



Dear ICAR Family,

Thank you all for hanging in with us in our first-ever virtual Annual Meeting. We learned a lot--with and from you--and we missed a lot. I look forward to a time when we can organize, commiserate, and laugh in person.

Over the course of 2 weeks, 4 days, 14+ hours, and 15+ sessions, it surprised us how rejuvenating it was to talk through all of the possibilities that could be. In service of ICAR's ongoing commitment to ensure that the conversations don't stop at the end of our meetings--and in advance of our publication of the sessions which will come over the next week or so--I thought it might be helpful to highlight some of our takeaways from the meeting:

Our Racial Justice and Corporate Accountability panel charged us all to think about how we can better move from ally to accomplice; ensuring our leadership, boards, and procurement practices advance racial justice even when those most likely to hold us accountable aren't in the room. Black-, Indigenous-, and people-of-color-led NGOs exist, and they have vision and solutions; non-BIPOC-led organizations must fight against the status quo and be willing to give up power to achieve the change we claim we want to see. We must trust that BOPOC-led organizations have the vision and approach that works for them and their communities. This includes all of us being "accomplices" and pushing the funding world to directly invest in and fund BIPOC-led organizations and initiatives (even and especially when our BIPOC relatives are not in the room). Finally, we talked about how better to ensure implicit bias doesn't influence programming decisions and the need for every organization to have a free, prior, and informed consent policy.

For ICAR's part, we are committed to doing our own introspective work and establishing and reinforcing the policies recommended by the panel as we continue to advance this work. If there are other organizations that would like to work with us in developing these policies, we--as always--welcome your partnership.

Our Protecting Protest: Fighting Back Against Corporate Bullies session reaffirmed the need to build defense networks and legal protections to ensure that those who speak up against corporate destruction of our environment or in service of other matters of public concern are able to do so

without fear of a meritless lawsuit. And we talked about just how lonely and scary facing a SLAPP can be in isolation; solidarity is the only way we can effectively fight against these abuses of power.

Our Building a Just Transition for Worker and Climate Justice discussion and Sharan Burrow's keynote address underscored the pressing need to build a social floor that reflects the reality that:

1. There are no jobs on a dead planet;
2. Clean energy jobs can't undercut hard-won worker protections and must advance them; and
3. The populations most harmed by poor environmental stewardship are the communities most likely to be harmed by poor worker protections and an absence of racial justice.

We learned about advances in Germany and Denmark, how to rebut the false narratives around cost, and the value that is created when meaningful social contracts are honored.

Our panel on Corporate Capture laid bare both the challenge and the promise of addressing this grave threat to democracy that stands at the heart of both our racial justice and environmental justice imperatives—from American Legislative Exchange Council (ALEC)-sponsored legislation that disproportionately affects the BIPOC community and the fossil fuel industry's efforts to block environmental regulation on climate change, to the promise embodied in HR1 and provisions in the draft treaty on business and human rights to address this threat.

Our mandatory human rights due diligence (mHRDD) panel brought together experts from Uganda, the U.S., Mexico and the E.U. with consensus around the necessity that these laws be robust and effective, engage impacted communities throughout, and be measured exclusively on how they change corporate behavior on the ground, not whether they establish box-ticking exercises that continue to fail communities.

There were dozens of lessons as well from the breakout sessions, and lots of substantive work amongst an amazing community of researchers, advocates, lawyers, and activists that underscored this community's commitment to:

- Acknowledging the voluntary initiatives system is not working, and the need to insist on systems that center values, ownership, and governance;
- Ensuring academic institutions are providing the foundation students need to engage in this field concretely;
- Centering the most affected rights holders in our own jurisdictions and around the world, and bringing them in to the BHR space as experts in their own right, so that together we can build and advocate for structures that keep them safe and hold corporations accountable for harming their communities;
- Working collaboratively around upcoming legal battles from ongoing SLAPP suits to the Nestle Cargill Supreme Court Case to advance corporate accountability;

- Thinking creatively and learning about other business models and corporate forms that exists and crafting legislation and policy recommendations that move us away from existing extractive and exploitative models;
- Naming, rejecting, and building counter strategies to the five overarching corporate strategies to avoid accountability as identified through the Mind the GAP project, which are: 1) constructing deniability; 2) avoiding liability through judicial strategies; 3) distracting and obfuscating stakeholders; 4) undermining defenders and communities; and 5) utilizing State power.
- Collaborating to leverage trade agreements and regulation to ensure forward momentum on worker and environmental protections; and
- Advocating for public disclosure of usable supply chain data central to corporate accountability and worker empowerment; and highlighting the key opportunities and pitfalls to avoid related to data when developing mHRDD legislation.

And finally, we want to again congratulate and celebrate the two recipients of the Gwynne Skinner Human Rights Award: Alejandra Gonza and Al-Haq! Hearing them reflect on their work reminds us all that we must continue our fight for justice and accountability. We send many thanks to the selection committee for their support throughout this entire process and for allowing this award to continue to be a part of the ICAR Annual Meeting.

My hope for all of you is that this less than ideal format still facilitated what ICAR is meant to do--help you share the work you are leading and offer new perspectives, connections, and opportunities for impactful collaboration going forward. And that this crazy hard year becomes the impetus for reforms based on what is needed rather than what seems possible. On behalf of the ICAR team, thank you for attending, thank you for contributing, and next time we are very much looking forward to seeing you in person!

With gratitude and admiration,

Alison