

The Last Word

NPIC out of control

Appleseed gives award to Pfizer as CIA covers itself in Pride colors

By Citizen Staff

More than thirty years ago, members of Harvard Law School's Class of 1958 came together to help establish and guide centers for law in the public interest throughout the country.

Their idea: tackle societal ills through the founding of non-profit law centers and to "plant a seed from which a public service activity involving lawyers, young and old, can grow and develop across the country."

Instead of the traditional model of providing legal services to individuals, their strategy was to tackle system-wide reform – to address problems at their root.

In 1994, the Appleseed Foundation was formally launched and as of this writing, the Appleseed Network has expanded to include eighteen centers across the US and Mexico.

Appleseed has had a number of remarkable truly public interest victories over the years – with much focus on racial inequality in the justice and prison systems.

But there is little focus on corporate crime and corporate power. Appleseed has morphed into an integral part of the non profit industrial complex (NPIC) – public interest groups that have been coopted by powerful corporate and state interests they were founded to confront in the public arena.

Appleseed's board of directors is now dominated by corporate lawyers.

– Co-chair Rory Leraris is a partner at giant corporate law firm Cravath.

– Co-chair Tom McCoy most recently served as executive vice president and general counsel of CH2M Hill Companies, the giant engineering firm.

– Mary Morningstar is deputy general counsel at defense contractor Lockheed Martin.

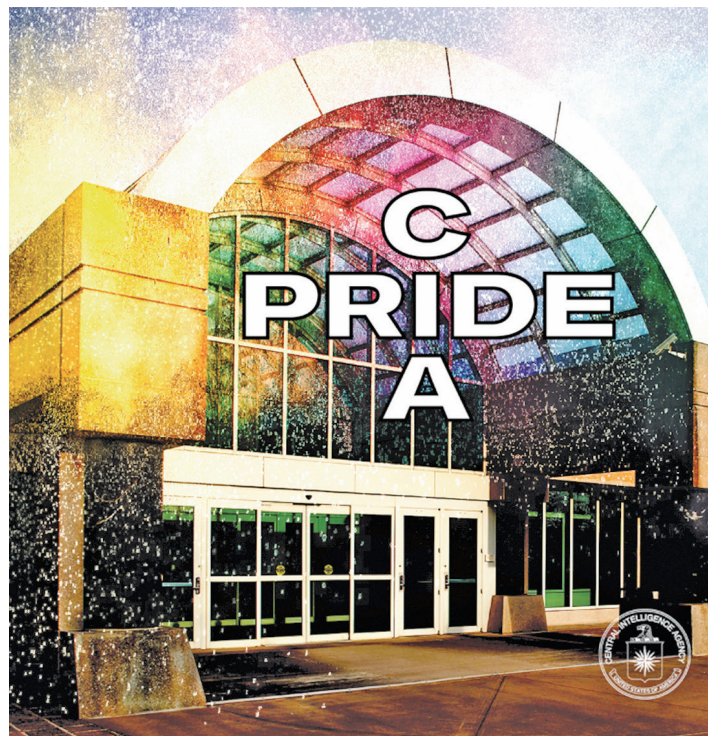
– Lisa Dewey is a partner at the corporate criminal defense law firm DLA Piper.

– Daniel Dominiguez is a partner at the corporate criminal defense firm Latham & Watkins.

– Gayle Erikson previously served as general counsel at W.R. Grace, the multinational chemical company.

– Markus Green is vice president at Pfizer.

Then, to the shock of many



On June 8, 2023, the official CIA Twitter account tweeted this photo of CIA headquarters bathed in Pride colors to commemorate Pride Month.

of its founders and other public interest groups, earlier this year, Appleseed gave one of its "Pillar of Justice" awards to Pfizer.

"Pfizer was instrumental in starting the Attorney General Alliance Africa Program," Appleseed said in making the announcement. "The program, which was founded seven years ago, trains prosecutors, judges, and investigators in twelve different nations on the continent. The AGA Africa Program helps to create a knowledge bridge between the US State Attorneys General and members of the criminal justice system in Africa, all in an effort to share expertise and build capacity to combat a myriad of transnational crimes such as human trafficking, cyber related fraud, and money laundering."

Appleseed gave this award despite knowing that Pfizer is also an out of control corporate criminal.

In 2009, Pfizer and its subsidiary Pharmacia & Upjohn Company paid \$2.3 billion, the largest health care fraud settlement in the history of the Department of Justice, to resolve criminal and civil liability arising from the illegal promotion of certain pharmaceutical products.

Pharmacia & Upjohn plead guilty to a felony violation of the Food, Drug and Cosmetic Act for misbranding Bextra with the intent to defraud or mislead.

And according to the Vio-

lation Tracker database, over the past twenty years, Pfizer has paid hundreds of millions of dollars to settle more than 90 criminal and civil state and federal charges ranging from fraud to bribery.

Public interest groups were originally created to counter corporate power. Thus the term – public interest – to counter private interests.

But it's becoming more difficult to find major public interest groups that haven't in some ways been coopted by corporate power. Even those public interest groups that say they will not take corporate money and will not have board members with ties to major corporations – they often keep close alliances with corporate aligned politicians. Leaders of the corporate wing of the Democratic Party are often seen at major fundraisers for larger NPIC organizations.

Ten years ago, *Corporate Crime Reporter* broke a story about how Chesapeake Energy, one of the biggest gas drilling companies in the U.S. and a firm heavily involved in fracking, was secretly donating \$25 million to Sierra Club to fight coal cuts.

Sierra Club and other public interest groups found themselves promoting natural gas a "bridge fuel" to a cleaner energy future.

Similarly, in 2019, *Corporate Crime Reporter* exposed the corporate capture of the anti-bribery group Transparency International USA, which

identified itself as "a non-partisan, non-profit organization dedicated to strengthening integrity and combating corruption in the United States and internationally."

But increasingly it had been seen as a corporate front group, funded by multinational corporations – the same multinationals that corrupt the U.S. political system.

Its million dollar a year budget was sustained by contributions from the likes of Bechtel Corporation, Deloitte, Google, Pfizer, Citigroup, ExxonMobil, Fluor, General Electric, Lockheed Martin, Marsh & McLennan, PepsiCo, PricewaterhouseCoopers, Raytheon, Realogy, and Tyco.

In 2016, it gave its annual corporate leadership award to Bechtel.

Its board of directors was dominated by corporate lawyers, many of whom defend companies from charges of foreign bribery.

Then in 2017, the Berlin-based Transparency International, publishers of the popular annual *Corruption Perception Index*, had seen enough and stripped its US affiliate of its accreditation.

In a 2015 interview with *Corporate Crime Reporter*, Sarah Chayes, author of *Thieves of State: Why Corruption Threatens Global Security*, was critical of Transparency International USA's failure to tackle corruption in the United States – what she identified as a system of "legalized bribery."

"Transparency International chapters are supposed to focus on the countries in which they are resident," Chayes said. "Transparency International Colombia works on corruption in Colombia. But Transparency International USA is constantly focused on corruption in Third World countries. It's ridiculous. You would have thought that Transparency International USA would have been at the forefront of ensuring that the criminal bankers that gave us the financial collapse in 2008 would be criminally prosecuted. And maybe Transparency USA should have investigated the relationship between the Treasury Department and the banking sector. But I didn't see any of that."

Journalist Glenn Greenwald points out that U.S. intelligence agencies now are justifying wars, bombing campaigns

and sanctions in the name of the LGBTQ cause.

"They often times, even with Ukraine, will point out that Ukraine is better for trans people than Russia," Greenwald said last month on his *Systems Update* podcast. "And they will show some trans soldier who is embraced by the Ukrainian Army. I'd like to see a trans person near the Azov battalion and see how they are treated."

"But LGBT causes are becoming increasingly integrated into not just the symbolism and justification rhetorically for U.S. foreign policy, but also for the substantive justifications for regime change and wars. That country is very hostile to LGBTs and that means we now have to change that government."

On June 8, 2023, the CIA official twitter account said that the "CIA's 2023 theme for #Pride Month is WELCOME! Wellness. Equity. LGBTQ+ Community. Openness. ME!"

"Pride Month is an occasion for all of us at the Agency to pay tribute to the rich history, community, and mission contributions of our LGBTQ+ officers."

The picture was the CIA headquarters bathed in pride colors.

"Re-branding US foreign policy and the US intelligence agencies, including the CIA, as a crusade for LGBTQ2AI+ rights is a truly genius feat of marketing," Greenwald tweeted in response. "It's one of the reasons – not the only – that US liberals now regards the CIA and US foreign policy as so benevolent."

Greenwald also pointed to the fact that military contractor Lockheed Martin recently sponsored a Pride Month parade in the nation's capital and a Pride Month festival in Texas.

The examples are endless. (Most recently, see the January 2023 *Capitol Hill Citizen* article titled *AARP AFL Push Medicare Disadvantage*.) The corporatism is metastacizing through the public interest movement.

The spread of NPIC, now a permanent fixture in the swamp, has real life consequences.

Inside the beltway, it neuters strong countervailing forces to corporate power.

Outside the beltway, it leads to citizen discouragement and disengagement.

And we know where that leads. Time for a citizen summit to call out NPIC and start to clean house.

CHC