



ICJB
International Campaign
for Justice in Bhopal



How-to Media Guide

Media Checklist

How to Make a Media Contacts List

What Goes in a Media Packet

How to Write a Media Advisory & Press Release

Tips on Writing for the Media

How to Pitch a Story

Interview Tips

Using Social Media

Example: Media Advisory

Example: Press Release

Example: Letters to the Editor

(Credit & thanks for some of these materials go to Celia Alario, the staff of the Spin Project, Fenton Communications, Ripple Strategies, and voice coach Vicki Post. All material is 'Copy Left' or 'Creative Commons,' so feel free to share, but please credit these folks!)



MEDIA CHECKLIST

AS SOON AS POSSIBLE

- Compile a **Media Contacts List** of all relevant reporters and journalists in your geographic area (see “How to Make a Media Contacts List”).

1-2 WEEKS BEFORE EVENT

- Prepare media advisory and press release (see “How to Write a Media Advisory & Press Release”).
- Call reporters about the event, and email them your media advisory. Send the text of the advisory **IN the email**, instead of as an attachment (attachments are often filtered out as spam). In your phone calls, you’ll have about 30 seconds to tell them the WHO-WHAT-WHEN-WHERE-WHY of the event. Practice your pitch on your home voice mail or with a friend. If you get a reporter on the phone, **double-check their email address** to send them your advisory. Call back to make sure they received it. Ask them if they are planning to cover the event; try to get a commitment. Don’t get discouraged, they will probably not commit.
- Designate a Media Spokesperson for your event. This person can practice fielding questions and role-play sound bites (with short, concise points) as your answers (see “Interview Tips”).

2 DAYS BEFORE EVENT

- Call reporters again to remind them about your event and re-email the media advisory.
- Call the Associated Press (AP) (number is online) and get your event in their “Daybook.” The AP circulates a schedule of daily events to all of the media outlets in your area. Tell them you have an event for the daybook, and email them your media advisory. Follow up with a phone call to make sure they received it.
- Prepare a media packet (also called press packet). Include your media advisory, press release, and fact sheets. This packet should be distributed to the press at your event. (see “What Goes in a Media Packet”)
- Designate a Media Liaison, who will pass out press materials at the event (could be the same person as your Media Spokesperson).
- Create a standard message for event attendees. This should include Bhopal info (~150,000 still affected; little help from government on healthcare, economic and environmental plights; Dow evading liability for cleanup and beyond). **Email to planned event attendees and ask them to memorize it.**

MORNING OF EVENT

- Call media contacts once again. Email reporters the press advisory one final time. Try to get a commitment that they will attend. Make sure to stress why your event is newsworthy.
- Bring media packets and a sign-in sheet for reporters who attend the event.

AT THE EVENT

- Find the reporters - don’t wait for them to find you. Control the media - don’t let them control you.
- Have your “sound bites” ready beforehand. **Saying these, and repeating them if necessary, is more important than answering the reporter’s questions.**
- Don’t** make long-winded speeches; they’ll be edited to death.



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- Make sure all event attendees know your standard message / sound bites and **WHO** the Media Spokesperson is – **tell attendees to refer media to the Media Spokesperson if possible**. Do what you can to make the audience well informed - it looks bad for them to say, “Well, uh, I guess I came cause, well, yah know, I’m really concerned about stuff.”

AFTER THE EVENT

- Follow-up with all reporters who attended and make sure they have all of the materials they need. If you took digital pictures, offer to e-mail some to them. Use this time to thank the reporter and build a relationship with him/her.
- Email your pictures to justice@bhopal.net for use on the website and ICJB’s media efforts.
- Look for coverage of your event on the news or in your paper. Record and clip articles. Contact reporters who covered the event to thank them. Send any press coverage to justice@bhopal.net.
- Write Op-Eds and Letters to the Editor.



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HOW TO MAKE A MEDIA CONTACTS LIST

Before you can send out a media advisory or pitch your story, you need a list of media contacts – reporters in your area as well as online journalists and bloggers who write about related topics.

Here are some tips:

- **Do your homework!** Research what publications are in your area, what their affiliations are, and how stories are assigned there. Try to find out who is the **environmental reporter**, who is the **business reporter**, etc. Find out the deadlines for each published issue, how they most prefer to be contacted, etc.
- **Design for your goals and target audience.** Think about who will be reading this, who you *want* to read it, and what you want them to get out of it.
- **Design for the time you have.** Make the best use of your limited time.
- **Design for the kind of world we want to live in.** Don't just go for the big media outlets. Support independent media too.
- **Collect emails, phone numbers, and social media information.** Make sure to get the names of relevant reporters, plus their phone numbers and email addresses if you can.
- **Tenacity gets the goods.** Don't give up easily!
- **Don't forget online journalism and social media.** Read more in the Social Media section.





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WHAT GOES IN A MEDIA PACKET

On the day of the event, you should be prepared to hand out media packets to any reporters who come. Make sure to bring copies for as many journalists as you think may attend.

A media packet should include all the information a journalist will need to write an article about your event and the Bhopal campaign in general.

It is best to put each media packet in a folder, so journalists can go through the contents easily.

Media Packets should include:

- Media Advisory
- Press Release
- Fact sheet(s) that provides background information on the Bhopal Disaster, the history of ICJB, and the liabilities of Dow Chemical/Union Carbide
- Social Media information
- Optional: Fact sheet about your local campaign and how Bhopal relates to local issues
- Optional: Past press coverage of your local campaign
- Optional: Photos from previous events
- Optional: Quotes/Testimonials from survivors in Bhopal about their experiences the night of the disaster and their struggle for compensation and medical care



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HOW TO WRITE A MEDIA ADVISORY & PRESS RELEASE

A **media advisory**, also sometimes called a media alert, is given to the media many days **BEFORE** your event happens. Think of it as an invitation. It lists the **WHO, WHAT, WHERE** and **WHEN** of your event in a **bullet point format**, along with background information on your group and **WHY** you are doing this event. When you contact journalists 1-3 weeks before your event occurs, you will send them the Media Advisory.

A **press release** includes the same information as your media advisory but is usually written in the past tense (as if your event already happened) and in a full paragraph format. Imagine what you hope the news coverage of your event will look like – what your dream article would look like – and then write your press release **exactly as you want it told**. On the day of the event, give journalists your Press Release as part of your media packet.

On both the Media Advisory and Press Release, make sure to:

- Include your “boilerplate”—a short section, at the end, about your group.
- Include your day and nighttime contact information as well as email, social media sites, website, etc.
- Include the release date information for your event – If media for your event is embargoed (shouldn't be made public until a certain date/time).
- Be clear and concise, and keep your message consistent.
- Keep it to less than one page, unless absolutely necessary.

See the sample Media Advisory and Press Release at the end of this how-to guide on how to format your documents.

The example Media Advisory includes 3 headlines that have active language (think about your verbs!), describes what the action is **succinctly**, and ties the event into the larger campaign for justice in Bhopal.



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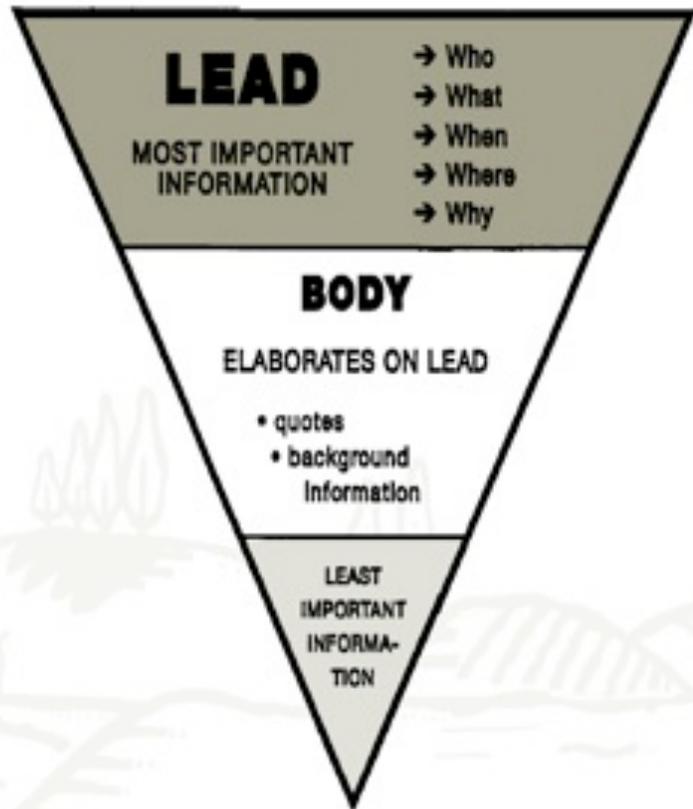
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TIPS ON WRITING FOR THE MEDIA

- Focus on the headline and subhead (spend 80% of your time on those & the first paragraph).
- The second to last paragraph should “further the story.”
- The last paragraph should include info on your organization (purpose, mission, campaigns, size, etc.)
- Use the ‘inverted pyramid:

The Inverted
Pyramid:





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Things to remember with your messaging...

- Claim **What You WANT**, Not Just What You Don't Want
- Keep it relevant
- Appeal to shared values or a public need
- Try to use an angle that would have universal appeal
- Remember: Clarity, Consistency, Credibility
- Anticipate: What Will Journalists Ask? What Will The "Opposition" Say?
- What Is Your Dream Headline/Photo? **Provide these!**

...and always ask yourself: What is newsworthy?

- New
- Announcement
- Exemplary of a Trend
- Variation on an already newsworthy theme
- Localize a national story
- Nationalize a local story
- Dramatic Human Interest
- Visuals
- Pulls Heart Strings
- Controversy
- Fresh angle on an old story
- Anniversaries
- Calendar hook (Anniversary or deadline coming up)
- Profiles and Personnel
- Special Event
- Respond & React
- Celebrity
- Unusual or Ironic
- Danger or Threat

Elements of a Press Release, from Wikipedia:

- **Headline** - Used to grab the attention of journalists and briefly summarize the news.
- **Dateline** - Contains the release date and usually the originating city of the press release.
- **Introduction** - First paragraph in a press release, that generally gives basic answers to the questions of who, what, when, where and why.
- **Body** - Further explanation, statistics, background, or other details relevant to the news.
- **Boilerplate** - Generally a short "about" section, providing independent background on the issuing company, organization, or individual.
- **Close** - In North America, traditionally the symbol "-30-" appeared after the boilerplate or body and before the media contact information, indicating to media that the release is ending. A more modern equivalent has been the "####" symbol. In other countries, other means of indicating the end of the release may be used, such as the text "ends."
- **Media Contact Information** - name, phone number, email address, mailing address, or other contact information for the PR or other media relations contact person.



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HOW TO PITCH A STORY

Once you have your messaging all worked out, you need to get it out there. To do this, you'll need to call reporters and pitch them - convince them your story is worth covering. When pitching a story, keep in mind:

The Pitch: Fundamentals

- Don't be intimidated
- Think about (and offer) multiple angles
- Be available to reporters when you send information
- Avoid 'no comment'
- Practice your pitch before calling a reporter
- There is no such thing as 'off the record'
- Thank reporters
- Be mindful of how you offer feedback on a story
- Create a pitch call 'rap'
- Know deadlines & communication preferences & honor them
- Introduce yourself before you pitch the story
- Know the outlets
- Learn how stories are assigned
- Have something in writing before you call
- Always be completely honest

Remind Yourself: What is News? Frames/Hooks/Angles

- New
- Announcement
- Exemplary of a Trend
- Variation on an already newsworthy theme
- **Localize a national story**
- Nationalize a local story
- **Dramatic Human Interest**
- **Visuals**
- **Pulls Heart Strings**
- **Controversy**
- **Fresh angle on an old story**
- **Anniversaries!**
- Calendar hook
- Profiles and Personnel
- Special Event
- Respond & React
- Celebrity
- Unusual or Ironic
- Danger or Threat



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Dos & Don'ts (from 'Spin Works')

- Never lie to a reporter
- Respect reporters' professionalism
- Never wing it
- Use layperson language that anybody can understand
- Speak in sound bites
- Return reporters' calls
- Meet reporters' deadlines
- Use words to create an image or paint a picture of your story
- Remember: three is a trend
- 'If it bleeds it leads'
- Visualize your story for TV
- Personalize your story
- Think strategically
- Do not answer reporters' questions, respond to them

Remember Why You Pitch!

- Instant gratification (getting the immediate story placed)
- Building for the longer lead time pieces and features
- Establishing yourself as the gateway to the experts
- Building long-term PERSONAL relationships with reporters



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INTERVIEW TIPS



Before the interview:

- Develop your message (Problem, Solution, Action) .
- Control the Frame (Your analysis of the issue, the frame defines what's in your story).
- Consider getting the opinion of someone outside the immediate group about the clarity of your message. Does it make sense to them? What other details are important?
- Know your talking points and be well practiced—practice in front of the mirror, in front of your friends, and if possible in front of a camera.
- Be familiar with both the short term (this cycle) and long term (campaign) media strategies and how this interview fits into each.
- Know your audience and know the medium (watch the show, research the reporter, understand who watches).
- Know the interview format and prepare yourself for the specific type of interview.
- Think about what the others interviewed (the “opposition”) will be saying.
- Ask the reporter a series of questions LONG before they ask you any!
 - Find out what kind of a story the outlet is doing (how long, what angle, etc).

- What topics will be discussed in the interview?
- Who else is being interviewed?
- Are you live?
- When will it air?
- Where will it appear (and can you leverage that for more)?
- Prepare for distractions and interruptions.
- Choose a focal point for ‘state-shifting’ (an image, a sound or a body stance)
- Visualize the results!
- Warm up your voice and use the music of your voice (tone, intonation, emphasis)
- Image is very important. Be conscious of how you look and the impact of your appearance on your message. ALL of you is the message, not just what you say!
- Choose the right clothes: avoid busy patterns, think polished and a bit more conservative than you usually dress, avoid accessories that are too bright or dangly, be ready for hot lights.

During the interview:

- Remember that you have something important to say. Build up your self-confidence.
- Remember that this is YOUR interview, the reporter needs you for the story!

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- There is no such thing as ‘off the record’ and no such thing as ‘off camera’ remarks!
- Avoid ‘No Comment’.
- It is ok not to know the answer, but refer them to someone who does, and tell them what you want them to know (your talking points!)
- Don't be thrown off by the question; "discipline" the message.
- Don't answer the question, respond by speaking your talking points.
- Speak slowly and clearly and avoid pause words (‘um’ ‘like’ ‘uh’)
- Practice the art of ‘bridging’—Build a bridge from the question you are asked to the talking points you have ready to deliver i.e. "That's a great question but what's more important is...." (Especially important in live interviews!)
- Practice the art of ‘flagging’—make statements before your talking points that flag for the reporter and editor that what is coming is the key point. (Especially important in taped interviews! Ex: “What is really important to know is..” or “The main point is..”)
- When preparing to answer: Stop, Breathe, Relax, Think, Speak!
- When answering: Listen, Respond, Expand (ONLY if necessary), STOP!
- Don't try to explain everything; stay on your key messages.
- Don't repeat the reporter's questions or phrases.
- Remember that you set the pace and tone of the interview.
- You can often determine the time, place and length of an interview.
- It is ok to ask the reporter to repeat the question.
- If you are not doing a live broadcast, it is ok to start over if you make a mistake.. (Let them know you would like to begin again.)
- Know where to look: look at the interviewer, NOT at the camera—unless you are on a satellite ‘talkback’ style interview, in which case you do look into the camera. When in doubt, ASK where to look. And look at the same place throughout the interview!

MORE During the interview:

- Know how to hold yourself: if you are standing, straight but not too stiff, no rocking, one foot slightly in front of the other, hands clasped in front or behind you, or on the podium. If you are sitting, sit up straight a few inches away from the back of the chair and watch out for how your clothes may bunch up. Always avoid fidgeting and excessive hand motions, don't tap your foot or your pen, and don't touch the mike or your hand piece.
- For satellite ‘talkback’ style interviews: assume you are always being broadcast, even before the interview begins or when the host is talking to other guests. Don't be afraid to interrupt the host or other guests that you cannot see. You can request a monitor, but it can be distracting!
- Don't worry, the movement will not collapse if you mess up your sound-byte!
- Keep love in your heart, and let it come through in your interview. Let your integrity show!

After the interview:

- Debrief with others; how do you feel about the interview? What did they think?
- Watch yourself (request a copy or have someone record it!) and evaluate how it went: notice which bytes made it, did they ask the questions you were expecting, did you control the frame, did you stay on message?
- Leverage the interview! What can you do with the video to further your goals?
- Practice some more based on what you learned!!!



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USING SOCIAL MEDIA

Don't forget to think about how you can use social media to leverage support for your event / campaign.

Make sure to:

- Create a page on social media platforms like Facebook and Google plus, which is dedicated to your local group & campaign efforts – and ask your friends and new members to “like” it.
- Create e-invitations to your events and distribute through social media and also email.
- Create one or two specific hash-tags that your group members can use to raise awareness about your activities (ex. #bhopal30 for the 30th anniversary); check with ICJB to find out what hash-tags the international campaign is using.
- Send regular updates to your followers and brainstorm how to get more friends / followers.
- Follow / friend other groups on social media that may be interested in your group's activities – your digital allies may become in-person allies.
- Follow media contacts on social media.
- Include social media on your campaign's overall media to-do list – your social media presence will only be effective and grow further if you use it regularly.



THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE IN BHOPAL (ICJB)

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MEDIA ADVISORY

CONTACT: [Name & cellphone number]

For [Day of the Week] December 3, 20__

__th Anniversary of Bhopal Chemical Disaster Prompts Protests Around the World

[City/Action - ex. San Francisco “Die-In”] Calls on Dow Chemical to Clean Up Poisoned Groundwater and Face Criminal Trial in India

Tens of Thousands in Bhopal Still Suffering from Toxic Chemical Exposure

At midnight on December 2, 1984 twenty-seven tons of lethal gases leaked from Union Carbide’s pesticide factory in Bhopal, India, immediately killing 8,000 people and poisoning thousands of others. Today, at least 150,000 people, including children born to parents who survived the disaster, are suffering from exposure-related health effects such as cancer, neurological damage, chaotic menstrual cycles and mental illness. Over 20,000 people have been forced to drink water laced with unsafe levels of mercury, carbon tetrachloride and other persistent organic pollutants and heavy metals.

Human rights, legal, environmental health and other experts are demanding that Dow Chemical, the current owner of Union Carbide, be held accountable for this atrocity. Many events worldwide are taking place to coincide with the __th anniversary.

WHAT: [Brief description, ex: 25 people, each representing 1,000 people who have died in Bhopal, to participate in mass Die-In, covering themselves in white sheets to symbolize those who have died due to Dow’s negligence.]

WHERE: [Location, ex: Union Square, San Francisco]

WHEN: [Time, ex: Thursday, December 3, 12:05pm]

WHY: The International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB) supports the survivors of Bhopal and their fight for justice. Union Carbide has refused to submit itself to ongoing criminal proceedings in India. Dow Chemical has refused to take responsibility for cleaning up Bhopal, despite Carbide’s legal responsibilities. ICJB demands that Dow-Carbide provide just compensation to the survivors, submit itself to face trial in India, and clean up the contamination in Bhopal.

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THE INTERNATIONAL CAMPAIGN FOR JUSTICE IN BHOPAL (ICJB)

PRESS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

Friday, April 11, 1:00 p.m.

www.bhopal.net

CONTACT: [Full Name]

PHONE: [Number]

E-MAIL: [Email Address]

U-MICH STUDENTS QUARANTINE DOW CHEMICAL CAMPUS LABORATORY

GROUP CALLS ON UNIVERSITY TO DISASSOCIATE FROM DOW BECAUSE OF HUMAN RIGHTS ABUSES IN INDIA

Today at 1:30 PM, several members of Justice for Bhopal, a University of Michigan student group and member of the International Campaign for Justice in Bhopal (ICJB), quarantined the Dow Laboratory Building on central campus. The Dow Laboratory was largely funded by contributions from the Dow Chemical Company, one of the largest chemical corporations in the world and a heavy contributor to the University of Michigan. Although Dow has donated millions of dollars to the University of Michigan, the company has steadfastly refused to spend any money to clean up contamination in Bhopal, India, for which it is responsible.

In 1984, a chemical leak at a Union Carbide factory in Bhopal, India, exposed more than half a million people to deadly gases. Twenty thousand people have died to date as a result, and 120,000 people are still suffering from the aftereffects of their exposure. The site, which has never been cleaned up, continues to poison the residents of Bhopal. Groundwater poses a particular hazard: cancer and brain-damage- and birth-defect-causing chemicals have contaminated the water and those who drink it. Testing has revealed that mercury levels in the drinking water approach 6 million times those expected, and levels of trichloroethene, a chemical that can impair fetal development, exceed EPA safety standards by a factor of 50.

In 2001, Michigan-based chemical corporation Dow Chemical purchased Union Carbide, thereby acquiring its assets and liabilities. However Dow has refused to clean up the site, provide safe drinking water, compensate the victims, or disclose the composition of the gas leak, information that could potentially save many lives.

Dressed in white bio-hazard suits and white face masks, Justice for Bhopal members advised students that entry into the Dow Laboratory Building might be unsafe, given Dow's history of environmental contamination. Other members, dressed as waiters, offered "Bhopal water" to passers-by. Told that the water contained a hazardous mix of chemicals, carcinogens, and heavy metals, students were required to sign a liability waiver in order to sample it. Not surprisingly, most declined.

"Dow's refusal to provide safe drinking water to the people of Bhopal is truly shocking," said Nidhip Patel, co-facilitator of the Justice for Bhopal group. "The University of Michigan should wash its hands of the company; every dollar that we accept from Dow is a dollar that's not being spent to clean up the contamination or protect the health of the people of Bhopal. Too many people have died for U-Mich to continue business-as-usual."

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Letter to the Editor Example #1:

Below is a great sample Letter to the Editor written by Nityanand Jayaraman protesting Dow's sponsorship of the Hindu Music Festival. It is effective because it is passionate, factual, concise and localized.

Dear Editor:

I was shocked to read that Dow Chemical is sponsoring The Hindu Music Festival this year. Dow Chemical is the owner of Union Carbide, which was declared a fugitive from Indian courts in 1991, and is wanted for culpable homicide in relation to the 1984 Bhopal gas disaster. Dow has been personally shielding the fugitive, and has prolonged the misery of the gas victims by refusing to clean up the toxic wastes in Bhopal. In 2007, Dow was caught for having paid Rs. 80 lakhs in bribes to Indian agriculture ministry officials to expedite registration of three pesticides, including Dursban, which was withdrawn from domestic use in the US owing to its effects on the brains of developing children. The Hindu and Frontline have been consistent and sensitive in reporting on Bhopal. Does this new partnership with Dow Chemical, on the eve of the 25th anniversary of the Bhopal disaster, symbolize a new phase in The Hindu group's reporting on the Bhopal issue? I would urge The Hindu to resist the financial temptation offered by Dow and return their money.

Sincerely,

Nityanand Jayaraman

Letter to the Editor Example #2

Below is a great sample Letter to the Editor that you could adapt that covers the Bhopal issue more broadly.

Dear Editor,

This December 3rd marks [] years of corporate irresponsibility. Since the Bhopal disaster occurred in 1984, more than 23,000 people have died and more than 100,000 people have been left chronically ill either because they were directly exposed to the toxic gas or because they continue to live with contaminated groundwater. Dow Chemical Company, who took ownership of Union Carbide, refuses to take responsibility.

This issue is crucial because it has huge implications for the chemical industry, globalization, and human rights. As a local [student, community member, mother, etc.], I am organizing with [people can insert own short message here]. We demand that Dow take responsibility for the disaster and show some congruence with their supposed values. After [] long years of injustice, it is time that Dow finally owns up to their catastrophic mistake and shows some heart.

Sincerely,

[Name]