crucial importance in relation to the martial and confrontation/alliance typologies within prospective narrative disclosure. By adopting strategies that can fairly be described as coercive (occupying facilities, freezing financial assets, or staging labor strikes, for example), activists can invite counter-suspicion and counter-mobilization among opposing factions in the public sphere. Nonetheless, my research

suggests that when activists are able to negotiate these obstacles they can exert considerable influence on the attitudes and practices of corporate decision makers. A primary reason this happens is because true stories, when set in public circulation at certain times and in certain places, can cohere into public demands that corporations and markets find difficult to ignore.

In the next chapter I build upon these themes by arguing that prospective narrative disclosure and the martial and confrontation/alliance typologies represent refinements to longstanding rhetorical practices in the discourse of anti-corporate activism. Just as the strategies of twenty-first century activists resemble those of iconoclastic rhetors from across human history, they also bear a striking resemblance to strategies activists have employed to challenge market practices since the dawn of the industrial era.

Chapter 3: Indicting Phantoms: Anti-Corporate Activism in Historic Context

“Did you ever expect a corporation to have a conscience, when it has no soul to be damned, and no body to be kicked?”

Edward Thurlow¹

At the dawn of the Industrial Revolution one finds two prominent social movements in England that continue to drive debates about rhetorical agency and the limits of corporate activism in the global marketplace: the Luddite rebellion and the Abolitionist movement. The former was a labor rebellion that began in 1811, when new laws banning trade with Napoleonic France and its allies resulted in widespread unemployment and even famine in the English textile region.² Thousands of people in the region responded by destroying industrial machinery and publically harassing many factory owners and managers.³ The uprising lasted nearly three years, ending only after a military intervention of unprecedented scale and the public trial and execution of dozens of leaders.⁴ The latter was a series of popular campaigns against the slave trade and featured large rallies throughout England at which abolitionist speakers denounced slavery as a violent and inhumane practice that was utterly inconsistent with Christian values. In the end the abolitionists achieved their goal of ending the slave trade and outlawing slavery in the British Empire.

The Luddite and abolitionist movements mark touchstone moments in the history of corporations and of anti-corporate activism. More to the point, the two campaigns represent overlapping trends in market-based activism that have persisted across the last two centuries – a time during which the world has seen the emergence and proliferation of business corporations,

1 As cited in John C. Coffee, “‘No Soul to Damn: No Body to Kick:’ An Unscandalized Inquiry into the Problem of Corporate Punishment” *Michigan Law Review* 79, no. 3 (1981): 386.

2 Frank Peel, *The Risings of the Luddites, Chartists and Plugdrawers* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2009), 160.

3 Ibid, 11-15.

4 Kevin Binfield, “Introduction,” in *Writings of the Luddites*, ed. Kevin Binfield, 1-68 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 2-3.

labor unions, international communication networks, and anti-corporate campaigns. Specifically, the Luddite rebellion can be viewed as anticipating the martial typology in prospective narrative disclosure with its characteristic emphasis on the use of bluntly instrumental strategies for the purpose of changing short term behaviors (e.g., wage scales, working conditions, and environmental policies). The abolitionist movement, by contrast, anticipates the confrontation/alliance pattern, characterized by artful disclosures of systematic harms for the purpose of bruising consciences, galvanizing popular sentiment, and gradually shifting the attitudes and practices of entire markets. This should not be taken to mean the two campaigns were entirely dissimilar. Both the Luddites and the abolitionists used pamphleteering, mass meetings, political parody, and grotesque imagery to disclose systematic human rights abuses and rally public audiences. Both groups also developed detailed campaign strategies and tactics for coordinating the actions of large numbers of people over extended periods of time.

In this chapter I use the Luddite and abolitionist campaigns as a starting point for reviewing important themes in the history of corporations and of anti-corporate protest movements. I begin by recounting a brief history of the business corporation, starting with ancient cooperative business ventures, moving on to a more extended discussion of the emergence and growth of the general business corporation, a type of cooperative business venture which investors have found highly attractive, in no small part because they afford unprecedented protection against legal torts and obscure lines of ethical accountability. Following that, I provide a history of anti-corporate activism, starting with an analysis of important events and themes in the Luddite and abolitionist campaigns. From there I continue on to examine salient moments of consumer and labor activism in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries and the emergence of more strategically sophisticated, media-savvy campaigns in the

twentieth century. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how, in recent decades, anti-corporate activists have learned to combine ancient rhetorical disclosure practices and public media strategies in order to influence the daily business practices of multinational corporations.

The Birth of the Corporation

Corporation, *n.*

An ingenious device for obtaining individual profit without individual responsibility
– Ambrose Bierce⁵

The word “corporation” can be defined in at least two ways. In its most general sense it refers to a business enterprise owned by several people. In this chapter I will be using the word in a narrower, strictly legal sense to refer to a general business corporation, defined as “a legal person separate and distinct from the people who own it...[an arrangement that limits] an owner’s loss... to the amount of capital that he [*sic*] has invested.”⁶ The implication is that when a plaintiff sues a corporation she or he is suing the company, not the investors.⁷ This also means that a corporation is, quite literally, a legal fiction and a product of social imagination.⁸ More to the point, corporations are legal constructs people have created *ex nihilo* over time to conduct business in an increasingly complex and interconnected global marketplace.

This much acknowledged, corporations of the sort I just described are a relatively recent phenomenon in human history. Prior to the eighteenth century, business corporations were virtually unknown in the U. S. and Europe. What is more, it was not until governments began to issue charters for large scale transportation projects in the early nineteenth century that corporations caught on with investors. Despite this tentative beginning, corporations soon began

⁵ Ambrose Bierce, *The Unabridged Devil’s Dictionary*, ed. David E. Schultz and S. T. Joshi (Athens, GA: University of Georgia Press, 2000), 43.

⁶ Graham Bannock, et. al., *Dictionary of Business* (Princeton, NJ: Bloomberg Press, 2003), 161, 200.

⁷ For a more detailed definition of the corporation and other types of business organizations, including the limited liability company and the limited liability partnership see: Thomas R. Hurst and William A. Gregory, *Cases and Materials on Corporations* (Cincinnati, OH: Anderson Publishing Company, 1999), 1.

⁸ Taylor, *Modern Social Imaginaries*, 23.

to proliferate and crowd out other types of cooperative business ventures. Two hundred years later corporations have become a ubiquitous presence in modern economies and in daily life. To understand why, after their unparalleled record of financial growth, corporations remain controversial, requires a more detailed understanding of their history.

To begin with, cooperative business ventures are hardly a new idea. Three millennia ago merchants trading along the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers entered into joint ownership agreements supervised by temple authorities.⁹ A millennia later, Assyrian business people developed even more complex arrangements that in many respects resembled modern day venture-capital funds. By the fourth century BCE joint business ventures were relatively commonplace, especially in sea-faring cultures like those of Athens and Rome, where they provided important protections against the extreme financial risks inherent to sea travel and international commerce. It was the Romans who first treated cooperatively owned businesses as autonomous entities, legally distinct from any one of their owners or investors.¹⁰ These Roman *societates* (business societies) also count as the first businesses with legally distinct subsidiaries – in the form of various *collegia* or *corpora* (craft guilds) for manufacturing specific goods.

The craft guild proved to be a robust model for collective business enterprises and persisted largely unchallenged until the Middle Ages, when business people and states began to look for new ways of financing large scale enterprises and global exploration.¹¹ Collective business enterprises more closely resembling the modern day business corporation first appeared in the sixteenth century, when European states (eager to funnel riches from international trade

⁹ John Micklethwait and Adrian Wooldridge, *The Company: A Short History of a Revolutionary Idea* (New York: Modern Library, 2005), 4-5.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Adolph Berle and Gardiner Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property* (Edison, NJ: Transaction Publishers, 1991), 14; Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 45; Ted Nace, *Gangs of America: The Rise of Corporate America and the Disabling of Democracy* (San Francisco: Berrett-Koehler, 2005), 22.

into governmental coffers) began to grant charters for international trading companies such as the Merchant Adventurers.¹² As European governments expanded their international empires over the next few centuries, they granted charters for similar enterprises with increasing frequency.¹³

The earliest of the chartered companies functioned as umbrella organizations for independent businesses, each of which was responsible for its own finances and accounting.¹⁴ These arrangements proved cumbersome and inefficient for what were, more often than not, international enterprises. It often made little sense, for example, for individual merchants to maintain separate docks or to commission separate ships when operating out of the same ports. Cooperation on those sorts of pragmatic issues led to cooperation on financial matters and, eventually, to the selling of joint stock to finance risky adventures abroad.¹⁵

Despite promises of extraordinary returns, the early overseas business ventures were dicey affairs that only rarely delivered profits to investors. Early Dutch and English entrepreneurs to the “spice islands” in Indonesia, for example, sometimes executed indigenous people they deemed uncooperative and, on several occasions, even poisoned their own crews. Not surprisingly, such traders often failed to complete their official missions, which, in most

12 The Merchant Adventurers (also known as the Guild or Fraternity of St. Thomas a Beckett) was organized by the Mercers’ (textile) Guild in 1505 to coordinate trade with Germany and Holland. Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 8; Nace, *Gangs of America*, 22, 46-47.

13 The English government was prolific in this regard. Prominent examples include: the Russia (Muscovy) Company (1553), the East India Company (1600), the Hudson’s Bay Company (1670), and the Royal African Company (1672), and the South Seas Company (1711); Ron Harris, *Industrializing English Law: Entrepreneurship and Business Organization, 1720-1844* (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2000), 52; Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 17.

14 Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, xvi.

15 In one of the earliest examples of this arrangement the Muscovy Company made several attempts to sail to the remote port of Archangel on the northern coast of Russia. When, against considerable odds, one of the company’s ships finally sailed from London to Archangel and back, the company was granted a temporary monopoly on trade with Moscow. The owners then proceeded to raise money for subsequent journeys by selling public shares in their enterprise. There is some question as to whether the Muscovy Company should count as the first “joint stock company” or whether that honor should go to some other enterprise such as the Turkey Company or the British East India Company. Regardless, the practice of issuing public shares in chartered companies quickly caught on. Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 18; Nace, *Gangs of America*, 22.

instances, was to deliver novel commodities to European consumers.¹⁶ Early disasters aside, European merchants and monarchs sensed there was money to be made, and so they continued to fund trading ventures to sundry parts of the “New World.” By the middle of the seventeenth century the Dutch East India Company and the English East India Company were providing upper class consumers with a steady supply of tea, spices, silk, and other exotic goods.¹⁷ The Dutch East India Company quickly became the larger and more profitable enterprise, largely due to its practice of funding its sailing ventures on a multi-decade rather than a per-journey basis. The new practice enabled investors to spread out their risks in hope of gaining steady, dependable returns on investment.¹⁸

The emergence of relatively stable and prosperous companies also created a need for public markets where investors and entrepreneurs could meet one another and conduct business. The Dutch opened the first such stock market in 1611. And by 1636 they saw the first stock market collapse after tulip bulb futures rose temporarily above the price of gold.¹⁹ The so-called Tulip Mania was the first and, to this day, the best known of several market scandals during this era, including the South Sea Bubble of 1720 (in which thousands of investors lost their fortunes in an elaborate scheme to profit from the South American slave trade) and the Mississippi Company scandal later that same year (in which thousands of investors in France and the continent were taken in by an elaborate marketing scheme exaggerating the wealth of Louisiana).²⁰

Two aspects of the wild fluctuations of these early markets are of special importance in relation to prospective narrative disclosure, as they mark behaviors that persist, to varying

16 Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 19.

17 Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 13; Nace, *Gangs of America*, 33.

18 Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 20.

19 Ibid.

20 Ibid, 28-31.

degrees, even in the sophisticated global trading environments of the twenty-first century. The first concerns radical disparities between the claims speculators made when luring investors and what actually happened once they received money. The second has to do with strategic maneuvers among investors and managers intent on limiting their liability for a company's missteps while maximizing their potential for reaping large financial returns.

Regarding the former, one of the most striking examples involves a text entitled "Discourse on Western Planting" in which the writer Richard Hakluyt attempted to convince Queen Elizabeth to support Sir Walter Raleigh's schemes for establishing colonies in North America. Such an enterprise, he claimed, would advance the Christian Gospel (through conversions of indigenous people) and "yelde unto us all the commodities of Europe, Affrica, and Asia, as far as wee were wonte to travel."²¹ The grim truth was that the Jamestown colony quickly became a sort of death camp for poor people (including not a few children) who had been rounded up from the streets and prisons of London. Of the 3,570 people transported to the new colony over three years, only 900 survived.²² Three hundred or so died in skirmishes with Indians. The balance died of disease, starvation, or (more often than not) brutal punishments inflicted by Virginia Company managers upon anyone who complained or stepped out of line in any other way.²³ Even as Hakluyt and others fed investors in the Virginia Company fervent fictions about idyllic life in the New World, word about brutal living conditions in Jamestown spread quickly among the poor of London. When the Virginia Company submitted a request for

²¹ Richard Hakluyt, *A Discourse Concerning Western Planting* (Cambridge, MA: John Wilson and Son, 1877), 19.

²² Nace, *Gangs of America*, 36.

²³ As Ted Nace explains, "Even petty crimes were harshly punished. Stealing an ear of corn or a bunch of grapes while weeding a garden was punishable by death. For stealing two or three pints of oatmeal, one worker had a needle thrust through his tongue and was chained to a tree until he died of starvation." Nace, *Gangs of America*, 33.

children from the Bridewell reformatory to be transported to the new colony, it sparked a revolt among the children.²⁴

In the end, the English underclass was helpless to do anything about the disturbing dissonance many recognized between the words and deeds of those associated with the Virginia Company. As for the children, 150 of them arrived on schedule in Jamestown colony where they were soon joined by a group of captives from the Congo region of Western Africa (the first instance of African slavery in what would become the United States).²⁵ These developments aside, the “subculture of resistance” against elite business interests that became visible in the Bridewell revolt continued to percolate beneath the surface during the era of British colonial expansion; and in cities like Boston and New York it would eventually provide fuel for political rebellion.²⁶

The second thing to notice at this juncture about eighteenth century markets is that (wild fluctuations aside) they represented a significant improvement over even riskier investment strategies in which small groups of owners shared enormous risks in hope of reaping enormous profits. The new joint stock companies, by their very nature, afforded investors greater protection against financial risk than traditional business partnerships.²⁷ The difference was a matter of scale. Because the Virginia Company and other joint stock companies sold shares to hundreds or even thousands of investors, and because the returns they paid were based on long-term productivity rather than the success of individual ventures, they were able to provide investors with a significant hedge against catastrophic losses. Returns may have been erratic and

²⁴ Ibid, 36.

²⁵ James Horn, *A Land as God Made It: Jamestown and the Birth of America* (New York, Basic Books, 2005), 243-244.

²⁶ As a final note on the Jamestown debacle, when political observers and financial investors began to complain about mismanagement of the colony, King James finally revoked the company’s charter in 1624 and the settlement came under control of the crown. Nace, *Gangs of America*, 36.

²⁷ Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 19

unpredictable, but for patient investors the new joint stock companies sometimes paid out handsome long-term dividends.

And yet, by distributing financial risk across large numbers of people, the joint stock companies also made it more difficult for anyone to trace lines of ethical responsibility. When, for example, the captains of some Dutch ships executed local citizens in remote ports, poisoned their own crews, or did anything else that impeded their ability to deliver promised goods on time to European markets, investors in the Dutch East India Company did not necessarily lose their fortunes.²⁸ This was true, if for no other reason, because it was also difficult to determine with any precision just who (besides a gaggle of incorrigible underlings) should be called to account, legally or otherwise, for such actions.

Scottish economist Adam Smith (a person often held out as one of the great apologists for economic liberalism) spoke to this ethical dilemma in *Wealth of Nations* when he held up the East India Company's operations in Bengal as illustrating the dangers of mismanagement in chartered monopolies:

Nothing can be more foolish than to expect that the clerks of a great counting-house at ten thousand miles distance, and consequently almost quite out of sight, should, upon a simple order from their masters, give up at once doing any sort of business on their own account abandon for ever all hopes of making a fortune, of which they have the means in their hands.²⁹

In other words, whether one is speaking of eighteenth century British accountants in Bengal or the managers of sweatshops in modern day Bangladesh, people are less likely to bypass succulent but corrupt opportunities when they have every reason to believe their actions will not be subjected to widespread public critique. Worse, even when criminal operatives can be identified and called out, investors receive powerful incentives (in the form of dividend checks)

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Adam Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations: Books IV-V* (New York: Penguin, 1999), 224.

to look the other way. These sorts of difficulties with accountability in the early joint stock companies marked the beginning of an incipient rhetoric of disappearance – a discursive trend that would come to maturity in the twentieth century under the aegis of armadas of highly paid business executives, corporate lawyers, and public relations specialists. Charged with protecting returns on investment to stockholders, they would dedicate their full energies to formulating apologies for corporate actions and, in the process, making it difficult to determine who, if anyone, could be held answerable for egregious practices.

In the rough and tumble markets of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, joint stock companies could hide many misdeeds from customers and investors, but this did not prevent them from earning a reputation as enormously risky business ventures. Large enterprises such as the Dutch East India Company aside, the vast majority of large businesses during this period were sole proprietorships or privately held corporations.³⁰ As evidence of the pervasive distrust of corporations during this era, when the U.S. Constitution was drafted the new United States of America counted only six small-scale chartered corporations other than banks.³¹ In the Constitutional Convention of 1787 the question of whether the national government or the states should grant charters to corporations was hotly debated. In the end, the new Constitution included no mention of corporations. This is primarily because advocates of federal charters could not overcome the objections of those who feared the expansion of corporate power and wanted to prevent the new nation from chartering anything like the East India Company – a business entity with economic clout that rivaled that of well-established political states.³²

It was not until the nineteenth century when governments and investors began to look for ways to finance large scale railroad projects that business corporations began to proliferate and

30 Bakan, *The Corporation*, 6-7.

31 Nace, *Gangs of America*, 47.

32 Ibid, 48.

soon became a fixed feature of the global landscape.³³ The “true creators” of the modern day corporation, in other words, were the great railroads of the United States and Great Britain. In England, between 1825 and 1849, shareholder investments in railroads increased 1,000 fold from £200,000 to more than £230, 000,000.³⁴ In the years following the Civil War in the United States, the nation built more than 100,000 miles of track and the number of corporations in all sectors of the economy began to grow exponentially. Investors, it seems, had fallen in love with the idea of limited liability.

As corporations proliferated, many investors came to learn that owning stock in a company was not the same thing as having a say in its management. As California Governor Newton Booth (an ardent anti-monopolist) observed in 1873, “every tie in the [new Transcontinental Railroad] is the grave of a small stockholder.”³⁵ In other words, although cash flowed in from tens of thousands of people, a small cadre of monopolists retained control over the purse strings and were able to expand their own interests exponentially even while returning precious little money to small investors.

In the coming decades new labor unions such as the Knights of Labor, the American Federation of Labor, and the American Railway Union would make a similar discovery, but with more tangible and disturbing results.³⁶ In a series of clashes with labor activists during the fin de siècle, management demonstrated a willingness to use overt violence to quell dissent among

33 This is not to say that all nation’s developed limited liability laws at the same time. In the United States, laws governing incorporation varied among the states. New York enacted incorporation laws in 1811, and by the 1830’s most other states had followed suit. In England, where many law makers shared Adam Smith’s deep suspicion of joint stock companies, major impediments to incorporation remained on the books until 1844. Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 49.

34 Bakan, *The Corporation*, 10.

35 Ibid, 14.

36 Leon Fink, *Workingmen’s Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 3; Jonathan Rees, “American Federation of Labor,” in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History, Volume 1*, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 74-77; Shelton Stromquist, “American Railway Union,” in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History, Volume 1*, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 96-98.

company employees. To cite but a handful of the most notorious incidents, management called on private security firms and government troops to quell labor uprisings in the Colorado Labor Wars from 1902 to 1904, the Railroad Shopmen's Strike of 1922, and the huge Textile Workers' Strike of the 1930s (also known as the "Uprising of '34").³⁷ In each case, the strategy was unambiguously coercive. Strike participants were silenced with bludgeons and bullets.

That corporate interests were able to suppress labor uprisings with the help of state and federal militias was an indication of their increasing financial and political clout. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, large companies had succeeded in lobbying politicians in many venues to remove what they saw as burdensome limits on incorporation. In the early decades of the nineteenth century corporations were generally extended charters to conduct business for a limited number of years in a specific market sector.³⁸ Moreover, if management violated the terms of a charter, then revocation was a tangible possibility. By the 1860s the charter system began to give way to new methods of general incorporation in which virtually anyone willing to fill out the necessary paperwork could be approved to form a business corporation. Under the new system corporations were typically extended an unlimited life span and freed up to conduct business in any market sector. One result of these developments was that some corporations quickly grew to an enormous size, thus prompting the U. S. and other industrialized nations to pass legislation such as the Sherman Antitrust Act of 1890 aimed at limiting the scope and influence of corporate monopolies.³⁹

37 Daniel Clark, "Textile Workers Union of America," in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1373; Colin J. Davis, *Power at Odds: The 1922 National Railroad Shopmen's Strike* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 83-100 passim.

38 Nace provides a chart in which he contrasts the differences between the legal standings of corporations under the old charter system and the new system of general incorporation that emerged in most venues in the latter half of the nineteenth century. Nace, *Gangs of America*, 71.

39 Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 73.

Concerns about corporations gaining excessive power were hardly new. As early as 1816, Thomas Jefferson had written that he hoped the nation would “crush in its birth the aristocracy of our monied corporations which dare already to challenge our government to a trial of strength and bid defiance to the laws of our country.”⁴⁰ Half a century later Abraham Lincoln echoed these sentiments by warning that “corporations have been enthroned and an air of corruption in high places will follow.” By 1886, the year the Supreme Court issued the *Santa Clara* decision (later interpreted as granting personhood to corporations), the ascendance of corporations had become a hotly contested topic in lyceum debates and editorial pages on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴¹

Titans of business like Cornelius Vanderbilt, John D. Rockefeller, and Andrew Carnegie shrugged off these concerns and doubled-down on expanding their empires. By the early decades of the twentieth century, critics within the academy were issuing warnings about the anti-democratic nature of these industrialists and the enterprises they had founded. In 1931 Isaac Wormser argued that modern day corporations more closely resembled independent monsters than human beings.⁴² One year later, Adolph Berle and Gardiner Means appealed to Jeffersonian notions of political liberty to warn that the separation of ownership and control in corporations was leading to an accumulation of power, not so much in the hands of a cadre of conspicuous “robber barons,” but in the hands of a new class of highly paid and largely anonymous corporate managers.⁴³

40 The line appears in a letter Jefferson wrote to George Logan in November, 1816. Thomas Jefferson, *The Works of Thomas Jefferson: Volume 12*, ed. Paul Leicester Ford (New York: G.P. Putnam’s Sons, 1905), 44.

41 Nace, *Gangs of America*, 15; *Santa Clara County v. Southern Pacific Railroad Company*. 118 U.S. 394 (1886).

42 Wormser, *Frankenstein, Incorporated*, v.

43 Berle and Means, *The Modern Corporation and Private Property*, 14-15.

Jürgen Habermas would later extend these arguments by attributing the decline of the bourgeois public sphere to the “invasion of advertising publications [and]... public relations” in the early twentieth century.⁴⁴ Habermas’ critique is quite specific, going so far as to name the corporate public relations pioneers Ivy Lee and Edward Bernays. And though he does not name him, Habermas could just as easily have included the journalist and communication scholar Walter Lippmann, whose arguments about “stereotypes” and the lack of “universal competence” in the general public were entirely congruent with the views of early public relations professionals.⁴⁵ In truth, what people like Lippmann and Bernays shared was a Platonic interest in controlling an unruly *demos* through the subtle manipulation of public opinion.⁴⁶ Bernays, for instance, was the nephew of Sigmund Freud and spoke proudly of adapting his uncle’s theories for use in the “engineering of consent.”⁴⁷ Those seeking evidence of the growth in managerial power Berle and Means predicted need look no further than the unblushing defense of the scientific management of public opinion one finds in the works of Lippman and Bernays.⁴⁸

In more recent decades corporations have expanded internationally and become even wealthier and more influential. By 2005 the annual revenues of each the world’s ten largest corporations exceeded the gross domestic products of 168 nations.⁴⁹ The most politically consequential result of this situation is that multinational corporations have become increasingly peripatetic and independent of the control of individual nation states. The various iterations of the post-World War II Bretton Woods institutions (most significantly the International Monetary

44 Jürgen Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere: An Inquiry into a Category of Bourgeois Society* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1991), 192-193.

45 Walter Lippmann, *Public Opinion* (New York: Harcourt, 1922), 79, 369.

46 Lippmann coined the phrase “the manufacture of consent” to describe this process. *Ibid*, 248.

47 Edward L. Bernays, *Public Relations* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2004); Edward L. Bernays and Howard Walden Cutler, *The Engineering of Consent* (University of Oklahoma Press, 1969); Stuart Ewen, *PR!: A Social History of Spin* (New York: Basic Books, 1998).

48 Ewen, *PR!*, 3-36 *passim*.

49 Subhabrata Bobby Banerjee, *Corporate Social Responsibility: The Good, the Bad and the Ugly* (Northampton, MA: Edward Elgar, 2007), 173.

Fund, the World Bank and the World Trade Organization) have lowered or eliminated many barriers to global trade, thus enabling many corporations to sidestep local laws regulating labor, environmental, and investment practices by simply contracting with suppliers in other countries.

At the same time, critics in the academy have continued to issue warnings about the colonizing potential of corporations.⁵⁰ To cite but a few of the most prominent examples, Theodor Adorno traced the progress of a “culture industry” capable of commodifying even the most mundane aspects of daily life.⁵¹ Economist Joseph Stiglitz has warned of a fundamental lack of democratic accountability when management “hides behind the corporate veil.”⁵² Stanley Deetz has written a detailed analysis of “corporate colonization,” or the steady intrusion of the corporate presence into the daily activities of media, family, education, and the state.⁵³ And in *No Logo*, Naomi Klein has provided a chilling description of the mind-numbing results of corporate branding strategies.⁵⁴

Corporations have responded to these sorts of criticisms by developing CSR initiatives: sophisticated strategies for serving the public good (and, in the process, enhancing profitability and public relations).⁵⁵ As early as the 1950s, some business executives began to argue that all corporations should contribute to finding solutions to “many of the complex social questions of

50 Stanley Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 1992), ix.

51 The phrase first appears in Horkheimer and Adorno’s *Dialectic of Enlightenment*. Max Horkheimer and Theodor Adorno, *Dialectic of Enlightenment: Philosophical Fragments*, ed. Gershom Scholem, trans. Edmund Jephcott (Palo Alto: Stanford University Press, 2002), 94.

52 Joseph Stiglitz, *Making Globalization Work* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2006), 193.

53 Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization*, 13.

54 Klein, *No Logo*, 9-60 passim.

55 This is not to say that earlier corporate business leaders did not make philanthropic gestures. Andrew Carnegie, for example, built more than 2,500 public libraries in the U.S., Canada, and the United Kingdom. John D. Rockefeller donated millions to help found the University of Chicago and Spelman College. Peter Krass, *Carnegie* (Hoboken, NJ: John Wiley and Sons, 2002), 432; Grant Segall, *John D. Rockefeller: Anointed with Oil* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 39, 73.

our time.”⁵⁶ By the 1980s the notion of CSR had gained momentum and, despite the objections of critics such as Milton Friedman, by the end of the millennium, nearly all of the world’s best known companies had developed CSR initiatives.⁵⁷

While it is easy to dismiss these efforts as a mere Potemkin village, a series of sham exercises designed to deflect serious criticism and protect profits, I want to argue that (absent clear evidence to the contrary) we should avoid jumping to those sorts of conclusions. I say this for the simple reason that, although the history of corporations includes many examples of companies going out of their way to side-step democratic accountability, this is not the entire story. As I will explain more thoroughly in later chapters, at various times and in various places activists have succeeded in turning back corporate intrusions, sometimes because supposedly “heartless” executives have stepped forward and embraced an activist cause.

At a minimum this means that, despite their enormous economic and political resources, corporations are not invulnerable institutions. They are human enterprises populated by people representing a diverse range of interests, beliefs, and temperaments. In recent centuries determined social activists have been refining strategies and tactics for identifying and exploiting vulnerabilities that arise as a result of this situation. As I explain next, what most of these activists shared was a penchant for speaking uncomfortable truths in a timely fashion in order to extract significant concessions from intransigent business interests and influence the ethical standards of global markets.

56 About this same time Howard Brown argued that most businesspeople “are keenly aware of the fact that their long-run self-interest requires that they heed their social obligations.” By this view, corporate social responsibility initiatives are more than frivolous distractions; they are essential to the long-term integrity of any business. Frank W. Abrams, “Management’s Responsibilities in a Complex World,” *Harvard Business Review* 29, no. 3 (1951), 34; Howard Bowen, *Social Responsibilities of the Businessman* (New York: Harper, 1953), 124.

57 Consider, for example, that representatives from 99 nations have consulted with the International Organization for Standards’ ISO-2600 program tasked with developing international corporate social responsibility standards. Milton Friedman, “The Social Responsibility of Business is to Increase Its Profits,” *New York Times Magazine*, September 13, 1970, 17; International Organization for Standards, “ISO-2600 – Social Responsibility,” www.iso.org/iso/social_responsibility (accessed August 1, 2011).

The Marketplace as a New Field of Political Action

The corporation has become the new site of protest... rather than protesting on the doorsteps of government on Sunday afternoon when no one is there, they are protesting outside of the Niketown on Fifth Avenue.
– Naomi Klein⁵⁸

Anti-corporate activism and the general business corporation arrived on the world scene in the late eighteenth century, the same period of time which (as Jürgen Habermas has famously argued) gave birth to a vibrant public sphere.⁵⁹ The basic elements of prospective narrative disclosure (including public disclosure, kairotic strategy development, and the public circulation of iconoclastic stories) were already present in those early market-based protest campaigns and have persisted, sometimes in attenuated forms, to the present day. Over two centuries that saw the rise of the labor movement, the muckrakers, the civil rights movements, and the anti-corporate globalization movement, activist protestors have developed and refined strategies for using popular media to disclose hidden violence, circulate stories, and rally public audiences.

Early market activists faced challenges that seem almost unimaginable from a twenty-first century perspective. If they were to stand a chance of influencing business and markets, activists in the eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries had to learn how to use newspapers, pamphlets, and the public mail to coordinate the actions of large numbers of people scattered across nations and continents. None of this was possible prior to the emergence in the eighteenth century of a bourgeois public sphere that occupied a space between the private and governmental spheres. This development was due in large part to a revolution in global communication. As long distance trade lines opened channels of communication, an emergent middle class began to meet in coffee houses and salons on the continent and in the larger cities of the American colonies to discuss international business dealings and debate political issues. Habermas' account

⁵⁸ As cited in Bakan, *The Corporation*, 151.

⁵⁹ Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 14-15.

of this period has been widely criticized as contradictory in that it fails to account for the exclusion of women, minorities, and the poor.⁶⁰ Whatever the merits of these claims, they do not change the fact that the emergence of international trade, print journalism and pamphleteering during this period provided activist movements with potent tools for challenging and even dismantling regnant power structures.⁶¹

From a Bakhtinian perspective one could say that the emergence of international trade, journalism, and discussion forums created pathways for the centrifugal (and destabilizing) circulation of stories and texts. One of the most important results of these developments was the emergence of dispersed communities “based less on physical proximity than on commercial and media pathways.”⁶² Groups of people who in earlier times had been separated by vast stretches of geography gained access to new tools that enabled them to communicate with one another in regular and dependable ways.⁶³ As Charles Tilly has argued, these factors help to explain why social movements were born during this time period.⁶⁴ When geography became less of an impediment to moral action, people representing a range of heterodox political interests could begin to coordinate their efforts and work on common causes.⁶⁵

Examples of coordinated social actions targeting business interests from this time period include consumer protests in the American colonies, the Luddite rebellion, and English abolitionism. In all three actions one finds evidence of a rhetoric of disclosure (including carnivalesque inversion and intensive research practices) that foreshadows the use of prospective

60 Nancy Fraser is one of several critics who claim that because of these elisions, “the bourgeois public was never *the* public.” Nancy Fraser, “Rethinking the Public Sphere,” in *Habermas and the Public Sphere*, ed. Craig Calhoun (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1992), 116.

61 Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 15.

62 Lawrence B. Glickman, *Buying Power: A History of Consumer Activism in America* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2009), 60.

63 T.H. Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution: How Consumer Politics Shaped American Independence* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 7.

64 Charles Tilly, *Social Movements: 1768-2004* (Boulder, CO: Paradigm, 2004), 16.

65 Glickman, *Buying Power*, 60; Habermas, *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, 16.

narrative disclosure in the fully-realized anti-corporate campaigns of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries.

Turning first to consumer protests in the American colonies, two factors are especially important to an understanding of the emergence and growth of anti-corporate campaigns. First, the availability of local printing presses and the establishment of regularized trade between America and Europe in the eighteenth century enabled American colonists to coordinate protest activities across great distances. Second, the resultant protests against British authorities and their commercial allies often featured carnivalesque and grotesque themes. On the first point, when colonists from Maine to South Carolina began to shun English textiles and tea in favor of homespun clothes and homegrown herbal teas, they were able to convince Parliament of the seriousness of their objections to taxation without representation.⁶⁶ By focusing on imported goods the colonists demonstrated kairotic savvy.⁶⁷ This is because, as Edmund Burke pointed out at the time, by the middle of the eighteenth century trade with the American colonies made up a substantial portion of England's gross national product.⁶⁸ The nation could ill afford to take income from the colonies for granted. His warning proved prescient. By the 1760s colonial shoppers had distinguished themselves as having a considerable appetite for high quality fashions, ceramics, books and other goods from London; and when thousands of people in every American colony decided, *en masse*, to stop purchasing English commercial goods, they nearly crippled the empire.⁶⁹

In addition to shunning English goods, many colonists also participated in localized, carnivalesque protest events targeting government agents and small businesses. In the annual

⁶⁶ Breen, *The Marketplace of Revolution*, xv.

⁶⁷ Ibid.

⁶⁸ Ibid, 73.

⁶⁹ Ibid, 131.

Pope's Day festivities, for example, colonists donned face paint and wild costumes and (in addition to their traditional target, the radical Catholic Guy Fawkes) torched effigies of British officials charged with enforcing the hated Stamp Act.⁷⁰ Local business people caught selling British goods during this time often became the victims of "rough music" ceremonies in which masked members of a local community would hoist a merchant in the air and parade him through town to the sound of banging pots and clamoring bells.⁷¹ The offending party was often coated with tar and feathers and carried past the gallows.

Even with this background, the Boston Tea Party stood out as "the most carnivalesque event of the era... [and] a wild reversal of the traditional order."⁷² The most obvious inversion had to do with the seemingly mundane act of making a cup of tea, and involved the destruction of nearly £10,000 worth of property belonging to the East India Tea Company. The physician Thomas Young (a close associate of Samuel Adams) helped to kick off the raucous tea party by delivering a satirical speech on the ill effects of tea on human health.⁷³ The rebels (many of them dressed in Mohawk Indian disguises) then enacted a crude parody of the tea rituals of the upper classes by using block and tackle hoists to dump huge chests of tea into Boston Harbor.⁷⁴ As one participant, a journeyman blacksmith recalled, "We were merry in an undertone at the very idea of making so large a cup of tea for the fishes."⁷⁵ In other words, by making a gigantic,

⁷⁰ Gary B. Nash, *The Unknown American Revolution: The Unruly Birth of Democracy and the Struggle to Create America* (New York: Penguin, 2005), 47; Alfred Fabian Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party: Memory and the American Revolution* (Boston: Beacon Press, 2000), 102.

⁷¹ Edward Countryman, *The American Revolution* (New York: Hill and Wang, 2003), 28; Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, 102-105.

⁷² Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, 102.

⁷³ Ibid.

⁷⁴ As Philip Deloria explains, Indian disguises served several functions. They afforded rebels a degree of anonymity; they made the rebels appear more terrifying (reflecting the fictive status of Indians as symbols of terror in the national imaginary); they gave participants a license to engage in actions that were otherwise forbidden; and they enabled the rebels to shift the blame for their actions to an anonymous, marginalized *other*. Philip J. Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 10-37 passim; Norman K. Risjord, *Jefferson's America, 1760-1815* (Lanham, Maryland: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 109.

⁷⁵ Young, *The Shoemaker and the Tea Party*, 102.

undrinkable cup of tea the rebels snubbed their noses at the wealthy elite and signaled their willingness to use the marketplace as a field of political action.

Nor were the large scale coordinated actions and carnivalesque protests in the American colonies isolated events. One finds clear evidence of both practices in the English Luddite and abolitionist movements. In the first instance, that the Luddites engaged in tactical planning may seem counterintuitive since their campaign has often been dismissed as an outburst of irrational technophobia. In truth, the Luddite rebellion represented a large scale social movement among craft weavers who rallied by the thousands to meetings (public and private) in the textile region of Central England. The rallies soon gave way to violence as angry crowds attacked factories, smashed mechanized stocking frames, and terrorized former employers. As the citizens of Paris had done at the Bastille prison twenty years earlier, the mobs struck out at the machinery of power that had worked profound changes in their daily lives. The stocking looms, in other words, became a metonym for industrialization to a people struggling to make sense of dehumanizing working conditions, grinding poverty, and the demise of their craft-based culture.

And yet, as Sir George Beaumont observed at the time, the Luddites were not irrational zealots. Rather, they were a group of “empty-bellied men-ragged men-or worn-out, emaciated, half-starved, dying men.”⁷⁶ The implication of Beaumont’s observation is that, journalistic accounts from the time period notwithstanding, the Luddite rebellion ought not to be dismissed as a senseless paroxysm of violence. To the contrary, the strategic elements of their coordinated protest actions anticipate the sophisticated instrumental strategies that labor leaders such as Samuel Gompers (founder of the American Federation of Labor) and Ray Rogers (chief

⁷⁶ As cited in Jeffrey Wasserstrom, “‘Civilization’ and Its Discontents: The Boxers and Luddites as Heroes and Villains,” *Theory and Society* 16, no. 5 (1987), 680.

strategist of the Stevens campaign) would use to win labor contracts in later years.⁷⁷ Historians, in fact, now understand that the Luddites selected their targets carefully, smashing machines at only those workplaces where they believed workers had been treated most harshly and only rarely singling out managers for physical harassment.⁷⁸ As labor historian Eric Hobsbawm has observed, the rebellion was a carefully planned exercise in “collective bargaining by riot.”⁷⁹ This helps to explain why the insurrection lasted for nearly three years and had to be suppressed through military intervention. The Luddite Rebellion, in other words, may have been a violent, calamitous failure, but it was not entirely unplanned. The extensive body of literature the participants left behind provides clear evidence that they, like the American rebels, used the communicative technologies of their day (especially pamphlets and newspapers) to coordinate the public protest activities of large numbers of people over long distances and over an extended period of time.⁸⁰

The Luddites also shared the American rebels’ enthusiasm for carnivalesque inversion, albeit with a more cynical edge that reflected the darker sensibilities of a people who had become intimately familiar with deprivation and disease. One can detect this tone in popular depictions of Ned (“King”) Ludd, the mythical leader of the movement. He is typically depicted as a gigantic man dressed in women’s clothing, carrying a king’s scepter leading a phalanx of armed rebels.⁸¹ At a minimum the image reflects attempts to reduce governing authorities to a plebian level and to assert the strength of the rebellion. Beyond that, the status of Ned Ludd’s “dress” is

77 Rees, “The American Federation of Labor,” 74.

78 As Wasserstrom explains, “Machine breaking ... was generally a rational tactic rather than a paroxysm.” E. P. Thompson, *The Making of the English Working Class* (New York: Random House, 1963), 484-485; Wasserstrom “‘Civilization’ and Its Discontents,” 690.

79 Eric. J. Hobsbawm, “The Machine Breakers,” *Past & Present* 1 (1952), 59.

80 Adrian Randall, “Preface,” in *Writings of the Luddites*, ed. Kevin Binfield, xii-xviii (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), xvi.

81 Steven E. Jones, *Against Technology: From the Luddites to Neo-Luddism* (New York: Routledge, 2006), 59.

decidedly more ambiguous. When viewed in historical context it appears to reflect the active participation of women in the rebellion, anger over the hiring of women to replace men in textile factories, or both.⁸²

In other contexts, Luddite rhetors adopted an even more confrontational and menacing tone. One of the clearest examples comes from a passage in the popular ballad “General Ludd’s Triumph,” where the Luddites conduct a mock-trial of the weaving machines and sentence them to die:

These Engines of mischief were sentenced to die
By unanimous vote of the Trade
And Ludd who can all opposition defy
Was the grand Executioner made⁸³

By referencing death and execution, the anonymous author of these lines channels themes that are rendered explicit in numerous other Luddite texts that detail “famine,” “poverty,” and “outrages” in the workplace.⁸⁴ In passages such as these, where they provide graphic accounts of deprivation and use parody and satire to critique business practices, Luddite rhetors can sound remarkably contemporary. In all likelihood many of their texts could be adapted, with only minor revisions, for use in the sort of carnivalesque performances that have become commonplace events in modern day anti-corporate campaigns.

The rhetorical strategies of the Luddites resemble those of more contemporary activists in at least two other respects as well. First, as will become clearer in chapter four, their carefully planned instrumental strategies prefigure the “power on power” logic of ACTWU’s campaign

⁸² Binfield, “Introduction,” 3,168; Randall, “Preface,” xxv.

⁸³ Jones, *Against Technology*, 59.

⁸⁴ This fervent bit of verse by an unnamed Luddite author is representative of the rather extensive body of literature the movement left behind, and of its dark sensibilities:

Some folks for certain have thought it was shocking,
When famine appeals, and when poverty groans;
That life should be valued at less than a stocking,
And breaking of frames, lead to breaking of bones.

Kevin Binfield, ed., *Writings of the Luddites* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2004), 98, 116.

against J. P. Stevens. Second, by committing to a strategy that prioritized instrumental action over storytelling disclosure, the Luddites failed to appreciate the risk of debilitating blowback from their political adversaries. Indeed their inability to prevent industrialists from crushing a centuries old tradition of craft weaving had little to do with the merits of their claims. It is difficult, after all, to argue that they should not have complained about being starved out of their homes. It had everything to do with their decision to abandon public protest and attack the machinery of industrial production.

The English abolitionists, it should be recalled, employed many of the same rhetorical strategies and tactics as their Luddite contemporaries, but achieved radically different results. From the vantage point of the twenty-first century, the discrepancy between the outcomes of the two campaigns might seem easy to explain. The dissolution of the slave trade in the British Empire might seem like a predictable development – a natural end to a marginal and dehumanizing business enterprise in an era redolent with talk about “unalienable rights.” Such arguments, however, fall wide of the mark by underestimating the vitality and profitability of the international slave trade. When Thomas Clarkson, William Wilberforce, and other abolitionists began to travel the English countryside speaking in churches, town halls, and parlor rooms about the horrors of chattel slavery, the incomes of slave-related enterprises like the Company of Merchants Trading to Africa were said to have amounted to three quarters of the nation’s international earnings.⁸⁵ This number may have been inflated to bolster the claims of anti-abolitionist Members of Parliament who argued the abolishment of slavery, whatever its moral justification, would bankrupt the nation. Still, there can be little doubt that, absent the intervention of the abolitionist movement, the trafficking of African slaves could have persisted

⁸⁵ Micklethwait and Wooldridge, *The Company*, 41.

well into the nineteenth century. There was simply too much money being made. As Neta Crawford explains, “the slave trade did not end because it was no longer profitable.”⁸⁶

Crawford’s argument is important in the present context in that it makes it difficult to argue the abolitionists fared better than the Luddites because they faced an easier task. More to the point, if one is to account for radical differences in the outcomes of the two campaigns requires a more careful consideration of the abolitionists’ rhetorical strategies. At risk of oversimplification, what can be said in that regard is that the abolitionists responded to a seemingly impossible situation by staging sugar boycotts and petition campaigns and by using books, pamphlets, broadsheets, trinkets, letters to newspapers, and public oratory to rally public audiences to their cause.⁸⁷ At nearly every juncture they also used grotesque images and the first person testimonies of former slaves to disturb the consciences of the English public. Their goal in all this was to convince the English public that chattel slavery was fundamentally incompatible with the core values of Christian civilization, putting pressure on Parliament and on business merchants to end the slave trade.⁸⁸

In the present context the most striking and important quality of the abolitionists’ strategies and tactics is their resemblance to the confrontation/alliance pattern in contemporary anti-corporate activism in which activists conceive of campaigns as long-term efforts to transform the ethical standards of markets. The similarities between the two are not difficult to recognize in even a cursory review of the history of abolitionism. Merchants and politicians often took pains to distance themselves from the worst excesses of the slave trade, and when they did this they often left written records of their thoughts in the form of company memos,

⁸⁶ Neta C. Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics: Ethics, Decolonization, and Humanitarian Intervention* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 389.

⁸⁷ Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics*, 177-178; Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, 1-13.

⁸⁸ Ibid.

editorials, statements to Parliament, and the like.⁸⁹ When these same politicians and business leaders later failed to live up to the letter of their own words (as often happened), abolitionists would then have a clear point of leverage for confronting the offending party and demanding that they account for the discrepancy between what they had said and the actual lived experiences of slaves. Abolitionists would then use the response as a fulcrum point for future critiques. Through this practice of extracting minor concessions, they eventually shifted market attitudes toward human slavery and finally brought an end to the slave trade in the British Empire.

To make this gradualist strategy work, the abolitionists had to remain one step ahead of their opponents by engaging in careful research. In that regard, international travel was crucial. The abolitionist William Wilberforce, for example, wrote his widely distributed *Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade* after an extended tour of Caribbean sugar plantations where he was able to witness first-hand the violence of chattel slavery. The text reflects his outrage at what he saw:

When from the West Indies themselves I have heard the same assertion, that the negro slaves are happier than our labouring poor, let me be forgiven for declaring, that such an opinion, formed not by transient visitors but by those to whom a Negro sale, working under the whip, public and severe floggings of decent females, private punishments, and all other sad particulars of negro humiliation are thoroughly known, has, I own, created in my mind a reflection of a different character [*sic*].⁹⁰

After touring Barbados, in other words, Wilberforce could speak with authority in public debates and puncture popular fictions about the happy status of the slaves on sugar plantations.

First person investigations were important as well to the work of Wilberforce's best known ally, Thomas Clarkson, who visited the docks at Liverpool on a daily basis over several

⁸⁹ Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics*, 176.

⁹⁰ William Wilberforce, *Letter on the Abolition of the Slave Trade: Addressed to the Freeholders and Other Inhabitants of Yorkshire* (Oxford: T. Cadell and W. Davies, 1807), 201-202.

years to gather implements of the slave trade and the narratives of sailors.⁹¹ Despite several harrowing attempts on his life, Clarkson eventually assembled what amounted to a traveling museum of the Middle Passage including shackles, chains and the brutal *speculum orbis*, used to pry open the jaws of those who refused nourishment.⁹² He placed these items on display at hundreds of abolitionist meetings, large and small, throughout England. At many of these same meetings he was joined on the stage by former slaves who provided harrowing first person accounts of violence and deprivation. It was a confrontational strategy designed explicitly to create dissonance in English consciences by exposing predominantly Christian audiences to accounts of grotesque violence.⁹³

Contemporary anti-corporate activists have adopted remarkably similar strategies by conducting painstaking research in order to uncover grotesque images and stories that they can set in public circulation in order to destabilize popular sensibilities about how markets should work. Some of these modern day activists have even followed the example of earlier abolitionists like Thomas Clarkson by featuring the narratives of former slaves in their campaign protests. As I explain more thoroughly in chapter five, the best known example of this strategy may be the CIW which, during the Taco Bell campaign, conducted its own undercover investigations of human trafficking rings in Florida agriculture.⁹⁴ In more recent years the coalition has even

91 Oldfield, *Popular Politics and British Anti-Slavery*, 70-95.

92 The Abolition Project, "Thomas Clarkson - Collecting Evidence: The Abolition of Slavery Project," http://abolition.e2bn.org/box_58.html.

93 This is evident in one of his best known tracts where he writes of "Christian" slave traders who "will scourge [slaves] amidst their groans, and even smile, while they are torturing them to death." The evidence he gathered helped to fuel a raging national debate, even among the Quakers, over Christian theology and slavery. Thomas Clarkson, *An Essay on the Slavery and Commerce of the Human Species, Particularly the African* (Whitefish, MT: Kessinger, 2004), 49; Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics*, 174.

94 Other organizations that have sponsored anti-corporate campaigns focused on exposing modern day slavery include the International Labor Rights Fund (slavery in the global cotton, tobacco, and cocoa trade) and the UK group Stop the Traffik (child slavery in commercial cocoa farming in West Africa). Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "CIW Anti-Slavery Campaign," www.ciw-online.org/slavery.html (accessed November 7, 2010); International Labor Rights Forum, "Stop Child and Forced Labor," www.laborrights.org/child-and-forced-labor

followed Clarkson's lead by assembling a traveling "Modern Day Slavery Museum" featuring photographs, documents, and tangible items related to the history and continuing practice of human slavery.⁹⁵

If nothing else, these last few examples suggest that some of the anti-corporate activists of our day have been inspired by the gradualist strategies of the English abolitionists. The same cannot be said for many of the English abolitionists' activist contemporaries. I say this because, as the nineteenth century progressed, market based activism took a distinctly instrumental turn, especially in the new labor unions that emerged in response to the Industrial Revolution. Activists during this period came to prioritize the changing of short term market behaviors over changing public attitudes. One finds evidence of this shift in emphasis, for example, during the early industrial era in the U. S., a time when many journeymen craftworkers came to realize that the new emphasis on profitability and large scale production in many businesses often led to sharp decreases in their annual incomes.⁹⁶ As a direct result of this development workers in several major cities staged dozens of labor strikes and work stoppages large and small. Two of the best known incidents during this era were the Federal Society of Journeymen Cordwainers (shoemakers) strike in 1806 and a wide-scale carpenters strike in New York City in 1809.⁹⁷ The journeymen workers who participated in these actions attempted to use economic pressure to convince business leaders to pay higher wages and improve working conditions. This does not mean, however, that they abandoned rhetorical disclosure entirely. Indeed, a careful reading of the history of the rise of the labor and consumer movements in the nineteenth and twentieth

(accessed December 1, 2011); Stop the Traffik, "The Ten Campaign: Chocolate Shouldn't Cost the Life of a Child," www.stopthetraffik.org/takeaction/chocolate/ (accessed December 1, 2011).

⁹⁵ Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "The Florida Modern-Day Slavery Museum," www.ciw-online.org/freedom_march/museum.html (Accessed December 1, 2011).

⁹⁶ Howard Rock, "Revolutionary and Early National Periods," in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1195.

⁹⁷ Mark Lane, "Philadelphia Journeymen Cordwainers Strike," in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1083.

centuries shows that market-based activists demonstrated a consistent interest in time-tested strategies and tactics related to public, storytelling disclosure.

During this same era, activists representing other interests also demonstrated a preference for instrumental strategies. American abolitionists staged maple “buycotts” (i.e., purchasing maple syrup in place of sugar) in an attempt to pressure U.S. companies to stop importing slave-produced sugar from Barbados.⁹⁸ They later extended this project to include products manufactured with slave labor in the American South. The Sabbatarian movement adopted a similar strategy by asking consumers to shun businesses that manufactured or sold goods on Sundays in violation (as they saw it) of the Christian Sabbath.⁹⁹ These actions, however, did not represent the sum total of the American abolitionists and Sabbatarians’ strategies and tactics. The two groups also circulated pamphlets and news stories featuring compelling stories about things like the horrors of slavery and the scandalous hypocrisies of Sabbath-breakers.¹⁰⁰

One finds evidence of this sort of a distinctly instrumental logic as well in the Swing Riots in England in the 1830s in which agricultural laborers donned sashes and smashed threshing machines.¹⁰¹ Like the Luddites a generation earlier, the Swing movement claimed a mythical leader, Captain Swing, a tough talking rowdy who wrote threatening, ironic letters to authorities.¹⁰² As this last example suggests, even as nineteenth century protestors refined strategies and tactics for direct action against business interests, they continued to use carnivalesque parody and iconoclastic rhetorical techniques to disclose what they saw as egregious inconsistencies between discourse and practice.

98 Glickman, *Buying Power*, 63.

99 Ibid, 82.

100 Browne, “Like Gory Spectres,” 277; Alexis McCrossen, “Sabbatarianism in Nineteenth Century America,” in *Religious and Secular Reform in America: Ideas, Beliefs, and Social Change*, ed. David Keith Adams, and Cornelis A. van Minnen (New York: New York University Press: 1999), 139.

101 Eric J. Hobsbawm and George Rudé, *Captain Swing* (New Haven: Phoenix Press, 2001), xxi- xxii.

102 Katrina Navickas, “‘That Sash Will Hang You’: Political Clothing and Adornment in England, 1780–1840,” *Journal of British Studies* 49, no. 3 (2010), 561.

These early labor actions also presaged the rise of larger, more organized labor movements in the latter half of the nineteenth century, including the Knights of Labor, the American Federation of Labor, and the Trades Union Congress began to attract huge followings in the U. S. and Europe.¹⁰³ As they grew, the new labor unions pioneered direct action strategies such as collective bargaining, labor strikes, and work stoppages that would become widely practiced in decades to come.¹⁰⁴ In doing so they also provided cogent examples for activists who would follow on the limits and potential of direct action campaigns. On several occasions, as in the Pullman strike of 1894 and the massive textile workers strike of 1934, workers discovered to their misfortune that companies and governmental authorities were sometimes willing to use violence to suppress what they viewed as radical demands.¹⁰⁵ In yet other actions, including the United Auto Workers sit-down strike of 1936-37 and the long series of strikes, court cases, and work stoppages that led to the eight-hour workday, labor activists demonstrated that under the right conditions it was possible to transform corporate labor standards through persistent action.¹⁰⁶ Although historical accounts of these actions have tended to emphasize their strategic and instrumental dimensions, carnivalesque storytelling disclosure continued to play a crucial role.¹⁰⁷ One of the primary functions of a labor strike, after all, is to inspire public

103 William H. Maehl, Jr., “‘Jerusalem Deferred’: Recent Writing in the History of the British Labor Movement,” *The Journal of Modern History* 41, no. 3 (1969), 346.

104 See, for example, David Brody’s review of the history of collective bargaining: David Brody, “Collective Bargaining,” in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 275-281.

105 Daniel Cleate, *Culture of Misfortune: An Interpretive History of Textile Unionism in the United States* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2001), 49; Almont Lindsey, *The Pullman Strike: The Story of a Unique Experiment and of a Great Labor Upheaval* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 90.

106 Sidney Fine, *Sit-Down: The General Motors Strike of 1936-1937* (Ann Arbor: The University of Michigan Press, 1969), 313-342 passim; Robert Whaples, “Winning the Eight-Hour Day, 1909-1919,” *The Journal of Economic History* 50, no. 2 (1990), 393.

107 As Kenneth Tucker has observed, the European and American labor movements of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries often “combined the individualism associated with the Bohemian artistic style of the aesthetic sphere and the more communal and emotional intensity of carnival to create new criticisms of authority and discipline.... These carnivalesque and aesthetic themes arose as an alternative to capitalism, a kind of lifestyle politics that helped make labor and later social movements ‘explosive mixtures of aesthetic and political

sympathy by disclosing the ugly truth regarding wage scales and working conditions. If this were not so, then striking workers would dispense with the picket signs and parades and simply stay home from work. A picket line is a storytelling venue.

At a minimum, this brief overview of the rise of the labor movement suggests that, as time progressed, anti-corporate activists learned to develop more sophisticated strategies that were more likely to inspire public sympathy and win concessions from their corporate opponents. Even as they did this, however, labor unions and other activist groups were forced to negotiate radically evolving ideological terrain. In 1800, an abolitionist could hold up a picture of a suffering slave bearing the inscription “Am I not a man and a brother?” confident in the knowledge that any subsequent debates would, in all likelihood, be conducted on theological grounds. The abolitionists understood, in other words, that by disseminating disturbing images and stories about slavery to public audiences they were invoking Christian sensibilities regarding charity toward the poor and suffering. Nor were these concepts merely abstract notions bandied about in churches and coffee shops. They were key elements (however dimly realized) of the English and American national identities.

A century later there had been a sea change in public attitudes on both sides of the Atlantic, and activists were forced to find ways of advancing arguments in what had become a more complex and predominantly secular environment. At the start of the nineteenth century the ideas John Locke and Adam Smith had advanced about human liberty and economic individualism still sounded novel or even revolutionary.¹⁰⁸ But after a century or so of

imagination.” Kenneth H. Tucker, *Workers of the World, Enjoy!: Aesthetic Politics from Revolutionary Syndicalism to the Global Justice Movement* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2010), 107; Albrecht Wellmer, *The Persistence of Modernity: Essays on Aesthetics, Ethics, and Postmodernism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1991), 33.

¹⁰⁸ John Locke, *The Second Treatise of Government* (New York: Barnes and Noble, 2004), 4; Smith, *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, 264.

astounding economic growth and colonial expansion many, even within the academy, had come to embrace these ideas as natural law and as entirely consistent with a social Darwinian view of the world that assigned a privileged status to White Anglo-Saxon Protestants.¹⁰⁹

To make all of this even more complicated, if activists were to coordinate campaigns over large distances and disclose corporate practices to dispersed audiences, they would need to learn how to tell their stories in ways that would attract attention from the new mass media (including mass market newspapers, radio, and eventually television and digital media). One can get a sense of how activists learned to negotiate this complex new landscape by reviewing several prominent events in the history of anti-corporate protest movements in the twentieth century. These include shocking exposés of harsh working conditions in American industry, satirical responses to advertising images, and the emergence of full-scale anti-corporate campaigns alongside the civil rights and anti-war protests of the 1960s.

In the first instance, I am thinking of two well-known incidents: Lewis Hines' publication of disturbing photographs of child labor and the publication of Upton Sinclair's novel *The Jungle*. The Hines photos are important because they demonstrate how an activist organization, in this case the National Child Labor Committee (NCLC), could use a new type of public media (newspaper photography) to disclose previously occluded corporate practices which ran contrary to public sensibilities about individual liberties.¹¹⁰ At the start of the twentieth century the notion of economic freedom had been woven into the nation's historic narrative in complex ways.¹¹¹ Hines' photographs of soot-covered pre-pubescent coal miners and waifs on factory assembly

109 For a thoroughgoing discussion of the influence of the views of Adam Smith and the sociologist Herbert Spencer (credited with popularizing social Darwinism) on popular thinking during the *fin de siècle*, see: Robert H. Wiebe, *The Search for Order* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1967), 136.

110 Kate Sampsell-Willmann, *Lewis Hine as Social Critic* (Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 2009), 167.

111 Arthur M. Schlesinger, *The Cycles of American History* (New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1999).

lines did not square with Horatio Alger narratives of equal opportunity. The pictures were meant to inspire anger, and they did.

Hines crisscrossed the nation presenting “stereopticon” shows of his news photos and lecturing on child labor as a representative of the NCLC. As one journalist of the day recounted after one such presentation, the images depicted “a state of affairs, which is terrible in its reality – terrible to encounter, terrible to admit that such things exist in civilized societies.”¹¹² The quotation is instructive because it suggests how notions of economic and educational opportunity had bonded with conceptions of what counts as “civilized” and become part of the national ethos. As Robert Wiebe explained, descriptions of children as “the carrier[s] of tomorrow’s hope” would have been “utterly alien” to most public audiences only a few decades earlier. And yet, by the start of the twentieth century, Western societies struggled to square gritty photographs of child workers with popular visions of an enlightened, technological future.¹¹³

Despite these sweeping changes in public attitude, child labor proved difficult to eradicate, and it was not until the Great Depression of the 1930s, when adults began competing for jobs previously held by children, that the practice was effectively de-normalized. As evidence of the difficulty of the struggles, although Congress passed laws limiting child labor in 1916 and 1918, the Supreme Court later overturned the laws on the grounds that, as one author later explained, they “denied children the freedom to contract work.”¹¹⁴ Given this deep cultural and legal ambivalence about the status of child labor, Hine’s photographs are widely credited as having played a decisive role in helping to stay the invisible hand of the economic marketplace from extending to pre-adolescent labor.

112 Russell Freedman and Lewis Hine, *Kids at Work* (San Anselmo, CA: Sandpiper, 1998), 70.

113 Wiebe, *The Search for Order*, 169.

114 Freedman and Hine, *Kids at Work*, 94; *Hammer v. Dagenhart*. 247 U.S. 251 (1918). 247.

In the second incident from this era, Upton Sinclair claimed that in writing his novel *The Jungle* (a fictional exposé about a Lithuanian immigrant family's experiences working in the meatpacking industry) that he "aimed at the public's heart, and by accident ... hit it in the stomach."¹¹⁵ It is easy to see why this might happen given Lewis' graphic descriptions of a workplace in which rats were rampant and a worker who fell into a machine could end up in a can of lard.¹¹⁶ The novel sold more than 25,000 copies in the first six weeks and prompted President Theodore Roosevelt to call for investigations into the meatpacking industry.¹¹⁷ This, in turn, led to the passage of the 1906 meat inspection act, an event that prepared the way for the creation of the United States Food and Drug Administration.

The difficulties Hine and the NCLC faced in battling child labor and the surprising response to Lewis' novel can teach us something about the sensibilities of the times, but also about the indeterminacies of public narrative disclosures. In any era, if a political critique is to gain political leverage it must find purchase in some widely shared intuitive conception of moral standards.¹¹⁸ Such standards are not always as easily identified as one might think. The same readers who clamored for the government to clean up fetid meat packing plants appeared largely unfazed by lengthy and vivid descriptions of what amounted to wage slavery in the meatpacking industry. This does not mean that in writing his novel Sinclair missed the mark entirely. In a nation that had come increasingly to think of itself as the vanguard of Western civilization, his grotesque stories about rodent carcasses and putrid flesh were not only nauseating but radically at odds with national identity narratives. As happened in the abolitionist movement and the

115 Wilson J. Warren, *Tied to the Great Packing Machine: The Midwest and Meatpacking* (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2007), 126.

116 Upton Sinclair, *The Jungle* (New York: Doubleday, 1906), 116 -117.

117 Louis Auchincloss, *Theodore Roosevelt* (New York: Henry Holt, 2001), 102.

118 In a similar vein Frederic Jameson has argued that satiric parody requires "that still latent feeling that there exists something *normal*." Absent this sensibility, what passes for parody amounts to little more than "neutral practice." Frederic Jameson, "Postmodernism and Consumer Society," in *The Anti-Aesthetic: Essays on Postmodern Culture*, ed. Hal Foster (New York: The New York Press, 1983), 114.

American Revolution a century earlier, when the disturbing texts and tales of people like Sinclair and Hines began to circulate in centrifugal fashion among the general population they disturbed dominant narratives and prompted calls for a reformation of the political order.

As the century progressed, activists continued to view the market-place as contested terrain – an area where, by disclosing the often grim details of industrial production and by challenging corporate advertising fictions, they could advance the interests of civil society. In several instances, this involved popular authors using literary fiction to skewer corporate hyperbole. In a novel published in 1910, H. G. Wells served up a parody of rags to riches narratives and patent medicine scams by describing the rise and fall of the Tono-Bungay company (“Ton o’ Bunk, Eh?”).¹¹⁹ Two Broadway plays from the 1920s and 30s, *It Pays to Advertise* and *Nothing but Lies*, took aim at the hyperbolic claims of corporate advertising and depicted advertising and public relations professionals as scheming crooks.¹²⁰ When the nation fell on hard times during the Great Depression, large companies continued to churn out advertising campaigns, and in the process provided their critics with even more fodder for biting political satire. During the Depression years of the 1930s *Ballyhoo Magazine* published fake advertisements to draw attention to rampant poverty and encouraged people to become “toucher-uppers” by writing satirical comments on advertising billboards.¹²¹ By ridiculing the corporate advertising schemes, these authors provided yet another way of addressing the problem of finding a standard for critique in a secular era. In effect, they argued that, whatever their merits as business enterprises, corporations often failed to live up to the ethical standards of their own institutional discourse.

119 H. G. Wells, *Tono-Bungay* (New York: Penguin, 2005).

120 Stephen R. Fox *The Mirror Makers: A History of American Advertising and Its Creators* (Chicago: University of Illinois Press, 1997), 67; Erik L. Olson, “How Magazine Articles Portrayed Advertising from 1900 to 1940,” *Journal of Advertising* 24, no. 3 (1995), 43.

121 Klein, *No Logo*, 328.

The rapid diffusion of new communication technologies in the years following World War II provided anti-corporate activists with unprecedented opportunities for coordinating the activities of large numbers of people across vast geographic distances and for using public media to disclose controversial business practices that occurred in remote locations around the globe. It was in this era that full-blown anti-corporate campaigns resembling the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns began to emerge in global markets. In the next two chapters I conduct close readings of those two campaigns. Before doing that, I want focus on two examples of campaigns that helped to set the stage for these actions by demonstrating how – by staging carefully timed, high profile public protest events – activists could attract the attention of global media and tell their stories to a global audience. The first is the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) sponsored “sit-ins” at Woolworth’s lunch counters. The second is the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) campaign to convince Dow Chemical to stop the manufacturing and sale of Napalm.

Turning to the first example, SNCC’s original sit-in at a Woolworth’s lunch counter in 1960 is a clear example of a carefully thought out kairotic (or prospective) strategy in which an activist group operating on a shoe string budget was able to exploit a corporate vulnerability. This is evident, if for no other reason, because the students had no shortage of segregated dining establishments to choose from when they planned their initial protest in Greenville, South Carolina.¹²² By crossing the Jim Crow line at a Woolworth’s lunch counter they demonstrated how companies with a national presence were perpetuating racism in the South through passive complicity. Their refusal to leave the lunch counter when asked constituted a violation of social decorum that cost nothing and could be copied easily by others. In an earlier era, such an action

¹²² David Vogel, *Lobbying the Corporation: Citizen Challenges to Business Authority* (New York: Basic Books, 1978), 24-25.

might have attracted local attention. But in 1960 the story about “Negro” students attempting to cross a racial barrier was quickly picked up by the Associated Press, United Press International, and the *New York Times*.¹²³ By the time Woolworth’s announced the full desegregation of its lunch counters nationwide six months later, an estimated 50,000 people had participated in sit-ins at company stores in 54 cities in nine states.¹²⁴

SNCC’s Woolworth’s campaign was but one of several large scale civil rights oriented anti-corporate campaigns during this time period, including Saul Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) campaign against Kodak and the United Farm Workers’ (UFW) national grape boycotts led by Cesar Chavez.¹²⁵ In each instance the sponsoring organization staged high profile actions that drew the attention of national media to disclose, not only discrepancies between corporate discourse and corporate actions, but how corporations often failed to comply with a growing body of civil rights related federal legislation and judicial rulings.¹²⁶

One finds a similar emphasis on kairotic timing and the identification of corporate hypocrisies in anti-corporate campaigns sponsored by radical student groups during this same period. Student activists improved upon media strategies of the civil rights movement by focusing even more intently on staging visual spectacles designed to attract the attention of journalists from around the globe. By the late 1960s, activist groups such as the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were developing anti-corporate campaigns in relation to protests against the Vietnam War, and in so doing, they helped to pioneer the centrifugal dissemination of

123 Gene Roberts and Hank Klibanoff, *The Race Beat: The Press, the Civil Rights Struggle, and the Awakening of a Nation* (New York: Vintage Books, 2007), 223.

124 Polletta, *It Was Like a Fever*, 32.

125 Vogel reviews these events in the second chapter of his influential book *Lobbying the Corporation*. Vogel, *Lobbying the Corporation*, 23-68 passim.

126 Vogel, *Lobbying the Corporation*, 18.

activist arguments and stories via the new visual medium of television.¹²⁷ As former SDS leader and media critic Todd Gitlin observed, “for their different reasons the media and the movement needed each other. The media needs stories, preferring the dramatic; the movement needed publicity for recruitment, for support, and for political effect.”¹²⁸ In this passage Gitlin is speaking generally about the tenuous and sometimes counter-productive relationship between the SDS and mass media in the 1960s and 70s, a time when the group was engaged in war protests on college campuses across the nation.

Gitlin’s observations about the relationship of student radicals and global media are germane to a discussion of anti-corporate activism because he was also signaling the war protestors’ interest in using media events to challenge the actions of corporations in general and Dow Chemical in particular.¹²⁹ They were interested in Dow for one reason: it owned the federal contract to manufacture Napalm (a controversial form of jellied gasoline) for military use in Vietnam. As with the Woolworth’s sit-ins only a few years earlier, the Dow campaign was calibrated to disclose a corporate practice that was linked to a contentious issue of public significance. The Napalm contract amounted to less than one percent of the company’s sales in

127 Todd Gitlin, *The Whole World is Watching: Mass Media in the Making and Unmaking of the New Left* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 14.

128. As Gitlin explains later in the book, although the phrase “the movement” eluded precise definitions, he used it to refer to

several thousand young people who, in 1963 and 1964, began to casually call themselves “the movement,” to *know* themselves as “the movement,” and to speak of their responsibilities within “the movement.” ... By “the movement” some meant specifically the civil rights movement, but the term usually referred to both black and white activists who shared some commitment to the realization of civil rights, peace, and some sort of radically democratic political-economic and cultural transformation, and who believed in undertaking some sort of direct action toward those ends.... In this movement that was both distinct and, at its boundaries, loosely defined, the two major national organizations were Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) and the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee.

Gitlin. *The Whole World is Watching*, 24, 293-294.

129 In their well-known *Port Huron Statement* written in 1962, the SDS described corporations as “[e]conomic minorities not responsible to a public in any democratic fashion [that] make decisions of a more profound importance than even those made by Congress...” Students for a Democratic Society, *The Port Huron Statement* (Chicago: Charles H. Kerr, 1990), 22.

1967.¹³⁰ Nevertheless, it provided a perdurable link between Dow Chemical and some of the most controversial events in the Vietnam War. It enabled protestors to argue that the company had profited from the death and disfigurement of innocent women and children.

The Dow campaign began in the fall of 1966, ran through the fall of 1969, and featured a long series of events tailored to attract the attention of the press.¹³¹ A group of nuns, priests and draft resisters broke into Dow's offices in Washington, D.C. and threw blood on its filing cabinets.¹³² Student groups staged 183 protests against the company over two years, many of them featuring graphic images of civilians and soldiers who had been disfigured or killed by burning napalm.¹³³ The Medical Committee for Human Rights sponsored a first of its kind shareholder resolution advocating the company halt sales of napalm for military purposes.¹³⁴ And the SDS worked with several other activist groups to sponsor a national boycott of Saran Wrap and other consumer products manufactured by Dow.

By 1969, the company had had enough and it quietly backed away from Napalm by submitting an intentionally high bid for renewal of their federal contract to supply the product to the U.S military.¹³⁵ The strategy worked. Dow Chemical lost the contract, but by then the damage to the company's reputation had already been done. Many in the public had already come to associate the "decisions of a major chemical corporation with charred infants."¹³⁶ That some members of Dow's management expressed anxiety about this development suggests yet another technique activists have used to gain rhetorical leverage against corporations in a diverse and secular age. They placed the company name in dialogic tension with actions so extreme that

¹³⁰ Vogel, *Lobbying the Corporation*, 43.

¹³¹ Ibid.

¹³² Ibid, 44.

¹³³ Vogel, *Lobbying the Corporation*, 44; Tom Wells, *The War Within: America's Battle over Vietnam* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1994), 84.

¹³⁴ Vogel, *Lobbying the Corporation*, 45.

¹³⁵ Ibid, 48.

¹³⁶ Ibid, 49.

they were likely to offend the moral sensibilities of anyone (including company management), regardless of their religious or cultural identifications.

In the present context, the campaigns against Dow Chemical and Woolworth's are important in that they demonstrate how anti-corporate activists were able to adapt ancient rhetorical techniques and time-tested campaign strategies in an age of global media. More to the point, they used rhetorical practices similar to those that market-based activists had been using since the eighteenth century to coordinate actions, disclose hidden violence, set disturbing stories in the public circulation and destabilize dominant fictions. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, activists were learning to adapt their practices to the exigencies of a more secular and inter-connected era. In the years since, they have developed strategies for disclosing violence and appealing to public consciences that do not rely on partisan religious sensibilities. As activists refined their rhetorical techniques, and as activists around the globe gained access to new communication technologies, the number of anti-corporate campaigns increased exponentially. By the start of the new millennium people across the globe had become accustomed to hearing and reading about anti-corporate campaigns like the National Labor Committee's (NLC) Kathie Lee Gifford campaign, the United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS) Nike campaign, and the numerous environmentally-oriented protest actions sponsored by Greenpeace.¹³⁷ These anti-corporate campaigns are but the best known of hundreds in recent years, and they represent an unprecedented wave of anti-corporate activism at the international level. In the second half of this chapter I provide more in-depth histories of two of the best

¹³⁷ For discussions of the nature and impact of these campaigns see: David Boje, "Nike, Greek Goddess of Victory or Cruelty? Women's Stories of Asian Factory Life," *Journal of Organizational Change Management* 11, no. 6 (1998), 461-480; Kevin Deluca, *Image Politics: The New Rhetoric of Environmental Activism* (New York: Guilford Press, 1999); Michele Micheletti and Dietlind Stolle, "Mobilizing Consumers to Take Responsibility for Global Social Justice," *Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science: 611, The Politics of Consumption/The Consumption of Politics* (May, 2007), 157-175.

known campaigns of the current era, each of which has helped to shape the practice of anti-corporate activism in the twenty-first century.

Reflecting on History

The history of cooperative business ventures in the West can be traced back at least three thousand years, however, it was not until the eighteenth century that governments began to issue charters for a new type of cooperative business venture known as the general business corporation . Many investors and politicians were initially wary of the new arrangement. It was not until American and British authorities offered limited liability to anyone willing to invest in large scale railroad projects that corporation's began to attract large numbers of investors. By the closing decades of the nineteenth century, these same governments were under pressure to find ways of curbing the monopoly power and political influence of large corporations such as Standard Oil and the United States Steel Corporation. One of the ways companies responded to their critics in the governmental and public spheres was by developing powerful public relations and advertising strategies for the purpose of managing public opinion and wooing customers. As testimony to the success of their efforts, by the close of the twentieth century corporate advertising and public relations messages had become a sort of wallpaper of daily life for consumers in the developed world. As Naomi Klein has argued, the new corporate globalization has given us a "New Branded World."¹³⁸

The same companies whose brands now crowd for our attention in retail stores and on computer screens have also developed elaborate international supply networks for manufacturing and delivering goods and services to consumers in an efficient manner and at the lowest possible cost. What consumers see are the glittering facades – the TV ads, product labels, and billboards. But the global corporate supply chains operate quietly in the background. The entire corporate

¹³⁸ Klein, *No Logo*, 3.

system (including supply networks, advertising and public relations schemes, and the legal firewalls that protect investors) serve to diffuse ethical responsibility and prevent recognition of things like substandard wages, environmental dumping, or sexism. In fact, two centuries after governments began to issue corporate charters, anti-corporate activists continue to struggle to respond to exigencies that sound remarkably similar to those the Luddites and abolitionists faced two hundred years ago: unemployment, harsh working conditions, and even chattel slavery.

In their efforts to respond to these sorts of egregious harms, the activist movements I have reviewed have consistently stressed the importance of public transparency. English philosopher and social reformer Jeremy Bentham provided a cogent explanation of the activist argument for transparency when he wrote: “[T]he grand security of securities is publicity:—exposure—the completest exposure of the whole system of procedure—whatever is done by anybody, being done before the eyes of the universal public. By this means, appropriate moral aptitude may be maximized—appropriate intellectual aptitude may be maximized—appropriate active aptitude may be maximized.”¹³⁹ In the present context this means that if corporations are to be persuaded to operate in socially responsible ways, the first step is public transparency. In other words when consumers, investors, and management are operating with roughly the same information, or so the logic goes, radical transformations in business practices and market standards become possible.

Some critics of corporate practices have objected to this line of reasoning by questioning whether corporations, as currently conceived, are even capable of recognizing social responsibilities. Authors such as Robert Monk and Nell Minow have their doubts. They argue that the corporation is essentially “an externalizing machine the same way a shark is a killing machine – no malevolence, no intentional harm, just something designed with sublime efficiency

139 Jeremy Bentham, *Principles of Judicial Procedure*,” (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1839), 8.

for self-preservation, which it accomplishes without any capacity to factor in the consequences to others.”¹⁴⁰ A corporation, that is, must be viewed for what it is: an amoral business enterprise designed for the express purpose of side-stepping legal accountability in order to generate profits for shareholders.¹⁴¹

Although Monk and Minow are contemporary authors, their shark analogy echoes a common theme in anti-corporate rhetoric since the eighteenth century: corporations are impersonal organizations that prioritize profits over people. Over the history of anti-corporate activism some activist groups have stressed this line of thinking more doggedly than others. Many in the labor and environmental movements, for example, have followed the lead of the Luddites by viewing management at any corporation they target as an intransigent enemy that must be defeated through direct instrumental action. Any attempt to domesticate a shark is ultimately futile. Other activists have followed the lead of the abolitionists by looking beyond limited liability laws in order to appeal to the consciences of individual managers, investors, and consumers. From abolitionist campaigners such as William Wilberforce, to “toucher-uppers” during the Depression, to modern day anti-corporate protest groups like the CIW – these activists have adopted a more patient, gradualist strategy aimed at using timely disclosures to shift market practices over long periods of time.

When viewed in historical context, these differences basically amount to a variation in strategic emphasis. A careful review of the history of market-based protest movements in the West makes clear that for more than two centuries anti-corporate activists (even those who view corporations as incorrigible institutions) have shared an interest in using narrative disclosure to rally public audiences in support of their causes. Since the earliest days of the Industrial

¹⁴⁰ Monks and Minow, *Power and Accountability*, 24.

¹⁴¹ Bakan, *The Corporation*, 60; Robert Monks and Nell Minow, *Power and Accountability: Restoring the Balances of Power between Corporations and Society* (New York: Harper Collins, 1991), 24.

Revolution, activists have staged carnivalesque performances, displayed grotesque images, and circulated disturbing stories – all in an effort to disclose secretive practices and convince powerful business enterprises to change their ways.

In the next two chapters I provide case studies of the campaigns against the J. P. Stevens and Taco Bell Corporations respectively. The former campaign was conceived as a power on power confrontation between a textile union and one of the nation's largest textile manufacturers. As such it constitutes a paradigm instance of a martial campaign, featuring direct action strategies including labor strikes and consumer boycotts aimed at extracting specific concessions from management, all the while downplaying any attempts to change management attitudes toward the union cause. By contrast the Taco Bell campaign counts as a paradigm example of a confrontation/alliance campaign that was conceived from the beginning as a long-term effort to change the attitudes of certain corporate leaders and investors toward the CIW's activist claims and thereby influence the defacto corporate social responsibility standards of international markets.

Chapter 4: “Power on Power” Campaigning: ACTWU versus J. P. Stevens

“The greater the number of temptations to which the exercise of political power is exposed, the more necessary it is to give to those who possess it, the most powerful reasons for resisting them.”

Jeremy Bentham¹

What I am calling the Stevens campaign was actually the culminating event in a seventeen-year effort to unionize J. P. Stevens and, ultimately, the Southern textile industry.² In this study I am primarily interested in the years 1976 – 1980, the time period during which the innovative young labor organizer Ray Rogers and his associates at Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union (ACTWU) developed and implemented their novel “corporate campaign” strategies, including a national boycott of J. P. Stevens’ products. If we are to understand the importance of the Stevens campaign in union history, and as an exemplar for later anti-corporate activists, the conflict must first be placed in historical context.

My discussion of these themes begins with a fairly detailed history of the Stevens campaign, including an opening gloss on how a legacy of labor-related violence and institutionalized racism in the American South contributed to a long-term standoff between labor and management in the U. S. textile industry. I then provide a more extensive overview of important events in the Stevens campaign, beginning with the strategic merger of the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA) and the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) and continuing on to a discussion of prominent events such as the staging of a national boycott and the strategic shifting of union retirement funds among various banks in order to gain economic leverage against company management. I conclude this first section of

¹ Jeremy Bentham, “On Publicity,” in *The Works of Jeremy Bentham: Part VIII*, ed. John Bowring (Edinburgh: William Tait, 1839), 310.

² TWUA kicked off the campaign by distributing a brochure entitled “America’s Stake in the South” in which they outlined their plans for influencing wages and working conditions in the entire region. Textile Workers Union of America, *America’s Stake in the South*, undated pamphlet, folder 216, box 1462, ACTWU NC Joint Board, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

the chapter by discussing culminating events in the Stevens campaign, as well as events from several subsequent campaigns that employed martial strategies similar to those ACTWU used against J. P. Stevens. In the second half of the chapter I conduct a critical analysis of several key moments in the Stevens campaign in order to show how they exemplify the martial typology within prospective narrative disclosure. The chapter concludes with a discussion of how the Stevens campaign has influenced the attitudes and practices of anti-corporate activists and corporate managers in subsequent years.

The J. P. Stevens Campaign: A Brief History

In the early decades of the twentieth century U. S. textile manufacturers began to move their factories from the heavily unionized states in New England and the Mid-Atlantic region to the American South where “right to work” laws insured they would have access to a steady supply of “one hundred percent Anglo-Saxon, cheap, contented labor.”³ During this era communities like Roanoke Rapids, North Carolina (which later became the focal point of the Stevens campaign) developed into paternalistic “mill towns” where textile companies were not only the chief employers, they also typically held title to their employees homes and maintained controlling interests in local governments, small businesses, and hospitals.⁴ Textile companies – quite literally – managed employee’s lives from cradle to grave. This hardly means, of course, that Northern industrialists had no interest in preserving Southern culture. When companies like J. P. Stevens set up shop south of the Mason-Dixon line they quickly adapted to local traditions

3 Mimi Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise: A Portrait of Southern Textile Workers* (New York: Anchor Press, 1979), 12.

4 Roanoke Rapids was in nearly all respects a quintessential mill town. It was founded in the 1890s in the closing years of the “Cotton Mill Campaign” (an organized attempt by Southern lawmakers and business interests to attract Northern manufacturers). By 1913, the community’s chief architect, Sam F. Patterson “was more than merely the principal employer in Roanoke Rapids. By himself and through his mill bosses, Patterson was the town’s landlord, its merchant, its mayor, school principal, police chief, and patron of social and religious welfare.” Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 15; Jacquelyn Hall, et. al., *Like a Family: the Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 157; Henry B. Leifermann, *Crystal Lee: A Woman of Inheritance* (New York: MacMillan, 1975), 47-48.

by hiring Blacks for only the most menial and demanding jobs – typically as janitors or cotton bail handlers.⁵ Women could work on the factory floor, but they rarely advanced to higher paying supervisory positions.⁶

The history of the J. P. Stevens Company exemplifies these patterns.⁷ In 1813, Nathaniel Stevens opened a textile mill in Massachusetts to produce woolen fabrics. The family business prospered quickly, and in 1865 Nathaniel's grandson, John P. Stevens, took the helm and expanded into retail marketing.⁸ By the start of WWI the company was one of the nation's largest textile manufacturers, boasting corporate offices in Manhattan and nine cotton mills scattered throughout New England. In 1929, Yale educated Robert Ten Broeck Stevens succeeded his father as president of the company, and by 1946 Stevens had taken the company public and accelerated efforts to close down mills in the Northeast and Mid-Atlantic states and open them in the South.⁹ Between 1951 and 1980 the company closed nineteen northern manufacturing facilities, eight of which were unionized.¹⁰ Stevens remained at the helm of the

5 Timothy J. Minchin, *Hiring the Black Worker: The Racial Integration of the Southern Textile Industry*, (Chapel Hill, NC: 1999), 3; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 23.

6, Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 23; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Re-cid'i-vist," undated campaign pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, 7.

7 One finds a similar pattern of centripetal discourse and convenient erasures in other corporate communications from the time. See for example the pamphlet "J. P. Stevens Today," which provides a glowing overview of the company's history and its several divisions. J. P. Stevens and Company, "J. P. Stevens Today;" J. P. Stevens and Company, "Straightening Things Out," company pamphlet, dated February 15, 1977, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, 20; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 14.

8 John N. Ingham and Lynne B. Feldman, *Contemporary American Business Leaders: A Biographical Dictionary*. (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Press, 1990), 662; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 14; Melissa Walker, Charles Reagan Wilson, and James C. Cobb, eds. *The New Encyclopedia of Southern Culture: Volume 11: Agriculture and Industry* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2008), 323; Richard J. Whalen, "The Durable Threads of J. P. Stevens," *Fortune*, April, 1963.

9 Ingham, *Contemporary American Business Leaders*, 662; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 15.

10 J. P. Stevens was hardly exceptional in its decision to move manufacturing operations to the South. In 1910 only 39% of the nation's cotton textile and thread making capacity was located south of the Mason-Dixon Line. By the early 1970s, the number had grown to 90%; Clete, *Culture of Misfortune*, 262; James A. Gross, *Broken Promise: The Subversion of U.S. Labor Relations Policy, 1947-1994* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2003), 177; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 10.

company until his retirement in 1974, stepping aside only briefly from 1951-53, to serve as Secretary of the Army. His hand-picked successor, James D. Finley, is said to have shared Stevens' passion for military precision, as well as his life-long antipathy toward labor unions. By the 1970s the J. P. Stevens Company was the nation's second largest textile manufacturer with 46,000 employees and 1.1 billion dollars in annual sales.¹¹

When the Textile Workers Union of America (TWUA) set a goal of expanding its presence in the American South, J. P. Stevens made an appealing target for several reasons. First, it was a major manufacturer, and union leaders reasoned any progress made in organizing J. P. Stevens would make it easier to recruit workers in factories run by other companies.¹² Second, they reasoned the timing was right for a major push in the South.¹³ Union's had made two previous, unsuccessful attempts to organize large numbers of textile workers in the region. In the first effort, the famous "Uprising of '34," factory owners – often working in cooperation with state and local officials – used overt violence and intimidation to suppress a general strike involving more than 170,000 mill workers.¹⁴ Just over a decade later the new TWUA sponsored "Operation Dixie" (1946-1953). Once again, management responded strenuously – albeit with less violence – and the union succeeded in recruiting fewer than 12,000 new members.¹⁵ For the next decade or so, the TWUA concentrated on organizing small factories in the region, but by 1963 they concluded the time had come for another large scale organizing effort in the Southern

11 Gross, *Broken Promise*, 177.

12 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens and the National Labor Relations Law," undated ACTWU flier, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Clete, *Culture of Misfortune*, 262; Gross, *Broken Promise*, 177; Textile Workers Union of America, *America's Stake in the South*, 8.

13 Textile Workers Union of America, *America's Stake in the South*, 8; Clete, *Culture of Misfortune*, 178.

14 Half a million people participated nationwide, making it the largest labor strike in the nation's history. Daniel Clark, "Textile Workers Union of America," in *Encyclopedia of U.S. Labor and Working-Class History*, ed. Eric Arnesen (New York: Routledge, 2007), 1373; Clete, *Culture of Misfortune*, 178; Anita Price Davis, *North Carolina during the Great Depression: A Documentary Portrait of a Decade* (Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2003), 183.

15 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 12.

textile industry. A primary reason for the decision was that, as a result of the dramatic social and legal advancements of the Civil Rights Movement, textile factories had been forced to hire more Black and female workers.¹⁶ Changes in civil rights standards and labor laws had also made it more difficult for companies to intimidate or fire workers for participating in union activities.

This hardly meant management at all manufacturing facilities had become equally tolerant. The J.P. Stevens Company, in particular, was highly vulnerable to anti-corporate activism because it appeared to be swimming against the current. As one NLRB examiner concluded, over several decades the company had made “a systematic attempt to rid itself of union adherents.”¹⁷ TWUA leaders calculated (in kairotic fashion) that by targeting a corporation with an extensive record of NLRB violations, they could more easily build a case at local mills and in the press regarding the benefits of union representation in the American South.¹⁸

J. P. Stevens’ management team apparently decided early on to oppose the TWUA’s organizing campaign at every juncture, even if this required violating NLRB regulations and paying large fines.¹⁹ That said, Robert T. Stevens and other company executives claimed they never sanctioned racism or sexism, and they aggressively defended J. P. Stevens as providing safe work environments and jobs that paid well for tens of thousands of people.²⁰ In his only media interview on the subject, Stevens rejected union efforts to frame the company as a serial law-breaker. Clearly incensed, he told a Virginia newspaper, “You know, we haven’t existed in

16 Textile Workers Union of America, *America’s Stake in the South*, 5; Adam Fairclough, *A Better Day Coming: Blacks and Equality, 1890-2000* (New York: Viking, 2001), 279-81; Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 24.

17 1978 ACTWU Convention Proceedings, 200, as cited in Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 27.

18 As Harold McIver of the AFL-CIO later explained, “We organized J. P. Stevens up in New England way back by AF of L.; and they shut down and come down south. So I saw it as a way to really change the environment and change the working lives of Southerners in general [*sic*].” Harold McIver, in an interview conducted by Chris Lutz, September 26, 1995, accession number: 95-12, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Minchin, “J. P. Stevens Campaign,” 707.

19 Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 28.

20 Si Lappa, “Stevens Looks upon Union as Third-Party Intruder,” *Daily News Record*, August 28, 1967, 22-23.

this country and this industry, and made progress, for 154 years by being law breakers, despite what some people would have you think.”²¹ In other words, regardless of his company’s long history of NLRB violations, he steadfastly maintained the company his great-grandfather had founded continued to be what it had always been – a preeminently professional and benevolent organization.

This confident assessment aside, the case the union had been building against Robert Stevens’ family enterprise proved difficult to dismiss. In the late 1970s, union organizers distributed a booklet with the stark title *Re·cid’i·vist* in which they provided detailed information on NLRB and federal court rulings against J.P. Stevens during the 1970s, a period when the company claimed to have addressed some of the more egregious issues union activists had raised a decade earlier.²² The title of the booklet comes from a 1977 legal action in which a judge representing the United States Court of Appeals argued J.P. Stevens’ long history of anti-union activism had “earned the company its reputation as the most notorious *recidivist* in the field of labor law [emphasis added].”²³ The booklet sub-divided rulings against the company into five categories: “Discharges” (“firing workers who tried to exercise their right to organize.”); “Intimidation” (a long list of illegal practices including “Threatening... Discriminating... [F]iring... [and] Blacklisting”); “Bad Faith Bargaining” (“contumaciously failed to bargain in good faith” when unions won bargaining rights); “Equal Employment” (systematic denial of employment opportunities and fair wages to African Americans); “Health and Safety” (48 OSHA violations in North Carolina alone for 1977, including “failure to protect machine operators from hazards... Excessive cotton dust... [and] “Noise levels... 20 times the OSHA standard.”); and

21 Ibid.

22 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Re·cid’i·vist.”

23 Ibid.

“Contempt of Court.”²⁴ The detailing of litigation themes is important in this context as it provides a convenient summary of persistent themes in the discourse of the Stevens campaign.²⁵

It is important as well in that it reveals what Robert T. Stevens could not. J. P. Stevens had earned a reputation as a company which “deliberately took their chances [by ignoring the courts and the NLRB] because they thought it profitable for them to do so.”²⁶ The conclusion squares with the historic record. By the time J. P. Stevens’ management decided to give in to ACTWU’s demands in the fall of 1980, the company had acquired the most extensive record of federal labor violations in the history of the U. S textile industry.²⁷

Judicial and regulatory rulings aside, J. P. Stevens’ hard-nosed techniques for dealing with unions were highly effective in at least one respect. They prevented large numbers of employees at most of the company’s textile mills from siding openly with the union. Organizers were reporting that although many workers were privately sympathetic toward the union cause, they feared speaking out, lest they be demoted or fired or – worse – lest the company shut down the factory and transfer their jobs elsewhere.²⁸ After ten years of concerted efforts, the TWUA had succeeded in winning elections in only ten of Stevens’ 160 factories.²⁹ The epicenter of support for unionization was the large complex of mills in and around Roanoke Rapids where, in

²⁴ Ibid.

²⁵ Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens: The Company,” undated campaign pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens and its Record of Discrimination and Employment Practices,” undated campaign pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

²⁶ Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Re-cid’i-vist.”

²⁷ Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 27, 28, 91.

²⁸ Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens and the National Labor Relations Law,” J. Gary DiNunno, “J. P. Stevens: Anatomy of an Outlaw,” article from *The AFL-CIO American Federationist*, April, 1976, reprinted by ACTWU for use as a campaign pamphlet, Textile Industry folder, box 61, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, 2.

²⁹ Philip Shabecoff, “J.P. Stevens Pact: Breakthrough, but War Goes on,” *New York Times*, October 21, 1980; Philip Shabecoff, “Stevens Pact Is Ratified, Encouraging Unions in South,” *New York Times*, October 20, 1980.

1974, after several years of intense effort, a majority of the workers had voted in favor of unionization.³⁰ Two years later, negotiations between labor and management had yet to produce a bargaining agreement, and union leaders became convinced they would need to make fundamental changes in their campaign strategies if they were to persuade the company to bargain in good faith. After extended discussions among representatives from TWUA, the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America (ACWA), the AFL-CIO, Carolina Citizens for Economic Justice, and the Institute for Southern Studies, union leaders settled on a plan for a complex and expensive campaign featuring a national boycott of J. P. Stevens' products.³¹ They hired a controversial young labor activist named Ray Rogers to help plan the action. Rogers had come to the attention of union leadership in the Farah Jeans boycott two years earlier where he played a key role in convincing merchants in Birmingham, Alabama to stop selling slacks manufactured by non-union workers.³²

According to a confidential ACTWU "Blue Print," union leadership expected the new strategy would cost nearly 2.5 million dollars and require the hiring of between 50 and 60 new organizing staff.³³ The blue print makes clear as well that the boycott would be only one component of a three-pronged offensive "aimed at [J. P. Stevens'] plants, in the courts, and in the marketplace."³⁴ In practice, this meant the union would redouble its efforts to educate and organize workers, continue to challenge Stevens before the NLRB, and take advantage of "the

30 Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 10; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 74.

31 ACTWU had already decided on the basic framework for the boycott of J. P. Stevens before they hired Rogers. The Institute for Southern Studies provided a detailed proposal for the campaign in May of 1976 about the same time Rogers joined the campaign organizing staff. Bob Arnold, et. al., "Confidential: To: Interested Parties," memo from Institute for Southern Studies to ACTWU dated May 10, 1976, folder 1, box 3374, Emory Via collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Frank W. Emig, untitled memorandum and attached proposal containing joint AFL-CIO/ACTWU "blueprint" for Stevens campaign, dated June 8, 1976, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 76.

32 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 122; Rogers, interview by author.

33 Emig, untitled memorandum.

34 Ibid.

lessons learned in the massive Farah boycott of 1972-74... [in order] to mobilize the labor movement and friendly forces in the community against Stevens [*sic*] consumer products.”³⁵ With these goals in mind, ACTWU officials appointed Ray Rogers “boycott director,” and he oversaw the development and implementation of a novel set of strategies and tactics he dubbed the “corporate campaign.”³⁶ The new techniques emerged from a period of intensive research and strategy development.³⁷ Beginning in 1976, the boycott staff worked closely with the Corporate Data Exchange (CDE) to conduct intensive research on the J. P. Stevens Corporation and its board of directors.³⁸ The staff then used what they learned to develop a complex campaign strategy that drew upon public disclosure tactics pioneered in the Farah boycott and proxy voting strategies first used by Saul Alinsky’s Industrial Areas Foundation.³⁹ Rogers and the ACTWU boycott staff refined these techniques by developing plans for disclosing information pinpointing the economic and inter-organizational interests of individual executives and for tactically shifting union funds among major banks.⁴⁰ By combining a wide range of carefully timed campaign strategies and tactics (including pension fund investment strategies, consumer boycotts, union organizing drives, and disclosures of little-known financial

35 In a confidential inter-office memo from 1976, AFL-CIO organizer Harold McIver wrote of a crucial need for “establishing provable company knowledge” regarding NLRB violations and threatened plant closures in order to recruit more members to the union and maintain pressure on management to bargain in good faith with union representatives. Emig, untitled memorandum; Harold McIver, untitled, confidential memorandum to J. P. Stevens boycott staff regarding organizing efforts, dated September 15, 1976, folder 38, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

36 Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 51; Rogers, interview by author.

37 I found evidence that ACTWU conducted intensive research on J. P. Stevens before starting the campaign in a variety of documents on file in the Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University in Atlanta. Examples include: Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “A Profile of J. P. Stevens,” undated internal document, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens: The Company,” McIver, untitled, confidential memorandum to J. P. Stevens boycott staff regarding organizing efforts.

38 Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 54.

39 Rogers references Alinsky in the documents listed in Appendix B. For a review of Alinsky’s approach to anti-corporate activism, see his well-known work *Rules for Radicals*. Saul Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals* (New York: Vintage, 1972); Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 53-54; Rogers, interview by author.

40 See Appendix B for an illustration of the process.

relationships) the union hoped to keep management perpetually off-balance, thereby gaining a tactical advantage against a more powerful opponent.⁴¹ In a *New York Times* interview from 1984, Rogers provided a pointed summation of the new technique. Unions are unlikely to get very far, he claimed, “by simply trying to harass and embarrass” management. If they are to win concessions, a campaign must “organize” labor and “disorganize” with a “divide and conquer strategy” in which corporate interests are pitted against one another and “forced to deal with inescapable economic and political pressure.”⁴² From Rogers’ perspective, in other words, in any given anti-corporate campaign disclosure strategies can certainly help to shape public perceptions and encourage public participation, but the primary field of conflict will always be material.⁴³ Corporations can ignore ideas, but they will always pay attention to money. For this reason, a battle against a corporation will always be an expensive, complex, and highly confrontational affair.

Some union staff wondered aloud whether Rogers’ plans were too ambitious, time consuming, and expensive.⁴⁴ In the end, the Stevens campaign was undeniably costly, but it also exceeded the expectations of many critics within the labor movement by attracting international attention for the boycott and by convincing management to honor labor contracts at those facilities where ACTWU had won elections.⁴⁵

41 Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, xiii; Rogers, interview by author.

42 Rogers was not alone in calling for unions to find ways of using retirement pension funds to influence the practices of large corporations. In their 1976 book *The North Will Rise Again*, Jeremy Rifkin and Randy Barber argued labor unions could use activist investment strategies to check “job flight” from the industrialized Northeast to “right to work” states in the rural South. Under Rogers’ guidance ACTWU sponsored several such shareholder resolutions as part of the Stevens campaign. While the resolutions appear to have done little to slow the pace of job flight, they were among the earliest salvos in the activist “shareholder revolution” that began in the late twentieth century. Marleen O’Connor, “Labor’s Role in the Shareholder Revolution,” in *Working Capital: The Power of Labor’s Pensions*, ed. Archon Fung, Tessa Hebb, and Joel Rogers (Ithaca, NY: ILR Press, 2001), 67; Jeremy Rifkin and Randy Barber, *The North Will Rise Again: Pensions, Politics, and Power in the 1980s* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1978), 160-164; William Serrin, “Organized Labor Is Increasingly Less So,” *New York Times*, November 18, 1984.

43 Rogers, interview by author.

44 Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens! The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 161-62.

45 Ibid, 117-120.

The boycott committee kicked off the new campaign at J. P. Stevens Corporation's Annual Stockholders' Meeting, held in Manhattan in February of 1976.⁴⁶ At that meeting the Interfaith Center for Corporate Responsibility (ICCR) used proxy votes to introduce two "disclosure" resolutions. Specifically, the ICCR wanted management to provide demographic information on the company's workforce (in order to demonstrate compliance with the Civil Rights Act of 1964) and a detailed accounting of the company's history of NLRB violations (so they could assess "the potential financial impact of protracted conflict with the unionizing effort"⁴⁷). The ICCR arranged for a dozen or so people to speak in favor of the resolution, including a Catholic nun, an elderly woman suffering from brown lung disease, and Coretta Scott King, widow of the slain civil rights leader. When her turn came to speak, Ms. King quoted her husband who "at the height of the Montgomery bus protest ... said 'Our struggle is not toward putting the bus company out of business, but toward putting justice in business.'"⁴⁸ Her brief remarks received a standing ovation from all of the protestors and most of the shareholders present. The company board and executives remained seated and later deflected blame for the numerous tales of discrimination, disease, and injury they heard that day. As James Finley told the audience, "We've made some, ah, misjudgments along the way."⁴⁹ Finley and the rest of the board voted to rebuff the ICCR resolutions, but over the next two years they found it increasingly difficult to ignore the union's new strategy of combining narrative disclosure with intense economic pressure.

46 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Stockholders Meeting," undated memorandum detailing plans for protests and proxy actions at J. P. Stevens 1977 annual meeting, folder 40, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

47 Ibid.

48 Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 135.

49 Ibid, 137.

In local factories across the South and at public protest events on college campuses, retail outlets and other venues in at least 25 cities across the nation, the union distributed literature detailing J. P. Stevens' history of NLRB violations and providing graphic accounts of unsafe working conditions and discrimination in its factories.⁵⁰ At the same time they attempted to leverage these efforts by mounting an intensive letter-writing campaign in which union members and boycott supporters wrote to J. P. Stevens' board members, as well as executives in companies with whom they did business, to demand the company address workers' concerns. Rogers justified the latter tactic in a letter he wrote to an ACTWU organizer in Atlanta explaining executives at companies with strong financial ties to J. P. Stevens, including Manufacturers Hanover Trust, Avon, and New York Life, "have to be concerned over [their] image with the large constituencies organized labor represents."⁵¹ In the coming months Rogers and the union would provide executives with a second reason to attend to labor constituencies by threatening to withdraw an estimated one-billion dollars in union retirement funds from one of J. P. Stevens' principal lenders, Manufacturers Hanover Trust.⁵²

By March of 1978 the union's tactics began to produce results when two people resigned from the board of directors of Manufacturers Hanover Trust.⁵³ The first was James D. Finley of

50 ACTWU set up offices to coordinate local protest events in 25 cities including San Francisco, Denver, Chicago, Pittsburgh, New York, and Boston. Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Boycott Cities," undated ACTWU document, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Rally: Justice for J.P. Stevens Workers Day: Plan for Cities throughout the Country, November 30, 1978," internal document, box-folder 9/8 Folder 8, Box 9, Los Angeles J. P. Stevens Boycott Committee Records, Southern California Library for Social Studies and Research, Los Angeles.

51 Raymond Rogers, Letter to James Salas of the AFL-CIO encouraging union members to write protest letters to New York Life, dated August 14, 1978, folder 36, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

52 At the time Manufacturers Hanover was the nation's fourth largest commercial bank. Brent Fisse and John Braithwaite, *The Impact of Publicity on Corporate Offenders*, (Albany, NY: State University of New York Press, 1983), 124; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 124; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 53-54.

53 David Pauly and John Wolcott, "Labor's New Muscle," *Newsweek*, April 3, 1978, 58.

J. P. Stevens who admitted he had made the decision as a result of union pressure.⁵⁴ The second, David W. Mitchell, chairman and chief executive officer of Avon Products, cited personal and family reasons in announcing his decision not to run for re-election. Two weeks later, Mitchell announced he would step down from the board of J. P. Stevens as well, explaining “I cannot permit Avon to be drawn into the conflict and to be subjected to the pressures which the union is exerting as a result of my Stevens Board membership.”⁵⁵ Indeed, Mitchell had been under intense pressure for months from Avon distributors, customers, and women’s rights groups to distance the company from J. P. Stevens. Delegates at the 1977 International Women’s Year Convention had sent thousands of postcards to Avon demanding to know how a company that marketed primarily to women could justify associating with a corporation that had a well-established record of sex discrimination. The deluge of mail and phone calls did not let up until Mitchell finally agreed to resign from the two boards.⁵⁶

The Avon campaign was part of a larger effort in which ACTWU worked with union, church, human rights, and student organizations to coordinate public protest events and letter-writing campaigns directed at J. P. Stevens’ management and national retailers who sold their products, including Woolworth’s, Federated, Gimbels, Macy’s, and Jordan-Marsh.⁵⁷ The protests were often theatrical and memorable. The New York City chapter of the National Organization of Women staged a street theatre protest, culminating in the burning of J. P. Stevens brand bed sheets. Students at NYU, Rutgers, Columbia, and Princeton held “teach-ins” featuring talks by

⁵⁴ Fisse and Braithwaite, 19; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 54; Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 124; Rogers, interview by author.

⁵⁵ Avon Corporation, “Avon News Release” dated March 21, 1978, folder 36, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

⁵⁶ The union also forced resignations at Seamen’s bank and New York Life. However, not all attempts to force resignations were successful. Several executives at Goldman Sachs served as directors for J. P. Stevens and refused to step aside despite pressure from the union. Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 124, 126.

⁵⁷ Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 102, 104.

former mill workers.⁵⁸ On November 30, 1978 ACTWU coordinated Justice for J. P. Stevens' Workers Day rallies in 74 cities across the country.⁵⁹ In Indianapolis, protestors staged a "hard times luncheon" at a Hilton Hotel and concluded by asking the staff what company had manufactured their table linens.⁶⁰ When told the fabric had come from J. P. Stevens, protestors immediately ripped the linens off the tables in melodramatic fashion and dumped them unceremoniously on the floor along with their entire meals. The largest Justice Day event that day was held in New York City where more than three-thousand people joined in a noisy rally outside the Stevens Tower in Manhattan, many of them carrying pre-printed signs bearing union slogans such as "Tear the Fabric of Injustice!" "Cotton Dust Chokes!" and, most memorably, "Don't Sleep Tonight with J. P. Stevens!"⁶¹

The Justice Day protests, like most of the other boycott related events, were carefully planned by ACTWU staff, but the union leaders had very little control, at least in the beginning, over a development that would draw international attention to their cause – the 1979 release of the film *Norma Rae*. The film was inspired by the true life experiences of Crystal Lee Sutton, a union activist who had been fired by J. P. Stevens.⁶² Journalist Henry P. Leifermann first learned of Sutton's story when he wrote a *New York Times* article on the Stevens campaign.⁶³ He later wrote a full-length book about Sutton's experiences and sold the movie rights to a Hollywood

58 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 92-93; "'Human Billboard' Raps Seamen's, J.P. Stevens Tie," *The American Banker*, October 12, 1979, 3; Nancy Nappo, "Princeton: Activism is Reborn," *New York Times*, December 25, 1977.

59 "3,000 March in Midtown to Attack J.P. Stevens' Anti-Union Policies," *New York Times*, December 1, 1978; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 102; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Rally: Justice for J.P. Stevens Workers Day."

60 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 1.

61 "3,000 March in Midtown to Attack J.P. Stevens' Anti-Union Policies;" Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 99, 101.

62 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 105.

63 Henry P. Leifermann, "Trouble in the South's First Industry: The Unions are Coming," *New York Times*, August 5, 1973.

producer.⁶⁴ The film takes some liberties with the story line and dwells more on “Norma Rae’s” complicated love life than her union organizing activities at the fictional O. P. Henley textile mill. Nonetheless, its depictions of arduous daily working conditions is confirmed by testimony Crystal Lee and others provided to the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in 1974 about their experiences working at the J. P. Stevens plants in Roanoke Rapids.⁶⁵

Sally Fields won an Academy Award for her role as Norma Rae and, by at least one account, the film introduced the union’s cause to “a potential audience of seventy-five million people,” many of whom knew little or nothing about working conditions in Southern textile mills.⁶⁶ The movie also helped to attract celebrity and political endorsements for the Stevens campaign and provided ACTWU with an articulate and charismatic advocate in the person of Crystal Lee Sutton. In several respects Sutton’s story embodied the complexities of the union’s cause and its defiant tone. She was a tough-talking, thrice married woman who was unintimidated by male authority figures in the workplace. As a result, she was a felicitous match for the situation and time period – a defiant, working class woman who spoke with conviction and clarity about important issues of the day such as race, class, and political hypocrisy.

Public Backlash against the Stevens Campaign

Just as progressive groups rallied in support of the J. P. Stevens boycott in the 1970s, so too conservatives rallied in opposition to unionization, first in Southern textile communities, and over the next few decades in communities across the nation where corporate management teams

64 Henry B. Leifermann, *Crystal Lee*; Leifermann, “Trouble in the South’s First Industry.”

65 Crystal Lee Jordan, In *National Labor Relations Board v. J. P. Stevens & Co., Inc.*, United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit, June 4, 1974, 39-91, folder 1, box 1740, ACTWU southern Regional Office collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

66 Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 108.

attempted to rally public support to fend off union organizing efforts.⁶⁷ One can trace two prominent, interrelated themes in the discourse of the boycott opponents in the factories and small towns of the South during this time: racism and a pervasive suspicion of people and organizations perceived as interlopers in local affairs. In the first instance, given that only fifteen years earlier the same communities where J. P. Stevens maintained textile mills had lived under laws mandating racial segregation, it is hardly surprising ACTWU would begin to experience difficulties recruiting white members.⁶⁸ The spirit of Jim Crow had retreated, but not entirely. The employee education committees that sprang up to oppose unionization in textile communities were almost exclusively white, and in some instances the arguments they advanced were unambiguously racist.⁶⁹ The founder of the Roanoke Rapids Employee Education Committee, for example, complained to Mike Wallace of CBS News that unions supported “Nigger rights” and explained, “Most of the ones you get at the union hall are colored.”⁷⁰

That sort of racist language was certainly inflammatory; however, it was also atypical – at least in the publicly available records of the employee education committees. Suspicion of outside intruders into local communities was by far the more common theme in the promotional literature of anti-union organizations and in news stories and editorials from the time period.⁷¹ As one union opponent explained, “This was a nice little town, and everybody was happy, like one big family, and all at once the union came in and a bunch of young people, they went to join the union and get something for nothing. It split the town in two, you’ve got troubles.”⁷² In keeping with these sentiments, opponents frequently stereotyped unions as arising solely as a

67 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 127; Emory Via, handwritten notes from office meeting on J. P. Stevens boycott, folder 1, box 3374, Emory Via collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

68 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 154.

69 Ibid, 138.

70 Ibid.

71 Ibid, 134.

72 Ibid, 135.

result of “third party” agitators intruding into the private relations of Southern businesses and their employees.⁷³ Never mind that the majority of the union organizers and church leaders active in the campaign were from the South, the participation of college students, union activists, and church groups from other sections of the country was read as de facto proof that textile unions were a meddlesome, counterproductive influence in labor negotiations.⁷⁴

This situation was not without its ironies, especially since suspicion of outside interests did not extend to J. P. Stevens management in New York City. In news stories and in employee education committee documents, ACTWU’s opponents consistently defended the company as a force for good in local economies: a responsible employer with a long history of providing much needed jobs to those who chose, of their own free will, to accept them.⁷⁵ Objecting to this line of reasoning was futile, they argued, because, if the textile mills were to close, the economies of small towns like Roanoke Rapids would simply collapse. In the black and white logic of ACTWU’s most vocal opponents, it was better to be a loyal employee than an unemployed union rabble-rouser.

J. P. Stevens, of course, had a material interest in the arguments being advanced by employee education committees. The company demonstrated as much by adopting a four tier strategy in response to the boycott. They funded surrogate organizations that channeled funds to employee education committees, enabling them to set up offices, coordinate activities, and

73 Brenda Paschal, “Chamber Doesn’t Want Unions,” *Greenville Piedmont*, February 1, 1977, newspaper article, folder 37, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

74 Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J.P. Stevens Campaign*, 154-165 passim.

75 Anthony Barrigan, “Right to Work Laws Needed Nationally,” *The Douglas County Sentinel*, May 10, 1973, folder 34, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 137; Paschal, “Chamber Doesn’t Want Unions;” Dorothy Pruitt, “Practices of ACTWU Attacked by Stevens Employee of Greenville,” *Anderson Independent*, May 26, 1978, 5A, folder 36, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

distribute materials at the local level.⁷⁶ They published a flurry of professional-looking letters and pamphlets telling management's side of the story and scheduled executives to speak on college campuses and to meet with various church groups.⁷⁷ At the same time, they cooperated with other textile companies to mount an intensive and ultimately successful lobbying effort in opposition to the Labor Management Reporting and Disclosure Act of 1977 (the so-called "Stevens Bill").⁷⁸ Finally, they used a two-step tactic of violating fewer NLRB regulations and improving pay at their non-union facilities in order to limit ACTWU's ability to recruit new members. As a direct result of these actions, by the late 1970s ACTWU had been placed in the difficult position of battling a corporation which, whatever its history, was now leaning on local factory managers to abide by the law.⁷⁹

J. P. Stevens' more conciliatory strategy was good news for boycott supporters, for it enabled them to argue that the campaign had helped to improve working conditions at textile factories across the South. By 1979 even union opponents were admitting textile unions had benefited Southern workers. As anti-union consultant George Hood, one of the architects of the employee education committee strategy, admitted, "The union has done a lot of good, there's no question about it, at Stevens. Things are much better today because of the union presence."⁸⁰ By the late 1970s African Americans and women were receiving noticeably better pay and better opportunities for advancement in most Southern textile mills than in earlier decades. J. P.

⁷⁶ Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 133.

⁷⁷ J. P. Stevens convinced one Presbyterian denomination not to endorse the boycott. And while it is difficult to gauge whether the campus speaking events had any mitigating influence on student support of the boycott, the company did secure the support of sizable numbers of Baptist, Methodist, and Presbyterian ministers, especially in the South. Ibid, 128-129.

⁷⁸ The bill would have 1) required the NLRB to certify a union as the official bargaining agent in any facility where it had secured written authorization from 55% of the workers; 2) prohibited companies with a record of "flagrant or repeated violations of NLRB orders" from doing business with the federal government for three years; and 3) required elections to be held within 45 days of a union request. Ibid, 143-144.

⁷⁹ Ibid, 140-141.

⁸⁰ Ibid, 148.

Stevens and other textile manufacturers in the region had also made significant improvements in workplace safety and retirement benefits. Stories of overt discrimination, on-the-job injuries, and brown lung disease were beginning to lose their currency, at least in relation to J. P. Stevens' non-union facilities. Employees at those mills where the union had won majority votes continued to complain they were being forced to endure lower pay and harsher working conditions than their peers at non-union mills.⁸¹

The improvements in daily working conditions, however, made it more difficult for ACTWU to frame J. P. Stevens as "the Nation's number one labor law violator."⁸² In the end, the improvements also placed management in a tenuous position. The company's decision to improve wages and working conditions in many of its factories had done little to placate boycott supporters, who remained focused on their stubborn refusal to bargain in good faith with the union in Roanoke Rapids and other locations where ACTWU had won majority support. Under intense pressure from the NLRB and the federal courts to end the stand-off, in the spring of 1978 the company began secretive negotiations with union representatives.⁸³ By October of 1980, the two parties had worked out a compromise and announced an historic agreement under which J. P. Stevens recognized ACTWU as the official bargaining agent in those workplaces where it had

⁸¹ Ibid, 142.

⁸² Ibid, 141.

⁸³ The company was under pressure from two sources: the NLRB, which stood ready to cite them yet again for refusing to bargain in good faith with ACTWU in Roanoke Rapids, and from a civil suit ACTWU had brought against the company in response to a wiretapping scandal in Milledgeville, Georgia. Reverend James Orange, who worked as an ACTWU organizer, claimed the Milledgeville incident was the deciding event that forced J. P. Stevens to the bargaining table. Since the incident took place in 1976, two years before the two parties entered into negotiations, the more likely explanation is that the wire-tapping incident was one of several causes that contributed to the company's decision to negotiate an end to the boycott. For a more thoroughgoing discussion of these events, see Minchin's article in the *Georgia Historical Quarterly*. Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 149, 151, 163; Timothy J. Minchin "The Milledgeville Spy Case and the Struggle to Organize J. P. Stevens," *Georgia Historical Quarterly* 90, no. 1 (2006): 96-122; Reverend James Orange, in an interview conducted by Robert Woodrum, July 15, 2003, W. J. Userly Center for the Workplace, accession number: M2003-xx, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

won elections, and the union agreed to refrain from using corporate campaign strategies against the company in future contract negotiations.⁸⁴

Emulating the Stevens Campaign

In subsequent years dozens of other organizations emulated ACTWU's "corporate campaign" strategies. In not a few instances this was because Ray Rogers either organized the campaigns or worked as a consultant.⁸⁵ However, in most of the campaigns I reviewed that employed martial style campaign strategies there was no obvious connection to Rogers or the consulting agency he founded in the 1980s.⁸⁶ The majority of the campaigns that employed strategies similar to those used in the Stevens campaign were in labor contexts, but many others were not. Some of the most prominent examples include the campaigns against Continental Airlines in 1983, Hormel Foods in 1985, American Airlines in 1986, and Ravenswood Aluminum in 1990.⁸⁷ During this same time period other groups began to adapt Rogers' brand of direct action techniques to non-labor contexts by sponsoring anti-corporate campaigns with clearly articulated short-term goals in which they confronted management on several fronts. Examples of the latter include Rain Forest Action Network's (RAIN) 1989 campaign against Mitsubishi in which it used a combination of shareholder activism and street theatre to convince

84 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 149-150.

85 In the years following the Stevens campaign, Rogers has worked with labor, human rights, and environmental organizations to sponsor campaigns against more than two dozen companies including Brown and Root Construction (1983, with Texas Building and Construction Trades Council); Campbell's Soup (1984, with the Farm Labor Organizing Committee), Hormel Foods (1985, with United Food and Commercial Workers, P-9), DuPont (1992, with Greenpeace), and Coca-Cola (ongoing, with a consortium of labor and environmentalist groups in Columbia, India, Mexico, and the Philippines). Campaign to Stop Killer Coke, "Murdered Union Leaders," <http://killercoke.org/> (accessed August 1, 2011); Corporate Campaign, Inc., "Labor Campaigns: 1976-Present," www.corporatecampaign.org/history.php (accessed December 1, 2011); Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 315, 323, 342.

86 Of the 92 martial campaigns listed in Appendix A, Rogers worked as a consultant on 26. Twenty-three of those campaigns are listed on the Corporate Campaign, Inc. website. Corporate Campaign, Inc., "Labor Campaigns."

87 See Appendix A for more information on these campaigns; Stephen Franklin, *Three Strikes: Labor's Heartland Losses and What They Mean for Working Americans*, (New York: Guilford Press, 2002), 29-31; Tom Juravich and Kate Bronfenbrenner, *Ravenswood: The Steelworkers' Victory and the Revival of American Labor* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1999); Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 312, 317.

the company to halt harvesting of old growth timber; the 1992 campaign in which Greenpeace worked with Ray Rogers to develop a campaign to force DuPont and a host of other chemical manufacturers to halt the production of Freon and other ozone depleting chemicals; and the “Merchants of Shame” campaign begun in 1998 in which the National Organization of Women (NOW) has used a combination of civil suits and public shaming strategies to pressure companies including Detroit-Edison, Wal-Mart, and Smith-Barney to address documented patterns of sexual abuse and discrimination in the workplace.⁸⁸

The standard wisdom about the use of corporate campaign tactics in these sorts of post-Stevens actions holds that once the techniques became well-known they became difficult to repeat. As one source put it, “The Stevens victory did not translate into a series of easy wins for labor.”⁸⁹ This was nowhere as clear as in the American South where ACTWU was unable to capitalize on the gains of the Stevens campaign by winning elections at large numbers of other textile plants.⁹⁰ Indeed, ACTWU’s new difficulties proved a harbinger of things to come. The labor movement fell on hard times in the 1980s and 90s, due in large part to a steep decline in manufacturing jobs as employers began to move facilities to places like El Salvador, China, and Bangladesh, where they could hire workers for a fraction of the price they had been paying in the U. S. It was due as well to a shift in attitudes among many in management. Executives at many firms felt emboldened by the example of J. P. Stevens, which had demonstrated it often cost less

⁸⁸ I am not the first to notice this trend. Manheim, for instance, discusses how the National Organization for Women and other activist groups adopted “labor-based” campaign strategies to new contexts. Of the 91 martial campaigns I list in Appendix A, 42 are in non-labor contexts. The vast majority of those are environmental campaigns. Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 142; Priscilla Murphy and Juliet Dee, “Du Pont and Greenpeace: The Dynamics of Conflict between Corporations and Activist Groups,” *Journal of Public Relations Research* 4, no. 1 (1992) 3-20.

⁸⁹ Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, “The Evolution,” 218. Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 91-110.

⁹⁰ Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 182-184.

money to pay NLRB fines than to cooperate with unions.⁹¹ This helps to explain why, as Stephen H. Norwood has documented, many companies took a hard line with unions in the 1980s and 90s by firing organizers and hiring labor consultants who specialized in defaming and intimidating union activists.⁹² At the same time, many of these same companies hired more mid-level personnel managers and implemented proactive “human resources management” strategies designed to keep track of employees’ concerns and tamp down potential conflicts.

None of this was good news for the labor movement. Complaints filed with the NLRB spiked during this period while union membership declined from 20% of the non-agricultural workforce in 1983 to 13.5% in 2000.⁹³ The best known example of management taking a hard line with unions in this era is undoubtedly the strike against Hormel Foods in Austin, Minnesota in 1985.⁹⁴ The union sponsored an extended corporate campaign but was forced to concede defeat after the company locked them out, Ray Rogers was temporarily thrown in jail, and the state’s Democratic governor called in the National Guard to maintain order.⁹⁵ The great lesson of the Hormel strike was that popular support is the life blood of anti-corporate activism. Since the action against Hormel took place during a steep economic recession (a time when other meat processing companies had either cut wages or gone out of business) the union failed to win the sort of broad public sympathy that had forced the hand of management at J. P. Stevens.

91 By 1977, for example, the company had paid more than \$1 million in NLRB fines and back pay to workers. It would have cost them in excess of \$8 million to provide all of their employees with a raise of ten cents per hour during that same time period. *MacNeil/Lehrer Report*, “J. P. Stevens,” transcript of video tape, dated December 22, 1976, folder 1, box 1740, ACTWU southern Regional Office collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University; Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 183.

92 Steven H. Norwood, *Strikebreaking and Intimidation: Mercenaries and Masculinity in Twentieth-Century America*, (Chapel Hill, NC: 2002), 236.

93 Christopher R. Martin, *Framed!: Labor and the Corporate Media* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2003), 26; Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 179.

94 Franklin, *Three Strikes*, 29.

95 Ibid, 31.

In later campaigns such as the United Steelworkers' strikes against Ravenswood Aluminum in 1990, Bridgestone/Firestone in 1996, and Bayou Steel (1996) union strategists focused on increasing the participation of rank-and-file workers in daily decision-making, building coalitions with local human rights groups, and even making humanitarian appeals to individual corporate executives.⁹⁶ In all three instances, the union won surprising victories against what appeared to be overwhelming odds. The changes in strategy began to pay dividends in other labor campaigns as well, and by the start of the new millennium labor unions and other activist organizations were sponsoring anti-corporate campaigns with increasing frequency and finding that management, while not always cooperative, was more likely to listen to their concerns than they had been a decade or so earlier.

These dramatic shifts in the practice of anti-corporate activism, I contend, make more sense when the strategies of the Stevens campaign are understood as a paradigm instance of prospective narrative disclosure. In the second half of the chapter I unpack this claim in considerable detail by revisiting several key events in the campaign in order to demonstrate how they exemplify the inherent strengths and weaknesses of the martial typology.

Martial Strategies in the Stevens Campaign

Most accounts of ACTWU's campaign against the J. P. Stevens Company have focused on the sudden emergence of an innovative, controversial, and sometimes counterproductive set of direct action strategies dubbed the "corporate campaign."⁹⁷ Until recently, that is, scholars have tended to accept the union's own description of the Stevens campaign as a series of power

⁹⁶ In the Bridgestone/Firestone strike, the union set up "Camp Justice" outside the company's U. S. offices and faxed photographs of union families to company executives at corporate headquarters in Japan. Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, "The Evolution," 218; Franklin, *Three Strikes*, 237-239.

⁹⁷ Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, "The Evolution," 218; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, xiii; Rogers, interview by author; Barry E. Truchil, *Capital-Labor Relations in the U.S. Textile Industry* (Santa Barbara, CA: Praeger, 1988), 141.

on power confrontations in which the union used a combination of economic pressure and disclosures of financial relationships to convince a reluctant corporate board to come to the bargaining table. My research suggests, however, that this reading of the union's upset victory against a multinational corporation may be too simplistic. More specifically, a careful reading of campaign related academic literature and hundreds of primary documents makes clear that the public dissemination of first person stories disclosing egregious working conditions in Southern textile mills was the decisive factor in ending the campaign. J. P. Stevens' management decided to cooperate with ACTWU, not because the union's national boycott had hurt sales (it had not) or because of union investment strategies, but because they had been made to look like greedy, heartless ne'er do wells. By the time they sat down with union representatives, company executives were under intense pressure from the public and from management at other textile companies to bring the conflict to a dignified close.⁹⁸

I am not the first to question the limitations of accepting the union's account of power on power strategies in the Stevens campaign at face value. In the first book length study of the Stevens campaign, labor historian Timothy Minchin argues that African-American and women's groups played a crucial role in galvanizing public support for unionizing J. P. Stevens' textile factories and in convincing management to settle the conflict. My research confirms Minchin's insight about the importance of women and minorities and extends on it by demonstrating how, by setting stories about things like workplace injuries and discrimination in public circulation, ACTWU was able to hold management accountable in the public sphere.

To be clear, none of this should be taken to mean the union's well-known direct action strategies (maneuvering of bank funds and bringing suit before the National Labor Relations Board, for instance) had no influence whatsoever on management decisions or on the strategies

98 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 167.

employed in subsequent anti-corporate campaigns. Rather, my argument is that storytelling was the *sine qua non* of the Stevens campaign. ACTWU's strategies, in all likelihood, would have failed entirely had they not been executed at a time when management had already been thrown off balance by the public circulation of shocking stories about daily work life in Southern textile mills. That said, there is no doubt the direct action strategies ACTWU developed for the Stevens campaign were widely imitated in the closing decades of the twentieth century and continue to influence anti-corporate activism even today. Critics have sometimes dismissed ACTWU's corporate campaign strategies as overly aggressive and counterproductive.⁹⁹ These criticisms notwithstanding, there is no question that the Stevens campaign was one of the earliest (and most important) milestones in the contemporary anti-corporate globalization movement.¹⁰⁰

My discussion of these themes unfolds in two stages. I begin by providing extended discussions of three interdependent dimensions of ACTWU's rhetorical strategies: public disclosures, kairotic strategy development, and storytelling circulation. I then consider how these strategies influenced the outcome of the campaign, the practices of other anti-corporate activists, and the de facto CSR standards of global markets.

Rhetorical Disclosures in the Southern Textile Industry

In planning and managing the Stevens campaign, ACTWU employed rhetorical strategies conforming to a pattern of prospective narrative disclosure. The historical timeline of the campaign, conforms in large part to the three step process I described earlier beginning with intensive research and continuing on to strategy development and public, storytelling disclosure. More importantly, a close reading of the history of the Stevens campaign and of campaign related texts provides compelling evidence of the union's interest in plurivocal storytelling

99 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 183.

100 Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 23.

circulation and of management's competing interest in maintaining monovocal control over company discourse.

Regarding the former claim, at the Southern Labor Archives at Georgia State University, I found a variety of texts (including handwritten notes from ACTWU meetings, confidential memorandums to union staff and internal documents detailing interactions with the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility) that provide direct evidence the union conducted extensive research on J. P. Stevens and planned campaign strategies in a top-down manner in conjunction with other activist organizations.¹⁰¹ To consider but one of several possible examples, in a four page internal memo entitled "Profile of J. P. Stevens," union leaders included detailed information on the company's history, economic resources, product lines, and board of directors.¹⁰²

Another class of documents provides evidence the union staff employed intensive research strategies for the purpose of exposing practices that would problematize the carefully crafted narratives one encountered in the company's public documents. Here I am thinking of the

101 Some of the documents provide evidence the union studied academic texts and tracked unfavorable news stories. These include a chapter on byssinosis (brown lung disease) from a book on occupational diseases and margin notes in a *Wall Street Journal* article distributed to union staff. Bob Arnold, "Organizing Dixie: Unions Lose Ground in Campaign to Follow Firms Moving South," *The Wall Street Journal*, June 24, 1977, folder 40, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Boycott Cities"; William McKinley Gafafer, and Louis Israel Dublin, *Occupational Diseases: A Guide to their Recognition* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Dept. of Health, Education, and Welfare, Public Health Service, 1966), folder 213, box 1462, ACTWU North Carolina Joint Board, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, 56-58; Si Kahn and Charlotte Brody, "Strategic Overview of the J. P. Stevens Campaign," ACTWU internal document dated July 15, 1976, folder 1, box 3374, Emory Via collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Harold McIver, undated confidential memorandum to union staff on "J. P. Stevens & Co. Organizing Project," folder 38, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Timothy Smith, untitled document produced by the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility detailing plans for proxy actions at J. P. Stevens 1977 annual meeting, dated February 4, 1977, folder 40, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Emory Via, "Carolina Committee – Confidential," memorandum providing details of a proposed "three tier campaign against Stevens," folder 1, box 3374, Emory Via collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Emory Via, handwritten notes from office meeting on J. P. Stevens boycott.

102 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "A Profile of J. P. Stevens."

rather extensive body of campaign literature in which union strategists attempted to build a persuasive, thoroughly footnoted case against J. P. Stevens to justify their boycott strategy.¹⁰³

What is more, in my interview with Ray Rogers, who chaired ACTWU's J. P. Stevens boycott committee, he confirmed the union spent considerable time and energy developing a complex set of strategies for encountering the company on several fronts (e.g., through the courts and with organizing drives, consumer boycotts, protest marches, and rhetorical disclosure).¹⁰⁴ Taken together the interview and texts confirm the observation of ACTWU organizers Si Kahn and Charlotte Brody that in their year and one-half of intensive preparation the union produced "enough memos on strategies and tactics... to fill a small book."¹⁰⁵

All in all the sources I reviewed provide a detailed picture of union leaders planning and managing a complex public campaign focused on convincing J. P. Stevens' management to sign bargaining agreements in those mills where workers had voted for union representation and, beyond that, to expand the union's presence in the Southern textile industry. Toward that end,

103 DiNunno, "J. P. Stevens: Anatomy of an Outlaw;" Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Fact Sheet: Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union," undated campaign pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens and its Record of Discrimination and Employment Practices;" Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens and Occupational Safety and Health," undated campaign pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens and the Impoverishment of the Carolinas," undated campaign pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens and the National Labor Relations Law;" Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens has Pursued a Runaway Shop Policy, Stranding Thousands of Northern Workers in closed Plants," undated campaign pamphlet. J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens: The Company;" Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Myths Exposed," ACTWU pamphlet, dated November, 1976, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; "Special Report: The Sun Belt," collection of news stories reprinted from the *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, dated September, 1979, Plant Closures folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

104 See Appendix B for a graphic illustration of Rogers "corporate campaign" strategies. Rogers, interview by author.

105 Kahn and Brody, "Strategic Overview of the J. P. Stevens Campaign."

they determined to disclose self-serving financial relationships and disquieting information about how the company had been profiting from human misery. Most scholarly accounts have focused on the first of these two modes of disclosure – regarding inter-relationships among banks, corporations, and boards of directors. My work deviates from this pattern, by documenting a more far-reaching and influential strategy of disclosing, not only financial relationships among corporate executives, but also the harrowing first-person experiences of individual textile workers. By way of explanation, it was in reading stories told by workers at J. P. Stevens’ textile mills that I first arrived at a tentative definition of prospective narrative disclosure. In the next few pages I give a more fully-developed account of what I learned from reading those documents. More specifically, I explain how the union was able to use storytelling disclosure to shift public perceptions of J. P. Stevens to the point where they were widely perceived, even among management at other corporations within their industry, as marketplace pariahs. This shifting of public sensibilities, I maintain, was crucial to the decisions of J. P. Stevens’ executives to end their standoff with the union.

The many graphic descriptions of workplace misery one encounters in ACTWU’s campaign literature recall Edwin Black’s description of the “open hand” of rhetorical appeal and “the closed fist” of coercive power.¹⁰⁶ Keeping with Black’s analysis, in these texts the union served as a “translator” – an artful mediator enabling public audiences to view secretive aspects of corporate discourse and practices. This does not mean union strategists simply held a mirror up to randomly selected scenes in J. P. Stevens’ textile mills. Rather, they disclosed specific incidents and relationships in a prospective (or to use Black’s terminology, “prophetic”)

¹⁰⁶ Edwin Black, “Secrecy and Disclosure as Rhetorical Forms,” *Quarterly Journal of Speech* 74, no. 2 (1988), 133.

manner.¹⁰⁷ That is, by revealing the truth regarding material conditions, the union was able to “‘turn’ the frontier into a crossing,” and disclose an alternative telos, a new way forward toward a less coercive future.¹⁰⁸

One finds a striking example of this type of public revelation in a tri-fold ACTWU campaign pamphlet entitled simply “What’s under the Covers?” The union distributed four versions of the pamphlet, all of them conforming to the same simple formula.¹⁰⁹ The cover is a near duplicate of a J.P. Stevens advertising image, and when readers opened it they found one of four different messages regarding discrimination, work-related accidents, brown lung disease, or “runaway shop policies.”¹¹⁰ The most startling image in the group is of seventeen-year-old Kathy Peace who was fired after losing two fingers in an industrial accident. The front cover of the pamphlet is printed in color, but the interior image of the injured young woman is in black and white, thus highlighting the contrast between the glossy surface of the company’s public relations and advertising narratives and the gritty reality of daily work experiences for many textile workers. Her eyes do not meet the camera. Instead she stares down at her injured hand, which she holds out as if presenting it as atechanical evidence before a jury of her peers. The

107 Ibid, 135.

108 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 128.

109 One of the tri-fold brochures is reproduced in Appendix D. Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “What’s Under the Covers? Brown Lung and J. P. Stevens,” undated ACTWU pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “What’s Under the Covers? Danger on the Job at J. P. Stevens,” undated campaign pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “What’s Under the Covers? Discrimination at J. P. Stevens,” undated ACTWU pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “What’s Under the Covers? J. P. Stevens a Runaway Company,” undated ACTWU pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

110 The image (reproduced in Appendix D) appeared in a national print advertising campaign as well as in a promotional brochure entitled “J. P. Stevens Today.” Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “What’s Under the Covers? Danger on the Job at J. P. Stevens,” J. P. Stevens and Company, “J. P. Stevens Today,” undated company pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

words printed beneath the photograph fill in the subtext. “Hundreds of men and women who work for J. P. Stevens, America’s second largest textile firm, have been injured on the job because of the company’s negligence.”¹¹¹

The document is mimetic in the sense that it provides compelling, first-person evidence of workplace violence and of callous neglect. Moreover, by setting the young woman’s mute testimony in dialectical tension with an easily recognizable J. P. Stevens’ advertising image, the union provides an unmistakable example of Burkean “planned incongruity.”¹¹² Through “rational planning,” in other words, they were able to identify a corporate narrative about material civility (in the form of an advertising image) and “wrench it loose and metaphorically apply it to a different category.”¹¹³ In this instance, one could use the phrase “pariah corporation” to describe the new rhetorical category.

During the Stevens campaign ACTWU distributed at least a dozen different pamphlets nationwide featuring these sorts of graphic images and stories.¹¹⁴ One of the most widely circulated was entitled simply *Testimony* and included stories and fragments of stories from more than a dozen employees and former employees of J. P. Stevens.¹¹⁵ The pamphlet includes, for example, the stories of Mildred Whitley whose job was threatened after she missed work for mastectomy surgery, Lundee Cannon who spoke of developing brown lung disease from working in a factory where the air was laden with cotton dust, and Robert Mallory who was ignored by management when he demanded to know why he was being paid less money but was

111 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “What’s Under the Covers? Danger on the Job at J. P. Stevens.”

112 Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 308, 313.

113 Ibid, 308.

114 Sections of several pamphlets are reproduced in Appendix D.

115 Several images and stories from the brochure are reproduced in Appendix D. Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Testimony,” undated campaign pamphlet. J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

expected to do more work than his white peers.¹¹⁶ The references to named individuals in these texts stand in contrast to the campaign related discourse of J. P. Stevens in which, as I will explain shortly, employees are seldom named, and when they are, they tend to echo “the company line” in uncanny ways. When read in context, in other words, there can be no doubt the union intended the bleak images of people like Kathy Peace to serve as a synecdochal representation of a pattern of systematic and egregious violations of safety and human rights in the Southern textile industry at mid-century.

The pamphlets leave no doubt as well that the union was encouraging a thoroughgoing “hermeneutic of suspicion” regarding the narratives in J. P. Stevens’ corporate literature.¹¹⁷ That is, by distributing campaign literature featuring disturbing images and stories union strategists hoped public audiences would come to view the glossy surface of the company’s public discourse as fictive and deceptive, as hiding ugly truths about money, pain, and power. The compelling accounts of racism, sexism, and workplace injuries found in these documents lent credibility (or to use Ricoeur’s term, *kerygma*) to the union’s disclosures of little-known financial relationships between J. P. Stevens and other corporate institutions.¹¹⁸ Moreover, by acting first and presenting first person accounts of egregious harms, ACTWU was able to shift the burden of proof onto executives who had been caught very much off guard. So, for instance, by linking the CEO of Avon to J. P. Stevens, the union was, at the same time, establishing a metonymic link between Avon Corporation and the stories of workplace coercion and discrimination coming out of Southern textile factories.¹¹⁹ And by connecting management at

116 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Testimony,” 2, 10, and 19.

117 Paul Ricoeur, *Freud and Philosophy: An Essay on Interpretation* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1970), 28.

118 Ibid.

119 Avon Corporation, “Avon News Release,” Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 124.

several companies in this way to haunting depictions of daily misery they disturbed regnant conceptions of corporate accountability and provided heuristic examples for later activist campaigns.

Of course, as is well known, the union also worked to identify answerable decision makers in J. P. Stevens' management and among the network of banks and other companies that lent the company financial and professional support. Ray Rogers and his associates on the ACTWU boycott committee viewed these sorts of disclosures as a lynch pin tactic in their overall campaign strategy.¹²⁰ Their logic was straightforward. Because of limited liability laws it was nearly impossible for the union to hold Robert T. Stevens, James Finley and other members of the management team of J.P. Stevens Corporation legally responsible for egregious working conditions and violations of human rights in their company's Southern factories. However, by disseminating compelling stories about threats to human rights, safety, and health in J. P. Stevens' textile mills, ACTWU was able to frame these executives – along with the company's board of directors and its largest investors – as ethically answerable for their role in perpetuating human suffering. More to the point, union activists were able to cut through the overlapping matrices of organizational power to disclose people who had been creating and managing wealth without “answering for life.”¹²¹

What these examples make clear is that the union's efforts to peel back the fictive surface of J. P. Stevens' public narratives in order to reveal ugly truths were fundamental to their campaign strategies. They provide evidence as well that ACTWU intended to hold J. P. Stevens' management publically accountable for the horrific incidents recounted in campaign literature. What these initial examples do not make clear, however, is that ACTWU had to proceed with

¹²⁰ Rogers, interview by author.

¹²¹ Bakhtin, *Art and Answerability*, 2.

care when distributing campaign related literature in rural textile communities, lest they run afoul of local authorities. To understand these dangers and how the union sidestepped them in order to set the workers' stories into public circulation on the national and international levels will require a more in depth review of kairotic strategies in the Stevens campaign.

ACTWU's campaign strategies were kairotic in the sense that they took advantage of important advancements in the Civil Rights Movement in the twentieth century and featured carefully timed instrumental actions (shareholder actions and tactical shifting of union retirement funds, for example) and public storytelling disclosure. On the first point, it is widely recognized that in the years following World War II, civil rights activists won a series of legal and popular confrontations that eventually produced tangible changes in what passed for common sense in relation to racial and gender equality. The Stevens campaign was timed to take advantage of these developments, to capitalize on a moment in history when it became possible to "overcome the threshold of stability" regarding race, gender, and labor relations in the American South.¹²² This was not a naïve calculation. As I explained in the previous chapter, only four decades earlier during the Textile Workers' Strike of 1934 (aka, the "Uprising of '34"), the textile industry had violently suppressed a large scale labor initiative in the region.¹²³ It is important to keep this bit of history in view when assessing the impact of ACTWU's power on power strategies. It seems unlikely that between the Uprising of '34 and the start of the late 1970s that labor unions could have accumulated economic and political resources sufficient to challenge a multinational corporation like J. P. Stevens on anything approaching equal terms. To the contrary, the most

122 Dana L. Cloud, "The Materialist Dialectic as a Site of Kairos: Theorizing Rhetorical Intervention in Material Social Relations," in *Rhetoric, Materiality, and Politics*, ed. Barbara A. Biesecker and John Louis Lucaites, 293-320 (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2009), 298.

123 Half a million people participated nation-wide, making the Uprising of '34 the largest labor strike in the nation's history. As Dana Cloud argues, the textile companies' response was so brutal that many workers consciously repressed their memories of the experience. Clark, "Textile Workers Union of America," 1373; Clete *Culture of Misfortune*, 178; Dana L. Cloud, "The Null Persona: Race and the Rhetoric of Silence in the Uprising of '34," *Rhetoric and Public Affairs* 2, no. 2 (1999), 178; Davis, *North Carolina during the Great Depression*, 183.

likely reason J. P. Stevens and other textile companies did not crush unionists in the 1970s was that there had been a qualitative shift in public attitudes toward race, gender and many forms of institutionalized violence since the 1930s.¹²⁴

Again, this does not mean that kairotic, instrumental action within the material economy played no role whatsoever in forcing the hand of management. Still, the closer one looks at claims that those sorts of actions were definitive in the Stevens campaign, the more difficult they become to defend. ACTWU's national boycott of J. P. Stevens' products and its shifting of union retirement funds among New York banks had relatively little impact on the company's profitability or its short term cash flow. The union's initial use of proxy voting tactics at J. P. Stevens' annual meetings proved even less effective (at least in economic terms). ACTWU succeeded in introducing several activist motions and in scheduling union speakers to address shareholders. Although union speakers (including Coretta Scott King) proved embarrassing for the company, management easily rebuffed the union's proposed changes to its policies.¹²⁵ ACTWU's proxy voting strategies proved more effective in the fall of 1980 at Metropolitan Life when, under threat of having to hold a costly election for their board of directors, the insurance company began to lean on J. P. Stevens to end the boycott.¹²⁶ By that time, however, the company and the union had been negotiating in secret for more than a year and a settlement was, in all likelihood, a foregone conclusion.¹²⁷

As I explained earlier, a close reading of the history of the Stevens campaign and of campaign-related documents provides compelling evidence that kairotic, storytelling disclosure rather than boycotts and bank transfers were the most important factor in management's decision

124 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 39-40.

125 Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 135.

126 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 167.

127 Ibid.

to end the campaign. This conclusion is in line with de Certeau's observations on the tactical uses of storytelling and the importance of allowing memory to gather force until it stands the greatest chance of upending history.¹²⁸ One can recognize these sorts of tactics, for example, in the events leading up to the resignation of Avon CEO David W. Mitchell from two corporate boards.¹²⁹ By setting disturbing accounts of daily work-life at J. P. Stevens in public circulation, the union was able to pinpoint a glaring contradiction in Avon's corporate discourse. It could not continue to promote itself as a company that offered women free-market opportunities while at the same time lending strategic support to J. P. Stevens, a corporation that had become metonymically linked in the public imagination with egregious violations of women's rights.

The Mitchell resignation, as it turns out, presaged the actions of several J. P. Stevens' executives. By 1980 media reports suggested a new crop of managers had grown weary of having their company framed at every turn as a "corporate pariah."¹³⁰ J. P. Stevens appears to have caved in, not because they had been overpowered in a material sense, but because a reshuffled management team finally determined their corporate practices were fundamentally out of step with the ethical sensibilities of the national marketplace of the late twentieth century.¹³¹ To understand just why kairotic storytelling disclosure could overcome corporate resistance and bring about this sort of result will require a more thorough discussion of storytelling circulation and its relation to popular reasoning.

128 For de Certeau, storytelling is an iconoclastic process, and storytellers aim to produce "coups." De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 80-81.

129 Avon Corporation, "Avon News Release," Michael C. Jensen, "Avon Products Chmn David Mitchell Resigns from Board of J P Stevens & Co.," *New York Times*, March 2, 1978, 1.

130 "J. P. Stevens: A Beginning or an End?," *The Economist*, October 25, 1980, 60; Doug McInnis, "Stevens May Have Felt Pressure Put on Insurer," *Raleigh News Observer*, October 21, 1980, as cited in Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 168.; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 167.

131 The two parties began negotiations shortly after the staunchly anti-union CEO James D. Finley retired in the fall of 1979. It was not until the fall of 1983 (following the death of his father, Robert T. Stevens) that the new CEO, Whitney Stevens agreed to settle all outstanding claims of resulting from the company's unfair labor practices. McInnis, "Stevens May Have Felt Pressure Put on Insurer;" Minchin, *Don't Sleep Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 167-168.

When ACTWU engaged in a conscious strategy of disseminating bruising stories about the daily work experiences of textile workers, they were not so much developing novel campaign strategies as they were revisiting an ancient rhetorical tradition in order to discover how “to make the weaker position seem the stronger.”¹³² To that end, ACTWU developed a national strategy for distributing campaign materials featuring carnivalesque and grotesque stories and images. In this way they hoped to grab the attention of popular audiences and the national media. These actions ultimately enabled the union to rally the centrifugal (plurivocal and decentralizing) forces of public opinion in order to challenge management to comply with their demands and the rulings of the NLRB. Management responded to these efforts with a series of distinctly centripetal (monovocal and centralizing) initiatives aimed at reinforcing corporate narratives and reasserting precise, top-down control over their organizational discourse.

Turning first to union strategies, by distributing campaign literature featuring grotesque and carnivalesque stories and images, ACTWU was able to disclose workplace violence and issue scathing parodies of corporate hierarchies. I found several compelling examples of grotesque realism, for example, in campaign pamphlets ACTWU distributed from offices it set up in large cities across the nation during the Stevens campaign.¹³³ They include images and stories about missing fingers, a severed arm, a severed hand, brown lung disease, and a double

132 De Certeau *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xx.

133 Union activists distributed several campaign fliers with distinctly carnivalesque themes (in that they featured “free and familiar” depictions of authority figures) with titles such as: “Fought any Dragons Lately? (a tongue-in-cheek account of union “knights” who tame a fuming “chief dragon.”); “My J. P. Stevens Coloring Book” (in which they provided satiric caricatures of stock management figures – e.g., the “Cheap Labor Lawyer” who proclaims “COLOR MY HEART ... BLACK!”); and “Welcome to the Scene Mr. Greene” (a satiric portrait of a real-life personnel manager hired to reign in ACTWU’s local organizing campaigns). Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “My J. P. Stevens Coloring Book,” Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Welcome to the Scene, Mr. Greene!” ACTWU pamphlet, dated November, 1976, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Textile Workers Union of America, “Fought any Dragons Lately?” undated TWUA pamphlet, folder 216, box 1462, ACTWU North Carolina Joint Board, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

mastectomy.¹³⁴ The gruesome depictions of damaged bodies one encounters in these documents serve as negative boundary markers, denoting the limits of the human conscience at a particular moment in time. They serve to disclose an ugly history and prompt (through visceral rejection) a demand for a future in which, at the very least, people are less likely to be brutalized in the ways the union described.¹³⁵

I also found numerous examples of carnivalesque inversion in the Stevens campaign, including two prominent protest actions that exemplify the union's efforts to subvert political hierarchies in order critique corporate practices. The first is an incident I mentioned earlier where protestors dumped their table cloths, meals and all, onto the floor of a Hilton Hotel.¹³⁶ The second is a picket sign reading "Don't Sleep Tonight with J. P. Stevens!" that appeared in several protest events.¹³⁷ In each of these examples, the salience of the human body and its animal functions serves as a common denominator, in effect marginalizing social taxonomies by bringing biology to the fore. In the first instance, it hardly seems accidental that activists would stage a protest in an exclusive hotel frequented by wealthy business executives. By posing as wealthy, pompous customers who explode over a seemingly minor issue, the protestors drew attention to the enormous power discrepancy between employees and management. In Medieval carnivals the performers would, no doubt, have pushed this parody to its natural limits by belching, passing

134 See, for example, the images and stories from ACTWU's "Testimony" pamphlet reproduced in Appendix D; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Testimony," 2, 4, 6, 7; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "What's Under the Covers? Danger on the Job at J. P. Stevens."

135 Theodor Adorno described a similar "negative dialectic" in relation to the Holocaust which he viewed as an ultimate limit case, "a capital X far emptier than the ancient transcendental subject" that served to reveal the contradictions and real horrors of the received social order. Theodor W. Adorno, *Negative Dialectics* (New York: Seabury Press, 1973), 79.

136 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 1.

137 Timothy J. Minchin, "'Don't Sleep With Stevens!': The J. P. Stevens Boycott and Social Activism in the 1970s," *Journal of American Studies* 39, no. 3, (2005), 511.

gas, or displaying body parts.¹³⁸ Still, even within this (apparently) more modest performance one can recognize how the salience of consumption discloses the humanity of superiors, thereby temporarily erasing differences between rich and poor, managers and employees. Regardless of their income levels or professional titles, everybody eats.

In the second example, protestors used personification to demote “J. P. Stevens” to the level of a college student and to invoke an image of a promiscuous and undesirable sexual partner – someone to be shunned, perhaps as a result of their infidelity or their disease status. Allusions to profligate behavior and sexually transmitted diseases (syphilis in particular) were common in medieval carnivalesque performances. Consistent with this pattern, the union destabilized corporate narratives by placing them in dialogic proximity to promiscuity, disease, and decay.¹³⁹ Even more important, by depicting J. P. Stevens as a spurned lover, the protestors echoed the predicament of many employees caught between a desperate desire to fulfill their bodily needs (that is, by working to gain food and shelter) and their natural reluctance to pursue those ends by cooperating with a coercive employer. As with the grotesque images of damaged bodies in the union’s campaign literature, the salience of the human body in this syphilitic metaphor serves temporarily to stand social order on its head and to open a space in which audiences might catch a glimpse of a reconfigured social order. Through personification and debasement, they disclosed the humanity of management and provided a satiric channel for expressing revulsion toward their actions.

The union’s strategy of circulating carnivalesque and grotesque stories and images was not without risks. In that sense, the strategy constituted a rhetorical wager that by telling sad and

138 As Clark and Holquist explain, for Bakhtin, “The grotesque body is flesh as the site of becoming.” As such, it privileges “hidden” processes such as sex, pregnancy, injury, and evacuations of all kinds. Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, 317; Katerina Clark and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1984), 303.

139 Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his World*, 384.

compelling stories they might galvanize public audiences in support of ACTWU's cause. Put another way, by circulating such stories in public venues, the union gained the attention of popular audiences and the media, but they also sacrificed a significant measure of strategic control. Union strategists controlled the types of stories they included in campaign literature and protest events, and they often took care to distribute literature and stage events in locations around the country where they determined they might find sympathetic audiences. Beyond that, they had to depend on public storytelling circulation, meaning that if people found the stories compelling, then they would repeat them to others and the workers' accounts would begin to spread out in a diffused, centrifugal manner that defied narrative control.¹⁴⁰ People read campaign literature and sometimes repeated what they had learned, one person to another at kitchen tables and water coolers. When journalists sometimes included the workers' stories (or fragments thereof) in news stories, they skipped political boundaries and cropped up in conversations in remote locations.

In this way, ACTWU's grotesque and carnivalesque stories became travelers, "moving from context to context, shifting in content and refraction, as they jump-start[ed] the future."¹⁴¹ Put another way, by placing a set of compelling texts in public circulation, the union was able to generate a whole series of "publics," that is to say, "social space[s] created by the reflexive circulation of discourse."¹⁴² As the workers' texts entered into public circulation, details of their contents were taken up by sympathetic readers and passed on to others. "The concatenation of [these] texts through time," served to stimulate wide scale public empathy for the plight of Southern textile workers.¹⁴³ To say that ACTWU engaged in kairotic storytelling action,

140 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 273.

141 Boje, *Storytelling Organization*, 14.

142 Warner, *Publics and Counterpublics*, 90.

143 Ibid, 90.

therefore, is to say that the union wagered legions of people would take the word of a handful of textile workers rather than the polished, public relations narratives of a multinational corporation.

The strategic, “centrifugal” dissemination of stories in the public and private spheres was a keystone of ACTWU’s rhetorical strategies and stands in contrast to the centripetal character of J. P. Stevens’ organizational discourse. The surprising strengths of the former and the vulnerabilities of the latter become evident in a close analysis of how the union selected stories and set them in circulation: often in urban centers and college campuses far removed from the “humorless terrain” of Southern textile communities.

To begin, many of the best-known stories from the Stevens campaign followed a similar pathway from the factory floor to the public sphere. In brief, some of the stories circulating in rural textile mills and union halls about work-related sexism, racism, injuries and the like were subsequently investigated by union officials and presented as formal grievances to company managers. If the initial complaint was rebuffed at the local level, the story was then included in complaints litigated before the NLRB and Federal courts.¹⁴⁴ The union recounted some of the most graphic and memorable incidents in pamphlets and even in a documentary film. ACTWU staff members working in cities scattered across the nation used the pamphlets and the film to spread the word about harsh working conditions at J. P. Stevens textile mills and to encourage consumers to shun the company’s products.¹⁴⁵ In turn, some of the stories found in these texts were eventually picked up by journalists and repeated in news stories and books from the time period, thus helping to make the J. P. Stevens campaign a “cause célèbre” in the late 1970s.”¹⁴⁶

144 Prominent examples include the cases of Louis Harrell, Maurine Hedgpeth, Lucy Taylor, and Crystal Lee Sutton (aka, Jordan). Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Testimony,” 7, 10; Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 142, 144, 145; Jordan, in *National Labor Relations Board v. J. P. Stevens & Co., Inc.*, 39-91.

145 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Boycott Cities,” Minchin, ““Don’t Sleep With Stevens!”: The J. P. Stevens Boycott,” 528.

146 Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 8.

Undoubtedly the most prominent name to emerge from this process was that of Crystal Lee Sutton who, as noted earlier, was the inspiration for the award winning film *Norma Rae*. The film has been widely credited with drawing attention to the plight of textile workers and helping to convince management to negotiate an end to the campaign.¹⁴⁷ *Norma Rae* is important in this context because its popular reception highlights a crucial weakness in arguments of those who credit the success of the Stevens campaign to power on power strategies. To wit, if J. P. Stevens' management ultimately gave in to union demands as a result of material pressures and strategic disruptions (e.g., financial pressures due to the shifting of union funds and strategic disruptions of corporate boards that made it difficult to carry on daily business), then a popular film would not have mattered. *Norma Rae* would amount to little more than an intriguing side show. However, if the popular success of the film was a major contributing factor in management's decision to end the campaign, then this lends credence to an alternative reading of the campaign in which storytelling circulation is the more important factor.

This should not be taken to mean that a popular film was solely responsible for convincing management to end the campaign. This is true, if for no other reason, because, by the time *Norma Rae* debuted in theaters nationwide, the J. P. Stevens Corporation had already endured three years of lousy publicity and embarrassing revelations, and it was already under pressure from investors to end the standoff with the union.¹⁴⁸ What can be said is that the movie provided a disturbing account of daily work life in Southern textile mills that many audiences found credible and compelling. In that way it also lent credibility to the grim stories recounted in campaign literature and public protests. In all likelihood, these factors helped the union to "close

147 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 108; "'Norma Rae' 1, J. P. Stevens 0," *Washington Post*, October 24, 1980, A22; Robert Brent Toplin, "Norma Rae: Unionism in an Age of Feminism," *Labor History* 36, no. 2 (1995), 291.

148 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 106-108.

the deal” with management in the final year of the campaign. What this means is that, in order to make sense of ACTWU’s improbable victory in the Stevens campaign, it is important to look past *Norma Rae* and consider the collective influence of the dozens of other stories the union set afloat in the public sphere in the 1970s.¹⁴⁹

One person whose story was featured in ACTWU’s campaign discourse was Lucy Taylor, and her experience provides a reasonable template for understanding the union’s centrifugal storytelling strategies. After working thirty-five years in the weaving room of a J. P. Stevens mill in Roanoke Rapids, Taylor developed brown lung disease and was forced into early retirement.¹⁵⁰ She filed a workers’ compensation claim, but management turned her down, claiming she should have submitted the paperwork as soon as she had begun to experience symptoms several years earlier. She subsequently registered a grievance with the union, and in 1980 presented her case to the North Carolina Supreme Court.¹⁵¹ The court found her testimony compelling and subsequently extended workers compensation benefits to thousands of former textile workers whose claims, like Taylor’s, had been previously denied. Her victory was featured in an “above the fold” news report on the business page of the *Charlotte Observer* in the

149 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Testimony,” 7, 10; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “There’s a Hole in Willie Brice’s Christmas Stocking,” undated flier. J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 142, 144, 145; Robert Daniels, “‘We’re the Slaves for J. P. Stevens’: Willie Brice Worked 24 Years at a Nonunionized Plant; His Pension is \$14.56 Per Month,” *Cleveland Plain Dealer*, September 17, 1979, 15; Jordan, in *National Labor Relations Board v. J. P. Stevens & Co., Inc.*, 39-91.

150 Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 77.

151 Workers’ stories about workplace health and safety issues and rights violations sometimes came to the attention of union representatives through venues other than the formal grievance process. For example, in May of 1977 Harold McIver, AFL-CIO coordinator for the Stevens campaign forwarded to his staff a copy of a hand-written letter from a man named Don Hale who had been let go from a non-union textile mill after twelve years shortly after he lost an eye in a work-related accident. Hale told McIver, “I tired of the shit way the mill company do mill help. I have one wish before I die is to see the southern become union [*sic*]. Don Hale, hand-written letter to Harold McIver seeking union assistance, dated May 6, 1977, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Harold McIver, untitled memorandum to J. P. Stevens boycott staff with attached letter from textile worker Don Hale, dated May 6, 1977, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

spring of 1980.¹⁵² ACTWU included portions of Taylor's account in two widely disseminated fliers and in the film *Testimony* shown on scores of college campuses and other public venues in the late 1970s.¹⁵³ *Newsweek* magazine reporter Mimi Conway later featured Taylor's story alongside those of a dozen or so other textile workers in her 1979 book *Rise Gonna Rise*.¹⁵⁴

The progression of Taylor's story from direct experience to dissemination in various media illustrates an important rhetorical distinction. Given that her story had been recounted in state courts and in Congressional hearings, management could hardly claim her story had been fabricated – at least not entirely. As a result, they were forced to settle on what de Certeau would recognize as a rhetorical strategy featuring asyndeton, or the elimination of “conjunctions” in a discursive economy.¹⁵⁵ That is, if they were going to restore the integrity of their organizational narratives and halt the flow of disquieting questions from investors and the press, management had to find ways of suppressing the stories that had been percolating out of their Southern textile mills for several years.

Put simply, the company had two options (three if one counts conceding to union demands). They could continue their attempts to silence workers on the local level by using coercive force (threats, firings, black listings, and the like), or they could frame the public

152 In her role as president of the Carolina Brown Lung Association (CBLA) Taylor also presented testimony about her experiences to the Department of Labor's Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) hearings on cotton dust standards in May of 1977. Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 58-59; Howard Covington, “Compensation Open to More: Court Eases Byssinosis Rule,” *The Charlotte Observer*, May 7, 1980, C1, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; James Wooten, “Southern Conflict,” *New York Times*, July 8, 1979.

153 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Testimony,” 7; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Under the Covers: Brown Lung and J. P. Stevens,” “Selling a Boycott at the Grass Roots,” *U.S. News & World Report*, June 20, 1977, 71.

154 Some journalists appear to have felt an obligation to keep the workers' stories in circulation. As one such author, Tamara Hareven, wrote, “One cannot possibly overstate the importance of keeping the J. P. Stevens drama alive in the national conscience, and of documenting, recording and interpreting the social experience and the human conditions surrounding this struggle between labor and management.” Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 58-59; Tamara K. Hareven “Battle for the Union Label; *Rise Gonna Rise: A Portrait of Southern Textile Workers*,” *Washington Post*, June 10, 1979, E4.

155 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 101.

testimonies of people like Lucy Taylor and Crystal Lee Sutton as atypical experiences in what was, on balance, a professional and fair-handed workplace. As it turned out, through most of the campaign the company pursued both strategies simultaneously.¹⁵⁶ That is, they persisted in snubbing NLRB regulations by firing and intimidating union activists and sympathizers. At the same time they developed a public relations strategy aimed at framing J. P. Stevens as a benevolent corporation that had been unfairly maligned. Both strategies depended on employee's keeping their mouths shut about the persistence of egregious working conditions in textile mills. In the end, ACTWU was able to exploit this weakness by taking the mill workers' stories onto the international stage where they were held out as representative of a systematic pattern of oppression and abuse in J. P. Stevens' textile mills.

By adopting a strategy of setting stories about life in the textile mills in public circulation, ACTWU leadership demonstrated an intuitive understanding of the kairotic opportunities attendant to an emerging global market. They sensed that many of the shibboleths and conventions of Southern textile communities would appear provincial, dated, or even cruel when viewed from the perspective of more tolerant terrains. They knew as well that by the late 1970s the world was becoming a decidedly more peripatetic and talkative place, and they set about developing strategies that would enable them to critique the political order of Southern textile mills while remaining beyond the reach of the company's disciplinary practices.

They accomplished this by staging protest actions in Los Angeles, New York, and other locations where they were more likely to attract the attention of global media. Only a few

¹⁵⁶ By 1978 J. P. Stevens' management had begun to shift its strategy by letting local managers know they would no longer tolerate the continued firing and intimidation of union sympathizers and activists. By that time, however, Employee Education Committees had gained a large following, especially among white male employees, in the company's Southern mills. Leaders of many such groups demonstrated a willingness to intimidate union sympathizers and oppose the advancement of minorities in the workplace. Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 138.

decades earlier this strategic maneuver would have been difficult or impossible. When Robert T. Stevens began moving textile factories southward in the 1940s, he was not only escaping labor unions and securing profits, he was building mills in small towns where non-union shops were unlikely to draw the attention of muckraking journalists. The rural South was still a place where the white majority embraced segregation, sexism, and fundamentalist religion.¹⁵⁷ Roanoke Falls, North Carolina was no exception. Whatever its endearing qualities, and no doubt they were many, the town provided a felicitous political environment for a CEO used to running his organization with military precision.¹⁵⁸ This is not to suggest that J. P. Stevens' management enjoyed the sort of all-encompassing political authority of earlier textile companies in the area, many of whom ruled factory towns as omnipotent tyrants.¹⁵⁹ Nevertheless, the history of the Stevens campaign and of the Southern labor movement leave no doubt the company exerted considerable influence over the small towns where they set up mills. When Stevens' management spoke to city councils, police departments, and state legislatures, they listened.¹⁶⁰

ACTWU campaign pamphlets are filled with stories that confirm J. P. Stevens' political clout. These documents include harrowing descriptions of the daily deprivations and hardships many experienced in the "humorless terrain" of rural textile factories.¹⁶¹ One of the more compelling examples is that of Maurine Hedgpeth, a veteran employee who in the 1960s presented testimony to the NLRB about safety violations at the J. P. Stevens textile mill where

157 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 10.

158 CEO James D. Finley was a protégé of his predecessor Robert Ten Broeck Stevens (Secretary of the Army under Eisenhower) and shared his antipathy toward the labor movement. Ibid, 66.

159 Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 15; Jacquelyn Hall, et. al., *Like a Family: the Making of a Southern Cotton Mill World* (Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 1987), 157; Leifermann, *Crystal Lee*, 47-48.

160 Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 15; Hall, *Like a Family*, 157.

161 See chapter two where I adapt Bruner's concept of the "humorless state" to describe "humorless terrains" in the global marketplace: places where speaking the truth about the material conditions of industrial production could get a person fired or even killed. See also: Bruner, "Carnavalesque Protest and the Humorless State," 137.

she worked as a weaver on the third shift.¹⁶² When local managers found out what she had done, they fired her as well as her husband, and the family stared down starvation for the better part of four years. As she later explained:

They told us if any of us was goin' to get any work we would have to leave town to do it, because nobody here would hire us. I told them we would starve before I left town... And we almost did... My children would say, 'Mom, are you going to eat?' and I'd say, 'I ate while I was cooking.' You just don't forget things like that. It took me 4 years and 21 days to get my job back. I had to go all the way up through the courts. ...But nothing made up for being out of work for 4 years and going without enough to eat.¹⁶³

Hedgpeth's story and others like it provide powerful evidence that in textile towns in the American South at mid-century speaking out against management required unquestionable *parrhesia*, rhetorical bravery.¹⁶⁴ Moreover, at the time of the Stevens campaign, the Uprising of '34 was a not-so-distant memory for many people in the rural South.¹⁶⁵ Only a few decades earlier those who had dared to go out on strike against textile companies "were beaten, shot, discredited, and evicted from their homes in company-owned towns."¹⁶⁶ By the second half of the century management could no longer get away with beating or shooting employees, but they often fired anyone who spoke out and blacklisted their families in the community.¹⁶⁷ For people like the Hedgpeths it amounted to nearly the same thing.

A fundamental weakness of J. P. Stevens' corporate strategy was that it failed to anticipate how easily ACTWU could shift the terrain of the conflict in order to critique company practices from remote venues. So long as the conflict was restricted to factory floors and the localized public spheres of rural Appalachian towns, management could lean on local authorities

¹⁶² Ibid, 2.

¹⁶³ Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Testimony," 10, 11.

¹⁶⁴ See Appendix D for a more detailed account of Hedgpeth's story as recounted in an ACTWU campaign brochure.

¹⁶⁵ Clark, "Textile Workers Union of America," 1373; Davis, *North Carolina during the Great Depression*, 183.

¹⁶⁶ Cloud, "The Null Persona," 177.

¹⁶⁷ Conway, *Rise Gonna Rise*, 109, 141, 194.

and repress union activity with relative impunity. In rural textile communities many had learned to accept unsafe working conditions and the denial of opportunities to minorities and women as part of the natural order of things.¹⁶⁸

During the 1970s ACTWU began to challenge these assumptions by disclosing gritty truths about daily work life in sleepy mill towns like Roanoke Rapids, Virginia or White Horse, South Carolina. Sometimes they did this by distributing crudely made pamphlets to mill workers they were hoping to recruit into the union.¹⁶⁹ More often, they did this by staging protest events and distributing professionally formatted materials in the streets of major cities like Los Angeles and Indianapolis and on dozens of college campuses across the nation including Harvard, Princeton, and Stanford.¹⁷⁰ In Southern textile communities J. P. Stevens could discipline union employees who dared to distribute graphic or carnivalesque accounts of daily work life. But in the streets of Manhattan unionists were free to play the pranksters and parody their employer as a spurned, syphilitic lover. In Roanoke Rapids and other mill towns in the American South the staging of these sorts of carnivalesque protest events would likely have resulted in people being fired, black listed, or worse. By shifting the terrain of the conflict, the union expanded their rhetorical options and enabled them to engage in humorous dissent while enjoying a diminished threat of direct reprisal. What happened in places like Roanoke Rapids could not always be contained there. The twentieth century simply provided too many channels for the global

168 Ibid, 44, 119.

169 See, for instance, the cartoon reproduced in Appendix D from the handmade pamphlet entitled “J. P. Stevens Talks Out of Both Sides of Their Mouth.” Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “J. P. Stevens Talks Out of Both Sides of Their Mouth;” Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Who is J. P. Stevens?” undated campaign pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Why is J. P. Stevens Treating Montgomery Workers Like Unwanted Step-Children?” campaign pamphlet, dated August 22, 1976, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

170 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 92-93.

distribution and circulation of carnivalesque and grotesque stories that could be repeated in remote locations by people who were not subject to organizational discipline.¹⁷¹

J. P. Stevens responded to the union's plurivocal storytelling strategies by pursuing an unapologetically monovocal strategy of embracing "traditional American values" and framing union activists as self-serving criminals. Both of these tactics are on clear display in a pamphlet published by J. P. Stevens in 1977 entitled "Straightening Things Out" and in several other texts from the same time period, including a series of "captive audience" speeches delivered by local factory managers and the script of a remarkable anti-union film featuring interviews with Stevens' employees.¹⁷² In each instance, the company and its anti-labor apologists demonstrated a keen interest in controlling how people spoke about labor relations and the daily work environment in their textile mills. When read alongside one another, the texts display a remarkable narrative unity that signals a conscious attempt at exerting centripetal control over the centrifugal force of ACTWU's storytelling practices.¹⁷³ In that regard, the texts anticipate a deeply conservative audience that resonates to the "company line" about the benevolence of management and the predatory nature of union activists. In developing these claims I work from the center to the periphery, beginning with the company pamphlet, then moving on to the captive audience speeches and the film in order to demonstrate how specific themes persisted across a series of organizational texts in monovocal fashion.

171 Boje, *Storytelling Organization*, 2; White, *The Content of the Form*, 1.

172 Under the provisions of the Taft-Hartley Act passed in 1947, companies gained the ability to require employees to attend meetings on paid time to listen to anti-union messages. In an effort to decrease their chances of facing future litigation over harassment of union sympathizers, J. P. Stevens disallowed management from speaking directly to workers about most union-related matters in 1978. Fisse and Braithwaite, 25; Gross, *Broken Promise*, 35; J. P. Stevens and Company, "Straightening Things Out," company pamphlet, dated February 15, 1977; J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, 5, 9, 16.

173 Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 67.

James D. Finley, CEO of J. P. Stevens, set the tone for his company's response to the union campaign in the introduction to the "Straightening Things Out" pamphlet by writing: "This booklet is written for the friends of J. P. Stevens. And for those who don't particularly know the Company but are curious – and care – about the truth."¹⁷⁴ When this statement is read in context it becomes clear that Finley is drawing a clear distinction between friends and enemies (with the union and its allies falling into the latter category) and that when he writes of "truth" he assumes his audience will accept the word of a prominent CEO as authoritative – even when he provides no discernible warrant for his claims. The document is subdivided into twelve topics corresponding to salient themes in ACTWU's campaign literature including "Labor Law," "Employee Relations," and "Occupational Safety."¹⁷⁵

Throughout the text the anonymous management author frames labor interests as conspiratorial, violent, and deceptive. ACTWU may have been presenting itself as an organization looking out for the best interests of workers, but they were actually interlopers who would "readily sacrifice the interest of the employee... in order to increase their own power."¹⁷⁶ Worse, union activists were responsible for "Cars and trucks ... damaged by repeated barrages of rocks and stones. Acid poured on machinery. Shots... fired into the cars and homes of employees working during the strike."¹⁷⁷ That such behaviors are typical of labor unions is simply assumed. The author assumes as well that ACTWU could not be trusted to speak the truth about J. P. Stevens' record before the NLRB. Never mind the 125 times federal courts ruled against the

174 J. P. Stevens and Company, "Straightening Things Out," 1.

175 J. P. Stevens and Company, "Straightening Things Out," 5, 9, 16.

176 Ibid, 5.

177 Ibid, 6.

company's labor practices. This record is held out as *de rigueur* for a major textile company with "a total workforce of more than 45,000 people."¹⁷⁸

These passages are all the more remarkable since the pamphlet lacks two things one finds in abundance in much of the union literature I reviewed: footnotes and first person accounts. Whatever else one might say about management's arguments in the "Straightening Things Out" pamphlet – nearly all of their claims about union criminality and deception were difficult if not impossible to verify. None of this prevented anti-union activists in Southern textile towns from embracing management arguments as their own. In fact, as I will explain in more detail shortly, assumptions about the malevolence of labor unions and labor activism became the single most distinguishing trait of anti-union discourse in the 1980s and 90s. These developments aside, in the more immediate context of the "Straightening Things Out" pamphlet and the closely related texts I will consider next, the tactic appears to have back-fired on management. For many public audiences in the late 1970s, management's counter-suspicion tactics simply did not ring true.

The texts of anti-union speeches delivered by local managers and of a management film shown at several employee meetings echo salient themes in the "Straightening Things Out" pamphlet. Bakhtin has described this sort of pattern as double-voicing, the articulation of the words of one speaker in the mouth of another, in other words, rhetorical ventriloquism.¹⁷⁹ In the "Straightening Things Out" pamphlet, for instance, the author claims, "Stevens has found that *a direct relationship* with its employees works not only to the *best interests* of the Company, but to the benefit and best interests of the employees themselves [emphasis added]."¹⁸⁰ Managers at local J. P. Stevens' textile mills repeated this claim in a series of captive audience speeches where employees were required to sit through anti-union presentations. At one such event, in

¹⁷⁸ Ibid, 10.

¹⁷⁹ Bakhtin, *Dialogic Imagination*, 324.

¹⁸⁰ J. P. Stevens and Company, "Straightening Things Out," 9.

Milledgeville, Georgia, a supervisor claimed, “We are deeply convinced that *a direct working relationship* between a company and its employees *serves the best interests* of both [emphasis added].”¹⁸¹ Management speakers used the same argument in similar speeches delivered at mills in Wallace and Aberdeen, North Carolina.¹⁸² The argument is echoed as well in the words of a J. P. Stevens mill worker who speaks in a company film shown to workers in a factory in White Horse, South Carolina: “If I talk I know what I’m talking about, and I’d rather do my talking... Somebody in between I don’t know whether he’s talking about me or somebody else [*sic*].”¹⁸³ The speaker gives no indication he is aware of the irony of his own words – that in demanding his own voice he was sticking to the company line.

Nor are these isolated examples. At points these texts echo one another in detail when local supervisors and mill workers repeat specific statistics and phrases from management literature. In its “Straightening Things Out” pamphlet, for instance, the company claims “Minorities make up *23 percent of J. P. Stevens’ workforce*, an increase of over 200% during the last ten years [emphasis added]” and goes on to argue that in the previous twelve years it had

181 Harold McIver, untitled, confidential memorandum to J. P. Stevens boycott staff dated September 27, 1976 with attached transcript for a “captive audience” speech delivered in Milledgeville, GA on September 22, 1976, folder 38, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

182 In Aberdeen the management speaker told workers, “By signing these [union] cards you say that you no longer want to deal with the company as an individual, but that you want to pay some union spokesperson to do your talking for you.” In Wallace they warned them, “Bear in mind that it is now your individual right and freedom to come in and settle with us personally any problems you may have. But if this union were to get in the freedom and this right which you now have would definitely be taken away from you and placed in the hands of the union.” Vivian Greene and Kenneth Burnett, “Speech by Vivian Greene and Kenneth Burnett: Mini-Captive Audience” transcripts of speeches delivered in Aberdeen, NC, dated March 24, 1977. J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; G. G. Walker, “Captive Audience Speech to Stevens Employees, Wallace, N. C.,” speech transcript dated January 28, 1975, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, 11.

183 It seems likely that if the company expended the time and money to make the film that it would have shown it in other factories as well, though I found no records to support this claim. J. P. Stevens and Company, transcript of untitled company film shown at textile mill in White Horse, SC, on January 10, 1978, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, 2.

“spent more than \$20,000,000 for environmental controls [emphasis added].”¹⁸⁴ Workers in the film shown at the White Horse factory repeat these exact arguments with one man claiming that since “23% of the employees of J. P. Stevens are black [emphasis added],” which he viewed as a considerable improvement, unionization could hurt minorities by limiting job opportunities.¹⁸⁵ Another added, “[I]n the last 10 years we have spent *more than \$20 million regarding the abatement of pollution* [emphasis added].”¹⁸⁶

At other times the secondary texts amplify themes that remain muted in management literature. I am thinking, for example, of the closing words of the company pamphlet: “J.P. Stevens has been creating jobs since 1813.”¹⁸⁷ This statement marks the end of a document in which labor activists are portrayed as a dangerous other willing to use “beatings, stonings, shootings, and bombings” to get their way.¹⁸⁸ By contrast, the reference to the year 1813 invoked a corporate history extending back to the early years of the American republic and including a prominent Secretary of the U. S. Army.¹⁸⁹

The metonymic linking of J. P. Stevens’ corporate history to national narratives and ideology was not lost on those employees who adamantly opposed unionization. The rhetoric of participants in employee education committees was salted with talk about God-given “freedom of choice,” and caricatures of unions and union organizers as subversives who were opposed to “the Bible and what it says,” and “the American Way.”¹⁹⁰ These sentiments are echoed as well in

184 J. P. Stevens and Company, “Straightening Things Out,” cover page.

185 J. P. Stevens and Company, transcript of untitled company film shown at textile mill in White Horse, SC, 7.

186 Ibid, 4.

187 J. P. Stevens and Company, “Straightening Things Out,” 20.

188 Ibid, 6.

189 Minchin, “J. P. Stevens Campaign,” 707.

190 The first two quotations come from anti-union workers who spoke on the film shown in White Horse, SC. The second is from a letter to the editor written by an anti-union activist. J. P. Stevens and Company, transcript of untitled company film shown at textile mill in White Horse, SC, 2, 9, 11; Pruitt, “Practices of ACTWU Attacked by Stevens Employee of Greenville.”

a captive audience speech delivered at a plant in Aberdeen, North Carolina where a local manager delivered a caustic critique of an ACTWU campaign pamphlet: “I guess the most (dishonest) thing about the whole thing is here in the liberty bell that we sort of associate with the flag and patriotism and so forth they say ‘freedom and Justice for J. P. Stevens Workers [sic]’”¹⁹¹ This sort of conflation of narrative themes from national history and fundamentalist religion with anti-union arguments was a consistent theme in the discourse of ACTWU’s opponents in Southern textile communities. The practice fostered a “them versus us” atmosphere in which the labor movement was objectified as a malignant and eminently unreasonable force determined to subvert, not only company policies, but the cultural foundations of Southern and American life.

Read in context, then, one can identify numerous examples of Bakhtinian double-voicing in the management pamphlet, the captive audience speeches, and the company film. In these texts the words of local managers and anti-union activists mirror specific themes and phrases in the written discourse of corporate management. What are missing from these documents are any sustained, detailed accounts of first hand experiences in the workplace. Instead, one encounters a highly disciplined, two dimensional discourse featuring, on the one hand, pragmatic issues of management (e.g., cost containments and threats of plant closures) and, on the other, abstract, disembodied accounts of working conditions in which a vote for unionization is tantamount to voting against God and liberty. This is true, even in regard to the one text where management appears to make a concerted effort to demonstrate they are attending to the concerns of their

191 The speaker was referring to an image of the Liberty Bell that appeared on a series of ACTWU “Fact Sheets” purporting to disclose the truth about working conditions at J. P. Stevens’ textile mills and about the company’s record before the NLRB. The union distributed at least seven such pamphlets during the Stevens campaign including one entitled: “Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens and its Record of Discrimination and Employment Practices.” Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Fact Sheet: J. P. Stevens and its Record of Discrimination and Employment Practices;” Greene and Burnett, “Speech by Vivian Greene and Kenneth Burnett,” 19.

employees: the film shown in White Horse, South Carolina in which individual mill hands talk about work-life at J. P. Stevens. Remarkably, the people featured in the film provide almost no first person details about their experiences, preferring instead to channel organizational and cultural narratives.

The monovocal tone of the film is even more striking when compared with ACTWU's campaign discourse, and especially their film *Testimony* and its accompanying pamphlet by the same name.¹⁹² As I explained earlier, the film and booklet included compelling, detailed first person accounts by people like Lucy Taylor of their idiosyncratic experiences of life in the textile mills. The stories are remarkable examples of atechanical rhetoric, personal testimonies set in a richly documented textual context. By contrast, the textile workers in the management film speak in decidedly abstract terms and operate as virtually interchangeable narrators for a set of predictable narratives.

This is not to say the company film was ineffective. While the accounts of work life found in the company film and in other anti-union literature from the time period often failed to square with material conditions (e.g., by overlooking or minimizing J. P. Stevens' history before the NLRB), they did serve to galvanize many conservative audiences in opposition to the ACTWU campaign. More to the point, by resisting the union at every juncture, especially at the local level where they could require employees to listen to their arguments, J. P. Stevens provided a persuasive lesson for other employers about how to stand up to unions while preserving profits.¹⁹³

¹⁹² Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Testimony,"

¹⁹³ According to Steven H. Norwood, in the years following the emergence of "corporate campaign" style direct action strategies professional labor consultants developed sophisticated techniques for sidestepping federal labor laws and delaying NLRB elections. By the year 2000, the NLRB was so weakened that the AFL-CIO had begun to speak of the agency as a "legal fiction. For a straightforward defense of many of the strategies Norwood describes, see labor consultant Louis Jackson's book *Winning NLRB Elections*. Louis Jackson, *Winning NLRB Elections: Management's Strategy and Preventive Programs* (New York: Practicing Law Institute, 1972); Minchin,

Furthermore, despite their emphasis on plurivocal storytelling circulation, some aspects of ACTWU's own organizational discourse were distinctly centripetal, that is to say, distinctly centralizing and controlling in nature. This tendency toward monovocal control of organizational discourse, in fact, is one of the distinctive markers of the martial typology in prospective narrative disclosure. One finds evidence of this pattern in the top-down decision-making structure of the union, the limited involvement of rank and file workers in day-to-day decision-making, and in union materials detailing strict procedures for dealing with the press and for giving prescribed answers to anti-union arguments during organizing campaigns.¹⁹⁴ These elements within ACTWU's organizational discourse are clearly problematic in that they provided fodder for the worst caricatures of unions as tyrannical organizations. They are problematic as well because they reproduced authoritarian order and failed to take advantage of the talents and creativity of the entire membership. As I explain next, despite these limitations, the union's strategy of circulating credible, firsthand stories about safety and human rights issues in local, regional, and national venues made it more difficult for J. P. Stevens' management to control how it was being perceived in the market place and the public sphere.

Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign, 182; Steven H. Norwood, *Strikebreaking and Intimidation*, 247.

194 In the late 1970s as their campaign against J. P. Stevens began to gain national momentum, ACTWU became concerned with controlling the tenor and nature of internal and external organizational communication. In December of 1976, for example, Harold McIver floated a rough draft for a new "Community Educational Program" complete with role playing materials to help workers answer standard objections raised by union opponents. The following spring he issued a memorandum in which he announced that "In the future, no staff person should give any statements to the press without checking with this office first." Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Suggested Five-Minute Speech to ACTWU Members," undated document, folder 36, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Talking Points on J. P. Stevens," undated internal document, folder 36, box 1839, ACTWU NC Joint Board, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; Harold McIver, untitled memorandum and attached rough draft of a proposal for a "Committee Educational Program," dated December 10, 1976, 4, folder 39, box 1839, AFL-CIO Region V 1976-1978 collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

ACTWU's organizational discourse in the Stevens campaign was, in a sense, divided against itself. On the one hand, by disseminating worker's plurivocal stories in the public sphere they galvanized a large and diverse set of audiences to support their cause. On the other hand, by managing their campaign in a top-down manner and using confrontational strategies, they risked alienating management and animating conservative opposition. Any reasonable assessment of the long-term impact of the Stevens campaign on the market practices of corporations and activists must account for both developments: public enthusiasm and public alienation. Laclau provides a useful set of tools for analyzing both themes in his description of the formation of popular demands.

In the first instance, one can get a sense of the natural strengths of the Stevens campaign as a popular movement by thinking more carefully about some of the real life experiences of Crystal Lee Sutton, the woman who inspired the film *Norma Rae*. The most famous scene in the film hews closely to an incident Sutton described in testimony to the United States Court of Appeals for the Second Circuit in 1974.¹⁹⁵ Frustrated and upset after being fired for attempting to copy down the words of an anti-union notice on a company bulletin board, Norma Rae walks onto the factory floor to gather her belongings. Instead of leaving peacefully, she decides on a whim to write the word "UNION" on a large piece of paper and jumps onto a table in the center of the shop holding the sign above her head. Inspired by her action, the other workers begin to shut off their noisy machines in support of her action.¹⁹⁶

In her court testimony Sutton does not mention other workers shutting down their machines. Otherwise the film scene aligns, point-by-point with the story she recounted in court testimony. Minor differences between the two versions aside, Sutton's elevation of the signifier

195 Jordan, in *National Labor Relations Board v. J. P. Stevens & Co., Inc.*, 39-91.

196 *Norma Rae*, DVD, directed by Martin Ritt, 1979 (Beverly Hills, CA: Twentieth Century Fox, 2001).

“UNION” and the subsequent public circulation of her story along with those of other workers comports well with Laclau’s description of the formation of popular demands. He describes this process in reference to situations where a discursive system “fails to constitute itself as a closed order,” thereby opening a space for the articulation of popular demands¹⁹⁷ In the Stevens campaign union protesters revealed this lack of closure by disseminating compelling stories that problematized the company’s advertising and public relations narratives. The public circulation of those stories, in other words, created a whole series of localized scandals as people representing a broad spectrum of J. P. Stevens’ consumer and investor base began to express concerns about how the company was treating its employees.

The sorts of widely dispersed, low-level turbulence this engendered is consistent with Laclau’s description of the proliferation of “equivalential chains” in popular movements.¹⁹⁸ As I explained earlier, in this process one stentorian demand can come to stand in for several others that become linked together via a metaphorical, equivalential process. Thus, in the Stevens campaign, the signifier “UNION” became the organizing term for a whole set of demands related to racism, sexism, workplace safety, and wage scales. As stories related to these demands circulated in centrifugal fashion on college campuses and other venues far removed from rural textile towns, they became metonymically linked with extant demands regarding matters such as race, gender, health and union solidarity. These developments, in turn, contributed to the further destabilization of the more abstract, transcendental components of J. P. Stevens’ discourse, including their relationship to national narratives about things like justice, liberty, and free enterprise.

197 Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 12.

198 Ibid, 129-132.

In this way the elevation of the signifier “UNION” during the Stevens campaign eventually produced what Laclau calls “an antagonistic frontier” – the result of people who have been drawn together by an antagonistic difference in order to articulate a demand for substantive change in a discursive order. One can catch a glimpse of the boundary of this frontier in Crystal Lee Sutton’s observation that, “It makes me feel good to know the Union [*sic*] is interested in seeing that justice be done to the workers that JP continues to harass, even after the Supreme Court of the United States of America has said this will not be tolerated. Shit, if this happens again, someone will go to jail.”¹⁹⁹ With these words, one gets the sense Sutton is articulating the sensibilities of a group of people (women, African-Americans, college students, and the poor) who had been drawn together by a demand, reached critical mass, and could now speak with considerable authority to the old guard of society.

That the Stevens campaign helped to unite a diverse collection of people and interest groups suggests the campaign could have influenced the trajectory of a range of human rights interests. Indeed this was likely the case with the United Farm Workers, the African American Civil Rights Movement, and even the South African anti-Apartheid movement. In the first instance, this is because Rogers and Cesar Chavez discussed campaign strategies in the early 1980s, and also because some members of the large J. P. Stevens boycott committee in California later worked in leadership positions in the UFW.²⁰⁰ Second, there can be no doubt the victory at J. P. Stevens was a watershed moment in the history of race relations in the U.S. South in that a labor union (the majority of whom were African American and/or female) won a

199 Sutton was referring to a 1967 Supreme Court decision (*National Labor Relations Board, Petitioner, v. J. P. Stevens & Co., Inc., et al.*) in which the court declined to hear an appeal of a lower court ruling requiring the company to reinstate workers they had fired illegally. Minchin, *Don’t Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 36, 107. *National Labor Relations Board, Petitioner, v. J. P. Stevens & Co., Inc., et al.* 464 F.2d 1326 U.S. (1971).

200 Rogers, interview by author; Randy Shaw, *Beyond the Fields: Cesar Chavez, the UFW, and the Struggle for Justice in the 21st Century* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2008), 52.

contract in communities where the schools and cafes had been segregated only a generation earlier.²⁰¹ Finally, the South African ambassador to the United Nations, Dumisani S. Kumalo, claims that in the 1980s he and other anti-apartheid activists appropriated strategies developed by Ray Rogers and ACTWU against banking interests.²⁰² Beyond that, as I explained earlier, the strategies ACTWU developed for the Stevens campaign were widely emulated by labor unions and groups representing other activist interests in the 1980s and 90s.²⁰³

To be sure, this was not the entire story. ACTWU's power on power strategies proved counterproductive in at least two ways. First, to the degree that they replicated the top-down decision-making practices of J. P. Stevens, the union undermined its own credibility as advocates for a humanitarian cause. Second, their use of martial style campaign strategies helped to animate a "rival hegemonic project" in the public sphere.²⁰⁴ In the first case, the distinctly instrumental orientation of the campaign – by which I mean their singular focus on signing a labor contract in Roanoke Rapids and the handful of other locales where ACTWU had won collective bargaining rights – lead the union to adopt a power on power model that mirrored and, to a degree, legitimized the authoritarian power structure of their corporate opponent.

To cite the most obvious example, even while union organizers produced pamphlets featuring the stories of individual workers, they employed top-down decision-making practices in many ways resembling those of their corporate opponents. In 1976, for example, ACTWU put

201 Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 155.

202 Kumalo made the claim in an online interview: "One of the people who taught me organizing, in a way-another movement, which was very important, was the J. P. Stevens movement. Ray Rogers and those people were doing the J. P. Stevens movement and campaigns with banks and all of that. So when we did the bank campaigns and what have you, we had learned from them. So I'm just trying to say it was not an isolated movement that to me, at least in my experience, started on its own." Dumisani S. Kumalo, "No Easy Victories Interview: Dumisani Kumalo," www.noeasyvictories.org/interviews/int14_kumalo.php (accessed September 13, 2010).

203 Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, "The Evolution," 218; Manheim, *Death of a Thousand*, 63.

204 Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 131.

in place a “Committee Educational Program” with detailed, standardized lesson plans.²⁰⁵ As part of these lessons, union members were expected to practice responding to anti-union objections with prescribed answers. Even more striking, union organizers developed a “Suggested Five Minute Speech to ACTWU Members” that could be read word for word at local meetings.²⁰⁶ Whatever the intent of such lessons, they left the union more vulnerable to criticisms from opponents who claimed they used strong-armed tactics to manipulate workers.

Moreover, ACTWU’s strategies in the Stevens campaign sometimes bore an uncanny resemblance to the investment strategies of their corporate target. J. P. Stevens made strategic investments in New York banks in order to secure profits and capitalize on future opportunities, and ACTWU mirrored those actions by shifting union funds in order to threaten corporate profits and limit the company’s economic options. Similarly, ACTWU mirrored J. P. Stevens’ public relations and advertising schemes by issuing press releases, publishing promotional pamphlets, and staging high profile public events to coincide with company meetings. The goal in each instance, of course, was to disclose corporate behaviors and relationships left out of J. P. Stevens’ official narratives. Or (to frame the situation in Nietzschean terms), one could say the union aimed to disclose the self-serving “monumental” dimensions of the organizational narratives by placing them in conversation with contradictory events in the “antiquarian” historical record.²⁰⁷

Some level of discursive appropriation, of course, may be inevitable in anti-corporate activism. Still, there may be a point at which appropriation serves to reify status quo procedures. ACTWU may have tested that limit by deciding to match many of J. P. Stevens’ organizational

205 McIver, untitled memorandum and attached rough draft of a proposal for a “Committee Educational Program.”

206 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “Suggested Five-Minute Speech to ACTWU Members.”

207 Nietzsche, “On the Uses and Disadvantages of History for Life,” 22.

gestures. In so doing, they also risked damaging their own credibility as an organization interested in advancing democratic initiatives. Top-down decision-making undercut the credibility of their egalitarian rhetoric, and, fair or not, in years to come, critics of the labor movement would point to the Stevens campaign as providing tacit confirmation of their claims regarding the authoritarian, self-serving nature of labor unions.²⁰⁸

To be clear, union documents leave little doubt ACTWU's leadership understood their strategies were controversial and ran a considerable risk of sparking a conservative backlash.²⁰⁹ In the end they simply concluded that if they were to achieve their goal of winning labor contracts in the South, then they would need to run the risk. It was a kairotic, rhetorical wager that produced mixed results. ACTWU won labor contracts at ten Southern textile mills and, in so doing, inspired many emulators. Their actions also sparked an angry backlash against ACTWU in many communities in the South and contributed to a national backlash against labor unions in the U. S. in the 1980s and 90s.

What can be said, then, is that the same strategies that enabled ACTWU to galvanize a range of disparate interests served to alienate other audiences and to animate competing projects in the public sphere. The crucial point at this juncture is that these interest groups competed, not only for the allegiances of people, but for the ownership of ideas. As Laclau explains, in the agonistic contest between hegemonic interests, some signifiers become "indeterminate between alternative equivalential frontiers."²¹⁰ Put another way, they have become "floating signifiers"

208 Franklin, *Three Strikes*, 31-32; Minchin, *Don't Sleep with Stevens!: The J. P. Stevens Campaign*, 182.

209 I found two documents related to the Stevens campaign in which authors made direct references to the possibility of a conservative backlash. The Institute for Southern Studies provided the most direct assessment by arguing that "Without support from the general community, a right-wing backlash could emerge at the outset." Bob Arnold, et. al., "Confidential: To: Interested Parties," memo from Institute for Southern Studies to ACTWU dated May 10, 1976, folder 1, box 3374, Emory Via collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta; McIver, undated, confidential memorandum to union staff on "J. P. Stevens & Co. Organizing Project," 3.

210 Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 131.

that can be claimed, at the same moment, by competing discursive alliances.²¹¹ Something like this happened in the Stevens campaign where both parties to the conflict appealed to similar abstract concepts in order to advance their arguments. In ACTWU's campaign discourse, for example, "freedom" is related to freedom from coercion and to demands for safe working conditions and equal opportunity in the workplace. Moreover, union texts from the campaign are filled with scathing caricatures of management and reveal a fundamental distrust of elite corporate decision makers in faraway places. And, as I argued earlier, the word "union" is held out as a demand that captures both sentiments. That is, the right to be represented by a union is framed as a demand which, if accommodated, would serve the interests of freedom and curb the worst excesses of corporate power.

Anti-union activists and their allies in management proffered competing understandings of these same concepts. In the campaign related texts of J. P. Stevens and the employee education committees, "freedom" was framed as the "right to work," and labor activists (rather than management) were framed as authoritarian elitists. Finally, the word "union" was subverted and became a watchword for violence, thuggery, and interference in local affairs.

An Ambivalent Legacy

ACTWU's campaign to unionize J. P. Stevens has left a decidedly ambivalent legacy. By employing a novel combination of instrumental and narrative direct action strategies, they were able to force a conclusion to what had become an intractable labor conflict. The Stevens campaign was one of the founding events in the contemporary anti-globalization movement and the strategies and tactics they used to bring reluctant executives to the bargaining table have been emulated by scores of other activist organizations. And yet, some of those strategies prompted an immediate, defiant backlash among opponents of labor and were at least partially responsible for

211 Ibid.

alienating management teams at other corporations as well as large sectors of the general public. In reviewing these two vectors of the Stevens campaign I have focused on narrative rhetoric – in particular on a pattern of prospective narrative disclosure featuring kairotic rhetorical disclosures and storytelling circulation. This process of prospective narrative disclosure served to leverage and amplify ACTWU’s better-known “corporate campaign” tactics. More to the point, my research suggests that had the union not disseminated credible first person accounts of harsh working conditions and discriminatory employment policies, their signature power on power campaign strategies in all likelihood would have failed. Storytelling worked where arm twisting could not.

In practice this meant that through the centrifugal circulation of individual accounts of appalling workplace experiences, ACTWU was able to throw J. P. Stevens’ management off balance and prevent them from mounting a credible, consistent public defense. And because the stories the union was disseminating about daily work-life in Southern textile mills were consistently graphic and compelling, they became a constant source of embarrassment for the Stevens’ management team and even for executives in other corporations who had a stake in the company’s success. Moreover, advancements in global communication enabled the union to keep the campaign in public view, thus preventing management from defaulting to old practices and simply silencing dissenting voices. It was one thing to intimidate or fire dissenting mill-worker in Roanoke Rapids. It proved considerably more difficult to defend such practices on remote college campuses and in the company’s annual meetings. The practical result of all this was that by 1980 the union’s accusations regarding J. P. Stevens being “the nation’s No. 1 labor law violator” had proven impossible to shake off.²¹²

212 Minchin, “Don’t Sleep With Stevens!”: The J. P. Stevens Boycott,” 512.

In that regard, the following passage from a story that appeared in *The Economist* shortly after J. P. Stevens announced it had agreed to terms with the union is telling: “The company has made these concessions after 17 years of intransigence partly because it would have had to flout the law openly to continue its resistance in those plants where the workers had freely voted for the union; and partly because the campaign by the union to turn Stevens into a corporate pariah was taking its toll. The company was becoming something of an embarrassment for the rest of big business.”²¹³ Three years earlier, Representative Frank Thompson of New Jersey reached a similar conclusion, observing that “It might well be that the time is coming when the J.P. Stevenses in this town will have to bear the burden or the pressures of more enlightened examples in the South and become more enlightened or more reasonable or risk the disdain of the great number of lawful employers who do not use such tactics.”²¹⁴ To put this all another way, consistent with Paul Turpin’s analysis of the importance of public decorum in market economies, at some point in the late stages of the Stevens campaign, management appears to have reached a tipping point when they realized public sentiment had turned against them and, profits aside, if they were going to be able to hold their heads up when facing their peers and investors they would need to find a way to end the campaign in the quietest and most dignified manner possible.²¹⁵

This should not be taken to mean that management had been convinced by ACTWU’s arguments. Given the very limited information we have regarding the thinking of the J. P. Stevens management team in relation to the ACTWU campaign, it is impossible to know whether they experienced a genuine change of heart regarding their labor practices or made a pragmatic decision based on how evolving attitudes toward CSR practices were likely to impact

213 “J. P. Stevens; A Beginning or an End?” 60.

214 As cited in Peggy Simpson, untitled article, *Associated Press*, August 9, 1977.

215 Turpin, “Liberal Political Economy and Justice,” 15-16.

things like their share price or future profitability. What we can say is that in the years following the Stevens campaign corporations developed sophisticated strategies of their own – some of them unsavory, others more overtly bureaucratic and professional – in order to manage “human resources,” respond to anti-corporate campaigns, and insure long-term profitability. In the three decades since the end of the Stevens campaign labor union membership has declined significantly and many corporations have either tested the limits of NLRB regulations by actively resisting union organizing efforts, or they have moved manufacturing operations overseas where they can hire workers for a fraction of what it costs in the U. S.

The situation was not entirely bleak. This same era saw the emergence of CSR policies as a common-place feature of corporate discourse and a vibrant anti-globalization movement featuring more rhetorically sophisticated and democratically managed anti-corporate campaigns. As one international business scholar argued recently, that the anti-corporate globalization movement and the CSR movement would arise during the same period of history is hardly accidental.²¹⁶ One of the primary reasons most multinational corporations developed sophisticated CSR policies in the closing decades of the twentieth century is that they served as a bulwark against the critiques of anti-corporate activists. The best defense proved to be a good offense. Whether most of these policies represent sincere attempts at addressing pressing social problems is yet to be determined. What is important in this context is that if we are to blame the architects of the Stevens campaign for being short-sighted regarding the risks of counter-mobilization, so too must we give them credit for providing a powerful, heuristic example of anti-corporate activism. In that regard, their most enduring legacy may have more to do with

216 J. J. Asongu, *Strategic Corporate Social Responsibility in Practice* (Lawrenceville, GA: Greenview Publishing Company, 2007), 37.

storytelling circulation and disclosure than with “power on power” strategies – unless of course we are speaking of the inherent limitation of the latter.

I turn next to a case study of the CIW’s Taco Bell campaign. This more recent campaign exemplifies an alternative confrontation/alliance pattern that featured a more egalitarian decision-making structure that was less likely to prompt conservative blowback in the public sphere. These differences aside, the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns are identical in at least one respect. Activists in both campaigns assumed that, if they were to stand a chance of influencing the trajectory of corporate behavior in the global marketplace, then they had to speak the truth about the material constraints of daily work life.

Chapter 5: A Community of Witnesses: The CIW vs. Taco Bell

When you look at the difference between us as farm workers and Taco Bell as a billion-dollar corporation, you may think we are crazy for taking them on. They have all the wealth and political power, and we have only one weapon. But that weapon – the truth – is the most powerful thing on earth, so we are certain that we will prevail.

Romeo Ramirez, Coalition of Immokalee Workers¹

In the passage printed above, CIW member Romeo Ramirez provides a concise answer to a pair of questions of central concern to this chapter. How did a couple thousand agricultural day laborers convince a multinational corporation to accede to their demands? Beyond that, how did they convince management at that company and several others to endorse their campaign to improve wages and working conditions in commercial agriculture in Florida? Romero provides a forthright answer to both questions. The coalition believed they could challenge multinational corporations and win because they were armed with the truth. Some might view his argument as cliché or even naïve. Nevertheless, after an extensive review of documents related to the history of the Taco Bell campaign, I am convinced he was correct. The CIW persuaded management at the world's largest fast food company (YUM! Brands, Taco Bell's parent corporation) to comply with their demand to pay one-penny more per pound for tomatoes – in effect doubling the wages for workers who had not had a raise in pay since the 1970s. The company even went a step further by encouraging other fast food companies to adopt the penny per pound standard. The CIW succeeded, I contend, because they told true stories about the material conditions of daily labor in the farm fields of South Florida – deep within the Taco Bell/YUM! Brands corporate supply chain.

¹ Romeo Ramirez, "Eliminating Slavery in Agricultural Labor: The Coalition of Immokalee Workers," trans. Alan Seid, in *Global Uprising: Confronting the Tyrannies of the 21st Century*, ed. Neva Welton and Linda Wolf (Gabriola Island, BC: New Society Publishers, 2001), 183.

Just as ACTWU had done two and one-half decades earlier in its campaign against J. P. Stevens, the CIW made a rhetorical wager. They gambled that by providing compelling evidence of modern day slavery and carefully disseminating first person accounts of horrific working conditions they could wring important concessions from a more powerful foe. However, unlike their predecessors in ACTWU, the CIW employed distinctly egalitarian decision-making practices and made no claims regarding power on power campaigning. If Taco Bell and its parent company, YUM! Brands, were to cooperate with the CIW, then it would be because public audiences, and even management, came to accept what the farmworkers and their allies were saying about the need to eradicate human trafficking and improve working conditions in corporate agriculture.

In this chapter I develop these claims regarding the CIW's strategies in considerable detail in order to defend the Taco Bell campaign as a paradigm example of the confrontation/alliance pattern in prospective narrative disclosure. Toward that end I begin by locating the CIW in its historical context as a group of marginalized farmworkers who determined to challenge an intransigent status quo in Florida's commercial farming industry. I open this section of the chapter by reviewing a harrowing incident that helped to convince farmworkers to take a stand against abusive working conditions. I then consider how they used cooperative decision-making practices to plan several early actions against local growers and, eventually, used these same methods at all stages of their ground-breaking Taco Bell campaign. I conclude this first half of the chapter by reviewing events from several subsequent campaigns sponsored by the CIW.

In the second half of the chapter I conduct critical analyses of several pivotal moments in the Taco Bell campaign. This section begins with a brief consideration of how advancements in

global communication and commerce in the closing decades of the twentieth century worked to the advantage of the CIW. I then take up the three strands of prospective narrative disclosure. This section begins with a discussion of rhetorical disclosure focusing on the CIW's groundbreaking investigations into human trafficking in commercial agriculture. An important lesson of these investigations, I will argue, is that disclosure of harsh working conditions is insufficient, in and of itself, to account for the CIW's ability to convince management to endorse its cause. A thoroughgoing explanation of the coalition's victory, I argue, must account for the roles of their theatrical protest performances, their egalitarian decision-making practices, and their kairotic strategies (especially in the last year of the campaign). I conclude by discussing YUM! executive Jonathan Blum's remarkable visit to the CIW's office in Immokalee, Florida and by considering how CIW-style storytelling practices could influence the trajectory of international CSR practices.

The Taco Bell Campaign: A Brief History

"The story of the Taco Bell boycott makes a case study that shows how a tiny group of seemingly powerless people can force a multinational corporation to take them seriously."
Danielle Zwerdling²

The CIW was formed in the early 1990s, four decades after Edward R. Murrow's documentary *Harvest of Shame* first drew national attention to oppressive working conditions and low wages in commercial agriculture.³ In the intervening years living conditions and wage scales in some regions had not substantially improved. In Florida's tomato industry, in fact, wages had actually declined by about 20% from what they had been in the 1970s.⁴ When the

² "Analysis: Strategy Used by Coalition of Immokalee Workers to Get the Attention of Yum! Brands," *National Public Radio: All Things Considered*, June 16, 2005.

³ Edward R. Murrow, Fred W. Friendly, and David Lowe, *Harvest of Shame*, DVD, CBS Broadcasting Company (New York: New Video Group, 2005).

⁴ Donald P. Baker, "Florida Farm Workers Fast for Better Wages; Five Enter Day 24 of Hunger Strike to Fight Pay They Say Is Lower Than It Was 20 Years Ago," *Washington Post*, January 13, 1998.

fledgling CIW (originally the “Southwest Florida Farmworkers Project”) began meeting in a borrowed room at Our Lady of Guadalupe Catholic Church in Immokalee, most growers were paying only forty cents per thirty-two pound bucket, ten cents less than they had been paying two decades earlier.⁵ Growers attributed the decline to improved staking practices that made it easier for pickers to reach tomatoes and to increased competition from Mexico and Central America.⁶ Whatever the reasons, virtually all tomato pickers worked long hours doing back-breaking labor in the Florida sun for poverty level wages with no benefits.⁷ Every year during the fall and winter harvest seasons, migrant farmworkers would flood into Immokalee where many of them lived crowded into dilapidated, roach-infested mobile homes. Workers often complained of exorbitant rent payments, sporadic work, and truculent field supervisors.⁸ None of this did much to change the attitudes of most of the area’s commercial tomato farmers. When asked why he would not negotiate with the farmworkers of the CIW, one grower is said to have responded, “Because a tractor doesn’t tell the farmer how to run the farm.”⁹

The CIW began as a group of a dozen or so migrant laborers working in collaboration with the Florida Rural Legal Services, a foundation that provides pro bono legal assistance to the needy.¹⁰ The group quickly gained credibility in the community and momentum for its cause as a

5 Baker, “Florida Farm Workers Fast for Better Wages;” Lucas Benitez, “Conversation, Bio: Lucas Benitez,” interview with American Bar Association in relation to Law Day, May 1, 2000, <http://abapubliceducation.org/publiced/lawday/convo/00/benitezbio.html> (accessed August 1, 2011).

6 Baker, “Florida Farm Workers Fast for Better Wages.”

7 For a compelling description of living conditions for farmworkers in Southwest Florida during this time, see the first chapter of John Bowe’s *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*.

8 In an interview on National Public Radio Benitez explained how field supervisors verbally abused workers on a daily basis: “The verbal abuse was, like—well, you might have to put a beep on this on the radio—’You sons of bitches, you assholes, move it! You came here to work. Move it!’” “Analysis,” National Public Radio; Lucas Benitez, “Because a Tractor Doesn’t Tell the Farmer How to Run the Farm: Testimony by Lucas Benitez, Coalition of Immokalee Workers to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Hearing on Ending Abuses and Improving Working Conditions for Tomato Workers,” Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: United States Senate, S. Hrg. 110-889, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., April 15 2008.

9 Benitez, “Because a Tractor.”

10 John Bowe, “Nobodies: Does Slavery Exist in America?” *The New Yorker*, April 21, 2003, 106; Florida Rural Legal Services, “Florida Rural Legal Services,” December 10, 2006, www.frls.org/ (accessed June 1, 2011).

result of two incidents. The first involved a young farmworker who was beaten nearly to death after asking his field boss if he could leave a hot farm field to get a drink of water.¹¹ The CIW responded by rallying hundreds of people to protest at the perpetrator's home. The coalition saved the young man's blood-soaked shirt as a tangible reminder of the sort of violence many field workers faced on a daily basis.¹²

The second incident involved a chance meeting with a young migrant worker named Julia Gabriel when several members of the CIW traveled north to harvest crops in South Carolina.¹³ Gabriel confided that her bosses (who operated out of a small town near Immokalee) paid her and the other workers on her picking crew little or nothing and threatened to kill anyone who complained or tried to leave. The coalition decided to investigate Gabriel's claims, and, as a result of their efforts, the two owners of the operation were each eventually sentenced to fifteen years in federal prison on human trafficking charges.¹⁴

These events helped to establish the CIW's reputation as a human rights organization dedicated to eradicating violence and human trafficking in commercial agriculture. They also helped to establish an important rhetorical pattern that has persisted across their national boycott of Taco Bell and several subsequent anti-corporate campaigns. They used negative demands (e.g., ending violence and slavery in agriculture) to obtain positive concessions from their corporate opponents (e.g., raising wages or paying a surcharge on tomatoes). From the very beginning the coalition has also demonstrated a sincere commitment to community decision-making practices. This commitment is reflected in their early choice of an organizational motto:

11 Evelyn Nieves, "Fla. Tomato Pickers Still Reap 'Harvest of Shame': Boycott Helps Raise Awareness of Plight," *Washington Post*, February 28, 2005.

12 See Appendix E for a photograph of the shirt. Ibid.

13 Benitez, "Because a Tractor;" "Migrant Workers' Exploitation Still Exists," *Naples Daily News*, May 12, 1997.

14 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 44; "Migrant Workers Exploitation Still Exists," *Naples Daily News*, May 12, 1997.

“We are all leaders.”¹⁵ The phrase reflected the influence of several early members in the CIW who had been exposed to the writings of the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire while working as community organizers in their native countries of Mexico, Haiti, and Guatemala.¹⁶ It also reflected the cultural sensibilities of the many indigenous people in the coalition, and it marked a conscious rejection of the “top-down” decision-making practices of most labor unions.¹⁷ Early on, they fended off overtures from both the United Farm Workers (UFW) and the Farm Labor Organizing Committee (FLOC), opting instead to become an independent farmworkers cooperative.¹⁸ As things turned out, the decisions to foreground negative demands and operate as a cooperative helped to insure the success of the Taco Bell campaign and the coalition’s larger campaign to improve working conditions in commercial farming. Companies could not very well dismiss them as a shill for labor unions (though some tried), and not even their most ardent opponents wanted to be seen as defending slavery.¹⁹

In their early years the coalition also tested several rhetorical strategies on the local level that they would eventually use on the national-stage in the Taco Bell campaign. Understandably enough, the targets of their first actions were large commercial tomato growers based in Southwest Florida including 6L’s, Gargiulo, and the Pacific Land Company.²⁰ The CIW’s first major protest action was a 1995 general strike involving 3,000 workers.²¹ They followed this in

15 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 33.

16 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 25; Leary, “Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell.”

17 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 11; Leary, “Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell.”

18 Leary, “Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell.”

19 According to newspaper columnist Bill Maxwell, Florida’s Commissioner of Agriculture Robert Crawford viewed the CIW as “a shill for a labor union and for what he calls the Mexican lobby.” Leary, “Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell;” Bill Maxwell, “Young Farm Worker’s Labor Yields Fruit,” *St. Petersburg Times*, November 14, 1999.

20 Benitez, “Because a Tractor;” “Farmworkers Coalition Gains Validation,” *Naples Daily News*, February 12, 1996; “Pickers Deserve More,” *Fort Myers News-Press*, November 16, 1995.

21 Benitez, “Because a Tractor;” Hector Tobar, “A Growing Voice for Fla. Farm Workers; Lucas Benitez, Others, Champion Plight of Tomato Pickers,” *Los Angeles Times*, Mar 28, 2000.

1997 with a more focused and long-term campaign around the theme “Awareness + Commitment = Change.”²² As part of this effort, they staged two more general strikes and a prominent hunger strike over the next two years.²³ The hunger strike ended after 30 days, following the intervention of Cardinal W. H. Keeler of Baltimore and former president Jimmy Carter.²⁴ These efforts served as an impetus for a deal brokered in December of 1999 by Florida Governor Jeb Bush in which some growers agreed to raise the per bucket price they were paying from forty to forty-five cents.²⁵ This amounted to an average 13% increase for most workers and up to twenty-five percent for those who had been working at an even lower rate.²⁶ The wage increase was not mandatory and, at any rate, only returned pay levels to what they had been in the 1970s.

The following spring, the CIW worked with several church and human rights groups to sponsor a 230 mile “March for Dignity, Dialogue, and a Fair Wages for Florida Farmworkers” from Fort Myers to the offices of the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange (FTGE) near Orlando.²⁷ About that time, they also became more active in conducting slavery investigations. Since some members of the coalition were former slaves, they understood how to infiltrate human trafficking organizations in order to gather information they could turn over to authorities.²⁸

22 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Who We Are,” www.ciw-online.org/1-aboutciw.html (accessed July 1, 2011).

23 Benitez, “Because a Tractor.”

24 Baker, “Florida Farm Workers Fast for Better Wages.”

25 “Tomato Pickers Call Holiday Ceasefire in Labor Protests,” *Associated Press*, December 19, 1999.

26 “Arriving at the Settlement,” *Fort Myers News-Press*, July 5, 2008; Bill Maxwell, “Bush Acts on Behalf of Farm Workers,” *St. Petersburg Times*, November 22, 1998.

27 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Coalition of Immokalee Workers Announces “March for Dignity, Dialogue, and a Fair Wage for Florida Farm Workers,” February 17, 2000. www.ciw-online.org/4-flmarch.html (accessed July 1, 2011).

28 See Appendix F for more information on the CIW’s slavery investigations. See as well, John Bowe’s account of the role played by former slave Romeo Romero in the CIW investigations that led to the break up and prosecution of the violent trafficking operation run by Ramiro and Juan Ramos. Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 61-64.

By 2005, when Taco Bell finally agreed to terms with the coalition, their investigations had produced five sets of federal convictions for human trafficking.²⁹ The first of these cases was the one first brought to the attention of the CIW by Julia Gabriel, and it exemplified the shocking violence of cases that would follow. Miguel Flores and Sebastian Gomez maintained a work force of 400 people, most of whom had been trafficked illegally into the United States by *coyote* traffickers who promised lucrative pay for nominal effort.³⁰ When they arrived, people were forced to work ten to twelve hour days, six days per week, and often paid less than the cost of room and board. In at least one instance, enslaved workers were “paid” with beer and crack cocaine.³¹ Anyone who complained or attempted to escape was summarily pistol whipped or shot. Flores and Gomez were eventually convicted under laws based on the Thirteenth Amendment prohibiting slavery and involuntary servitude. The case is said to have helped pave the way for passage of the Trafficking Victims Protection Act (TVPA) in 2001.³²

By 2000 the CIW had concluded that it was multinational corporations (not the commercial growers in Southwest Florida) that actually controlled how people were paid in commercial farming. They responded by learning more about which prominent companies bought tomatoes from their region and by holding a series of *encuentras* (radically open community discussions) where they explored strategic options.³³ As part of this process they eventually ran across an article in the industry publication *The Packer* describing Taco Bell

29 Taken in order, the federal cases were: U.S. vs. Flores (1997), U.S. vs. Cuello (1999), U.S. vs. Tecum (2001), U.S. vs. Lee (2001), and U.S. vs. Ramos (2004). Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “CIW Anti-Slavery Campaign. For more information on these cases, see Appendix F.

30 See Appendix F for a summary of the case posted to the CIW website; Benitez, “Because a Tractor;” Amy Bennett Williams, “Immokalee Anti-Trafficking Hero Gets Honor for Fighting Slavery,” *Fort Myers News Press*, June 11, 2010.

31 In 2006 the CIW helped expose a human trafficking ring operating in North Florida and North Carolina. Michael Lee, the labor contractor who ran the operation was found to have been practicing involuntary servitude and paying workers with crack cocaine and beer. Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 42; Janine Zeitlin, “Labor Camps Kept Workers in Servitude with Crack Cocaine: Coalition of Immokalee Workers was Instrumental in Helping Expose Abuse in North Florida and North Carolina,” *Naples Daily News*, September 23, 2006.

32 Benitez, “Because a Tractor.”

33 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 24-25.

Corporation as a major purchaser of tomatoes from commercial farms in the Immokalee area.³⁴

The workers were struck by the irony of Mexican laborers picking vegetables for a company trading on Mexican culture, and soon settled on a plan for a national boycott. Lucas Benitez later recalled the pivotal discussion:

I remember this very clearly. It was one of the members in the meeting. I can't really remember his name, but he said, "Well, if Taco Bell's one of the companies that buys the most tomatoes from Immokalee, then maybe they're the ones who are keeping most of the money that we're not making here. Maybe we could boycott them and do that to pressure them to answer us." "All right, well, let's do a boycott against Taco Bell."³⁵

From the workers' perspective, in other words, the decision to pursue a campaign against Taco Bell was a simple matter of fairness. Whatever their motivation, from a legal perspective it was a savvy move that took advantage of a long-standing loophole in American labor law. The loophole dated back to 1935 when Congress passed the National Labor Relations Act (NLRA) extending significant legal protection to the activities of unions.³⁶ Sadly, the legislation excluded agricultural laborers and domestic workers, occupations that at the time were dominated by African-Americans.³⁷ Cruel as it was, this racist restriction provided a group like the CIW with an important tactical advantage. This is because, although the NLRA precluded most labor unions from engaging in "secondary boycotts" of companies that do business with their employers, it placed no such restrictions on farmworkers. Even if the courts were to rule the CIW was a labor union, as agricultural workers they would be free to sponsor boycotts against any corporation they wished.³⁸

³⁴ Ibid, 51.

³⁵ "Analysis: Strategy Used by Coalition of Immokalee Workers to Get the Attention of Yum! Brands."

³⁶ Julie Yates Rivchin, "Colloquium: Building Power among Low-Wage Immigrant Workers: Some Legal Considerations for Organizing Structures and strategies," *Review of Law and Social Change* 28 (2004).

³⁷ Ibid.

³⁸ The UFW exploited this same loophole to sponsor national boycotts of table grapes in the 1960s and 70s. Rivchin, "Colloquium."

In the end, the coalition and their allies developed a long-shot strategy involving a series of cross-country journeys to Taco Bell's corporate headquarters in Irvine, California where they hoped to present their case to company executives in person. Their demands were seemingly modest. They asked the company to pay one penny more per pound for tomatoes with the extra money bypassing the supply chain and being paid directly to tomato pickers.³⁹ The CIW proposal would, in effect, double the wages of workers when they picked tomatoes bound for Taco Bell.

Meanwhile, the CIW continued its aggressive investigations of human trafficking operations in commercial farming. By adopting a two-part strategy of pairing modest demands with jarring stories about slavery convictions, the CIW encouraged many people (especially within one of the company's key demographic groups: college students) to associate Taco Bell with modern day slavery.⁴⁰ Company executives felt blindsided by the strategy and mystified by the CIW's claims regarding modern day slavery.⁴¹ In fact, Jonathan Blum, Vice President of Public Affairs for Taco Bell at the start of the campaign, has never wavered on his claim that management was entirely unaware of human trafficking activities in Florida agriculture.⁴² Of course, to say management was ignorant is not the same as saying they had no ethical responsibility. Nevertheless, Blum's claim is credible. The slavery operations in question were located on remote farms in the Florida Everglades, nearly 2,000 miles distant from the corporate offices. Management was insulated from the situation by multiple layers of contractual agreements and legal precedents. Viewed from these remote distances, the slaves of South

39 Brett Barrouquere, "Yum, Farm Workers Reach Agreement on Pay," *Associated Press*, March 8, 2005; Frank J. Bove, "In Rich Southern Fields, Migrants Reap Abuse," *Atlanta Journal Constitution*, June 3, 2004; Eric Schlosser, "A Side Order of Human Rights," *New York Times*, April 6, 2005.

40 Leary, "Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell;" Dan Moffett, "Sell Living Wage, Not Talking Dog," *Palm Beach Post*, March 22, 2002.

41 Blum, "Testimony of Jonathan Blum."

42 Ibid.

Florida became little more than ciphers on the corporate ledgers – embodied representations of the corporation’s “terministic screen.”⁴³

The CIW was unfazed by the company’s initial rejection of their claims, and on April 1, 2001 it announced a national boycott of Taco Bell. Over the next four years it worked frenetically to rally public support for their cause by engaging in a wide range of activities including a series of national “Truth Tours,” a hunger strike, proxy strategies at the company’s annual meetings, and protests on college campuses.⁴⁴ The Truth Tours became annual affairs in which farmworkers and their supporters piled into tour buses and headed off to the Taco Bell corporate headquarters in California where large crowds of sympathetic supporters participated in colorful marches, rock concerts, and theatrical protest events.⁴⁵ The coalition also scheduled stops in major cities along the way where they would hold protests at local Taco Bell restaurants and/or give presentations to interested groups to explain their cause. In 2002, for example, the CIW made sixteen such stops on their way to and from California.⁴⁶

The 2003 Truth Tour included a hunger strike in Irvine that ended after ten days when Cardinal Roger Mahoney of Los Angeles intervened, and after it had become clear that company executives would not agree to meet with representatives from the coalition.⁴⁷ The following year the workers scheduled an even more ambitious tour featuring a forty-four mile march from East

43 Burke coined the phrase “terministic screen” to describe how the symbols one uses come to form a sort of linguistic grid or screen that “necessarily directs the attention to one field rather than another,” and serves to shape one’s “range of observations.” Kenneth Burke, “Terministic Screens,” in *Language as Symbolic Action: Essays on Life, Literature, and Method* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1966), 50.

44 Brett Barrouquere, “Farm Workers Protest Wages, Conditions in Cross-Country Demonstrations,” *Associated Press*, February 27, 2004; Leary, “Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell;” Evelyn Nieves, “Accord with Tomato Pickers Ends Boycott of Taco Bell,” *Washington Post*, March 9, 2005; Paul Holmes, “Yum May Face Unsavory Consequences,” *PR Week*, July 22, 2002.

45 “Analysis,” National Public Radio; Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Let Freedom Ring... Boycott the Bell!;” “The New Woody Guthries,” *OC Weekly*, March 12, 2004.

46 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “CIW Cross-Country Truth Tour,” www.ciw-online.org/tz_site-revision/home/home.html (accessed July 1, 2011); Jerry Hicks and Marc Ballon, “Protest Trip Ends at Taco Bell” *Los Angeles Times*, March 12, 2002.

47 Duncan Campbell, “Taco’s Tomato Pickers on Slave Wages,” *The Guardian*, March 17, 2003.

Los Angeles to Irvine and an eight mile march through Louisville, Kentucky to YUM! Brands' corporate offices. The Irvine protest included a large-scale music concert featuring Tom Morello (of Rage Against the Machine), hip hop artist Boots Riley, and Mexican/American singer Lila Downs.⁴⁸

During this same time period the CIW also worked with church groups to sponsor activist resolutions at YUM! Brands' annual stockholder meetings.⁴⁹ These actions enabled the CIW and their allies to interact more directly with management and shareholders. Some of that interaction was marked by sharp exchanges as when, at the 2004 YUM! Brands shareholder meeting in Louisville, CEO David Novak told the coalition they would not cooperate with them until they called off their boycott and stopped using Taco Bell as a "stalking horse" in their dispute with growers.⁵⁰ Despite Novak's objections, a resolution endorsing the CIW's campaign earned the support of 36% of YUM! shareholders, a much larger percentage of the vote than activist resolutions typically receive.⁵¹ The vote was said to have "spooked" company executives and became one of the deciding factors in the company's decision to seek an end to the conflict.⁵²

In addition to these large scale efforts, the CIW and their sister organization the Student/Farmworker Cooperative helped to coordinate protests on college campuses across the nation. Protests on college campuses, in fact, began before the boycott began and soon grew to include largely independent actions on campuses across the nation. Early protests took place at

48 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "Florida Farmworkers Cross Country to Take Fight for Rights to Fast-Food Giant Taco Bell," www.ciw-online.org/tz_site-revision/breaking_news/2004mediaadvisory.shtml (accessed August 1, 2011); "Tomato Marchers," *City News Service*, March 1, 2004.

49 The CIW gained access to YUM! Brands annual meetings with the cooperation of religious groups including the National Council of Churches and the Presbyterian Church, USA. Leary, "Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell."

50 "Taco Bell and Yum! Brands Offer to Assist Tomato Workers If They End Boycott against Company; Universal Florida Tomato Surcharge Recommended Solution," *Business Wire*, May 20, 2004.

51 Leary, "Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell."

52 Ibid.

Florida State University, the University of Miami, and New College in Sarasota.⁵³ Over the next three years students staged protest actions on dozens of other campuses including the University of Michigan, the University of Texas, the University of San Francisco, and Boise State.⁵⁴ By the end of the campaign twenty two college and high school campuses including Notre Dame, UCLA and the University of Chicago had cut their contracts with Taco Bell.⁵⁵

A primary reason the coalition was able to gain a large national following in such a short period of time was that they had expended considerable effort in building horizontal alliances with groups that were advocating related causes. One of the ways they accomplished this was by scheduling “community forums” whenever possible, typically as “add on” events at major CIW protest rallies. They used the forums to discuss issues and coordinate protest actions with community volunteers and allied organizations.⁵⁶ The sessions were used to schedule the CIW’s participation in events directly related to the Taco Bell campaign and some that were not, such as the protests against the Free Trade Area of the Americas meetings in Miami in 2003.⁵⁷ By sponsoring community forums and participating in activist “side events,” the coalition was able to form important alliances with a large network of almost 100 supporting organizations, including church groups (e.g., the National Council of Churches and the United Methodist Church), student groups (e.g., the United Students Against Sweatshops, and the Chicana/o group

53 “From Nike to Taco Bell,” *Palm Beach Post*, May 8, 2001; Timothy O’Hara, “Farm Workers Boycott Taco Bell: The Coalition of Immokalee Workers Will Protest Here to Garner Support,” *Sarasota Herald-Tribune*, February 10, 2001.

54 Brett Barrouquere, “Farm Workers Protest Wages, Conditions in Cross-Country Demonstrations,” *Associated Press*, February 27, 2004; “Resolution: Boise State Faculty Senate,” October 18, 2004, *academics.boisestate.edu/facultysenate/files/2009/01/res3.doc* (accessed July 1, 2011); “UCLA Meets to Discuss Taco Bell Contract,” *U-Wire*, October 8, 2004.

55 Leary, “Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell.”

56 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “2004 Northwest Mini-Tour (Oct 14-26); Daily Updates from the Road,” www.ciw-online.org/2004Minitour%20updates.html; Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “2005 Taco Bell Truth Tour: Day Six,” www.ciw-online.org/tz_site-revision/breaking_news/2005day6.shtml; Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Farmworkers to Present Case to Tricon Shareholders,” May 13, 2002, www.ciw-online.org/tz_site-revision/breaking_news/May%2016%20Press%20Release.html (accessed August 1, 2011).

57 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Root Cause People’s March to Miami to Protest the FTAA Ministerial Meeting a Huge Success!” www.ciw-online.org/Rootcause.html (accessed July 1, 2011).

Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán [MEChA]), as well as the National Family Farm Coalition, the National Lawyers Guild, and the Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now (ACORN).⁵⁸

The more obvious reason why the Taco Bell campaign was garnering national attention was that journalists across the nation, and even internationally, had begun to write stories about the coalition's investigations into human trafficking in Florida agriculture.⁵⁹ In 2001, ABC Nightly News featured the investigations in a story about the Taco Bell campaign.⁶⁰ Two years later *The Guardian* newspaper in the United Kingdom ran a similar story focusing on the CIW's efforts to expose slavery in the commercial tomato industry.⁶¹ Shortly after that, freelance writer John Bowe published a story in *The New Yorker* magazine entitled "Nobodies: Does Slavery Exist in America?" that provided the most in-depth profile to date of the CIW and its anti-slavery investigations.⁶²

Some writers singled out Taco Bell management for what they saw as their inept handling of the CIW campaign. Public Relations columnist Paul Holmes called Taco Bell executive Jonathan Blum's statement that his company would "not now nor ever" get involved in a labor dispute between the CIW and commercial growers "one of the dumbest things I've heard a corporate spokesperson say in quite some time" (on the grounds that, like it or not, the company

58 See Appendix G for a complete list that was posted to the CIW website.

59 A Lexis-Nexis search for news stories published before March 1, 2005 (shortly before the campaign ended) containing the terms "Coalition of Immokalee Workers" and "Taco Bell" turned up 180 news stories. When the second term was changed to "slavery," the search turned up 74 stories. Only three of the stories found in the second search were published before the start of the Taco Bell campaign in 2001. Examples of news stories focused on the CIW's slavery investigations include the following: Kari Lydersen, "Immigrant Advocates Win Award: In Florida, Workers Cracked Slavery Ring," *Washington Post*, November 20, 2003; Bill Maxwell, "Slavery Alive in Florida Agriculture Industry," *St. Petersburg Times*, July 3, 2002; and "Slave Traders Jailed for 12 Years," *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 21, 2002.

60 Ron Claiborne, "Tomato Pickers Put Pressure on Taco Bell to Pay More for Tomatoes So They Can Earn a Decent Wage to Survive," *ABC World News Tonight*, March 10, 2001.

61 Campbell, "Taco's Tomato Pickers on Slave Wages."

62 Bowe, "Nobodies: Does Slavery Exist in America?" 106.

was already embroiled in the conflict).⁶³ Bill Maxwell, a columnist with the *St. Petersburg Times* (and a former migrant farmworker) observed that “Besides supporting human misery, Taco Bell should worry that the 18-to-24-year-old age group (college-age students) is its target market.”⁶⁴ And Eric Schlosser (author of *Fast Food Nation*) argued “Taco Bell sells more Mexican food than any other company in the United States. It shouldn’t profit from the exploitation of poor Mexican farmworkers.”⁶⁵

No doubt this sort of press coverage helps to explain how the CIW came to the attention of some of the world’s best known human rights groups and why these organizations began to honor them with numerous awards. In 1998 Lucas Benitez received the U.S. Bishops’ Conference Cardinal Bernardin Award for New Leadership (related to anti-poverty initiatives).⁶⁶ The following year Benitez was honored again, this time receiving the \$100,000 “Brick Award” for “America’s Best Young Community Leader” from *Rolling Stone* magazine and the Do Something youth foundation.⁶⁷ In 2000 the National Organization for Women presented Julia Gabriel with a “Women of Courage” award.⁶⁸ And in 2003, the Robert F. Kennedy Center awarded their annual “Human Rights Award” to Julia Gabriel, Romeo Ramirez, and Lucas Benitez of the CIW.⁶⁹

Despite all of these developments (the press coverage, the campus protests, the national Truth Tours, etc.), the CIW boycott appears to have had little to no effect on Taco Bell’s sales

63 Holmes, “Yum May Face Unsavory Consequences.”

64 Bill Maxwell, “Taco Bell Should Help Tomato Pickers,” *St. Petersburg Times*, February 24, 2002.

65 Eric Schlosser, *Fast Food Nation* (New York: Harper, 2005); Eric Schlosser, “Migrant Farm Workers’ Rights Are Withering on the Vine,” *Capital Times*, March 9, 2004.

66 “Organizer of Farm Workers Wins First Bernardin Award,” *Chicago Tribune*, November 27, 1998.

67 Tobar, “A Growing Voice for Fla. Farm Workers.”

68 National Organization for Women, “NOW National Conference 2000: Women of Courage,” *National Conference for Women*, www.now.org/organization/conference/2000/courage.html (accessed July 1, 2011).

69 Robert F. Kennedy Memorial, “2003: Coalition of Immokalee Workers, United States,” <http://rfkcenter.org/award/2003> (accessed August 1, 2011); Mike Schneider, “Farmworkers Want Taco Bell to Push Growers for Higher Pay,” *Associated Press*, February 24, 2004.

figures.⁷⁰ Nevertheless, as time wore on, management began to look for a way to end the campaign while at the same time limiting any residual damage to the company's public reputation. Their first efforts in this regard were low key. In 2002, Blum sent a letter to Six L's Farms (the largest tomato grower in Southwest Florida) to inform them that while they had no plans for intervening in the company's contractual relationships with tomato pickers that they would be monitoring all future developments.⁷¹ Two years later Taco Bell rewrote its supplier code of conduct to state that it would not tolerate the intimidation of workers or forced labor.⁷²

About that same time the Carter Center in Atlanta intervened into the conflict and sponsored confidential negotiation sessions between representatives of the company and the CIW.⁷³ Given the nature of the discussions, there are no publically available records of the meetings or the topics they discussed. What is known is that the CIW accused CEO David Novak of violating the terms of the negotiations by going public with an offer to pay an extra penny per pound if the entire fast food industry would do the same.⁷⁴ The CIW summarily rejected Novak's offer as "not serious."⁷⁵ A month or two later the company followed up by sending the coalition a check for \$110,000, an amount they claimed was equivalent to one percent of what it had spent on Florida tomatoes the previous year.⁷⁶ The CIW refused the check, claiming the offer amounted to little more than a "public relations stunt."⁷⁷ Indeed, although the latter two gestures might strike some observers as naïve or even callous, they represented a

70 Blum, "Testimony of Jonathan Blum.

71 Milford Prewitt, "Wage War Continues; Florida Tomato Pickers Battle Tricon Global Restaurants," *Nation's Restaurant News* 36 no. 21 (2002).

72 "Farmworkers Ask Taco Bell To Press Growers For Higher Pay," *Dow Jones International News*, February 24, 2004; Schneider, "Farmworkers Want Taco Bell to Push Growers for Higher Pay."

73 "Taco Bell to Fund Pay Hike for Workers at Fla. Tomato Farms," *OsterDowJones Commodity Wire* March 8, 2005.

74 Mireidy Fernandez, "Company's 'Solution' Misses the Mark, Say CIW Representatives," *Naples Daily News*, May 21, 2004; "Taco Bell and Yum! Brands Offer to Assist Tomato Workers," *Business Wire*.

75 "Farmworkers Reject Fast Food Company's Check, Continue Boycott," *Associated Press*, June 18, 2004; "Send Reform, Not Payoff," *Palm Beach Post*, June 23, 2004.

76 "Farmworkers Reject," *Associated Press*.

77 *Ibid*.

significant step forward in what had become a bruising contest of wills between company management and the farmworkers of the coalition.

By the spring of 2005, with the CIW poised to stage yet another massive protest, the company decided to heed a recommendation Lucas Benitez had put forward three years earlier. Taco Bell would cooperate fully with the CIW and “market itself as the socially responsible company in the fast-food industry.”⁷⁸ At the signing ceremony in 2005, Blum announced Taco Bell and YUM! would cooperate with the CIW in efforts to reform working conditions in Florida. He added that “human rights are universal and we hope other [fast food restaurants] will follow our company’s lead.”⁷⁹ In the years since, the company has held true to its word by publically encouraging other fast food companies to follow their lead by paying the penny per pound surcharge.⁸⁰ Two years after the end of the Taco Bell campaign, YUM! Brands announced that all of its subsidiaries (including its Pizza Hut, Long John Silver’s and A&W restaurants) would comply with the agreement.⁸¹

Having gained the endorsement of the world’s largest fast food company, the CIW then set about pursuing other major players in the industry on the assumption that if they could persuade the likes of Yum! Brands and McDonald’s to pay a penny more per pound for tomatoes, then other companies in the fast food industry and other market sectors would follow. In brief, the strategy worked, and six years later the CIW has racked up an impressive series of hard-won campaign victories.

In April of 2007, after a two-year campaign in which it was forced to back away from a botched research report on working conditions in Florida agriculture, McDonald’s followed the

78 Prewitt, “Wage War Continues.”

79 “Coalition of Immokalee Workers, Taco Bell Reach Groundbreaking Agreement; CIW to End Taco Bell Boycott,” *U.S. Newswire*, March 8, 2005.

80 Blum, “Testimony of Jonathan Blum.”

81 “Yum! Brands Expanding Deal with Florida Farmworkers,” *Associated Press*, May 18, 2007.

example of Taco Bell by agreeing to pay the penny per pound surcharge.⁸² Just over one year later, Burger King did the same.⁸³ The latter campaign drew international scrutiny when the company was found to have hired private investigators to infiltrate the coalition, and a company vice-president was fired for having used his daughters e-mail account to post scathing remarks about the CIW.⁸⁴ Over the next two years the coalition continued on to secure agreements with one more fast food company (Subway), one grocery store chain (Whole Foods) and four companies that provide food services on college campuses (Bon Appétit, Aramark, Sodexo, and the Compass Group).⁸⁵ Most remarkable of all, in the spring of 2011 they signed an agreement to cooperate with an old nemesis, the FTGE (a group which only three years earlier had threatened to bring suit against the CIW for supposedly violating federal RICO statutes).⁸⁶ Currently, the CIW is sponsoring multiple campaigns against Chipotle Grill, Quiznos, and the supermarket companies Publix, Kroger's, Trader Joe's, Stop & Shop, and Ahold (a European grocery conglomerate that owns Stop & Shop).⁸⁷

None of the subsequent campaigns has included a national boycott. Otherwise, the CIW has not deviated in any significant way from the rhetorical template of the Taco Bell campaign.

82 Laura Wides-Munoz, "Upping the Ante: McDonald's to Pay More for Salad Tomatoes," *Chicago Tribune*, April 10, 2007.

83 "At Last, Burger King Does the Right Thing," *St. Petersburg Times*, June 2, 2008.

84 Eric Schlosser, "Do You Want Spies with That?; Burger King Undercover," *International Herald Tribune*, May 8, 2008; Laura Wides-Munoz, "Burger King Fires 2 Over Executive's Secret Blog Criticizing Farm Worker's Group," *Associated Press*, May 13, 2008.

85 "Compass Group and the Coalition of Immokalee Workers (CIW) Announce Sweeping Changes to Benefit Tomato Harvesters," *PR Newswire*, September 25, 2009; Sodexo and Coalition of Immokalee Workers Sign Fair Food Agreement," *Business Wire*, August 24, 2010; "Students Call on Sodexo to Follow Suit as Aramark Agrees to Work With CIW," *PR Newswire*, April 1, 2010.

86 Reginald L. Brown, "Testimony of Reginald L. Brown – Executive Vice President, Florida Tomato Growers Exchange to the Senate Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: Hearing on Ending Abuses and Improving Working Conditions for Tomato Workers," Committee on Health, Education, Labor, and Pensions: United States Senate, S. Hrg. 110-889, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., April 15 2008.

87 Brett Ader, "UF Senate Passes Resolution Calling on Publix to Meet with Tomato Pickers," *Florida Independent*, February 1, 2011; Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "Quiznos: The World is Changing. When Will You?" www.ciw-online.org/now_is_the_time.html (accessed July 1, 2011); Sean Sellers, "Slavery in Your Salsa? To Establish 'Integrity,' Chipotle Grill Needs to Stand against Farmworker Abuse," *Grist.com*, September 10, 2010, www.grist.org/article/food-9-10-2010chipotles-ongoing-farmworker-problem (accessed July 1, 2011); Jeff Wells, "A Penny Per Pound," *Supermarket News*, December 1, 2010.

In each instance, once they have targeted a company or market sector they have pursued them in an unrelenting manner by staging numerous protest events and Truth Tours featuring graphic accounts of human trafficking and harsh working conditions in commercial agriculture. In doing so, they have gone after the best known companies first in hope of convincing a whole string of companies in the same market sector to accept the penny per pound initiative and endorse their campaign to improve working conditions for migrant farmworkers.⁸⁸

Rhetorical Disclosure in Commercial Agriculture

At the start of the Taco Bell campaign the CIW had few material resources, but they were in a position to use new communication technologies to highlight the dramatic contradictions between their experiences with violence and deprivation and the fictive narratives being spun by advertising and public relations specialists. For one thing, as immigrants laboring deep within a complex network of supply chains they possessed a detailed, intimate knowledge of the most unsavory aspects of U.S. commercial agriculture. They knew where the slaves were kept. Some members of the coalition, in fact, had been slaves themselves.⁸⁹

However, if they were to use any of this information to their own advantage, they would have to overcome significant barriers. The farmworkers who came together in the 1990's to form the CIW were, in a sense, invisible people in U.S society. Few of them spoke English as their

⁸⁸ In 2007 Anti-Slavery International presented the CIW with its annual Anti-Slavery Award. In accepting the award, Lucas Benitez explained the penny-per-pound agreement includes three provisions: "a penny more per pound to be passed directly on to the workers; a supplier code of conduct establishing fundamental human rights in the field, including the first enforceable zero tolerance policy against slavery; [and] a guaranteed role for workers in drafting, enforcing, and monitoring the code in the fields. Lucas Benitez, "The Coalition of Immokalee Workers Acceptance Speeches for the 2007 Anti-Slavery Award," Anti-Slavery International. www.antislavery.org/english/what_we_do/antislavery_international_today/award/2007_award_winners_speech.aspx (accessed July 1, 2011).

⁸⁹ Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 61.

first language. Many of them lacked formal education and official visas, and the majority hailed from indigenous communities in rural Mexico and Guatemala. They were day laborers working on the extreme margins of U.S. society, only rarely interacting in any significant way with the predominantly upper class, Anglo populations in nearby communities such as Fort Myers or Naples, Florida.⁹⁰

These barriers turned out to be less important than one might expect, especially since the members of the CIW were able to draw upon a set of indigenous cultural traditions that were well-suited to their moment in history. As an activist organization operating at the start of the new millennium the CIW was well-positioned to borrow techniques from earlier campaigns, adapt them to suit their own indigenous sensibilities, and sponsor a ground-breaking campaign. So, for example, by making a radical commitment to community decision-making practices, the CIW made it difficult for Taco Bell to do what J. P. Stevens' management had done a generation earlier: issue scathing caricatures of dictatorial, self-serving union leaders. The CIW simply had no high profile authority figures who could be parodied in that way. The farmworkers of the CIW spoke with many voices and they spoke from first-hand experience, and because of this they defied caricature. In the Taco Bell campaign day laborers often spoke with considerable authority on matters such as the planning of slavery investigations or contradictions they recognized in corporate narratives. This was because leadership in the CIW arose at the local level (and has remained there), and because their disciplined emphasis on egalitarian decision-making and plurivocal storytelling practices lent their rhetorical strategies an undeniable sense of legitimacy. Beginning with the Taco Bell campaign, corporate executives have learned that when the CIW speaks on matters such as slavery and working conditions in commercial agriculture, sizeable percentages of important audiences (including consumers, college students, and investors) appear

⁹⁰ Ibid, 7.

willing to listen.

The CIW's cooperative sensibilities also proved a good fit for an age in which they could use Internet technologies to conduct research and plan strategies with other activist organizations while living and working in a remote farming community on the edge of the Florida Everglades. Unlike the Stevens campaign, where a handful of organizers on the union payroll conducted research and developed strategies, the Taco Bell campaign was planned by a diverse collection of Internet savvy farmworkers in consultation with a handful of graduate students, church workers, and pro bono attorneys.⁹¹ That this group was able to extract important concessions from a multinational corporation confirms Lyotard's observation that in the age of satellites and global communication "the information used in decision-making (and therefore the means of control) [is rendered] even more mobile and subject to piracy" than it was in earlier times.⁹² By 1999, when they launched their campaign against Taco Bell, the CIW clearly enjoyed faster and cheaper access to strategically valuable information on the corporation they chose to target than did their predecessors in ACTWU. The gradual democratization of information in the Internet age worked to the advantage of a democratically minded organization like the CIW and enabled them to plan and implement an anti-corporate campaign for a fraction of what a similar initiative would likely have cost in the 1970s.

None of this should be taken to mean that geography was entirely irrelevant to the CIW's campaign strategies. As residents of Southwest Florida the farmworkers of the CIW were ideally positioned to observe the lifestyles of a wealthy elite and the squalor of one of the nation's poorest communities. Indeed, the short drive from the sprawling mansions and gleaming high rise condominiums of Naples, Florida, through the Everglades, to the squalor of migrant housing

⁹¹ Ibid, 33.

⁹² Lyotard, *The Postmodern Condition*, 6.

in Immokalee can remind one of Homi Bhabha's description of the "parallax" (a sense of dislocation and disorientation that occurs as a result of a radical shift in the perspective of the observer).⁹³ Whether one views Southwest Florida as a land of tropical opulence or a blighted outpost for low income workers depends on whether it is observed from the perspective of the posh, gated communities of Naples or the bleak landscapes of Immokalee. On the two-lane road connecting the two towns, gated housing developments stand next to tomato fields and the two conflicting perspectives can blur together in disturbing ways.

Immokalee, Florida is, by nearly all measures, one of the poorest communities in the nation.⁹⁴ Despite the development, beginning in the 1970s, of tidy neighborhoods such as the HUD sponsored Farmworkers' Village, most of the town's agricultural workers still live in fetid, overcrowded apartments and mobile homes.⁹⁵ They can afford little else. Farmworkers in Immokalee – and for that matter most of the rest of the nation – still make about what they did in the mid-1970s (less than \$10,000 per year).⁹⁶

93 Homi Bhabha, "Postmodernism/Postcolonialism," in *Critical Terms for Art History*, ed. Robert S. Nelson and Richard Shiff, 435-451 (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2003), 450.

94 According to the U.S. Census Bureau, 45.9% of Immokalee households have incomes below the poverty level. This number does not include the thousands of migrant workers who flood into the town during the winter and spring harvesting seasons. U.S. Census Bureau, "American FactFinder: Selected Economic Characteristics: 2006-2010 American Community Survey 5-Year Estimates: Immokalee CDP, Florida," http://factfinder2.census.gov/faces/tableservices/jsf/pages/productview.xhtml?pid=ACS_10_5YR_DP03&prodType=table (accessed December 1, 2011).

95 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 12; Robert F. Kennedy Memorial, "2003."

96 The CIW has long maintained that farmworkers in Florida earn poverty level wages. Commercial growers have disputed this claim, arguing most workers earn nearly double the federal minimum wage. Arriving at a precise number is difficult since farm laborers are typically hired on a day-to-day basis and work inconsistent hours. This much noted, the National Agricultural Workers Survey (NAWS) compiled annually by the United States Department of Labor supports the CIW's claim. As of 2002, just as the Taco Bell campaign was gaining national momentum, the NAWS reported farmworkers nationwide earned an average salary of \$7.25 per hour. Farmworkers need work only 150 days per year to be considered full time. They almost never receive health insurance or other fringe benefits and are exempted from most federal fair labor laws. For a detailed presentation and discussion of the growers' and farmworkers' positions on the issue see the transcript of the 2008 United States Senate HELP Committee hearing on *Ending Abuses and Improving Working Conditions for Tomato Workers*. Senate Committee on Health Education Labor and Pensions, *Full Committee Hearing - Ending Abuses and Improving Working Conditions for Tomato Workers*, S. Hrg. 110-889, 110th Cong., 2nd sess., April 15 2008.

The farmworkers of the CIW remain largely invisible to residents of Naples, who rarely venture east into the commercial farming region on the edge of the Everglades. But this is clearly a one-way arrangement. The people who pick tomatoes in the farm fields of Immokalee are keenly aware of the stark disparities between the places where they live and work and the wealthy enclaves just down the road. In the 1990s some of these agricultural workers began searching for ways to disclose the obvious inconsistencies they recognized between life in Naples and life in Immokalee – and between corporate narratives and the daily life experiences of farmworkers.

The stories they eventually told about deprivation and violence in corporate supply chains proved undeniably gripping and garnered the attention of journalists and public audiences around the world.⁹⁷ Undoubtedly, one reason for this was that they presented an anachronistic moral conundrum. Never mind that there were likely more slaves being trafficked around the globe in 2003 than there were in 1803, the presence of people laboring at gunpoint on commercial farms only a short drive from the million-dollar condominiums of Naples or Miami Beach disrupts popular narratives about human progress and freedom and raises important questions about the ethical relationship of management and periphery.⁹⁸ To wit, were the slaves in Immokalee part of the Taco Bell “system”? Even if one concludes they were not, does this mean the company had no moral obligation to address their situation?

⁹⁷ See for example: Campbell, “Taco’s Tomato Pickers on Slave Wages;” David Crary, “Human Trafficking in U.S. Poses Elusive Target for Coalition Trying to Combat it,” *AP World Stream*, October 30, 2005; “Modern Forms of Slavery in Industrialized Countries,” *International Labour Organization*, May 11, 2005, www.ilo.org/global/about-the-ilo/press-and-media-centre/news/WCMS_075552/lang-en/index.htm (accessed August 1, 2011); “Slave Traders Jailed for 12 Years,” *Sydney Morning Herald*, November 21, 2002.

⁹⁸ Kevin Bales, *Ending Slavery: How We Free Today’s Slaves* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2007); Kevin Bales, Laurel E. Fletcher, and Eric Stover, “Hidden Slaves: Forced Labor in the United States,” *Berkeley Journal of International Law* 23 (2005), 47-109; Andrew Cockburn, “21st Century Slaves,” *National Geographic*, September 1, 2003, 2.

The CIW was able to raise these sorts of questions by conducting independent investigations into slavery in modern day corporate agriculture. The multiple sets of federal slavery convictions that resulted from the investigations lent credibility to the stories they were telling on their website and in public protest events about systematic deprivation and violence in commercial agriculture. They enabled them to articulate a damning critique of the public narratives of companies whose supply chains ended in the farm fields of Immokalee, and, for that matter, commercial farm fields in scores of other rural farming communities in the Southeastern United States. Rhetorical disclosure provided an opportunity for transformative rhetorical action.

By way of clarification, as in previous chapters, I am using the word disclosure to refer to disclosure of egregious working conditions and to the disclosure of answerable individuals within the corporate matrix. One can recognize the natural connection between these two modes of action in events surrounding the most notorious of the federal court cases that resulted from the CIW investigations: *U.S. vs. Ramos*, 2004. The case concerned a particularly brutal human trafficking operation run by a licensed labor contractor named Ramiro Ramos (aka, *el Diablo*) who provided contract workers to commercial farming operations near Lake Placid, Florida, about an hour's drive north of Immokalee.⁹⁹ By the time of his arrest in 2001, Ramos had earned a reputation as someone willing to kill any farmworkers who defied his authority.¹⁰⁰

In 1997 Ramos was arrested on suspicion of having ordered the murder of Arisoto Roblero, a Guatemalan van driver responsible for shuttling workers in between Lake Placid and commercial farming operations in North Carolina.¹⁰¹ The shuttle operation represented a weak link in Ramos' organization. So long as workers remained on isolated rural farms where they

99 "Used and Abused: Five Recent Cases with Slavery Convictions," *Palm Beach Post*, December 7, 2003.

100 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 4.

101 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 5; "Used and Abused," *Palm Beach Post*.

could be closely supervised, Ramos and his small cadre of associates (primarily members of his own family) could prevent anyone from breaking “contract” and speaking to authorities. As with the Flores/Gomez operation I described earlier in this chapter, most of the people trapped in this system had been lured to the U. S. from Mexico or Guatemala by *coyote* traffickers who had promised to sneak them across the border and provide them with jobs that paid handsomely picking vegetables on commercial farms. Once across the border workers were trapped into indentured servitude. Ramos charged them inflated prices for housing and food, all the while monitoring their every move and threatening physical violence if they dared to question authority.¹⁰² Even before they set foot in a commercial farm field workers were hopelessly in debt to their employer.

Authorities believed Roblero had been targeted for execution because he was suspected of having helped one of Ramos’ indentured workers escape. Whether or not he had actually done such a thing hardly mattered. His killing was to serve as an example for anyone else who might contemplate making a break for freedom. The murder took place on April 20, 1997. A group of Ramos’ associates are said to have surrounded the van Roblero was driving, hauled him out and put a bullet in the back of his head. Someone called 911, told the sheriff’s department of the murder, and provided a description of a truck belonging to Ramos. Unfortunately, all but one of the witnesses to the crime refused to cooperate with authorities. That witness told deputies that although he had witnessed the murder he could not name the killer. He believed, “If he told he would be killed by the Ramos family,” and, even if he managed to survive, the killers knew where his family lived in Mexico.¹⁰³ Their hands tied, local authorities contacted the U. S. Department of Labor who subsequently raided Ramos’ home and recovered a cache of

¹⁰² Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 4; Maxwell, “Slavery Alive in Florida Agriculture Industry.”

¹⁰³ Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 5.

unregistered weaponry including an AK-47, a Browning 9-millimeter semiautomatic pistol, and a Remington 700 7-millimeter rifle.¹⁰⁴ Ramos was arrested and hauled in for questioning, but he escaped prosecution on all charges.

In May of 2000, Ramos was arrested once again, this time charged with pistol whipping another van driver nearly to death.¹⁰⁵ Prosecutors decided to ignore any possible connections to the murder three years earlier, and Ramos and his colleagues were each charged with misdemeanor assault and sentenced to one year of probation. When the CIW learned of the incident they decided to investigate. In their conversations with area farmworkers they quickly learned about the murder three years earlier and about the scale of the Ramos operation in the commercial orange groves near Lake Placid.¹⁰⁶

Nineteen year old Romeo Romero then volunteered to go undercover by working for Ramos picking oranges.¹⁰⁷ In this way he was able to study the human trafficking operation from the inside and confirm that workers were being held against their will in decrepit housing and threatened with physical harm if they attempted to flee.¹⁰⁸ On Palm Sunday, 2001, the coalition made a daring visit to the Ramos encampment, figuring their guards were likely to be in church.¹⁰⁹ The gamble paid off, and they were able to spend twenty minutes or so speaking with enslaved workers and distributing literature explaining how the CIW could help them. The following week one of the indentured workers found a way to call the coalition office and they arranged an escape plan for three men. On a signal from a hotel window near the Ramos compound, the three men sprinted to a waiting car and were driven to safety.

104 Ibid, 6.

105 "Used and Abused," *Palm Beach Post*.

106 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 61.

107 Ibid.

108 The Ramos operation included more than 700 workers, whom they crowded into trailer parks in remote corners of the Everglades. Workers often lived twenty or more to a trailer, their mattresses on the floor. They often saw snakes through holes in the floor. "Used and Abused."

109 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 27.

Ramiro Ramos, his brothers Juan and their cousin José Luis were charged, among other things, with conspiracy to hold people in involuntary servitude and harboring illegal aliens for financial gain.¹¹⁰ In a trial held in the United States District Court for the Southern District of Florida in June of 2002 they were convicted on fifteen of sixteen counts.¹¹¹ Ramiro and Juan were sentenced to twelve years in federal prison and their cousin José Luis to ten. Their defense attorneys, facing an uphill battle, had offered a novel defense, claiming the judge should dismiss all charges since commercial growers were clearly at fault. Their clients, they argued, were the victims of selective and arbitrary prosecution.

Judge K. Michael Moore, a conservative jurist with a no-nonsense reputation, quickly dismissed the motion. Nevertheless, he revisited the defense argument in his closing remarks where he criticized the citrus industry for willfully ignoring indentured servitude in commercial orange groves. “Others at a higher level of the fruit picking industry,” he claimed, “seem complicit in one way or another with how these activities occur.”¹¹² The CIW quickly seized upon Judge Moore’s comments and expanded upon them in an online editorial in which they claimed: “Until the corporations that profit from cheap Florida produce – corporations like Taco Bell – are obliged to acknowledge their role in keeping wages and working conditions in Florida fields as miserable as they are, farm labor conditions will not improve.”¹¹³ Later in the same article they continued on to argue that, by keeping food costs artificially low, Taco Bell and other fast food chains were able to “plow their profits back into advertising and expansion.”¹¹⁴ By disclosing compelling evidence of human trafficking, in other words, the CIW was able to raise

110 Bowe, *Nobodies: Modern American Slave Labor*, 64; Bill Maxwell, “Slavery Alive in Florida Agriculture Industry,” *St. Petersburg Times*, July 3, 2002.

111 Kelly Wolfe, “3 Sentenced for Forcing 700 into Slavery in Groves,” *Palm Beach Post*, November 21, 2002.

112 Ibid.

113 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “CIW Opinion on Ramos Sentencing,” www.ciw-online.org/CIW%20opinion%20on%20Ramos%20sent.html (accessed November 7, 2010).

114 Ibid.

disturbing questions about the moral integrity of Taco Bell's public relations and advertising narratives.

The Ramos case represents but a single example of the CIW arguing for a connection between Taco Bell and incidents of violence and coercion in the remote farm fields of South Florida. Nevertheless, it demonstrates how, by disclosing a perdurable link between the human trafficking rings of South Florida and the tacos being sold in retail outlets across the country, the coalition was able to raise serious questions regarding the moral character of the company's management team. Before I take up these themes in detail, I first want to consider how the CIW used the information it gathered in slavery operations to its advantage when staging public protest actions against Taco Bell.

Throughout the Taco Bell campaign, the CIW attempted to contrast elements of the company's public narratives (advertisements featuring a talking Chihuahua, for example) with material evidence of slavery. Put another way, by placing official narratives in close association with living stories, the coalition provided compelling examples of Burkean "planned incongruity."¹¹⁵ In other words, by disclosing how slavery had become systematically incorporated into corporate supply chains they were simply "remoraliz[ing], by accurate naming, a situation already demoralized."¹¹⁶ In this way, by disclosing a disturbing and little-known truth about corporate policy, the CIW was able to prompt a "casuistic stretching" (i.e., a modifying or refining) of public attitudes toward Taco Bell.¹¹⁷ This much noted, the coalition's plurivocal rhetorical strategy deviates from Burke's theoretical model in one respect. Burke's description of planned incongruity is unapologetically dialectical; that is, it assumes a synthesis that evolves from the opposition of two opposing concepts. Read in historic context, the CIW's campaign

¹¹⁵ Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 308-309.

¹¹⁶ Ibid, 341.

¹¹⁷ Ibid, 309.

discourse looks more complicated than this. At any given moment in the campaign one can trace multiple examples of incongruity – incidents where the CIW intentionally contrasted their lived experience of the harsh discipline in commercial agriculture with fictive elements of corporate discourse. And yet, multiple voices speak at the same time with various audiences attending, making the interaction between corporate and activist discourses difficult to classify.

For these reasons, I want to supplement Burke's conception of planned incongruity by turning again to Bakhtin's writings on dialogism and the carnivalesque, this time with an eye toward acknowledging how the CIW was influenced by a related set of Chicana/o oral performance traditions and, as a result, practiced a form of community storytelling. By using protest performances to tell "their" stories about slavery and deprivation the coalition exposed fictive aspects of corporate discourse and opened co-generative spaces where important aspects of daily work experience could be renegotiated. To support this claim, I begin by reviewing two well-known photographs (reprinted in Appendix E) from the Taco Bell campaign and explaining how elements of each might be viewed from the perspectives of the carnivalesque and Chicano/a performance traditions. Following that I review a series of representative images and texts from the Taco Bell campaign in order to demonstrate how the CIW was able to highlight disturbing contradictions in corporate discourse while at the same time side-stepping the sort of counterproductive blowback that occurred in the Stevens campaign.

To begin, the first of the two photos is from a 2003 *National Geographic* magazine article on modern day slavery.¹¹⁸ It features several farmworkers sitting on a curb, one of them hiding behind a green-faced caricature of Taco Bell president Emil Brolick.¹¹⁹ Other farmworkers are holding signs bearing campaign slogans including, most prominently, "STOP

¹¹⁸ See Appendix E.

¹¹⁹ Jodi Cobb, photograph of CIW protestors, in Andrew Cockburn, "21st Century Slaves," *National Geographic*, September 1, 2003, 2.

SWEATSHOPS NOW!” The second photo appeared in the *Washington Post* in 2005 and shows CIW member Lucas Benitez holding the bloodied shirt of a teenage migrant worker who, though he was not a slave, had been beaten nearly to death by a supervisor when he asked permission to get a drink of water.¹²⁰

Primary elements of these two photos are consistent with many of the carnivalesque and grotesque themes I reviewed in the Stevens campaign. The first photo, for example, includes clear instances of parody and social inversion. By distorting the executive’s skin color and placing his face next to a slogan about sweatshop labor in the tomato fields, the coalition was making a not-so-subtle argument about Taco Bell profiting from modern day slavery. The CIW, in other words, used carnivalesque inversion to erase power differentials (albeit temporarily) between tomato pickers and executives and to articulate a scathing critique of corporate policy.

In the second photo, the salience of the bloodied shirt recalls the use of grotesque realism in the Stevens campaign – especially the frequent references in ACTWU’s campaign literature to bodily injury in Southern textile mills. In the CIW’s campaign against Taco Bell, as in the earlier campaign, grotesque imagery (in the form of stories and images related to slavery and other types of oppression in commercial agriculture) disrupted corporate narratives and prompted calls for ethically answerable subjects within the corporate hierarchy. In other contexts they pressed this point by stressing how, despite the fact that in its CSR documents YUM! Brands boasted of its commitment to “humane procedures for caring for and handling animals,” they initially refused to meet with the CIW to discuss human slavery in their corporate supply chain.¹²¹ By disclosing material violence, therefore, the CIW was arguing that Brolick and his fellow

120 Evelyn Nieves, “Fla. Tomato Pickers Still Reap ‘Harvest of Shame’: Boycott Helps Raise Awareness of Plight,” *Washington Post*, February 28, 2005: A03.

121 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Dear YUM! Brands Board Members,” www.ciw-online.org/images/YUM%20Brands%20Board%20letter.pdf (accessed November 7, 2010).

executives at Taco Bell and YUM! Brands ought to be called to account for their role in perpetuating the systematic abuses farmworkers had witnessed and experienced in their daily work lives.

In subtle ways the two photos also reflect the centrifugal heteroglossia of the CIW's campaign discourse and the centripetal, discursive discipline of their corporate opponents. In the first photo, for instance, the garish caricature of the executive competes with other protest signs for the viewer's attention. When read in a context in which several protestors are engaged in conversation, these competing signs signal a plurivocal and cooperative creative process. The slogans and art work that appeared on these sorts of handmade protests signs in the Taco Bell campaign varied widely, depending on who was available to make them at any given venue. As well, the status of the two people engaged in conversation is ambiguous. They are rank and file participants in an anti-corporate protest action. These same people may very well have been active participants in wide open, community planning sessions where the coalition hammered out their protest strategies and tactics. In the second photo, the bloodied shirt is a salient reminder of one young man's violent experience and of a documented pattern of systematic oppression in commercial agriculture. The image serves to privilege a heterodox, communal demand that disrupts Taco Bell's carefully crafted image as a company with a legitimate connection to Hispanic culture. As happened in the Stevens campaign, activists used disturbing images and caricatures to disrupt dominant conceptions of a quiescent, political order.

The CIW's rhetorical strategies resembled those employed by ACTWU in the Stevens campaign in at least one more important respect. By launching satirical critiques from locations far removed from the "humorless terrain" of their daily work experience, the coalition was able to gain rhetorical leverage against a powerful opponent. Truculent crew leaders in the tomato

fields of Immokalee surely looked imposing from the perspective of the day laborers and *esclavos* they supervised. And yet, to public audiences in Los Angeles, New York, or even Miami, these provincial tyrants seemed more like petty criminals who belonged in federal prison. In effect, by circulating bruising critiques of corporate practices in locations far removed from the tomato fields of Southwest Florida, the CIW underscored the importance of deterritorialization to modern day anti-corporate movements. Under conditions of globalization the CIW was able to shift terrains and articulate arguments that would have been immediately suppressed in the humorless terrains of their daily work lives.

What can be said then, is that in the Taco Bell campaign, as in the Stevens campaign two decades earlier, activists employed rhetorical techniques that conformed in striking ways to Burkean planned incongruity as well as Bakhtin's accounts of dialogism and the carnivalesque. At the same time, a careful reading of the CIW's theatrical protest actions in the Taco Bell campaign suggests that one must tread carefully when comparing their rhetorical practices to a performance tradition (the carnivalesque) with distinctly European roots. This is because the CIW's protest performances and their overall campaign discourse reflect a deep familiarity with Chicana/o theatrical genres including *carpa* (traveling tent shows), *actos* (short scenes addressing issues of concern to the rural poor), and the *Teatro Campesino* of the United Farm Workers (UFW). The word "*campesino*," in fact, is sometimes translated "farmworker," and (particularly when they staged *actos* depicting farm labor) the CIW reflected the aesthetic sensibilities of their predecessors in the United Farm Workers (UFW).

The public protest performances of both organizations, the CIW and the UFW, are representative of an indigenous oral performance tradition in Mexico and Central America identified with *rasquachismo*, a term Chicano scholar Tomás Ybarra-Frausto has defined as

referring to “a cultural sensibility of the poor and excluded.”¹²² The history of this performance tradition is thinly documented – hardly surprising given a dearth of published scripts and a long association with the *pelado* (the lower classes). What is known is that it is a highly improvisational tradition and that performers have tended to borrow freely from several available genres including Aztec religious ceremonies, Mexican *el Día de los Muertos* (Day of the Dead) rituals, Italian *commedia dell’arte*, and the European carnival.¹²³ In recent decades they have also been influenced by agitprop theatre (especially the works of Bertolt Brecht), the *teatro místico* tradition (associated with the Brazilian peasant movement) and Augusto Boal’s “Theatre of the Oppressed.”¹²⁴

Until recently, scholars have tended to assume the Chicana/o oral performance tradition was largely derivative of the European carnival.¹²⁵ In truth, although the two traditions intersect at various points in their histories and share a familial similarity (most notably, a plebian interest in social inversion and a distinct emphasis on embodied experience) they represent distinctive categories. In the present context, these distinctions suggest that anyone interested in understanding the CIW’s accomplishments in the Taco Bell campaign (specifically, how they were able to discover and exploit gaps and contradictions in their opponent’s corporate narratives) is obligated to attend to their performance style on its own terms. With this much in mind, I want to consider three themes in the CIW’s protest discourse as they relate to the Chicano/a oral performance tradition: the spirit of the underdog (*rasquachismo*), community

122 Tomás Ybarra-Frausto, “Notes from *Losaida*: A Forward,” in *Velvet Barrios: Popular Culture and Chicana/o Sexualities*, ed., Alicia Gaspar de Alba, xv-xviii (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003), xviii.

123 W. B. Worthen provides a useful introduction to the history of Chicano/a theatre. Worthen, “Staging América,” 101-120.

124 Cordelia Candelaria, Peter J. García, and Arturo J. Aldama, ed., “Luis Valdez,” in *Encyclopedia of Latino Popular Culture*, 852-853 (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2004); Emmanuel SamPATH Nelson, ed., “Mexican American Drama,” in *The Greenwood Encyclopedia of Multiethnic American Literature: I – M* (Santa Barbara, CA: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2005), 1468.

125 Yolanda Broyles-González. *El Teatro Campesino: Theater in the Chicano Movement* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 3-4.

forensics or judgment, and a dual function of critiquing dominant order while opening space for the plurivocal articulation of traditional and oppositional values.

Turning first to *rasquachismo*, the key word to attend to is “appropriation.” Artistic performances that count as *rasquachismo* are characterized by “strategies of appropriation, reversal, and inversion.”¹²⁶ Thus, the spirit of *rasquachismo* is also the spirit of invention – a “capacity to hold life together with bits of string, old coffee cans, and broken mirrors in a dazzling gesture of aesthetic bravado.”¹²⁷ The UFW’s *Teatro Campesino*, which operated on a minimal budget and often performed in farm fields or on the back-end of flat-bed trucks, exemplified *rasquachismo*.¹²⁸ Despite minimal resources, they were able to reclaim geography and turn the tools of discipline to their own ends. The fields where they labored and the trucks used to haul the produce they picked were transformed into performance venues where they could subject field bosses and politicians alike to critical interrogation. In a similar way in the two photos reprinted in Appendix E depicting protest performances, the CIW appropriates tomato buckets, trash bags, and the well-known image of the talking Chihuahua for a protest staged near the Taco Bell corporate offices in Irvine, California. The tomato buckets in particular lend the performance a sense of somber authenticity. In the first photo a woman tosses a tomato bucket up to another worker, just as agricultural workers do scores of times in a typical workday in the farm fields of South Florida. The difference, of course, is that in real life the buckets contain thirty-five to forty pounds of green tomatoes.¹²⁹

126 Ybarra-Frausto, “Notes from *Losaida*,” xviii.

127 Amalia Mesa-Bains, “‘Domesticana’: The Sensibility of Chicana Rasquache,” in *Chicana Feminisms: a Critical Reader*, ed. Gabriela F. Arredondo (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2003), 300.

128 Broyles-González. *El Teatro Campesino*, 35.

129 Bruce Nissen, “Critical Analysis of the Report, Economic Impact: Tomatoes in Florida, Report 1,” Research Institute on Social and Economic Policy, Florida International University, www.ciw-online.org/Nissen_report.html (accessed August 1, 2011).

The appropriation of materials in these protests is consistent with the argument I advanced in chapter two about how anti-corporate activists frequently operate as bricoleurs who adapt a variety of materials at hand in order to critique corporate power and overcome resource disparities. However, when these appropriations are viewed in relation to the Chicano/a oral performance tradition they take on a deeper significance that serves to problematize Western, industrial notions of production. As Yolanda Broyles-González explains in relation to the UFW's *Teatro Campesino*: “[The] spiritual ground of the UFW is the working-class Mexican belief system that contextualizes all human endeavor and creation as part of the greater creation. This could be described as a sacred conception of production as opposed to the dominant mainstream secular view of production, which is mechanistic and individualistic.”¹³⁰ Similarly, the CIW appropriated mundane items such as tomato buckets and trash bags and used them to critique what they saw as a dehumanizing, soul-deadening model of human production according to which they were little more than fungible cogs in a corporate machine. The distinction recalls Hannah Arendt’s discussion of the difference between labor and action (the latter conceived as a mode of communal praxis).¹³¹ By reenacting mechanical gestures from their daily work lives, the CIW was able to disclose the Fordist nature of commercial agriculture and demonstrate how the *vita activa* (the realm of work) can become a locus of political action.¹³²

The didactic and political tone of these oral performance traditions becomes even more pronounced in relation to the second theme: community forensics or judgment. In that regard, consider the photo of Lucas Benitez holding the bloodied shirt. Although the image is not from a staged theatrical performance, it highlights a persistent interest in the Chicano/a oral performance tradition with staging tribunals where “actions [can be] intensely examined and

130 Broyles-González, *El Teatro Campesino*, 112.

131 Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 7.

132 Ibid.

publically judged.”¹³³ The photo is closely cropped, affording minimal information about the obscured background. Benitez stares off to the right in a thoughtful manner that recalls a witness presenting atechanical evidence to a court. This oblique stance lends salience to the blood soaked shirt and provides the reader with a story fragment rather than a complete story. As a result, the picture is invitational. To make sense of it the viewer must study the contents (e.g., the ambiguity of the object and the reason for the blood) and reflect on how such a thing might have happened. Absent the original news story, most observers would likely see an urgent image lacking a coherent hermeneutic context. As a rhetorical object, therefore, the photo constitutes an audience through both confrontation and invitation.

Like the reenactment of field work in the photos from the Irvine protests discussed earlier, Benitez’ somber presentation of the bloodied shirt also serves to invoke the “physical socio-cultural memory of [a] community’s experience.”¹³⁴ During the famous grape boycotts of the 1960s and 70s *el Teatro Campesino*’s graphic depictions of dehumanizing work conditions helped the UFW galvanize workers and present compelling arguments in the public sphere about the need to reform employment practices in commercial agriculture. Similarly, in their theatrical reenactments of field work, the CIW drew upon embodied memories to present explicit arguments about egregious contradictions and erasures in a set of corporate narratives. By providing atechanical evidence of violence and by reenacting the mechanics of daily work life, they disturbed the superficial cohesion of the homogenized Hispanic culture one encounters in Taco Bell’s corporate advertising narratives.

Turning to the third theme, the CIW’s attempts at disturbing narratives is consistent with a defining double gesture of the Chicano/a protest tradition. As W. B. Worthen explains, by

133 Broyles-González, *El Teatro Campesino*, 48.

134 Ibid, 22-23.

drawing upon a wide variety of traditions performers have been able to [legitimate] aspects of Chicano/a culture (themselves often deeply hybridized) [while] at the same time ... reframing the representation of Chicanos/as produced in dominant culture.”¹³⁵ In their protest discourse, in other words, activists manage to freeze what they view as dehumanizing and stereotypical representations of Chicano/a culture in order to subject them to critical interrogation. Consider, for instance, the well-known Taco Bell advertisement reproduced in Appendix E featuring a Chihuahua dog that says “¡Yo Quiero Taco Bell!” (I Want Some Taco Bell!).¹³⁶ The image and slogan invoke a tightly scripted, monovocal corporate narrative. Taco Bell is a multinational fast food company with thousands of restaurants worldwide.

Even when the advertisement is read at a surface level the subtext is not difficult to understand: tiny dog; tiny prices; Mexican restaurant; harmless tongue-in-cheek fun. Never mind that many people of Mexican heritage found the image patronizing and demeaning.¹³⁷ Certainly the members of the CIW felt this way and attempted to exploit the disparity they recognized between Taco Bell’s shallow, stereotypical presentation of Mexican culture and their own, lived experience as Hispanic and indigenous people laboring deep within the company’s supply chain. In that regard, the CIW campaign is replete with examples of the coalition appropriating the language of Taco Bell’s advertising themes. They smashed Chihuahua piñatas, carried signs with parodies of company slogans such as *¡No Quiero Taco Bell!* (I don’t want Taco Bell!) and *¡Yo*

135 W. B. Worthen, “Staging América,” 102.

136 YUM! Brands legal department did not grant permission to reproduce the Taco Bell advertisement featuring the talking Chihuahua. What’s more, the company appears to have scrubbed all references to the Taco Bell Chihuahua from its website. However, images from the advertising campaign can still be viewed on archived versions of the Taco Bell website available through the Internet Archive. Taco Bell Corporation, “Taco Bell TV Takes,” June 19, 2000, <http://web.archive.org/web/20000511135714/www.tacobell.com/homepage/default2.asp> (accessed December 1, 2011).

137 Richard Estrada, “Playing Fast and Loose with Stereotypes,” *Fort Lauderdale Sun Sentinel*, May 19, 1998; Elda Silva, “Lulac Chief, Ad Exec Differ on Taco Bell Dispute,” *San Antonio Express-News*, March 11, 1998; Presbyterian Voices for Justice, “The Taco Bell Boycott – A Short History,” *The Witherspoon Society*, February 18, 2004, www.witherspoonsociety.org/2004/taco_bell_background.htm (accessed November 7, 2010).

Quiero Profits! (I want profits!), and talked about the hypocrisy of the company's language frequently.¹³⁸ By parodying Taco Bell's advertising themes the CIW encouraged public audiences to set aside their cultural biases and take a fresh look at Mexican culture as dynamic, shifting, and, in many ways, unpredictable.

The conception of the Chicana/o subject that emerges from this critical process in the CIW's campaign discourse escapes tidy classifications. It is a subject in the process of becoming, capable of articulating cogent critiques of colonizing discourses and of its own cultural practices. In the first place, by critiquing monovocal corporate advertising narratives the CIW opened space for non-western modes of community narration. Consistent with this, they often spoke of the experiences of field workers, but only rarely referenced the experiences of individual workers. It is notable, for instance, that although one can find numerous accounts from various sources of the young man who was beaten for requesting a drink of water, he is never named. This emphasis on communal experience is evident as well on the CIW website, where articles are posted without attribution, and in protest performances, such as the ones depicted in the photos printed above, where they emphasize generic work practices.

This communal mode of authorship is in keeping with indigenous values of Mesoamerican cultures, and it also conforms to Roland Barthes' account of "middle voice" as a mode of narration in which the subject is recognized as "being effected and affected" by their own authorship.¹³⁹ More to the point, in the communal storytelling practices of the CIW one encounters a mode of narration (middle voice) that came to be eclipsed in the West due to the

138 Examples from the CIW web page include the phrases "no quiero labor exploitation," "no quiero Taco Bell," "chalupas are for chumps." Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "Boycott the Bell;" Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "CIW News: Press Archives: A Selection of Taco Bell Boycott Press," www.ciw-online.org/Pressarchives.html (accessed August 1, 2011); Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "Let Freedom Ring... Boycott the Bell!"

139 Roland Barthes. *The Rustle of Language*, trans. Richard Howard (Berkeley: University of California Press), 19.

ascension of a “vocabulary of the will,” privileging “the human subject as agent, the source of actions.”¹⁴⁰ There is no need to uncover emergent categories of community authorship in the campaign discourse of the CIW; it is their natural mode of narration – a reflection of their non-Western, indigenous sensibilities. And in the Taco Bell campaign it proved a felicitous mode of action for disclosing systematic violence. In the photo of the bloodied shirt, for example, the shirt can be recognized more easily as a metonym for the experiences of an entire community. By speaking with a communal voice, the farmworkers made it difficult for critics to argue that any one person’s experiences were exceptional.

At the same time, the CIW demonstrated a willingness to critique even its own cultural and organizational practices. On that point, the following quotation that has been posted for several years on the CIW website is instructive”: “*Como trabajadores y mujeres, tenemos que luchar por nuestros derechos y contra la violencia tanto en la labor como en la casa. As women and as workers, we have to fight for our rights and against violence both in the fields and in our own homes.*”¹⁴¹ The words appear next to a photo of Julia Gabriel, the woman who, as I mentioned earlier, was one of the recipients of the Robert F. Kennedy Center’s Human Rights Award. Gabriel’s statement, of course, is entirely consistent with the CIW’s commitment to Freirean style consciousness-raising, in that it signals an interest in honoring the dignity of all marginalized people.¹⁴² It also signals the willingness of an organization, the majority of whose members are male farmworkers, to interrogate its own critical assumptions about *machismo* attitudes in Chicano culture and even within their own ranks. As one observer has noted, the CIW also demonstrated an interest in interrogating their own practices through their participation

140 Jean Pierre-Vernant. As cited in Hans Kellner, “‘Never Again’ is Now,” in *The Postmodern History Reader*, ed. Keith Jenkins, 397-412 (New York: Routledge, 1997), 400.

141 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “I am the CIW!: ¡Soy yo la Coalicion!” www.ciw-online.org/listserve.html (accessed November 7, 2010).

142 Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, 114.

in the Root Cause alliance, where they worked in close cooperation with two Miami based human rights organizations (Power U and the Miami Workers Center), both of which have a high percentage of women in leadership positions.¹⁴³ Taken together, these two examples provide clear evidence that the CIW was interested in avoiding the sorts of jarring contradictions between words and actions they recognized the discourse of many corporations. From the CIW's perspective, if they were going to expect the public to accept their organization's critiques of corporate practices, they had to be willing to challenge the persistence of violence and sexism in some corners of their own community.

The CIW's interest in interrogating their own situated practices is consistent with a larger interest in cultural self-reflection within the Chicano/a performance tradition, a situation that suggests an answer for a well-known limitation of the European carnivalesque tradition. Despite the emphasis on bawdy excess and social inversion, carnivalesque performances can fold back upon themselves and reinscribe social norms.¹⁴⁴ The spring carnival, after all, was a period of temporary, cathartic release in anticipation of the somber Lenten season. By appropriating aspects of this tradition, modern day activists risk falling prey to its traps. In a backhanded way, lampooning a Pope, a president, or a CEO can serve to confirm the legitimacy of a normative power. This is not to say carnivalesque protest is, of necessity, a self-defeating enterprise. As I argued earlier, ACTWU used carnivalesque and dialogic methods to critique the actions of the J. P. Stevens Corporation and to convince management to negotiate in good faith. The CIW

143 Root Cause was a temporary alliance of three activist organizations based in South Florida: the CIW, Power U (focused on minority rights and environmentalism) and the Miami Workers Center (focused on organizing service workers). The three organizations came together to coordinate protest actions at the Free Trade Area of the Americas conference in Miami in 2003. Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "Day Three, Root Cause People's March," www.ciw-online.org/tz_site-revision/breaking_news/Day3RootCauseMarchb.html (accessed August 1, 2011); Leary, "Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell."

144 As Bruner explains (with reference to Nietzsche, Foucault, and the carnivalesque), "Official periods of 'sanctioned transgression' are capable of 'magically' reinforcing the normal moral and political order by revealing the limits of that order in more positive ways than outright physical and/or ideological repression." Bruner, "Carnavalesque Protest and the Humorless State," 140.

accomplished something similar in the Taco Bell campaign by drawing upon Chicano/a oral performance traditions. In so doing, they revealed a straightforward (albeit demanding) technique for acknowledging and addressing the risks of reinscription and commodification: the perpetual critique of their own organizational and cultural practices. Their activities in this regard are important in the context of this study because it is representative of a broader trend within the anti-corporate globalization movement toward cooperation among people representing a wide range of human rights initiatives. In that sense, the wide-ranging list of people and organizations who supported the Taco Bell campaign (reproduced in Appendix G) is telling. By signaling their interest in social justice broadly defined, the CIW set a high standard for their own organizational practices, while at the same time providing further evidence that confrontation-alliance style campaigns are less likely to spark countermobilization by opposing forces.

The importance of the coalition's commitment to perpetual self-critique is important as well in light of later developments in the campaign when they focused even more intently egregious discrepancies between Taco Bell's corporate narratives and the personal values of some members of its management team. If they were going to accuse executives of hypocrisy, the coalition needed to look in the mirror first to make sure they could not be accused of the same thing. At this point the themes I have reviewed so far (rhetorical disclosure and indigenous performance traditions) converge in a discussion of the kairotic dimensions of the CIW's campaign strategies. It is at this point as well where the differences between the rhetorical strategies of the Taco Bell and Stevens campaigns become most pronounced and it becomes easier to recognize why the CIW was able to do what ACTWU could not: persuade its former opponent to become its committed ally.

When the CIW set about planning their first anti-corporate campaign they faced a more complex set of organizational barriers than did their predecessors at ACTWU. Ray Rogers and the J. P. Stevens boycott committee worked long hours ferreting out secretive financial relationships. But they also had an important advantage over the CIW in that they were on a union payroll, meaning that the lines of legal and ethical responsibility connecting corporate employers and union employees were unambiguous. By contrast, the CIW represented a group of day laborers on the remote edges of a corporate supply chain. Their status as contract employees with no direct legal connection to Taco Bell complicated their task enormously. In fact, when the CIW decided in 1999 to forgo local actions against growers and launch a full blown anti-corporate campaign, their first task was to review a long list of companies that purchased tomatoes from Florida to decide which one they should target. As I explained previously, their choice of Taco Bell appears to have been partially the result of painstaking research and partially the result of cultural intuition. The idea that a major purchaser of tomatoes from South Florida sold Mexican food struck them as painfully ironic. They followed that thin thread across the country to Southern California and began their first campaign to convince a multinational corporation to pay a penny more per pound for tomatoes. In the end, the coalition's tenuous connection to the company appears to have worked to their advantage. They clearly caught management off guard and, as I will explain in more detail shortly, by the time the company's public relations department began to take the campaign seriously the CIW had discovered several more points of vulnerability in YUM! Brands' rhetorical armature. In the end, the conglomerate proved an especially suitable target for the coalition's plurivocal storytelling strategies. This was true because of felicitous gaps and elisions in some of Taco Bell's official

narratives and because company management proved especially vulnerable to charges of personal hypocrisy.

On the first point, there can be no doubt that Taco Bell corporation was a formidable opponent, fully capable of rebuffing critiques from experienced activists, let alone a group of farmworkers with meager resources. More specifically, at the start of the campaign, Taco Bell was in a position to rebuff critiques of its supply chain policy because of the nature of its purchasing practices and because of certain rhetorical strategies embedded within its official narratives. As regards the former, Taco Bell was only one of several hundred large companies that purchased tomatoes and other fruits and vegetables from the commercial farms of South Florida every year. Moreover, it was embedded within a well-established supply system in which retailers contract with wholesalers, wholesalers contract with commercial farmers, commercial farmers hire labor contractors; and labor contractors hire day laborers to harvest the crops.¹⁴⁵

From a stylistic perspective, the supply chain connecting the CIW and Taco Bell resembles anadiplosis, the overlapping of wording in consecutive sentences, as in the statement: “Having power makes [authorities] *isolated*; *isolation* breeds *insecurity*; *insecurity* breeds *suspicion and fear*; *suspicion and fear* breed violence [italics added].”¹⁴⁶ Each phrase in the passage connects to the one that follows, except that the last does not circle back and connect in any formal way to the first. A similar pattern occurs in modern day corporate supply chains where at each point of articulation there exists a set of legal agreements insuring a steady flow of products from the supplier to the corporate retailer but which, at the same time, affords the retailer significant legal protection from any difficulties arising from things like violations of

¹⁴⁵ Mark Harvey, Stephen Quilley, and Huw Beynon, *Exploring the Tomato: Transformations of Nature, Society and Economy* (Edward Elgar Publishing, 2003), 205.

¹⁴⁶ Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Permanent Purge: Politics in Soviet Totalitarianism* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1956), 17.

labor statutes or environmental policies further down the line. Like the metal plates on a suit of armor, each juncture marks a point of vulnerability but also a point of overlap affording extra security.

In the years between the Taco Bell and J. P. Stevens campaigns, corporate supply chain policies matured considerably. During those years most multinational corporations developed increasingly complex supply chains and similarly complex discursive and legal frameworks for responding to anti-corporate campaigns.¹⁴⁷ As a result, most multinational corporations now issue supplier codes of conduct.¹⁴⁸ YUM! Brands and Taco Bell were no exception.¹⁴⁹ In fact, as the Taco Bell campaign gained momentum, management used the corporate supplier code of conduct as a sort of rhetorical barricade against the arguments of the CIW. In a 2003 shareholder proxy statement, for example, they claimed, “Our suppliers are required to abide by strict standards, including not violating employment or wage and hour laws or regulations adopted by the governing body of any city, state, county or country in which they operate.”¹⁵⁰

When they read this statement, of course, the CIW recognized an opportunity for discussing indentured servitude in commercial agriculture and, more specifically, within Taco

147 Thomas L. Friedman, *The World is Flat: A Brief History of the Twenty-First Century* (Farrar, Straus, & Giroux, 2005), 160; Dale Neef, *The Supply Chain Imperative: How to Insure Ethical Behavior in Your Global Suppliers* (New York: American Management Association, 2004), 45.

148 This development is related to a larger trend toward the adoption of voluntary social and ethical accounting, auditing, and reporting (SEEAR) practices. Neef, *The Supply Chain Imperative*, 7.

149 Taco Bell Corporation, “Supplier Code of Conduct,” www.tacobell.com/Company/SupplierCode (accessed August 1, 2011); YUM! Brands Corporation, “YUM! Brands 2010 Corporate Social Responsibility Report: Supplier Accountability,” www.yum.com/csr/food/supply/accountability.asp (accessed August 1, 2011).

150 A year earlier the company cited their supply chain policy in an open letter to Taco Bell customers, arguing they had asked representatives from a growers’ cooperative to investigate the coalition’s complaints “to determine if they identified any violations of our Supplier Code of Conduct. Indeed, they did not witness any violations and have verified that the conditions of our Code of Conduct are being followed.” Never mind the irony of asking commercial growers to investigate one of their own, the appeal to a written standard in this situation recalls a similar set of rhetorical machinations more than a century earlier. Nineteenth century politicians and merchants sometimes attempted to placate abolitionists by issuing written statements clarifying their commitment to the humane treatment of those who worked in their global supply chains. When these same companies subsequently failed to live up to the letter of their own public statements (a common scenario) abolitionists then proceeded to use the companies own words against them. See for example, Crawford’s discussion of how abolitionists used concessions on the “meta-argument” about the religious grounds for slavery in order to gain concessions on the legal front. Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics*, 180.

Bell's supply network. That the CIW would be able to disclose this vulnerability seems obvious only in retrospect. The coalition dedicated many hours to intensive research and discussion before they settled on a single target within a broad field of choices and developed a set of kairotic campaign strategies to exploit Taco Bell Corporation's particular organizational weaknesses.

On the second point, despite the fact that companies like Taco Bell and YUM! spend millions every year on marketing and public relations strategies, their executive teams may still be vulnerable to charges of personal hypocrisy. In the last chapter, I described how ACTWU was able to leverage gaps and erasures in J. P. Stevens' corporate history in order to force resignations from the company's board of directors. In the Taco Bell campaign, the CIW used a nearly identical strategy of identifying and leveraging moments of asyndeton (intentional erasures) in Taco Bell's official corporate history. In a sense, their task was made easier because, with the advent of the Internet, most multinational corporations now post official histories online. The corporate history Taco Bell provided on its website in 2003 is a prototypical example of the sort of sanitized, PR-savvy auto-biography that has become *de rigueur* in the twenty-first century global marketplace.¹⁵¹ It is a brief (fewer than 2,000 words), all-American tale of business success salted with references to Mexican culture. Predictably, the protagonist of the narrative is Glen Bell, an ex-Marine who founded the company on a shoestring budget.

When he left the military in 1946 Bell determined to start a business, and his first effort was a drive-up hot dog stand. Having been raised close to the Mexican border in "the sleepy agricultural town" of San Bernardino, California, Bell developed a taste for Mexican food.¹⁵² He soon began experimenting with methods for mass marketing tacos. His plan was to, "obtain a

151 Taco Bell Corporation, "History," Taco Bell Corporation, December 19, 2003, <http://web.archive.org/web/20030329113437/http://www.tacobell.com/> (accessed August 1, 2011).

152 Ibid.

location in a Mexican neighborhood. That way, if tacos were successful, potential competitors would write it off to the location and assume that the idea wouldn't sell anywhere else."¹⁵³ The experiment succeeded; and in the balance of the narrative success follows upon success and Glen Bell emerges a smiling billionaire. By 1956 Bell owned three Mexican restaurants. And by the early 1960s he had coined the name Taco Bell and sold his first franchise (to a police officer who went on to make millions). By 2001, the company had become an international conglomerate "widely recognized for introducing [people from around the world to the] exciting tastes of Tacos, Burritos, Fajitas, and Wraps."¹⁵⁴

It is a tidy, self-congratulatory history that brooks no controversies and includes nary a word about long-standing complaints from Mexican-Americans that the company's advertising campaigns (most especially the advertisements I discussed earlier in this chapter featuring a talking Chihuahua) perpetuated demeaning stereotypes.¹⁵⁵ Nor does it reference the CIW's charges that the company had been profiting from the misery of Mexican farmworkers in South Florida (even though the history was posted in 2003, two years after the start of the CIW campaign).

Taco Bell's corporate history also conforms to the same pattern as the corporate histories I discussed in chapter two. Which is to say, it proceeds according to a predictable, metonymic logic in which intangible concepts are represented by tangible items, and the future often resembles the past. In this case, specific elements of Taco Bell's corporate history (for example, the military man/entrepreneur, the police officer who bought the first franchise, and the proliferation of restaurants) operate as tangible representations of neo-liberal ideology. In reading

153 Ibid.

154 Ibid.

155 Elizabeth Sutherland Martínez, *De Colores Means All of Us: Latina Views for a Multi-Colored Century* (Cambridge: South End Press, 1998), 67; Jack R. Payton, "Taco Bell's Dog: Cute or Callous?" *St. Petersburg Times*, April 21, 1998; Marc Shugold, "The Brass Band," *Los Angeles Times*, September 23, 1986.

this web-based history, one enters a clean, efficient, multi-cultural terrain in which the merits of economic liberalism and the integrity of the company narrative are simply assumed.

The metonymic logic of Taco Bell's corporate history also helps to create a simulacral cultural topos – a thin, fictive cultural landscape in which Latino culture becomes inextricably entangled with the corporate narrative. The history contains numerous references to Mexican food and culture and is embedded in a website that includes photos of tacos and burritos alongside images of smiling employees (several of them Hispanic) as well as links to press releases touting the company's commitment to cultural diversity.¹⁵⁶ In this context, of course, cultural diversity does not stray beyond the tight parameters of Taco Bell's founding narrative; it is a shallow diversity featuring skin color and ethnic labels, and affords no breathing space for a more vibrant diversity of perspectives that might challenge the steady trajectory of the corporation in the global marketplace. The tactical and defensive dimensions of such a history are not difficult to recognize. By embracing a (shallow) form of cultural diversity, Taco Bell placed itself in a position to deflect certain critiques of its corporate policies. Would a company with such a history be so insensitive as to perpetuate demeaning stereotypes of Mexican Americans or, worse, purchase tomatoes picked by Mexican *esclavos*?

In 2000 the CIW set about developing strategies for exploiting the erasures and inconsistencies they recognized in Taco Bell and YUM! Brands corporate discourse. In doing so, they maintained a steady commitment to community decision-making and plurivocal narrative practices. As I have already explained, their actions in this regard were due in large part to their commitment to indigenous communication practices and Freirean consciousness raising. Taken together these factors may not sound obviously kairotic. Community decision-making, critical

¹⁵⁶ Taco Bell Corporation, "Company Information: Taco Bell History," Taco Bell Corporation, www.tacobell.com/company/ (accessed October 1, 2010).

pedagogy, and plurivocal storytelling sound potentially complex and anarchic, not swift and decisive. And yet, when one looks closely at certain moments in the Taco Bell campaign (especially the closing months when they took their stories to YUM! Brands' home turf) the coalition seemed keenly aware of timing and decorum (classical components of rhetorical *kairos*).¹⁵⁷ In effect, the CIW matched a powerful corporate strategy (anadiplosis) with a potent rhetorical gesture of their own: synecdoche, the substitution of a part for the whole.¹⁵⁸ They used credible, first person stories to frame Taco Bell as a corporation that was willing to profit from the enslavement of indigenous farmworkers.

The CIW's kairotic strategies were a natural extension of their egalitarian, co-generative decision-making practices. A plurivocal process yielded plurivocal campaign strategies. One way to understand why this is so is to view key events in the Taco Bell campaign through the lens of Michel de Certeau's work on storytelling resistance. In *The Practice of Everyday Life* de Certeau describes two types of tactical, storied resistance to sedimented narrative strategies. The first is a type of dispersed, plurivocal micro-resistance that serves to "introduce a Brownian [seemingly random] movement into the system."¹⁵⁹ This is the mode of action in the "walking rhetorics" he describes in the famous chapter "Walking in the City," where pedestrians learn to improvise new paths as readily as "Charlie Chaplin multiplies the possibilities of his cane."¹⁶⁰ In this mode of tactical resistance, change occurs gradually over extended time as logics of resistance 'insinuate' themselves into dominant strategies in such a way that the powerful come to believe the new ideas were a result of their own reflection.¹⁶¹ One finds evidence of this sort of patient strategizing at several moments in the history of the CIW campaign, including their early

157 Sipiora, "Introduction," 3.

158 Michel de Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, 101.

159 Ibid, xx.

160 Ibid, 98.

161 Ibid, xii.

tenacity in a frustrating confrontation with growers and, as I will explain in more detail shortly, their plurivocal storytelling tactics in the closing weeks of the campaign. The CIW appeared to understand that if they were to convince Taco Bell management to address their concerns, then they would have to dedicate themselves to sticking with the task for as long as it would take in order to win over the consciences of their opponents. This, too, is a sort of timing.

De Certeau labels the second set of tactics “Storytime,” a term which, as I explained in chapter two, refers to the tactical uses of accumulated memories to produce sudden interruptions in the ‘equilibria’ of time and space.¹⁶² It is in this context (that is, in the carefully planned disruptions of status quo strategies) where the CIW’s campaign strategies and tactics most closely resemble traditional notions of rhetorical kairos. More specifically, in kairotic storytime, narrators must often bide their time waiting for an appropriate moment when the accumulated force of memory stands the greatest chance of mounting a “coup.”¹⁶³ Something like this happened in 2001 when the farmworkers of the CIW surprised Taco Bell management by demonstrating how a company that made millions selling Mexican food had been quietly profiting from the enslavement of Mexican workers.

In the closing months of their campaign against Taco Bell, the CIW employed both of the kairotic actions de Certeau describes (one plodding and plurivocal and the other sudden and unexpected). To understand how this happened, requires a brief explanation of an important development in the Taco Bell campaign – a moment when management revealed some unexpected vulnerabilities. As I explained earlier, midway through the Taco Bell campaign, the company was purchased by Yum! Brands. Soon after, Taco Bell moved its corporate offices to the YUM! Brands headquarters in Louisville, Kentucky. The move had several important

¹⁶² Ibid, 84.

¹⁶³ Ibid, 80.

implications for the campaign, one of the most important, it turned out, was that they gained more direct access to YUM! Brands CEO David Novak. In 2004 Novak, who is an evangelical Christian, was a featured participant in a panel discussion at a corporate leadership conference named, memorably, the “Lead Like Jesus Celebration.”¹⁶⁴ The coalition and its allies did not have to do a great deal of research to figure out that Mr. Novak, whether he recognized it or not, was highly vulnerable to charges of religious hypocrisy.

The theme of the Lead like Jesus conference provided the coalition with an opportunity to highlight a dramatic incongruity in ethical performance with great specificity. In the fall of 2004, political columnist Sarah Posner wrote a blog posting entitled *Leading like Jesus* that the CIW later featured on its website.¹⁶⁵ In the posting, Posner highlights an apparent contradiction between Novak’s participation in the conference and YUM! Brands’ corporate policies. She begins by asking “so how, exactly, does Novak lead like Jesus? Let’s take a look.” She then goes on to contrast Novak’s \$8.8 million annual salary with the “poverty level” wages of the farmworkers and asks why he would take an obdurate stand against an organization fighting slavery, but pull company ads immediately when he received complaints about their placement on the racy evening soap opera *Desperate Housewives*. “That leadership must be A-OK with Jesus,” Posner concluded, “just like involuntary servitude is good for the company’s bottom line. But fictional depictions of sex, murder, and dysfunctional families? Unacceptable.”¹⁶⁶ In effect, Posner helped the CIW make an argument that Novak could not claim to be a devout Christian

164 Bill Wolfe, “Seminar Will Stress Christ-Centered Leadership: 4,000 Expected at Southeast Church,” *Courier-Journal*, November 17, 2004.

165 “New Article Slams Yum Brands, Yum CEO David Novak!” *Coalition of Immokalee Workers*, 2005, www.ciw-online.org/2004-05news.html.

166 Sarah Posner, “Leading like Jesus,” *Campaign for Labor Rights*, December 13, 2004, <http://web.archive.org/web/20050108132704/www.clrlabor.org/alerts/2004/dec13-bell-jesus.htm> (accessed November 2, 2010).

business leader on the one hand and a profit-driven CEO willing even to overlook instances of modern day slavery on the other.

Because Novak was participating in a religious event, he was fully exposed to criticism, and on one of the most pernicious and troubling of issues: chattel slavery. As I noted earlier, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, a group of pious abolitionists in England brought an end to the highly profitable slave trade in the British Empire by arguing the practice was fundamentally unchristian.¹⁶⁷ Mr. Novak fared no better against the modern day abolitionists of the CIW. Posner built a case for Novak's hypocrisy, but the coalition had been leveling the same sorts of accusations at public protest events.¹⁶⁸ To Americans living in the twenty-first century, the contradictions between Novak's evangelical Christianity and modern day agricultural slavery are likely to appear self-evident. But that is the point. The language of praise and blame requires a leverage point in popular sentiment, or, one could say, among those things that have come to pass for common sense. Moreover, if activists are to exploit contradictions between corporate practices and popular attitudes, they must be able to level an accusation at the proper time and in the proper manner so as to achieve maximum effect. Put another way, by identifying and exploiting Novak's "Achilles' heel" the farmworkers of the CIW demonstrated their mastery of time-honored kairotic tactics.

Since Louisville, Kentucky is a deeply religious community and a hub of action for the Presbyterian Church USA, the coalition had little difficulty gaining the cooperation of a few progressively minded church leaders and seminarians in identifying local churches and schools where they could make presentations about working conditions in Florida agriculture. The great

¹⁶⁷ As Crawford explains, in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries Christianity became "the primary table on which to represent slavery and judge arguments about it." Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics*, 174.

¹⁶⁸ Leary, "Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell."

benefit of the strategy was that it allowed the CIW to take their campaign to the very neighborhoods where company employees lived with their families. Executives of multinational corporations are not accustomed to fielding questions at the church fish fry, the family dinner table, or the local country club about their company's stance on human slavery. No one can ever know how often these sorts of discomfiting conversations actually took place. Regardless, the strategy forced members of the YUM! Brands management team to shift their perspective on the Taco Bell campaign from the corporate "we" to the personal "I." By the spring of 2005 the CIW was, in effect, asking executives to explain – before their friends and families – how they were *not* profiting from the misery of others.

The coalition's strategy took advantage of the plebian and unpredictable nature of storytelling circulation. Once told, stories can be wild, impious, dissonant, and difficult to control. This is not to say they cannot be useful in achieving strategic ends. As David Boje explains:

The implication of the "story turn" is that the important interaction among storytellers is at the local level. At the local level, telling is communicative interaction in ways that are self-organizing emergent processes. However, there is still "story control" going on... There is a merger without the imposition of narrative control from the top (or center), such as by a managerial list group.¹⁶⁹

It was this sort of local, improvised but kairotic storytelling that was on display in the neighborhoods of Louisville in the closing months of the Taco Bell campaign. Obviously, the stories being told were embedded within a larger campaign strategy, but that strategy was plurivocal and participatory from beginning to end.

The plurivocality of the CIW's discursive practices is undeniable and stands in contrast to the predominantly monovocal discipline of their corporate opponents. My use of the word "predominantly" here is intentional in that, unlike the Stevens campaign where management

¹⁶⁹ Boje, *Storytelling Organization*, 193.

closed ranks and spoke with one voice, one executive at YUM! Brands eventually broke ranks and afforded a glimpse of plurivocality within the corporate board room. I conclude this chapter by discussing this unusual incident and its relationship to corporate answerability and the evolution of CSR standards.

In April of 2008, Jonathan Blum, chief public affairs officer and senior vice president of Yum! Brands, offered testimony before the United States Senate Committee Hearing “On Ending Abuses and Improving Working Conditions for Tomato Workers.”¹⁷⁰ Blum’s testimony was important to the hearing because he was the executive charged with managing his company’s response to the CIW campaign. The senators were interested in hearing what Blum had to say about management’s perspective on the Taco Bell campaign and why his company eventually decided to cooperate with the CIW’s demands. The testimony he provided was remarkable in at least two respects: because Blum insisted that (appearances aside) the campaign had had no effect on sales and because of the story he told about a spontaneous visit he paid to Immokalee in the spring of 2004.¹⁷¹

He set the context for his story by explaining that management had reached a sort of impasse in their efforts to understand working conditions in the tomato fields in the Immokalee region. Corporate growers claimed field workers earned an average wage of twelve to thirteen dollars per hour. The CIW disputed this claim, arguing that tomato pickers actually earned “sub-minimal wage.”¹⁷² Management’s dilemma, he explained, was that neither side could provide them with compelling documentation for their claims. In an effort to resolve this conflict, Blum made a personal decision to take time off from a family vacation in Florida in order to visit

¹⁷⁰ Blum, “Testimony of Jonathan Blum.”

¹⁷¹ Ibid.

¹⁷² Ibid.

Immokalee “unannounced and without a guide – to go into the fields to see the conditions faced by these workers firsthand.”¹⁷³

The decision changed the course of the company’s negotiations with the CIW. As Blum told the Senate HELP Committee, after touring Immokalee and meeting with the CIW, he “recognized that our Taco Bell customers would want us to be part of the solution and help these workers if we could. This was simply a matter of good CSR.”¹⁷⁴ Consequently he pressed the issue with the rest of the management team, and YUM! Brands entered into confidential negotiations with the coalition. The two parties eventually “came to the mutual conclusion that the original penny per pound contribution would lead to the greatest long-term improvement in these workers lives.”¹⁷⁵ As a result, Taco Bell and the CIW announced their ground breaking agreement in March of 2005.

The pivotal moment in Blum’s testimony is his recognition that “*our* Taco Bell customers would want *us* to be part of the solution [emphasis added].”¹⁷⁶ By using personal pronouns in this statement he acknowledges his own ethical accountability as a corporate manager and provides a memorable example of a corporate executive operating as an autonomous, answerable human subject. Put another way, by choosing to converse with people in Taco Bell’s corporate supply chain as human equals (as opposed to fungible “objects” in the company system) he entered consciously into the ethical realm. To be clear, this is not to say he had not been ethically responsible up to that point for the actions he had taken as a corporate executive. To the contrary, the various legal and functional machinations of the corporate system had merely occluded any

173 Ibid.

174 Ibid.

175 Ibid.

176 Ibid.

role he may have played (however unwittingly) in perpetuating oppressive working conditions in commercial agriculture.

While Blum certainly deserves credit for acting to resolve the conflict with the CIW, it is difficult to imagine him reaching out to the coalition had they not sponsored an extended national campaign. He admitted as much in his Senate testimony, claiming that “the CIW was very good at generating publicity on this issue,” and adding that management had found the campaign, “a distraction ... and an inappropriate tarnish to our Company’s public image.”¹⁷⁷ For their part the many college students, church groups, and celebrities who spoke out in support of the CIW consistently argued consumers were answerable for their role in perpetuating egregious harms if they continued to purchase products from Taco Bell. So long as customers continued to queue up to buy burritos and taco salads, they argued, management would continue to ignore slavery in their supply chain.¹⁷⁸

These same disparate constituencies also recognized an affinity between their own activist demands and those being advanced by the CIW. More to the point, people interested in organic food, globalization, labor organizing, and a range of other causes came to recognize a similarity between the issues they were raising and the central demands of the Taco Bell campaign related to fair labor standards in commercial agriculture.¹⁷⁹ Of course, this sort of cross-pollination of activist causes is hardly new. In the Stevens campaign two decades earlier, women and minorities recognized a kinship with black and female textile workers and, as a result, supported ACTWU in opposition to management. As I noted earlier, Laclau relates this

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ See for example the Student Farmworker Alliance’s brief history of the CIW’s campaigns as well as the statements from supportive people and organizations posted on the CIW website. Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Boycott the Bell,” Student/Farmworker Alliance, “An Unfinished History...,” www.sfalliance.org/history.html (accessed August 1, 2011).

¹⁷⁹ For more information see Appendix G where I provide a list of celebrities, politicians, and activist organizations that endorsed the Taco Bell campaign.

sort of “equivalential logic” to the formation of “antagonistic frontiers” separating a popular demand from a locus of power.¹⁸⁰ Crucial to the formation of any such frontier is a metonymic linkage of demands according to which people recognize visceral similarities between their demands and those articulated by others.

The organic relationship between public answerability and the formation of these sorts of popular demands can be recognized at several points in the Taco Bell campaign. For example, in a campaign rally at Taco Bell headquarters in 2003, journalist Eric Schlosser detailed the logic linking the organic food movement with the CIW’s cause: “We all eat. But we rarely stop to think about where our food comes from, how it was made -- and who makes it possible.”¹⁸¹ He then went on to emphasize how management and consumers were answerable for egregious working conditions in commercial farming. “In the same way that Nike has been held accountable for the mistreatment of the Asian workers,” he posited, “Taco Bell must be held accountable for the mistreatment of the American farmworkers.” Given this situation, he continued, consumers must understand, “Every one of our purchases is like a vote, a vote for a particular company and its business practices.... The Coalition of Immokalee Workers are trying to bring dignity and a decent wage to American farmworkers. Please give them your full support.”¹⁸² With these words Schlosser encouraged the public to recognize a natural affinity between the organic food movement and the CIW’s Taco Bell campaign. Just as people can be held answerable for the sorts of foods they choose to consume, so too can they be held answerable in some significant way for the conditions under which those foods have been grown.

180 Laclau, *On Populist Reason*, 74.

181 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Endorsements,” www.ciw-online.org/tz_site-revision/breaking_news/endorsements.html (accessed November 7, 2010)

182 Ibid.

There is evidence of a similar metonymic logic in a posting on the CIW website in which they announced their decision to participate with the Root Cause alliance in protests at the Free Trade Area of the Americas conference in Miami in 2003.¹⁸³ By doing so, the coalition acknowledged its close association with a range of progressive causes including “gender or sexual identity [as well as]”:

Healthcare
A living wage
Fair working conditions
Decent housing
Equal access to education
A clean living and working environment¹⁸⁴

In this posting the CIW first recognized a natural affinity among any groups working to advance human rights and improve the lot of the working poor in an age of globalized corporate power. They then went on to express their interest in holding the “trade ministers from throughout the hemisphere [who] were meeting to negotiate, in secret, the future of trade policy for 34 countries of the Americas” responsible for perpetuating an elitist system of “corporate-led free trade.”¹⁸⁵ The CIW was important to Root Cause in that they provided a signifier that could organize a whole field of demands and that conference participants could not simply shrug off: slavery. In other words, by marching alongside allies in the Miami protests the CIW was able to articulate a critique of corporate globalization while reinforcing its relationship with other progressive causes.

183 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Day Three, Root Cause People’s March.”

184 Ibid.

185 Ibid.

When these last two examples are read alongside the earlier account of Jonathan Blum's visit to Immokalee, they reveal a potential pitfall in a discussion of popular demands and antagonistic frontiers as they relate to the Taco Bell campaign. This is because the word "frontier" could be read as implying a bright line separating mutually exclusive discourse structures. More specifically, it could be interpreted as suggesting a clean dichotomy between noble activists and cold blooded, obdurate managers. Blum's visit to Immokalee is important, if for no other reasons, because it exposes the limitations of such a reading by providing an example of a persuadable, three-dimensional executive in a multinational corporation and affords a brief look at a management team scrambling to respond to an anti-corporate campaign. On both counts, Blum's testimony is concise and compelling. He sounds sincerely moved by what he saw in Immokalee and, by describing his personal response, he signaled a willingness to recognize how policies he had advocated helped to perpetuate human trafficking in commercial agriculture. He makes clear as well that management felt compelled to set aside other duties to respond to the campaign (e.g., they were "distracted" and took time to speak on the phone with growers and the CIW).¹⁸⁶ As the campaign dragged on they became concerned it would tarnish their company's reputation in the marketplace.

In at least one respect the scenario Blum describes is in keeping with the handful of publically available texts in which executives at other corporations have discussed their own experiences in dealing with anti-corporate campaigns.¹⁸⁷ In these accounts managers tell of growing weary of responding to withering public criticism and of their concerns for the public reputations of their organizations and their brands. In all likelihood these managers, as well as the executives at Taco Bell and YUM! Brands were concerned about their personal reputations

¹⁸⁶ Ibid.

¹⁸⁷ See for example: Vogel, *The Market for Virtue*, 46.

as well. In Blum's case this can be deduced from his unorthodox decision to visit Immokalee unannounced and from reports that YUM! Brands management felt "spooked" by the uncanny manner in which the CIW was able to highlight a potential conflict of interest between the Christian values of some executives and the presence of slaves in the YUM! Brands supply chain.¹⁸⁸

That executives would become concerned with their own public reputations is consistent as well with Paul Turpin's argument that public decorum has come to serve a constitutive function in market economies.¹⁸⁹ Public decorum, in other words, is not merely an ancillary factor in the evolution of CSR standards. It plays an important role in shaping de facto standards for ethical behavior in market economies. Turpin's analysis in this regard is in line with the arguments of those who credit the emergence of activist NGOs in the years following World War II with the development of "pro-social, pro-democratic," international CSR regimes including The United Nations Global Compact (outlining global principles for human rights, labor and environmental sustainability), the Dow Jones Sustainability Index and the FTSE4Good.¹⁹⁰ Because corporations are interested in avoiding the protracted distractions of anti-corporate campaigns and because they are concerned for their own reputations as well as those of their companies, they have invested considerable time and money into developing CSR regimes.

A clear implication of this analysis is that Jonathan Blum can hardly be viewed as an exceptional instance of a corporate executive with a sensitive conscience. Indeed the CIW's

188 Leary, "Immokalee Workers Take Down Taco Bell."

189 Turpin, "Liberal Political Economy and Justice," 15-16.

190 Gergen and Whitney, "Technologies of Representation in the Global Corporation," 331; Rachel Kovacs, "Interdisciplinary Bar for the Public Interest: What CSR and NGO Frameworks Contribute to the Public Relations of British and European Activists," *Public Relations Review* 32, no. 4 (2006), 429-431; Isabelle Maignan and O. C. Ferrell, "Corporate Social Responsibility and Marketing: An Integrative Framework," *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science* 32, no. 1 (2004), 3-19; Andreas Georg Scherer and Guido Palazzo, "Toward a Political Conception of Corporate Responsibility: Business and Society Seen from a Habermasian Perspective," *Academy of Management Review* 32, no. 4 (2007), 1096-1120.

rhetorical strategies in the Taco Bell campaign make no sense at all if board rooms are not populated by three dimensional human beings. At every juncture in the campaign (in their disclosures of slavery, their targeting of a remote corporation, their hunger strikes and their neighborhood tactics in Louisville) the CIW assumed the presence of people like Jonathan Blum capable of responding not only strategically but compassionately. Bakhtin has described this sort of answerable subject as an “addressee... whose responsive understanding the author of the speech work seeks.”¹⁹¹ Even more important, to the degree that such a person “understands” a message he or she becomes “a participant in the dialogue.”¹⁹² Put another way, at the moment Blum acknowledged the merits of the CIW’s claims and responded to their “hail,” he became interpolated as an ethical agent who could be held answerable for his role in perpetuating egregious employment practices in commercial farming.¹⁹³

Because of this, because he decided to interact with the members of the coalition on their terms, he was ideally positioned to lobby other executives and, eventually, other corporations to attend to the farmworkers’ cause. Blum, of course, was but one person on the management team of a multinational corporation. If he was to convince other executives that settling with the CIW was in the best interests of the corporation and its investors, then he needed to argue a pragmatic case to people accustomed to viewing business decisions through the twin lenses of profitability and public relations. In that sense the CIW provided him with an appealing option. By agreeing to pay a mere one cent more per pound for tomatoes (a cost they could easily pass along to consumers), Taco Bell and YUM! Brands were able to situate themselves as market leaders for an important humanitarian cause. That the management team at YUM! Brands and other

191 Mikhail Bakhtin, “The Problem of the Text in Linguistics, Philology, and the Human Sciences: An Experiment in Philosophical Analysis,” in *Speech Genres and Other Late Essays*, ed. Caryl Emerson and Michael Holquist, trans. Vern W. McGee (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1986), 126.

192 Ibid, 125.

193 Althusser, “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses,” 173.

multinational corporations would be interested in being viewed in this way is understandable. In a globalized marketplace, corporate managers have come to understand their actions will be judged by what Bakhtin calls a “superaddressee:” an abstract, idealized observer that can be conceived as “the people, the court of history, and so forth.”¹⁹⁴

The CIW demonstrated an intuitive understanding of this situation by employing a bifurcated rhetoric that made it easier for management to say “yes” to their proposal. The first prong of their campaign rhetoric was confrontational. They did not hesitate to portray management as obdurate apparatchiks, answerable for their roles in perpetuating egregious harms. The second prong was the penny-per-pound initiative, which provided management with an elegant and efficient exit from what had become a bruising confrontation. The coalition was, in effect, providing Taco Bell with a made to order image repair strategy. By agreeing to cooperate with the penny-per-pound initiative, the company was also aligning itself with the CIW’s Campaign for Fair Food and, in so doing, positioning itself as a market leader in a highly visible CSR initiative.

In a series of later campaigns against other well-known companies including McDonald’s, Burger King, and Whole Foods, the coalition has maintained a disciplined emphasis on cooperative decision-making practices, community storytelling, and indigenous performance practices. That several more companies have signed onto the penny per pound agreement and that commercial growers are being more cooperative suggests the possibility for noticeable improvement in working conditions in commercial agriculture in Florida in the coming years. Significantly, the CIW (an organization that includes a high percentage of undocumented immigrants) achieved these gains without sparking xenophobic backlash among political conservatives.

194 Bakhtin, “The Problem of the Text,” 126.

The differences from the Stevens campaign are inescapable. ACTWU's strategies in the earlier campaign were perceived by many in corporate management as providing tacit justification for their decisions to "get tough" on union organizers and campaign activists. By contrast, in the Taco Bell campaign the CIW was able to develop positive momentum in one sector of the global marketplace (the fast food industry) that has carried over into other sectors, most prominently the food service and grocery industries.

In the previous chapter I argued that in the Stevens campaign people aligned with either union or management had come to read the very same sets of circumstances in radically different ways. The union and its allies viewed the testimonies of workers about workplace injuries and discrimination as clear evidence of a systematic pattern of abuse and greed in the textile industry. Management responded by dismissing these workers' experiences as exceptional stories circulated by greedy union organizers – interlopers who disrupted the otherwise quiescent relationship of a professionally run organization and its employees. No such thing happened in the Taco Bell campaign. This may be largely due to the nature of the charges the CIW leveled against its corporate opponent. In the Stevens campaign one could understand how even the best run multinational corporation might have occasional difficulties with things like workplace safety or discrimination. In an organization of their size, the company insisted, "misunderstandings" and "errors in judgment" were simply unavoidable. Management at Taco Bell and YUM! could not retreat to these sorts of stock arguments. They could hardly claim that an occasional misunderstanding about slavery was simply part of doing business in a global economy. The topic is too explosive. In the aftermath of the monumental abolitionist and Civil Rights movements in the West, slavery became a sort of zero tolerance offence. Neither, as it turns out, were Taco Bell and YUM! Brands management in a particularly strong position to use

the asyndeton strategy I discussed earlier in order to close down any critical interrogation of their organizational practices and distance themselves from controversial situations. The CIW's kairotic storytelling strategies and the force of their argument regarding slavery in modern day corporate supply chains proved compelling – especially since the coalition had provided the company with an appealing alternative to the campaign in the form of the penny per pound agreement. In the end, the coalition's strategy also helped to prevent the CIW and their allies from clinging to stereotypical and inflexible views of management. Unlike the Stevens campaign, in which union and management interests persisted in clinging to melodramatic caricatures of an enemy “other,” the Taco Bell campaign ended with both parties evincing tentative respect for their former opponents.

The Taco Bell Campaign and the Future of Markets

In its national campaign targeting Taco Bell and YUM! Brands, the CIW used prospective narrative disclosure to draw attention to egregious working conditions in commercial agriculture and answerable decision makers within a prominent multinational corporation. Their strategy was prospective in the sense that they targeted a corporation with an abiding, metaphoric connection to Hispanic culture and developed kairotic rhetorical strategies that pierced Taco Bell and YUM! Brands' figurative armor in order to disclose disquieting contradictions between corporate discourse and executive values. In developing and implementing these campaign strategies, the CIW demonstrated its commitment to community decision practices and to a rich *Chicano/a* oral performance tradition which, like carnivalesque performances in the European tradition, place a premium on grotesque disclosure and social inversion.

The CIW's Taco Bell campaign conformed to the confrontation/alliance pattern in prospective narrative disclosure in three respects. First, it featured an initial storytelling

confrontation followed by attempts to convince management to change its practices and embrace activist demands as their own. Second, the CIW planned the campaign as the first stage of a long-term effort aimed at transforming labor standards in commercial farming in Florida. Third, several of the coalition's practices served to decrease any risk of conservative backlash. They eschewed top-down decision-making in favor of egalitarian community discussions. They demonstrated a penchant for self-critique, especially in relation to their own potential for perpetuating sexism. They appropriated strategies from twentieth century civil rights campaigns (including hunger strikes and UFW style theatrical performances). And they conducted high profile investigations of a string of modern day slavery operations. Taken together, these actions made it difficult for their opponents in management and the public sphere to question either the legitimacy of the coalition's claims or the integrity of their demands.

The closing chapters of the Taco Bell campaign provide compelling evidence regarding the potential of confrontation/alliance strategies for influencing the attitudes and practices of market leaders. In his testimony to the U. S. Senate HELP Committee Jonathan Blum claimed that in the years following the Taco Bell campaign his company and the CIW "have enjoyed good relations, maintain an active and open dialogue, and [we] genuinely want to help them with their cause."¹⁹⁵ In the five years since the conclusion of the Taco Bell campaign management appears to have remained true to their word. They have stepped in at crucial junctures in subsequent campaigns to defend the CIW and to speak to the workability and ethical importance of the penny per pound agreement. When the Florida Tomato Growers Exchange attempted to put an end to the agreement by refusing to cooperate with the new agreement, YUM! Brands announced it would place funds owed to farmworkers in an escrow account until growers decided to cooperate. And in 2007 they announced an agreement brokered with the CIW to

¹⁹⁵ Blum, "Testimony of Jonathan Blum."

expand the penny per pound agreement to cover all of their brands, including Kentucky Fried Chicken, Long John Silvers, and A&W.¹⁹⁶

The CIW's rhetorical project, to be sure, carries with it certain inherent risks. Anytime activists sign an agreement with a multinational corporation they provide the company with an opportunity for burnishing its public relations image. By endorsing one activist campaign, in other words, could position itself to shrug off other activist campaigns. This is because, as I argued in chapter two, once they have aligned themselves with an activist cause, it can be more difficult for future activists to frame them as heartless capitalists. Indeed, the risk of this sort of "recuperation" cannot be ignored.¹⁹⁷ To cite an example close at hand, in recent years Greenpeace has accused YUM! Brands of bucking an environmentalist trend in the fast food industry by purchasing paper products from two companies with a well-established record of clear cutting Asian rainforests.¹⁹⁸ Arguably, YUM Brands is in a stronger position to ignore Greenpeace's claims given their company's high profile cooperation with the CIW. While this development is discouraging, it hardly means that the Taco Bell campaign was a useless endeavor. We cannot afford to be naïve regarding the potential for corporations to appropriate oppositional projects in order to further their own ends. At the same time, it seems to me that anyone interested in embracing the CIW's vision of "a better world, based on democratic participation" must guard against becoming overly jaded in regard to corporate CSR policy. This is true, if for no other reason, because there are now fewer slaves picking crops on commercial farms in Florida.

196 "Yum! Brands Expanding Deal with Florida Farmworkers," *Associated Press*, May 18, 2007.

197 Tom McDonough, "Introduction: Ideology and the Situationist Utopia," in *Guy Debord and the Situationist International: Texts and Documents*, ed. Tom McDonough (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2004), xiii.

198 Greenpeace, "What YUM! Inc. Doesn't Want You to Know," April 26, 2011, www.greenpeace.org/usa/en/news-and-blogs/campaign-blog/what-yum-inc-doesnt-want-you-to-know/blog/34450/ (accessed December 1, 2011).

In the end, it is difficult to determine whether the management teams at Taco Bell, YUM! Brands, and the several other corporations that have cooperated with the CIW in recent years did so out of altruistic or pragmatic reasons. In all likelihood they were motivated by a complicated amalgam of both. Regardless, by employing a two-stage rhetorical strategy of confrontation and (proposed) alliance, the CIW made it easier for management to say yes to their proposal.

Chapter 6: Anti-Corporate Campaigns and Global Markets

“You choose justice. Very good! We agree. But now we must be serious.”
Jacques Ellul¹

Stanley Deetz has observed that “the price of the antidemocratic character of corporate control is more difficult for individuals to understand and respond to than excesses of the state.”² He attributes this situation to the fact that while state power tends to be explicitly restrictive, corporate power is “embodied in routines and techniques that appear enabling and apolitical.”³ If Deetz is correct about the seeming invisibility and banality of corporate power in daily life, and I believe he is, then this raises important questions about the transformative potential of anti-corporate activism. First, what accounts for the ability of groups such as ACTWU and the CIW to extract concessions from powerful but seemingly banal and faceless institutions? And, why is it that some anti-corporate campaigns appear to be more effective than others in shifting the attitudes and practices of corporate actors in global markets? These two questions have served to guide my inquiry in this dissertation. In this last chapter I proceed by revisiting each question and then discussing some of the theoretical and practical implications of my conclusions.

Kairotic Wagers and Corporate Responses

In response to the first question, I have argued one can account for the ability of anti-corporate activists to gain concessions from prominent companies by looking to their use of prospective narrative disclosure. The phrase refers to a kairotic wager on the part of an activist group that by disclosing disquieting corporate practices and answerable corporate actors they can rally public audiences to support their demands thereby putting pressure on a company to modify its market practices in some significant way. Two dimensions of this process are of special

1 Jacques Ellul, *The Ethics of Freedom* (Grand Rapids, MI: Erdmann, 1976), 39.

2 Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization*, ix.

3 Ibid.

importance. First, disclosure in this context typically involves the strategic dissemination of stories and texts featuring carnivalesque and grotesque themes. Second, as it is practiced in anti-corporate campaigns, prospective narrative disclosure typically involves a three step process involving intensive research followed by a period of strategy development and culminating in one or more instances of carefully timed public disclosure. I borrowed a phrase from Kenneth Burke to describe this third stage as a moment of “planned incongruity” when activists place corporate fictions in dialogical tension with the actual conditions of industrial production.⁴ Corporations, I should add, have responded to this rhetoric of disclosure by practicing a compensatory rhetoric of closure featuring strategic (and sometimes controversial) research and public relations strategies.

I arrived at these answers after conducting case studies of the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns and reviewing events from more than 170 other anti-corporate campaigns in recent decades. I found clear evidence in both case studies of a pattern of rhetorical practices in keeping with the three stages of prospective narrative disclosure I just described. In both campaigns activists conducted intensive research of a company in an effort to identify vulnerabilities that could be exploited through kairotic action. Union strategists in the Stevens campaign hired professional labor consultants who specialized in the “power analysis” of corporations and management. In the Taco Bell campaign, by contrast, the CIW held marathon research sessions in which rank and file members of the coalition worked alongside graduate school interns and *pro bono* attorneys. Both groups then used what they learned to develop detailed sets of campaign strategies and tactics. In the Stevens campaign this meant the same small group of labor leaders laid out a multi-faceted power on power strategy aimed at convincing one company, J. P. Stevens, to recognize a labor agreement at several of its factories across the rural

⁴ Burke, *Attitudes Toward History* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1984), 309.

South. In the Taco Bell campaign the CIW used wide-ranging community discussions to craft a “campaign for fair food” aimed at changing wages and working conditions for commercial farmworkers in Florida. Finally, the culminating stage of the Stevens campaign featured a wide ranging set of strategies and tactics including disclosures of financial relationships, the maneuvering of bank funds, a national boycott, theatrical street protests, and the public circulation of texts featuring graphic accounts of injury and discrimination. The Taco Bell campaign, by comparison, was an even more theatrical event that included slavery investigations, a national boycott, street theatre, and a demand for a penny per pound increase in wages.

My review of scores of campaigns suggests that the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns are not isolated examples and that prospective narrative disclosure constitutes a ubiquitous rhetorical strategy in contemporary anti-corporate activism.⁵ As I explained previously, as early as 1960s the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee was staging sit-ins at Woolworth’s lunch counters, and the United Farm Workers was sponsoring national boycotts of corporate grown table grapes. In 1990s, the United Food and Commercial Workers leaked information to the ABC news magazine *Prime Time Live*, which subsequently broadcast a controversial episode on a pattern of unsafe food handling practices at grocery stores owned by the Food Lion Corporation.⁶ And in recent years delegations of indigenous people from the Ecuador working in cooperation with the Rain Forest Action Network have staged large scale protests at the Chevron Corporation’s annual meeting to present evidence the oil company has been dumping billions of

⁵ See Appendix A for the list of campaigns I reviewed for this study.

⁶ Terry Tang, “Revisiting the Food Lion Case,” *The New York Times*, February 17, 1997.

gallons of toxic waste into rivers in the Amazon rainforest.⁷ In these few examples, and in the scores of other campaigns I reviewed for this study, activists wagered time and again that through the strategic disclosure of egregious practices and answerable people they could ultimately convince companies to make substantive changes in how they do business.

The most obvious implication of the pattern of prospective narrative disclosure I have traced through these campaigns (and more than 170 others listed in Appendix A) is that persuasion in anti-corporate campaigns results from the leveraging of popular opinion. While it may seem as if I am stating the obvious as regards the Taco Bell campaign, the same cannot be said for ACTWU's campaign against J. P. Stevens which, more often than not, has been framed as a distinctly instrumental event – a sort of “lunge at the company's financial throat.”⁸ My reading of the Stevens campaign follows that of Minchin by treating it as a complex, public sector action that included secondary, instrumental components. It assumes, in other words, that in all likelihood J. P. Stevens eventually cooperated with the union, not because of financial and legal pressures, but because of the valance of popular opinions within its market sector and the public sphere.

Moreover, a careful reading of both campaigns demonstrates how activists were able to produce these shifts in popular reasoning through the circulation of stories and texts featuring carnivalesque and grotesque themes. In adopting these modes of rhetorical disclosure, I have argued, activists have appropriated ancient rhetorics of disclosure as well as social protest strategies pioneered during the Industrial Revolution and adapted them for use in an age of global media. The manner in which this happened in each campaign reflected the exigencies of

⁷ “Indians Protest Chevron Meeting,” *The Oil Daily*, April 27, 2009; Jordan Robertson, “Chevron Annual Meeting Draws Protests from Activists: Human Rights, Environment Are at Center of the Controversy,” *The Associated Press*, May 28, 2009.

⁸ Franklin, *Three Strikes*, 31.

the day. The Stevens campaign played out in the twin shadows of the African American Civil Rights Movement and second wave feminism. ACTWU was able to leverage this situation to its advantage by featuring the first person stories of women and minorities who had endured discrimination and violence in J. P. Stevens' textile mills.

Two decades later the CIW was forced to negotiate a vastly different economic and political landscape in which illegal immigration had become a tendentious and sometimes explosive issue. Given this backdrop, one might have expected that a campaign sponsored by a group of predominantly Mexican and Haitian farmworkers would prompt significant countermobilization on the political right. It did not. In all likelihood this was because slavery trumped illegal immigration. Even in a time of resurgent nativism it was difficult for opposing interest groups to impugn the motivations of people who were being lauded as modern day abolitionists. This development, of course, highlights the signal importance of slavery in American public memory. In the aftermath of the Civil War and of the great Civil Rights Movements of the twentieth century, the issue had become one of the enduring "third rails" of public discourse. If the Stevens campaign gained persuasive force by forging a metonymic link between labor rights and demands for the equal treatment of women and minorities, the Taco Bell campaign accomplished something similar by linking the Campaign for Fair Food to the global campaign to expose and eradicate the modern slave trade.

Of course, the difficulty with arguments about using public opinion to pressure corporations to change is that, as Deetz has pointed out, a corporation is "a special type of fiction."⁹ A corporation is a citizen of no nation and literally does not care about things like workers' rights, environmental pollution, or national values. It is a legal fiction; and as such it is designed to deflect torts and erase lines of legal liability so that it can deliver a dependable return

⁹ Deetz, *Democracy in an Age of Corporate Colonization*, 19, 307.

on investment to shareholders. Given this situation, who is the target of an activist campaign? And, even more troubling, by what standards are they to be critiqued? ACTWU and the CIW, I have argued, worked around these difficulties by highlighting contradictions between words and deeds. That is, both groups demonstrated a willingness to ask straightforward questions about how a company's actions measured up to their own organizational discourse. Furthermore, both singled out specific members of management they deemed vulnerable and critiqued them according to the ethical standards of their home communities. In the Stevens campaign, this involved asking how an executive from Avon Corporation, a company that made millions selling cosmetics to women, could sit on the board of a company that discriminated against its female workers. In the Taco Bell campaign it involved asking how church going executives could justify profiting from modern slavery. These last two incidents, in turn, illustrate the power and importance of public storytelling disclosure and suggest that not all modes of corporate power are likely to strike public audiences as subtle, enabling, or apolitical

Comparing Typologies

In response to the second question regarding the relative effectiveness of campaigns, I have argued that the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns represent overlapping typologies of practice within prospective narrative disclosure in contemporary anti-corporate campaigns. More specifically, the Stevens campaign counts as a "martial" campaign where, intermingled with the basic rhetorical elements I just described, one finds instrumental strategies and tactics including political lobbying, civil suits, and labor strikes that are focused on forcing management's hand on some pressing, short term issue. Activists in these types of campaigns are more concerned with changing behaviors than attitudes and are more likely to view controversial practices as justified given the need to address some urgent issue. As happened in the Stevens campaign, they

are often willing to risk alienating management and animating public sector opposition, so long as the company eventually agrees to change some specific business practice. The risks inherent to such an approach became apparent in the 1980s and 90s when other groups struggled to replicate the initial success of the Stevens campaign.

The Taco Bell campaign, by contrast, can be viewed as a paradigmatic example of a “confrontation/alliance” campaign in which activists focus from the beginning on changing the attitudes of corporate management toward some contentious issue and on gradually shifting the CSR standards of entire market sectors. Beyond that, they assume that if they can convince a few industry leaders to cooperate, then they will be able to build momentum for long-lasting change that can spill over into other markets. This is precisely what the CIW has been attempting to do by sponsoring campaigns against YUM! Brands, McDonald’s, and Burger King and then moving on to smaller players such as Subway, Chipotle Grill, and Quiznos.¹⁰ The success they experienced in the fast food industry enabled them to stage similar long-range campaigns targeting grocery retailers (Kroger, Publix, and Trader Joes) and college food service providers (Sodexo and Aramark).

Once again, the CIW is not an isolated example. As I explained earlier, I found dozens of examples of other campaigns in which activist groups have determined to influence the business practices of entire market sectors, one company at a time.¹¹ Prominent examples include the “Victoria’s Dirty Secret” campaign sponsored by ForestEthics (part of a larger effort to reduce mailings by catalog retailers), the “Ten Campaign” sponsored by the U.K. group Stop the Traffik

10 For links related to each of these campaigns see Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Coalition of Immokalee Workers: Home,” www.ciw-online.org/index.html (accessed August 1, 2011).

11 After reviewing hundreds of news stories and web pages, I determined 77 of the 173 campaigns listed in Appendix A employed strategies in keeping with the confrontation/alliance typology. It should be noted that the list is organized according to the company that was targeted as opposed to the industrial sector. So, for example, each of the CIW campaigns is listed separately even though they are part of a larger “Campaign for Fair Food” aimed at transforming labor standards in Florida farming.

(aimed at chocolate manufacturers that purchase cocoa beans picked by child slaves), and PETA's Murder King campaign (one in a series of campaigns aimed at convincing fast food companies to improve animal welfare standards).¹²

As these brief reviews of the two typologies suggest, the two case studies provide clear evidence that confrontation/alliance campaigns are more likely than martial campaigns to yield progressive and enduring changes in the CSR standards of global markets. This is true for two reasons: because the former type of campaign is conceived from the start as a long range campaign focused on shifting attitudes, and because activists who sponsor them are less likely to employ instrumental strategies that carry a greater risk of alienating the opposition.

This is not to say that there were no other important, intervening factors. In truth, a careful review of the case studies suggests at least three factors (in addition to the typology of practice I have advocated) that may help to account for the differing outcomes of the two campaigns. The first strikes me as mundane, but crucially important. Campaigns evolve; by which I mean that activists have learned from the mistakes of the past and have worked to implement the best practices of what they viewed as the most effective campaigns. By the 1990s labor unions were already absorbing the lessons of the Stevens campaign by forming alliances with community-based human rights initiatives in the planning of campaign strategies. During this same time period, other activists (most notably environmental groups such as Greenpeace, the Rainforest Action Network, and Earth Justice) began to adopt martial style strategies including civil suits, political lobbying, and even occupations of facilities for the anti-corporate campaigns they sponsored.¹³ Over the years, in other words, anti-corporate activists have learned

12 Amy Merrick, "Victoria's Secret Goes Green on Paper for Catalogs," *Wall Street Journal*, December 7, 2006; People for the Ethical Treatment of Animals, "Victory;" Stop the Traffik, "The Ten Campaign."

13 I provide brief descriptions of 42 such campaigns in Appendix A, 31 of them focused on environmental causes.

to appropriate the best elements of earlier campaigns in order to address the exigencies at hand while at the same time reducing the chances of countermobilization.

Second, the Stevens campaign was planned and run by a small group of professional labor leaders with only modest input from rank and file employees. This prompted some of their opponents in management and on the political right to argue that the campaign was not a legitimate reflection of the attitudes of the vast majority of workers. By contrast, from its inception the CIW has demonstrated a steadfast commitment to community decision-making practices. This has made it more difficult for adversaries to dismiss them as professional organizers or as a front group for a liberal cabal.

Third, the global diffusion of communication technologies accelerated in the years between the Stevens and Taco Bell campaigns, opening new channels for the distribution of stories and providing new opportunities for exploiting contradictions between corporate discourse and corporate practices. Consider, for example, that ACTWU rented office space in major cities across the U. S. to coordinate protest activities, film screenings, and the distribution of literature for the Stevens campaign. Two decades later the CIW was able to use Internet technologies to coordinate a similarly complex set of national and even international campaign activities from a single office in rural Florida. Even more important, the new technologies provided the coalition with more channels for the public circulation of stories and texts. The opening of these networks has made it more difficult for multinational corporations to exert precise control over organizational communications while at the same time creating a more fertile atmosphere for the public circulation of stories, the cross-pollination of issues, and the formation of popular demands.

From Disclosure to Transformation

This study has several important implications for future research and practice. First, even as we learn more about the rhetorical strategies of anti-corporate activists, we need to know more about the nature and practice of corporate resistance strategies. Beyond that, the answers I have posited for the two research questions underscore the importance of anti-corporate activism as a category of academic inquiry and of studying best practices in anti-corporate protest.

On the first point, my research confirms Boje's observation that corporations have become students of storytelling and are constantly refining ways to spin the public, dialogic circulation of stories and texts to their advantage.¹⁴ Consider, for instance, the situation of Taco Bell and YUM! Brands. By forming a partnership with the CIW, YUM! Brands likely enhanced the credibility of a whole range of CSR initiatives pertaining to matters such as their paper purchasing practices and their international marketing initiatives. While I am certainly not claiming that the Taco Bell and YUM! Brands management team agreed to cooperate with the coalition for purely cynical reasons, it is important to note that the penny per pound agreement has done nothing to slow the pace of the company's advertising campaigns or their expansion into new corners of the global market.¹⁵

The implication of this situation is that, although prospective narrative disclosure may be a useful tool for convincing individual corporations and even entire market sectors to address their most egregious practices, it remains to be seen whether these gains can check the steady progress of the corporate commodification of daily life in any significant and lasting way. For that to happen, activists must find ways of disclosing not only heinous practices in remote places

¹⁴ Boje, "Spin," 203.

¹⁵ The most dramatic example is China. In 1987, the company operated one Kentucky Fried Chicken outlet in the country. By 2011 it operated 3,200 restaurants in 650 cities. William Mellor, "The Secret to KFC's Success in China," *Washington Post*, February 20, 2011.

but also the more subtle, coercive intrusions of corporate control into the mundane routines of daily life.

On the second point pertaining to the importance of studying anti-corporate activism, as I argued earlier, de Certeau claimed the academy had (for good reason) spent enough time mapping networks of discipline. He believed the time had come for a second grand project concerned with antidiscipline – that is, for understanding the myriad ways in which people negotiate disciplinary terrains in order to open spaces where civil society might flourish.¹⁶ In the present context, de Certeau's argument points to the need for understanding the possibilities for and limitations of anti-corporate activism. In the opening chapter, for instance, I explained that rhetoricians have not typically treated anti-corporate campaigns as a distinct category of analysis. The same cannot be said for other disciplines including critical management studies, labor relations, sociology and critical public relations. At various points in the present study I have engaged debates in these literatures, in part to encourage inter-disciplinary dialogues that might advance theoretical inquiry and civic practice.

Beyond that, one way the academy can heed de Certeau's advice about attending more carefully to antidiscipline is by tracking best practices in anti-corporate activism. In that regard, the findings of this research project problematize certain longstanding assumptions about disciplinary resistance and suggest several practical techniques for advancing praxis. Most importantly, my review of the two case studies suggests that the surest route to shifting the CSR standards of global markets runs through the ancient territory of plebian, storytelling resistance. The accomplishments of the CIW in particular stand in confirmation of arguments put forward by writers like Jacques Rancière, Victor Turner, and Michele de Certeau about the creative,

16 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xv.

rhetorical capacity of marginalized people.¹⁷ Lest I be misunderstood, I am not advocating a naïve faith in the capabilities of the masses. Rather, my argument is that marginalized people often possess sufficient resources within the traditional storytelling practices of their own cultures for identifying and leveraging performative contradictions in discourses of power. This assumes that the people who inhabit the humorless terrains on the margins of the global marketplace are often forced to become patient students of the daily discourse and practices of corporations. Their very invisibility, in fact, works to their advantage, enabling them to recognize erasures and incongruities in corporate practice that others would miss.

What is more, in the digital age activists can leverage their efforts through the use of new communication technologies. More to the point, prospective narrative disclosure assumes that activists have adapted ancient, iconoclastic, rhetorical tactics (kairos, storytelling, and *mētis* to be specific) for use in a digital age. Telephones, televisions, and computers have provided new routes for plebian storytelling circulation and for the articulation of popular demands. This popular orientation confirms the emphasis in contemporary anti-corporate activism on egalitarian decision-making practices and of the metonymic linking of related causes in the formation of political demands. The confrontation/alliance typology extends this logic by singling out answerable corporate executives and then using carnivalesque inversion to erase power differentials and appeal to them, as errant peers, to mend their ways. It extends it as well by assuming that corporate managers are susceptible to peer pressure and by assuming that if the

17 De Certeau, *The Practice of Everyday Life*, xiv; Jacques Ranciere, *The Philosopher and His Poor*, trans. Andrew Parker, Corinne Oster and John Drury (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 2004), 3; Victor W. Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1967), 93.

biggest players in any given market endorse a cause, then smaller companies are likely to follow.¹⁸

Beyond that, both case studies suggest the global diffusion of news media and personal communication technologies has increased opportunities for world-wide dialogic interaction and cooperation among activist groups that sponsor anti-corporate campaigns. Not even multinational corporations can check the sheer plurivocality of the new global communication networks. As new technologies for global communication have become available, activists have used them with increasing frequency to conduct research and coordinate strategies in remarkably efficient ways. As a direct result of these developments, things that have happened deep within company supply chains have sometimes boomeranged back on companies at inopportune times and created major public relations disasters.¹⁹

The implication is that a complex age has provided activists with new opportunities for practicing the arts of narrative disclosure. As they take advantage of these new opportunities by crafting new campaigns, anti-corporate activists would be wise to remember that, from the earliest times, these traditions have always stressed the importance of intimate knowledge born of extended interaction with those in positions of power. In the present context this means that (discursive typologies notwithstanding) there can never be any such thing as a “one-size-fits-all” model of anti-corporate activism. No two anti-corporate campaigns can ever address the same exigencies.

18 Forrest Briscoe and Sean Safford describe this sort of practice as an illustration of the “Nixon in China effect” according to which “contentious practices spread from initial [highly visible] targets of activism to become accepted by organizations in the mainstream.” Forrest Briscoe and Sean Safford, “The Nixon-in-China Effect: Activism, Imitation, and the Institutionalization of Contentious Practices,” *Administrative Science Quarterly* 53 (2008), 460.

19 In using the term “boomerang” here, I am thinking of Keck and Sikkink’s description of the “boomerang effect” in global activism. Margaret E. Keck and Kathryn Sikkink, *Activists Beyond Borders: Advocacy Networks in International Politics* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1998) 12.

For this reason, those who plan anti-corporate campaigns should be wary of stereotypes of management behavior. Everyone understands, for example, the potential for cynicism in CSR strategies. Still, they dare not fall prey to these stereotypes by becoming cynical themselves. If activists are to make any progress in shifting the behavioral trajectories of corporations, they must recognize that they are negotiating with people, not stereotypes. Corporations may be fictive entities devoid of consciences, but managers and investors are not. Most CSR documents have to be accepted at face value as sincere efforts to position a company as a responsible (albeit fictive) participant in civil society willing to conduct business in a fair, above board manner. As the economist Joseph Stiglitz has explained, that a company would attempt to frame itself this way in the public consciousness makes economic sense. So-called “asymmetries in information” (better known as lack of organizational transparency) may provide a company or governing institution with some short term advantages, but they also destabilize markets and can cost corporations and economies a good deal of money over the long haul.²⁰

I want to close by highlighting the tension Stiglitz identifies between a reflexive instinct on the part of many corporate decision makers to maintain confidentiality and an emergent consensus among economists and business scholars that lack of transparency is often a very bad idea. As Stiglitz explains, many prominent corporations assume unnecessary risks by underestimating the risks of confidentiality and the benefits of organizational transparency. These sorts of miscalculations have often resulted in serious discrepancies between what companies say in public and how they actually conduct business on a daily basis in remote corners of the global marketplace. In the closing decades of the twentieth century anti-corporate activists discovered ways of exploiting this situation in order to challenge the business policies of

20 Michael Hirsh, “The Most Misunderstood Man in America; Joseph Stiglitz Predicted the Global Financial Meltdown. So Why Can’t He Get Any Respect Here at Home?” *Newsweek* 154, no. 4 (2009), 44; Joseph Stiglitz, *Globalization and its Discontents* (New York: W. W. Norton, 2002), xi.

individual companies and the de facto social responsibility standards of entire market sectors. In a sense, the world has seen this scenario before. In the nineteenth century, abolitionists succeeded in ending the slave trade in the British Empire by contrasting the high sounding words of English business people against their actual practices.²¹ The anti-corporate activists of the twenty-first century can provide an important service to civil society by continuing to follow the example of their abolitionist predecessors.

21 Crawford, *Argument and Change in World Politics*, 159-200 passim.

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Appendices

Appendix A: A Listing of Anti-Corporate Campaigns

C = confrontation/alliance typology

M = martial typology

Total =173 campaigns (77 C; 96 M)

Type	Target	Title	Sponsor	Dates	Cause	Notes
M	Adam's Mark Hotels		NAACP	1999-2001	racial discrimination	boycott in response to flap over room rentals for the 1999 Black College Reunion; company sued NAACP, then apologized
M	Albertson's Super Markets		UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers)	1984	union contract	sponsored by Kamber Group; media campaign w/character attacks on company founder; campaign stalled
M	American Airlines		APFA (Assoc. of Professional Flight Attendants)	1986-87	union contract	Ray Rogers worked as consultant; battle over two-tier wage scheme; multiple fronts; company conceded
M	American Airlines		APFA (Assoc. of Professional Flight Attendants)	1990-91	gender discrimination	campaign resulted in changes to weight standards for female flight attendants; Rogers consulted
C	Aramark		CIW	ongoing	wages & slavery	Aramark is nation's largest food service company serving colleges
C	ARCO		Free Burma Coalition	1995-98	cooperation w/corrupt regime	company ceased operations in Burma
C	ASHTA Chemicals	Stop Seafood Contamination	Oceana	ongoing	chemical contamination of seafood	chemicals in seafood; internet petition campaign; signed agreement with Costco, 2008
M	Bank of America		CORE (Congress of Racial Equality)	1963	racial discrimination	only 1.9% Black employees; pioneering push for transparent hiring policies; state government pressured the company

M	BASF		OCAW (Oil, Chemical and Atomic Workers Union)	1985-89	union contract; environment; racism	US and South African unions, environmentalists cooperated to win campaign against German company; dubbed “Bhopal on the Bayou”
C	Baxter International		Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility, Greenpeace, SEIU	1998-99	reduce use of PVC	company agreed to end practice
C	Bayer Group		Coalition against Bayer-Dangers	ongoing	pesticides; industrial chemicals; GMO food	series of campaigns; based in Germany
M	Bayou Steel		USWA	1993-96	union contract; NLRB violations	company settled; agreed to address NLRB issues
M	BE&K Building Group		UBC (United Brotherhood of Carpenters)	1984-93	hiring of non-union workers	nationwide campaign; OSHA complaints; video “BE&K: The Workers’ Enemy”; community meetings
M	Beverly Enterprises		UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers); SEIU (Service Employees International Union)	1982-83	union contract	union recognized; intense financial, shareholder pressure; media campaign re: quality of care
C	Blockbuster	Blockbuster Victims Online		ongoing	unfair business practices	monitoring site
C	Blue Diamond Growers		International Longshore & Warehouse Union (ILWU)	ongoing	union contract	campaign was featured along w/Resurrection Health Care and Verizon campaigns in AFL/CIO presentation at the United States Social Forum in

						Atlanta in 2007
C	book and magazine publishers	Book and Magazine Paper Campaign	Markets Initiative (now, CANOPY)	ongoing	Protect forests, environment	Canadian campaign; one of a series of campaigns; Harry Potter books targeted (now the “greenest books in history”)
C	Bowater, Inc.	Bowater Campaign	Dogwood Alliance & NRDC (Natural Resources Defense Council)	2005	sustainable forest management practices	Internet petition campaign; media events; nation’s largest news print producer concedes
M	BP (British Petroleum)		Greenpeace	ongoing	halt offshore oil drilling; Alaska North Slope	shareholder activism; cooperated with Inuit peoples
M	BP and other oil corps.	Canadian Indigenous Tar Sands Campaign	Indigenous Environmental Network	ongoing	tar sands mining; health; indigenous rights	Canadian IEN vs. BP et al; BP did an about face on its “Beyond Petroleum” strategy and pursued oil profits via tar sands
M	Bridgestone/Firestone		URW (United Rubber Workers) & IBT (Teamsters)	1995	union contract	Union set up “Camp Justice” @ US corporate headquarters; faxed family photos to executives in Japan; heavy media coverage
M	Brooklyn Union Gas		TWU (Transport Workers Union)	1995	union contract	1,800 workers earn contract over company demands for steep pay cuts; Rogers consulted
M	Brown and Root		Texas Building and Trades Council	1983	union contract	Rogers was hired, but campaign was cut short due to public backlash
M	Browne and Sharpe		International Association of Machinists)	1982	union contract	IAM papers @ GSU; Rogers was hired & fired; company was aggressively anti-union; union filed unfair labor practices lawsuit; company settled

C	Burger King	Murder King	PETA	2001	humane slaughter	company conceded, 2001
C	Burger King		CIW	2008	wages & slavery	company conceded after firing corporate VP for bungling campaign
M	Cairn Energy	Cairn Energy	Greenpeace	ongoing	environmental: prevent oil wells near Greenland	courts ordered Greenpeace to stop "Tweeting" photos from protest site, supporters resent the photos.
M	Campbell's Soup		FLOC (Farm Labor Organizing Committee)	1984	labor contract	Rogers was consultant; contrasting style w/CIW, strong leadership @ FLOC vs. shared leadership @ CIW
C	catalog retailers	Catalog Cutdown	Forest Ethics	ongoing	endangered forests	series of campaigns w/long list of companies signing on
M	Caterpillar Tractor		UAW	1991-98	union contract; NLRB violations; non-union workers	media emphasis w/rank and file talking points; record 441 NLRB violations; company made modest concessions
M	Cement industry	Don't Trash Our Lungs	Earth Justice	2004-2010	halt mercury pollution from cement kilns	claimed victory in 2010 when EPA announced new guidelines for air pollution from kilns
M	Chevron	Chevron vs. Sierra Club	Sierra Club/Gulf Restoration Network	2009	environmental: oil wells in Gulf of Mexico; LA Bayou	featured congressional lobbying
M	Chevron		Human Rights Watch	1998	human rights; halt drilling in Nigeria	featured lawsuit and Congressional lobbying
M	Chevron (formerly Texaco)	Chevron-Toxico	Amazon Watch	ongoing	Amazon environment; health; indigenous rights	dubbed "Amazon Chernobyl," dumping of waste in Ecuador; Internet petition; federal court case
C	Chipotle Grill	Chipocracy	CIW	ongoing	wages & slavery	protracted campaign; company claims to serve "food with integrity"

M	Citicorp and other international banks	Global Finance Campaign	Rainforest Action Network	ongoing	funding of environmentally destructive projects	featured shareholder activism
M	Coal industry	Stop Mountain Top Removal Mining	Earth Justice	ongoing	stop mountain top removal mining in coal industry	Earth Justice motto is: "Because the earth needs a good lawyer."
C	Coca-Cola	Campaign to Hold Coca-Cola Accountable	India Resource Center	ongoing	water shortages; toxic waste	groups claims company is damaging water tables and distributing fertilizer containing toxic waste
C	Coca-Cola	Killer Coke	Corporate Campaigns, Inc.	ongoing	union contract; criminal prosecution	Rogers serves as pro bono consultant; claims of execution of union leaders in Colombia; several federal law suits under alien tort statutes
C	Coca-Cola		As You Sow	2007	recycling	company agreed to reuse bottles made of PET and build recycling plant
C	Coca-Cola, et. al.	Caring Consumer	PETA	2007	animal testing & cruelty	series of campaigns (PepsiCo, OceanSpray, POM Wonderful); companies agreed to halt animal testing
C	companies & industries using astroturf campaigns	bermanexpose d.com	Center for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington	ongoing	expose astroturf campaigns	criticizes Richard Berman's anti-activist websites
M	Conoco		Rainforest Action Network	1991	drilling in Amazon rainforest	company abandoned project to drill in Yasuni National Park in Ecuador; featured shareholder activism
M	Consolidated Edison		UWUA (Utility Workers Union of America)	1988-89	union contract	campaign featured mile-long "human billboard" in Manhattan; resulted in union contract; Rogers consulted
M	Consolidated Foods (Sarah Lee) &		ACTWU	1982-83	union contract; EEOC &	Rogers was consultant; media emphasis; endorsed by religious

	Hanes Hosiery				NLRB violations	organizations, NOW, celebrities, SCLC; company cooperated w/ EEOC
M	Continental Airlines		ALPA (Airline Pilots Association)	1983-84	labor contract	crushing loss when corporation filed Chapter 11
M	Continental Tire		USW & ICEM	1998-99	union contract; NLRB violations; non-union workers	strike @ plant in NC; protests and sympathy strikes across Europe and South Africa; company settled
M	corporate farms	California Strawberry Workers	UFW (United Farm Workers)	1996	union contract	campaign ended when workers voted for independent union
M	Dell Computer	Dellception	CREW (Citizens for Responsibility and Ethics in Washington)	ongoing	next day warranties and lack of service	follow up campaign to 34 state settlement on service plans
M	Delta Pride Catfish		UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers)	1990	labor contract; racism	charges of racism, OSHA dispute
M	Detroit Edison	Merchants of Shame	NOW (National Organization of Women)	1998	sexual harassment	featured class action lawsuits; company agreed to terms
M	DirecTech (DirecTV installer)		IBEW (International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers)	2008	union contract	company hired law firm Jackson Lewis (widely viewed as anti-union) to negotiate with union after successful election; campaign featured protests at DirectTV annual meeting; Rogers consulted
C	Dow Chemical		SDS (Students for a Democratic Society) and other 60s	1966-69	Napalm	protests have no effect on profits; management complained campaign was stressful and hurt company image;

			protest groups			company conceded nothing
M	DuPont and other chemical corps	Ozone Campaign	Greenpeace	1992-97	ozone destroying chemicals	Ray Rogers helped plan; companies disputed science claims; resulted in worldwide regulatory changes
M	Eastern Airlines		TWU (Transportation Workers Union)	1989	union contract	CEO Frank Lorenzo demanded steep pay cuts; union strike and campaign shut down air service; campaign ended when Lorenzo sold off airline in pieces; Rogers consulted
M	Eastman Kodak		FIGHT (Freedom, Integration, God, Honor, Today)	1964-67	jobs; racial discrimination	annual meeting strategies; threat of farting en masse at concert hall; company concedes
C	Electrolux	Jobkiller Electrolux	Social Forum Nuremberg	ongoing	prevent factory closings; job flight	based in Germany; being fought out plant by plant in Germany; international petition campaign
C	Exxon Mobil	Exxpose-Exxon	18 groups (Greenpeace, MoveOn.org, & Sierra Club, et al)	ongoing	environmental issues & global warming	complaints include: pay for Valdez spill, funding front groups & junk science
C	F. W. Woolworth		SNCC (Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee)	1960	racial discrimination	Woolworth's targeted due to national stature; highlighted complicity of a national corporation in regional segregation practices
M	Farah Manufacturing		ACWU (Amalgamated Clothes Workers' Union)	1972-74	union contract	organized by Ray Rogers, et. al.; company settled; church, college involvement; company moved manufacturing to Mexico in 80s
M	Federal Express		ALPA (Airlines Pilots Association)	1996	union contract	featured work slowdown; allegations of OSHA safety violations; company settled

M	Food Lion		UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers)	1992-95	labor contract; food safety	campaign featured in <i>ABC PrimeTime Live</i> news documentary; company filed suit against ABC and ultimately lost
M	Ford, et. al.	Global Warming Shareholder Campaign	Ceres	ongoing	environ- mental sustainability	featured shareholder activism
C	forestry companies and consumers	Don't Buy SFI	Dogwood Alliance and the Alliance for Credible Forest Certification	ongoing	ban Sustainable Forestry Initiative	claims SFI is industry front (greenwashing)
M	Freeport- McMoRan		Rainforest Action Network	1990s	Indonesian mining operation; indigenous rights	large mining corps; payments to local military; company endowed environmental chairs @ US colleges
C	GAP	GAP Sucks	Forest Stewardship Council	2004	CA redwoods; old growth lumber	amateurish site; but appears to have sizeable following; claims family that owns GAP owns logging company
C	GAP	GAP Sweatshops Campaign	Wetlands Preserve	1999	sweatshop labor	campaign announced, but no apparent follow through
M	Gardenburge r		Oregon Food Workers Union (PCUN, <i>Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste</i>)	1997-99	union contract; human rights; child labor	company was secondary target in NORPAC campaign; settled and broke ties w/NORPAC
C	Georgia Pacific	Boycott Georgia Pacific		ongoing	pollution of St. John's River in FL	company has agreed to spend millions on environmental technology; lobbying of state/local governments
M	Georgia- Pacific		Rainforest Action Network	ongoing	harvesting endangered timber, Indonesia	Indonesia is world's leading plywood supplier; charges of clear cutting & environmental

						devastation
M	Giumarra Vineyards Corp. & other grape growers		UFW (United Farm Workers)	1967-78	union contract	national boycott resulted in union contracts & 1975 California Agricultural Labor Relations Act
M	Guess? Jeans		UNITE	1997	payment of minimum wage	union sued the company over failure to pay minimum wage; company lost court case, moved operations to Mexico
C	Hoescht/Rhone Poulenc		Fund for the Feminist majority	1992	speed up availability of RU-486	Ray Rogers was consulted; prolife backlash
M	Home Depot		Rainforest Action Network	1998-99	sale of lumber from old growth trees	featured “rescue” of lumber from local stores; company agreed to phase out sales of lumber from old growth trees
M	Hormel Foods		UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers)	1985-86	labor contract; NLRB violations	Rogers worked as consultant and was jailed; widely studied failure; union was thrown out; Governor called in National Guard
C	Iam’s pet food	Iam’s Cruelty	PETA	on-going	animal cruelty	undercover operation; claims dogs suffer in Iam’s lab experiments
C	industrial agriculture”		Primal Seeds	on-going	biodiversity; local food security	active in global environmental protests; advocate “guerilla gardening”
C	industrial paper companies and their customers	Packaging Campaign	Dogwood Alliance	on-going	paper packaging	focused on packaging of recorded music, cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, fast food
M	International Paper		United Paperworkers International Union	1987	union contract	management was emboldened by union busting strategies of J. P. Stevens and locked out union workers; Rogers consulted; union lost several contracts

M	Iowa Beef Processors		UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers)	1986-88	union contract; workplace safety	union claimed company had mafia connections; Congressional hearings; parent company (Occidental Petroleum) pressured union; company settled out of court
M	J P Stevens		ACTWU	1976-80	union contract	Rogers chaired the national boycott committee; campaign was featured in the film <i>Norma Rae</i> ; ten textile plants unionized
C	Johnson & Johnson, et al.	PVC: Recycling Killer	Grass Roots Recycling Network & Center for Health Environment & Justice	on-going	PVC packaging and products	cooperative effort w/Center for Health and Environmental Justice; resulted in pledges from dozens of companies
C	Kimberly-Clark		Greenpeace	on-going	old growth forests	activists locked down the company's Canadian national offices; spread wood chips in hall ways
C	Manchester Hotels, Corp.	Boycott Manchester Hotels	Californians Against Hate campaign	2008	gay marriage	Prop 8 protest
C	MasterFoods	MasterFoods Boycott	Operation Black Vote	2004	racist advertising	UK campaign; concluded successfully in 2004
C	Mattel		Greenpeace	1999	reduce use of PVC	company agreed to end practice; EU banned toys w/PVC
M	McDonald's	McLibel Support Campaign	McLibel Support Campaign	1997	support UK "McLibel" case	company sued environmental activists for libel; McDonald's won (after 10 years); lost PR war; conflict featured in documentary film
C	McDonald's		CIW	2007	wages & slavery	company was embarrassed by bad research and conceded all terms
C	McDonald's and other fast food chains	Value the Meal	Corporate Accountability	on-going	advertising to children; nutrition info	CAI lobbied corporate and governmental actors

			International (formerly ACA)			
C	Metro Group		NLC (National Labor Committee)	2009	sweatshops; union contracts	NLC accused German corporation (world's 5th largest retailer) of selling goods made in sweatshops in Bangladesh
M	Microsoft	Consumer Choice Campaign	Net Action	on- going	FCC enforcement of anti-trust laws	the campaign lives on, but made the most noise in early 90s; CCC monitors Microsoft
M	Mitsubishi		Rainforest Action Network	1989	harvesting of old growth timber	pressured banks owned in US; publicity stunts at auto shows; company settled
M	Mitsubishi	Merchants of Shame	NOW; Operation PUSH	1996-98	sexual harassment & racial discrim- ination	class action suit against company & UAW; settled for \$34 million and contract changes
C	Mitsubishi		Natural Resources Defense Council	1999- 2000	salt extraction in Baja California	US based campaign against Japanese corporation; re: operation in Mexico; company ends project
C	Monsanto	Millions Against Monsanto	OCA	2007	hormones in milk	ten year campaign resulted in Monsanto putting milk hormone division up for sale
M	Monsanto		Greenpeace	ongoing	GMO foods	1999 class action suit & lobbying UN; Greenpeace lost on both fronts; efforts continue
M	Mosaic Phosphate		Earth Justice	2008	Phosphate mining in FL	featured federal law suit; ended w/ Army Corps of Engineers refusing mine permit
M	Mount Olive Pickles	Mount Olive Boycott	FLOC	1998- 2004	wage dispute	company paid more for cucumbers; first union to represent guest workers; sued growers.
C	Multiple	Computer TakeBack Campaign	Electronics TakeBack Coalition	ongoing	responsible recycling	Internet petition; looks at all stages of manufacture, sale, and disposal

C	music industry	Greening the Music Industry	Dogwood Alliance	ongoing	paper packaging	part of larger campaign to encourage less packaging, more recycling in retail
M	Nestle	International Nestlé Boycott	Baby Milk Action	ongoing	sale of infant formula in Third World	monitors Nestlé's compliance w/international accords
M	Nestle	Tell Nestle	Food and Water Watch	ongoing	prevent use of Miami-Dade public drinking water	sponsor campaigns nationwide based on local environmental issues
M	Nestle		Action for Corporate Accountability (now CAI)	1984-88	sale of infant formula in Third World	claimed Nestlé was not abiding by international agreements
C	Nestle, Cadbury, et al.	Ten Campaign	Stop the Traffik	ongoing	slavery/human trafficking	originally named the "Chocolate Campaign;" Changed name after "ten" years; Nestlé & other companies have cooperated; 70% of world chocolate supply comes from W Africa where 15,000 child slaves are reported to work in cocoa farming
C	Nestle, Wal-Mart, et.al.	E Waste Shareholder Campaign	As You Sow	ongoing	responsible recycling	Dell and Apple are among the companies that have signed on
C	Nike		UNITE	1990s	sweatshop labor; job flight	unclear when the campaign ended; UNITE cooperated w/NOW & Campaign for Fair Labor
C	Nike		Oxfam Australia	ongoing	sweatshop labor	exchanged series of public letters w/company; monitors corporate practices in SE Asia
C	Nike	Just Pay It	USAS (United Students Against Sweatshops)	2010	sweatshop labor; back wages	claimed that as of January, 2010 company owed \$2.1 million in back wages to Honduran workers
C	Nike		USAS (United Students)	ongoing	sweatshop labor	has sponsored a series of campaigns starting in 1990s

			Against Sweatshops)			
M	NORPAC Food Sales		Oregon Food Workers Union (<i>PCUN, Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noroeste</i>)	ongoing	union contract; human rights; child labor	began in 1997; almost settled 2002; Has featured legislative battle; boycott; campus activity; worker tours
M	Northern Indiana Public Service Company (NIPSCO)	NIPSCO	USW	1997	union contract	See Bronfenbrenner and Juravich, Bronfenbrenner, Kate, and Tom Juravich, "The Evolution of Strategic and Coordinated Bargaining Campaigns in The 1990s"
M	Northwest Airlines		ALPA (Airlines Pilots Association)	1978	union contract	Rogers worked as consultant; brought pressure on corporate financiers; settled contract
M	Obayashi Construction & Toyota		Kentucky Building and Construction Trades Council	1986	hiring of non-union workers	Kamber Group was consulted; company agreed to unions for US construction projects; protests @ dealerships
C	Office Depot	Office Depot Campaign	Dogwood Alliance	2007	endangered forests	concluded successfully
C	Office Max	Office Max Campaign	Dogwood Alliance	2007	endangered forests	concluded successfully
M	Ogden/Danly		USW	1984	union contract	Kamber Group consulted; contract settled
C	Oil companies	Boston Oil Party	People's Bicentennial Action Center	1973	hold oil companies accountable for "energy crisis"	group was led by Jeremy Rifkin; dumped oil cans into Boston Harbor
M	Pacifica Radio	Grand Theft: Radio	alliance of radio producers and audience members	2001-2	stop censorship of politically progressive programming	Rogers helped plan successful effort to oust certain members of the radio network's board of directors

M	pharmaceutical industry	Campaign to Stop Biotech Looting	International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers	2008-10	labor conditions & corporate welfare	Rogers helped plan campaign to expose union-busting efforts and excessive profits among pharmaceutical companies based in Massachusetts
C	Philip Morris	Crashing Philip Morris Art Party	Global Partnerships for Tobacco Control	2006	tobacco	featured student protests; sponsored ASEAN Art Awards in Thailand
M	Portland, OR		SweatFree Communities	2007	sweatshop labor	City of Portland agreed not to buy clothing made in sweatshops
C	Publix		CIW	ongoing	wages & slavery	as with McDonald's and Burger King, company has made costly PR missteps; controversial filming incident; controversial statements from management
C	PVC products retailers	PVC Products	Center for Health, Environment, and Justice	ongoing	eradicating use of PVC	group claims more than 100 corporations have agreed to go PVC free
M	Ravenswood	Ravenswood Aluminum Company	USWA	1990	union contract	strong rank and file participation; seen as turning point in union activism
M	Resurrection Health Care (RHC)	Resurrection Healthcare	American Federation of State, County and Municipal Employees, AFL-CIO	2003	union contract	aims to return Catholic organization to original mission to serve poor
M	Rio Tinto Mining		ICEM (International Federation of Chemical, Energy, Mine and General Workers' Unions)	ongoing	indigenous rights; protect environment	campaign started in 1998; features shareholder activism
M	R. J. Reynolds		FLOC (Farm Labor	2008-present	union contract/safe	FLOC currently represents 7,000 workers

	Tobacco		Organizing Committee)		working conditions	and aims to represent entire workforce of 30,000; claims workers suffer from exposure to nicotine and pesticides; Rogers serves as consultant
C	Royal Caribbean Cruise Lines	Royal Caribbean Campaign	Oceana	2004	wastewater treatment	concluded successfully; Oceana sponsors many campaigns
M	salmon farms	Farmed and Dangerous	Coastal Alliance for Aquaculture Reform (CAAR)	ongoing	environmental threat of ocean salmon farming	supported by indigenous “First Nations” & commercial fishing industry; lobbying of US & Canadian governments
M	Sawyer Lumber		PACE (Paper Allied-Industrial Chemical and Energy Workers)	1999-2000	union contract	company refused to recognize union vote & court decision; Louisiana-Pacific bought the company and honored union contract
M	Scott Printing Company		Jersey City Typographical No. 94	1983	union contract	long-term, small scale labor strike (27 workers) ends shortly after start of campaign organized by Ray Rogers
M	SeaFirst Bank		UFCW (United Food and Commercial Workers)	1978-1996	union contract	Rogers served as consultant; protracted court fight re: union jurisdiction; settled in 1996; union membership declined
M	Shell Oil	Boycott Shell	Essential Action	ongoing	Nigerian oil wells; human rights	claims company is complicit in destruction of wetlands and execution of activists
M	Shell Oil	Brent Spar Campaign	Green Peace	1995	planned sinking of oil storage facility	activists occupied facility; protest actions @ Shell service stations; company agreed to dismantle facility on shore
M	Shell Oil	Shell Oil	Gulf Restoration Network	ongoing	environmental: Gulf of Mexico; LA Bayou	related to Chevron campaign

C	Sinar Mas	Pulping the Planet	Greenpeace	ongoing	Environmental: deforestation of Indonesia by paper manufacturer	several corps have agreed not to buy from Sinar Mas until it changes its environmental policy
M	Siemens	Siemens-Boycott	International Physicians for Prevention of Nuclear War	ongoing	nuclear power plants	group won 1985 Nobel Peace Prize; features corporate and governmental lobbying
M	Smith Barney	Merchants of Shame	NOW	1997-98	Sexual harassment	company settled
C	Staples	Staples Campaign	Dogwood Alliance	2002	Endangered forests	concluded successfully
C	Starbucks	Frankenbucks Campaign	Organic Consumers Association	2007	hormones in milk	featured independent/spontaneous protests at local stores worldwide; carnivalesque themes; internet petition
C	Starbucks		US & Guatemala Labor Education Project	2000	fair trade coffee	company agreed to terms quickly
M	Statoil, Mobil, and Enterprise oil	Atlantic Frontier	Greenpeace	1998	prevent oil drilling in pristine area of N Sea	activists blockaded drilling site; partial victory; company was allowed to drill in limited area
C	Subway		CIW	2008	wages & slavery	corporation signed onto the penny per pound standard after a brief campaign
C	Swatch	Swatch Boycott		1999	illegal use of radio frequency	group went after most visible company in a conglomerate; European campaign
C	Taco Bell	Boot the Bell	CIW	2005	wages & slavery	CIW's first national campaign; company endorsed penny per pound initiative and encouraged other fast food companies to do the same

M	Texas International Airlines	Bad Apple	ALPA (Airline Pilots Association)	1981	union contract	short campaign against company owned by airline magnate Frank Lorenzo; resulted in labor contract
M	Tobacco industry	Challenging Big Tobacco	Corporate Accountability International	ongoing	Tobacco	supports Global Tobacco Treaty (UN initiative); targeted governmental and corporate actors
C	Toy and jewelry manufacturers	Eliminating Lead in Children's Products	Center for Environmental Health	ongoing	lead in water and paint	CEH is considered a leader in the environmental justice movement
C	Trader Joe's	Trader Joe's Campaign	CIW	ongoing	wages & slavery	company has admitted need to improve wages and working conditions, but refuses to sign agreement.
M	Transamerica Airlines		ALPA (Airline Pilots Association)	1984-85	union contract	company had sought wage cuts of up to 60%; campaign failed to produce contract; company dissolved in 1986; Rogers consulted
M	TWA Airlines		IFFA (International Federation of Flight Attendants)	1986-87	union contract	union launched campaign after Carl Icahn purchased company and demanded steep wage cuts; Icahn hired replacements, but union eventually reinstated; Rogers consulted
M	Union Carbide and Dow Chemical	International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal	International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal	2007	justice for victims of chemical spill	convinced government of India to take legal action in response to Bhopal chemical disaster
M	United Parcel Service		IBT (International Brotherhood of Teamsters)	1996-97	union contract	dramatic campaign victory tainted by Carey funding scandal
C	universities & clothing manufacturers	Sweat Free Campus	United Students Against Sweatshops	ongoing	sweatshop labor	group cooperates with Killer Coke campaign

C	universities	Campus Community Solidarity	United Students Against Sweatshops	ongoing	fair wages for campus workers	links local/international campaigns
M	USX	USX campaign	USWA	1986	union contract	demanding corporate transparency; showdown over steel delivery practices; partial victory; union reinstated
C	various	Forest Management for the 21st Century	Dogwood Alliance, et. al.	ongoing	old growth forests	lobbies companies to adopt responsible harvesting practices
M	various	Justice for Janitors	Service Employees International Union	ongoing	union contracts; human rights	has targeted several companies; one aim is to prevent harassment of immigrant workers
M	Verizon	Verizon Communications	CWA and IBEW	2009	union contract	won a union contract, now focusing on other companies like AT&T and T-Mobile
C	Victoria's Secret	Victoria's Dirty Secret	ForestEthics	2005	old growth forests	concluded successfully; part of Catalog Cutdown campaign
M	Wal-Mart	Merchant of Shame	National Organization of Women	ongoing	Sexual discrimination	campaign began in 2002; US Supreme Court ruled in favor of the company in 2011
C	Wal-Mart	Wal-Mart Watch	Wal-Mart Watch	ongoing	ethical business practices	monitoring site
C	Wal-Mart, National Association of Christian Retail	Sweat Shop Crucifixes	NLC (National Labor Committee)	2007	sweatshop labor	dramatic revelation re: sweatshop labor on steps of St. Patrick's Cathedral just before start of holiday shopping season
C	Walt Disney Corp	Disney Go Green	CHEJ (Center for Health, Environment, and Justice)	ongoing	cleaning products w/toxic chemicals	group sponsors many environmental campaigns; founded by "Love Canal" families
M	Washington Gas & Light Co.		IGUW (International Union of Gas Workers) & Teamsters	1995-96	union contract	1,000 member local wins union contract after it affiliates with Teamsters; Rogers consulted

			International			
M	whaling industry	Whaling	Greenpeace	ongoing	denormalize whaling	began in 1975; international campaign; featured boat blockades; whalers shot harpoons at activists
M	Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel Corporation	Wheeling Pittsburgh Steel Corporation	USWA	1996	union contract	classic “corporate campaign,” but Rogers did not consult; intensive media events; company settled
C	Whole Foods		CIW	2009	wages & slavery	company signed onto the penny per pound standard after brief campaign
C	Yoplait Yogurt		OCA	2009	hormones in milk	company agreed to cooperate
C	YUM! and 10 other fast food chains	No Free Refills	Dogwood Alliance	ongoing	reduce use of non-recycled paper	clever, professional looking website w/parody of drive up window; features internet petition
C	various	POPs Campaign	Indigenous Environmental Network	ongoing	children’s health; toxic waste on tribal lands	POP = Persistent Organic Pollutants; fought corporate toxic waste dumping, especially in Arizona & Canada
C	various	Other Campaign/ <i>La Otra Campana</i>	EZLN	ongoing	“neoliberalism;” privatization of public resources	based in Mexico; lobbies national government, but has international emphasis; has cooperated with CIW, FLOC, and other activist groups with indigenous roots
M	Portland, OR		SweatFree Communities	2007	sweatshop labor	City of Portland agreed not to buy clothing made in sweatshops
C	various	Cocoa Campaign	International Labor Rights Fund	ongoing	slavery/human trafficking	protests use of child slavery in West African chocolate trade

Appendix B: “Power on Power” Strategies



Illustrations are from a brochure distributed by Corporate Campaigns, Inc.²²

²² Ray Rogers, “When Labor Needs a Powerful Friend...” (New York: Corporate Campaign, Incorporated, 2009).

Appendix C: Activist Resources

Activist Training Materials					
Title	Author(s)	Pub	City	Year	Notes
<i>Action Planning Training Manual</i>		The Ruckus Society	Oakland, CA	2003	Eight page manual; basically a brief explanation and apologia for direct action campaigns
<i>The Activist's Ally: Contemplative Tools for Social Change</i>		The Center for Contemplative Mind in Society	Northampton, MA	2007	105 page manual w/section on business; comes w/companion CD
<i>Activist Research Manual: Volume 1: Sources of Information on Corporations</i>	Draffan, George	Public Information Network	Seattle, WA	1999	91 page manual focused 100% on activist research of corporations
<i>Activist Research?</i>	Glocal Research Space			2004	Very short, but includes list of 18 organizations (most based at universities worldwide) "developing social action research"
<i>An Activist's Guide to Helping People Protect America's Wild Places: Stand By Your Land</i>		Wilderness Support Center	Durango, CO	2005	76 page manual; includes long list of links to similar resources
<i>An Activist's Manual on the International Covenant on Economic, Cultural, and Social Rights</i>	King, Jeff	Center for Economic and Social Rights	Brooklyn, NY	2003	286 page manual; focuses on human rights under ICESCR, adopted by UN Gen Assembly in 1966
<i>An Activists Guide to Research and Advocacy: Core Manual, Research and Analysis Skills Strengthening Programme</i>	Civil Society Research and Support Collective	Center for Civil Society, University of Natal	Durban, South Africa	2003	150 pages; specific discussions of challenging corporate lobbying power
<i>Campus Organizing: Guide for Social Justice Groups</i>		Center for Campus Organizing	Cambridge, MA	2002	Sixteen pages; focused on challenging corporate influence on college campuses; Organization merged into new group,

					website: www.campusactivism.org
<i>Celebrating the 40th Anniversary of the Wilderness Act—WITH ACTION!: An Outreach Guide for Advocates</i>		Campaign for America's Wilderness	Washington, DC	2004	43 page manual; primary focus is on lobbying governmental actors, but includes discussion of protesting corporate policies
<i>The Corporate Watch DIY Guide to How to Research Companies</i>		Corporate Watch (UK)	Oxford, UK	2002	Sixteen pages; appears to be widely distributed; includes numerous web links
<i>Demystifying Economics: A Scoping of Economic Education Resources</i>		Institute of Development Studies	Brighton, UK	2004	27 pages; a listing of practical resources to help activists and non-intellectuals grasp actionable economics; co-produced w/Just Associates in Washington, DC
<i>A DigiActive Introduction to Facebook Activism</i>	Schultz, Dan	DigiActive		2008	Fifteen pages; organization claims to exist on the web w/no central office
<i>GarmentReport</i>		Women Working Worldwide	Manchester, UK	2003	256 pages; detailed study of working conditions in EU/UK garment supply chains; focuses on possibilities for organizing female workers
<i>Grassroots and Nonprofit Leadership: A Guide for Organizing in Changing Times</i>	Lakey, Berit M.; Lakey, George, Napier, Rod; Robinson, Janice M.	New Society	Gabriola Island, BC	1995	Full length book, 210 pages;
<i>Grass Roots Organizing</i>		Sierra Club	Washington, DC	2006	113 pages; several editions; appears highly influential.
<i>Grass Roots Organizing On Texas Water Issues</i>		Lone Star Sierra Club	San Antonio	2004	Eleven page manual; material adapted from Sierra Club's main manual
<i>Guide to Confronting a Factory Farm</i>		Socially Responsible Agriculture Project	Idaho Falls, ID	2007	143 pages
<i>High School Organizing Manual</i>		United Students Against Sweatshops	Washington, DC	2007	156 pages; attempts to bring university activism to high schools

<i>An Introduction to Nonviolent Direct Action</i>		Rainforest Action Network	San Francisco	No date	Three page flier w/links to organizations providing more detailed info (e.g., RANT and Ruckus Soc.)
<i>Justice For All: A Guide to Worker Rights in a Global Economy</i>		AFL-CIO	Washington, DC	2008	349 page guide to international labor agreements
<i>No More Secret Candy Store: A Grassroots Guide to Investigating Development Subsidies</i>	LeRoy, Greg & Hinkley, Sara	Good Jobs First	Washington, DC	2002	28 page “how to” research manual
<i>Organizing for Social Change</i>	Bobo, Kim; Kendall, Jackie; & Max, Steve	Seven Locks Press	Santa Ana, CA	2010	Fourth edition of the most widely read book of its kind; focuses on lobbying governmental actors, but includes discussions of market-based activism as well; published by the Midwest Academy
<i>Re-Energizing Your City: The Cool Cities Campaign Activist Manual</i>		Sierra Club	San Francisco	2005	Sixteen pages; focuses on limiting corporate greenhouse gas emissions
<i>Research for Radicals: A How to Manual for Activists of All Kinds</i>	“Megan”	TAO Communications	Vancouver, BC	2000	TAO Communications is an “anarchist cooperative”; the manual is based on an anti-corporate research manual produced by CorpWatch in the UK
<i>Strategy: Knowledge for a Better World</i>		Institute of Development Studies	Brighton, UK	2010	Four pages; primarily and overview of the organization’s goals and resources

Organizations Providing Training or Research Services	
Organization	Note
AFL-CIO Corporate Watch	Provides a variety of online resources and links for researching corporations
CARP	Corporate Agriculture Research Project; monitors corporate agriculture w/goal of serving “economic and social justice”; provides an online “fact miners” guide

Corporate Accountability International	Has been sponsoring anti-corporate campaigns for more than thirty years; publishes an annual “Corporate Hall of Shame”
Corporate Campaigns, Inc.	Founded by Ray Rogers; provides research and consulting services for anti-corporate activists
Corporate Information	Similar to Hoover’s
Corporate Research Project	“A non-profit center that assists community, environmental and labor organizations in researching and analyzing companies and industries.”
Corporate Watch	Research group based in UK; provides info on corporations to activist groups
CorpWatch	Research group based in US; advocates for corporate transparency and accountability
DigiActive	Helps grassroots activists around the world leverage their influence by using computers and phones
Essential Information	Founded by Ralph Nader in 1982; sponsors campaigns, conducts research, and publishes Multinational Monitor
Good Jobs First	Parent organization for the Corporate Research Project
Hoover’s	Largest and best known corporate profile service; intended for investors, but popular w/activists as well
Institute of Development Studies	Large organization founded in 1966: focuses on international development
Midwest Academy	Highly influential organization; trains activists and publishes Organizing for Social Change
Muckety	Provides profiles and relationship maps of corporations, officers, et al; also maps relationships between/among politicians, celebrities, activists, et al.
Multinational Monitor	Founded by Ralph Nader; dedicated to monitoring corporate behavior; publishes annual “Top Ten Worst Corporations”
Notable Names Database	Like Muckety, this site provides relationship maps of high profile people
Public Information Network	Also known as Endgame Research; may be a one man show
Rant Collective	RANT (Root Activist Network of Trainers) collective formed in 2001. Targets governmental and corporate actors
Sierra Club	Founded in 1892 by John Muir; largest environmental activism group in the US
Socially Responsible Agriculture Project	Opposes factory farming
Sourcewatch	Wiki site sponsored by the Center for Media and Democracy; provides information on corporations, PR firms, and political actors
The Data	Oldest organization of its kind; 30+ years in activist research

Center	
United Students Against Sweatshops	Claims to have student chapters on more than 25 college campuses in US and Canada
US-SEC	All corporations must file information periodically w/SEC; all information is publicly available
Women Working Worldwide	Researches EU/UK supply chains and working conditions of women

Appendix D: Stevens Campaign: Photographs and Pamphlets



23

**DANGER ON THE JOB
at J.P. STEVENS.**

Listen to 18-year-old Kathy Peace:

"I was runnin' a tufting machine in the Riverine plant at J.P. Stevens." Was she trained to run the machine? "No sir." How long had she been working when she lost two fingers? "About an hour and 45 minutes..."

Hundreds of men and women who work for J.P. Stevens, America's second largest textile firm, have been injured on the job because of the company's negligence. Many, like Kathy Peace, were ordered to run giant machines, fraught with hazards, despite little or no training in their safe operation. As soon as Kathy lost two fingers, she lost her job.

With union representation—the goal of Stevens workers during a 15-year struggle in the face of vicious resistance by the company—workers would have an effective voice in setting and enforcing health and safety standards. Since 1963, the federal courts and the National Labor Relations Board have repeatedly found Stevens guilty of coercing, firing and spying on union supporters—guilty in hundreds of cases representing more than 1000 separate violations.

If you buy J.P. Stevens sheets, carpets, pillowcases, towels, blankets, table linens and hosiery, you help the company resist 20th century safety and health standards in the textile mills.

**Please don't buy
J.P. STEVENS PRODUCTS**

UTC-3

The text to the right of the photograph of the injured worker reads, “Listen to 18-year-old Kathy Peace: ‘I was runnin’ a tufting machine in the Riverine plant at J. P. Stevens.’ Was she trained to run the machine? ‘No sir.’ How long had she been working when she lost two fingers? ‘About an hour and 45 minutes...’”

23 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, “What’s Under the Covers? Danger on the Job at J. P. Stevens.”

Sheet & Bedroom Accessories Division

This division is one of three devoted to consumer products and is the largest producer of fabrics for sheets in the world.

Stevens, for example, is the market leader in selling solid color sheets in this country. We also produce fine quality bedspreads, comforters, pillow shams, dust ruffles, and draperies, in solids and prints, all color-coordinated for almost unlimited home decorating effects.

In the fashion explosion that has swept the home furnishings field in recent years, Stevens has created a completely new concept in home decorating. From the kitchen to the bathroom to the bedroom, color and pattern are coordinated to provide a totally integrated look. A consumer can alter a bedroom's personality by simply mixing and matching our solid colors with our prints.

This division works closely with our other home furnishings divisions to create total color and pattern



coordination of Stevens products throughout the home.

Through our consumer research, new colors and prints are pre-tested to confirm their selling appeal.

Comprehensive marketing programs are geared directly to the consumer, through retail store promotions and national advertising and publicity.

Stevens domestic products are directed at four major marketing areas:

Utica is one of the leading brand names in the country. *Utica* brand products, designed by famous designers as well as our own design experts, are sold in fine department stores and specialty shops.

Tastemaker is one of the largest budget-priced brands of designer sheets and bedroom accessories.

Private label products are created and designed exclusively for major retail chains.

Institutional Linen Supply provides complete bed linen needs for hotels, hospitals, and other institutions.

(Opposite) A *Utica* designer print ensemble for a totally coordinated bedroom.

(Left) The Stevens sheeting plant in Clemson, S.C., is 27 acres under one roof.

(Above) *Utica* Pipeline Collection of solid colors in a complete assortment of ready-made bedroom accessories.

7

"J. P. Stevens Today" brochure²⁴



The narrow, neatly made beds in this image, (an enlargement of the photo in the upper right corner of the brochure printed above) bear a close resemblance to the image that appeared on the front covers of ACTWU'S "What's Under the Covers?" pamphlets.²⁵

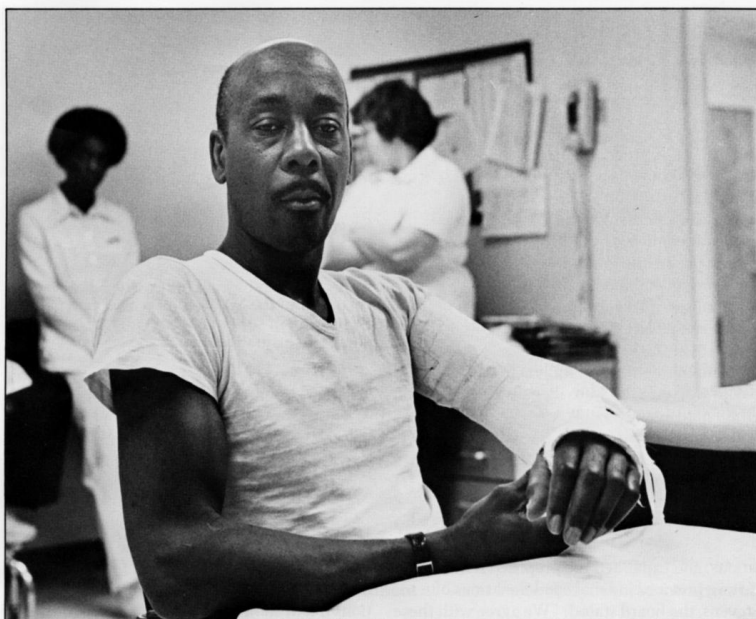
24 J. P. Stevens and Company, "J. P. Stevens Today," undated company pamphlet, J. P. Stevens folder, box 31, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta, 7.

25 Ibid.



Louis Harrell of Roanoke Rapids, a J.P. Stevens worker for 28 years and a victim of "brown lung" disease, died a few days after this photo was taken.

26



"Not one hour goes by when I don't have a touch of pain," says Richard Lee Lewis, shown here recuperating from the accident in which his arm was severed while working at the J.P. Stevens plant in West Boylston, Ala.

27

26 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "J. P. Stevens, 1979: 'Further Harm is Done.'" Campaign pamphlet dated March, 1980, J. P. Stevens folder, box 61, pamphlets collection, Southern Labor Archives, Special Collections and Archives, Georgia State University, Atlanta.

27 Ibid.

**THEY ARE WORKING IN COTTON DUST,
IN AMOUNTS 12 TIMES HIGHER THAN ALLOWED BY THE GOVERNMENT.
IN SHORT PERIODS, 30 TIMES HIGHER.**

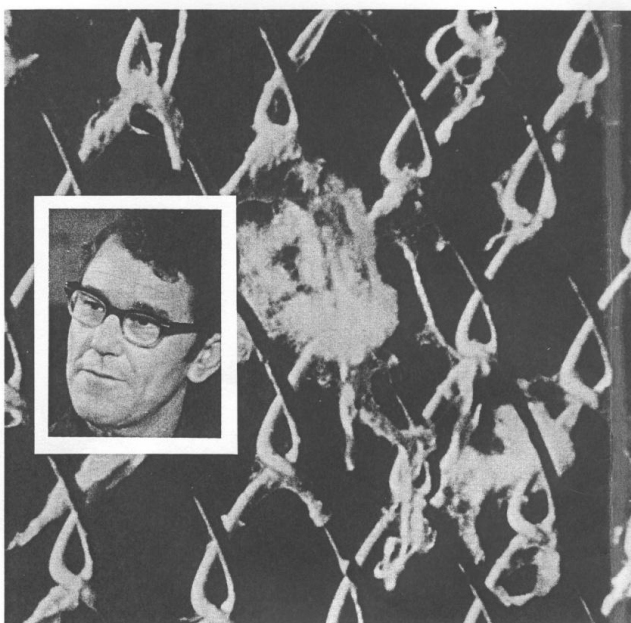
Stevens is in serious violation of
these regulations. And the result can be
the deadly brown lung.

*"The dust problem where I work
is terrible. Workin' at the pace
we have to work, I get lint and
cotton in my throat and mouth.*

***I spit up wads of cotton
half as big as my thumb.***

*And this is not once a day,
but it's every hour. Sometimes
every 30 or 40 minutes.'*

LUNDEE CANNON



Page from the "Testimony" pamphlet. ACTWU produced a documentary film by the same name.²⁹

28 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Testimony," 6.

29 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, *Testimony: Justice V. J.P. Stevens*, documentary film, ACTWU Executive Vice-President's Office Files, Collection Number: 5619/006, Box 3, Folder 22, Kheel Center for Labor-Management Documentation and Archives, M.P. Catherwood Library, Cornell University.



By placing Whitley's face and story next to an image of the Stevens Tower in Manhattan, ACTWU provided a paradigm example of planned incongruity³⁰

30 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Testimony," 2; Burke, *Attitudes Toward History*, 309.



MAURINE
HEDGEPETH

***"Stevens doesn't just fire you.
They fire your whole family.***

I should know?"

"I went to work in the mill in 1957.

*Back in 1963 we started talkin' union.
And we thought we had a right to do that. But we learned different.*

*I testified at a National Labor Relations hearing in 1964.
A few days later, I went on a pregnancy leave.
On Christmas Eve they fired my husband, after him bein' a loom fixer for 25 years.*

*In January, when my leave was up, they wouldn't give me my job back.
We had 3 children and neither one of us had a job.*

*They told us if any of us was goin' to get any work
we would have to leave town to do it, because nobody here would hire us.*

I told them I would starve before I left town . . . And we almost did.

This is my home. My roots are here.

*... I don't like to think about the next 4 years. They were pretty hard years;
when my kids asked for something to eat and I didn't have enough to feed everybody.*

*And my children would say, 'Mom, are you going to eat?'
And I'd say, 'I ate while I was cooking.'*

You just don't forget things like that.

*It took me 4 years and 21 days before I got my job back.
I had to go all the way up through the courts.*

The Stevens Company had broken the law and had to put me back to work with full back pay.

*But nothing could make up for being out of work for 4 years
and going without enough to eat."*

AND SHE'S ONLY ONE OF MANY.

The courts have ruled that hundreds of Stevens workers have been illegally fired for union activity or had their pay cut or been penalized.



***"There is such a thing as the blacklisting
of workers for their interest in unions.***

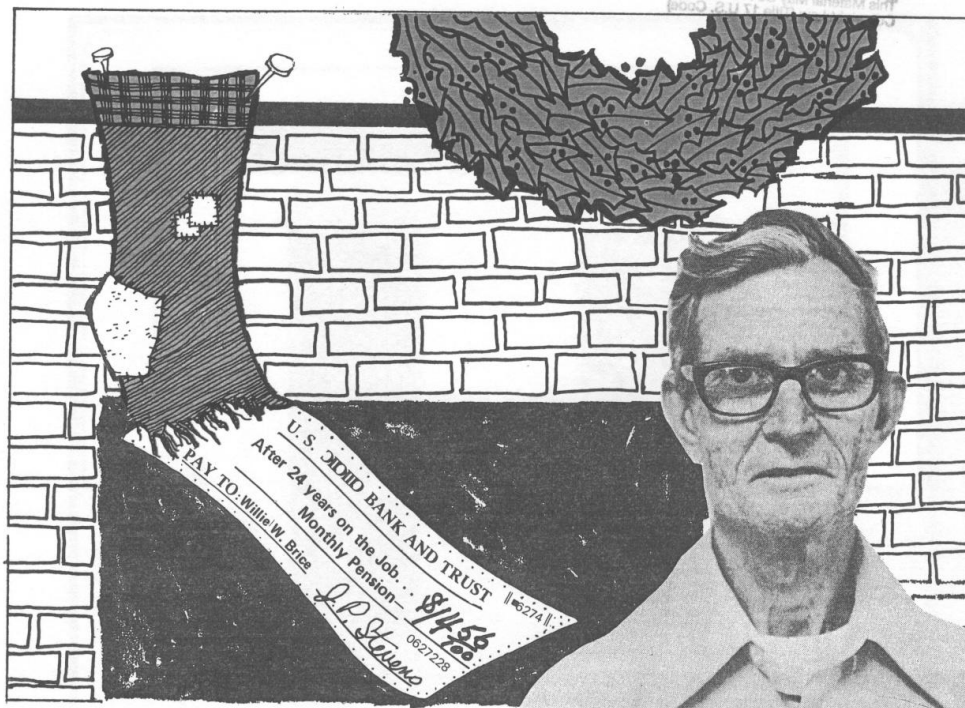
***Anybody who says there isn't a blacklist in the
southern textile industry
doesn't really know the situation very well?"***

THE REVEREND DONALD W. SHRIVER, JR.
President of the renowned Union Theological Seminary
and chairman of a group of concerned clergymen
looking into the situation in Roanoke Rapids, N.C.



Attention consumers!

There's a hole in Willie Brice's Christmas stocking.



The holiday season won't be very festive for Willie Wells Brice of Teachey, North Carolina, who spent 24 years working for J.P. Stevens and Co., America's second largest textile manufacturer. Upon his retirement last June, Mr. Brice became eligible for company retirement pension benefits totaling \$14.56 a month, or \$3.64 a week. His situation typifies those of thousands of retirees who devoted their working lives to "America's Number One Labor Law Violator"—a company with a long and disgraceful history of exploiting human suffering for profits.

**PLEASE DON'T BUY J. P. STEVENS PRODUCTS
SOLD AT RICH'S**

This leaflet is not directed to the employees of this store, nor to the employees of any other employer doing business with this store, and is directed solely to consumers.

33

33 Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "There's a Hole in Willie Brice's Christmas Stocking."

WELCOME TO THE SCENE, MR. GREENE!

[11, '76]

WELCOME TO MONTGOMERY, MR. PETE GREENE,
IT'S SO NICE TO HAVE YOU ON THE WEST BOYSTON PLANT SCENE.

BUT WE SEE THROUGH THE CHANGES YOU'RE TRYING TO MAKE,
HOPING THAT WE'LL TELL OUR UNION TO JUMP IN THE LAKE.

WE KNOW WHY YOU'VE COME AND HOW LONG YOU'LL STAY,
TO KEEP US FROM HAVING A CONTRACT SOME DAY.

SO THANKS FOR THE HAND-SHAKES AND THANKS FOR THE FUSS,
BUT WE'RE ON TO YOUR GAME, IT'S THE UNION FOR US.



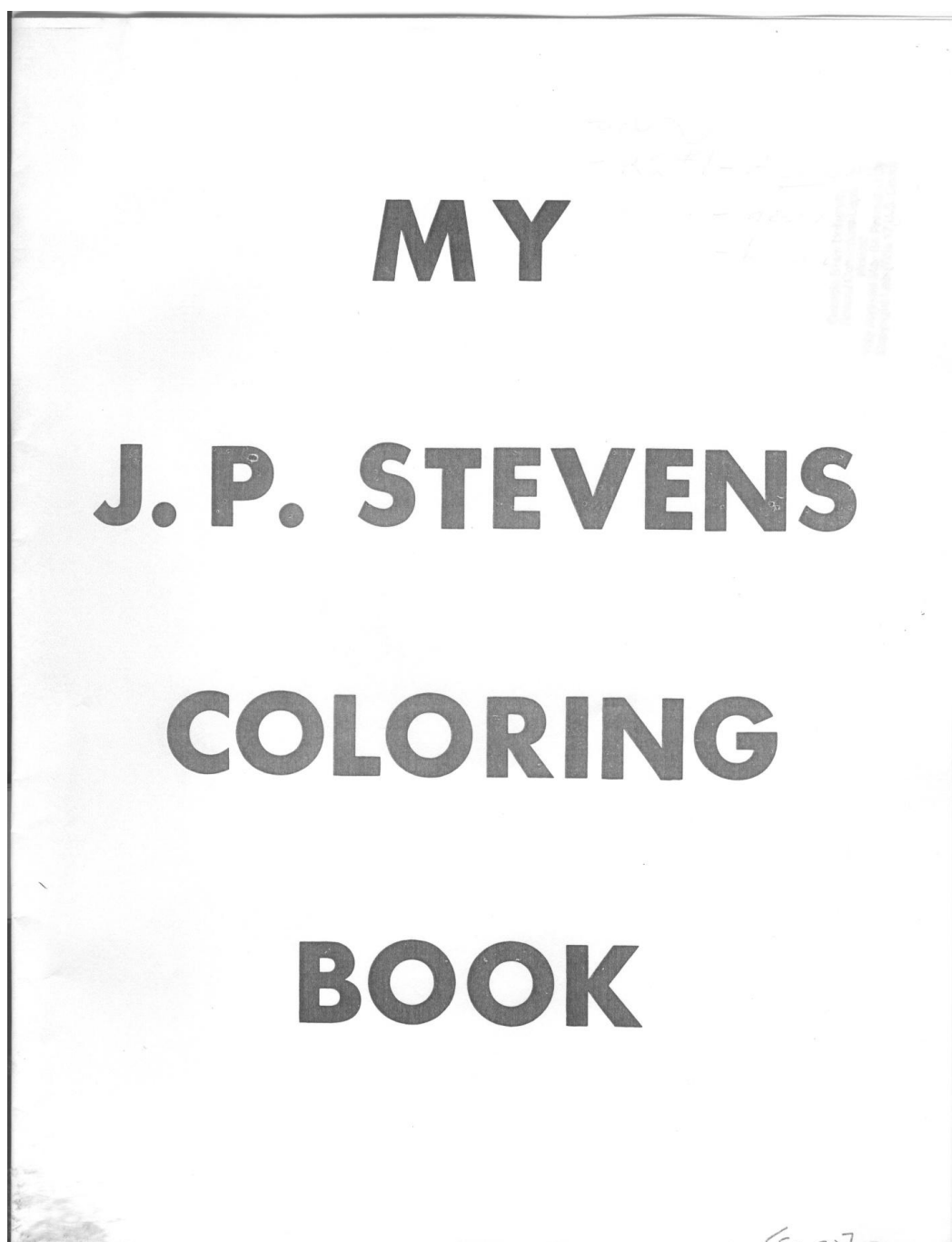
These two illustrations are from hand-made pamphlets distributed to textile workers during the Stevens campaign. Both illustrate the CIW's use of carnivalesque inversion.³⁴

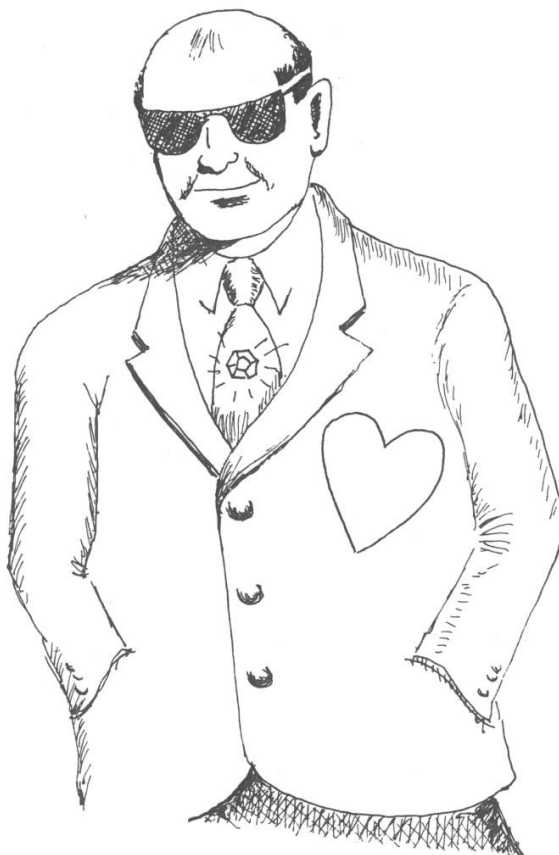


35

³⁴ Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "Welcome to the Scene, Mr. Greene!"

³⁵ Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union, "J. P. Stevens Talks Out of Both Sides of Their Mouth."





I am the company's labor lawyer. Sometimes I am called their "Cheap Labor Lawyer" because I show Stevens and other companies how to keep their employees from organizing a union. And without a union, the company can continue paying low wages and stretching out jobs.

The more innocent people the company fires, the more they have to pay me in legal fees and the richer I get. Sometimes I make more in one day than a textile worker earns in a whole year.

COLOR MY HEART---BLACK!

Appendix E: Images from the Taco Bell Campaign



38

Photo courtesy of Jodi Cobb/National Geographic Magazine



39

Photo courtesy of Miami Herald/McClatchy-Tribune/Getty Images

38 Jodi Cobb, photograph of CIW protestors, in Andrew Cockburn, "21st Century Slaves," *National Geographic*, September 1, 2003, 2.

39 Evelyn Nieves, "Fla. Tomato Pickers Still Reap 'Harvest of Shame.'"



Photo courtesy of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

According to the CIW website, in this scene protestors are using “powerful, silent theater – inspired by the Brazilian peasant movement’s traditional ‘mistica’ form of popular theater [in order to tell] ... the story of Mexican and Guatemalan peasants uprooted from their communities by poverty, forced into a desperate migration to Florida’s tomato fields.”⁴⁰



Photo courtesy of the Coalition of Immokalee Workers.

The caption for this photograph from the CIW website reads: “The theater drew the clear connection between farmworker poverty and fast-food profits, as consumers brought Taco Bell executives piles of money while the workers picked bucket after bucket of tomatoes. But the theater ended when the workers and consumers united in a hunger strike and forced the Taco Bell executives to the table. As the theater came to a close, workers and allies distributed cups of water to the crowd in a symbolic joining with the hunger strikers.”⁴¹

40 Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “Let Freedom Ring... Boycott the Bell!”

41 Ibid.

Appendix F: CIW's Anti-Slavery Campaign

Information is from the CIW Website⁴²

U.S. vs. Flores – In 1997, Miguel Flores and Sebastian Gomez were sentenced to 15 years each in federal prison on slavery, extortion, and firearms charges, amongst others. Flores and Gomez had a workforce of over 400 men and women in Florida and South Carolina, harvesting vegetables and citrus. The workers, mostly indigenous Mexicans and Guatemalans, were forced to work 10-12 hour days, 6 days per week, for as little as \$20 per week, under the watch of armed guards. Those who attempted escape were assaulted, pistol-whipped, and even shot. The case was brought to federal authorities after five years of investigation by escaped workers and CIW members.

U.S. vs. Cuello – In 1999, Abel Cuello was sentenced to 33 months in federal prison on slavery charges. He had held more than 30 tomato pickers in two trailers in the isolated swampland west of Immokalee, keeping them under constant watch. Three workers escaped the camp, only to have their boss track them down a few weeks later. The employer ran one of them down with his car, stating that he owned them. The workers sought help from the CIW and the police, and the CIW worked with the DOJ on the ensuing investigation. Cuello worked for Manley Farms North Inc., a major Bonita Springs tomato supplier. Once out of prison, Cuello supplied labor to Ag-Mart Farms, a tomato company operating in Florida and North Carolina.

U.S. vs. Tecum – In 2001, Jose Tecum was sentenced to 9 years in federal prison on slavery and kidnapping charges. He forced a young woman to work against her will both in the tomato fields around Immokalee, and in his home. The CIW assisted the DOJ with the prosecution, including victim and witness assistance.

U.S. vs. Lee – In 2001, Michael Lee was sentenced to 4 years in federal prison and 3 years supervised release on a slavery conspiracy charge. He pled guilty to using crack cocaine, threats, and violence to enslave his workers. Lee held his workers in forced labor, recruiting homeless U.S. citizens for his operation, creating a “company store” debt through loans for rent, food, cigarettes, and cocaine. He abducted and beat one of his workers to prevent him from leaving his employ. Lee harvested for orange growers in the Fort Pierce, FL area.

U.S. vs. Ramos – In 2004, Ramiro and Juan Ramos were sentenced to 15 years each in federal prison on slavery and firearms charges, and the forfeiture of over \$3 million in assets. The men, who had a workforce of over 700 farmworkers in the citrus groves of Florida, as well as the fields of North Carolina, threatened workers with death if they were to try to leave, and pistol-whipped and assaulted – at gunpoint – passenger van service drivers who gave rides to farmworkers leaving the area. The case was brought to trial by the DOJ after two years of investigation by the CIW. The Ramoses harvested for Consolidated Citrus and Lykes Brothers, among others.

⁴² Coalition of Immokalee Workers, “CIW Anti-Slavery Campaign,” www.ciw-online.org/slavery.html (accessed November 7, 2010).

U.S. vs. Ronald Evans – In 2007, Florida employer Ron Evans was sentenced to 30 years in federal prison on drug conspiracy, financial re-structuring, and witness tampering charges, among others. Jequita Evans was also sentenced to 20 years, and Ron Evans Jr. to 10 years. Operating in Florida and North Carolina, Ron Evans recruited homeless U.S. citizens from shelters across the Southeast, including New Orleans, Tampa, and Miami, with promises of good jobs and housing. At Palatka, FL and Newton Grove, NC area labor camps, the Evans' deducted rent, food, crack cocaine and alcohol from workers' pay, holding them "perpetually indebted" in what the DOJ called "a form of servitude morally and legally reprehensible." The Palatka labor camp was surrounded by a chain link fence topped with barbed wire, with a No Trespassing sign. The CIW and a Miami-based homeless outreach organization (Touching Miami with Love) began the investigation and reported the case to federal authorities in 2003. In Florida, Ron Evans worked for grower Frank Johns. Johns was 2004 Chairman of the Florida Fruit and Vegetable Association, the powerful lobbying arm of the Florida agricultural industry. As of 2007, he remained the Chairman of the FFVA's Budget and Finance Committee.

U.S. vs. Navarrete – In December 2008, employers Cesar and Geovanni Navarrete were sentenced to 12 years each in federal prison on charges of conspiracy, holding workers in involuntary servitude, and peonage. They had employed dozens of tomato pickers in Florida and South Carolina. As stated in the DOJ press release on their sentencing, "[the employers] pleaded guilty to beating, threatening, restraining, and locking workers in trucks to force them to work as agricultural laborers... [They] were accused of paying the workers minimal wages and driving the workers into debt, while simultaneously threatening physical harm if the workers left their employment before their debts had been repaid to the Navarrete family." Workers first reported the abuse to Collier County police, and additional workers sought help from the CIW. The CIW collaborated with the DOJ and the police on the year-long investigation and prosecution.

U.S. vs. Bontemps – In July 2010, Cabioch Bontemps, Carline Ceneus, and Willy Edouard were indicted by a federal grand jury on charges of conspiracy to commit forced labor. DOJ officials accuse the three of holding over 50 guest workers from Haiti against their will in the bean fields of Alachua County, Florida. The indictment states that Bontemps raped one of the workers in his employ and threatened her if she were to report it. The employers held the workers' passports and visas, and forced them to work in fields recently sprayed with harsh pesticides, causing permanent scarring. The grower, Steven Davis, asked the judge during the court hearing to release Bontemps since he was key to the harvesting operation. "All these people [the workers] look up to him," Davis said. "All these people respect him. All these people worship him." As of September 2010, the prosecution is ongoing. The CIW trained local law enforcement and church groups shortly before the workers were rescued, and assisted in referring the case to the DOJ. [As of the date of this dissertation, case is still in the courts.]

Appendix G: Taco Bell Campaign Endorsements as of September, 2004

This information is from the CIW website.¹

Individuals

- * Tom Morello, Audioslave (formerly, Rage Against the Machine)
- * Susan Sarandon
- * Noam Chomsky, professor, MIT
- * Congresswoman Linda Sanchez, D-CA
- * CA State Senator Joe Dunn, D-District 34
- * Edward James Olmos
- * The Indigo Girls
- * Chumbawamba
- * Eric Schlosser (author, "Fast Food Nation")
- * Barbara Ehrenreich (author, "Nickel and Dimed")
- * David Korten (author, "When Corporations Rule the World")
- * Naomi Klein (author, "No Logo")
- * Dolores Huerta
- * Julia Butterfly Hill
- * Howard Zinn (author, "A People's History of the United States")
- * Lalo Alcaraz, cartoonist
- * Louis Andriessen, composer
- * Paul Loeb (author, "Soul of a Citizen")

Labor

- * American Postal Workers Union (APWU)
- * Los Angeles County Federation of Labor
- * United Farm Workers (UFW)
- * Pineros y Campesinos Unidos del Noreste (PCUN)
- * Labor Council for Latin American Advancement (LCLAA)
- * United Electrical, Radio, and Machine Workers of America, UE District 10
- * San Francisco Labor Council (SFLC)
- * Hotel Employees and Restaurant Employees International Union Local 2850 (HERE)
- * Coalition of University Employees Local 3 (CUE - Berkeley, CA)
- * Oakland Education Association (OEA - Oakland, CA)
- * Laborers International Union, District Council (Iowa, Nebraska, South Dakota)
- * South Florida Jobs with Justice
- * The Garment Workers Center
- * United Campus Workers (Communication Workers of America, Local 3865, Knoxville, TN) *
- Workers Solidarity Alliance (WSA National Office, NY, NY)

Global Justice

- * United for Peace and Justice
- * Mexico Solidarity Network
- * Global Exchange

¹ Coalition of Immokalee Workers, "Endorsements."

- * Campaign for Labor Rights
- * United for a Fair Economy
- * Food First
- * Anti-Slavery International (London)

Student

- * Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan, National (MEChA)
- * MEChA de Palomar College
- * United Students Against Sweatshops (USAS)
- * United States Student Association (USSA)
- * Student Labor Action Project (SLAP)
- * Student Environmental Action Coalition (SEAC)
- * Student/Farmworker Alliance
- * Campus Greens
- * Student Peace Action Network (SPAN)
- * Students Transforming and Resisting Corporations (STARC)
- * Associated Students of the University of California (ASUC)
- * University of California Student Association (UCSA)
- * Purdue Organization for Labor Equality (POLE)
- * The Movement for Democracy for Education 180
- * San Diego State University, Student Government
- * Harvard Divinity School, Anti-Poverty Campaign and Equitas

Religious

- * National Council of Churches
- * United Methodist Church
- * Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
- * Christian Church (Disciples of Christ)
- * United Church of Christ
- * California Council of Churches
- * Pax Christi USA
- * American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
- * New Orleans Province of the Jesuits
- * Bishop John Nevins, DD, Diocese of Venice, Florida
- * Peace and Justice Office, Diocese of Venice, Florida
- * Episcopal Diocese of Southwest Florida
- * Unitarian Universalist Service Committee
- * National Farm Worker Ministry
- * National Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice
- * Ohio Council of Churches
- * First Christian Church (Disciples of Christ), Findlay, OH
- * Florida Council of Churches Commission on Social Justice
- * Apostolic Catholic Church (SW Florida)
- * Sarasota/Manatee Farm Worker Supporters
- * The Session of Lakeview Presbyterian Church, Florida
- * North Carolina Council of Churches Farmworker Ministry Committee
- * Florida United Church of Christ Women

- * Florida Church Women United
- * Church Women United of Illinois
- * South Florida Interfaith Committee for Worker Justice
- * Tampa Farm Worker Supporters
- * Interfaith Action of Southwest Florida
- * Unitarian Universalist Migrant Ministry
- * Religious Society of Friends, Ft. Myers Meeting
- * Florida Council of Churches Commission on Social Justice
- * Sisters of Charity of the Blessed Virgin Mary
- * Orange County (CA) Interfaith Committee to Aid Farm Workers

Community/other

- * National Family Farm Coalition
- * Family Farm Defenders
- * Community Farm Alliance of Kentucky and Indiana
- * National Lawyers Guild
- * American Anti-Slavery Group
- * School of Americas Watch (SOA Watch)
- * Florida AIM (American Indian Movement)
- * ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now)
- * Florida Green Party
- * LUS (Latinos Unidos Siempre), youth organization, Oregon
- * Florida Coalition of Peace and Justice
- * Long Beach, CA, Green Party
- * The Simple Way
- * Zapatista Solidarity Coalition - Sacramento, CA
- * Bay Area (San Francisco) Radical Women
- * Green Party of Brevard County, FL
- * The Blue-Green Alliance of the Green Party of Florida
- * San Francisco Day Laborers
- * Marin (CA) Interfaith Task Force on Latin America
- * Liberate Orange County (CA)
- * Coastal Convergence Society (Huntington Beach, CA)