

*The story of two people who wouldn't say McSorry*

Produced and Directed by  
Franny Armstrong

Produced by  
Spanner Films

Dramatic Scenes  
Directed by Ken Loach

**U.S.A. Opening: May 20, 2005**  
**Running Time: 85 minutes**

**PUBLICITY CONTACT:**

Meredith Emmanuel / Beth Portello  
Cinema Libre Studio  
8328 De Soto Avenue  
Canoga Park, Ca 91304  
PH: 818-349-8822  
FX: 818-349-9922  
meredith@cinemalibrestudio.com

**DISTRIBUTOR CONTACT:**

Adam Chapnick  
Cinema Libre Distribution  
8328 De Soto Avenue  
Canoga Park, Ca 91304  
PH: 818-349-8822  
FX: 818-349-9922  
achapnick@cinemalibrestudio.com



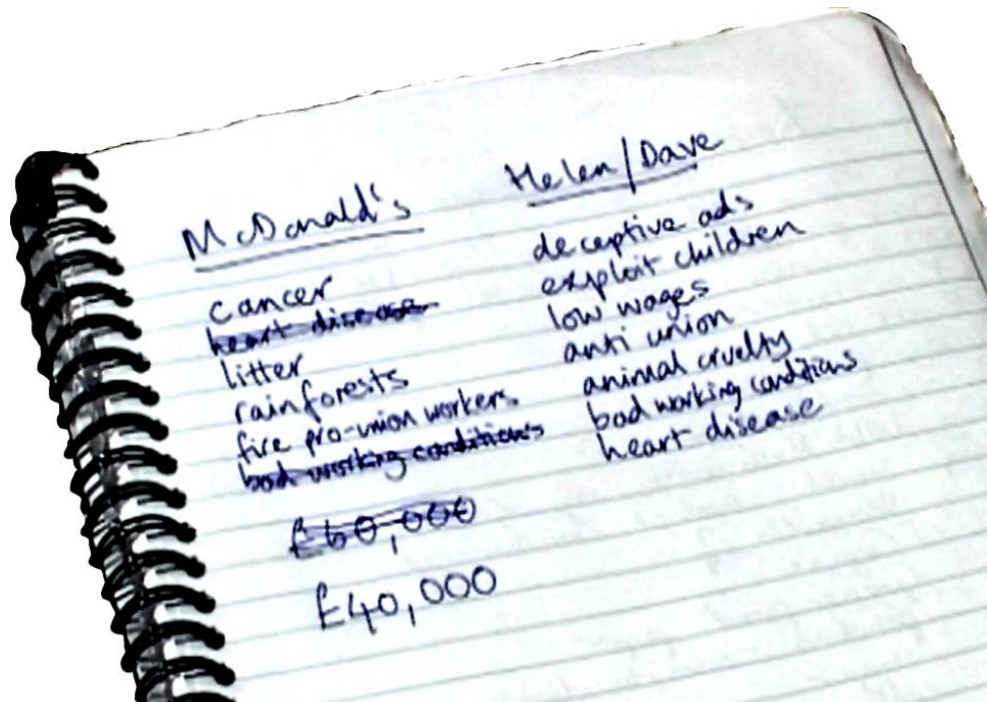
**li·bel** (lɪˈbəl)

*n.*

- 1) a. A false publication, as in writing, print, signs, or pictures, that damages a person's reputation.
- b. The act of presenting such material to the public.

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[Middle English, *litigant's written complaint*, from Old French, from Latin *libellus*, diminutive of *liber*, *book*.]



## **SYNOPSIS**

**McLibel** is the story of two ordinary people who stood up to the multinational power of McDonald's in the biggest corporate PR disaster in history.

Filmed over a 10-year period, the documentary follows the lives of Helen Steel and Dave Morris as they are transformed from anonymous non-profit activists into unlikely global heroes, defending themselves through what became the longest trial in English history.

Director Franny Armstrong documents the McLibel case's drama and intrigue with compelling, behind-the-scenes detail, while highlighting the film's key issue: The people's right to freedom of speech in the face of massive corporate globalization.

In 1986, a non-profit group named London Greenpeace (LGP) produced a leaflet called "What's Wrong With McDonald's? Everything They Don't Want You to Know," attacking many aspects of the corporation's business practices. Morris and Steel were members of the group.

Soon after the leaflets appeared, McDonald's hired spies to infiltrate LGP. Under UK law, non-profit organizations are invulnerable to libel suits. The "McSpies" collected information on the identities and home addresses of LGP activists, reporting back to McDonald's, who in turn sued five of the group's members individually.

McDonald's offered the individuals a stark choice: retract the allegations made in the leaflet and apologize, or go to court.

With no money nor legal experience, and little hope of defeating McDonald's Goliath legal team, three of the five members reluctantly backed out and issued apologies. Steel and Morris determined they would not be bullied. "It just really stuck in my throat to apologize to McDonald's," says Steel. "I thought it was them who should be apologizing to society for the damage they do."

The pair decided to stand up to the burger giant in court and set out upon a journey that would change their lives forever. They soon became known as the McLibel 2.

Over the next three years in court, Steel and Morris faced seemingly insurmountable odds. Extensive research, 40,000 pages of background reading, intense media scrutiny and family/financial challenges, combined with court preparations, hearings and appeals, pushed Steel and Morris beyond exhaustion. They were up against libel laws stacked in favor of McDonald's. The two were denied legal assistance and the right to a trial by jury.

Outside the courtroom, Morris raised his young son, Charlie, alone while Steel supported herself working part time in a bar at night. McDonald's tried every trick in the book against them. The hamburger behemoth spared no expense, paying an estimated USD \$20 million in legal fees and putting costly experts, company executives and board members in the witness box.

As the trial progressed, a devoted group of supporters grew around Steel and Morris. The supporter's efforts aided more than 70 witnesses to testify on the pair's behalf in court, including; internationally renowned experts, nutritionists, environmentalists, cattle ranchers, ex-McDonald's workers, turncoat "McSpies" and a former Ronald McDonald actor from the US.





Through interviews with key witnesses and exploration of related events, **McLibel** explores the key issues of the case:

- Are McDonald's products healthy and nutritious – as its ads have claimed – or is it junk food?
- Are high-fat diets linked to heart disease, cancer and obesity?
- Does McDonald's advertising exploit children?
- Are McDonald's suppliers cruel to animals?
- Does cattle ranching and disposable packaging damage the environment?
- Does having a McJob mean low wages, no unions and bad working conditions?

For the first time in history, a multinational corporation's business practices were put on trial as McDonald's internal policies and procedures were opened up to public scrutiny. And a very different McDonald's emerged than that which is portrayed via its annual \$2 billion advertising budget.

Meanwhile, outside the courtroom, the publicity, controversy and protests grew, with millions of the now notorious "What's Wrong With McDonald's" leaflets being handed out all over the world.

Volunteers helped create and maintain the now famous **www.McSpotlight.org** website ("The blueprint for all activist sites" – Wired Magazine), providing up-to-the minute information to millions of people worldwide (including the media) that became fascinated with the case.

As the negative publicity spiraled out of control, McDonald's top executives flew to London from the U.S. for secret talks with Steel and Morris in an attempt to settle out of court. No chance. The talks were secretly taped and are featured in **McLibel**.

The McLibel trial lasted 313 days and, along with a 23-day appeal in 1999, resulted in a mixed verdict, with damning rulings made against McDonald's core business practices. The McLibel 2 were ordered to pay £40,000 damages (USD \$76,000), but refused to pay, declaring McDonald's "didn't deserve a penny."

At the end of the trial, the case was described by commentators as "the worst corporate PR disaster in history." McDonald's backed down from applying for an injunction to prevent the pair from leafleting; sending the McLibel 2 to jail would not improve public opinion about the company.

On Sept. 20, 2000, the McLibel 2 launched a new case (known as Steel and Morris vs. UK) against the UK Government in the European Court of Human Rights. They argued the marathon McLibel trial and UK libel laws breached the European Convention on Human Rights Article 6 (Right to a Fair Trial) and Article 10 (Right to Freedom of Expression). Steel and Morris traveled by train to Strasbourg – this time supported by a team of lawyers – for the hearing.

Finally, on Feb. 15, 2005, the McLibel 2 received e-mail notification that they had won the final stage of their legal marathon. The European Court of Human Rights declared the case had breached their rights to a fair trial and freedom of expression. Specifically, it ruled UK laws had failed to protect an individual's right to criticize massive corporations whose business practices can affect people's lives, health and the environment. This moment of triumph is the final scene in the movie.



McLibel is not about hamburgers: McLibel is about freedom of speech, multinational corporations, the power they wield over our everyday lives and how two brave people are changing the world.

**DIRECTOR'S INTRODUCTION**



In 1996, when I was a pop drummer, I read about a trial starting in my home city of London. McDonald's was suing a gardener and postman for libel. My dad was a filmmaker who had recently defected to the Internet and foolishly left his camera and editing equipment lying around.

I asked the McLibel defendants, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, if I could make a documentary about the trial. But eight production companies were already fighting over the story. I was too late, so I went back to my drums and day job.

Some time later, Dave called and said that all the companies had dropped out. Then he asked me the kind of question that can change your life: "Why does not having any money stop you from making a film?"

So I quit my day job, moved back home with dad, borrowed his camera, set up a TV production company, rounded up some volunteers and got to it.

Two years later, the case was ambling its way towards becoming the longest in English history. We had no money and no backing from the TV industry, which was frightened of being sued for libel too. So we raised funds by selling our footage to news stations round the world – and begging for donations.

As the trial became more famous, the BBC decided it would like to buy my film. It scheduled it in a great time slot on BBC1 a few days after the verdict, but decided to pull out upon legal advice. Channel 4 tried to pick it up next, but was also advised it was, legally, too hot to handle.

So with no UK broadcast, we distributed a 52 minute version of the film in the new way: on eight mainstream TV channels worldwide, countless cable and satellite channels, streaming on our website (1,500 viewers each month), at film festivals, schools and colleges and at community screenings around the world. From Peru to Slovenia, China to Turkey, 26 million people saw the original documentary.

I foolishly thought that might be the end of my McLibel experience. But in 2004, I took another life-changing call from Dave Morris. He and Helen were off to the European Court of Human Rights in September. Then, with impeccable timing, Cinema Libre Studio offered to distribute the film theatrically in America, if I could cut a feature-length, all-inclusive version.

Six months later Helen and Dave beat the British Government in the European Court. The newly edited film is a thousand times better – I've had a bit of practice since I made the first version – and the film will finally be broadcast in the UK and hopefully 24 other countries.

More importantly, public awareness about multinational corporations' business practices has increased exponentially. Hard-hitting films like "The Corporation" and "Super Size Me," along with explosive books such as "Fast Food Nation" are global bestsellers. And the big McLibel issues – the dangers of eating junk food and exploitive advertising to children – are now mainstream public interest issues.

Who said ordinary people can't change the world?

*Franny Armstrong, Director  
London, March 2005*

**A NOTE FROM HELEN AND DAVE**

Dear Reader,

We are delighted to hear the **McLibel** documentary is to be shown in America. It's an excellent account of our long and finally successful battle with the McDonald's Corporation and the UK legal system. We hope that many people will take the time to see it.

McDonald's is planning to celebrate its 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary this year. But what is there to celebrate?

50 years of junk food? McJobs? Litter? Idiotic advertising? Brainwashing our kids? Cruelty to animals?

McDonald's has been raking in the profits for 50 years and society has paid the price, as proven by the damning judgements we won against it in our case. We think people should look forward to its funeral, not its birthday.

The real celebration should be that for the past 20 years, since the first ever International Day of Action Against McDonald's in 1985, there has been growing public concern and debate about the business practices of the fast food industry.

Anti-McDonald's leaflets – initially given out in thousands when McDonald's sued us hoping to halt their distribution - are now distributed in millions! These ongoing protests are an example of "people power," in which ordinary people around the world are questioning and challenging the organizations that currently dominate our lives, our communities and our planet.

If **McLibel** helps inspire people to question and speak out against McWorld, then our years of effort will have been very much worth it.

*Helen Steel and Dave Morris, The 'McLibel 2'  
London, April 2005*



**WHO'S IN THE FILM**

**Helen Steel**, Co-defendant

**Dave Morris**, Co-defendant

**Eric Schlosser**, Author, "Fast Food Nation"

**Morgan Spurlock**, Director and star of the film "Super Size Me"

**Prof. Colin Campbell**, World Cancer Research Fund. Witness in trial.

**Sue Dibb**, The Food Commission. Witness in trial.

**Dan Gallin**, General Secretary, International Union of Food Workers. Witness in trial.

**Stephen Gardner**, Former Assistant Attorney General, Texas. Witness in trial.

**Geoff Giuliano**, Former Ronald McDonald actor. Witness in trial.

**Charlie Kervons**, age 6 and age 15, son of Dave Morris

**Howard Lyman**, Former cattle rancher turned vegan environmental campaigner. Witness in trial.

**Charles O'Leary**, McSpotlight volunteer

**Paul Preston**, President, McDonald's, UK. Witness in trial.

**Charles Secrett**, Director, Friends of the Earth UK. Witness in trial.

**Keir Starmer QC**, Defendants Voluntary Counsel

**Fran Tiller**, Former private investigator for McDonald's. Witness in trial.

**Mr X, Mr Y and Mr Z**, Three top McDonald's executives recorded in secret settlement negotiations

**CREDITS**

**Produced & Directed by**  
Franny Armstrong

**Editors**  
David G Hill  
Gregers Sall

**Executive Producer**  
Peter Armstrong

**Drama Director**  
Ken Loach

**Assistant Producers**  
Lizzie Gillett  
San Davey

**Assistant Editors**  
Andrew Depledge  
Justin Badger

**Original Music**  
Chris Brierley  
Alfie Thomas  
Johny Brown  
Guy Jackson  
Luminous Frenzy  
Band Of Holy Joy  
The Playthings

**Camera**  
Franny Armstrong  
Peter Armstrong  
Neve Cunningham  
Mick Duffield

**Sound Mix And Dub**  
Neil Hipkiss @ Master Tracks

**Colour Grade**  
James Bamford @ The Mill

**Graphics**  
David G Hill  
Dave Recchia

**Legal**  
Robin Lewis  
Tamsin Allen  
Stephen Grosz  
@ Bindman & Partners

**Sound Recording**  
Ian Macpherson  
Brian Healy

**Additional Camera**  
Jeff Baynes  
Shane Bunce  
Tom Harding  
Lizzie Gillett  
Jamie Lowe  
Katherine Ludlow  
Katherine Miles  
Paul Robinson  
Shangara Singh

**Camera Assistants**  
Jason Gairn  
Carol Brown

**Production Assistants**  
Wendy Dunleavy  
Lottie Gammon  
Annie Morris  
Simon Steven  
Helena Earnshaw  
Sue Wilson  
Diane Gault  
Devin Howse

Phil George

**Drama Coordinator**  
Georgina Isherwood

**Actors**  
Bruce Alexander  
Pip Donaghy  
Ian Flintoff  
Oliver Ford Davies  
Richard Hope  
William Hope  
Linda Mcquire  
Nick Miles  
Fred Pearson  
Malcolm Tierney  
Dave Morris & Helen Steel (as themselves)

**Voice Overs**  
Anita Anand  
Peter Armstrong  
Chris Brierley  
Rhona Cameron  
Wilson Haagens  
Frank Hutson  
Robert Newman  
Simon O'Brien  
Alfie Thomas  
Louise Wallis

**Archive**  
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© Peter Heller, Filmkraft  
© Gabriel Productions Ltd  
© Fauna  
© BBC Television  
© ITN  
© Sky News  
© BBC 24  
Undercurrents.Org

**The Ancient Mariner**  
Written, Performed & Produced by Johny Brown,  
Alfie Thomas & Chris Brierley

**McJazz**  
Written & Performed by Vince Clarke & Chris Rodel.  
Recorded by Glue Ear.

**McSpies**  
Written, Performed & Produced by  
Chris Brierley

**The Planet's Suite**  
Written by Gustav Holst.  
Performed by The Glue Ear  
Symphony Orchestra.

**City Trams**  
Written, Performed & Produced by The Band Of  
Holy Joy

**Microsoft The Opera**  
Written, Performed & Produced by Alfie Thomas

**McFeeling**  
Written, Performed & Produced by Luminous Frenzy

**Someone Shares  
My Dreams**  
Written by Johny Brown,  
Chris Brierley, Alfie Thomas & Rob Hacker.  
Performed & produced by The Band Of Holy Joy.

**Zadoc The Priest**  
Written by G.F.Handel.  
Performed & Produced by Glue Ear.

**Winter From The Four Seasons**  
Written by A.Vivaldi.  
Performed by Kriesler Orchestra.

**The Real Thing**  
Written, Performed & Produced by The Band Of  
Holy Joy

**Rubber Nice**  
Written, Performed & Produced by Guy Jackson

**Liberation**  
Written, Performed & Produced by  
Luminous Frenzy

**The Barber Of Seville**  
Written by Rossini.  
Performed & Produced by Glue Ear.

**Sleepy Time Donald**  
Written by Johny Brown  
& Alfie Thomas.  
Performed by The Society  
of Imaginary Friends.

**Clare**  
Written by Alfie Thomas  
Arranged by Chris Brierley  
Performed by Glue Ear

**Saviour**  
Written And Performed by The Playthings.

**Thanks to**  
Dan Mills, Albert Beale, Suzanne Hamilton, Bill  
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Eve Barker, Mclibel Support Campaign, Eveline  
Lubbers, Marq Wijngaarden, Felipe Rodriguez, Rop  
Gonggrijp, Sam De Silva, Sean Healy, Rob Kenny &  
Curzon Soho, Yassin Rozeman, Joseph Wilson,  
Oscar Winter, Beth O'Lenahan, Oscar & Uccella  
Khan-Thomas, Laurie Emerson-Macdonald, Aran  
Jackson, Alastair Kleboe, Fin Spiteri, Phil Clayton,  
Zac Adam-Richardson, Amy Timms, Abigail Brons-  
Harper, Adam Gray,, Media Foundation, Jessica  
Cheung, Jane Balfour, Nick Cobbing, Neil Starr,  
Fiona Watson, Survival International, Clare Druce &  
Fawn, James Alexander, Paul O'Connor, , Jule  
Hartung, Mark Stephens, Parisa Wright, Anthony  
Hudson,, Fiona Nix, John Battsek , Alex Cooke,  
Alan Hayling, Fiona Caldwell, Chris Christophe,  
Herbert Girardet, Sally Hibbin,, Clear Cut, RGB, The  
Mill, Luminous Frenzy, Glue Ear

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All At Parallax  
All At Hedgerley  
All At Cinema Libre Studio  
All At Bullfrog  
All At Mcspotlight

Everyone Who Lent Equipment  
Everyone Who Donated Money  
Everyone Who Worked For Free

**Double Thanks To**  
Will Ross & Raymond Doherty

Mark Stucke & Gil Scrine  
For distributing the film when nobody else would  
touch it

All Franny's Friends & Family  
For looking interested over the last 10 years

Helen & Dave for inspiration

**But Most Of All**  
To Dad, Taz And Boo for everything



**REVIEWS**

- ✓ A racing plot with more twists than a John le Carre novel ... the perfect 21st century narrative... a wonderfully human tale about two people who simply refused to say sorry and in doing so they changed the world... Brilliant.

*Bermuda Sun Newspaper*

- ✓ Inspirational ... absorbing.

*Chicago Reader*

- ✓ An often-hilarious expose of big business arrogance... and an extraordinary example of independent filmmaking

*Sydney Morning Herald*

- ✓ Will make you think twice about what civil liberties are worth in the corporate era... Powerful.

*Time Out*

- ✓ Very adroit. (4 stars out of 5)

*Sunday Telegraph*

- ✓ "Absolute nonchalance and great pizzazz.... Dynamite."

*IndieWire*

For full text reviews, please visit [www.cinemalibrestudio.com/pressroom/](http://www.cinemalibrestudio.com/pressroom/)

## ***MCLIBEL***

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### **ABOUT THE DIRECTOR**

From age 4, Franny Armstrong knew she was going to be a rock drummer. And indeed she was. Until she read about a trial in which the fast food giants were suing a gardener and postman for libel. So she sadly put down the drumsticks and picked up a video camera. Three years later, in August 1997, Armstrong 's first documentary, 'McLibel', was released to worldwide critical acclaim.

Armstrong's second major documentary, 'Drowned Out', follows the fight against the Narmada Dam in India. She filmed it over three years, battling against illness, rain, solar battery chargers, six language barriers and police arrests. The 75-minute film was runner-up for Best Documentary at the British Independent Film Awards, the OneWorld Media awards and the San Francisco International Film Festival. It too has been broadcast round the world.

DVD Insider predicts Armstrong will be "... one of the key documentary film-makers of our generation..."

Armstrong's films are produced through Spanner Films, an independent TV production company based in London, which she founded in 1999. Working entirely outside the mainstream TV industry, her films have now been seen by a total of 49 million people.

Armstrong has spoken at more than 80 film festivals, seminars and colleges around the world. She has been interviewed for TV news and chat shows (e.g. BBC and ABC Australia) and has written articles for books, newspapers and magazines.

***Drowned Out*** and ***McLibel*** are relevant to several fields of study, including anthropology, Asian studies, human rights, ecology, geography, marketing, business studies, film and media studies. Armstrong regularly lectures at schools, university and community groups and leads discussions about the issues raised in both her films.

Cinema Libre Studio is releasing both **McLibel** and **Drowned Out** theatrically in the USA.

### **ABOUT CINEMA LIBRE**

Cinema Libre Studio is an entertainment company dedicated to creating quality films with global appeal. It is a haven for filmmakers with views, offering one-stop shopping for production, co-production, distribution, marketing and post-production services. Headquartered in Los Angeles, the company has offices in Paris, London, Munich, Rome, Madrid and Tokyo. The company is best known for distributing the films "OutFoxed," "Uncovered: The War on Iraq," "Unconstitutional," "Unprecedented," David O. Russell's "Soldiers Pay" and "WMD: Weapons of Mass Deception." For more information please call the above or visit [www.cinematlibrestudio.com](http://www.cinematlibrestudio.com)

**SCREEN AND BROADCAST BACKGROUND**

The source material for *McLibel* was shown in 1997/8 as *McLibel: Two Worlds Collide*. It was a 52-minute recap of the trial's events to that date. The U.S. and Canadian theatrical and DVD release of *McLibel* is a completely re-cut, fast-paced, 85 minute film, which includes exclusive footage – including the European Court case and verdict and an interview with “Fast Food Nation” author, Eric Schlosser - that has not been seen elsewhere ever before.

***McLibel: Two Worlds Collide - Festivals***

Oxdox (UK)  
Robert Flaherty Seminar (USA)  
The Women On Women Film Festival (Australia)  
Electrofringe 1999 (Australia)  
Next 5 Minutes Festival (Netherlands)  
Belfast Film Festival (Ireland)  
North By Northwest Film Festival (UK)  
Human Rights Watch (USA)  
Sheffield International Documentary Festival (UK)  
Cork International Film Fest (Ireland)  
Winksworth Arts Festival (UK)  
Big Green Gathering (UK)  
Glastonbury Festival (UK)  
Blandford Festival (UK)  
Independent Heroines Feminist Film Festival (UK)

***McLibel: Two Worlds Collide – Television and Radio***

(All screenings are pre-2000)

ERT – NET, National broadcast (Greece)  
RTP, National broadcast (Portugal)  
SBS, National broadcast (Australia)  
Danmarks Radio (Denmark)  
VARA (The Netherlands)  
Roger's Community Channel 4 (Vancouver, Canada)  
Time Warner Cable (San Diego, USA)  
SKA TV Channel 31 (Australia)  
DUTV (Philadelphia, USA)  
Ondes Sans Frontieres Cable (France)  
VKTV (The Netherlands)  
Triangle TV (New Zealand)  
Rogue Valley Television (Orgeon, USA)  
Free Speech TV Channel 34 (New York, USA)  
CTV (Australia)

## Victory for McLibel 2 Against UK Government

### *Verdict of European Court - Campaigners Celebrate 20 Years of Growing Protests Against McWorld*

LONDON - On 15th February, the European Court of Human Rights in Strasbourg declared that the mammoth McLibel case was in breach of the right to a fair trial and right to freedom of expression.

The McLibel 2, Helen Steel and Dave Morris, held a press Conference outside McDonald's in The Strand, Central London - chosen to mark 20 years of growing protests against McDonald's since the first ever 'Day of Action against McDonald's' on Jan 19th 1985, when London Greenpeace protested outside that store.

McDonald's Corporation had launched libel proceedings in an unsuccessful attempt to prevent the distribution of leaflets criticising the company. The McLibel trial became the longest case in English legal history, lasting 314 days, in which the McLibel 2 represented themselves against McDonald's. The trial and a 23-day appeal in 1999, resulted in a mixed verdict in which damning rulings were made against McDonald's core business practices (see below).

Despite the rulings, no sanctions were ordered against McDonald's, yet the McLibel 2 were outrageously ordered to pay the company £40,000 damages.

The McLibel 2 refused to pay a single penny and instead launched legal proceedings against the UK government in Sept 2000. The European Court ruling on 15th February stated that there had been an unacceptable inequality of arms with McDonald's during the trial, and that the lack of procedural fairness and equality gave rise to a breach of the right to freedom of expression. They also said that the award of £40,000 damages to McDonald's was disproportionate. The court also recognised that there was a "strong public interest in enabling campaign groups and individuals outside the mainstream to contribute to the public debate by disseminating information and ideas on matters of general public interest such as health and the environment".

"Having largely beaten McDonald's, and won some damning judgements against them in our trial, we have now exposed the notoriously oppressive and unfair UK laws. We hope that this will result in greater public scrutiny and criticism of powerful organisations whose practices have a detrimental effect on society and the environment. The McLibel campaign and the world-wide distribution of millions of anti-McDonald's leaflets had already proved that determined and widespread grass roots protests and defiance can undermine those who try to silence their critics, and also render oppressive laws unworkable. The continually growing opposition to McDonald's and all it stands for is a vindication of all the efforts of those around the world who have been exposing and challenging the corporation's business practices," say Morris and Steel.