**Fight BP’s pink-washing**

*A briefing for LGBTQ rights campaigners*

*by No Pride In BP, Platform and People & Planet*

---

**Pinkwashing:**

*(n.*) a public relations tactic, involving an appeal to LGBT-friendliness, in order to offset or ‘wash’ over other questionable practices

---

**Is BP a queer-friendly company?**

“proud to be a business where you can be yourself” - BP website

- BP sponsored National Student Pride in the UK in 2015-2016
- BP is on Stonewall’s [Top 100 Employers list](#) and puts on LGBT recruitment events with Stonewall, as well as at universities across the UK
- John Browne, BP CEO of 12 years, recently published a book called *The Glass Closet* (seriously), “to shine a light on the difficulties that still plague LGBT employees”

---

In recent years fossil fuel company BP has – for strategic reasons – tried to foster an image of being pro-LGBT+ rights. BP is using the queer community as a prop to legitimise their business model - that depends on propping up repressive politicians and as well as dangerous levels of fossil fuel burning. The rest of this booklet will show how, and what we can do about it.

By allowing BP to sponsor Pride events and our student LGBTQ+ societies, we give BP permission to ride on the back of LGBTQ+ struggle; cheaply using our pride as a trade off for human rights abuses around the world. It’s time to refuse BP’s logo on our pride.
BP’s real queer rights record: enables crackdown in Egypt

BP is the largest foreign investor in Egypt with a $12bn gas deal, placing them as the largest contributor to the military regime of Abdel Fattah el-Sisi. Over the past two years El-Sisi’s regime has become increasingly threatening to the lives of trans and queer Egyptians.

- In March 2015, seven trans people were arrested for ‘debauchery’, after police used fake dating profiles to lure them to a nightclub. Fake web pages had been created to entrap them. Over 150 trans Egyptians are known to have been jailed.
- The regime has instructed Egyptian media to increase anti-gay coverage. Egyptian police and pro-government media repeatedly collaborated on raiding bath houses to round up gay men. Their arrests were broadcast on TV.

BP’s stance is not simply shutting its eyes on the repression: it actively props up el-Sisi’s regime with intensified support. While BP claims to be responsible for 30% of Egypt’s natural gas output, it is also pushing for further concessions in the West Nile Delta and negotiating to start drilling in the recently discovered Atoll field.

In April 2016 - at the same time as BP was finalizing its gas deal with the regime - an Egyptian court sentenced 11 men to prison for ‘debauchery’, with sentences ranging from 3 to 12 years.
BP’s real queer rights record: puts homophobes into US congress

BP and its employees donate a sizeable amount of money for US election campaigns. In the last two election cycles (2014 and 2016), the only two congressmen to remain in BP’s top five donation recipients were:

**John Culberson, Texas congressman.** In 1993 Culberson signed onto a ‘friend of the court’ statement that “called homosexuality a psychiatric condition that ‘endangers the public health.’ [It states] homosexuality is ‘closely associated with other anti-social, deleterious behavior.’” Culberson has never openly renounced this stance.

Culberson in 2009: “Now, personally, I think — and it’s I think also self-evident — that you’ve got to have a marriage between a man and woman or society’s not going to make it.” Culberson counts BP as his biggest donor.

**John Cornyn, Texas congressman.** Cornyn is known for the following stance on same-sex marriage: "It does not affect your daily life very much if your neighbor marries a box turtle. But that does not mean it is right. . . . Now you must raise your children up in a world where that union of man and box turtle is on the same legal footing as man and wife."

Culberson and Cornyn both were elected on the Texas Republican Party 2014 platform, which stated that "Homosexuality is a chosen behavior that is contrary to the fundamental unchanging truths that have been ordained by God" and that it “must not be presented as an acceptable alternative lifestyle.” The platform also promotes so-called “reparative therapy” for queer people.

These congressmen have since then voted against laws to protect queer and trans people from discrimination, as well as against equal marriage rights. BP is helping political candidates get elected, who then use their positions to attack LGBTQ people.

With Donald Trump in office, BP’s congress protegees (including John Cornyn, John Culberson, Mitch McConnell, Paul Ryan) will now be supporting his homophobic, transphobic, racist, and climate denialist agenda.
Destructive business

BP's pinkwashing aims to make the company acceptable to potential employees, business partners and customers.

BP runs Pride floats and LGBTQ recruitment events to position itself as a “responsible company”. Meanwhile, it maintains homophobic and transphobic politicians, from congressman John Culberson to Egyptian dictator Abdel Fattah el Sisi in office.

BP's pinkwashing is a distraction from the company's core business model: continued drilling for oil that displaces indigenous people from their lands and pollutes waterways, and has communities across the Gulf of Mexico their livelihoods and health after the Deepwater Horizon disaster.

BP's pinkwashing strategy asks its audience to forget that BP's business plan depends on burning more fossil fuels than is possible within a “safe” two-degree global warming scenario.

BP's pinkwashing asks us to pretend that as long as BP runs an LGBT recruitment fair in London, it is OK to remove front-line communities from their homes in the quest for extraction and profit in other parts of the world.
BP uses a similar strategy by branding arts and cultural institutions in London. This has sparked resistance, leading several institutions to sever their ties with BP.

**It’s time for LGBTQ organisations and student groups to reject BP branding, too.**

---

**What you can do**

**Kick BP out of student career fairs**
We can inform every potential employee of BP’s human rights record, or convince career fairs to not accept BP stalls.

**Make sure our wider LGBTQ community isn’t buying BP’s pinkwash!**
We can call on queer organisations to stop wearing the BP brand and accepting BP sponsorship. National Student Pride finally dropped BP as a ‘platinum sponsor’ after two years of protest by students, and Oxford students’ LGBTQ+ society has rejected BP sponsorship. Write to your LGBTQ student society (and other organisations) to make sure they follow suit.

**Call on LGBTQ staff in BP to get BP’s donations to homophobic senators stopped**
Sign this open letter: [http://bit.ly/2kYmFv2](http://bit.ly/2kYmFv2)

Congressman John Culberson counts BP as his biggest donor and is known for saying “You’ve got to have marriage between a man and a woman or society is not going to make it.”