

An Open Letter on Corporate Accountability, Mergers, and the Defense of Civil Rights

Across industries, major corporations are quietly retreating from long-standing commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion. These decisions are not happening in a vacuum—and they are not neutral business choices.

They are occurring at a moment when corporate mergers, regulatory approvals, and political pressure have converged to create powerful incentives for silence, compliance, and retreat from civil rights values.

We write as civil rights, cultural, labor, and community organizations to make one thing clear: **corporate capitulation to political intimidation, especially when tied to merger approvals or regulatory leverage, undermines democracy, harms workers and consumers, and puts Black, Brown and LGBTQIA+ communities, women, and people of disabilities at risk.**

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Are Not the Problem. Political Coercion Is.

DEI did not fail. What we are witnessing instead is a coordinated effort to weaponize government authority, through agencies, regulatory threats, and merger processes—to coerce corporations into abandoning equity commitments under the false banner of “neutrality” or “compliance.”¹

This moment demands honesty. When companies roll back equal employment policies while simultaneously seeking merger approvals or favorable regulatory treatment, the public is right to question whether those rollbacks are voluntary, or strategic concessions to gain political favor or grease regulatory wheels.

Mergers Must Not Be Used as Bargaining Chips Against Civil Rights.

Merger approvals exist to protect the public interest: competition, workers, consumers, and communities. They must not be transformed into bargaining chips that reward companies for distancing themselves from civil rights values or for acquiescing to racially harmful political agendas.

When corporations depend heavily on Black and Brown consumers, workers, and cultural communities, abandoning equity commitments in pursuit of growth or regulatory favor is not only hypocritical—it is dangerous, and an affront to the trillions in spending power these communities wield.

Anti-Democracy Influence Cannot Remain Hidden.

¹ See, e.g., Ruth Livier, *Complicit: Corporate Media's Capitulation to Trump's Attacks on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion*, Free Press, Jan. 21, 2026, https://www.freepress.net/sites/default/files/2026-01/complicit_corporate_media_capitulation_trump_attacks_dei.pdf.

At the same time DEI language is being stripped away, corporate dollars continue to flow, often invisibly, into anti-democratic sectors within political and philanthropic ecosystems that benefit from racial division, voter suppression, and weakened civil rights enforcement.

The public deserves transparency. Communities deserve accountability. Regulators must not dole out favors based on fealty to an anti-DEI agenda. And corporations must be honest about whether their political spending aligns with the values they claim to uphold.

Our Call

We call on corporations, regulators, and policymakers to:

- **Publicly reaffirm commitments to equal opportunity, equity, inclusion, and civil rights as core values, not expendable programs**
- **Reject the use of merger approvals or regulatory authority as tools to coerce political or racial compliance**
- **Disclose contributions that undermine civil rights and democratic participation**
- **Engage communities, workers, and consumers honestly when decisions impact equity and access**
- **Participate in independent, third-party audits on equal employment programs and political spending, giving communities the transparency they deserve.**

We further call on regulators to uphold their duty to the public interest, ensuring that merger reviews are grounded in competition, consumer protection, and democratic values, not political intimidation.

This Is a Defining Moment

The choices corporations make right now will shape not only markets, but culture, democracy, and the lived realities of millions of people. Silence and retreat may seem expedient, but history shows they come at a high cost.

We stand ready to work with companies that choose equal opportunity, transparency, accountability, and courage. And we will continue to organize, inform, and mobilize when those values are compromised.

Civil rights are not negotiable.

Democracy is not a bargaining chip.

And communities are not collateral damage.

Signed,

[Organization Names Listed Alphabetically]

Adasina Social Capital
African American Policy Forum
American Association of University Women (AAUW)
American Federation of Teachers (AFT)
American Pride Rises
Bend the Arc: Jewish Action
BlueGreen Alliance
Center for Constitutional Rights
Clearinghouse on Women's Issues
Climate Critical
Coalition on Human Needs
Color of Change
Community Equity Initiative
Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR)
Democracy Forward
Disability Rights Education & Defense Fund
Diverse Asset Managers Initiative (DAMI)
End Citizens United
Endangered Species Coalition
Equal Justice Society
Equal Rights Advocates
Equality California
Feminist Majority Foundation
Free Press
GLAAD
Glisten
Greenpeace USA
Inclusion Allies Coalition
Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility
Just Solutions
JustLeadership USA
Lake Research Partners
League of United Latin American Citizens
Mexican American Legal Defense and Educational Fund (MALDEF)
Minority Business Enterprise Legal Defense and Education Fund (MBELDEF)
National Action Network (NAN)
National Community Reinvestment Coalition
National Council of Asian Pacific Americans (NCAPA)
National Education Association (NEA)
National Institute for Workers' Rights (NIWR)
National Health Law Program

National Partnership for Women and Families
National Organization for Women
National Urban League
National Women's Law Center
NETWORK Lobby for Catholic Social Justice
Onyx Impact
Philanthropic Initiative for Racial Equity (PRE)
Public Citizen
Public Justice
Race Forward
Racial Justice Investing Coalition
Reproaction
RootsAction
Right to Be
Saving Ourselves Inc.
Service Employees International Union (SEIU)
Silver State Equality
Sisters Lead Sisters Vote
The 75 Million
UltraViolet
WorkLife Law