Rainforest Action Network defends forests, climate against Citigroup, 2000-2004

Time period notes: The campaign finished in 2004 when Citigroup released its "New Environmental Initiatives," which were renewed in 2009. Nevertheless, Citigroup has returned to working with corporations that do not act environmentally responsibly.

13 April 2000 to: 2004

Country: United States
Country: International
Location Description: While the United States was the primary target, the campaign actually existed on five continents.

Goals: The Rainforest Action Network campaigned Citigroup to "take action to address its role in financing the destruction of the world's remaining old growth forests and the acceleration of climate change."

Methods

Methods in 1st segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 015. Group lobbying
- 071. Consumers' boycott

Methods in 2nd segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 015. Group lobbying
- 037. Singing
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 071. Consumers' boycott

Methods in 3rd segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 015. Group lobbying
- 071. Consumers' boycott
171. Nonviolent interjection

Methods in 4th segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 015. Group lobbying
- 023. Destruction of own property
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 071. Consumers' boycott

Methods in 5th segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 015. Group lobbying
- 047. Assemblies of protest or support
- 071. Consumers' boycott

Methods in 6th segment:

- 002. Letters of opposition or support
- 007. Slogans, caricatures, and symbols
- 008. Banners, posters, and displayed communications
- 015. Group lobbying
- 071. Consumers' boycott

Additional methods (Timing Unknown):

- 086. Withdrawal of bank deposits

Classifications

Classification:
Defense

Cluster:
Environment

Group characterization:

- College students
- Environmentalists

Leaders, partners, allies, elites

Leaders:
Mike Brune-executive director of RAN, Ilyse Hogue- RAN campaign manager for the Global Finance Campaign
Partners:
College students

External allies:
Not known

Involvement of social elites:
Citigroup shareholders

Joining/exiting order of social groups

Groups in 1st Segment:
- College students

Groups in 2nd Segment:
Groups in 3rd Segment:
Groups in 4th Segment:
Groups in 5th Segment:
Groups in 6th Segment:

Additional notes on joining/exiting order:
The Rainforest Action Network asked for student participation from the beginning in order to raise awareness. All other participants in actions were merely concerned citizens and some shareholders. Exact joining order is not known.

*Segment Length: 8 months*

Opponent, Opponent Responses, and Violence

Opponents:
Citigroup

Nonviolent responses of opponent:
Negotiations, meetings

Campaigner violence:
Not known

Repressive Violence:
While there were arrests, charges were either dropped or community service and fines were enforced. There were never injuries to protestors.

Success Outcome

Success in achieving specific demands/goals:
5 points out of 6 points

Survival:
1 point out of 1 points

Growth:
3 points out of 3 points

Notes on outcomes:
While the campaign was initially successful in convincing Citigroup to agree to cease funding of environmentally destructive projects, recently Citigroup has begun funding numerous projects that were and could potentially be harmful to the environment.
In the early 2000s Citigroup was the world's largest project finance bank, with customers in over 100 countries and territories. Citigroup provided the finances for thousands of projects; some of these projects were deeply damaging to the environment. Citigroup was indirectly related to the Camisea pipeline in Peru as a financial advisor, as well as the Chad-Cameroon pipeline under construction by Exxon, Chevron and numerous central African oil companies.

The Rainforest Action Network (RAN) began to target Citigroup as a continuation of its numerous campaigns to encourage large corporations to make environmentally friendly decisions. RAN thus chose Citigroup as an influential U.S. company with direct international relations, connections to environmentally harmful projects, and success contingent upon its public image.

On 13 April 2000 RAN's executive director Mike Brune and Global Finance Campaign Manager Ilyse Hogue wrote a letter to Citigroup imploring the bank to cease funding projects that were extracting fossil fuels and destroying forests. They named Citibank the "World's Most Destructive Bank."

One month later at Citigroup's annual meeting RAN campaigners addressed the board of directors including CEO of Citigroup Sandy Weill while shareholders were present. Immediately following the meeting Citigroup agreed to meet again with RAN representatives. These meetings continued for two years and Mike Brune felt that they were "discussions" rather than "negotiations." Citigroup officials were more than willing to talk about the issues at hand, but never actually decided upon final courses of action.

In September 2000 RAN took its campaign to college campuses, encouraging boycotts of Citigroup's credit cards and job recruitment events in order to garner media attention. In October 2000 RAN held its first Day of Action in which participants cut their Citigroup credit cards and shut down accounts with the bank.

As the Christmas season approached, carolers stood outside of the headquarters for Citigroup singing a satirical song called "Oil Wells" to the tune of Jingle Bells. On 14 February 2001 RAN had school children send hundreds of valentines to Citigroup CEO Sandy Weill begging him to give his Valentine's Day love to the Earth.

One year after the beginning of the campaign, in April 2001, RAN held its second Day of Action, which was an international success in 12 countries across 5 continents. Masses of people hung banners, marched in protest, and compiled symbolic mounds of wood chips and oil at bank branches. 500 school children drew pictures and sent them to Sandy Weill, yet again begging for the end of rainforest destruction. In October 2001, dozens of men and women forced workers to stop construction on an Ecuadorian cloud forest pipeline.

Columbia University's Students for Environmental and Economic Justice encouraged the 4,000 Citigroup users at the college to cut their credit cards. Columbia was one of the leading universities in the campaign, but over 60 U.S. Colleges joined in the National Week of Action in February 2002, making phone calls, writing letters to Citigroup, and completing numerous demonstrations.

The Rainforest Action Network also appealed to shareholders. RAN convinced numerous shareholders to withdraw their support from Citigroup.

Finally, in 2004, due to social and economic pressure, Citigroup released its "New Environmental Initiatives," and withdrew funding from environmentally destructive projects. These initiatives comprised the most extensive contract to cease anti-environment projects of any bank. RAN concluded its campaign with success.

In 2009, Citigroup reaffirmed its vow to deal with "Environmental and Social Risk Management."

However, on 9 March 2011, the Rainforest Action Network released a statement to the public that in 2010 Citigroup had raised $34 billion dollars for the coal and oil industry and was not upholding its promise. The statement detailed numerous projects, including the Keystone XL pipeline, which Citigroup continued to finance.
Research Notes

Influences:

Previous Rainforest Action Network campaigns, specifically the success in their campaign against Home Depot, influenced their actions against Citigroup (1)

Sources:


Name of researcher, and date dd/mm/yyyy:
Jessica Seigel, 10/02/2013

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