

SYNOPSIS OF THE CITIZENS UNITED MOVIE

Vanguard Aerospace is major defense contractor, with a large number of the shares still controlled by its original founder, Ace Rogers, now mostly incapacitated, and with the day to day corporate operations taken over by his son-in-law, the fundamentally amoral Harry. One of the fastest growing divisions of Vanguard is the manufacturing of military assault drones, a great concern to Ace's granddaughter Sun, because of the reports of large numbers of innocent civilian casualties. Sun has become active in the Occupy America movement, much disapproved by the rest of her family.

Our story starts with the news on TV that the Supreme Court has now endorsed unlimited corporate political advertising in the Citizens United decision, good news for Vanguard's power to influence defense policy, but met with dismay in the bare bones organizing office of the Occupy America chapter where Sun is a leader. They talk about the need for a constitutional amendment to negate corporate personhood. Unknown to them, their group has already been infiltrated by a covert government operative named Spike, with the mission of instigating violence to discredit the movement.

Sun proposes that they organize an initiative to put a resolution on the agenda of the upcoming Vanguard shareholders' meeting, to object to the rampant misuse of these killing drones, to pressure for change from the inside. Though she has not yet inherited any Vanguard stock, their plan is to raise money to buy shares, so they can be recognized to stand up and speak at the shareholders' meeting. Spike reacts to this with sarcastic derision, advocating that real change will only come from a "revolution".

Sun's family also reacts very negatively to her corporate resolution idea, and a family dinner turns into a huge argument and blowup where she is essentially disowned when she accuses the enterprise of being immoral. "How dare you talk to your grandfather like that?!" shouts Harry.

Spurred by the news that the Supreme Court has in fact now ruled in favor of unlimited corporate political donations, the "buy Vanguard shares" plan generates wide public wide support, and they also approach institutional investors in the stock to get behind what is after all a non-binding resolution of conscience. They get enough commitments there so that they feel a winning vote is within reach.

But in the meantime, Spike has, by providing them pot and a place to crash, managed to hook a couple naive scruffy, young guys hanging around the Occupy America office into a plot of his own invention, to set off stink bombs in the bathrooms of various corporate offices. He laughs with his supervising agents about how easy it was to get them involved. Only when the time comes, it's not just smelly m-80s Spike has procured, but serious military high explosives (fake). They both try to back out, but Spike browbeats them that they have to go through with it because they are already involved, and the two soon find themselves indicted before anything else is even done.

With the whole movement now in great turmoil and under duress, everything is thrown into doubt, but a brilliant pro bono attorney steps forward and succeeds in demonstrating entrapment in the bathroom explosives case, and they think they can still pull off the shareholders' vote. However, Harry has a secret agreement with one of the institutions that Sun thought they had in their corner, and with that has the votes in hand to defeat them. That's not his only secret. He's cheating on his wife, who finds out about it.

The night of the shareholders' meeting Ace's daughter comes to him in tears about Harry's marital infidelities, which shakes Ace's confidence in his son-in law. At the same time there is a press conference on TV where Harry is asked about Ace's own position on the issue. "Never mind about that," he says, "I control the family's voting block now." Ace is outraged and demands to be taken in his wheelchair to the shareholder's meeting so he can assert his founder's rights over the family stock, to vote FOR the resolution.

It's now a race against time, helped by Harry arrogantly dragging the resolution vote out to the very end to make the whole thing as boring as possible for the activists, and hindered by having Ace's car stopped by the police for speeding, intercutting the contrast of the rush of Ace in motion with the droning at meeting. Will Ace get there in time? Will he reconcile with his granddaughter? Find out at the end of Citizens United, The Movie.