



**THE YES MEN**

**FIX THE WORLD**

Sometimes it takes a lie to expose the truth.

**FOR TEACHERS**

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*Note: Throughout the guide, numbers in RED ITALICS coincide with times in the film.*

# THE YES MEN FIX THE WORLD



## About the Film

Andy Bichlbaum and Mike Bonanno are two guys who just can't take "no" for an answer.

They have an unusual hobby: posing as top executives of corporations they hate. Armed with nothing but thrift-store suits, the Yes Men lie their way into business conferences and parody their corporate targets in ever more extreme ways - basically doing everything that they can to wake up their audiences to the danger of letting greed run our world.

One day Andy, purporting to be a Dow Chemical spokesperson, gets on the biggest TV news program in the world and announces that Dow will finally clean up the site of the largest industrial accident in history, the Bhopal catastrophe. The result: as people worldwide celebrate, Dow's stock value loses two billion dollars. People want Dow to do the right thing, but the market decides that it can't.

The reality hits Andy and Mike like a ton of bricks: we have created a market system that makes doing the right thing impossible, and the people who appear to be leading are actually following its pathological dictates. If we keep putting the market in the driver's seat, it could happily drive the whole planet off a cliff.

On their journey, the Yes Men act as gonzo journalists, delving deep into the question of why we have given the market more power than any other institution to determine our direction as a society. They visit the twisted (and accidentally hilarious) underworld of the free-market think tanks, where they figure out a way to defeat the logic that's destroying our planet. And as they appear on the BBC before 300 million viewers, or before 1000 New Orleans contractors alongside Mayor Ray Nagin, the layers of lies are peeled back to reveal the raw heart of truth - a truth that brings with it hope.

Hope explodes at the end of this film with a power that may take students out of the classroom and into the streets.

# A.

## Questions for Discussion or Research

The following questions could be used for further research into problems and debates raised by *The Yes Men Fix the World*. Teachers can use or adapt selected questions to prepare classes for viewing the film, or as debrief discussions.

Another good tactic to focus discussion: teachers can pause the movie at intervals, for instance after each Yes Men action in the movie has been concluded, and introduce a question for a brief (less than 5 minutes), focused discussion rather than leaving discussion to the end of the movie, when some students may have lost track of an idea or question they had earlier.

It also sends an important message to students: *you aren't a passive viewer! You are an active participant and we need your involvement even as the movie is being screened!*

**Teachers:** One way of structuring discussion intermissions that is focused, manageable and efficient in terms of time spent is to have students/viewers partner up. The teacher's role is to pose a question or debate point related to the section of the film just viewed and to ensure that time limits for discussion are respected, so that the class returns to the film in under five minutes.

Once the discussion point has been posted by the teacher and the class has been given a minute for independent reflection, one person in each pair has one minute to respond, without interruption, to their partner (whose job it is to listen attentively). Then the partners switch roles, talker becomes listener and vice versa, for one minute. A final minute or two are open for both partners to interact, asking questions of one another, making observations, and so on. Ideally, students will take brief notes of points that they may want to share with the entire class as part of a debrief at the conclusion of the screening.

This gives students time to process and share their ideas and questions as the movie progresses. It is also a good strategy for teachers who want to ensure students are fully engaged and understand the political and other implications of various parts of the movie. And it doesn't mean that there shouldn't be a class discussion at the conclusion of the screening, but it *does* provide some insurance that discussion will be more rich, focused and useful.

### Questions

*Note: Numbers in RED ITALICS coincide with times in the film*

1. The Yes Men ask: "With so many things going wrong, who should we go after next?" (4:20) They seem to be saying that the need for action is obvious, but it's unclear who or what to target. Think of three things (big or small, global or local) that you are unhappy about, and figure out which of the three would be most important to go after.
2. What is "acceptable risk" in business? (8:30) Where does this term come from?
3. Should corporations have moral responsibility? Milton Friedman argues that people, not corporations should be held responsible for negative effects of production or products: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Uy2GZxNR6fU>. Is Friedman right?
4. "That's the thing about cults: what's shocking to outsiders, seems normal to insiders." (12:20) What are some things considered normal to banking/academic/government/corporate insiders that would shock outsiders – us?
5. The film portrays economist Milton Friedman as a cult leader, the "guru of greed." (14:00) Is this claim fair and justifiable?
6. What were the basics of Friedman's program? The "free market gospel" has brought a great deal of wealth – to some people. What evidence can you find that it is so dangerous? Prove or refute the case made by the Yes Men. Here are a couple links to get you started:
  - pro – <http://www.naomiklein.org/shock-doctrine>
  - con – [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism\\_and\\_Freedom](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Capitalism_and_Freedom)
7. The film seems to argue that large corporations never voluntarily act in the interests of the communities where they operate: "This is the first time in history that a company...has performed an action which is significantly against its bottom line simply because it's the right thing to do." (22:30) Is this true? If not, find a counter-example.
8. The Yes Men seem to fault Dow for not doing the right thing in Bhopal. Are they justified in that? Whose responsibility is it to ensure that people and corporations act as responsible citizens?
9. The film suggests that Dow values some lives - those of asbestos claimants in Texas, for example - more highly than others – Bhopalis, for example. (25:50) Is this accurate?

## A. Questions for Discussion or Research

10. Find another example of a corporation appearing to value some lives more than others. Explain, from that corporation's perspective, why they should be allowed to value some lives more than others. <http://www.thefreelibrary.com/Ackerman,+Frank+&+Heinzerling,+Lisa.+Priceless:+On+Knowing+the+Price...-a0143627567>
11. In the fallout of Jude Finistera's appearance on the BBC, the reporter interviewing Andy asks: "Did you think about the people of Bhopal when you decided to peddle this stunt? They actually suddenly believe that they've got a payout from Dow and then, you know, an hour or two later they find it's untrue." (27:30) Why do you think the commentator focused on this? Is the media trying to defend the corporate bad guys by calling what the Yes Men have done cruel? Or is some subtler dynamic at play?
12. Isn't it wrong to lie? Dow Chemical spent millions of dollars on their "Dow Hu" campaign, but the Yes Men's lying may have negatively affected the value of that campaign – in other words, they may have cost Dow Chemical hundreds of thousands, or even millions, of dollars. Isn't that not only lying, but effectively stealing?
13. Free market thinkers don't believe in government intervention in the free market (39:00). From their perspective, how do you imagine they explain the failures of the unregulated free market? Do they approve or disapprove of banks going to the government for bailouts?
14. How might businesses explain why deregulation and tax cuts are good, even if it means impairing governments' ability to help those people who need help? How might they explain that bailouts should be for banks, not for people losing their homes? Pretend to be from a bank, and make that argument to your neighbor, who should pretend to have just lost their home.
15. The Yes Men assert that the destruction of New Orleans was due not only to Hurricane Katrina, but "greed, dressed up as progress." (49:30) What do they mean? Can you think of a different way to define "progress"? Could your definition help avoid or stop human or ecological tragedies?
16. The Yes Men explain: "We wanted to take a closer look at how the market was fixing the US Gulf coast." (50:30) What is the status of people living in New Orleans today? What has changed for better/worse since 2004? What other disasters were big news before that have since fallen off the radar of the mainstream news cycle? Could we revisit them for a status update?
17. If governments are (meant to) solve problems, and corporations are driven to maximize profit, which is better to deal with challenges facing our world? Why is government regulation of the free market a necessity? Doesn't the example of HUD in the movie show how inefficient government really is? Doesn't this make the case for a market truly freed of government interference?
18. New Orleans Mayor Ray Nagin comments: "I believe in a market driven process. Economics. Capitalism is going to take over." The Yes Men observe: "The government, didn't believe in government. (104:30) Why do the free-market adherents need crises to push through their privatization programs? What does this say about the power people have to keep government and corporations accountable if the people are vigilant and active?
19. Patricia Thomas says "I respect this hoax, because maybe it'll take a hoax like this to bring them out here to see what we're going through." The woman interviewing her is a news reporter, yet if you were to watch the news story she made, she did not use any of Thomas' quote, and instead reported that Thomas and other public housing refugees were very upset by the "cruel" hoax. Why might this reporter have not reported the truth?
20. In reality, the media is almost always on the side of the Yes Men. Why do you think the Yes Men chose the two negative reactions (after the BBC appearance, and after the HUD talk) to feature in this movie?
21. If the 'good news' (Dow, HUD) the Yes Men provide sparks happiness in the media, business people, citizen audiences – then why is it not the real news? Who is to blame for this – corporations, governments, or ourselves? Why?
22. U.S. President Barack Obama ran on a wildly popular program for change. Since taking office, he has talked about getting things "back on track." (116:30). What can people who voted for change and believe that "Yes (They) Can," do to make change they can believe in/put pressure on Obama/their government to do the right thing? The different ways "we can contribute to a movement that says 'business as usual is not acceptable.'" (1:22:00)
23. Frances Fox Piven, the woman in the film who says that, wrote a book entitled *Poor People's Movements* in which she argues that the way things change for the better is through popular pressure. The New Deal, the end of slavery, the end of segregation, etc. came about only because people forced their leaders – Roosevelt, Lincoln, et al. – to do the right thing. Is this true? Why or why not?
24. In the film is one version of the story of the fake New York Times. Watch this segment (<http://theyesmen.org/pub/ifc.mpeg>) for another version. What are the differences? What are the reasons for those differences? In other words, what choices did the two filmmaking teams (The Yes Men and the IFC directors) make in telling the stories their way?

## A. Questions for Discussion or Research

- 25.** A quick bit of research into the actions comprising the movie shows that they didn't happen in the order they're presented. The "Golden Skeleton" lecture actually occurred after the BBC appearance, but in the movie it's presented as having happened before it. What other such inconsistencies can you find? For example, what time did Andy go on the BBC – and what time is on the clock behind Andy as he's preparing to go on TV? Why did the Yes Men actually get kicked off the stage in the Exxon talk?
- 26.** If you can find another example of an unacknowledged fabrication (i.e. not one that is fully up-front) or chronological inconsistency. See if it's on the list of inaccuracies on the *Yes Men Fix the World* website and if it isn't, add it on!
- 27.** Why do you think the Yes Men are collecting these inaccuracies? Do such fabrications invalidate or cast doubt on the film's points? Why or why not?
- 28.** Can you find other examples of documentaries that fabricate? Research the history of documentary films. Does everyone do this?
- 29.** There is a campaign by a consortium of right-wing think tanks to discredit the film: [www.freedomconsortium.com](http://www.freedomconsortium.com). What do you think? Now look at this page: [www.freedomconsortium.com/secret.html](http://www.freedomconsortium.com/secret.html). Now what do you think? Why are the Yes Men doing this?
- 30.** "Jude Finisterra," for example, translates into St. Jude, "end of earth." Using this key, who is Rene Oswin (or the other guy)? Sheperd Wolff? Northrop Goody? Or the spokesperson for the writers of the fake *New York Times*, "Bertha Suttner"?



# B.

## Activities and Actions



### ACTIVITY #1: Newspaper Activity

#### Who said the only good news is no news?

At the conclusion of the movie, the Yes Men stage an action where they produce and distribute a Special Edition of the *New York Times*. (1:17:00)

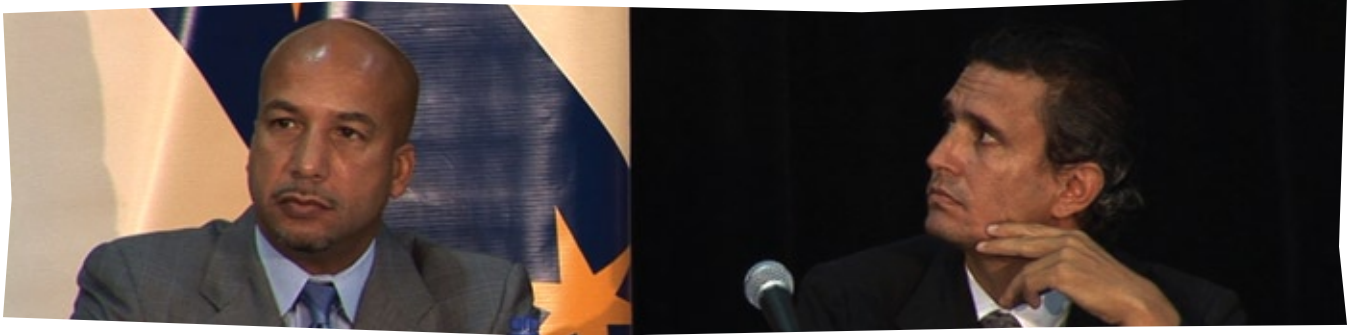
**Step 1:** Compare and contrast today's *New York Times* (<http://www.nytimes.com/>) or other daily newspaper with the *New York Times* Special Edition (<http://www.nytimes-se.com/>). Do the same with the *New York Post* (<http://nypost.com/>) and the *New York Post* Special Edition (<http://nypost-se.com/>).

**Step 2:** Questions to think about or discuss with others:

- Which groups of people or stories are featured prominently or are missing from each edition?
- Who are the intended audiences of each paper?
- How are big business, non-profits, government organizations and ordinary people featured positively, stigmatized or ignored in each edition?
- What is each trying to convince its audiences of, in broad terms?
- What assumptions do stories in each paper make?
- What biases does each demonstrate?
- The Special Edition would obviously be good news for some people. But not everyone. What people or groups would oppose the stories it features? What arguments or critiques would they make in response?
- What steps would have to be taken to make some of the Special Edition stories reality? What groups would oppose such changes? How and why?
- A number of the Special Edition stories prominently feature mass mobilization of people to make changes possible. Why is civic involvement so critical to achieving the goals these stories profile?
- Watch the Video News Releases (VNRs) on the NYPost-se.com and NYTimes-se.com. Do you see anything strange about them—especially the spokesperson for the (real) papers? These pieces were each linked in the press release sent early on the morning of the paper's distribution. When does that mean they were edited?
- What are VNRs? Who makes them? Visit this website to learn more about VNRs (<http://www.prwatch.org/fakenews/findings/vnrs>)
- Would all people you know be happy about or support all the Special Edition stories? Do you? How do the Special Edition writers assume their paper has the consent and support of its audiences? How do writers at the (real) *New York Times*?

**Step 3:** What would your ideal news look like? Create a news story you would like to see. Or, work with others to create an ideal newspaper for your local community. Post your creation online (on a personal or community blog, and/or the *Yes Men Fix the World* website) or distribute them in your community.

Alternatively, those of you who are students may wish to create a special edition of your school newspaper and distribute it as a form of action on your campus or at your school.



## **ACTIVITY #2: Identity Correction Activity**

### **Whose Government? Campaign Rhetoric versus Actions in Office**

The Yes Men make the case that we need government to regulate the market. But can we trust government to do what it should? As the case of HUD and New Orleans Public Housing (102:00) show, government is often only as honest as the people keep it.

Politicians who are serving the interests of corporations and lobbyists depend on the apathy of the general public. As long as the people don't ask too many questions, think too hard (or at all) about their lofty rhetoric, politicians feel empowered to do what they want, rather than what the people need. They can even joke about "a well dressed lie being chased by naked truth," and claim that the government is set to "enhance" public housing, even as they tear it down and privatize it.

New Orleans mayor Ray Nagin observed this in the movie: "There's lots of information out there, there's lots of misinformation out there." People who would abuse the public trust depend on the people not knowing the difference (and the media not commenting on it, even when political rhetoric and government action don't match).

This activity is an opportunity to flex your critical thinking muscles, and a chance to get politically active in your own community:

- Step 1:** Select one of your local government representatives. Any level of government will do. Research their platform from the last election. These are readily available online. Identify the key priorities and actions they promised to take if elected.
- Step 2:** Investigate: what actions has your representative *actually* taken since elected? What promises have they kept? Broken? Ignored? Compare their speeches and campaign promises to their legislative record – is your representative doing what they said they would? Are they serving the community, or other interests? What people or groups have benefitted/suffered as a result?
- Step 3:** As a public service, create a 'correction' announcement or apology on behalf of your political representative. In it, illustrate the gaps between their rhetoric and action. Since it isn't a lie when you use the politician's own words, use them! Or take it to the next step and improve upon them – what would best serve the interests of your community, particularly its least privileged or powerful? Make some suggestions.

When your 'correction' press release is completed, you can distribute it, post it to a community blog, or send it in to your local newspaper's op-ed page. Or contact the representative him or herself to 'fact check' – confirm that they are aware that they aren't doing what they promised and ask for timelines for them to address this. Remember to post the results of your action on the *Yes Men Fix the World* website.





## ACTIVITY #3: Media Analysis Activity

### Corporate Advertising – It Ain't Pretty

In the movie, the Yes Men show that Dow Chemical responded to bad press coverage about Bhopal with a public relations campaign entitled "The Human Element." (34:00) Yet they wouldn't spend any money to actually compensate the Bhopal victims. Why is it that companies are often willing to pay millions to cover their tracks when they could compensate the victims of their mistakes (or better yet, developing products that aren't harmful in the first place)?

Advertising plays a key role in creating positive brand association among audiences of North American consumers, many of whom would think twice about purchasing products from companies with indefensible labour and environmental practices.

Such ad campaigns are a big part of the recent upswing in what has been called 'corporate social responsibility.' But just how responsible is a corporation that is lying to its wealthiest marketing targets while it continues to hurt and even kill 'disposable' people in 3rd World?

Dow's CSR branch is called "Dow Commitments" (<http://www.dow.com/commitments/>). Do some research into corporate social responsibility, and decide what you think of CSR. For further reading, you can refer to this article: <http://www2.macleans.ca/2009/06/15/talisman-a-responsible-corporation/>. Do you agree with its arguments?

So you're just another North American consumer – and, hey, who doesn't believe in the 'human element?' But if that campaign was built on lies, what other ad campaigns might be? How can you tell the difference and help spread the word?

This activity helps you to get educated and take action:

**Step 1:** Watch the following ads, produced by the parent company Unilever, the makers of Dove soap in North America and Fair and Lovely Skin Bleach in India:

- Dove "Evolution" campaign: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iYhCn0jf46U>
- Unilever "Fair and Lovely" campaign (Indian original): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NKEF-8XkWMU>
- "Fair and Lovely" campaign: (English translation): [http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIUQ5hbRHxk&feature=Playlist&p=039BBFE0F03918E8&playnext=1&playnext\\_from=PL&index=7](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KIUQ5hbRHxk&feature=Playlist&p=039BBFE0F03918E8&playnext=1&playnext_from=PL&index=7)
- Dove "Onslaught" campaign: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Ei6JvKOW60I>
- "Onslaught(er)" (parody campaign): <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=odl7pQFyjs0>
- Dove's Corporate Social Responsibility Site: <http://www.campaignforrealbeauty.com/>

**Step 2:** Questions to think about or discuss with others:

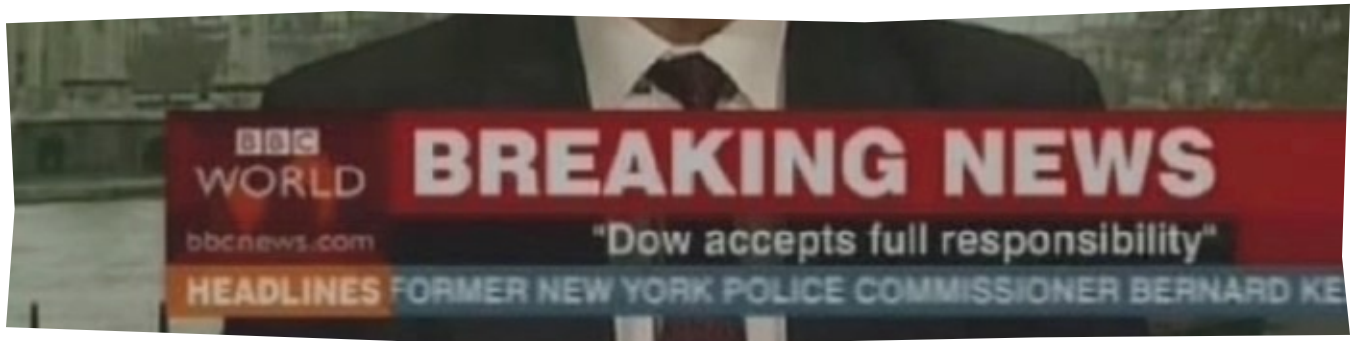
- Compare and contrast the messages about women, race, social class and beauty in the two ads.
- How can one corporation promote these two campaigns simultaneously? If promoting positive messages about body image isn't the goal of both campaigns, what is driving them?
- What does this say about the potential for corporate social responsibility? How responsible is a corporation that advertises to North American and South Asian audiences in such different ways? Or treats victims of its actions so differently as in the case of Union Carbide victims in Texas versus Bhopal?

## B. Activities and Actions: Activity #3

**Step 3:** Create an alternative campaign for Dove. Use one of the two Yes Men approaches: either take the campaign to the ugliest and most truthful extreme (like their Exxon 'Vivolium' action) or, (as in the Bhopal example) correct their message, devising a new one about what true beauty (or true corporate social responsibility) really is.

Or, take on the issue of **corporate social responsibility**: develop an ad campaign that defines what *true* corporate social responsibility would look like.

You could apply this work to another company whose products you use and go from there. You can create a video or print ad (see Adbusters spoof gallery for examples: <https://www.adbusters.org/gallery/spoofads>), which you can post on Youtube, in your community or on the Yes Men wiki site.



## **ACTIVITY #4: Research and Debate Activity**

### **Who Pays the Price?**

In the movie, the stock trader comments, with reference to reactions to the phony Dow announcement about compensating Bhopal victims: "It seems like a good thing, unless you're a Dow stockholder and you're expecting the \$20 billion to go towards a dividend to come back to you...and it's going to these people. You can see how people could be upset about that, right?" (36:00)

You don't have to be a stockholder in a major corporation to feel this way. Anyone who benefits from a high quality of life that is underwritten by the work and deprivation of others implicitly supports this rationale.

For instance, people often remark that they 'can't live without' X latest luxury item. 'I can't live without my iPod.' 'I can't live without my cellphone.' 'I can't live without my latte.' Fill in the blank. By saying this, one makes a want into a need. You've probably said it yourself.

But what are the things you really couldn't live without? Food? Gasoline? Clean drinking water? Affordable housing? How do luxuries become necessities? What's the difference?

### **Step 1: Research the true cost of one luxury you enjoy**

Choose one luxury item that you 'can't live without'. Do some research into who made that item. Your goal is to find out how much they were paid, what their working conditions were, where they are from, etc. In other words, find out if/how the worker who made that item is able to 'make a living from it'. Could you?

You might also consider: what are the environmental costs associated with its production? Shipping costs? Is this product produced and delivered as sustainably as it could be?

For example: If you choose your favorite t-shirt, you might find that your t-shirt was likely made by a Chinese woman in a non-unionized Gap factory and was paid 10 cents to make it, in sub-standard working conditions. Search the Internet, contact the company, get others involved so you can collaborate and divide up the work.

### **What was the real cost of producing this product? Who paid it (beyond what you paid in terms of sticker price)?**

If you are completing this activity as part of a class, before you move on, this is a good opportunity to share your 'luxury' choice (and what you learned) as a class. It is interesting to see what others consider to be something they can't live without. This is also a good opportunity to share what you've learned about how the costs associated with its production are borne by others (or 'externalized' onto, in economics-speak).

### **Step 2: Ask yourself – How do I benefit at the expense of the workers who made this product 'I can't live without'?**

Here are a few resources to get you started thinking about this problem:

- *The Story of Stuff*: <http://www.storyofstuff.com/>
- *The Isle of Flowers*: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=EpKWK2dxgb4>
- Your Ecological Footprint (from *Redefining Progress*) <http://www.myfootprint.org/>

Reflect on what you've learned. If completing this activity as part of a class, prepare some brief notes/questions to share with the group.

## B. Activities and Actions: Activity #4

### Step 3: Consider the impact

What difference would it make if you stopped consuming your luxury item? Consider: what would it take for you to change your lifestyle or pattern of consumption so that no one else is victimized for your benefit?

Compare with your classmates who have researched different products, some of which you likely use also. How easy would it be to minimize your impact in terms of a number of products you use and consume? Would such an effort be realistic? How much time would this take? Would this be a good use of your time and resources (as opposed to other ways you might get involved in making change)?

Read "No Impact Man's Top Ten Eco-Lifestyle Changes" (<http://noimpactman.typepad.com/blog/2009/05/no-impact-mans-top-ten-ecolifestyle-changes.html>) and discuss which of these changes you could make in your life. What would make it easier to make them? If everyone around you were doing it, would that make it easier?

### Step 4: Debate: How Can We Most Effectively Take Action?

As a class, consider the relative effectiveness of the following options for changing the current business logic and doing things differently.

- Strategic consumer choice – "voting with your wallet"
- Ethical consumption (e.g. green, local, organic or fair(er) trade products)
- Organized boycotts of individual products or companies, or actions by NGOs
- Corporate social responsibility – relying on companies to do the right thing
- Government intervention in the economy (to regulate for fairness and sustainability)
- Other methods or approaches we might take?

Following a group discussion and some debate, try to come to a conclusion about the various pros and cons of each approach. Which, in your opinion, is our best hope for changing the current business model?

Some factors you may want to discuss and debate regarding these approaches:

- To what degree is this approach democratic and/or accountable to the people? All people?
- Does this approach give more power to some and less to others based on their financial (and other) resources? Based on where they live?
- Does the approach merely encourage more consumption of a different type (i.e. is it merely shifting 'luxury' consumption to a new form that is still unsustainable?)
- To what extent are labels such as 'green' or 'fair trade' accurate? According to whose criteria?
- Do boycotts successfully cause lasting change? Do they cause change that is broadly structural (i.e. felt through the economy as a whole) or limited to one product or corporation?
- Are claims of corporate social responsibility verifiable? Do they go far enough?
- Can national governments make changes to level the playing field in a globalized economy?
- Without regulations, what are the dangers of 'racing to the bottom'?
- To what extent do we require concerted global action to tackle such problems?



## **ACTIVITY #5: Role Playing Activity**

### **What would corporate social responsibility (CSR) look like?**

In this simulation, pairs or groups of students will take on one of the following roles and be part of a simulated negotiation about what CSR would look like regarding the Bhopal chemical plant spill. This simulation builds on students' knowledge about the Bhopal disaster from the film, as well as some external research they may do in preparation for the simulation.

Students may also want to read the following document that discusses breaking the law as "the cost of doing business" and the faculty from the University of Chicago (Milton Friedman's school) in making this argument: [www.counterpunch.org/mokhibberotten.html](http://www.counterpunch.org/mokhibberotten.html)

- Roles:**
- Dow corporation
  - Dow shareholders
  - Consumers of Dow products
  - Dow workers
  - People of Bhopal
  - Indian government
  - World Trade Organization
  - US government
  - Victim's rights activist
  - Yes Men
  - Bhopal health worker
  - Other

Each group will have time to prepare a 2-minute presentation about what CSR would look like based on their role. After the presentations, there should be time for participants to ask each other questions, debate different visions of CSR, and try to form alliances with groups that share their vision. Make sure participants are taking notes about their observations and analysis of the simulation. Could you come to a consensus? Is that possible or desirable?

### **Large group discussion:**

Have the group come out of their assigned roles and have a class discussion about what they (themselves) think DOW should do.

1. Can corporations be socially responsible if it means the bottom line suffers?
2. Are laws effective if breaking them is considered 'the cost of doing business'?
3. What can we do if corporations fail to be socially responsible?

# C.

## Initiate Your Own Yes Men-Inspired Action

The Yes Men decided that they had to take action in response to corporate irresponsibility and corruption. Now they want to know: What issue(s) do YOU care about? What can YOU do to address this? How can YOU get others involved?

Refer to the *Yes Men Fix the World* Challenge Game for tips on how to plan and execute an action.

If you are completing this activity as part of a class, why not try this: break into small groups to develop a proposed action. Then, the entire class should reconvene to share and critique their proposals. From here, the class can vote on what problem or project they will take on, with the entire class working *on the same project*. This way, you may be able to take the best parts of each group's proposal. You can combine proposals, or apply the form of one proposal's action to address a problem from a different group's proposal.

If you are really ambitious, this project could be a school or campus-wide endeavor. This is also a good opportunity to investigate and discuss some of the common barriers to taking collective political action today. Your group might even be inspired to take this problem on as a focal point for their next project.

\* Remember to post your action ideas on the *Yes Men Fix the World* website. You have the opportunity to tell others how you are making change, get feedback, ask important questions, or even get others involved in your project.

# D.

## Other Potential Activities

- Investigate claims made by particular products/companies. Are products what they claim to be? Do they do what they claim to do? How do marketing campaigns use key words (e.g. 'natural' or 'green') to deceive consumers? Get the truth out there.
- Create 'Wanted' posters for corporate bad guys. Select a company or CEO. Do your homework. Put their record on the record.
- Contest the idea of what constitutes 'freedom.' Is freedom simple the ability to act in the market without government regulation or social responsibility to one's neighbours? Or are there other ways to define freedom, one's that involve giving up some things (e.g. paying taxes) in order for everyone to get other freedoms (e.g. access to health coverage). Who benefits and loses from these different ways of defining freedom? Start the debate!
- Examine 'Business as Usual:' what it is, in whose interests does it work for (or against), what we could do instead? Think about the Yes Men's argument: "How could we get companies to do the right thing? We needed to change the rules of the market." (37:00) What are some key rules that would have to be changed? (limited liability, government regulation, people over profit, sustainable practices, long-term thinking over short-term profit, etc.). Start the conversation with people you know, get them talking about this important issue.

