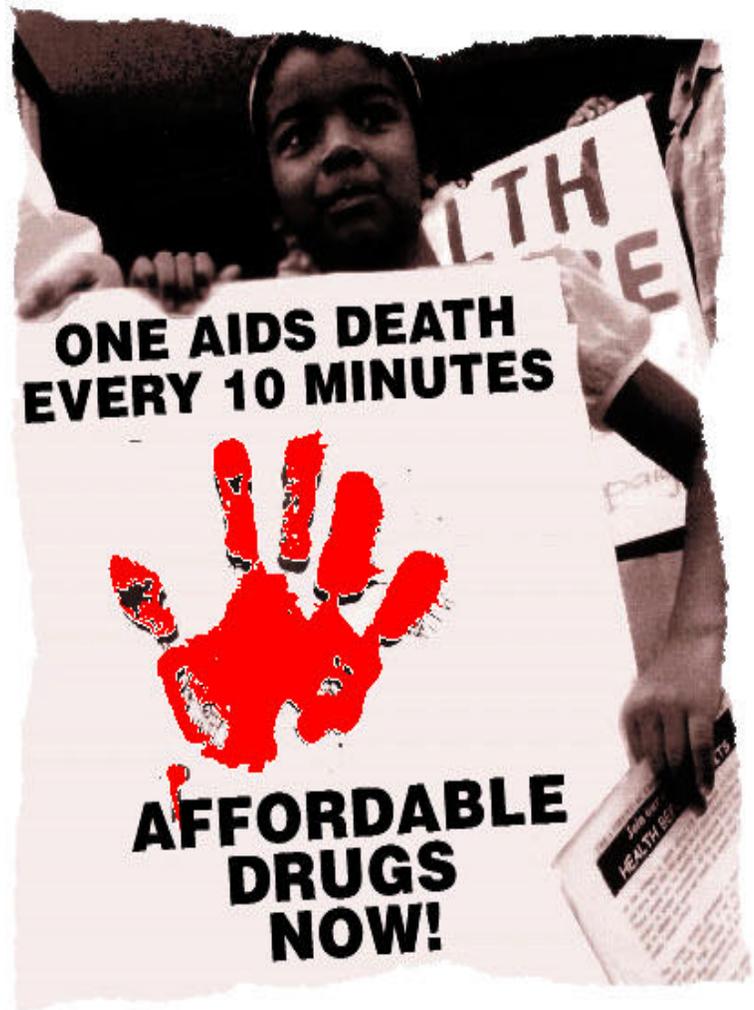


**DROP THE  
DEBT!  
DROP THE  
PRICES!**



**DON'T BE PART OF THE AIDS CRISIS!**

**JOIN THE  
BOSTON GLOBAL ACTION NETWORK**

The Boston Global Action Network is bringing the "spirit of Seattle" to Boston. Labor, environmental, community, and direct action groups work together on protests, teach-ins, and building a movement to end corporate globalization.

If your organization, affinity group, or association would like to coordinate with other likeminded groups on issues related to global justice and on local efforts to combat corporate globalization, please consider joining BGAN as a member organization. BGAN's coordinating committee holds monthly open meetings where member groups set its course. Organizational dues are \$25. Contact us at [info@bostonglobalaction.org](mailto:info@bostonglobalaction.org)

## BOSTON ACTIVISTS ACT UP ON PRAGUE SOLIDARITY DAY

"Drop the debt! Drop the prices!" was the rallying cry of Boston-area activists who took on Pfizer, Inc. as part of global S26 solidarity actions.

[Sept. 26, Cambridge, Mass.] -- As part of the September 26 International Day of Action in solidarity with IMF/World Bank protests in Prague, Boston-area activists targeted Pfizer, one of the largest and most rapacious pharmaceutical corporations in the world.

Approximately 150 people of diverse ages and activist groups including Jobs with Justice, Jubilee 2000, International Action Center, Oxfam America, local anarchist collectives, and AIDS activists assembled in the pouring rain at the MIT Student Center to listen to various speakers before beginning their march. **Cassie Watters** of Jobs With Justice and **Melissa Hagan** of Bank Busters, both member organizations of the Boston Global Action Network, facilitated the speeches, while Equal Exchange provided fair trade coffee.

Several more invited guests rounded out the speakers' list upon arriving at Pfizer offices on Memorial Drive after a 30-minute spirited but orderly march against corporate greed. Coffins and tombstones were carried to graphically illustrate the AIDS death toll and Pfizer's complicity, while puppets and banners blasted the IMF/World Bank and called for cancellation of the debt. No untoward incident was reported and Food Not Bombs was at hand to feed the wet, but cheerful demonstrators.

### "Speakers Link Debt, Corporate Greed, and Democracy Issues"

**Saurabh Asthana**, a representative of the MIT Social Justice Cooperative welcomed the marchers to the campus and cited the importance of community and solidarity ideals for activists. Professor **Jonathan King** spoke on the biotech industry's increasing corporate control over all aspects of human life, from pharmaceuticals to agriculture, and the theft of genetic resources from indigenous peoples. He gave an impassioned defense of scientific discovery, while simultaneously warning against the influence of corporate monies and private interests that are undermining and corrupting science.

**Kenneth Johnson** of the Ella Baker House, named after a heroic civil rights crusader, focused more specifically on the AIDS crisis. His remarks on the outrageous behaviour of drug companies, who have continued to put profits over people, illuminated the real issues in the current debate over pharmaceutical prices. However, he inveighed against complete cynicism, calling on the average citizen to bring pressure to bear on politicians through the political process.

**Andrea Lee** of Greater Boston NOW joined the other speakers, choosing to alert the audience to the upcoming World Women's March in mid-October. The march hopes to link women around the world in solidarity against deepening poverty and violence that have affected women disproportionately in this era of corporate globalisation.

Economist **Kiaran Honderich**, fresh from her eight-month fact-finding tour to Southern Africa, ascribed the AIDS crisis to three principle determinants: 1) the destructive impact on social structures of Apartheid era labour policies, exacerbated today by IMF and US-sponsored export-led growth; 2) the laying waste of public health budgets by debt servicing; and 3) the genocidal priorities of pharmaceutical companies, whose price-fixing and patents make it impossible for more than 95% of the African population to afford any form of treatment.

**Brook Baker**, a law professor at Northeastern University, concurred and read aloud greetings from the Treatment Access Campaign that has spearheaded actions in South Africa for access to affordable drugs. In July, TAC staged a 9,000 strong demonstration in Durban, South Africa ahead of the 13th International AIDS Conference, and has continued to push Pfizer and other pharmaceutical companies to lower prices or stop blocking the importation and production of generic drugs. TAC applauded the protesters and expressed deep appreciation and solidarity with their aims.

Ending the first segment, **Tim Atwater**, Methodist Minister and coordinator for Jubilee 2000 Northeast, led the gathered marchers in a rousing linking of the debt and pricing issues. Rev. Atwater, cited the "Drop the Debt! Drop the Prices!" slogan of the demonstration, initiating the march on a spiritual note, calling attention to the human suffering caused by the crushing debt burden and withheld treatment for AIDS.

At Pfizer's offices, **Andres Barrada**, a professor from Mexico, **Basav Sen**, a global economic justice advocate from India, and **Herbert Jean-Baptiste** an SEIU union organizer with local 285 from Haiti, joined together to talk more specifically about the theme of the Prague demonstrations. Each relayed how IMF and World Bank policies worked to undermine their respective countries' economic sovereignty while imposing brutal structural adjustment programs in the name of debt relief and poverty alleviation. These, in conjunction with neoliberal economic policies also encouraged by global financial institutions, worked to pauperize much of the population through mass unemployment, selling off of natural resources, and privatization of the public sector.

**Phil Mamber** of Massachusetts Senior Action focused on the repercussions of the pharmaceutical monopolies in this country, and how they have set prices so high that seniors must choose between food, paying the rent, and drugs on a month-to-month basis. He invited the marchers, most of whom were young, to join in an intergenerational protest against Pfizer the following Monday, October 2.

**David Scondras**, a long-time AIDS activist now with Search for a Cure, closed out the demonstration by pointing out the particular absurdity of drug company claims that research would suffer as result of lower profits. He described how most of the AIDS drugs patented and sold at astronomical rates by pharmaceutical companies were in fact developed in government or university labs, funded primarily from public, taxpayer sources. He felt that the pharmaceutical industry was violating even free market norms, by imposing their monopoly and blocking open competition, while inflating their figures on research spending and pouring money into political campaigns in a bid to influence government policy in the face of extreme public outrage.