

Citizens United, The Movie

"It's not just a motion picture
... it's a movement"

Written by

The Pen

Opening
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OPENING SEQUENCE:

A single candle in closeup flickers in a darkened room, under the title, in the style of the lettering from the US Constitution,

Citizens United The Movie

We dissolve to the hand of JAMES MADISON, painstakingly writing with an ink quill on a piece of parchment in the wavering light. As he does so, these words appear on the screen as animated script.

"The power of all corporations, ought to be limited in this respect. The growing wealth acquired by them never fails to be a source of abuses."

over a caption of his name

James Madison, father of the Constitution

and we hear MADISON reading the text out loud to himself.

DISSOLVE TO:

1 DAY - MONTAGE OF SCENES OF COLONIAL LIFE

1

A shopkeeper adjusts the display of bonnets in her store window. We see a horse drawn carriage with an important passenger, and his name is captioned on the screen, "James Madison." A farmer tends to his crops and we see other people strolling in period costume in a verdant garden. The carriage arrives at a stately mansion house and MADISON disembarks. Over all of which we hear . . .

NARRATOR

At the time of the birth of our nation there were few American corporations, and those that were chartered were tightly controlled, both by the length of their charters, and by their obligation to perform a needed service for society. Our founding fathers never would have imagined, or approved, of the ubiquitous proliferation of corporations today for every and any PRIVATE purpose without limit.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON stands in his library room, with book open in hand, taken apparently from a bookcase to his right, with cloth drapes open in the manner of the 18th century. He is dressed in a formal waistcoat, knee-length breeches, and white stockings, but is not wearing a wig. It is 1791, and he has the full vigor of someone only 36 years old. There is a simple writing desk to his left and a door standing open, in which direction he looks up and glances over.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

Ah, my dear James, I bid thee enter. What is your business with me?

His visitor is the same JAMES MADISON, himself only 40 years old, who steps through the door into the room, attired in a similar fashion.

JAMES MADISON

If you would entertain my solicitude, I am distressed over your proposal to charter a national bank.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

And your concern? . . .

JAMES MADISON

There is great peril in the indefinite accumulation of wealth by anonymous societies. We do well to recollect the example of England's East India Company, which over time came to wield such unwarranted political power.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

There are four protections provided here. First, that the charter be limited to a period of 20 years; secondly, that it must specify its purpose, here, merely to facilitate the finance of the government, indisputably within its own sovereign right.

HAMILTON pauses for just a moment to close the open book he is holding, and transfers it to being held with one hand in arm, so he can gesture with the other to emphasize his points.

JAMES MADISON

(with an open hand gesture)
Please continue . . .

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

Third, that the endeavor be founded in the necessity that it accomplish a PUBLIC GOOD, and lastly, that if it fails in this, or exceeds its designated purpose, that the people may simply elect to allow the charter to lapse without renewal.

JAMES MADISON

Our successors will never have occasion to say that Alexander Hamilton lacked a rebuttal on the finest of points.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

That is most gracious of you.

JAMES MADISON

But any enterprise to create an artificial person is fraught with the danger of future encroachments. I confess I cannot join your firm conviction in this case, and in debate, I shall respectfully stand and oppose the bill.

ALEXANDER HAMILTON

As you must. Nevertheless, if we are careful and vigilant, we, the people, will always retain the political authority.

2 DAY - OFFICE OF A DEFENSE CONTRACTOR CEO

2

HARRY LEE, the acting CEO of Vanguard Aerospace has just been watching a video on his computer with a PR CONSULTANT standing to the side of his desk in his expansive well-appointed office. He looks up as it finishes.

TV SPOT AUDIO

We're the people. The people . . . of Vanguard.

HARRY LEE

We're the people? . . . I don't like it.

PR CONSULTANT

No, no, really. It tested off the chart in the focus group.

HARRY LEE

(curious surprise)

Really.

PR CONSULTANT

The majority are under the DELUSION that we live in some kind of democracy in this country.

HARRY LEE

(with a huff)

Huhhh . . .

(and then laughing)

Some fat chance of that, with the money WE drop on lobbying, and attack ads.

PR CONSULTANT

Think of this as an ad for being docile.

HARRY LEE

(contemptuously)

Like we're going to bring democracy to all the countries we carpet bomb.

PR CONSULTANT

Believe me, Harry, they'll lap it up.

HARRY LEE

(still tentative and unsure)

Well . . . I guess you guys know what you're doing.

PR CONSULTANT

Here, watch it again. It's going to be great.

The PR CONSULTANT reaches over for HARRY LEE's mouse, and we see the video start to play again on the computer screen, as we cut to the same ad full screen.

2A MODERN 30 SECOND TV SPOT FOR VANGUARD AEROSPACE 2A

We see a slick montage of video clips of aerospace technology and military hardware in motion, each more spectacular than the last, a cockpit interior shot of a

fighter pilot banking as he jets away from the deck of an aircraft carrier surrounded by sparkling waters, a spy satellite silhouetted by a partial shot of the earth and the glint of the sun off its curvature, and prominently towards the end, a missile armed drone in flight that sudden turns on us and flies practically down our throats. Various actors are seen appearing and speaking on camera in front of some of these shots, or are heard just doing voiceovers. The soundtrack is that of a rich and soothing symphony orchestra.

TV AD SCRIPT

We know who we are. We're the people who make the things that keep you safe. We're the people who build the things that keep us strong. We're the people who protect you. Around the world, the people of Vanguard are working to keep the future of America's dreams secure. WE'RE the people. The people . . . of Vanguard.

3 INT - EVENING - COMMUNITY ACTIVIST OFFICE

3

The camera pulls back gradually away from the TV the defense contractor TV spot has been playing on, while the regular news continues. The local organizing office of Occupy America is a bare bones operation with a couple beat up old desks, piles of papers scattered here and there, protest signs leaning haphazardly against one wall, under some inflammatory posters.

ACTIVIST 1

(incredulous)

What's a defense contractor doing advertising on the national evening news? Have they got some product I'm supposed to buy?

ACTIVIST 3

Good question.

ACTIVIST 1

All they make is military hardware.

ACTIVIST 2

(joking)

You know, I've been thinking for a while it might be time to pick up a new drone. I was thinking a

bright red one, with racing stripes.

ACTIVIST 3

(after a cursory laugh)

They drop all that money on the networks to keep the news coverage pro-war.

ACTIVIST 1

You think that parade of spokes-generals they give so much air time to is an accident?

ACTIVIST 3

(firmly, in solidarity)

Yeah, well money is NOT the same thing as speech, if WE'RE going to have anything to say about it.

ACTIVIST 2

I still can't believe Sun Lee went up against her whole family organizing this shareholder action . . . Hey, here she comes.

4 EXT - EVENING - S.F. NEIGHBORHOOD STOREFRONT 4

A young woman, SUN LEE, strides towards the front door of the Occupy America organizing office, identified by a banner hung over the doorframe. She is in her early 20s, but with a determination and force of presence that belies her years. She has a confrontational appearance, with a streak of violet in her hair and a prominent tattoo of the Chinese character for "trust" on her right cheekbone.

5 INT - EVENING - COMMUNITY ACTIVIST OFFICE 5

The door opens briskly and SUN LEE enters, as all attention turns towards her.

ACTIVIST 1

(hopeful)

What's the word?

SUN LEE

(somewhat discouraged)

The US Attorney still won't negotiate a plea at all. She says she wants the Bathroom Bombers to do hard time.

They all make slightly grim faces and there is a momentary pause.

ACTIVIST 3

Sun, this is my sister, Barb, she just got into town on vacation.

SISTER

(enthusiastically)
I'd love to help out, I could help make some signs, pass out fliers, whatever.

SUN LEE

Great, we could use all the warm bodies we can trust, that we can get. Thanks for volunteering.
(turning to ACTIVIST 2)
Adam, what's the word with the University Endowment Committee, can we count on their proxies?

ACTIVIST 2

They're in a tough spot. A number of the faculty are very disturbed about all the drone killings, but the cloud from this upcoming trial is hanging over our whole group . . .

ACTIVIST 1

We sure didn't need that.

ACTIVIST 2

I just don't see any way we can muster the support now to actually get this shareholders' resolution passed.

SUN LEE

Maybe we could reach out to some of the faculty individually, to plead our case to the administration.

ACTIVIST 2

I don't know where you get the courage to keep going.

SUN LEE

(nobly)
To fight when the odds are against you, that takes courage. To continue to fight when it appears there is no way you can prevail . . . all that takes is integrity.

(turning now to ACTIVIST 1)
Lisa, did we get the permit for the demonstration
this weekend . . .

They continue to discuss organizing tactics while we shift
to

6 INT - EVENING - CLOSEUP ACTIVIST 3 & HER SISTER 6

SISTER

Is Sun really the granddaughter of the founder of
Vanguard Aerospace?

ACTIVIST 3

(confidentially)
Her family's basically disowned her over the
shareholders' drone protest we've been working on.

7 CLOSEUP OF TV NEWS BROADCAST 7

The national news program continues in the background, the
rest pause and turn their attention to the screen.

TV TALKING HEAD

Jury selection is about to start in the Bathroom
Bombers case which has gotten such national
attention . . .

8 INT - EVENING - CLOSEUP ACTIVIST 3 & HER SISTER 8

Continuing their private conversation.

SISTER

What about the bombing case? How did that get so
stinked up?

ACTIVIST 3

It all started about a year ago. The Citizens
United supreme court decision was coming down and
we were talking about ways to force corporate
accountability, when a new guy, Spike, turned up
and started hanging around. I always thought he
was way too snarky myself. If we had known that he
was actually a . . .

Her voice trails off as we dissolve back to the same office a year earlier . . .

9 FULL SCREEN TV BROADCAST

9

It is a year earlier. We are watching a segment of the Jan 27, 2010, State of the Union speech.

PRESIDENT OBAMA

Last week, the Supreme Court reversed a century of law to open the floodgates for special interests - including foreign corporations - to spend without limit in our elections. Well I don't think American elections should be bankrolled by America's most powerful interests, or worse, by foreign entities. They should be decided by the American people, and that's why I'm urging Democrats and Republicans to pass a bill that helps to right this wrong.

The camera pulls back from the TV to show the same ACTIVISTS, and some other individuals, watching the speech in the same organizing office.