

OG Joins **As You Sow** for an Event Offering a Look Into the Shocking Future of Fracking in LA and Other Cities

Posted on 30. Oct, 2011 by Michael Chapdelaine

On Tuesday, October 25, **As You Sow** held their “No Fracking Way!” fundraiser at Space 150 offices in Venice, CA. Founded in 1992, the nonprofit has been working with corporations to introduce shareholder resolutions that, in the words of Chief Executive Officer Andrew Behar, “bring them into integrity” on energy use, environmental health, waste management, and human rights. **As You Sow’s** efforts have, among other achievements, resulted in hundreds of thousands of tons of waste being diverted from landfills annually and millions of acres of genetically modified crops never having been planted.



“NO FRACKING WAY!” AT SPACE 150
CREDIT: MICHAEL CHAPDELAINÉ

Self-described “reformed petrosexual” Rick Overton provided a short bit of comic relief to the gathered attendees. Behar then began addressing *the issue at hand*: using the highly risky and highly consequential technique of hydraulic fracturing, referred to as “fracking” for short, in the Los Angeles area to extract oil and natural gas trapped in sub-surface, non-porous rock formations.

Academy Award nominee Josh Fox, the documentary filmmaker behind *Gasland*, joined the event via Skype to highlight the deleterious effects associated with fracking. In addition to toxically tainted groundwater, he stressed that there is a huge problem with “fugitive emission,” in energy industry parlance, of the greenhouse gas methane into the atmosphere in those areas where it is

employed – like Texas.

According to a recent Cornell University study, this release could be worse than that of carbon dioxide from coal-burning power plants. In conjunction to political lobbying, Fox described the natural gas industry as conducting a “charm offensive” to sell the public on a continuation and expansion of fracking in gas-holding shale formations across the country. Fox added that “shale gas is the big thing that’s in the way of our renewable energy future.”

After the presentation, I spoke with **As You Sow’s** founder, Tom Van Dyck, to get his insightful view on the persistence of fossil fuels and economic barriers to realizing a renewable energy revolution.

Tom: “What we don’t have is a free market. A free market is where pollution is no longer a subsidy. You have all the costs and externalities priced into a product and all subsidies are gone. In that way, [fossil fuel and alternative energy] products can compete. It’s not a free market when taxpayers pick up the tab for a Superfund site.”

Michael: “Right, if we had free markets, we would probably see a gallon of gas running around \$15. Under those circumstances, wouldn’t a lot of alternative energies do much better absent subsidies of their own?”

Tom: “Correct. That’s exactly right. We need regulations in place so that externalities are embedded. That’s what



JOSH FOX AND ANDREW BEHAR TALK FRACKING AND FIELD QUESTIONS
CREDIT: MICHAEL CHAPDELAINÉ

regulation should be for. And the fines should be great because those are risks that taxpayers are picking up the tab on. That's not a free market, that's a subsidized market. We have a system right now where capital is protecting where capital is invested, rather than where capital needs to go. That situation buys lobbying dollars. We're not really a capitalistic system because we're clogging and gumming up the engine of innovation."

Check out **As You Sow** to learn more about their efforts to ensure that human health and the environment factor into corporate decision-making.



TOM VAN DYCK AND MICHAEL CHAPDELAINE
CREDIT: MICHAEL CHAPDELAINE