

RESOURCES RELATED TO THE EARTHQUAKES' 2019 BLACKROCK ACTION

"Eating Money" action template

Aims

To draw attention to the role of BlackRock and other players in the financial sector in funding the destruction of the planet.

In particular, to encourage questions and change from within BlackRock (or other such companies).

Overview

Rebels dressed in smart office attire set up a dining table complete with white tablecloth and plates of paper/edible money. A banner is held up behind them with the words "When the last tree is cut down, the last fish caught and the last river poisoned, you will realise that you cannot eat money." Three rebels sit at the table tucking into the money whilst performing as greedy, ecocidal financiers.

If appropriate, activist(s) glue on to the front of the building.

Activists carry placards emphasising main messages i.e. "BlackRock – the biggest backer of climate and rainforest destruction" or "Barclays – Europe's biggest financier of fossil fuels".

This action first took place outside BlackRock's London HQ in October 2019 and a few weeks later outside the HQ of Hargreaves Lansdown.

Pandemic considerations and adaptations

As we are now in a pandemic situation, safe social distancing is important. Activist should be wearing masks unless they are the diners (possibly two diners rather than three?) and, for instance, diners could each have their own stash of fake paper money or edible money (available from cake decoration companies) rather than a shared source.

When and where to stage

To be performed outside the worst offending, ecocidal companies in the financial sector. One to two hours over lunch time means you are more likely to engage with staff.

Resources required

- One large banner with the "When the last tree is cut..." quote
- Placards (neck or hand-held depending on whether you need to be unobtrusive en route)
- Fold up table
- White tablecloth with company logo on front drop
- Plate, glasses and cutlery for each diner
- water jug
- candle stick or flowers
- fake money
- a silver tray or cloche for waiter serving water and fake money.

- Press releases – important - suitable for different media outlets e.g. for Financial Times, local papers and social media; letter to the CEO/Board
- Flyers, perhaps designed to look like company fake £10 notes (see Resources below).

Many of the resources are available from the EarthQuakes affinity group in Bristol who created this action and are happy to lend their resources and support to other groups who wish to do their own versions of this action, including help with adapting the Money Flyer for use with a different target company e.g. for Barclays/Sharklays.

You can contact the group via sharklays.co.uk/home/contact.

Roles required

Practical roles:

- Coordinator
- Painters/artists to create banners, logo/other message (e.g. campaign website address) on front drop of tablecloth, placards, flyers/fake money etc (see above and links below for help with this)
- Legal Observer(s)
- Bag Minder to keep bags safe and out of sight until after action
- Well-Being Co-ordinator
- Arrestee(s) and arrestee support if the group think that this is appropriate at this time
- Writers to write letter to e.g. CEO and press releases and flyer
- Person to attempt to hand in letter to targeted company
- Leaflet/flyer distributor(s)

Performance roles:

- Three or two Diners/Performers to set up the table with white tablecloth (with company logo visible on front) and to be able to comfortably ad lib performing as greedy, ecocidal Board Members tucking into their ill-gotten money – i.e. bark orders at waiter, pretend to ring a dealer, guffaw and congratulate each other about how you have made your profits
- Waiter – to be part of the performance and ensure water is offered and money (in silver cloche) is proffered
- Two banner holders standing behind the diners with the powerful quote
- Rebels wearing or holding placards
- Press Spokespeople
- Videographers, photographers and live-streamers

Tips/lessons learned

- All participants to remember to pose for good 'framed' still shots (e.g. diners stuffing their mouths with money with company office, logo and quote clearly visible and waiter offering a cloche-full of money).
- Important that good video and photo footage taken of the words on each placards and flipchart as well as the action. More thoughts [here](#).
- All participants to do background reading re the target company so that there are some good quotes from activists (e.g. if targeting Barclays, look on the Sharklays website www.sharklays.co.uk)

Resources available for you to use:



Videos of BlackRock Action: [click here](#) and [here](#)

Letter to Head of UK BlackRock: [click here](#)



Photos of Action: [click here](#)



BlackRock/PetroDollar Money examples – could be adapted for other target companies

- Print money on both sides for “Eating Money” actions so that it can’t appear the wrong way up in photos/film - ie, it is always obvious that it is money
- Print Money on one side and flyer text on reverse for use as an information handout at the scene:

[click here](#)

Arrestee Statement

First of all, I want to apologise for adding to the work and stress levels of police officers., especially in the light of cutbacks and the additional pressures they face at this time. As a 57-year-old wife, daughter, mother, step mum and grandmother it gives me no pleasure to break the law and risk getting my first criminal conviction.

I have worked for 26 years with young people (mostly as a Careers Adviser and Connexions Personal Adviser) trying to help teenagers achieve their best possible futures. I am passionate about my job and giving young people that extra support and guidance. However, I know very well that on our current climate change trajectory and with ‘business as usual’, our civilisation has very little future ahead of it.

As a Quaker, mum and granny, and as someone who rather late in the day has properly listened to the scientists and grasped the true scale of what we are facing; as someone who loves the natural world and wants the best for future generations, I feel that I have to do what little I can within the small window of hope that we have before our precious planet reaches a ‘tipping point’ and it really is too late.

The thousands of staff working for BlackRock are, many of them, working hard to provide for their children's futures. Many of them may be unaware that their company is one of the major contributors to the destruction of their planet.

BlackRock is the world's largest asset management company. It manages assets worth 6.5 trillion dollars, more than the world's third largest economy. BlackRock stokes the fires that are destroying our planet. It invests in companies that use deforestation to produce beef, soy, palm oil, rubber and timber. It is also the world's largest investor in coal mines, coal-fired utilities and oil and gas companies .

The American environmentalist Bill McKibben says that if BlackRock "simply decided to exclude fossil-fuel stocks from its main funds - or if it even just decided to underweight the stocks - it would send a message like no other".

Due to the massive scale of its financial holdings, BlackRock literally has the power to determine whether our planet remains habitable or not.

XR calls on Larry Fink and BlackRock's 13,000 other employees, its countless investors and shareholders, to wake up and smell the smoke. Recognise that the world's unprecedented Climate and Ecological Emergency is induced by the hydrocarbon industries and deforestation-risk companies they mistakenly invest in. Instead of committing ecocide and other crimes against humanity, we call on BlackRock to end the destruction and send the world and our struggling ecosystems a message like no other – a message of hope.

I am a conscientious protector of our precious planet – I act non-violently on behalf of those in the global south who are already suffering and dying due to climate change and for my baby granddaughter and future generations. I was the co-ordinator for this action. I have no doubt that my actions outside BlackRock were morally justified. I was wearing a placard stating "BlackRock – profiteering from Earth's Destruction." I hope that, before it is too late, that there will be an ecocide law that criminalizes senior management of companies like BlackRock – not people like me - if they do not choose to act responsibly themselves.

What I have done today is, to me, Quaker Faith in Action. As a Quaker and a Christian and a conscientious protector of our planet and our children's futures, I need, in Quaker words, to "speak truth to power". BlackRock were targeted by a peaceful protest by Extinction Rebellion activists from four different XR affinity groups. We are from all walks of life including doctors, a retired headteacher, artists, a builder, librarian, careers adviser and businessmen. In our action we were dressed in smart office attire to emphasise that we are not 'the other'. Our action was around the well-known and wise Native American quote "when you cut down the last trees, eat the last fish and poison the last river, you will realise that you cannot eat money."

Jo Flanagan

Some lessons learnt – with special emphasis on targeting the financial sector

I just have a few ideas/reflections following co-ordinating the Titanic Action and the BlackRock Action and you can decide whether any of this could be useful or not:-

Firstly, after co-ordinating the XR Titanic Action with Annika <https://ecohustler.com/article/titanic-flash-mob-call-for-immediate-action-on-climate-change> I reflected on ways I could improve and asked for honest

feedback from one sympathetic freelance photographer I had persuaded to attend. He hadn't been able to use many of his photos. In essence, the main point was that I hadn't 'framed' the action/performance to make it easy for him to get it into print. The shot was simply too wide. I had far too many placards and too much simultaneous action.

For the BlackRock Action in London in October 2019 I focussed on my main aim which was to further damage BlackRock's reputation and get as much negative publicity about their destructive investment practices as possible. I worked hard to get all of the strands of media working together including asking one of our rebel group, as soon as the action had started, to hotfoot it to the offices of the Financial Times to try (successfully) to persuade one of their journalist to attend and cover the action. Our action rebels Mark, Sue, Richard and Clara all did a brilliant job in getting the action covered as did Bristol M&M and XR nationally. I liaised with another sympathetic group in America (the wonderful Sunrise Project) who provided me with some very helpful advice and guidance and agreed to provide a videographer and helped to get the story out there internationally. All media-tasked rebels had press releases **ready to go** (differently geared for local, tabloid, and international media), plus photographs, live-streaming, articles and letters and leaflets (beautifully researched by Hilary in our group) and ready to use very quickly and I tried to **facilitate them all to work together and share materials with each other.**

Some more thoughts/ideas below for getting more effective coverage for XR and the Climate Emergency:-

Dress Smartly

I asked the 24 XR participants to dress up in smart office clothes - partly to get them through the 250 security cameras around the City of London, and partly so that world financiers and others couldn't so readily dismiss our arguments and us as 'the other' and could, perhaps, identify themselves in the rebel diners.

I know that readers of the Daily Mailicious and others will often dismiss XR and our arguments anyway but in order to widen our support and so that we are not just preaching to the converted I reckon that donning 'rebel suits' and dressing up for demos (whilst being warm and comfortable) is often a good idea anyway and can help overcome prejudices and win wider support for XR.

Be an outside observer

After decades of being an activist I have now got used to crossing the road of any march or action and looking in on it as an outsider. Asking myself questions such as "would passers-by know what this action was about?" (I sometimes at this point suggest that banners/placards etc are turned to face the on-lookers). Too often the messages are missing or preaching to the converted and/or mean nothing to an outsider. Too often actions are missing clarity, originality and humour – all ways of getting our urgent messages across (and this is not to dismiss some absolutely brilliant XR actions and messaging)

Link the financial sector with Ecocide

I think that the greatest deterrents to CEOs and other Ecocidal leaders could be the deterrent of a future Ecocide Law. This could also support the financial sector boards and governments to steer away from a profit at all costs policy. XR getting fully behind the Stop Ecocide Campaign would be a massive push in the right direction. I deliberately mentioned Ecocide at the time of my un-gluing at BlackRock. Sometimes financial sector and government leaders need support to move away from old, destructive ways and the threat of future legal action and potential imprisonment could be an extremely valuable tool – for them as well as us.

Frame your shots

I deliberately 'stage managed' the action so that in one shot photographers could get everything needed for a powerful image ie the diners seated eating their platefuls of money; 'BlackRock' emblazoned across the front

drop of the tablecloth; BlackRock's HQ and logo behind; and also within the shot the banner with the powerful quote "when you cut down the last tree, eat the last fish and poison the last river you will realize that you cannot eat money." I had just 3 main messages on the neck placards. I asked the 'diners' to pose every few minutes with money half in their mouths so that the photographers could take good shots.

Within one photo was the emotive quote, some stark facts, BlackRock's office and logo and humour (and an arrestee).

I hope these reflections (or maybe some of them) are useful – good luck with your targeting of the all-important financial sector 😊

Love and Rebellion

Jo x

Further resources and action templates can be found here- <https://sharklays.co.uk/Home/Resources>